

**THEY KNEW THE DEAD MAN: EPISTEMOPHILIA AND MONSTROSITY IN
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S "THE BODY-SNATCHER"**

BY

EVE DUTTON

A Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
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Abstract

Critical literature concerning R.L. Stevenson's "The Body-Snatcher" rarely deals with the story proper; instead, the story is placed in moral, philosophical, ethical, or historical contexts and used as a jumping-off point. This exploration centres around the story itself, or, more accurately, the central figure of terror in the story: the dead, dissected corpse. Incorporating an overview of the known facts of grave-robbing and the Anatomy Act, and drawing heavily upon the concept of epistemophilia as set forth in Peter Brooks' *Body Work*, "The Body-Snatcher" is situated within a tradition of resurrectionist literature shown to be prevalent in nineteenth-century works of horror—a tradition which encompasses Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher."

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Introduction

When Robert Louis Stevenson finished writing his short story "The Body-Snatcher" in 1881, he claims to have "laid it aside in a justifiable disgust" (Letters III, 204). When he finally published it in 1885, it seems that his reviewers agreed with his assessment. The story, a gruesome narrative about a young medical student's descent down the slippery slope of morality from grave-robbing to murder, was ignored by most contemporary critics, derided by the rest. Even today, when compared with the rest of Robert Louis Stevenson's work, "The Body-Snatcher" is generally dismissed. Frank McLynn, who considers Stevenson "Scotland's greatest writer of English prose," (McLynn 1) and who leaves no stone unturned in chronicling the author's career, touches only once on "The Body-Snatcher"; he remarks that it was "based on the career of Robert Knox the anatomist," and adds, "it is a slight piece alongside the [...] other products of the period" (194).

The few academics who have studied Stevenson's often-overlooked story usually tackle the morality of the tale, occasionally probing into Stevenson's cultural reading of the world around him. Joseph J. Egan, in "Grave Sites and Moral Death: A Reexamination of Stevenson's 'The Body-Snatcher'," speculates that the true horror of the piece lies in the dehumanization of the characters themselves, rather than in their treatment of the corpses. In the more recent "Anatomizing Professionalism: Medicine, Authorship, and R.L. Stevenson's 'The Body-Snatcher'," Patrick Scott calls the story "Stevenson's most damning, most bitter, most insightful, and most self-conscious indictment of the culture of professionalism within which he himself had flourished" (Scott 126). Scott reads "The Body-Snatcher" as a criticism of Victorian professional hegemony, and, while he argues quite forcefully in favour of further study of the story, he dismisses the more literary elements of the story with his

dogmatic proclamation that "[t]he trouble with Stevenson's 'The Body-Snatcher' is that everyone knows what it's about, so nobody takes it seriously" (113). This statement quite nicely sums up the reason why academics avoid the story, and why reviewers panned it so thoroughly: its factual basis prevents it from being any kind of surprise to the educated reader.

While it's true that the tale met with little critical success when it was originally released, it now fails to capture many readers' imaginations simply because the circumstances seem far too alien and outlandish. The culture of resurrectionism, and the sensational facts upon which the story is based, were already largely played out at the time Stevenson was writing, and the conflation of death-beds and marriage-beds in popular literature would have made the sexual implications of robbing a grave seem obvious to most. However, I will argue that this story is part of a tradition which includes such renowned, canonical works as Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and I will compare "The Body-Snatcher" with these two tales of horror in order to explore the concept of "epistemophilia."¹ In each of the three stories, the desire to know the body takes on an unnatural form, bringing together desire for the dead body, the undead body, the monstrous body, the criminal body, the homosexual body, and the incestuous body. All three stories deal with the violation of the grave and the raising of the living dead, and all reference resurrectionism, either directly (*Frankenstein*) or obliquely ("Usher"). It is true that, next to the works of Mary Shelley and Poe, Stevenson's story begins to seem not so much chilling as simply dully gruesome. Nevertheless, I will show that much lies beneath the skin of this particular story, and that, together with some of the more

¹ In *Body Work*, Peter Brooks defines epistemophilia as being "constructed from sexual desire and curiosity," the sexual desire for the body conflated with the desire for knowledge (5). I feel compelled to note that Brooks relies heavily on psychoanalysis in his interpretations of various texts in *Body Work*.

renowned horror tales of the period, "The Body-Snatcher" represents a tradition of grave-robbing or "resurrectionist" literature.

Critical literature concerning "The Body-Snatcher" rarely deals with the story proper; instead, the story is placed in moral, philosophical, ethical, or historical contexts and used as a jumping-off point. I will be dealing with the story itself, or, more accurately, with the central figure of terror in the story—that of the dead, dissected corpse. After first exploring the known facts of grave-robbing and the Anatomy Act, I will situate "The Body-Snatcher" in what could be called the tradition of resurrectionist literature prevalent in nineteenth-century works of horror, and I will explore how that tradition effectively tapped into the deep-seated public fear of the violation of the dead by the living.

In Great Britain, the first legal acknowledgement of the use of cadavers by students of medicine came in 1504.² Interestingly enough, the initial step forward took place in Scotland, when the Edinburgh Guild of Surgeons and Barbers was granted the right to use executed criminals for dissection. Scotland, and Edinburgh in particular, would later become a hotbed of grave-robbing and murder, culminating in the discovery of the crimes of William Burke and William Hare.³ As the number of doctors and medical students in Great Britain increased, corpses became increasingly hard to come by, particularly since the medical profession's newly-minted respectability confined them to strictly legal channels of acquisition.

By 1760, the Royal College of Surgeons required an aspiring doctor to have dissected at least one cadaver before he could be issued a license to practice medicine. Anatomists

2 I am indebted to Ruth Richardson's *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, Mary Roach's *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*, and James Bailey's *The Diary of a Resurrectionist*, as well as the National Library of Scotland's astounding online collection of period broadsheets, for the following historical information.

3 Edinburgh is also the site of the fictional crimes that take place in "The Body-Snatcher," which means that the story is often read as a simple re-telling of the Burke and Hare murders.

often went abroad to study in France, Italy, or Germany, where bodies that were not claimed within a certain period were often made available for dissection. Britain's medical students still relied solely on the bodies of executed criminals, a practice that had been abolished in most other European countries. This not only severely limited the supply of corpses available to the medical schools, it also attached a certain stigma to the dissection of human remains. The idea of dissection after death was often more of a deterrent than the sentence of execution itself. Condemned criminals would request that their corpse be publicly hung in chains rather than dissected.

It was in the late 18th century that Britain first began to see evidence of the resurrectionist movement. Cases of men being caught disinterring and stealing bodies began to appear before the court. However, the law of the time did not allow a property value to be attached to a human corpse, so penalties for body-snatching were extremely lenient. Technically, the grave-robbers hadn't really stolen anything of value, as they weren't particularly interested in the grave-goods or shroud.

Similar events were taking place in the United States, which had adopted many of Britain's policies regarding dissection and the distribution of corpses. The extreme poverty in some of the larger American cities, as well as the rampant infection and disease which proliferated the number of corpses available, produced a climate just as favourable to resurrectionism as that of Great Britain. As industrialization began to stratify class distinctions, the grave-robbing business started to take off on both sides of the Atlantic. Initially, it was the medical students themselves who did the dirty work, grubbing about in the graveyards after dark. This pursuit involved considerable dangers: besides the obvious threat of disease and injury, the aspiring anatomists also needed to be on the lookout for the angry bereaved, as well as any booby-traps surrounding the grave. It wasn't long before the

students and their teachers found it more seemly, to say nothing of less lethal, to rely on the services of certain body-snatchers, or "resurrection men". It was a financial arrangement that suited both the growing population of urban poor and the medical men, who found it considerably less expensive to have a body delivered on the sly than to obtain one through legal channels.

Considering all the trials and tribulations involved in the procurement of a corpse, not to mention the arduous physical labour, it is not surprising that some inspired individuals turned instead to the fine art of creating corpses. The assignment of economic value of dead bodies created a thriving industry of murder.⁴ A particularly enterprising pair, William Burke and William Hare, ran a lodging-house in Edinburgh, along with their common-law spouses. After the death of one of their lodgers introduced them to the possibility of profiting from death, it was not long before the two men had murdered fifteen of their guests, incapacitating them with liquor and then smothering them with a pillow. When they were finally caught in 1828, there was literally no evidence with which to prosecute, the bodies having been long since dissected. It was decided instead that Hare would testify against his partner, in exchange for full immunity from prosecution. Burke was sentenced to death and hanged, and his body legally dissected. Doctor Knox, the man who accepted the corpses from Burke and Hare, was not charged, but he was tried and convicted in the court of public opinion. Doctor Knox makes an appearance in Stevenson's tale: "[t]here was, at that period, a certain extramural teacher of anatomy, whom I shall here designate by the letter K. His name was subsequently too well known. The man who bore it skulked through the streets of Edinburgh in disguise, while the mob that applauded at the execution of Burke called loudly for the

⁴ An Edinburgh man, John Wilson, supposedly mixed arsenic into snuff and offered it to travellers. Jean Waldie and Helen Torrence, also from Edinburgh, kidnapped and killed a child, selling the corpse for the price of a drink. See James Blake Bailey's *Diary of a Resurrectionist* and Norman Adams' *Dead and Buried: The Horrible History of Body Snatching* for these and other examples.

blood of his employer" (103).

The Burke and Hare murders propelled Parliament into action, and in 1832 a bill, which would become known as the Anatomy Act, was passed. It was actually the second time that a bill designed to prevent grave-robbing and regulate the distribution of corpses to medical schools had been passed through the House of Commons, but the first bill had lost support in the House of Lords. The Act allowed anyone having lawful possession of a corpse to give it up to science, unless this directly contravened the wishes of the deceased. This not only made unclaimed corpses available to the anatomists through sources such as workhouses, it granted a person the right to leave their body to science. The act also abolished the practice of dissecting the corpses of executed criminals. Overall, the Anatomy Act had the twofold effect of depriving corpses of their status as currency, and severing dissection's long public association with crime. The American justice system soon followed suit with their own legislations, and before long, resurrectionism died out completely.

