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Anorexic Affect: Disordered Eating and the Conative Body

by

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Abstract

Anorexic Affect: Disordered Eating and the Conative Body performs a material feminist re-mapping of the sense events occasioned by self-starvation. Suspending the usual critical interpretations of eating disorders (gender, transcendence, and representation), as well as the clinical rallying points of studies of anorexia and bulimia nervosa (etiology and therapy), this project adopts a symptomatological approach. Deleuze's construction of a literary clinic in *Essays Critical and Clinical* and *Coldness and Cruelty* is the point of departure for *Anorexic Affect*, as are many of Deleuze and Guattari's literary conceptual personae: Bartleby, Gregor Samsa, Molloy, Murphy, and Watt. With each of these self-starvers Melville, Kafka, and Beckett express new symptoms and speeds of trans-ordered eating. Specifically, the ability to hold matter in reserve is anathema to anorexic and bulimic bodies (what they cannot do), but rather than reading this as a symptom of disembodiment and detachment from sensory milieus, *Anorexic Affect* proposes alternatives. By bringing the literary clinic to bear on contemporary critiques and memoirs of women's self-starvation, this project charts the overlapping affective capacities producing disorderly eating *while also* sustaining its sites of production. Constructing anorexic economies, ecologies, and ethologies as new symptomatological sites of critical/clinical encounter, *Anorexic Affect* exposes the sedimentary narratives of eating disorders while—more importantly—developing and exhausting other possible permutations of self-starvation.

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Anorexic Affect: Disordered Eating and the Conative Body

Introduction: Re-Mapping Anorexia

To call anorexia an eating disorder is to suggest not only the existence of a phantasmatic origin but also a fantasied order, since it is to insist that there is a proper eating order.

--Branka Arsic, "Experimental Ordinary" 36

This project unfolds an attempt to generate new critical ground for dis-ordered eating that engages generously, genuinely, and generatively with Branka Arsic's critique. Arsic does not simply ask after a terminological shift. Indeed, it is easy to exchange the term "eating disorder" for "dis-ordered eating," or "disease" for "dis-ease." The challenge of my dissertation lies in finding hospitable critical grounds for transposing disorderly eating, critical grounds that avoid assumptions that self-starvation is wrong, bad, narcissistic, vain, passive, or stupid. The vicissitudes of anorexic and bulimic practices can threaten life. Anorexia afflicts between 1% and 5% of young women in North America. With a 20% mortality rate, it is the most fatal mental disorder there is. For the 80% of anorexics that do remain alive, relapses are frequent, and the possibility of a full recovery is at best tenuous in cultures enduringly "thinspired" and diet-driven participants in "multiple cults of thinness" (Eckerman 9). These statistics are confounding. Why

are women dying such seemingly senseless deaths? Why are current treatment options failing so many sufferers? Why do we continue to invest in dieting crazes that can “trigger” or induce prolonged self-starvation? Why do women punish their bodies? Where does this self-loathing come from? These are difficult questions that demand repeated confrontation so that critical dialogues about anorexia and bulimia remain open. However, these are not the only productive interrogative trajectories. My dissertation maps different questions worth posing.

The political investment fueling my analysis is, simply put, an affirmation of life. This investment in living might seem simplistic, but I fear that current critical considerations of anorexia have become too far removed from the basics: from living, breathing, eating, shitting, sensing, relating, and moving bodies. I also fear that without acknowledging this basic investment in life, my travels through different sites of anorexic inquiry might be read as pro-ana (promoting anorexia) and morbidly, or romantically espousing disease and death. To be very clear, I am arguing that *because* anorexia’s dangers are currently so real, we must exhaust all of our critical and conceptual creativity. I am arguing that *in response to* the immediacy of anorexia in the contemporary moment, we must extend our critical curiosities to produce analysis that exhausts the possible. This is not the time to police the borders of what can be said about anorexia, rather, this is the time for exploration, extension, experimentation, and exhaustion: for producing a more fluid ethics of anorexia to replace what has

become “common sense.”

Specifically, my contention is that dis-ordered eating and living need not be mutually exclusive. Some anorexics sustain their practices throughout their lives, and vital living is often occasioned by these practices. So long as anorexia is only read as conditioned by lacking, hollowing, disembodiment, disappearing, shrinking, and disengaging, we will remain unable to follow some of its divergent impulses. Consider anorexia’s most prevalent metaphors: lack, frigidity, emptiness, impoverishment, immobility, entrapment, stagnation, disembodiment, immaturity, incapacity, childishness, self-involvement, confusion, and deceit. But now weigh these against some anorexic practices, its expressions, its somatic and sensory events: fidgeting, shivering, hungering, desiring, hyper-kinetically moving, measuring, considering, touching, bingeing, purging, feeling, sensing, cooking, drinking, chewing, sucking, memorizing, interrogating, expending, exhausting, exploring. There exists a troubling discord between anorexia’s metaphoricity and many of its constitutive practices. I am proposing critical dialogue about dis-ordered eating that accounts for more of its complexity. Not all anorexics are death-driven; and not all of anorexic experience can be wholly interpreted as suffering and decline. Some anorexics sustain dis-ordered eating throughout their lives; some of what compels self-starvation is exhilaration.

The critical mapping of anorexia that I propose might provide practical, philosophical, literary, creative, and perhaps even clinical tools to explore the

more capacious aspects of anorexia which are still a surprisingly uncharted territory. This introduction consists of three sections. The following section on the diagnostic history of anorexia develops its own case study about the changing reception of dis-ordered eating in the first and second halves of the 20th century. With WWII, there is a decisive shift away from pre-war clinical affirmations of active self-starvers; these case studies of hyperkinetic anorexics all but disappear from the clinic.

Because my aim throughout this dissertation is to balance the clinical with the critical, the second section details feminist analyses of eating disorders in the past decades. First, I recount the work that comprises the dominant feminist approach to eating disorders, and then I describe the “call” for revisionist strategies (still performed by feminists, but with an eye to the failures of social-constructivist models of illness). A third section addresses my dissertation’s methodological investment in material feminisms. I consider Karen Barad’s work in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* and “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” in order to point to some of the limitations of social-constructivist feminist appraisals of eating disorders and to move beyond the omissions of contemporary feminist revisions of this work. Instead of pursuing only discursivity, language, and signification (following Foucault’s work on the docile disciplinary body and Butler’s performativity), Barad proposes that feminists explore the material complexities of women’s lived

bodily experience, studies that would require making matter more relevant than simply immutable, colonized, exploited, and passive substance. While I am more enthusiastic than Barad about Foucault's investigation of situated material engagements (particularly in regard to dietetics), I argue that Barad's polemic invokes a necessary conceptual shift for beginning to confront disorderly eating more inventively.

Section I-- A Diagnostic History of Anorexia

In *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa*, Joan Jacobs Brumberg develops a useful outline of the morphing medical landscape of anorexia over the 19th and 20th centuries. I will draw from Brumberg's work while placing her diagnostic portraits in dialogue with more current medico-scientific approaches to eating disorders. The "discovery" of anorexia nervosa is credited to William Gull (Britain) and Charles Lasègue (France), both late 19th century physicians who simultaneously and independently stumbled upon and qualified a perplexing cluster of symptoms. Lasègue named the disorder *l'anorexie hystérique* and Gull similarly conferred that it was "a hysteria of the gastric center" amounting to an "alimentary nihilism" (Brumberg 127, 136). While Gull and Lasègue noted anorexia's overlaps with hysteria, their credited "discovery" was preceded in 1694. Richard Morton, a British physician famous for his insights on tuberculosis,

referred to a number of his unappetitive female patients as “skeletons only clad with skin” (Morton 9), suffering a condition he could neither attribute to tuberculosis nor chlorosis.¹

Interestingly, Morton described one “skeletal” female patient expressing symptoms of continued engagement: “poring upon Books, to expose her self both Day and Night to the injuries of the Air” (Morton qtd. In Brumberg 8). Morton’s description might offer a preliminary medical account of an anorexic whose hunger occasions something other than weight loss or “wasting away.” “Poring over books,” Morton’s “skeleton clad with skin” seems decidedly more involved. On its own, Morton’s case study cannot fully support a more affirmative reading of

¹ The potential diagnostic cut introduced by Morton in 1694 is interesting to consider. Before his research demarcated the “skeleton clad only with skin” from the sufferer of tuberculosis and/or chlorosis, were restrictive food behaviours collapsed with these states of decline? Brumberg’s discussion notes the similarity between the expression of chlorotic and anorexic symptoms: both diagnosed in adolescent, middle class girls, both linked with popularized notions of beauty, both linked to the onset of menstruation, and both involving strange habits surrounding food. Simone Weil, and Franz Kafka both die of tubercular complications, write of self-starvation (I will argue in the following chapters that Weil and Kafka are instrumental symptomatologists of anorexic affect. In short, their writing invents or expresses new symptoms of anorexia). A point worth foregrounding here is that whether eating disorders overlap with tuberculosis, chlorosis, hysteria, or in the contemporary moment, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, autism—there exist fascinating affinities and linkages that make anorexia and bulimia nervosa always already an assemblage, transmuted by its shifting contiguities. Just as Morton’s 1694 observations detached what we now call anorexia from tuberculosis and chlorosis (or perhaps suspended this connection) I think it is possible to detach disorderly eating from anorexia and bulimia nervosa (another temporary suspension) in order to chart its other sites of contiguity.

self-starvation, but his clinical observations are in dialogue with a host of other case reports on anorexia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Psychiatrist, Regina C. Casper's 2006 work on "The 'Drive for Activity' and 'Restlessness' in Anorexia Nervosa: Potential Pathways," hypothesizes that "a drive for activity in the presence of physiological and endocrine changes consistent with starvation is a characteristic symptom of acute anorexia nervosa" (Casper 99). The active anorexic arsenal that Casper details is facilitated by a combination of three characteristic traits of the disorder—which, significantly, are not found in cases of enforced starvation: 1) denial and lack of concern for physical hardship or decline, 2) contentment and a particular euphoric mental state, and 3) paradoxical liveliness and overactivity (Casper, 387; 1998). This approach to anorexia as a hyperactive state is one that shows up across scientific literature, particularly evolutionary biological (Guisinger,), ethological (Casper), neurological (Wilson, Kay, Hoens), and evolutionary psychiatric (Arun). Together, this scientific literature suggests that anorexic patients might refuse food in order to retain an element of vitality (Casper 390; 1998); in order to retain a fluctuating relationship between moving and living, somewhat counter-intuitively occasioned by severe weight loss.

Furthermore, these approaches complicate the typically cast anorexic symptom of fearing fat. To fear gaining fat and to fear losing one's relationship with an empty/hungry body: these might be altogether misunderstood as congruent anorexic phobias and anxieties. If we understand anorexia only as a

desire to look excessively thin, or to look more androgynous, focusing on these visual registers might mean that we miss other possibilities for sense-making that self-starvers engage. Just as fat activates bodies in particular ways by altering movements, intensities, and expressions, so too does emaciation. Take one of Arthur Crisp's contributions to the more capacious clinical picture of self-starvation. In 1965, he found that the emaciation of a number of his anorexic patients altered patterns of sleep and wakefulness quite radically. Increased arousal and activity associated with starvation tended to guarantee wakefulness through the 2nd half of the night. Consider the ways that this single symptom could potentially alter how an anorexic body experiences and expresses life, time, and space. Here I am invoking the guiding question of my dissertation: What do anorexic bodies do? To provide answers to this question, I am proposing a dialogue between a Spinozist-Deleuzian call to post- or trans-human ethics, an emergent body of material feminist scholarship forging new critical/clinical relationships between nature and culture, and a re-awakened medico-scientific emphasis on anorexic physiology that underscores earlier, stubborn, and stifling equations between anorexia and passivity. My hope is that this dialogue will invent a more creative conceptual vocabulary with which we might begin to take stock of the vicissitudes of dis-ordered eating. Regina Casper's simultaneous disclaimer *and* frustration with a missing vocabulary for her work's interrogation of eating disorders is perhaps suitably emphatic here: "I have used the terms

activation, arousal, energy and vitality interchangeably for want of a scientific term for what makes emaciated anorexia nervosa patients appear energetic, lively and capable of extended exercise” (390: 1998). In the following chapters, I situate Casper’s missing term as *affect*.

Casper argues that despite the clinical connection between self-starvation and abundant physical activity that has been made “throughout history” this connection has received little attention in the past fifty years (Casper 99). From 1864 to 1874, William Gull described anorexic behavior as “restless and active, [with a] persistent wish to be on the move, great restlessness, and remarkable and strikingly disproportionate abundance of physical energy” (Gull qt. in Casper 101). In 1873 Charles Lasègue observed that food abstinence “tends to increase the aptitude for movement; she [his anorexic patient] is never tired, [possesses] an inexhaustible optimism [and] paradoxical liveliness” (qtd. in Casper 101). Similar clinical case studies abound in the years that follow Morton’s, Lasègue, and Gull’s practices. Anorexics are described as: engaged in “exaggerated movements” (Janet, 1903); having “a strange unrest, [taking] long walks far beyond her strength” (Albutt and Rollston, 1905); “exceedingly fond of long walks” (Gee, 1908); possessing “remarkable physical and mental energy” (Ryle, 1936); “in spite of pitiful emaciation, she is often reported as active, even restlessly so” (Nicolle, 1938), with “remarkable and strikingly disproportionate abundance of physical energy” (Palmer and Jones, 1939); having preserved her

strength surprisingly well (McCullagh and Tupper, 1940); with an “internal urge towards increased activity” (Waller et. al, 1940); possessing “undiminished, almost excessive vitality, cheerfully active” (Pardee, 1941); with “relatively extraordinary degrees of physical and mental activity (Berkman, 1948); overactive and elated (Meyer and Weinroth, 1957); and “the most practical criterion is the activity displayed by patients with anorexia nervosa (Bond, 1949).

What has changed between the mid-20th century and the 21st century that can account for such a radical shift in the symptomatology of anorexia?² Why have the possible anorexic metaphors of elation, vitality, mobility and exhilaration been exorcised from the critical, clinical and cultural imagination? What has incurred this stringent policing of anorexic meaning? Why are we clinging to the hegemony of a singular anorexic subject; autophagic, catatonic, driven to death alone, and reactive when these preceding clinical case studies so clearly foresee anorexics in *media res*: in the more formative and euphoric stages of their illness?

One provocative clue guiding my research is that the clinical disavowal of anorexia’s more vital expressions is more pronounced when the patient in question is female. Only an estimated 10% of documented cases of anorexia involve male patients, so the overwhelming majority of case studies of eating

² Overactivity is not a consideration for the *DSM IV--Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. In other contemporary psychiatric literature, when hyperactivity is addressed, it is usually in relation to treatment plans (in- or out-patient protocols) where most forms of extended movement are disallowed because it leads to more extreme weight loss.

disorders have female subjects. Rather than insisting on the importance of gender as the pre-eminent lens through which we assess eating disorders, my project's aim is to suspend this lens (not always, but at times, and with caution) so that we might explore anorexic acts rather than only its etiologies and significations. When I do focus on gender (in Chapter 3), this has more to do with exposing a sedimented hermeneutics (both clinical and critical) that has rendered the equation between anorexia and femininity absolutely compulsory. Most of the critical and clinical literature on eating disorders insists that these originate in women's socialization: mothers' and daughters' inability to negotiate Oedipal conflicts, women's infantilization in a culture deeming youthful bodies desirable; women's negative self-esteem/body image in a capitalist culture that sediments connection between fitness, slenderness, beauty, and success; women's desire to fashion their bodies into a more androgynous aesthetic to attempt to yield more of the power awarded to men. Anorexia has been critically/clinically imagined as the socio-cultural inheritance of women.

My focus on the conative bodies of male self-starvers is one way out of deeming dis-ordered eating a female malady, which is to say an understating of women's nature as wholly subsumed, distorted, and controlled by culture.³ Men

³ In using the term "female malady," I am also quoting Elaine Showalter's influential feminist critic of the history of psychiatric practices in asylums. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture* (1986) argues that women's mental illness in the 19th and 20th centuries was a protest mounted against women's subjection, exploitation, and codification as "mad" beneath a

engage in acts of self-starvation too. And while we could assume that men are under similar pressures to look good, or fit, or slender in the contemporary moment, I am unconvinced of the value of this argument. Because my dissertation suspends questions of *why* people self-starve in favor of explorations of *what* this disorderly eating produces, I am leaving aside differentiations between the aetiologies of men's and women's anorexia. That said, I will consider that there exists a differential reception of men's and women's self-starvation in the latter half of the 20th century. Michael Krasnow's *My Life as a Male Anorexic* is one of the few memoirs written by a male anorexic, and offers important insight because of its clinical framing by Krasnow's team of psychiatrists and medical doctors who lend their authoritative weight to what they deem the crowning achievement of his existence. Dr. Spielberg's foreword asserts that "it appears to me that Michael's being in control of his anorexia as well as the anorexia itself, has been the central achievement of his life. In that sense, the publication of this book both validates and nourishes him" (Spielberg qtd in Krasnow xxii). In the book's appendix, titled "A Psychiatrist's Comments," Dr. Stephen R. Weiner points to the remarkability of Krasnow's persistent health despite severe emaciation and

phallogocentric psychiatric and cultural lens. Showalter's work has been instrumental in exposing a brutal history of women's treatment—and torture—in the name of "health." Beyond its scope, however, is a more complex consideration of nature-culture in which the latter does not fully control and mute the former. Are political protest and mimesis the only forms of agency we can attribute to say, the hysteric? Are the commitments of her body only reactive and representative?

malnutrition (96). He notes that “it is very clear that one of Michael’s unique characteristics is his perseverance...[he] is certainly a unique person...[he] has certainly amazed anyone who has treated him, probably by his ability to tolerate his incredibly low body weight for as long as he has” (93, 97). Krasnow’s male anorexic body is capacious; Weiner, his clinician, invites us to marvel at what it can do. His “amazing ability to “persevere” is perhaps less “unique” to Krasnow’s case of anorexia than Weiner allows, especially when placed in conversation with clinical observations of women’s “remarkable endurance” and hyperactivity in the first half of the 20th century.

Observations of anorexia’s capacious somatic manifestations have been replaced with clinical and critical gazes fixated on its solipsistic and suicidal psychology. But this frequently proves discordant with anorexic women’s professed experiences of their dis-ease. Anosognosia, the persistent denial of the existence of illness or physical decline is a fascinating anorexic symptom, one enabling the drive toward hyperactivity, hyperkinesis, restlessness, and euphoria that Regina Casper’s work pointedly uncovers. The symptom of anosognosia also invokes a crucial moment of differentiation between *self*-starvation and starvation. In cases of involuntary starvation, the denial of hunger, weakness, fatigue, accompanied with more emphatic energetic expenditure does not exist: hunger is accompanied by suffering, dampening, depression, and immobility. Both Regina Casper and Shan Guisinger argue that the affective apparati of hunger diverge

radically in cases of disordered eating. What we have come to call anorexia is compelled by the “denial” of appetite, hunger, or even weakness, a symptom that has been pathologized and de-naturalized: adolescent women are deceitful, dishonest, and will take whatever measures necessary to trick anyone who gets in the way of their suicidal quests for weight loss. But what if this anosognosia is part of the somatic complexity of self-starvation? What if it paints a neurological, biological, and evolutionary picture discordant with the majority of feminist scholarship on eating disorders relying on the assumption that self-starvation is so unnatural it can only be externally (patriarchally) imposed? I want to insist on the possibility of different experiences of hunger,⁴ not all of which fit neatly into social constructivist feminist interpretations of eating disorders. Anosognosia, as I will argue in the following chapters, is a key critical and clinical clue for the re-mapping of anorexic affect.

⁴ It should be obvious that hunger is not always the same, or can feel differently depending on its contingencies: the time of day, the season, the temperature, the age, the environment, the physical space, the postures occupied, the tasks at hand, the types of clothing worn, the company kept, etc). Because bodies change in accordance with each of these sites of exchange/encounter, it makes sense that what we call ‘hunger’ would be transmuted as well. Speaking experientially and candidly, when I am eating more-or-less normally (at regular intervals, let’s say, and with little commitment to disorderly eating) I experience hunger as a numbing and painful sensation. I need to eat before I can move extensively, or think with focus, or exist with contentment and security. But if I am more committed to “living without dining” (to, say, organizing my days around not-eating), then I experience—and express—hunger in completely different ways. It can provoke a type of energy that is difficult to find otherwise: to access when physically full. It compels different systems of timing, valuation, relation, movement, and arousal.

The question of why anorexia is clinically treated so differently in the first and second half of the 20th century still remains. I am asking what sorts of social and political momentums can account for the disappearance of more affirmative understandings of some of anorexia's constituent physical practices, particularly when female bodies are the agents in question? Psychiatrically and medically speaking, the years during and following WWII radically alter anorexia's clinical landscape. In *The Anorexic Self: A Personal, Political Analysis of Diagnostic Discourse*, Paula Saukko develops a provocative case study of the circumstances surrounding Hilde Bruch's groundbreaking and still prevalent diagnostic appraisal of eating disorders. Having fled the Holocaust because she was Jewish, Bruch performed the majority of her early research on the causes of obesity in Jewish immigrants. According to Saukko, Bruch:

became one of the pioneers who turned attention away from physical theories of obesity, which sometimes contained racist undertones, and toward theories focusing on family interaction and lifestyle...Personal issues aside, Bruch's work also belongs to the wartime trend in American psychiatry away from hereditary and racial theories toward hygienic explanations that stressed the importance of environmental factors in producing social, mental, or physical deviance (Saukko 44).

In her exploration of obesity, Bruch's focus was on overly protective and abusive

mothers whom she theorized perpetuated their children's low self-esteem resulting in excessive weight gain. Decades later, when turning her work to families producing anorexic daughters, Bruch's depiction of the "anorexic family reflects central political anxieties of the historical moment," and particularly on the politically-loaded figure of the mother (of 'feminized suburbia') (Saukko 49). Bruch's clinical portrait of the anorexic painted a "too-good middle-class girl in the late fifties and sixties...a docile girl from an affluent family with a domineering and domesticated mother" (ibid 50), overly vulnerable to peer-pressure, her family's expectations of perfection, and the media's messages of thinness and feminine beauty. According to Saukko, Bruch's anorexic perfectly "fitted the postwar preoccupation with the possibly dangerous effects of mass media and products...[having] presumably fallen ill because of the excess of things and images—[the anorexic] became a symbol of popular and academic anxiety with the postwar consumer or mass culture often associated with femininity and its presumed propensity to be seduced or engulfed by objects and irrational desires" (Saukko 51).

Following Saukko's analysis, I am encouraged to dissect the political anatomy of the contemporary female subject of anorexia. Bruch's work on eating disorders in postwar America comes out of a fascinating constellation of historical, political, economical, personal, and social events. Particularly, clinical anxieties over eugenics and feminist anxieties over the biologization of illness

converge to produce and perpetuate what remains the “common sense” of anorexia. Bruch’s portrait of the affluent, docile, perfectionist, susceptible consumer with neurotic mother, in many ways, remains the fixed anorexic figure sustained by feminist accounts of eating disorders. And just as the imbrication of Bruch’s work in an historical moment especially hostile to biological, neurological, and evolutionary biological readings of illness informed her understanding of eating disorders, I would argue that the same anxieties persist in many feminist analyses still weighing cultural, social, discursive, and political interpretations of anorexic dis-ease far more heavily than material concerns.

While Saukko’s analysis of the enmeshment of Bruch’s theory in the events of the Holocaust offers a psychiatric evaluation of why clinical attention moved away from active and capacious expressions of anorexic bodies, Ancel Keys’ work on wartime starvation presents a conversant—equally groundbreaking—medical case study. Ending in 1945, Dr. Ancel Keys conducted a year-long starvation experiment on 36 men (conscientious objectors to the war), who had volunteered to take part in the Minnesota experiments and who were selected based on physical, psychological and intellectual fitness. Keys, who earlier had developed the “K ration,” food aiming to meet the American army’s dietary needs while in combat, and who later rose to contemporary cultural fame with his *The Mediterranean Diet’s* guide to weight loss, had planned to systematically starve his test subjects in order to then re-feed them and gain

valuable information about the best (and most cost-effective) means of rehabilitating victims of concentration camps after their post-war liberation.

Keys' study ended too late to have any real impact on these war-torn bodies, but in 1950, his experiments were documented in a two volume, 1385-page text called *The Biology of Human Starvation*. Still considered "seminal," Keys' study remains the pre-eminent medical textbook frequented for re-feeding and rehabilitating the physiology of starved bodies. In other words, Keys' experiment is a foundational guide for physicians placing anorexic patients on re-feeding programs in order to keep them alive (Tucker 199). Keys himself, while conducting his study, immediately saw the connection between the behaviors of his test subjects and anorexic subjects. Just like anorexics, the men in the experiments had distorted body images characteristic of BDD (body dysmorphic disorder); during their starvation phase, many of the men found that those not on their starvation diet looked fat; they seemed unaware of their own skeletal appearance, complained of "feeling fat," and became "morbidly fascinated with their bodily functions" (Tucker 131,215). Furthermore, some of the men were obsessed with cookbooks, collecting them "reading the recipes, and staring at the pictures of food with almost pornographic fascination" (Tucker 123). This list of behaviors is conversant with the psychological symptomatology of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Contrary to the popular sense that these disordered behaviors emerge in

female patients as the result of struggles with the volatility of female embodiment and feminine social rituals in a patriarchal culture, Keys' experiment suggests that in fact, these strange practices might be more based in the biology of starvation, regardless of whether experienced by a man or a woman. Keys' indifference to gender is notable when compared with Bruch's fixation on the "feminized" character of self-starvation (insisting that gender manifested as *the* axis of eating disorders). Keys himself felt that his experiment, amounting to *The Biology of Human Starvation* "more closely duplicated anorexia than it did wartime starvation, in that conditions other than food intake, such as cleanliness and accessibility of medical care, were 'normal.'" (Tucker 192). He even noted that in terms of self-starvation, "women seemed more durable than men" (ibid 192).⁵ In the years following his study, Keys felt as though its most remarkable contribution to human biology was the knowledge that "the human body was supremely well-equipped to deal with starvation" (Tucker 182).

I will signal three points that emerge from Ancel Keys' Minnesota experiments investigating the shared biological manifestations of starvation and

⁵ This is a rather interesting observation on the part of Keys, who, unsatisfied by his own causal explanations, gestured outward to suggest that "clearly, the whole question merits the closest of scrutiny" (qtd. In Tucker 192). Keys' findings attesting to the potential of women's superior adaptation to starvation resonates with a number of ethological studies of hyperactive anorexia in rodents. The female rats show remarkably more sustainable physical appetites for movement once consuming a calorically-deficient (starvation) diet. I will take these studies up in greater depth in chapters 4 and 5.

anorexia: 1) This is yet another medico-scientific inquiry that postulates the capaciousness of starved bodies; 2) While Keys' considerations of female adeptness for self-starving are just "hunches" meant to guide future scientific inquiry, they are in dialogue with some of the more substantiated findings of ethological studies of anorexic rats, in whom females evidence a much higher facility with movement when starved (3) The timing of Keys' Minnesota experiments—during WWII—illuminates a complex historical moment where many events and discourses collide to change the course of critical/clinical affirmations of self-starvation.

I suspect that the events surrounding the Holocaust continue to implicate patterns of critical and clinical reception and treatment of anorexia. With Keys' experiments, 36 otherwise healthy men, voluntarily starving themselves for science and for WWII relief efforts in a Minnesota laboratory, connect with the practices and the expressions of a medically-enigmatic "female malady." The starved bodies of Holocaust victims are implicated by the starved bodies of anorexics, as after the 1950 publication of *The Biology of Human Starvation*, the re-feeding programs meant to nourish survivors of death camps are used to ensure the survival of women with severely disordered eating. This enfolding happens scientifically, medically, and indeed discursively—but never critically. My point is that the medical and social events surrounding the Holocaust might have amounted to a watershed moment in the clinical treatment and social reception

patterns of anorexia, a moment that has gone critically undiagnosed (with the exception of Saukko's work), and a moment that could provide a very crucial piece to the question I have invoked based on Regina Casper's work: Why do case studies of women's anorexia, post 1950, no longer consider its more affirmative properties?

One of the responses I am attempting to map here is that anorexia's geography is altered by the Holocaust. With images of tortured and starved concentration camp bodies, and piled corpses, it has become increasingly distasteful to suggest that the often emaciated and skeletal bodies of anorexics (in Morton's language, "skeletons clad only with skin") could be euphoric, agentic, capacious, and vital. Ancel Keys' Minnesota starvation experiments give some clinical weight to the circulating social discourses condemning female anorexic embodiment in relation to the Holocaust. To this day, recourse to the immorality and self-involvement of anorexia is often made in the name of the horrors of the Holocaust, as these women are, after all, foregoing food, a luxury not granted to everyone. I would challenge my reader to find any text with the subject of anorexia (psychological, medical, fictive, autobiographical, feminist or otherwise) that does not include a passing reference to the shared aesthetic of anorexic bodies with those of concentration camp victims.

While space will not allow me to list *every* incidence of this discursive connection (this could fill my whole dissertation), I will provide a representative

sampling. Hilde Bruch, whose groundbreaking work on the psychology of anorexia is still deemed incisive and authoritative, prefaced her 1978 *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia* by explaining that “the chief symptom [of the ‘new disease’] is severe starvation leading to a devastating weight loss: ‘she looks like the victim of a concentration camp’ is a not an uncommon description” (Bruch XIX). Moving from psychological to medical receptions of anorexic bodies, and from 1978 to 2009, a recent two-part article featured in *The New York Times* on “The Cellular and Molecular Substrates of Anorexia Nervosa,” opened with molecular biologist, John Medina’s earliest memories of coming face to face with an anorexic: “It was difficult not to stare at her, for she looked like someone freshly liberated from a concentration camp” (Medina). From medical models of anorexic bodies to those found in adolescent fiction, Ivy Ruckman’s *The Hunger Scream* fulfils Hilde Bruch’s prophecy of a “not uncommon description” when at one point the anorexic protagonist’s mother concedes that she “look[s] like [she’s] just come out of a concentration camp, that’s all” (Ruckman 117). And, in a similar vein, Marya Hornbacher’s insightful and often-quoted autobiographical telling of her lengthy battle with eating disorders recounts her mother’s equation between anorexic embodiment and Holocaust imagery: “years later, when asked what she was thinking, my mother would say, ‘you looked like an escapee from Auschwitz’” (Hornbacher 175).

This sentiment is equally pervasive in feminist critical appraisals of

anorexia. Kim Chernin's *The Hungry Self* demonstrates its utterance among the families of anorexics that have frequented her practice:

Anorectic women are frequently described by their parents and siblings in terms that explicitly evoke the concentration camp experience. "She looks like those pictures of people just liberated from Buchenwald," a mother says to me on the phone..." I can't bear to look at her," another woman says of her younger sister, she looks like a death's head, like one of those people the Nazis tried to starve to death." "You go over to the highschool today," says one mother of a teenage daughter..." and it's like walking into a concentration camp (Chernin 60).

Adding to the frequency of these sorts of utterances in published mediations of eating disorders (across disciplines), this phenomenon appears the widespread "trump card" of those "trawling" internet pro-ana websites. The most frequently mobilized criticism of pro-ana advocacy is an evocation of starved WWII bodies.

I have found so few texts that resist this urge to connect anorexic bodies with those of victims of the Holocaust, that I believe our representative strategies for conjuring anorexia are already committed to recognizing its more expansive and unexplained—indeed, its mobile—properties, convergences, and affinities. The sampling of utterances taken from the texts above share an important commonality: in each it is the act of *reading*, of facing, of seeing and of trying

desperately to make meaning of anorexia that incurs the metaphors of concentration camps. Perplexing is that nowhere have I found a single passage (published or not) in which an anorexic connects her own food refusal, her own material practices, or her own desired aesthetic with Holocaust imagery. Instead, the acts of describing, interpreting, and often derogating anorexia tend to produce this connection.⁶

But it would be fraught to stop at an analysis of what anorexic bodies visually signify, symbolize, and represent. Building on this, we need to think about how these bodies produce. The events of the Holocaust continue to implicate anorexia, altering its clinical and social geography. Specifically, Ancel Keys' 1945 Minnesota starvation experiments morph the medico-scientific (in this case, biological) cartography of human starvation, and anorexia along with it. If paradigmatic anorexic behaviours (doings) such as mirror checking, purging, fat-fearing, cooking obsessions and body dysmorphias can be induced in 36 male test subjects, isolated within a laboratory, then this calls into question some of the "compulsory," "obvious," and "assumed" common sense correlatives between

⁶ Beyond pointing to this startling discrepancy, I also wish to note that here I have produced an example of discourse analysis involving dis-ordered eating. While my dissertation mostly suspends the discourses (surrounding/producing/perpetuating) anorexia in favour of its material practices (exploring instead what is produced by anorexia), I should point out that my contention with the former version of analyses of eating disorders is its hegemonic focus on engenderation, mass-media, beauty, and body image. In other words, it is possible to perform analyses of anorexia's discursive connections with attention to different sorts of maps than those imagined by social-constructivist feminist scholarship.

dis-eased femininity and dis-ordered eating. If prior to Keys' experiments in 1945, clinical (most often psychological) case reports of anorexia insisted on abundant properties of "vitality," "euphoria," "(hyper)activity," "mobility," "energy" and "elation," all affirmative readings of anorexia that have been lost post-WWII, then it seems safe to suggest that medical, ethical, and social practices coming out of the Holocaust continue to figure anorexia negatively.

I am suggesting that the policing of expressions of anorexic aptitudes has occurred, in part, as the result of the material connection solidified by Keys' experiments: that many anorexic patients now follow the re-feeding regimens developed for the victims of concentration camps. What do anorexic bodies do? If treated medically, they follow the feeding protocol intended for post-Holocaust rehabilitation. This is one of the vicissitudes of self-starvation. This is a material practice that literally shapes anorexic embodiment. Scrutinizing this particular constellation of anorexic involvement is just as crucial as those I have called "compulsory." For eating disorders are not only about young women feeling shitty about their bodies in a world that ritualistically condemns these bodies, they are perhaps more immediately about feeling, eating, and shitting—basic acts that, following anorexic and bulimic practices, are perpetually contested, conflicted, and complicated.

The trend in dominant feminist analyses of anorexia has been to de-medicalize and de-pathologize eating disorders by constructing a continuum of collective women's experiences of various "beautifying" regimes. Anorexia has meant a great deal in a culture that assumes—produces, perpetuates, markets—the collusion between beauty, desirability, self-esteem, sexuality, success, health, fitness, and slenderness. In this cultural scheme, anorexia is a tragic but morphological extension of patriarchal discourses that inscribe women's bodies. There exists a perpetual tension in these analyses between viewing anorexia as active and passive. On the one hand, anorexia is considered an active protest against what it means (discursively, culturally, biologically, politically, and economically) to be a woman. And on the other, anorexia is a powerless, cornered position women are forced to occupy because they have no other viable choice: all they have left is self-starvation which at least gives women the illusion of mastery and control over their bodies. The uncompromising through-line connecting each of these interpretations is that women are the disenfranchised inheritors of a dislocated mind-body. Having become strangers to their bodies, anorexia flourishes in a culture where women struggle to redefine what it means to be a woman, what it means to negotiate repressed female desires, what it means to be sexually objectified, and what it means to be othered within a masculinist economy of subject formation.

Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight* (2003) is widely quoted in transdisciplinary scholarship on eating disorders. For her, anorexia is a "defence

against the ‘femaleness’ of the body and a punishment of its desires” (Bordo 8). She goes on to propose that “the extremities to which the anorectic takes the denial of appetite...suggest the dualistic nature of her construction of reality: either she transcends body totally, becoming pure ‘male’ will, or she capitulates utterly to the degraded female body and its disgusting hungers. She sees no other possibilities, no middle ground” (Bordo 8). The dangerous, seductive allure of self-starvation, according to Bordo, is that “in the process of [becoming anorexic] a new realm of meanings is discovered, a range of values and possibilities that Western culture has traditionally coded as male and rarely made available to women: an ethic and aesthetic of self-mastery and self-transcendence, expertise and power over others through the example of superior will and control” (Bordo 178). To unpack, Bordo’s authoritative stance on anorexia is that it is an attempted flight from the coding of natural female bodies, and a repression of bodily desire (its ‘disgusting’ hungers and ‘degrading’ needs). A seductive opportunity for women to adopt the guise of masculine control, sovereignty, transcendence, and mastery of the body, Bordo reads anorexia as a sympathetic plight—a veritable attempt at something other—amidst the systemic violence of representation.

Susie Orbach’s work in *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (1983) and *Hunger Strike: the Anorectic’s Struggle as a Metaphor for our Age* (2001) has also been widely recognized. In agreement with Bordo, Orbach suggests that “anorexia is an expression of a woman’s confusion about how much space she may take up in the world...Submitting her body to rigorous discipline is part of her attempt to deny

an emotional life as the anorectic cannot tolerate feelings” (Hunger Strike 14). “Unable to contain a wide range of feelings inside herself” (Orbach 98), the anorexic woman begins a process of “defeminizing her body” (ibid 27) so that she might not be subject to the emotional life that her feminized body represents and entails. While Bordo’s analysis seems to sympathize with the sterile attempts at self-empowerment falsely promised by the clutches of an eating disorder, Orbach takes this reading a step further. For her, anorexia is not only a plight, but a political protest, a hunger strike against women’s social conditions (ibid 101). She argues that anorexia is “an attempted solution to being in a world in which at the most profound level one feels excluded, and to which one feels deeply unentitled to enter...Her self-denial is in effect a protest against the rules that circumscribe a woman’s life” (Orbach 103, 107). Orbach’s professed aim in politicizing eating disorders is to “humanize the actions” of anorexics (102). As with Bordo’s reading, Orbach performs a de-medicalization and de-pathologization of the anorexic subject: no longer a disease or a singular subject’s neurosis, anorexia is the return of the repressed, or the political stance of women railing against the ways their bodies have been coded as inhospitably feminine.

Naomi Wolf’s bestselling book, *The Beauty Myth* (1991) famously uncovers the external social causes of eating disorders. Even though Wolf’s book was published more than two decades ago, she was the invited keynote speaker at the 2010 National Eating Disorders Association’s (NEDA) annual conference. In *The Beauty Myth*, Wolf argues that the current cultural fixation on slenderness is a patriarchally deployed persistence controlling women. Thinness, she argues, has

nothing to do with beauty, and everything to do with rendering women obedient to men's desires (Wolf 193). Her analysis goes so far as to consider the current "epidemic of eating disorders" a form of genocide preventing women from undercutting men's cultural, intellectual, social, political, and economic power. Bordo, Orbach, and Wolf (along with Chernin, Lawrence, Mahowald, and Malson) are widely cited feminist thinkers on eating disorders. To sum up this scholarship, there is a deeply embedded sense that to starve oneself is to attempt (either by futile or laudable effort) to occupy the same privileged position as the masculine subject. This is either by renouncing patriarchal ideals (Grosz), by embodying a male ethic of self-production, mastery, and discipline (Bordo), by hunger striking for entry into the gates of masculine power (Orbach), by obeying the whims of an internal, panoptical male connoisseur (Knapp), and by transforming female curves into hardened surfaces more characteristic of male embodiment (Chernin, Nolan, Heywood).

I would like to reproduce a response to Wolf's keynote address at the NEDA conference by another presenter, Carrie Arnold, who has published her own memoir and maintained the blog, *ED Bites*, chronicling her process of recovery from anorexia. If there is a thesis statement present in Arnold's blog entries and the dialogue that occurs around them, this is that the popular acceptance of social-constructivist feminist scholarship explaining eating disorders has contributed to the social maligning of anorexic women as vain, stupid, and narcissistic. Arnold's point is not that Bordo, Orbach, Wolf, Chernin, Knapp, et.al have performed analyses that have intentionally repudiated

anorexics, but that their thinking has been swept up by so many social and political anxieties surrounding the diet, fitness, and “health” industries, that anorexia has become a liquidated syndrome wholly eclipsed by social and cultural explanations. Differently put, Arnold is suggesting that some feminist attempts to medically de-pathologize anorexic women’s behaviours have served the opposite function: they have socially re-pathologized eating disorders so that sufferers have not only failed at producing a “healthy” body, but they have also failed to rise (mindfully, intellectually) above what we should know are problematic cultural expectations. Specifically, Arnold writes:

Eating disorders existed before thin was in, and they will probably exist after Size Zero seems as antiquated and misguided as chastity belts and foot binding. *The cultural language of fat and thin and dieting are what we have to put our experience into words. They are how we frame what is happening to us.* People in the Middle Ages framed anorexia as an effort to be more spiritual. Now, we look at it as an effort to be thinner or look like some supermodel. *But the way we make sense of an illness is different than the illness itself* (My italics, “Thoughts on NEDA” *ED Bites*)

Arnold makes two critical points of intervention in this short passage, and these are in many ways the critical imperatives of her entire blog, a space invested in recovering from disorderly eating, and a community that invokes generous

dialogue from a range of readers/writers somehow connected to anorexia.⁷ Arnold points to a crucial problematic: that the language/logic available to women to make their experiences of disordered-eating meaningful is limited. She suggests that eating disorders are not singularly about women's disdain embodiment within patriarchy, but that the aggregates of women's experiences of consumerism, dieting, fitness, and beauty have been made most readily available. She points to the expediency of this vocabulary for anorexics and interlocutors of the disorder alike: "the culture of thin provides a vocabulary from many sufferers...It makes sense to you, and it helps get those around you to stop breathing down your bony neck" (Arnold).

Arnold's second point of intervention is a distinction between how we make illness meaningful, and how illness actually functions. A number of responses to Arnold's thesis are equally as instructive on this point. Abby writes that "being underweight is a byproduct of my behaviours, not the goal." And Jesse responds in agreement that "I really have no desire to be anything like a supermodel, but I don't want to eat, which makes me lose weight, and this provides a convenient, if disingenuous, justification." Apart from this particular conversation, Marya Hornbacher's memoir of bulimia and anorexia, *Wasted* also attests to this distinction. She writes that "I simply did not eat. I was tenacious this time. It was definitely not about 'losing weight.' That particular moniker for what

⁷ *ED Bites* provides one example of an alternative to pro-ana communities: an evolving, collaborative conversation between women striving to both validate, understand, and connect through their disorderly eating, but with a persistent affirmation of living, moving on, and becoming something other than anorexic or bulimic.

I was doing seemed absurd, even to me. That term is external. I was exploring the extent of hunger. The hunger was the thing. The heady rush” (Hornbacher 167). What emerges from these passages is a sense that deeming eating disorders meaningful as “a beauty quest gone wrong” (Arnold) actually serves the unintended purpose of masking the properties, functions, and desires of lived anorexic experience. A “disingenuous justification,” a “byproduct” of behaviours, and a “convenient excuse”—the connection between patriarchy and anorexia, might actually mask and simplify a more complex process.

Before moving to a discussion of the call within feminist thought for more expansive approaches to anorexia, I want to first locate the difficulty—the incurred censorship—of accessing a sustained written engagement with anorexic and bulimic practices of embodiment. In 2009, the *New York Times* published Leslie Feinberg’s book review of Lori Halse Anderson’s *Wintergirls*, a fiction about anorexia and bulimia written for adolescents. Having been a *NY Times* bestseller for over six weeks, *Wintergirls* generated extensive dialogue about the politics of representing eating disorders. Feinberg writes in “Skin and Bone” that “while to my mind, there is nothing in *Wintergirls* that glamourizes the illness, for some, the mere mention of symptoms is problematic. ‘It’s about competition,’ an anorexic sufferer once explained to me. ‘Sometimes all it takes to get triggered is to read about someone who weighs less than you do.’” In her article, “The Troubling Allure of Eating Disorder Books,” Tara Parker-Pope agrees with Feinberg’s identification of the problematics of “triggering,” or “thinspiring” literature. She worries about the pernicious effect this literature could have on

young women; once in the hands of disorderly eaters, memoirs and fictions about anorexia could serve as “how-to” guides suggesting the “tips and tricks” required for a leading a “lifestyle” valuing self-starvation (often referred to as pro-ana).

Anderson is interviewed in a short pod-cast, also published by the *New York Times*, in which she is asked to speak to the potentially triggering effects of *Wintergirls*. Her response is illuminating:

When we submitted the book to the experts for the final reviews, that was the first question. Are there things in the book that will trigger unsuspecting people? And if so, what do we do about that? Their response was that we have a culture that glamorizes this. The Docs say Yes, the book is going to trigger people. Turning on the television triggers people—looking at billboards, using the computer, walking past a magazine rack. But the challenge they felt the book had met was to tell the entire story. There is nothing glamorous or lovely about an eating disorder. It’s horror.

Following Anderson’s interview and the conversations that surround the publication of *Wintergirls*, I am left to wonder what gets left out of texts like it. In order for publication to ensue, must a text dramatize anorexia’s horrors more forcefully than anything else? Has there been an uncompromising censorship of written expressions of anorexic pleasure? I agree with Anderson, that there is nothing glamorous or lovely about eating disorders. But I also disagree with her efforts to frame all of anorexic experience as horrifying, desperate, and destructive. There is pleasure, production, and propulsion operative in dis-ordered

eating, and we can explore this without glamorizing or romanticizing the devastating effects of illness. Our climate of reception to anorexia is such that pro-ana websites are routinely shut down by virtual-“hygienic” campaigns to save those who might be unsuspectingly infected—“triggered”—to a state of despair and disease. Our current fetishization of thin is not a glamorization of anorexia. In fact, the positive reception of thin women’s bodies that advertising continues to produce *depends upon* the muting, muddling, and maligning of anorexics desiring.

My point is that the contentious—but parallel, mutually enforcing—relationship feminist scholarship has forged between patriarchy, capitalism, and anorexia, can only make meaning out of the spent, wasted, socially-pathologized, disembodied, senseless, and objectified figure of anorexia. This figure of anorexia is connected to the objectified, thin, passive—and yet publicly lauded—woman modeled, fashioned, and carved out of consumer culture. But this relationship is erected by the exclusion of other expressions of disordered-eating: those omitted from published memoirs and fictions and erased from the internet because they express anorexia as active, desiring, relational, experimental, sensate, and productive. *This* capitulation of disorderly eating is more troubling, but it is the one feminism needs explore because it contends with the glamour, allure, hegemony, and hygiene of skinniness. It activates touching and feeling to replace the stillness of seeing and being-seen. It economizes and exhausts rather than wastes and declines. It is porous, mobile, and motive—not only reclusive, alienated, and hemmed-in. There is nothing “glamorous” or “lovely” about this visceral economy of anorexic expenditure, but there is something intricate,

affective, and experimental, and while such an uncovering of desiring/hungering in anorexia might run the risk of “triggering” people to attempt self-starvation, it also offers the potential to entice self-starvers to try something new. There are different sorts of “triggering” momentums we ought to consider.

Section III--Feminist Revisions; or The Call to Think Anorexia Affirmatively

This wave of scholarship begins with Claire Colebrook and Abigail Bray’s 1998 essay, “The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment.” Adopting a Deleuzian approach to ethics as “the ways in which bodies become, intersect, and affirm their existence” (36), they argue for feminist appraisals of eating disorders that move beyond critiques of the violence of representation which “intervenes to objectify, alienate, and dehumanize the body” (ibid 37), a notion most clearly articulated in feminist scholarship on eating disorders. On the contrary, they argue that:

The body is not a prior fullness, anteriority, or plenitude that is subsequently identified and organized through restricting representations. Representations are not negations imposed on otherwise fluid bodies. Body images are not stereotypes that produce human beings as complicit subjects. On the contrary, images, representations, and significations (as well as bodies) are aspects of ongoing practices of negotiation, reformation, and encounter. Neither the body nor the feminine can be located as the

innocent other of (patriarchal) representation...The body is a negotiation with images, but it is also a negotiation with pleasures, pains, other bodies, space, visibility, and medical practice; no single event in this field can act as a general ground for determining the status of the body...As long as representation is seen as a negation of corporeality, dualism can only ever be complicated and never overcome (ibid 38-45).

I am indebted to Colebrook and Bray's work in this essay. By acknowledging the cost—the high stakes for feminism— of coding the entire “edifice of representation” as phallogentric (ibid 49), Colebrook and Bray encourage a different mode of engagement with eating disorders. They propose that “to see dietetic regimen as a form of positive self-production might enable a thinking of the body in terms of the connections it makes, the intensities of its actions, and the dynamism of its practices” (ibid 63).

By considering anorexic practices of calorie counting, weighing, and measuring, Colebrook and Bray argue that an engagement with the metabolic, thermodynamic machinations of (all) bodies could yield a theory of anorexic self-formation rather than self-destruction (ibid 63,64). I like the Deleuzian clues dropped by Colebrook and Bray for re-mapping anorexia, and I am encouraged to follow them in my own work. “The Haunted Flesh” proves a paradigmatically shifting polemic against corporeal feminist acquiescence to mind-body, representation-matter dualisms. But this essay does not sustain the type of scholarship of anorexia it proposes. Colebrook and Bray provide no support for

the self-fashioning, thermo-dynamic, productive, desiring, and engaged self-starver who is the Deleuzian answer to the anorexic subject otherwise coded as diminished and lacking by phallogentric edifices of representation. Perhaps it is fair to suggest that this essay paves the way for future scholarship to uncover this more affirmative version of anorexia.

Just as I have been identifying the problems of social-constructivist feminist models of eating disorders, I also want to pose a critical problem of revisionist strategies begun by Colebrook and Bray. It is easier to call for paradigmatic shifts than it is to perform them; it is easier to engage in the deconstruction of approaches to anorexia than to build something else in their place. The active, affirmative, relational, and affective figure of disorderly eating is hard to find: not because she does not exist, but because her expressive bodily events continue to be thwarted. Reinterpreting anorexia is a critical process still enervated by the specular economy. Not only are we still dealing with censorship of pro-ana appeals to disorderly eating as a “lifestyle” choice, not only are publishers concerned about the ‘triggering’ effects of prose affirming the values and the “highs” of self-starvation, and not only are we dealing with anorexics who claim that the patriarchal logic of beauty is the most available (yet disingenuous) method to make their practices most universally meaningful—but we are still experimenting with conceptual vocabularies that can sustain the material properties of (female) desire, and we are especially ill-equipped to engage with (anorexic) desire, not contained by the dictates of familiar, hygienic, and healthful life.

Colebrook and Bray are not the only feminist thinkers to call for the re-imagining of anorexic embodiment. Josephine Brain's 2010 article, "Unsettling 'Body Image': Anorexic Body Narratives and the Materialization of the 'Body Imaginary,'" argues against feminist interpretations of anorexia as a disorder of the visual register, both causing and caused by a Cartesian mind-body split (Bordo, Wolf, Chernin, Malson, MacSween, Heywood, Nolan, Knapp). Brain charges this scholarship with an occularcentrism that perpetuates two limitations. It disallows for more generative understandings of anorexia. And it ignores that anorexic practice itself exposes the limitations of occularcentrism (Brain 152). Both Brain and Bray⁸ are in agreement that feminism's construal of anorexia's surfeit of symbolism (it simultaneously signifies dependence and control, sickness and glamour, hyperfemininity and androgyny, conformity and rebellion, passivity and protest, embodiment and transcendence, self-production and self-annihilation) leaves the anorexic "as little more than the unwitting reflector of her era's power relations" (Brain 153). While this socio-cultural feminist analysis hypothesizes that anorexia is caused by women's being hemmed-in by paradoxical cultural discourses, Brain argues that reading these analyses, "we begin to wonder whether we are talking about real women at all. While a self is always implied in these

⁸ Abigail Bray's 1996 article, "The Anorexic Body: Reading Disorders" is what I am here referring to. This essay begins with a formidable list of what anorexia has—and continues to—signify. Bray's thesis is that the shared pathologization of hysteria and anorexia is found in the perpetuating notion of women's uncritical and undiscerning consumption of media texts, social media, and images. In the 19th century, she argues, hysterical women's reading practices were similarly criticized as accountable for the generation of illness.

analyses, it is left largely unexamined as a sort of black box where cultural forces somehow collide and interact to produce unpredictable constellations of behaviour” (ibid 153). The reading of anorexia as “an overdetermined reaction to an *image* of the perfect female body...an effect of a phallogentric signifying economy, tends to reify a denigrated association of femininity with corporeality which actually reproduces rather than challenges the Cartesian dualism” (Brain 154). In place of these readings, Brain asks “how might anorexic subjectivity be thought in a way that attends to sociocultural exigencies without denying interoceptive and affective experience? How might it be possible to think anorexia beyond a single theory of ‘the body’, or indeed, a single theory of anorexia?” (ibid 155).

Brain’s solution is to study anorexic embodiment through a queer theoretical framework that invokes transgender studies. The anorexic body, she argues, is “far from ‘pathological’ or ‘disembodied,’ [but] testifies to an ‘acting out’ of gender’s unlivability precisely in order to go on living” (Brain 164). Specifically, she brings Jay Prosser’s borrowed notion of the “skin ego” to bear on interpretations of eating disorders that have been otherwise wholly invested in visual cartographies of the body. Brain-through-Prosser proposes that perhaps anorexic experience “derives not so much from the perception of the body (an ‘external perception’), that is, from what can be seen, but from the *bodily sensations* that stem from its touching—touching here in both an active and passive sense—(an ‘internal perception’) (Prosser qt.in Brain, 159). Brain’s theory of disorderly eating as performance of gender’s “unlivability precisely to go on

living” is rich, as is her invocation of anorexic sensing/feeling through haptic awareness rather than a punitive obsession with the overdetermined “body image.”

I agree with these critical shifts, and I too see promise in these approaches to anorexic embodiment that can account for the beginnings of an articulation of anorexic desire. Brain’s analysis, however, falls short precisely where Colebrook and Bray’s does: there is no sustenance for these promising new approaches to anorexic bodies-in-action-relation. The theoretical groundwork is laid out, mapped, and interrogated, but then where is this new, this different, this desiring anorexic subject? Where is the anorexic practice to measure and test these exciting methodologies?⁹ This absence is a very real problem in feminist revisions of anorexia that espouse the importance of material practice, bodily expression, and living for vital forms of experimentation. A final note on Brain’s essay before moving on is that I am on board with her demonstration of the reaches of anorexia beyond feminist theory, and I find her proposal of a queer-anorexic theoretical constellation both exciting and necessary. However, my challenge to Brain’s thinking is that one need not look beyond feminist philosophy to find sustained and sustainable theories of sensing-through-touching. Why not employ Irigaray’s philosophy of touch instead of Prosser’s? My point is that challenges to the feminist orthodoxy of anorexia are more palatable when they can engage with a

⁹ Another way of pointing to this absence is to suggest that these feminist revisions are so weighted toward critique, that they forget the clinic altogether. Clinical practitioners perform case studies, and Deleuze’s model of symptomatology intuitively balances between these wrongfully discordant poles.

rich history of ideas extending from feminist philosophy, especially since feminist theoretical traditions continue to produce many conceptual vocabularies, morphologies, or morpho-logics for thinking through the articulations of affective sense events. We can work beyond considerations of gender while still fueled by feminism.¹⁰

Shifting from Colebrook, Bray, and Brain, I wish to consider the work of Sigal Gooldin and Megan Warin. Gooldin identifies her research at a crossroads between qualitative anthropology and cultural anthropology, and Warin is a social anthropologist. My own frustration with the absence of sustained engagements with the living practices occasioned by disordered eating in revisionist feminist scholarship is shared by both Gooldin and Warin. As social anthropologists, their theories about anorexia require substantiating case studies, and show some promise of actually articulating some of the behaviors, expressions, and bodily events that prolong women's commitments to disorderly eating. In her 2008 article, "Being Anorexic: Hunger, Subjectivity, and Embodied Morality," Gooldin notes that the dilemma of pop-feminist discourses about anorexia is that its understood remedy:

like [its] etiological roots...lies in the consumption of images.

Although feminist conceptualizations of anorexia are heterogeneous in their focus and emphasize different aspects connecting anorexia and culture—the fundamental notion that seems to have infiltrated into popular discourses is that the

¹⁰ Chapter 3 sustains this engagement with Irigaray.

etiology of anorexia is triggered by the cultural imaginary of consumerism, and that the ‘cult of thinness’ plays a crucial role in the onset of anorexia. (Gooldin 276).

Beyond the obvious impasse of a visual economy which can be both the cause of eating disorders (glamorizing skinny women) and their solution (validating healthy women’s bodies and body images), Gooldin identifies three critical problems with populist and feminist readings of our culture of anorexia. First, “the focus on visual images and representations of the slim body overlooks distinct meanings that are associated with different acts, memories, motivations, and imaginations involved with being (some)body” (Gooldin 278). Second, the conceptualization of anorexia that “draws upon mediated accounts of slim bodies (by turning to psychotherapists’ accounts, commercial ads, or other sources), reproduces the politics of discursive power while downplaying agentic and embodied aspects of the anorexic self” (Gooldin 278). And finally, from the purview of medical anthropology, “although we know a lot about anorexia, we know very little about anorexics,” about the “lived experiences of anorexic women anchored in the body” (ibid 278).

As a proposed solution to these three problems, Gooldin shifts the emphasis away from cultural critiques of the aetiologies of anorexia, instead anchoring her discussion in phenomenological accounts of embodied anorexia: in questions addressing “the emic constructions of having an anorexic body and the embodied process of being anorexic” (Gooldin 279). According to Gooldin, anthropological studies can lend “analytical and methodological tools for exploring the concrete

ways in which anorexics use their hunger, and the cultural webs of significations in which the anorexic's hunger is entangled" (ibid 281). In many ways, Gooldin's work picks up where Colebrook's, Bray's, and Brain's leaves off. Part of this can be allotted to her different disciplinary footing (as an anthropologist), but Gooldin sees her analysis through, builds, demonstrates, and substantiates her interpretations (via case studies, interviews, and quoted passages) in ways that are just as possible—and necessary—for feminist scholars trained in close reading practices.

While I agree with Gooldin's critique and laud her case-study approach, I do not follow her work through to its conclusions. What ensues is a lengthy passage reproduced by Gooldin, and written by a hospitalized anorexic patient retroactively reflecting on her experiences:

Fat is a physical evidence for the content maintenance of affluent seasons, when you have that to store. But a finger inspecting for slenderness, which is usually hidden under large clothes, tells the observer a completely different story. Whether it is 'the inspected' gazing at herself or, whether it is an outsider...the woman herself may feel she is winning. She may touch the skeletal frame which holds together the soft contents of her internal organs, and report that what she left with is exactly what makes her feel content, what is essential for her to just about exist in the real world...Overflow for me is something that makes you lumpish and tired, something that causes fast wearing. *You* are sleepy and I'm awake, and my

senses are sharp. I may be hungry, but I'm using the feelings aroused by this hunger in order to become a better hunter in those sides of life that you will never get to know" (Lichtman qtd.in Gooldin, 281).

I will return to this passage again in chapters 3, 4, and 5, because it begs to be re-read in critical terms that can assess self-starvation as an engagement with seasonally-appropriate momentums for storing, hibernating, moving, hunting, gathering, wandering, and hungering, all of which I pursue.

Gooldin, however, reads this passage as evidence of the anorexic's desire for "victory" over herself and others. Here, "she defies the judgmental gaze of an army of experts and thus creates an alternative narrative of victory, strength, authenticity, will, and power. These [recurrent] themes are the stuff of which a 'heroic self' is made" (Gooldin 281). For Gooldin, this "moral discourse" of transcendence, self-mastery, willpower, and fate encapsulated by the speaker's metaphor of "the hunter," "the heroic, risk-taking, active agent...who is traditionally a male actor, courageously confronting those (risky) sides of life" (ibid 288), speaks to the morally charged anorexic experience of hunger (ibid 289, 291). Gooldin's analysis concludes where Leslie Heywood's thesis of modernist ethos of anorexic transcendence (discussion to follow in chapter 1) begins. Gooldin refigures anorexia as an attempt to wear the emperor's clothing: to achieve mastery over the physical body through a victorious route to masculine transcendence. My hope is to disarticulate these "moral," "heroic," "victorious" metaphors of self-starvation in relation to modernist literature.

Gooldin is correct to note the competitive impulses expressed in the passage above: the writer does invoke the notion of winning, and outlasting her perceived observers. But there is so much more involved. Subscribing all of hunting to a heroic process of overtaking, winning, and dominating (man defeating nature) mistakes the other acts/impulses involved. Hunting also involves a process of traveling, wandering, salvaging, economizing, connecting, following, feeling, feeding, starving, mapping, sustaining, subsisting, storing, exploring, exhausting, becoming: all affects that seem more appropriate to the symptomatological interventions of the case studies I will perform throughout my dissertation. The above-quoted passage speaks just as much to exploratory, material, and haptic encounters—economies of salvaging and extending present in disorderly eating as it does to the mind's victorious dominion over the body. Gooldin's anthropological intervention in feminist critiques of the enculturation and encoding of anorexia is useful. Her methodology sustains an engagement with living, hungering anorexics, which is notably and problematically absent from most feminist scholarship, even if her close readings lead anorexia back to the same place: the victory of masculinist impulses over feminine embodiment.

Megan Warin, is another social anthropologist anxious to revise earlier feminist figurations of anorexic culture. She has published widely on the topic: "Miasmatic Calories and Saturating Fats: Fear of Contamination in Anorexia" (2003), "Primitivizing Anorexia: The Irresistible Spectacle of Not Eating" (2004), and "Reconfiguring Relatedness in Anorexia" (2006), and *Abject Relations* (2010). Drawing on Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection and Mary Douglas's

concept of dirt/pollution as matter out-of-place, Warin's work addresses what she sees as a critical void in scholarship on anorexia: an exploration of the ways in which food is talked about, experienced, described, and approached by people with anorexia ("Miasmatic Calories," 78). By bringing the material experiences forged by disordered-eating to the forefront, Warin points to "much of what is lost in a textual reading of the [anorexic] body—that is the smells, tastes, textures, and sensations that my fieldwork was redolent with. At the heart of people's experiences was the embodied sentience of anorexia: the greasy texture of butter on the tongue, wincing from nausea at the very sight of food, and experiencing hunger as a searing pull on an already empty stomach" (ibid 78). In her critique of the disembodied languages of structuralism and discursivity, Warin attempts to convey experiences of anorexia not only communicated through words, but "simultaneously embodied and performed. I observed the ways in which arms and legs were held close to the body, limbs often moved as if exercising, and faces and bodies contorted at the suggestion of certain foods" (ibid 80). Focusing on the "changing embodied experiences of anorexia, of the heaviness of aching limbs, the tingling of flesh, the bloating of stomachs, and the sensations of food and fluids traveling through bodies" ("Primitivizing Anorexia" 98), Warin's work challenges thinness as the definitive bodily marker of anorexia" (ibid 98) and pre-empt the privileging of the visual spectacle of anorexia emphasized in most scholarship on the topic.

Warin's ethnographic observations allow her to focus on the bodily sensations so crucial to anorexic practice without making recourse to explanations

of the aetiologies of anorexia. She neither makes mention of the causes of disordered-eating, nor the metaphoric reverberations of anorexic bodies, but instead follows the affective momentums of anorexic desire, disgust, pleasure, and fear. Said differently, Warin's analysis engages with what anorexic bodies do rather than what anorexia as a state of illness, metaphor, paradox, protest, or pathology means. Connected to the physical movements of disorderly eating, Warin asserts that anorexia can provide people with "a whole new set of social relations...Individually and collectively, people entered into a relationship with anorexia, which in turn tempered their relationships with themselves and their everyday worlds" ("Reconfiguring Relatedness, 43).

In Warin's hands, anorexia manifests as immanence: "participants did not say 'I am anorexic'—rather their identity was articulated through shifting notions of belonging...Thinking about belonging entails, then, thinking about relations of proximity and movement. One wishes to belong or not belong—one moves away from something in order to cease to belong. It is a constant process of becoming and unbecoming" (ibid 45). Contradicting critical impulses to either efface affirmative versions of anorexia completely, or to assume that desiring anorexia can only be a negative experience, Warin asserts that according to her fieldwork, anorexic "desire was also experienced as a series of practices that produced, connected, separated, and constituted social relations" (ibid 47).

I am drawn to the results of Warin's ethnographic methodology because she yields a more capacious version of anorexia than the typically discursive methodologies of earlier feminist scholarship on the topic. Passages and

observations arising from her fieldwork (along with Gooldin's) will continue to be important to my discussion in the following chapters. For now, I wish to offer up Warin's work as a valid alternative. Building sites of engagement beyond Colebrook, Bray, and Brain, Warin repeatedly performs case studies to substantiate her critiques of the limitations of social-constructivist or "corporeal" feminist work on anorexia; she lets the practical, constructive, and epistemological iterations of disordered eating work as both critical *and* clinical interventions in dominant appraisals of anorexia. In short, she builds something new in place of discursive analyses of eating disorders. And unlike the conclusions of Gooldin's ethnographic method, Warin's does not aim to reterritorialize, and re-signify anorexic experience as metaphor (regardless of whether not these metaphors are more agentic and affirmative).

Section IV—Methodology

Along with Claire Colebrook, Abigail Bray, Josephine Brain, Sigal Gooldin, and Megan Warin (as well as Elizabeth Wilson and Branka Arsic whose work I return to throughout my project), this dissertation builds on feminist scholarship conducted on eating disorders in the past 30 years. By following a material feminist methodology, I participate in understanding the cultural and literary forms produced by disorderly eating. But instead of understanding anorexia and bulimia as unfoldings (mimetic performances, discursive inscriptions) of cultural forms shaping and gendering bodies, I am considering the acts, desires, pleasures,

exigencies, and movements (the affects) of anorexic and bulimic bodies as a way of understanding cultural and literary forces beginning with the material. Material feminisms compel my critical re-mapping of dis-ordered eating.¹¹ The limitations of feminist hermeneutics of eating disorders have, to my mind, been enervated by a negligence of material bodies in favor of discursive constructions of embodiment. This is not to say that matter is ever pre-discursive or outside of discourse, but material feminists demonstrate, often quite creatively, that what we need is a material-discursive. It is not simply that discourse alters the properties of matter, but that matter activates and alters discourse.

¹¹ My understanding of the distinction between material feminisms and Marxist feminisms is that while the latter explores materiality tied to questions of gender, labor, ideology, and class, the former is more connected to a *post-post* structuralist momentum to intervene in the ways that discussions of language, corporeality, discursivity, and representation have eclipsed discussions of matter in feminist scholarship. And furthermore, there is a post-humanist bent to material feminist scholarship that is not necessarily shared by Marxist feminist approaches. However, Claire Colebrook's article, "On Not Becoming Man: The Materialist Politics of Unactualized Potential" in *Material Feminisms* connects Marxist materialism and material feminisms. She suggests that the Marxist concept of dialectical materialism "insists upon the dynamism of matter: it is because we must live as bodily beings that we are required to work, so the very relation to being will be structured by the ways in which our work is structured" (61). Marxists affirm the importance of bodily life: intervening in matter-mind divides by bringing to the forefront monism (matter and spirit as indistinct) and vitalism (neither matter nor spirit are simply being, but always productive becoming) (ibid 64). Following Colebrook, both Marxist and material feminists identify and criticize a similar problem: that deeming women "mired in material embodiment" assumes that matter is "devoid of dynamism," and that confronting the border "between mind and matter deemed the effect of prior linguistic or social production" erroneously assumes language is a "fixed and inhuman grid imposed upon life, rather than a living force" (ibid 64).

Karen Barad's work in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* scripts a material feminist call to paradigmatically shift what she exposes as the representationalist bent of many post-structuralist feminisms: "Language has been granted too much power," she argues:

the linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretive turn, the cultural turn: it seems that at every turn lately every 'thing'—even materiality—is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation....Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that doesn't seem to matter anymore is matter. (Barad 132).

I would like to situate Barad's rallying call to embrace matter—even and especially as the "specter of essentialism continues to haunt feminism" (Alaimo and Hekman 17)—as an invitation to explore anorexia's material forces, its affects. By building on social-constructivist feminist leanings (what Claire Colebrook and Abigail Bray call 'corporeal feminisms') unilaterally focused on the linguistic, discursive, cultural, and representational aggregates around which understandings of female embodiment have been formulated, Barad offers a conceptual shift away from an analysis of signification toward an examination of processes of materialization. What Foucault's analysis of technologies of subjection, discourse, and governmentality (and Butler's elaboration of these

accounts into her theory of performativity) forecloses and forestalls, according to Barad, “is an understanding of precisely *how* discursive practices produce material bodies...It would seem that any robust theory of the materialization of bodies would necessarily take account of *how the body’s materiality*—for example, its anatomy and physiology—*and other material forces actively matter to the processes of materialization*” (italics in original, Barad 127). Basing her critique on Foucault’s work leading up to the end of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Barad writes that “for all Foucault’s emphasis on the political anatomy of disciplinary power, he fails to offer an account of the body’s historicity in which its very materiality plays an *active* role in the workings of power” (Barad 128).

I will take up Foucault’s final two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* in a moment, because while I find Barad’s insights invaluable, I find that she stops short at the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* in fact speak emphatically to biology, anatomy, and physiology as they “matter directly to the processes of materialization.” Barad’s dispute is more accurately an issue with corporeal feminist scholarship. Eating disorders illuminate this tendency. Foucault’s influence is widely felt in corporeal feminist critiques of the phallogocentric institutions producing, punishing, and condemning female subjects by prolonging patriarchal repudiation of women’s bodies. Suzie Orbach (1979), Kim Chernin (1983), Marilyn Lawrence (1984),

Elaine Showalter (1985), and Susan Bordo (1988) inform a body of feminist scholarship on eating disorders that focuses on society's construction of docile female subjects. Here Foucault's work on the normalizing gaze of medical, psychiatric, clinical, and disciplinary institutions is used to explain the objectification of women's bodies: having internalized this pernicious gaze, anorexic women are perversely mimetic of contemporary bodily self-surveillance practices (Eckerman 11,12).

Taking disciplined "healthism" to the extreme, anorexics are viewed as paradoxically attempting to protest the discursive inscription of women's bodies, while still performatively acquiescing to punitive patriarchal regimes. Eating disorders are interpreted by this feminist scholarship as a cultural pathology—not an individual pathology—symptomatic of a misogynist culture increasingly afraid of women's growing social, political, and physical power. As Saukko argued about Hilde Bruch's psychiatric case reports on anorexia, I would suggest that this body of feminist scholarship continues to construe the common cultural sense (the "of courses") of anorexia: of course women starve because they hate themselves and their bodies; of course women starve to get rid of the thing that gives them away as female; of course women starve in an attempt to be absolutely in control of their bodies, what are otherwise subjected to severe surveillance and specular regimentation from the outside in; of course women's self-starvation is graphic reification of the circulating discourses producing femininity. But I want to

remain suspicious of all of these “of courses”—at least distanced enough to acknowledge what they leave unexplained. What has become the feminist canon of eating disorder scholarship leaves relatively untouched the more agentic and active body of Foucault’s latter two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* where he explores more creative processes of material (and ethical) self-cultivation. Foucault’s work in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* is invested in the construal of an ethics distanced from morality, but not from materiality.

Barad’s material feminist call invites different questions about anorexia. How, specifically, anatomically, biologically, physiologically, do anorexic women embody patriarchal discourses? How—bodily speaking—do they internalize and ingest the panoptical gaze? Do the affects of which hungry bodies are capable somehow make them less active or agentic? Do the passions and pleasures of anorexics alter the kinetic operations of bodies? Does the empty body respond differently to its environment? Does starving change feeling and moving? How does antiperistalsis reconfigure bodily patterns of intra-action? My dissertation’s exploration of anorexic affect offers possible answers to each of these questions, usually by borrowing more heavily from Deleuze’s philosophy than Foucault’s. While the material feminist thinkers I am most indebted to (Barad, Braidotti, Colebrook, Grosz, Irigaray, Haraway, Wilson) travel on more Deleuzian frequencies, I also find promise in Foucault’s consideration of ethico-aesthetic self-cultivation.

Deleuze situates agency as both pre-subjective and de-subjectifying, in what he calls events of pre-individual singularities, or haecceities. Deleuze does not deny the existence of a subject. His morphological apparatus for conceptualizing—and experimenting with—becoming(s) imagines possibilities for transmuting what we have come to call the subject. Deleuze’s philosophy attests to the myriad ways that the subject has become a dominant organizing principle for most operations of conceiving. But power, for Deleuze, is not only what actualizes a subject as accountable to forces of domination, institutionalization, exploitation, inscription—to the interpellative violences of everyday life. Power also functions at a microcosmic or micropolitical level, which is to say that being is impossible without becoming. For Deleuze, any question of agency requires that we go back to the body “not as an organism or entity in itself, but as a system, or a series of open-ended systems, functioning within other huge systems it cannot control, through which it can access and acquire its abilities and capacities” (Grosz *Nick of Time*, 3). Channelling Elizabeth Grosz, I am suggesting that Deleuze provides tools to invent anew “the concepts of nature, matter, and life,” tools for beginning to understand “what is in the *nature* of bodies, in biological evolution, that opens them up to cultural and conceptual evolution” (ibid 2).

