The Voice that Travels from Vessels to Other Worlds:
Extracting Narratives from the Cave of the Sibyl

by

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A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2025

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

From caves, leaves, dust, to ampullae, the Sibyl of Cumae's voice has travelled far from vessels and into other story-worlds in various material forms. While practicing as a female prophet in classical antiquity, her origin possesses no definite beginning but only allusions to an incomplete identity and liminal persona. The Sibyl of Cumae's uncertain characteristics have rendered her an ideal figure for speculative interpretation over time, particularly through stories. Based on Vergil's famous account in the *Aeneid*, the Sibyl of Cumae was imagined to be dispersing prophecies from inside a subterranean architecture: a cave in the ancient city of Cumae, Italy. With increasing interpretations of the Sibyl dealt through time, writers from the past have provided her material presence while oncoming generations continue to mold it to create something new amongst her absence. This thesis will critically examine the evolution of the Sibyl of Cumae's character in a selection of seven texts from two separate timelines. Reading Vergil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Petronius's *Satyricon*, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, Gerard Manley Hopkins's *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, I find varied interpretations of this Sibyl united by a shared theme of isolation. Isolation, or the condition of separateness, becomes a motif to study in this thesis through form, material, emotion, and narrative. I unravel varied meanings and representations of isolation in the selected texts by examining the qualities of objects and architecture that have been associated with the Sibyl of Cumae in them including the cave, dust, ampulla, leaves, cage, and jar. I distinguish the qualities of decay, silence, and visibility from these objects and study their prominence across settings, characters and objects in the selected texts. This leads me to recognize how the Sibyl of Cumae has adapted into something beyond a corporeal presence by proxy of material entities of the physical world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank family, friends, peers, professors, and the Waterloo School of Architecture community who have been involved and supported me throughout my academic journey at the University of Waterloo.

I would like to first extend my gratitude to my two supervisors Rick Haldenby and Tara Bissett. Rick, thank you for all of the stories you shared with me throughout my years at the Waterloo School of Architecture, especially during our undergraduate semester in Rome. Thank you for venturing us out to the cave of the Sibyl in the heat. Without this site visit, I would not have experienced what I did to encourage me to write a thesis that is so rooted in ancient history and literature. Tara, thank you for your infinite care, resources, and guidance throughout the entire development of this thesis, and helping me decipher what seemed to be limitless ideas the Sibyl of Cumae continued to inspire within me. Through our meetings and conversations about the Sibyl and imbricated feminist discourses, I learned so much about the craft of writing and ways to become a better communicator. Thank you both for your patience, wealth of knowledge, and encouragement as I continued to explore and remain astonished by the countless ways the Sibyl intersects different historic times and studies throughout this entire thesis journey.

Thank you to my committee member, Fiona Lim Tung, for your kindness, support, and feedback throughout this process. Your visual expertise helped guide and improve the presentation of my illustrations, and constantly inspired me to seek meaning in the complex question of what a drawing is really trying to “say.” I am so happy to have met, learned, and even worked with you at the school. Thank you to my peer and friend Katia Myers, for your support and our many conversations throughout both of our thesis journeys. Upon establishing our mini pilot group with Rick and Tara, our group meetings influenced and helped shape the development of ideas for this thesis. I appreciate all our time shared together and learned so much from our group meetings.

I would like to thank my external reader, Doctor Katerina Ruedi Ray, for continuing to light the flame of this thesis topic through thought-provoking reflections and questions regarding interpretation, authorship, and representations of the Sibyl of Cumae during the presentation of this study. It was a pleasure meeting you.

Thank you to my friends, who have supported me through all of my academic endeavors with only words of encouragement.

A final thank you to my family for always supporting me to be creative and sharing with me the true meaning and reward of hard work and perseverance. I love you. Volim vas.

DEDICATION

To all story-lovers, story-architects, and story-tellers,
from thousands of years ago to today,
may we continue to use our words to share interesting ideas.

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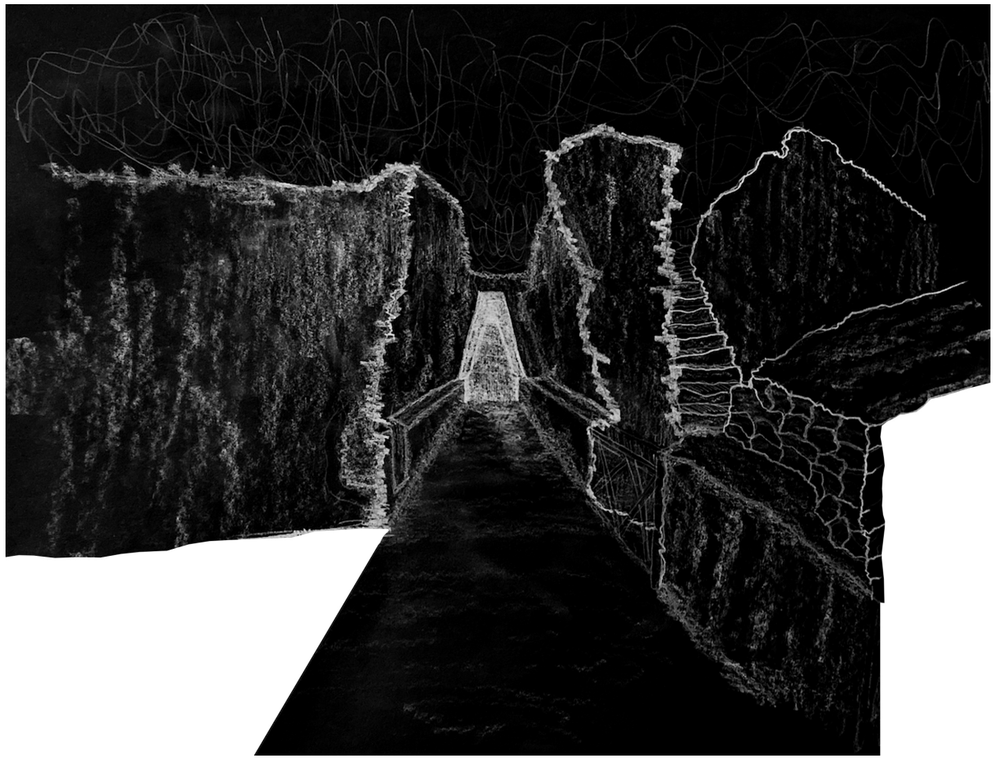


Figure 1. The Cave of the Sibyl. Sketch by author.

PREFACE

The idea for this thesis emerged after a visit to a cave.

> *Journal Entry: My visit inside of the Cave of the Sibyl, May 26, 2022.*
>
> *It's May of 2022, and I'm standing amongst dusty fragments of tufa rock that make up the sparse remains of the ancient city of Cumae in Italy. I'm listening to one of Professor Rick Haldenby's on-site lectures (I like to call them epic stories) via audio unit. With an earphone in one ear, I crank the volume up and hear, amongst little scratchy background frequencies, his introduction to the cave of the Sibyl. The Sibyl was an ancient female prophet from Greco-Roman tradition. According to Amedeo Maiuri's archaeological identification that was inspired by a description of a cave in Vergil's epic "Aeneid," it's believed that the Sibyl of Cumae received and dispersed her prophecies from within this cave. The class was in this moment scattered around the entrance into her cave. My body is in critical need of shade at this point. Italian summer heat is no joke. Where did I put my water bottle? I hope I didn't forget it in the bus. This desire seemed to disappear as I entered the dark vessel. The air became different. It was damp, cold, and musty. There was a particular heaviness to it. Daylight dimmed and the walls that bind the cave formed an endless pattern that looked like some weird labyrinth. Between the alternating piercings of light and darkness, I saw only a shadow of a long, straight path to pursue.*

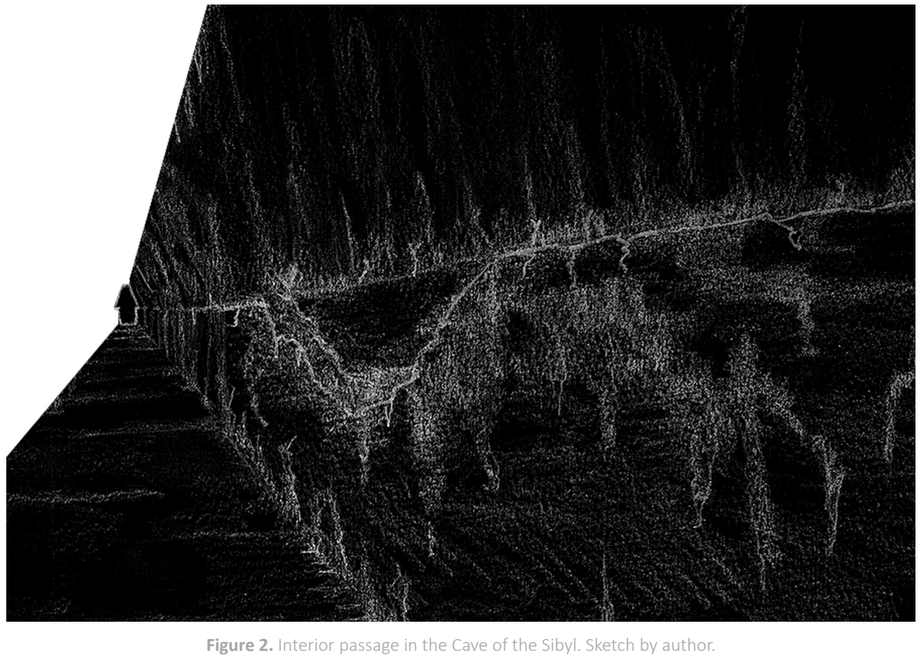


Figure 2. Interior passage in the Cave of the Sibyl. Sketch by author.

Supposedly built in two phases (fourth and first centuries BCE), the cave is a hefty, stone-carved tufa mass that spans over one hundred meters in length. This path I'm on is still going. Is there an end? It seemed to cease by the constraints of modern safety or preservation regulations. A small, metal fence separated me from a modest chamber at the very end (too bad). While some diffused light entered through an opening on the right side, my stare was fixed to the illuminated ground. I saw multiple indents on the ground in no distinct order, and all I'm imagining is that these were once the Sibyl's footsteps – dancing in free ecstasy while the gods inspired her mind. While the walls were presently bare and the ground was dust, I felt weirdly transported to a different place and time inside this vessel. The cave is like a conundrum fighting between a great rootedness to the land and a threshold to an otherworldly place. I felt I entered a portal into a divine consultation with the Sibyl, but she's no longer here. Although surviving in ruins now, the ancient city of Cumae is a place that has grounded myths and stories to the physical landscape. Besides the cave of the Sibyl, the temple of Apollo and lake Avernus are neighbouring sites. Lake Avernus is a volcanic crater lake often described as a portal to the underworld. The temple of Apollo was the landing zone of the Greek mythical architect Daedalus after escaping Crete and tragically losing his son in flight. Daedalus landed in Cumae and built the temple as his sanctuary. Upon hearing these stories, I knew I was in good company here. It seems after all, there is much more to the decayed remains of an ancient city that meets the naked eye.

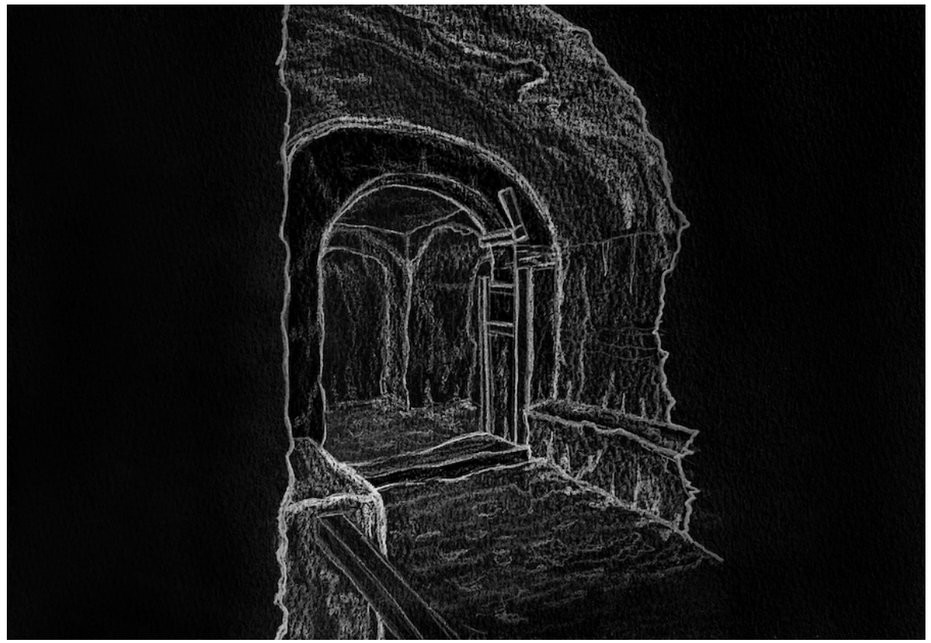


Figure 3. The Sibyl's chamber. Sketch by author.

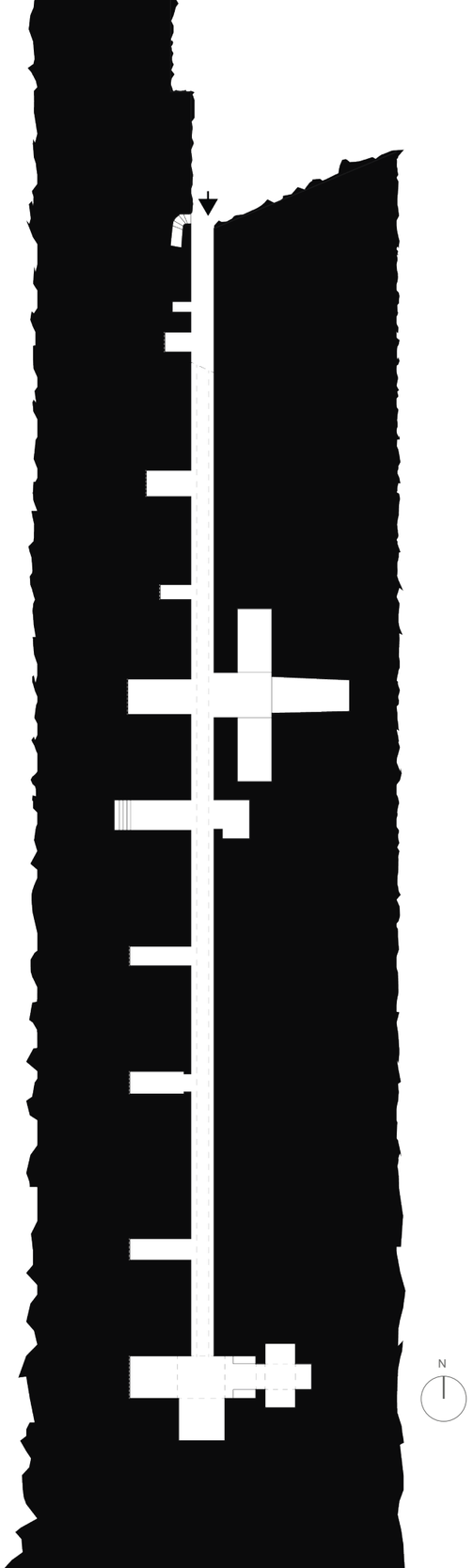




Figure 4 (left). Plan drawing of the Cave of the Sibyl. Scale 1:700m.

Figure 5 (above). Key plan map indicating approximate location of the ancient city of Cumae in Italy.

My visit to the cave of the Sibyl evoked a major effect this type of subterranean space has had on a collective human history. Besides providing a temporary shelter for the early nomadic human lifestyle, caves were loci for ritual activity: from shelters to sacred sites for burials, divine, or religious practices. Along with these customs, the cave walls assumed their own ritual identity once cave art became the first pictorial expression for the Western world.[1] Depictions of hunting scenes provided what Jorge Guillermo notes in *Sibyls: Prophecy and Power in the Ancient World* as a "blueprint for a long list of future ceremonial rituals."[2] As time passed, human methods of living evolved while the sacred identity of the cave remained intact. The ritual history of the cave of the Sibyl was revealed to me through Vergil's story of the Sibyl of Cumae providing divine consultations from inside her subterranean vessel.[3] Although the suspected use of the Sibyl's cave for divine consultation dissipated once the city of Cumae was captured by the Campanians[4], I see this cave not as an obsolete architectural space, but a living fragment of ritual history, and a living fragment of the Sibyl's myth.

My experience in the cave of the Sibyl located the myth of the Sibyl of Cumae in the physical world. I have always enjoyed listening to and reading stories, so the Sibyl of Cumae's lore provided an exciting opportunity for me to immerse myself in the story-worlds that she appears in. Acknowledging the mythical rootedness of the cave of the Sibyl, this thesis is not about re-imagining the Sibyl's barren cave or proposing a design for a site in the physical world. I do not wish to limit the Sibyl to an immobile site. The intent of this thesis is to study and interpret the meaning and effects of materials - that are spaces and objects - that became associated with the Sibyl of Cumae through time. I use my phenomenological encounter with the Sibyl's cave as a springboard into a research study that will examine various interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae in literature.

While I am just a tourist looking in, some questions I wished to answer throughout this research study included: *How has the Sibyl's identity been influenced by her material associations? How have interpretations of the Sibyl's occupation of spaces and things affected the representation of her character? How is myth conveyed in the physical world?* And more broadly: *How is architecture and spatial experience effectively conveyed through writing*? What became most important to me was leaning into my experience inside the Sibyl's cave, her ancient lore, and recognizing conceptual patterns in the shared practice of storytelling.

Throughout this process, I was constantly reminded of the strong connection between architecture and poetry, the universal nature of stories, and the complexity in conveying spatial experience through writing. The site for this thesis, if any, is the accumulation of words I have gathered from many, interesting poets, and writers. So, I extend my deepest gratitude to writers including Vergil, Ovid, Petronius, Mary Shelley, T.S. Eliot, Sylvia Plath and G.M. Hopkins who have opened a portal for me to see different versions of a Sibyl's material presence, and the incomparable influence an ancient figure like the Sibyl of Cumae possesses to inspire.

1 Jorge Guillermo, "Prophecy in the Ancient World," in *Sibyls: Prophecy and Power in the Ancient World* (New York: Overlook, 2013), 22.
2 Ibid, 23.
3 While "Virgil" is also extensively used by authors, I use the spelling "Vergil" throughout this thesis for his name.
4 Herbert William (H.W.) Parke and B.C. McGing, "Cumae," in *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1988), 81.



Figure 6. Elihu Vedder, *The Cumaean Sibyl*, 1876, oil on canvas. Detroit Institute of Arts Museum.

INTRODUCTION

Who was the Sibyl?

In *From Symbol to Sign*, writer and feminist Julia Kristeva describes the "image" of the Sibyl as an "infinitization of discourse."[5] She references the Sibyl entity while studying the changed perception of symbol to sign during the late Middle Ages where sign begins to evoke, "a collection of associated images and ideas."[6] Kristeva's view of the Sibyl harkens back to the difficulty in defining the Sibyl because her origin is unknown. Jorge Guillermo describes what became a succession of Sibyls as an "extremely small and yet very powerful group of independent women prophets."[7] While it has been established that there were multiple and different Sibyls throughout history, no original account of a Sibyl's identity and origin is knowingly available. Accounted evidence of their existence is dispersed amongst ancient poetry, stories, scholarly studies, or pseudo-Sibylline prophecies that have decomposed. Yet, Sibyls are believed to have emerged in pagan polytheism and survived dissolution to Christianity.[8] I will be focusing on one Sibyl in this thesis: the Sibyl of Cumae. I use the term *Sibyl* throughout this thesis to refer to the Sibyl of Cumae's shared title and designation with other Sibyls, but my use of this general designation is directed towards my study of her.

Consensuses gathered from the available evidence has established that the Sibyl was a highly respected individual whose lore was known as early as the sixth century BCE.[9] The word *Sibyl* has its own, long history. In short, the term originates from the Latin *Sibylla*, derived from Greek, and has been translated to multiple English terms ranging from *prophet*, *diviner*, *all-seer*, *priestess*, and *oracle*. While an etymological origin continues to be tossed between ancient Greek, North African, or Semitic, *Sibyl*, at some point in time and place, began to refer to a mortal woman from various pagan cultures who was in possession of and consulted for her divine knowledge.[10] A Sibyl's divine knowledge was directly conferred upon her by gods that inspired future predictions for her to communicate with the human population. This concern with the future and intrigue in differences between life and death came with human evolution. This led to the developing belief of animism that acknowledges the existence of an unseen and uncontrollable universal, spiritual force in the world. As these spiritual beliefs were active in classical antiquity, the Sibyl assumed a significant role because her prophetic abilities provided partial access to omnipresent messages from the gods.[11] It has been noted that the Sibyl was not a possessed vessel that was talked through by gods like the Oracle of Delphi, who was a separate divine figure.[12] Instead, the Sibyl maintained her own personhood while revealing her prophecies. The content of a Sibylline prophecy would address the world more generally, concerning world impacting events like wars, natural disasters, to mass diseases.[13] At the time, the Sibyl would deliver her prophetic verses within

5 Julia Kristeva, "From Symbol to Sign," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi, trans. Sean Hand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 67-68.

6 Kristeva, "From Symbol to Sign," 72.

7 Guillermo, "Introduction," *Sibyls*, 10.

8 Guillermo, "The Fusion of Pagan and Christian Traditions," 197-201.

9 Jessica L. Malay, "Sibylline Heritage," in *Prophecy and Sibylline Imagery in the Renaissance: Shakespeare's Sibyls* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.

10 Guillermo, "Introduction," 11.

11 Guillermo, "Prophecy in the Ancient World," 24-26.

12 Malay, "Sibylline Heritage," 4.

13 This is based on remaining evidence gathered from the pseudo-Sibylline oracles.

sacred spaces, particularly the cave for the Sibyl of Cumae. In this subterranean vessel, she would prophesy in various rituals but her most recognized methods have been writing on oak leaves and using her voice to chant riddled allegories.