In *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, Ruth Richardson places the acts of body-snatching and dissection in a political, anthropological, and folkloric context. She describes how she was driven to research the topic after she read *Frankenstein* and became interested in the facts that lay behind the fiction. Richardson explores the role of the corpse in British popular culture and asserts that public outrage over the violation of the grave in Victorian times was due in large part to the period's eschatological confusion over the state and destination of the soul after death. She discusses the Burke and Hare murders and the resulting political and social climate which led to the creation of the Anatomy Act in 1832. She defines the cadaver as anatomical object, then redefines it as saleable commodity. Michael Sappol makes a similar move in *A Traffic of Bodies*. While Richardson concerns herself primarily with the British history of body-snatching and dissection, Sappol's territory

is the American school of resurrectionism. Sappol links body-snatching with prostitution, which is often referred to as "selling" one's body or one's self. This comparison brings into play the "deviant" sexuality inherent in grave-robbing, a theme Sappol expands upon, and one that is central to my own assertions. Sappol also notes that representations of dissection in sensationalist fiction quickly became gendered: the corpse was invariably female, the anatomist male. Dissection soon replaced rape in popular literature as the proverbial fate worse than death for women everywhere. I believe that the essentially sexual nature of the resurrectionists' desire to *know* the dead is what fuels the Victorian fear of having one's body dug up and violated. "The Body-Snatcher," *Frankenstein*, and "The Fall of the House of Usher" all use the shared horror of grave-robbing to encode the possibility of more specific sexual horrors, such as incest and/or homosexuality.

In *Murdering to Dissect*, Tim Marshall explores Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and builds on the solid foundations of Richardson's work. Marshall firmly places *Frankenstein* in the tradition of grave-robbing or "Anatomist" literature, describing it as a story that "articulates all the great themes" of the Anatomy era, as the period before and leading up to the Anatomy Act is commonly known (2). He directly mentions "The Body-Snatcher" only once, to remark that his aim is not to deal directly with Anatomist fiction itself, but to situate *Frankenstein* in particular within the body-snatching phenomenon and its resulting controversies. He suggests that Mary Shelley's story, inspired by her girlhood in Scotland (which was, more likely than not, steeped in resurrectionist rumblings) and her conversations with Shelley and Lord Byron on the topic of human re-animation, serves as an allegory of the Anatomy era. He explores the class implications evident in the creature's murder of Frankenstein's family, and suggests that the monster's delivery of the corpses of the anatomist's poor relatives to the doctor's doorstep is reminiscent of the resurrectionist's

delivery of his charges to his employer. Throughout *Murdering to Dissect*, Marshall explicitly parallels creation and destruction, viewing them as diametric ends of a scale rather than binary opposites. As he points out, the creature in *Frankenstein*, a dead man made living, turns out to be a monster that kills; destruction becomes creation becomes destruction.

Within this thematic preoccupation with creation and destruction emerges the possibility that Stevenson, like Shelley, is addressing more than dissection and grave-robbing; perhaps he is unveiling the creative process involved in the writing of a horror story. The author's own fears and insecurities in regard to writing can lie encoded within the simple structure of this dark tale. His pen becomes the scalpel of dissection--the (de)creation of the monstrous paralleling the public's violation (and fear of violation) by Stevenson's anatomists-turned-resurrectionists, who have themselves become monstrous as they eschew morality and decency for science and knowledge. After all, what is an author but an anatomist of characters--someone who peels back the layers and allows us to see the inner workings?

If we see the body as a text that can be read by the anatomist, then the quest for the body, what Peter Brooks calls the "epistemophilic impulse," begins to make sense on another level. In *Body Work*, Brooks suggests that narrative literature is often driven by a character's desire for a body (someone else's or his or her own) and that the body comes to represent "an apparent ultimate good, since it appears to hold within itself--as itself--the key to satisfaction, power, and meaning" (6). Brooks claims that scenarios of desire are most often responsible for the inscribing of the body with messages. Since horror literature is by definition unnatural, in my opinion it stands to reason that in Stevenson's tale, the body, in particular the body of Gray, represents evil rather than good. Living, Gray's character is the

embodiment of sin and vice. Murdered, he is still more emblematic: the object of unnatural desire, the dead body, the fetishized body, the criminal body. Gray is the book that ought not to have been written, ought not to be read. The desire for, and, ultimately, the possession of, Gray's dead body is what undoes Fettes and Macfarlane in the end.

My analysis of Brooks' analysis of desire and the monstrous body in *Frankenstein* has considerable bearing on the unnatural desire for the dead body in "The Body-Snatchers." Brooks points out that the Monster's realization that he is a monster happens simultaneously with his realization that he is not an object of desire; he is a monster, etymologically a thing to be shown, effectively removed from participation in the natural human rituals of body inscription. Brooks also examines the aborted creation of the female monster, noting that the scientist's frenzy to destroy his second creation comes about when "the Monster's phallic gaze at the female monster's body makes Frankenstein aware of the bodily potential of a sexed pair of monsters" (210). Frankenstein's initial desire to create life takes an unnatural form, and the young doctor, the only one to ever have desired the Monster, now can only look upon him with revulsion. I will take Brooks' premise one step further to argue that Frankenstein's desire for his male creation is steeped in the language of sexuality, and his revulsion when his desire is on the verge of being realized is what propels him to abandon the Monster and instead take a bride. As in "The Body-Snatcher," the horror of *Frankenstein* is the unnatural desire for the dead/monstrous body. This unnatural desire also emerges in "The Fall of the House of Usher." When Roderick Usher makes the unusual request of preserving his sister's body in the vault beneath the family home, prior to its being buried, his reason for doing so is "certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men" (Poe 75). But, as I contend, the dual implication is that he is jealous of her body being violated in its grave, and terrified that the medical men might read the text of his sister's

remains and discover evidence of incest. Although it is not incest that hides within Stevenson's tale and coffins, the complex nexus of death and desire occurs as homosexual panic. In the penultimate scene of "The Body-Snatcher," Macfarlane and Fettes exhume the naked body of a pious farmer's wife. What they get instead, once they've completed their violation and placed the body in the carriage, is not a woman at all, but a man. This is the ultimate homophobic horror: the body believed to be female, and used as female, is actually male. The woman's textual sexuality has been erased and redefined, rewritten as male, beckoning, and dead.

I will be analysing the three texts under discussion in chronological order, in order to maintain historical perspective on the events that influenced each text, as well as the ways in which the texts have influenced each other. It is important to keep this perspective in mind, as there is often a great temptation to lump all the works from a certain century or period together indiscriminately. It must be remembered that current events at the time Shelley was bringing *Frankenstein* to life would have become history by the time Stevenson turned "The Body-Snatcher" loose on the world. In my first chapter, "Detrimental Passions," I will explore Frankenstein's desire for the dead, male body, as well as the notable absence of living women--and the corresponding proliferation of female corpses--within the text. I will touch on instances of homosexual panic in the novel, and I will also be using Peter Brooks' work on monstrosity and desire in *Frankenstein* as my entry point into the epistemophilia that pervades all three texts. I will also look at the desire for unnatural knowledge and its destructive potential in *Frankenstein*. My second chapter, "A Fate Worse than Death," expands on the theme of desire for the unnatural and the dead body, as I discuss the possible incestuous motivation behind Usher's hasty burial of his sister, and his refusal to let her corpse be handled by anyone but him. I will also explore the epistemophilic relationship

between Usher and his unnamed narrator. Finally, my third chapter, "A Grave Predicament," explores the correlation between grave-robbing and sodomy, both in the text and within the larger historical context of the period. I will also discuss the "unnatural" desire and homosexual panic that surface in "The Body-Snatcher," binding it together with the other two texts.

Chapter One: A Detrimental Passion

In *Body Work*, when Peter Brooks introduces the concept of epistemophilia, he declares his intention to discuss "bodies emblazoned with meaning within the field of desire, desire that is originally and always, with whatever sublimations, sexual, but also by extension the desire to know: the body as an 'epistemophilic' project" (5). What better "project" could he possibly have chosen than Frankenstein's monster? Frankenstein's desire for knowledge is certainly centred in the body--but not necessarily the living body. Wishing to learn the secrets of life, Frankenstein becomes an expert in death, examining and probing into various corpses. He haunts the vaults and charnel-houses of the dead, and he, like Fettes in "The Body-Snatcher," shows a marked disrespect for the immaterial: "I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy, and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm" (30).

Mary Shelley was no stranger to graveyards, and there is evidence to suggest that she would have been familiar with the threat of body-snatching.⁵ Mary Shelley grew up in Scotland, during a time when the region was inundated with reports of bodies being stolen from their resting places in the dead of night. Her father, William Godwin, published a book in 1809 called *An Essay on Sepulchres*, a work which demonstrated his preoccupation with commemorating and preserving the remains of the dead--specifically those of his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft. He went to great lengths to mark Wollstonecraft's burial site, and the younger Mary often went to sit by her mother's grave during her courtship with Percy

5 This evidence is summarized in Ruth Richardson's *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*.

Shelley. While Mary Shelley never explicitly made reference to her own thoughts and experiences of the Resurrectionist era, she was obviously affected by it.

If anyone can rightly be said to be a "resurrectionist," it is Victor Frankenstein, who represses his own sullied identity as a trafficker in body parts and recreates himself as an anatomist, a master of medicine, a creator of life. It is possible to trace resurrectionist implications through the entire novel. In fact, Tim Marshall, in *Murdering to Dissect*, points to *Frankenstein* as the ideal allegorical reading of the Anatomy era, claiming that the book "articulates all the great themes" of the period (2). Marshall is careful to distinguish between "anatomy literature," literature of the period during which the Anatomy Act was produced and passed, and grave-robbing fiction such as "The Body-Snatcher", which he dismisses. *Frankenstein*, he claims, is a fine example of how the events of the period indirectly influenced the portrayal of class and power relations in literature. In one of his rare moments of exclusively literary exploration, Marshall asserts that the manner in which corpse after corpse is delivered to Frankenstein by the monster is suggestive of the relationship between anatomists and resurrection men. It is an illicit relationship, he claims, bound up in class, desire, and male privilege, and complicated by the exchange of money involved. It is a striking comparison, but one which falls apart in light of the fact that Frankenstein never pays the monster for his services. In actuality, it is because he does *not* reward the monster with a mate that the bodies start piling up. Marshall calls this moment "the pivot of the political allegory which [Frankenstein's] narrative constructs; the broken pledge rehearses the class betrayal which occurred on a grand scale in 1832" (25). Preferring to explore the allegorical and metaphorical resurrectionism in the text, Marshall largely overlooks the literal representations of grave-robbing and anatomy study. It is true that Frankenstein repeatedly rejects the world of illicit male/male power relations; his identity as a grave-

robber and anatomist is buried deep within the text, layered over with rhetoric and justifications, and presented almost as an afterthought to his philosophical journey towards the creation of life. However, it is there. Despite his assertions to the contrary, Frankenstein is not creating an entirely new man; he is collecting and re-animating humanity's cast-offs. In other words, he is not actually cooking a meal, merely mixing together some leftovers.