The point I want to get to is that some of Foucault’s work in the latter two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* can be another—and at times, a

complimentary tool to Deleuze—for considering not only the ways that various configurations of institutionalized power inscribe bodies, and produce subjects. I would suggest that Foucault’s work can also function along with material feminist insistences on revitalizing our understanding of bodily agency as it acts both with and against socio-cultural, political, and economic discourses. In other words, I am suggesting that in very different ways, both Deleuze and Foucault consider the possibility of materially agentic, extensive and intensive movement: that bodies move culture, just as culture moves bodies.¹² Foucault begins *The Use of Pleasure* by noting that this is “not a study of conceptions, but of practices” (5). Confronting Greek philosophical texts, Foucault maps morphing compositional sites of bodily, intellectual, sexual, digestive, environmental economic, spiritual, and political pleasures.

My focus will be on his discussion of Greek dietetics as a somatechné of self-construction. Foucault defines “akseisis” as “an exercise of oneself in the

¹² I know that the material exertions of bodies end up in very different places for Deleuze and Foucault. I discuss Deleuze’s account of exhaustion in Chapter 4 (and it is the notion that lurks in my close readings performed throughout this dissertation). For now, I want to say that exhaustion is fabulation: it creates a coming people, a coming body, a coming concept, a coming community as an involutory form detached from linear progressions. In short, following Deleuze, material *epuisements* can be prolonged systems of invention/creation. Foucault is far less optimistic. The material exigencies he describes in *The Use of Pleasure*, and *The Care of the Self* are ultimately quelled moments of agentic arousal. The ethico-aesthetic, digestively collaborative Greek subject ends up as the biopolitical-subject-in-training. That said, I do think that *in medias res* can be a useful place to take up temporary residence when dealing with philosophy.

activity of thought” (9), and later suggests that Greek philosophy involved very few instances specifying askesis as an exercise in self control (74), but instead as a form of practical training, or endurance whose “main objective was to define the use of pleasures—which conditions were favorable, which practice was recommended, which rarefaction was necessary—in terms of a certain way of caring for one’s body” (97). Dietetic preoccupations, he argues, replaced therapeutic ones:

dietetics required what might be called a ‘serial attention’; that is, an attention to sequences: activities were not simply good or bad in themselves; their value was determined in part by those that preceded them or those that followed, and the same thing (a certain food, a type of exercise; a hot or cold bath) would be recommended or advised against according to whether one had engaged in or was about to engage in such or such other activity (the practices that followed, one after the other, ought to counterbalance one another in their effects)...The practice of regimen also implied a ‘circumstantial’ vigilance, a sharply focused yet wide-ranging attention that must be directed toward the external world, its elements, its sensations: the climate, of course, the seasons, the hours of the day, the degree of humidity and dryness; of heat or cold, the winds, the characteristic features of a region, the layout of

a city...[The goal was to] modulate [a] way of living according to all these variables (106).

The aesthetics of existence or somatic techniques occasioned by these dietetic protocols, are significant for Foucault because the individual does not employ them passively (107). Rather, “it was a whole manner of forming oneself as a subject who had the proper, necessary, and sufficient concern for his body...it defined a circumstantial strategy involving the body and the elements that surrounded it” (108).

In Chapter 1, I take up Foucault’s dietetic uses of pleasure once again in relation to Deleuze’s notion of “symptomatology.” In a Nietzschean tradition, Foucault writes of the philosopher-physician of Greek culture, and in conversation with Deleuze’s project, he suggests that the Greek practice of dietetics was more creative and experimental exercise than proscriptive apparatus. Patients did not seek out the advice of doctors to learn what to do differently, or to maintain their bodies in line with a “dominant” or “moral” health because it was impossible to determine in advance “and for everyone, the rhythm of an activity that engaged an interplay of qualities—dryness, heat, moisture, cold—between the body and its milieu” (114). I want to ask how Foucault’s description of using pleasures more-and-less amply to compose a capacious physical body in relation to material forces that exceed and produce it, might have to do with dis-ordered eating? First, contrary to Barad’s charge that Foucault’s work never explores the ways that the

biological and historical are bound together (Barad 127), it would seem that the passages above acknowledge precisely *how* bodies come to matter. The ethico-aesthetic exercise of dietetic existence is exactly a point of intersection and negotiation between productive material forces: the individual's body, the time of day/month/year, external and internal heat (thermodynamics), the body's history of activity, sensory events that precede and proceed digestion, variable levels of moisture and dryness, climate, landscape, architecture, and geography. Foucault produces an exhaustive series of dietetic variables—he describes what Deleuze and Guattari would call an associated milieu—to depict the body's material imbrication in forces that intra-act with bodies.

Second, Foucault's discussion of dietetics in both *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* is concerned with the aesthetic and ethical exercise of power beginning with the body's capacity to cultivate its pleasures and sensations *in relation* to its milieu. Differently put, this body is not yet docile, but instead derives its power in part from how, what, where, and when it ingests. Foucault's use of the term "pleasure" instead of "desire" offers a generative point of intersection with Deleuze and Guattari's project in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Their schizo-analytical method attempts to rescue the *acts* of desiring (desiring-production, desiring-assemblages) from a psychoanalytic *state* of desire. However, Foucault's genealogical method explores the historical, cultural, philosophical, and ideological moments when what would have been considered

pleasures (or *aphrodisia*)—non pre-determined relations to sensations through which the subject perpetually navigated—sequentially shifted to desire: a more fixed, morally intuited and instituted set of regulations put in place to interpellate subjects while controlling pleasures. The distinction Foucault maps between pleasure and desire is a distinction between ethics and morality: between conative bodies producing cultural forms and docile bodies produced by cultural forms.

To come back to Barad's critique of post-structuralist feminist scholarship, I would suggest that she identifies a critical quagmire in studies of eating disorders: that the only thing that has not mattered to these studies is matter itself. Because anorexia and bulimia have been deemed attempts to leave the body altogether, very few scholars have thought through the complex materialities of disorderly eating. Anorexics eat. And move. And feel. And extend. And encounter. And engage. And compose. And relate. These points should be absolutely obvious, and yet they continue to escape the "common sense" observances—the "of courses"—of anorexia. My dissertation follows Barad's critique of representationalism by proposing alternate critical methods of mapping dis-ordered eating. While my methodology navigates from Deleuze, to Foucault, to Barad, to Wilson, to Colebrook, to Irigaray, to Massumi, to Spinoza, to Weil, Hornbacher, to Beckett, to Kafka, I use each text as a vehicle for exploring the material forces of self-starvation foreclosed by feminist discussions anticipating anorexic transcendence, morality, masculinity, and disembodiment.

Feminist scholarship on eating disorders has been instrumental in acknowledging that acts of food refusal take place within a larger cultural field of production and exploitation. Since dieting often leads to more restrictive self-starving behaviors, and since anorexic women often articulate the desire to be thin as the propelling force of their food refusal, social-constructivist and corporeal feminist theories have played a crucial role in bringing anorexia out of the clinic; which is to say, in compelling understandings that eating disorders are not simply the pathological behaviors of individuals at a socio-cultural remove, but rather, are part of a larger socio-cultural dis-ease of representation, femininity, female sexuality, and female embodiment. It is my argument that feminist readings deeming eating disorders only socially-, culturally-, linguistically-, discursively- and representationally-bound syndromes of capitalism and patriarchy, are limited by their refutations of the active, affirmative, and productive material coordinates of anorexic bodies. My project's aim is to bring together trans-disciplinary readings of disordered eating, especially those conducted from angles under-examined by feminisms. As a humanities-based feminist scholar, my hope is to expose the limitations and assumptions of early feminist scholarship on eating disorders while mapping a new critical trajectory for disorderly eating, *and* filling each point of this map with substantive case studies. It is not enough to simply criticize the work of others; I think that the more difficult (and immediate) task of feminist scholars of anorexia is to build something new how we might differently

follow the intensities and exigencies of anorexics and bulimics.

While Barad's work makes no mention of disordered eating, it proposes a valuable first step in navigating anorexia and bulimia otherwise (and elsewhere). Rather than inciting a search for the hidden meanings, aetiologies, and significations of anorexia, we might instead ask how do anorexic bodies act? What energies, milieus, and somatechné are actualized in the process of disordered digestion? How do the body's surfaces and faculties change in the course of self-starvation? How are the spaces surrounding bodies differently traversed through practices of disorderly eating? "Intra-action," for Barad, is the material force of agency: agency as a series of enactments rather than a quality, attribute, or possession of a subject (*Meeting* 178). Understanding Intra-action, then, depends on a Spinozist—and, to a certain extent, Foucauldian—reworking of subjectivity. Subjects do not pre-exist their acts. Rather, subjectivity can only be understood as the iterative play of practices, affects, and actions. Making space for the possibility of material agency—or what she names "iterative intra-activity" to build upon Judith Butler's notion of "iterative citationality"—Barad situates the problem in representationalist feminist (and scientific) thinking in a number of places: 1) in the collapsing of discourse and language, so that in some cases, the two have become synonymous, granting language far too much power (Barad 137); 2) in the under-development of posthumanist approaches calling into question the given-ness of differential categories of "human" and "nonhuman"

(ibid 126); 3) in the relative ease with which Western philosophy has followed the Cartesian “cut,” separating subject from object and mind from body, while privileging the former in each equation¹³ (ibid 133); 4) in the ascription of matter to the realm of the passive and immutable, awaiting signification and completion from discourse, history, and culture (ibid 139); 5) and in the unnecessary distancing between humanities and scientific scholarship that has meant that theories of the materialization of bodies have not taken account of the body’s materiality (of its biology, anatomy and physiology) (ibid 127).

¹³ The philosophers and thinkers I take up throughout my dissertation are most useful to me because they collaboratively confront the privileging of the mind at the expense of the body. In most cases, they share a desire to irrigate what has come to be called the Cartesian divide. In his second meditation, along with “The Principles of Philosophy,” Descartes proposes a distinction between the mind and the body: “between a thinking or corporeal thing” (135). The senses (what he calls ‘extensions’) only serve to lead to thinking, once perceived and processed by the mind. Descartes writes that “there is nothing really existing apart from our thought, we clearly perceive that neither extension, nor figure, nor local motion, nor anything similar that can be attributed to body, pertains to our nature, and nothing save thought alone” (ibid). The body’s extensions, for Descartes, can only lead to perception once the mind can grasp them. The distinction between mind and body seems to present a parallel for Descartes in the distinction between words and things. We attend to words rather than things, he argues, because “we attach all our conceptions to words by which to express them, and comit to memory our thoughts in connection with these terms...and find it more easy to recall the words than the things signified by them” (ibid 172). And finally, Descartes thoughts on appetite are perhaps relevant here. He proposes that “natural appetites, such as hunger, thirst, and the others, are...sensations excited in the mind by means of the nerves of the stomach, fauces, and other parts, and are entirely different from the will which we have to eat, drink [and do all that which we think proper for the conservation of our body] (parentheses in original, ibid 197). In other words, bodily appetites, and those of the will are separate, with the will empowering itself to perform the body’s conservation, or to ensure its health.

Barad's list invites a challenge. The goal of my dissertation is to respond to this challenge. My project is an attempt to exhaust the possible of what anorexia and bulimia might engage. Each chapter develops and refines another way to approach, extend, and expand the conceptual vocabularies currently available for dis-ordered eating. My methodology perpetually recapitulates what I interpret as the intensities and affects of anorexia. Said differently, I am demonstrating how dis-ordered eating functions on two levels: by orchestrating philosophies that are already in concert with anorexic and bulimic modalities, I am constantly connecting and affirming rather than interpreting and critiquing. If anorexics often express a desire to access other-than-human bodily pleasures and momentums, then we need to explore anorexia with philosophies that take the non-human into account. If bulimics attempt to feel beside and beyond themselves, then we need to meet bulimia with theories that can extend agency outside of the parameters of the subject. And in a complimentary sense, if literature develops and invents symptomatologies of productive iterations of self-starvation, then we need to place these in dialogue with contemporary dis-ordered eaters. This is a system of mapping anorexia-in-relation.

Section V--Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1, "A Symptomatological Study: the Shared 'Health' of Modernism and

Anorexia,” begins with Leslie Heywood’s conception of “anorexic logic.” This is a point of departure for my project because it is an attempt to view modernist literature’s sites of composition with an anorexic ethos of transcendence. I suggest that perhaps it is not so much that modernist literature abjects female “mass,” feminine “masses,” and material bodies, but that to critically/clinically bring matter to matter, we must approach the active engagements of self-starving bodies, in art as in life. My thesis for this chapter is that self-starvation can be approached as an active material engagement with a world of stimulus that extends beyond a visual and representational axis of signification. Careful not to aggrandize anorexic practice as a form of heightened artistic exploration, I suggest that part of breathing new critical life into scholarship on eating disorders means exhausting the possible by critically distancing from meta-narratives about the anorexic impulses (what feminist, Leslie Heywood calls ‘anorexic logic’) governing our world of images and ideas about female embodiment. Instead, I argue that a focus on the material propensities constitutive of dis-ordered eating will move us toward a conceptual vocabulary capable of accounting for what anorexic bodies can do.

This chapter’s second section explores Simone Weil’s philosophy of self-starvation in conversation with Chris Kraus’s postmodern fiction, *Aliens and Anorexia*. Kraus confronts the differential allowances made for illness across gendered lines. *Aliens and Anorexia* opens a crucial through-line for my dissertation, a clue that approaching dis-ordered eating more inventively might require and justify pursuing male literary figures of self-starvation, those still

under-explored by feminist scholarship on anorexia. Kraus re-imagines Weil as hyper-porous and over-saturated with content (in midst of a perpetual panic of altruism) where she cannot keep the world out. However, I re-imagine Weil as a dis-ordered eater, intensifying the voids of hunger, and espousing a nomadic philosophy of uprooting, traversing, and deterritorializing—those acts by virtue of which she could maintain her hunger. Instead of trying to recuperate Weil’s work and life from her illness (as Kraus does), my analysis is more invested in asking how Weil’s philosophies of disorderly eating can expand studies of anorexia.

Moving from Weil, I point to some of the ways her philosophy of anorexic decreation could anticipate Deleuzian becomings. Here I detail Deleuze’s literary clinic, a mode of literary scholarship that seeks not what a text means, but instead what a text does, particularly how its momentums materialize extra-textually. Rather than a diagnostic tool or therapeutic model, Deleuze argues that literature expresses—and invents—clusters of symptoms not yet interpreted under medical or psychiatric rubrics, and therefore not yet formulated into distinct “diseases,” “neuroses,” or “disorders.” This symptomatological literary enterprise invites the critic to think through the productive momentums, and therefore ‘healthful,’ forces of acts that might otherwise be reduced to pathologies and neuroses. By applying Deleuze’s literary clinical/critical method, this section revisits dis-ordered eating as a set of practices, acts, and engagements that might—even if only fleetingly—equip individuals (and collectives) with the capacity to mobilize connections that remain un-explored in scholarship on eating disorders.

Chapter 2, “Transposing the Table: Anorexic Currencies in Melville and

Kafka,” applies the methodology of Chapter 1 by performing two related symptomatological case studies. The first confronts Herman Melville’s *Bartleby, the Scrivener*. Bartleby has been enthusiastically pursued by contemporary philosophers: for his formulaic invention of a logic of preference that undermines language as a whole (Deleuze and Guattari), for the potentiality maintained in his radical passivity (Agamben), and for his representation of the ethical aporia of responsibility (Derrida). Bartleby’s anorexia has been given philosophical substance; his food refusal has been a decidedly productive practice for the history of ideas, and yet no connection is made by these philosophers between Bartleby’s expediciencies and his anorexia. My discussion of Bartleby’s self-starvation is concerned with his disruption of the signifying systems surrounding him. Bartleby’s refusals are productive; they mobilize the actors, spaces, and economies around him, but his hunger still fails to make meaning in a way that Bartleby’s interlocutor (the lawyer/narrator) can accept. Melville’s contribution to studies of disorderly eating, I argue, is to expose the attorney’s relentless attempts to identify, diagnose, and make Bartleby’s fast signify something. But his hunger means nothing, it simply activates other forms of sensory arousal: for the office, for Wall Street’s economy, and for the law.

From *Bartleby*, I move to Kafka, another self-starver of the 20th century who invented a nuanced literary clinic involved with the processes of hungering, wandering, self-starving, and becoming. Kafka’s own diaries documenting his “dieting in all directions” are just as provocative as the hunger artist’s often quoted inability to find the food he was looking for. While many critics have

approached Kafka's connection between starvation and art as an aesthetics of hunger that speaks to anorexic desire to leave the body, I take up "The Metamorphosis"'s Gregor Samsa. Unconcerned with *why* Gregor starves, I consider the material intensities fueled by his hunger. Far from leaving his body behind, Gregor's metamorphosis necessitates his attempts to move his body differently, to see-through-feeling, to economize and traverse his surrounding space with different points of connection and composition. Gregor never transcends his body, or his familiar human world; instead he manages to explore it with a non-human body, with alternate carriers of significance and affective capacities.

My dissertation's third chapter builds upon the case studies of Chapter 2 by re-invoking feminist theory and the specificity of women's self-starving bodies. Chapter 3, "Anorexic Economies: Trading the Visual for the Visceral," performs a critical shift. Even outside of psychoanalytic theory, the anorexic has been codified by what feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray has called a specular economy through which women are only granted access to culture and subjectivity through language and discourse that privileges male embodiment and masculine subjects. A prevalent insistence in feminist theories of anorexia is that self-starving women attempt to access the power and privilege socially granted to men by becoming slaves to self-surveillance regimens (by becoming the docile subjects of a Foucauldian notion of discipline). As I argued that there has been a tendency in feminist scholarship of anorexia to focus primarily on the less agentic Foucauldian subjects, rather than the more powerful and capacious embodied

subjects of self-cultivation or somatechné, this tendency also exists with Irigaray's work. While the first half of Irigaray's project in *The Speculum of the Other Woman* documents the specular economy and phallogocentrism of Western culture and philosophy, a second part of her project builds a new morphology—and a sensate economy—acts of desiring-production specific to women's bodies. Irigaray gives bodily and sensory agency back to women in *This Sex Which is Not One*, and in the process exchanges visible cues for tactile ones, singularity for multiplicity, presence for extension.

Following Irigaray, to think through women's auto-eroticisms made possible by the mobility and tactility of the female body, is to conceptualize women's subjectivity through feminine matter irreducible to mater. Many anorexic fictions and memoirs give texture to Irigaray's account of feminine embodiment. Across texts, anorexics are far more compelled to touch their bodies than to look at them. Despite the insistence (often by anorexics) that they lack desire, these passages (written by the same anorexics) attest to the proliferation of anorexic desire—not desire as coveting, wanting, and lacking, but desire as doing, assembling, and exploring. With the help of material feminist, Tasmin Lorraine's work in *Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy*, I connect Irigaray's focus on feminine subjectivity to Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on "becoming-woman:" assembling through modes of perception which are not subject-based and non-identificatory, but are constitutive of agency nonetheless. This exchange offers a rethinking of economies of internalization, accumulation, acquisition, and consumption. Rather than suggesting that the anorexic

internalizes patriarchal and capitalist representation, I argue that anorexic bodies are surfaces with points of connection, engaged in economies of visceral action and expenditure. The anorexic goal is not to have, but to do, and sometimes without preference. The goal is not to reject food, but to exhaust the possible uses of food, and the spaces that (not) eating can occupy or occasion.

The anorexic economies I develop in Chapter 3 transition to Chapter 4's discussion of "Anorexic Ecologies: Beckettian Exhaustion and Dis-Ordered Eating." While Chapter 3's focus is on trading visibility for tactility, this chapter's central theme is motion, whether constructing transverse ethological lines of becoming, involutory affective momentums across species milieus, or traversing the exhausting and exhaustive series of possible circumstantial variables. Chapter 4 returns to Deleuze's literary clinic with the self-starving figures of Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, *The Trilogy* and *Watt*. My thesis is that Beckett's characters fast in order to move differently, and specifically to remain dis-eased and unrestful. I connect the utterances of Molloy and Murphy (conversant with Deleuzian ethology, involution, and exhaustion) with those of anorexics and bulimics, seemingly engaged in nomadic practices of self-starvation that traverse living otherwise: in connection with non-human motilities and anti-capitalist time. As in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 suggests that anorexia and bulimia are not attempted flights from embodiment, but attempts to immanently re-compose the material properties of living and desiring.

My final chapter, "Anorexic Ethologies: Involutionary Beckett and Bulimic Anti-Peristalsis" is where I attempt to bring each of my dissertation's

strands together: modernist literature, contemporary memoirs of anorexia and bulimia, pro-ana movements, Deleuzian philosophy, material feminist theory, neurology, evolutionary biology, and post-humanism. This trans-disciplinary reading of self-starvation is fueled by connection, relation, dialogue, is compelled by the material propensities of self-starving bodies and by the reaches of anorexic/bulimic extensions. Specific to this chapter is a prolonged consideration of bulimic economies, ecologies, and ethologies. While both practices are effectively named dis-ordered eating and are never quite mutually exclusive or separable, I suggest that there exists a tendency in scholarship on eating disorders to rely more heavily on discussions of anorexia. As a 2009 anthology of *Critical Feminist Approaches to Eating Disorders* rightly suggests, “it is interesting to note that this volume was more readily populated with chapters on anorexia or eating disorders than with those dealing specifically with bulimia. This is despite the probability that the latter is, statistically, the more common category of pathologized eating” (Malson and Burns 3). As I propose in Chapter 5, bulimia is not nearly as suggestive of disembodiment and transcendence as anorexia has become to the feminist critical imagination. It does not fit as cleanly or hygienically into only discursive categories, or, said differently, confronting bulimia *requires* making matter matter more. As Elizabeth Wilson brilliantly demonstrates in her article, “Gut Feminism,” material feminisms might be better equipped than corporeal feminisms to consider the bulimic exigencies of antiperistalsis.

Transitioning from Chapter 5 to my dissertation’s conclusion involves a

conceptual shift from living without dining to living outside of self-starvation. The most crucial question my project leaves unanswered until its conclusion is how we might facilitate or approach recovery if self-starvation (as I have argued) already validates vital momentums, affective arousals, and sensorily-rich nomadic versions of living. How do women recuperate from their dis-ordered eating the desire to live if already fueling their dis-ordered eating are affirmative and affective movements? How would recovery function in the context of my project? While each of my dissertation's chapters consider case studies of self-starvation, my conclusion takes up case studies of "recovery" that strike an effective-affective balance between harnessing the powers and capacities of anorexic and bulimic living while using them to do produce something beyond self-starvation. Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted*, Sheila MacLeod's *The Art of Starvation*, Caroline Knapp's *Appetites: Why Women Want*, and Shelley Davidow's *All Anna's Children* offer promising glimpses of recovery outside of the psychiatric, medical, and cultural clinics of eating disorders. I read these texts as proposing that a key to prolonging anorexic and bulimic lives is to harness a *more sustainable* ethics of curiosity, experimentation, movement, becoming, relating, re-composing, extending, feeling, and exploring—to continue to wonder what a body can do.

Chapter 1

A Symptomatological Study: The Shared 'Health' of Modernism and Disordered Eating

The physician is wrong when he claims to be able to do without philosophy, and one would be quite mistaken to reproach philosophers with crossing their own boundaries when they concern themselves with health and its regimen... To those who study it, it gives access to knowledge of great importance since it concerns health and the preservation of life.

-- (Plutarch, qtd. In Foucault, *Care of Self* 99)

This chapter explores the literary dimensions of anorexia and the anorexic dimensions of literature. Questions guiding my analysis are: What can studies of modernist literature bring to the cross-disciplinary field of eating disorders? What can understandings of contemporary eating disorders add to modernist literature, particularly those texts compelled by self-starvation and physical deterioration? How and why does the logic of diagnosis change so acutely when moving from female sufferers of eating disorders to male wanderers, vagrants, nomads, heroes, and artists whose perambulations are fuelled by self-starvation? How might we map different symptomatologies of dis-ordered eating with gender simply one critical and clinical coordinate among many? What is at stake (what is lost and

what is gained?) when locating dis-ordered eating in a conceptual shift from corporeal feminist politics of identity and discourse toward a material feminist micropolitics of immanence?

This chapter argues that self-starvation—whether we identify and name its constitutive practices as anorexia, bulimia, eating disordered or dis-ordered eating—is an active (in some cases an *act of*) engagement with the physical world and the material body. My aim is to reconsider readings of eating disorders positioning afflicted women as reactive and immobilized by mass culture. Specifically, I am proposing that by exploring the anorexic affect operative in modernist fiction, feminists can: 1) develop a different reference point for women's self-starvation, still in the field of social production, but irreducible to the cultures produced by phallogocentrism 2) affirm a kinship between literature and life; between art and bodies; between representation and matter—a kinship that refuses the dominance, authority and truth claims of one over the other; 3) increase the critical surface space occupied by the field of anorexia, choosing to make more matter.

In suggesting that anorexia can produce affective sites of encounter, I am not positioning myself as pro-ana. On the contrary, I maintain that there are far better—less dangerous, less destructive, more productive, more creative, more practical, and more life-affirming—ways to engage with one's body and one's world than to starve. But part of placing anorexia-in-relation to literature, to art, to

ethics, to affect, and to life, is to begin to map how and where self-starvers might move: away from stasis and decomposition.¹⁴ If we can understand dis-ordered eating intricately (as literarily/philosophically/politically/scientifically/materially complex) and if we continue to complicate the affective milieus of anorexic bodies, then critically speaking, we arm ourselves with the capacity to clarify the properties, redirect the engagements, and re-channel the intensities of dis-ordered eating. Far from celebrating the immobility and decline that self-starvation can undoubtedly usher in, my analysis is committed to exposing the possibility that dis-ordered eating can be done differently: can manifest in ways that are active, vital, visceral, and compositional.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first considers a modernist-anorexic connection forged by Leslie Heywood's *Dedication to Hunger: The Anorexic Aesthetic in Modern Culture* (1996). I illustrate what she calls an "anorexic logic" operative in literary modernism's definitive characteristic of textual minimalism, an aesthetic practice perhaps best expressed by a popular pro-ana slogan: "in the body, as in [art] perfection is attained not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." While I agree with Heywood's sense that modernism and anorexia share a particular affinity, I disagree that this relationship follows Descartes' privileging of mind over matter, and ideation over sensory extension. Instead, I will argue that modernism and

¹⁴ My conclusion further develops this point.

anorexia are linked by their experimentation with the efabulative possibilities of what emptying/hungering bodies can do. For philosopher, Simone Weil, hunger can occasion a decreation of the subject (a disinclination to singular, detached identity in favour of impersonal instrumentality). Following Weil, the voids of self-starvation can produce an ethics premised on a disarticulated subject. For Melville's "anorexic" Bartleby, self-starvation instigates a reader to come, one who can witness the impasses of interpretation, recognition, and representation, and compose other sites of engagement in their place. For Kafka's Gregor Samsa, disordered eating is congruent with becoming-insect. "The Metamorphosis" expresses a new symptom of self-starvation: a sense of feeling (moving, affecting, and being affected) with the body's "palpitating collaboration" in the course of transposing space. And finally, the anorexic food abstentions and bulimic food un-retentions of Beckett's vitally degenerating anti-heroes (often, his becoming-worms) compose and compost new affective milieus instigated by non-human and inhuman expressions of agency. While each of these thesis statements is mentioned here only in passing in order to anticipate my dissertation's analysis, I challenge Heywood's conception of modernism's anorexic logic and anorexia's modernist aesthetic with an insistence on this literature's commitment to the vibrancy of matter. If anything, modernism's anorexics uproot, move, feel, compost, and compose.

This chapter's second section performs a case study of Simone Weil's philosophy and biography. Weil presents a challenge.¹⁵ At times her longings in *Gravity and Grace* express her desire for immateriality. Simply put, she often seems to want to go through life without a body, or without accountability to the demands of organic life. These points fit Weil's commitment to self-starvation rather perfectly with Heywood's notion of "anorexic logic," as does Weil's espousal of mysticism. In short, Weil could be read as a case study of *anorexia mirabilis*: sharing an overlapping symptomatology with prodigious female fasters in the Middle Ages, whose food abstention has been understood as a form of "holy anorexia" in pursuit of absolute transcendence of mind over body (Bell, Brumberg, Vandereycken and Ven Deth). And yet, there are elements of Weil's life and writing that speak to the opposite impulses: that her hunger might have

¹⁵ In all candor, I'm unsure of what to do with Weil. I don't know exactly where she fits into the matrix of my dissertation. And I find it challenging to understand where she fits into the matrix of Western philosophy. I am uncomfortable with Weil's mysticism and piousness. While I dislike Chris Kraus's construal of Weil's "alienesque" qualities, perhaps Kraus hits on a crucial problematic. Albert Camus writes of Weil that she was "the only great spirit of our time," another reference to her un-wordly qualities, or perhaps even to her immateriality. Giorgio Agamben's doctoral dissertation was written on Weil's philosophy and yet he rarely cites Weil in his own work. For further reading, see Alissa Ricciardi's "From Decreation to Bare Life: Weil, Agamben, and the Impolitical" (2009). I will discuss the ways that Weil's notion of decreation seems to anticipate Deleuze and Guattari's de-territorialiation—again, without explicit reference anywhere in their work to her thinking. The question I am pondering here is whether Weil's writings, their (un)reception, point to a receptive problem in philosophy? Perhaps Weil and Bartleby share a great deal: both are touchstones and/or ghosts, figures that seem of another world or construed of another type of matter. The point I'm struggling to articulate is that both Weil and Bartleby seem to require different systems of reading that avoid all of the pitfalls demonstrated so beautifully by Melville's lawyer.

served hyper-porous and hyper-kinetic aims to feel and move beyond the confines of the subject. Considering the interpretive challenge presented by Weil, my analysis situates her as a fascinating—perhaps especially because forgotten to feminist analyses of eating disorders—philosopher of anorexic affect.

From Weil, I move to Deleuze in this chapter's third (and final) section to set up the theoretical building blocks with which my dissertation proceeds. To provide philosophical grounds for a connection between literature and life, I consider Deleuze's *Coldness and Cruelty* and *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Deleuze's literary clinic seems a pragmatic and generative means of restoration after he and Guattari have shed doubt on the unconscious: if we no longer subscribe to an authorial, cultural, and literary unconscious governing desire, then how do we fill this interpretive gap; how do we approach and *use* literature anew? Put otherwise, Deleuze's pairing of the critical with the clinical demonstrates the utilitarian force of literature. But this force is not redemptive or therapeutic (it is not a means of exorcising our sins and sicknesses in order to restore morality and dominant health). Literature's function is not representational (it does not identify and invest our world with meaning). It is not transcendental (it does not provide us with an aesthetic means of escaping quotidian and embodied life). Instead, the force of literature, literature's clinic, derives from what it can activate, engage, and invent. What does literature do? For Deleuze, it unfolds the immanent potential of what might come: a people, a language, a symptom, a body, a gesture, an affect, a sensory event. In short, literature invents new ways of living and feeling.

Part I~ Modernism's Anorexic Logic; Anorexia's Modernist Aesthetic

I am made of literature, I am nothing else and cannot be anything else.

--Franz Kafka, *Diaries*

I like to think that...if you should happen sometimes to think of me
you will do so as one thinks of a book read in childhood.

--Simone Weil to Gustave Thibon

The thesis developed by this section is that anorexia can be read as the extra-textual practice that fuels modernist literary occupation. Furthermore, by function of symbiotic exchange, some modernist literary texts help to activate different understandings of anorexic behaviors. They help to extract non-pre-existing clinical symptoms of dis-ordered eating. My contention is that this relationship is one of mutual growth, exchange, and vitality. Re-reading Gregor Samsa, Bartleby the Scrivener, Molloy, and Murphy as a cast of literary characters enacting an anorexic ethics of bodily exhaustion is a way to make more matter to the fields of modernist literary studies and to those comprising scholarship on eating disorders. Following Deleuze's emphasis on extracting the function of literature in its connection to organic life, it strikes me that this critical and clinical connection between the shared logic of anorexia and modernism is compelling because it brings more to the table, so to speak. My purpose is neither to read these texts with an anorexic or pro-ana lens, nor to apply psychiatric concepts to this literature and its writers. And yet, it would be easy to pull up the *Diagnostic and*

Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders--DSM IV entries on the psychiatric characteristics of “anorexia nervosa,” “bulimia nervosa” and show, step-by-step, how Gregor Samsa, for example, evinces “textbook” signs of an eating disorder, or how Gregor’s anorexia could be understood as a projection of Kafka’s own eating neuroses, expressed by his call to “starve in all directions” (qt. in *Williams* 110). To execute these interpretive strategies, however, is to read as a clinician or diagnostician with an eye to the etiological and therapeutic functions of text and dis-ease¹⁶. Gregor’s behaviors become representative of psychiatric illnesses and Kafka’s use of Gregor is read as a channel for the textual representation of his own neuroses and anxieties. But if, according to Deleuze, we do not write from our neuroses, nor do we read from them. If the neurotic vocation is to foreclose the possibilities of desire, then the schizophrenic vocation is to mobilize desiring, connecting and assembling, and it is with a schizoid investment in perpetual action-in-relation that we can bring literary modernism to the field of anorexia and the field of anorexia to literary modernism.

I am not alone in seeking this enfolding. In *Dedication to Hunger: The Anorexic Aesthetic in Modern Culture* (1996), feminist literary critic, Leslie Heywood writes part-memoir, part close-reading and part-theoretical treatise on the anorexic logic shared by modernism and women with eating disorders. She coins the term “anorexic logic” to denote “the set of assumptions critical to the

¹⁶ I discuss this further in the 3rd section of this chapter, as well as in Bartleby case study performed in Chapter 2. For now, I will just say that reading as diagnostician invested in the why’s of behaviours and in the how’s of treatment/cure is to read with the same strategies as Melville’s attorney in “Bartleby, the Scrivener.”

logic of assimilation; that values mind over body, masculine over feminine, individual over community” (Heywood xxii). According to Heywood, anorexia is:

a failed attempt to create an alternative, to avoid lining up on one side of the male/female, rich/poor, white/black, hetero/homo divides. Because it is an attempt to articulate a different space and so clearly a failed attempt, anorexia is an object of fascination in a culture uncertain in its polarities, boundaries, differences, uncertain even as that culture definitively imposes boundaries and differences as specific configurations of power (13).

Heywood’s sense that anorexia is an attempt to articulate what she calls a “different space” alternative to binary logic is useful in its departure from other readings of the passivity of eating disorders.¹⁷ For Heywood, anorexia is action—ultimately failed or stifled action—meant as a revolt against molarity and morality. Her theory provocatively suggests that the cultural forces requiring our identification as a stable gender, class, race and sexuality are responsible for anorexics’ unrest. Following Heywood’s analysis, the hyperactivity incurred by food refusal¹⁸ is made more seductive (perhaps more necessary) by the fixed categories of identity imposed by cultural, clinical, and political configurations of power. To my mind, what Heywood offers is a compelling reason for feminist critical/clinical discussions of anorexia to extend beyond the gendered aggregates of identity. If we follow Heywood’s

¹⁷ I consider these feminist accounts of anorexic passivity at length in my introduction.

¹⁸ For further discussion of hyperactivity and anorexia, see my introduction as well as Chapters 3 and 4.

anorexic etiology, then it would make sense to avoid replicating those same fixed structures of interpretation that, by her account, invite women to attempt self-starvation as one means of “articulating a different space” for the modern subject.¹⁹

Central to Heywood’s analysis is a problem with Cartesian subjectivity. She describes anorexics as “paradigmatic Cartesian subjects,” (ibid 18), struggling with the continued philosophical and cultural ascription of individuality, mindfulness, and transcendence to masculinity. Heywood posits that:

the anorexic self-image is a black hole, a cavernous nothingness; a disruption of the sense of linear time...an experience of the mind and body as radically split; with the mind struggling to control the body, an increasing isolation, a sense of superiority to and lack of emotional contacts with others; a complete suppression of sexuality...and a marked identification with the masculine and simultaneous rejection of the feminine, along with a paradoxical attempt to accede to beauty standards of thinness (ibid 18).

Heywood’s description of the anorexic’s struggle is between the masculine (mind) and feminine (matter). The anorexic’s accession to “beauty standards and thinness,” which Heywood refers to as paradoxical, is simply another

¹⁹ Each of my dissertation’s “conceptual personae” of disordered eating is—in one way or another—feeling beside the self. Said differently, each case study uncovers a connection between self-starvation and a dis- or, or trans-, or differently-articulated subject.

instance of what she deems anorexia's rendering of bodily passivity. There is a distinction made between the matter of "real" (women's) bodies and the discursive implications of cultural standards for beauty and slenderness. This matter-representation distinction is clarified by Heywood's invocation of the same Cartesian logic functioning within modernist literature. "The ideal body," she argues, with reference to the modernist textual body "is more 'artistic,' more worked upon, than the raw material of the body... In giving privilege to that figure by constantly working against the real body to transcend it, to change it, to overcome it by shaping it into the figurative ideal, we literally inscribe the methodology of modernist critical thinking into our flesh" (ibid 11).

Once again, the polarity developed in Heywood's theory is between representation and matter. For her, the anorexic body is mute and passive (in contrast to her earlier claims to anorexia's attempts to activate a different enunciatory space). Following Heywood's argument, the literary modernist aesthetic practices of textual reducing, revising, reshaping, and minimalizing (the operations of taking up less space) are discursive acts, literally reducing anorexic flesh. In other words, anorexic logic and modernist logic enter into relation through their investment in transcendence: in their parallel pursuit to make a (textual) body take up the least space possible in order to make meaning

proliferate. Representation eclipses bodies, she argues, as “we are trained to shape our bodies as works of art” (ibid 32).²⁰

I wish to extend Heywood’s discussion of the connection between modernism and anorexia. Her work asserts very clearly that both anorexia and modernism are processes of grappling with the location of subjectivity in Cartesian dualisms. Modernist fiction and anorexia, she argues, are masculinist enterprises, as they arise out of cultural and literary disdain for the excesses that women’s bodies have come to represent. For Heywood the question of modernism and anorexia is how to make meaning by reducing physical space: how to mean at matter’s expense. Without adopting a mutually exclusive approach to meaning and mattering, like Heywood’s, I wonder if we could preserve some of her insights about the shared expressive events of modernist literary texts and anorexic bodies? I agree with Heywood on a number of accounts. I agree with her

²⁰ Again, it is interesting here to make recourse to Foucault’s work in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*. Heywood’s critique seems to follow Foucauldian fixations on institutional and disciplinary power. And yet Foucault offers a divergent (Greek critical/clinical) model for the somatechné involved in shaping bodies into ethico-aesthetic works of art. Diet, he argues, was of more prevalent concern to the Greeks than sex (*Care* 238) because it involved what Karen Barad would call “agentic intra-action,” the understanding of bodies as enmeshed in (produced by and productive of) complex sensory chains of events. The training of bodies into shaped works of art was not in response to top-down discursive orchestrations of power, but in an understanding of the enfoldedness of bodies in different environments, seasons, spaces, times, social/political collectives, etc. Foucault’s subject of the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* is capable of a more engaged sensory and dietetic form of self-fashioning, self-training, or self-shaping.

sense that anorexia nervosa is exacerbated in a cultural and critical—humanist—milieu that repeatedly asserts the powerlessness and passivity of matter and the pre-eminence of more mindful systems of representation. I agree with her that the conceptual vocabulary often brought to the forefront in anorexic memoirs and case studies consists in accounts of an irrevocable mind-body, representation-matter split. I would argue, however, for the importance of building on this Cartesian paradigm. If anorexics grapple with the tenuous location of subjectivity outside of the body, in configurations of power making matter a mere conduit for the interests of patriarchy (as Heywood's own analysis asserts), then a crucial feminist task might be to extend other theories of subjectivity to anorexia.

The particular trajectory I am proposing here works through Spinoza, Deleuze and the material feminists who have made their work most relevant to the experience of lived bodies in action-relation. Claire Colebrook's latest book on *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (2010) argues for the need to see "meaning as the property of living systems, from which the brain would be [one] sophisticated derivation" (Colebrook 29). Following an anti-Cartesian turn effectuated through Spinoza's philosophy of affect, she echoes that we need no longer see "mind as a separate substance, for mind is just 'the feeling of what happens' at the level of matter...and relations" (Colebrook 84, 85). Both bodies and meaning systems emerge from what she calls "potentialities for orientation," virtual sense events (like seeing and hearing) that express bodies in midst of their active and

productive relations (ibid 86, 94). By bringing Colebrook to Heywood, it is possible to build on what Heywood terms anorexia's shared logic of literary modernism by giving it more material dimensions. If anorexia is no longer deemed a death-bound battle between body and mind, then what other sorts of body-mind relations are both productive and operative in anorexic "potentialities for orientation"? If the climax of literary modernism's meaning-making is no longer located in a flight from the body, or in mindful acts of material transcendence, then what are the expressive potentials of these texts: what do they do?

What follows in proceeding chapters is my attempt to incite a connection between literary modernism's and anorexia's expressions/inventions. I follow Heywood in this aim. But building on her work, I want to propose that this relationship is one of mutual vitality rather than sacrifice and loss. Differently put, I choose not to submit to Heywood's sense that literary modernism's textual aesthetic is dependent upon an abjection of "real" female bodies²¹, and

²¹ I am suspicious that "real" women's bodies is often used as a synonym for fleshy women's bodies. At least this is what the popularized rhetoric of women "owning their curves" or "loving the skin they're in" is after. While feminists continue to insist that anorexia flourishes in what have become "cults of thinness" (Eckerman), I also find it pertinent to consider that the "cults of curviness" that currently exist. Women's bodies are normalized, objectified, commoditized, and sexualized just as much for their curves as they are their leanness. We deem curvaceous women's bodies a sign of empowerment, while skinniness can be considered an assault to feminist praxis. My body constantly changes sizes, and sometimes drastically so. When I look lean, athletic, and fit, women often express concern for my health. When I look bigger, fatter, curvier, those same women express how

furthermore, that this rejection of feminine flesh has ultimately proven disastrous for anorexic women. Instead of only pointing to what modernism takes away from femininity, I am proposing that we might look to this literature's potential to give anew: What can it add by way of the invention of a non pre-existing symptomatology of dis-ordered eating?

Literary critics working outside of feminist traditions have also had much to say about the congruent shift in cultural attitudes about eating and writing around the turn of the 20th century. In his article "Modernism and Anorexia, or How I learned to Diet in All Directions" (1989) Mark Anderson writes that:

One cannot talk about a 'language crisis' in European literature at the turn of the century without also addressing the problem of food rejection, fasting, starvation and other forms of corporeal self-obliteration. If an ancient trope in Western writing has seen language as a kind of food, or food as a kind of language, modernism confirms their association by negating both. The rejection of 19th century historical and social discourse, the fragmentation or self-effacement of the author's voice, the disappearance of the writer into his text, the extinction of 'personality' or expression—these textual events are repeatedly

pleasing they find my aesthetic, how healthy, natural, and vibrant I look. I think there is a very real sense in which thinness is considered unnatural and unhealthy and I think it important to confront that sense.

figured in terms of a physical disgust with food, or prolonged fasting despite the absence of external constraint, finally of a wasting away of the corporeal self. In short, the specific movement in modernist discourse toward increasingly brief, fragmentary self-consuming, or ‘silent’ texts relies, with surprising regularity and insistence, on figures of anorexia. (29)

The dialogue between Anderson’s analysis and Heywood’s is striking, particularly in their elucidation of modernism’s anorexic anxieties about subjectivity. Like Heywood, Anderson illustrates a vexed relationship between textual content and physical form, through which the concerns of the material body are rendered secondary to the concerns of art.²² In modernism, he argues, “the ‘fat’ of empirical existence is trimmed away to get at the core of an essential writing self” (ibid 32). Following Anderson’s logic, both language and food are negated by modernism. That which feeds the textual body (language), the material body (food), and therefore, the practical tools required to sustain both literature and life are rendered secondary to concerns with elimination.

Anderson frames both anorexia and modernism as navigations through exclusion and withdrawal. This process of elimination, according to Anderson is

²² Another Foucauldian intervention makes sense here, as he demonstrates that dieting and fasting could be self-fashioning more than self-obliteration. Or that an art of existence can co-emerge along with material practices of dietetic exploration. But again, the material exigencies of dietetics are, for Foucault, *not* attempts to conquer nature, but to practice the body *in relation* to the natural forces that exceed, produce, and sustain it.

purposeful, and even creative: “If modernism attempted to merge life with art, anorexia also makes the body into a self-fashioned artifact, a form of language. ...Obsessive fasting, self-induced vomiting, and physical exercise give anorexics the powerful sensation of controlling nature by eliminating it, fashioning their own body into a pure bodiless idea” (Anderson 35, 36). Here the modernist/anorexic trope of bodilessness re-emerges, once again in the language of transcendence. Following Anderson’s account, self-starvation is an attempt to control nature by a process of elimination. Like modernism’s textual impulses, anorexia’s creative expressions depend on making less matter in order to make meaning manifest. Anorexic transcendence, like modernist art, is only possible once the (textual) body overcomes life and environment.

In agreement with Heywood’s analysis of modernism’s privileging of the masculine body, Anderson posits that “historically, modernism was an aggressively masculine movement, its angular, lean forms bespeaking the discomfort with women or the outright misogyny that many of its most noted representatives in fact held to” (ibid 35). I should point out here the biological essentialism upon which both Heywood and Anderson’s critiques of modernism’s masculinism depend. In both, there is a conflation of female embodiment—indeed, of femininity—with fat and fleshy bodily parts. This should set off alarms, and yet often goes without notice in a cultural milieu that is so desperate to counteract mass-mediated fetishizations of lean and angular feminine forms. In

many ways the pop-cultural, and sometimes feminist critical impetus is to validate the fat of women's "real" bodies as a compensatory, counter-discursive measure. The end result is that anorexic women are excluded from the ranks of femininity; skinny women's bodies are deemed somehow less "real," or less "natural" than their assumed fleshy points of origin.

The problem I am situating in Heywood's and Anderson's analysis of modernism and anorexia is that both confront "figures of anorexia" (Anderson 29), employing these as metaphorical expressions of modernist attitudes about plenitude, excess, waste, minimalism, transcendence, authority, revision, and askesis. But anorexia is not a figure; it does not represent something other than itself. Nor is it the malnourished material underbelly of representation, a grave materialization of the threat of modernism's textuality and mass mediated imagery grafted onto bodies. To say as much (as both Heywood and Anderson do) is to ascribe all of anorexic practices to passivity, and to negate a potentially affirmative relationship between anorexic life and modernist literature.

While Heywood's critique never quite envisions either a modern or anorexic solution to the problems she aptly presents, Anderson proposes that in response to what he deems modernism's anorexic impulse to deny the flesh, much of its literature produces "anti-bodies" (Anderson 37). These, he argues, are bodies withdrawn from "the traditional arena of male privilege, authority and responsibility" (ibid 38). Gregor and Bartleby, for example, are for Anderson two

of modernism's revered "anti-bodies," who have much to say, "but prefer to starve themselves away from the world insisting on a form of nourishment that the world is incapable of providing" (ibid 38). I am compelled by Anderson's offer of a homeopathic modernist remedy to its own tendency to exclude and disavow bodies. And his choice of Gregor and Bartleby as veritable "anti-body" representatives is radical in that they allow for a gesture toward what could be read as modernism's anorexic *solution* to the problem of transcendence.

But if Anderson begins to forge an anorexic ethos of bodiliness in modernist literature, this still depends on a politics of exclusion and alienation. Both Gregor and Bartleby, he urges, starve themselves "away from the world," and ultimately find that the world offers not the sustenance they require for the continued unfolding of life. My take on Gregor and Bartleby's anorexic ethics, as I develop in Chapter 2 is precisely the opposite: that both characters' pursuit of self-starvation seems a means of opening to the world, of composing different sensory and affective milieus. For me, there is no "anti-body" required to remedy modernist impulses to make meaning at the expense and extinction of matter. Rather, I see modernist literature as already engaging an ethics of bodily extension and exhaustion that situates meaning and matter as mutually-sustaining systems of action-in-relation. This is the potential orientation that modernism and

anorexia share, and this, I argue, accounts for the elevated incidence of self-starvers in modernist literature.²³

Part II- Simone Weil's Anorexic Decreation

Every being cries out silently to be read differently. We read, but also *we are read by*, others. Interferences in these readings forcing someone to read himself as we read him (slavery). Forcing others

²³ And for the elevated incidence of modernist literature in the libraries of the female self-starvers I take up in the second half of my dissertation. As previously discussed, Leslie Heywood's *Dedication to Hunger* unseats a connection between the anorexic logic of self-starvation and the modernist literary enterprise. In the section of her book predominated by memories of her own anorexia, Heywood relates her affinity for reading and analyzing high modernist literature at the height of her dis-ordered eating. She found a home in this literature because it spoke to her anorexic logic. While making a less overt connection, Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (1998) cites both Nietzsche and Beckett, weaving references to *Waiting for Godot*, and naming a whole chapter after it (117). Hornbacher's anorexia and bulimia are perhaps practiced to their most dangerous extent while she is still a teenager, studying creative writing at a prestigious school for the artistically gifted. Likewise, Sheila MacLeod's indicatively named memoir and feminist critical appraisal of anorexia, *The Art of Starvation* (1981), points to yet another instance of a self-starver finding solace in the texts offered by the high modernist period. MacLeod's adolescent, self-imposed extra-curricular reading list was made up of the works of Virginia Woolf, Henry James, and Samuel Beckett, which is to say nothing of Kafka's "A Hunger Artist," to which MacLeod's own title seems to allude (81). Her expressed "euphoric" (64, 81) anorexic zeal activates her thirst to exhaust her literary chops on the most difficult texts she can find; indeed, MacLeod admits that they were barely understandable to her at the time (80). The frequency with which modernist texts appear in anorexic memoirs might suggest nothing more than the fact that these authors are well-versed in literature. But this, alone, is a point worth making, especially in the midst of a cultural and academic milieu that still sometimes insists on the stupidity of anorexics

to read us as we read ourselves (conquest). More often than not a dialogue between deaf people.

--Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* 121

The previous section on Heywood and Anderson's formulation of modernism's "anorexic logic" argued for the need to build different sites of collaboration between literature and hunger. Both critics approach hunger as a striving for a bodiless aesthetic of self-mastery, and a trimming of the fat of material life. On the contrary, an argument I will continue to refine as each of my chapters progresses is that modernist literature and self-starvation instead compose in moments of subjective disarticulation accompanied by affective arousals to feel, move, and express differently. Rather than viewing anorexic bodies as the passive receptors or inheritors of the misogynistic de-privilging of female matter, I proposed that we consider anorexic bodies as actively altering sensory relations and milieus—a tendency my case studies on Melville, Kafka, and Beckett in the next chapters will demonstrate is part of the vital tenor (the vital health) of modernist literature. At stake is a question of whether self-starvation is a movement away from nature; whether it is an investment in increasingly immaterial sources of value, meaning, and self-formation. The understanding that to self-starve is to turn the (female) body away from its nature, to uproot the body from its material sources of life and origin has been the point of departure for the majority of feminist scholarship on anorexia. This is also the through-line of both

Heywood and Anderson's conceptions of modernist anorexic logic (Heywood) and ethos (Anderson).

I am devoting this section to a case study of Simone Weil because she is an important link between Heywood and Anderson's contentions of anorexic immateriality, and Deleuze's conception of vital health. While Deleuze draws his critical clinical project (the beginnings of a generative relationship between literature and psychiatry) from Nietzsche, Masoch, Kafka, Melville, and Beckett, we could just as well draw from philosopher, Simone Weil. She writes of hunger, while submitting herself to the exigencies of self-starvation as a way of feeling beside herself, or as a way of becoming carried away to a state of "non-personal power" (Deleuze *Dialogues* 50). There are many points of conversation between Deleuze and Weil: both espouse a philosophy of vagrancy, both privilege life at a removal from dominant health, both account for the a-personal or intersubjective compounds of sense, and both work through the possibilities of sustaining life through decreation. I would like to submit Weil as something of a forgotten "philosopher-physician" of dis-ordered eating. *Gravity and Grace* affirms the productive events of hungering as tapping in to an empathic form of collective life, a version of vitality on the brink of survival (what Deleuze would call exhaustion).²⁴²⁵

²⁴ Chapters 3 and 4 consider the relationship between survival and anorexia, expressed by contemporary female disordered eaters.

²⁵ Weil is fascinating because she is a woman who died of self-starvation, and yet her "anorexia" is rarely addressed by feminist scholarship on eating disorders (Kraus is one notable exception) My introduction framed my dissertation in a material feminist methodological turn—offering one productive way to critically explore the material properties of self-starving bodies. Karen Barad identifies an

In her post-modernist fiction, *Aliens and Anorexia*, Chris Kraus confronts precisely the discordant treatment of women's and men's illness. Of particular interest to her is illness that drives artistic and philosophical production. Conversant with Deleuze's insistence that impersonal and affective life activates with the dissolution of the 1st person (or of the power to say 'I')²⁶, Kraus channels her own—and philosopher, Simone Weil's—conceptual vocabulary of vulnerability, empathy, porosity, and "decreation" to illuminate intersubjective sense events. If there is a link between the two eponymous figures of her title, one that Kraus leaves relatively unexamined, this is that both enforce an interrogation of the lived practices of everyday life. The alien and the anorexic are connected by their recognition of the absolute impossibility of "home." For anorexics, this political, ideological and physical "home" is transmitted through food: through the systemic violence of its production and the obligatory social rituals surrounding it. Whether anorexic, bulimic, eating-disordered, socially compromised, or fully "healthy," the moment we question food in any meaningful way, we sustain our alienation, and our inability to return to the supposed safety, health, hygiene, and regularity of eating. The nomadism, occasioned by food refusal or dis-ordered eating, marks a disruption of the systematic organization of time, space, meaning,

aporia in feminist discussions of embodiment refuting considerations of biology, anatomy, and neurology. Claire Colebrook and Abigail Bray locate the same absence in corporeal feminist scholarship. And Elizabeth Wilson exposes a similar lack of biological and neurological considerations in feminist appraisals of hysteria, anorexia, and bulimia. But I want to ask how many feminist scholars of eating disorders consider Simone Weil's philosophy of self-starvation? This absence is just as problematic to me as say the under acknowledged neuro-biological coordinates of anorexia.

²⁶ I discuss this at length in the next section.

and matter.²⁷

Drawing heavily on Simone Weil's philosophy of "decreation," *Aliens and Anorexia* proposes that illness (and specifically, anorexia) is productive because it is often the catalyst for un-doing(s). In *Gravity and Grace*, Simone Weil distinguishes between decreation and destruction. Decreation passes something ordered into disorder, while destruction passes something ordered into nothingness (Weil 28). "The city," Weil writes, "gives us the feeling of being at home. We must take the feeling of being at home into exile. We must be rooted in the absence of a place" (34). At times, Weil and Deleuze are compatible strangers. "Decreation" is akin to "deterritorialization," in which perpetually morphing sets of relations are decontextualized, or rendered virtual so that they may be differently potentialized or actualized. Illuminated in this way, decreation is productive rather than destructive: its momentums disarticulate the subject *while* producing new perpetually uprooting forms of extension in its place. Weil's notion of nomadic subjectivity is grounded in the evolving (and involutory) material properties of life. To dwell in the absence of place does not mean to transcend the body, but to decreate the space of the body as we know and feel it, along with the space of "home" as contained, static, and familiar. At stake is a perpetual process of reformulating what bodies can do.

Kraus reveres Weil as an unacknowledged (both alienated and alienesque) anorexic heroine to philosophy and literature. A "self-loathing and self-starving androgyne" (Kraus 28), nicknamed "the martian" (27), Weil, as conceived by

²⁷ My point is that alimentary travel is very much a nomadic *voyage en place*.

Kraus, suffered a "panic of altruism" (122) that rendered her body "so saturated with content she felt her head would split apart" (128). "Like the male modernists of her time," posits Kraus, "Weil was yearning towards a transcendental state of decreation" (130), and yet was not allowed through the masculinist gates of high modernist values. Rather than being exalted for her minimalism, discipline, and asceticism like her male contemporaries, Kraus relates that the common criticism of Weil's "anorexic philosophy" focused on her as a "madwoman" and "masochist who exalted pain and suffering as supreme values" (130, 142).

Kraus's defense of Weil's performative, experimental philosophy is that unlike male philosophers who made use of their suffering to formulate and/or legitimize their philosophical projects, Weil's self-starvation has been used by critics to dismiss her work. While Weil used her body as her raw philosophical material, so too did Nietzsche, for example. Although he "suffered blinding headaches, his is not interpreted as the 'philosophy of headaches'" (145). *Aliens and Anorexia* re-discovers a crucial differential between the treatment of men's and women's illness and initiates a reading of anorexia in relation to excess. Not only does Kraus resituate Weil's asceticism on a continuum with her male philosophical counterparts, but she also proposes that Weil's decreation through self-starvation—her porousness—was an opening and altering of her senses rather than an attempt to shrink away from her tactile world. Nietzsche and Weil might have shared an affinity for "gut philosophy" and physical suffering, but in Kraus's hands, Weil's ethics of experimentation leap all the way from modernism's ethos of transgression to post-modernism's drug-induced perambulations:

Aldous Huxley spent eight hours tripping out on mescaline. Simone Weil spent twenty years tripping out on content and causality...is there any wonder she starved? Huxley is not a manipulative girl. He is a distinguished and credentialed thinker, and so we take him at his word. Yet why do Weil's interpreters look for hidden clues when she argues, similarly, for a state of decreation? She hates herself, she can't get fucked, she's ugly. If she finds it difficult to eat, it must be that she's refusing food, as anorexics do, as an oblique manipulation...If the female anorexic isn't consciously manipulative, then she's tragic: shedding pounds in a futile effort to erase her female body, which is the only part of her that's irreducible and defining...Impossible to conceive a female life that might extend outside itself. Impossible to accept the self-destruction of a woman as strategic. Weil's advocacy of decreation is read as evidence of her dysfunction, her hatred-of-her-body (Kraus 27, 116, 128, 135).

Kraus's critical leaps arrive at what I think is a substantive and creative unveiling of anorexic ethics. Indeed, it is possible to read *Aliens and Anorexia* (generously) as critically performing the same saturation of content that Kraus proposes is the lure, the "trip," the "high" of self-starving bodies. Differently put, Kraus's critical/creative methodology recapitulates her understanding of what it is to be anorexic: a state of heightened porousness in which thinking and feeling too much enforce the body's exile from "home," as found in the usual narratives (scientific, social, political, biopolitical, evolutionary) that render eating a facile

and uncontested act. Kraus's Weilian equation is that porosity equals malabsorption: "the body is so fraught with information it becomes impossible to process food...the more you think, the more impossible it is to eat. The panic of altruism, tripping out on content, anorexia, all three are states of heightened consciousness, described as female psychological disorders. Does it matter how you get there?" (Kraus 138,135). By virtue of this equation, Kraus saturates her reader with alternative content to what has been provided by most literature on anorexia. If not an attempted avoidance of "femininity" (136), anorexia might be an empathic tool for feeling the uneven global social order of food and labor (129). If not read exclusively as a tragic enactment of an anorexic subject's negative feelings about her own body (142), then perhaps self-starvation is an experimental perceptual tool, an attempt to create a "high" comparative to the high offered by drugs (127). If not a desperate cry for attention (113), then perhaps anorexia is a transvaluation of values, an interrogation of food (through which socio-cultural values are handed down) in order to recognize the sheer impossibility of "home" (145). Read as an exhaustion of the virtual possibilities of anorexic traversals, Kraus's text is fittingly decreative rather than destructive.

Kraus offers an important allegiance with my dissertation's arsenal of thinkers working within feminist critical traditions, but unsatisfied with the litany of unquestioned associations between anorexia, beauty, body image, and self-esteem these traditions continue to produce. Kraus troubles these assumptions with her Deleuzian measure of anorexia as "the creation of an involuted body"

rather than the regression from or "evasion of a social gender role" (163).²⁸ I feel more comfortable with Kraus's Deleuzian, and indeed Weilian, formulations of self-starvation than I do with her own narrative. At times she connects anorexia to a state of bodilessness, elucidated by her metaphor of alien invasion. I wish to trouble this by refocusing on strands of Simone Weil's life and writing that Kraus leaves unexplored.

One of the many refrains of *Aliens and Anorexia* is a lament at the impossibility of women's transcendence of their bodily states, the sheer inconceivability "that the female subject might ever simply try to step outside her body" (142). Kraus's central thesis on anorexia is that it could (and should) be thought of as an attempt to leave the body altogether in order to reject our culture's cynicism transmitted through food (160). It is on this idea that Kraus and I begin to part ways, for I will continue to argue that dis-ordered eating is in its most glaring and important configuration, an engagement with desiring. There is no departure of one's body achieved through self-starvation, but quite the opposite: this is a recognition of the inescapability of bodies, and a collapsing of identity with bodily acts. To name just a few, the constant presence and measure of hunger; the feeling of the mind as one wandering, sensing organ among many; the twitching of muscles aching for physical activity; and the tactile pleasure of

²⁸ In fact, Kraus notes in *Aliens and Anorexia* that Deleuze's partner, Claire Parnet, was herself anorexic. I have not come across Deleuze's own statement to this effect, but it is interesting to note that *Dialogues*, which Deleuze wrote in conversation with Parnet, sustains his most elaborate account of anorexia. Branka Arsic's essay, "The Experimental Ordinary," formulates its accounts of peripatetic anorexic cook-models directly from *Dialogues*. I take this up in my third and fourth chapters.

sucking in an already-hollowed stomach. What do you do when you realize that you cannot leave your body? You change its shape. You experiment with its parameters. You navigate through space differently. You practice different modes of interfacing with socio-cultural and ecological assemblages. You give yourself over to perpetual motion. You distinguish less and less between the space of you and that which surrounds you. You extend and alter your body because departure and divorce from the physical are absolutely impossible without death. And with death, dis-ordered eating ceases too. Anorexia renders the body a strange, contested, wandering, and transposed space: absolutely, it does. But to suggest that anorexia is an invasion of the body (by either ideological or alien force) is to buy into the Cartesian mind-body scission and to negate the fundamental quality of "*rootedness* in the absence of place" (Weil). Invasion and involution are mutually exclusive.²⁹

As much as Chris Kraus wants to read Simone Weil as "the martian" from another planet, beautifully Other and prophetic because ill-equipped with the proper antibodies for her altruistic panics, I find it more useful to re-read Weil as a product of her specific environment, seeking to involve herself differently with the spaces surrounding her rather than narrowing her parameters for bodily acts. Weil died in a French sanatorium in 1943, at the age of 33, from tubercular starvation (the same ailment as Kafka). She had refused to consume more food than the official rations of ordinary people in France during the second world war,

²⁹ Perhaps another way of expressing the parting of my dissertation's trajectory with Kraus's work is to suggest that I am insisting on the importance of bringing material feminism to bear on *Aliens and Anorexia*.

and was depleted from years of factory and farm work that she chose to perform despite having no financial need. In the introduction to Weil's *Gravity and Grace*, Gustave Thibon describes Weil as "an intellectual who wanted to return to the land"(Thibon x) and eschew the comforts her wealth and privilege could have afforded her in favor of "an old, half-ruined farm" where, "though delicate and ill, she worked on the land with tireless energy and often contented herself with blackberries from the wayside bushes for a meal"(Thibon ix). "She had a rare fault," describes Thibon, "(or a rare quality according to the plane on which we place ourselves): it was to refuse to make any concession whatever to the requirements and conventions of social life" (ibid x).

I am drawn to Weil's "return to the land" in the final years of her life, and I am fascinated by the continued migrations that marked this return. Upon discovering that Thibon's farm afforded her special treatment, Weil "moved to another farm so that as a stranger among strangers she might share the lot of real agricultural laborers" (Thibon xii). I would intuit here that Thibon might have missed something about Weil's migrations which he reads as purely, simply, and non-secretively (xv) motivated by her philosophically- and morally-charged empathic tourism of physical laborers. To my mind, Weil's movement, rendering her one stranger among many meant that she could further enact her refusal to make concessions to the requirements and conventions of social life, particularly rituals surrounding food. Thibon's introduction reveals his restrained torment about Weil's bird-like, sparse diet of only blackberries to fuel hours of farm labor, as well as her depleted physical condition. I can imagine how difficult it might

have been for Weil to continue subsisting in this way beneath Thibon's tutelage and concern. Indeed the "special treatment" Thibon refers to might have felt like crushing surveillance to Weil, and the survival of her dis-ordered eating likely depended on movement away from the all-too-familiar. She had to remain exiled from "home," and to continue to peruse the unfamiliar: her anorexia (one means of her decreation) both required and occasioned it.

Chris Kraus admonishes critics for interpreting Weil's *Gravity and Grace* as her "anorexic philosophy." Contrary to Kraus's admonishing, I find this a rich point of critical departure. Rather than scorning critics' dismissal of Weil's philosophy of illness, I think it more beneficial to explore this philosophy generously in search of a critical/clinical tapestry of symptomatological inventions. Weil is not writing about having anorexia (this is a term she certainly never adopts). Furthermore, she is not talking of ontological states (of being anorexic), but of the productive sense events that dis-ordered eating can activate. Simply put, she is hungry while writing, and writing about what this hunger performs. *Gravity and Grace* begins with this hunger, as Weil writes "we imagine kinds of food, but the hunger itself is real: we have to fasten on to the hunger" (21). This material, philosophical, affective, and ethical rootedness in hunger is that which places the body in exile—in the absence of place (34). It allows for the preservation of "the interior void" (22), the "destruction of the power to say 'I'" which can only be achieved with extreme physical affliction (Weil 23). Weil further expostulates that "extreme affliction begins when all other attachments are

replaced by those of survival" (25), a state of decreation in which "we participate in the creation of the world by de-creating ourselves"(29).

Perhaps Weil's most poignant longing expressed in *Gravity and Grace* is "to see a landscape as it is when I am not there [as] when I am in any place, I disturb the silence of heaven and earth by my breathing and the beating of my heart" (89). Earlier, Weil writes that "we have to die in order to liberate a tied up energy, in order to possess an energy which is free and capable of understanding the true nature of things...We must become nothing, we must go down to the vegetable level" (*G&G* 81,82). On the one hand, these passages express a fatalistic anorexic drive to become impalpable and invisible: in *Gravity and Grace*, Weil explicitly and hauntingly laments "if only I knew how to disappear" (88). Weil also proclaims that "man's greatest affliction, which begins with infancy and accompanies him until death, is that looking and eating are two different operations. Eternal beatitude is a state where to look is to eat" (*ibid*). In "Decreation: How Women Like Sappho, Marguerite Porete, and Simone Weil Tell God," poet/philosopher/classicist, Anne Carson speaks to Weil's food refusal. Carson writes:

Simone Weil had a problem with eating all her life. Lots of women do. Nothing more powerfully or more often reminds us of our own physicality than food and the need to eat it. So she creates in her mind a dream of distance where food can be enjoyed, perhaps even from across the room merely by looking at it, where desire need not

end in perishing, where the lover can stay, at the same time, near to and far from the object of her love (Carson).

Carson conjectures that writing was, for Weil, a line of flight as “a writer may *tell* what is near and far at once” (ibid).

Like Heywood, Anderson, and Kraus, Carson connects not-eating with the severing (or alienating) of the body from environment, from the physical expressions of living and desiring. For Weil to involve her body’s senses with food beyond looking at it from afar (from across the room) would be pernicious to her particular systems for moving through thinking and living. Weil addresses these pointedly. Writing again of decreation, she advises that “we have to change the relationship between our body and the world. We do not become attached, we change our attachment. We must become attached to the all, to feel the universe through each sensation” (*G&G* 128). The question invited by this passage is whether Weil’s not-eating detaches her mind from her body *or* fastens to hunger as a technique of decreation? Does she enter states of detachment in the course of her self-starvation, or does she change her attachments? Weil’s professed fantasies of witnessing landscapes once no longer in them, of freeing latent forms of energy through death, or of becoming nothing by passing down to the vegetable level are just as provocatively ecological fixations—with becoming landscape itself, so connected, so spread out as to be imperceptible to the eye/I. The physical decompositions she writes of are decreations of the subject, but Weil’s notion of decreation is always compositional too. It anticipates a new form of sensation, a new way of feeling the Other’s suffering, an alternate mode of letting the world

seep in. Weil's anorexic, ethical, affective aporia evolves questions of how to tread so lightly in the world as to economize energies that precede and proceed human life. How to extend herself without perceiving of herself—without seeing or being seen? Not only do these questions anticipate Melville's *Bartleby*, and Kafka's Gregor (the next chapter's case studies), but it is also possible to read Weil's concerns in relation to Beckett's becoming(s)-worm (the case studies of Chapters 4 and 5). Weil's questions, I will argue, become more productive than aporetic³⁰ for Melville, Kafka, and Beckett.

The crucial distinction Weil offers is, I would argue, is between the void (hunger) as a rigid state of detachment and distancing from the world, and indeed from the material needs of bodies; and the void (hunger) as a series of acts and apprenticeships that render bodies more malleable, porous, and affective. She articulates a difference between hunger as a means of keeping the world out (moderating and limiting its access) and letting it in. But hunger does not let the world in so that we might find our place or feel at home, or revel in the comfort of the familiar, it is rather a sustainable process of nomadism, of exile, and of rootedness in the absence of place. Weil opens the possibility that hunger is an engine of action and engagement. When this vehicular process ceases to be sustainable, we enter the realm of destruction, but so long as movement precipitates changing relationships between body and world, Weil posits that we can manifest decreation. So what might it mean to call Simone Weil's philosophy

³⁰ I'm not suggesting that aporias are unproductive, however, one of my dissertation's contentions is that studies of anorexia are already caught up in the many impasses and paradoxes of eating disorders, and at times, we need to find ways out of these.

anorexic, as Chris Kraus asserts we ought *not* do?³¹ I am arguing for the value of deeming Weil a philosopher of anorexia, rather than an anorexic philosopher. The latter designation presupposes a static form of identification or representation. However, to assert that Weil's philosophy, conversant with her biographical penchant for self-starvation (Weil's body was her own matter of philosophical experimentation), is to offer a divergent analysis of self-starvation as an affective and empathic tool. Weil's version of anorexia is as perpetual askesis: emptying out, and voiding in order to let the world in, but with difference—constituting herself each time anew.

Part III- Deleuze's Literary Clinic

What health would be sufficient to liberate life wherever it is
imprisoned by and within man, by and within organisms and genera?

--Gilles Deleuze, "Literature and Life" 3

I know for a fact that sickness is easier. But health is more interesting.

--Marya Hornbacher, *Wasted* 280

³¹ In "Decreation: How Women Like Sappho, Marguerite, Porete, and Simone Weil Tell God," Anne Carson also criticizes this tendency, not only with regard to Weil, but to all cases of female "saints" or mystical women. She writes that "we need history to be able to call saints neurotic, anoretic, pathological, sexually repressed, or fake. These judgments sanctify our survival."

In moving from Deleuze to Weil, I am not leaving her notion of decreation behind, but rather demonstrating that the inventive force of literature, according to Deleuze's work in *Coldness and Cruelty* and *Essays Critical and Clinical* extends Weil's concept of the disarticulation of the subject to modernist literature's agency or vital health. In his work with Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze develops the exercise of schizo-analysis to escape restrained definitions of desire normalized by Freudian psychoanalysis. Refuting what they deem Freud's curtailment of all of desire to the Oedipal triangle governing the unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari replace the "neurotic" with the "schizophrenic." While the neurotic suppresses and represses desire (a version of desire conditioned by lack) only to have it eventually overflow, the schizophrenic prolongs desiring (a more active version of desire, the brining of matter to matter that produces life). One of the critical interventions offered by schizo-analysis, and indeed by Deleuze and Guattari's project as a whole, is the notion that desire is not repressed, but is instead the condition and catalyst of life, of vitality, and of affective movement. According to Deleuze and Guattari's reading of the various "neuroses" and "compulsions" of psychoanalysis, desire is the destructive force that must be buried and sublimated in order for life to be both manageable and meaningful—a process that constitutes singular subjects of enunciation. But according to the many "fluxes" and "flows" of schizo-analysis, there are no singular subjects, and enunciation is only made possible by the destructive/creative potentials of desiring. Simply put, the schizophrenic turns desire (a noun) into a verb so that Deleuze and Guattari can shift attention to what

desiring produces.