In *Different Spaces*, Michel Foucault describes what the works of Gaston Bachelard taught about space: that we do not live in an "empty space, but, on the contrary, in a space that is laden with qualities, a space that may also be haunted by fantasy."[14] The cave of the Sibyl is one such site haunted by the fantasies of myth, poetry, and fictitious stories. Since the cave's discovery in 1932 by the archaeologist Amedeo Maiuri, this site became attached to the Sibyl of Cumae's character following the famous reference to her in Vergil's *Aeneid*.[15] Particularly, ancient authors like Vergil, Ovid, and Petronius have influenced a modern conception of the Sibyl of Cumae as an isolated misfortune. From Vergil's account, the Sibyl of Cumae was secluded inside of a cave where she practiced her established ritual of writing prophecies on oak leaves.[16] After transmitting her prophecies to writing, she would open the entrance to the cave where wind would invade and transport her prophecies to the visitor. However, wind would scatter the order of her prophecies which forced the visitor to make their own sense of the newly disordered words. From Ovid's account in the *Metamorphoses*, the Greek god Apollo attempted to bribe the Sibyl of Cumae with eternal life for her virginity. After she refused his offer and already asked for as many years of life as dust particles she held in her hand, she was sabotaged into aging up to one thousand years, without eternal youth. What would be left of the Sibyl through this transformation is her voice. From Petronius's account in the *Satyricon*, the Sibyl of Cumae was seen as a shrunken body confined inside an ampulla, ruminating on the idea of death compelled by her immanent aging.

Thousands of years later, the Sibyl of Cumae's character became newly interpreted as an absent presence. In the science fiction novel, *The Last Man*, Romantic novelist Mary Shelley conveys the Sibyl's leaves as prophecies that foretell a plague that causes a post-apocalyptic world during the twenty-first century. In the sonnet *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, English poet Gerard Manley (G.M.) Hopkins conveys the Sibyl's leaves as materials of prophetic authority that spell out an event of evening turning into hellish darkness. In the epigraph of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Petronius's ancient story of the Sibyl suspended inside an ampulla begins to foreshadow an inescapable wasteland. Without direct address, the Sibyl's confinement in Petronius's ampulla is evoked by Sylvia Plath's incorporation of a bell jar in her only novel as a metaphor of a young woman experiencing the entrapment of gender norms in 1950s America. Stories like this have amassed the Sibyl of Cumae's character into something beyond myth or a corporeal presence, and into something very material, but at the discretion of interpretation.

These literary works have influenced me to trace through time how the Sibyl of Cumae has been increasingly isolated and detached from a personal identity, while simultaneously becoming increasingly associated with material entities including the cave, dust, ampulla, leaves, cage, and bell jar. Considering this, the intent of this thesis will be to examine interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae's character in these seven texts by focusing on the sense of isolation her associated materials evoke across two different periods: antiquity and the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. I will take a close, critical look at alternative ways the select authors have endowed the Sibyl with a material presence and the ways spatial, temporal, and gendered characteristics from the texts have eclipsed the notion of her personal identity.

14 Michel Foucault and James D Faubion, "Different Spaces," *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, 177.

15 Richard C. Monti, "THE TOPOGRAPHICAL AND LITERARY EVIDENCE FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SIBYL'S CAVE AT CUMAE," *Vergilius* (1959-) 37, (1991): 39.

16 Parke and McGing, "Cumae," 82-83.

Part 1 The Sibyl of Cumae's Presence: In the selected readings from classical antiquity, the Sibyl of Cumae is a present character designated to alternate forms of vessels. Focusing on the *Aeneid*, the *Metamorphoses*, and the *Satyricon*, I select the cave, the hand holding dust, and the ampulla from these stories as three material entities to study the trope of interiority that their spatial and material characteristics imply. I suggest these material entities render an embodied form of isolation. To examine this, I look at ways the notion of interiority imposes characteristics of immobility onto the Sibyl's character where she cannot independently dwell, age, or die in the stories.

Part 2 The Sibyl of Cumae's Absence: In the selected modern readings, the Sibyl of Cumae assumes an absent presence as authors incorporate varied material objects to stand in for her character. Reading *The Last Man*, *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, *The Waste Land*, and *The Bell Jar*, I consider the writers' references to leaves, the cage, and the jar as materials associated with the Sibyl's character. Located within post-apocalyptic, hellish, wasteland, and 1950s woman's worlds, I distinguish qualities of decay, silence, and visibility from the Sibyl's associated objects to study the concept of isolation within each of these other worlds. I suggest these three qualities act as driving, thematic forces in each narrative. To realize this, I conduct an annotative analysis of selected passages from the texts to recognize the prominent, physical manifestations of decay, silence, and visibility across settings, objects, and characters.

I conclude that while both eras of writing convey isolation in varied ways, the readings from antiquity fixate this towards the Sibyl's corporeal presence while the modern readings incorporate it as a driving thematic force to inspire new creation. These multiple story-worlds ultimately reveal how the Sibyl of Cumae has amassed to something much beyond the constraints of a corporeal presence by proxy of objects and architecture of the physical world.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is separated into two parts of historic time. Each one examines literary interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae from Greek and Roman traditions and her growing material presence in literary works written from a Western perspective. Part 1 looks at interpretations of the Sibyl in ancient history considering texts from classical antiquity. Part 2 looks at interpretations of the Sibyl in modernity considering texts written between the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. A total of seven texts were selected to study the interpretation of the Sibyl of Cumae's character. These distinct times – antiquity and the turn of the nineteenth century – have aided in establishing a feasible scope while also showing a diverse evolution of the Sibyl's presence and the varied objects, themes, and settings each writer associates with her. Below I outline the methods to my study.

1. First-hand Observations: Phenomenological Encounter in the Cave of the Sibyl

My phenomenological encounter in the cave of the Sibyl provided me with a unique perspective to approach my thesis research. First, it provided a physical and material dimension to the stories of the Sibyl I became exposed to. The cave offered the embodied experience of some of the Sibyl's stories, particularly ones by Vergil and Mary Shelley, where I was able to see, hear, smell, and touch my surrounding environment, and use this as a point of departure for my own writing. Additionally, as a young woman and a student of architecture, my critical engagement with spatial qualities of the site brought an additional dimension to this study. These qualities consisted of darkness, being underground, fragmented materials, and the elongated but narrow scale of the interior. These qualities of the cave revealed a sense of interiorization where I began to question how this associated space affected the perception of the Sibyl's character throughout history. My phenomenological experience with the cave of the Sibyl established a connection between the poetic language of writers I was exposed to and the material presence of the Sibyl that would become the basis for my study.

2. Existing Research on Sibyls from Classical Antiquity

To write a thesis that is most concerned with studying interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae in literature, I was driven to learn more about her history. I have read books, legends, and poetry from classical antiquity, but also modern research papers, books, and articles written about Sibyls. Legends were important documents since their suspected circulation between vast amounts of people left a lasting impression of the Sibyl in modern time, particularly the Sibyl of Cumae in ancient Rome. The modern research done on Sibyls presented me the groundwork that has already been established. I looked closely at works on Sibyls by Herbert William Parke, Jorge Guillermo, Julia Kristeva, and Edwyn Bevan. These existing works led me to primary sources of English translations of surviving, ancient texts that have been frequently referenced in modern Sibylline studies. This includes works by Platonic philosopher Heraclides of Pontus, Roman scholar Marcus Terentius Varro, Greek geographer and traveler Pausanias, and teacher of rhetoric and Christian apologist Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius. These existing works helped piece together the historical details I address in Part 1 of this thesis where I study the more general Sibyl entity from paganism through Christianity.

It is important to note that this thesis is not an all-encompassing history of the Sibyl. While several Sibyls have been recognized throughout history, my research focuses on the Sibyl of Cumae. I

selected the Sibyl of Cumae because of her strong association to my on-site experience inside the Sibyl's cave and because she has been addressed with the most palpable detail in modern day studies on Sibyls. The historical research I did helped me develop a critical awareness of recurring characteristics pertaining to a Sibylline identity. This includes a Sibyl's liminal character and specifically, the Sibyl of Cumae's association with material objects that possess qualities relating to isolation and interiority. The idea of liminality or being in between two ends and qualities relating to interiority resonated greatly with me as a young woman reader. I developed a strong connection with the Sibyl of Cumae's history by pursuing these two characteristics in my study. This ultimately resulted in the driving topics for Part 1 of this thesis: understanding the eclipsing effects of the Sibyl of Cumae's liminal character and her designation to vessel-type spaces on a personal identity.

3. Choosing Literary Case Studies: Antiquity and the Nineteenth to Mid-Twentieth Century

I selected specific texts to study the Sibyl of Cumae's material presence. I chose to focus on literature because the memory associated with written work has greatly influenced and shaped how the Sibyl of Cumae has been remembered today. The ancient stories I selected to study include Vergil's *Aeneid* (19 BCE), Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 AD), and Petronius's *Satyricon* (first century AD). I was introduced to these stories during my site visit to the cave of the Sibyl and through the historical research on Sibyls I conducted after. I selected these specific stories because they are the most frequently referenced ancient stories regarding the Sibyl of Cumae and directly address her character. I use these three stories as three case studies in this thesis, but I am not the first to study the Sibyl in these texts. There have been papers and articles published that have critiqued the identification of the cave of the Sibyl in Cumae in relation to the cave descriptions from the *Aeneid*, particularly since the cave's discovery from the twentieth century onwards.[17] There are some articles written between the twentieth and some from the current century discussing the role of the Sibyl in the *Satyricon*.[18] Within these works, the story from Ovid is often mentioned to give context for the Sibyl's character. The existing works helped support my critical approach in reading these three stories and encouraged me to continue to think critically about the effects of interpretation and spatial associations for the Sibyl of Cumae's character.

I selected the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century of English writing as my study ground for Part 2 of this thesis. This is because the nineteenth century was a major time of change in forms of self-expression. Particularly, from the industrial revolution onwards, writing methods were changing as writers began to express the inner self and more individuality through their writing. New and inspiring works emerged out of this. The four texts I chose to study from this time include Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), Gerard Manley Hopkins's *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves* (1886), T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963). These four modern texts allowed me to expand and diversify my scope, going beyond retellings of the ancient stories. I chose these specific texts because they directly incorporated material objects that could be connected back to the Sibyl of Cumae's character in the selected readings from antiquity. This includes the cave, leaves, and similar variations to the ampulla. However, the Sibyl becomes an absent versus present character in the modern texts. In this way, both literary clusters are uniquely united and contrasted by their interpretations of this Sibyl. It is important to

17 See J.H. Waszink's "Vergil and the Sibyl of Cumae" (1948); Raymond J. Clark's "Vergil, 'Aeneid', 6.40 ff. and the Cumaean Sibyl's Cave" (1977); Karl Galinsky's "Aeneas at Cumae" (2009); Bill Gladhill et. al "Walking through Elysium: Vergil's underworld and the poetics of tradition" (2020).

18 See William Arrowsmith's "Luxury and Death in the Satyricon" (1966); H.D. Cameron's "The Sibyl in the 'Satyricon'" (1970); L. Richardson Jr.'s "Trimalchio and the Sibyl at Cumae" (2002).

note that I am not the first to critically analyze the Sibyl in these texts either. There have been articles, papers, and book chapters speculating on the role and meaning of the Sibyl within these texts while also referencing the stories from antiquity.[19] I apply a unique architectural lens to my study by specifically focusing on distinguishing the effects of spatial and material associations for the Sibyl's personal identity in her ancient and modern interpretations.

4. Themes of Isolation: Developing a Critical Perspective to Study the Material Presence of the Sibyl

After reading the chosen texts, I established a critical perspective to study the Sibyl's material presence. I recognized a shared theme of isolation across all seven texts. While the Sibyl occupied various forms of vessels in the readings from antiquity, her transcendence into other worlds in varied forms of material objects in the modern readings told a similar story: an idea of separation.

Positioning myself within a critical and feminist perspective, I looked at diverse ways that isolation had been conveyed within each text. In the readings from antiquity, I study how isolation is embodied considering qualities of interiority and immobility that vessel-type objects and spaces impose on the Sibyl. In the modern readings, I study how isolation is a driving thematic force that is invoked by the qualities of material objects associated with the Sibyl. This includes *decay* from the leaves, *silence* from the cage, and the trope of *visibility* from the jar.

I found parallels to these themes of the Sibyl's feminine identity to decay, age, and visibility in feminist critique from the twentieth century, spanning Plath's journal entries and works by Iris Marion Young, Alexandra Kollontai, and Hannah Arendt that touches on labour, housework, and preservation. These discourses enhanced my critical perspective with themes that inflected my interpretations of the Sibyl in the selected texts.

To further support the theme of isolation, I studied the evolving concept of isolation during the nineteenth to twentieth century period in British and American contexts. In the first chapter of Part 2, I attempt to connect the evolving concept of isolation introduced by the industrial revolution to my study of the Sibyl in the works by Shelley, Hopkins, Eliot, and Plath. I consider the emotion of loneliness and adjacent themes of the individual, interiority, and post-apocalyptic visions as contributors to the overarching concept of isolation at the time. These themes parallel the Sibyl's past, especially her ambiguous individual traits, pronounced interiority, and apocalyptic themes in her prophecies. Pivotal resources to this part of my research include works on loneliness by Fay Bound Alberti and Clark E. Moustakas, Romantic theory in M. H. Abrams's *The Mirror and The Lamp*, Stefan Muthesius's work concerning the Victorian domestic home of the nineteenth century, Julie Park's writing on the inner self and novel objects, and studies on the apocalyptic genre in Victorian writing by Kevin Mills and Ralph Pordzik.

Finally, I read letters and journal entries authored by Shelley, Hopkins, Eliot, and Plath. This history of Romantic interiority provided greater context into what may have influenced their interpretations of the Sibyl in their texts.

19 See Helen H. Bacon's "The Sibyl in the Bottle" (1958); John C. Hampsey's "Trapped in Sibyl's Jar" (1990); Emily Gowers' "Virgil's Sibyl and the 'Many Mouths' Cliché" (2005); Timothy Ruppert's "Time and the Sibyl in Mary Shelley's 'The Last Man'" (2009); Julie Carr's "Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Reck of the Moment" (2008); Ila Ahlawat's "The Sibyl and the Hanging Cage" (2021).

5. Distinguishing Material Proxies of the Sibyl: Conducting Research Through a Material Lens

After reading the literary case studies, I realized the associations made with the Sibyl and the physical world: a material object or space can be associated with the Sibyl in each of the texts. This includes a cave from the *Aeneid*, a hand holding dust from the *Metamorphoses*, an ampulla from the *Satyricon*, leaves in *The Last Man* and *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, a cage in *The Waste Land*, and a glass jar in *The Bell Jar*. While my study focuses on recognizing a theme of isolation through writing, these six objects or spaces provided me with an architectural lens to recognize isolation considering materiality, scale, and spatial experience.

6. Theoretical Research to Develop Meaning: On Interpretation and Translation

Since there is no original document by the Sibyl, I had to rely on interpretations. And since the readings from antiquity were originally written in Latin, I had to rely on English translations of these texts. Considering this, I did theoretical research to help guide my approach to studying an ambiguous and interpretative subject like a Sibyl. Some pivotal readings for my approach to working interpretatively and based on translations include Umberto Eco's theory of literature in *The Open Work*, the act of reading diffractively from Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Paul Ricœur's opinions on translation, and the importance of history discussed in T.S. Eliot's critical essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. Because the study of the Sibyl of Cumae is such a rich subject trapped between histories, these complex works aided me to understand how the past continues to shape the present, forming a fluid dialogue between them. Like Eco's reference to open work, I suggest that literary work is not fixed nor closed but invites dynamic interactions with the reader through interpretation.[20] While interpretation is subjective, Barad's approach to reading diffractively suggests a fluid approach to reading where thoughts and ideas are read "through one another" to allow for greater contemplation rather than rejections based on difference.[21] These readings heightened my awareness for recognizing alternative interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae and finding an engaging way to study them simultaneously.

7. Visual Research: Visual Art and Hand Sketching

I also conducted visual research through hand sketching. While I focused on studying literary interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae, existing art ranging from paintings, illustrations, frescoes, and engravings provided a visual dimension to the two-dimensional version of the Sibyl I was interacting with the most. By looking at art from various periods in modern times, this revealed the lasting impression material entities including the *cave*, *leaves*, and *dust* had on the Sibyl of Cumae's character.

Hand sketching offered a personal and embodied dimension to my own interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae. During my research process, I sketched the material objects I was analyzing from the selected texts including the cave, the hand holding dust, ampulla, leaves, cage, and bell jar. I employed different drawing perspectives to envision these vessel-type spaces and objects in the way the Sibyl was imagined inhabiting them by the authors. To do this, I used the first-person point of view as well as worm's-eye view. These two drawing perspectives helped me envision the essence of the authors' interpretations of the Sibyl being displayed, and ways this has imposed constraints on her character.

20 Umberto Eco, "The Poetics of the Open Work," in *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1-23.

21 Karen Michelle Barad, "Introduction: The Science and Ethics of Mattering," in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 30. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822388128.

Additionally, since the Sibyl was increasingly associated with longevity through her lore, each of my illustrations convey a temporal aspect of the material object of study. For example, I portray the cave going deeper into its repetitive interior and the hand holding dust as increasingly disintegrating and dispersed in similar manner to the Sibyl's body that was imagined withering away. I also portray the Sibyl's body becoming increasingly indistinguishable from the ampulla, a leaf undergoing a process of decay, and the cage and the bell jar as singular, static objects that represent the Sibyl's imagined confinement inside them.

While I was examining the material tropes of decay, silence, and visibility through selected passages in the four readings from modernity, I hand sketched objects, settings, and characters to visually convey my analyses. In this way, I was able to grasp their strong, material presence in the texts by focusing on drawing in various scales ranging from a strand of grass, human hands, to a landscape. Additionally, I employed different drawing perspectives to evoke the material quality I was studying within each text. For selected passages in *The Last Man*, I used the worm's-eye view to envision the decay that was instigated by the plague. This view highlights the essence of nature's triumph over the decaying human condition. For selected passages in *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, I employed a perspective view of an abstracted distance. This was meant to evoke the decay that Hopkins conveys in the large-scale event of night overtaking the evening time. The abstract views I sketched of a black hole, a gradient of black and white, and the human mind are meant to suggest the sense of the night, or darkness, consuming the world. For selected passages in *The Waste Land*, I employed a perspective view of varied settings from the poem to evoke silence. The settings I drew include a dry and dead landscape, a crowd of solitary people walking, and an empty chapel. The obscure and bare qualities of the sketches enhance the mood of silence by portraying silence as an empty space. Lastly, for selected passages in *The Bell Jar*, I used a first-person perspective view to adopt the view of the main character in the book. By adopting the first-person perspective, I was able to envision the varying qualities of visibility in the spaces the main character experiences throughout the novel.

PART 1. THE SIBYL OF CUMAE'S PRESENCE

Classical Antiquity

The Eclipsing Effects of Liminality and Vessel-type Objects or Spaces

Despite the Sibyl of Cumae's uncertain history, ancient authors had little restrictions in imagining her presence. Consequently, references to Sibyls in works by authors like Varro, Pausanias, Vergil, and Ovid have entrenched certain characteristics that have established the Sibyl's presence as very material, but with little emphasis on her personal identity. As a result, the Sibyl of Cumae became a liminal character associated with books, dried leaves, caves, dust, and an ampulla. These objects and spaces are individual fragments, but once associated with her, they became her material presence. How have liminality and these associated materials affected the Sibyl of Cumae's identity? Looking at ancient studies on the Sibyl entity as well as interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae in ancient stories, the following section will examine how the liminal quality of the Sibyl's character and her association with the cave, dust, and ampulla have overshadowed her personal identity.

In the first chapter, I resurface some of the most prominent ancient studies regarding the Sibyl entity from Greek and Roman cultures to distinguish characteristics that enforced a liminal quality to the Sibyl of Cumae's character. I use the term *liminal* to describe the status of being confined in between two ends, without fully reaching either. For a Sibyl, this includes existing in between mortal and immortal, myth and history, and the past and future. Despite adopting a liminal persona, the Sibyl of Cumae was remembered as very material. In the second chapter, I focus on the Sibyl of Cumae's association with the cave, a hand holding dust, and ampulla in Vergil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Petronius's *Satyricon*. I examine the impositions of these vessel-type objects and spaces for the Sibyl's presence in these stories. To do this, I look at how their physical qualities interiorize the Sibyl and contribute to an embodied isolation: the cave secludes the Sibyl, dust disintegrates the Sibyl's body, and the ampulla confines the Sibyl.

THE LIMINAL CHARACTER OF SIBYLS

In the following section, I will distinguish four traits that contribute to the Sibyl of Cumae's liminal character including her indeterminate age, impersonal name, increasing recognition in ancient Rome, and adoption in the emergence of Christianity. From the fourth century BCE through Christianity, writers denied the Sibyl a personal name and age by imbuing the word *Sibyl* with characteristics that resulted in a universalization of the term. For instance, although she was given presence by association to various landmarks and cities, these fragmented associations threatened to eclipse her personal identity. Similarly, a Sibyl's age became detached from her body and assumed by the information that could be gathered from her wide-spreading prophecies at the time. Consequently, the Sibyl was deprived of being remembered as an individual who lived and died but instead became a transcendental entity. At the same time, due to a Sibyl's oracular abilities, she resides in between myth and history. The legend of the Sibylline books suggests the Sibyl of Cumae had a direct impact in ancient Roman politics, despite the only trace left of her was the book that, in time, was eventually destroyed. This only left an uncertain trace of her existence. Additionally, a Sibyl's prophetic custom draws upon the past to foretell the future. In this way, the emergence of Christianity confined the Sibyl just in between a past, pagan religion and a future, monotheistic religion. As a result, the Sibyl's voice was not lost but repurposed for the dispersion of a single God's messages. These three, in-between states – immortal and mortal, myth and history, past and future – exhibit the liminal quality of the Sibyl of Cumae's character that has seemingly muddled the notion of her personal identity.

Universalizing the Sibyl: Impersonal Name and Ageless Age

A Sibyl's impersonal name and ageless age contribute to the liminal quality of the Sibyl of Cumae's character. With the two, she adopts a status in between immortal and mortal. It is not known for certain what a Sibyl's personal name was, and her age has not been defined by a birth to death trajectory but by details of her prophecies that were wide spreading at the time. According to Parke's study on Sibyls in classical antiquity, the word *Sibylla,* from Greek and Latin origin, was initially applied in the singular form as a personal name until the nearing end of the fourth century BCE.[22] The suspected first written reference to a Sibyl was found in *Moralia*, written by the Greek historian Plutarch. In this text, Plutarch recounts a comment made about a Sibyl by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus: "the Sibyl with raving mouth utters things mirthless and unadorned and unperfumed, and her voice carries through a thousand years because of the god who speaks through her."[23] If this was the Sibyl's initial account, it ingrained the idea of name and age as something impersonal for a Sibyl, and the voice as the only part of her identity that she has agency over.