In his narratorial reflection on the passionate period of learning, Frankenstein remarks that "[a] human being ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquillity. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule" (33). He clearly does not follow his own advice: his search for knowledge and his devotion to his work are described in terms typically reserved for lovers. Words such as "ardour," "ardent," and "eager" are used more than once, and the phrase "engaged heart and soul" appears twice (29-33). As more than one critic has pointed out, this ardour is notably absent when Frankenstein considers his bride-to-be, Elizabeth. He certainly speaks of her in terms of affection, the same way he describes all of his family, as well as his friend, Henry Clerval. Frankenstein's epistemophilic desires clearly have one, and only one focus: the body. More accurately, the dead body.

It is interesting to note, as Leila Silvana May does in "Sibling Revelry in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," that Frankenstein's exhaustive research is limited to the male body: when the Monster demands a mate, Frankenstein must go abroad to learn from the (presumably male) natural philosophers of England. The reason for this is never made explicit, but why should the good doctor need to learn more about the secrets of life? His first creation was, in that regard, a remarkable success. Only one circumstance could possibly necessitate more learning: Frankenstein has no knowledge whatsoever of the insides of woman, despite having been born of one and being engaged to marry another. During his

original studies, he apparently showed no interest in examining the corpses of women, limiting himself exclusively to contemplation of the male body--his (unconsciously) acknowledged object of desire. Frankenstein will later deny this desire, just as he denies the time he has spent digging in the dirt.⁶

The monster's first spasms of life are reminiscent of orgasm: "it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs" (34). In these first moments, the Monster is genderless, an "it", but that soon changes as Frankenstein takes in the full detail of what he has created:

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!-- Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (34)

Frankenstein's passion has blinded him to the essential maleness of the object of his desire. In this first description, his creature sounds--unusual colouring notwithstanding--quite attractive: tall and muscular, with beautiful features, lovely hair, and perfect teeth. More than one critic has pointed to this passage as evidence that the Monster is supposed to represent a woman; I disagree. While he does possess the markedly feminine attributes of passivity and an excess of desirability that Elizabeth seems to lack, the Monster is, essentially, a very manly man, and it seems to be this, above all else, that upsets the good doctor. The corpse, in

⁶ While it might, perhaps, be reaching to compare grave-digging to the sexual "dirty work" of anal sex, I would not be the first to do so--Leo Bersani's ground-breaking "Is the Rectum a Grave" discusses anal sex in terms of what he calls "the hygienics of social power," and tackles the notion that allowing one's self to be penetrated signals the abdication of power (252).

resurrectionist literature, is conceptualized as female, lying quietly still while the male anatomist penetrates it with a scalpel. We see this motif reoccurring in Victorian representations of the corpse, and I will return again to this point in my discussions of "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Body-Snatcher." Once living and moving, however, the Monster suddenly transforms, like the farmer's wife in "The Body-Snatcher," from passive female to active male—not just male, but far more masculine than Frankenstein himself, and capable of overpowering and penetrating him.

Frankenstein is so overwrought by his creation that he runs to his bedroom to have a nap. He falls into a dream. This moment is so authorially contrived that the dream, significant in its own right, practically screams for the reader's attention:

I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (34)

This hearkens back to my earlier suggestion that the general horror of grave-robbing is used to represent the more specific horrors of incest and homosexuality. Not only are Frankenstein's desire for the dead male body and the incestuous female body are played out simultaneously in his dream, but his epistemophilic desires are layered over one another. However, the phallic graveworms emerging from their folds are clear signifiers of maleness, as is the form emerging from its foreskin-like shroud. Leila Silvana May, equating the feminine with the monstrous, argues that the dream, rather than representing a desire for the feminine, suggests the deadly unleashing of feminine desire into the world. Again, the

Monster is cloaked in femininity, as though erasing the creature's male sexuality is the only possible way to explain Frankenstein's initial desire. However, Frankenstein's marked absence of desire for Elizabeth within the text makes it clear that Frankenstein's epistemophilia does not centre around his mother because he wants to sleep with her, but rather, because he wants to be her--or what she represents. The defined shift from male to female sexuality that May suggests makes it possible to posit Frankenstein as the monster's mother.

Peter Brooks claims that Frankenstein's epistemophilia centers around the woman's body, specifically the mother's body. He points out the imagery, during the period of the Monster's creation, of nature as a woman and truth as the penetration of her prostrate body (215). This explains why Frankenstein's desire can never be realized by his male monster, and why all the mother-figures we encounter within the text are dead or dying, their bodies "radically absent" (210). It also suggests that Frankenstein is intensely curious about the birthing/mothering process, which he attempts to recreate with the Monster. This is a logical step for Frankenstein; as a man of science, a modern Prometheus, his apparent disinterest in the female body need not interfere with his desire to procreate. Brooks also mentions the destruction of the female monster, but does not draw the ultimate conclusion: that it is this abortion of the second child that is directly responsible for the murder of Elizabeth, thus cementing the tangled, incestuous horror of Frankenstein's relationship to his cousin/sister/mother/wife's monstrous body.

Frankenstein wakes from his dream to a moment usually only experienced by women in nineteenth-century literature--he is horrified to find a powerful male monster standing over his bed. The scene in which the Monster approaches Frankenstein's bed and draws back the curtain reads like a prelude to rape:

He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs.

(35)

Only moments ago--less than a page in the text's dense topography--the two men's positions were reversed: Frankenstein stood over his monster, rendered almost inarticulate by desire. But, following the generative spasm that identifies the Monster as male, Frankenstein becomes filled with horror and disgust at what he has done, what he has wanted. Now, though, Frankenstein's prone position opens up the possibility of him being "detained" by a larger, stronger man. As Frankenstein becomes conscious of the Monster's ability--and seeming intent--to violate him, he is seized by homophobic panic, and runs away.

It is never made explicitly clear whether Frankenstein has actually created a sexed monster; no mention is ever made of the Monster's genitalia or reproductive abilities. But the references to the creature using male pronouns, combined with Frankenstein's fear that creating a second, female monster will give birth to an unnatural new race, suggests that the Monster is capable of reproduction, and thus, being the only member of his species, endowed with an impossible-to-satisfy biological imperative. The only avenue left open to the Monster, it seems, is the "unnatural" route of male/male desire, which makes him extremely dangerous.

In his chapter on the nature of monstrosity, Peter Brooks claims that *Frankenstein* is an early representative of a movement of "dissent from within the dominant tradition"(199). The dominant tradition to which he refers is the use of the phallic field of vision to view the female body. However, I believe that the story does not necessarily break with this tradition,

but merely subverts it: instead, we have the phallic gaze of the anatomist penetrating the prostrate corpse--the most important difference being that the corpse is male. Brooks also suggests the fact that the name Frankenstein has now come to evoke Victor Frankenstein's nameless monster points to the "issues of language" that exist in the story. He discusses the nested narrative, and claims that the act of narration in *Frankenstein* implies a bond or contract between the listener and the storyteller. "Storytelling in *Frankenstein* is far from an innocent act; narratives have designs on their narratees that must be unraveled" (200). He claims that the main issue of the nested narrative is "relation," and while he doesn't use the term to mean family relations, his repeated use of the word definitely speaks to that meaning. For the characters who narrate to each other are often related; Walton writes to his sister, Elizabeth and M. Frankenstein write to young Victor, and the Monster tells his sad tale to the only human being on earth to whom he can lay any claim.

Language plays an essential role in Brooks' reading of monstrosity. My own analysis has shown how the language of gender accompanies the Monster's transformation from a passive corpse to an active, sexed male, and how the language of desire and orgasm informs his creation. Brooks presents language as the Monster's only "model of relation," as it is through his discovery and mastery of language that he becomes aware of his place in the world--or, rather, his lack thereof (204). He also defines a monster as "an imaginary being who comes to life in language and, once having done so, cannot be eliminated from language" (218). This analysis of monstrosity also speaks to "The Body-Snatcher," and the supernatural cache of the term "resurrection men". Once the resurrection man is named, he cannot be un-named. The characters of the story are mere mortals--like Victor Frankenstein, they are barely more than students--but calling them resurrection men invests them with a certain godlike power that is denied them in the story's somewhat more pejorative title. As in

Frankenstein, it is when they try to exercise the power with which language has endowed them that things begin to go horribly wrong.

Brooks claims that the "anti-Narcissistic" moment when the Monster first sees his own reflection is what effectively severs the Monster from desire (207). The Monster, Brooks notes, can only satisfy his desire through the repeated elimination of female bodies; this might have something to do, he suggests, with the novel's notable absence of living mothers. Brooks posits Justine as a substitute mother-figure. I disagree with his assessment; Justine stands out as a victim who is not directly murdered by the monster. Nor is she killed because of her relation to the Monster's creator. Justine dies because she is a beautiful woman, and the Monster decides that if he can't have her, no one can. Here, as Brooks illuminates, the Monster is a metaphor for the sadism inherent in "familial orders of relation" (213).