We might read *Coldness and Cruelty* and *Essays Critical and Clinical* as literary close readings, “case studies” offering reading strategies alternative to the therapeutic and diagnostic methods. Deleuze’s literary clinic is an extension of the schizo-analyst’s³² schizophrenic vocation, guiding us through the symbiotic unfolding of life and literature. If literature does not represent life by vesting it with significance and meaning, then what do we do as readers? How do we approach literary texts if not by granting them with some semblance of authority or control over the material world? Deleuze answers these questions by proposing that “a text is merely a small cog in an extra-textual practice. It is not a question of commenting on a text by method of deconstruction, or by other methods, it is a question of seeing what *use* it has in the extra-textual practice that prolongs the text” (qt. in Smith, “A Life of Pure Immanence,” xvi). Claire Colebrook explains Deleuze’s literary project in relation to material feminism. In “On Not Becoming Man: the Materialized Politics of Unactualized Potential,” she writes that “literature does not create concepts—the ideal or immaterial orientation or problem that must be expressed through some material language—for literature, like all art, allows matter to stand alone, to vibrate” (76). Literature is not the expression *of* life, but is instead “taken from life as it is lived (in relations) and given a separate, monumental, and intensive being” (Colebrook 77). There is a Spinozist inflection here as Colebrook and Deleuze point us away from questions of representation and towards a pragmatic empirical investigation: What does the

³² The schizo-analyst is he/she who finds ways to harness the powers of schizophrenia without necessarily being schizophrenic.

text do? What does it mobilize? What are its valences off of the page? How does it pass through and move with life rather than mastering it, seeing it, transcending it, capturing it—all of which require harnessing productive forms of desiring. For Deleuze, literature and life are landscapes that appear—or become sensible—only by virtue of their perpetual mobility (*Essays* 5).

In *Coldness and Cruelty* and *Essays Critical and Clinical*, the pervading encounter between literature and life is coordinated via medicine and psychiatry. According to Deleuze, medicine is made up of at least three focal activities. 1) *Symptomatology* is the study of signs. 2) *Etiology* is the search for causes. 2) *Therapy* is the development and application of treatment (Smith xvi). Deleuze then offers another distinction within the realm of symptomatology, which, not surprisingly, he finds more useful than the other two clinical focal points listed above. “Medicine,” he writes, “distinguishes between symptoms and syndromes, a symptom being the specific sign of an illness, and a syndrome, the meeting place or crossing point of manifestations issuing from very different origins and arising within variable contexts (*Coldness* 13,14). The striking feature of symptoms, especially as they converge, overlap, and are called upon to formulate different diagnostic matrices, is that they refer to sets of behaviors that can traverse space and time. Different “disturbances,” “disorders,” or “diseases,” for example can share the same symptom. A disease thought “cured” centuries ago can have symptoms that re-emerge in the present. The value of this non-diagnostic, yet still clinical/critical analysis is that it allows for a micro-politics of connection and extension. Once we shift the clinical and critical focus from what anorexia *is* to

what anorexics *do*, then we can account for symptoms interacting with properties, ideas, expressions, environments and sense events that are porous rather than fixed. While anorexia is indisputably linked to female embodiment, it is also connected to other modes of bodily comportment.³³³⁴

³³ I discuss this point at length in Chapter 4.

³⁴ To add to the trans-historical, trans-geographical and trans-species (point to follow) dimensions of symptomatology, I would add that there can also be a trans-gendered component. One of the recent trends in medical research on eating disorders is an attempt to uncover a genetic and neurological link between anorexia/bulimia nervosa and autism spectrum disorders. Symptomologically, there is a tremendous behavioural overlap between the two: repetition, rigid thought patterns, attention to detail, difficulty interpreting emotions and a diminished appetite for social interactions. And furthermore, some of the difficulty autistic individuals reportedly endure with the interpretation of facial expressions has been recently found correlative to anorexic patients' inability to parse facial expressions and emotional cues (Schmidt, Treasure, Zucker). Current president of the Academy for Eating Disorders, Janet Banker notes that this scholarship suggests that anorexic behavior could be understood as a temporary lapse into autistic cognitive behavior (qtd. In Svalavitz). While men comprise only 15% of eating disorder diagnoses in North America, an inverse statistic is the case for autism (80% diagnosed are male). I am unable to shed light on the efficacy of these medical studies, but I do wish to point out that a symptomatological study of both "illnesses" in relation could potentially shift the ascription of eating disorders to distinctly "female maladies" provoked by patriarchy.

Autism spectrum disorders, unlike eating disorders, are never interpreted as exacerbated by men's low self-esteem and negative body images. To add anecdotal weight to this discussion, my brother (expressing many of the traits of autism, specifically Asperger's Syndrome) and I (expressing many of the traits of anorexia) often forged our *only* sibling solidarity around food: food fighting, food hoarding, calorie counting, food restricting, bingeing, dinner-time high-jackings, and revolts against the enforced social regimes of eating. The point is not that autism and anorexia share a cause, or that anorexia is a female version of autism. My point is that the shared expressive events of both "disorders" call into question some dominant feminist and psychiatric scholarship understanding anorexia's properties as bound-by-femininity. Deleuze's point is that the convergent sense events of both anorexia and autism (the 'symptoms') call for the invention of different critical/clinical tapestries that depend on morphing physical acts, events, and environments, rather than the molar aggregates of diagnostic logic. It is not that my brother *is* (identifies as) autistic, and I, anorexic. It is that our relationship (and I'm speaking just as much of our biological/neurological/genetic make-up as

Deleuze suggests that “etiology, which is the scientific or experimental aspect of medicine, must be subordinated to symptomatology, which is its literary, artistic aspect. Only on this condition can we avoid splitting the semiological unity of a disturbance, or uniting very different disturbances under a misbegotten name, into a whole arbitrarily defined by non-specific causes” (*Coldness* 133,134). To unpack, literature (the critical) and medicine (the clinical) are mutually-inclusive in their exercises of anticipating, observing, creating, mapping, and exploring symptoms. Gregg Lambert is helpful in describing this process as a “strategy of reversing the institutional priority of the two functions, critical and clinical, either by investing the clinical object with a critical function, or the critical with a clinical determination, and thereby folding one operation onto the other” (Lambert 139).

Deleuze demonstrates these enfolding operations with his case-study of sadomasochism in *Coldness and Cruelty*. In both literary (critical) construct and psychiatric (clinical) designation, medicine has borrowed from the study of literature, and according to Deleuze, would evolve even more generatively if it engaged more carefully with Masoch’s literary texts. While psychiatry has understood Masochism as the underbelly of Sadism, Deleuze argues for a far more complex relational web between the two that requires the literary method in addition to the symptomatological method:

The critical (in the literary sense) and the clinical (in the medical sense) may be destined to enter into a new relationship of mutual

I am of our social interactions and kinship) is sometimes forged by a connection between autistic and anorexic occupations involved with dis-ordered eating.

learning. Symptomatology is always a question of art; the clinical specificities of Sadism and Masochism are not separable from the literary values of Sade and Masoch. In place of a dialectic which all too readily perceives the link between opposites, we should aim for a critical and clinical appraisal able to reveal the truly differential mechanisms as well as the artistic originalities (*Coldness* 14).

This mutually-compelling relationship between art and medicine is clarified in *The Logic of Sense*:

Authors, if they are great, are more like doctors than patients. We mean that they are themselves astonishing diagnosticians or symptomatologists. There is always a great deal of art involved in the grouping of symptoms, in the organization of a table where a particular symptom is dissociated from another, juxtaposed to a third, and forms the new figure of a disorder or illness. Clinicians who are able to renew a symptomological picture produce a work of art; conversely, artists are clinicians, not with respect to their own case, or even with respect to a case in general, rather, they are clinicians of civilization (*L and S* 237).

Citing Nietzsche's famous claim that "artists and philosophers are physicians of culture," Deleuze contributes the reverse: that doctors performing symptomatological studies can also participate in the creative, inventive processes of artists and philosophers. In other words, the diagnostic languages of "diseases"

and “disorders” become an aesthetic—and indeed an ascetic—exercise.

I want to come back to my introduction’s discussion of Foucault’s latter two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* to instigate a dialogue between Deleuze’s literary-aesthetic-asketic clinic, and Foucault’s ethico-aesthetic-asketic somatechné of pleasure and self care. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault accounts for the modern medicalized subject, born out of an oppressive clinical gaze. By the end of the 18th century, the increasing power of the medical clinic meant that “the emergence of clinical practice” enabled “a language without words, possessing an entirely new syntax to be formed: a language that did not owe its truth to speech, but to the gaze alone” (Foucault, *BOTC* 69). Symptoms became signs (ibid 92), as gaze and speech collapsed into “one discursive formulation of knowledge. [M]edical experience...succeeded in striking a balance between seeing and knowing” (ibid 55). An instrument of enlightenment, the modern clinic became, according to Foucault, a powerful site for the discursive construction of subjects along visual and representational axes of signification.

Perhaps we can consider the difference between Foucault’s genealogy of the modern medical clinic and the revised clinic invoked by Deleuze’s work. For Foucault (as for Deleuze), clinical practice is tied to natural history. Foucault proposes that the discursive clinical mapping of symptoms/signs demanded the same observational tools “to isolate features, to recognize those that are identical and those that are different, to regroup them, to classify them by species or

families” (ibid 89). But there are three crucial differences between Deleuze’s literary clinic and Foucault’s illumination of the medical clinic. First, Deleuze’s critical/clinical practitioner does not access knowledge through the instruments of the gaze. Second, Deleuze’s clinic is not tied to language and signification (to meaning-making exercises) so much as to the material productions of sensing and feeling. And third, for Deleuze, the point of critical/clinical exploration is to *release* the classification of species and genera along genealogical and kinship lines. Instead, Deleuzian symptomatology follows inter-species involvements (involutions), mapping shared “symptoms” produced by and productive of different affective milieus, encounters, and becomings.

By identifying Deleuze’s departure from *The Birth of the Clinic*’s medical gaze, I intend to think through a completely different clinical vein in Foucault’s *The Use of Pleasure* and *Care of the Self*. Confronting Greek philosophy, Foucault locates a divergent “medical” practice that is more conversant with Deleuze’s critical/clinical literary enterprises of “health.” Before the birth of the modern clinic—before “the question of law begins to modify the themes of art and techné (Foucault, *Care* 68)—there was, according to Foucault’s genealogy, a more extensive symbiotic relationship between philosophy and medicine. He writes that for the Greeks, “medicine was not conceived simply as a technique of intervention, relying in cases of illness, on remedies and operations. It was also supposed to define, in the form of a corpus of knowledge and rules, a way of

living, a reflective mode of relation to oneself, to one's body, to food, to wakefulness and sleep, to the various activities, and to the environment" (Foucault, *Care* 99). In detailing Greek medico-philosophical apparatus for problematizing the environment and the body in relation (to positing the body "as fragile entity in relation to its surroundings"), Foucault provides Antyllus's analogue between medicine and architecture, both engaging the "variables of a house...its orientation, and its interior design. Each element is assigned a dietetic or therapeutic value, a house is a series of compartments that will be harmful or beneficial as regards possible illnesses" (ibid 101).

While Deleuze and Guattari employ a paradigmatic shift from their reading of Freudian psychoanalytic notions of desire (premised by lack) to desiring (the vital, material condition of movement and production outside of the theatre of the unconscious), Foucault's final two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* replace discussions of desire with pleasure. Equally unwilling to relinquish desire to the unconscious, Foucault's orchestration of pleasures (what he sometimes calls *aphrodisia*) are agentic practices performed, prolonged, and modulated by virtue of the body's sites of encounter: the visceral/digesting/ruminating body, the body in composition with its environmental/seasonal/temporal milieus, and the body navigating through architectural/social/sexual sites of intra-action. For Foucault, observance of each of these energetic frequencies and sensory events amounts to an aesthetic, artistic exercise of existence. The Greek subject—unlike the modern

medical subject—observes and practices a regimen of bodily pleasures, intensities, and experiments in order to fashion life as an ethico-aesthetic work of art.

Both Foucault's and Deleuze's critical, clinical projects conceive of the possibility of health outside of a normalizing clinical gaze (Foucault) and "dominant health" (Deleuze). For both, health is, quite simply put, that which increases powers to act, to relate, and to connect. In a Spinozist turn, a healthy body is a body that increases its power to affect and be affected. This is the post-Nietzschean (Deleuzian and Foucauldian) formula we might arrive at once we have cast off the moral impetus to define "good health" in opposition to "bad health." If for Deleuze health is determined by a body's capacity to perpetually move (to affect and be affected), then politics too—micropolitics—would adopt these mobile, organic, and fluid properties. Just as organic health is made possible by the creative and constitutive forces of desiring (which might well require the disintegration of the organic body, or the organized concept of good health), the exercise of political health is undertaken only once politics can "have done" with the molar aggregates of identity. Assembling requires disassembling.

This is why, for Deleuze, politics, like "literature begins only when the 3rd person is born in us that strips us of the power to say 'I'" (*Essays* 3). As with the bodily and the political, "health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people who are missing" (*ibid* 4). The healthy Deleuzian body will invent

gestures, movements, affects, and sense events, fluid sites of composition with objects, environments, sensations, and other bodies. This process is described by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* as the formulation of “desiring-machines,” and later in *A Thousand Plateaus* as building a “body without organs” through the composition of non-individuated singularities, or “haecceities.”

When it comes to a healthy Deleuzian political field, we are again in the realm of invention and experimentation: a healthy political body, or a political body without organs, will map changing constellations of involvement and encounter between the material forces of bodies and ideas. And, finally, Deleuzian literary health—specifically, literature’s clinic—makes possible the extraction of non-pre-existing clinical symptoms and behaviours, giving rise to symptomatology: the inventive clustering of these symptoms to create an illness (or a health, for that matter) that has yet to come. This process of literary invention, according to Deleuze, is called “fabulation,” without which *good* writing would not exist: “the ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, in this creation of a health, in this invention of a people, the possibility of a life” (1997; 5). Contrary to the understanding of writing as a therapeutic enterprise and to the perceived role of literary criticism in some psychoanalytic traditions, Deleuze proposes that:

we do not write with our neuroses...not that the writer would necessarily be in good health...but he possesses an irresistible and

delicate health that stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless giving him the becomings that a dominant and substantial health would render impossible (ibid 3).³⁵

The crucial emphasis of the passage is its invitation to interrogate dosages of illness and health. How much chaos is too much? How far can the writer travel into exile before getting completely lost? How much illness before health is blocked? How much disassembling to allow for the continued processes of assembling? How to incarnate the powers of schizophrenia without producing a schizophrenic? At what point does illness become no longer a process itself, but an arresting of the process of life? Without these questions, one might read Deleuze's project as an espousal and romanticization of illness; a celebration of mobility at the cost of responsibility. If there is a Deleuzian orientation to responsibility, it is precisely in this modulation of doses to allow for continued life, and continued health (but of course the Deleuzian version of health manifested by the exhaustion of the possible). Deleuze is proposing askesis (an exhaustive process of emptying) only insofar as it occasions an extraction of the non-pre-existing (fabulation), a form of writing "for a future that the present cannot recognize" (Grosz 117).

³⁵ I take up this passage again in Chapter 4 by emphasizing the connection between disordered eating and exhaustion.

Here is what I see as the most tenuous point of this chapter, and perhaps of my dissertation as a whole. I find Deleuze's reading of the critical and clinical enterprises of literature instrumental in its potential application to disordered eating. With the help of Deleuze, I show that some of the practices constitutive of disordered eating, some of the manifestations of anorexia and bulimia, are congruent with the many ways Deleuze (and Deleuze and Guattari) formulate immanence. But also with the help of Deleuze, it is imperative to show that these sensory experimentations can be taken too far. There is no immanence without mobility, and no mobility without life. My project's reading of disordered eating engages with the "healthful" (in the Deleuzian sense) properties of anorexic expression, while acknowledging their very real dangers. I am extracting post-clinical anorexic modalities from modernist literature in order to exhaust critical possibilities. Perhaps the most useful critical/clinical lesson about anorexia offered by Deleuze's literary clinic is that one cannot just stop with the emptying of the body, but that every instance of the void requires replenishing, and that this voiding/replenishing is the fundamental condition of material, literary, and political production (of desiring-production). A hollowed anorexic body is not vital if it is no longer capable of sustaining action-in-relation, and therefore, the anorexic affect explored by my dissertation assumes life as its fundamental point of departure, but a life that is still open "to the becomings that a dominant and substantial health would render impossible" (Deleuze, *Essays* 3).

While I continue to work with Deleuze's illumination of the critical-clinical action-in-relation of self-starving bodies, the next section moves into a more specific symbiosis: that of modernist literature and dis-ordered eating. Many of the literary figures I claim as anorexic and bulimic, Deleuze and Guattari have already claimed as anti-Oedipal philosophical heroes or conceptual personae: namely, Beckett's schizophrenic desiring-machines, along with Kafka and Melville's becomings-animal. While I am interested in anorexic and bulimic confrontations with some of capitalism's mode's of production,³⁶ my aim is not to reproduce Deleuze and Guattari's vision of schizo-analysis by simply trading the schizo for ana.³⁷ For me, Deleuze's work on Masoch in *Coldness and Cruelty* is more generative. With schizo-analysis, there is an outright dismissal of clinical enterprise (particularly psychoanalysis), but with symptomatological critical/clinical practice, Deleuze becomes more interested in generating creative compositions and affinities between the physician and the philosopher—and literature becomes the most apt grounds for his appeal. By suggesting that sadomasochism “is a syndrome that ought to be split up into irreducible chains” (Deleuze *Coldness* 14), Deleuze proposes, quite simply, that *we need to go back to read* so that “the critical (in the literary sense) and the clinical (in the medical

³⁶ This is the topic of Chapter 3.

³⁷ Ana (anorexia) and Mia (Bulimia) are the terms used in pro-ana communities to describe a set of behaviors and investments at a distance from clinical diagnoses of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

sense) may be destined to enter into a new relationship of mutual learning” (ibid 14). Unlike masochism and sadism, anorexia nervosa does not have literary beginnings. My introduction detailed the diagnostic histories of anorexia nervosa, which are fascinating social, political, and economic constellations of events for which literature has been mostly left out. While I am acknowledging that the clinical subject of anorexia nervosa (*the anorexic*) is not made from literature, I am proposing that multiple creative enunciations of dis-ordered eating might emerge from the modernist literature I take up. I am arguing that we need to *go back and read*: to consult and cavort with some of modernist literature’s disorderly eaters that have been left out of the critical and clinical imaginations of anorexia. It could well be that Weil, Melville, Kafka, and Beckett invent—or express—a different set of symptoms, previously unthought by approaches to anorexia mirabilis, holy anorexia (Bell), chlorosis (Morton), hysteria of the gastric centre (Gull), *l’anorexie hystérique* (Laségue), and anorexia nervosa.

By engaging with Deleuze’s tripartite arrangement of the field of medicine (symptomatology, aetiology, therapy), I am exposing that feminist discussions of eating disorders focus almost exclusively on aetiology (what has caused the disorder?) and therapy (how can we treat the disorder?), thereby leaving symptomatology almost completely aside.³⁸ My thesis has been that once

³⁸ This is despite the fact that anorexic and bulimic aetiologies are still unknown. While corporeal feminists are convinced of the discursive aetiologies of women’s self-starvation, they cannot speak to physiological,

opened to the symptomatological study of what anorexic bodies do—of what sorts of connections are made possible by dis-ordered eating—the critical and clinical picture of anorexia extends beyond male/female and literature/life divides. And furthermore, I am positing that this richer understanding of anorexic affect opens channels for the possible redirection of these affects away from death and disconnection. By dialoguing with Deleuze’s notions of “life” and “health,” my aim has been to set up the conceptual vocabulary operative throughout my dissertation, and to move feminist discussions of anorexia away from normalizing and moralizing tendencies to read anorexic bodies as socio-culturally contained—whether passive, reactive, or pathological.

biological, or neurological causes. And while medico-scientific researchers speak to anorexic effects on physiology, biology, and neurology, they are still uncertain of its aetiologies. This strikes me as a poignant moment where the critical and the clinical could enter into mutual learning practices.

Chapter 2

Transposing the Table: Anorexic Currencies in Melville and Kafka

It was not intended for any specific purpose, for anything one expects of a table. Heavy, cumbersome, it was virtually immovable. One didn't know how to handle it (mentally or physically). Its top surface, the useful part of the table, having been gradually reduced, was disappearing with so little relation to the clumsy framework that the thing did not strike one as a table, but as some freak piece of furniture, an unfamiliar instrument... There was something stunned about it, something petrified. Perhaps it suggested a stalled engine.

--Henry Michaux qtd. In Deleuze and Guattari, *AO* 6

Chapter 1 proposed a methodological backdrop for the literary case studies I develop in this chapter. Here I demonstrate the possible functions of literature's anorexic symptomatology. Often, sustained case studies are absent in feminist scholarship on anorexia seeking to distance itself as far away from "the clinic" as possible. I employ case studies because their shared critical and clinical valences might be a way to follow a more creative, inventive, and affirmative (less institutionalized) version of clinical practice. To reiterate what my previous chapter implied, I find Deleuze's projects in *Coldness and Cruelty* and *Essays*

Critical and Clinical most useful because with these texts he exhausts the resources of modernist literature to build something in place of psychiatric models of illness.

This Chapter is divided into two case studies: the first, Herman Melville's, *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, and the second, Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." I use *Bartleby* as an allegory of the failures of diagnostic and representational logic. What the narrator-attorney repeatedly fails to grasp is that *Bartleby's* fast is meaningless: while his self-starvation produces varied sense events, it has no identifiable meaning. This lack of content—emptiness, void, askesis—implicates the attorney in a foolhardy search for *Bartleby's* past, his identity, and for the aetiologies of his strange behaviors. In focusing exclusively on questions of why (why he prefers not to, why he refuses to move, why he does not eat), the attorney forecloses explorations of what these acts produce. In other words, the attorney's hermeneutic strategies mime what I consider to be the limitations of many appraisals of eating disorders. My analysis focuses on what *Bartleby's* self-starvation does. He is neither ghost, nor cipher, but innervates a curious affective resonance in composition with the other indigestive bodies in his midst, and partakes in a sensory economy that thwarts the operations of capitalism and the law.

I am opening this chapter with a case study of *Bartleby's* anorexia because Melville's text asks questions that are reinforced—and, at moments—answered by Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." *Bartleby's* narrative is never his own. His fast is ineffectively interpreted/interlocuted by the attorney. Gregor Samsa's, narrative, on the other hand, grants us access to Gregor's extensive bodily acts

performed precisely when no one is watching. Therefore, the second section of this chapter builds on the first. I consider the currencies of disordered eating in Kafka's own life, in "A Hunger Artist," and especially in "The Metamorphosis." Gregor Samsa is the most compelling figure of self-starvation for my dissertation. His narrative offers a spectacular case study of anorexic affect. The less that Gregor eats, the more he feels and moves. With his increasingly paralyzed human carriers of significance, Gregor experiences a symbiotic extension of animal (or insect) capacities to explore the connective surfaces of his conative body. His fast is just as meaningless as Bartleby's and the hunger artist's, but reciprocally more sensorily involved.

Case Study #1. Living Without Dining: Anorexic Economy in Melville's
Bartleby, the Scrivener

Gregor Samsa and Bartleby, the Scrivener are narrative figures connected by their manipulations of hunger, food, space, and economy. From an insect released from his job as commercial traveler, to a "cadaverous," (Melville 6) "stationary" (Melville 11) man whose apparition unseats the symbolic economy—as well as the economic space of "the office"—both Gregor and Bartleby "live without dining" (Melville 13). Whereas my discussion of "The Metamorphosis" will focus primarily on the hypermobility of Gregor's fast, this case study considers Bartleby's suspension in a state of dynamic immobility. Bartleby does not travel, but he does move; his own body does not traverse space, but instead enervates its transmutation. We might say that Bartleby is motionless but still moving. My

discussion has two related dimensions. First, I consider the text's dramatization of (in)digestion as one means of unsettling the economic machinations—the ordered operations—of the office of the law. And second, I argue that the text dramatizes the failures of interpretation, recognition, and representation, offering a paradigmatic shift from morality to ethics. As with Kafka's works, much has been made of "Bartleby, the Scrivener." There is a cultish celebration of this text within philosophical circles, as it is used to embody elephantine political dilemmas. According to Deleuze, Bartleby's "formula" is the unprecedented invention of a logic of preference that undermines and explodes the symbolic operations of language, logic, and desire. For Derrida, Bartleby represents the ethical aporia (the possible impossible) of responsibility. On Hardt and Negri's account, Bartleby is a figure of refusal and "absolute purity...hanging on the edge of an abyss," and thus inciting the humble beginnings of a "liberatory politics" (Hardt and Negri 203, 204). And for Agamben, Bartleby, a *muselmann*, illuminates the power of pure potentiality maintained through a radical form of passivity.

In its most recent political expediency, Bartleby's inscrutability has been borrowed and reproduced to characterize a socio-political movement of passive resistance. One *Occupy Wallstreet* poster, for example, reads "I would prefer not to, May 1st: No work, no school, no banking, no housework, no shopping. General Strike"(see Greenberg, "Wallstreet's Debt to Melville"). For all of Bartleby's stoicisms, his heroisms, and his famed transgressions within philosophical and political circles, very little attention is paid to his anorexia. Dis-ordered eating is, in many ways, the text's under-acknowledged cipher. How would the above-quoted *Occupy Wallstreet* poster function if "no eating" was included in the list of

activities worth striking? What would it mean for Deleuze, Derrida, Hardt, Negri, or Agamben to herald Bartleby's self-starvation as perhaps singularly responsible for his vagrancy, his radicality, or his pure potentiality? Of course "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is irreducible to an allegorical tale of anorexia. But so too is anorexia irreducible to its common allegories. Symbiotically, I will demonstrate, both forms can re-imagine their material function outside of the representational aggregates of allegory.

Section I. Dyspeptic Production

I began my dissertation with Branka Arsic's claim that "to call anorexia an eating disorder is to suggest not only the existence of a phantasmatic origin but also a fantasied order since it is to suggest that there is a proper eating order" (Arsic, "Experimental Ordinary" 36). While Arsic's succinct statement echoes throughout my dissertation, it seems immediately relevant to "Bartleby, the Scrivener." Her assessment of the impossibility of ascribing any order to eating proves a useful point of departure for exploring the peristaltic dilemmas played out in the text. For, when it comes to the attorney's account of his legal office, digestion never functions with any regularity. Bartleby is not the only employee to conduct himself in a disorderly fashion with food. The legal office seems to produce dyspepsia just as dyspepsia is integral for the legal office's production. One very clear way that relations form in *Bartleby, the Scrivener* is through digestive imbalances. Independently, Turkey, Nippers, Ginger-Nut, and Bartleby are all disorderly eaters: their imbalanced digestive energies prevent them from conducting

proper and productive lives within the space of the legal office. In short, their consumptive irregularities undermine their productive output.

Singularly, the lawyer's copyists fail to function. But symbiotically, they perform a resilient working order, sustaining the office's ecology: a strange system of relations in which dysfunction perpetuates production. Before turning to the employees' function-through-relation, I wish to consider their individual digestive inadequacies. Turkey's dietetic imbalance occurs, with surprising regularity, after lunch: "in the morning, one might say, his face was of a fine florid hue, but after twelve o'clock, meridian—his dinner hour—it blazed like a grate full of Christmas coals; and continued blazing...till 6 o'clock, P.M. or thereabouts" (Melville 1). "Altogether too energetic," "inflamed, flurried, flighty," and recklessly active, Turkey's afternoon indigestion results in his inability to perform his copying (1). Turkey's agitated mid-day energy causes him to overturn his inkstand (9), to blot his ink, to make a "racket with his chair," to "spill his sandbox," to split all of his pens to pieces in an attempt to mend them, and to throw his office tools on the floor in frustration and indignation, "inflamed with augmented blazonry, as if cannel coal had been heaped on anthracite" (1). Furthermore, by Nipper's account, Turkey cannot afford to purchase clothing to replace his clothes ("apt to look oily and smell of eating-houses") because he spends his money "chiefly for red ink" (2). Said differently, Turkey is just as compromised in acts of production as in acts of consumption.

Compared to Turkey's reddish hue, Nippers possesses a "sallow" complexion (2). His energetic disposition is less heated and impulsive than it is agitated, nervous, anxious, and irresolute. Diagnosed by the lawyer as suffering in

the grips of “two evil powers—ambition and indigestion” (Melville 2), Nippers is perpetually on the move. “Irritable,” “nervous,” and “testy,” he grinds his teeth, and writes with a “swift hand” (2). While Turkey is prone to impulsive and impassioned outbursts, Nippers is more conditioned by compulsive restlessness. He “hisses maledictions” rather than speaking them, and is perpetually modifying his working space, never happy with the relation of his body to the objects in its environment:

discontent with the height to the table where he worked. Though a very ingenious mechanical turn, Nippers could never get [his] table to suit him. He put chips under it, blocks of various sorts, bits of pasteboard, and at last went so far as to attempt an exquisite adjustment by final pieces of folded blotting paper. If, for the sake of easing his back, he brought the table lid at a sharp angle well up towards his chin, and wrote like the man using the steep roof of a Dutch house for his desk:-then he declared that it stopped the circulation in his arms. If now he lowered the table to his waistbands and stooped over it in writing, then there was a sore aching in his back...[He] would sometimes impatiently rise from his seat, and stooping over his table, spread his arms wide apart, seize the whole desk, and move it, jerk it, with a grim, grinding motion on the floor, as if the table were a perverse, voluntary agent... In short, the truth of the matter was, Nippers knew not what he wanted (Melville 2).

While Turkey's raised heat upsets the office's climate, it is Nippers' incessant, restless movement that unseats (quite literally) "the stillness of [the] chambers" (2).

As confining and reductive as the lawyer's diagnostic and narrative capacity for understanding his world often seems, he also manages to usher the reader toward an exploration of each character (particularly Turkey, Nippers, and Bartleby) as constellations of sense events, one in relation to the other. While the lawyer is overzealous about morality, charity, and humanism, he also unfolds a rather nuanced approach to what I have called the office's dyspeptic production. Turkey is not simply a failed employee because slovenly, sweaty, and prone to a heated energetic constitution. And Nippers is never really held accountable for his perpetual state of being here-nor-there, for his indecisions, or for his ceaseless fidgeting. Rather, the lawyer understands Turkey's and Nippers' disorders as opportune: one imbalance requires, supports, and amends the other. As he suggests, Turkey's and Nippers' "fits relieved each other like guards. When Nippers' was on, Turkey's was off and *vice versa*" (2). Turkey conducts himself productively in the morning hours, while Nippers' can only stop his indigestive and ambitious fits of nervous energy in the afternoon—a symbiotic system of production and relation that the lawyer recounts as "a good natural arrangement under the circumstances" (2).

Ginger-Nut, a third employee, is even kept on (it would seem) for the sole purpose of "purveying cakes and apples" (2), performing snack-runs in order to sustain the digestive dis-order of the office space. As a literarily tropic fool figure,

the attorney is a vessel for misunderstandings that perpetuate understandings. He is curious figure. On the one hand, as a conglomerate of diagnostician, capitalist, and legal authority, Melville's lawyer participates in and enables a non-fordist office, an "unhealthy" space where relations of production are balanced because they are broken. In this sense, he has created an alternative capitalist space by participating in a strange anti-capitalist form of movement. But even though an alternative space for production, the office's law still cannot accommodate Bartleby.

Introduced as "a motionless young man" (3), the lawyer's reception of Bartleby's "great stillness"(5) becomes less generous as his "occupation of wallstreet" progresses. His "cadaverously gentlemanly *nonchalance*" (6), when read most generously by the lawyer, allows that not even "a wrinkle of agitation ripple[s] him" (3) in his "serene and harmless... ways" (12). When the lawyer can allow for such interpretive generosity, Bartleby's immovable and unchangeable energetic force sustains the office's dyspeptic-production-through-relation. Indeed, it is as though Bartleby's dietetic disturbance produces an energetic charge that compliments (through opposition) the digestive imbalances of the office space: Bartleby's "great stillness, his unalterableness of demeanor under all circumstances, made him a valuable acquisition. One prime thing was this—*he was always there*;—first in the morning, continually through the day, and the last at night" (5). Bartleby's benefit is precisely his tendency to stick, and his steady consistency in relation to Turkey's and Nipper's more erratic constitutions. In *Bartleby, the Scrivener's* office ecology, Turkey heats, Nippers mobilizes, and

Bartleby stabilizes.

Unlike Turkey and Nippers, Bartleby does not suffer from fits of indigestion and hyperactivity. Instead, he seems to exert only enough energy to remain unwavering in his stationarity. This is a truly fascinating economy. Bartleby's stillness is not passive in this text, but invites us to think through the muscular expenditures required for immobility. Bartleby exerts exceptional force to remain still, and reciprocally, the force of his stillness is felt as exceptional. Instead of moving, he enforces and incites the movements of those around him. Bartleby's capacity to affect is the dilemma I explore in the next section, but here I want to consider the sensory economy occasioned by his unrest (or what Deleuze would call exhaustion).³⁹ Bartleby disturbs production because he prefers not to. While the office's assembly line of copying stops squarely at Bartleby, we might think of instead of his production of assemblages. Turkey, Nippers, Ginger-Nut, and the Attorney all have to move around Bartleby: they are required to take on more tasks, they eventually have to move to another office, and the attorney is literally 'unseated' for the entirety of his narrative. Bartleby instigates movement by remaining perfectly immovable. His fast yields a different version of speed. This is not capitalist speed tied to efficiency, but a version of momentum connected to affect. Bartleby's fast transposes the temporal and spatial dimensions of production.

To conclude this section, it proves useful to consider Bartleby's food refusal more carefully, always bearing in mind that this is only ever narrated through the

³⁹ I consider exhaustion at length in Chapter 4, when I discuss Beckett.

lawyer's misreadings and misdiagnoses. It would seem that Bartleby does eat—albeit scarcely and off-scene—during his employ as a copyist. Even though the lawyer observes that “he never went to dinner...never visited any refectory or eating house...indeed...he never went anywhere” (4,6), Bartleby is one of Ginger-Nut's (the office purveyor of eponymous biscuits) repeat customers. The lawyer's interpretation of this observance is worth reproducing at length:

He lives, then, on ginger-nuts, thought I; never eats a dinner, properly speaking; he must be a vegetarian then; but no; he never eats vegetables, he eats nothing but ginger-nuts. My mind then ran on in reveries concerning the probable effects upon the human constitution of living entirely on ginger-nuts. Ginger-nuts are so-called because they contain ginger as one of their peculiar constituents, and the final flavouring one. Now what was ginger? A hot, spicy thing. Was Bartleby hot and spicy? Not at all. Ginger, then, had no effect upon Bartleby. Probably, he preferred it should have none (4).

This is an apt demonstration of the lawyer's logistic challenge in the face of alternative dietetic propositions⁴⁰. If he *is* not a “proper” diner, then Bartleby must *be* a vegetarian. But what would it mean to *be* a vegetarian? It must *mean* eating vegetables? But Bartleby never eats vegetables, so he must *be* something other. He must *be* what he eats, and he eats ginger, so he must *be* hot and spicy. But he

⁴⁰ Indeed anyone who has ever taken an alternative dietetic trajectory (vegetarianism, veganism, locavorism, raw foodism, slow foodism, etc), will likely relate to this passage. Foucault claimed that dietetic choices were more important to the Greeks than sexual ones, but I think that dietetic perversions are still just as troubling to normativizing impulses (backed by dominant health, science, evolution, industry, etc) as sexual ones.

is neither. So what now? The lawyer cannot function outside of notions of being and meaning. Bartleby is unidentifiable: we do not know who he is, what he is (or has), or why he “lives without dining” (13). His history, identity, and aetiology is completely indecipherable. All we can know (and only at times) is what Bartleby does. This passage provocatively points to the text’s central tension: *Bartleby, the Scrivener* is never about its title character. Rather, it is about the confused processes of reading, identifying, diagnosing, understanding, and representing him.

The lawyer/doctor tries: at times genuinely and generously, and at times neither. We have to fail to read Bartleby as any one thing—or as anything at all—because this is the affective exercise that the text pleads for. The only way to approach Bartleby is to be moved by him. And it is only in fleeting action that the lawyer can touch upon, or feel that Bartleby has moved him. My understanding of “Bartleby, the Scrivener” is that it is an assault to the practices of reading, identifying, and knowing. Those approaches fail to yield a satisfying—a digestible—experience of this text. As a reader, it is easy to replicate the lawyer’s frustrated hermeneutical impasse, and thus to forget that *Bartleby, the Scrivener* is an exploration of indigestion and forms of desiring-production mediated through this gustatory dis-order.

In an attempt to creatively understand Bartleby’s excessive ginger-nut consumption, Branka Arsic argues that the attorney “is right to the extent that incorporation of any ingredient is likely to destabilize the already-existing mixture of substances we call the body” (70), but that, ultimately, Bartleby is a ginger

“junkie” who employs the substance for its laxative effects (making the body emptier and lighter) and for its narcotic effects (suppressing spasms of pain) (Arsic 70-73). As intriguing as I find the reaches of Arsic’s proposition, her experimentation with Bartleby’s different possible identities in *Passive Constitutions* prolongs the attorney’s mistakes. Is it any better to suggest that Bartleby is “the junkie” than it is to misname him as “the scrivener”? I would rather add an idea to her list of possibilities that veers focus away from identity and onto an ethics, as to critically experiment with Bartleby’s identity as a “junkie” is, I believe, to undermine the text’s investment in anti-representationalism. I could easily argue that Bartleby *is an* anorexic, but, again, such an appraisal would reproduce the attorney’s representational logic. Bartleby *is not*. He acts. He starves. He prefers not to. He sticks. He stays. He attaches. He exhausts. He sits. He sleeps. He eats ginger-nuts (supposedly). He affects. He mobilizes the bodies around him.

I would argue that the lawyer’s inquiry into the properties of ginger—a “hot, spicy thing” (4)—re-channels the reader, to explore eating as a practice of bringing matter to matter. In *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*, Jane Bennett unfolds a reading of foods as agential substances, “as conative bodies vying alongside and within an other complex body (a person’s ‘own’ body)” (Bennett 39). It seems an obvious point that food matter is equipped with the productive power to “generate new human tissue” (40) and “alter affective states” (41). But Bennett’s posthumanist intervention is to grant food matter agency, intelligence, and creativity: she grants it “strivings and trajectories” with the

capacity to enhance and alter human “wills, habits, and ideas” (43). Bennett yields an interesting digression, pointing to Bartleby’s power via assemblage.

The attorney’s recourse to the affective intra-action of food matter and body matter is only fleeting. His conclusion that Bartleby is neither hot nor spicy, and therefore completely impervious to the affects of ginger (and anything else, for that matter), is an all-too-hasty return to what the text repeatedly dramatizes as a hermeneutical impasse. That Bartleby does not perform the hot and spicy qualities of ginger as part of his identity does not foreclose the possibility that the energetic charge of ginger affects and alters the energetic constitution of his body. Notable is the fact that Bartleby’s stillness becomes ever more catatonic once he can no longer occupy Wallstreet. Perhaps without access to Ginger-Nut’s heating and mobilizing purveyances, and without capacity to modulate his energetic constitution in balance with the office’s ecology, Bartleby experiences decline, stagnation, and decomposition. He can no longer create composite relations with the material bodies in his midst.

Gert Buelen’s and Dominiek Hoens’ discussion in “Above and Beneath Classification: *Bartleby*, *Life and Times of Michael K*, and Syntagmatic Participation” (2007), argues that *Bartleby* narrativizes what can be summed up as a failed encounter. In moments like the one quoted above, they propose that the lawyer has “replaced encounter with recognition. Our job as readers, we could speculate... is to allow the encounter to take place” (Buelen and Hoens 11). I am committed to this argument. And yet I struggle to find modes of analysis that prove adequate to the task of allowing the encounter to take place. A first step, I

have argued, is to shift focus away from the attorney's stagnant logistic attempts: to consider function-in-action rather than identity. To my mind, the task of reading and writing about *Bartleby, the Scrivener* is to avoid the compulsion to fix and affix Bartleby's "condition." The attorney manages this task more skillfully with Turkey and Nippers. He is comfortable with their dyspeptic production, comfortable with their derangements of the office space, and capable of viewing their digestive irregularities as complementarily oppositional.

With Bartleby, he almost gets it: there are textual moments of encounter where the lawyer manages to create space enough to feel and sense Bartleby as a relational force, or as a body with the capacity to move (to affect), but these are prematurely relinquished for the sake of profundity. The lawyer's concluding lament, "Ah Bartleby! Ah Humanity!" (13), occurs similarly to Gregor Samsa's epiphanical appeal to music as the nourishment he craved. These are textual moments where the process of encounter is abruptly seized by the espousal of a level of depth that disrupts the interplay of surfaces. Differently put, only by keeping Bartleby emptied of content (of psychological depth, of preference, of cumulative nourishment) can we affirm the operations of his anorexic affect (his dynamic immovability, his action-in-relation, his exhaustion, his linguistic invention, and the fasting speed of his transpositions).

Part 2. "Stationary you shall be then:" Bartleby's Rootedness in the Absence of Place, and Transcribing Activity as Passivity

There has been a tendency in critical analysis of *Bartleby, the Scrivener* to replicate an understanding of Bartleby's stationarity as a form of "radical passivity" or "passive resistance" (Agamben, Davis, Brown, Arsic). The lawyer's narrative names Bartleby's force as such: as an "unintentional" act of "passive resistance" (Melville 4). But even against the lawyer's egregious (mis)reading, I would argue that these are striking misnomers. The analytical hurdle of each of my case studies—and the clinical/critical tendencies which plague understandings of eating disorders—is a reinterpretation of the void, or the emptied body as a condition of possibility rather than negation. Simply put, Weil, Deleuze (Kwinter and Kafka in the next section) have helped me to suggest that the void can be a qualitatively and quantitatively positive space rather than a negative one. Comparatively, this case study's critical deadlock is the association of immobility and stillness with passivity, and in Bartleby's case, death. I would suggest that *Bartleby, the Scrivener's* version of immobility is active, agential, and affective. Bartleby's fast might be slow, steady, and unwavering (especially compared to Gregor Samsa's, Molloy, and Murphy's), but it is still active and momentous. Just as I will argue in the next case study that Gregor's self-starvation (his fasting) slows and re-navigates the hurried motion of his former "commercial" and "conventional" life, so too does Bartleby's: a fasting, but "motionless young man" (Melville 3), he unsettles the office's (and the law's) requisite speed and compulsory production.

Bartleby's manifestation of dis-order is through radical immobility and self-starvation. He is stationary (11). A "perpetual sentry in the corner," (4) and a

“millstone” (8). “Bartleby move[s] not a limb” (7). He is a “fixture in [the lawyer’s] chamber” (8) who refuses to concede to make any motion at all (8). When the lawyer is forced to move his operations elsewhere due to Bartleby’s enigmatic immobility, he becomes “the motionless occupant of a naked room” (10). And when Bartleby can no longer access the office’s interior space, he “persists in haunting the building generally, sitting upon the banisters of the stairs by day, and sleeping in the entry by night” (12). In *Passive Constitutions: 7 1/2 Times Bartleby*, Branka Arsic suggests that “the law moves out of the office” (93) which is one event that points to the ways in which “Bartleby’s passivity is in constant motion” (Arsic 99). She elaborates that *Bartleby, the Scrivener* is a grappling with the relationship between being and doing, appearing and acting: “Is there a being without doing and must we do (something) in order to be?...Bartleby, I want to suggest, is Melville’s effort to find an exit from the vicious circles that equate doing and acting. In order to achieve that result, Melville [has] to invent nothing less than a different ontology: a being that is not doing” (Arsic 134, 140).

I would like to dialogue with—and challenge—Arsic’s argument by navigating her questions away from ontological considerations. What she asserts as Melville’s questions about the relationship between being and doing are, to my mind, more productively explored in a discussion of ethics. The first step in this transposition requires an interrogation of Bartleby’s presumed passivity. Does Bartleby act? Does he do (something)? I believe so. I think it is imperative to re-channel Arsic’s sense that “the law moves out of the office” (93). Is it not more so

that Bartleby moves the law (out of the office)? The law does eventually uproot Bartleby's position: off-scene, he is dragged away to prison as a vagrant whom the legal, social, and economic order cannot appropriately classify or regulate. What was Bartleby's unrest becomes his arrest. But for the duration of Bartleby's Wallstreet occupation (his employ as a legal copyist, his sole inhabitation of the newly 'naked room,' and his stationarity on the steps of the building) his agential. His constitution is active, not passive. For most of the text, I would suggest that Bartleby in fact moves the law. His refusal to budge is precisely the energetic force that accounts for the text's affective resonances. It moves the lawyer, the employees, the office, the law, and of course, the reader.

My previous section focused on Bartleby's energetic constitution in relation to the other employees' bodies, and in particular, to the varied productive momentums of their digestive dis-orders. I argued that Bartleby's stillness is active rather than passive, and his self-starvation relational instead of hermetic. Gillian Brown writes of Bartleby in her article, "The Empire of Agoraphobia," that his "anorexia secures the agoraphobic division of self from world, home from market" (Brown 147). Referring to his self-starvation as a "perfect self-enclosure" (147), Brown asserts that Bartleby's "anorexic politics of radical...immobility...elaborates death as the best mode of self-preservation" (Brown 150). Brown's analysis is prescient in its acknowledgement of anorexia as a failed micro-politics of attempted self-preservation and survival within the confines of macro-political ordinances for capitalist production. Following Brown's essay, Bartleby's anorexia is his only recourse in the legal office/system:

it is the only way he can be the subject of his own confinement.

I began this case study by admonishing the philosophical and political valences of Bartleby's heroism for their failures to make mention of the fact that his self-starvation (perhaps to the point of death) instigates all other transgressions. Brown's intervention in the critical tradition of Bartleby, the Scrivener is, for me, a necessary one. That said, I find her understanding of anorexia as a form of "self-enclosure" to be at best, cursory; and at worst, oblivious to sensory happenings in the text. My last section was a lengthy argument against reading Bartleby's eating and fasting behaviours as hermetically sealed from the rest of the office and world. On the contrary, I have argued that his acts surrounding food consumption can be read as a process of involvement with the organic and organized dyspeptic derangements of the office space. I will return to Brown's invocation of death as the only effective means of anorexic self-preservation. But first, I would like to focus more on the ways that Bartleby moves the lawyer. Against Brown's notion of Bartleby's anorexia as a "perfect self-enclosure," the text repeatedly depicts Bartleby's permeation of the lawyer's space and sensibilities: a process of extension rather than seclusion.

At first, the lawyer attempts to move Bartleby. He "abruptly call[s] him...in...haste and natural expectancy of instant compliance" (3). "Hurriedly" insisting that Bartleby match the speed of his capitalist appeals to rapidity and efficacy, the lawyer is initially disappointed by the fact that his new copyist will not quicken in submission, not only to him, but to the larger system of production and exchange demanded by the office of the law. This is an interesting point of

dialogue between *Bartleby, the Scrivener* and “The Metamorphosis”. With the proceeding case study, I argue that Gregor’s fast instigates his removal from the temporal demands of his former existence as a commercial salesman. My discussion focuses on Gregor’s fast-fuelled invention of differential modes of travel: one means of sensory exploration enhanced in the course of his self-starvation. For Bartleby, as I have proposed, this occurs differently because the text is not about him, and gives us very little access—if any—to what Arsic calls his “being without doing” (140).

Perhaps what is more interesting about “Bartleby, the Scrivener” is that our only account of the eponymous and enigmatic figure is through the lawyer’s fleeting observations of how Bartleby moves, deranges, affects, and unseats him. The lawyer’s interlocutions of Bartleby’s fast fail to make meaning, but they certainly make sense. Following Deleuze’s reading of the text in “Bartleby; or, the Formula,” it is the attorney who “starts to vagabond while Bartleby remains tranquil” (“Critical Clinical” 76). Bartleby’s first move is to slow the office’s pace of production, and to intervene in the lawyer’s haste. Shortly after Bartleby’s first utterance of “I *prefer* not to,” the attorney “staggers” back to his desk (5), unsure of an appropriate response. It is as though Bartleby’s stillness conflicts with and produces the lawyer’s differential movement, now impeded from functioning at a more industrious speed. In addition to bringing the force of inertia to bear on the office’s systematic circulation, Bartleby also alters the speech patterns of those in his midst. The lawyer, Turkey, and Nippers all find themselves ventriloquizing Bartleby’s “queer word”: *prefer* “involuntarily rolls from [their] tongues” (7). In

other words, Bartleby alters the course of the office's communication.

Related to these physical movements, Bartleby's comportment sends the lawyer into an affective state of suspension in which he can innumerate peculiar new feelings that move him, but is incapable of pinning down their exact meaning or moral implication. The lawyer claims to be "upbraided" (10), "unmanned" (4,6)⁴¹, and "strangely disarmed...but in a wonderful manner touched and disconcerted" (4). This dynamic is at its most volatile and deranging in the final instances of the text. The lawyer has professed to have "torn" himself away from the "cling" of Bartleby's stickiness, his immobility, and yet seeing him imprisoned in the Tombs:

strangely huddled at the base of the wall, his knees drawn up, and lying on his side, his head touching the cold sones, [he] saw the wasted Bartleby. But nothing stirred. [The lawyer] paused; then went close up to him; stooped over, and saw that his dim eyes were open; otherwise he seemed profoundly sleeping. *Something*

⁴¹ In Beckett's *Molloy* and *Murphy*, both eponymous figures refer to their unmanning or their exiles from manhood. Following the trajectory of Deleuzian immanence, this "unmanning"—a distancing from molar subjectivity—would be the first step toward effectuating becomings. It is interesting to observe that in Beckett's texts, as well as Melville's *Bartleby*, disordered eating instigates an un-manning or de-masculinizing. And, to recall my discussion in Chapter 1 (as well as to anticipated my discussion in Chapter 3), women's self-starvation is often read as a failed attempt to embody the power, privilege, control, self-discipline, and heroism discursively constructed as masculine. Why, I want to ask, is it that the same acts are read as diametrically opposed when performed by men and women? Why do we give the molecular forces of self-starvation over to men by reading women's anorexia as a failed process of molarization? I take up becoming-woman in Chapter 3.

prompted me to touch him. I felt his hand, when a tingling shiver ran up my arm and down my spine to my feet" (my emphasis, 13).

This moment is complex because even in Bartleby's most catatonic state, he still possesses an energetic and affective charge. Like Gregor Samsa, Bartleby ceases to see and look (Deleuze, "Formula," 76). While his eyes are still open in this passage, they no longer seem to register visual stimuli. And similar to "The Metamorphosis," seeing is replaced with feeling. In a haptically charged moment, Bartleby physically moves the attorney with a transfer of energy that can only be read as active. Is he alive? Is he dead? These states continue to be completely irrelevant to the text. He *is* neither alive nor dead because he *is* nothing. He simply does: "he lives without dining" (13). To re-invoke Arsic's notion of a Melvillian (or Bartlebian) ontological state of "a being that is not doing" (140), I would like to offer a revision. This climactic textual moment expresses a form of doing that is not attached to being, or to a singular being (or body). The lawyer touching Bartleby and being touched by him: this is an encounter, a material exchange, an assemblage made possible only outside of recognition, and representation. In other words, conversing with Arsic's analysis, I would assert that Melville's effort—his dilemma—is to explore agency outside of ontology. Can we accept and engage doing without making recourse to being?

The lawyer cannot. His final sigh, "Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!" (13) navigates the reader away from the encounter, back toward the symbolic order of operations. Bartleby's final "sleep with kings and counselors" (13) marks a narrative return to the lawyer's preoccupation with his misguided responsibility to

the other: what he calls “cheaply purchase[d], delicious self-approval; a sweet morsel for [his own] conscience” (4). Indeed, the lawyer’s final act of “charity” is the most difficult to swallow. He finds his palpable reasons, meanings, proofs, and explanations, filling Bartleby’s indentificatory void, and once again subordinating doing to being. In the final paragraph, we find that Bartleby “had been a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office” (13), and thus suffered an occupationally hazardous form of depression from “continually handling” death (13) for extended periods of time. This final paragraph serves to cheapen Bartleby’s experience, as the lawyer can finally satisfy his own need to identify the causes or aetiologies of Bartleby’s “condition.” Differently put, in order to give weight to a satiating diagnosis, the lawyer abandons what seemed a far more complex symptomatological study. The productive space of indigestion is suppressed by a more calculable, digestive order.

Our job as readers, then, is to dwell in the dyspeptic production abandoned by the lawyer in the text’s last breaths, which is my way of suggesting what Buelens and Hoens call “allowing the encounter to take place” (11). Yet another way of inhabiting the critical/clinical space of symptomatological study (rather than diagnostic recognition) is to transition from a focus on morality to ethics. I see this as the momentum that informs my dissertation as a whole. Each thesis, each case study, and each chapter (both independently and in relation) evolves a different way of practicing this gesture. *Bartleby, the Scrivener* is a crucial text to my dissertation because it dramatizes the difficulties of such a transposition, and its central cipher figure is a self-starver. I want to resist using Bartleby as a

prototype, or worse, as a metaphor for dis-ordered eaters. But I also want to posit the value of approaching the lawyer's attempted (and ultimately failed) interlocutions of Bartleby's askesis in connection with critical appraisals of eating disorders. Favouring a diagnostic method of analysis, these readings reproduce the attorney's search for meaning, essence, and aetiology. Is anorexia a Bartlebian formula: the materialization of a logic of preference, hollowing out a "zone of indetermination," or a "growth of nothingness" of the will (Deleuze, "Formula" 71,73)? I think this notion just as rich as contemporary feminist interpretations of anorexia as a patriarchally-manifested disorder caused by women's disconnect and discontent with their bodies. To say that dis-ordered eating is any one thing, however, is beyond the scope of my dissertation and my desire. Anxious not to reproduce the attorney's failures, my investment is in the potential affects of dis-ordered eating. What I can argue with certainty is that the interpretive impasse occasioned by Bartleby's self-starvation brings something very tangible to studies of anorexia, and that my own understanding of anorexic practice alters the ways I navigate through *Bartleby's* dilemmas. My final point before concluding this section is rendered through Deleuze. I want to sketch out more deliberately than I have thus far how I am using the notion of a critical/clinical shift from morality to ethics, and to clarify how I view this in relation to Deleuze's symptomatological method of textual and extra-textual analysis. This is the method I propose in Chapters 1 and 2 of my dissertation, and perform in chapters 3, 4, and 5 as one possible way of sustaining an engagement with anorexic immanence. In his book, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1970), as well as his published course lectures on

Spinoza, Deleuze candidly clarifies the difference between questions of morality and those of ethics. If we are to follow Spinoza's thinking (as well as Nietzsche's), then ethics involves a completely different approach: it is not morality in its more localized iterations as it quite often used. To approach Spinozist ethics, we first have to understand how conative bodies function. Bodies are sensory happenings or events that occur "when a certain composite or complex relation of movement and rest is preserved through all the changes which affect the parts of the body" (Deleuze "Lectures"). As the permanence of relations of movement and rest (ibid), bodies do not exist anterior to their capacities for infinite compositions. Spinoza's philosophy calls these capacities for material exchange and encounter, affects, while Deleuze's philosophy experiments with different (creative and specific) valences of affective encounters: the BwO, assemblage (or *agencement*), extension, becoming-animal, involution, exhaustion, and haecceity are those that seem most relevant to my dissertation. A study of ethics, then, is an endeavouring to explore the body in its potential, composite formulations. While a study of morality could be performed from the purview of material relations, Deleuze claims that Spinoza is never a philosopher of morality "for a very simple reason: he never asks what we must do, and always asks what we are capable of, what's in our power" ("Lectures"). Ethics is a problem of power; morality is a problem of duty.

To build on this distinction, morality, as system of judgment, implies a power superior to the power of ontology, to the power of being (ibid), and therefore, "always refers to transcendent values" (Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 23). The

matter of morality is always essence (what is man? What is good? What is healthy?). The matter of ethics, however, is existence: action not necessarily attached to essence (of what are bodies capable? What can a body do? How is a particular sensory event possible?). In Spinoza's philosophy, the body/mind "exists according as we sense it" (Spinoza, *Ethics* 72). Existence made conceivable through sense: there are no value judgments performed by ethics, but instead a perpetual, "conceptive" (Spinoza replaces perception with conception because he views the latter as more active) (ibid 97) mode of agency.

I want to be careful not to misuse Spinoza's (and Deleuze's, for that matter) ethics as a ticket to the complacent acceptance of any bodily event—even if horrific—as sensorily and affectively rich. It is possible that my dissertation will frequently rub against this sort of resistance. Built into Spinoza's ethics is a very clear insistence that bodies as perpetual vessels of action-through-relation depend upon a powerful affective dynamic of composition in order to exist, and in order to continue to do (to permanently recompose). De-composition halts this process. De-composition means that a body is no longer momentous and capacious. De-composition is what Simone Weil situates as destruction (altogether different from decreation). So building on Deleuze's assessment that Spinoza never situates a philosophy of morality, I think it imperative to note that there is one organizing moral principle in his thought. That is, that we must (a statement of duty and responsibility) increase our capacity to affect and be affected. Otherwise, there is no possible engagement with an ethics. This is indeed the rub of Weil's, *Bartleby's*, Kafka's, Gregor's, the *Hunger Artist's*, and *Bartleby's*, Molloy's and

Murphy's dis-ordered alimentionation—of all of dis-ordered eating for that matter: that this is a material practice that needs to continue to evolve, relate, and re-compose. The title of my dissertation is *Anorexic Affect* because without the process of becoming, the order of dis-ordered eating is essentially restored: organic breakdown happens because we know it will. Once anorexia becomes geared toward de-composition, death, decline, and destruction (without the thrust of renewal, recomposition, and differential mobility), vital compositions are impossible, and so too is an engaged and sustainable ethics.

In the case of *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, the critical question is less whether or not Bartleby has sustained an anorexic ethics, and more whether or not the lawyer has engaged Bartleby's anorexia in accordance with the ethical process I sketched above. The obvious answer to this is that he has not. His eventually fulfilled hunger to make Bartleby's life, death, and illness mean something—mean anything at all—is only self-involved⁴², and his final narrative forecloses the possibility that Bartleby's starvation could continue to become something other. This failure, I would like to propose, points to a perfect intersection between

⁴² I want to emphasize the possibility of different forms of hunger. The lawyer's hunger is different from the self-starver's (Bartleby's) hunger. Some versions of hunger are to alert the brain to the body's need for re-filling (or the body's preference for satiety). But I wonder if the self-starver's hunger is often unattached to this preference, or to this sense that the void must be filled. I am thinking of a conative version of hunger which might be to sustain the body's strivings, volitions, compositions, and momentums. In other words, the point of this hunger is never satiety. This is focus of Chapter 4 because I think it is connected to Deleuze's distinction between the affects of exhaustion and tiredness. But I suppose, at this point in my dissertation, it is still compelling to think through the different affective compositions of the hungry body.

diagnostic and moral appraisals of dis-ease. The lawyer's repeatedly proclaimed sense of duty to humanity and his niggling desire to pinpoint Bartleby's exact affliction (handicapped? Blind? Dumb? Depressed?) seem to emerge from the same place of authority, and recall us to the same appraisal of essence. As I have argued, the attorney does relate his exploratory, but temporary, moments of ethical engagement. His attempted interrogation of ginger's properties is one⁴³, and his final shiver upon touching Bartleby is another. Here, the lawyer's focus is so exhausted by the possibilities of Bartleby's relations of movement and rest (by questions of what and how) that he forgets to ask questions of why. In these short-lived events he manages a symptomatological approach rather than a diagnostic one because what matters is the existence of peculiarities and particularities, and not so much the larger, more definitive—diagnostic, moral, representational, symbolic—picture.

These spaces of tension and complexity in “Bartleby, the Scrivener” open beautifully onto Gregor's anorexic modes of expression. While these are not the same as Bartleby's, they do share many affinities. My aim is not to redefine anorexia through Bartleby or Gregor, but instead, my hope is to critically re-compose complex relations that form through varied, mutually-involved, and symbiotically-evolving processes of dis-ordered eating. As I have argued, Bartleby's food refusal is misused when allegorized; for Bartleby *is* nothing. The attorney cannot represent him. If the text offers a compelling allegory, this is in its illustration of the sensory events that unsettle representational logic—a lesson that

⁴³ I discussed this at the end of the last section.

bears repeated scrutiny when faced with a body of scholarship on anorexia that reproduces the attorney's hermeneutic strategies.

Case Study #2. Kafka's Hunger Artistry

When it became clear in my organism that my writing was the most productive direction for my being to take, everything (all those abilities which were directed towards the joys of sex, eating, drinking, philosophical reflection, and above all music) rushed in that direction...I simply dieted in all those directions.

--Kafka, 1976, 163-164

In this famous passage, Kafka narrativizes his starvation diet as a curiously economical affair. The less he fucks, eats, drinks, reflects, and listens, the more he can produce. The less energy he expends on living a full, varied, capacious and healthful organic life, the more energy he can conserve for his literary enterprise. In some ways, Kafka yields his extreme dieting as a pragmatic solution to the capitalist subject's dilemma of time and expenditure: how to use one's time effectively, how to produce the most in the shortest time possible, how to navigate between competing impulses for productivity and leisure (what he calls the "other joys"). Indeed, Kafka's multi-directional fasts seem a potential solution to an economy of accumulation premised on speed and efficiency. His fasts exempt him from the metric pulses of production, enabling a working system with virtually no waste. Time is not wasted. Energy is not mis-channelled. And still, work is produced, but all the while resisting biopolitical tenets of robust organic health,

longevity, and balance.

Some critics have argued that this passage channels a modernist ethos of transcendence, alienation, and sacrifice, suggesting that Kafka gives over his body to his mind, abandoning the needs of his organism entirely to the needs of his writing craft. In a letter to his fiancée, Felice Brauer, Kafka clarifies that he does not have an "interest in literature," but that he is "made of literature" (qtd in Anderson, 32). Leslie Heywood proposes that these passages reject not only "the body in order to institute the primacy of the spirit, but...[Kafka] expresses the need to cut out and separate himself from anything like a personal, empirical existence as the necessary condition for the production of texts" (71). Similarly, Malcolm Pasley depicts Kafka's writing process as impervious to the demands of his body and world. He argues that "Kafka's works shut themselves off so emphatically from the empirical realities of life, as well as from everything 'in the air' around him" (274). In line with these readings, Mark Anderson proposes that "writing required from Kafka an ascetic disciplining of the body, a corporeal rejection of the world's nourishing pleasures...The fat of empirical existence is trimmed away [so that he may] get at the core of an essential writing self" (Anderson 32,33). This critical picture of Kafka's writing process is ensconced in refusal, negation, stasis, alienation, and starvation: he moves away from the organic body (Heywood), from the "fat" of the land (Anderson), and even from particulate matter 'in the air' (Pasley). Writing in a prophylactic bubble, hermetically sealed from the material world, Kafka's critical characterization bears unmistakable resemblance to that of the anorexic, similarly understood as eschewing physical needs, pleasures, social conventions, as well as positive

relationships and interactions.

I would argue that these critics have missed the possibility that Kafka's approach to writing is deeply embodied: that instead of a bodiless, creative "spirit" cordoning his self off from the material world, the passage quoted above asserts Kafka's working knowledge of his body as a tactile, energetic system of production. By blocking (or starving) certain channels (or "abilities"), he anticipates the repletion of others. Less seems to be more here, as, for me, Kafka intuits a bodily ecology of relational sense events, or affects. What connects Kafka to Chris Kraus, to Simone Weil, to Richard Morton's first clinical glimpse of an anorexic patient, is that self-starvation becomes the material vehicle for something more—for some other form of nourishment. From Kafka's literary expediency, to Chris Kraus's empathic saturation, to Simone Weil's decreation, to Morton's voracious anorexic reader, dis-ordered eating in each of these accounts acts as an enabling frequency with which bodies can re-channel organic energies (previously used for feeding and digestion) in order to differently actualize ideas, environments, and movements. In other words, Kafka, like Weil, expresses the ascetic void of hunger and food refusal. As critical/clinical readers we might not ask what the void represents so much as what the void enables, or how the void is progressively filled and re-filled. The empty body is the body in its most virtual/possible form, and the critical question ought to be what can/will this body do next?

Guided by this Spinozist ethical/affective/ethological question, I am focusing on Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." I argue for a connection between Gregor Samsa's starving "in all directions" and Kafka's own productive fasts. This

is not by means of insisting upon the written text as a vehicle for its author's neuroses and ailments. Rather, I am interested in the critical and clinical symptoms of self-starvation that Kafka invents through Gregor Samsa. Just as I proposed in Chapter 1 that we might re-read Simone Weil's work as creating a situated philosophy of anorexia, I am arguing that "The Metamorphosis" participates in the invention of a symptomatology of dis-ordered eating. My previous case study of *Bartleby, the Scrivener* suggested that Melville dramatizes the attorney's diagnostic/legal attempts at representing Bartleby's self-starvation, gesturing toward the need to replace a hermeneutics of anorexia with a more creative critical/critical form of encountering the material forces of disordered alimentation. While Melville leaves us with a sense that we are not yet equipped with the affective capacity required to "treat" Bartleby, Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" stages a more prolonged encounter with the conative processes of self-starvation.

Like Weil, Kafka is both physically hungry and writing about physical hunger. A 1988 paper published by the University of Munich proposed evidence for the hypothesis that Kafka "suffered from an atypical anorexia nervosa," a term that he never personally adopted to describe his failing physical health. Like Weil, Kafka died of tubercular starvation in a sanatorium (1924). Severe thoracic lesions meant that he could not so much as swallow without significant pain. As for Weil, Eating seemed a contested and complicated act in Kafka's life: he was a vegetarian for long stretches of time, railing against his father (a butcher's) consumption of flesh. His food restrictions were paired with a certain hyperactivity or reckless physicality, and a detrimental need for excessive fresh

air;⁴⁴ he left windows open throughout the winter and refused to wear warm clothing when cold. In 1918 he even resorted to gardening for want of physically laborious occupation.⁴⁵ Kafka's orientation to "health" seems a strange affair. He was both patently obsessed with his worsening physical condition (frequently seeking out stays in sanatoriums for 'rest cure') while also disdainful of the offerings from traditional medico-science and psychology. "Fad" or "nature cures" of the time held his interest for their more positive approach to health. In her essay, "The Experimental Ordinary: Deleuze on Eating and Anorexic Elegance," Branka Arsic proposes that Kafka "worked at evading the universal law that one has to eat in order to live. Not only was he a vegetarian who found pleasure in contradicting his sanatorium neighbor according to whom 'a meat diet [was] absolutely essential,' advocating the perverse common-sense idea that thinking depends on eating life" (Arsic 39). Quoting Kafka's lament that, "unfortunately...food wouldn't disappear from the plate save by being swallowed," (ibid 39), Arsic argues for a Deleuzian interpretation of Kafka's hunger as striving to be free "free from the call for dinner" (ibid) and the loaded social, political, moral, and economic sensibilities handed down through this

⁴⁴ Again, Morton's "skeleton clad only with skin," "poring over books," and exposed to the "injuries of the air" comes to mind. As does a famous literary self-starver from the 19th century, Catherine Earnshaw. In Charlotte Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1947), Catherine submits herself to what seem hysterical bouts of self-starvation, ending in a "hunger strike" to her death. The closer to death she becomes, the more insistent she is on keeping her window open, despite the cold "injurious" air. Part of this is to be closer to Heathcliffe, who also systematically starves himself to the point of decline while wandering the Moors. Brontë's own life was equally marked by cycles of self-starvation.

⁴⁵ Beckett was also an avid gardener, and Weil an enthusiastic farm labourer.

interpelative call to subjectivity. In Arsic's hands, Kafka's starvation is not an attempt to leave his body, but an engagement with lightness and unrest.⁴⁶

I have no investment in outing Kafka as an anorexic, although he explores the complexities of food, movement, illness, and health from the purviews of the anorexic économie, ecologies, and ethologies I map in the proceeding three chapters. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1989), Deleuze and Guattari position Kafka's entire textual corpus as "a long history of fasts" (20). To write, they argue, is to "transform[] words into things capable of competing with food," because writing performs a deterritorializing of the mouth, tongue, and teeth "which find their primitive territoriality in food" (19, 20). Fasting enables (or perhaps enforces) alternate navigations between bodies and environments, bodies and ideas, and sensate bodily expressions (literally feelings 'beside one's self'). In other words, following Deleuze and Guattari, to fast is to give way to affective sense events that throw the organism into what can amount to a creative or destructive—but hopefully a decreative—upheaval.⁴⁷ This is a crucial reconsideration of some psychoanalytic connections between eating and incorporating, where we ingest, digest and expel the other. Here identification occurs as the fortification of the membrane between self and other, "I" and "not I," body and environment. Turning to Deleuze and Guattari, however, along with

⁴⁶ It is surprising to me that Arsic's book on *Bartleby* (discussed in the previous section) never connects Kafka's self-starvation with *Bartleby's*, instead exploring different versions of how *Bartleby's* mysterious identity might play out. I am curious as to why, for Arsic, Kafka's dis-ordered eating expresses a desire to be freed from signification, while *Bartleby's* indicates the need for re-presentation.

⁴⁷ I will consider Deleuze and Parnet's discussion of anorexic elegance more directly in Chapter 4, as this is the basis for Arsic's interpretation of Kafka's self-starvation.

Weil, Kraus, Melville, and Kafka, fasting performs nearly the opposite function: it eradicates boundaries between body and environment, rendering the organism more porous and changeable, a smoothing of the body through its encounter(s).

Deleuze and Guattari present a case for the symbiotic emergence of fasting and writing as productive forces of becoming (or to re-invoke Weil's terminology, as catalysts for decreating). Just as fasting perpetually re-aligns the body's organs of digestion, the invention of a minor literature temporarily re-constitutes the function of written language, making us nomads or exiles (Weil) within our previously-familiar systems of signification. Kafka manages to make the German language inhospitable by "oppos[ing] a purely intensive use of language to all symbolic or even significant or simply signifying uses of it. [He] arrives at a perfect and informed expression, a materially intense expression" (19). Simply put, Kafka's writing enhances the material properties of language in order to re-position or alter its function. This material intensity is achieved by voiding the symbolic, representational, and signifying aggregates of any given language—an act that has little to do with establishing and interpreting meaning and everything to do with enacting *agencement* or assemblage. This is a symbiotic hollowing of content and engorgement of expression. It is useful here to return to the theoretical groundwork of my last chapter because Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor literature in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and Deleuze's concept of literary health in *Essays Critical and Clinical* are connected. Rooted in the absence of place, "literature is a passage of life that traverses outside the lived and the liveable...the writer often returns from the land of the dead and is himself or herself 'a stranger to life'" (141). But this exile from 'life' ultimately affirms the

enterprise of health: "Writers do not experience their aloneness from the perspective of this world, from this or that society, or from the presence of others who exist, but rather from the perspective of another possible world or another community that these figures anticipate, even though the conditions for this community are still lacking" (151). So it is the emptying out (askesis) of the familiar that actualizes the traversal of possible worlds, of "a people" yet to come. It is here that the creative and clinical capacities of literature are mutually supportive, and we might think through Kafka's writing as an engagement with the virtual possible occasioned by "a long history of fasts," or the connections between emptying-expressing bodies.

"The Metamorphosis" (1915), "A Hunger Artist" (1924) and "Investigations of a Dog" (1933) are sustained written engagements with acts of self-starvation. All three texts are linked by their unrelenting refusal of psychological (and etiological) explanations for extended fasting. While I find "The Metamorphosis" the most rich of these texts to consider at length, I wish to briefly discuss "A Hunger Artist's" conversant foreclosure of psychological analyses of the nameless artist's motivations for starving. One by one, each familiar or easily digestible cause for the artist's extended fasting implodes, and we, as readers, are forced to abandon our (psycho)analytic tools. The height of this interpretive impasse is achieved with the artist's final words to his impresario and overseers. When asked why his fasts should not be considered admirable, the artist "lifting his head a little and speaking, with his lips pursed, as if for a kiss, right into the overseer's ear, so that no syllable might be lost" proclaims, "because I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made

no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else" (Kafka 277). This is the only signficatory crumb offered up by the end of a narrative that seduces us with the promise of a feast of symbolism, as the artist's palliative "kiss" is nothing if not anti-climactic and barren of meaning.

As in the case of *Bartleby*, we are not granted access to the hunger artist's desires, traumas, or to the meaning of his prolonged starvation. I would argue that this critical impasse is perhaps an invitation to explore not what the artist's starvation has meant or represented, but rather how it has functioned. Differently put, I am suggesting that the final words of the dying artist—his legacy—make very little meaning, while making a great deal of sense. The artist claims that his self-starvation is the logical (ordinary, even) culmination of his search for the food or nourishment he might have liked. This statement does make sense of his actions. It also refuses to make them mean anything. If the point of this search is to acquire food, be fulfilled, and experience the sensation of alimentary satisfaction, then the artist has embarked on an unsuccessful and excruciating forage. But does the artist not also invite us to understand his search simply as is: as an ongoing propulsion to find something or to keep looking? Willing to tell tales of his "nomadic life" (276), the artist's final utterance makes recourse to the differential mobility occasioned by his fasts: his is not motion to get anywhere, not motion to produce anything, not motion to economize or maximize time (a clock is after all the only adornment on the walls of his cage). His fast—much like *Bartleby's*—is a slow-motion without finality, without accumulation, and without acquisition. And yet it is still about taste and sensate preference. If we can understand the artist as fuelled by anything, than this has to be his sense of taste:

he fasts because he cannot find food to suit his tastes. I took up Melville's Bartlebian formula in the proceeding case study, but here it bears mentioning that the hunger artist and Bartleby are linked by their taste for not tasting—by their preferring not to—which is of course still a preference, or a sense-making exercise, but one that refuses to make justifications, explanations, and rationalizations that we (as readers) find edible.