The speculation on a Sibyl's indeterminate age and name can be found in Heraclides's and Varro's ancient works that survive in recounted fragments, as well as Pausanias's surviving travelogue of ancient Greece. These ancient accounts indicate a growing, universalization of the Sibyl as she became understood as a designated title, associated with cities, and assumed multiple identities during prophetic rituals.

"Sibyl" and Designated Titles

In the ancient world, *Sibyl* became a designated title for female prophets. In *Concerning oracle-centres*, a lost survey of oracle centres across the Mediterranean, Plato's pupil Heraclides of Pontus distinguished *Sibylla* as a term that refers to multiple, mortal women who possessed divine knowledge. This has been widely considered the first work to suggest that there was not one, but multiple *Sibylla*. Heraclides's work exists as a cited fragment in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* of his own assertions of multiple Sibyls: "And there is another Sibyl also of Erythrae, called *Herophile*."[24] In this way, *Sibylla* became a professional title that was passed down to future women in possession of divine knowledge. This title designation would be remembered by later centuries, as recognized in Isidore, bishop of Seville's translated Latin words: *Sibyl* is, "the name of a function, not a proper noun."[25] Thus, Heraclides's fundamental work transformed the way in which Sibyls were recognized beyond the individual, but rather a network of individuals.

"Sibyl" and Multiple Cities

While *Sibyl* became *Sibyls*, their names also became associated with multiple cities in the ancient world. For example, in an incomplete collection of books regarding the history of Rome from the first century BCE, Marcus Terentius Varro created the first, chronological list of Sibyls related to cities. Parke notes that the Sibyls gained legendary connections to cities by the large production and dissemination

22 Parke and McGing, "The Ancient Scholarly Sources for the Identity of Sibyls," 23.

23 Charles H. Kahn and Heraclitus, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 45.

24 Clement of Alexandria, "Book 1," in *Stromateis. Books 1-3*, trans. John Ferguson (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 106 (1.21.108 [3] reference to line).

25 Isidore, and Stephen A Barney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, UK; Cambridge University Press, 2006), 181.

of their prophecies across the ancient world.[26] Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* was a collection of books about religious customs in Roman life at the time ranging from priesthoods, cult places, sacred ceremonies, to deities of the pantheon.[27] In this work, it is believed that Varro recorded ten Sibyls, with notes on sources mixed between Greek and Roman that go beyond scholarly prose and use poetry and legends as relevant evidence. Based on Lactantius's recount in *Divine Institutes*, Varro's list included the following Sibyls:

1. the Persian Sibyl (source noted as Nicanor's writing on the history of Alexander of Macedon)
2. the Libyan Sibyl (source noted as Euripides – a Greek tragedian's writing in the prologue to *Lamia*)
3. the Delphian Sibyl (source noted as Chrysippus – a Greek philosopher's writing in his *De Divinatione*)
4. the Cimmerian Sibyl (sources noted as Naevius – a Roman poet's writing in *Punic War* and Piso's writing in *Annales*)
5. the Erythraean Sibyl (source noted as Apollodorus of Erythrae – a Greek writer who designated Sibyl as his "fellow-citizen")
6. the Samian Sibyl (source noted as Eratosthenes – a Greek mathematician and poet who located references to the Sibyl in ancient Samian records)
7. the Cumaean Sibyl (source noted as the legend of the Sibylline books in Rome)
8. the Hellespontine Sibyl (source noted as Heraclides of Pontus)
9. the Phrygian Sibyl (source not specified by Lactantius)
10. the Tiburtine Sibyl (source not specified by Lactantius)[28]

This surviving evidence assigned Sibyls to different landmarks. Consequently, this would have localized each Sibyl to specific sites where they likely had different methods of conducting divine practice. For example, Jessica Malay recognizes multiple Sibyls in her observations on prophecy and Sibylline imagery in the Renaissance period as, "some wandered the earth, but others inhabited a particular place – cave or a rock."[29] The Sibyl of Cumae was one such Sibyl designated to a cave in the ancient city of Cumae, Italy. Considering Varro's list of Sibyls, the Sibyl's name became rooted in the real world which further universalized each Sibyl by separating them to different landmarks.

"Sibyl" and Multiple Names

While Sibyls were thought to have resided in different cities, it is also believed that they referred to multiple names during prophetic practice. In the surviving travelogue of the Greek mainland *Description of Greece*, Greek traveler and geographer Pausanias recognized the growing respect of Sibyls from his interactions with local communities. In this way, Pausanias learned more about a Sibyl's assumption of multiple names during prophetic practice. For example, in the travelogue, Pausanias associated the Delphic Sibyl to the name *Herophile* - this is in reference to a hymn to Apollo where the Sibyl referred to multiple names during her practice including "Herophile," "Artemis," and the "wife,"

26 Parke and McGing, "The Ancient Scholarly Sources for the Identity of Sibyls," 23.
27 Alessandra Rolle, "10 Coming Home: Varro's Antiquitates rerum divinarum and the Canonisation of Roman Religion," in *Canonisation as Innovation* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2022), 268.
28 Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius, "Book 1: False Religion," in *Divine Institutes*, trans. Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 70-71 (1.6.8 reference to line).
29 Malay, "Sibylline Heritage," 16.

"sister," or "daughter of Apollo."[30] If the Sibyl referred to herself by multiple names, this positioned her further into a liminal state by adopting multiple personas. However, it has been noted that a Sibyl's custom was to begin her prophecy by expressing herself as her own person, by name and paternity first. This custom secured her own identity even if she were to adopt these multiple names. This shows, in Roman statesperson Cicero's words from *De Divinatione*, that the Sibyl is someone who, "is not frenzied, who is painstaking, not crazy."[31]

"Sibyl" and Uncertain Age

In addition to an undefined personal name, a Sibyl's age remains uncertain. In these early periods, age was not betrayed by her body, but rather by the information that could be gathered from her recorded prophecies. Sibylline prophecies mixed past and present details resulting in a forecast of possible futures. Typically, a Sibyl would begin by addressing a much earlier era and end on her final, future message. Considering this chronological custom, Sibyls were believed to have lived long before delivering a prophecy because of their knowledge of the distant past. In knowing events of both the past and the future, this positioned the Sibyl in a liminal zone between the two. Moreover, Parke notes the vague linguistic structure of the Sibyls' prophecies that mixed ambiguous metaphors and facts.[32] This ambiguous characteristic created a pattern of knowledge that could be easily passed down to future generations. Around the same time, *Chresmologoi*, which were tellers of oracles, also contributed to the uncertainty of a Sibyl's age. These individuals possessed no prophetic abilities but interpreted Sibyls' oracles to share with the public. While this would have spread knowledge of the Sibyls' prophecies, it also prolonged their memory. As a result, age for any Sibyl could be conceived as transcendental.

The characteristics of indeterminate age and impersonal name concoct the Sibyl of Cumae's identity into a liminal state between mortal and immortal. Any personal details of the Sibyl have been found in re-tellings of original documents. Considering possible forgeries, over-summaries, or re-wordings, this may have risked the entire credibility of any original work by the Sibyls. While continuing to rely on remaining fragments of evidence of the Sibyls written by others, it is only fitting to end this Sibylline *stromateis* with her own suspected address located in Pausanias's travelogue. Here, one of the Sibyls addresses her origin in what just may have been her own words:

> "By birth I am half a mortal and half a goddess,
> For my mother was an immortal nymph, but my father was a corn-eating man.
> By my mother's side I am Ida-born, but my fatherland was red Marpessus (sacred to the Mother) and the river Aidoneus."[33]

30 Pausanias, "Book Tenth – Phocis," in *Pausanias's Description of Greece – Volume 1*, trans. J.G. Frazer (Cambridge, U.K.: Trinity College, 1965), 516 (10.12.2-3 reference to lines).
31 Cicero, Marcus Tullius, "Divination Book II," in *Cicero. De senectute, De amicitia, De divination*, trans. W.A. (William Armistead) Falconer (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1923), 497 (2.54.112 reference to line).
32 Parke and McGing, "The Characteristics of Sibylline Oracles," 15.
33 Pausanias and Frazer, *Description of Greece,* 516 (10.12.3 reference to line).



Figure 7. Romeyn de Hooghe, *De Sibille van Cumae Sibylle Cumana*, 1688, print.

Legends of Sibyls further enforce the liminal quality of the Sibyl of Cumae's character. Particularly, the legend of the Sibylline books positioned the Sibyl of Cumae just in between myth and the history of ancient Rome. A legend is a story typically based on a historic event from the past that becomes widely believed and shared by people. Through its widespread knowledge, a legend can become remembered as historical but without exact authentication of facts.

Based on legend, the Sibyl of Cumae was the speculated carrier of Sibylline books in ancient Rome. According to *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote of an old wise woman who travelled by foot to offer Tarquinius Superbus, the final king of Rome, a collection of nine books of prophecies.[34] The King continuously refused to pay the Sibyl's asking price and she negotiated by burning one book after another. Superbus eventually surrendered and paid the original price for only three remaining books. Since then, the Sibyl vanished without a trace. The most critical detail emerging from

34 Dionysius, of Halicarnassus, "Book IV," in *The Roman antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, with an English translation by Ernest Cary, on the basis of the version of Edward Spelman, in seven volumes*, trans. Earnest Cary (William Heinemann; Cambridge Mass: Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1937), 465 (4.62.2; 4.62.3; 4.62.4 reference to lines).

this legend was the manifestation of a material fragment left behind of the Sibyl's existence; the book assumed a strong material presence of the Sibyl at this point.

Guarding Sibylline Books

Since at least the second century BCE, a collection of Sibylline books were heavily guarded by the Roman state.[35] Modern day studies on Sibyls refer to the Sibylline books as "original" Sibylline prophecies that were officially guarded in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill.[36] For instance, Malay notes that Sibylline prophecies were without a doubt "political."[37] The Romans understood the influence of the Sibyls' prophecies considering they kept a collection confined. In fact, in *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius notes the unreachability of the Sibyl of Cumae's prophecies, calling them, "state secrets."[38] Their consultation was only made available to a specific board of priests known as the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, or guarders of the Sibylline books. This expanded to fifteen priests by the first century CE.[39] Their consultations with the books would inspire ritual enactments in the city like a ceremony, sacrifice, or construction of a temple for the worship of deities. While the Sibyl assumed this new, political status in Rome through this collection of prophecies, they became central documents for Roman politics and life. The books continued to be referred to in times of crises, natural or human-induced, to help guide Roman state decisions. The widespread circulation of the Sibyls' prophecies in ancient Greek local communities indicated their major public influence for the Roman state. As a result, the Roman state enforced regulations on Sibylline prophecies by forbidding public possession or destructing collections.[40] While this gatekeeping may have been in efforts to minimize public distress that could be brought by false and forged prophecies, it also suggested the book possessed only a prominent level of authority and truth through the Sibyl's associated authorship, which Guillermo notes were, "taken a great deal more seriously," than any false prophet.[41]

Destroying Sibylline Books

While adopting a high status in the Roman government, the Sibylline books were tragically burnt in a fire that destroyed the Temple of Jupiter in 83 BCE.[42] But given their developed reputation, a commission was appointed by the senate to gather a new set of prophecies. Parke notes that by the Augustan Age, the *quindecimviri* were required to copy any decomposing Sibylline prophecies for preservation and to store them in the new location of Apollo's temple on the Palatine Hill.[43] This meant that prophecies continued to be observed in Rome, but the question of authenticity of the new collection ultimately diminished their level of authority. As a result, the general consultation of Sibylline books diminished under succeeding Roman seats of power and the new adoption of Christianity. The fate of the new collection met the same ending as the majority of the original Sibylline books from the legend, when Roman General Flavius Stilicho ordered the prophetic books to be destroyed indefinitely around the late

35 Malay, "Sibylline Heritage," 7.
36 These "original" books are separate from the pseudo-Sibylline oracles that emerged in Christianity.
37 Malay, "Sibylline Heritage," 7.
38 Lactantius, "Book 1: False Religion," 71 (1.6.13 reference to line).
39 Malay, "Sibylline Heritage," 8.
40 Ibid, 18.
41 Guillermo, "Prophecy in the Ancient World," 40.
42 Malay, "Sibylline Heritage," 18.
43 Parke and McGing, "The *Libri Sibyllini*," 209-10.

fourth to early fifth century CE.[44]

The legend of the Sibylline books contributes to the establishment of the Sibyl of Cumae's growing material presence since it introduced her arrival in Rome not just by legend, but through the object of the book. At the same time, the legend further enforces the liminal quality of the Sibyl's character considering the Roman senate would have been presently interacting with the Sibylline books, while she remained absent in the city.

44 Malay, "Sibylline Heritage," 19.

Christianizing the Sibyl: The Sibyl's Voice Becomes an Accessory for Faith



Figure 8. Pietro Perugino, *Prophets and Sibyls*, ca. 1497-1500, fresco.

"*That day of wrath, that dreadful day,*
shall heaven and earth in ashes lay,
as David and the ***Sybil*** *say*."
- Thomas of Celano, *Dies Irae (Day of Wrath)*

The Christianization of Sibyls further entrenched a liminal gloss to the Sibyl of Cumae's character. The new religion positioned the Sibyl in between a pagan past and a monotheistic future religion. Like her respected uprising in Rome, the emergence of Christianity recognized the authority of the Sibyl's antiquated voice and paradoxically adopted it into the emerging religion.

The Importance of "Woman's Voice" in Prophecy

Women and prophecy are historically linked. Parke notes a deeply ingrained connection between the oracle site at Delphi, most often linked to the Greek god Apollo, and the great Mother Earth – known as *Ge* or *Gaia* by the Greeks.[45] Based on an oracle from the Sibylline books, *Magna Mater,* or the Roman goddess *Cybele*, was brought to Rome. The importation of this new cult following has been validated by the discovery of miniature figurines with distinct, full-bodied silhouettes across Europe that symbolized the healthy abundance of the Earth Mother.[46] These figures would be carried for ritual events across Western cultures, injecting a religious significance to the worship of this female deity. While representing the root of all creation, this positioned a female figure at an extreme level of authority and respect,

45 H.W. Parke, "The Origin of the Oracle," in *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), 7.
46 Guillermo, "Women and Prophecy," 66.

resulting in the earliest Greek oracles being consecrated to her.[47] These oracle centers would convey the Earth Mother's prophecies not just by anyone, but how Parke notes "through a woman's mouth."[48] Guillermo also notes this relation to the Earth Mother as a critical point when the Sibylline tradition began.[49] The rooting in the worship of the Earth Mother recoils the Sibyls' highly respected position in ancient Greece and Rome as carrying on a very well-established tradition of matriarchal authority through the woman's voice. This rendered a Sibyl's venerable voice impossible to ignore in the new religion.

Transforming Sibyls into Message-Bearers for Christ

It has been established that the Sibyls were not lost once they faced de-paganization. Instead, the emerging development of Christianity since the first century BCE adapted the Sibyls into motif message bearers of one God. But how did an entity enveloped in pagan religion find itself morphed into the anti-latter? The Sibyls' deeply established roots in the pagan past have been considered as reason for this. For example, Guillermo notes that when Emperor Constantine and Licinius issued the Edict of Milan which initiated the public acceptance of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the majority of individuals that were converting or adopting the new religion would have been brought up in a pagan past.[50] Because of this, it was likely that elements of the Sibyls' pagan past resurfaced in the developmental discussions on Christian religion.[51]

Under new regulations and changing leaders, ancestral rituals of the past ranging from cult followings to incantations were strained. But, over time, the line between the pagan past and Christianity became not so much a separation from the traditional ways but an adaptive transition, or using Guillermo's words, from pagan "cultic focus" to "Christian objects of devotion."[52] So, while Christianity became the official religion in the late Roman Empire, the new faith adopted the Sibyls in ways to fit within their own preaching to successfully establish itself to a similar level of serious credibility that the Sibyls possessed in the pagan world. The Sibyls maintained an authority recognized especially through the channels of extremely influential early Christian writings by authors like Lactantius, Clement of Alexandria, and Saint Augustine of Hippo. In fact, it has been noted that Lactantius showed a very prominent outlook on Sibyls as he referenced them above all other prophets from the Old Testament in *Divine Institutes*.[53] This suggests that works like Lactantius's focused more on incorporating the past with teachings rather than ignorance.[54] Through this adaptive phase, the Sibyls maintained an impressive presence that became very apparent in emerging modern art. From Michelangelo's renowned creation on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, to Pietro Perugino's fresco of prophets and Sibyls, the Sibyls appeared just inches beside the parallel, message-bearing Christian male prophets.

Mimicking Sibylline Prophecies

It is important to also mention the pseudo-Sibylline oracles here, which became mimicries of the original Sibylline books. Paradoxically existing as a key source of remaining Sibylline oracles but as

47 Guillermo, "Women and Prophecy," 66-67.
48 Parke, "The Origin of the Oracle," 10.
49 Guillermo, "Women and Prophecy," 67.
50 Guillermo, "The Fusion of Pagan and Christian Traditions," 185.
51 Guillermo, "Prophecy in the Ancient World," 53.
52 Guillermo, "The Fusion of Pagan and Christian Traditions," 196.
53 Ibid, 200.
54 Guillermo, "The Fusion of Pagan and Christian Traditions," 200-201.

newly authored translations, they are one of the most important historic documents that provide evidence of a cult following of Sibylline prophecy, pagan or Christian for the matter. This newly translated version was assembled by an unknown Byzantine scholar from around the sixth century AD.[55] In its current state, there are a total of twelve out of fourteen books.[56] The content is written from different times and in multiple styles of writing ranging from Greek and Roman pagan myth, Judeo-Christian legends, and early Christian references. With the miscellaneous passing down of sources by legends, oral accounts, and writing, authorship regarding these oracles is very ambiguous. From the content in these books, it became clear that early Christians noticed the important level of influence and malleability of a Sibyl-uttered oracular document. For example, Parke notes this reproduction of the Sibyls' oracles alluded to monotheistic values using Christian adaptations of characters including pagan gods transformed into human counterparts and indications of the Creation Story and the Last Judgement.[57] From this subjective interpretation, Sibylline prophecies still gained a major level of traction over time and would even be believed to be directly descendant from the original Sibylline books, or how Guillermo described as, "authentic revelations."[58] In this way, a stone was set in dispersing the new religion's ultimate genesis: the coming of Christ accompanied by the pagan born voice of the Sibyl. The authority of the Sibyl's voice ultimately became an accessory for faith here.

Considering the Sibyl of Cumae's uncertain age and name, legendary arrival in ancient Rome, and adaptation in Christianity, her uncertain past left voids of knowledge which have been attempted to be filled by others. From ancient scholars, early Christian apologists, to modern historians, this uncertain history has blurred the perception of the Sibyl's personal identity. However, through this process, she became strikingly more material by her growing association with the physical world, local legends, objects, and religious documents.

55 Parke and McGing, "The Characteristics of Sibylline Oracles," 1.
56 Books 1-8 and Books 11-14 have historically been recognized.
57 Parke and McGing, "The Characteristics of Sibylline Oracles," 11.
58 Guillermo, "The Fusion of Pagan and Christian Traditions," 200.

THE SIBYL OF CUMAE'S VESSELS:
CAVE, HAND HOLDING DUST, AMPULLA

Although the Sibyl of Cumae's character attained liminal qualities in literature, politics, and religion, she paradoxically assumed an increasing material presence. Since Vergil and Ovid, she has been significantly associated with a cave, a hand holding dust, and ampulla. In Vergil's *Aeneid*, the Sibyl of Cumae is beckoned from her cave to act as an intercessor and guide to the Underworld for the Trojan hero Aeneas. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the Greek god Apollo curses the Sibyl of Cumae to age a very long time, until disintegrating into dust. In Petronius's *Satyricon,* after a more-than-lifetime of aging, the Sibyl of Cumae is viewed by a group of boys as a speck of a body inside a suspended ampulla, wishing to die. While these objects have enhanced the material dimension of the Sibyl's presence, they have impeded her capability of dwelling, aging, and dying by immobilizing her body. In the following section, I will look at how the cave, ampulla, and dust immobilize the Sibyl's character by considering qualities of interiorization these materials enforce, thus conveying her presence as an embodiment of isolation. Considering diverse ways that the cave, ampulla, and dust envelop or transform the Sibyl's body, this reveals how she is paralyzed of moving, aging, and dying on her own terms.

First, I will examine how the Sibyl of Cumae is rendered immobile inside the cave in Vergil's story by considering how movement in its interior is instigated by others. To do this, I consider the cave's programmatic functions as a transitory site of pilgrimage for others, a heterotopia or "other" space for divine interaction, and the condition of illegibility that wind imposes on the Sibyl's leaf-written prophecies. Following Vergil's account, I look at how the Sibyl is portrayed as immobile in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by considering the concept of immanence in feminine aging that the material of dust implies in the story. This reveals a transformation which robs her of her own body. Finally, I look at how the Sibyl is immobilized in Petronius's story through her confinement inside an ampulla. To do this, I consider how the narrative portrays the Sibyl impeding death as she is depicted alive inside the ampulla without any indication that she will die. I also consider how the material of the ampulla enforces a sense of display onto the Sibyl which deprives her of privacy and agency, further contributing to her immobility. The Sibyl's confinement in the small scale of the ampulla leads me to recognize her growing association not only to vessel-type spaces, but the growing miniaturization of her character through the essence of interiority. In this way, the cave, dust, and ampulla each contribute to an entrenched representation of the Sibyl of Cumae's character as something that transmutes her body into material entities that embody isolation.