The Monster becomes the self-styled fallen angel, the snake in the garden, upsetting systems of social order wherever he goes. Death comes out of turn to young, wealthy William Frankenstein, and murder, apparently hitherto unthought of in Edenic Geneva, is the inescapable conclusion. Geneva in *Frankenstein* feels quite utopian, and the Frankensteins are its most noble inhabitants. Elizabeth remarks on the nature of a life in service in Geneva:

The republican institutions of our country have produced simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great monarchies that surround it. Hence there is less distinction between the several classes of its inhabitants; and the lower orders being neither so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral. A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France and England. Justine, thus received in our family, learned the duties of a servant; a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include

the idea of ignorance, and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being. (40)

Elizabeth concludes her letter with "a little gossip concerning the good people of Geneva" (41). And they are good people--every last one of them, apparently. There is, it seems, no malicious gossip to be had! This is because no one in Geneva is willing to look beneath the surface: epistemophilia simply doesn't exist for the Genevans. All the young people are either just married, or going to be married, or, in the case of Elizabeth and Frankenstein, assured since childhood of eventually being married. Fathers are benign, mothers mostly deceased. Despite this seemingly inconsequential maternal mortality rate, everyone in Geneva is happy and healthy and sexy, and those who aren't quickly die, in dependent clauses or afterthoughts, and trouble the reader no more.

Following the murder of William, all of the characters regard the system of justice with a kind of joyful reverence, confident that the right verdict will be delivered. Even Frankenstein, who knows Justine to be falsely accused, looks forward to the trial as a means of cleaning up the entire mess without his having to interfere personally. Even the etymology suggests that Justine will be freed--her very name has its roots in the Latin word for "just". But such is not to be: with the presence of the Monster in Geneva comes the evil of class prejudice. Before, servants were treated as equals; now, Justine Moritz is assumed by the community to be a thief--and worse, an ingrate--because of her social standing. Even Elizabeth's belief in Justine's innocence wavers momentarily: after all, to believe Justine to be true is to believe justice to be false.

The Monster has entered the garden, and he has brought epistemophilic desire with him. There are two responses to this desire: to hide from it, as Frankenstein does, assuming that the system will prevail; or, like Elizabeth, to seek out the answers. Determined to uncover the truth, Elizabeth will not accept word of Justine's confession; she visits Justine in

prison, and the knowledge that she gains there satisfies her. It doesn't particularly matter that Justine is to be hanged, as long as Elizabeth knows she is innocent:

You know not, my dear Victor, how much I am relieved, now that I trust in the innocence of this unfortunate girl. I never could again have known peace, if I had been deceived in my reliance on her. For the moment that I did believe her guilty, I felt an anguish I could not long have sustained. Now my heart is lightened. (58)

All of this tragedy is essentially the result of frustrated lust: the Monster, as he himself points out, is an Adam with no Eve, rejected first by his creator, and then by society at large. In gaining knowledge, he also gains desire. It is not enough anymore merely to observe systems of knowing; he wishes to know and to be "known and loved" by his cottagers (89)⁷. But they reject him and flee, assuming, as Frankenstein does, that the Monster's approach heralds some kind of violation. Though it is never made clear in the text, possibly it is the Monster's unusual duality of signification--at once living and dead, possessing both male and female attributes--which make him appear unnatural, and thus threatening. This is the first of many incidents in which the Monster's epistemophilic desire is thwarted; and each time, the desire becomes more openly lustful, and each time, he becomes angrier and more violent as the violence towards him is increased. Brooks makes the connection between the penetrating male gaze and the monster's "to-be-looked-at-ness" (218-19). The Monster is repeatedly denied the chance to function sexually with another human being: "[y]ou can't do anything with a monster except look at it," is Brooks' ultimate conclusion (220).

Eventually, it seems the only way the Monster can conceive to know and possess a woman's body is to murder it. He narrates the moment when he happens upon the sleeping

⁷ Leila Silvana May insightfully notes that the Monster's first, indelible notions of the love that exists between a man and a woman come from observing the egalitarian sibling bond between Agatha and Felix, a type of bond that exists nowhere else in the novel.

Justine, as if taking her life somehow empowers him to speak for her: "[h]ere, I thought, is one of those whose smiles are bestowed on all but me; she shall not escape" (97). Justine has done absolutely nothing to the Monster--she hasn't even seen him--but he takes revenge on her for his baffled desires. The possibility of being slighted is the only impetus he seems to need. The fate of Justine's corpse is never mentioned, but presumably, as she is a hanged murderer, she is destined to be dissected by medical students. This is fitting: after all, in order for the Monster to gain a mate, dead women must be procured for the anatomist, and female anatomy must be examined, its secret insides expunged.

Revealingly, the Monster claims to be "consumed by a burning passion which [Frankenstein] alone can gratify" (97). The reasoning behind this declaration is that Frankenstein is the only one who can create a suitable mate for the monster, but the phrasing alludes to the complicated web of unnatural desire that binds Frankenstein to his creation. "This passion is detrimental to me," the Monster muses, "for you do not reflect that you are the cause of its excess" (98). Ultimately, the Monster does manage to inflict on his creator the pain of frustrated lust: he murders Frankenstein's bride, Elizabeth, on their wedding night, before the marriage can be consummated. And he is allowed access to the bridal chamber because of Frankenstein's thwarted desire for the Monster's body--in this case, his desire to overpower and destroy the Monster's body. Frankenstein takes the Monster literally when he says, "I shall be with you on your wedding-night" (116). Rather than going to bed with Elizabeth--an action that is, in itself, fraught with terror--he stays to have it out with the Monster once and for all. It does not occur to him that the Monster's attentions may not be directed at him--that because he destroyed the Monster's object of desire, the Monster intends to return the favour. The reason for this oversight is simple: Elizabeth is not, and has never been, the true object of Frankenstein's epistemophilic yearnings. He is not interested in

knowing her body, and so the Monster's logic, while theoretically sound, falls flat in practice. He is rather closer to the mark in his murder of Henry Clerval.⁸

In what I consider to be the crux of his argument, Brooks discusses the nature of monstrosity:

What, then, in unprincipled nature, is a monster? A monster is that outcome or product of curiosity or epistemophilia pushed to an extreme that results--as in the story of Oedipus--in confusion, blindness, and exile. A monster is that which cannot be placed in any of the taxonomic schemes devised by the human mind to understand and to order nature. It exceeds the very basis of classification, language itself: it is an excess of signification, a strange byproduct or leftover of the process of making meaning. It is an imaginary being who comes to life in language and, once having done so, cannot be eliminated from language. (218)

This passage directly informs the relationship between Frankenstein and Elizabeth. It is Elizabeth's "excess of signification" that makes her so problematic as a wife for Frankenstein: she is redefined many times through the novel as his cousin, his sister, his surrogate mother, and finally his bride. This renders her body monstrous in the eyes of Frankenstein. His nightmare of embracing his dead mother is about to come to fruition, and critics have suggested that this is the real reason Frankenstein is so terrified of his wedding night. It is safer to wait downstairs for the unsigned Monster and his familiar male body than to journey into the uncharted territories waiting in the bridal bed. The destruction of the

⁸ The episode of Henry Clerval's murder and Frankenstein's subsequent imprisonment is interesting, not only in and of itself, but because the entire incident takes place in Scotland. Frankenstein and Clerval leave Geneva for a tour of Europe, during which Frankenstein intends to fulfill his vow to the Monster, to build an Eve for his Adam. Their first stop in Scotland is the city of Edinburgh, the site of both the fictional murders of "The Body-Snatcher" and the real crimes of William Burke and William Hare. This is not, of course, an allusion to that particular case: references to Edinburgh appear even in the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, with the Burke and Hare murders still a decade away.

female monster and Elizabeth's subsequent murder both follow Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's model of the negotiation of male homosocial desire through the female body; in this case, epistemophilic desire is negotiated through the dead female bodies of Shelley's text. Victor Frankenstein responds to his epistemophilia by repressing it: he buries his identity as anatomist and grave-robber--an identity which carries strong associations with homoerotic desire--and recreates himself as a scientist and loving fiancé. The Monster can find no outlet for his desire other than language--a language which Frankenstein refuses to hear--and his frustration culminates in his murder of Elizabeth to punish his creator for thwarting that desire. This act literalizes Frankenstein's own desire for the dead body, by marrying him to a corpse in more ways than one: he is both tied to Elizabeth and forever bonded to the Monster, whom he devotes his life to pursuing.

Chapter Two: A Fate Worse Than Death

Madeline Usher represents the ideal nineteenth-century woman: someone who is rarely seen and never speaks a word, who wastes away quietly but prettily, and who--as the "cataleptical character" of her disease would suggest--remains where she is placed.⁹ As a character, Madeline is dead long before she has apparently passed on; she floats about the house like a ghost, and is made more ghostly by the way she is negated and absented in the text. The narrator's descriptions of her are remarkable only in their lack; while Usher is described in lavish detail, his sister's character is a void, an empty space:

While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread—and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door at length closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother—but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears. (70)

The female body ravaged by tuberculosis was one of the Victorian period's standards of feminine beauty. As Roy Porter writes in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine*, "[t]he consumptive look signalled the becoming petiteness of the feminine, but,

⁹ Medical science in the nineteenth century catalogued many separate states of suspended animation. Any one of these states could supposedly be mistaken for death if the attendant physician were not alert enough to catch them. In the case of catalepsy, the patient is unable to move or speak, but conscious and aware; a cataleptic person sees and hears everything around them, but is unable to react. Catalepsy is marked by such absence of will or volition that the body remains in whatever position it is placed.

paradoxically, it also conveyed a thrilling eroticism [...] It was part of the mythology, confirmed by doctors, that tuberculosis was an aphrodisiac" (106). The consumptive or tubercular woman, for all her ethereal nature, made quite a mark on nineteenth-century literature: she populated tales of ghosts and vampires, investing them with a kind of graveyard sexuality. Madeline Usher is the ultimate in feminine, consumptive, disappearing beauty: she fades from the narrator's gaze without ever having really been present within it. The erotics of the death-bed scene in nineteenth-century literature have been discussed by various critics; it is not the wedding night but the terminal illness which allows readers a glimpse into the Victorian bedroom. Death is similar to sex because of its mystery, as well as the impossibility of absorbing it into the domestic sphere. Both involve a bed, a body, and often blood; both, once stripped of their romantic trappings, are clinical experiences, closely tied to the examination and understanding of anatomy. Death and sex are closely related to one another from a scientific point of view as well: it has been theorized that death is, essentially, the price we pay for our ability to reproduce. Organisms that replicate through division rather than sex, such as bacteria, viruses, and sponges, do not die as long as they are given plenty of nutrients and a benign environment. Multicellular creatures, on the other hand, all reproduce sexually, and all die. This is a modern theory, but it does have its roots in nineteenth-century research. Foucault cites the nineteenth century as a period when society shifted from "*a symbolics of blood to an analytics of sexuality*" (Sexuality 148). This phenomenon can be seen in "The Fall of the House of Usher," where the relationship of the last two descendants of the House of Usher simultaneously breaks the taboos of both blood and sex.