As one of the last texts Kafka wrote before his own death in 1924, "A Hunger Artist" offers a far more glib and tragic appraisal of self-starvation than does "The Metamorphosis," written and published nearly a decade earlier, in 1915. Confined to the bars of a cage, watched by predatory butchers, controlled by an abusive impresario, dismissed by a fickle audience, and out-performed by a hungry panther, the hunger artist's death does not serve to affirm the creative potential of self-starvation or the value of hunger artistry. If anything, "A Hunger Artist" reads as a parable of excess: the artist takes his sensing-through-starving too far, to a point where his sensations, tastes, explorations and motions ultimately stagnate and decline. Throughout my dissertation, I have insisted upon the value of approaching self-starvation as a potentially sustainable process of experimentation. I have argued that once death-driven, the bodily practices that are constitutive of fasting, hungering, and dis-ordered eating foreclose possibilities for relating, interacting and assembling, making the body impermeable and impervious to its surroundings. In Weil's morphology, this is a transgression from decreation to destruction, and in Deleuze's this is a passage from becoming-molecular to botching the assembling potential of bodies without organs and succumbing to neuroses which block the iterations of desiring. Like

Weil's, I think that Kafka's "dieting in all directions" reached the limit point of its productivity. I think that he, like the hunger artist, failed to modulate his doses of hunger, and his void became simply emptiness and sickness rather than a point of departure for Spinoza's ethical decri and Deleuze's virtual possible illumination of what a body can do.

In a recent Deleuzian reading of Kafka's "A Hunger Artist" and Steve McQueen's film, *Hunger*, Zach Horton performs a wonderful "experimental investigation of the bodily boundaries produced and perturbed by self-induced starvation" (Horton 118). Horton understands "A Hunger Artist" as Kafka's dramatization of a botched body without organs, one that begins with the artist leading a nomadic life while in a cage, but ends as the "diagnosis of a BwO that fails to activate its virtual potentialities in a renewed process of striation to effect a political resonance through its constitutive audience" (Horton 118). Horton's analysis enacts a perspectival shift, suggesting that for the first half of Kafka's short story, the artist produces his body only in relation to other bodies, as an extended series of bodily encounters:

the artist's body, reconfigured and hollowed out, his head against his breast, knee against knee, makes tentative contact with the ground, with the body of a female spectator, and later that of an attendant...These molecular encounters modify the bodies around him...The hollowed body refuses food only to fuse with other bodies (Horton 119).

In these passages, Horton illustrates the artist's nomadism whilst in a cage, his *voyage en place*, particularly the differential physical engagements and gestures

that are both enabled and required by the artist's enclosure. These are the "fusings" or becomings that Kafka's starving artist both produces and is produced by. Horton's crucial intervention in scholarship on "A Hunger Artist" is his reconsideration of the function of the artist's connection to his audience. This is not a simple relation of subject to object, tormentor to tormented, and onlooker to performer, but is instead a series of tactile encounters between bodies made possible by the artist's food refusal. This tactility is non-sustained, however, as the artist's starving body eventually ceases to be expressive and affective. Instead, as Horton argues, the text's finale renders the artist "as content, as one character in his eponymous story, at the center even as he shrinks to a point, left to die an objective death" (123).

I agree with Horton's sense that by the end of "A Hunger Artist," Kafka ceases to engage with the virtual possibilities of the starving artist's body. The artist's expressions, nomadisms, and haptic encounters stall, subsumed by the larger commercial "show," which must go on. Horton's essay quickly moves to Steve McQueen's 2008 film about IRA hunger striker—or "hunger artist"—Bobby Sands. Horton argues that McQueen picks up where Kafka leaves off: with a more sustained exploration of the "revolutionary potential of fasting through molecularization" (Horton 123). But I would like to suggest that Kafka's earlier text, "The Metamorphosis" actually picks up where "A Hunger Artist" leaves off. Perhaps because "The Metamorphosis" resonates with Kafka's take on self-starvation at a time when his own body is still vital and experimenting; perhaps because Gregor Samsa's insect body is a less-restrictive vessel for Kafka's narrative curiosity and play with the notion of self-starvation; or perhaps because

Kafka teaches us that linear time is simply one means of navigating through time-space-text—whatever the reason, my sense is still the same. "The Metamorphosis" offers a more curious and creative engagement with anorexic expression. Because it is both perplexing and absurd, Gregor's "condition" is never really made to mean anything, his expressing body is not arrested by representation. It is difficult to fathom how (or why), as readers, we would ever ask after the meaning or cause of Gregor's transformation when Kafka's text instead invites us to consider the function of this strange occurrence: what does it do? With Gregor's (or rather, with a) life? With bodies? With familiarity? With domesticity? With economy? With time, space, sensation, movement? These will be the guiding questions of my analysis.

The critical shift from an interpretive approach focused on the *essence* of Gregor's strange condition, to a critical/clinical methodology compelled to explore its immanence is what guides this study. Instigating my close reading of Gregor's self-starvation is Sanford Kwinter's formidable analysis of, "Kafkan Immanence" where he argues:

The bug is many things and critics have not tired in speculating on its inconsistencies and pointing to its 'reality' and 'true nature'—rather, what is fundamental to the story is the dynamo of *transformation*, the movement of becoming something *other*, the (intensive) *displacement* across the interface that separates realms. In short, what is at stake is not what the bug is but the vehicular processes that have seized and transformed a body and

are enabling or causing its effective migration of realms (Kwinter 147).

This case study hones in on Gregor's food refusal as a catalyst for such vehicular processes of becoming-other. I will not replicate Melville's attorney's reading strategies by asking after the significance of Gregor's starvation; rather, I will explore the function(s) of his changing dietetic regimens. I argue that instead of reproducing Oedipal narratives of disavowal and desire in eating disorders, Kafka's text in fact imagines the productive potentials of dis-ordered eating. I support this in two ways. First, I propose that Gregor's need to redeploy his transformed body in relation to its surroundings forces him to shift his reliance on the visual cues of his former world in order to *feel* his way around. Gregor's sustenance now depends upon his capacity for feeling: in the active and affective sense of one surface touching another. Second, I suggest that this tactility opens for Gregor, as for the reader, the possibility that his starving body's tweaked physical movements amount to something other than alienation and disembodiment⁴⁸. My contention is that Gregor's anorexic body is less trapped by the walls of his shrinking room than it is "rooted in the absence of place" (Weil)—propelled and produced by a process of becoming, encountering, and relating.

Part I. To "Feed with the Palpitating Collaboration of his Whole Body": the Less

⁴⁸ In this way, "The Metamorphosis" is an interesting revision of Chris Kraus's *Aliens and Anorexia*. The drama of Deleuzian becoming seems more hospitable grounds to explore anorexia than the notion of alien invasion. While Kraus calls Weil "the Martian," I think there are more generative affinities to be made between Weil and Gregor's molecular becomings.

Gregor Eats, the More He Feels

In Gregor's first moments of awakening as insect he experiences a dampening of visual stimuli. As the narrative progresses, he gradually becomes blind. In place of the visual is Gregor's expanding haptic sense of his own body and his surrounding world. The importance of his gaze lessens from the first paragraphs onwards. I will point to the text's opening sequence to demonstrate this shift. Gregor's initial understanding of his altered physical form is transmitted through sight. Upon awakening, "he was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his dome-like brown belly divided into stiff arched segments...His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes" (Kafka 89). The sensory focus of this introductory passage is sight. The visual cues that signal Gregor's metamorphosis are descriptions of his strange appearance: hard back, dome-like brown belly, bulky torso, and thin legs. The drama of these physical transformations plays out, "helplessly before his eyes." After scanning his body, Gregor's next visual cues concern his room, his "regular human bedroom, only rather too small, lay[ing] between the four familiar walls" (89). I will argue in the next section that this appeal to a claustrophobic, "rather too small bedroom" is quickly relinquished and de-familiarized with the exacerbation of Gregor's hyperactive self-starvation, but for now I wish to point to the room's one decorative adornment. We find that Gregor has just hung a picture "which he had recently cut out from an illustrated magazine and put into a pretty gilt frame. It showed a lady, with a fur cap on and a fur stole, sitting upright and holding out to

the spectator a huge fur muff into which the whole of her forearm had vanished" (89).⁴⁹ What strikes me about this image is that despite being cut from an illustrated magazine, Kafka's description is already marked by an emphasis on tactility. Not only does Gregor's gaze move directly from his spread out collection of "cloth samples" (89) to the framed image, and not only do we later learn that the construction of the "pretty frame" was a 3-evening endeavour on Gregor's part (89), but the focus of the image is also on its subject's fashion. She wears a fur cap, fur stole, and the whole of her forearm vanishes into a fur muff. In other words, this particular image brings texture and touch to the forefront and anticipates how Gregor's transformation will eventually play out.

It is worth noting that Gregor's *venus in furs* visually signals what Kwinter has called the text's "dynamo of *transformation*" (Kwinter 147). Perhaps crucial to the narrative is the fact that the depicted woman's own body is partially eclipsed

⁴⁹ Perhaps this image is connected with Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, whose title character is also Gregor. This reading has been performed. If I had more time to revise, I would carefully re-read *Venus in Furs* because I have already considered Deleuze's essay *Coldness and Cruelty*, which accompanies it, and the connection between both Gregors is one I've failed to attend to. While I think that reading Gregor as engaged with masochism is compelling, I don't think it is obligatory. To my mind, the generative nature of symptomatology lies in experimenting with overlapping sequences of collaborating symptoms, postures, gestures, gaits, practices. Masochism need not describe Gregor's "condition" anymore than anorexia, as I think the task is less to diagnose than to demonstrate the function of Gregor's extensions, intensifications once he is becoming-insect. Like Weil's fantasies of decreation (of becoming-nothing, becoming-imperceptible) and Melville's *Bartleby*, Gregor *is* nothing—the point of becoming. He does things which can be named and included in particular syndromes, but I am more committed to working through his symptoms than naming his syndrome, and to deciphering its causes. In other words, it is my contention that to ask why Gregor becomes-beetle is no different than to retrace Melville's lawyer's quest to decipher why Bartleby prefers not to (move, eat, work).

by the remains—the skins—of animal bodies. As her forearm disappears into a fur muff, there is a certain transmutation of human to animal as one surface becomes an extension of the other. But I wish to be very careful to note the difference between this instance of animality and otherness and Gregor's becoming-other. The "prettiness" and desirability of this image (even Gregor's mother is drawn to it) is juxtaposed with Gregor's hideousness. To be draped in the skins of dead animals is saleable and even fetishized by a commercial seller of textiles, and yet Gregor's hard carapace, his stiff arched segments, and his numerous thin legs (his insect body) needs to be hidden away from his family and boss's inquisitive view. My point is that the soft, fur-clad woman's body of the photograph invites touch, while Gregor's sharp, cold, angular surfaces are precisely monstrous. It is as though Gregor's being aggressively launched from his family's visual field mandates his own deployment of other types of sensate encounters with them: he is forced to forge different relations and forced to connect differently with those in his environment. Without exploring the relationship between seeing and touching outside of the text, I think it is possible to suggest that Gregor's family's repudiation of the sight of his body intuits the ways that the visual sense calls forth the tactile sense. It could be that his family rejects him because seeing him recalls touching him—another way of pointing to the importance of touch in the text.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ A secondary point about the wall-hanging, especially worth noting because of Kafka's own proximity to vegetarianism, is that Gregor's photograph speaks to a cruel and superfluous form of human waste. In the 20th century (as in the contemporary moment), the acquisition of fur clothing involved the brutal treatment of animals, sought only for their skins, the rest of their bodies rarely utilized for consumption in any other way. I think this connection bears scrutiny in a text that tirelessly confronts and complicates the rigidity and brutality of

We encounter this decorative photograph once again near the end of the text. Despite Gregor's minimalism, this is the one item in his room he is unwilling to relinquish to his mother and sister. And while our introduction to the framed image is propelled by Gregor's visual exploration of his body and world, he later turns completely to his haptic understanding as a means of comprehending the spatial dimensions of his room, and indeed the affective dimensions of his body. Now at the height of his starvation, he is again "struck by the picture of the lady muffled in so much fur and quickly crawled up to it and pressed himself to the glass, which was a good surface to hold on to and comforted his hot belly. This picture at least, which was entirely hidden beneath him, was going to be removed by nobody" (118). The point I wish to foreground here is that Gregor's pleasures alter throughout the course of his fast. The same image that brought him visual stimulation in the text's first paragraphs is now used to orchestrate the tactile sensation of one smooth, hard surface meeting another.⁵¹ This time, instead of looking at the image, Gregor literally mounts it, and uses its cool glass surface to alter his bodily temperature. As Kwinter posits, the photograph's and "every surface is now a sensible one—walls, doors, food...it is the surface itself of

human treatment of otherness. And it is unsurprising that yet another text dealing with self-starvation invokes the human-animal divide as a crucial way to think through the contested space of eating and consuming. Always critical to bear in mind is what it means to be a "healthy" eater and consumer, and how this differs so radically from being a producer of affective encounter in "The Metamorphosis" (and outside of it). A question that should never leave us is this: how does the systemic violence of everyday life rely on deployed narratives about orderly eating and living? My discussion will return to notions of waste and wasting away, for Gregor's form of decomposition differs wildly from the more commercially viable version of wasteful expenditure depicted on his wall.

⁵¹ A near reversal of a soft, human hand, going into a soft, furry muff.

Gregor's body that grows in subtlety, sensitivity, and articulateness...He employs his entire body as if engaged in a total act of sensuous reception" (Kwinter 157). To streamline Kwinter's analysis to my dissertation's focus on dis-ordered eating, I am arguing that Gregor's starvation fuels—and is fueled by—his appetite for tactile connection. The less he eats, the more he feels.

This symbiotic relationship between hunger and affect is anticipated by Gregor's dealings with food. His expressed intention upon rising (as an insect) is to acquire food; this hankering to literally break his fast, perhaps a remnant of his former life's more rigid timetables, is what precedes the flurry of activity that takes up an ensuing 13 pages of narrative space. Gregor's "immediate intention," we read is to:

get up quietly without being disturbed, to put on his clothes, and above all eat his breakfast, and only then consider what else was to be done, since in bed, he was well aware, his meditations would come to no sensible conclusion...'But what's the use of lying idle in bed,' said Gregor to himself (92).

What follows this expressed repulsion to lethargy and stillness is a series of physical gesticulations, all geared toward the eventual acquisition of nourishment. Gregor "inflates himself" (92), bends one leg, stretches another, waves the other legs "helplessly," (92), shifts the whole lower part of his body (93), "gathers his forces together and thrusts" out of bed (93), bumps against the bed, deems his lower body more sensitive than the rest (93), moves the top part of his body head first (93), watches his legs struggling against each other (93), breathes lightly

(93), "sets himself to rocking his whole body at once in a regular rhythm"(94), swings himself out of bed with all his strength (95), falls with a loud thump, rubs his head on the carpet in pain and irritation (95), levers himself up by a chest of drawers (98), "heaves" himself to an upright standing position (98), falls purposely against the back of a chair and "clings with his little legs to the ends of it" (98), pushes the chair against the door (99), rests momentarily (99), puts the door lock between his jaws and "circles around the lock, holding on only with his mouth, pushing on the key as required, or pulling it down again with all the weight of his body" (100), "edges" himself around the open door, walks (102), rocks with suppressed eagerness to move (103), "springs" forward (103), attempts walking backwards (104), "thrusts himself" (104), flutters his legs (105), flies (105), tries out his feelers, and finally "dips his head" straight into the milk basin his sister has left for him only to turn away from the food in disgust and and "take refuge in the movement" (106) of "crawl[ing] back to the middle of the room" (105).

This is quite a spectacular narrative sequence. In an attempt to unpack it, there are two points I wish to develop. The first is in relation to what I have been suggesting, with the help of Kwinter, is the text's heightening of acts of sensuous perception, operative beyond visual fields of production and recognition. There is a subordination of acts of knowing-through-seeing to those of feeling-through-doing. Gregor signals this shift from seeing to touching when lying, blinded by the total darkness of his room, he "slowly" and "awkwardly" accedes to exploring his surrounding space by "trying out his feelers, which he now first learned to

appreciate" (105). This whole-bodied form of mobile feeling also punctuates Gregor's experience of ingestion. Having discovered that due to the injuries he has sustained from the morning's required movements (listed above), the act of eating has been further complicated. He can now "only feed with the palpitating collaboration of his whole body" (105). Even as Gregor shirks from previously enjoyed foods—the potentially symbolic offering of milk in this instance—he expresses accelerated bodily involvement with processes that surround food. The time/space of his routine freed from eating or feasting is now devoted to extensive movement: getting to the food, touching it, taking it, rejecting it, and physically moving away from it. In the course of his fast, Gregor does not shrink from his world, but instead explores and engages with it more fully.

This fullness of Gregor's fasting experience is proportional to his accentuated bodily awareness. Kwinter is again insightful on this point. Channeling Spinoza and Deleuze, he proposes that "it is possible to say that a body is 'fullest' precisely when it is most empty, that is when it forms a continuous, even if folded, surface and not an interior, signifying space" (Kwinter 152). This paradigmatic shift is provocative. Kwinter is speaking to the possibility that Gregor Samsa's starving body becomes more continuous (more smooth, more virtual, more affected and affective) as it hollows out. An "empty" body is neither regressing nor reducing, but instead intensifying its potential for connecting, relating, and encountering. While I situate Kwinter's analysis in a Spinozist and Deleuzian philosophical tradition, it is critical to resuscitate Simone Weil's notion of hunger as a connective conduit (what Kwinter calls a 'vehicular process'). She

too argues for the immanence of an asketic void, suggesting that emptying (whether via starvation or other physically exhausting tasks) is a process by which bodies become more porous, malleable, and involved. To hunger, for Weil, is to engage a process of changing a body's associations (and apprenticeships) with the world. Weil, like Kwinter, creates an alternative interpretation of desire as a mobilizing sensory force.

Following both Weil and Kwinter, I have argued that we see these transformed engagements in "The Metamorphosis" with Gregor's altered relations to his senses. Forced into (or capable of) abandoning his reliance on visual understandings, Gregor makes a different instrument of his body by increasingly investing in spatial and tactile perceptive cues. His sense of nourishment and ingestion expands as well. We see this in the text's salient description of Gregor's required new feeding methods. No longer does he simply eat, but instead must involve the whole of his organism in tremulous, involuntary, irregular, "palpitating" movements of physical collaboration. This new peristaltic process reads very much like its complete reversal: vomiting, a reading later supported by his sister's lament that "the food came out again just as it went it" (136,137). Arguably, she is here referring to Gregor's room rather than his digestive tract, but ultimately, Gregor's room *is* his body (without organs), or his room acts as an extension of his bodily surfaces. Not only does this passage intuit a reversal of the peristaltic process,⁵² but the folding of food into (or out of) Gregor's body is auto-

⁵² What material feminist, Elizabeth Wilson refers to as anti-peristalsis. I consider Wilson's notion of phylogenetic bulimic processes of amphimixing in chapter 4.

erotic. This passage compliments the previously discussed return of the framed photograph, which Gregor mounts and presses his body against in a sensuous act of reception. His ingestion of food or his repudiation of it—both processes are described as the same series of physical gestures—is a masturbatory act, a way for him to touch and encounter his body differently.⁵³ Once again, the "emptiness" of Gregor's body sustains a proliferation of desiring.

This same tactile, auto-erotic, non-ingestive version of incorporation is performed again when Gregor succeeds in opening his bedroom's locked door with his mouth and jaws. Perhaps a humorous textual play on Kafka's own often expressed dislike of psychology (Williams 116), Gregor "hope[s] for great and remarkable results from both the doctor and the locksmith [who have been called in by his family] *without really distinguishing precisely between them*" (my emphasis 99). As much as I read this as a Kafkan joke, its humor also signals the suspicious ordinance of good health. Kafka first makes mention of a doctor in "The Metamorphosis" in regard to Gregor's anxiety over missing a day of work (his first missed day in 5 years of steady employment with his firm) due to illness. He is fretful that his chief will call in a "sick-insurance doctor" to discredit the Samsa family (literally in debt to the firm) and accuse Gregor of laziness and "perfectly healthy malingering" (91). The complicity of this imaginary doctor with the deployment of economic notions of health and illness is illuminative, and I would argue that Kafka calls into question the entire conflated apparatus of health and economy. What would it mean to be healthy by other means than

⁵³ I discuss the auto-eroticisms of anorexia in relation to "food-play" further in chapter 3.

steady occupation, good financial standing, a growing savings account, being perpetually “on time,” and constantly submitting to the dictates of a nearly deaf chief employer (90)? And how can we account for the eclipsing of anatomical health by economic prosperity?⁵⁴

My contention is that Kafka’s reintroduction of the figure of medical authority is an apt response to this line of inquiry. Gregor’s indistinction between a doctor and a locksmith is perhaps no more absurd than his employer’s collapsing of medicine with economy. This proves an interesting narrative progression, as health is maneuvered away from an economy of accumulation towards a differential set of relations of exchange—these ones involving space, touch, and sensation. Gregor’s lack of distinction between a doctor (an expert who, by varying methods, opens otherwise inaccessible 'insides') and a locksmith (an expert who opens otherwise inaccessible surfaces) re-affirms the connection between Gregor's body and his room.⁵⁵ It also resists any sort of physical or psychic "interior signifying space," to re-invoke Kwinter's and Weil’s claims

⁵⁴ These are also the questions of *Bartleby, the Scrivener*. The narrator/attorney/diagnostician (Melville) and the sick-insurance doctor (Kafka) are conversant figures, or instruments of dominant health.

⁵⁵ And what a perfect illustration of the critical-clinical here. To my mind, this is Deleuze’s argument in *Coldness and Cruelty*; his proposed facilitation of a more generative relationship between literature and psychiatry. Or, we might think of this as a shift from the schizophrenic/anorexic of the analysts couch to the schizophrenic/anorexic out for a walk. Instead of exploring the profundity of his experiences, desires, anxieties, and neuroses (by unlocking the hidden keys to his existence), Gregor shoves the lock/key into his mouth to manipulate it to open, excretes digestive fluids, and strives to accomplish an ordinary feat with an un-ordinary—conative body. This is perhaps the most affecting moment for me in a text that functions purely on an affective register.

about the repletion of empty bodies. To Gregor's mind, the opening of his bedroom's lock is the very same venture as the diagnosing or treating of his "illness." This indistinction is another way that the text eschews significance for surfaces, as on Gregor's account, his strange condition is nothing more than relative to the state of the four walls that are extensions of his body. He doesn't unlock or unearth his secret desires or compulsions. His neuroses don't boil to the surface. There is no real allowance for the space of Gregor's psychic interiority. Instead, we have one surface touching another (his mouth to door lock, jaws to key, back to chair, head on handle) and one body swept up in the momentums of the other (Gregor's physical rotation with the key's):

He set himself to turning the key in the lock with his mouth. It seemed, unhappily, that he hadn't really any teeth--what could he grip the key with? --but on the other hand his jaws were certainly very strong; with their help he did manage to set the key in motion, heedless of the fact that he was undoubtedly damaging them somewhere, since a brown fluid issued from his mouth, flowed over the key, and dripped on the floor...He clenched his jaws recklessly on the key with all the force at his command. As the turning of the key progressed he circled around the lock, holding on now only with his mouth, pushing on the key as required, or pulling it down again with all the weight of his body. The louder click of the finally yielding lock literally quickened Gregor. With a deep breath of relief he said to himself: 'So I didn't

need the locksmith' and laid his head on the handle to open the door wide (100).

Notably, this whole exercise is one that Gregor undertakes so that he can attain his illusive breakfast. Furthermore, his manipulations of the lock and key in his mouth and jaws, his "pushing and pulling as required" lubricated by a new fluid "issued from his mouth" is an apt description of the digestive acts that precede swallowing. In other words, just as important as what Gregor refuses to put in his mouth (milk, fresh foods, and eventually all foods) are the strange forms of nourishment he does choose to take. In this case, he seems nourished, yet again, by sensate, haptic encounters with the architectural and physical vehicles of his room-body.

I have suggested that Gregor's room and body become essentially one extension of the same surface. This happens quite literally as he emits a "sticky" substance from his extremities and orifices wherever he travels.⁵⁶ We read that Gregor "left traces behind him of the sticky stuff on his soles wherever he crawled...walls, furniture, and ceiling" (115,119). Later, we learn that "streaks of dirt stretched along the walls" from Gregor's tactile adventures.⁵⁷ Despite fasting,

⁵⁶ In chapter 4, I consider Beckett's worm-like figures of self-starvation. The digestive operations of the worm often look quite similar to Gregor's.

⁵⁷ To place "The Metamorphosis" in conversation with another text involving a different version of madness, this passage anticipates Charlotte Perkins Gillman's "The Yellow Wallpaper." Here the protagonist (and author) are writing against Weir Mitchell's 'rest cure' (which, interestingly enough, Kafka sought out as respite from his own 'conditions') for hysterical women in the 19th century. Locked in her room (like Gregor), "The Yellow Wallpaper's" protagonist finds patches of yellow paint on her clothing and a streak along her room's wallpaper where she has wandered to-and-fro (again, like Gregor). Perkins Gillman and Kafka's texts both imagine an oppressive (colonial, domestic, medical,

hungering, and starving, Gregor begins to take up more space. His body extends with his increasing coverage of the room. Differently put, his food refusal and hyperactivity invite a dimensional expansion of surface space rather than a corporeal diminishing or disembodiment. Gregor's room and body fold one onto the other:

Owing to the amount of dust that lay thick in his room and rose into the air at the slightest movement, he too was covered with dust; fluff and hair and remnants of food trailed with him, caught on his back and along his sides; his indifference to everything was much too great for him to turn on his back and scrape himself clean on the carpet, as once he had done several times a day (130).

Instead of wasting away (a term often used to describe a self-starver's physical depletion), Gregor's body continuously comes to matter. His body acquires the particulate matter of the room, as more and more substances are grafted onto his skin. Shifting from an economy (signalled by accumulation) to an ecology (produced through connection), there is a way in which Gregor's body acts as a composting agent for his family's wastes. Once no longer attracted to fresh foods, he consumes moldy cheeses and the remains from his family's dinners. This is a different sort of production enabled by Gregor's self-starvation. His becoming-

patriarchal, etc) space that their protagonists are captivated by. They both mobilize the spaces of their rooms to perform strange acts of physical traversal, and in both cases, there is at least a modicum of physical liberation achieved through tactile—and certainly auto-erotic—connections with surfaces. With the redeployment of surface space, there is a redeployment of bodily pleasure and sensate encounters, as both texts call into question dominant readings of 'health' and 'sickness.'

insect, I suppose, requires that he feeds off human waste. Just as important to his transformation, I would argue, is that Gregor's disordered eating allows for a renegotiation of the terms of what constitutes waste/wasting. Indeed there is something very different about the particulate matter and food wastes that attach to Gregor's "host" body, and the wasted animal furs that adorn the anonymous woman in his magazine cutout. In Gregor's case, his dis-ordered eating becomes an agent of possible renewal, revitalization, and regeneration—refuse items are utilized by him and transformed into something else, having been given alternate properties and functions. In the photographed woman's case, the ordinary and ordered participation in consumptive practices means that waste is what is produced: the lives of the bodies she wears, to be exact.

Perhaps this is a good time to reconsider Weil, particularly what I noted in the last chapter could be read as her longings for extension to a more pre- and post-human ecology. She notes her aim to "see a landscape as it is when I am not there...[not to disturb the silence] by my breathing and beating heart" (*Gravity and Grace*, 89); along with her notion of death as a natural, necessary form of liberating "tied up energy" (ibid 81); and her sense that "we must become nothing, we must go down to the vegetable level" (ibid 82). What for Weil might be the anorexic impasse of having a body, imposing on space, or needing to disrupt landscape/nature in order to perceive it, is more affirmative in Gregor's case of self-starvation. In fact, Kafka might offer a more sustainable response to Weil's ethical aporias: her need to let the world in so fully that she ceases to exist, or her professed desire to experience nature/space so fully that she is no longer

capable of being. For Gregor's systems of fasting motion are alternate methods of traversing space.

Instead of treading lightly or not at all, he leaves his body's changing particulate matter (indistinguishable from the filth of his room) wherever he goes, depositing archives of excreta to change his room's surfaces so ineradicably that he and not-he become perpetually indistinguishable by virtue of material exchange. His unhygienic treading uses space to generate new digestive functions, just as it uses his body to re-purpose space. In other words, the practices involved with Gregor's self-starvation (his fasting motions) are just as decreative as Weil's longings, but they are more tenable and sustainable. Essentially, he composts the spaces around him, generating all along new means of vital living, desiring, and composing. While Weil wishes to disappear, to stop breathing, and bestill the noise made by her beating heart, Gregor's means of "becoming nothing" or descending to "the vegetable level" is to appear only through touch and to be never still, or never capable of rest.⁵⁸ In other words, hyper-tactility (touching everything) and hyper-kinesis (moving constantly) occasion Gregor's decreation.

Thus far, I have argued that Gregor's self-starvation invites a progression from reliance on visible environmental and bodily cues to more tactile encounters. With the help of Kwinter's analysis, I have suggested that Gregor's developing haptic modalities are part of his particular manifestation of askesis—his "emptying" in order to processually become something other than human, -than organic totality, -than consumer, -than commercial traveler, -than Oedipal subject.

⁵⁸ Quite literally, all of his vital processes are now speeded up. He becomes and insect with rapid metabolic process and life-span.

And I have discussed the ways that Gregor's emptying invites a surfeit of feeling (rather than symbolism). The text repeatedly reminds us that this is a *metamorphosis* and not a *metaphor*. Gregor develops the notion of feeling quite literally in terms of his new insect "feelers" that become his predominant means of interfacing with the world. Building on this, I have illuminated the larger connections between touching and feeling, and between Gregor's seemingly proliferating capacities to affect and be affected. In short, his hunger can be thought of as meaningless and asymbolic. But what replaces meaning in this text is sense. Gregor asks a crucial question directly before indulging in food for the first time post-metamorphosis. While pondering his improved physical capacity to heal, he asks, "Am I less sensitive now?" (Kafka 108). This functions as a rhetorical question. For textually evident is precisely the reverse: that Gregor's attempts to grapple with his changing body and traversed material world are nothing short of more sensitive, more sensate, and seemingly more involved.

Part 2. "He Was Still Unaware What Powers of Movement He Possessed": The Less He Eats, the More He Moves

Because feeling and moving are so connected in "The Metamorphosis," I have already begun to discuss the hyperactivity that seems to increase proportionally to Gregor's state of hunger. In this section, I will further explore the events of his transformation pertaining more specifically to Gregor's developing aptitude for creative, sustaining, and affective/affecting motion. My contention is that contrary

to resounding interpretations of eating disorders as the result of mind-body dissociations, or as dangerous desires for disembodiment, Gregor's case study points to potentially divergent readings of self-starvation. Not only does he feel more intensely and sense more fully upon the advent of his fast, but he also carries his body more inventively. Of course part of these creative comportments are due to the fact that he has become an insect overnight and must navigate space completely differently, but there is also a direct textual relation expressed between Gregor's abstention from food and his indulgence in exercise. To insist upon reading Gregor's symptomatology as mind-body dissociative, or to interpret his relations to the physical world as conditioned by his *disembodiment*, seems mistaken, as Gregor's post-transformational perambulations depend upon his exploratory, bodily acts. As the text suggests, he takes "refuge" in the movement of crawling up and down his room (106). The more time Gregor liberates from the labours of ingestion and digestion, the more he devotes his energies to expanding his motor capacities:

he was fast losing any interest he had ever taken in food, so that for mere recreation he had formed the habit of crawling crisscross over the walls and ceiling. He especially enjoyed hanging suspended from the ceiling; it was much better than lying on the floor; one could breathe more freely; one's body swung and rocked lightly...in the almost blissful suspension (115).

Returning to Gregor's initial visual introduction of his environment, we read that "his room, a regular human bedroom, only rather too small, lay quiet between the

four familiar walls" (89). The initial claustrophobia of Gregor's room has subsided. His "four familiar walls" are instead a series of surfaces which facilitate his growing appetite for movement. My previous section discussed the text's transference from a visual economy to a visceral economy predicated on touch. I want to stress here that *seen* as familiar human walls, these are claustrophobic, but *experienced* and *traversed* as vertical floors, impromptu beds, and cooling plates, they encourage movement and exploration. Previously architectural structures allocating one space as separate from another, or blocking passage from one room to the next, or providing space for decorative adornments (notably, his framed magazine clipping), the walls are now vehicles for Gregor's tactile interfacings and physical momentums. In-use, they are decidedly less familiar. Gregor's differential spatial relations alter the material properties of his room. Dimensions multiply. Instead of four walls, a ceiling, and a floor, he now has undifferentiated surfaces. With the expanding physical characteristics of his room, there is a proportional expansion of Gregor's somatic abilities. His possible trajectories—his capacities for movement—proliferate as his hunger increases. No longer satisfied by "crawling up and down" his walls, he crisscrosses the walls and ceiling. Having exhausted the pleasures of upright or *adroite* postures and straight lines, he hangs in "blissful suspension," neither up nor down, here nor there.

Just as his room and body increase in function (or affect), so does food. In brief, he starts to do strange things with it. In the previous section, I considered the events of Gregor's initial dipping his head into a basin of milk (only to repudiate it), as well as his treatment of his room's lock and key as nourishment.

These events, I argued, were sensory encounters illuminating Gregor's developing tactility. To build on this, I would argue that the possible properties and affordances of food substances expand in the course of Gregor's starvation. Rather than sitting down at a table to eat a meal (a practice we are led to believe his family still adheres to with rigidity), "Gregor was now eating hardly anything. Only when he happened to pass the food laid out for him did he take a bit of something in his mouth as a pastime, kept it there for an hour at a time, and usually spat it out again" (127).

Now a "pastime" and recreational device related to his other dynamic motilities, Gregor's taking of food is more about a "passing" experience of one surface touching another—one means of traversing time and space, and one occupation among many. This seems to contradict Gregor's formerly familiar relationship to food. The sole provider of financial support for his family (in debt), Gregor's "breadwinning" meant that his travel could only ever have been motivated and contained by commerce. In his familiar routine of working, earning, saving, and eking out a living for his family, food functions as a means to an end, as well as a symbolic encapsulation of "means." Certainly eating can bring pleasure, joy, connection, and can enhance sensate awareness: of course it can. But just as readily, these compositional joys of eating (and prosperity) can be lost in the service of accumulation. My discussion of Simone Weil in chapter 1, demonstrates this. For her, eating more than the French rations of soldiers, or feasting more heartily than itinerant farm laborers, or working under less duress than factory workers, fuelled an empathic struggle that was more deranging and

injurious than self-starvation⁵⁹. Not eating was, for her, more involved, compositional, momentous, and indeed ethically, somatically, and affectively engaged than robust health. The problem for Weil, as for Kafka, and Gregor is that questioning consumption in such a sustained way means that “health” can never really be restored: so long that it is conflated with economy. Like Weil, Gregor engages an ethics only when he ceases to eat. By holding food temporarily in his mouth before spitting it out again (‘what he refers to as a pastime’), he seems to negotiate a different kind of time, irreducible to the rigid schedules of his former existence. It is as though his new pastime facilitates his movement past time. I am not referring to time itself, but to the normative organizing principle of efficient economical existence.⁶⁰ It is not that Gregor's self-starvation allows him to step outside of temporality; it is that his fast enables the slow—suspended—motions of becoming. He no longer has to work to eat, to eat to work, and to move to reach a destination, but can instead "sway," and "rock," and "crawl," and "crisscross" for the sake of momentum alone.

Gregor’s new pastime anticipates his evolution within different temporal (and spatial) dimensions. His fast, I argue, offers the potential for a differential orchestration of the rhythms of everyday life. Some of the initial passages of the text further qualify the temporal impasse of Gregor's former "commercial" existence. In the beginning, he is weighed down by the realities of losing time, and of having time pass too quickly before he can move or act in accordance with its dictates. Conditioned to wake by 4:00 am to the sound of his alarm clock and

⁵⁹ Apparently, as early as age 6, Weil cut all sugar from her diet upon learning that soldiers were not permitted it.

⁶⁰ I discuss anorexic time vs. time as capitalistic unit of efficiency in chapter 4.

catch the 5:00 am train, Gregor soon finds himself aiming for the 6:00 am departure, and then the 7:00 am, on to the 8:00 am train, to eventually not leaving for work at all, and finally to holding "gainful" employment no longer. Even with sequentially lowered expectations, each of these losing battles with time is met with tremendous anxiety. Time is going too fast, and Gregor cannot contain it. He is losing units, and he cannot bank them. This post-transformational failure to economize and schedule his time efficiently redirects Gregor, as I have suggested, into a different temporal dimension where he is no longer stagnated by the predicates of good 'health.' Robust health, for Gregor, formerly would have meant his generative participation in the socio-economic order to continue: to make his timetables, to catch his trains without tardiness, to economize and set aside money for his family's debts, to make commercial sales, and of course, to eat and travel in order to accomplish these tasks. Only once cast outside of normative time—once "wasting away"—can Gregor comport himself more inventively.

The commercially viable order of health depends on an economy of accumulation: Gregor's firm's increasing of sales from month to month, his banking of earnings in order to eradicate debt, his savings that will send his sister to study at the musical conservatorium, and his cumulative 5 years of steady employment without a single day missed due to illness. The banking, saving, and investing that motivate Gregor's years of employment are, I believe, quite *filling*. They are preoccupations with satiation, acquisition, interiority, property, and content. These speak to a version of expansion that functions from the inside out. I am describing an economic process of earning and saving, but I am also pointing to the conceptualizing of eating as building, storing, and incorporating. I am

thinking here of the stock-piling of calories and nutrients for the eventual transfer of organic matter into expendable energy. Is this not how eating and digesting ought to function for the maintenance of a healthy physical and socio-economic body? Once outside of this accumulative economy, Gregor seems more compelled by the vicissitudes of expenditure and exchange rather than accumulation; he is more compelled by doing than eating.

Sanford Kwinter is insightful on this point. He maps out this different version of "traffic" when he writes that:

the body is clearly the site within and upon which metamorphosis is played out. But this body concerns much more than simply the anatomical bodies that correspond to characters; it is also a collective social body, a body constantly mutating, multiplying, and redeploying its surfaces...Within such a system of bodies...everything comes to be linked in...mutual, even symbiotic implication, that is, in a network of relations of exchange; but these relations are purely material and vital and generally have neither interior nor content (Kwinter 150, 151).

With Kwinter's claim that "The Metamorphosis" develops material and vital relations of exchange which are neither filling nor meaningful, we are returned to his Spinozist and Deleuzian (and I have argued, equally Weilian) proposition that that "the body is 'fullest' precisely when it is the most empty"(ibid 152). When what could be mistaken as internal space is evacuated, the surface becomes populated. Again, Kwinter's sense of 'the body' is not as a singular anatomical entity, but as a series of continuous—but shifting—physical coordinates

formulating a collective space (anatomical, social, political, and economical). How, then, does Gregor's collective space differ from his anxieties about accumulation (sketched above)? When he begins to starve himself, he no longer subscribes to the same organizing principles of his formerly "healthy" existence. He makes self-starvation his "pastime" rather than fretting about catching his trains "on time." And this constitutes a different version of travel, the first aspect of which is a lateral move (beside or beyond) time, while the second is more of a confinement within the dictates time. While passing time inheres a collective sequence of perpetual actions (immanence), being on time implies a static, stand-still, on point physical position (essence).

Gregor makes a fatal mistake upon discovering that music and not movement, has—all along—been the unknown nourishment he craved (130,131). This is the point in the text where he is touched and moved by something other than touching and moving. Conversely, this is the textual moment where his "disappointment at the failure of his plan, perhaps also the weakness arising from extreme hunger, made it impossible for him to move...and he lay waiting" (132, 133). My contention is that Gregor fails in these final instances to recognize that his drama of perpetual encounter has sustained him. Here he begins experience an internality of desire (a longing) and is thereby unable to enact desiring—as touching, feeling, moving and becoming. With the onset of Gregor's decomposition, his yet-untapped powers of movement (102) are eventually exhausted, and with them, dissolves the productive potential of his fast. To add a cruel irony to his demise, it is literally food that thwarts Gregor's momentums. In an assault, his father manages to seriously injure his son by launching and lodging

an apple into his back "which disabled him for more than a month--the apple went on sticking in his body as a visible reminder, since no one ventured to remove it...His injury had impaired, probably forever, his powers of movement, and for the time being it took him long, long minutes to creep across his room like an old invalid--there was no question now of crawling up the wall" (122,123). Shortly after this episode, Gregor dies, with the apple still rotting, inflaming, and infecting his back (135).

As a reader, I have to ask myself what makes the apple an injurious surface when all the others that Gregor touches and traverses (or even falls upon) are enabling? My only response is that Kafka's is a very real grappling—a specific investigation of *material* form. Again, this is not metaphor, but metamorphosis. Some experiments are fatal, and some experiences are toxic. Once the apple is stuck to Gregor, it is no longer moving. And neither is he. Instead of moving, Gregor is rotting and decomposing. The other moments of composting decomposition I discussed in the previous section involved Gregor as the agent of decomposition, but here, he becomes the helpless object or passive receptacle of destruction. As an insect, Gregor has no affordance for dorsal decomposition. The first half of the text relates his efforts to simply get off of his back: this is harder than any other physical feat for him. While a human body would find no problem removing an apple stuck on its back, Gregor has become a different animal, with different affordances, different capacities, and of course, different limitations.

Perhaps this is where we are alerted most emphatically to the fact that his experiment has exceeded itself. Provocatively, the loss of vitality that results from

this final blow is directly correlative to Gregor's incapacity and invalidism. Food stuff is literally what undercuts his hypermobility, what stops his body from free motion, and what exacerbates his steady decline. Because he can no longer move, Gregor looks beyond the corporeal and material to the representative and symbolic. While music is by nature a play of surfaces, in "The Metamorphosis," Grete's violin playing—that so moves Gregor—functions by snapping him back into the symbolic, economic, and Oedipal order that his hunger has circumvented. His final desire is encapsulated by a fantasy to trap Grete in his room forever, have her play for his ears alone, and to tell her that he will earn enough income to pay for her tuition at the musical Conservatorium (131). This fantasy is an admission of what Gregor cannot bear not to possess. Moved to a desire for acquisition, and no longer compelled by a steady process of desiring, Gregor fails to tap into the productive potentials that have nourished him. Simply put, he fills "the void" and stagnates his process of encounter.

Said differently, I am suggesting that because Gregor has only ever been (in the course of the text) a series of becomings, when his metamorphosis stops, he can no longer remain "living without dining." In the moments of hearing his sister play violin, Gregor is returned to the dictates of human meaning, human metre, human economy, and human music. These stagnate what have been the rhythms, expenditures, and speeds of his insect metamorphosis. The post-human ecologies which Gregor has sustained, and which have in turn sustained his body are cut off, and I would suggest that this is the moment where Gregor is severed from his insect-bodily capacities. Instead, he becomes affected by what he *cannot* do: as insect, he cannot earn money; he cannot save money; he cannot pay off

debts; he cannot provide for Grete's classical musical training; he cannot be a brother/father to Grete; and he does not possess the physical capacity (the right organs) to kiss her on the neck. The previous engagements and arousals that sustained Gregor's human form are no longer possible in his new associated milieu. After decreating, how can he re-assume his (human) subjectivity? If there is one moment of qualitative emotion (sadness) that enters the text, this is it. And ultimately, this emotion thwarts Gregor's motion.

My concluding point in this section is about relatedness in the text. I believe that the above-discussed moment of Gregor's final epiphany aptly demonstrates the difference between motion and *emotion*. I have argued that Gregor snaps back into a symbolic, representational logic upon fantasizing about his sister's violin music. He is seized by a vision that "after his confession his sister would be so touched that she would burst into tears, and Gregor would then raise himself to her shoulder and kiss her on the neck, which, now that she went to business, was kept free of any ribbon or collar" (131). The Kafkan kiss once again: in "A Hunger Artist" (as previously discussed) this epiphanical kiss amounts to the artist's famed proclamation that he starved because unable to find the food he liked. I read this representational impasse as one in a series of Kafka's explorations of surfaces, or resistances to profundity, and also as an invitation to the reader to consider the function of the artist's starvation rather than its meanings or causes. In "The Metamorphosis" the final imagined kiss performs the opposite gesture. Here Gregor makes his self-starvation meaningful, stipulating his unrequited desire by finally, fatally, and I would argue mistakenly, finding the "food" or indulgence he craved. I wish to argue that this kiss is a failed moment of

encounter that contradicts the text's more dynamic preceding relations. While tragic and emotive, Gregor's fantasy kiss no longer motivates his affective exchanges with his environment and family: the sensate events that have been unfamiliar and strange, but still expressive of a series of relations. My experience of reading and re-reading "The Metamorphosis" is always marked by surprise at the lack of definitive terms of emotion. Another way to express this is to suggest that there are many moments of feeling while singular or representative feelings are an absolute rarity. Rather than a description of sadness or frustration (for example), Kafka gives us a narrative demonstration of physical gestures and acts that are inhospitable to further qualification.

In some ways, Gregor is just as autistic as he is anorexic, but of course to employ this diagnostic terminology is reductive. Instead, it is befitting to consider how relations function prior to Gregor's "confession" of desire. I have discussed the ways that Gregor's tactile encounters function. Furthermore, I have considered his adaptive mobile interfacing with the architecture of his room and the food put in it. However, I have yet to explore Gregor's relations beyond the spatial. Because despite being isolated to his room, he manages to express his own bodily intensities in-relation to others. At times, Gregor's family members even assume his modes of comportment. His mother "shuffles" (91), and like him, bumps into things and knocks them over (103) and "trotts to and fro" (118). As Gregor's fast progresses, his family seems less and less inclined to eat, and over time "ate scarcely anything" (110). Like Gregor, instead of eating, his father plays with food, specifically using fruit as projectile weapons (122). The family's lodgers "rub their hands" together and "scuttle" away (137,138) in what seems a series of

acts befitting of an insect's affects. And the final sentence of the text illustrates Grete's potential becoming-animal, a parallel to "A Hunger Artist's panther, "she sprang to her feet and stretched her young body" (139), literally increasing the surface space of her body in a call to action not unlike Gregor's. In a way, the bodies in Gregor's immediate environment are *moved*—by him and like him. The import of these micro-movements within the text, I would argue, is that they replace readily ingestible emotions as carriers of significance. In the same way that Gregor's fast engages a process of experimentation with touch and space, we too as readers are forced to avoid our usual feast of narrative symbolism. Perhaps a meaningful breadcrumb from time-to-time might energize our progression through the text, but ultimately, "The Metamorphosis" is more about traversing narrative space than finding edible meaning.

Chapter 3

Anorexic Economies: Trading the Visual for the Visceral

I don't know what I look like. I can't remember how to look.

--Laurie Halse Anderson, *Wintergirls* 83

I think that this assumption of powerlessness is the most dangerous thing an anorexic can hear.

--Marya Hornbacher, *Wasted* 131

What a strange confusion—that of void with lack...Anorexia is perhaps the thing about which most wrong has been spoken—particularly under the influence of psychoanalysis. The void which is specific to the anorexic body without organs has nothing to do with a lack, and is part of the constitution of the field of desire.

--Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 90

This chapter shifts from a discussion of literature to life, and from a focus on mostly male bodies to female ones. The questions about affect, ethics, immanence, and desire that have been guiding my analysis all along are, I believe, pertinent to feminism(s), but the second half of my dissertation is more explicitly located in feminist discussions of the body. While my introduction and chapter 1 discussed—and contended with—dominant analyses of anorexia and eating disorders within feminist scholarship, chapters 3, 4, and 5 are more concerned

with construction than contention. I point to how we might critically and clinically re-assemble anorexia's constellations. It is easier to feel, think, and write about dis-ordered eating at a remove. I can feel certain that Bartleby and Gregor engage with an experimental process of self-starvation that accounts for the richness of both of their texts. But when dealing with living anorexic subjects, a different sense of trepidation, uncertainty, takes hold. While critical experimentation might invite the value of fastening on to uncertainty, I also think that there are some certainties required. Most importantly, I want to ensure that this chapter's analysis generates more rather than less: more ideas, more questions, more extensions, more provocations.

To invoke Weil again, striving to be rooted in the absence of place is to repeatedly challenge that which feels close to home, common-sensical, familiar: the certainty with which we think we know. What do we think we know about eating disorders? We know they are meaningful (and even metaphorical) in a patriarchal culture that objectifies women. We know that in a culture obsessed with how things look, the obsession with bodily surfaces entailed by eating disorders must mean something. The challenge enacted by this chapter, then, is to suspend this knowledge. Metaphoricity might be one of anorexia's more powerful constellations. But there are other constellations that can be just as powerful. Does anorexia make meaning? Of course it does. But it also makes sense, and it is this tendency—this affective capacity—that this chapter pursues.

The figures that occupied the first part of my dissertation will return. I have not left Weil, Bartleby, Kafka, and Gregor, but will continue to use each of these

case studies as a means of relating to contemporary women's narratives of disordered eating. My hope is that as I quote passages from each of these memoirs, my reader will find glimpses of Weil's nomadic exile from "home," Kafka's "dieting in all directions," Gregor's intensification of touch, and Bartleby's dynamic immobility. It is difficult to separate theory and practice in my dissertation. I am drawn to Deleuze, Barad, Foucault, Kraus, Weil, Kwinter, and Arsic (to name the most prevalent so far) because their work straddles theory/practice and literature/philosophy/life distinctions so productively. To the dialogues and conceptual vocabularies of dis-ordered eating I have been building, this chapter adds Luce Irigaray, whose work I read as inviting a feminist philosophy of affect. Not only does Irigaray make material feminisms possible, but she also contributes a relentless focus on gender, important to bring to bear on Spinoza's and Deleuze's conceptions of ethics which are attempts at an *après* or beyond gendered forms of identification. While I do not follow Irigaray's contention that both Spinoza and Deleuze's work replicates masculinist philosophical/cultural tendencies to privilege the male subject of enunciation at the expense of the female, I value and explore her resistance to becoming-woman as a romanticization of what is already the bodily condition of women in the specular economy. Irigaray's point of contention allows for a provocative and productive engagement with the potential limits (and dangers) of my dissertation's attempted remobilization of dis-ordered eating.

The first half of this chapter unfolds alternative readings to the prefiguration of anorexia as a symptom of the specular economy. I do not disagree that dis-

ordered eating can develop from women's aspirations to look a certain way amidst mass media cultures glamourizing thin bodies. I do not disagree that what can drive—and certainly begin the process of—dis-ordered eating is the need for a sense of control, discipline, and mastery of the body that is one extension of bio-political and patriarchal regimes that can subordinate women's bodies by associating them with the natural, chaotic, and uncontrollable physical world. These social-constructivist approaches are valid feminist contributions to studies of eating disorders. I would argue, however, that this sense that anorexia is a symptom of women's alienation from their "natural" bodies is not the only symptomatological connection worth exploring. To demonstrate alternative methods, this section engages Irigaray's construction of sensate modalities for female embodiment, that activate tactile expressions of relatedness in place of visual instigations of dominance. Important to Irigaray's visceral economy of female embodiment is a departure from the binaries of stillness and movement, passivity and activity. Instead, she expounds a philosophy of dynamic stillness and intersubjective action. I see these momentums in dialogue with those of Weil, Gregor, and Bartleby. With the help of Irigaray, Tasmin Lorraine and Brian Massumi, this section will moderate an alternative feminist approach to anorexic bodily comportment that uses contemporary literature, anorexic memoirs, and discussions within pro-ana communities to explore the momentums of dis-ordered eating. In this section, I propose that dis-ordered eating can engage a visceral economy of extension that contends with: 1) the ocular-centrism prolonging the specular economy, and 2) the impetuses for accumulation, acquisition, and

efficiency prolonging capitalism.

I. From Lacking Desire to Desiring-Production: Reinterpreting Anorexic Economies

What better emblem of the empire of the senseless, useless waste of resources than the insatiable...anorectics of America, driven to passivity, apathy, and influence by the infinite choice of consumables.

--George Yudice, "Feeding the Transcendent Body" 19

Anorexic culture: a culture of disgust, expulsion, anthropoemia, or rejection. The anorexic prefigures this culture in a rather poetic fashion by vying to keep it at bay...Low tar, low energy, low sex, low calories, low speed—anorexic society.

--Jean Baudrillard, *America*

My point is that illness is *not* a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiest way of being ill—is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking. Yet it is hardly possible to take up one's residence in the kingdom of the ill unprejudiced by the lurid metaphors with which it has been landscaped.

--Susan Sontag *Illness as Metaphor* 3

Anorexia literally means lacking desire. This is sometimes translated as lacking

hunger. Because it is clear that anorexic women never stop hungering, most literature on eating disorders (across disciplines) points to the disorder's glaring misnomer. But very few attempts have been made to critically recuperate anorexic(s) desiring, or the process of desiring anorexic versions of production. To my mind, there is a monumental difference between living without hunger and fastening on to the sensate events of hungering. This difference, I contend, offers a crucial clue for our continued critical engagement with dis-ordered eating. The attempt to live without desire, or without hungering, could be construed as an attempt to live without a body—to experience life uninterrupted by the organic necessities paramount to the organism's survival. Viewed as lacking hunger, I can understand why the anorexic has been divested of desire, and why mastery, rejection, disgust, expulsion, abjection, control, discipline, and transcendence have been understood as the key terms to her existence. George Yudice and Jean Baudrillard articulate the narrativized (and indeed maligned) version of the anorexic perfectly. An “emblem of the empire of the senseless” and a “useless waste of resources” (Yudice), this version of anorexia is constituted by a culture—by an “anorexic society” (Baudrillard)—that courts the superficial, the apathetic, the empty, the passive, the useless, the low, and the lacking (Baudrillard).

Anorexics court the process of hungering; there is no doubt. But at stake is a question of whether or not hungering is senseless. To rephrase as a question: is hunger a state, a stasis, in which we disconnect from the material world, or is hungering a momentum that ensures the continual reminder of a living, feeling,

sensing, and desiring body? To repeat the question once more, is hunger an attempt to forego and numb the material needs of the organism, or is hungering a way to tap into them, to continually experience the vicissitudes of a body moving and being moved by the material world? This question bears continual re-posing, because it has become common sense to view anorexics as only capable of experiencing hunger as an impoverished, hermetic state of hermetic removal from the body, and from desire. And yet a hungering body is still interactive and affective: smells, sounds, and colors are all intensified as sensory stimuli anticipate and enable the search for nourishment, the stomach contracts, hypermobility and insomnia ensues, endorphins are released, energy becomes frantic, hyperkinetic even, and focus on “familiar” tasks is complicated by impulses to wander and move. I have been resistant to metaphors and allegorizations of the anorexic body, but here I want to briefly invoke metaphor, if only to illuminate what has been a selective process of deciphering anorexia’s symbols. To hunger has different metaphorical valences than to waste away in a state of atrophy and emptiness. To hunger is also to want. It is to strive, to reach, to search. Hunger can be a mobilizing force, a vehicular process, an engine of expression, exploration, and connection. Simply put, a hungry body can be a conative body.

This initial focus on hunger segues to a discussion of the processes of desiring-production in disorderly eating. It is my hope that this section will highlight the relocation of desire that often occurs within anorexia and bulimia. I wish to arrive at an adequately supported and contextualized sense of dis-ordered

eating as a physical practice that inheres the second grouping of metaphors of hunger discussed in my previous paragraph. I will argue that dis-ordered eating can render bodies more porous, permeable, affective, tactile, and more “rooted in the absence of place,” to borrow Weil’s expression once again. The task of this chapter’s discussion is to replace prevalent metaphors of anorexic waste, apathy, passivity, senselessness, solipsism, rejection, and emptiness with the offering of a much different version of women’s appetites for self-starvation. Differently put, this is a re-articulation of the properties, functions, and extensions of desiring in dis-ordered eating. I first consider Irigaray’s critique of the symbolic economy, but quickly move to the second aspect of her project which details a line of flight from the female subject’s scopic containment. With the help of Irigaray’s haptic, visceral economy, I show the connection between touching and desiring sustained in memoirs of eating disorders. My thesis is that anorexia is a highly sensory experience, and that by focusing on its haptic expressions, we can navigate feminist interrogations of eating disorders away from the common visual aggregates of anorexia, a critical gesture already begun by Josephine Brain and Megan Warin.

II. The Horror of Nothing to See: Irigaray’s Specular Economy

Anorexia is so specifically a female symptom that it can be correlated with the girl’s inability to accept her sexual “destiny” and can be seen as a sort of desperate rejection of the sexual blossoming to which she is fated. More

generally, one may cite here the lack of sexual appetite attributed to women

--Freud, Myth, qtd. In Irigaray, 70

In *This Sex Which is Not One* and *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray elaborates a critique of philosophy, what she claims is a masculinist apparatus erected in support of the patriarchal divides of Western culture. According to Irigaray, the two offences serially committed (and unacknowledged) by the institution of philosophy are: 1) the replication of a mind/body divide and, 2) the exclusion of the feminine. Philosophy has tended to reproduce Descartes' mind/body dualism which has elevated the mind (a disembodied, male realm) and derogated the body (a disavowed, female 'dark continent'). Furthermore, philosophy has excluded the feminine as *other* by coding the female body as unreasonable, irrational, natural, chaotic, and hysterical. According to Irigaray, it is impossible to negotiate a female ontology, "the being of woman" (*Speculum* 21) within an "economy of representation" which functions as "an organized system whose meaning is regulated by paradigms and units of value that are in turn determined by male subjects" (*Speculum* 21,22). This "intentionally phallic currency" privileges an "economy of presence" in which the representation and valuation of "presence" ensures that "becoming a woman" is only ever in terms of lack, absence, vacancy, default, and negative space (*Speculum* 41). In this way, representation masks its debt to (its loan from) the female other: "she is left with a *void*, a *lack* of all representation, re-presentation, and even strictly speaking of all mimesis of her desire for origin. That desire will henceforth pass through the

discourse-desire-law of man's desire" (Speculum 42). Left in "exile" from her own "economy of desire," "the little girl, the woman, supposedly has *nothing* you can see. She exposes, exhibits the possibility of a *nothing to see*" (Speculum 42-47).

To unpack these passages more thoroughly, it is necessary to explain that here Irigaray builds her critique of Freudian psychoanalysis, in which female desire functions through lack—through a lack of presence, lack of phallus, and lack of agency. Woman becomes subject by desiring what she does not have: a penis, and all that it represents (a unit of measurement, a presence, a visually-available demarcation of power/privilege). Instead, she is castrated by virtue of "having nothing you can see...having *nothing* (having NO THING) (Speculum 48). Resigned to this drama of repeatedly recognizing the negative space that prefigures female embodiment and representation, the only form of desire made available to women within this libidinal economy is characterized by the scopic drive to be looked at, to be seen, and to be visually objectified. Enforced is a consignment of women to the outside of signification. Woman can borrow signifiers, she can have signifiers imposed upon her, but she cannot adequately represent herself on/in her own terms (Speculum 71). Within this "anatomical recapitulation of the social" (ibid 70), either woman subscribes to a masculinist occularcentric scheme of desire, or "hysteria is all she has left" (ibid 71).

I will examine the first aspect of women's hemming-in within the specular economy. Irigaray illuminates that for psychoanalysis, woman enters into a system of exchange as an object of value only by virtue of that which makes her

physically desirable for, or fetishized by, the male gaze. As her “sexual ‘usefulness’ depends upon her being concerned about the quality or ‘properties’ of her body,” (ibid 113), woman’s physical vanity can be orchestrated as a means of compensating for her perceived and re-presented sexual inferiority (ibid113). By fetishizing her own body, woman mimes, replicates, and reproduces “a process patterned after that of the model and prototype of all fetishes: the penis” (ibid 114). Resultantly, her desire can only pass through those spaces already colonized by the masculine subject: discourse, culture, economy, exchange, language, and signification. An “obliging prop for man’s fantasies,” woman will find pleasure in this role: “a masochistic prostitution of her body to a desire that is not her own...leav[ing] her in a familiar state of dependency upon man” (Sex Not One 25). The non-visible, and therefore, non-theorizable nature of woman’s sexual pleasure leaves her at a loss for a conceptual and signifiatory vocabulary where she might adequately work through the properties of her body, and her capacity for desiring.

I have been focusing on Irigaray’s critique of Freud’s phallic currency of desire, because this aspect of her work seems to most readily provoke and invite a discussion of disorderly eating, but it is important to note that Irigaray does not simply go to battle with psychoanalysis on account of the reproduced impossibility of women’s volitional and agentic desire. Rather, Irigaray’s critique of Freud occasions her deconstruction of what she deems the masculinist interests of Western philosophy: for these too operate in accordance with the specular/speculative economy. Beyond Freud, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza,

Nietzsche, Deleuze, et.al. exercise systems of thought that exclude/excise the feminine—an untamed, uncharted dark continent that subtends the clarity and fixity required for elevated, mindful, sovereign, and solipsistic philosophical enterprises of self-representation (ibid 136).

Irigaray's contemporaneous French feminist philosophers propose a process of hysterical mimesis as one way to liberate the female subject—the feminine—from her philosophical and cultural hemming-in by masculine self-representation. In *Revolutionary Poetic Language*, Julia Kristeva calls for a philosophical refashioning of Plato's chora (or cave) into the *semiotic chora*, a distinctly female mode of intersubjective embodiment that celebrates pre-symbolic madness, unreason, rhythm, and music that subverts language and logic. In "The Laughter of Medusa," Helene Cixous proposes and performs *écriture féminine*: a hysterical mode of creation intended to reinsert the body, pleasure, and distinctly feminine corporeal expressions into women's writing—one means of reclaiming those realms violently jettisoned from symbolic (and masculine) language.

However, Irigaray's work differently validates and treats hysteria. She foresees the potential for embodied resistance in the remnant of hysteria—all that women have left in a specular economy if they resist their subjugation to representations, evaluations, and exchanges which are not their own. Irigaray is pointed in her acknowledgement that the "issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman could be the *subject* or the *object*, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself; of suspending its pretention to the production of truth and of a meaning that is univocal" (Sex Not One 78). In other words, to validate

hysteria as a creative practice where women might access desire on their own terms (as Kristeva and Cixous suggest), is to replicate and prolong the theoretical machinery that produces sovereign male subjects. The hysteric is neither sovereign, nor univocal—but it is precisely her being “No Thing” that accounts for the momentums that hysteria can fuel.⁶¹ Irigaray concedes that in hysteria there is the “possibility of another mode of production...perhaps a cultural resource yet to come” (*Sex Not One* 138). But at the same time, hysteria “cannot be experienced outside of social and cultural structures” (*ibid* 138) that currently pathologize women’s behaviors, attempting to cure them by rendering women more submissive and adaptable to masculine society (*ibid* 137). Simply put, the hysteric has already been “metabolized by phallocentrism” (*Speculum* 229). For Irigaray, there is power and promise in acts of hysterical mimesis, but ultimately, she argues that feminists (and philosophers) need another means of insisting upon the affirmative potential of female bodies—another means that will disrupt the process of mimesis (a form of replication that cannot extend outside of phallocentrism). For Irigaray, promise lies instead in the realms of collaborative or generative confrontations with difference.

The next section’s discussion turns to the elements of Irigaray’s philosophy that propose morphologies of female resistance that are not mimetic, but “recast all economy” (*Speculum* 145). I find these creative aspects of Irigaray’s project just as startling and useful to feminism as her critique of the masculine subject of

⁶¹ Simone Weil’s expressed desire to “become nothing” (chapter 1) comes to mind here.

culture, economy, and philosophy. However, Irigaray's understanding of women's trappings within a visual economy of representation, as well as her interpretation of the pathologized hysteric of Freudian psychoanalysis offer productive points of departure for a re-invocation of disorderly eating. Indeed, her deconstruction of the specular economy implicates the majority of contemporary feminist understandings of anorexia. I will not detail these readings at length here, because to do so would be to repeat my introduction's material. But to briefly summarize this scholarship, there is a deeply embedded sense that to starve oneself is to attempt (either by futile or laudable effort) to occupy the same privileged position as the masculine subject. This is either by renouncing patriarchal ideals (Grosz), by embodying a male ethic of self-production, mastery, and discipline (Bordo), by hunger striking for entry into the gates of masculine power (Orbach), by obeying the whims of an internal, panoptical male connoisseur (Knapp), and by transforming female curves into hardened surfaces more characteristic of male embodiment (Chernin, Nolan, Heywood).

Irigaray's critique of the specular economy is implicated by this scholarship. Social constructivist or corporeal feminist positions on anorexia point to cultural bind: the impossibility of articulating the female body within an economy of subject formation that functions by staving off female desire. How can we begin to think through desiring anorexia and anorexic desiring when there is no conceptual vocabulary available that will allow for female agency? This presents a very real, very immediate problem. Within these critiques, there are two divergent commitments offered to attempt to solve this impasse. First, we can

commit to reading anorexia as an active, political stance—a protest—against patriarchy, against “eating orders,” and against biopolitical “health” (Grosz, Bordo, Orbach). In this view, anorexic women rail against their castration: against having *no thing*, being *nothing*, or possessing *nothing to see* (Irigaray). Either, they become the ironic embodiment of *nothingness*, emptiness, and lack, or they render their bodies rigid, hard, unfeeling, and emotionless, performing, and perhaps perverting an economy of phallic exchange. Anorexia, in other words, is rendered as (hysterical) remnant; it is all some women have left, and a failed means of asserting agency over female desire, that which has been given no real cultural currency. The second commitment present in these critiques is to viewing anorexics as passive victims of systemic patriarchal violence that evades their control (Wolf, Chernin, Knapp, Nolan, Heywood). According to this vein of analysis, the only remedy to anorexia would be abolish the operations of patriarchy.

III. Irigaray’s Haptic Economy: Having *No Thing*

My case study on Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” proposed that Gregor Samsa’s physical transformation (effected through his becoming-insect *and* his self-starvation)⁶² fuelled his traversal from a state of seeing “clearly” to a nomadic

⁶² I think that both forms of becomings are inseparable in the text, while not reciprocal. Gregor doesn’t stop eating because he’s an insect, and he does not transform into an insect because he stops eating. The relationship is not one of causality, but is instead an affective composition. Gregor’s metamorphosis

mode of sensory enhancement where Gregor begins to feel-through-movement, and to “see” by virtue of touch. The metamorphoses taking place on the surface of Gregor’s body alter his patterns of interaction with food, family, and space, and (as I argued), they also instigate a shifting economy. All of those ritual/routine modalities Gregor performed in his human life are inhospitable to his fasting, non-human body, and vice versa: as an insect, Gregor no longer fits within the familiar aggregates of human existence. His body becomes something other, but Kafka’s formidable narrative of becoming ensures that so too does Gregor’s system of exchange. Gregor is no longer the same thing, but is symbiotically altered as human interactions and economies of exchange now effect a different milieu. Prior to his transformation, Gregor is a healthy commercial traveler, selling textiles; subject to his “deaf,” unforgiving, and impatient boss’s whims; scrutinized by a “sick insurance doctor;” contained by his father’s incurred financial debt; and wanting nothing but to work, earn, and accumulate money that will allow for his family’s continued health and prosperity. Having become-insect, Gregor is cruelly exorcized from these forms of familiar economic participation: he is fired from his job and forbidden to leave his room and home. However, Gregor still produces, exchanges, and economizes—as a still active, still capacious, and perhaps more visceral and creative economic participant.

Gregor is no longer a “healthy” subject in a (specular) economy premised on visibility, presence, authority, and the accumulation/consumption of “things.”

means that his body changes, which in turn changes his milieu (his carriers of significance)—what he can and cannot do.

He has to remain invisible to his family and lodgers (they are disgusted by the sight of him). He has to absent himself from work and all forms of social participation. He is no longer in control of his physical movements (almost half the text is taken up with Gregor's quest to get out of bed and across his small room). He no longer has things (his furniture constantly shifted and removed). And increasingly, he eats nothing, nourished instead by strange and unfamiliar pleasures of moving, feeling, and touching. As I have argued, Gregor invents, produces, and experiments with differential forms of movement and exchange. His having no thing, eating nothing, and being no identifiably-human thing are the conditions of possibility for Gregor's perambulations. My discussion of "The Metamorphosis" relied on a Deleuzian proposition of askesis in which emptying out (in Gregor's case, starving) bears the potential for replenishing and repopulating with something new (a different mode of comportment, a new posture, an unidentifiable feeling, a surprising connection, a new language, a previously-unthought idea, an altered surface, etc).⁶³ My sense was that Gregor's fasting body, while unhealthy and unresponsive to moral mores, engages a Spinozist ethical premise of doing rather than being. Kafka, I argued, demonstrates time and again that Gregor's capacities to affect and be affected are enhanced by his physical transformation. In short, his body can do more, differently.

My aim in re-invoking "The Metamorphosis" is to think through the

⁶³ But this notion of askesis as emptying in order to feel anew, or conjure a form of sensation or production to come is not simply a Deleuzian proposition. As I will show, this is also the case for Irigaray. It is the case for Weil. For Kwinter. For Kafka. For Beckett (as I will demonstrate in the next few chapters).

connection between Gregor's visceral expenditures/extensions while fasting and those of female anorexics. While my last chapters performed a Deleuzian methodology, this chapter builds on this method by adding Irigaray's philosophy of affect, and thus a theory that accounts for the specificity of female desire in disordered eating. This connection complicates the experiment. If I were simply engaging in a Deleuzian framework, I could connect Gregor's or Bartleby's or Molloy's nomadisms to those of anorexics by pointing to Deleuze and Guattari's claim that all becomings pass through a becoming-woman. The process of molecularization requires sequential movements away from the authoritarian subject, or from those coordinates of identity that demarcate authority to begin with. It could be argued, then, that Gregor's becoming-insect passes through a becoming-woman. Specifically, he is no longer a patriarch and provider for his family, finding himself instead a pathologized hysteric creeping around his room,⁶⁴ unable to work, earn, and participate healthfully in the socio-economic order.

These instances of disenfranchisement are not in-themselves becomings-woman; rather, Gregor's exploratory movements in response to his increasingly dis-empowered categories of identity are important. His touching/feeling in place of seeing/controlling, his redeployment of the surface space of his room in place of being trapped, and his differential engagements with the temporality of eating, feeding, digesting—these momentums could be read as becomings-woman, just as much as they are specific to Gregor's becoming-insect. To set up an analogous

⁶⁴ Similar to the narrator of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

relationship between Gregor's disordered-eating and anorexia, the latter could also be interpreted as a process of becoming-woman. Not by exaggeratedly and frequently investing in the body image reflected in the mirror, not by excessively thinking about food and cooking for others (those domestic tasks traditionally expected of women), not by dieting, and not through auto-objectification. While these behaviours might speak to becoming *a* woman, they are not becomings-woman because they are reactions to (or perhaps even protests against) regimes of identification. Anorexic becomings-woman are actions further removed from these macro-political gestures. By moving away from the mirror to see-through-touch⁶⁵, contemplating the hyper-porosity of the skin while cooking, feeding off of the wastes on others' plates, stuffing food into underwear to avoid eating it, spreading the eating of a single apple over the course of two hours and countless/counted segments, vomiting by will alone, and revaluing the body's absences as presences—these are just some of the sensory events of anorexia that

⁶⁵ In chapter 2, I considered the altered events of Gregor interacting with his wall-hanging: a framed photograph of a woman clad in fur. Presumably, as human, Gregor adorns his walls with this image because he likes the way it looks. Perhaps he aspires to the wealth it represents. Perhaps he likes the way it looks back at him. But as "A Metamorphosis" progresses, Gregor evolves different sensory systems of erotic interaction with the photograph as a surface: he uses the frame's glass to cool his belly and alter the temperature of his body, he presses himself up against it, he uses it as one surface to explore haptically among others in his room. In short, Gregor does everything *but* look at the image. Kafka's sequence of narrative events bears reconsideration here. I know that I resist the ways that anorexia has been allegorized, but this particular allegory for anorexia seems so much more generative to me. Gregor's trades of vision for touch, of being-looked-at and looking for feeling, and of reflection for thermodynamic exchange: I would argue that these sensory events are more in keeping with anorexic experiences (and indeed anorexic economies).

could be becomings-woman. This distinction between what dominant feminist scholarship of anorexia has understood as the socio-cultural inheritance of femininity (becoming *a* woman) and the bodily momentums sustaining anorexic practice (becomings-woman) is one that I will keep resignaling in my ensuing discussion.