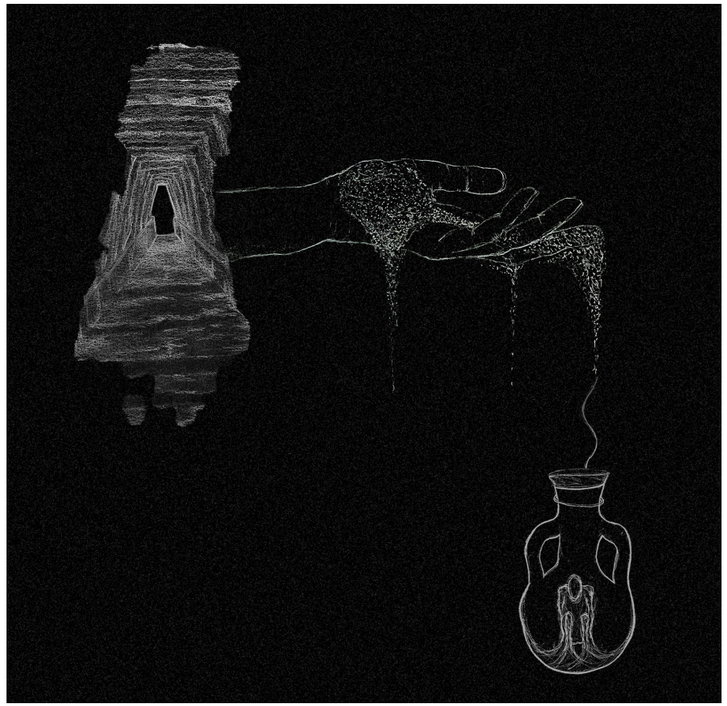


Figure 9. The cave, hand holding dust, and ampulla. Sketch by author.

Grounding the Sibyl: The Cave in the *Aeneid*

"The cave, then, stands as mouthpiece to the Sibyl as the Sibyl herself stands to Apollo."
- Emily Gowers in *"Virgil's Sibyl and the 'Many Mouths' Cliché (Aen. 6.625-7)"*

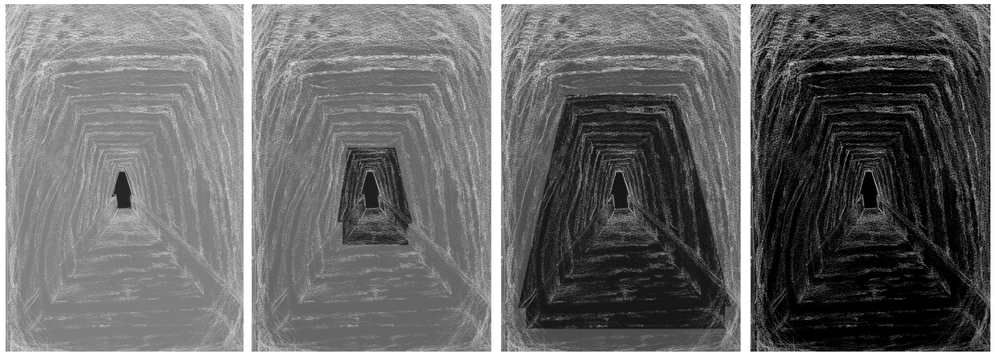


Figure 10. The Sibyl's cave. Sketch by author.

In the *Aeneid*, Vergil employs the cave to signify the Sibyl's presence. However, everything inside the cave moves by the hands of others, yet Vergil designates the cave as the Sibyl's permanent address by having the seer Helenus state: "When you reach Cumae, near the sacred lakes / And the deep-sighing forest of Avernus, / You'll see the raving Sibyl in a deep cave."[59] Suddenly, the Sibyl, who was traditionally linked to a nomadic lifestyle, became rooted in the idea of the cave.[60] In this way, a distinct tension emerged between her mobility and immobility, deepened by the exterior and interior conditions of her site. The cave is a chthonic architecture; its structure is made by subtracting and dividing material to form a void with a deep interior. It is invariably a site of banishment and exile or one of refuge. While Vergil does not indicate the extent of the Sibyl's seclusion in the cave, her repeated occupation of it in the poem suggests that the cave is a continuous refuge, only emerging from it when sought out. In this way, the Sibyl is an immobilized observer from the interior of the cave. She may see and act for others, but she remains unseen. When an exterior force penetrates the interior, such as natural elements or visitors, things are put into motion inside of the cave. Three examples that induce movement in the Sibyl's cave include Aeneas appointing the Sibyl as a guide, divine inspiration puppeteering the Sibyl's body, and the force of wind dispersing the Sibyl's leaf-written prophecies.

The Cave is for Others: Transitory Site of Pilgrimage

The Sibyl's cave in the *Aeneid* became a transitory pilgrimage site for others while the Sibyl remains fixed to it. For example, Vergil frames the Trojan hero Aeneas's visit to the Sibyl's cave with the proposition to meet with his dead father in the Underworld. Aeneas initiates mobility for the Sibyl in the cave by appointing her as his guide to travel outside of her cave to a new destination with him: the Underworld. Susanna Braund notes that the *Aeneid* is "strongly teleological" which suggests the essence of looking ahead to a future trajectory first in order to explain the purpose or meaning of a present condition.[61] For instance, the Sibyl of Cumae acts as a teleological figure in Vergil's poem since she can provide guidance based on her prophetic abilities. Considering Vergil's incorporation of themes of the future and the unknown in the poem, the Sibyl, whose ancient lore is so closely tied to prophecy, was assigned primarily two advisory roles in the story: as a guide and intercessor. What these two share is that in both, the Sibyl serves someone else, which adds to her liminal character and eclipses her personal identity.

More than that, by associating the Sibyl with the depths of a dark cavern, Vergil portrays her character as feared by men. In this way, the voided space of the cavern makes the Sibyl seem frightening. The fear, although lending the Sibyl an intimidating authority over the ones who seek her, otherizes her character. It feeds the reader an image of her embodying isolation by her interiorization in the cave. Only those who are granted to set foot inside are allowed to enter her place apart and only with a reason. In this way, her identity becomes the façade of fear enforced by the cave. Additionally, Vergil does not define what the Sibyl does on her own without the visitation of desperate knowledge seekers. This begs the questions of what the Sibyl does alone in the cave, and if she exits the cave on her own. Only when specified to this role as a guide in the story, the Sibyl seems to be granted mobility. For example, when the Sibyl travels as a guide for Aeneas to the entry to the Underworld by Avernus, the landscape and the Sibyl, experience new forms of activity:

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59 Vergil, "Book III," in *The Aeneid*, trans. Sarah Ruden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), lines 255-57; 441-43, 74.
60 If considering the Sibyl's legend in Rome.
61 Susanna Braund, introduction to *The Aeneid*, trans. Sarah Ruden, xi.

"Now, right before the rising sun's light broke,
The ground beneath their feet roared. Wooded slopes
Shifted. Dogs seemed to howl among the shadows…
Into the open cave she bolted, maddened,
And he kept pace with her, his guide, with brave steps."[62]

The Cave is a Heterotopia for Divine Interaction

As the Sibyl's cave in Vergil's poem is a transitory site for others, it is also a site for divine interaction. The cave acts as a heterotopia or "other" space.[63] While the Sibyl is communicating with the god Apollo, Apollo puppeteers her body while she is inside her cave. Later, Vergil provides a vivid description of the Sibyl's induced trance: "Inside, the priestess ran amok, resisting / Phoebus and trying hard to shake that great god / Out of her soul. He drove her harder, twisted / Her face and curbed her heart, pinioning, shaping."[64] Dance was a common ritual for divine communication in the Sibyl's prophetic custom. In this trance, Apollo is not only inspiring the Sibyl's movements, but painfully puppeteering her by "driving" and "twisting" her body. The prophetic activity that Vergil described occurring inside of the Sibyl's cave further established the cave as a liminal space that is in between the physical and divine worlds. In *Different Spaces*, Michel Foucault describes heterotopias as "other" spaces that "presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at the same time."[65] One of the principles of heterotopias is that entry to the space is often enforced by submissions to rituals, purifications, or constraint.[66] Some of Foucault's examples of heterotopias include prisons, museums, libraries, theatres, ships, and cemeteries. Although extremely diverse in typology, these spaces deviate from conventional tradition or norm and is indicated by temporal, programmatic, or spatial conditions of the site. For example, a museum deviates from the present moment since it houses a repository of anachronistic times and histories, becoming, as Foucault describes, "a kind of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in a place that will not move."[67] Like a heterotopia, the Sibyl's cave is fixed and self-enclosed but connects with another world by the divine activity that occurs inside of it. So, while the cave does not move, there is a whole unseen force of divine mobility that is penetrating the interior. Like Aeneas, mobility in the cave is granted by the hands of Apollo and the divine things that remain unseen.

The Cave is a Site for Illegible Written Prophecies

After the Sibyl's divine interaction finishes in Vergil's story, wind pierces into the Sibyl's cave and instigates new movement in the interior. The wind forges disorder in the arrangement of the Sibyl's prophetic leaves. It is established that the Sibyl of Cumae wrote her prophecies on dried, oak leaves. Upon receiving a prophecy, her ritual custom was to write each one on a leaf and arrange her accumulated prophecies into what Guillermo describes a "strict sequential order."[68] Vergil incorporates the Sibyl of Cumae's antique custom directly into the poem, indicating that she lays her verses, "In sequence and then

62 Vergil and Ruden, "Book VI," in *The Aeneid*, lines 255-57; lines 262-63, 148.
63 Michel Foucault and James D Faubion, "Different Spaces," *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, 183.
64 Vergil and Ruden, "Book III," lines 77-80, 142.
65 Foucault and Faubion, "Different Spaces," 183.
66 Ibid.
67 Foucault, 182.
68 Guillermo, "The Cumaean Sibyl," 108.

locks them in her cave. / They stay there motionless, in perfect order."[69]

The Sibyl of Cumae, who was renowned for spewing her divine knowledge in ecstatic trances, is rendered static in the interior of the cave immediately upon transmitting her prophecies on leaves. It is not until Vergil describes the force of wind that penetrates the interior of the Sibyl's cave that things begin to move. For example, when the Sibyl opened the entry into her cave, the leaves scattered into complete disorder due to the force of wind, rendering her prophecies illegible for the decipherer. But the Sibyl is the only one who still knows what is written on the leaves. However, the darkness in the cave creates even more difficulty in communicating her writing. Vergil cleverly does not make the Sibyl's verses succumb, "To leaves that gusts can play with and confuse."[70] Instead, Vergil depicts Aeneas asking the Sibyl to do the deciphering for him. So, while the wind mobilized the leaves, the Sibyl remained stuck in the cave, as Vergil wrote, "She doesn't chase its flutters through her cavern, / Or link the lines back in their proper order."[71] With this interplay between the exterior and interior conditions of her site, the Sibyl's knowledge became mobilized as her prophetic leaves "boomed / Out of the cave," while her physical body remained inside the cave.[72] Whether the Sibyl assumed the role of a guide, was inspired by the gods to dance, or had her order of knowledge confused, it becomes more clear that the interior constituents of the cave in Vergil's *Aeneid*, including the Sibyl, were granted mobility by the hands of exterior forces.

69 Vergil and Ruden, "Book III," lines 255-57; lines 445-47, 74.
70 Vergil and Ruden, "Book VI," line 75, 142.
71 Vergil and Ruden, "Book VI," lines 450-51, 74.
72 Vergil and Ruden, "Book VI," lines 100-101, 142.

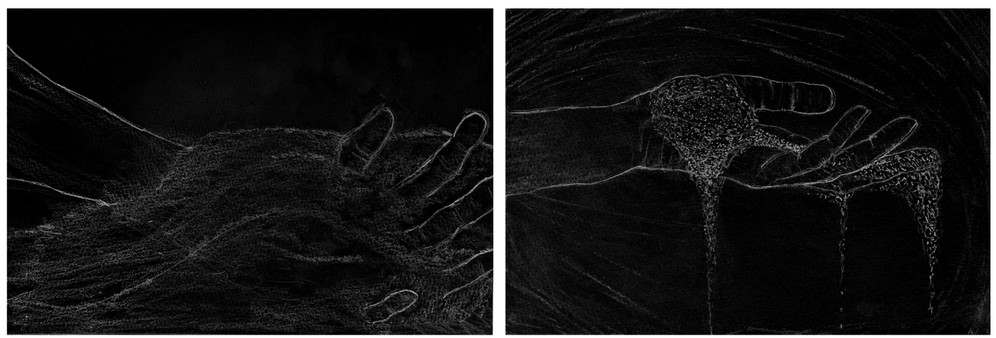


Figure 11. The hand holding dust. Sketches by author.

Aging into Dust

If the Sibyl was mobilized by external agents like wind, gods, and heroes, she was also aged by others. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid impedes the Sibyl's ability to age on her own terms and enact care towards her own body. This can be understood in the poem when Apollo curses the Sibyl to age as many years as grains of dust she held in her hand. Dust is the material presence of age since it is inevitably developed by time. It is a sign of immanent accumulation like the accumulated years of a human's life. Dust, particularly, has been associated with the woman through domestic labour. Just like aging is tied to the maintenance of the body, dust is tied to the maintenance of the house. Dust in the house is a remnant of uncleanliness: dirt, mold, and all things gross. It will layer repetitively on surfaces unless it is cared for by preservation. Traditionally assumed as the woman's job, the act of care in the preservation of objects within the home contributes to what Iris Marion Young calls "a living, meaningful history" since objects embody identities of its dwellers.[73] Through Ovid's words, dust symbolizes the eradication of the Sibyl's "living" history as her body is deemed to physically transform into particles of dust. In Parke's study on Sibyls, he notes how the Sibyl's longevity became a "favourite motif" for many writers of the time.[74] Since the Sibyl's first, suspected reference by Heraclitus, she became a one-thousand-year-old identity, at the least. This impressive sum of years, while granting her valuable wisdom, has also physically transformed her character by age, as suggested by Ovid's poem. Ovid depicts old age using the idea of the Sibyl's body disintegrating into dust. In this way, the Sibyl's body has lost its meaning for her personal identity since it transformed into a disintegrating vessel that only houses her voice. So, just as dust is an immanent accumulation of dirt in the modern house, so too was it the unkempt remnant of the Sibyl's withering body in Ovid's poem.

Before Ovid employs dust to signal the beginning of the Sibyl's subsequent process of aging, Apollo tells the Sibyl that he will build a shrine to honour her for saving his life. While developing a growing infatuation with the Sibyl, Apollo bribes her with a wish in exchange for her virginity. The Sibyl, out of naivety, wished for as many more years as grains of dust[75] she could hold in her hand. But she did not ask for eternal youth:

> "'Choose any gift you want, Cumaean virgin-
> you'll have it!' I scooped up a pile of dust
> and pointed to it, foolishly demanding
> as many birthdays as that dust had flecks.
> I failed to ask for youthful years. He granted
> my wish, and promised endless youth as well
> if we made love. I scorned Apollo's gift."[76]

Since the Sibyl refused Apollo's offer to sleep with him, the god, out of spite, sabotaged her to age as many years as "dust had flecks" without eternal youth.

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73 Iris Marion Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme," in *Motherhood and Space: Configurations of the Maternal through Politics, Home, and the Body*, 1st ed., ed. Sarah Boykin Hardy and Caroline Alice Wiedmer (New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 134.

74 Parke and McGing, "The Sibyl in Pagan Rome," 147.

75 Dust has also been translated to "sand" in other English translations of the *Metamorphoses*.

76 Ovid, "Book Fourteen: The Sibyl and Apollo," in *Metamorphoses,* trans. Stephanie McCarter (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2022), lines 143-49, 406.

By Apollo's wish-turned-curse, the Sibyl remains trapped in a world of immanence. Ovid has the Sibyl state that she, "still must see three hundred vintages, three hundred harvests," indicating that she will continue to see repetitive events like harvests for her remaining years.[77] In Ovid's point of view, feminine aging is stuck in an endless process of immanence rather than growth. When Ovid linked disintegration and dust to the process of aging, he posits time as the enemy rather than the companion in feminine aging. In the human life cycle, the body undergoes a relatively slow process of decay in aging up to the stage of death where the body begins to decay at a much faster rate. However, Ovid has extremely elongated this process of decay for the Sibyl: she must accumulate one thousand years until finally reaching death. In *Women and Temporality in Literature and Cinema*, Ila Ahlawat studies the entrapment of women in temporal spaces using examples from literature and cinema. She focuses on the Sibyl's centrality and impact on the temporal dynamics in Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* for the woman characters. She draws on the pre-historic narrative of the Sibyl's character being enclosed as an "interiorized tragedy" whose body is played with by being shrunken.[78] Ovid's poem, which Ahlawat also references, can be understood as a central contributor to this harmful play with the Sibyl's body. Since Ovid, the Sibyl begins to embody isolation by the miniaturizing transformation she has been subjected to through this elongated process of aging. From this, her character has become indefinitely trapped within immanence.

The ideas of immanence and repetition hold a long history in the woman's domain and have been more modernly critiqued in relation to work, labour, and housework. In *Communism and the Family*, Marxist feminist Alexandra Kollontai critiqued the effects of a growing capitalist society on women's work and productivity in Soviet Russia. Questioning the necessity of housework, she looks at the time-consuming tasks of cleaning, cooking, and washing that have pigeon-holed women's work within domestic quarters. She argues these tasks create no productive value within the growing, consumer-driven society but a stagnant repetition of tasks. While Ovid does not reveal what the Sibyl has done or seen over the past seven hundred years, only that she "still must see" a repetition of events for the rest of her one-thousand-year sentence, he nonetheless foregrounds the notion of waiting and the inability to progress. Kollontai's modern, working woman, who, if she were to also live to one thousand like the Sibyl, "would still have to begin every day from the beginning."[79]

The Sibyl of Cumae was imagined as a very nomadic character based on her legend in Rome. But through the words of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, she is removed from that lifestyle as her body becomes subjected to an abnormal process of immanent and elongated aging. However, while her body was imagined withering away to the scale of dust, Ovid still acknowledged the inescapable trait of the Sibyl's voice. The Sibyl, although stuck with transforming into an unrecognizable body, says in the poem that she is, "still known by my voice."[80] If the Sibyl was robbed of her body, at least she can keep a remaining fragment of her identity that no man is foolish enough to take away from her.

77 Ovid and McCarter, "The Sibyl and Apollo," lines 153-54, 407.

78 Ila Ahlawat, "The Sibyl and the Hanging Cage," in *Women and Temporality in Literature and Cinema: Negotiating with Timelessness* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 33.

79 Alexandra Kollontai, "Communism and the Family," in *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 255.

80 Ovid and McCarter, "The Sibyl and Apollo," lines 160-61, 407.

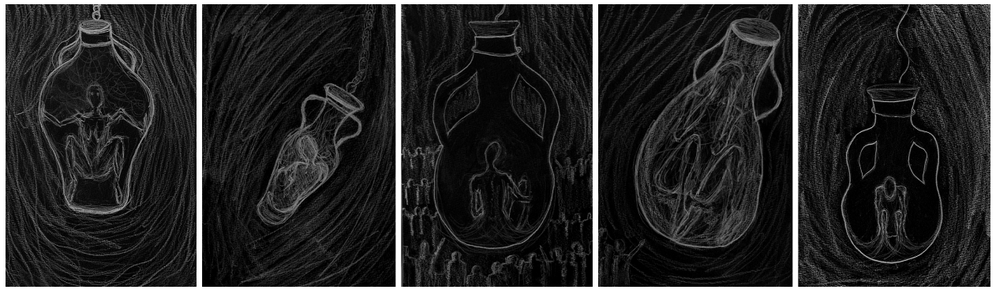


Figure 12. The ampulla that kept the Sibyl. Sketches by author.

Following Ovid's reference to dust, Petronius portrays the Sibyl of Cumae confined inside an ampulla in the *Satyricon*. Here, the Sibyl is immobilized by being confined to the limits of the ampulla's interior space. In the story, Petronius describes a conversation during a dinner party where the character Trimalchio states: "I saw the Sibyl at Cumae with my own eyes. She was hanging in a bottle, and when the guys asked her, 'What do you want, Sibyl?' she said, 'I want to die.'"[81] Following this unprecedented statement, a luxurious feast ensues leaving this reference to the Sibyl completely suspended in time. The uniqueness of this passage, considering its unrelatedness to things said before and after in the story, has influenced readers to explore why Trimalchio said it.[82] Several critical theories have connected it to the overall theme of death that is present through the story. For instance, William Arrowsmith describes Petronius's reference to the Sibyl in a study on the themes of luxury and death in the story as something like "little revelations" that hint at the obsession with death throughout the story.[83] Through Petronius's version of events, the ampulla is an object that not only physically immobilizes the Sibyl's body but metaphorically deprives her of death considering she is still alive while being viewed inside of it.

Impeding Death Inside the Ampulla

Ovid's poem marked a moment when authors would continue to shrink the Sibyl, as understood by Petronius here. Petronius reveals how age has shrunken the Sibyl's body so much that its ravages are no longer perceptible as she is just small enough to fit inside an ampulla. While the ampulla creates a distinguishable boundary between interior and exterior space, its spatial constraints fixate on the idea of the Sibyl's long aging through the lens of interiority: she has little space to physically progress or change in this architecture of confinement, as if her repetitive life span has rendered her static. Containing the Sibyl within the ampulla tells the reader that she has seen so much of life pass by while she remains unable to die just yet. She has essentially been given an indeterminate sentence while inside the ampulla. The ampulla metaphorically represents the Sibyl's inescapable elongated aging, ultimately showing her impeding death while she remains stuck inside.

On Display Inside the Ampulla

Petronius leaves the materiality of the ampulla undefined, but in his time, an ampulla resembled a small vessel with two handles that stored liquids ranging from water, oil, vinegar, wine, and perfume. Depending on the type of ampulla, its material ranged from earthenware, leather, to metals.[84] Interestingly, Petronius states that Trimalchio sees the Sibyl with his "own eyes" which suggests the material makeup of this object is transparent, more like a jar of glass than an earth-molded piece. To support this assumption, L. Richardson Junior considered the possibility of glass as the material of the Sibyl's container in the *Satyricon*, asserting that, "glassblowing was an innovation of the age of Augustus, and glass jars much favored as burial urns."[85] This speculated detail of the ampulla being made of glass in Petronius's story further immobilizes the Sibyl's character by having her dangle in an isolated display with no privacy, for the "guys" to gaze at.

81 Petronius Arbiter and Sarah Ruden. *Satyricon* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2000), 35.

82 H. D. Cameron, "The Sibyl in the 'Satyricon,'" *The Classical Journal (Classical Association of the Middle West and South)* 65, no. 8 (1970): 337.