A preoccupation with the unattainable or "forbidden" woman is the driving force behind the gothic fascination with incest, a fascination which is explored by Poe in "The

Fall of the House of Usher." The dying Madeline serves as her brother's muse: his most fantastic artistic ventures--his paintings and impromptu compositions--are conceived after she is laid low by her illness for the final time. He robs her grave, so to speak, to gain his vast creative power. And it is vast: his wild endeavours in painting and composing leave his companion astounded. "If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher" (72). In "Dialogue With the Dead: The Deceased Beloved as Muse," Elisabeth Bronfen discusses the role of the body of the dead or dying beloved woman as the artist's tragic muse, both in the nineteenth-century consciousness in general and Poe's works in particular:

The pale young woman dying of tuberculosis repeatedly functioned as model for his half-dead, prematurely buried, or (through metempsychosis) resurrected heroines Madeline, Morella, Berenice, and Ligeia.[...] illness, which forbade any direct consummation of erotic desire, inspired those texts in which the fascination for a woman is dependent precisely on her unattainability--that is, her being physically absent while present when remembered or artistically recreated [...] Poe's various speakers hold an intermediary position, balanced between an embrace of death and a successful denial or repression of it. (249-50)

It is the absence of the dead body, the impossibility of ever satisfying one's desire for that body, that engenders creative forces within the survivor. Once dead, the beloved can be revived through the artistic impulse. In both positioning Madeline as his dead muse and refusing to give up her body, Roderick takes up an intermediary position between denial/repression and the embrace of death. His sister's corpse returning to life forces him to confront his own mortality; if she, the dead twin, can live, then he, the living twin, can--and does--die.

Madeline is denied a death scene; we are informed of her death in a single, dependent clause, where the crux of the statement is not her death but her subsequent burial. This passage is crucial to my analysis; as in *Frankenstein*, the reference to body-snatching is so brief and so deeply buried that it must be carefully exhumed from the surrounding text. Both the narrator (who serves as a kind of homoerotic witness) and Usher comment on the unsavoury character of the medical men who wait on Madeline during her long illness; upon meeting the family physician, the narrator remarks that the doctor's face "wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity" (67). Following Madeline's death, he recalls the man's "sinister countenance," and decides that Usher is correct in his assessment of the situation (75). Usher's reasons for keeping her body in the vault are that her illness was unique, that her doctors have made "certain obtrusive and eager inquiries," and that the family graveyard is situated some distance from the house, in a remote (and presumably unguarded) area (75). The fact that Madeline's unique illness caused her to fall into death-like trances is apparently of no concern to her devoted brother. Usher's plan is to keep the corpse until it is no longer "fresh"--thus negating its economic and scientific value--and then, once the danger has passed, to lay Madeline properly to rest in the family graveyard. Usher is far more concerned by the possibility of his sister's body being exhumed and examined by the doctors than he is troubled by her passing. He denies the doctor knowledge of Madeline's body, which suggests that he owns this knowledge, and that it is therefore within his power to deny. He cannot wait to bury her, and insists that it be done immediately--but at the same time, he cannot seem to let her body go.

In the same way that Frankenstein represses his identity as an anatomist, Roderick Usher is struggling to repress his own haunted past--a past which may have included an "unnatural" knowledge of the body of his twin sister. Roderick Usher is, according to his

friend the narrator, a modern man, with strange new ideas and philosophies. His favourite book, the *Vigiliae Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesiae Maguntinae*, suggests that he is not squeamish about strange or "unnatural" ideas, as does his theory about the sentience of inanimate objects.¹⁰ Why should such a progressive thinker object to the use of his sister's body to aid science? Possibly because he has something to hide, something that could be revealed if the Lady Madeline were to be examined. Perhaps he does not wish her body to be penetrated because he has already done so himself, because the evidence is there to be discovered, or even because he is jealous of whoever can have her when he can't. Whatever his reasons, Roderick's attempt to deny the knowledge of Madeline's body backfires, and Madeline emerges from the vaults of the House of Usher profoundly changed, energized and dangerous. In much the same way as Frankenstein's monster, she has transformed from a passive, feminine figure to an active, masculine one.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned the essential role language plays in my reading of monstrosity. As Brooks points out, Frankenstein's monster first gains agency through language. It is when he learns to speak that he begins to function as an independent being, and to realize his own monstrosity. What, then, are we to make of the way in which Madeline is repeatedly denied language? Not only does she never speak on her own behalf, but the moment that she breaks free of her imprisonment in the vault is masked by a sort of re-texting, as the narrator interprets the sounds of her escape in light of the tale of the hero Ethelred. In being renamed, re-cast as Ethelred, rather than Madeline, she gains the strength to break free of her coffin and struggle out of the vault under the house. The true source of the sounds never occurs to the narrator; Madeline is dead because Usher has said she is dead--or, more accurately, he has said that she is "no more" (75). Usher's intense distrust of

¹⁰ *The Ecclesiastical Maguntinists' Second Chorus of the Wakeful Dead*. I am indebted to Kelly Hourihan for the translation.

the doctors attending his sister make it unlikely that he would accept their opinions in the matter; he alone has the final word, both on the nature of Madeline's illness and her subsequent passing.

David Ketterer takes one of the most frequently used—and most wordless—words in the story, *shudder*, and shakes loose a sinister "crypt-ogram," examining the characters' names in detail:

Some of the double *ds* (or, spelled out, *des*) lost from *shudder*--or the multiple *ds* from *shud-d-d-d-der*--are salvaged for the particular purpose of determining the common fulcrum of the first names of Usher and his sister--Roderick and Madeline--and point to the oft-noted doppelgänger relationship between them. They also no doubt influenced the choice of a third three-syllable name, what might be construed as the female and male gendered name Ethelred (combining the spirits of Madeline and Roderick), with its final *d*, for the hero (and heroine) of the tale within a tale that seemingly brings about the fall of the House of Usher... *dead* (or *de-ed--de* plus its mirror-image double) immediately suggests itself... (195)

While Ketterer does not delve into the decidedly sexual implications of the word *shudder*, it is obvious that, in this single word, it is possible to locate both death and sex. And of course, once you remove the *ds* from *shudder*, what you are left with is an anagram of *Usher*.

Usher strives to repress his sister, to eliminate her from language, from existence, and in doing so, he traps her in an unnamed state between life and death. He claims that he "dared not speak," despite having heard her movements within the coffin, suggesting that he is terrified of Madeline returning to life (81). However, he does not wonder whether she is coming to kill him; instead, he asks, "Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste?" making it clear that what he fears, more than death, is Madeline regaining her ability to speak (82). The only way the narrator can make sense of any of this upheaval is to attempt to return the power of language to Usher: "[a]s if in the superhuman energy of [Usher's] utterance there had been found the potency of a spell," Madeline appears (82). Having at last

broken free of the text and the life/death binary it presents, she is finally able to utter her first sound: a "low, moaning cry," as though the words she has within her are too monstrous to be articulated (82).

In *The Vampire Lectures*, Laurence A. Rickels explores the literary and cultural nature of the "undead" status accorded to characters who overcome death, real or simulated. He suggests that the undead figure creates a boundary crisis for the survivor, because of the mirror effect: the undead figure is a mirror of his or her former self, as well as a mirror of the survivor. The survivor is unable to separate him/herself from the deceased, and so life above ground cannot continue because the survivor is still tied to the grave and its occupant. This boundary crisis meshes in "Usher" with Eve Sedgwick's paranoid Gothic, with its murderous doubles and subtextual threats of sexual violence. The state of undeath is all about the confusion of individuality--a confusion that is powerfully apparent in the conflation of Roderick Usher with his twin sister. The House, according to its master, gains its power from the unique arrangement of the stones--an arrangement which, the narrator remarks, gives the house a face-like appearance--but above all, from the reflection of this arrangement in the waters of the tarn. Like the last of the Ushers, there exist two houses, both unnatural, but one a mere spectral reflection of the other, seen only below the ground. Usher displays the symptoms of illness that Madeline cannot, he is feminized in a way that she is not, and when she dies, it is he who becomes an aimless ghost. Madeline is encrypted psychically within him: he is her only voice. He is frequently described as being deathly "wan" (one), both before and after the passing of his sister. While Usher's looks and mannerisms are described in exquisite (and feminine) detail, the only real physical sense we are given of Madeline is how closely, in the sleep of death, she resembles her brother:

A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my

attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. (76)

Usher seems to revel in his "near-death" experience, in the sympathies that enable him to experience the grave without actually entering it. It is when the twin/reflection emerges from beneath the ground that everything literally falls apart. Madeline is no longer cataleptic, a living corpse willing to remain wherever she is placed; like the farmer's wife in "The Body-Snatcher," Madeline's dead female body has somehow transformed into a living, powerful, sexual, uncloseted masculine force. It's difficult not to read echoes of violent sexuality in the final scene as Madeline, "with a low, moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse" (82). The undead figure is more powerful than a ghostly figure because its corporeality represents not only danger of infection, but also sexual danger. The "blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame" is reminiscent of the most extreme example of this brand of dangerous female sexuality: the nineteenth-century vampire story. While a ghost is bodiless, a vampire represents a corporeal, and thus possibly sexual, threat. Madeline is ghostly and ethereal before her 'death' and entombment; risen from the grave, she is a far more powerful and menacing figure, because she now has the strength, the desire, and the capability both to differentiate herself from her brother, and to kill him. The blood on her robes is significant, not only as a sign of her struggle, but as a sign of her body and sexuality. Perhaps it is menstrual blood, or perhaps the stains are the result of an abortion or miscarriage; either way, it makes her a dangerous woman, a force to be reckoned with. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault says that

man falls ill because he knows he must die; but in a world where the grave is not an absolute, but merely one of a number of possibilities--and not the worst of them, either--
Madeline's resurrection is the only way she can gain agency in her own body. No sinister medical man will be permitted to cut into her now.