The connection I would like to forge between Gregor's self-starvation and anorexic becomings is already working against aspects of Irigaray's project, as she sees the need to retain awareness of the imbalanced ontological status of being a man and a woman. Crucial to her project is observing the ethical, economic, political, and embodied dimensions of how masculinity and femininity are divergently felt, practiced, and discursively-encoded. Acknowledging gender difference is paramount to Irigaray's critique of the specular economy in which masculine hegemony—sameness—is grafted onto thought, language, logic, and discourse, reifying the process through which "man needs to deny his embodiment in order to maintain his separation from the matter that produced him" (Lorraine 94). For Irigaray, the constant reminder of the female body's absence from discourse (the originary transcendence ensuring the privileged status of mind over body) is required for feminist practice. As Tasmin Lorraine's account of Irigaray's project puts it, her "dream is that two distinct subjects—masculine and feminine—could meet as equals without obliterating their differences" (Lorraine 24).

While Deleuze's philosophy begins with the "bracketing" of self/other relations of alterity in order to privilege pre-individual differences and formative

encounters with the a-subjective, impersonal forces of immanence, Irigaray's work asserts the prematurity, and risks entailed by thinking beyond molar power relations. Dorothea Olkowski's essay, "Body, Knowledge, and Becoming-Woman: Morpho-Logic in Deleuze and Irigaray," is instructive on Irigaray's point of contention with Deleuze's work. She writes that for Irigaray:

the body without organs is no more than the historical condition of women—no singular organ dominates the woman's body, thus no pleasure belongs specifically to her—thus becoming-woman is a presumption, a phantasmatic position for a male subject who, once again, supplements his own pleasure. In other words, she takes becoming-woman to be another appropriation of the woman's body by the male (Olkowski 103).

This leads precisely to a question of what is at stake in my dissertation's affirmation of disordered eating as exercises of hungering, desiring, and becoming. Social constructivist feminist scholarship on eating disorders has suggested that anorexia is simultaneously the result of—and results in—the appropriation of women's bodies (and pleasures, and desires) by the male gaze: either by men (Wolf), by women's internalized male gaze (Knapp), or by women's contempt for their bodies produced and propagated by patriarchy (Bordo). A second wave of feminist scholarship on anorexia proposes a re-investment in the material concerns of self-starvers as a way to intervene in the privileging of representation over matter, a Cartesian legacy (Colebrook and Bray). Or, it deems feminist inquiry too limited to account for the material

engagements of anorexic bodies (Brain, Gooldin, Warin). I wish to strike a middle ground between these critical engagements that avoid all of the abuses noted. These are: 1) affirming the anorexic body-without-organs that simply re-deploys the logic/language of the specular economy; 2) replicating philosophy's blind-spots to women's bodily pleasures; and 3) further de-limiting feminist inquiry into disordered eating.

My solution is to find points of convergence, overlap, and mediation between Irigaray and Deleuze. It is true (as Irigaray argues) that we cannot simply ignore a gendered divide when dealing with anorexia. And it is also true (as Deleuze argues) that becomings can occasion an escape, however fleeting, from the male subject, and from masculine desire. Irigaray's feminist philosophy of active female desire can speak to Deleuze's eco-philosophy affirming desiring-production. The two projects meet most emphatically, for me, upon considerations of affects as materially engaged processes negotiating feeling-through-doing, doing-through-relating, and seeing-through-feeling.

My next two chapters will focus on Deleuze's use of ethology as a way to move affect (and anorexia) beyond discussions relying on human-centric philosophies of embodiment. However, because this chapter confronts the gendered divides of scholarship on eating disorders, I find it useful to approach Deleuze through Brian Massumi's consideration of affect in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Deleuze and Guattari build on a Spinozist approach to affect by mapping the differing capacities of what bodies can do, as a way to figure pre-individual singularities. This offers a morphology that places

bodily sensations at its center without making recourse to molar figurations of identity, meaning, and representation. Said differently, Deleuze and Guattari's theory of affect (via ethology and involution) is a means of classifying bodies—relating, desiring, encountering—by virtue of the specific compartments, postures, traits, behaviors, and milieus they produce. Massumi's interpretation of Deleuzian affect, however, veers in a slightly alternate direction. I find Massumi's consideration of the skin as an organ of haptic encounter to offer compelling connections with Irigaray's feminist philosophy of touch. By placing their work in dialogue, I am setting up the methodology for my ensuing section where I deal with expressions of anorexia more specifically.

In *Parables of the Virtual*, Massumi proposes a problem: “that there is no cultural theoretical vocabulary specific to affect. Our entire vocabulary has derived from theories of signification that are still wedded to structure even across irreconcilable differences” (221). One of my interpretations of Gregor and Bartleby's fasting in chapter 2 was that both enforce/enable reading practices capable of suspending meaning and diagnosis in efforts to engage instead with sense: with the affective extensions and the intensities of both characters' dynamic (in)action. I also pointed to the resonance of Gregor's metamorphosis on an emotionally-voided, but affectively charged register by arguing that Gregor's fasting motion(s) replace emotion(s) in the text. Massumi's analysis offers insight into this shift. Emotions, he argues, could be thought of as territorialized affects. They are feelings and sensations registered and organized as significant and signifying ontological states. While “affect is most often used

loosely as a synonym for emotion,” they follow different logics: affect is intensity which is inassimilable and emotion is “subjective content, the *socio-linguistic* fixing of the quality of an experience” (Massumi 221). Once in the realm of emotion, then, the momentums of sensing, feeling, and affecting become static, and sense is affixed to ideational and cultural content. This is not to say that affect is not pre-social, pre-discursive, or pre-cultural, but instead a constant process of negotiating with these elements (Massumi 223).

We might return to Claire Colebrook and Abigail Bray’s material feminist reminder here that “the body is not a prior fullness, anteriority, or plenitude that is subsequently identified and organized through restricting representations. Representations are not negations imposed on otherwise fluid bodies” (“Haunted Flesh 38). For Colebrook, Bray, Deleuze, and Massumi, emotions and representations fall under the same category of socio-linguistic and socio-cultural fixations, and affective bodies are more compellingly approached as perpetually interfacing with images, ideas, metaphors, and words; *but also with* less charted movements, intensities, flows, speeds, and interactions. Massumi critically situates affect as a 3rd state in what has been understood by philosophy as the mind-body dualism.

Affect, he argues can intervene in a distinction between mind and body, male and female, activity and passivity (Massumi 225). A synaesthetic “participation of the senses in each other: the effects of one sensory mode into another, affects are virtual synaesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actual existing, particular things that embody them” (Massumi

228). When in “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” Melville’s attorney situates Turkey’s changing digestive compartments as negotiations with the sun’s meridians, he intuitively what Massumi calls affect. As material rhythms and frequencies that bodies are temporarily swept up by, Melville invites us to think about digestion as an affectively engaged encounter with ideas, and representations, yes, but also with environmental variances and digestive viscera.⁶⁶ The ways that Turkey (as well as self-starving Bartleby, for that matter) comports his digesting body are related to class, gender, and emotion. But they are also relations with forces that precede, escape, and transform these identifications. Affect, according to Massumi, gives a “logical consistency to the in-between” of activity and passivity. As such, it means “realigning with a logic of relation...It may seem odd to suggest that the relation has an ontological status separate from the terms of the relation. But as the work of Deleuze repeatedly emphasizes, it is in fact an indispensable step toward conceptualizing change as anything more than a negation, deviation, rupture, or subversion” (Massumi 70). Affect, as “the impersonal connecting thread of experience,” is “pre-and post-contextual, pre-and post-personal, an excess of continuity invested only in the ongoing” (Massumi 217).

Beyond Massumi’s situating of affect as the instigating force and the constitutive, material glue of encounter, his work resonates with Irigaray’s on the basis of its search for bodily morphologies occurring between, beneath, and

⁶⁶ Foucault makes this same invitation in *The Use of Pleasure*.

beyond distinctions between activity and passivity.⁶⁷ Like Irigaray, Massumi (through Deleuze) criticizes the image of thought, and particularly the privileged relationships between seeing and knowing, and between visibility and power. Massumi's comments about body and image (and body image) are worth considering at length here, especially because his pursuit of that which exceeds the subject speaks provocatively to Irigaray's critique of the specular economy's blind spots. Massumi recounts that the experience of emotion is often described "as being outside of oneself and one's vitality" (35). But this emotionally heightened state of being beside oneself (with grief, happiness, excitement, depression, anxiety, or any other calculable/identifiable emotions) is indispensable to the active operations of desiring, which produce and perpetuate life: "If there were no escape, no excess or remainder, no fade-out to infinity, the universe would be without potential, pure entropy, death. Actually existing, structured things live through and in that which escapes them. Their autonomy is the autonomy of affect" (Massumi 35).

Emotions can make us feel beyond, beside, or outside of ourselves. But these emotions, as contained expressions of personal experience, cannot speak to the complexity of sensory events that compel us. At times, according to Massumi, we are made fleetingly aware of those impulses and momentums which escape capture by the operations of knowing and meaning-making⁶⁸. To feel beside ourselves involves a breakdown of the walls of the subject; this is to become a

⁶⁷ This also recalls my introduction's discussion of Karen Barad's material feminist notion of "agential intra-action."

⁶⁸ This would be a Deleuzian encounter.

body without organs or to engage the sensory explorations of becoming. In Weil's account of self-starvation, to feel beside oneself is to become "rooted in the absence of place": a nomadic, decreative exercise that both renders the body more porous and fashions the world anew. Gregor's metamorphosis is perhaps the most perfect narrative of feeling outside of oneself: in the course of his fast, he and his room become mutually enfolded surfaces that allow for an extension of Gregor's capacities for feeling. And, this sense of feeling beyond oneself is accounted for by the attorney in *Bartleby, the Scrivener*. Here, Bartleby's fast—his dynamic stillness—overwhelms the attorney to a point of confrontation with the inadequacies of those systems of capture that make the world interpretable (logic, meaning, responsibility, identity, morality, health).

Differently put, to feel beside oneself is to engage the dynamic operations of affect which threaten the subject as we know it. We feel that which we do not know, and that which does not yet make meaning. Massumi's compendium to Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs is the body without image (BwI). The blindspot of vision, he argues, is movement. We are incapable of seeing ourselves in motion as others can see us (Massumi 48). The BwI, he suggests, "is an accumulation of relative perspectives and passages between them, an additive space of utter receptivity retaining and combining past movements, in intensity, extracted from their actual terms" (ibid 57). The BwI, then, is an acknowledgment of the porousness of the body, incompleteness of the subject, and the inadequacy of the individual to properly see herself in motion. We can feel ourselves in motion, we can touch our articulating muscles through the skin, but part of mobility

entails a necessary blinding, a nothing to see, or a limit to what can be seen. While the body image can only ever be a still image, moving can evade self-seeing.

I want to pause to think about the BwI in relation to anorexia. Body image has been one of the central considerations around which understandings of aetiologies—and attempted therapeutic reparations—of eating disorders continue to rally. In psychiatric literature, women suffering from eating disorders have distorted body images: they believe their bodies are differently shaped, or take up more space than they actually do. Sometimes referred to as body dysmorphic disorder, this symptomatic break between the mind and body of self-starvers is cited on the DSM IV as a primary diagnostic characteristic of anorexia and bulimia nervosa.⁶⁹ Therapeutic interventions, especially Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy will often focus on repairing this mind-body divide with a more positive (and accurate) self-image and a better understanding of the connections between emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.

Feminist scholarship on eating disorders has tended to de-pathologize sufferers by pathologizing culture instead: all women inherit (culturally, linguistically, discursively, economically, philosophically) a state of mind-body disrepair, and women are incapable of constructing positive body images that anticipate healthy female bodies because the mediated, visual imperatives of

⁶⁹ The DSM IV is the current Diagnostic Statistics Manual for psychiatric illnesses, a comprehensive reference guide for primary symptoms of disorders. For anorexia nervosa, the four main diagnostic criteria are: 1) refusal to maintain a normal body weight; 2) intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, despite being underweight; 3) disturbance in the way one's body weight or shape are experienced; and 4) amenorrhea.

patriarchy foreclose this possibility. The iconic representation of anorexia is a thin woman gazing unhappily at her mirror reflection which shows the distorted image of a much larger body than she actually possesses. But because so much of my research on disorderly eating implicates touching, feeling, moving, and being moved as central sensory experiences of self-starvation, I am drawn to Massumi's notion that affective movement intervenes in the imagining and imaging of the body. The BwI might be just as crucial to the events of anorexic and bulimic expression as what has been psychiatrically, culturally, and critically understood as the body image.

According to Massumi, the BwI offers a potential for escape from the visual dictates of identification and representation, because "movement-vision is sight turned proprioceptive; the eyes reabsorbed into the flesh" (Massumi 61). Proprioception is the individual's sense of the relative position of neighbouring parts of the body, neighbouring bodies, and the strength and effort being employed in movement. It is the spatial awareness required to navigate through life, but differs from perception in that it is not purely ideational, and instead manifests through the "palpitating collaboration" of bodies and surfaces. For Massumi:

Proprioception folds tactility into the body, enveloping the skin's contact with the external world in a dimension of medium depth: between epidermis and viscera. The muscles and ligaments register conditions of movement which the skin internalizes as qualities: the hardness of the floor underfoot as one looks into a mirror becomes

a resistance enabling sensation and movement, the softness of the cat's fur becomes a lubricant for the motion of the hand. Proprioception translates with objects into a muscular memory of relationality. This is the emulative memory of skill, habit, posture...The dimension of proprioception lies midway between stimulus and response, in a region where infolded tactile encounter meets externalizing response to the qualities gathered by all five senses (Massumi 58).

Massumi's notion of the body without image develops a conceptual vocabulary for thinking through the non-optical—haptic—elements of feeling. This haptic trajectory of sense and encounter is more synaesthetic, as new correlations of sensations are developed, and a mutuality of tactile and visual can occur in an engagement of seeing-through-feeling, sensing-through-relating, and feeling-through-movement. It is less that touch replaces vision in the BwI, and more that touching and seeing are mutually-engaged events that expand the organism's capacity for encounter. In Massumi's affective schema, proprioception precedes and produces perception. We might think of an individual's perceptions as ideational observations or self-contained, solipsistic impressions about the world. But proprioception requires a more active and agentic form of embodiment in which the collaboration of surfaces produces sensation. While perception might be tied to making meaning (and emotion), proprioception inheres practices of sense-making (and affect).

Massumi foregrounds touch, tactility, and the skin as vehicles of encounter

and, as such, offers an interesting connective node between Deleuze's project and Irigaray's. Tasmine Lorraine's *Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy* is also instructive about this dialogue. She tends to read Irigaray through a Deleuzian lens rather than the opposite, but far from criticizing this approach, I find that it yields an exciting and valuable feminist terrain, and I will draw from it extensively in thinking through Irigaray's haptic economy. This chapter's first section detailed Irigaray's critique of the specular economy, and then moved to a consideration of early (but still popular) feminist understandings of anorexia's aetiologies as contiguous with female castration by masculine discourse privileging presence, control, visibility, and transcendence. Here I want to propose that Irigaray's feminist philosophy of touch can help to critically reposition anorexic desire more actively, especially in connection to Massumi's Deleuzian theory of affective, motive bodies without image. Like Massumi, Irigaray invokes haptic encounters to refigure the ways that desire has been coded and symbolized in accordance with feminine lack. Because touch, unlike vision, is irrespective of shape, unpredictable, and remains contiguous with membranes and surfaces, it has the capacity to follow pleasures as they unfold, rather than signifying, perceiving, and re-presenting pleasures after they have occurred. For Irigaray, "the body is always touching upon new ground. It cannot help but be continually feeling and losing itself in the immediacy of experience that it has never already had" (Lorraine 59).

I find that Irigaray's sense of the continuous, contiguous unfolding of (female) embodiment anticipates Massumi's notion of the proprioceptive BwI.

Culturally and discursively mediated images of women's bodies, underpinned by a specular logic that displaces women's pleasures have been understood by Irigaray as responsible for women's alienation from their bodies. Strangers in their own flesh, and hemmed-in by negatively construed body images derogating female lack, absence, and emptiness, Irigaray invents a "morpho-logic" (to employ Olkowski's term for that which is not only a morphology and not only a logic) that privileges female bodies and feminine desires. Specifically, she argues that privileging the sense of touch over sight could "invoke a sensual encounter with the world premised on immersion and participation rather than separation and control. A subject focused on tactile sensation is less able to distinguish himself as an active subject acting upon passive objects" (Lorraine 43). This emergent emphasis on contiguous material involvements—occasioned by the tactile explorations of bodies in the process of relating—is, for Irigaray, the extension of a corporeal logic specific to female bodies. Instead of simply pointing out the failures of an existent economy premised on visibility, presence, and phallic currency, Irigaray insists on the possibility of "an *other* libidinal economy" (Speculum 48) whose function requires perpetual movement (ex-stasis), enfolding, relating, shifting, extending, and touching. In other words, this haptic economy entails a dynamic, immanent sense of being that colludes with becoming: this is a "sensible transcendental" in which the powers of bodies are not surpassed by those of the mind, but instead, powers are derived from the perpetual mutation of one physical state to another.

Irigaray's "manner of recasting all economy" (Speculum 145) is to first

expose a void (the hole of men's signifying systems) and to traverse this emptiness by exposing the limitations of maligning this void as possessing nothing(s). A blind spot is less a failure than the condition of possibility for re-imagining capacities for relating⁷⁰. Massumi's BwI allows for precisely this form of engagement. The body in motion that the optic senses are ill-equipped to perceive, instead engages haptic sensory awareness that the body can indeed proprioceive. Sanford Kwinter's imagining of "Kafkan Immanence" also makes recourse the virtual possible in a similar way. For him, emptiness is not a state of depletion, but rather, the body is most replete when most empty because this is when it can increase, spread, and extend its surfaces. Kwinter's work converses with Irigaray and Massumi's affective powers of tactile exploration.

However, Irigaray's philosophy takes on much more than Kwinter's and Massumi's. She re-converts and re-vitalizes the emptiness with which female bodies have been (out) cast, but she also re-imagines how economies (systems of exchange) could—and already do—function differently. Replete emptiness threatens processes of producing, reproducing, representing, and signifying because it is space that does not exist to be filled with *some* thing. No-thingness already possesses agency, the agency of contiguous movement. No-thing cannot be enclosed. The hysteric is still hemmed-in by Irigaray's account, as hysteria is "all she has left" (Speculum 71). Hysteria is a remnant. While offering a potential site of feminine resistance through acts of mimesis, hysteria is excessive,

⁷⁰ This is another insistence of the virtual potentialities of the void I discussed in Chapter 2.

abundant, overflowing, non-repressed, unadulterated desire. But even though hysteria can exceed and expose the failures of the specular economy, for Irigaray, it is less potent and potential than pure emptiness because hysterics still perform and mime identity: they mime structures in order to subvert them. However, in Irigaray's most inventive feminine libidinal economy, desire is divested of structure—it is no thing, it has no thing, and it does not seek to fill this void or feed this emptiness—because desire “takes pleasure in nothing” (*Speculum* 234). In other words, desire feeds rather than needing to be fed. To grant desire a structure, is to thwart its operant capacities to perpetually touch and connect with different surfaces.

Both Massumi and Irigaray propose that looking at *something* requires a stillness (a still image, an acknowledgment of presence) that thwarts the operations of affect (Massumi) and desire (Irigaray). Touching, on the other hand, entails the perpetual interfacing of surfaces. Massumi sketches mirror-foot-floor and fur-hand assemblages, while Irigaray is more concerned with the perpetually encountering surfaces of vaginal lips. Woman, for Irigaray, is the privileged figure in this haptic, libidinal economy because she has no choice but to “touch herself all the time” (*Sex Not One* 24). Because the optic sense requires “discrimination and individuation of form” it is “particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking, and her entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity: She is to be the beautiful object of contemplation” (*Sex Not One* 25). “A defect in the systematics of representation and desire” (*ibid* 25), woman takes

pleasure from precisely her “incompleteness of form” because it allows for indefinite touching that renders indistinguishable the surface which is touching (active) from the surface which is being touched (passive) (ibid 26). Irigaray posits that this multiplicity can replace individuation in an economy resigned to measuring, counting, and inventorying units of things, as an “appetite for touch” (ibid 27) is an investment in the mobile, mutating, and immeasurable interplay of surfaces. In Irigaray’s thinking, congruent to Deleuze and Guattari’s disdain for the repressed, buried subject of Freudian psychoanalysis, there is a paradigmatic shift from validating volume, profundity, and depth (unearthing structure beneath structure) to exploring changing surfaces in the course of their fluid, shifting interplay.

Like Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the machinery of capitalism, Irigaray’s critic of the specular economy points to its restriction to solids: a premising of desire on the attainment of property, in which woman is no more than one “geometric prop” among many (*Sex Not One*, 79, 108). This, Irigaray argues, fails to “recognize a specific economy of fluids—their resistance to solids, their proper dynamics” (ibid 114) and disallows for principles of more subtle “dynamogenic” forces (114). Because property and accumulation foreclose the dynamics of proximity, touch, and emptiness (those affects produced by female desire), Irigaray calls for an economic shift: “what if these ‘commodities’ refused to go to ‘market’? What if they maintained ‘another’ kind of commerce, among themselves?...Exchanges without identifiable terms, without accounts, without end...without additions and accumulations...without sequence and number.

Without standard and yardstick?" (ibid 196,197).

In other words, the bodily character (morphology) of woman, in its dynamic fluidity, connective surfaces, and haptic encounters is involved in systems of differentially productive economic exchange. From specular subjectivity to embodied subjectivity, from phallogentric to affective and non-centred, and from ocular to haptic—this is how Irigaray proposes we re-fuel productive feminine economies. Rather than re-inscribing an irrational, passive, or hysterical female body, she offers the alternative of a material, fluid, dynamic, intra-active, and agentic female body, creatively engaged with matter and space (instead of contained, contaminated, muted, inert, and commoditized matter). The female body, she suggests, is not only the stymied matter of economic exchange, but more importantly, the female body morphologizes the material enactment of how to perform exchanges differently, of how to re-conceive the productive iterations of bodily desire. As I suggested in my case study on “The Metamorphosis,” this model of bodily economy seems to approach and approximate an ecology.

Anorexia has become a grotesque image for all that consumer culture gets wrong: its superficiality, aestheticization of beauty, emptiness, uselessness, its estrangement from what truly matters, its exhaustion of natural resources, its misogyny, and its abuse of matter itself. Any resistance produced by anorexics is sterile at best, as anorexia is in essence another product of late capitalism. However, I will argue in the following sections that anorexia is also (at times) productive. It is not simply politically reactive and resistant to patriarchy, but an engine of affective encounter. While certain aspects of anorexia are produced by

the specular economy, other elements of anorexic expression are productive of Massumi's mobile BwI and Irigaray's haptic economies of female desire. My contention is that anorexia can engage with the voided, emptied body in order to traverse space differently, in order to collaborate with ecologies that extend beyond the human, and in order to invent different compartments and momentums. It is true that aspects of the experiences of dis-ordered eaters are colonized and hemmed-in by specular logic, but it is also the case that emptiness can be replete with possibility: that eating less can activate more.

IV. Appetitive Starvation: the Persistence of Hyperkinetic Affect

And even when you have spoken, you find your lexicon vastly insufficient: the words lack shape, and taste, temperature, and weight. *Hunger* and *cold*, *flesh* and *bone* are commonplace words. I cannot articulate how those four words mean something different to me than perhaps they do to you, how each of these has in my mouth, strange flavor: the acid of bile, the metallic tang of blood.

--Marya Hornbacher, *Wasted* 275

I use Marya Hornbacher's quotation as an epigraph because her Pulitzer Prize winning *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* recalls the material events of disordered eating. Words, she suggests, make less meaning to her than they do sense. "Hunger, cold, flesh, and bone" do not so much possess meaning as they do

physical characteristics; they have shapes, tastes, temperatures, weights, and flavors; they have the capacity to recall blood, bile, and the vicissitudes of self-starvation. The body is radically emphasized in this passage, and yet Hornbacher still interprets her eating disorder as a Cartesian dualistic phenomenon: “body and mind fall apart from each other, and it is in this fissure that an eating disorder may fester and thrive” (Hornbacher 6). To provide another frequently quoted aspect of Hornbacher’s memoir, she writes that “I perfected the art of the silent puke: no hack, no gag, just bend over and mentally will the food back up” (ibid 97). Stephanie Grant’s fiction, *The Passion of Alice*, about an eating disorder recovery unit reiterates a similarly capacious bulimic who “didn’t even have to bend” to regurgitate food (Grant 197).

I will return to this peristaltic reversal (or antiperistalsis) in chapter 5, because it is the subject of Elizabeth Wilson’s formidable analysis of bulimia in “The Brain and Gut.” For now, I want to provide a sense of the tension recurring in texts like Hornbacher’s between iterations of how eating disorders come to be (their aetiologies) and how they function (their sensate events). The schizophrenic appeals in this literature are, on the one hand, to irreparable dissociations between minds and bodies; and on the other hand, to an uncompromising connection (a mutual enfolding) between minds and bodies. The fact that Hornbacher can “will” or think her undigested food back out of her body without making a single gagging sound suggests that her disorderly eating engages a visceral form of reasoning where thought is carried out by the organs of digestion. Her bulimic body is not mind-body dissociative, but instead maps the operations of thought

onto different parts of her body. And yet, *Wasted* continues to insist upon the Cartesian divide. “The splitting of body and mind causing eating disorders is not psychotic,” claims Horbacher, but instead, “the history of Western culture made manifest...We claim a loss of appetite, a most sacred physicality, superwomen who have conquered the feminine realm of the material and finally gained access to the masculine realm of the mind...Bodies get treated like wayward women who have to be shown who’s boss, even if it means slapping them around a little” (109,118,124).

To point once again to the ways that the lived bodily practices of disordered eating directly contradict this approach to the causes, meanings, and metaphors of eating disorders, Horbacher’s own writing and remembering cannibalizes all of the social constructivist causes for her eating disorder she postulates. Analogous to my contention that the body radically and forcefully intervenes in all processes of logic (which might otherwise be deemed disembodied) in the course of disorderly eating, I would argue that Horbacher is unable to sustain evidence for her assertions of the socio-cultural causes of eating disorders. The blood and bile that keep resurfacing in Hornbacher’s mouth while remembering her experiences of self-starvation begin to redirect the narrative. Embodiment is less contained and disciplined than it is a force of narrative contamination—it seeps, spills, and overflows *Wasted*—a provocative attestation to the lived, bodily experiences of starvation.

At times, Hornbacher writes at a remove from what she thinks anorexia *is*, and instead attempts to articulate what it *does*:

You cannot trick your body. Your body, strange as it seems to we who are saturated with a doctrine of dualism, is actually attached to your brain. There is a very simple, inevitable thing that happens to a person who is dieting: when you are not eating enough, your thinking process changes...Nothing is the same...You want things to taste *intense*...You're high as a kite, sleepless, full of frenetic, unstable energy—and the heightened intensity of experience that eating disorders initially induce. At first, everything tastes and smells intense; tactile experience is intense, your own drive and energy themselves are intense and focused...You begin to rely on the feeling of hunger, your body's raucous rebellion at the small tortures of your own hands (105,111).

The repetition of the term “intense” in this passage re-invokes the absence of words with which Hornbacher can describe the materialities of hungering, as though her body's active articulations (its acts of desiring) exceed and overpower the articulative capacity of language. She can approximate her physical sensations with words, but language does not possess the necessary properties of expression. Without claiming to, *Wasted* engages more forcefully with the doings, strivings, and hungerings of anorexic bodies than it does with what anorexia means or signifies. Hornbacher's remembrances of her starving body seem to rupture the structures of signification, as her disordered eating extends outside of the interpretive grounds initially laid out for it.

Contrary to notions of the dualistic anorexic conundrum where women

starve themselves to deny that they have bodies, this passage proposes an alternate mind-body relationship. Following Hornbacher's logic, self-starvation viscerally occasions the body's intervention in thought. Rather than a practice of disembodiment through which women attempt to transcend the physical (female) realm, dis-ordered eating can instead emphasize the physicality of thought. The starved body is not brute or mute matter, but instead an agent of ideational enterprise. Hornbacher later relates that with her developing experiences of physical hunger "I was suddenly, deeply, passionately interested in everything. I couldn't stop thinking. I woke up in the night, heart pounding and head spinning with thoughts. I turned on my light and began to plot things on notepads" (Hornbacher 54). Once again, this seems a fitting moment to remember Kafka's own methods of fasting—his starving or "dieting in all directions" in order to become literature itself, and in order to allow his writing to proliferate. Hornbacher's fasting seems to occasion a similar proliferation of creative impulses to write, as she too redirects or differently channels organic energies. As with Kafka and Gregor, we might intuit that there is very little "waste" in this visceral economy.

Without getting too far into my next chapter's discussion of anorexic ecologies, I wish to linger on the hyper-activity of self-starvation which Hornbacher's passage also touches upon. "High as a kite, sleepless, full of frenetic, unstable energy," the disorderly eater experiences enhanced affective capacities. I cannot help but think of Kafka's Gregor Samsa when reading Hornbacher's memoir. It is not simply that Gregor's metamorphosis sheds light on

Hornbacher's memories of self-starvation: with the progression of his metamorphosis, Gregor does more, he possesses more energy, he feels more intensely with insect feelers replacing his blinding eyes. But it is also that Hornbacher's *Wasted* illuminates the importance of Gregor's food refusal (his fast) to his other creative perambulations. In a sense, Gregor can feel more intensely because of the material allowances of his hunger—the same energetic force that Kathryn Harrison's memoir *The Kiss* terms “the dizzy rapture of starving...[a] screw up of an energetic variety” (Harrison 39).

Sheila MacLeod's memoir, *The Art of Starvation*, makes the same connection between active momentums and anorexia, remembering that “I became more and more fanatically energetic as the disease progressed...Having lost weight, I was beginning to ‘throw my weight around’ [My report cards at the time read] ‘Sheila must learn to curb her natural exuberance’...’So I wrote back, “Exuberance is beauty”” (73,77). MacLeod's interpretation of her anorexia as a symbiotic interplay between losing weight and throwing her weight around is interesting because it suggests a dynamic relationship between emptying out and “filling” social space differently. To borrow from Hornbacher's terminology once again, she makes different “imposition[s] on space” (13). MacLeod remembers feeling more beautiful while starving because of an increased or untamed exuberance: she can do more. MacLeod's account in this passage is not about how her body looks to herself or the world. It has nothing to do with a body image or images of bodies. Rather, her anorexia is an investment in differential movements, energies, and newly developing physical capacities. In these passages, her self-

starvation is about how she feels or senses her body through extension.

In dialogue with Hornbacher, Grant, Harrison, and MacLoed, the intensification of sensate events (affects) in the course of disorderly eating is also exposed by Lori Halse Anderson's *Wintergirls*: "adrenaline kicks in when you're starving. That's what nobody understands. Except for being hungry and cold, most of the time, I feel I can do anything. I gives me superhuman powers of smell and hearing" (Anderson 189). I will argue in the next chapter that the affective "powers" of the starving body evidence less of a "superhuman" transcendence of bodily matter, and more of a post-humanist engagement with how human animal and non-human animal bodies can interact. The difference would be between reading Gregor's becoming-insect as a humanist act of transcendence, and interpreting his becoming-insect as a process of re-integrating his mutating body and thereby traversing/transforming the habits, compartments, demands, and spaces of "the human." However, my focus in this chapter (while it anticipates the discussion to come) is to emphasize the possibility that self-starvation can enhance bodily capacities for relating, sensing, and moving. This is by way of arguing that the forces compelling people to starve are more than simply cultural and ideational: they are also complex negotiations with how bodies work. A pro-ana website called *Cerulean Butterfly* suggests in its "quotes" section that "starvation is fulfilling. Colours become brighter, sounds sharper, odors much more savory, and penetrating that inhalation fills every fiber and pore of the body." It is important to acknowledge the highs, the pleasures, and the exhilarations of disorderly eating, because these emphasize bodies that continue to

be affected and affective. Furthermore, such an engagement with anorexic affect exposes the ever-absent vocabulary we possess for anorexic desiring, and if we follow Irigaray, for female desiring more generally.

Morag MacSween's feminist, sociological analysis of eating disorders (1995) proposes that "the ultimate anorexic goal is the construction of the body as desireless and inviolate. Eating nothing—allowing nothing into the body...In anorexia the body and its appetites are transformed into an attempt to eradicate desire...The aim is to create the body as an absolute object—inviolable, complete, inactive, and initiativeless—wholly owned and controlled by the self...Anorexia is an attempt to render the body impermeable" (MacSween 194, 209). I have cited the schizophrenic impulse in literatures (of all types) on eating disorders. MacSween's definitions of the anorexic body expose this quite radically. When interpreting what anorexia *is*, she points to a desireless, inviolable, inactive, impermeable, and initiativeless physical state. And yet, when she quotes anorexic women, they reveal nearly the opposite sorts of physical impulses. One woman suggests that when anorexic "you've got energy, adrenaline just flows, and the less you eat the better you feel. [On days when she didn't eat] it felt absolutely *brilliant*. That's when you had your most energy, that's when you could have run a mile, swum a mile, done *everything*, that's when you felt the best" (qtd. In MacSween 101).

Horbacher refers to herself as a "hyperkinetic" individual, and this passage certainly details the hunger for kinetic movement that accompanies starvation. MacSween's image of "initiativeless," "inactive," and "desireless" anorexics is

almost incomprehensible when reading the speaker's sensations of energetic rush or "high" occasioned by hungering. MacSween uncovers another anorexic's supposed "desirelessness:" "I remember I had this desire for somebody to show me how the body worked, and to show me that the body did not need food, because I didn't seem to be convinced it did need food. I used to think it could go without food, and I wanted somebody to show me the systems of the body and how it really worked" (qtd. In MacSween 106). This quotation reveals an anorexic speaking to her need to understand and experiment with the machinations of her body. She wants to measure what bodies can do, to test their limits: how much or how far can they move on empty stomachs? Hungering—and indeed, anorexia—for the speaker, is a process of exploration and mediation. But how divergent this is from the culturally dominant images we possess of anorexics? Self-starvation is not necessarily an attempt to stave off material excess, to transcend the body, or to create a hermetic seal from the world. On the contrary, each of the passages I have quoted points to the opposite effect: that hungering can enhance sensory involvements. It can be a study in affect rather than a recoil from being affected.

Ivy Ruckman's adolescent fiction, *The Hunger Scream* relays more of this confusion. She describes her protagonist's Cartesian anorexic dilemma as a will to absolute physical control: "the body must be subjugated to the mind, totally!" (Ruckman 106). A few pages earlier, however, Ruckman has described her protagonist's physical transformations in the course of hungering. In almost the same narrative moment she relates that, "her senses were so acute since she'd lost weight. Sounds were sharper, smells were keen and penetrating, colours were

somehow more intense. She herself might feel depressed, but her senses were on a perpetual high” (Ruckman 99). In each of these instances, the physiology of the starving body seems to undermine or contradict its ideologies (the mind’s total, disembodied, detachment and control). Not only are body and mind more mutually implicated in the process of self-starvation, but there also seems a synaesthetic appeal where one sense is inseparable from the other.

Brian Massumi’s discussion of affect suggests that the proprioceptive BwI is by nature synaesthetic, and the intermingling of operative senses is the point of departure for Deleuze and Guattari’s BwO. In “How do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?” they ask “Is it really so sad and dangerous to be fed up with seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, talking with your tongue, thinking with your brain?...Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly?” (ATP 150,151). Part of thinking past (or prior to) the individuating logic of subject formation entails the practice of feeling with all of the body’s surfaces, or with what Gregor calls “the palpating collaboration” of his entire organism. The value of Deleuze and Guattari’s BwO (and Massumi’s BwI) is that it invites the organic “collaboration” of senses, but not necessarily to achieve or maintain normatively “healthful” ends. Instead, the body’s constitutive sense events are creative collaborations that sustain continued exploration. In short, organs can take on different functions, or affective properties in order to feel, touch, unfold, or invent different physical sensations.

Jennifer Shute’s *Life Size* recounts some of the anorexic process of

synaesthesia. At times quoting from pro-ana websites, her anorexic narrator suggests that starvation has been “fulfilling. Colors become clearer, sounds sharper, as if some kind of fuzz has been scraped off perception, as if more of the body were available to attend. For the first few weeks, I was in a state of sustained exhilaration: speedy, powerful, unstoppable. The clinical term, I imagine is *manic*. Mania has its uses; it gets things done” (Shute 116). Conversant with Hornbacher’s sense of self-starvation’s affective intensity, Shute’s narrator finds that “stripped down, the brain is closer to the surface, taking in colors, light, sounds, with a fine vibrating intensity...I’ve never been more intensely alive. Right now, for instance, that honeyed square of sunlight on an olive tile pierces my retina, furs the edge of my tongue” (ibid 7, 24). The anorexic narrator tastes images and colors; they change the feeling of the surface of her tongue. Recalling Hornbacher’s sense of hearing, reading, and thinking certain words that manifest blood and bile in her throat, Shute’s narrative suggests that self-starvation can intensify sensory events in an enfolding—what Elizabeth Wilson refers to as an *amphimixing*⁷¹—of organic functions.

Like Hornbacher’s, MacLeod’s, and Harrison’s narrators, Shute’s anorexic protagonist’s body also longs for its pre-institutionalized hyperkinesis, crying out for motion, “a magic potion” (Shute 139). Her hospitalization has forbidden her from any physical exercise because it will burn too many calories and further encourage her dangerous anorexic logic. The narrator’s inability to move (her enforced stasis) encourages differential explorations of space:

⁷¹ Discussion to follow in Chapter 5.

So this is what my world has shrunk to: a ward with two grey metal beds barred at head and foot, with thin spreads, waffled, which might once have been white. The walls, an institutional cream, are scuffed and scarred; lying here, I trace and retrace each blister, each blemish, each bruise. The cold floor is tiled in beige and khaki, which might once have been lemon and olive, or even vanilla or lime (Shute 2).

The narrator's perceived diminution of her world resonates with Gregor Samsa's traversed room. Surfaces become something different here, as the narrator describes her retracing of a wall that could very likely describe her own skin (scuffed, scarred, blistered, and blemished). The visible properties of her room-body are palpable tastes (again, translating synaesthetically to the tip of her tongue), lemon, olive, vanilla, and lime. Locked into her hospital room, and unable to move her body, the narrator is still strangely moved here: the room's walls become epidermic extensions of her skin and she interfaces with images as though they are tastes. As with Gregor's self-starvation and Bartleby's fast, a different type of feeling is aroused by anorexia: because Shute's anorexic narrator has to refrain from movement, she traverses the spaces around her body.

That the process of hungering can amplify the senses, while supposedly dampening affective responses is not only the conundrum of creative fictions and non-fictions of eating disorders, but this is also one of the interpretive dilemmas present in clinical approaches. Hilde Bruch's *The Golden Cage* and *Conversations with Anorexics* are still the founding psychiatric texts of eating

disorders. The tone of Bruch's work tends to infantilize her anorexic patients, but rather than criticizing her approach, I want to reveal one of its central tensions. "The starving organism," she explains, "is like a closed system that goes on functioning indefinitely on a reduced level" (Golden 90). Having performed numerous case studies, Bruch posits that anorexia is the grotesque realization of a mind-over-matter experience where "everything becomes a symbol of victory over the body" (ibid 62). An enclosed, impermeable, hermetically sealed system, Bruch's view of anorexia is that it is a failed attempt at immateriality.⁷²

But like all of the other texts I have explored thus far, when Bruch writes more directly to the sensations expressed within her case studies, she reveals

⁷² If I were to re-write this dissertation, I would do so with more of an eye to Nietzsche, and particularly to *The Will to Power*. It strikes me that my focus on the voids, emptyings, and ascetic proclivities of disordered eating could be interestingly supported and complicated by working through its excesses. There's something about Nietzsche's reformulation of Darwinian evolution that could be crucial to my project, but I'm unable to articulate it yet. The reason I'm footnoting this here, is that I think one of the points of scholarship on eating disorders I'm attempting to call into question is that this has to do with an elevated, prideful, victorious sense of will power: the notion (as argued by Bruch) that anorexics believe themselves so in control of their bodies, and of food matter that they can abstain from it in acts of extreme willpower. But with Nietzsche's "will to power," while the terminology is congruent, he's developing a philosophy of affect *and* fabulation, and indeed one that contends with Descartes. For Nietzsche, the struggle for more (for a perpetual excess) is more important than the struggle for existence/survival: "the general aspect of life is not need, nor starvation, but far more richness, profusion" (*W to P* 14); the will to power is essentially a will to produce, to move, to build/make more, but otherwise. I am compelled by Elizabeth Grosz's reading of Nietzsche's *Will to Power* along Darwinian lines in *The Nick of Time*. Here she writes that "it is not 'distress,' 'scarcity,' 'survival' that characterize nature, but abundance, overflow, and profusion...Rather than advocating an economy of counting, observing, and administering, Nietzsche proclaims an economy of excess" (Grosz 104). The relationship between self-starvation and excess is a connection I would like to consider further. But not here, unfortunately!

something quite different. Anorexics, she writes, “will speak of the world as gloriously, or unbearably vivid, or say that all of their senses are keener...[Anorexics] experience a new keenness of the senses, which for a short time is wonderful. They are convinced they are experiencing something very special. As time goes on, this hyperacuity may become annoying and serves to exclude them even more from ordinary living” (Golden Cage 14,73). This “hyperacuity to sound and light” (ibid 14), accompanied by a “disturbed sense of time” (ibid 74) is, according to Bruch, pernicious to the demands of ordinary living. There is no doubt that sensing with increased vigor and intensity would complicate the normative physical and social functioning of anorexics. This much is clear. But this distancing from normative modes of interaction (whether biological or cultural) might be what disordered eaters keep striving for: it is not the cause of anorexia, but certainly one of its functions. And if so, we need to address the failed conceptual vocabulary we possess for interpreting bodies that, simply put, do (feel, look, move, sense) differently. Disorderly eating is a differential engagement with the material forces of desire; it is less about knowing, seeing, representing, and meaning than it is about feeling, sensing, and moving through an “experimental ordinary.” Again, this is not a flight from embodiment, but an exploration of its speeds, momentums, thresholds, and limits.

. As my introduction discussed at length, Hilde Bruch’ work came out of a post-WWII period and she was the first to investigate the psychiatry of anorexia and bulimia extensively. Now acknowledged as “the new standard in the field of eating disorders,” the 2nd edition of David Garner and Paul Garfinkel’s *Handbook*

of Treatment for Eating Disorders (1997) reproduces a number of the same contradictions and anxieties about anorexic embodiment I have been citing. Garner and Garfinkel suggest that their “anorexic patients frequently experience a serious deficit in the area of affective recognition and expression” (276). Furthermore, anorexic patients “close all interest in sex and avoid encounters with the opposite sex. When sexual experiences do occur, they are usually not enjoyed...anorexics experience little pleasure from their bodies” (Garner and Garfinkel 9). My next section discusses anorexic pleasure, and specifically the auto-eroticisms of self-starvation expressed by all of the texts I have already taken up. It is difficult to read many of the passages I have quoted from Hornbacher, Harrison, MacLeod, Shute, Ruckman, and those quoted in MacSween’s sociological reading of anorexia, and not intuit a sense of pleasure derived from the hyperkinesis, the “dizzying” energetic raptures, and the expanded sensory capacities of self-starvation (however temporary these may be). To recall my introduction’s illumination of a post WWII shift in cultural, clinical, and critical assessments of eating disorders, I argued that early clinical affirmations of anorexic capacity were foreclosed by evolving clinical and critical tendencies to favor socio-cultural readings of illness (as well as an emergent distaste for affirming the powers of emaciated bodies in the wake of the Holocaust). I would argue that the expressions of anorexic intensity recurrent in the memoirs—and clinical guidebooks—on eating disorders provoke connections with the early 20th century clinical manifestations of self-starvation as invigorating, enrapturing, capacitating, and exhilarating.

This section has acknowledged that the first step in reframing self-starvation more actively is to sustain an engagement with the embodied motilities already operative in disordered eating. My insistence has been that self-starvation is, first and foremost, a materially-sustained process of feeling the world differently—an exploratory practice that extends the body’s surfaces. What has become the nearly inevitable interpretation of disorderly eating as a lived Cartesian dilemma (even in literature that contradicts this reading) is unilaterally focused on questions of *why* anorexia and bulimia occur and on questions of *what* eating disorders are. My thesis has been that once the hermeneutic direction is shifted to questions of *how* disordered eating functions (practically, experientially, sensorily), we arrive at a symptomatological tapestry that could take us elsewhere. It is possible that there are many different iterations of anorexia, and not one unified experience. Even pro-ana websites tend to reproduce this notion. According to many of them “some say that ‘the best anas never die,’ but others want to die from this as a ‘martyr for ana’” (*Beauty is Bones*). My interest is in recuperating the former figuration of “ana,” (which has been largely disappeared in scholarship on eating disorders) because this ana holds a key to understanding anorexic desiring—or hungering—as a self-sustaining process that needs to confront life and living, that needs to keep mutating into something other, and that necessitates traversal and relation in order to continue “living without dining.” The ana that never dies so that she can continue hungering is the hyperkinetic ana that hungers to do more, to move otherwise, and to feel differently in the course of this frenetic mobility.

Crucial to Massumi’s, Deleuze’s, and Irigaray’s conceptualizations of affect

is an economy of movement, relation, proximity, and exchange that offers a way out of the Cartesian mind/body, active/passive, presence/absence divides. The expressions of self-starvation I have been quoting at length in this section provide glimpses of the beginning of what could be the affective exchanges of anorexia. I have foregrounded some of the restless energy and sensory enhancements that can fuel disordered eating, and I return to these in my dissertation's final chapters. The next section will map anorexic desiring as primarily haptic exploration (rather than visual)—another means of critical engagement with the hyper-porosities of starving bodies. What I hope this section has achieved is a demonstration of the representative conflicts in all manners of scholarship on eating disorders. In response to my own question of where we might find the more affirmative iterations of anorexia, I think that we find these in the tensions, dilemmas, and contradictions I have been exposing. This dissertation is, after all, an experiment with the capaciousness of the voided and emptied spaces created and traversed by self-starvation. In other words, it is not that anorexia is always a state of depletion or destruction, nor is it always an affirmative experience. Instead, anorexia might anticipate forms of production that find our conceptual vocabularies in need of expansion and growth. I have judged it important to begin this chapter with Irigaray's critique of the specular economy before moving on to her fluid, haptic, visceral, and embodied modes of female exchange because her critique provides a compelling argument for forms of critical/visceral invention of comportments that have not yet been given intellectual, cultural, and economic space.

V. The Haptic Events of Hungering; or Anorexia's Tactile Explorations

The goal of this chapter has been to revisit the relationships that have been critically forged between eating disorders and economies. Anorexia has typically been understood as the graphic and fatal reification—the end point—of the commodification of women's bodies. Amy Nolan's discussion of what she terms the “anorexic logic” operative in the filmic rendition of *American Psycho* (a novel/film in which a serial killer routinely hacks up women's bodies while lecturing about hygienic skin care regimens) is an extreme version of this critical trajectory. She argues that the same superficial logic that leads Patrick Bateman to count calories, perform extensive sit-ups, use body scrubs, and invest in nothing more deep than his “image,” is what causes women to self-starve. A post-modern simulacrum in which profundity is an absolute impossibility, anorexia speaks to women's need to be wholly invested with how they look—as physical beauty is the only means to women's power and privilege in a misogynistic culture hell-bent on looking good. I will explore how surfaces operate in disorderly eating, but I wish to do so without a commitment to interpreting surfaces as somehow lacking complexity.

Contrary to Nolan, I think that the anorexic investment in surface can be read more affirmatively. The operations of touching, connecting, and feeling are crucial to self-starvation, but these are not necessarily enslavements to the visual demands of “looking good.” Indeed, anorexic practices of self-touching can intervene in specular economies by affirming and playing with the tactile

expressions of desire proposed by Irigaray's haptic economies of relation and extension. The skin is not a detached, disembodied, superficial realm divested of any other function than appearing a particular way. Rather, the epidermis is the body's largest organ, charged with different affective operation. More than any other organ, it connects, interfaces, moves, permeates, and is permeated. As another way of insisting upon the sensate events of anorexia, my argument is that feeling and touching surpass the importance of seeing and being seen for disorderly eaters. And following the movements of these haptic economies means committing to the possibility of more appetitive anorexia, affirming that that we are mistaken in naming this constellation of symptoms as lacking appetite, libido, hunger, pleasure, and desire.

My last section uncovered the tense and conflicted relationship in literature on eating disorders between defining anorexia as a state of radical mind-body dissociation, but then illuminating the intricacies of its mind-body involvements. The same operation occurred with regard to anorexic affect: on the one hand, these texts insist upon the numbing, deadening, and dampening of the senses occurring in anorexic bodies, but then, on the other hand, the same texts suggested that hungering allows for an enhancement of sensory input and output. Guided by Irigaray's critique of the specular economy, I proposed that these tensions expose a fundamental lack of vocabularies specific to anorexic (and female) morphologies, and gesture toward the need to invent new methods of approaching disordered eating. The issue of anorexic desire is more conflicted, critically speaking, than anorexic embodiment and affect. Perhaps because the term

anorexia itself points to a lack of hunger, desire, and appetite, or perhaps because women's self-starvation is interpreted as a rejection of the fertile (and sexually mature) female body and as a regression to a pre-pubertal, androgynous body, disordered eaters are often viewed as either attempting to exorcise themselves from a libidinal economy (on hunger strike), or as the tragic products of such phallogocentric systems of exchange. In either reading, there is no allowance for the possibility that self-starvers might create and engage different systems of libidinal exchange. But I will argue that they often do. This section's thesis is that connected to the affective arousals produced by hungering (which I discussed in the previous section) disorderly eating can also occasion a system of erotic self-exploration that re-maps the female body's erogenous zones not yet "metabolized by phallogocentrism" (Irigaray *Speculum* 229). The passages I will unpack suggest that self-starvation can serve as a reminder that the body is not simply an objectified, visible surface with which anorexic women experience points of contention; it is also a surface with points of connection.

The most glaring—explicit—connection between anorexia and auto-eroticism I have found in the course of my research appeared in a case study of a woman named Jeannette in the psychoanalytic study, *Fear of Being Fat: the Treatment of Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia*. Wilson, Hogan, and Mintz write that one anorexic patient "reported to her therapist that she masturbated one hundred times each evening, believing the constant pressure would strengthen her sphincter muscles, thereby facilitating release of food through defecation" (217). The patient's account of her masturbatory regimes sounds hyperbolic, but still,

one has to acknowledge how fraught it would be to consider this practice as stemming from a lack of desire. The patient's aim is not to achieve orgasm by the protraction and release of pelvic muscles, but instead to achieve the ex-stasies required for voiding—the ecstasy of emptiness. Her masturbation invites the contraction and release of peristaltic musculature that will facilitate further and faster defecatory movement. It seems necessary to foreground here that this is a libidinal economy—as system of sexual exchange. The aspirations to cleanliness and purity (hygiene) which often dominate interpretations of anorexic acts are called into question by this passage. Does self-starvation here really read as an attempt to live divested of the concerns of having a body? Or, instead, is it possible that disordered eating is fuelled by the pleasures incurred by inciting different bodily momentums and by re-channeling the usual order of every-day digestive and sexual functions? There would seem a hedonistic anorexic delight in precisely the out-of-order or dis-ordered viscera. The above-quoted patient uses masturbation as a means to purportedly enhance the metabolic and digestive functions of her body. Emptying—voiding the body of its contents, facilitating intestinal release, creating absent space that is not negative space—is arousing.

The erotic pleasures of voiding and emptying are depicted in Laura Greenfield's 2006 HBO documentary film, *Thin*, following four women in an in-patient program for eating disorders. Greenfield's film is part of a larger documentary photographic project called *Girl Culture* where she takes on socio-cultural imperatives surrounding women's beauty. According to Greenfield, “the making of the documentary THIN was a continuation of [a] decade-long

exploration of body image and the way the female body has become a primary expression of identity for girls and women in our time. I am intrigued by the way the female body has become a tablet on which our culture's conflicting messages about femininity are written and rewritten." Shelly Guillory, one of the subjects of *Thin* is a 25-year-old anorexic patient, otherwise employed as a psychiatric nurse. She enters the Renfrew Rehabilitation Centre with a Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastronomy (PEG) feeding tube inserted directly into her stomach. Over time, Shelly has managed to figure out how to contract her stomach muscles in such a way that when she articulates in a particular position, the food is sucked back out of the tube. Recounting this practice as blissful, with a smile she says, "It was a good feeling to suck it out because I could get it all out."

A feeding tube where food is directly passed from tube to gut is already a disruption of the normal eating-order by the prosthetic increase of the body's digestive surfaces. Shelly's learned capacity to move her abdominal muscles to push food back out of her tube is yet another system of antiperistalsis. Like the bulimics of Marya Horbacher's *Wasted* and Stephanie Grant's *The Passion of Alice* who can throw up without making a single gagging sound (Hornbacher) or without even bending over (Grant), Shelly's developed ability to contract her gut so that it reverses the direction of food-flow seems to re-channel (quite literally) bodily energies and functions. Similar to the anorexic case study quoted in my previous paragraph, pleasure is derived from the process of emptying, or by the avoidance of holding matter in reserve.

By following the interpretive lines of Shelly's blissful voiding schemes, I

find it difficult to arrive at an equation between anorexic emptiness and purity, transcendence, hygiene, and disembodiment. Greenfield's own interpretation of her film is that it explores women's body images and bodies, which have become volatile discursive tablets for cultural ideas about how women should look. Women's bodies, accordingly, she argues, have become the only way they can assert their identity. I have to ask if these two cases of anorexic *aphrodesia* have anything to do with the assertion of identity? With beauty? With body image? With wanting to look a particular way? To my mind, they have very little to do with visual imperatives, with molar configurations of identity, or with body images. They are concerned with hedonistic pleasures of excess. They are concerned with altered sensate awareness and capacity. They are concerned with engaging the surfaces, organs, and functions of digestion to realize goals outside of health, happiness, normalcy, and sometimes life. But these instances express more about feeling and touching than seeing and looking. Self-starvation engages experimental practices of doing more with less: libidinal systems of economization and exchange that privilege having no-thing.

Echoing Amy Nolan's interpretation of "Anorexic Logic," as well as Jean Baudrillard's and George Yudice's critiques of anorexic culture (used as epigraphs for this chapter), Marya Horbacher laments that we (anorexics and bulimics) "grew up in a world where the surface of the thing is infinitely more important than its substance" (*Wasted* 136). Similarly lamenting emptiness, Stephanie Grant's narrator in *The Passion of Alice* posits that "If I had to say my anorexia was about any one single thing, I would have said it was about living

without longing, without desire of any kind” (Grant 36). MacLeod writes in *The Art of Starvation* that “starvation reduces libido” (78). Caroline Knapp postulates that in her own experiences of anorexia “the libido vanished along with the flesh; sensuality became a distant memory, something other people experienced. I lived in my head and only in my head” (Knapp 137). And Kathryn Harrison’s memoir, *The Kiss*, exclaims that “it isn’t just appetite for food that I deny, it’s all appetite, all desire. It’s sex” (46). I would never argue that any of these writers are wrong, or misinformed about self-starvation. I will, however, point to discordant moments in each of their texts where it is alarmingly clear that hunger and desire are far from mutually-exclusive, but are instead mutually enfolded practices of traversing emptied, altered, and reconfigured bodily space through touch. My thesis is that disordered eating is less caused by women’s problematic acquiescence to confluences between surface/shape and beauty/success produced by specular economies. Rather, I argue that that feminists might just as ably explore disordered eating in terms of its production and re-purposing of bodily surfaces that extend sensory involvement rather than curtailing it.

Hornbacher remembers that “I pulled my thighs apart to see how they’d look when I got skinny, pinched hard at the excess, tried to smother the wellspring of terror that rose in my chest when I thought: I’m fat” (73). This passage evokes a complex relationship between seeing and feeling (looking and touching). What seems most graphic and compelling here is the way Hornbacher describes her process of measuring the spaces of her body. Around this point in her narrative, she tells us that with her increasing self-starvation, her sexual desire has dried up

and all-but-vanished to what she recounts as a mistakenly “passionless state of starvation.” In thwarting her hunger, a different kind of hunger has evolved, “a hunger for hunger itself, a hunger for the life-taking powers that hunger has” (94). We might approach her hungering as an erotic practice of self-touching, which may indeed be a longing for the “life-taking” powers of hunger (as Hornbacher asserts), but it is also a process of desiring, which is by necessity life-giving. Pulling her own thighs apart, suggestively, seductively, so that she can pinch what she deems her excess skin strikes me as an eroticization of the void. Literally, she longs to create more absent space between her legs. She wants to make her holes bigger in absolute terror that they should be re-filled. This is a libidinal investment, and while it is possible that Hornbacher’s terror of fat arises from her female indoctrination within the specular economy, it is also possible that her self-starvation occasions a process of feeling her way into a different system of values in which the no-thing is privileged, aroused, and explored.

In an extended description of her food rituals, Hornbacher’s narrative again feels its way through a differential system of consumption and exchange:

I’d sit at a table facing the street so no one could watch my erotic encounter with a plastic spoon. I would spread my paper out in front of me, set the yogurt aside, check my watch. I’d read the same sentence over and over, to prove that I could sit in front of food without snarfing it up, to prove it was no big deal. When five minutes had passed, I would start to skim my yogurt... You take the edge of your spoon, and run it over the top of the yogurt, being

careful to get only the melted part. Then let the yogurt drip off until there's only a sheen of it on the spoon. Lick it—wait, be careful, you have only to lick a teeny bit at a time, the sheen should last four or five licks, and you have to lick the back of the spoon first, then turn the spoon over and lick the front, with the tip of your tongue. Then set the yogurt aside again...check the melt progression. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Do not take a mouthful, do not eat any of the yogurt unless it's melted (254,255).

This passage resonates at times with Kafka's description of Gregor's fast near the end of "The Metamorphosis." Food, at this point, has become for Gregor a "past-time:" one surface among many that he traverses hyperkinetically and nomadically. In chapter 2, I argued that Gregor's hunger fuels his more experimental investments in time, as his previous life of travelling commercially, hemmed-in by the dictates of being constantly on-time, meant that he had narrow interests outside of working longer hours to pay off his family's debt with rapidity. In short, Gregor's fast slows the motion of production, and fuels more experimental speeds, measurements, values, and intensities.

Hornbacher's passage speaks to a sense of alimentary-manipulation—food play—to alter the way that her body experiences and moves through time. Her "erotic encounter with a plastic spoon" is such because of its play with changing surfaces. The spreading of the newspaper, the checking of the watch, the skimming of the melted surface of the yogurt with the tip of the spoon, the licking of the back of the spoon 4 or 5 times with the whole tongue, the licking of the

front of the spoon with only the tip of the tongue, and the repetition of this sequence until there is no more melted yogurt to lick. Consumption is a complicated endeavor here. Hornbacher does not simply eat something, she draws out each tactile encounter, nourished just as much by her sequence of sensate events as the small portion of yogurt she consumes. The task here (or the eroticism of the scene) seems to arise from the acts of making less substance matter more. The spoon is no longer simply a vessel to place food into the body, but instead an instrument for skimming, licking, and meeting the tongue differently whether on its front or back. And the tongue does not simply occasion taste or swallowing, but moves seductively around the spoon by connecting and angling different parts of its surface.

I am discussing the haptic operations of desire in this section, but these are connected to my previous section's discussion of affect. The above passage is an apt description of what Hornbacher means by hyperkinesis. The movement evoked by her food-play offers a point of connection between Bartleby's dynamic stillness and Gregor's "past-time." Her movements are subtle; they do not go anywhere beyond repetition; but they do a great deal. Normative eating or an eating-order would function by consuming food for the accomplishing of tasks (working, socializing, producing, reproducing, sustaining energy and productive momentums) and maintaining some semblance of "health." Bracketing off the fact that I do not know anybody who only eats for these purposes, I wish to unpack Hornbacher's dynamo of anorexic traversal. First, Hornbacher reads her paper so that she can refrain from eating rather than the opposite in which she would feed

her body so that it could accomplish productive work.

Second, her erotic eating is productive because it “wastes” time. She does not eat so that she can do more, she does more by not eating, or by eating very little in this case: the hungering sustains her subtle energetic momentums rather than the food. If Hornbacher were to consume her yogurt in the way of a starving person in need of food, she would wolf it down. But she consumes her yogurt in the way of a self-starving person in need of food-play, of doing “weird things with food” and with bodies, and with tongues, and with time, and with surfaces. Her dis-order is an engine for the interplay of surfaces. Elsewhere, Hornbacher writes that her anxious anorexic “fingers read the body like Braille, as if an arrangement of bones might give words and sense to my life” (276). Hornbacher’s haptic explorations in the face of blindness dialogue with Gregor’s departure from the visual and visible world of sense. However, she mistakes “sense” in this passage for symbolism or meaning. Her anorexic/bulimic memoir has made sense, has described sensate and sensual arousals. She has just “clung to the doctrine of disembodiment so furiously” (Hornbacher 255) that what serve as her “voice-overs” attempting to satiate the *why*’s of self-starvation tend to contradict the *how*’s, leaving them at times under-explored.

Stephanie Grant’s *The Passion of Alice*, makes a similar connection between disordered eating and masturbation. In the first pages of her text, anorexic narrator, Alice realizes that in the recovery program “everyone would be eager to tell the thing she did with food. Like the way girls talked about masturbation in college” (17). Beyond a deliberate connection, Alice unfolds the erotic food

rituals (and tricks) that speak to a collaborative system of exchange in her hospital unit:

The thing we did with food was quick, clean. I mashed the soft foods first—rice, peas, beans. The vegetables were always a notch past al-dente. The chicken cutlet (or hamburger, or fish fillet) I chopped into tiny bite sized pieces. Food looked smaller cut. I saved the big items for her—potato, roll, dessert. These, I slipped down my stretch waste pants and tucked into the side of my underwear...Inside [the bathroom stall] I stacked a pyramid of carbohydrates on the toilet paper dispenser, waited, and flushed (Grant 31).

Alice cuts and mashes her food not to facilitate digestive ease, but to change the shape of her meal on the plate so that less will appear left-over. She expands her food's surfaces so that she can get away with eating less volume. Alice's engagement with food is very much like her engagement with her own body: through self-starvation, she enhances its surfaces so that she can keep it empty, *or* the opposite, she keeps it empty so that her touching, feeling, and doing can proliferate and intensify.

Conversant with Hornbacher's drawn out skimming and licking of melting yogurt, Alice plays with the contours of her food (and body) in order to make more of less. And in dialogue with each of the re-mappings of female bodily erogenous zones appearing in this section, Alice tucks her uneaten food into her underwear so that she can exchange it with a fellow patient (a 'compulsive eater')

in an unsupervised trip to the bathroom. Again, we are confronted with an alarming disparity between what have become doctrines of anorexic disembodiment, purity, and transcendence and the more material realities of Alice's exchanging food from vagina to mouth (from one disordered eater to another) in a place designated for elimination. A bulimic friend Alice makes in her recovery program later verbalizes this tension. When asked why she stopped purging, she simply responds that "I got tired of putting my face where other people shit...It was giving me low self-esteem." Alice is relieved by this statement, saying to herself, "at last. Someone with a sense of humour" (Grant 90). To my mind, the humorous gesture of this passage comes from its play with the notion that eating disorders are caused by low self-esteem. Here it is the more graphic material practices of bulimia that eventually make the speaker feel "shitty" enough about herself to stop purging. In a reversal, it is her low self-esteem that ensures her recovery from bulimia rather than the other way around.

To return to the implications of Alice's food-play, her premeditated exchange of food from her underwear to her friend's mouth could be read as a perversion of pregnancy where food is passed from mother's umbilical cord to child's body (the same could be argued about Shelley's PEG tube reversal, where she makes her food go out rather than in). But following Deleuze and Guattari's elaboration of an-Oedipal desire, and following Irigaray's insistence on a desiring, agentic, and relational female body not necessarily hemmed-in by (re)production, I would prefer to think through this exchange as the erotic touch of one surface to another. In the same series of acts, Alice traverses the alimentary order (from

mouth to anus), the “laws” of her recovery unit, and the geography of the hospital. She facilitates not-eating in the dining room, and eating “where people shit.” Her placement of the uneaten carbohydrates on her stall’s toilet paper bespeaks of Alice’s assault on “hygiene” and “health” (the hospital would not distinguish between the two) and her material practices of self-nourishing, sensate events that escape the peristaltic process of regimented input-output. Simply put, by doing strange things with food, she does strange things with her body, and by doing strange things with her body, she alters and differently organizes public and private space.

Alice’s haptic explorations—her feelings of two surfaces touching—fuel her dis-ordered eating. She suggests as much in an anti-psychiatric rant occurring in the first few pages of the text:

The therapists are like turning forks for epiphanies...They hammer *and then, and then, and how did that make you feel?* In group therapy, they demonstrate their true genius, quietly inciting multiple confessions from a single wormy word. Shame. Fault. Responsibility. Father. Brother. Mother...They see us as persons without free will. Incapable of choice. They have neat square boxes for everything in their world, and I must fit in the box that says self-starving equals self-hate. My anorexia is a form of self-knowledge. People think that anorexics imagine ourselves fat and diet away invisible flab. But people are afraid of the truth: we prefer ourselves this way, boiled-down bone, essence. My favourite

cooking metaphor (unfortunate perhaps) applies: not reduce, *clarify*. I know exactly what I look like, without hyperbole. Every inch of skin, each muscle, each bone. I see where and how they connect. I can name the tendons and joints. I finger the cartilage. When I eat, I follow the food as it digests, watching the lump of carrot or rice cake diminish, until finally, elimination (Grant 1,2).

This passage is complex. Alice has criticized psychiatric methodologies. She has criticized “reductionist” therapeutic attempts to enable anorexics, couched in a disingenuous, humanist language of “self-discovery.” In their place, Alice proposes a more active version of anorexia. She is not interested in what has been done to her to make her this way, but rather, in what her body does, a form of what she calls self-knowledge. Alice’s version of self-knowledge cannot be collapsed with morality; this is not about “Shame. Fault. Responsibility. Father. Brother. Mother,” about neither epiphany nor hyperbole. Instead, Alice gestures toward a self-knowledge dependent on her body’s emerging surfaces and changing geography.⁷³ *Feelings of* shame, fault and responsibility (nouns in response to her therapist’s questions of ‘how do you feel?’) are replaced with verbs, with a more affective version of *feeling*, and indeed desiring. Alice’s therapists seems to ask after her revelations, and epiphanies that will make her

⁷³ Foucault’s notion of self-formation in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* seems again relevant here to distinguish between self-fashioning according to a set of rules (morality) or self-fashioning as a way to explore competing pleasures or aphordisia (ethics, aesthetics, artistry).

envision, and know-through-seeing and identifying the meanings of her self-starvation. For them, seeing is knowing, and “feeling” means identifying particular emotional states and psychic registers of past events.

But Alice’s own narrative is more concerned with tactile modes of exploration. Touch replaces vision as the passage progresses with “every inch of skin, each muscle, each bone...where and how they connect...[naming] tendons and joints...[touching and fingering] cartilage...[eating and following] food as it digests, watching the lump of carrot or rice cake diminish, until finally, elimination.” Alice provides us with a list of verbs constitutive of her anorexic practices; she relates her acts, her behaviors, her discoveries, her experiments, the passages of one surface moving within another.⁷⁴ What she above depicts as the alchemical leaps of therapy (signaled by epiphany, hyperbole, morality, genius, pretension, confession, and ‘wormy’ words) is replaced with the biomechanics of

⁷⁴ Alice’s description of feeling food substances as they pass through her alimentary canal is interesting to me for a number of reasons. 1) I should sign-post it for my discussion of Beckett’s becoming-worm in Chapter 5. Beckett too writes of reptilian sensibilities, and Grant’s description here connotes a reptile ‘s body eating a too-big meal. 2) I’ve been considering touch throughout this chapter as having to do with skin, or epidermis, but with this passage, we might also consider observing eating in this way as a form of touch where the walls of the gut come into contact with the walls of food matter. 3) This second point as interesting resonances with Michael Gershon’s post-Cartesian theory of the gut as *Second Brain* (1998). He argues that the actions of thought are carried out by the gut perhaps more than the brain, and situates the intestinal tract as a simultaeneously inside/outside bodily surface where we the world literally passes through us. 4) Based on the last point, I am reminded again of Simone Weil, who sought self-starvation-fueled decreation in order to let more of the world in.

embodiment (measured in digestion, in muscle, tissue, bone, cartilage, joint, skin and fluid).

Alice's preferred cooking metaphor for her dis-ordered eating demonstrates another remarkable shift away from anorexia's critical orthodoxy. "Not reduce, *clarify*," she instructs. In culinary terms, the process of reduction is to take a substance and literally make it take up less space, thereby intensifying its flavors. To clarify, however, is to take a solid, and make it liquid in order to understand its component parts, and in order to actively choose which parts to retain and which parts to remove. To clarify is to change the properties of a substance, to alter its surface area and expose its constituent parts. Differently put, it is to change a substance's interactions with space and environment, equipping it with different capacities and possibilities for engagement. This is not about what anorexia *is*, but about what it *does*, activates, and alters. For Alice, self-starvation clarifies her body, makes visible and touchable her component parts, foregrounding their points of connection and interaction. It also allows for an acknowledgement of the vicissitudes of digestion, particularly as Alice professes her anorexic ability to feel the peristaltic process intimately: she feels carrot and rice cakes slide down the surfaces of her throat and through her alimentary canal. Alice's post-recovery statement is just as provocative as her introductory rant. "After all this" she suggests, "after all the wanting and not wanting and tiring-not-to-want, desire itself was a disappointment. It lacked agency" (Grant 256). Does Alice's recovery from anorexia require this distillation (a reduction instead of a *clarification* to use her cooking metaphor once more) that desire lacks

agency? Is this how she finds her way back to life, back to “health,” back “home,” and back to an eating order?

If, as I have been arguing, that each of these textual engagements with women’s self-starvation (at times unwittingly) uncovers operations of desiring and hungering through tactile extension and affective arousal—where does Irigaray’s haptic economy of female desire lead? How does one ensure that it sustains itself? Is there a point where anorexics need to be re-contained and re-conditioned to the specular economy so that they can live? My case studies of the last chapters (Weil, Kafka, Gregor, Bartleby) become so “rooted in the absence of place,” so decreeted, or so de-territorialized that they eventually die. But each of the textual (fictive and non-fictive) subjects of this chapter survive. They recover enough to write and publish their memoir. I wish to sign-post these questions, but leave them only questions for now. My dissertation’s conclusion will pick up where I here leave off by considering the notion of recovery. Because if Irigarayan and Deleuzian philosophies of desiring insist upon the body’s perpetual mutating and becoming; if for them, hungering, emptying, and touching no-thing are imperative, creative life-forces; then how do we negotiate a “recovery” from desiring and hungering that is not death? If self-starvation fuels desire, but “healthy” life contains it, what do we do to ensure that self-starvers are restored to a version of health that does not impede desiring?

The argument I have been developing throughout this chapter is that contrary to understandings of eating disorders as rejections of the female body and all of its discursive encodings, by following the second step of Irigaray’s

philosophy—her mapping of the erotic movements of the female body—we arrive at a divergent sense of the operations of anorexic desiring. Demonstrating this trajectory, I have shown that dis-ordered eating can also fuel visceral and tactile engagements with bodily surfaces. Differently put, I have been arguing that the process of losing weight that often results from self-starvation is more complicated than staving off excess fat in an effort to make the body less feminine. The following is a passage from Shelley Jackson's *Wintergirls*. The narrator's anorexia is in advanced stages when she relates her methods for mapping the changes in her body:

I press my fingertips into my cheekbones...the fingers drift over my skin, down my throat, past the butterfly wings of my thyroid, down to where my collarbones hook into my sternum like the wishbone of a bird...My hands read a braille map hewn from bone, starting with my hollow breasts...I count my ribs like rosary beads, muttering incantations, fingers curling under the bony cage. They can almost touch what's hiding inside...my winged shoulder blades look ready to sprout feathers (222).