83 William Arrowsmith, "Luxury and Death in the Satyricon," *Arion (Boston)* 5, no. 3 (1966): 310.

84 "Ampulla," in *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.* William Smith, LLD. William Wayte. G. E. Marindin. Albemarle Street, London. John Murray. 1890. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0063:entry=ampulla-cn

85 L. Richardson Jr., "Trimalchio and the Sibyl at Cumae," *The Classical World* 96, no. 1 (2002): 78.

Contributing to Existing Narratives of Containment

Why would the Sibyl, who was not liquid by nature, be stored in this tiny container made for liquids? It could be that Petronius borrowed from other narratives of containment originating prior to or around his time. For example, in a study on rain rituals and wind-taming practices, Allegra Iafrate looks at the upbringing of the clichéd motif of the "demon in the bottle" that became popularized in Western culture through an Italian focused history. While recognizing the absence of evidence on how a necromancer could trap a demon in a container, this creates what she deems, "a sheer trope without ritual, as the fruit of a narrative, rather than of a magical tradition."[86] This essentially limits a powerful spirit's magic by enforcing control through containment. While Iafrate notes ancient examples of this specific condition of encasing powerful entities, Campbell Bonner's work in *The Sibyl and Bottle Imps* is seen as a critical source. Bonner provides various literary examples from ancient Greek culture that confined powerful entities in small vessels. His examples predate Petronius's story and include the myth of Tithonus, the bag of wind in *The Odyssey*, Pandora's jar, and a depiction of Hermes evoking winged entities from a jar.[87] These sources help support the conjecture that this "captive demon" folk motif could just as well have held roots in ancient Greece. And with additional recounts associating the Sibyl with small vessels like flasks and cages near Petronius's time, this reveals the strong possibility that Petronius's rendition of the Sibyl was only further contributing to existing narratives of containment at the time.[88]

In a separate account that Parke referenced from an ancient historical writer by the name of Hyperochus of Cumae, it was suggested there was a small vessel that contained the Sibyl's bones in the temple of Apollo.[89] Hyperochus's account, found in Pausanias's ancient travelogue, describes a story told by the temple guides of a small stone urn (*hydria*) that contains the Sibyl's bones.[90] Considering the Sibyl's accumulated association with burial urns, bottles, and jars, this entrenched the vision of her as a small thing imprisoned inside of vessels. While Petronius's interpretation situates the Sibyl inside an ampulla, it functions in similar ways to the cave and dust: the ampulla immobilizes the Sibyl's body using interiorization as a method to enforce characteristics of viewership and confinement upon her.

Embodying Isolation

The cave, dust, and ampulla are three objects that have enhanced the material presence of the Sibyl of Cumae by pairing her with the human acts of dwelling, aging, and dying, respectively. At the same time, they have associated certain characteristics with these three objects and spaces in the narratives to suggest an embodiment of isolation by interiorizing the Sibyl. The Sibyl's interiorization has consistently promoted an idea of physically shrinking her character. However, while involuntarily undergoing this constant process of transfiguration by others, the Sibyl paradoxically continues to survive increasingly in the outside world as her material associations continue to be remembered by new generations as the makeup of her presence. So, as much as these material entities – the cave, dust, and ampulla – consume the Sibyl's personal identity in these narratives, she has interestingly become remembered as something much beyond her body through them.

86 Allegra Iafrate, "'Il Demone Nell'ampolla': Solomon, Virgil, Aeolus, and the Long Metamorphosis of Rain Rituals and Wind-Taming Practices," *Revue de l'histoire Des Religions*, no. 234 (2017): 399.

87 Campbell Bonner, "The Sibyl and Bottle Imps," in *Quantulacumque; Studies Presented to Kirsopp Lake by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Robert Pierce Casey, Silva Tipple Lake, and Agnes Lake (London: Christophers, 1937), 4.

88 Bonner, "The Sibyl and Bottle Imps," 3.

89 Parke and McGing, "Cumae," 81.

90 Pausanias and Frazer, *Description of Greece,* 517 (10.12.8 reference to line).

AFTERWORD

The "Modern" Sibyl of Cumae: A Subject of Ambiguity in Visual Art (1400-1800s)

These ancient stories about the Sibyl of Cumae by Vergil, Ovid, and Petronius reveal something important: writers from the time were tantalized with the paradoxical ideas of immortalizing the Sibyl and grounding her so she might be found. But what if the Sibyl never wanted to be found? These ancient interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae, scattered across various times and literary worlds, leave only a trace of her myth as something extremely real by her material associations. Although she has been consistently imagined as immortal through her suspected one-thousand-year-old aging, the Sibyl is not immortal in her physical body. The leaves, cave, dust, and ampulla continue to maintain her sense of immortality as this pattern of physical remnants left behind of her character. Evidence for this exists in emerging visual depictions of Sibyls during the modern era.

For example, in a study on modern Sibyls and Sibylline media, Luisa Calè makes an important distinction between the impact of narrative translations into visual art for what became the "modern" Sibyl. Considering Vergil's incorporation of the Sibyl of Cumae and prophetic leaves in the *Aeneid*, Calè notes how, "outside the world of the poem the Sibyl's leaves take on new forms as loose papers, scrolls, and scraps, which are scattered to the winds, stitched into bundles, gathered and bound into folios, kept in libraries and archives."[91] In this way, the Sibyl of Cumae assumed just another version, tweaked, and molded by her interpreters. But this time, interpretation followed a pattern of objects the ancient authors left behind. This inspired me to continue tracking the evolution of the Sibyl's material presence up to modernity by looking at artworks depicting the Sibyl of Cumae. These images inform my thesis by providing a visual dimension to the Sibyl of Cumae's material presence that I have been studying in literature. While including a range of artwork from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, my intention for this wide scope was to track patterns in representation. In these images, I notice that while the Sibyl's body changes in compositions, her associated objects stay relatively the same and identifiable. *Books*, *paper*, *scrolls*, and *leaves* begin to signal the Sibyl of Cumae's identity and strong material presence. This shows that the Sibyl's knowledge has ultimately materialized, while she remains a liminal carrier.



Figure 13. Artist unknown, *The Cumaean Sibyl leads Aeneas to the underworld: they encounter Cerberus*, date unknown, etching. Wellcome Collection, London, UK.

91 Luisa Calè, "Modern Sibyls and Sibylline Media," *Studies in Romanticism* 59, no. 1 (2020): 59. https://doi.org/10.1353/srm.2020.0006.



Figure 14. Artist unknown, *Cumaean Sibyl*, ca. early 15th Century, engraving. National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Figure 15. Agostino Veneziano, *The Cumaean Sibyl*, 1516, engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 16. Jacob Matham, *Sibyl seated among classical ruins*, 1612, pen and brown ink on laid paper. Courtauld Institute of Art, London, UK.



Figure 17. Paul Maupin, after Jacques Stella, *Sibylla Cumana*, 1625, woodcut on laid paper. National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Figure 18. Jan Brueghel the Younger, *Aeneas and the Sibyl in the Underworld*, ca. 1630's, oil on copper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

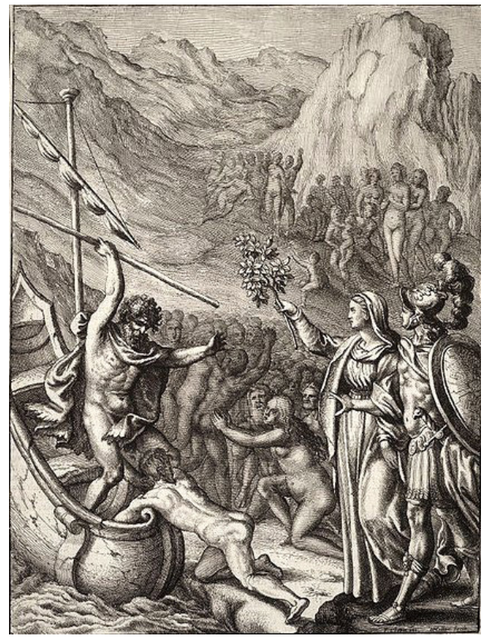


Figure 19. Wenceslaus Hollar, *Aeneas and Charon*, 1654, etching.



Figure 20. Salvator Rosa, *Apollo and the Cumaean Sibyl*, ca. 1661, etching and drypoint. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 21. Gerard de Lairesse, *Aeneas and the Cumaean Sibyl*, 1670, etching. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.



Figure 22. Giovanni Volpato, *The Cumaean Sibyl after the fresco by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel*, ca. 1784-90, engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 23. Nicolai Abildgaard, *Tarquin and the Sibyl*, 1809, oil on canvas. SMK Open – National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen.

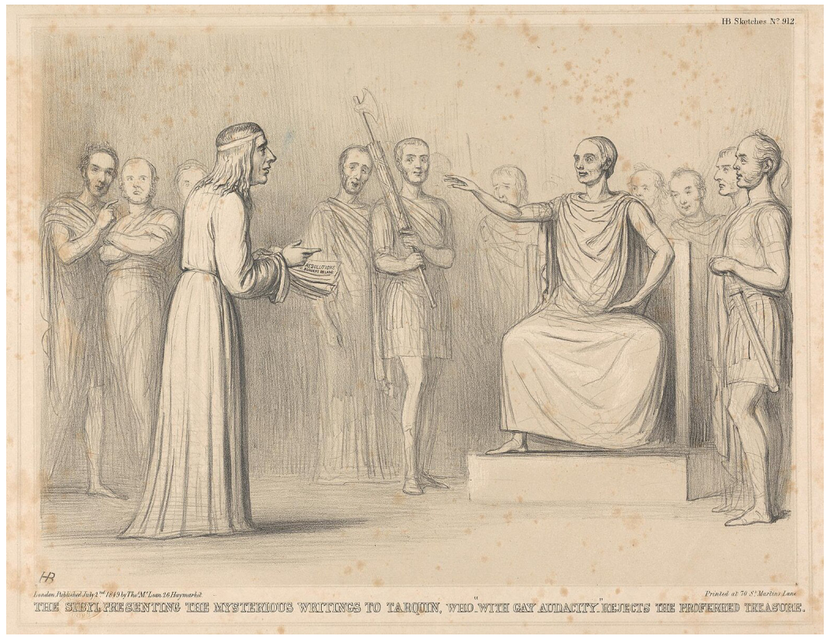


Figure 24. John Doyle, *The Sibyl Presenting the Mysterious Writings to Tarquin, Who "With Gay Audacity" Rejects the Proferred Treasure*, 1849, lithograph.
Yale Center for British Art, Yale University.

PART 2. THE SIBYL OF CUMAE'S ABSENCE

19th to mid-20th Centuries

The Sibyl of Cumae and Themes of Isolation in Select Modern Literature

From ancient history, the Sibyl of Cumae's presence was perceived as very material by writers like Vergil, Ovid, and Petronius who associated the cave, dust, and the ampulla with her character. By the nineteenth century, the Sibyl continued to be incorporated into literary works, but this time she was portrayed as an absent presence. Instead, her prophetic leaves and ampulla, newly interpreted as a cage and a bell jar, assumed her presence in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, G.M. Hopkins's *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves,* T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land,* and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. In this chapter, I will study how the objects that stand in for the Sibyl relate to the concept of isolation in these four texts. To do this, I will suggest three qualities from the leaves, the cage, and the bell jar that convey isolation including *decay*, *silence*, and *visibility*. By focusing on these three qualities, I will examine how they impart new creation considering their physical prominence in objects, settings, and characters of select passages in the four texts.

But first, why does the Sibyl of Cumae, who has been represented embodying isolation in ancient stories, become a relevant figure for these four, modern texts? Isolation became an increasingly individualized trope between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in the United Kingdom and America. While the state of isolation existed prior, it became strongly associated with subjective emotions of the individual human, particularly loneliness which became prominent in a growing industrial society during the 1800s. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the first use of the noun *isolation* was in 1833, and its definition is described as an action or condition of being isolated.[92] In this way, isolation is understood as an objective state of separateness with no strong indication of emotional bearing. Loneliness, on the other hand, became understood as a subjective emotional reaction that could be instigated by the state of isolation. To establish the relation between the concept of isolation and these four, modern texts, I will first consider the growing awareness of isolation and the modern emotion of loneliness in the 1800s and early twentieth century. Then, I will look at the centralization of the individual, the externalization of the inner self, and emerging post-apocalyptic visions in British and American cultures as contributing themes to the evolving concept of isolation at the time. I will then locate specific examples of the lone individual, the inner tormented self, and post-apocalyptic visions in the selected readings. This all leads me to realize how these four texts siphon the Sibyl through the material tropes of decay, silence, and visibility, and how this simultaneously exhibits the prominent themes relating to isolation during their time.

92 Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "Isolation," last modified November 9, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/isolation#word-history



Figure 25. Lucas Vorsterman, *Boetvaardige Maria Magdalena in een grot*, ca. 1619-1675, print, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Although the use of the term *isolation* in English was popularized during the nineteenth century, the condition of isolation existed prior. For example, isolation can be understood in the theme of exile that appears across various religious texts like the Christian bible. Edward Said wrote that, "exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience."[93] In the Christian bible, exile is an outcome of a forced banishment or displacement of an individual or group caused by sin. In this context, exile is a punished form of isolation, separated from a native land for example, and return can be granted by a renewed faith in Christ. Similarly, the legend of Mary Magdalene tells a story of Mary living in solitude until her death in a cave in Southern France. As one of Jesus's disciples, Mary Magdalene fled from Jerusalem to France where she established a new following of Christ. While preaching in Marseille, she retreated to a cave in the Sainte-Baume Mountain where she devoted her life to prayer. In this case, Mary Magdalene's isolation was self-initiated, and portrayed the cave as an ideal environment for spiritual renewal given its secluded qualities. The cave that Mary supposedly stayed in had turned into a sacred, pilgrimage site. Considering the conditions of solitude that exile invokes, this portrayed isolation as a detachment from a previous condition, either physical or spiritual.

Loneliness, on the other hand, became conceived as a subjective emotion belonging to the individual in the nineteenth century. Loneliness has often been studied with the use of the term *solitude* prior to the nineteenth century. Particularly, voluntary solitude became a desired state during the eighteenth century, as it enabled the individual to reflect and reconnect with God. In this way, solitude had an illuminative, religious effect. While the solitary effect of loneliness was still like Mary Magdalene's

93 Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), 173.

legend, this time God's presence could be found outside of the cave. According to Fay Bound Alberti's Western-focused study on the etymology of *loneliness*, loneliness gained fame around 1800 and became a "modern" emotion.[94] Anything conceived as loneliness prior was a condition of "oneliness" – the state of being alone with no significant emotional or psychological bearing.[95] However, this willing notion of seeking solitude made living a lonely life seem more positive if it benefited the individual's well-being. In *The Touch of Loneliness*, American psychologist Clark E. Moustakas described loneliness using his own experiences as, "a capacity or source in man for new searching, awareness, and inspiration," where "the individual may contemplate life from the depths of his own self and in nature."[96]

The big question that stands is: why was loneliness so prevalent in the 1800s? Destructive world events from the time should be considered. Particularly, the ravages of plagues, wars, and post-apocalyptic anxieties became increasingly conveyed in literature through the eyes of the lone survivor character at the time which transformed the way the world was being seen. Life was being perceived through the eyes of the individual. This is recognizable in Romantic and Victorian fiction and poetry writing, where writers began interacting with the self on a more subjective, emotional level.[97] While writers not only perceived but experienced new, cultural changes themselves, the novel became an outlet for social criticism or a collective form of introspection from which the inner self became a central interest.[98] Along with the onset of mass urbanization and industrialization in Great Britain at the time, the city was a place that could increase isolation, with its different spaces that were growing increasingly separated. These new living conditions risked traditional relations between humans, the natural world, and social lives. And with new scientific discoveries and psychological observations emerging at the same time, the individual became the centralized, dissectible object for society's pursuit of progress.[99] So, while the emotion of loneliness could be understood as a by-product of isolation, it is important to remember that it was also becoming inextricably tied to the individual from the nineteenth century onwards.

94 Fay Bound Alberti, "When 'Oneliness' Became Loneliness," in *A Biography of Loneliness: The History of an Emotion* (First edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 18.

95 Ibid, 18-20.

96 Clark E. Moustakas, "Loneliness - Unraveling Its Power and Meaning," in *The Touch of Loneliness* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 14.

97 Joseph Warren Beach and Hardin Craig, "Point of Departure," in *English Literature of the 19th and the Early 20th Centuries, 1798 to the First World War* (New York: Collier, 1962), 11-15; Beach and Craig, "Poetry of the Romantic Period," 20-21; Beach and Craig, "General Victorian Prose," 106.

98 John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor, "Introduction," in *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: 1820-1880*, ed. John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xxiv.

99 Alberti, "When 'Oneliness' Became Loneliness," 31-32.

Selected Readings

The Last Man

In the introduction to Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, a character's interpretation of the Sibyl's leaf-written prophecies in 1818 introduces a theme of decay that portrays a growing isolation of the human population. The Sibyl's leaves foreshadow a plague that takes over the twenty-first century world in the book. Following the introduction, the novel is divided into three volumes. The sense of decay that the Sibyl's leaves impart increases throughout each volume considering the outcome of the plague including increasing human deaths, declining physical and mental states of humans, and strained relationships between humans and the natural world. The first volume begins in 2073 and introduces Lionel and his sister Perdita's lives in England before the plague. Key characters in the story include Adrian - the Earl of Windsor, the Greek princess Evadne, Adrian's sister Idris, as well as Lord Raymond who becomes Lord Protector of England. An important event that takes place in the first volume is when Lord Raymond travels to Greece with Adrian to fight in a war against Türkiye.

The second volume introduces the initial, decaying effects of the plague including deaths and new, isolated lifestyles. In Greece, Raymond is found continuing to fight for Greece and progressing to Constantinople. Constantinople becomes the first place where the plague is fully recognized in the novel. During this trip, the deaths of Evadne, Raymond, and Perdita have a major impact on Lionel. Upon his return to England, Lionel and his remaining family offer their home, Windsor Castle, as a shared refuge to the public. At this point, the plague infects the London population, and people are forced to live in growing isolation from fear of contraction. Lionel's observations of his surroundings become especially important to the theme of decay as they indicate a thriving natural environment but a declining human condition. Additionally, seasons begin to indicate a new pattern with the plague reduced during the wintertime and reappearing in the warmer months. The volume ends with Lionel reflecting on the decline in the quality of life in England and proposing a plan to leave the country. The final volume takes place in 2096 and highlights the greatest rate of decay in the human condition. Around this time, almost everyone Lionel was close to dies. Lionel realizes he is the last man once he reaches shore near Ravenna following the disastrous sea storm that took the lives of his remaining family and best friend. Deprived of any sense of belonging after this event, Lionel travels to Rome alone. Like the Sibyl wrote prophecies on leaves, Lionel leaves notes in various languages through each town he passed, in hopes another human would follow him to Rome. While surviving alone in Rome, Lionel reflects on his isolated lifestyle by writing about his own experiences during the plague. Afterward he sets sail in the Mediterranean searching for the rarest thing in life: companionship. The novel ends in the year 2100.

It has been considered that Shelley's novel has certain auto-biographical elements that reflect events that occurred in her own life.[100] Shelley's closest companions including her husband Percy - who drowned off the coast of Italy in Livorno in 1822, her three children, and good friend Lord Byron had all passed by the time the novel was published.[101] Considering this context, Shelley's personal experiences are strikingly close to what the lone Lionel Verney experiences throughout the novel.

100 Kari E. Lokke, "The Last Man," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley, Cambridge*, ed. Esther Schor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 117.

101 Maggie Kilgour, "In the Sibyl's Cave: Vergilian Prophecy and Mary Shelley's Last Man," in *Walking through Elysium* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 62.

Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves

Born in Stratford, U.K., G.M. Hopkins was a poet and a Jesuit priest. While studying Greek and Roman history and culture at Oxford University, he converted to Roman Catholicism which led to his studies in priesthood just before 1870. This new path inspired a revelation of the individual self – a type of new awareness that would appear in Hopkins's poetry after studying philosophy and theories of individuality in Lancashire.[102] Hopkins eventually became a teacher of Greek and Latin at the Jesuits' new University College in Ireland in 1884.[103] This transition, while estranging him from family and friends, rendered Hopkins an outsider and manifested an isolated lifestyle that showed through in his writing. For instance, Hopkins's previous poetry was attuned to locating God in nature. In *Imagining Eternity in Gerard Manley Hopkins's Late Poetry*, Thomas Butler tracks Hopkins's shift in poetic focus towards the subject of eternity by studying two poems from the 1880s that contrastingly envision eternity through hell and heaven.[104] The hell-concerned one would become known as *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*.

Like Shelley's novel, *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves* suggests a theme of decay by an interpretation of the Sibyl's leaves that turn into fearful objects. The fourteen-line sonnet portrays death, as warned by the Sibyl's leaves, through a temporal transformation of evening turning into nighttime. Decay, if considering the symbolization of death here, takes form as the dying imagery of the sonnet. This ranges from allusions to the dissolution of light and colour of the natural world, as well as the Sibyl's leaves turning into sharp objects. The sonnet ends on the notion of the Christian Final Judgement. Although the sonnet suggests Christian eschatology, John C. Hampsey considers that it "may be the most pagan poem Hopkins ever wrote" due to Hopkins's incorporation of the Sibyl's prophetic leaves in the sonnet.[105]

In a letter to his brother from 1885, Hopkins said the true nature of poetry "must be spoken; till it is spoken it is not performed, it does not perform, it is not itself."[106] In another letter to classicist poet Robert Bridges, Hopkins said that *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves* was to be performed aloud, "leisurely, poetical (not rhetorical)."[107] Through these written exchanges, it becomes clear that the voice possesses an extremely high authority in this particular sonnet, very much echoing the Sibyl's venerable voice from antiquity.

102 "Biography," *Gerard Manley Hopkins, International Hopkins Association,* accessed November 16, 2024, https://hopkinspoetry.com/biography/

103 Norman H. MacKenzie, "Some Notes on Hopkins's Life and Interests," in *A Reader's Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Ithaca N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1981), 13-17.

104 Thomas Butler, "Imagining Eternity in Gerard Manley Hopkins's Late Poetry," *The Explicator*. Vol. 80. (Washington: Routledge, 2022), 5-8.

105 John C. Hampsey, "Trapped in Sibyl's Jar: Hopkins's Dialectic of Self in 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves,'" *Colby Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (1990): \ 230.

106 Justin Tackett, "Phonographic Hopkins: Sound, Cylinders, Silence, and 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves,'" *Victorian Poetry* 56, no. 2 (2018): 147.

107 MacKenzie, "'No. 61 Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves' in "'The Wreck of the Deutschland' to Dublin Sonnets (Nos 28-76)," 163.

The Waste Land

St. Louis-born Thomas Stearns Eliot took a travel fellowship to London in 1914 and ended up establishing a professional and personal life in the city. Eliot's marriage to Vivienne Haigh-Wood and his friendship with American poet and critic Ezra Pound had a strong impact on his life in London. In fact, these two relationships became pillars for the development of the poem *The Waste Land* in the early 1900s. At this time, Eliot perceived an increasingly destructed world by lives lost during the First World War, the Spanish flu, as well as the introduction of the Prohibition in 1920. This waste, loss, regulation, and destruction transformed the world surrounding Eliot into fragmented pieces of a modern, Western society. These fragments would inspire a vision of a new, barren world: the wasteland.