Chapter Three: A Grave Predicament

It is imperative to begin this chapter with an analysis of the tale's references to the case of Burke and Hare, a case which resulted in the Anatomy Act of 1832 and essentially eliminated resurrectionism. The famous case is directly referenced by the narrator, as part of an introduction to the events of Fettes' younger days:

There was, at that period, a certain extramural teacher of anatomy, whom I shall here designate by the letter K. His name was subsequently too well known. The man who bore it skulked through the streets of Edinburgh in disguise, while the mob that applauded at the execution of Burke called loudly for the blood of his employer. But Mr. K---- was then at the top of his vogue; he enjoyed a popularity due partly to his own talent and address, partly to the incapacity of his rival, the university professor. (103)

The thinly-veiled attempt to disguise Dr. Robert Knox's identity does little help when William Burke and Edinburgh are named in full. Despite his narrator's pretensions, Stevenson wants us to know exactly to whom he is referring. Dr. Knox was most renowned for being the one who got away, as far as law and justice were concerned. It couldn't be proven that he had any knowledge that the bodies were those of murder victims, and of course the evidence had long since been disposed of. However, there was more than one incident that led the public to believe he knew what was going on; at least one of Burke and Hare's victims was recognized and commented on in Knox's class. Stevenson's narrator hints at Knox's attitude towards the possibility of foul play in the procurement of the corpses he purchased:

In that large and busy class, the raw material of the anatomists kept perpetually

running out; and the business thus rendered necessary was not only unpleasant in itself, but threatened dangerous consequences to all who were concerned. It was the policy of Mr. K---- to ask no questions in his dealings with the trade. "They bring the body, and we pay the price," he used to say, dwelling on the alliteration--"*quid pro quo*." And again, and somewhat profanely, "Ask no questions," he would tell his assistants, "for conscience sake." There was no understanding that the subjects were provided by the crime of murder. Had that idea been broached to him in words, he would have recoiled in horror; but the lightness of his speech upon so grave a matter was, in itself, an offence against good manners, and a temptation to the men with whom he dealt. (105)

It is a popular misconception that Fettes and Macfarlane, the young students who travel down the slippery slope of morality, are supposed to represent Burke and Hare. This is simply not possible, as it is completely incongruous with what we know of the case. For one thing, William Burke and William Hare had no ambition to be grave-robbers; they were murderers, pure and simple. Both of them denied ever having dug up a corpse for any reason, and the amount of money Dr. Knox paid them for their quality specimens largely supports this assertion. Burke and Hare were certainly not what one would call members of the upper crust; in point of fact, they ran a flop-house or "beggar's hotel" in Tamer's Close, which came to Hare by way of his common-law wife's previous husband. Far from being an educated man, Burke had spent time in service, and in the military, before landing on Hare's doorstep. Purely by chance, when one of their lodgers happened to die, the two men discovered the vast amounts of money that could be made by selling corpses to Dr. Knox at Surgeons Square. It was then, presumably, that they began to find murder far more profitable than housing poor lodgers.

Stevenson does portray characters similar to the infamous pair, albeit briefly: the two men who bring the murdered body of Jane Galbraith to the door of the dissecting-room give a suggestion as to what the interactions between the resurrection men and the anatomists would have been like. William Burke was an Irishman; the narrator references the men's "grumbling Irish voices" (106). This is the only clue that indicates the identity of the two minor characters, apart from their association with Dr. K---- and his students. If anything, Fettes, as we find him at the beginning of the story, is far more representative of Dr. Knox than of Burke and Hare. What is known of Knox is that he was forced to give up medicine and leave Edinburgh for London, his reputation completely ruined by the taint of scandal. He is supposed to have died in anonymous poverty. Fettes is a mysterious man, known only as someone who may or may not own property, and who may or may not have had medical training. Even among friends, he keeps to himself, says little, and drinks much. Which leads us to the parlour of the George Inn.

The four characters who open the tale are "the undertaker, the landlord, and Fettes, and myself" (97). The actual narrator of "The Body-Snatcher" is not its main character, Fettes, but an unnamed observer, one of Fettes' drinking buddies at the George Inn in Debenham. Unlike the other three characters, two of whom are at least defined by their professions, the narrator is left undefined and peripheral to the action, a blank space tailor-made for the reader to slip into. Furthermore, it is the narrator's role as interlocutor to ensure that the story is moved along and that details are made clear, which he does by probing with questions. He is the one who asks the great doctor's name, information which, once revealed, stirs Fettes to confront Macfarlane on the front stairs of the inn. However, Fettes never once addresses the narrator directly in the story's opening scene, even though the narrator addresses him. Yet the narrator is the only one to have heard Fettes' awful story from start to

finish. "[T]here is now no other man alive who could narrate to you the following foul and unnatural events," he boasts, having been the only one to successfully convince Fettes to tell his tale (103). This knowing of stories, of secret lives, is a recurring theme in "The Body-Snatcher", as secrets are passed on from one character to another. Besides being a popular convention of romance that most readers would have been familiar with, this kind of nested narrative is a trick that Stevenson himself was quite practiced at. The conflation of character and narrator becomes more pronounced as the second phase of the tale unfolds, the narrator delivering Fettes' story in exquisite and almost overwrought detail, as though he had experienced it personally.

The professions Stevenson chooses for the companions are interesting: the undertaker and the landlord, as well as Fettes, who is known in the village as the Doctor because of his medical knowledge, all have the task of preserving and protecting people's bodies. Essentially, their roles in society are seen as opposite to that of the anatomist. However, landlords--such as the infamous Burke and Hare--would find it just as easy to make money selling dead bodies as housing live ones, and undertakers have been known to trade in corpses now and again. The nightly presence of the undertaker in the inn is a bit macabre in and of itself: is he there waiting for lodgers to die? Doctors are simply anatomists who have become respectable, due to their new standing in society as professionals. Fettes, however, is not a respectable member of society: he is a drunk of no profession and unknown means, an eccentric figure renowned for his refusal to attend church and his vaguely radical political opinions. On the other hand, Wolfe Macfarlane, the "great man's still greater London doctor," is a fine example of the now-respectable anatomist (98). His first appearance, swathed in furs and glinting of gold, inspires awe in Fettes' companions, who immediately recognize their social superior.

The three friends witness a scene of reunion between Fettes, whose past they know nothing about, and Macfarlane, who is visiting a patient at the inn. The three men are surprised that Fettes is able to claim acquaintance with such a man:

"Do you know him, Doctor?" asked the undertaker, with a gasp.

"God forbid!" was the reply. (99)

This exchange marks the first of several uses of the word *know* regarding Fettes' relationship with Macfarlane in this scene. Fettes' refusal to claim ownership of his knowledge of Macfarlane is telling: theirs was once a relationship entirely based on knowledge, both because they were at school together and because each was privy to the secrets of the other. There is also, as we will see later, the suggestion that their relationship might have involved knowing in the Biblical sense. "I do not wish to *know* the roof that shelters you," Fettes tells Macfarlane, scorning his offers of assistance. "I heard your name; I feared it might be you; I wished to *know* if, after all, there were a God; I *know* now that there is none" (101, italics mine). Fettes' assertion that he is looking for an unnatural, even blasphemous knowledge of God is a metaphor for the events of his younger days: as a medical student, he was a man who spent his days searching to discover the secrets of life and death, and tumbled instead into the secret world of resurrectionism and murder for profit. It is also, as we shall see, a metaphor for the illicit and possibly sexual relationship between Fettes and Macfarlane.

The seeming proliferation of homosexual relationships in the story becomes somewhat more plausible when we note that there are only two female characters in "The Body-Snatcher", and both are already dead when we meet them. This is appropriate when we consider the rending of the grave and the intimate knowledge of the corpse that must take place, as well the dead body's feminine role as the victim of sexual violation--the overtly romanticized "fate worse than death". The first woman, Jane Galbraith, is "as well known as

the Castle Rock" in Edinburgh (108). We may take this to mean that Jane was a prostitute, a reading which would fit with one of the unfortunate truths of resurrectionism: namely, that the lower classes were most likely to be killed for money, or to have their bodies dug up or falsely claimed following their deaths. It also dovetails neatly with the comparison between body-snatching and prostitution in Michael Sappol's *A Traffic of Bodies*. In his first chapter, Sappol outlines the evolution of a culture of death in early modern Europe, in which a proper burial became an important economic signifier. The wealthy and the poor became further stratified by the manner in which they could afford to be buried. Sappol then shifts to a discussion of the economics of death, in terms of the dead body as a saleable commodity: one can argue, based on his assertions, that the 19th-century traffic in bodies was at least partially responsible for the shift in attitude which began once again to identify the body with the spirit. He makes comparative mention of prostitution, the profession often referred to as "selling one's body" or "selling one's self;" the conclusion, not stated but implied, is that both professions are essentially selling the poor, stricken body to benefit the wealthy, idle body. In Stevenson's tale, the fact that Fettes, the respectable young medical student, is familiar enough with Jane Galbraith to recognize her on the table, having seen her "alive and hearty" only the night before, suggests that his purchases of human flesh are perhaps not limited to corpses (107). His exclamation of "I know her, I tell you" is extremely telling, and points to a pattern of the anatomists' knowledge of the dead in "The Body-Snatcher" as loaded with sexual implications and unnatural intimacy (107).

Macfarlane counsels Fettes on what his reaction to Jane Galbraith's body should be:

"The next best thing for me is not to recognize it; and," he added coolly, "I don't. You may, if you please. I don't dictate, but I think a man of the world would do as I do; and I may add, I fancy that is what K---- would look for at our hands.

The question is, Why did he choose us two for his assistants? And I answer, because he didn't want old wives." (109)

This speech, as well as Macfarlane's later counsels concerning the body of Gray, are rife with imagery of the feminine corpse being penetrated by the masculine scalpel. In several places, Macfarlane remarks that it takes a *man*, not a boy, to do such a job as theirs. There are *men* of the world, and there are *old wives*. There are *lions*, and there are *lambs*. And then there is *Wolfe* Macfarlane, who seems to view himself as being completely outside any system of morality, even Dr. K----'s. While Fettes struggles with his conscience at every turn, Macfarlane's only concern is getting caught.