A frequent motif appearing across literatures of anorexia, and especially present in the utterances of self-starvers, is the human body's non-mammalian transformation. Very seldom do I come across an anorexic who testifies to her emaciated body's resemblance to a boy's or man's. I find this disparity astonishing. Irigaray's philosophy repeatedly situates gender as *the* division of our era, and as the central divide that produces all of human experience. I do not

doubt the importance of gendered experience, but I think it quite possible that the more crucial divide to self-starvers is between the human and non-human. I will revisit this notion in the next two chapters. However, I wish to insist, by unpacking the passage quoted above, that disordered eaters do not view their bodies as becoming more masculine. Instead, they feel their bodies becoming other: as changing shape, as mutating landscape, as altered surfaces with newly emergent points of connection. The passage above expresses the narrator's pleasure of running her fingers over bones that were previously untouchable: cheekbones, the butterfly wings of her thyroid, her sternum like the wishbone of a bird, ribs counted like rosary beads, and winged shoulder blades. True, the narrator's breasts feel hollow, but her fingers interface with different bodily mounds and protuberances. For her, touching these other emergent bodily surfaces is just as erotic an act as touching or seeing her breasts. If this is a repudiation of the female (material) body, it is also an engagement with Irigaray's haptic, material female economies of desiring.

VI. Anorexia as a System of Exchange with Animate Matter

This chapter's final section is about anorexia's hyper-porosities. Related to the enhancement of affective sensory events, and connected to the drive to explore and feel through touch, "fastening on to the void" (Weil) of self-starvation can also occasion a shifting awareness of the agentic capacities or vibrancies of

matter. This chapter has both argued for and demonstrated a critical re-animation of the bodily comportments of dis-ordered eaters, whose narratives often implicitly “cry out silently to be read differently” (Weil). I have insisted throughout this chapter that disorderly eating evolves a system of material exchange and encounter, rather than a mimetic performance of recoil from the material world (and thereby, a refusal of the female body). I have attempted to show that anorexics do not so much practice food refusal as they do food-play: the expansion of food’s surfaces in relation to their bodies, the extension of the times allotted to eating, the creative increase of food-functions, and the arousal of different parts of the body in the peristaltic process.

I have argued that self-starvers tend to do more with less. Hornbacher is insightful on this point. She writes that “I didn’t actually stop eating. I just started eating strange things. There aren’t very many anoretics, actually, who flat-out do not eat. That’s not a sustainable system, and even we know that. You have to eat enough to subsist” (215). I will return to Hornbacher’s invocation of anorexia’s systematics of sustainability, because she beautifully articulates the nature of anorexic economies of desire, but before I get to the chapter’s conclusion, it proves useful to acknowledge the ways that anorexics “intra-act” (Barad) with animate food-matter. In short, there is a double animation occurring in anorexic economies..

To feel “all things [as] animate, albeit in different degrees” (Spinoza qtd in Bennett) is to engage a radical Spinozist vitalism. And contrary to the critical orthodoxy of anorexia where the will of the mind can conquer material desiring

(keeping everything out) some anorexics articulate precisely the opposite sensation. They suggest that with the heightening of self-starvation, they sense their bodies as hyper-porous, and approach surrounding food-matter as mobile rather than mute. Megan Warin's essay, "Miasmatic Calories and Saturating Fats: Fear of Contamination of Anorexia" explores this phenomenon through anthropological case studies. As her terming of "miasmatic calories" in the article's title suggests, Warin posits that anorexics, obsessed with purity, view food as filthy because it is "matter out of place" (Douglas). I wish to put a material feminist spin on Warin's hypothesis. On the one hand, self-starvers can express impulses to keep food out of their bodies in order to maintain a fastening and a fascination with hunger's void. On the other hand, the enhanced proprioceptive awareness of dis-ordered eaters who fear the momentums of food-matter in relation to the momentums of their own bodies, points to a heightened sense of the body's imbrication in materialities that extend outside of it—outside of the organized organism, and outside of the contained and controlled self. This is quite a departure from the transcendent anorexic who seeks to avoid the impertinent demands of her body and live in an entirely representational, ideational world.

While conducting her fieldwork, Warin uncovered that many of her subjects possessed knowledge of an Australian woman named Brontë, whose struggle with anorexia had been relentlessly followed by popular media over several years in the late 1990s. Brontë feared "flying calories": "one thing I remember is that when I first came in here [for treatment] I couldn't walk past anyone who was

eating because...I felt the calories had gone into me somehow. I'd roll up towels and push them under my door so the calories from outside couldn't come through and go into my body" (qtd in Warin, 84). Warin accounts for many other participants' similar fears, particularly that calories were most threatening to the anorexic body when passed through the sense of smell. According to many of Warin's subjects, "smelling meant inhaling an essence of food, an essence that carried calories. What was even more distressing was that smells moved and they knew no boundaries. They circulated through the air, hung in kitchens, or traveled through the house (under doors and through open windows), permeating different rooms" (ibid 85). There is a synaesthetic form of participation present in these accounts, as calories not only reside in formulated food-substances, but food particles permeate the air and the body through the nose: an organ of taste just as much as the tongue. It is not simply that anorexics do more with less food, but also that they perceive a certain reciprocity in the actions of food-matter: that it too expands its surfaces, traverses spaces outside of itself, and encounters bodies with its unpredictable transmutations. Brontë's fear of being in physical proximity to other bodies engaged in eating is instructive. It is a phobic response to the world of matter, expressing a desire to keep even the most minute of particles at bay. But it is also an illumination of the sensory intensities operative in anorexia. Brontë is afraid because her world is too connective; that bodies extend outside of their contained physical barriers. She literally "feels beside herself" in the course of her self-starvation.

Another of Warin's subjects, Jacinta, recounts a similar experience of the

molecular properties of foods and smells: “when I smelt cooking in the house...I used to wonder, I used to hope against hope that those molecules of food smells getting into your nose and into your body didn’t actually carry any substance, like calories” (Warin 85). Conversely, Tamara articulates that “I felt like if I even went near it I was going to catch calories...too many calories flying around here, I can’t even be in the kitchen” (ibid 85). Another subject, Elise, even remembers wearing plastic gloves to make her surfaces less permeable: “I’d prepare food for my brother and sister all the time and...wear gloves or wrap my hands in Glad wrap because I couldn’t stand the thought of fat seeping into me” (ibid 87). Elise foregoes the use of hygienic products like skin moisturizers and hand creams because she is anxious that they will be “absorbed through her skin and congeal in her body” (ibid 87). This lack of attention to the female body as an aesthetic object of contemplation should strike any reader as counter-indicative to reading anorexia as an internalization of contemporary standards for beauty. Yet another woman recounts to Warin her vigilance surrounding dinner-table gestures, refusing to let anyone pass anything across the table to her if their hands had touched butter, for fear that it would “transfer to her” (ibid 88). I like Warin’s own reading of these anorexic anxieties. She proposes that “it was through an engagement with embodied sentience, of the sensory experiences of food, visceral and corporeal experiences, and intersubjective relationships between people and objects, that new meanings and experiences were highlighted” (ibid 88).

To build on Warin’s insights, I would argue these anorexic anxieties about hyper-porousness and molecularity are interesting ways to figure the re-animation

of matter from a feminist perspective. No longer a mute or immutable substance, matter possesses agency in each of these accounts, which are equally attuned to whatever subtle energetic forces are materially orchestrated to connect bodies. Warin observes this phenomenon without exploring its relation to gender, but I think this is a fascinating site of dialogue between anorexic morpho-logics and those approached by material feminisms. Instead of regarding the participants in Warin's study as "fat-phobic" (a clinical diagnostic criteria for anorexia and bulimia nervosa on the DSM IV), I wonder if disordered eaters are more viscerally engaged with and aroused by the exigencies of food-matter (in connection with the exigencies of their bodily matter).

In chapter 2, I made recourse to Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things* in my case study on *Bartleby*, a text in which food is understood as an agent of productive arousal and exchange. Bennett explores fat as non-human, affective substance rather than the molar configuration of human identity that has been politically rallied as pernicious to national, economic, and biopolitical "health."⁷⁵ Engaging with an extensive palate of philosophers, Bennett reinterprets fat as a "conative body" and as possessing an affective charge, and "productive powers": "once ingested, once, that is, food coacts with the hand that places it in one's mouth, with the metabolic agencies of intestines, pancreas, kidneys, with cultural practices of physical exercise, and so on, food can generate new human tissue" (Bennett 39,40). The imperative ethical gesture of

⁷⁵ Indeed the "epidemic of anorexia" and the "epidemic of obesity" share much common ground, but this is another dissertation.

Bennett's attempt "to take seriously the efficacy of nonhuman fat" (42) performs a double critical operation. It shifts our notion of what counts as active, or what constitutes an actor. And it focuses our attention from the individual to the collective agency of assemblage (Bennet 42). In other words, the same acts interpreted as anorexia's incurred fat phobias, could also be deemed more complex interfacings with post-humanist and post-human configurations of matter's vibrancy. Anorexic bodies might act *with* matter rather than acting upon or against it. The disordered eater's process of differently animating bodily matter through affect, hyperkinesis, touch, and hyper-porosity, might require experimentation with the properties (the given-ness) of inert, receptive, passive, and brute matter. Proprioceptively, self-starvation arouses ex-stasi(e)s.

Conversant with Bennet on this point is Barad, whose material feminist argument in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* I used in the introduction to frame the larger methodological scope of my project. Here it is worth re-introducing the grounds built by Barad for a feminist relationship with physics. Barad writes that "the asymmetrical faith we place in our access to representations over things is a historically and culturally contingent belief that is part of Western philosophy's [Cartesian] legacy and not a logical necessity" (49). Barad goes on to conclude⁷⁶

⁷⁶ After having worked through Newton, Heisenberg, Bohr, Shroëder, among other famous physicists, and after having performed a case study of the Brittlestar (close relative of the starfish) whose arms continue to wiggle and emit after breaking off, a creature that challenges traditional notions of embodiment. Brittlestars, Barad writes, "know better than to get caught up in a geometrical optics of knowing" (378).

that many cultural studies approaches to embodiment “too often figure visualization as a matter of geometrical optics, leaving important factors of physical optics aside...Can we trust visual delineations to define bodily boundaries? Can we trust our eyes?” (377, 378). Some physicists’ understanding of matter, she argues, could “usefully intervene in feminist reconceptualizations of materiality, so that it becomes possible to understand not only how bodily contours are constituted through psychic processes, but how even the very atoms that make up the biological body come to matter, and more generally how matter makes itself felt” (ibid 208). Following both Bennett and Barad, we might ask why it seems more likely that anorexic women are negatively affected by images conflating desirability and emaciation, or by other discursive representations of femininity—more likely than, say, being affectively overwhelmed by matter’s vibrancy? Or by the unrestful proclivities of matter being brought to matter? Why does it seem more reasonable that anorexia is a response to women’s vulnerability to cultural images, pressuers, and ideas than women’s vulnerable along *with* the agential intra-actions between body-matter, food-matter, and kitchen-matter: all those material substances that attach to Gregor Samsa’s fasting body, altering his insides/outside, and his speeds and sites of (de)composition? I am proposing that Warin’s case studies of “miasmatic calories” present provocative insights into anorexic sense-events, while anticipating a non-human associated milieu. Gregor’s insect body is more sensitive to particulate matter because his beetle-surfaces are literally more adhesive than the human epidermis. But there is a

hyper-porous quality of anorexic sensate experience (expressed by the participants of Warin's fieldwork, as well as Simone Weil) that points beyond all-too-human identity, or beyond the conditions that call human subjects into being.

This point leads in to my concluding statements about anorexic economies. Irigaray's task of jamming the theoretical machine producing specular subjects via mind-body, male-female, active-passive distinctions, proposes a systematic haptic economy through which (abjected, female) matter is perpetually re-animated and revitalized. For Irigaray, the arousing and erotic practices of female bodies produce economies of extension, encounter, immanence, and exchange. She too proposes a productive feminine schema of doing more with less: her haptic economies are less concerned with having (things) than with doing more (with no-thing). This is by way of changing a surface through its capacities for interaction and intra-action, rather than through adorning, accumulating, filling, and erecting structures to re-present empty surfaces. The maintenance of empty space is, for Irigaray, crucial to the perpetuation of ex-stasis and ex-stasies.

While Irigaray's philosophy deals exclusively with gender, I would argue that there are exciting ways her work could interact with scholarship on ecology. The haptic economy she construes can, at times, read as a philosophy of interaction between bodies and environments, a theory of relating organisms and the surrounding spaces that affect and produce them. By approaching bodily appetites for mobility, change, and connection, I find Irigaray's feminism most useful for thinking through expressions of self-starvation. In my previous chapter's discussion of Gregor's fast, I proposed that he invents new modes of

participation in consumptive practices. Whereas his former involvement in an eating-order and in more ordinary living entailed eating and working as means of accumulation. Filling the body, filling the bank, filling his time sheets, filling his deadlines and obligations, and essentially repeating this process daily to facilitate the acquisition of more things for his family—these were Gregor’s events of economic participation and exchange prior to his metamorphosis. But once transforming, he begins to economize more creatively. He uses eating as a “past-time.” He feeds off of his family’s wasted food scraps. He requires less nourishment to mobilize his room-body more inventively. And his former modes of commercial travel become nomadic transpositions of architectural space, temporality, familiarity, alimentary/peristaltic orders, medical orders, and human orders. Fuelled by hungering, and having fastened to its voids, Gregor no longer seeks to have, but instead to do.

Gregor’s is an anorexic economy. I am proposing the term as a way to contend with Heywood’s and Nolan’s discussions of “anorexic logic,” because what I have been exposing throughout this chapter (and dissertation more widely) are the material properties—the affective momentums, tactile explorations, and porosities—of hungering. These often directly contradict “anorexic logic,” and so we need to find other vocabularies that are more insistent on self-starvation’s material constellations of desiring. My next chapter will offer “anorexic ecology” as another critical constellation. Anorexic economies are inseparable from anorexic ecologies, as similar processes of material animation fuel each. In Kathryn Harrison’s memoir, *The Kiss*, she invokes the shared appeal of self-

starvation and traveling on a shoestring budget. “The economy of this makes me feel safe,” she writes, “how little I need, really, to sustain me” (129). Hornbacher speaks to a similar pleasure in *Wasted*, of “how long I could go, running on fumes. I wanted to find the bare minimum required to subsist” (245). And again, she explains, “you can subsist a long time, eating just a little. You can stay alive. That’s how we all stay alive as long as we do, because we eat, just a little. Just enough to feign life” (ibid 268). Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Wintergirls* finds her anorexic narrator reflecting on her psychic manifestations of hunger: “my body is eating itself, chopping up my muscles and throwing them in the fire so the engine doesn’t seize” (206). Conversely, a collection of “thinspiring” quotes from pro-ana website *Cerulean Butterfly* reads “I do eat normally; I eat only what is necessary for survival.” Further down the page reads “like a plant, surely the body can be trained to exist on nothing, to take its nourishment from the air.” And finally, on a different pro-ana webpage called *Utopian Form*, the “quotes” section includes the statement that “it is possible for the human psyche to adapt to hunger to the point where the body seeks it.”

The conceptual vocabulary of each of these passages has to do with survival, sustainability, and with measuring the organism’s adaptation to extreme conditions. With how little can one survive? Just how little food is required to sustain one’s perpetual hungering? How much movement can a few bites of food facilitate? What can the body sustain? What can a body do? And do these questions not test, anticipate, and facilitate differently productive economies? If the perfect subject of consumer cultures acquires more, more, more based on

“want” and not necessarily “need,” then by contrast, “the best anas” live by stretching the most function out of the least substance. The anorexic economy is a vehicle for making (food) matter last longer, farther, and more inventively. The body feeds off of its own excesses, composting itself. There is minimal material waste produced by this economy. For self-starvers, time is wasted rather than saved, but this is another means of confronting the consuming subject’s thorough investment in a system privileging speed and efficiency as adequate ways to assert control over life and time. An anorexic economy is a system of exchange without property. Not even the body is owned as property of the individual anorexic subject, who is at once volitional, volatile, and vulnerable to the changing speeds, gradations, and pressures of other molecular bodies. An anorexic economy facilitating morphologies of mutation and movement is neither concerned with expenditure nor acquisition, but with exhaustion: with the exhaustive and exhausting functions of making less matter more. An anorexic economy is minimalist, but not insofar as it aims to expose the “core” of human experience, essential identity, or meaning. The only “essence” available to this form of minimalism is movement: more twitching, shivering, arousing, touching, feeling, sensing, measuring, and experimenting with the dynamic conditions of hungering. This is how I define economies of anorexic desire. And the value of this definition is that, while still engaging feminist approaches to embodiment, it offers a radical departure from what feminisms have framed as late capitalism’s instigations of anorexia

Chapter 4

Anorexic Ecologies: Beckett's Exhaustive Disordered Eaters

My historical and geopolitical position is such that I see a close link between the epidemic of anorexia-bulimia, I.e. The spasmodic waves of expansion and shrinking of the body-weight in the population of the opulent classes of the world, and the thinning out and willful depletion of the world's reserves of biodiversity in seeds, grains, plants, and water supplies.

--Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions* 100

When I wake, I'm empty, light, light-headed; I like to stay this way, free and pure, light on my feet, traveling light. For me, food's only interest lies in how little I need, how strong I am, how well I can resist...Like a plant, surely the body can be trained to subsist on nothing, to take its nourishment from the air.

--Jennifer Shute, *Life-Size* 7

I am beginning this chapter with Rosi Braidotti's notion of anorexic depletion as a point of contemplation for Beckett's exhaustion. In the above passage from *Transpositions*, Braidotti views anorexia and bulimia as bodily landscapes contiguous with industrial farming practices: sites of destruction that compound with the myriad ways that culture intervenes in, depletes, and alters the shape of

nature (thinning, culling, wasting, exploiting, and curtailing biodiversity). What strikes me about Braidotti's interpretation of the congruities of our current epidemic of eating disorders and industrial farming is that it leaves no space for the possibility that nature is anything but reactive. Eating disorders, in Braidotti's hands, become symptoms of the systemic effacement of matter's generative potential. The final two chapters of my dissertation present a challenge to this idea. In considering the possibility of anorexic ecologies, I am arguing that disordered eating can participate in the configuration of connections that exceed the human. My thesis is that self-starvation is not simply produced, but that it can also produce.

If Braidotti is correct, that our epidemic of anorexia and bulimia can fester in the moments where culture imposes itself problematically on nature, then I also want to consider post-human ecologies (matrices of what Barad has called agential intra-activity) as possible ways to examine the material forces of disordered and transordered⁷⁷ eating. Experimenting with anorexic bodies as complex natural-cultural sites that are produced by constellations of intra-action, *while also* producing other natural-cultural sites of exchange, I am arguing that we can generate (by means of exhaustion) new critical grounds for feminist

⁷⁷ My use of this term will become more clear in the ensuing chapters. I think that Beckett expresses/invents a different symptom of self-starvation: a proclivity for symmetry to the detriment of organized or dominant health. To suggest that Beckett's figures of not-eating are dis-orderly would be a misstepping on my part, as they are invested in differently-ordered practices of eating and not-eating. Specifically, I will argue that they are composing at times with the eating order of the worm. By transordered eating, then, I am referring to eating practices that occur between species and genera.

approaches to eating disorders. Perhaps it is the case that Simone Weil's hunger opens her to the acknowledgment—and lament—that her own presence (her breath and heartbeat) observing a landscape would leave that landscape irreparably altered. However, she also repeatedly suggests that the subject is porous to the latent energies of world-forming decreative potential. Decreation, for Weil, is not entropic but uprooting. It sweeps the ground as she knows it from beneath her feet, making a new subject while building a new world. My sense is that Weil's decompositional/compositional sites of decreation invite us to revalue Braidotti's reading of anorexia and bulimia as extensions of the all-*but*-natural enforcement of power, or as movements further away from the rich, complex, and biodiverse expression of bodies (human and otherwise).

With the term “anorexic ecologies” (as with “anorexic ethologies” in the next chapter) I am posing one solution to Weil's anorexic aporias in *Gravity and Grace*, as well as challenging the logic perpetuated by Braidotti's *Transpositions*, which fails to account for the nature part of the nature-culture scheme prolonging epidemics of self-starvation. Is disordered eating at odds with nature? For Weil, anorexic decreation is an “undoing of the creature in us” by virtue of the impersonal, affective, ethical, vital forces that supplant and uproot our being (at home, in place, as subject). But again, decreation is only non-destructive if it conjures something new. Weil's (as Deleuze's and Beckett's) notion of decomposition could be read as participating in a compost ecology: a dynamic ecosystem of bodies/ideas/subject formations/structures breaking down to release nutrient energy, all the while composing new sites of dynamic connection

between organisms and environments. While Braidotti considers industrial farming practices in relation to anorexia and bulimia, thinking through the ecological connections formulated by some disordered and transordered eaters is more conversant with smaller (perhaps also slower) scales of food production.

My last chapter detailed some of the moments where dis-ordered eating can express a longing to “traverse the table,” to treat food differently: to touch it, stick it in strange places, play with it, and waste it. Each of the memoirs and case studies I discussed pointed to ritualized acts involving the prolongation of not-eating, or of eating alarmingly little. My sense is that this amounts to an enhancement of the pleasures (and pains) of elaborate food-related production, with a reciprocal diminution of the amount of food produced and consumed. To my mind, these “tricks” of self-starvers are ways of slowing food by exhausting the sites of engagement, composition, and connection offered by food- and body-matter, but without actually eating. Differently put, there is a disarticulation of “normal” food and body functions with a symbiotic re-imagining of how they might meet and exchange differently.⁷⁸ The understanding of anorexic ecologies with which this chapter proceeds, then, is that disordered and transordered eating can anticipate the possibility of vitality *in* decomposition. Anorexic ecologies—the posthuman ecosystems with which modernist literature’s transordered eaters are often notably engaged—evolve different grapplings with time and space as it exceeds, produces, and destroys the organism in order to invent other forms of creation.

⁷⁸ Gregor Samsa refers to this exact behavior as a “past time.”

Deleuze's Exhaustion

The moments of Beckett's "Molloy" and *Murphy* that Deleuze chooses to emphasize as both exhausting and exhaustive are textual and sensory events that revolve around food and appetite: more specifically, these involve not-eating and unrest. Deleuze's "The Exhausted" never explicitly connects disorderly alimentation (or anorexia/bulimia) to his analysis of Beckett's work, and this absence is one I would like to re-vitalize in two ways. First, I hope to enliven a connection between anorexic economies and ecologies by connecting the process of exhaustion to Deleuze's more candid discussions of anorexia in *Dialogues*, in which he composes the peristaltic dilemmas of anorexics with notions of involution, becoming, and "elegance." And second, by reading Molloy's, Moran's, and Murphy's exhaustive eating patterns in conversation with those expressed in Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted* and Sheila MacLeod's *The Art of Starvation*, I propose and adopt different morphologies of self-starvation. The questions that guide this section are as follows. How does exhaustion function in relation to self-starvation in Beckett's literary works? How does exhaustion function in relation to transverse, ethological momentums of involution in Deleuze's philosophy? And how can these morphologies be used to mobilize different critical and clinical awareness of anorexic practices, productions, and relations?

The first sentence of "The Exhausted" distinguishes between the affects of

exhaustion and tiredness. Exhaustion exceeds or moves past tiredness because a tired body no longer conceives of possibility, while an exhausted body produces new possibilities by virtue of exhausting “that which, in the possible, *is not realized* (Deleuze 152). Another distinction is introduced. There is a difference between realizing and exhausting. Realization is an exercise of thought, ideation, and representation to which goals and preferences are affixed and accomplished, resulting in tiredness (ibid 153). Realization and tiredness tend to occasion operations of rest and repose, requisite events for regenerating musculature and intellectual vigor. When Deleuze writes of a “dominant health,” he speaks to a version of the mind-body that is predisposed to a set of preferences and goals, a mind-body that effectuates tiredness in order to repeatedly accomplish the same preferences and goals. Dominant health facilitates a series of acts that must end in a period of stasis and inactivity in order to continually re-animate.

What Deleuze refers to as a “literary enterprise of health,” is what one can only arrive at once outside of (or at the very limits of) the dictates of healthful, organized life. This version of health functions through exhaustion where “one remains active but for nothing” (ibid 153). This is perpetual activity unattached to preferences and goals, activity used for “nothing except to create further permutations...the goal is no longer to go out or stay in, and one no longer makes use of the days and nights” (ibid 153). Deleuze is not presuming a simple sensory reversal, where perhaps we might sleep all day and become active throughout the night. The example he uses is of wearing shoes to stay in, and slippers to go out (ibid 153). Deleuze’s exhaustion asks us to contemplate how wearing slippers to

go out would change our possibilities for physical comportment, would alter our environmental cues or carriers of significance, would change the way others in our milieu interact with us, would alter the surfaces and terrains we would come into contact with, and ultimately (temporarily) would change the human animal/subject by suspending already-realized human modes of navigation through the world, and by facilitating other affective compositions.⁷⁹

Deleuze's essay on "The Exhausted" concretizes, connects, and perhaps even refines his entire project. Specifically, it clarifies the most important affects that prolong Deleuze's morphology: unrest, hyper-kinesis, and physio-logical exhaustion. Exhaustion forges a crucial relationship between doing and thinking: as both constellations of activity are enervated by agitation and unrest. Stillness is the dearth to involved sensory expression, to making sense, to making a logic of sense, and to perpetuating the movements of desiring. Bartleby is perhaps a useful figure to re-introduce at this point because his stillness is still dynamic, and still a process of exhaustion. He has no preference (he prefers not to), no goals, and inhabits an associated milieu that both paralyzes and re-channels human

⁷⁹ Sanford Kwinter's discussion of the plenitude of "the void" (which I took up in relation to Kafka in my chapter 2) is conversant with exhaustion. Chapter 2 proposed that askesis invokes bodily emptying—a virtual, plentiful version of emptiness because the body extends through different points of contact. Across Deleuze's philosophy, acts of emptying, deserting, and exhausting condition the virtual possible. That is, vitality is occasioned by emptying, or by voiding familiar spaces of their contents. She who wears slippers to go outside becomes more rooted in the absence of place (Weil), no longer returning to the same space, but instead exploring the familiar with different feelers: in this way, the process of exhaustion sustains and affirms itself as each new construction of possibility is eventually exploited.

demarcations of sense. Differently said, his stillness is more active than passive: it introduces a different “formula” of non-preference into language/logic. Bartleby’s stillness incites the bodies around him to different sorts of acts and relations, and it literally moves the office of the law. Bartleby is still, but activates unrest nonetheless, thus confounding the office of the law. Divergent from Bartleby’s dynamic immobility, a truly deconstructive and nonproductive iteration of stillness would be found in an interval of inactivity that is sustained for something other (or more significant/meaningful/productive) than itself.

In Deleuzian-Beckettian exhaustion, “one remains active, but for nothing” (Deleuze 153), whereas in tiredness, one would cease to act in anticipation of something more: one might sleep for a better tomorrow, stop moving muscles to regenerate them enough to perform the same motions again, rest for more healthful digestion, or pause having arrived at a destination. But these states of pause and repose are anathema to exhaustion. Throughout my dissertation, I have argued for the existence of different expressions of disorderly eating. What I have often called a sustainable version of anorexia (or bulimia) is an engagement with Deleuzian/Beckettian exhaustion. Most current understandings of anorexia and bulimia assume that these are goal-oriented exercises of restraint: that the anorexic’s only desire (if she is granted any capacity for desiring at all) is *to be* thinner, *to look* skinny or beautiful, to appear androgynous, to waste away unwanted flesh, to cast off bodily need, to become infertile, to protest the conditions of female embodiment, to leave behind feminine articulations of embodiment, to reach a punitive goal weight, to self-mutilate, or

to die. Anorexic practices of self-surveillance and self-control are generally viewed as *for something*, or attempting to realize a preference, however confounding that preference may be.

The aetiologies of anorexia—its reasons and causations—are the sources of information that clinicians and critics alike have tended to privilege. My contention with this scholarship is that it disallows for the possibility that anorexia and bulimia can be fuelled by more exhaustive/exhausting permutations of “remaining active, but for *nothing*” beyond maintaining affective arousals at a remove from the human (particularly in its state of dominant health). Is anorexia not about “preferring not to” when most available avenues of human action and inaction require an assertion of preference? And is this perhaps why eating disorders disorient us (I mean this ‘us’ in an inclusive sense of those who occupy a position of ‘dominant health’ and those who do not)? To transform these questions into a statement of intent, I am proposing that scholars of eating disorders have mistaken anorexic exhaustion as a longing for disembodiment. What if the only need of anorexics and bulimics is to live without need? Or to tap into alternative affective arousals made available by the material configurations of hunger and starvation—by preferring not to? And furthermore, what if this “need to be without need” (Deleuze 154) were not interpreted as a flight from the material world or from the impertinent demands of bodies, but instead as an ecological process of re-composing the body and thereby instigating and extending into other-than-human sensory milieus?

I began this section with an epigraph from Rosi Braidotti’s

Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics. Braidotti interprets the associated milieu of the anorexic/bulimic body as one conditioned by the thinning, over-working, and depleting of natural resources by the hands of human actors invested in capital gains and immediate gratification. As such, Braidotti scripts a relationship between the mutually-tired anorexic body and skeletal, used-up earth: the anorexic and bulimic waste away their capacity for vitality, or their engines of material engagement, a perfectly predictable condition in a world where we waste what could be a resourceful, bountiful, more biodiverse earth.

I will build upon Braidotti's transposition by transposing the affects of tiredness for exhaustion. One of the tenets of Deleuze's ecological-ethological-ethical-philosophical project is that what we call "nature" is an agentic force that *both* produces and is produced by the human (but of course, not by the human alone). Deleuze's ecologies open philosophy to non-human agents at the same time as he suggests that the enterprise of philosophy is mutually enfolded in involutory momentums. I am not denying that human actors perpetuate indelible damage to the earth. And I am not denying that some anorexics and bulimics waste their lives and bodies in concert with this abuse. However, I am suggesting that we might figure different compositions and collaborations—ecologies—of disorderly eating *with* environment. And I am proposing that by changing the conversation of anorexia from tiredness to exhaustion, other channels of relation and involution are made available. De-compositional expressions of self-starvation exist in tandem with other destructive human habits, and compositional expressions of self-starvation are enfolded with different

landscapes and non-human agents.

I. Beckett's Vital Degeneracies: Murphy's Exhaustion

Before I demonstrate the operations of exhaustion in fictions and memoirs of anorexia and bulimia, the next sections perform case studies of some of Beckett's self-starvers: specifically, Molloy, Moran, and Murphy. Deleuze writes that "Beckett's characters play with the possible without realizing it; they are too involved in a possibility that is ever more restricted in its kind to care about what is still happening" (Deleuze 153). About *Murphy*, he notes that "the hero devotes himself to the combinatorial of five small biscuits, but on the condition of having vanquished all order of preference, and thereby having conquered the hundred and twenty modes of total permutability" (ibid 153). Before Murphy can eat his 5 biscuits, he needs to ensure that he has learned not to prefer any one over the other.

Had Beckett identified Murphy as anorexic, these exhaustive permutations would read differently. We would diagnose his behaviours along the lines of his illness; that Murphy anguishes over how and what to eat because he attaches to the pleasures of hunger more than those of fullness. And still, this is a more generous/generative diagnosis than would be made available to Murphy if he were a female clinical subject of anorexia. Were this the case, Murphy's biscuit permutations would read as perpetuations of his narcissistic investment in maintaining a low body weight for the sake of misapprehended beauty; or perhaps

Murphy would be read as enacting a protest against his various socio-cultural disenfranchisements. If passing from literature to life by placing Murphy in the associated critical/clinical milieu of anorexia nervosa seems absurd, then this should indicate the limitations that many anorexic and bulimic women continue to face. Beckett's literary milieu for disordered alimentation seems a more hospitable environment to think through the proclivities of those inclined to self-starvation.

While Deleuze's analysis zeroes in on Murphy's formulation of exhaustive series of biscuit combinations, I would like to take up the food events that sandwich this scene. The biscuit scene discussed by Deleuze takes place just after Beckett recounts Murphy's daily "defrauded vested interest" of "fourpenny lunch," a "ritual vitiated by no base thoughts of nutrition" (Beckett 80, 84). Murphy's solution to the perils of seeking employment is to indulge in lengthy daily lunches. Already, a differential system of values is introduced, as Murphy eats (but does not get around to actual ingestion beyond tea) so that he can avoid work. Reformulated, Murphy's daily activities surrounding food refusal are what he employs so that he does not have to enter into the workforce. Instead of working to facilitate dining, and dining to facilitate energy for working (as it generally happens in the eating ordinary), Murphy prefers not to eat because he prefers not to work, and perhaps much like *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, he prefers to "live without dining" so that he can continue to live without working.

The nourishment or sustenance required by both *Bartleby* and Murphy is a form of needing to not need. Murphy's alimentary system of value, exchange, and

balanced transaction speaks to an unfamiliar sensory economy: “A cup of tea and a packet of assorted biscuits. Twopence the tea, twopence the biscuits, a perfectly balanced meal” (ibid 80). First, a “perfectly balanced meal” is generally approached as a nutritively balanced meal, but Murphy’s food math (like Molloy’s penchant for symmetry) expresses different arousals. He seems to find his daily “defraudings” (amounting to his getting 1.83 cups of tea for the price of 1) stimulating and triumphant because they disrupt the practice of consumption on two levels. By not eating, he does not produce in a dominant sense because he avoids entering the work force. Because he does not consume, he does not need to work. And by delighting in possibilities for social and commercial mischief, he tricks the restaurant into giving him free food. Like Gregor Samsa, Murphy develops a “past-time” involving food (and the social/economic practices surrounding it), but the “past-time” is only pleasurable if he does not eat the food or submit to repetitive social and commercial food rituals. In the same way that by virtue of fasting, Gregor finds a mode of travel that is no longer commercial (but is still an economy of extension and exploration) through his prolongations of not-eating, Murphy finds a method of balancing his meals that is no longer healthful, but is still vital and creative.

Furthermore, Murphy’s food refusals facilitate exploration. He describes some of the sensory events that fuel his not-eating lunch: “the sensation of the seat of a chair coming together with his drooping posteriors at last was so delicious that he rose at once and repeated the sit, lingeringly and with intense concentration...The second sit, however, was a great disappointment” (ibid 80). Beckett’s description

of Murphy's physically satiating sensation of sitting in a chair is described as "delicious," generally a term reserved for taste. But beyond the linguistic play, we might consider Murphy's relationship to repose. He does not allow for it. He experiences the immediate pleasure of resting his exhausted posteriors because this effects a postural change—but then he stands right back up so that he can again feel the sensation of sitting down again, a "disappointment" because he has already realized the sensory possibilities of seated repose, and must now exhaust different possibilities for sensory arousal. If Murphy were tired, he would both rest and digest in preparation for some-thing, but he is exhausted/exhaustive, so he needs to keep moving differently. He is moved by the sensation of his limbs meeting the surface of the chair, he is moved by the possibilities of intervention in the ordinary economy of a meal, and he is moved to/by the spaces of interaction channeled through not-eating. So he takes his pack of assorted biscuits and goes for a walk.

In "The Exhausted," Deleuze unpacks Murphy's combinatorial "art or science of exhausting the possible through inclusive disjunctions...For him, what matters is the order in which he does what he has to do, and in what combinations he does two things at the same time—when it is still necessary to do so, for nothing" (154). Murphy replaces his plans to eat his biscuits with "tables and programs that are devoid of all meaning" (154). But what I find most interesting about this scene is that Murphy's not-eating reverberates in the behavior of a herd of nearby sheep. The string of events that leads to Murphy's failure to sate his hunger is complicated: he is approached by a woman with "Duck's disease" who

asks him to watch her Dachshund while she feeds lettuce to sheep. While Murphy is temporarily absorbed in watching the “ecstatic demeanor” of the sheep refusing to eat “lovely clean white crisp sparkling delicious lettuce!” (Beckett 101,102), the Dachshund eats his Digestive, Osbourne, and Petit Beurre (leaving only the Ginger biscuit behind). This is a stunning correlative sequence—itsself “an exhaustive series of things”—of human and non-human compositions surrounding appetite and dis-ease.

First, Beckett invents “Duck’s disease,” what he jokes is a “distressing pathological condition in which the thighs are suppressed and the buttocks spring directly from behind the knees” (97). The aetiology of Duck’s Disease, he relates, is obscure to all but “the psychopathological wholehogs, who have shown it to be simply another embodiment of the neurotic” (98). In other words, the woman Murphy encounters has short legs and resultantly waddles like a duck, which psychopathology cannot comprehend, or psychobabble cannot express beyond ascribing it to the pathological and neurotic tendencies of “weaker vessels” of nature: women (97). In a short paragraph, Beckett humourously stages the drama of the clinic, only to move from a waddling woman to anorexic sheep⁸⁰.

The sheep appear interestingly to Murphy, and he focuses on them so fully that he too forgets to eat, another active prolongation of his hunger. We read that “the sheep were a miserable-looking lot, dingy, close-cropped, undersized, and misshapen. They were not cropping, they were not ruminating, they did not even

⁸⁰ For me, this scene dialogues with Kafka’s joke about the doctor-locksmith in “The Metamorphosis.”

seem to be taking their ease. They simply stood...on the point of collapse” (99,100). In response to each experimental attempt made at feeding them lettuce they ought to find “delicious,” the sheep seem to prefer not to fulfill the active obligations of sheep comportment: not feeding, not cropping, not ruminating, *but also* not resting or “taking ease,” perpetually on the “point of collapse.”

I am interested in the sheeps’ dynamic inactivity and vital degeneracy. Murphy describes their demeanour as “ecstatic,” while feeling completely absorbed in “this touching little argonautic” (100) of a “Duck-Dis-eased” Mrs. Dew, wandering further afield, and attempting different postural experiments in her quest to make sheep eat from her hand. The point I am attempting to build (an argument that becomes even more clear with Molloy’s in-appetitive enterprising) is that Murphy forgets about his biscuits, or succeeds at failing to eat, because he is moved: moved by his own hunger, moved by the sheeps’ hunger, moved by their dynamic stillness on the verge of collapse but never acquiescing to rest, and moved by Mrs. Dew’s attempted “ovine awareness” (101). As with his balanced “fourpenny” restaurant lunch that directly precedes this more pastoral scene, Murphy is affected by the interactions, momentums, unrests, and postures that surround eating, but these investments ensure that he never gets around to actual ingestion. Said differently, he seems more moved and aroused by food-play (by what he can do with food, by the sorts of interactions food can effect) than by ingestion. Said once more, the extensive permutations of food substances are what move Murphy in these narrative episodes to feel his way through his own argonautic endeavours, or his own states of activity for the sake of having no-

thing.

By invoking the notion of food-play, I am deliberately recalling my analysis of anorexic economies in chapter 3 where I unpacked a symbiotic sense of arousal expressed by many accounts of disordered eaters. For anorexics and bulimics, eating itself is not so stimulating as the acts involved in prolonging and tricking hunger. Beckett's *Murphy* mocks psychotherapeutic diagnostic logic by inventing "Duck's Disease" (a female, pathological, neurotic, natural tendency to walk strangely). But beyond mockery, I would argue that Beckett (like Weil, Kafka, Melville, but perhaps in an even more sustained way) scripts compelling permutations of self-starvation. He replaces the diagnostic "plans" or trajectories of neuroses with symptomatological tables and programs devoid of meaning, but still participating in sense-making enterprises (in enterprises of vital health that unseat dominant health). The Beckettian phenomenon of self-starvation constantly maps different processes of not eating to keep moving and stay moved, because only by maintaining mobile affective engagements can a logic of preference be unseated by the exercise of exhaustion.

II. *Watt's* Exhaustive Compost Ecologies

Chapter 2's case study of Melville's *Bartleby, the Scrivener* argued that the legal office's productive output depends on a tenuous ecosystem balancing the disordered eating or (in)digestive practices of each of the attorney's employees. Turkey heats, Nippers moves, and Bartleby slows/stagnates/stills. Bartleby's

contribution to symptomatology of transordered alimentation, I argued, is the sense that nomadic acts of *deplacement* (his vagrancy in place or dynamic stillness) can instigate different relationships between speed and rest that the lawyer cannot see or represent, and that the law cannot properly account for. Ineffectual peristalsis in *Bartleby, the Scrivener* both intervenes in fast and efficient lines of production while also producing new sites of exchange between the employees' bodies and the office's spatial arrangements. Beckett's *Watt* presents a conversant laboring ecosystem fueled by dis- and trans-ordered eating. Like Murphy, Watt's preoccupations are with the connections and encounters that surround food's production, consumption, and exchange. Watt is consumed by the many ways that Mr. Knott traverses the table.

In Watt's employ at Mr. Knott abode, he is responsible for the dining room, and specifically service relating to Mr. Knott's meals. More important than serving up his meals (discussion to follow), is Watt's task of emptying Mr. Knott's slops, but in a very systematic fashion:

Watt had instructions to empty these slops, not in the way that slops are usually emptied, no, but in the garden, before sunrise, or after sunset, on the violet bed in violet time, and on the pansy bed in pansy time, and on the rose bed in rose time, and on the celery banks in celery time, and on the seakale pits in seakale time, and in the tomato house in tomato time, and so on, always in the garden, in the flower garden, and in the vegetable garden, and in the fruit garden, on some young growing thirsty thing at the moment of its

most need, except of course in time of frost, or when the snow was on the ground. Then his instructions were to empty the slops on the dunghill (Beckett 55).

Watt's job is to fertilize Mr. Knott's food with his own wastes, a phenomenon that exceeds the garden's system of compost. While preparing Mr. Knott's dinner, which has been exactly the same for years, Watt leaves traces of himself in the pot: "as he mixed, stripped to the waist, and plying with both hands the great iron rod...tears would fall, tears of mental fatigue, from his face into the pot, and from his chest, and out from under his arms, beads of moisture, provoked by his exertions, into the pot also" (Beckett 73). This phenomenon worries Watt greatly, as the contents of Mr. Knott's meals have always been calculated with such exacting rigour that no more, and no less than fourteen identical meals (in size and ingredients) are to be produced. Watt's deposits of tears and sweat will no doubt *slightly* change the output of the giant pot, *slightly* and change the taste of the meal's elements in combination. His exertions, while repetitive, also invent a minor (perhaps imperceptible) variant that transmutes the taste/substance/quantities of Mr. Knott's dinner. When Mr. Knott's slops are poured over each of his gardens to enhance their growth, these slops will consist of minorly molecularly altered properties, changing the soil, the plant, and the working system of the house itself.

This process of (de)composition extends outside of Mr. Knott's house, garden, and employees, for Watt's instructions are also to feed whatever is left of Knott's meals to an outside dog (75), a task that leaves Watt to consider at

great length all of the possible permutations of the “problem of how to bring the dog and the food together” (78). This is a humorous recasting of *Murphy*’s human-canine relations. While *Murphy* gets so distracted by the non-preferential behavior of sheep on the verge of collapse, Mrs. Duck’s dog eats his biscuits. In Watt’s case, he must exhaust the combinatorial properties of how to feed, where to feed, and which dog to feed correctly in order to continue to balance Mr. Knott’s system of food-relation and material exchange. To the narrative as a whole, eating is less important than the proliferating (de)compositional sites surrounding food production/consumption.

Mr. Knott is a formidably Beckettian—exhaustive/exhausting—disordered eater. Beyond Watt’s critical introduction of *slight* alimentary variance depending on the time day, year, his emotional state, and body temperature, Mr. Knott’s meal is exactly the same:

This dish contained foods of various kinds, such as soups of various kinds, fish, eggs, game, poultry, meat, cheese, fruit, all of various kinds, and of course bread and butter, and it contained also the more usual beverages such as absinthe, mineral water, tea, coffee, milk, stout, beer, whiskey, brandy, wine and water, and it contained also many things to take for the good of the health, such as insulin, digitalin, calomel, iodine, laudanum, mercury, coal, iron, chamomile, and worm-powder, and of course salt and mustard, pepper and sugar, and of course a little salicyclic acid, to delay fermentation. All these things and many others too

numerous to mention were well mixed together in the famous pot and boiled for four hours until the consistence of a mess, or poss, was obtained and all the good things to eat, and all the good things to drink, and all the good things to take for the good of the health were inextricably mingled and transformed into a single good thing that was neither food, nor drink, nor physic, but quite a new good thing (ibid 72,73).

Mr. Knott's seeming investment in getting any thinkable "good" and "healthy" food, drink, medicine, poison, and mineral into his body all at once, and in the exact same fashion every single day is akin to Murphy's "perfectly balanced meal." The sense of balance and symmetry amounts to a productive disequilibrium where something new can become. Furthermore, Knott's pot dialogues with *The Passion of Alice's* anorexic narrator's favourite cooking act of clarification: changing the properties, surface spaces, and functions of substances by modulating temperatures. Knott's meal divorces substances from their genre (or function). The liquid drink, the solid food, the medicine powder can no longer be effectively treated as "drink," "food," and "medicine." And the "healthful" properties of these substances are lost to excess and repetition. Too many substances, all at once are forced into counter-intuitive relations, a chemical experiment that expands the parameters of what constitutes eating and what constitutes food. It is as if Knott's meals are already composting before he eats them. They do not consist of matter out of place so much as they do matter so attached to place (to Knott's slop basins, to his gardens fertilized by them, to

his kitchen's scraps, to his cook's teary and sweaty protrusions, and to the sick local dog who will eat his dinner's remains). Knott's meal is out-of-step, an improperly paced eating order, and this untimeliness is what accounts for a curiously creative and ecological alimentary affair. Said differently, Knott's version of "health" is the vital health incurred by de-and re-generation, and a vital health that changes how we might think about production.

My discussion returns to *Watt* in the next chapter. Mr. Knott's perpetually exchanging poles of ingestion/expulsion anticipate my discussion of Beckett's trilogy where becoming-worm underscores each momentum of differently-ordered eating for Molloy, Malone, Mahood, McMann, Worm, and the Unnamable. Furthermore, Knott's meals are relevant to the text's earlier description of Mary's binge episodes, passages I will take up in relation to my discussion of bulimia in Chapter 5. I wish to return once again to Rosi Braidotti's claim that eating disorders are congruent with industrial farming practices stripping land of resources, thinning out biodiverse organisms, and exploiting nature for profit (*Transpositions* 100). Watt's explorations of alimentary dis-order while employed by Mr. Knott seem less concerned with the processes of procuring (and eating) food than with formulating new connections between food and waste. Wasting is not a form of entropic wasting-away, but instead, "waste" is productive of vital living; wasting can be creative. For Beckett, I would argue, the productive "wasting" of time and energy is an iteration of anorexic/bulimic exhaustion. Braidotti may be correct to argue that exploitation, curtailment, and reduction (of landscapes and bodies)

make anorexia and bulimia epidemics in our culture. But I would also argue the case for imposing a Beckettian symmetry here. Wasted spaces continue to produce. New forms of living can emerge from wasting. This is the point of exploring anorexic ecologies as sites of material connection effectuated through disordered eating.

Molloy's Exhaustion

The ordinary person eats a meal, then rests from eating for a space, then eats again, then rests again, and in this way, now eating, and now resting from eating, he deals with the difficult problem of hunger.

--Beckett, *Watt* 51

Beckett makes the connection between regimented eating and resting quite explicit, as the "ordinary" eater or eating order entails a repetitive schematics of starting and stopping, by the end of which we are unsure if the "ordinary person" eats to rest again or rests to eat again, or if a distinction between eating and resting is even possible to begin with. The point I take from Beckett's discussion of "ordinary" eating and digesting in *Watt* is that these operations ensure repose.

“The difficult problem of hunger” is dealt with—sated—through a repetition, or realization of the same set of goals. But Beckett presents this repetition as an organic enclosure; a perfectly ordinary, organized trap. Hunger makes us eat. Eating makes us stop moving long enough to digest. And digesting makes us hungry again. The acts of swallowing, digesting, and resting certainly occasion sensory events, muscular engagements, and visceral experiences, but in Beckett’s scheme, they do not really go anywhere: no new ground is covered, no new surfaces created, no new habits, gaits, postures, or comportments are invented. Said differently, Beckett is suggesting here that the “ordinary”—insofar as it is prescribed, regimented, ‘healthful’, and the same—is unproductive. The vital degeneracies of Beckett’s characters are always encounters with the mundane, or with the requisite practices of everyday life, but differentiation is the perpetually generative force in his works: moving differently, feeling differently, inhabiting space differently, having a body whose toes are falling off so that inventive postures are required to get from one space to the next, moving in a circle in the hopes of making a straight line—these are, for Beckett, productive events, and this is why his literature produces a philosophy of affect and evokes a tremendously rich affective response.

I am not moved by Molloy’s poverty, by his cruelty to his mother, or by his amnesia. Instead, I am moved because he keeps finding new ways to go on despite his progressive decomposition. And I am not gesturing at a heroic, or humanist reading of Molloy’s accomplished feats against all odds. Quite the opposite: I am moved by his powers of invention, by the moments where I have to

admit to myself while reading, that indeed, one could do such a thing, one could ride a bike in that way, one could deploy crutches like that, one could value symmetry over anything else.⁸¹ Only by virtue of their meaninglessness do these postures make sense to me. I find their purely utilitarian function thrilling. To return to what Deleuze calls Spinoza's "war cry," the experience of reading "Molloy" is an apprenticeship in affect, in repeatedly acknowledging that we do not yet know what a body can do. Molloy alerts us to this dilemma when he asserts, "I knew how difficult it was not to do again when you have done before" (85). While expressing his vulnerability, this is not an invocation of sin, or guilt in a moralistic sense of right- and wrong-doing. Rather, Molloy is referring to the propulsion of habit and of the "ordinary" relationships we perpetuate between activity and rest. These temporal rhythms sustain us in a particular way. But what each of the figures of disorderly eating appearing throughout my dissertation keep insisting (each, in his/her own way) is that other momentums, other relationships to speed and slowness, and other economies are also nourishing.

This is made most abundantly clear by Molloy's erotic encounters with

⁸¹ "Bartleby, the Scrivener," as I argued in Chapter 2, dramatizes the attorney's failures to be moved by Bartleby's exhaustion without making recourse to humanism, diagnosis, morality, charity, and philanthropy (all of the organizing systems which Bartleby's preferring not to baffles and escapes). For me, Molloy proves an interesting extension of Bartleby, or perhaps it is Beckett who moves further than Melville. While "Bartleby, the Scrivener," problematizes the failures of encounter, "Molloy" stymies any interpretive strategies that *do not* function on a purely affective register. If my dissertation were longer, or perhaps if I had used my space more wisely, this would be where J.M Coetzee's *The Life and Times of Michael K.* would come in. Coetzee wrote his doctoral thesis on Beckett, and crafted *Michael K* as contemporary South African re-writing of Bartleby (with the *K* a seeming homage to Kafka).

sucking stones. Here he proposes the existence of “two incompatible bodily needs, at loggerheads. But such things happen” (74). Like Murphy’s penchant for “balanced” fourpenny lunches, and Mr. Knott’s incompatible tastes for eating (or drinking?) healthy meals while disarticulating the functions and properties of healthy substances, Molloy’s first bodily need is symmetry. As “inelegant” to his mind as it may be, the uneven distribution of stones in his pockets proves “painful” to his body (74). The sucking process, he explains, is a competing necessity to the balance of stones on his person: “to suck the stones in the way I have described, not haphazardly, but with method, was also, I think, a bodily need” (74). The first point worth mentioning here is that Molloy’s use of the word “painful” is striking. This is a man who is old, amnesiac, and perhaps delirious. He has kidney and bladder stones, arthritis, some of his toes have fallen off, he has two progressively stiffer legs, he has lost all of his teeth, he is starving, and he suffers frequent incontinence. And yet none of these degeneracies or decompositions does he describe as “painful.” Rather, he experiences pain when he cannot suck his stones exhaustively, and when his stones are not equally distributed in his four pockets (distributed across a body already kinetically imbalanced by shifting stiffnesses in either leg). The desire to systematically suck stones is, for Molloy, visceral. Its prominence surpasses any other organic consideration he possesses.

Deleuze proposes that Molloy’s famous stone-sucking is a renouncement of signification that gives way to his mathematical, combinatorial efforts of “exhausting the possible through inclusive disjunctions” (Deleuze 154). My

discussions of *Murphy* and *Watt* proceeded by extending Deleuze's notion of Beckettian exhaustion to the food-events that surrounded eating. I wish to do the same with "Molloy." I will consider the relationship between stone sucking and other moments of (not) eating in the text. Molloy takes to an exhaustive series of stone permutations directly following his arrest by an officer of the law. He refuses a certain version of food only to find he needs to trick his hunger with stone-sucking. When approached by what he assumes is a social worker, Molloy is offered a tray of food:

She was holding out to me, and odd saucer, a mug full of greyish concoction which must have been green tea with saccharine and powered milk. Nor was that all, for between mug and saucer a thick slab of dry bread was precariously lodged...a moment later I myself was holding in trembling hands, this little plate of tottering dispartes, in which the hard, the liquid, and the soft were joined, without understanding how the transfer had been effected (23).

This food transfer ends with Molloy "flinging" it all "far from" him (24) as a way to circumvent the social worker's philanthropic gesture.⁸²

Molloy approaches her charity with a caution: "let me tell you this, when social workers offer you free, gratis and for nothing, something to hinder you from swooning, which with them is an obsession, it is useless to recoil, they will pursue you to the ends of the earth, the vomitory in their hands" (23,24). There is

⁸² We might compare this version of philanthropy with those of Bartleby's attorney, also a figure of the law who tries desperately to either make Bartleby eat, or to make his self-starvation meaningful or significant.

much to consider in this succession. First, Molloy shortly thereafter ponders “the food I had refused. I took a pebble from my pocket and sucked it. It was smooth from having been sucked so long...A little pebble in your mouth, round and smooth, appeases, soothes, makes you forget your hunger, forget your thirst” (26). Molloy’s stone sucking allows for the prolongation of his self-starvation, and at the same time, his food refusal renders the stone-sucking a “bodily need,” a way to trick his body’s hungers or his other competing physiological requirements. Second, the social worker’s offering of food, a “vomitorious” prophylactic against “swooning,” and Molloy’s resultant refusal of food issued under these imperatives, suggests that he takes to task socio-cultural meanings handed down through food. He is indeed hungry, but not hungry enough to accept a “charity” meal that would render him submissive or passively receptive to different dictates of health and vitality. The risk of swooning is preferable to the risk of swallowing for Molloy, who would likely meet his swoon and resultant stagger as an opportunity to move or feel differently. Swallowing, on the other hand, would force him into the same bodily protocols as the social authorities surrounding him. A preventative for swooning is also a maintenance of the *adroite*: a means of ensuring Molloy remains upright (a human position he eventually abandons with abandon), and all right (a moralistic stance he exposes masquerading as health or wellness).

This seems a crucial moment to recall *Murphy*’s “anorexic” sheep. Just as Molloy refuses his plate of “tottering disparates,” the sheep refuse multiple human offerings of “lovely fresh white crisp sparkling delicious lettuce” (102) from

“Mrs. Dew.” Just as the social worker’s offered meal would secure Molloy’s upright stature by preventing his swooning, so too would the lettuce potentially protect the “misshapen” sheep, read by Murphy as “one and all on the point of collapse” (100). The social worker’s food offering, if accepted by Molloy, would serve to validate her own system of “human” values (namely, the morality and health required of the ‘adroite’). Similarly, “Mrs. Dew’s” desire to feed the hungry sheep seems an attempt to force the herd animals into the same system of human-animal exchange she has developed with her far more appetitive canine companion, Nelly. Mrs. Dew can only leave Nelly held by the capable hands of another human, and we can only assume that Nelly happily and heartily consumes all the food offerings made available to her.⁸³ Said differently, Nelly’s hunger is immediately fulfilled by biscuits as she seizes the first available opportunity for ingestion: her affective expressions of appetite are radically different than the sheeps’, Murphy’s, and Molloy’s. But the crucial argument I build as this chapter progresses is that, while differently hungry, the sheep, Murphy, and Molloy are no less affectively involved—involuntary—animals, producing “natural,” “organic” systems of sensory exchange in their overlapping associated milieus.

Molloy’s experience of food substance is provocative in its invocation of differential systems of exchange. There are a number of “transfers” occurring in

⁸³ Which is not to simplify the dog’s forms of nourishment. Nelly is just as “disobedient” as Murphy, Molloy, and the sheep. He eats food that has not been offered to him. While Murphy’s, Molloy’s, and the sheep’s experiments (and sensory arousals) are incurred by not-eating offered food, Nelly’s practices suggest that he might attain similar sorts of arousals (or social mischief) by eating the wrong foods.

the episode with the social worker. The exchange of food for compliance, submission, health, and uprightness is particularly pernicious to Molloy's affective ethics of feeling-through-varied momentums requiring his abandonment of *the* human. But the other version of transfer here is occurring on the plate itself, as "tottering disparates" begin to join with each tremble of Molloy's hand. Eventually, "the hard, the liquid, and the soft were joined, without [his] understanding how the transfer had been effected" (23). It is as though the process of peristalsis begins on the plate with one food substance meeting another, a "vomitory in hand." Again, though, Molloy is perpetually trading other activities for swallowing, and privileging other organic motilities over ingestion, digestion, and the restful or less mobile states required to perform these tasks. Perhaps he sucks stones because he cannot physically swallow them. He can taste their salt. He can move the stones around with his tongue. He can salivate in order to facilitate the movement of his stones with his tongue. He can feel the smoothness of the stones sating his hunger. But swallowing would be a dearth to these pleasures which are, for him, significant "bodily needs."

What I hope to illustrate here is that Molloy's system of exchange speaks to the Irigarayan anorexic economies of visceral expenditure I detailed in Chapter 3. Molloy, like Hornbacher, Harrison, Grant, and MacLeod, seems to exchange desiring for eating (at least via an eating order) because desiring accommodates movement and invention in a way that the eating ordinary does not. Beckett, like each of the thinkers on anorexia in my previous chapter, ascribes orderly eating to a specular economy governed by the upright and "erect motion, that of man" (89).

Emptiness (not being full or filled) is the more arousing state for Molloy (et. al.) because it prevents his interpellation by the law and sustains his hungry wandering—his vagrancies—which are excitations to feel his body and environment differently (to remain rooted in the absence of place).

Moran, also “exiled in his manhood” (169) expresses a similar sense of simultaneous disconnect from masculinity and proper alimentation: his decision that he “must not eat” (174) is followed by an assertion that “I have been a man long enough. I shall not put up with it” (175). In an episode conversant with Molloy’s rejection of the social worker’s food offering, Moran employs food refusal as a way out of social imbrications. Imploring a stranger for “a little hot tea without sugar or milk” (despite his extreme starvation at this point), Moran runs/hobbles/crawls away before the stranger can return with his requested nourishment. His fear seems to be that if he accepts the stranger’s offering of tea, his progression will be thwarted. Like Molloy, Moran foregoes food in order to facilitate motion. Without assessing whether or not Moran and Molloy are the same person⁸⁴, I will suggest that Moran’s self-starvation engages with the same processes of transfer, traversal, and exchange as Molloy’s.

He begins his narrative obsessed with the hygiene of his son, with nobility, propriety, authority, decorum, punctuality, obeisance, rules, and order, but as his fasting progresses, Moran loses sight (quite literally) of all of these vestiges of the human. “I was literally uprooting” (165) he exclaims, as “I grew gradually weaker

⁸⁴ I don’t find this question terribly important. The point seems more that Molloy and Moran compose by virtue of their dissembling, their postures, gaits, and their fasts.

and weaker and weaker and more and more content. For several days I had eaten nothing. I could probably have found blackberries and mushrooms, but I had no wish for them” (162). “Elated” (162) with starvation and with his abandonment of the vertical world, Moran expresses a sense of revelry in taking “refuge in the horizontal”: “you explore it as never before and find it possessed of unsuspected delights, it becomes infinite” (140). As with Molloy, the requisite of Moran’s becoming is his physical transformation, his “becoming rapidly unrecognizable” (170) as a man. Where he once barked at his personal chef that he wouldn’t eat a shepherd’s pie she had prepared for him because “it’s unfit for a dog” (118), he now consumes “certain mosses” (166) causing “intestinal affectations” that force him to let out occasional “roars” of simultaneous “triumph or distress” (166).⁸⁵ Having once ordered his son to wash his hands before every meal, Moran now abandons propriety in favor of exhaustion: “Let me see. I had four ways of wearing my shirt. Front to front right side out, front to front inside out, back to back right side out, back to back front side out. And on the fifth day, I began again. It was in the hope of making it last” (171).

Again, we might recall the anorexic economies of my previous chapter, which I argued were invigorated by a similar process of making more with less, of stretching the most function out of the least substance. Moran is referring to his clothes that have begun to rot from his incontinences, and his “exhilaratingly horizontal” travels through the forest. But his anorexic defilements are reminiscent not only of an economy of expenditure where pleasure is incurred by

⁸⁵ Comparatively, Molloy eats grass (27).

the privileging of extension over consumption, but also of an anorexic engagement with waste. Specifically, I am thinking about the anonymous patient who reported to her therapist that she masturbated her sphincter muscles, not to achieve orgasm, but to facilitate her body's emptiness and release of food-matter. Stephanie Grant's Alice also comes to mind, who stuffs food into her underwear and exchanges it in a bathroom stall in order to sustain her self-starvation. In Moran's case, he begins his narrative by claiming to enjoy terrorizing his son with "inducing his mind towards the most fruitful of dispositions, horror of the body" (118), specifically by teasing him about "which mouth to put [his thermometer] in" (117). I am less anxious to contemplate issues of anorexic purity and defilement⁸⁶ than I am to consider how these sensory events speak to Moran's drama of becoming, or of engaging in non-human sensory motilities that confront and traverse the human ordinary or the ordinarily human.

IV. Anorexic Ecologies: Exhaustion and Involution

Human food cannot keep a man alive forever

--Bobby Sands, *Diaries*.

It is possible for the human psyche to adapt to hunger to the point
where the body seeks it

⁸⁶ Megan Warin's social anthropological case studies of anorexia follow this analytical trajectory.

The first half of this chapter has opened Deleuzo-Beckettian possibilities for critical engagements with anorexia and bulimia outside of the more rehearsed feminist trajectory of scholarship on eating disorders that maintains socio-cultural interpretations of the aetiologies of self-starvation. I am not denying the possibility that anorexia is a phenomenon that is culturally reinforced. Of course it is. Just as it is likely that elements of our contemporary culture encourage women to self-starve, it is also likely that many of the sensory expressions of dis-ordered eating develop in concert with the material imbrications of bodies in non-human affective milieus. The symptomatological strategy of my dissertation has been to re-combine expressions of self-starvation that exceed or undermine dominant critical and clinical interpretations of anorexic and bulimic aetiologies. Said otherwise, I am exploring written products of self-starvation, all differently engaged with dis-ordered eating, in order to reinforce my contention that approaching anorexia means acknowledging its more affirmative, capacious, and productive extensions. Anorexia can provoke a science of decomposition, but it also gesture toward a grammar of invention, and I think it imperative to study these moments of invention: not to argue for the benefits of occupying a pro-ana political position, but to map trajectories of anorexic affect in hope that these can channel more life-affirming traversals of the eating and human ordinary.

My previous chapter on anorexic economies began to critically re-compose the affective milieus of self-starvers. My focus was the traversal of seeing, re-

presenting, and realizing with touching, feeling, and affecting. Deleuze's concepts of involution, exhaustion, and Beckett's vitally degenerating dis-ordered eaters (both exhausted and involutory) build different possibilities of anorexic affect. Specifically, I have been arguing that not-eating in Beckett's *Murphy* and "Molloy," and eating strangely in Watt, occasions differential systems of kinesis, movement, posture, and exchange whose only point seems to be the maintenance of further nomadic momentums. Because Beckett's literary figures are mobilized by being perpetually on the verge of collapse, swoon, sleep, or death, I argue that his work (along with Deleuze's) brings notions of survival and sustenance to bear on disordered eating. The reverse is also true: that the language of extreme survival present in written accounts of anorexia generates compelling readings of the perambulatory hungers operative in Beckett. The next section demonstrates the potential of anorexic "inventories of peculiarities" surrounding food. Caloric calculations and weighing have long been understood as the only "body math" engaged by anorexics, but Beckett's *Murphy*, Watt, and "Molloy" invent competing bodily investments in symmetry, balance, and exchange that could be considered alternate visceral currencies.

Anorexia and Exhaustion

The pleasures of eating are fleeting; the pleasures of fasting are lasting.

--MacLeod, *The Art of Starvation*, 84

Whereas before mealtimes had implied some sort of positive interest in eating, their purpose now was the active avoidance of eating.

--ibid, 72

Extraordinary how mathematics help you to know yourself.

--Beckett "Molloy" 30

What Beckett and Deleuze contribute to understandings of anorexia is the possibility that not-eating might be irreducible to the thwarting of sensory participation—in mealtimes, in bodily acts, and in (de)compositional ecologies. In other words, to refuse food is not necessarily to refuse living, acting, and producing. And differently put again, the anorexic equations involved in self-starvation are more complicated than caloric calculations performed in pursuit of skinniness (this might be considered ‘dieting,’ whereas self-starving invokes other operations).⁸⁷ My hope is that after reading my previous analysis of Beckett’s

⁸⁷ In Chapter 3, I unpacked a quotation that frequently appears on pro-ana forums: that “some say the best anas never die, but others want to die from this, a martyr to the cause” (*Cerulean Butterfly*). I suggested that my dissertation’s interest was in critically resuscitating the first version of ana who lives to go on hungering. This is opposed to the second figure of ana who hungers to cease living. At the same time as I am attempting to conceptualize anorexia-in-relation, I am also frequently exposing the critical collapses that tend to occur in scholarship on eating disorders. Just as there has the death-driven figure of ana (who hungers to cease to live) has critically and clinically eclipsed the more affirmative, or more nomadic figure of ana (who lives to hunger, to move, to feel), there has also occurred a collapsing of food restriction (dieting) with self-starvation. These are related practices, but

Murphy, *Watt*, and “Molloy,” the epigraphs above tend to read in a more involved way. To intuit that Murphy avoids eating his biscuits because he wishes to lose weight, or to take up less space in the world, seems ridiculous. Similarly, one would never argue that Molloy perpetuates (tricks) his hunger by sucking stones in different combinations in order to eradicate his body, to punish his desires, to negate his capacities for pleasure, and foreclose his sensory relations with his environment. His body decomposes, yes. But the permutations of these different composites facilitate Molloy’s more intricate compositions with his environment. His body becomes less perceptible within his surroundings because of its more integrative movements, not because he wants to disappear.

Following Deleuze’s Beckettian lines of flight, not-eating becomes an exhaustive process because it enforces and enables different sorts of spatial, productive, temporal, and sensory relationships, all of which can become involutive organic re-inventions of how bodies navigate (compose and are composed by) their milieus through intra-action. In this section, I bring Beckettian exhaustion to bear on some of the memoirs, autobiographical fictions, and fictions of anorexia that appeared throughout Chapter 3. My thesis statement for this section is that Deleuzo-Beckettian exhaustion offers a new point of departure for exploring the expressions of contemporary dis-ordered eaters. Rather than assuming that not-eating is inactive, passive, and an attempted flight from embodiment, Beckett’s self-starving literary figures complicate the equation: not-

what I hope has emerged by now from each of my chapters’ discussions is that self-starvers espouse notions of vigour, health, and vitality that fall quite far outside of dominant health.

eating incurs momentums that are just as active, if not more experimental, than ordinary eating.

As Sheila MacLeod's *The Art of Starvation* emphasizes, (a quotation often used in pro-ana communities), "the pleasures of eating are fleeting; the pleasures of fasting are lasting" (84). To put a Beckettian twist on this expression, I would argue that eating is more in line with the body's affects of tiredness, whereas fasting can prove a more exhaustive and exhausting process of bodily production. To unpack, eating ends the process of hungering. The body stores nutrients in order to prepare for future action. As Beckett colorfully suggests *Watt*, the "ordinary person eats a meal, then rests from eating for a space, then eats again, then rests again, and in this way, now eating, and now resting from eating, he deals with the difficult problem of hunger (Beckett, *Watt* 51). Both Beckett and MacLeod suggest (albeit differently) that the lasting "pleasures of fasting" procure an alternate relationship to bodily momentums of speed and (un)rest. Once operating on the affects produced by hunger, bodies "running on empty," are inclined to stay momentous without periods of rest to prepare for the next series of acts. Self-starvation inclines bodies to keep going, and to keep mobilizing differently in space—especially the social, cultural, and familiar space devoted to mealtimes.

Again, MacLeod's memoir emphasizes the critical distinction between

deeming not-eating a state of passivity, or a series of activities: she recounts that “whereas before mealtimes had implied some sort of positive interest in eating, their purpose now was the active avoidance of eating” (72). Murphy comes especially to mind here, as for pages, his “balanced” meal involves a sequential series of active gestures that prolong his hunger; he avoids eating in order to remain experimentally, mathematically, and economically more active. There has been a tendency in critical and clinical accounts of anorexia to view the avoidance of eating as a fear of what Megan Warin has called “miasmatic calories.” The DSM IV includes “fear of fat” as a diagnostic symptom of both anorexia and bulimia nervosa. I do not contend with the fact that anorexics avoid calorie-rich foods, and calories more generally because they fear becoming fat. Rather, my contention is with the simplistic equation that is often made between fat (as a material substance) and fat (as a state or appearance). My sense is that disordered eaters are more viscerally engaged with the former than the latter: fat, as a substance, is pernicious to anorexic economies because it implicates the body’s capacities for acquiring, storing, saving, depositing, and conserving energy for the next moment, next meal, next day, etc. Fat is anathema to anorexic economies because it implicates rest, stillness, accumulation, waste, safety, luxury, and preparedness—not all physical resources have been exhausted and there is an excess of bodily fuel—preventing the anorexic body from producing (and being produced by) the affects of hunger, which necessitate bringing bodies to the brink of survival. In Beckettian terms, the brink of survival might feel like the threshold of a swoon (Molloy), or the moment just before collapse (Murphy).

To re-emphasize, I am proposing that not-eating both occasions and requires that time and space be inhabited differently, and that rather than an attempt to avoid eating (as in a fear *being* or *looking* fat), anorexia could also be approached as an attempt to affirm the material productions that capacitate and are capacitated by self-imposed hunger (the pleasures of doing more with less). In a neurologically based study of eating disorders, “Cracking the Moody Brain: The Rewards of Self-Starvation,” Caroline Zink and Daniel Weinberger demonstrate that the majority of investigations into anorexia have rallied around what they call the “negative affective processes” of self-starvation. “Studies implicating the brain serotonin in the etiology of anorexia” have proven appealing, they argue, as “serotonin has a well-known role in fear and anxiety, depressed mood, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, and satiety” (1).

If not serotonin, then the neuro-transmitter, dopamine has been understood as dysfunctional (usually hyperresponsive) in cases of anorexics (Zink and Weinberger 2), translating to a lack of pleasure associated with food intake. But, “regardless of whether the neurotransmitter involved is dopamine or serotonin, the take-home message has tended toward the absence of joy or positive emotion behind the anorexic state” (ibid2). The “surprising twist” effectuated by Zink and Weinberger’s research is that by virtue of a dysfunctional dopamine-ventral reward system, “self-starvation in anorexia may be driven by inappropriately assigned desire and ‘pleasure’ associated with food restriction, rather than the traditional perspective linking self-starvation to a lack of pleasure associated with food consumption” (ibid 2). In other words, Zink and Weinberger propose that

“rather than being an avoidance of something negative, anorexia is at least in part the pursuit of something experienced as positive...a perpetuating and reinforcing desire to not eat” (ibid 2,3).

I am bringing Zink and Weinberger’s “twist” from “negative” anorexic affect to more positively experienced sensations to the conversation of Deleuze, Beckett, and MacLeod because it offers a provocative cross-disciplinary moment that composes anorexia along nuanced symptomatological trajectories: here symptoms are differently combined/ordered to produce a new critical and clinical tableau. Zink and Weinberger’s insight fits with the narrative consistencies in texts about anorexia and bulimia where women often (if not, always) recursively associate their self-starvation with positive—euphoric, thrilling, ‘high’—states of sensory arousal that they have trouble negotiating post-“recovery” with the more negative aspects of their illness. Because the focus of so much scholarship on anorexia has been firmly entrenched in what gets lost, severed, or turned off in the process of self-starvation (life, youth, time, femininity, sexuality, libido, fertility, health, interests outside of the ‘narrow’ scope of food and weight, relationships, social skills), very little critical and clinical attention has been paid to what might get turned on by anorexic living (by *living* without dining).

Deleuzian-Beckettian exhaustion is a re-navigation of human comportment through which the instruments of ordinary existence are detached from their typical functions so that other modes of comportment can be invented. In Beckett, for example, Molloy’s somatic remembrance of the “desire to sit” still comes upon him “from time to time, back upon [him] from a vanished world” (22). His

physical limitations (or organic decompositions) make it impossible for Molloy to sit down, which in turn means that he differently orchestrates his body in connection with surfaces. The changes in Molloy's body produce a symbiotic change in his milieu: the world, as he moved through it when he could sit and walk, has "vanished" to the point where the desire to sit down is an odd remnant of a former body, life, and milieu. He has become a different animal with different capacities for moving and relating that have more in common with a slithering non-human than a human biped. From the purview of exhaustion, Molloy is increasingly incapable of rest, and therefore has to invent and move through new possibilities for feeling and moving.