Published in 1922, *The Waste Land* is a poem that ruminates on silence. Consisting of five sections, the presence of silence is first revealed in the epigraph that references Petronius's version of the Sibyl of Cumae hanging inside of an ampulla. In Matthew Hollis's biographical novel on *The Waste Land*, he references a working draft of Eliot's second section of the poem and makes note of the working title that was inspired by Petronius's portrayal of the Sibyl: it was called "In the Cage."[108] When Eliot translated the Latin *ampulla* to *cage*, this revealed something important about the wasteland: the wasteland is an entrapped space, no different than the Sibyl's ampulla besides it assuming alternate forms. One of the functions of a cage is to enforce limitations, and silence can emerge from this. In Eliot's poem, silence is what pervades the landscape, the cityscape, human relations, and emotions. With over four hundred lines, the five sections of the poem consist of multiple settings, times, characters, emotions, traditional and modern references. There is no linear beginning to end narrative. Below I summarize the five sections of the poem in attempt to reveal the metaphor of silence I opted to study within this text.

1. The Burial of the Dead

The wasteland is introduced as a present, hopeless, dead land. The past is written in a nostalgic tone, and the present contradicts the past with descriptions of a dry land and humans as living dead. The fortune cards the clairvoyant Madame Sosostris reveals suggest a perception of the future as pessimistic. This uncertainty of the future and detachment from the past positions the wasteland as stuck in its own repetitive cycle of no change. Characters, voices, or spectators in this section include an undefined narrator, Marie, a Lithuanian German voice, the archduke, Marie's cousin, the hyacinth girl, the clairvoyant Madame Sosostris, the Phoenician Sailor, Mrs. Equitone, London residents, Stetson, and a dog.

2. A Game of Chess

The title of this section suggests an interaction between two people is a game based on strategy and structure. There are a series of one-sided or interrupted conversations between partners in this section. These exchanges suggest that there is an absence or imbalance of communication amongst relations in the wasteland. Characters, voices, or spectators in this section include the Queen, Philomel (Greek mythological figure), an unnamed husband and wife, Lil and Albert, young George (Lil's son), an undefined narrator, a bartender's voice, Bill, Lou, and May.

108 Matthew Hollis, *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2023), 241.

3. The Fire Sermon

The title of this section refers to a Buddhist sermon where the human being is metaphorically burning with desire and cravings developed by the human senses.[109] In the context of the poem, the fire of human desire has metaphorically dissolved to a state of neutrality. Heightened emotions like love and reciprocal intimacy are desensitized which Eliot portrays through a series of perverse sexual encounters. Like the second section of the poem, these scenarios suggest silence to what may have been true or pure love before the wasteland. Characters, voices, or spectators in this section include nymphs (ancient Greek folklore reference), an undefined narrator, Sweeney, Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Porter's daughter, Philomela, King Tereus (ancient Greek reference), Mr. Eugenides, Tiresias (ancient Greek reference), the typist lady, the clerk, two unidentified characters, Buddha (spiritual reference), and the Lord (Christian reference).

4. Death by Water

This section tells the story of the demise of Phlebas the Phoenician sailor at sea, as foretold by Madame Sosostris in the first section of the poem. Imagery of a whirlpool mixes details of the sailor's past that have since disappeared in his present state of decay. Water, although a sign of life that the wasteland is deprived of, brings death here instead. Characters, voices, or spectators in this section include Phlebas the Phoenician sailor and an unidentified narrator.

5. What the Thunder said

The last section of the poem incorporates Christian references alluding to Christ including a character called the "third" who is unrecognizable but still present in the wasteland. Their anonymity in this section indicates the difficulty in gaining knowledge or finding salvation in the wasteland. However, thunder becomes a metaphorical medium that speaks three Sanskrit words from Hinduism: "datta" (give), "dayadhvam" (sympathize), and "damyata" (control). These sayings hint at an escape from the present conditions of the wasteland through giving oneself and control to God. The poem ends in a prayer with the repetition of "Shantih" three times which translates to, "the peace that passes all understanding." This prayer seems to position authority in God as the one who could break the silence that has entrapped everything and everyone in the wasteland. Characters, voices, or spectators in this section include the voice of thunder, an undefined narrator, the "third," a woman, and a fisherman.

109 Lheisa Dustin, "Theravada Buddhist Influence in The Waste Land?" *Notes and Queries* 56, no. 3 (2009): 417–20.

The Bell Jar

In 1963, Sylvia Plath published her only novel *The Bell Jar* under the pseudonym "Victoria Lucas." Since gaining a cult following, the novel has a divided crowd regarding how it intends to be read: an autobiography or a fictional reflection of the woman's role in a 1950s Western society.[110] Particularly, the parallels to Plath's life have typically been cross-referenced with her poetry and personal journals, whose unabridged versions became published in 2000. From these documents, it became known that Plath suffered with depression, suicidal thoughts, electro-shock therapy, and a troubling marriage – almost all conditions that the main character experiences throughout this novel.[111]

The Bell Jar incorporates the trope of visibility to portray a young woman in a 1950s American society. The story is told through the perspective of a nineteen-year-old college student named Esther Greenwood who works as a guest editor for a fashion magazine in New York during a summer in the 1950s. While living in a women's hotel, the city of New York becomes an unfamiliar environment for Esther who came from suburban Massachusetts. Because of this, she struggles to stay in control of her true self amongst work, expectations, and social life. Visibility becomes an important metaphor for Esther's growing sense of public space as imposing and private spaces as safe. In this way, isolated spaces like bathrooms and rooms become portals of comfort for Esther while public spaces like work events, bars, and shops leave her continuously unsatisfied or wanting to leave. At the same time, Esther struggles with the question of what she should do after college, introducing the dilemma of succumbing to a conventional, domestic life or pursuing her aspirations as a poet. Throughout each chapter, Esther reveals more of her inner struggles with her identity and societal expectations of women at the time, culminating to a suicidal depression.

Esther's depression worsens after her return home to Boston. Here she is forced to stay at home with her mother who does not fully empathize with her mental health. While Esther's depression deprives her of writing, reading, and taking basic care of herself, her mom decides to take her to a psychiatrist to seek therapy. Esther develops a dislike towards the male psychiatrist especially after her symptoms worsen from the electric shock therapy he prescribed. After several failed suicide attempts, Esther is admitted to a city hospital where she encounters more negative experiences. Esther eventually gets transferred to a private hospital which becomes the turning point of the novel, revealing her path to recovery. In this new environment, Esther develops more positive relationships with people and herself. When the metaphor of the bell jar first appears, it presents Esther's perception of her life as confined and controlled by exterior influences. The bell jar shares an uncanny similarity to the Sibyl's ampulla. In both cases, visibility is imposed on the two feminine characters while they are confined to the limits of small spaces. While the hospital continues to observe Esther's improvements, the novel ends with Esther entering a room to be interviewed for patient discharge. Esther acknowledges that the "bell jar" could reappear in her life, but it seems to have been gifted some air at that point in her life.

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110 Janet Badia, "The Bell Jar and Other Prose," in *The Cambridge Companion to Sylvia Plath, Cambridge*, ed. Jo Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 127-28.

111 Sylvia Plath, and Karen V Kukil, *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962: Transcribed from the Original Manuscripts at Smith College* (1st Anchor Books ed. New York: Anchor Books, 2000), see the following journal entries or fragments: Journal July 1950-July 1953 passages: #8, (page 9), #26 (page 21), #36 (page 29), #38 (page 33), #46 (page 43), #188 May 14 (page 183), July 6 1953 (page 185), July 14 (page 186) / Journal 22 November 1955-18 April 1956 passages: March 6 1956 (page 217) / Appendix 9 Journal Fragment April 16 1956 (page 570) / Appendix 10 "The Inmate" Tuesday: February 28 entry (page 601).

THEMES OF ISOLATION:
LONE INDIVIDUAL, TORMENTED SELF, POST-APOCALYPTIC VISIONS

The material tropes of decay, silence, and visibility that the Sibyl of Cumae's associated objects bring to Shelley's, Hopkins's, Eliot's, and Plath's texts become united by the concept of isolation. The following section will investigate the concept of isolation further by looking at the subjects of the individual, post-apocalyptic visions, and loneliness, or aloneness, during their time. First, I will consider how the themes of isolation and individuality become centralized in literature, particularly in philosophy, the emerging Romantic approaches to writing that focused on projecting the inner self, and the new use of experimental writing techniques from the modernist period. Then, I will consider how the ideas about privacy, loneliness, or aloneness, that the centralized individual entails are represented in the material world. I recognize this in the growing sub-division of Victorian home-planning and society's increasing consumption of small, novelty objects around the time. Following this, I consider the concept of isolation in the portrayal of the lone individual in literature through emerging Victorian post-apocalyptic visions. Finally, I tie all the conceptual material gathered from this cultural research back to the four texts of my analysis. To do this, I recognize the centralization of the lone individual, the inner tormented self, and post-apocalyptic visions throughout Shelley's, Hopkins's, Eliot's, and Plath's texts. I look at the portrayal of the lone individual through non-linear narrative and stream of consciousness writing techniques in Eliot's and Plath's texts, the portrayal of the tormented self through Shelley's first-person point of view of a lone man, and the centralization of inner turmoil at the end of Hopkins's sonnet. Finally, I distinguish varied versions of post-apocalyptic visions across Shelley's, Hopkins's, and Eliot's texts. These three themes – the individual, interiority, and post-apocalyptic visions – ultimately reveal the concept of isolation that unites the four, modern readings amongst the objects that stand in for the Sibyl.

Centralizing the Lone Individual

The reconceptualization of the individual human during the nineteenth century contributed to the evolving concept of isolation at the time. While the individual has been recognized in a collective mindset of humanity, it became more commonly perceived as a separated and centralized unit during the nineteenth century. This was particularly influenced by the Enlightenment where humans were becoming more independent and able-minded. In this shift to what John Kucich refers to an "organic society," the hierarchical ordering of individuals turned into a more fluid, collaborative society.[112] Two examples that contributed to this changing perception of the individual include the establishment of natural rights during the Enlightenment and self-led experimentations with new writing techniques emerging in the modernist period of the twentieth century. Falling within this era of experimentation, the concept of the lone individual is centralized in Eliot's and Plath's texts through their incorporations of new literary techniques in their own writing, particularly the stream of consciousness in *The Bell Jar* and the fragmented, non-linear narrative technique in *The Waste Land*.

Adopting "Natural" Rights During the Enlightenment

The individual reclaimed agency during the Enlightenment, which was primarily concerned with progress through reason and knowledge. In this new knowledge-seeking society, the common belief was that humans have the right to possess natural rights like life, liberty, or property, and the ability to improve personal conditions without exterior control.[113] This growing emphasis on human rights was further supported by the emergence of liberalism in Western societies. Some critical authorities that emerged on the liberal school of thought included the works of Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and English philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Particularly, Locke's emphasis on individual consent in the establishment of community in his *Two Treatises of Government* highlights the importance of individual agency and choice:

> "Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent, which is done by agreeing with other men..."[114]

Thus, the Enlightenment reshaped the perception of the individual under moral necessities and a reclaiming of self-agency.

The Lone Individual in Eliot's and Plath's Readings

From the Enlightenment onwards, the individual continued to be a critical subject for writers. Throughout modernism, there was a radical demand for change conveyed by the rejection of tradition that established new forms of self-expression.[115] Reaching America in the early twentieth century, this desire for change was greatly instigated by critical events that occurred at the time including the First World

112 John Kucich, "Modernization and the Organic Society," in *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: 1820-1880*, ed. John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 345-46.

113 John Locke, "Two Treatises of Government," in *The works of John Locke, in nine volumes*, 9th ed. Vol. 4. (London: printed for T. Longman, B. Law and Son, J. Johnson, C. Dilly, G. G. and J. Robinson, [and 14 others in London], 1794), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (accessed October 27, 2024), 341.

114 John Locke, "Two Treatises of Government," 394.

115 Andrzej Gasiorek, "Introduction," in *A History of Modernist Literature*, First edition (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 4-5.

War, the Prohibition, and the Great Depression. These events damaged traditional conceptions of society and instilled an anxiety in the future. These changes would be reflected through the writing of the time. By reflecting on current firsthand experiences, writers abandoned traditional, linear narrative structures and experimented with alternative literary techniques to express their individuality and tell their current stories. Two strong examples of this include Plath's incorporation of the stream of consciousness writing technique in *The Bell Jar* and Eliot's incorporation of the non-linear narrative technique in *The Waste Land.*

Eliot conveys the idea of the lone individual by writing from the first-person point-of-view using a non-linear narrative structure for *The Waste Land*. The non-linear narrative is built on a fragmented literary methodology by either telling a story within a story, leaving interactions unfinished, or having a series of narratives told simultaneously. Following this structure, the individual assumes multiple voices and points of views as multiple characters or spectators in the poem, which conveys a sense of isolation since everyone is telling their own, separate story. Key characters or spectators in Eliot's poem include the clairvoyant Madame Sosostris, Phlebas, Fisher King, Philomela, Tiresias, and the typist lady. What was also unique at the time was the fusion of the past into modern prose.[116] Eliot incorporates this within the poem by also referencing figures from ancient legends like Philomela, the Fisher King, and Tiresias. This further contributes to the fragmented nature of the non-linear structure of the poem by incorporating multiple timelines. In this complex layering of multiple individuals and times, society was not addressed altogether, but through direct glimpses of individual points of views. This not only reveals a centralization of the individual, but its inherent aloneness within the non-linear narrative structure in Eliot's poem as each individual addresses their own story.

Similarly, Plath centralizes the lone individual by incorporating the stream of consciousness writing technique in *The Bell Jar* to depict Esther Greenwood's experience with severe depression. The stream of consciousness technique portrays the authenticity of the individual mind without strict structures or formal refinements in writing. It is important to note that many new woman writers emerged in the nineteenth century. The stream of consciousness, as well as the centered perspective of the first-person point-of-view, created a condition for women to project their voices and reclaim their suppressed identities in the patriarchal driven society. In *The Bell Jar*, the reader gains an understanding of Esther's inner struggles and what is often left unsaid through the first-person point of view. Plath incorporates prolonged sentences and sporadic changes of timelines in her writing, which exemplifies the stream of consciousness technique. For example, Esther reveals several flashbacks of her past in the novel:

> "I remember the ceilings over every bathtub I've stretched out in. I remember the texture of the ceilings and the cracks and the colours and the damp spots and the light fixtures. I remember the tubs, too: the antique griffin-legged tubs, and the modern coffin-shaped tubs, and the fancy pink marble tubs overlooking indoor lily ponds, and I remember the shapes and sizes of the water taps and the different sorts of soap-holders."[117]

In this passage, the specific detail from the legs and materials of the tubs makes this memory very personal to Esther, therefore allowing the reader to fully immerse themselves in the individuality of her character. Eliot's and Plath's experimentations with new literary techniques attest to the evolving concept

116 Sarah Jane Davison, "Parody: History and Theory," in *Modernist Parody: Imitation, Origination, and Experimentation in Early Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 25-41.

117 Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 21.

of isolation at the time by centralizing the idea of the individual using the first-person point-of-view or a non-linear narrative structure. Considering these emerging methods of writing, the idea of the individual became portrayed as a more centralized and subjective entity.

Externalizing the Inner Self

While the idea of the individual was becoming increasingly centralized since the Enlightenment, the notion of interiority also contributed to the evolving concept of isolation at the time. Interiority, or the internal world of the person has always existed, but its perception and recognition shifted beyond an opposition to exteriority in the nineteenth century. At this time, the notion of interiority, or the inner self, became increasingly externalized and assumed outward form in the material world. This became especially apparent through creative expression. Three examples contributing to this evolving perception of interiority in English societies include the Romantics' illumination of the inner self in writing, sub-divided home planning and self-reflective designs of Victorian domestic interiors, and the increasing consumption of small, novelty objects. Making part of this cultural context, Shelley and Hopkins convey an externalization of the inner self by writing about the inner tormented self.

Writing in a Manner of "Feeling"

In the late eighteenth century, Romantic writing began to externalize the inner self, writing in what French poet Charles Baudelaire described as a manner of "feeling."[118] In this transition from a perceptual to projective mindset, the Romantic poet was in a more direct interaction with subjective forms of the self like the imagination. As a result, individual experiences were projected through writing. M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* tracks this shift in England's traditional concept of poetry that occurred in the early nineteenth century using the metaphors of the mirror and the lamp. In this work, the metaphor of the mirror alludes to the long tradition of poetic imitation that was active prior to the nineteenth century, or a reflective mimesis of nature.[119] The lamp suggests the Romantic change in writing methods, when poetry became a diverse illumination of the inner self, ranging from thoughts and emotions inspired by personal, outer world experiences.[120] Examples of the new method of Romantic writing varied depending on each author. For example, metaphor became increasingly recognized as a figure of speech and method of communicating the inner self. This interpretative process of writing and reading required readers to contemplate the meaning of words, rather than only consuming them. Thus, as the Romantic period began to acknowledge the uniqueness of the inner self, this resulted in more ambiguous and personal writing.

118 Charles Baudelaire and David Kelley, "Qu'est-ce que le romantisme?" in *Salon de 1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 125.

119 M. H. (Meyer Howard) Abrams, "Imitation and the Mirror," in *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Norton, 1958), 30-35.

120 Abrams, "Romantic Analogues of Art and Mind," in *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Norton, 1958), 60.



Figure 26. Mary Ellen Best, *Drawing, An Interior, 1837-40*, 1837, brush and watercolor, graphite on off-white wove paper. Cooper Hewitt – Smithsonian Design Museum, New York.

The externalization of the inner self also assumed material form in nineteenth century home planning, where spaces became more sub-divided into pocketed rooms. With this new planning approach beginning in late eighteenth century French architectural theory, pocketed rooms were programmatically directed towards individual needs.[121] Ranging from boudoirs to private studies, the concept of a private life within the home and family was becoming desired, particularly for an experience of solitary repose. However, in *The Poetic Home: Designing the 19th Century Domestic Interior*, Stefan Muthesius makes an important point that this desire of solitude did exist as far back as Roman antiquity as a "poetic genre," but the nineteenth century brought a new level of physical reality to this idea through architectural planning.[122] Like Baudelaire's definition of Romanticism, John Ruskin described the science of architecture as, "not merely a science of the rule and compass, it does not consist only in the observation of just rule, or of fair proportion: it is, or ought to be, a science of feeling more than of rule, a ministry to the mind, more than to the eye."[123] This perception is very apparent in the interior design of nineteenth century British and American homes that began to reflect personal tastes. While emerging technology of the time generated new materials ranging from cast iron to steel, the selection of objects from furniture to decor diversified with this mass, factory-led production. This transformed society into mass consumers. And with greater accessibility to these goods, objects became a unique outlet to display status and the

121 Stefan Muthesius, "Introduction," in *The Poetic Home: Designing the 19th-Century Domestic Interior* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 15-16.

122 Muthesias, "Atmosphere," 159.

123 John Ruskin, "Introduction," in *The Poetry of Architecture, or, The Architecture of the Nations of Europe: Considered in Its Association with Natural Scenery and National Character* (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 1.

inner self through material form. Muthesius highlights the shift of the nineteenth century domestic interior towards an individualized extension of self-identity by tracing key changes of the general conception of the home that occurred in Europe and America during this period. He describes the nineteenth century home as the "homely home" that suggests the home was not a kit of standard parts, but a personal reflection of the individual inspired by the creative intention of its designer and user.[124] Muthesius also recognizes that design emphasis of the time related to the "mood" of each room considering color, form, and light.[125] In this way, the colour or the texture of the wallpaper not only made a statement of the room, but of its user as well. As a result, these growing, individualized methods of house planning and interior design at the time revealed another externalization of the inner self.

The Novelty of the Self in Small Objects

Along with the mass consumption of home goods in Britain came the growing materialization and consumption of small objects. Since the consumption of tie-on pockets during the seventeenth century, letters, bound books, lockets, and pocket diaries became artifacts that also externalized the privatized, inner self. In *The Self and It: Novel Objects and Mimetic Subjects in Eighteenth-Century England*, Julie Park described the obsession with objects during this period as "new tools for devising novel versions of the self."[126] While the Romantic poet's emotions were written on pages, memories became frozen into photographs that were stored in novel objects like lockets kept close to the heart. In *Romanticism, Feminism, History, Historicism*, Anne Mellor and Susan Wolfson study the mass consumption of literary print culture starting in the late eighteenth century as a by-product of this manufactured goods craze through the lens of women's role in active consumption and production. As books became readily available to lend in Great Britain at the time, this influenced a mass target market of different classes of women consuming and writing prints: "The successful development of more than a dozen magazines, gift books, and annuals specifically aimed at a female audience reflected the presence of a literate female public."[127] So, reading, a historically less accessible and privileged act, was becoming much more accessible at the time. Along with the growing desire of the book, its miniaturization to the scale of the pocket at the same time introduced what Park called a "portable interiority."[128] In this way, books were not cumbersome and could be easily transported. For example, the pocket diary allowed the owner to personalize their book by recording experiences of their day, which further illuminated the diversity of personal identity. Although it existed as a privatized book that was not intended to be publicly shared, the pocket diary became another material form that externalized the inner self.

The Tormented Self in Shelley's and Hopkins's Readings

Considering the Romantics' concern with the inner self in writing, increasingly separated and decorated spaces in Victorian home planning, and the growing consumption of small objects, the notion of interiority was very apparent during the time Shelley and Hopkins were writing. In fact, Hopkins and Shelley both portray the inner self as tormented in their writing. In *The Last Man*, Shelley writes in

124 Muthesius, "A Poetic Everyday Home?," 27-28.

125 Muthesius, "Preface," 9.

126 Julie Park, "Introduction" in *The Self and It: Novel Objects and Mimetic Subjects in Eighteenth-Century England*, 1st ed. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010), xiii.

127 Anne K, Mellor and Susan J Wolfson, "Romanticism, Feminism, History, Historicism: A Conversation," in *Romanticism, History, Historicism*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2009), 144.