The knowing of the dead, in the sense of actually recognizing the corpse, foreshadows more incidents of knowing, all of which involve Gray. Gray's body is the single most important symbol in the story. Alive, it is the embodiment of sin and vice:

This was a small man, very pale and dark, with coal-black eyes. The cut of his features gave a promise of intellect and refinement which was but feebly realised in his manners, for he proved, upon a nearer acquaintance, coarse, vulgar, and stupid. He exercised, however, a very remarkable control over Macfarlane; issued orders like the Great Bashaw; became inflamed at the least discussion or delay, and commented rudely on the servility with which he was obeyed. This most offensive person took a fancy to Fettes on the spot, plied him with drinks, and honoured him with unusual confidences on his past career. If a tenth part of what he confessed were true, he was a very loathsome rogue; and the lad's vanity was tickled by the attention of so experienced a man. (109)

Murdered, Gray's body becomes the object of both repulsion and unnatural desire: the dead

body, the fetishized body, the criminal body. Later, when it is resurrected, Gray's body undergoes a second, far more hideous transformation. The term monster, etymologically, betokens something to be shown: Gray's body showing itself becomes the body monstrous, the dead body living, demanding something back. Gray is the empowered victim.

Fettes' being "tickled" by Gray's "experienced" attentions, and Gray "taking a fancy" to him, is an interesting pattern of language that suggests a homosexual, or at least homoerotic, attraction. A similar pattern can be noted in the interactions between Gray and Macfarlane: Gray has a nickname for him, Toddy, which is never explained (the only possible connection I can see is that a toddy is something that provides liquor), and at one point Macfarlane is referred to as "squirring the intolerable Gray from tavern to tavern" (110). However, their relationship is hardly a friendly one: Gray is, in all likelihood, blackmailing Macfarlane, or at the very least has possession of information that Macfarlane wouldn't want made public. This knowing of Macfarlane's secret self by Gray is what defines their interactions, as Gray demands servility, and treats himself and his new friend, Fettes, to a feast at Macfarlane's expense. At one point, the wordplay becomes both explicitly violent and implicitly sexual: "Did you ever see the lads play knife?" asks Gray. "He [Macfarlane] would like to do that all over my body". Fettes quickly retorts that medical students have a better way to violate a body: "When we dislike a dead friend of ours, we dissect him" (110). Which is, of course, exactly what comes to pass.

Eve Kosofsky Sedwick delivers an interesting and insightful treatment of male friendships and homosexual panic in her *Epistemology of the Closet*. In the book, she asserts that "a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition" is responsible for the fragmented way gender is perceived in 20th century Western thought (1). Our ways of knowing are fractured, she argues, because our ways of knowing ourselves as sexual beings

are essentially flawed. Modern conceptions of homosexuality tend to be composed of conflicting binarisms, and Sedgwick's refusal to adjudicate between these--or, more accurately, her recognition of the impossibility of doing so--is what forms the basis of her argument.

Sedgwick proposes that we consider the apposition of separatist and integrative views of homosexuality. On the one hand, we have the position that homosexuality is only participated in by the minority of people who identify themselves as completely homosexual. In contrast, there also exists the view that homosexuality is actively engaged by everyone in society, on a variety of levels, regardless of gender or sexuality. Sedgwick, it should be noted, does not espouse either viewpoint; she recognizes that both are essentially flawed, and instead merely points to the existence of both positions as yet another important example of how the homosexual closet is responsible for the splintering of Western ways of knowing. She argues that, since the eighteenth century, "the continuum of male homosocial bonds has been brutally structured by a secularized and psychologized homophobia" (185). Homophobia, Sedgwick suggests, informs male homosocial relationships, as men struggle to define themselves as something other than openly homosexual.

Treading the murky waters of male/male desire and power relations, men become embroiled in homosexual panic, which results in violence and the surfacing of what Sedgwick calls "the paranoid Gothic" (186). She defines paranoid Gothic literature as "novels in which a male hero is in a close, usually murderous relation to another male figure, in some respects his 'double,' to whom he seems to be mentally transparent" (186). Among her examples of the genre, she cites *Frankenstein* for its "two male figures locked in an epistemologically indissoluble clench of will and desire" (187). I feel that, in addition to *Frankenstein*, "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Body-Snatcher" both fall under the

category of paranoid Gothic as Sedgwick defines it.

The close male friendships in "The Body-Snatcher" are wrought with both the violence and the deliberate dissociation that characterize Sedgwick's version of homosexual panic. The narrator of the story, while remaining anonymous and seemingly without distinguishing characteristics, goes to some lengths to identify himself as being neither Fettes nor Macfarlane by telling a story in which he appears alongside both men, witnessing a confrontation between the two. However, after stating that he is now the only man left alive to tell the tale--an assertion which, as it follows the confrontation between Macfarlane and Fettes, suggests that at least one of the two has met a violent end--the narrator somehow manages to slide into Fettes' perspective, describing his thoughts and feelings with intimate familiarity.

Similarly, Macfarlane disowns the ubiquitous Gray; while he endures the liberties his "friend" takes, he refuses to be called "Toddy" (110). The nickname is never explained in the narrative, but it hints at a prior (possibly sexual, possibly murderous) association that Macfarlane, now on the verge of breaching respectable society, wants no part of. Then, in an attempt to permanently sever their attachment, he kills Gray and, with Fettes' help, has him dissected at the medical college. Macfarlane has thus neatly dissociated himself; just as the straight man must clearly define himself as not-gay, the easiest way of defining life is something which is obviously not dead. Macfarlane explains this in terms of lions and lambs:

If you're a lamb, you'll come to lie upon these tables like Gray or Jane
Galbraith; if you're a lion, you'll live and drive a horse like me, like
K_____, like all the world with any wit or courage... You were born to lead
the hunt; and I tell you, on my honour and my experience of life, three days

from now you'll laugh at all these scarecrows like a high school boy at a farce. (114)

The message here is clear: the experienced men of the world, the lions, the hunters, must dissociate themselves from the weak, female lambs, the victims of this scenario. Either you are the anatomist, or the one being penetrated. Once you are dead, the anatomists will break open your coffin/closet and "out" you to the world.

When Macfarlane brings in the body of Gray, Fettes suddenly feels a pang of conscience about what he has got himself involved in. His recognition of Gray is explicitly connected to his actions involving Jane Galbraith: "[i]t was a *cras tibi* which re-echoed in his soul, that two whom he had known should have come to lie upon these icy tables" (111). Macfarlane, too, directly compares the two incidents: "This second little matter flows clearly from the first. Mr. Gray is the continuation of Miss Galbraith. You can't begin and then stop. If you begin, you must keep on beginning; that's the truth. No rest for the wicked" (113). The comparisons suggest the possibility of Fettes' sexual knowledge of the dead body on the table.

The sexual overtones of knowledge in "The Body-Snatcher" also add significance to Fettes' relationship with Macfarlane. It is a friendship entirely based on knowledge: the knowledge Macfarlane, the senior of the two and the popular class assistant, imparts upon Fettes, the innocent and less experienced. Macfarlane has "travelled and studied abroad," which implies that he has studied in the medical schools of France, Germany, or other such countries without Britain's prejudice against dissection (107). Macfarlane is a sporting man and a bit of a dandy, his manners "agreeable and a little forward" (107). Fettes both desires and fears the unholy knowledge that Macfarlane has to offer. The friendship between the two young men is described in this manner:

With Fettes [Macfarlane] was on terms of intimacy; indeed, their relative positions called for some community of life; and when subjects were scarce the pair would drive far into the country in Macfarlane's gig, visit and desecrate some lonely graveyard, and return before dawn with their booty to the door of the dissecting-room. (107-8)

The grave-robbing aspect of their friendship is described almost as an afterthought, a commonplace. Just a lark, a bit of a ride with a brief stop to pick up a companion--the scene is reminiscent of a couple of wealthy young fellows picking up a prostitute in the one of seamier parts of London. The opening to a later passage echoes this one: "[a]t length an occasion arose which threw the pair once more into a closer union" (115). The occasion in question is a burial in Glencorse, which suggests their services will be required to supply K----'s students with subjects.

Fettes' knowledge of Gray's body comes to him directly through Macfarlane: it is Macfarlane who has introduced them, and it is he who urges the younger man to look at the corpse's face when he brings it into the dissecting-room. How Gray died is never made clear, leaving the reader with the only possibility explicitly presented: the image of Macfarlane "playing knife" with Gray's body--penetrating, violating, with the further indignity of a group dissection to follow. The power of the scalpel is not just the power to reveal, but the power to disguise and transform, to disappear the victim. The scalpel is a pen, reinscribing the victim's body, changing a person from a *he* or a *she* to an *it*. Language, erasing the writing on the body, becomes part of the dissection process.

Once involved in the cover-up, Fettes' fear of being outed drives him to further intimacies with Macfarlane: "He saw, with inexpressible dismay, that there was no limit to his weakness, and that, from concession to concession, he had fallen from the arbiter of

Macfarlane's destiny to his paid and helpless accomplice... the secret of Jane Galbraith and the cursed entry in the daybook closed his mouth" (114). The parallel drawn between Fettes (possibly sexual) association with the "well-known" Jane Galbraith, and his acquaintance of Gray, suggests that the moral slippery slope that Fettes encounters in this tale concerns not only death, but sexual degeneration as well. As Macfarlane notes, "Mr. Gray is the continuation of Miss Galbraith"(113).

Eventually, however, Fettes begins to forget his terror, and enjoy his position as Macfarlane's pet, cheerfully accepting money and favours from the older man; Fettes' knowledge of his companion's murder enables him to "count on [Macfarlane's] gratitude," as he puts it, with a full belly and a handful of Macfarlane's gold singing in his pocket (118). It is noted that Macfarlane "may have regretted that he had taught his young companion so successfully" (118). Macfarlane's uneasiness at this shift in the power dynamic intimates that, were things to continue on in this manner, Fettes might find himself as easily disposed of as Gray. There is a slight suggestion that this is, in fact, what eventually takes place: at their meeting in the George, when Fettes refuses Macfarlane's offers of hospitality and of money, the London doctor's real reaction is made clear as "[a] horrible, ugly look came and went across his almost venerable countenance" (101). Even as Macfarlane is uneasy with the tenor of the conversation, which threatens to out the secret the two have shared for many years, he is clearly furious with the way Fettes has startled him, humiliating him in front of a group of spectators. The narrator notes that, "[w]hite as he was, there was a dangerous glitter in his spectacles," the same spectacles that are later found dashed to pieces in the doorway of the inn following Macfarlane's hasty departure (102). In the moments following the confrontation, Fettes seems almost resigned, as though he realizes he has set off a chain reaction that will probably end in his death. "That man Macfarlane is not safe to cross," he

warns his companions; "those that have done so already have repented it too late" (102). The implication here is that he himself, having crossed Macfarlane, is not safe. The narrator's claim that there is "no other man *alive*" (103, italics mine) who could relate the story takes on a portentous meaning, particularly since there are two men who witnessed Gray's resurrection: what has happened to Macfarlane? I believe these are deliberate openings in the story, and not merely loose ends.