In my introduction, I quoted a number of passages from Carrie Arnold's blog, *ED Bites*, chronicling her ongoing recovery from anorexia nervosa. Remembering her self-starvation, Arnold writes that "I went through a period where all I would eat was finger food—nothing that required a utensil. After several weeks of this, I ate dinner at my parents' house and I remember picking up a fork and it taking a minute to remember what the *hell* I was supposed to do with such a thing" (Arnold). In *Wasted*, Marya Hornbacher writes of a similar amnesiac experience: "I sat at dinner with my parents, staring at my plate. I remember the night when I literally, honest-to-God, could not figure out what the hell to do with the fork. I held it. I started crying. I can't eat, I said" (Hornbacher 182). Another related passage is quoted in MacSween's *Anorexic Bodies*. A speaker notes that "I *never* use a knife and fork and plate at the table—just a spoon and my hands. I certainly eat very fast and hardly chew it, just swallow it"

(qtd. In McSween, 223).

The point I am signaling is that each of these speakers invokes the events of *the* dinner table. Arnold and Hornbacher are with their parents, seated at a family meal—a loaded, tenuous space for a disordered eater. According to Arnold’s account, she cannot remember what to do with a fork because she has been using different strategies for eating alternate types of food. If never using an intermediary utensil other than bodily appendages, it is perhaps fruitful to imagine how a meal changes shape. And circumventing an analysis of Arnold’s potential regression in this moment, perhaps we could focus on exhaustion. In Chapter 3, I argued that anorexic food-play can occasion haptic explorations of food-bodily surfaces. Arnold’s limitation of her diet to what she can eat with her fingers seems an apt example of her anorexic interfacing with surfaces through touch. But it is the momentary inability of both Arnold and Hornbacher to remember “what the *hell*” to do with a fork that is most striking. This is an instrument of “ordinary eating” (at least in the Western world) whose function is quotidian, mundane, repeated, and rehearsed. And yet both women find themselves at such a remove from this eating instrument to recall how to articulate their bodies in relation to it.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ The evidence frequently used to support social-constructivist explanations of eating disorders is the alarming disparity between instances of self-starvation in the Western and non-Western world. To implicate Suzie Orbach’s widely quoted phrase of “starving amidst plenty,” the figure of the anorexic has become that of a young, affluent, perfectionist woman who internalizes maternal expectations, mass-media expectations, socio-cultural expectations, and beauty ideals far too literally. The etiological equation made has tended toward exploring the rise of eating disorders around the

As with Molloy's seated posture—a remnant from a vanished world—the world of the dinner table, the mealtime, the “proper” and “sterilized” instruments of ordinary eating have vanished for each speaker. While Hornbacher is immobilized by frustration and sadness, both Arnold and McSween's anonymous anorexic speakers seem to find inventive ways to navigate this paralysis. Arnold eats food that facilitates touch, and McSween's speaker only uses a spoon and her cupped hands to navigate the plate. She ingests food whole, and with rapidity surpassing any rumination or proper pre-peristaltic measures. Indeed, her quotation is reminiscent of Molloy's feeding tactics, who “flinging himself at the [food] mess, gulped down the half or the quarter of it in two mouthfuls without chewing...then pushed it from [himself] with loathing” (Beckett 54).

What is perhaps remarkable about these passages is that with the exception of Hornbacher, the speakers will eat so long as their process of eating can disrupt the politics of the dinner table (hygiene, sterility, propriety for Arnold) and the pragmatics of digestion (chewing, pausing, taking time, slowing down for

world as congruent with increasing “westernization”: the more access women have to mass media, the more inclined they will be to self-starve. Without doubting the voracity of these claims, I wish to note that in other cultures, there seems to be more of a tactile orchestration of eating already present. In India, for example, eating is performed by shaping the right hand into a *mudra*, involving more of the body's surfaces as instruments of ingestion. My proposition is that if dis-ordered eating is effectuated or prolonged, in part, by tactile arousals (by bringing more matter to matter, or for involving more the body's surfaces in digestion), then I wonder if the comparatively elevated rates of eating disorders in the Western world also point to the relative absence of culturally/socially sanctioned outlets for extensive food-play: for less sterile-seeming forms of alimentation, or for more temporal expenditure devoted to growing, harvesting, selecting, preparing, and consuming food.

McSween's speaker). Said differently, these anorexics are willing to consume food if consumption can prolong or perpetuate the processes of interfacing strangely with food, or of exhausting different possibilities for bodily and social comportment in what is otherwise the sedentary, habitual space of the dinner table. Both Murphy's, Mr. Knott's and Molloy's exhaustive food perambulations come to mind here. Murphy's balanced lunches traverse the ordinary commercial practice of consuming, instead validating permutations of sensing, desiring, combining, and relating. Mr. Knott's food matters most vitally in its untimely slowing of production, and its sites of (de)composition that subtend the plate (which in his case is a pot, a vat, or a slop). And Molloy's refusal of a full dinner plate in favor of sucking his stones and eating (or foraging) only the nourishment that his body touches more directly while moving through the forest.⁸⁹ While I have noted that in the above-quoted passage, Hornbacher recalls finding herself saddened to tears by the fact that she does not know what to do with a fork and food on a plate, I would like to turn to passages in *Wasted* that describe conditions more hospitable to her consumption. As she puts it, "I didn't actually stop eating. I just started eating strange things" (215).

I quoted one of these strange encounters with food in the previous chapter, but there are two more events in *Wasted* reminiscent of Beckett's descriptions of body math:

⁸⁹ In an essay called "Samuel Beckett's Trilogy and the Ecology of Negation," Paul Sanders writes that "at times Molloy looks like a grotesque and comically ineffectual deep ecologies, such as when he 'forgets to be' and fuses 'seemlessly with the roots and tame stems'" (58).

I reached for a banana, set it on the counter, took the cornflakes from the cupboard, went to the fridge for milk. I don't have to eat any breakfast at all. I shut the door. Put back the cornflakes. Took out a small knife, cut the banana in half. Ate the half in 120 bites: sliced into quarters, each quarter sliced into 30 small bits. Ate it with a fork. It was so easy. It was so organized, so very much the same as I remembered it. All concentration reduced to the lowest common denominator, the brain switching over to the simple patterns of numerical logic, the tidy arrangement of bits of banana on the white plate (Hornbacher 164,5).

This passage does not describe an exhaustive series of possible combinatorial permutations of the same substance, as both *Murphy* and "Molloy" do. Where the dialogue between Beckett and Hornbacher occurs, I would argue, is in the realm of bodily mathematical operations—a bodily logic, or a logic of sense—that traverses the eating ordinary. Hornbacher puts her breakfast (cornflakes and milk) back into their respective places. Like *Murphy* and *Molloy*, she needs to eat in a way that does not break-fast, that prolongs her experimentation with time and space. Differently put, a breakfast would be a territorialized meal, but Hornbacher's anorexic operation in this passage seeks to disrupt this form of alimentation: she needs to keep wandering through the instruments of the ordinary rather than subscribing to them.

Remarkable is Hornbacher's (re)counting of her 120 bites for half a banana, sliced into quarters, sliced into 30 small segments, "a tidy arrangement of bits of

banana on a white plate,” that she eats with a fork (the same utensil she forgets how to use pages earlier when seated at a ‘proper’ meal). To eat a territorialized meal with a fork is nothing short of ordinary, but to eat 440 sliced bites of a banana with a fork is an altogether different operation. It requires precision, patience, measuring, planning, mapping, timing, prolonging, and coordinating. The banana is not simply a piece of fruit with calories, carbohydrates, and fats; Hornbacher’s equations involve alternate mathematical sensibilities. Similar to Gregor Samsa’s narrative, here food becomes a “past-time,” a way of passing time (between tiny slices and bites) by tricking organic time (signaled by what Beckett calls ‘the difficult problem of hunger’ requiring sequences of eating, then resting, then eating, then resting). Instead of consuming to satisfy hunger, or accumulating calories to prepare for future expenditures, Hornbacher’s anorexic process stretches as much engagement, pleasure, and function out of the smallest amount of material possible. Every bit of banana (all 440 bits, to be exact) is used up, each bite occupying the most time possible, because with more elaborate time spent (or wasted) on not-eating breakfast, she is less likely to succumb to hunger. This is quite a spectacular re-composition of her body’s relationship to food: rather than eating to satisfy her hunger or provide her body with fuel, she eats so that she can prolong *not* eating, so that she can continue to move through hunger, and so that she can perpetuate the affective arousals of emptiness.

Pages later, Hornbacher describes another of her (not)eating engagements:

Nights at about eleven o’clock, I’d go upstairs to get my evening snack: a bowl of nonfat granola, covered with nonfat yogurt,

honey, raisins. A big bowl of mush I'd mix up well. I'd flip off the kitchen light, carry the bowl downstairs again, sit down at the desk with my book, holding it open with my left hand. With my right, I performed my elaborate nightly food ritual: I picked out all the raisins first, eating them one by one. Then I ate the yogurt—avoiding a single granola oat—licking it from the spoon, not taking whole spoonfuls, just enough to coat the spoon with a thin sheen of aspartame pink, and licking it off. This took some time. When I had gleaned all the yogurt I could from the bowl, I ate the granola completely soggy by this time, in tiny bits. This took about 2.5 to 3 hours (ibid 215).

Again, there is an enormous temporal expenditure devoted to very little substance. Rather than eating food to fill her body or to satisfy nutritional needs, Hornbacher's ritual suggests that she is more enthralled with her bowl of mush as a sensory apparatus for exploration. Once again, she eats to avoid eating: breaks down her meal into minutia, picking and counting single raisins one-by-one. Recalling a nocturnal forager, Hornbacher's passage is interestingly devoted to the active engagements that surround food rather than the experience of consuming itself. She goes upstairs, she mixes ingredients, she flips off the light, she carries the bowl downstairs, she sits at her desk, she holds her book open with her left hand, she uses her right hand to pick raisins, then eat them, she licks pink yogurt from her spoon, and finally eats her soggy oats—the whole event having occupied as close to three hours as possible. This is an exhaustive sequence of

events, performed in the middle of the night (the organic time that generally invokes rest rather than the many versions of unrest signaled by this passage). Furthermore, Hornbacher describes a highly spatial configuration of a meal. She relates just as much about the architecture of her house (kitchen in relation to stairs, stairs in relation to room) and of her body's postures (body in relation to desk, book in relation to hand, hand in relation to bowl, tongue in relation to spoon). Hornbacher herself notes that her disordered eating, was "a spatial relations crisis" (39). (Not)eating is an elaborate—and active—sequencing of sensory events that disrupts the time of the ordinary and of the organism.

Hornbacher's disordered eating is just as conversant with Gregor Samsa's as it is Molloy's, Murphy's, and Moran's. At times, these passages recall Gregor's post-transformational attempts to get from his bed to his door (from one side of his small room to the next), where such seemingly inconsequential human bodily acts as rising from bed, walking across a room, and opening a door (the same articulations of his body he has made every single day in his human life) are no longer within his affective realm of possibility because he has literally become a different animal, with different surfaces, and different capacities for interaction and movement. As such, these previously three simple gestures take up nearly half of "The Metamorphosis." But in Gregor's new processes of feeling his way from what used to be point A to what used to be point B, new points, surfaces, and sensory constellations open up. Eating a breakfast or indulging a midnight snack, for Hornbacher, are no longer inconsequential human acts befitting of her sensory milieu or her carriers of significance. Just like Gregor's, Hornbacher's

hunger has re-composed her body and re-shaped her milieu (different sensations, events, postures, comportments, and modes of feeling now carry significance). Like Gregor, she has become a different human-animal, with alternate capacities for interaction and movement.

Chapter 5

Anorexic/Bulimic Ethologies: Beckett's Anti Peristalsis, and an Alternate Clinical Subject of Disordered Eating

You and your landscapes! Tell me about the worms!

--Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, 67

I've never seen so many butterflies in such worm-state. This little central cylinder, the only flesh, is the worm.

--Beckett's observation about his gardening, 1951. qtd in Sanders

I. Disordered Eating and Involution

I ended Chapter 3 by defining anorexic economies. The concluding thesis statement of Chapter 3 was that disordered eating operates on a plane of production that is not wholly eclipsed by capitalistic temporal, productive, and representational aggregates. Anorexia and bulimia have often been understood as symptomatic reifications of the mass mediatized maligning of women's bodies, and confused codifications of how women should access phallic and social capital. Rather than exploring disordered eating as another product of women's entrapment within specular economies, I have argued that we might approach the productive iterations of disorderly alimentation as facilitating differential relations to time, space, movement, and environment—sense events that produce expressions and strategies for coping with some of capitalism's momentums. I have been insisting that anorexia and bulimia are not only instigated by representations, but that they are also productive of desiring. Specifically, my

thesis has been that anorexic economies, facilitating morphologies of mutation and movement, are neither concerned with expenditure nor acquisition, but with exhaustion: with the exhaustive and exhausting functions of making less matter more.

In Chapter 4, I invoked Deleuze's analysis of Beckett's literary philosophy of exhaustion, and while "The Exhausted" from *Essays Critical and Clinical* has invited my thinking throughout this dissertation, Chapter 4 made this connection more explicit by pursuing two reciprocally guiding questions: What can Beckett's literary figures of exhaustion bring to feminist scholarship of anorexia and bulimia? And how do narratives of disordered eaters complicate and extend Deleuze's Beckettian formula of exhaustion? In *Dialogues*, Deleuze (with Parnet) periodically employs anorexia as a conceptual touchstone, forging passing relationships between the micro-political movements of anorexics and some of the more prominent conceptual nodes of his philosophy: namely, involution, style, bodies without organs, intensity, and becoming-woman. As such, Deleuze's considerations of anorexia in *Dialogues* segue between his analysis of Beckett's nomadic turns, Chapter 3's interpretation of anorexic economies, Chapter 4's discussion of anorexic ecologies, and the notion of anorexic ethologies this chapter will unfold. "To become," Deleuze writes:

is to become more and more restrained, more and more simple, more and more deserted and for that very reason populate. This is what's difficult to explain: to what extent one should involute. It is obviously the opposite of evolution, but it's also the opposite of

regression, returning to a childhood or a primitive world. To involute is to have an increasingly, economical, restrained step (*Dialogues* 29).

Becomings, then, are involutory in the sense that they empty the body of its prior sensory cues in order to make room for other possible movements and relations. It is not so much that Deleuze's involutory momentums consist of backward motion (regression) or linear progressions forward (evolution), but he instead refers to these as restrained steps, simplifications, and desertions. For Deleuze, "Beckett's characters are in perpetual involution" (ibid 30), and for my purposes Molloy proves a useful example that I will continue to take up throughout this chapter. In the course of Molloy's narrative, his body increasingly breaks down. His "health" is declining, he is losing bodily members, and movements he was once physically capable of become muscularly remembered vestiges of a prior existence.

With Molloy's stiffening legs, his capacity for restful, seated repose disappears, and with it, his former world (comprised of his arsenal of postures and momentums) vanishes. Deleuze's insight, however, is that the organism's decompositions or destratifications can still be both sustaining and productive because they allow for different sensory capacities to emerge in relation with other landscapes, surfaces, milieus, and bodies. Molloy's step is literally restrained: he once could sit down and walk with two good legs, soon he has only one 'good' leg, and eventually he has none. If Molloy were a figure of evolution, he might regenerate dead tissue, he might acquire a prosthetic enhancement to be

able to walk normally again, or he might become so mindfully adept that he could simply think in place of motion. But he is an involutory figure because he finds pleasure and even vigor in his body's increasing decrepitude. He becomes a different animal, with other functions and sensory capacities: now biking because he cannot walk, now hobbling on crutches because he cannot bike, now crawling because he cannot remain upright, now inching from one spot to the next because he cannot crawl. With each physical (d)efficiency, Molloy is a different organism inhabiting a different associated milieu.

I wish to return to Deleuze's symptomatological method of literary analysis I mapped in my first chapter, and especially to his comments in *Essays Critical and Clinical* about writing's enterprise of health. Repudiating what he interprets as a Freudian psychoanalytic methodology in which we create, write, and feel from our neuroses—from the interruption of the present by events of the past—Deleuze offers an involutory model of creative participation. Because neuroses and psychoses are interruptions and blockages that thwart our capacities for relating, interacting, and generating, literature needs to be written from a place of perpetual motion—from an “enterprise of health” that can occur outside of ordinary, robust, or dominant health:

not that the writer would necessarily be in good health...but he would possess an irresistible and delicate health that stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless giving him the becomings that a dominant and

substantial health would render impossible. The writer returns from what he has seen and heard with bloodshot eyes and pierced eardrums. What health would be sufficient to liberate life whenever it is imprisoned by and within man, by and within organisms and genera? (“Literature and Life” 3).

I find promise in Deleuze’s notion of the writer’s need to find a version of health sufficient enough to facilitate the sensory exchanges necessary for becoming and for sustaining involutory momentums, and yet a health insufficient enough to create distance from the ordinary (from health as morality, or from health as a technology of subjection). This is the tenuous balance that Beckett’s characters inhabit, and I will argue that it holds the promise of a viable balance which non-literary figures of dis-ordered eating might be equipped and inclined to explore.

As a process of involution, Deleuze argues that any creative expression requires extending the organism’s functions by paralyzing the dominant movements and modalities of the human subject. This is a gesture that has recurred throughout my dissertation. Simone Weil’s philosophy of decreation anticipates Deleuzian involution. By undoing the creature in her, she renders herself vulnerable to an empathic or ethical version of tourism in which she becomes other. To think back to Kafka’s diaries, quoted in my second chapter, he writes of his own process of literary invention as a schematics channeling self-starvation. In order to write, he must embody literature, and in order to do this, he must starve or diet in all other directions. Differently put, he casts off the joyful doings that make him human (food, sex, music) in order to preserve those

energies necessary to nourish his literary perambulations (which make him differently human).

Gregor Samsa experiences paralyzed human affects more literally. It takes him nearly half of “The Metamorphosis” to get out of bed and open his door because he needs to learn how to feel, move, and feel moved by a non-human body. His human body’s incapacitation is matched by a muting of the human carriers of significance that governed his prior life: timeliness, commercial travel, earning, acquiring, saving, eating, seeing, and supporting/pleasing his family. In “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” the attorney’s perpetual, false-charitable lament for humanity also comes out of a place of paralysis. The interpretive systems he has employed to see, read, and control his world are stymied by Bartleby’s strange affective resonance. Indeed the attorney’s hermeneutic, diagnostic, and ethical failures are that once his senses of what it means to be human are blocked, he is incapable of finding other modes of relating and interacting. He cannot be moved beyond the human, while Bartleby’s stillness is captivating precisely because of its other-than-human affective momentums.

The visual blinding of Gregor, Bartleby, Molloy, and Moran is another recurrence of paralyzed human sensory apparatus. Following Irigaray, my efforts in Chapter 3 were to guide feminist discussions of eating disorders away from an only visual logic of representation, a shift begun by Colebrook, Bray, Brain, Warin, and Gooldin. Irigaray’s philosophy performs this traversal of vision through touch as a means of surpassing a pervasive masculinist phallic currency, to tend toward a mode of sensory exploration more befitting of women’s bodies

and pleasures. But I have also argued that Irigaray's philosophy can unfold provocatively along with Deleuze's. More to the point, I mean that critically transposing the dictates of seeing, knowing, and being seen with haptic economies of desiring, can also instigate what Deleuze calls involution. Seeing has been an overloaded sense in considerations of the human, connected to transcendence, mastery, insight, and illumination, while touching implicates generative differentiations, or the contiguity of surfaces morphing through movement. In other words, haptic economies can facilitate and guide our morphologies into exciting—and, I think, crucial—post-humanist, material feminist, and ecophilosophical critical trajectories. To involute is to remap the surfaces of bodies by virtue of changing material involvements.

I have been referring to the paralysis (or suspension) of human comportment necessary for Deleuze's process of involution to gain momentum. To clarify, it is not that involutory bodies leave the human world behind to inhabit another: rather, the point is that life (organic, ideational, political) is only possible if it extends outside of the human, outside of the movements, postures, gestures, comportments (affects) we deem human. Involution inheres the travel or traversal of the human body—what Deleuze calls a “simplified” or “restrained” step—because it requires making less matter more, or materializing more from less. My third chapter discussed a crucial passage from Stephanie Grant's *The Passion of Alice*, where the anorexic narrator connects her favorite cooking metaphor to her process of disordered eating. “Not reduce, but *clarify*” (Grant 2) is Alice's sense of the type of action her anorexia performs. To my mind, Alice's

conception of clarification is parallel to Deleuze's notion of involution. In cooking, reduction would be the intensification of a substance's flavours that occurs when you make that substance occupy less space. Potency, via reduction, is achieved through diminishing matter for the goal of superior flavor. The "anorexic logic" of modernist fiction which I discussed in Chapter 1, according to Leslie Heywood and Mark Anderson, operates in accordance with the dictates of reduction: of producing increasingly thinner textual bodies (and bodily texts) for the purposes of aesthetic beauty (inaccessibility, poetry, style, taste, complexity). But for clarification to occur in cooking, a substance's material configurations are altered, its physical properties are changed so that it performs alternate functions. The point of clarification is not to intensify flavors, but to break a substance down so that it can be differently used.

To turn back to Deleuze's conception of involution, this is a simplification that is not regressive because it clarifies the micro-movements that shape human subject, while also making tangible other possible affective compositions of actions-in-relation. For Deleuze, "good" literature—the thinking of a truly nomadic writer—does not elevate or improve humanity. Rather, it encourages us to stutter in our own language, to limp in our own gait, to crawl in our own skin, and to wander in our own room. The function of this Deleuzian literary "enterprise of health" is to perpetually regenerate sense, to repopulate deserted space, and to refigure the human. In other words, involution occasions varying forms of movement that are neither progressive nor regressive, but simply compositional.

Before connecting involution to exhaustion, I wish to make two more points to set up the methodological framework for this chapter. The first implicates Deleuze's discussion of involutory micro-movements to his lectures and writings about Spinoza's philosophy, which he interprets as an ethological system of ethics. And my second point which will segue between involution and exhaustion is a connection between the anorexic economies I discussed in Chapter 3, and the anorexic/bulimic ethologies I map in this chapter. Chapter 3's discussion of affect drew extensively from Brian Massumi's notion of the body in movement (the BwI), which I argued was one way of reconsidering the more solipsistic body image that has been assumed by a great deal of scholarship on eating disorders. In summation, anorexia has been theorized as a disorder that results from culturally/commercially distorted—and then digested—images staging how women should look. Accompanying women's fraught internalization of these representations of female beauty, dysmorphic body images have been understood as the underlying cause of women's desire to diet away unwanted fat: the reflections appearing in the mirrors of female sufferers are radical distortions of how their frail bodies actually look.

Following a current in feminist revisions of disordered eating (detailed in my introduction), I proposed (along with Colebrook, Bray, Warin, Brain, Gooldin) that we think through anorexic sense events that are not only, and not primarily visually orchestrated. Just as Gregor, Bartleby, Molloy, and Moran begin to feel through movement and touch increasingly with their extending fasts, I have argued that many memoirs of formerly-anorexic and bulimic women express a

similar investment in the differential movements of their starving bodies: in enhanced hyperkinesis, more vibrant sensory and synaesthetic input, and in pursuing haptic explorations of changing bodily surfaces. In this chapter, I build on this discussion by considering the relation in Deleuze's work between affect and ethology. My intention is to think through some of the involutions that occur in disorderly eating that could suspend the subject, while invigorating—simplifying, clarifying—other channels for energetic expenditure and material function. Ultimately, I am exploring anorexic and bulimic milieus: I wish to open women's disorderly eating to the possibility that they draw from “sources of energy different from alimentary materials” (Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP* 51).

Deleuze calls the Spinozist ethical system of measuring the varying degrees to which bodies become powerful, an ethology. In the passage I quoted above from *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze inheres the extra-textual or material valences of literature by asking after “what health would be sufficient to liberate life whenever it is imprisoned by and within man, by and within organisms and genera?” (“Literature and Life” 3). He provides one possible response to this question in his discussions of ethology. With Guattari in “Of the Refrain,” Deleuze defines an ethology as “a privileged molar domain for demonstrating how the most varied components...can crystallize in assemblages that respect neither the distinction between orders nor the hierarchy of forms. What holds the components together are *transversals*, and the transversal itself is only a component that has taken upon itself the specialized vector of deterritorialization” (*ATP* 336). Deleuze and Guattari find a crucial conceptual

tool in ethological studies because, while related to evolution and ecology, ethology focuses on animal behaviors irrespective of specific animal groups or classifications. The transversals they refer to in the passage above compose impermanent connective nodes between species and genera, temporarily placed in-relation by virtue of their capacities to affect and be affected.

Deleuze and Guattari's conception of ethologies of shared sense events implicate Deleuze's construal of the literary clinic, which I discussed at length in Chapter 1. Simply put, his symptomatological method draws from the same composing/decomposing transversals that guide ethological study. In *Coldness and Cruelty* and *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze builds a method of literary analysis that re-imagines what he deems the limitations of psychoanalytic literary protocols in which the text is a repository of repressed neuroses and blocked, Oedipal desires. No longer a Freudian-inspired patient, Deleuze's writer is instead a Nietzschean-inspired physician who perpetually regroups existing behaviours. This clinician, compelled by a symptomatological method of study "does not invent the illness, [but] dissociates symptoms that were previously grouped together, and links up others that were dissociated. In short, he builds up a profoundly original clinical picture" (Deleuze *Coldness* 15).

I have already discussed Deleuze's empirical approach to literature that asks after the text's "vitality" and "tenor of life" (Smith xvi), in what he calls its "extra-textual" sustenances, functions, and prolongations. But what reading Deleuze across his own texts makes clear is that literature's enterprise of health and indeed life (its vital valences off the page) is its enmeshment in material

processes of exchange. An “illness,” which might be defined as a set of symptoms at a remove from dominant health, is considered by Deleuze a precondition for creative participation—so long as it remains momentous. To reiterate, following Deleuze, the dis-eased human is not a sick animal, but instead intersects, collaborates, and traverses species and genera to compose different modes of comportment. The writer-physician does not *represent* a new set of symptoms or behaviors through language. Deleuze’s intervention is altogether more pragmatic: the writer-physician re-cycles and re-animates various symptoms, movements, comportments, and behaviors (human and non-human) that become generative only through compositions, decompositions, and recompositions.

Deleuze is not simply employing ethology as a metaphor for philosophical and literary enterprise; he is suggesting that what we have come to identify as human “symptoms” are more adequately expressed as moments of transverse connection with non-human (competing, parallel, and requisite) planes of production. This is a spectacular re-mapping of Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the psychoanalytic “theatre” of the unconscious in which human behaviors are only ever symptomatic of a distinctly human drama of relation that requires a period of repose, rumination, digestion, dormancy, and inaction for expressions to finally—and accidentally—ascend to eventual articulation. Deleuze’s ethological, symptomatological cartography of human and non-human sensory events of (literary) composition appeals to a more hyperkinetic articulation of bodily production where “motion is the magic potion” (to quote the hospitalized anorexic

narrator of Jennifer Shute's *Life Size*).

Following Spinoza, Deleuze proposes that “bodies are not defined by their genus or species, by their organs and functions, but by what they can do, by the affects of which they are capable—in passion as well as in action. You have not defined an animal until you have listed its affects” (*Dialogues* 60). Deleuze goes on to point out that via a Spinozist ethology of affective taxonomies, a work horse and a race horse, despite participating in the same species and being identifiable within the same genera, are more different than a work horse and an ox, whose sensory participations in the world are connected through lines of transversal (ibid 60). The tick is a recurrent —and indeed revered—creature in Deleuze's own work, as well as his collaborations with Guattari. In “The Geology of Morals,” Deleuze and Guattari describe the tick's “unforgettable” associated milieu: “defined by its gravitational energy of falling, its olfactory characteristic of perceiving sweat, and its active characteristic of latching on...an associated world composed of three factors, and no more” (*ATP* 51). Produced by three affects, “which are all it is capable of as a result of the relationships of which it is composed...Blind and deaf... in the vast forest... [the tick] may sleep for years awaiting the encounter. What power, nevertheless!” (*Dialogues* 60). The tick's sensory simplicity and restraint (its suspension that is more anticipatory than restful) is what comprises its power.

Deleuze's descriptions are not of an organism *reduced* to its organs and functions, but of an organism whose world is composed by the interactions and extensions its body can facilitate; its engines of encounter. The tick's “tri-polar”

milieu is powerful and impactful because the tick (like the spider and the louse: “true philosophical beasts”) has learned “how to trim, cut up, and sew back together” an associated world (*Dialogues* 61), a world in which energetic momentum is channeled to affective capacity alone, and a world in which the only novelty available is through composition. This exploration of the tick’s microcosmos is critical to Deleuze’s eco-philosophy because its milieu facilitates the vital inventions—and interventions—that fuel creative (and healthful) enterprise. Differently put, it is not that the tick represents the philosopher, it is that the tick enacts philosophy, and philosophy enters into a field of composition with the tick’s affective momentums.

In my discussion of Beckett, anorexia, and bulimia that will ensue, I draw more heavily on the worm than I do the tick, but Deleuze’s notions of involution and ethology remain crucial. Deleuze and Guattari’s investment in an eco-ethico-ethology is indebted to the work of Jakob von Uexküll, a German-Estonian biologist who challenged Darwin’s thinking. Deleuze’s tri-polar affective tick is Uexküll’s, and the subject of what “A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men” describes as the *umwelt*. Here Uexküll proposes that the tick articulates a precise world of three receptor/effector cues (the same ones described initially by Deleuze and Guattari in “On the Geology of Morals”). These carriers of significance, Uexküll argues, compose the tick’s plan(e) of participation in its subjectively-organized world (its *umwelt*). The draw of Uexküll’s thinking for Deleuze and Guattari, is that his story of *umwelt* begins like Beckett’s literary texts—in *medias res*, *en route*, in the middle of already formulated animal worlds.

Instead of a chain of progressive, explanatory events that lead to the tick's current existence, Uexküll's theory of *umwelt* accounts for overlapping, enfolded animal worlds, the task of the observer not being "one of tracing a line back to the first intake of breath, but of following the way in which these worlds play themselves out, as they involve other figures of milieu, erupting onto and folding into the animal stratum" (Greaves 100). More akin to involution than evolution, Uexküll's tick's *umwelt* overlaps with that of the peripatetic biologist (to use his eponymous example) "strolling" about the forest, lost in moving contemplation.

I am veering my discussion from the strolling biologist/philosopher and suspended tick of Uexküll's *umwelt* and Deleuze's involutory, "associated milieus," to Charles Darwin's garden worms (the subject of his final text *The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms with Observation of Their Habits*) and Samuel Beckett's literary inventions of becoming-worm. Shifting from the tick to the worm, I hope to map a methodology more hospitable to symptomatology of disordered eating. While the tick can suspend its energies in anticipation of the next passing patch of exposed, hairless, heated skin, the earth-worm's affective cues are far less inclined to rest, repose, and states of inactivity.⁹⁰ In other words, the *umwelt* of the earthworm connects more readily

⁹⁰ While the tick seems more relevant to a discussion of affect in "Bartleby, the Scrivener," I think that the worm better suits Beckett. The tick recurs for Deleuze and Guattari in order to figure the nomad. In the "Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine," they write that "the nomad knows how to wait, he has infinite patience. Immobility and speed, catatonia and rush, a 'stationary process,' station as process...It is thus necessary to make a distinction between *speed* and *movement*: a movement may be very fast, but that does not give it speed; a speed may be very slow, or even immobile, yet it

with associated milieus of disordered eaters tending towards, as I have been arguing, states of heightened hyper-activity and unrest. I will demonstrate that Darwin's text on the earth-worm could be read in conversation with Deleuze and Guattari's involutory orchestration of Uexküll's tick.

With an incredible devotion to micro-movement, Darwin relates his study of worms. He writes that "I became interested in them, and wished to learn how far they reacted consciously, and how much mental power they displayed. I was the more desirous to learn something on this head, as few observations of this kind have been made, as far as I know, on animals so low in the scale of organization and so poorly provided with sense-organs, as are earth-worms" (Darwin 1). Darwin's extensive research of these sensibly deprived creatures concludes in the rather grandiose statements that "all the vegetable mould over the whole country has passed many times through, and will again pass many times through, the intestinal canals of worms" (2). And furthermore, that "worms have played a more important part in the history of the world than most persons would at first suppose...In many parts of England a weight of more than ten tons of dry earth annually passes through their bodies and is brought to the surface on each acre of land" (136). While Deleuze insists that "involution" directly opposes "evolution," Darwin's studies of evolution are far more nuanced than some of the critical

is still speed. Movement is extensive; speed is intensive" (381). The tick, like Bartleby, enacts speeds/rhythms that are either too slow or too fast for our instruments of measure, but are of course till forms of activity rather than passivity. To my mind, Beckett's nomads are different in that they transmute the character of movement rather than that of speed or stillness. It's laughable to imagine Molloy as a patient figure, particularly good at waiting. His suspensions are only possible with unrest.

abuses and misuses that have plagued his work. His text on earth-worm behavior dialogues with the Deleuzian concept of involution I have been unpacking, especially when paired with Beckett's Trilogy.

Like the tick, the earth-worm "cannot be said to possess the power of vision" (Darwin 11) is "destitute of eyes" (ibid 8), but is extremely sensitive to heat, light, vibrations, and certainly to physical contact and the movement this contact occasions (ibid 11-13): "when a worm first comes out of its burrow, it generally moves...from side to side in all directions, apparently as an organ of touch...Of all their senses that of touch, including in this term the perception of a vibration, seems the most highly developed" (ibid 13). In 1943, physician Josiah Oldfield applied his study rigorously to problems most prevalent in his patients: indigestion and constipation. Oldfield's research sought out evolutionary theories of the human digestive canal. Offering an account of our eventual genesis over time from amorphous, invertebrate amoebas—tube-like organisms—indiscriminate in terms of what matter entered into (and quickly moved out of) their bodies, Oldfield employs a provocative description of the garden worm. He writes:

We, as tubes, kept the world proceeding through us. Just as the worm moved through the earth through the aid of a set of ripples running down the length of his body and pushing against the ground as they ripple, so too the ripples along the inner muscular coating of the intestines continue for a while and then stop—and the intestinal contents stop each time the ripple runs along it,

carrying the contents a little way forward (Oldfield qtd. In Walton 250).

I will return to Oldfield's work in the following sections of this chapter, but here I wish to think of this passage in concert with Darwin's study. Both texts forge a fascinating relationship between touch and movement, as the worm is viscerally and haptically driven. One enervated surface—as both the outside and inside of the worm's body perform the same function of bringing matter to matter—the worm's outer surface can only maintain its mobility if it is perpetually digesting and expelling the earth that surrounds it. Darwin sediments this connection:

A worm after swallowing earth, whether for making its burrow or for food, soon comes to the surface to empty its body. The ejected earth is thoroughly mingled with the intestinal secretions, and is thus rendered viscid. After being dried it sets hard. I have watched worms during the act of ejection..it is not cast indifferently on any side, but with some care, first on one and then on the other side; the tail being used almost like a trowel (Darwin 51).

This description of vermi-composting processes reverberates uncannily with Watt's task of carefully pouring Mr. Knott's slops over garden plants in accordance with each of their different temporal growth cycles. Watt must observe human metabolic time in connection with celery time, seakale time, tomato time, and violet time, (*Watt* 55). Darwin's description is even more befitting of Molloy's penchant for symmetry expressed by his practice of sucking stones—what Deleuze reads as the permutations of exhaustion. I will unpack this

connection in the next section, along with the possible transverse composition of disorderly eating with invertebrate digestive momentums. However, to build to this argument, I wish to first think through affect and associated milieus in relation to Darwin's and Oldfield's earth-worm.

Operative on another plane than their connected conception of bodies without organs, Deleuze and Guattari write in "The Geology of Morals" of the tick's double pincers of articulation. "Associated milieus," they write, "are closely related to organic forms. An organic form is not a simple structure but a structuration, the constitution of an associated milieu. An animal milieu, such as the spider's web, is no less 'morphogenic' than the form of the organism" (*ATP* 51). The worm's digestive canal seems akin to the tick's doubly articulative pincers. As a structuration in process of composition, the worm's body quite literally changes the earth, and vice versa. It ingests, digests, and expels the dirt and rocks that its skin touches, balancing input and output carefully, symmetrically, and with precision: always moving, always eating, and always excreting because earth moving through the worm's tubular body is what propels its motion. I am arguing that there is a sensory overlap between these affective arousals of the worm, and those of disorderly eaters: in feeling-through-movement, digesting to facilitate mobility, moving to facilitate digestion, balancing taste with waste, and enforcing an excretive symmetry of discriminate sides. Following Deleuze, Uexküll, and Darwin, I am arguing that this mode of engagement is ethological, symptomatological and involutory (implicating transverse lines of becoming) rather than a regressive state of devolution.

II. Self-Starvation and Survival; or Anorexic Involution

Is not the force of our emotions that of other animals? Human infants are tedious at table, picking at their food, playing with it, distracted from it; they pick up voracity from the puppy absorbed with total attentiveness at his dish.

--Alphonso Lingis, *Dangerous Emotions* 170

I'm hungry, always hungry, a man should not be hungry, so I'll have to become a dog. But how? This will not involve imitating a dog, nor an analogy of relations. I must succeed in endowing the parts of my body with relations of speed and slowness that will make it become a dog.

-- Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP* 258

The terms "self-starvation" and "survival" can seem mutually exclusive because we need to eat in order to live. And so with the invocation of the term "survival" in many critical interpretations of anorexia, irony, paradox, and mythology are employed. I will list a number of these utterances, and follow them with analysis. In *The Art of Starvation*, Sheila MacLeod notes that "the irony entailed in starving myself in order to survive was not altogether lost on me" (84). In *The Kiss*, Kathryn Harrison interprets her anorexia as a perverse fairy tale: "the dizzy rapture of starving [was] the power of needing nothing. By force, I [made] myself

the impossible sprite who lives on air, or water, or purity” (39). Harrison’s terminology is reverberated by Jennifer Shute’s *Life Size*, in which the anorexic narrator exclaims that “I’m empty, light, light-headed; I like to stay this way, free and pure, light on my feet, travelling light—for me, food’s only interest lies in how little I need, how strong I am, how well I can resist...Like a plant, surely the body can be trained to exist on nothing, to take its nourishment from the air” (Shute 71). On a pro-ana website, called *Cerulean Butterfly*, another invocation of subsistence reads “I do eat normally; I eat only what is necessary for survival.” Marya Hornbacher writes of her self-starvation in *Wasted* that “I did it as catharsis; food suddenly seemed to be a burden, a strain on my limited-time...In reality, I did it as a test of my own endurance. I wanted to see how long I could go, running on fumes. I wanted to find the bare minimum required to subsist” (245). A few pages later, she explains more succinctly that “I was anorectic because I was afraid of being human” (266).

For me, these are fascinating narrative congruities between accounts of self-starvation, and yet they are incongruous with feminist scholarship on eating disorders that seem to leave no place for considerations of anorexia that traverse the human. To put it as pragmatically as possible, the frequency of statements made in memoirs and fictions of eating disorders about media images, or cultural expectations of female beauty is *surpassed* by the frequency of expressions connecting anorexia to animality. I find this startling. I am not startled by the fact that anorexics find strange affinities with non-human carriers of significance. Rather, I am startled by the homogeneity of feminist approaches to eating disorders

that hastily conflate expressions of non-human bodily comportment with disembodiment and transcendence.

I find John Rajchman's explanation of haecceity in *The Deleuze Connections* a useful point of departure for this discussion. He grants Deleuze and Guattari's "haecceity" with a quality of ineffability mixed with a symptomatological imperative to peruse and recombine singular sense-events. He notes that in order to think of haecceity, we might think of "bits of experience that can't be fit into a nice narrative unity, and so must be combined or put together in another way" (Rajchman 85). My contention is that anorexic ethology (or involution) is one such "bit" of anorexic experience that exposes the fissures of dominant feminist analyses of eating disorders, because it quite simply does not fit into what has become *the* anorexic milieu. To re-invoke Simon Weil, these texts "cry out silently to be read differently" (as did she) and this functions as double-edged invitation. On the one hand, it participates to what has already become a material feminist invitation to source contiguities between bodies and ideas that avoid the tendency to privilege ideation (as active) and materiality (as a passively inscribed receptor). And, on the other hand, I see this as an invitation and opportunity specific to feminist scholarship on disordered eating. If the non-human animal does not fit into current critical tableaux of anorexia, then perhaps we might symptomatologically re-configure, re-combine (or exhaust the combinatorial permutations of) anorexic expressions so that what we collectively call "anorexia" might actually become something other.

To return to the passages that compel this section, each of the anorexic

utterances, quoted above, establishes a connection between survival and self-starvation that none of the authors seem able to articulate within available human expressions of bodily comportment. Harrison's anorexia transforms her into an "impossible sprite" who can be nourished by air, water, and purity. The anonymous author of the pro-ana forum's quotations intuits a relationship between the anorexic body and vegetative life, whose survival is facilitated by air, water, light, and invisible nutrients in soil. And in Hornbacher's account, subsisting on the bare minimum, and freeing her body from "human" time was a method of allaying her fear of being human.

In *Conversations with Anorexics*, Hilde Bruch quotes her patient, Annette, who repeats what Bruch calls "the issue of not feeling human." Annette claims that her sister "is more in touch with humanity than I am...I was like an animal, not like a human being" (128, 146). Connected to Hornbacher's sense that anorexic time differs from "human time," or organized organic time, another of Bruch's patients relates that "I was proceeding as though time just did not exist" (203). Morag MacSween's *Anorexic Bodies* also quotes patients' accounts connecting their anorexic behaviors to those of non-human animals. One woman suggests that "I feel like an animal, dipping in with my fingers or tipping the carrots into my mouth. I usually crouch down by the fridge to do this" (223). To unpack, I want to insist upon a few points. First, I hope that placing these passages in dialogue illuminates an anorexic milieu that is not only enervated by the signficatory cues of visual culture: commercialized beauty, femininity, and images. This conceptual vocabulary evokes different sensory cues, and different

associated milieus.

Second, I should note that it is possible that in each of these accounts, *the* animal is employed as a narrative trope to communicate experiences which otherwise seem ineffable. But to this, I would argue that many narrative tropes have already been utilized and explored to critically understand anorexia. Transcendence, purity, and ethereality have been three widely used conceptual tools in scholarship on eating disorders. If exploring animality as a narrative trope is a way to differently combine bits of anorexic experience that fall between the cracks of the usual critical vocabulary, then so be it. And finally, passages like the ones I have quoted above are often read as evidencing the persistent critical and clinical connection between anorexia and disembodiment. But are these women longing to be without a body? Or are they articulating a desire to experience—viscerally, materially—how non-human versions of life, movement, and nourishment would unfold? There is a tremendous difference between these two versions of longing: the former is materially impossible outside of death, but the latter version of living (through exhaustion and involution) could be facilitated, even if only fleetingly sustained. I argue that present in the above passages is a sense that these women want to find their way out of rehearsed, practiced, *tired* human comportment—outside of dominant health—not outside of life's material momentums altogether. I maintain that this critical re-navigation holds promise, because if we can begin to understand the forces that activate anorexics and the forces that anorexics activate, then we can work on re-channeling those forces through less dangerous systems of extension and exchange.

Sigal Gooldin's article "Hunger, Subjectivity, and Embodied Morality" quotes a "recovered" anorexic retroactively reflecting on her experiences in the hospital. She suggests that "fat is a physical evidence for the content maintenance of affluent seasons, when you have to store" (281). Further ruminating on her self-starvation, she notes that "Overflow...is something you will not find in me. Overflow, for me, is something that makes you lumpish and tired, something that causes fast wearing... My senses are sharp. I may be hungry but I'm using the feelings aroused by this hunger in order to become a better hunter in those sides of life that you will never get to know" (281). Remarkable is the speaker's connection between the material substance of fat (what Megan Warin refers to as the anorexic's *miasmatic calories*) and a financial system of acquiring and saving. Saving, storing, and banking are pernicious to her anorexic economy in which everything that goes into her body must be immediately used up, expended, and exhausted. Food substance must be transferred into physical momentum, as accumulating food in the body (particularly fat) stymies digestive and extensive movement.

This passage dialogues with Beckett's description of the eating ordinary in *Watt*: eating, resting, eating, resting; storing, stoping, storing, stoping. Furthermore, the speaker's sense of accumulative eating as requiring a slowness that is not in keeping with more hyperkinetic anorexic affect offers a connection with Murphy, Mr. Knott, Molloy, and Moran, all of whom can only eat when food facilitates differential motion and unrest—anything to escape the body's arrest. Said differently, they only eat if this eating occasions fasting. From the

Deleuzian-Beckettian purview of exhaustion, the anonymous anorexic speaker unfolds a distinction between the affects of tiredness and exhaustion. She claims to “use the feelings aroused by hunger in order to become a better hunter in those sides of life that you will never get to know.” Her hunter reads as a nomadic wanderer, only capable of visceral exploration when reaching the corners, margins, or territories of life untouchable within the position of dominant health. In other words, the speaker’s version of travel is a hunger-fueled exhaustive peripatetic traversal of the ordinary.

These momentums of exhaustion and involution, I would argue, are what account for the frequency of anorexic expressions of a strange, ironic, or paradoxical survival instincts awakened with self-starvation. There is a recurrent longing expressed to move into realms of sensory arousal incapacitated by a healthful human milieu: whether the imaginary realm of the sprite (Harrison), the vegetative realm of the plant (Coetzee, Pro-Ana. Shute), the nomadic realm of the hunter (Gooldin), or an-as-of-yet indeterminate realm of the other-than-human (Hornbacher, MacLeod, Davidow). The guiding question of this section, however, is whether or not this tension between survival and self-starvation is indeed expressive of a mutual exclusivity. What if the gestures and affects fueling sustaining *and* starving were mutually involved activations of overlapping affective milieus—or ethologies?

I have stressed this possibility across literary case-studies of modernist fiction, philosophy, pro-ana communal forums, and contemporary memoir/autobiographical fiction. This chapter reads scientific literature in concert

with each of these genres. I have found that some scientific approaches to disordered eating follow what my first chapter detailed as a Deleuzian symptomtological method of (literary) analysis: the creative re-mapping and re-composing of symptoms across diagnostic structures. One provocative exercise in symptomatology is performed by Shan Guisinger's proposal of an "Adapted to Flee Famine" clinical approach to disordered eating. According to Guisinger, psychiatry's tool, the DSM IV, has hastily assumed that that weight loss is a *symptom* of an eating disorder (due to sufferers' 'refusal to maintain normal body weight'), when the physiology of self-starvation might instead *instigate* biological changes in anorexic bodies:

What if researchers have assumed the wrong direction of causality? Several lines of evidence, considered together, suggest that rather than psychological or medical pathology causing the bizarre behaviours contiguous with anorexia nervosa, it is weight loss that leads to the symptoms. If the interpretation of causality is reconsidered, a number of discordant observations fall into place (Guisinger 745).

I like Guisinger's term "contiguous" to describe anorexic behaviors because it emphasizes mutual imbrication, touching, or even the transverse of adjacent lines. Her work asks us to think about what sorts of ecologies and complicated biological involvements fall outside of the clinically orthodox anorexic subject. Reading anorexia through an "adapted to flee famine hypothesis," Guisinger integrates conventional theories of anorexia into a Darwinian framework by

proposing that anorexic “symptoms of restricting food, hyperactivity, and denial of starvation reflect the operation of adaptive mechanisms that once facilitated migration in response to local famine” (748). According to Guisinger, there is a crucial difference between the physiology and symptomatic tableau of a self-starver and a victim of famine or externally enforced starvation. That is, anorexic patients experience a sense of euphoria, of rapture, an enhancement of the sensible world, and a restlessness that incurs hyperactivity, whereas a starving body that is not “anorexic” will experience lethargy, depression, and a slowing of metabolic function in the body’s efforts to conserve energy.⁹¹ This second version of starvation is not paired with a sense of pleasure or hyperkinesis.

To put a Deleuzian spin on Guisinger’s work, the anorexic body might be capable of exhaustion, whereas the starving body would feel tired. Or furthermore, the former condition could allow for a grammar of physical invention, whereas the latter is a simple state of organic decomposition. Guisinger hypothesizes that in our hunter-gathering, nomadic past, extreme weight loss due to depleted local food resources would have meant that:

⁹¹ Guisinger’s creative, clinical picture of *self*-starvation is conversant with the pre-WWII capacious subject of anorexia discussed at length in my introduction. Also, Guisinger’s emphasis on the “self” of self-starvation is interesting in the ways it redirects social-constructivist and corporeal feminist interpretations of eating disorders. I have already noted how these readings rely on de-pathologizing individual sufferers by pathologizing a capitalist, cultural, patriarchal collective force. By placing anorexia on a continuum with women’s dieting, self-mutilation, extreme surveillance, and other punitive ritual regimes, it is as if eating disorders are assumed one among many obligatory rituals of femininity. In other words, there is no “self” in self-starvation—no agency accounted for, no choice in the matter, no volitional bodies, and only volatile ones.

some individuals might have done better by seeking foraging opportunities elsewhere. Then the hunger that conserved energy and the hunger that motivated single-minded search for food could be maladaptive. To migrate efficiently, individuals' bodies would have to turn off those usual adaptations to starvation. The ability to stop foraging locally, to feel restless and energetic, and optimistically to deny that one is dangerously thin could facilitate such a last-ditch effort. Here it is proposed that the three distinct adaptations specifically relevant for surviving past famine conditions: ignoring food; hyperactivity; and denial of starvation (748).

To test the relevance of her theory, Guisinger proposes that the anorexic syndrome of "ignoring food and restless energy ought to be found in some other species that inhabit similar ecological niches, when body weight drops very low" (749). Aided by other researchers, Guisinger notes that some domesticated animals bred for "extreme leanness develop a strikingly similar constellation of symptoms. Pigs with so called wasting-pig syndrome voluntarily restrict their intake of normal food, although they might eat large amounts of straw; they are also restless, moving incessantly around their pens" (750).

In their study of "Intriguing Links Between Animal Behaviour and Anorexia Nervosa," Janet L. Treasure (a consultant for the Institute of Psychiatry's Eating Disorders Research Group) and John B. Owen (a professor of Agriculture) point to the "intriguing possibility that [anorexia] has an analogous

genetic basis in both [pigs and humans]” for the mutual occurrence of food restriction and an increase of time devoted to “nonnutritive hyperactive behavior” (307,308). Perhaps more fascinating than restless pigs are the effects of induced starvation on laboratory rats (and eight other rodent species). Here, there is a symbiotic relationship between starvation and wheel running: the less rats eat, the more they run. In the “Relevance of Animal Models to Human Eating Disorders and Obesity,” Regina Casper suggests that “maximal wheel running occurs when animals are restricted to one time-limited period of food availability per day. Initially, animals compensate by increasing the amount of food eaten during the period of restricted access; however, with increased activity, animals no longer increase the amount consumed” (Casper et.al, 315). Greater weight loss in the rats leads to greater hyperactivity, which they can sustain for up to 90 days before dying of self-starvation (Guisinger, Epling, Pierce, 752).

In another article “The ‘Drive for Activity’ and ‘Restlessness’ in Anorexia Nervosa: Potential Pathways,” Regina Casper finds one such “pathway” in studies of the “foraging gene” discovered in fruit flies and honey bees. Larvae with mutations in this particular gene evidences increases in activity and “foraging locomotion” (Casper 104). While there has as yet been no homologous “foraging gene” described in humans and primates, Casper proposes the likelihood that this gene occurs across species, and could be heavily involved in the mediation of the starvation-induced movements of anorexics (104). Conversely, Guisinger’s study also considers the function of suppressed eating in wild animals. When hunger and feeding compete with other activities like defending their harem or

territory, incubating, molting, or migrating, “animals of many species will stop eating even when food is readily available” (Guisinger 750). “Presumably,” writes Guisinger, “migrating animals do not ‘eat and run’ because searching for food, when it is scarce, would interfere with this migration” (750). The correlative implication is that the denial of eating (and starvation) in anorexics could “promote optimism to travel elsewhere” (Guisinger 753).

My interest in these theories is not simply the paradigmatic shift that each of them effectuates, although this aspect is always compelling in any critical work. I am more interested in the generative power of connection, across disciplines, genres, texts, species, and genders. What happens when we bring Beckett to Hornbacher, to Deleuze, to Guisinger, to Casper, to Zink and Weinberger? What can open when we bring Deleuze’s involution and Beckett’s exhaustion to Guisinger’s evolutionarily adaptive hypothesis of anorexia? It is the critical practice of formulating these contiguities and constellations that proves productive. Alone, Guisinger might be a renegade, or Hornbacher, MacLeod and Shute’s textual moments (of what Rajchman would call Deleuzian ‘haecceities’) might be deemed exceptions in an otherwise homogenous literature on anorexic lack. On its own, Deleuze’s discussion of “anorexic elegance”—a consideration of the involutory potential of the restrained but extensive step occasioned by self-starvation— in *Dialogues* could be dismissed as a dangerous romanticization or aestheticization of an illness that kills women. And read in isolation from all of the other thinkers mentioned in this section, Beckett’s vital degenerates might not seem as relevant to the extra-textual, material engagements that prolong them. My

point is that by exploring the overlapping associated milieus, the affective resonances across these texts of how anorexia functions or what it arouses, I am repeatedly demonstrating that very different versions of anorexia can emerge.

Specifically, I want to suggest that placing Deleuzian involution in conversation with Guisinger's version of Darwinian evolution is perhaps more generative and relevant to the case studies of anorexia I have been exploring. Guisinger's hypothesis proposes that the "migratory restlessness," a symptom of anorexia, could be better thought through as an adaptive trait, for which individuals capable of traveling further with less and less food would have been naturally-selected because advantageous to those in their midst who would have needed to eat to stave off the lethargy, depression, and immobility usually observed in starvation (Guisinger 755). Anorexia, then, could be the toxic genetic remnant of a time when "nomadic foragers leaving depleted environments" (745) needed individuals capable of the version of hyperkinesis that anorexia repeatedly makes possible. The extension of Guisinger's analysis is that anorexics are misplaced in current cultural milieus that tend to privilege economies of acquisition, storage, saving, rest, and sedentarity. But a Deleuzian involutory reading can build on Guisinger's. Instead of a linear progression, involution functions through temporary moments and momentums of transverse connection.

Following involution, anorexia would not be the remnant of an other- or former-world, because there are instead mutually occurring worlds (*umwelts*) that are formed by virtue of the affective bodies inhabiting them. Regardless of species, the affective world of the anorexic might have more in common with the

affective world of the garden worm than that of a human ordinary eater. Employing this ethological taxonomy does not infer that anorexia is triggered by (or itself triggers) a regressive, anterior state in our evolutionary history, whether that of nomadic foraging societies (Guisinger), or a pre-human, worm-like, tubular digestive canal (Oldfield). Bringing Deleuze's involution to bear on Guisinger's work would yield a different hypothesis: that the affects of which anorexic bodies are capable (prolonged hunger accompanied by euphoria instead of depression, hyperactivity instead of lethargy, moving instead of storing, exhausting instead of tiring) are composed in relation to the affects of which alternately mobile bodies are also capable (foragers, wanderers, hunters, travellers, nomadics, migratory animals, lean pigs, bees, fruit flies, laboratory rodents, and earth worms). Said differently, invoking anorexic involution would allow for the possibility of mutually occurring milieus whose assemblage is fuelled and aroused by the material intensities of hunger, food-refusal, and self-starvation. The anorexic is not a misplaced animal in the contemporary moment whose nomadic "optimism to travel elsewhere" (Guisinger 753) by engaging different energetic momentums no longer serves an evolutionarily advantageous or productive purpose. Rather, anorexics invoke different systems of exchange and travel *in order to* inhabit different sensory milieus: anorexia is attempted involution, not an evolutionary remnant or history.

The next section on bulimia further develops this notion with more elaborate accounts of self-starvation. By means of concluding this section, I wish to come back to one of Deleuze's questions which began this chapter. When discussing

anorexia with Claire Parnet in *Dialogues*, he writes of the precariousness of doses, that these are what are most “difficult to explain: to what extent one should involute” (29). To this, he adds another question:

why is there such an elegance in certain anorexics? It is also true of life, even the most animal kind: if the animals invented their forms and their functions, this was not always by evolving, by developing themselves, nor by regressing as in the case of prematuration, but by losing, by abandoning, by reducing, by simplifying, even if this means creating new elements and new relations of this simplification. Experimentation is involutive, the opposite of overdose (29).

While I come back to the notion of involutive “dosage” in my conclusion—which considers the possibility of “healing” from dis-ordered eating—I want to signal its importance. Deleuze, Beckett, and Guisinger offer what I think is a tremendous “tweaking” to dominant understandings of eating disorders. If self-starvation and vital living are not mutually opposed, but are in concert, enfolded in contiguous systems of sensory participation, involved in a process of extending organic life and movement, and in exhaustive permutations of sense events inherited by “living without dining,” then where is the threshold? At what point does the experiment—the involution, the exhaustion—become decompositional? When and where does the “best” version of “ana” who never dies from hunger become the “martyred” version of “ana” who dies for her cause because she values—or prefers—decline over movement? Deleuze’s vital critical/clinical

writer returns from the margins of “dominant health” to invent life differently, to become something other, and to perpetuate further experimentation. Beckett keeps re-composing and re-generating the sensory permutations that enervate Molloy throughout his work. Molloy’s narrative ends, but the affective momentums that propel his movement reappear in Moran’s narrative, in *Malone Dies*, and in *The Unnameable*. Beckett’s characters never seem to expire because they have no stable molar identities: in a relentlessly Spinozist sense, Molloy *is* only ever what he *does*.

But these are literary figures and philosophical concepts, and far from suggesting that these are abstractions from real life, it is still important to remember that we are not often equipped with the requisite skills to sustain life less ordinary. The pleasures of disorderly eating, as my dissertation has insisted, lie in sustaining “the void,” in perpetually bringing the organism to its threshold of demise, and in using up every ounce and outlet of energy possible. Anorexic bodies are incredibly well equipped with the capacities to feel their way through living with hunger. But they are ill-equipped to live without the affective arousals that hunger occasions. These are two competing physical needs (like Molloy’s sucking stones). Said differently, when a body learns to be nourished by a particular series of acts and by a particular affective milieu, that body cannot be wrenched from its sensory participations and expected to survive and flourish. Ordinary eating—or the eating order—is inhospitable to the affective engagements of anorexia; even with the promise of organic totality, integrity, and longevity, it offers no “life-lines” for disorderly eaters.

My goal in expounding anorexic ecologies throughout this chapter and Chapter 4 has been to suggest that anorexia is a process of engagement, connection, and relation—a means of living through different sorts of sensory events and material intensities—that invoke participations with other-than-human and un-ordinary milieus. In building different sorts of anorexic connections and constellations, my aim is not to romanticize anorexia by simply replacing its more negative framings with affirmations of its creative potentialities. Rather, in reconfiguring anorexic desiring, my aim is to challenge readers to find more acceptable—more hospitable—milieus for disorderly eaters. If not to an eating ordinary, what can we expect anorexic women to return to? How can we negotiate—and indeed, sustain—the pleasures of anorexia without stagnating its experiments? In and through what sorts of sensory, ethical, and material engagements can anorexic women continue to experience life less-ordinary but still more-vital? How can we map an associated milieu that might prove productive to disordered eaters because it creates space for *both* experimentation (involution, exhaustion) *and* continued health (not necessarily dominant health, but the health(s) of wandering, sustaining, and desiring)? As I see it, this is the task of feminist scholars of anorexia in the contemporary moment.

III. Bulimic Ecologies, Economies, Ethologies

The design of the body can be understood by paraphrasing T.S. Eliot. We are indeed hollow men...and women. The space enclosed within the wall of the bowel, its *lumen*, is part of the outside world. The open

tube that begins at the mouth ends at the anus. Paradoxically as it may seem, the gut is a tunnel that permits the exterior to run right through us. Whatever is in the lumen of the gut is actually outside of our bodies, no matter how counter-intuitive that seems.

--Gershon qtd. In Walton, 249

This section comes out of a recognition that thus far, my dissertation has been more concerned with anorexia than bulimia, even though I have often used the terms in tandem, and even though my preferred term of “dis-ordered eating” is more inclusive of a range of “strange” food-related behaviors. Still, I have to admit that, at times, the affects and frequencies that compose bulimic bodies have taken a back seat in my dissertation’s symptomatological arc of anorexic affect. This final section, then, addresses bulimia in much more sustained way. I proceed on two separate, but related paths. First, I frame this section as ignited and guided by the material feminist analysis of Elizabeth Wilson’s article “Gut Feminism” and book, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body*. In doing so, I am re-emphasizing the concerns of my dissertation in dialogue with the larger concerns of material feminisms, and I am unpacking Wilson’s creative perusal of bulimia, work which I deem incredibly rich. The second part of this section reconvenes with Beckett’s “Molloy,” Marya Hornbacher’s *Wasted*, and Sheila MacLeod’s *The Art of Starvation* to further substantiate case studies of self-starvation that address bulimia more emphatically.

The Thinking Bulimic “Gut:” Further Unsettling Mind Body Dualisms

The medical notion of hysteria as a wandering womb has long been considered a violence against the female body. However, before such an etiology is dismissed altogether, the question of organic wandering demands closer examination. The notion of a roaming uterus contains within it a sense of organic matter that disseminates, strays, and deviates from its proper place. Perhaps biology wanders. Formulated in this way, hysterical diversion is not forced...from the outside, it is already part of the natural repertoire of biological matter.

--Elizabeth Wilson, *Psychosomatic* 13

Elizabeth Wilson offers a compelling case study of this phenomenon with regard to 19th century conversion hysteria. By asking how a neurosis can be acquainted with the nervous system (9), Wilson’s analysis is guided by a unrelenting exposure that what feminists over the past few decades have deemed an “intense scrutiny of the body” is in fact completely limited to the discursive operations of embodiment: “after all, how many feminist accounts of the anorexic body pay serious attention to the biological functions of the stomach, the mouth, or the digestive system? How many feminist analyses of the anxious body are informed and illuminated by neurological data? How many discussions of the sexual body

have been articulated through biochemistry?” (Wilson 8). In my introduction, I discussed Claire Colebrook and Abigail Bray’s article, “The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (dis)Embodiment.” Colebrook and Bray identify the same problematic with “corporeal feminists” of the past decades: that ultimately, “the body” is never really the material body in most feminist work. However, the difference between Colebrook and Bray’s project and Wilson’s is that the latter offers case studies to support her claims. She speaks directly to “the muscular capacities of the body, the function of the internal organs, the biophysics of cellular metabolism, the micro-physiology of circulation, respiration, digestion, and excretion” (8). In this sense, Wilson’s work is exceptional. Her’s is the *only* sustained engagement with disordered eating I have found that practices a feminist analysis (while still maintaining a critical distance from feminism) at the same time as it offers a new methodology for engaging with the bodily concerns of disordered eaters. This is not to say that Wilson is the only feminist thinker to contribute something tangible to studies of anorexia and bulimia, but that with regard to disordered eating, she is alone in her critical askesis—in her capacity to both void *and* re-populate with something other.

Without too much revelry, I also want to point out that Wilson makes another critical gesture I find tremendous. A great deal of Deleuze and Guattari’s project is devoted to attempts to undermine what have become cultural and ideational strongholds of Freudian psychoanalysis.⁹² In rescuing desire from the

⁹² Instead of rescuing psychoanalysis from Freud, Deleuze rescues the clinic from psychoanalysis in *Coldness and Cruelty* and *Essays Critical and Clinical*.

theatre of the unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari create alternate morphologies for producing desiring. I am of course indebted to this philosophy, but where Deleuze performs the generous re-composition of some thinkers, he and Guattari seem unwilling to read Freud's work in any spirit of generosity, a refusal that undermines the larger momentums of Deleuze's project. Wilson's "Gut Feminism" and *Psychosomatic* could be read as more full expressions of Deleuze and Guattari's project: rather than *reducing* psychoanalytic theory (making it take up less space), she *complicates* it (breaks it down to its constituent parts and recombines them to make something new), which, to my mind is a more exhaustive and exhausting process. It seems easier to think and write through *resentiment* than through curiosity, and I admire Wilson's accomplishment of the latter.

"Gut Feminism" and "The Brain and Gut" critically intervene in an historical moment when in order to understand conversion hysteria, Freud turns away from his early work on the nervous system of the lamprey, "higher" fish, and other invertebrate nervous systems (Wilson 1,2). He shifts his focus from the biological, neurological, and anatomical phenomena of hysteria onto an hysterical body detached from its viscera, hypothesizing that "hysteria behaves as though anatomy did not exist or as though it had no knowledge of it" (Freud qtd. In Wilson "Feminism" 67). As Wilson argues, Freud's "emerging preference for psychogenic etiologies over biological ones has been enormously influential on feminist accounts of embodiment. The idea that psychic or cultural conflicts could become somatic events was one of the central organizing principles of feminist

work on the body in the 1980s and 1990s” (“Feminism” 68). In short, Wilson claims that tendencies in this feminist work to explore bodily transformations ideationally, symbolically, representationally, and discursively without reference or recourse to biology, have replicated Freud’s eventual thesis on hysteria by imagining “the body as though anatomy did not exist” (ibid 69).

I will place Wilson and Irigaray in conversation here because Irigaray’s project also exposes what for her are philosophical and cultural (masculinist) tendencies to imagine *the* body as though *female* anatomy did not exist. But I propose that Wilson’s work offers a necessary extension of Irigaray’s: female anatomy need not be limited to female genitalia. Rather, the female body involves and implicates all kinds of surfaces, skins, and affective sensibilities that capacitate different modes of contact and engagement than male bodies do. For Wilson, this interactive, haptic, and involutive space is “the gut.” Irigaray’s line of flight from philosophies of male transcendence privileging elevated and detached minds from material bodies (coded as feminine), is to transvalue the anatomical agency specific to female bodies by giving female anatomy its own philosophical tradition in the expression of sensory economies. Wilson, on the other hand, intervenes in mind-body hierarchies by contemplating the “second brain”: the enteric nervous system which lines the organs of digestion and which carries out operations of thought sometimes independently of the central nervous system. Not only does this induce alternate approaches to the anatomical specificity of female bodies in the course of (anti)peristalsis, but it also innervates a radical re-thinking

of humanist philosophical enterprise.⁹³

While Wilson does not consider Nietzsche's philosophies of (in)digestion, she does take up Darwin's text on earthworms (which I have already discussed). According to Darwin, the earth worm has *everything* to do with our organic world, as all soil has passed through the digestive canals of worms at one time or the other (Wilson 44). And to recall Josiah Oldfield's investigations of his patients' peristaltic problems, he situates human evolution in the increasingly "elaborate systems of nerves and muscles" (qtd. In Walton 382) accreting for the purpose of keeping nutritive substances flowing freely through the digestive canal: "sites for processing the world which was propelled through us as it in turn made and sustained us" (Walton 250).

Wilson, Darwin, and Oldfield approach the organic technologies of un- and in-digestion as that which allows the organism to think, act, create, touch, move, and feel differently. Irigaray compellingly argues that the anatomical capacity specific to female bodies has been excluded from the enterprises of discourse and logic. By exposing that what has been counted and valued as human relies upon the exclusion of women, Irigaray orchestrates more affirmative female anatomical economies of desire. Said differently, she proposes that if women un-make (threaten) *the* "universal" subject, then feminists need to quite literally refigure

⁹³ Perhaps a similar re-thinking that Nietzsche was on to with his gut philosophies, or with his consideration of the "intestinal fortitude" fueling intellectual capacity. Wilson's gesture also implicates Foucault's discussion of dietetics in the latter two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. Said differently, Wilson, like Nietzsche and Foucault manages to straddle—and recompose—the critical and clinical quite effectively.

subjectivity. Wilson's work offers an equally compelling inverse equation. If organic digestive technologies have made the human subject, then they can also un-make the human, or compose the human animal differently. For Wilson, bulimia is precisely the creative organic expression of a differently composed human animal: bulimia engages organic thought.

Contemporaneous with Freud's thesis on hysteria, Wilson uncovers that one of Freud's colleagues followed an opposite path of inquiry. Sandor Ferenczi, a hungarian psychoanalyst pursued the biological substratum of hysteria in order to make psychological distress intelligible within phylogenetic terms. He saw hysteria as the body's phylogenetic desire to return to the water (the "thalassal trend"):

the hysterically reacting body could be described as semifluid, that is to say a substance whose previous rigidity and uniformity have been partially redissolved again into a psychic state, capable of adapting. Such 'semisubstances' would then have the extraordinary or wonderfully pleasing quality of being both body and mind simultaneously, that is of expressing wishes, sensations of pleasure-unpleasure, or even complicated thoughts through changes in their structure or function (the language of organs). (Ferenczi qtd in Wilson "Feminism" 76)

This, Ferenczi deemed one example of a bodily "biological unconscious" motivating organic activity (ibid 77). As such, he takes on both the conventional (Freudian) model of psychoanalysis locating the unconscious "theatre" in an

Oedipal drama, and conventional studies of human/animal physiology that “think of organs only in terms of their utility for the preservation of life” (ibid 76). Ferenczi instead calls for a “more intricate” account of our organs’ “capacity for pleasure, for the expression of wishes, and for complicated thought” (ibid 76). Said differently, sometimes our bodies act to sustain pleasures that seem counter-intuitive to the preservation of molar human life.

It bears mentioning that Ferenczi’s distinction between the organic impulses to preserve life, and bodily imbrications in sensory exchanges that seek to sustain other sorts of vital energies (competing with organized ‘life’), is conversant with Deleuze’s project, particularly his concepts of involution, exhaustion, bodies without organs, haecceity, becoming, ethology, and his distinction between vital health and dominant health. Ferenczi’s sense of the creative participation of hysterical bodies in an a more phylogenetic (or thalassic) organic milieu also speaks to Shan Guisinger’s “adapted to flee famine hypothesis” of anorexia which I discussed in the previous section. Both thinkers allow for the possibility that “illness” could be approached as differently-deployed biological movement rather than the stagnancy or blockage of life: productive capacity sometimes competes with what we have come to know as good health.

Wilson extends Ferenczi’s argument to touch on bulimia. Like mine, her discussion draws from moments of *Wasted*, particularly Hornbacher’s “perfection of the silent art of puking.” Along with the frequency of bulimic patients’ ability to reverse peristalsis by simply “willing food” out of their bodies, Wilson notes

that bulimic women will often use ingestion *in order to* provoke vomiting, thereby “not simply perverting the course of normal peristalsis, not simply reconditioning a hard-wired (flat) nervous event, [but also making] the soft tissue at the back of the throat alive to a number of different phylogenetic and ontogenetic possibilities” for what Ferenczi calls the biological unconscious of “interorgan communication” (Wilson 80). Wilson accounts for this inter-organic conversation as an erotic process of “amphimixing” where “various organs of ingestion, expulsion, sensation, and expression are borrowing from one another...the longer bulimia continues, the more manifest and routine this primal organic thought becomes” (ibid 81). Bulimia has proven so clinically difficult to treat, Wilson argues, because “the organism itself is beginning to think” (ibid 82).

Wilson is not employing this statement figuratively or metaphorically, but biologically and neurologically. She means that bulimia enacts communications between the organs and viscera of digestion (of the enteric nervous system) that reformulate the body, alter its priorities, its economies, and its systems of extension/production within its associated milieu. The “responsivity of bulimia to anti-depressants is one key piece of data that illuminates psychic action in the gut,” she argues (ibid 85). *Relations* between “head and gut” are formed by disordered eating rather than excised or split : “there are a number of demarcations that etiological discussions in the literature [on eating disorders] seem to force on the reader: depression *then* bingeing; satiety *or* mood; brain *not* gut. It has been my argument, via Ferenczi, that these Boolean demarcations among organs and between psyche and soma are intelligible only within a

conventional (flat) biological economy” (ibid 83).

To reconsider the relationship between Wilson and Irigaray once again, I would argue that Irigaray too readily gives over the hysteric to a process of mimesis wherein she reproduces and performs an exaggerated cultural logic of femininity rather than submitting to it. Bluntly put, the problem with hysterical mimetic (and this is Irigaray’s contention as well) is that she reproduces the same, her capacity for action still contrived and contained by the specular economy. But Wilson recuperates both hysteria and bulimia from the specular economy by critically equipping them with different capacities for sensory exchange—with a creative and organic economy of arousal. It may well be, as Irigaray argues, that the phallic regimes of culture, discourse, language, and logic have muted bodies coded as female. But Wilson’s feminist contribution is to suggest that those “muted” female bodies are participating in somatic (inter-organ and inter-species) conversations that require guttural participation to more adequately sense. The culturally muted female organism is not simply equipped with different capacities to act, feel, involve, explore, touch, desire, and engage (as Irigaray contends), but for Wilson, this culturally muted female organism also carries out thought, logic, dialogue, and biology independent from biopolitical regimes.