128 Julie Park, "Interiority and Jane Porter's pocket diary," *The Collation, Folger Shakespeare Library*, July 24, 2014, https://www.folger.edu/blogs/collation/interiority-and-jane-porters-pocket-diary/

the first-person point-of-view to portray the inner workings of a solitary man: the main character of the story, Lionel Verney. Considering what Lisa Hopkins calls "the landscape of the heart," the first-person point-of-view in Shelley's story provides the reader with a direct glimpse into the imagined, plague-ridden world.[129] This provides an ideal condition to illuminate the inner self since the reader is grasping the plot directly from a solitary character. For example, Verney projects a sense of tormented isolation through recounts of his emotions, feelings, and experiences during the plague. This constantly reminds the reader of his inner turmoil brought on by the plague, ultimately portraying the notion of interiority as an external, emotional space. In *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, Hopkins interacts with interiority on many conceptual levels, but one specific example can be found in the last line of the sonnet. While Hopkins presents a reduction of the natural world's diversity throughout the sonnet, the ending is dramatized by only presenting a tormented mind where an individual's thoughts are "selfwrung, selfstrung" and painfully grinding against one another.[130] To end the sonnet with this image of inner torment indicates a recoiling to a dimension of interiority, similar to Shelley's main character who ends up as the last man in the world. By considering the subject of interiority from the nineteenth century onwards through this range of examples, this reveals how a traditional isolated unit like the inner self became externalized from its deep and very personal interior during the time Shelley and Hopkins were writing.

129 Lisa Hopkins, "The Last Man and the Language of the Heart," *Romanticism on the Net*, no. 22 (2001): 0–0. https://doi.org/10.7202/005976ar.

130 Gerard Manley Hopkins, "32 Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," in *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Now First Published: Edited with Notes by Robert Bridges, London* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1918), 52 (reference line 14), https://proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/32-spelt-sibyls-leaves/docview/2147756014/se-2.

Post-Apocalyptic Visions



Figure 27. John Martin, *The Last Man*, 1849, oil on canvas, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK.

The emergence of post-apocalyptic visions also contributed to the awareness around isolation during the nineteenth century onwards. While the Christian bible conveys the apocalypse as an event on earth that results in God's intervention, Victorians began imagining the apocalypse without religious salvation. Rather, Victorians focused on conveying the fragments of life that would be left behind from this magnitude of destruction.[131] This new perception of the apocalypse portrayed the world as not renewed but isolated in the form of a post-apocalyptic landscape. This growing concern with post-apocalyptic visions appears in Shelley's, Hopkins's, and Eliot's texts in various forms of remains of a world that used to be.

Imagining Remnants of Disaster

To understand the reconceptualization of apocalyptic visions from the nineteenth century onwards, we can consider the traditional view from the Book of Revelation (Book of the Apocalypse) first. In this case, the apocalypse is conveyed as a catastrophic event that occurs on earth which leads to God's intervention. God's descent to earth suggests a redemptive paradise of new creation that will come where heaven and earth become joined and introduce the City of God to believers. The post-apocalypse, on the other hand, was an articulation of possible surviving physical remnants of this kind of disastrous event. The root of this could be traced back to the Romantics' anxieties instigated by destructive wars and revolutions of the time. For instance, the deaths from wars and the destruction brought on by natural disasters like the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815 rendered the emerging nineteenth century reality much like the nearing of an apocalypse or end-of-the-world scenario. And with the simultaneously growing recognition of the inner self at the time, individuals began to project their own personal versions

131 Ralph Pordzik, "Beyond Millennium: Nineteenth-Century Crises and the Iconology of Victorian Apocalyptic Poetry," in *Victorian Wastelands: Apocalyptic Discourse in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2012), 11-14.

of end-of-the-world scenarios, especially through visual art and writing. English Romanticist painter John Martin's painting of an apocalyptic landscape is a key example of this. Inspired by Thomas Campbell's poem of the same name, Martin's scene shows a world where the landscape is almost indistinguishable. What is left as the only remainder of life in the world is the one, lone man and the burning sun. These Victorian post-apocalyptic visions, as cultural phenomena, became a means to confront current anxieties and fears of climate, economic and societal collapse that were, or felt, very real at the time.



Figure 28. Albrecht Dürer, *Apocalypse (One of series of 15 woodcuts from 1498 Latin edition c. 1497)*, c. 1497, woodcut. The British Museum, London, UK.

Post-Apocalyptic Visions in Shelley's, Hopkins's, and Eliot's Readings

In their time, Shelley and Hopkins envisioned their own post-apocalyptic worlds while Eliot envisioned his version a few generations later. In Shelley's *The Last Man*, a plague causes the formation of a post-apocalyptic landscape. Throughout this novel, the plague is perceived as something that is feared and positions the human population as extremely vulnerable. In addition to the plague, several natural phenomena that Lionel Verney perceives throughout the story suggest apocalyptic traits including a black sun, hot volcanic meteors, and destructive sea storms. Like Campbell's painting, the narrative reduces human life to the presence of one, last man. The post-apocalyptic environment that Verney survives in is ultimately depicted without religious salvation. So, Shelley's post-apocalypse is rendered a lived reality by positioning the last man on a journey of survival in the same, changed world.

In Hopkins's sonnet, an apocalyptic vision takes form as a shapeless darkness, or what John C. Hampsey calls "hardly a beautiful one."[132] For example, Hopkins conveys hellish imagery throughout the sonnet using motifs of darkness, sharp beaks and dragon claws gliding in an unseeable sky. So instead of functioning as a transitory state towards something better, the post-apocalypse here is lived through the repetitive cycle of night, or rather death, that is inevitable in the real world - similar conditions that Shelley's main character experiences during the plague. While Hopkins depicts the inevitable event of evening transitioning into night, this nonetheless foregrounds an inescapable wheel of mortal time, where life becomes shrouded in total darkness.

While living in the aftereffects of the First World War and the Prohibition, Eliot re-imagined his world conditions as a post-apocalyptic dead land in *The Waste Land*. Throughout the poem, Eliot describes the landscape with qualities of dryness, fog, and shadow, using words like "stony rubbish" to indicate that the land of the wasteland does not possess qualities for growth but has rather become obsolete.[133] During the time the poem was published, the Western world was increasingly recognizing the capacity for human-induced destruction. In *Two Concepts of Apocalypse and Apocalyptic History Today*, historian Torbjörn Gustafsson Chorell argues for two conceptions of apocalypticism: one being the biblical one and the latter as a new history following conditions of life after the First World War. He also argues that the new version is still related to the past by the notion of "promise" that exists between humans and the land.[134] While presenting examples of "new apocalypticism," Chorell addresses German philosopher Gunther Anders's theses on the atomic age from the twentieth century in which Anders describes the possibility of an apocalypse that is "self-making."[135] Considering the fabrication of nuclear objects at the time like the atomic bomb, and their climatic effects, these objects risked apocalyptic outcomes that could threaten the habitability of the world beyond natural phenomena. Eliot's wasteland portrays this idea of a disastrous outcome of human-made doing, particularly as a landscape that has stopped being cared for or preserved. Like Hopkins's and Shelley's texts, each apocalyptic rendition here highlights a living, desolate existence for the human. The re-framing of apocalyptic visions from the nineteenth century onwards re-centered the nearing of an end of the world onto the surviving remains of its disaster, and illuminated the alarming vulnerability of a future, habitable world for humans. As these highly subjective and individual interpretations grew at the time, post-apocalyptic landscapes projected a sense of isolation through dystopic scenes without any optimistic indications of renewal.

The concept of isolation changed dramatically from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. In part, this was due to the fascination with the imbricated concepts of the individual becoming increasingly centralized in society, the externalization of the inner self through writing and material objects, and depictions of post-apocalyptic visions—themes that not only affected writing, but also the social, cultural, and material fabric of the Western world. While Shelley, Hopkins, Eliot, and Plath were active writers around this time, these themes became inevitably conceived in their own works. I was able to recognize this in their incorporations of the centralized, lone individual character, the portrayal of the inner, tormented self, and the varied post-apocalyptic-type conditions each author, besides Plath, transmitted through their writing. While these themes of the individual, interiority, and the post-apocalypse project a concern with isolation at the time, they interestingly harken back to the essence of the Sibyl of Cumae's ancient character who has been interpreted as embodying isolation.

132 John C. Hampsey, "Trapped in Sibyl's Jar: Hopkins's Dialectic of Self in 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves,'" *Colby Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (1990): 227.

133 T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," in *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952), 38 (reference lines 19-20).

134 Torbjörn Gustafsson Chorell, "Two Concepts of Apocalypse and Apocalyptic History Today," *Rethinking History* 28 no. 3 (2024): 372.

135 Chorell, "Two Concepts of Apocalypse," 363.

MATERIAL PROXIES OF THE SIBYL:
DECAY, SILENCE, VISIBILITY

Looking back at the four texts, *The Last Man*, *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, *The Waste Land*, and *The Bell Jar*, I will now study material representations of isolation considering objects associated with the Sibyl of Cumae in these texts. References to the Sibyl across all four of these texts relied on material objects to assert her presence including the *leaves*, *cage*, and *jar*. What qualities of these objects express isolation – the notion of separateness – in these texts? To explore this, I will investigate how each writer interprets the Sibyl using these three objects to convey a sense of isolation. To do this, I look at how the leaves bring decay in Shelley's and Hopkins's texts, the cage imparts silence in Eliot's wasteland, and how the glass bell jar suggests a trope of visibility in Plath's novel. These three qualities – decay, silence, visibility – provide me with a framework to further study the concept of isolation in these texts by examining its physical manifestations through settings, objects, and characters in select passages.

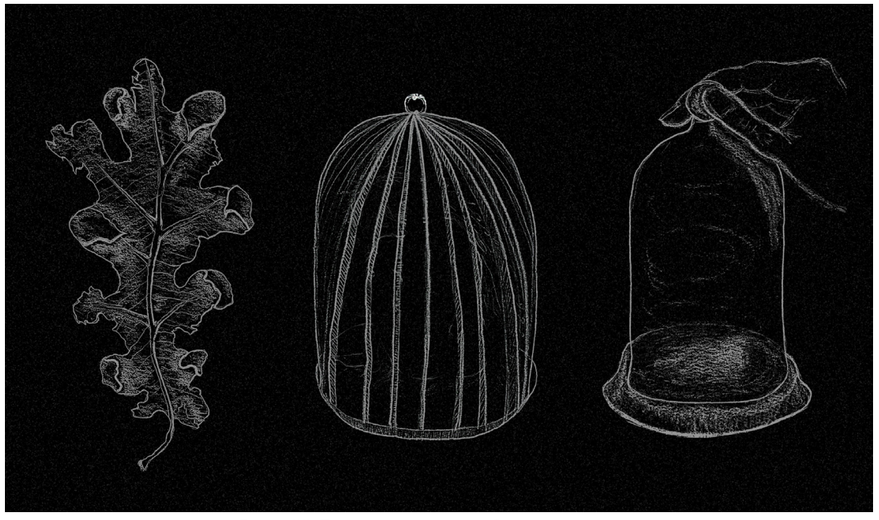


Figure 29. The leaf, cage, and jar. Sketches by author.

Decay:
What the Sibyl's Leaves Said in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* and G.M. Hopkins's *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*

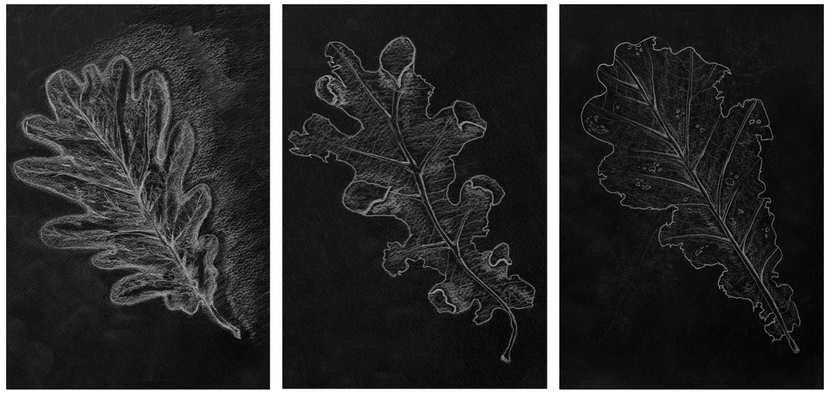


Figure 30. Leaf undergoing the process of decay. Sketches by author.

The Sibyl's Leaves Foretold a Plague-Ridden World

> "This was certainly the Sibyl's cave; not indeed exactly as Virgil describes it; but the whole of this land had been so convulsed by earthquake and volcano, that the change was not wonderful, though the traces of ruin were effaced by time; and we probably owed the preservation of these leaves, to the accident which had closed the mouth of the cavern, and the swift-growing vegetation which had rendered its sole opening impervious to the storm. We made a hasty selection of such of the leaves, whose writing one at least of us could understand; and then, laden with our treasure we bade adieu to the dim hypæthric cavern, and after much difficulty succeeded in rejoining our guides."[136]

In *The Last Man*, the leaves stand in for the Sibyl. The leaves, although suggesting decay and illegibility as prophetic documents that either disintegrated or were disordered, paradoxically instigate new creation through an act of interpretation. Shelley's traveler does not rely on the physicality of the Sibyl's cave but illustrates its presence through the "traces of ruin" exemplified by the decay of the leaves. The physical nature of leaves is interesting because their decay is part of a process of decomposition that results in new growth. The growth of leaves partakes in a cyclical process. Leaves begin a process of conversion during the springtime, where after saturating themselves with carbon dioxide, they transform the chemical into organic carbon compounds. By the time autumn arrives, colours change and trees shed leaves that decompose into the soil. Microorganisms like fungi and bacteria decompose the leaves and their biodegradable decay is then seen physically by the breakage or drying of the leaf. Eventually, the leaves will release carbon dioxide back into the environment. Freelance environmental science journalist Laura Poppick looks at the potential of life in dead leaves following the work of biologist Jane Marks: "Dead leaves, Marks explains, provide a primary food base for life all the way up the food chain in and around streams, from the fungi and bacteria that initially colonize the leaves, and the insects that chew them, down to the birds and fish that eat those insects, and so on."[137] Through the process of decay, leaves do not die, but bring new growth.

Shelley's story starts from a pile of decayed leaves. During a visit to Naples, an unnamed Englishwoman discovers piles of scattered leaves in the Sibyl's cave.[138] Upon closer examination, she finds prophecies written on the leaves in various languages, some familiar to her and some unknown. While the darkness in the cave makes it almost impossible to read, the woman realizes the leaves are the Sibyl's prophecies but in a state of disorder. Although the leaves were partially preserved in the cave, they have decayed through their problematic illegibility. This results in the task of interpretation to develop new meanings of the remaining messages. It is important to remember that the Sibyl's prophetic documents originated as fragments. While Shelley incorporates the Sibyl's leaves in her story, this means she also incorporated the subjective role of interpretation belonging to Sibylline tradition. So, while the traveler develops her version of the prophecy, she states that her, "only excuse for thus transforming them, is that they were unintelligible in their pristine conditions."[139]

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136 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, "Introduction," in *The Last Man* (1826), forward by Rebecca Solnit, introduction by John Havard (New York: Penguin Classics, 2024), 7-8.

137 Laura Poppick, "The life that springs from dead leaves in streams," *Knowable Magazine*, last modified June 8, 2020, https://knowablemagazine.org/content/article/living-world/2020/life-springs-dead-leaves-streams

138 Shelley, "Introduction," in *The Last Man*, 7-9.

139 Shelley, *The Last Man*, 9.

Timothy Ruppert explores Shelley's interest in the imagination as an agent of transformation and positive change. Ruppert associates the Sibyl's prophetic leaves with British Romantic visionary poets, who were interested in the creative potential of the literary prophecy which, "offered a historically authoritative genre equipped with unique artistic principles and a seemingly timely interventionist ethic."[140] Considering this, the leaves function two-fold in *The Last Man*: they are materials belonging to the Sibyl's character and they are the central authority for the creation of a new world, resulting in the plague-ridden, post-apocalyptic world that follows.

The Sibyl's Leaves Showed Fear

> "Only the beak-leaved boughs dragonish ' damask the tool-smooth bleak light; black,
> Ever so black on it. Óur tale, O óur oracle! ' Lét life, wáned, ah lét life wind
> Off hér once skéined stained véined varíety ' upon áll on twó spools; part, pen, pack"[141]

In *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, leaves assume the prophetic authority of the Sibyl's character. However, the leaves suggest decay in their physical re-composition in Hopkins's sonnet. For example, Hopkins transforms the Sibyl's leaves into "beak-leaved boughs" sharpened like "dragonish" beaks - a hellish image that indicates even the surrender of nature to a nebulous night. Although the leaves and boughs may be the remaining diversity as separate objects of nature, they have become hazardous in the night by turning into sharp objects. And if considering the details of the Sibyl's prophecies being written on these leaves, they would have become impossible to read in the dark. In fact, Hopkins addresses the colour black right after describing the boughs – which alludes to an inability to read the Sibyl's leaves once the night takes over. Following this imagery of decaying leaves, Hopkins's interpretation of the Sibyl's leaves foretells a final judgement scenario consisting of "two spools" of right and wrong. Like Shelley's traveler, the narrator here uses the Sibyl's prophecy as a mask of authority to confirm the interpretation of this inevitable darkness that takes over the world. While Hopkins incorporated the Sibyl's leaves in the sonnet, this has opened critical discourse questioning what this implies for the sonnet's overall composition. In *The Hermeneutics of "Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves"* Gary Stonum examines the role of the Sibyl's leaves in the sonnet by suggesting a view of the Sibyl's leaves as a framework to evoke the high level of drama that Hopkins presents through the multiple images of night he conveys.[142] Considering this, the Sibyl's leaves become ideal objects to dramatize decay by supporting the image of a consuming night since they become both physically distorted and illegible. So, while the Sibyl's leaves remind the reader of the inescapability of mortal time, they end up losing their natural shape and original purpose all to Hopkins's deadly night.

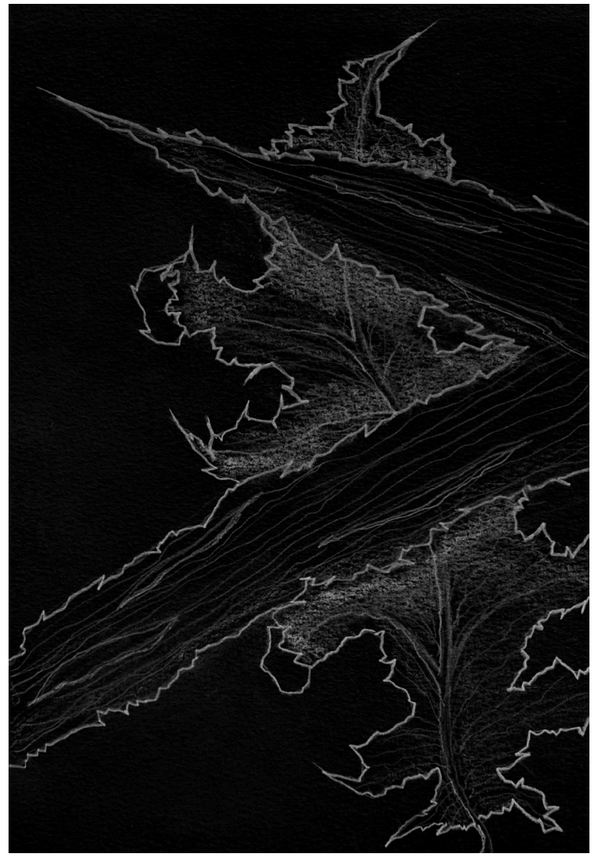


Figure 31. A leaf and bough with sharp ends. Sketch by author.

140 Timothy Ruppert, "TIME AND THE SIBYL IN MARY SHELLEY'S 'THE LAST MAN,'" *Studies in the Novel* 41, no. 2 (2009): 143.
141 Hopkins, "32 Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," 52 (reference lines 9-11).
142 Gary L. Stonum, "THE HERMENEUTICS OF 'SPELT FROM SIBYL'S LEAVES,'" *Hopkins Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (1976): 119.

Silence:
The Sibyl's Ampulla-Turned-Cage in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

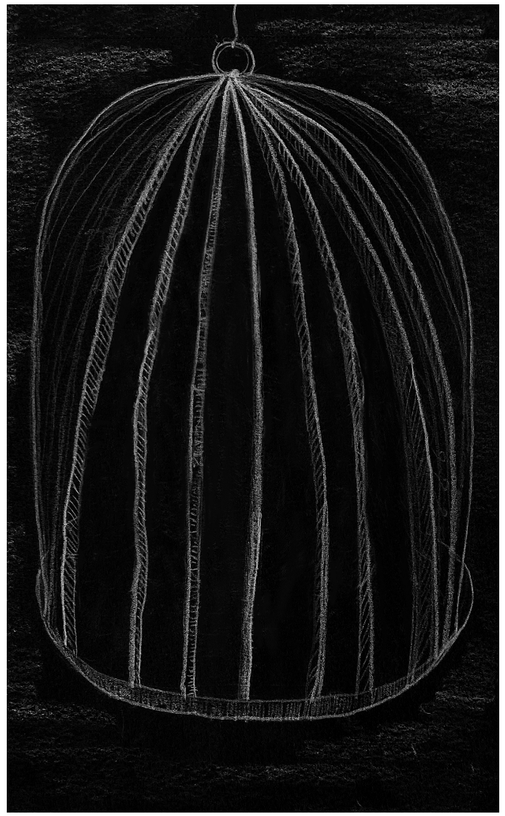


Figure 32. The Sibyl's cage in the wasteland. Sketch by author.

The Sibyl's Cage is a Standard of Silence

In *The Waste Land*, the cage stands in for the Sibyl. Petronius's version of the miniaturized Sibyl hanging in an ampulla is addressed in the epigraph of Eliot's poem.[143] Although Eliot includes the direct Latin reference, his translation of the *ampulla* to *cage* suggested the minor reconceptualization that the Sibyl's *ampulla* is a *cage* in the wasteland.[144] A critical quality of a cage is that it enforces silence. Like a prison, a cage forms a physical boundary between the thing it confines and the external environment. Through its inaccessibility, the condition of interiority is seen as negative versus exterior as positive in the same way confinement is viewed in opposition to freedom. Recalling Petronius's story, the Sibyl is asked by a group of boys what she wants, and her only answer was to die. The fact that Eliot resurfaces the Sibyl in this same, isolated manner at the beginning of the poem ingrains the ideas of a life wasting away and escape as an unattainable desire. In this way, the Sibyl's cage begins to enforce silence as a standard throughout the poem. While the cage projects a vision of the Sibyl as a hostage whose voice is missing its original authority, a similar quality of silence becomes transferred to the physical and temporal descriptions of the wasteland that follow.