Fettes, apparently cheerfully unaware of any danger from his companion, makes a speech in which he refers to the two as "men of the world," free of conscience and capable of doing whatever they please, and toasts Gray's memory (118). Immediately following this, the two men set out to defile the grave of a pious farmer's wife. The juxtaposition of the two scenes is striking, as is the language used to describe the act of robbing a grave: the narrator informs us that the two men were "experienced in such affairs," (119) and once the lights go out, the real horror begins.

Oliver S. Buckton examines encoded male desire and sodomy in "Reanimating Stevenson's Corpus." He touches on many of the major Stevenson works, but concerns himself chiefly with *The Wrong Box*, a rollicking predecessor to *Weekend at Bernie's* involving two men trying to keep track of an adventurous corpse. Interestingly, Buckton does not directly address "The Body-Snatcher," but many of the arguments he makes about *The Wrong Box* can be applied to the overlooked tale.

"The horror of Stevenson's story, in this reading, derives mainly from its representation of desires that were at once repugnant and fascinating to Victorians and that the legislation of the period had made increasingly visible and problematic" (24). Buckton is referring to illicit male relationships and the anti-homosexual legislation of 1885, but he might just as well be referring to grave-robbing and the Anatomy laws. He notes a number of

places in Stevenson's body of work where homosexuality is encoded: for example, he posits, building on Wayne Koestenbaum's argument, that a Victorian reader would have undoubtedly assumed that Jekyll and Hyde's secretive and illicit relationship was that of gay lovers, since blackmail was reputedly common among men whose affairs had soured. There is an echo of this in "The Body-Snatcher", in all of the money that is passed from Macfarlane to Gray and to Fettes.

Buckton expands on Leo Bersani's notion of the rectum being a grave, and explores the idea of grave-digging as heavily coded sodomy. The "erotically charged corpse" in *The Wrong Box*, the unmentionable, inescapable secret that is kept between two men, only to be wrenched from their control and thrust out into the world in the end, is deeply reminiscent of the corpse of Gray in the ultimate scene of "The Body-Snatcher" (41).

The grave-robbing in "The Body-Snatcher" then becomes the natural extension of Buckton's assertions. Grave-robbing is seen as taboo, dirty, and immoral; it is, in the Victorian mind, against the divine will of God, endangering the soul; the primary reason for robbing a grave is the use of the body in a way God never intended. The idea of robbing the grave/rectum takes us one step further, once more into the murky depths of Sedgwick's paranoid Gothic. Unlike *The Wrong Box*, the resurrection men are not simply taking the body; they are taking the body by force, and they are digging in the dirty grave in order to do it. Panic ensues once they realize that the body they have exhumed and violated is male and not female--that it is possible for men to unknowingly rape and sodomize one another.

In the tale's penultimate scene, Macfarlane and Fettes exhume the naked body of a pious farmer's wife. The narrator's description of the act of grave-robbing contains some of the language of rape:

To *bodies* that had been laid in earth, in joyful *expectation* of a far different

awakening, there *came* that *hasty*, lamp-lit, *terror-haunted* resurrection of the spade and mattock. The coffin was *forced*, the cerements *torn*, and the melancholy relics, clad in sackcloth, after being rattled for hours on moonless byways, were at length *exposed* to uttermost *indignities* before a class of *gaping* boys. (116, italics mine)

What Fettes and Macfarlane get instead, once they've completed their violation of the grave and placed the body in the carriage, is not a woman at all, but a man. This is the ultimate homophobic horror: the body believed to be female, and used as female, is actually male. The fact that it is Gray's body doesn't even come into play until the very last line of the story: the terror of the two young students comes from the fact that the body has redefined, re-written itself. All the anatomists' god-like power has been wrenched from their grasp in this one moment; some greater hand is wielding the pen, the scalpel, the instruments of terror.

Conclusion

Resurrectionist or "Anatomy" literature is, as we have seen, a field worthy of further examination. It is a field that has been left largely unexplored: while scholars such as Ruth Richardson, Michael Sappol, and Tim Marshall have provided a solid foundation of historical scholarship to build upon, and theorists like Elisabeth Bronfen and Regina Barecca have already tackled the gendering of dead and undead bodies in nineteenth-century literature, there has been almost no work done to date on examining literal portrayals of grave-robbing in nineteenth-century texts, and the larger themes and trends these portrayals represent. I feel that this is a necessary first step in establishing the strong presence of resurrectionist literature within the canon, and that the work I have done is part of that first step.

In my introduction, I referred to the general lack of critical enthusiasm with which Stevenson's story had previously been received. I am by no means trying to suggest that Stevenson was responsible for creating or defining the resurrectionist tradition; however, his story has a place within that tradition which cannot be ignored, and has served as an important example of resurrectionist literature. When it is placed alongside texts such as *Frankenstein* and "The Fall of the House of Usher," I feel that "The Body-Snatcher" gains some of the literary cache it has historically lacked. While my work on this topic so far has been confined to the above three texts, further study need not be limited exclusively to these; in fact, there is a veritable wealth of texts that fall into the category of resurrectionist literature in their treatments of literal, to say nothing of metaphorical, grave-robbing.

The profusion of graveyard sexuality in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* offers much material for further study. The sexualized transfusion of bodily fluids to the ravenous, undead Lucy,

as well as the dogged determination of the men who love her to see her firmly ensconced in the coffin, pinned down with a phallic stake by her heroic fiancé, transform the grave into a highly sexualized and feminized space. Even Dracula, whose masculine energies pervade the novel, is feminized as he lies helpless in his coffin: the men of the novel wish to penetrate Dracula's body/grave, because he has penetrated the bodies of their women—violating the men in the process, through the transmission of that most dreaded of venereal diseases, vampirism. In particular, Jonathan Harker's initial disgust at seeing Dracula lying asleep in his coffin seems to be centred chiefly in his red lips and the girlish blush of his cheeks, which suggests that it is not so much death that reviles him, but the mask of death's femininity upon the manly countenance of his host. What is to be done with this gendering/queering of the intimate grave space, particularly in light of Leo Bersani's assertions?

In H. Rider Haggard's *She*, the horror of the grave is more directly linked to the horror of female agency and female sexuality in the character of Ayesha. Like Lucy Westenra, Ayesha represents Victorian man's fear of encroaching female emancipation. As with the female vampire, Ayesha is a woman who does not age and fade into motherhood over time, whose beauty and sexuality never diminish; moreover, she is a woman who chooses her own lover, bringing him back from the brink of death. The travellers who encounter her witness the horrors of a matriarchal society: the immortal woman holds court over a world permeated by corpses, from the mummified remains of the ancients of Kor to the preserved body of her dead lover.

James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is also littered with corpses; most remarkable, however, is the episode of grave-robbing which closes the tale. Occurring outside the main confessional narrative, the digging up of the

narrator's unnaturally fresh corpse serves as a bizarre epilogue. Although the preternatural preservation of the suicide's remains is never explained, one character theorizes that it is the presence of the as yet unread confession that has kept the body in such a condition. This symbiosis of body and text is worthy of further exploration, as is the presence of the murderous—or in this case, murdered—double of Sedgwick's paranoid Gothic, in the form of the narrator's brother.

With the exception of Hogg's *Confessions*, the above-mentioned specifically reference the female corpse; in many resurrectionist texts, such as "The Body-Snatcher" and "Frankenstein," the agency—and the horror—of the corpse lies in its masculinity. So what conclusions can be drawn from the use of the female corpse?

Regina Barecca makes the intriguing suggestion that the creation of feminine texts in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is the means by which female sexuality is articulated and controlled. The way in which women inscribe themselves into the blank spaces of traditional male texts such as printed novels over-writes patriarchal narratives within the novel, Barecca argues. The women's voices may be marginalized—figuratively and literally—but they still maintain a strong presence. She alludes briefly to the two episodes of grave-robbing in the novel: Heathcliff twice attempts to dig up the body of Catherine, wishing them to be physically united in death (349-50). On achieving his aim, he finds that Catherine's corpse has not 'decomposed,' a word Barecca gives particular weight to in her analysis of feminine textuality. This link between composition and decomposition opens up numerous possibilities for future analysis: like *Wuthering Heights*, *Dracula*, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and *She* are all narratives constructed from a patchwork of 'found' texts—journals, confessions, letters, and so forth. If feminine texts are used to articulate female sexuality, do those texts written by dead women represent the sexuality of the grave?

In *Body Work*, Peter Brooks cites Barthes' assertion that nineteenth-century narrative serves as a kind of striptease, and suggests that we as readers are searching for the place where the clothing gaps. In resurrectionist literature, this is taken one step further--it is the places where *skin* gaps that the resurrectionists aspire to know. The characters' goal is to find the body, dissect the body; the author's goal is to make the body/text come alive. If the body is text, then the dead body living is the most unnatural and monstrous of texts--the horror story. The true horror of the dead-body-as-text is the chance that the text may somehow rewrite itself, reanimate itself, into something we didn't expect. This unnatural re-texting is the same phenomenon that chills us as readers when we read horror fiction: the idea that the text has the power of creation and destruction, independent of the author and the reader; the notion that the book doesn't stop happening because we stop reading. This is why the last image we are left with in "The Body-Snatcher" is the brief glimpse of "the dead and long-dissected Gray" (122). Nothing that comes after can be more frightening than this image. Gray is the dead body living, the monster showing itself rather than being shown, the fruit of the author's labour taking on a terrifying life of its own. Stevenson has created something that has gotten away from his control as an author, and he has no choice but to let the carriage draw away into the darkness, leaving us, the readers, horrified, looking on.

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