Before bringing Beckett to Wilson as the next and final section of this chapter does, I want to take a moment to situate how I see my dissertation’s contribution to feminist discussions of disordered eating in relation to Wilson’s. While Hornbacher is briefly quoted a few times, Wilson’s interest is in the stories told and challenged by formative scientific texts. For me, just as neurology and

biology, literature can carry out and be carried by the affects of organic thinking or guttural thought. The anorexic and bulimic bodies produced in and by literary writing are just as innovative and experimental as those Wilson finds in scientific writing. There seems to me to be a reactionary material feminist critical weight placed staunchly outside of language and literature with impassioned and inspired work paving feminist trajectories along with neurology (Wilson), physics (Barad), evolutionary biology and architecture (Grosz), animal behavior studies (Haraway). With this discovery of new ground for feminisms, I want to insist on the possibility of traversing, exhausting, recycling older ground in new ways. My dissertation is a feminist attempt to re-compose 20th century literatures (or simply literary moments) dealing with self-starvation. Following Deleuze (and Colebrook), I do not see the matters of this literature as divorced from material coordinates of lived, bodily, organic experience, but instead, as attempting to find a language that can suitably speak the guttural and antiperistaltic arousals of disorderly eating. Just as science, literature participates in organic invention; tries not to do again what has been done before. This is, after all, the value of Deleuze's literary clinic, which I believe bridges a necessary gap between material feminisms and literary studies.

IV, Excretive Symmetry: Bulimic Involutions

You have travelled the way from being worm to human being and much in you is still worm.

--Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Direct nervous action is always in intimate sympathy with other organs, other bodies, and other systems.

--Wilson, *Psychosomatic* 77

More so than any other literary case study I have taken up, Beckett's work offers compelling connections with bulimic momentums. In an essay called "Bulimic Beckett: Food For Thought and the Archive of Analysis" (2011), Laura Salisbury reads Beckett's oeuvre as consisting of "a writing that compulsively bears witness to desire to spit and shit out the world as intolerable, but becomes able through *form*, through its modes of textual rumination, to hold onto itself for long enough that the world might truly be experienced as such" (Salisbury 65). Proposing that Beckett's corpus compulsively experiments with containment, with what it means to keep things in and let them out again, Salisbury explores a biographical moment in Beckett's life when he left his own psychoanalytic therapy behind, doubting its efficacy, and referring to it as "the London torture" (ibid 61). According to Salisbury, Beckett suffered from digestive imbalances, and sought psychotherapy in an attempt to cure his general state of ill-being, but abandoned his therapist after what might have been a strange out-of-clinic dinner encounter.

Later, in a letter to his friend, Beckett notes that "I feel certain there is something wrong with my guts, yet I have not the courage to consult a doctor" (qtd in Salisbury 69). The *double entendre* of guts as intestines, and guts as the organic seat of courage is entertaining, but Beckett also invokes a complex notion here: that the gut carries out more than operations of digestion. It also regulates

what we might call character, or even heroism— what Nietzsche prefigured as “intestinal fortitude.” In Beckett’s formulation, to have a broken gut is to be a broken man in the sense of lacking “courage” and self-mastery. But this is Beckett, after all, whose literature seems deeply suspicious of humanist notions of courage and self-mastery, and for whom being unbroken or “ordinary” is stagnant. The Beckettian question, I have argued, is what does broken-ness facilitate? What forms of living are possible once we have “ceased to live” healthfully (*Molloy* 25)? What forms of self-knowledge are available outside of health, courage, and self-mastery? What kinds of inventions might a broken gut—indigestion, dyspepsia, anorexia, bulimia—occasion?

Despite its title, Salisbury’s essay does not implicate Beckett as himself bulimic, but she instead proposes that his writing method evolves a constant play with refraining, bingeing, and purging—the affects of a bulimic body. Even though she does not make the connection, Salisbury’s critique begins a re-imagining of the relationship between anorexia and modernist writing, which I discussed in Chapter 1. To briefly revisit, Leslie Heywood, Mark Anderson, and Alexander Deville have suggested that modernist writers follow an anorexic methodology where the fat of language is trimmed in favor of svelte texts. Reciprocally, they postulate, that modernist texts seek to transcend the material, natural, instinctive, populist—and female—body, by starving/editing its contours into an emaciated formulation necessary for the production of “high” art.

But Salisbury’s notion of Beckett’s bulimic writing provokes a different critical turn involving disorderly eating. For her, “the bulimic body that ingests

and excretes compulsively enacts an assault on thinking, and on time...[performing] a resistance to modernity's demands for subjects who are predictably 'regular'" (69). Salisbury's notion of the perpetually ingesting and excreting bulimic body is overstated, as bulimia and anorexia are far more closely related. Bulimic women tend to pass through periods of prolonged starvation where they eat very scarcely, and anorexic women will often binge and purge. Part of the strength of exploring symptomatology of disordered eating rather than submitting more carefully to diagnostic criteria, as my first chapter discussed at length, is that "diseases" are understood as mutually involved. Symptoms, behaviors, affects, and compartments are at times shared by many different illnesses (and healths, for that matter). The narrowness of diagnostic identifications (I am anorexic, or I am bulimic) tends to make the dis-ordered bodies in question capable of fewer affects or relations. Each of the philosophies I have engaged at length in my dissertation explore non-individuated or pre-individuated singularities as bodily modes that confront dominant narratives of self-mastery and subject formation. The strength of Deleuze's symptomatology method for exploring disorderly eating is that it allows for the possibility of overlap, not only from one body to the next, but also from one dis-ease to another. Taxonomies operate differently when concerned with sensory events and affective capacities rather than more static traits, appearances, and identifications. Another way of describing symptomatology, then, is by suggesting that we can improve our approach to "illnesses" by considering them ethologies: studies of behaviours (human and non-human) effectuated in accordance with environments.

To reiterate my points of engagement, I am suggesting that Salisbury's thesis that Beckett's literature orchestrates bulimic sensibilities because of its sustained engagements with perpetual ingestion and expulsion, builds (and improves) upon prior notions of modernism's anorexic logic. I see this as an improvement because bulimia seems to facilitate more of a critical allowance that bodily matters matter. I have been arguing against critical and clinical determinations of anorexic immateriality, transcendence, and disembodiment, which are misunderstood because disengaged with what anorexic women actually recount doing with their bodies and environments. But with bulimia, there is less of a critical battle in the sense that it is already quite obvious that cycles of bingeing and purging require visceral engagements with organic matter. Bulimic processes entail such graphic engagements with the material forces of bodies that there is little room for the egregious assumption that this is a flight from embodiment. To be clear, I am not proposing that bulimia improves anorexia. Rather, I am suggesting that critical approaches to bulimia are more nuanced than critical approaches to anorexia, but that in fact, the two disorders are fuelled by overlapping sensibilities, affects, extensions, traversals, and perambulations. My point is that Salisbury's offer of modernism's bulimic expression is perhaps more hospitable critical ground to pursue the material concerns of modernist literature in relation to the material concerns of disordered eaters.

To return to Salisbury's offering of a bulimic Beckett, I would prefer to think about his writing as engaged with different (but related) manifestations of disorderly eating. Molloy is a good case study in this regard because he starves,

and binges, and expels, and all amount to the same effort to self-preserve through physical decompositions that articulate inventive and hyper kinesis. According to Molloy, he needs to forget where he is, who he is, and even *that he is* in order to keep moving, as only then “I was no longer that sealed jar to which I owed my being so well preserved” (49). Like Gregor, Molloy gradually goes blind in the course of his self-starvation and ‘journey’ through the forest (90), but this makes him more capable of affective extension: “of my two eyes, only one functioning more or less correctly, I misjudged the distance separating me from the other world, and often I stretched out my hand for what was far beyond my reach, and often I knocked against obstacles scarcely visible on the horizon” (50). In this description of his deranged proprioception, Molloy expresses a symbiotic process of blinding to visual environmental cues and heightening of a drive to feel, and touch.

Because he can no longer see his own body’s relationship to its surroundings, other non-visual sensory events of feeling, reaching, and bumping into the “horizon” intensify. At the same time, he approaches smell and taste synaesthetically, smelling and tasting “without knowing exactly what, nor whether it was good, nor whether it was bad and seldom twice running the same thing” (50). Indiscriminately, and “beginning to lose all sense of measure” (79), Molloy begins smell/eat (unsure of which sensory operation he is using) grass, roots, berries, carob, and wild mushrooms, “in a word, whatever I could find, forests abound in good things” (85). Molloy’s foraging feeding patterns are not contemptible like the social worker’s offered dinner-plate of food because they

sustain his vagrancies.

Unable to see, and having abandoned the world of the upright for crawling and pulling himself forward flat on his belly with the use of his crutches (89), Molloy seems to eat whatever his body comes into contact with, whatever he happens upon—or perhaps whatever nourishments enervate his “little changes in course...made blindly in the dark” (90). His primary bodily needs are motion and unrest; food is only a consequence of this mobility. This is an alternate alimentary relationship to the one mandated by Molloy’s social worker. Having been arrested and contained, he is offered a tray of “tottering disparates” to “prevent swooning” or remain standing on his feet. Molloy cannot swallow food in this fashion. But lying down, worming about, ruminating on grass as grub, and effectuating different physical exchanges predicated on motion, tactility, and synaesthesia, Molloy consumes, quickly, sparingly but unselectively, and without repose for proper digestion:

My appetite! What a subject for conversation. I had hardly any. I ate like a thrush. But the little I did eat I devoured with a voracity usually attributed to heavy eaters, and wrongly, for heavy eaters as a rule eat ponderously and with method, that follows from the very notion of being a heavy eater...I flung myself at the mess, gulped down the half or the quarter of it in two mouthfuls without chewing (with what would I have chewed?) then pushed it from me with loathing. One would have thought I ate to live! (53,54).

The rapid gulps required by Molloy’s toothless gums, leaving whatever mass of

food before him only partially finished (half or one quarter finished, to be precise) before being pushed from him with loathing could describe a bulimic episode. But rather than replicating a fierce bulimic (literally translated as ‘ox hunger’) binge and purge session, I would argue that Molloy’s strange peristaltic events (transgressive bulimic acts) are contiguous with the larger schema of Molloy’s disorderly eating. He does not eat to live, he eats to experiment with his body’s functions, and to touch increasingly strange surfaces with different parts of his body. Unprocessed and un-chewed food literally passes through him (gulped in and then immediately pushed back out).

Just as Molloy’s stone-sucking is a rehearsed avoidance of swallowing, his description of eating in the above passage seems to circumnavigate the process of digestion or peristalsis. His body is a passage or canal where one surface meets another, but by virtue of unrest rather than the sequential rests and repose demanded in Beckett’s description of “ordinary” eating. Feeding seems to be an external exercise for Molloy. Just as his body blindly and synaesthetically consumes by touching upon the grass, berries, mushrooms, and roots that comprise the terrain he navigates horizontally. Molloy turns peristalsis inside-out. Whole gulps meet his digestive canal in the same way that other food-matter makes contact with his epidermis as his body inches around. He feels and fumbles his way through ingestion so as not to thwart his nomadic momentums, his processes of feeling beside himself.

My argument has been that Molloy’s narrative (as well as Moran’s) suggests that the goal of the exercise of ingestion is hyperkenesis, evolving morphologies

of haptic encounter. He consumes food when it is directly connected to the landscapes he traverses. His sucking stones are exemplary, as he finds them along the coast where he spends much of his time before moving to the forest. Beyond the stones, he eats earth, mosses, leaves, grass, berries, mushrooms, and roots in the course of his nomadic travel. This type of nourishment Molloy consumes, rather than “pushing it away with loathing” because it allows for his continued mobility. There is an element of tourism involved in Molloy’s economy of disordered eating: he explores familiar spaces (including bodily spaces) as if an outsider. Differently put, he de-familiarizes the familiar by changing the ways he moves through and makes contact with (extra-, inverted-, converted-, extended-, re-animated-) bodily spaces.

If Beckett’s writing can contribute nuanced symptomatology of bulimia, I suggest that these foreground the importance of alimentary travel that prolongs rather than relieves unrest. These qualities of hyper-mobility are present in bulimic accounts of bingeing and purging. For example, one “recovery” blog, “Shame in the City: Rita’s Bulimic Story,” recounts the sheer amount of travel necessary for the acquisition of food-mass both mid- and pre-binge: “I had to go grocery shopping nearly everyday to provide for my nightly binge and purge sessions. So I walk a long way to make sure that I’m going to a different store everyday.” Rita’s need to expand her grocery shopping radius comes from her social anxiety that her “bulimic secret” will be uncovered by those working at the grocery stores she frequents, so she extends her shopping territory with every binge. There is a divergence here from the anorexic economies I mapped out in

Chapter 3. Rita's bulimia makes her a constant consumer, and with the rapidity of ingestion-expulsion, a tremendous amount of energy, matter, and money is spent.

Opposed to the anorexic economy of extension where every drop of energy is squeezed out of the very least substance, Rita's account of bulimia involves a different relationship to extension and waste. However, I wish to propose that connecting Molloy's disorderly eating with Rita's invites an alternate approach to bulimia. Perhaps part of the puzzle of bulimic desiring is mobility itself. If we are to understand Rita's binge-purge processes to include her increasingly elaborate systems of food-acquisition, then it follows that part of the pleasure of dis-ordered alimentation is mapping her grocery shopping terrain differently, exploring the aisles of other stores, and traveling greater distances to acquire food. She traverses more space to avoid "discovery." With the help of Molloy, Rita reads like a dislocated forager, and with the help of Rita, Molloy reads like a peristaltic tourist, whose habits overlap with bulimic practices.

To further substantiate bulimic motilities in relation to Molloy's disorderly eating, I will come back to Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted* to explore two framing food events near the beginning and end of her narrative. Both unearth a relationship with travel, the first of which is more direct. As a teenager, Hornbacher flies to Asia on a school trip. Caught between two discordant poles of disorder and social responsibility, she relates her memories of the trip:

My memory of the ancient cities of the East is skewed by the uneasy guilt in my belly. Not to eat would be an insult to my host families, but if I ate, where would I throw up? I remember every

single goddam meal: what was served, what I ate, what I threw up. This frightens me. It was nearly eight years ago and I remember the Kentucky Fried Chicken I puked in a subway station, the fish cakes I had in my napkin dropped out the window at night while my roommate slept...In Hong Kong...the girls fanned out over the streets, murmuring to one another that we'd better buy things fast...We bought like crazy, moving down the narrow streets of a marketplace, on a hot sunny day, I bought plate after plate of fried squid, at it while walking through the narrow rows of lean-to stands covered with bright clothes. I ducked into a back ally, leaned over, and heaved (95,97).

The varied navigations of speed and motion carried out in this passage are extraordinary. There are macro-movements of having traveled to a foreign continent by plane, taking a subway for transportation, and “fanning” market streets for frenzied souvenir shopping. And there are also micro-movements operative within these more “commercial” forms of travel that are reminiscent of both Gregor and Molloy’s fasts. Hornbacher’s bulimic systems of orientation around “the Orient” are just as concerned with expulsion as ingestion. She remembers “puking,” “heaving,” and “dropping” her food in ducked alleyways and open windows with perhaps more avidity—more feeling, more “bile”—than the more commercialized rites of passage we generally buy into while traveling and touring.

Brian Massumi’s distinction between the body image (involving snapshots

of still bodies) and the body movement image (involving perpetual traversal) comes to mind. Hornbacher's "coming of age" narrative re-channels the notion of travel through "site-seeing" into a version of movement that seems less goal-oriented, and less visually orchestrated. This episode is not told through the snapshots of youthful travel, through the souvenirs she collects along the way, through the otherworldly sites and scenes she takes away with her. Instead, what continues to move her to feeling (8 years later) are her counterproductive momentums, those that do not belong framed on a wall or posted on *Facebook*: puking in a strange alleyway while her friends shop, sneaking napkins full of food out windows while her friends sleep, and contemplating where to quickly expel the contents of ritualized meal offerings she is socially incapable of refusing. My point is that without arguing about value, authenticity, good, bad, better, and worse, these sensory events are more affective for Hornbacher's text, and certainly more affecting for her reader. Furthermore, her bulimic episodes speak to a version of travel within travel. Traversing a new continent by privileging not where and what she eats, but instead where she pukes, the material immediacy of Hornbacher's purges navigate her down alleyways not found in guidebooks. Deleuze writes of the true clinician/writer having to learn to "stutter in his own language." My point is that Hornbacher's description of bulimic travel enacts a "stutter" in the body language of commercial travel, and indeed in the organism's syntax of peristalsis.

A second, and more terrifying binge episode relating to travel occurs near the end of *Wasted*. This binge is directly precursive to Hornbacher's final

hospitalization before “recovery.” Home alone, she sequentially eats through the entire contents of her parents’ cupboards, refills them to cover her tracks, and then eats all of the new groceries she has purchased. This is a lengthy and painful passage, but it is worth reproducing nonetheless because it is the elapsing of time, amnesia, repetition, and varied motion that strike me as crucial to Hornbacher’s understanding of how her bulimic episodes function:

I ate until there was no room left, went to the bathroom, puked my guts out, washed my face and hands, returned to the kitchen. Time must’ve passed because outside the window it was dusk, then dark. I turned on the kitchen light, blazing and bright in the yellow room, the rest of the house still dark, the dogs in the basement still whining to be let out, and I stood at the counter, shovelling cereal into my mouth on automatic pilot. I ran out of cereal and moved on to bread, ran out of bread and moved on to eggs, leftovers, ice cream, crackers, stopping every so often to puke in the dark bathroom, staggering back to the kitchen, bumping into door frames and walls that suddenly stuck out in strange places, moving onto the soup...I ate all the soup and threw it up, whole noodles and carrots and peas flooding the toilet bowl, splattering the walls, spinning away when I flushed. By midnight or so, I’d eaten everything in the house...[I] picked up my keys, got into the car, and drove to the grocery store, intending to buy all the foods I’d eaten so one one would know. No coat, no hat, no gloves. Freezing cold

and short of breath, dizzy, I got out of the car and went into the store. The lights were blinding. I squinted and went from row to row with my basket, desperately trying to remember what I'd eaten. I had no memory of the event whatsoever except that I'd gone to the refrigerator for the millionth time, opened it, and then realized with horror that it was empty...I wandered up and down the aisles. This, I will later read, is known as 'cruising'...I am suddenly at the checkout counter with a basket full of food. I'm paying. I'm loading the bags into the car. I'm driving out of the parking lot. Less than a mile away from the house, I have no idea how to get home. I panic. All I can think about is my need to eat. Now. This minute. I need to eat, fast, I need to eat a lot of things very fast. My mouth needs to be full, I need to be chewing on something, something salty. I pull over to the side of the road, crawl into the backseat, and start digging through the bags, pulling out things I don't remember buying, finally landing on a bag of potato chips, getting back into the front seat, ripping open the bag, stuffing a handful in my mouth, pulling back onto the road, driving aimlessly around until I recognize a road and follow it home. In the house I dump the bags on the kitchen table, the floor, the counter, and clear a space for myself. I keep eating...I suck everything down in sight, run to the bathroom, desperately wanting to rid myself of the feeling of fullness, throw up, run back, frantic to get the fullness

back. I stand there eating until all the food is gone. All of it.
Gone...Absolved by amnesia, I did it again. For the next three days
(220-222).

Likely, every reader will have a different sense of what this passage signals. For me, the two focal points are time and travel. While bingeing, Hornbacher loses her bearings, specifically, her orientations within time and space. Door frames and walls suddenly stick out in strange places; the time of day changes drastically without her knowledge, she gets lost less than a mile away from her home, she forgets where she is and what she has eaten, and drives aimlessly around in order to find home. What seems to be happening in the course of Hornbacher's bingeing and purging ordeal is that she is uprooting from the sensory, spatial, and temporal cues that govern ordinary life. Feeling located, or grounded in a specific time or place no longer matters so much as constantly being on the move: whether eating, puking, staggering from kitchen to bathroom and back again, rummaging through cupboards, opening the fridge for the millionth time, cruising grocery store aisles, getting lost, crawling over car seats to get to shopping bags full of food, feeling completely full, emptying, and feeling completely full again.

Despite Hornbacher's spatial and temporal disorientations—the dizzying, amnesiac intensities of her binge/purge—she does not describe an out-of-body experience. Rather, the bulimic process of becoming strange to oneself, or making one's body and home increasingly less familiar yields a sequence of visceral acts which orchestrate and articulate bodily relationships to time and space differently. While I have argued that anorexic economies involve the extension of bodies

through space, bulimic economies manifest the compression of organic time. In the course of self-starvation, an anorexic might consume in one week the amount of food an ordinary eater would regularly ingest in a single day, by making small portions of food stretch as long and far as possible. However, Hornbacher recounts a bulimic reversal: that she consumes in a few hours the quantity of food her whole family might eat in a week, or that in three short days, she ingests enough calories to last an ordinary eater a month.

Both (anorexic and bulimic) practices throw the organism's systems of temporal, spatial, and of course, social organization into radical upheaval. Both processes invoke notions of survival and frenetic movement. It is difficult to think of anything but survival when despite having just eaten the entire contents of her family's kitchen, Hornbacher describes that "all I can think about is my need to eat. Now. This minute. I need to eat fast. I need to eat a lot of things very fast. My mouth needs to be full, it needs to be chewing on something" (221). Perhaps this is an apt description of the animalistic ferocity of bulimic "ox hunger" as the diagnosis suggests, but I would argue that there are other forms of hungering (or desiring) at play that cannot be reduced to the caloric deficits of an organism needing to eat in order to live.

It is useful to re-invoke Molloy's proposition that such things can (and will) happen as "two incompatible bodily needs" (Beckett 74). Conversant with Molloy, Hornbacher's memoir does not express a need to eat to live, or to eat because she has been starving herself: rather, hers is a more Bartlebian invocation of the need to "live without dining," and a Kafkaesque invitation to employ food as

a means of measure “past time.” She needs to eat fast. Without her family. On a floor rather than a dinner table. Without preparation. Without repose. Altogether without the resting time required for digestion. She needs to feel food filling her mouth so that she can chew. She eats to experience rapid, frenzied, kinesis. She eats to uproot the familiarity of her home, to stagger around it encountering surfaces previously undiscovered. She eats to wander and “cruise” food isles. She eats to experience time differently. She eats so that she does not have to stop, or rest, or be still. She eats to forget who she is, where she is, and perhaps even that she is—so that she can keep going, keep eating, keep moving.

Sheila MacLeod’s *The Art of Starvation* expresses bulimic impulses similar to *Wasted*. She writes that while anorexic, she could only eat alone, and that the mere thought of public, collective eating engagements repulsed her to the point that she considered mealtimes “obscene” public events (100). Veering away from the social rituals of mealtimes, MacLeod instead enacts:

nocturnal escapades [that] sometimes included visits to the school kitchens, where I ate bananas, leaving a mound of their skins conspicuously on one of the tables, and quantities of ice cream, which I scooped up in handfuls, defiling the common stock with the unhygienic touch of my individuality. Now I think of an animal or a small child depositing its excreta in the wrong place so as to annoy its owner or parent. I ate like an animal too—furtively, quickly as if in fear of discovery, but without enjoyment...Food was still interesting material, but orally neutral, like cloth or paint, or clay

(99).

This passage engages with three related notions I would like to pursue. The first is the speed with which MacLeod's binge proceeds. Like Hornbacher, she eats quickly and furtively. The neutrality of food-matter in this account is also evocative. As "interesting material" removed from pleasure or enjoyment, MacLeod scripts her dis-ordered eating as a series of material engagements. Food is not simply nourishment to be enjoyed, but is more like "cloth, paint, or clay," substances used to fashion, form, mould, or construct something new. Connected to the anorexic food-play I discussed in my previous chapter, here MacLeod detaches food-matter from its "primal" importance, instead using it to refigure other relations. My second point of engagement with this passage is MacLeod's sense that her nighttime binges leave behind her body's particulate matter, traces of her "unhygienic touch." Gregor's self-starvation comes to mind once again, as he too traverses the space of his room by leaving dust, debris, and sticky substances emitted from his insect body, and seemingly required for his movements to take place. Here MacLeod's binging process maps her body more extensively: she begins to take up more space and to observe her tactile interactions with her immediate environment.

My final point is about MacLeod's recursive interpretation that while binging, she acts like an "animal depositing its excreta in the wrong place." This is connected to the anorexic deterritorializations I discussed in chapter 3, and specifically to Stephanie Grant's suggestion in *The Passion of Alice* that bulimia pragmatically involves "putting one's head where other people shit all day." In a

1999 filmic adaptation of Susannah Kayson's memoir, *Girl Interrupted*, chronicling her stay in a mental institution, a secondary bulimic character, Daisy, remarks that "everyone likes to be alone when it comes out. I like to be alone when it goes in. To me, the cafeteria is like being with twenty girls all at once taking a dump." Each of these narratives about disorderly eating (and specifically, bulimic binging/purging) disarticulates the "ordinary" or linear relationship between ingestion, digestion, and expulsion. Resultantly, I will contemplate MacLoed's metaphor of "an animal depositing its excreta in the wrong place" as a capacity of dis-ordered eating that exceeds linguistic play and representation. Approaching eating and excreting more synchronously—with little or no time elapsed between intervals of each act—is a potential mode of involuntary engagement that occasions different versions of organic time, space, and visceral expenditure.

To return to Beckett's *Watt*, the previous chapter argued for a sense of anorexic/bulimic ecology operative in Mr. Knott's confused, composting sites of ingestion and expulsion. But another employee of Mr. Knott's is perhaps most emphatically dialoguing with bulimic affect. A curious parlor maid named Mary is described to Watt. She has a strange, and indeed dis-ordered, relationship to food such that she eats onions and peppermints exhaustively. Mary's bulimic dilemma is that she cannot *not* be in *medias res*:

If Mary may be said to have ever finished doing anything, then she began to do this, that is to say she settled herself firmly in a comfortable semi-upright posture before the task to be performed

and remained there quietly eating onions and peppermints turn and about, I mean first an onion, then a peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint...then another onion, then another peppermint, and so on, while little by little the reason for her presence in that place faded from her mind, as with the dawn the figments of the id, and the duster, whose burden up till now she had so bravely borne, fell from her fingers to the dust, where having at once assumed the colour (grey) of its surroundings it disappeared until the following spring (42).

Mary gets so lost in doing that what she is doing (in this case cleaning) completely fades:

Whole days, and even entire weeks, would glide away without Mary's having opened her gob for any purpose other than the reception of her five fingers fastened firmly on a fragment of food, for to the spoon, the knife, and even the fork, considered as aids in ingestion, she had never been able to accustom herself...her appetite knew no remission (43).

Mary deals with the perpetual problem of hunger by never *not* eating, by having a mouth perpetually partially full of food, by never resting from eating, and never digesting. Unlike Molloy's (McMann's, Malone's, and Murphy's) fasts in which they are actively engaged with the affects occasioned by not-eating, Mary's nomadism—her traversal of the eating ordinary—is characterized by a Bartlebian

formula of still-motion. While Molloy worms about the forest, ingesting the foliage that touches his body in the course of its increasingly strange motion, Mary leaves traces of her partially-masticated morcels of “meat, fruit, bread, vegetables, nuts, and pastry in places as remote in space, and distinct in purpose, as the coal-hole, the conservatory, the American Bar, the oratory, the cellar, the attic, the dairy, and the servants washing chambers, where a greater part of Mary’s time was spent than seemed compatible with a satisfactory, or even tolerable, condition of the digestive apparatus” (45).

The point I want to emphasize here is that in the course of her disordered eating, Mary (like Hornbacher and MacLeod) moves differently through space: her body is changed. And her anti-peristaltic or extra-peristaltic motion is such that it changes the geography of Mr. Knott’s house. I mean this not in a metaphorical sense, but in a very material one: she changes surfaces, gives them different points of engagement and interaction. To inflect my argument with ethology, Mary’s alimentary travel equips her milieu with different carriers of significance. If I were reading as a diagnostician, I would name Mary’s condition “bulimia.” But I’m attempting to read as a symptomatologist, so my interest is in mapping constellations or sites of overlap between Mary’s affects, and Molloy’s, Hornbacher’s, and MacLeod’s in order to arrive at a tableau of the sense events that produce disordered eaters, and indeed the sites of encounter and exchange that disordered eating produces.

In my analysis of Beckett’s “Molloy,” I have been implicitly connecting Molloy’s increasingly horizontal axis of affective movement with that of a worm,

a reading I would like to make more explicit. As his narrative progresses, Molloy begins to “abandon erect motion, that of man” (89). Eventually lying flat on his belly or back, he plunges his crutches ahead of him and, inch by inch, pulls his body forward into the forest’s undergrowth. Molloy finds advantageous this horizontal locomotion because he can rest and move simultaneously. Specifically, he discovers that the previously opposed acts of starting and stopping now mutually entail one another:

He who moves in this way, crawling on his belly like a reptile, no sooner comes to rest than he begins to rest, and even the very movement is a kind of rest compared to other movements...And in this way I moved onward in the forest, slowly, but with a certain regularity, and I covered my 15 paces, day in day out without killing myself (89).

Molloy’s paced “regularity” is fascinating when compared to the epigraph about “ordinary” eating and digestive regularity from *Watt* which I have repeatedly quoted (the orderly body eats-rests-eats-rests-eats-rests to cope with the difficult problem of hunger). Instead, and similar to Mary, Molloy copes with the problem of hunger by engaging physical modalities that render movement and stillness the *same* locomotive exercise. Once “reptilian” he no longer has to pace his travel in accordance with ordinary forms of exertion because supine movement is restful while still unresting/divesting the organism from its regular (temporal, spatial, and peristaltic) ordinary. In Molloy’s acts of inching forward, the stop and start both function as propulsions for the next muscular articulation. There is no pause.

Moran expresses a conversant sense of unanticipated delight in building his body's capacity for pleasure through his exile from erect, upright motion. He suggests that "when you can neither stand nor sit with comfort, you take refuge in the horizontal...you explore it as never before and find it possessed of unexpected delights. In short, it becomes infinite" (140). The infinite, unfinished, and immanent acts occasioned by horizontal movement perform a trans-ordered version regularity. Molloy can indulge his professed "mania for symmetry" (85) by regulating his starving body to an extent inhospitable to the human ordinances of peristaltic health *while still building* its capacity to sustain less human affective momentums. Differently put, Molloy's becoming-worm nourishes his need for body-math, while producing physical equations made impossible by normative organic systems of time, accumulation, and expenditure.

These worm-becomings progress in the final two novels of Beckett's Trilogy. In "Malone Dies," a similiary blinding and toothless Malone recalls Molloy. Also like *Watt's* Mr. Knott, Malone's chamber pot and soup dish are routinely put into his room and taken away: all that matters, he tells us, is to "eat and excrete, dish and pot, dish and pot, these are the poles" (184). By the time of "The Unnameable," Malone and MacMann have become Mahood, then Worm, a cylindrical body, or tube, housed in a potted plant with dirt and sawdust, used to prop up the menus for frequenters (participants in the eating ordinary) of an abattoir's chop house (337-345). Narratively, Worm is an agent of vermi-composting, feeding off and excreting the remains of Murphy, Molloy, McMann, Malone, and Mahood in order to produce the Unanamable. The essential, for

Beckett's Trilogy is not to be, never to arrive anywhere, never to be anything, but "to go on squirming forever" (338). By the end of the Trilogy, we have traversed the human, the animal, the worm, and the amoeba to keep exhausting the possibilities of movement, sensation, and affect completely disentangled from the vestiges of a subject. Beckett revises Weil's question of how to feel outside of the subject. Weil asserts the need to become nothing, to go down to the vegetable level to find God. Beckett's response might be that we are always already becoming-worm, which is to say passing through the mud as it passes through us. This is the fundamental condition for living, feeling, and affecting.

In her essay "Modernity and the Peristaltic Subject," Jean Walton provocatively connects digestion to time. "It helps," she writes, "to see how we govern the movement of substances through our own bodies, even as we ourselves move through larger networks of goods, money, information, pleasures, and affect...The body itself became, and continues to function as a kind of chronometer, its neurological capacities engaged for the purpose of gauging and modulating duration, this making of itself a guarantor both of the regularity and the uni-directionality of time" (245,246). Walton develops a conversation between contemporary neurologist, Michael Gershon, and mid-19th century physician, Josiah Oldfield. Gershon's work on the enteric nervous system proposes that the gut is the body's "second brain," periodically capable of acting independently of the central nervous system.⁹⁴ To return to Oldfield's and Darwin's earth worms

⁹⁴ Gershon's work provides crucial paradigmatic shifts for both Elizabeth Wilson's theory of bulimic arousals of visceral, organic, and intestinal

with which I began this chapter, I have noted that Oldfield's inquiry into the digestive imbalances (dyspepsia and constipation) of his patients led him to consider the evolution of the human "gut." He notes that "we began as amoebas whose selection of substances from the environment, absorption of them, and rejection of the remainder as being unwanted or unusable was rather haphazard" (qtd. In Walton 249).

Our evolutionary history, he proposes, has progressed from constantly eating and "oozing out faeces" almost simultaneously to the eventual discovery of "periodic accumulation," a concept "introduced into the flow which was animal life" (Oldfield qtd. In Walton, 251). Oldfield's analysis follows that:

when man discovered the value of time, and the manifold varieties of interests that it unfolded to him, he...concentrated his feeding times into 2-3 hours or less, in the 24 hour clock. This freed his propulsive processes from continuous action and therefore eating, propulsion of foods along his alimentary canal, transformation, absorption, and expulsion, became alternated with long periods in which mental activities replaced the continual devotion...to bodily nutrition" (Oldfield 382).

Walton's insightful recomposition of Oldfield's investigation conjectures that "what was stored was the ability to store in the first place, a capacity to hold in reserve before expelling, a talent for discerning the prescribed space and time

"thinking," and Brian Massumi's discussion of the skin's relation to proprioception in *Parables of the Virtual*.

(256). Time, she argues, was “capitalized in the body,” by the “second brain”—the gut’s—dealings with the outside-inside world (ibid 256).

There is a lot to unpack here. I would like to propose the same paradigmatic shift with Oldfield and Walton’s discussion of evolution as I did with Guisinger and Casper’s in the preceding section. That is, that if we can rechannel our approach to think through Deleuzian involution rather than evolution, then we can avoid the idea of an only linear progression from amoeba to human. Even though they never use the term (or think along disorderly eating lines at all) Oldfield and Walton offer an incredibly compelling tableau of the affects which mobilize bulimic (and indeed Beckettian) bodies, and I want to be able to make this argument as provocatively as possible without social-Darwinian road blocks. Let me be very clear that I am not suggesting that bulimic women have regressed to a prior state of evolutionary history, or that they are somehow lesser animals. What I am suggesting is that bringing the ethological notion of involution (or overlapping associated milieus) to bear on this discussion re-introduces the possibility that disordered eating produces and is produced by visceral engagements with non-human modes of digestive and temporal comportment—a notion already proposed by Guisinger, Treasure, Owens, Casper, and Wilson.

Perhaps we can think through the affects of Oldfield’s Beckettian worm/amoeba. This is an organism for whom the “continual devotion to bodily nutrition” is paramount to “mental” activities: constantly eating and excreting, filling and voiding, ingesting and oozing. It moves by eating and eats by moving; without any separation between the bodily expression of these acts. Linear time

does not occur as a value, only propulsive momentum and haptic interfacings with surrounding space (which is already both inside and outside of the worm's digestive canal). All organic energies are devoted to moving within food and moving food within. This is Gregor Samsa's room-body taken to its ultimate expression. These are Gregor's affective arousals once divested of any remaining human vestiges. This is the momentum of Molloy's toothless, sightless, timeless, identity-less, extending/compressing, exhaustive/exhausting, nutritive crawl through the dark. It is Hornbacher getting literally carried away by the bulimic organic intensities of an insatiable urban forage—a search whose only point is to keep searching—for nutritive matter. This is MacLeod's bulimic “animal,” endeavouring nocturnal escapades of ingesting with an unhygienic touch, and depositing excreta in the wrong place. It is *The Passion of Alice's* bulimic resident, exhausted by putting her head where people shit all day (Grant).

Darwin's observations of the behaviours of garden worms also comes to mind here. To Oldfield's sense of the worm's “indifferent ooziings” (what he deems the requisite acts of a less evolved digestive apparatus), Darwin adds a compellingly post-humanist and Beckettian preference to the worm's list of affective arousals. Balance, and even symmetry, he proposes, is crucial to the worm's arsenal of bodily acts. Darwin writes that a “I have watched worms during the act of ejection, and when the earth was in a very liquid state it was ejected in little spurts, and when not so liquid by a slow peristaltic movement. It is not cast indifferently on any side, but with some care, first on one and then on the other side; the tail being used almost like a trowel” (Darwin 51). This passage

reads in conversation with Molloy's stone-sucking. Just as Molloy exhausts the combinatorial of 16 stones, attempting to achieve bodily symmetry (negotiating between his two competing bodily needs) so as to avoid sucking the same stone twice—covering ground he has already covered, doing the same as he has done before—Darwin's version of the garden worm seems aroused by a systemic process of balanced exchange. What goes in must come out. What comes out must be balanced on both sides so to avoid moving over (via ingesting) the same earth in the same way twice.

To recall Hornbacher's remembrances of her own bulimic practices in *Wasted*, she too writes of a system of perversely balanced exchange: "the Doritos. You ate them first because you, like most bulimics have developed a system of 'markers,' eating brightly coloured food first so you can tell when it's all out, and it all comes out in reverse order: the pizza, cookies, ruffles, pretzels, Doritos, all swimming in dark swirls of coke" (61). Here Hornbacher compellingly solidifies the bulimic process of making matter matter differently. To eat a brightly coloured food in order to mark its excretion, or to catalogue in reverse what has been ingested by its order of expulsion—this is conversant with Darwin's worm (and Beckett's becoming-worm), both affectively aroused by the organic integrity of symmetry. And if we take Molloy at his word that such things can (and do) happen as competing bodily needs, then it is provocative to consider that operative in bulimic practices are competing *bodily* needs: the "ordinary" or "healthful" need of ingesting food for nutritive function, rest, and production, and the extra-ordinary, involutive need to feel that everything that goes in will come

out again in the same order so that the process of binging/purging (what could otherwise be called a ‘continual devotion’ to food matter) can keep on.

My final point is that for both Oldfield and Walton the human takes on its organic organization once the possibility of bodily storage is developed and ensured. According to Oldfield, it is the human “discovery of the value of time” that concentrates feeding times within the 24-hour clock so that energy can be freed for other mental engagements. And following Walton’s analysis of the modern peristaltic subject, the human “capacity to hold [matter] in reserve before expelling” is what allows for the “capitalization” of time in the body; a watershed moment for the becoming-human. This is a stunning example of an associated milieu as well as a provocative invocation of “the void.” In Chapters 2 and 3, I focused on re-affirming the anorexic void as a space replete with possibility rather than participating in the more decompositional affects of emptiness. In an Irigarayan sense, this distinction would be between the void of having “no-thing,” which her feminist philosophical experiments transpose to a version of emptiness that creates more surfaces, more folds, and more erogenous zones of composition.

By bringing Walton’s phrase to Irigaray’s project, I am suggesting that the notion of a digestively disordered body, unwilling to hold any matter in reserve—unwilling to sustain any prolonged interventions in the void’s replete emptinesses—is perhaps another way to re-imagine the subject. While Irigaray’s project is invested in reshaping the specularized female subject, Walton’s essay gestures toward a reciprocal relationship between the modern capitalist subject formed through human peristaltic modalities. However, both propose a

relationship between economy, sense, and surface: to change our economic and environmental investments (to transvalue), we need to re-capacitate surfaces and engage with the affirmative affects of prolonged “emptiness.”

A truism frequently deployed to promote dominant health is that “we are what we eat,” and it would seem that this statement is supposed to alert us to the fact that our bodies are composed of what we put into them, and that we assume an organic or cellular identity based on food matter coming to bodily matter. Critical understandings of eating disorders have often followed this logic through to what has seemed a likely conclusion: if anorexics negate their bodily needs by eating nothing, then they want to be nothing, they want to disappear, or cease have a body. But of course, the mere fact that my dissertation (through each of its case studies) has insisted and demonstrated that anorexics *do* eat, begs alternate trajectories of sense. Oldfield and Walton’s work offers a furtive ground for that critical (and clinical) rechanneling of sense. In a nutshell, it is not that we *are* what we eat, but rather that our milieus (values, ethics, politics, temporal organizations, social cues) are produced in concert with *how* we eat. The digesting body does not precede its milieu, but both produces and is produced by it.

In many passages I have quoted at length to illustrate both anorexic and bulimic economies, ecologies, and ethologies, the notion of time has persisted. More to the point, these passages have often expressed a relationship between disordered eating and distorted organic time. I have already discussed Gregor Samsa’s employment of food as a “past-time.” The affective power of *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, is, at least in part, derived from his unresponsiveness to the dictates

of capitalist time and circulation. Murphy engages in extensive, and creative acts of not-eating to “waste” the time he is otherwise supposed to devote to seeking “productive” employment. And for Molloy and Moran, it seems the elapsed time required for resting or pausing is pernicious to the processes of fasting and experimenting. Hilde Bruch’s *Conversations with Anorexics* quotes one patient suggesting that in the course of her disordered eating, she “was proceeding as though time just did not exist” (203). And Hornbacher’s *Wasted* includes many examples of both anorexic and bulimic temporal modalities: she eats a single banana in 440 fork-bites to occupy her “mealtime” altogether differently, she eats as little as possible in the most time possible to trick her body’s hungers, and throughout her binges and purges, she is completely disoriented in the 24-hour clock and the structured eating-resting patterns it imposes.

Connected to the temporal re-navigations (or perhaps reversals) at play, in each of these instances there has also been a negative weighing of what Walton calls the human “capacity to hold matter in reserve before expelling it.” In this chapter (as well as chapters 2, 3, and 4), I have argued that for anorexics and bulimics, dis-ordered digestion can produce differently-structured economies. Across case studies, none of the figures of dis-ordered eating have valued holding matter in reserve: accumulating, storing, banking, depositing, conserving, preserving, saving, etc. If their relationships with food have produced (and been produced by) differential economic sensibilities, then each of these self-starvers has valued the affects of exhausting, expending, exploiting energy, using up, re-using, stretching, extending, surviving, wearing down, whittling away flesh, and

sustaining momentum on the bare minimum of nutritive fuel. I am particularly thinking of Bartleby, (a man without prior ‘content) who has no-thing. Sigal Gooldin’s anorexic “huntress” also offers a fruitful example, whose passage reads as offended by the mere notion of storing food and fat, when caloric deficits are what she feels fuel her to be a better, more hungry hunter, taking her nomadic explorations to places normal eaters would deem untenable.

My interest in these latter anorexic affective momentums has been that they too are productive of ecological relations, and sensory transactions/exchanges (economies) that we might approach as *connected* to vital processes rather than as anathema to them. With the help of Oldfield and Walton’s accounts of digestive time, it becomes clear that bulimic affect invokes sensibilities resistant to food storage and accumulation. In the course of bingeing and purging, shocking amounts of food are ingested, but then instead of being held in reserve for digestion to occur, they are immediately expelled: a reversal of organic time and peristalsis. In Hornbacher’s description of using orange Doritos as a marker to ensure that all of the food has come back out again in an opposite order, she is experimenting against the grain of linear, organic time—as it has been capitalized in/by the human animal. But with this paralysis of human time, Hornbacher is also producing other digestive relations, alternate economies, and affective assemblages. Following this chapter’s argument, we end up in what I think/hope is a more complex, troubling—but also capacitating—critical space. By showing more ways that anorexia and bulimia are already composed with living practices—with Deleuze has considered vital health—I have argued that we

develop more transverse lines, more lines of flight, more trajectories that disordered eaters might follow to remain active, mobile, and to remain *living* without subscribing to dining; or, in other words, to dominant health.

Conclusion

Re-Channeling the Productive Arousals of Disorderly Eating

It's never over. Not really. Not when you stay down there as long as I did, not when you've lived in the netherworld longer than you've lived in this material one, where things are very bright and large, and make such strange noises. You never really come back, not all the way.

--Hornbacher 285

This conclusion will be devoted to a discussion of recovery, a term I have—until now— placed in scare quotes. My difficulty with the notion of recovery from disordered eating does not come from a place of denial that life without food refusal and food-play can be generative, experimental, affective, and arousing. I know it can be. My resistance to the term recovery is that it implies a return to an eating order and the dominant versions of health that this effectuates. This is counterproductive to the goal of my dissertation which has insisted that disorderly eating innervates productive sensory arousals and exchanges: I have shown anorexic/bulimic economies, ecologies, and ethologies to be generative *because* they can allow for versions of material participation foreclosed by the eating ordinary. Repeatedly, I have argued the disorderly eating is a process of becoming “rooted in the absence of place” (Weil)—what can at times be a valuable and creative process that fuels and exhausts different pleasures and momentums.

Following Weil's metaphor of nomadism, my aim has been to question whether once home (the family dinner table, ordered eating, bodily awareness, systems of relations, affective capacities) has been uprooted by anorexia and bulimia, the possibility of re-rooting is tenable? Palatable? Practical? Desirable? Ethical? Hospitable? Sustainable? My question is whether or not it is possible for disorderly eaters to attempt to effectuate this return to normalcy.

This is a fair question. And it is a question often muted by common sense: *of course* anorexics will lead longer, fuller lives if they eat more; *of course* bulimics will expand their capacities for worldly participation if they can stop puking; *of course* an obsession with weight and food is limited and limiting. Without aligning myself with a pro-ana political position (which utilizes a macro-political discourse of human rights and identity), and without courting death and demise, I still think it both possible and imperative to question the voracity of employing common sense to make self-starvation meaningful/approachable when it is already a confrontation with such hegemonic practices meaning-making. Said differently, if anorexia and bulimia arouse alternate forms of sensory navigation, extension, and exchange, then I think we can only critically feel our way around them with the same attention to experimentation.

It has been my contention that anorexic and bulimic women are living, desiring, and composing affective constellations that counter-intuit "common sense." Women starve themselves because—strange as it may seem—they value the way hunger feels and fuels. They value peripatetic movement. They value wandering past-times. They value hyperkinetic momentums. They value touching

themselves. They value feeling emerging bony bodily surfaces. They value complicated food acts. They value re-shaping or trans-utilizing their surrounding spaces. They value unrest and exhaustion. They value counting and counterbalancing. They value stretching the most use out of the least substance. They value immanence, or a process whose only preference is to keep going and doing differently.

Instead of re-imposing another competing system of values on dis-ordered eaters, I want to suggest that we configure recovery in ways that can perpetuate the engines of encountering operative in anorexia and bulimia. I cannot think of a single affect disordered eaters capacitate, a single porosity, or motility that cannot be expressed outside of self-starvation. Which of the anorexic and bulimic affects my dissertation has illuminated could not be (with some creativity) prolonged by a body not death-driven, decomposing, or ceasing to engage? Should not this be the challenging enterprise of “recovery”? Should it not be an apprenticeship in how to sustain experimentation, momentum, nomadism *while also* sustaining life? Could we imagine treating disordered eating (tempting disordered eaters back to life if they are moving away from it) while prolonging the space for harnessing what my dissertation has substantiated as the productive powers of self-starvation?

I am not a medical doctor, therapist, or nutritionist. I can only think and write about self-starvation from the vantage points of lived experience, literary scholarship, feminist philosophy, and a commitment to critical curiosity. From these points of intersection, I can safely suggest that current strategies for treating

eating disorders (both critically and clinically) do not account for an evolving landscape of anorexic/bulimic experience. Focus has been on tracing the yet-unanswered whys of eating disorders instead of mapping the whats. If Elizabeth Wilson's assessment of the bulimic body is correct—that it evidences the organism beginning to think—then more carefully following these “twisted” somatic conversations is a start for clinically trained practitioners. And for critical practitioners, particularly literary ones, I would suggest that following the different sorts of “twists”—the discrepancies, inconsistencies, the bits of experience that do not fit into nice, neat narrative unity—begins an effort to recombine, re-compose, and differently complicate dis-ordered eating. Veering away from anorexic transcendence and toward anorexic immanence; away from humanism toward theories that can sustain engagements with what supersedes only human carriers of significance; thinking outside of contained disciplinary methodologies in order to approach bodies and texts in relation; and building on corporeal feminist models with material feminist perusals more equipped to handle the vicissitudes of bodies: these have been the strategies of each of my chapters and case studies.

At the moment, someone diagnosed with an eating disorder following the DSM IV's criteria, if they have access to clinical treatment, will generally be treated with a combination of psychotherapy, nutritional education, and medication. The psychotherapeutic methodologies undertaken to treat eating disorders involve combinations of cognitive behavioural therapy (equipping patients with the capacity to recognize and change distorted thoughts regarding

food and body image); dialectical behavioural therapy (teaching patients to practice mindfulness and resolve problematic inter-personal relationships that might have anticipated their eating disorder); family-based therapy; and group cognitive behavioural therapy (The Mayo Clinic). Nutritional education aims to teach sufferers to establish rigid protocols of eating three square meals a day with requisite snacks, and avoiding what are considered ‘dieting’ tendencies like exercise. Finally, medical interventions of eating disorders can involve anything from counter-balancing the physiological costs of self-starvation to anti-anxiety drugs, antidepressants, and in some severe cases, electro-shock therapies. This is a brief sketch of the recovery model currently clinically sanctioned for eating disorders. Relapse rates of patients having undergone both in and outpatient treatment protocols measure that around 40% of participants relapse within under a year of completing treatment.

The costs of treatment programs for eating disorder patients are substantial. In-patient residency programs cost upwards of \$30’000 monthly, plus travel expenses for sufferers and family members participating in the therapies. In Canada, there are nationally funded programs available, but the structures in place do not come close to meeting the demands: waiting lists can be as long as six months. Once a disordered eater has come to terms with needing medical and therapeutic intervention, I can imagine that the realities of waiting so long are both dangerous and limiting. If the practice of disordered eating is anything like the practice of other sorts of addictions, then the period of waiting for treatment, and recognizing its inevitability would (to my mind) lead to last-ditch, “bender”

efforts to ride self-starvation or bingeing/purging to their fullest expressions before having to leave them behind permanently.

In the United States, medical insurance companies mostly consider eating disorders “behavioural illnesses,” thereby only covering fractions of treatment costs. Generally, anorexic and bulimic bodies are covered for medical treatments, while not for psychogenic interventions. As far as the fiscal politics of eating disorders function, it is both unintended and unfortunate that critical feminist approaches to anorexia’s corporeal expressions, and discursive aetiologies (the socio-cultural-continuum explanation of eating disorders) have contributed to the continued tendency to deem anorexia and bulimia “behavioural illnesses,” and to focus on social-awareness raising campaign strategies rather than funding research efforts and treatment facilities. I would argue that disordered eating might involve a case where experimenting with and exploring the practices involved in the illness—and re-directing those—might be more valuable than preventionist strategies. Despite tremendous efforts to raise public awareness about the grim realities of eating disorders, anorexia and bulimia are still on the rise. Said differently, human and non-human animal bodies are inclined to self-starve. But instead of working against the biological, evolutionary, involuntory, economical, ethological, and socio-cultural forces at play that can invite and fuel self-starvation, I would suggest it might make more sense to work with these tendencies.

As with all of my dissertation’s chapters, this conclusion will orchestrate literary case studies. Weil dies of complications due to self-starvation. Kafka dies

unable to sustain his “dieting in all directions.” The Hunger Artist dies, unable to find the food he was seeking. Gregor Samsa dies of starvation, having just “recovered” his familiar systems of pre-transformational aesthetic, economic, and Oedipal values. Bartleby, while still affecting the narrator/lawyer, seems to die in attempts to live without dining. Deleuze dies, declaring that he was living as if “already gone” (Boutang 58) and soon after jumping out of a window. This list is important, because each of these thinkers/figures has contributed largely to my dissertation by re-animating disorderly eating as a form of perpetually traversing and sustaining “the voids” of hunger. And yet, I have insisted that self-starving is an investment in living, and moving, and feeling—a process of becoming which death inevitably disengages. Therefore, I am devoting my conclusion to case studies of self-starvation who continue live, specifically Hornbacher, MacLeod, Knapp, and Emily, the anorexic protagonist of Shelley Davidow’s adolescent fiction, *All Anna’s Children*. While remaining suspicious of the possibility of full recovery from full-blown disordered eating, each of these case-studies generates a series of sensory events that lead to doing living differently. My thesis is that each of these women find ways to continue to affect and be affected by the forces, openings, economies, and ecologies that their dis-ordered eating previously mobilized. But they find new ways of complicating living that no longer involve restricting food and/or putting their heads where people shit all day.

Sheila MacLeod’s observation by the end of *The Art of Starvation* is provocative. She writes:

From my own experience I feel that this is what an anorexic wants to be

told or needs to have confirmed: that she is a part of nature, and therefore at one with her own body. The body, which includes the mind, is what it is and what it does...Like psychoanalysis, an exclusively or aggressively feminist bias may be offering the anorexic too much, too soon. When she is in the grip of the disease, she doesn't need theory or ideology, but plain simple facts which can lead her to an *acceptance* of her being-in-the-world rather than reinforce her belief that she and the world are somehow wrong or at cross-purposes (139, 143).

To unpack, I would argue that MacLeod too-readily dismisses what she calls an "aggressively feminist bias" by presuming the univocality of feminist scholarship on anorexia. I agree that the majority of feminist work conducted on eating disorders in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as what remains the cultural and ideological firmhold of pop-feminist interpretations of eating disorders, tend follow a singular trajectory of anorexic aetiology. But I would also suggest that a wealth of material feminist scholarship can adequately sustain MacLeod's sense of what anorexics "need to have confirmed" about their bodily relation to the world. And to add to this, feminist theories are in no way deaf or immune to "plain simple facts," but are instead constantly engaging with them.

Where I find MacLeod's reading most useful is in her recognition of the material complexities of living with (or through) anorexia. Rich is MacLeod's sense that any approach to anorexia needs to begin with an acknowledgment that the anorexic "is part of nature," "at one with her body," a material participant in the world, and organically-engaged. This passage intuits that rather than viewing

eating disorders as a disconnected sphere of disembodied reactivity—the ultimate removal of ontology from ecology—MacLeod instead insists that “recovery” from anorexia needs to be fuelled by the same processes that prolong it. To think back to my previous chapter’s engagement with MacLeod’s memoir, as anorexic/bulimic, she was “like an animal depositing its excreta in the wrong place.” It is not that disordered eating is an attempt at immateriality or transcendence, but rather an often-failed attempt to experience the bodily otherwise—to feel the body differently, to manifest alternate affective capacities, to navigate the sensory world with markers that might prove invisible to human carriers of significance. What MacLeod suggests quite rightly is that the process of continuing to mobilize living without starving or bingeing requires the acknowledgment that already operative in anorexia is an attempted collapsing of self and body (110); not an excision or distillation of identity from ecology, or the body from its associated milieu.

Caroline Knapp’s memoir, *Appetites: Why Women Want*, includes a remarkable description of her epiphanical event where she paradigmatically shifts her capacities for engagement from self-starving to sculling:

Rowing is the most rhythmic of sports exhilarating and also deeply calming, and when it’s working smoothly, you feel like some kind of prehistoric water bird, a creature designed to skim across the river’s surface, oars like extensions of your own arms, the boat moving through the water in a steady balanced rush of exertion, each body part—legs, back, shoulders, abdomen, even wrists and

fingers and thumbs—following a set of learned rules, reaching out to catch the water and pull through in a way that comes to feel as ingrained as instinct. This is where the world began to open up for me. It was on the river, in that daily repetition of physical motions, that I first got a glimmer of what satisfaction felt like...all this came to feel possible and available and known, as visible as the concentric circles of water that form when the blades break through the surface of the water. It was there, too, that I began to redefine words like power and strength, to understand and experience them as qualities that existed within my own musculature, and to re-write the rules of triumph. Building up versus pairing down; taking in versus taking away. Starving had been about what I could do *to* my body, sculling about what I could do *with* it (156,157).

Before unpacking this passage, I want to quote another from Knapp's text, this one from earlier in her remembrances of disordered eating, an experience she interprets as instigating a vanished, vanquished libido, with "sensuality" having become a "distant memory, something other people experienced. I lived in my head and only in my head" (Knapp 137). She remembers:

I took painstaking note of these changes—how visible and pronounced my bones became, even the tiny finger bones; how my abdomen curved inward, a taut "c"—and I found each one of them profoundly compelling and inexplicably satisfying. I could not express what I'd been feeling with words, but I could wear it as a

structure in bone...the ulna, a long and tapering bone; the elbow, a distinct flare below the upper arm; the tiny wrist bones, angry little knobs the shape of marbles. I'd stand there and count each rib. I lived, and walked, and breathed hunger, and although my body felt tight and drawn and pained, I also felt driven, focused, and unyielding (9, 84).

I have paired these two lengthy passages in order to remark their similarities. I am compelled by Knapp's distinction between starving as "what I could do *to* my body" and sculling as "what I could do *with* it." Because, for me, Knapp's prose implicates her self-starvation as a process far less distinct from her sculling than she accounts for.

First, we can explore what connects both passages. In each, Knapp obsesses over lists of body parts as they function in relation to the whole. While sculling, she is affected by the extension of her arms—the wingspan of a "prehistoric bird"—by her legs, back, shoulders, abdomen, wrists, fingers, and thumbs. While starving, Knapp is compelled by focus on many of the same zones of contact and articulation: finger bones, curved abdomen, ulna, elbow, wrists, and ribs. While sculling she feels strong and driven because composed by a singular focus, a repetitive sequence of physical motions, a sense of power she expresses in her own musculature. While starving, she feels driven, focused, and unyielding because singularly focused on exposing—touching—an exhaustive list of body parts, a sense of power she expresses by wearing a particular structure of bone. Despite Knapp's reading of her anorexia as un-libidinous, a-sensual, and dis-

embodied, her writing expresses otherwise.

Both passages speak to a version of feeling the body differently, of engaging with surfaces and extensions that seemed previously less possible. With rowing, these are the conjunctive surfaces of her body and boat, arms and oars, her land-affects with her water-affects, the surface of the water with the surface of her skin, the capacities of a prehistoric bird with those of a human animal. What Knapp describes as a sensual process of equipping her body with the ability to “skim across the water’s surface” is a process of re-engineering human movement. To turn back to Knapp’s earlier passages describing anorexia, similar sensual and sensory experimentation is still apparent. She is compelled by touching newly-emergent bodily surfaces (or bones), by navigating her body by feeling one rib at a time, parts of her body she was previously incapable of touching and counting. Living, walking, and breathing hunger capacitates alternate forms of movement.

This is not to say that there exist no differences between Knapp’s passages. On the contrary, the differences matter just as much as the similarities: my sense is that Knapp’s sculling prolongs, achieves and heightens what her self-starvation has attempted but ultimately failed. When she describes her boat, I cannot help but recall Molloy’s bicycle, his instrument of differential movement and traversal once dominant human motilities are no longer available to his decomposing body. Knapp too describes a process of moving that traverses the innate (her word is “instinctual”) human realm of motion. She describes involuting: by extending living by moving over different surfaces, she can participate in the associated milieu of something other. And she describes feeling her way over the surface of

the water, never the same from moment to moment, ripple to ripple. Whereas sculling invokes motion, Knapp's self-starvation was clearly more stagnant (contained in a room, in front of a mirror).

But what is most compelling about Knapp's insight is that rowing seems a process of extension for her from a state of self-starvation. I am inclined to think that the appeal of self-starving was rooted in an attempt to feel, do, and move her body differently (not, as she claims simply to do *to* her body), but that sculling was a better (and certainly more sustainable) expression of this desiring. In other words, Knapp offers something both tangible and practical to scholarship on anorexia. Is it likely that anorexic women will inch-about, worm-like and blind in dark forests like Molloy? Probably not. But it is absolutely conceivable that recovering from dis-ordered eating could be approached as equipping bodies with more extensive capacities for motion, or with strategies for re-engineering human movement and affective momentum. And, of course, the tension exists between Knapp's sculling strategy of recovery and the regimented education of most treatment protocols for eating disorders that disallow for "exercise" because it is considered to instigate and exacerbate food and calorie restrictions to begin with. With the help of Knapp, however, I would argue that this is one clear instance where the versions of productivity and traversal innervated by dis-ordered eating could be worked with rather than against. Instead of telling anorexic women they must remain still, why not teach them to move their bodies with different purpose, to lose themselves in the pleasures and arousals of different sorts of affective events that alternately equip their bodies with capacities for interaction?

Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted* has proven a valuable case study throughout my dissertation, and her thoughts about her own recovery are no different. Hornbacher writes, quite candidly and simply, that she got "curious": "if I could get sick (I figured) I could bloody well get unsick. So I did. Am. However you want to put it. Obstreperousness, which as a character trait is extremely exploitable in the energetic annihilation of one's own body...is also very useful in other pursuits. For example, life" (277). Later, she recounts that "the impulse for life became stronger than the impulse for death. Though I did not fully believe that there was anything that could possibly make as much sense as an eating disorder—I began to wonder, in the same way I wondered what would happen if I began to lose weight, what would happen if I stopped" (280). What strikes me about Hornbacher's understanding of finally ending her self-starvation is her sense that this too was an exercise in curiosity, wonder, and experimentation: another "what if?" For her, getting sick invokes the same process of getting unsick, employing similarly "obstreperous" energetic momentums. She elaborates her specific systems for exploring life: "got a cat. Learned that in order to live plants need water. That a girl cannot live by cereal alone, though I go back and forth on that one. That friends are a good source of food and soul when one has not yet gotten the hang of cooking or living" (278). Hornbacher passes over her processes of recovery—what she calls returning from the netherworld to the material world—quite flippantly, but I find her experiential observations worth exploring.

In the proceeding paragraph, I will take up Shelley Davidow's *All Anna's*

Children in which Emily uses similar methods of recovery. For Hornbacher, a cat, some plants, and some friends are what she finds herself needing: equipping her space with living, breathing, non-human organisms, and collective social engagements surrounding food preparation. With Hornbacher's passing statement that she got a cat, I am brought back to Brian Massumi's description of proprioception: "the exertions and ease of the body's encounter with objects into a muscular memory of relationality...a cumulative memory of skill, habit, and posture" (59). "The cat's fur," he writes, becomes a lubricant for the motion of the hand" (59). While Hornbacher does not describe petting her cat's fur, she invokes the possibility that recovering from her anorexia and bulimia requires finding new surfaces for haptic exploration.

While starving, she described her "anxious fingers reading the body like braille, as if an arrangement of bones might give words and sense to [her] life" (Hornbacher 276). But while recovering, her fingers now meet and explore the surface of another body. If Hornbacher's anorexia and bulimia had been attempts to leave the molar aggregates of the human, then living with a cat would seem one tangible—and tactile—way to continue to encounter the non-human world without self-mutilation. In this sense, Hornbacher's strategies for recovery are conversant with Knapp's, who finds that sculling (the extensions of arms to oars, land-body to water-body) virtually enhances her body's interaction with fluid, perpetually changing surfaces, and re-aligns her body's momentums with those of a prehistoric bird skimming the water with its wings. For Hornbacher, these extensions are performed with a cat and a plant—also surfaces in perpetual and

vital motion.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari dismiss and repudiate the companion animal as only-ever a phantasmatic oedipalized other. With horror, they scorn these individuated animals as sentimentalized creatures who can only invite regression. I am drawn to both Brian Massumi's and Donna Haraway's revitalization of the human/companion animal encounter. In *When Species Meet*, Haraway argues that "because I become with dogs, I am drawn into the multispecies knots that they are tied into and that they retie by their reciprocal action. My premise is that touch ramifies and shapes accountability...Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world-making...Caring means becoming subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity" (35,36). In my own experience, living with a companion animal is a constant—and curious—study in motion. More than anything, I am drawn the ways my dog uses his body differently than I use my own, to how his surfaces meet mine, and to how he utilizes the spaces around him. When Hornbacher invokes her cat as a segue to a different sort of life than self-starvation could offer her, she gestures toward precisely this shift.

Her anorexia and bulimia have been fuelled by exhaustive attempts to remain mobile and exploratory, to touch emergent bodily surfaces, and to defamiliarize spaces through traversal. Living with a cat does not occasion a sudden shift in Hornbacher's sensible, affective milieu, but prolongs the experiments operative in her dis-ordered eating, only in a more sustainable and life-affirming way. To come back to Haraway's sense that "touch does not make one small,

[but] peppers its partners with attachment sites for world-making” (36), this speaks to the ways Hornbacher expresses her own impetus for recovery as an exercise in curiosity; the same exercise that prolonged her anorexic economies and ecologies, but simply re-channeled to construct alternate affective milieus. I would argue (and have argued) that making oneself small is never the preference of disorderly alimentation (maybe it is the preference of dieting). Instead, disorderly eating it is more akin to an attempted—and often dangerous—exercise in attaching with different sites for other-world making.

The final text I will explore is Shelley Davidow’s *All Anna’s Children*, a young adult fiction that places its protagonist’s anorexia in a South African and rural setting. What distinguishes this text from the other case studies I have explored is that it presents disorderly eating in non-Westernized and non-urbanized setting, and it is mostly focused on the process of recovery (of getting unsick as Hornbacher puts it). Teenaged Emily flees from her city life (and mother) to her uncle Tim’s farm in attempts to re-instigate the vibrant health that has characterized her nostalgic memories of the place and its keeper, herbalist “earth mother,” Anna. While sitting in her city room, she begins by closing her eyes and remembering the farm: “the smell of pine trees and porridge and cooking fires and herbs and honey, the sound of cocks crowing in the sun” (Davidow 4). Between her sensorily rich recollections of farm life, and her penchant for sketching pyramids, mummies, and ancient ruins, Emily is perpetually and proclaimedly curious about the possibility of “other worlds” (3) than her own. Once Emily’s mother concedes to let her stay on her uncles’ farm, she continues

to self-starve, continues to lose weight and weaken until she reluctantly agrees with Anna to visit the local village's Sangoma, the village's "witch doctor," or shaman who is said to harness his healing powers from the mountains (40). After a two-hour climb, Emily listens to the Sangoma's advice for healing what he calls "the patterns" of her illness. His prescription is quite simple: instead of drawing images of death, draw images of life; take responsibility for feeding an other; and most importantly, "work the earth and it will feed you. Your illness [will] pass" (56, 105).

I am compelled by the seeming simplicity-*sans*-reduction of this text. Davidow has imagined anorexia outside the contexts of its normal encasements: Westernized medicine, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, capitalist consumptive practices, and feminist representationalist thinking re-inscriptive of a Cartesian mind-body split. Emily puts the Sangoma's advice into practice. She takes responsibility for feeding an orphaned child. She plants and tends to her own garden, with "dirt between her nails. She [learns] how to plant according to the cycles of the moon" (78), "feeding the earth" so it will reciprocally feed her. Transferring her efforts to sketch artful images, Emily apprentices instead in ecology, learning that "certain herbs grow well with certain vegetables and keep bugs away from them. There's a whole art to it" (20). She learns to be at ease around horses by acknowledging the unspoken sensory exchanges that happen between human and non-human animal bodies. Gradually believing in the affective powers of associated milieus, Emily learns to listen to her body's physical cues differently: the feeling in her belly that corresponds to shifting

atmospheric pressures—sensory events, or happenings that “other animals see and hear” (64), or the air’s occasional “weight” causing a “sensation of thickness in her throat and mouth” (91).

A decisive shift occurs in Emily’s perception from visual cues to haptic and visceral sensibilities, to the “unsettling” curiosities “we can’t necessarily see” (69). While caring for the feeding of an orphaned baby, Emily’s focus is on the child’s surfaces in relation to her own, on “feeling how his small stomach pressed up against her as he breathed” (99). Surfaces change shape along with Emily’s body in the course of her healing: where she was once unrestful throughout the night to continue burning calories, she now burns calories with “exhausting work” (90), bringing sweat to her brow, and engaging with the filth and fertility of the land. Caloric and energetic expenditure is still valued by Emily, but her exhaustive efforts now form a calculated, enclosed—but more generative—system in which energy is not wasted. She is still weary of anything restful, but her proclivities for unrest are now geared more emphatically toward a productive system of collective nourishment. Emily now nourishes the spaces that surround her (her garden, her human relationships, her animal relationships) so that she can in turn feed herself.

To come back to both Kafka and Beckett, I would suggest that Davidow’s text manages to engage with a pragmatic iteration of Gregor’s use of food-play to pass time, and Beckett’s invocation of the speeds and stoppages of the productive ordinances of digestion. There is a middle ground achieved by Emily—a balance—between the competing bodily impulses/needs of disorderly eaters to

extend, assemble, touch, economize, experiment, exhaust, unrest, and nourish the body while maintaining “the void” disallowed by storage or accumulation. Having harvested a basket of tomatoes, Emily:

took a tomato and rubbed it between her hands, feeling the soft, shiny skin. Then she bit into it. The juice split over her lips and she caught it with her finger...Emily bent down over the tomato plants again and filled her basket. Tis would be her food for the day, she thought. Each day, now, she would choose one fruit or vegetable, and eat only that. If you ate only one type of food that made it easier for your digestion. That way you would be less likely to put on weight. (49)

Perhaps we can think about what delineates Emily’s system from the eating ordinary. Her erotic encounter with a tomato recalls Hornbacher’s erotic encounter with a spoon: the event of physically nourishing the body becomes about a play and expansion of sensory surfaces through touch. The tomato’s skin rubbing against her hand, the juice splitting over her lips, the finger meeting the juices, the tongue licking the finger. Furthermore, like Molloy, Emily manages to find a way to eat that prolongs hunger and momentum rather than thwarting it. By eating a single food for an entire day (a veritable alimentary experiment), Emily can speed her body’s digestion rather than slowing it down. In other words, she eats to maintain momentum—and the economization of all of her body’s energies—rather than to incur rest, pause, or repose. Said differently, she proposes eating in such a way that her body will be unable to store fuel in preparation for

something else. And finally, it bears mentioning that Emily is more agentic in this system. Not only does she eat a tomato, she plants the seeds, waters the garden, and harvests the fruit. Yet again, there is no restful in-between, but a constant imperative to keep going, doing, moving. And the active engagements that surround the event of eating become more extensive/involved. We might think of a foraging (human) animal, or of Darwin's and Olfield's garden worms.

Upon finally leaving the farm, Anna echoes some of the Sangoma's advice to Emily: "When you get back to the city, you must grow things. Herbs and plants, and flowers. Even if it's in pots. Wherever you can. Put this earth over them and they will grow, and you...will be better. In time you will heal completely" (107). The book's conclusion offers us a quick glimpse at how Emily's urban life will unfold. With her, we survey her newly designed city bedroom: "a breeze blew Emily's curtain aside. She surveyed her bedroom wall...A fern grew in a pot next to the colours. Its leaves were huge and green against her painting. Her whole room was alive. She'd planted herbs in pots along her window sill, and on her bedside table she kept a box of dried rosemary" (110).

Echoing MacLeod's insistence that anorexics need to be told they are one with nature, like Knapp's sculling, and conversant with Hornbacher's cat, Davidow ends *All Anna's Children* with the kernel of hope offered by effectively re-channeled energy. To repeat, it seems alarmingly clear that the affective engagements of Emily's disordered eating do not halt with her healing modalities. Rather, these engagements find a fuller, more nuanced expression in other living practices—practices that do not necessarily re-instill the symbolic order, capitalist

economy, dominant health, or the peristaltic ordinary. This final passage reads as a re-imagining of Gregor Samsa's room body. While through self-starvation and metamorphosis, he traverses the familiar spaces of his room by changing the functions of his walls, ceiling, windows, furniture, and door; Emily engages a similar process. Her room is now an eco-system. But Emily's metamorphosis follows the same "patterns" as her illness, practices that now fuel her from sick to unsick.

Davidow's depiction of both anorexia *and* health as processes of involvement with the earth is particularly striking. As is the title of her text. By its end, Ana (anorexia) and Anna (earth-mother, healer, herbalist) move in concert. Emily seems to inhabit the space that surrounds her body *so that* she can express its desires as generative, vital, and alive. The growing plants and herbs in her colourful room, her dirt-encrusted fingernails, the feminine lunar energy with which she and her garden connect as Emily's anorexia seems a vehicle for her becoming Anna. And Anna incites Emily's contemplation of the power of other worlds still connected to her anorexia (with Ana), but more invested in life-affirming and life-sustaining momentums. We would be remiss to read Emily's developing connection to the earth as reductive, or as espousing a simplistic relationship between her female body and the natural world. Rather, by fostering complex material engagements with her own body's surfaces in relation to those that produce and perpetuate her, Emily (and *All Ana's Children*) manages to affirm a prosperous, transverse connection between the affective capacities of disorderly eating and the ebbs, flows, and exhaustive rituals of small-scale food

production. Emily's anorexic assemblages compose more sustainably with alimentary assemblages that still fall far outside of the eating ordinary.

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