To start, the past is frequently contrasted by the present, and the future is portrayed as pessimistic or unseeable in the poem. In the first section of the poem, the past is described with nostalgic scenes from youth or get-togethers whereas the present is consistently described as alone or dead. Eliot's consistent incorporation of references to stones, rocks, dead trees, and dust reminds the reader that there is no opportunity for physical growth in the wasteland. More than this, air pollution, crowds of solitary people, fog, and the Thames River filled with oil and tar continue to present a repetitive cycle of desolate imagery with nothing to see in the distance of the wasteland, ultimately indicating a sense of inescapability that the cage implies. These details imbue a strong, physical dimension to the silence that pervades the wasteland. Just like silence prevents speaking, the wasteland is prevented from any sign of foreseeable or positive growth. This renders the cage-like wasteland a distorted mirror image of the Sibyl's ampulla, both confined by a limited boundary.

The Polyphony of Voices in the Waste Land

Like a polyphony in music contains multiple separate tones or melodies, the wasteland is pervaded by a polyphony of multiple voices that speak. However, they are not necessarily heard by others because they are either interrupted or left undefined. The motif of the Sibyl's voice in the poem can be looked at as the first example. From Petronius's ancient interpretation, the Sibyl's venerable voice was diminished to only projecting her helplessness in her cursed aging. This initial detail frames the standard of silence for Eliot's poem as something that results out of a helpless condition. At the same time, the Sibyl's voice was traditionally adopted by others like gods, poets, and oracle translators. Since Eliot begins *The Waste Land* with the Sibyl's voice, this could just as well be a hint to the multiple voices that are adopted throughout the poem ranging from Madame Sosostris, the Fisher King, the typist lady, and Tiresias to name a few. Moreover, the multiple voices adopted in the poem paradoxically conveys silence since it creates non-linearity and confusion. For example, the character "Lil" is having a conversation with someone in the second section of the poem. During this conversation, she is persistently interrupted by an undefined voice that repeats the line, "hurry up please it's time."[145]

143 Eliot, "The Waste Land," in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 37.
144 Hollis, *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem*, 241.
145 Eliot, "The Waste Land," in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 41-42 (reference lines 141;153;165;168;169).

This method of interruption results in Lil's story remaining unfinished, thus minimizing her voice in the overall composition of the poem.

While assuming a prophetic role like the Sibyl, Tiresias is another voice in the poem that exemplifies silence, this time through their paradoxical blind sight. Originating from Greek mythology, Tiresias was a blind prophet who was transformed into a woman by the goddess Hera. As a man becoming a woman, Tiresias's legend also suggests a double entendre of sight. On one hand, Tiresias is physically blind. On the other hand, Tiresias sees the future like the Sibyl. This paradox of a blinded visionary prophet is an ideal condition for the wasteland that is deprived of foreseeable progression. Tim Dean's critique on modernist aesthetic theory in *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot* suggests impersonality is a "strategy of access" instead of a "strategy of evasion."[146] Considering this context, Tiresias's voice can be understood as a vessel that is talked through, or how Dean notes, "a medium for others' voices."[147] Tiresias's voice functions in the same manner as the Sibyl's voice did by providing access to a closed reality, in this case being the wasteland's future. However, Tiresias's visions differ from the Sibyl's since they are specific as opposed to more generally addressing the world. For example, Tiresias foretells, or rather presently describes an imbalanced, unromantic, intimate encounter between a man and a woman referred to as "the typist lady" in the third section of the poem. The typist lady possesses no agency while the man with "exploring hands encounter no defence."[148] Considering this unreciprocated encounter, the wasteland continues to be depicted as an entrapped space even through divine observation. Tiresias's divine perception does not reveal a future trajectory for the wasteland, only a projection of the events that presently occur in that world. This detail further entrenches the standard of silence in the wasteland since it hints at only sameness for the future. The cage ultimately siphons the Sibyl by provoking a standard of silence through the multiple, ambiguous voices and stagnant physical characteristics of the land in the wasteland.

146 Tim Dean, "T. S. Eliot, Famous Clairvoyante," in *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot*, edited by Cassandra Laity and Nancy K. Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 44.

147 Ibid.

148 Eliot, "The Waste Land," in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 44 (reference line 240).

Visibility:
The Sibyl's Ampulla-Turned-Bell Jar in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*

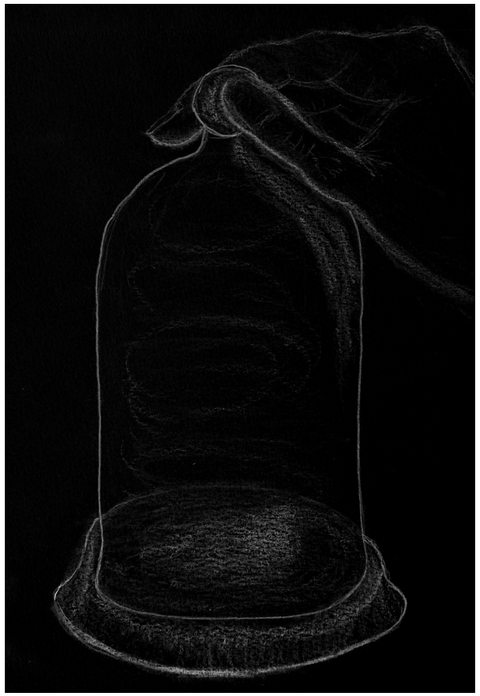


Figure 33. Bell jar. Sketch by author.

> "I knew I should be grateful to Mrs. Guinea, only I couldn't feel a thing. If Mrs. Guinea had given me a ticket to Europe, or a round-the-world cruise, it wouldn't have made one scrap of difference to me, because wherever I sat – on the deck of a ship or at a street café in Paris or Bangkok – I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air."[149]

The bell jar can be interpreted as a material counterpart to the Sibyl. As she was confined inside an ampulla, Plath's protagonist Esther Greenwood is metaphorically confined inside a manufactured glass bell jar. The bell jar evokes a trope of visibility that imposes senses of viewership, confinement, and control over Esther's identity. This is highlighted by the bell jar's material of glass, small scale, and the sense of control suggested by its metaphorical spectator: the western perception of women during the mid-1900s.

Small Jars as a Metaphor for Feminine Character Miniaturization

Plath does not directly reference the Sibyl, but the meaning of the bell jar is not so different from the Sibyl's ampulla. Like the ampulla, Esther's metaphorical bell jar possesses no room for growth – both literally and metaphorically. In the metaphorical sense, the two objects limit the potential of both feminine characters. While the Sibyl was forced into unnatural aging by Apollo in the *Metamorphoses*, Esther was forced to feel the pressure from the public eye regarding marriage and the domestic lifestyle. As a result, both miniature vessels are rendered as objects of display once associated with their characters. While inside of the ampulla, the Sibyl is presented in a diminishing manner for all eyes to see. In Esther's mind, she sees her identity "stewing" inside the bell jar considering the limiting perception of women in society at the time. The metaphor of visibility unites two histories from two different worlds through these small, vessel-type objects, displaying isolation in its bleakest form.

The Spatial and Material Qualities of the Bell Jar

The transparent material of glass and the small scale of the bell jar also impose viewership and confinement onto Esther's character. The bell jar is a common object used in laboratories for observing experiments and vacuum sealing. Its transparency makes attention easy to direct and maintain on one, specific point. And with the scale so small in relation to the human body, it suggests a reduction to something that can fit inside of it. This suggests a forced alteration or molding of the authentic individual, like Esther's identity in the context of Plath's novel. These two regulated conditions of being watched and confined project a state of vulnerability for whatever is kept inside the jar. For Esther, the bell jar's physical qualities materialize her vulnerable, psychological state that is influenced by exterior perceptions. Considering this, Plath incorporates alternating levels of visibility throughout the novel which exemplify Esther's battle between the exterior perceptions of women and her authentic self. As a result, Esther is constantly shifting between private and public architectural spaces throughout the story. The reader, who adopts the role of a spectator from the outside looking in, gains the sense that secluded spaces like bedrooms or bathrooms paradoxically offer Esther the self-controlled visibility she is deprived of in the crystal-clear viewership of the "bell jar" that is her public life. Considering this metaphor of visibility further, reflective materials in public environs that Esther interacts with constantly leave her stuck in a weird confusion between her true identity and her active presence. This ranges from glass revolving doors, mirrors, windows, to back seats of taxi cabs.[150]

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149 Plath, *The Bell Jar*, 195.

150 Although not exhaustive, some references to these environs can be found in *The Bell Jar* on the following pages: 20, 27, 43, 44, 53.

Through the alternating levels of visibility that these architectural spaces impose, this ultimately splits Esther's identity into two: the "public" Esther and the "private" Esther.

The Metaphor of Glass and the Over-Visibility of Women in Mid-Twentieth Century America

Further, the transparency of glass can be interpreted to simultaneously reflect the over-visibility conferred onto women by their permeating presence in consumable culture like magazines at the time. Particularly, the emphasis on women and domesticity that emerged in the nineteenth century enforced expectations of women marrying, starting a family, and living an interiorized lifestyle. *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960: Gender roles and the popular press* presents the perception of women's domestic and public roles during the 1940s to 1960s through the lens of mass-circulated women's magazine articles and advertisements. Magazines were one of the key sources of communication and culture at the time, especially for women. Particularly, *Ladies' Home Journal* was the archetype of women-oriented magazines that depicted everything a woman "should" be or "should" know. While its intention was to respond to reader interests, the content focusing on homemaking, how-to's, and information relating to "choosing a college or a winter coat to attracting and feeding a husband," did not shy away from reflecting a standardized image for women in society.[151] Looking back at Plath's novel, Esther's own interactions with reader's digest article cut-outs, and conversations about marriage throughout the novel confers the sense of over-visibility that the transparency of the bell jar implies. From this, Esther's metaphorical bell jar reveals a strikingly similar condition to the Sibyl stuck inside an ampulla. Both characters have been interiorized and on display for others.

Finding Inspiration Through the Sibyl of Cumae's Absence

While each of these four texts uniquely convey decay, silence, or visibility, this would not come without their interpretations of objects that stand in for the Sibyl of Cumae. The material, spatial, metaphorical, and symbolic qualities of the Sibyl's leaves and the ampulla as a cage and glass jar impart new creation in these works. For Shelley, the Sibyl's leaves offer the creation of a plague-ridden world. For Hopkins, the Sibyl's leaves offer an encounter with death through the inevitable darkness that consumes the earth during the nighttime. For Eliot, the perception of the Sibyl's ampulla as a cage provides the spatial framework for the imagination of an arid land that cannot progress. For Plath, the Sibyl's ampulla is reminisced by the glass jar that metaphorically reflects the life of a young woman living in America in the 1950s. Besides interpreting these objects as the thematic framework for the creation of new versions of the world, they also stand as the material evidence of the tangible outcomes of decay, silence, or visibility. The Sibyl's leaves decayed as they were found scattered and confused in Shelley's story. The Sibyl's leaves decayed to a frightening quality of sharpness in Hopkins's grim vision of night. The Sibyl's ampulla-turned-cage became a warning site for the silence and inescapability that consumes the barren wasteland. The Sibyl's ampulla-turned-jar became an emblem of confinement that miniaturizes feminine potential. With that, these four unique worlds are interestingly united by these three distinct tropes of decay, silence, and visibility that insinuate the overarching theme of isolation that I have attempted to recognize throughout this thesis. The material examination of these objects was fundamentally traced back to the Sibyl's ancient character whose personal identity, although seized by these objects and spaces, maintains to offer a multitude of inspiration amongst her absence.

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151 Nancy A. Walker, "Introduction," in *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 4.

CONCLUSION

The tasks of researching and creatively analyzing literature associated with the ancient Sibyl of Cumae in this thesis was an extremely challenging, extremely perplexing, but extremely rewarding process. My study began inside the cave of the Sibyl and ended in the story-worlds created by Mary Shelley, G.M. Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, and Sylvia Plath. During my embodied experience in the Sibyl's cave, I was exposed to the idea of the Sibyl's presence being enveloped by vessel-type spaces. In the four story-worlds, I was exposed to the effect the Sibyl's absence had to inspire new creation through her association with the cave, ampulla, and leaves. While the ancient stories told by Vergil, Ovid, and Petronius have influenced me to conceive vessels and the chthonic architecture of the cave as materials that signify the Sibyl's presence, this also influenced me to position the Sibyl as the central subject for my research study. Throughout this thesis, I attempted to learn more about the Sibyl of Cumae's ancient and mythical identity, and its physical constituents. By focusing my study on the interpretation of the Sibyl of Cumae in literature, this provided me with a feasible, interpretative ground where I could think creatively and more critically about the effects that spatial and material associations from the physical world had on conveying the Sibyl's mythical presence.

Part 1 of this thesis focused on studying the Sibyl from ancient history. I referred to various sources ranging from travelogues, legends, stories, surveys, theology, and religious texts. From these, I was able to recognize how the Sibyl of Cumae became increasingly dissociated from a personal identity considering specific traits that rendered her liminal and the imagination of her physical occupation of vessel-type objects or spaces. The Sibyl's impersonal name, uncertain age, legend of Sibylline books that burned the trace of her existence in ancient Rome, and adopted voice in the emergence of Christianity posit the sense of an inability for the Sibyl of Cumae to maintain her personhood while it was being tossed between multiple interpretations forged by others. While I ended this first part of the thesis on an analysis of the three ancient stories written by Vergil, Ovid, and Petronius, I was able to critically examine and envision how the Sibyl was imagined occupying spatial environments that were small, confined, or secluded. The cave, dust, and ampulla - three material entities - revealed conditions of interiority and immobility that deprived the Sibyl of Cumae of her selfhood. However, her growing association with these materials of the physical world became paradoxically remembered by future generations. With them, the Sibyl survived religious erasure and maintained her memory in modern time.

As I became more interested in studying the Sibyl of Cumae and her material associations, I ventured beyond ancient history. In Part 2 of this thesis, I looked at the Sibyl's alternative interpretations in literature from the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. Reading works by Shelley, Hopkins, Eliot, and Plath, I was re-introduced to the Sibyl's material associations from the past including the leaves and the ampulla – newly interpreted as a cage and glass jar in Eliot's and Plath's works. By recognizing the essence of the Sibyl embodying isolation from the ancient counterparts, I employed the concept of isolation as a method to study the interpretation of the Sibyl in the modern readings. Since the leaves and ampulla assumed the Sibyl's presence in the modern readings, I suggested the material tropes of decay, silence, and visibility siphon her character. This revealed to me how the Sibyl's absence, and these material entities that stand in for her character, inspire the thematic framework for the creation of new versions of the world.

The study and practice of architecture is unique because of its multi-disciplinary nature. The study of architecture is not only structural, nor mathematical. Architecture is also about the study of different histories, culture, and people. It calls on us to learn from the past to support and inspire the built fabric of the world. I see the study of architecture as a colossal story that continues to be unraveled, diffracted, added on to, re-shaped, and molded. I believe the road to becoming a good architect means becoming a good communicator of ideas, and that is the approach I adopted in this thesis. While I positioned my study much beyond an architectural scope and looked at literature, art, cultural, psychological, philosophical, religious, and feminist studies and discourse, I built a multi-disciplinary methodology that allowed me to communicate and engage with the site of the cave of the Sibyl and its connection to the Sibyl of Cumae. By tracing varied interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae through time, I was able to recognize the role that entities of the physical world including nature, architecture, and objects have in transcending myth and enigmatic figures that emerged thousands of years ago.

In the end, I am still left with a paradoxical perception of the Sibyl. While certain aspects of her personal identity were assumed by others, like her voice, she still maintained the venerable quality she had to inspire. In *From the Beast to the Blonde*, cultural critic Marina Warner describes the paradox of the Sibyl entity, saying that, "she is exiled, even abandoned, her voice is muffled, even muted," and yet, "she goes on speaking."[152] Like Warner, my critical examination on select interpretations of the Sibyl of Cumae revealed many ways that the Sibyl possesses the unique trait of a powerful, transcendental voice whose memory continues to be maintained, all while exterior forces - like authors or material forms - continue to adopt her character. At the same time, the lore attached to the Sibyl of Cumae continues to illuminate the value of certain human qualities including the importance of woman's voice, aging as an indication to be present during our individual time allotted on earth, and the positive benefits of sharing knowledge, and especially stories, with others. Throughout all this, this thesis also attempted to reveal how the physical world acts as an agent in conveying myth by proxies of nature and numinous spaces, as I experienced in the cave of the Sibyl.

From caves, leaves, dust, to ampullae, I still hear your voice, Sibyl of Cumae. Thank you.

While the Sibyl used words to transmit inspiration in the ancient world, I conclude this thesis with a synthesis of all I have learned about her character and stories throughout this process in the form of a fragment of my own writing, a poem, or rather story, about the life in dead leaves.

"Dear Sibyl, I must ask you one question"

152 Marina Warner, "In the Cave of the Enchantress," in *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (1st American ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 11.

Do you enjoy in the numbing darkness

or lean more towards revealing the light?

Without you here, there is but no confess.

What is there to see with you not in sight?

Was it because of the flames that were brought

to your books by Stilicho, ruling man?

Pulverized to ashes and dust, they thought,

foolish to think this lessened your life span.

Although your arrival in Rome seemed brief,

a lingering trace of presence was left.

There is a voice that speaks from this dead leaf,

it chants, 'I am here, I am, I am here!' -

please don't forget, amongst the fire's theft.

The dead leaf walks and dances in mid-air,

twisting, twirling, surrendering nature.

Here it moves freely amongst wear and tear

landing on ground where it is no stranger.

I find it in a cave lying on ground.

Revealing paths to follow where it lies.

Inching further inside, echoing sound

I enter the vessel while wind sighs.

In this vessel there is but little light

as my hand meets the stony rock surface

inscribing, incising, nature takes flight

for inside here lie her untouched verses.

The underground is no place for the books

or body for this is where dead leaves dance.

In the sparse light that pierces a small nook

presence of dust is revealed in remnants.

As tiny specks and dead leaves dance in air,

I don't see but feel things I can't deny.

Here I encounter Sibyl say so fair,

"Didn't you know that a dead leaf can't die?"

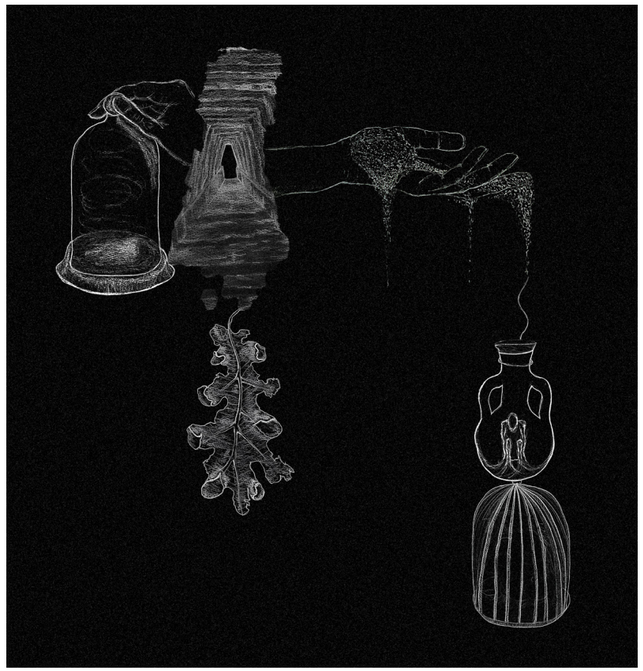


Figure 34. Material proxies of the Sibyl. Sketch by author.

end.

ANALYSES: THE MATERIAL TROPES OF DECAY, SILENCE, VISIBILITY

I recognized that the theme of isolation plays a significant role in how the Sibyl of Cumae's material associations are manifested in Shelley's, Hopkins's, Eliot's, and Plath's texts. A critical part of this process was closely reading their texts to develop meaning by finding tangible examples of decay, silence, and visibility throughout. Therefore, I have compiled a selection of passages below that show how I analyzed the qualities of decay, silence, and visibility in these four texts by looking at how they take physical form through settings (human-made and natural), objects, and characters. The following passages informed my thesis by revealing how architecture and other physical objects act as agents in conveying isolation through the qualities of decay, silence, and visibility.

In the selected passages from Shelley's novel, I recognized how decay is physically manifested in descriptions of deserted or unkempt human-made architectural environments, the detachment between the human condition and the natural world, and the declining physical and psychological conditions of the human during the plague. These specific examples reveal how the natural world is paradoxically conveyed as flourishing and instigating new creation during the plague while the human condition succumbs to decay. In the selected lines of Hopkins's sonnet, I recognized the materialization of decay in descriptions of the dissolution of light into darkness, the loss of variety in colour, and the human mind being tormented by repetitive thoughts. In the selected lines of Eliot's poem, I recognized the materialization of silence in dead and dry descriptions of settings, silent characters or spectators, and the absence of humans, objects, or sounds in space. Finally, I recognized the metaphor of visibility in the selected passages from Plath's novel by looking at the range of visibility between public and private spaces that Esther Greenwood interacts with. I found framed conditions like windows, cameras, and mirrors possess the highest level of visibility and impose viewership onto Esther considering their reflective and transparent descriptions. I then recognized transitory spaces like cars, temporary hospital rooms, and doors possess a liminal level of visibility that is penetrable and impermanent therefore impeding Esther's ability to feel grounded. Finally, I recognized spaces that possess solid qualities like bathtubs, Esther's own bedroom, and windowless rooms provide the least amount of visibility but the most grounding for Esther. Considering this varied material and spatial evidence, this helped me grasp the strong, material manifestations of decay, silence, and visibility in these texts.

The components of my analysis below consist of my personal annotations of select passages, an annotation key, my hand sketches of physical components of passages, and my written reflections that consider how each passage conveys the specified material quality. My annotations are in the form of superscripted letters employed directly into the selected passages that highlight specific words that represent the material quality for examination. For example, the superscripted letter **A** distinguishes entities that are affected by either decay, silence, or visibility. This ranges from objects, architecture, natural settings, and people. The superscripted letter **B** is tagged to words that are reactions or outcomes to the effects of the material quality of examination. For example, if I was examining evidence of decay, I tag words here that suggest a decayed transformation of **A** entities. For Shelley's novel, the additional superscripted letter **C** indicates material entities from the past and the superscripted letter **D** highlights any indications of renewal in the scene.

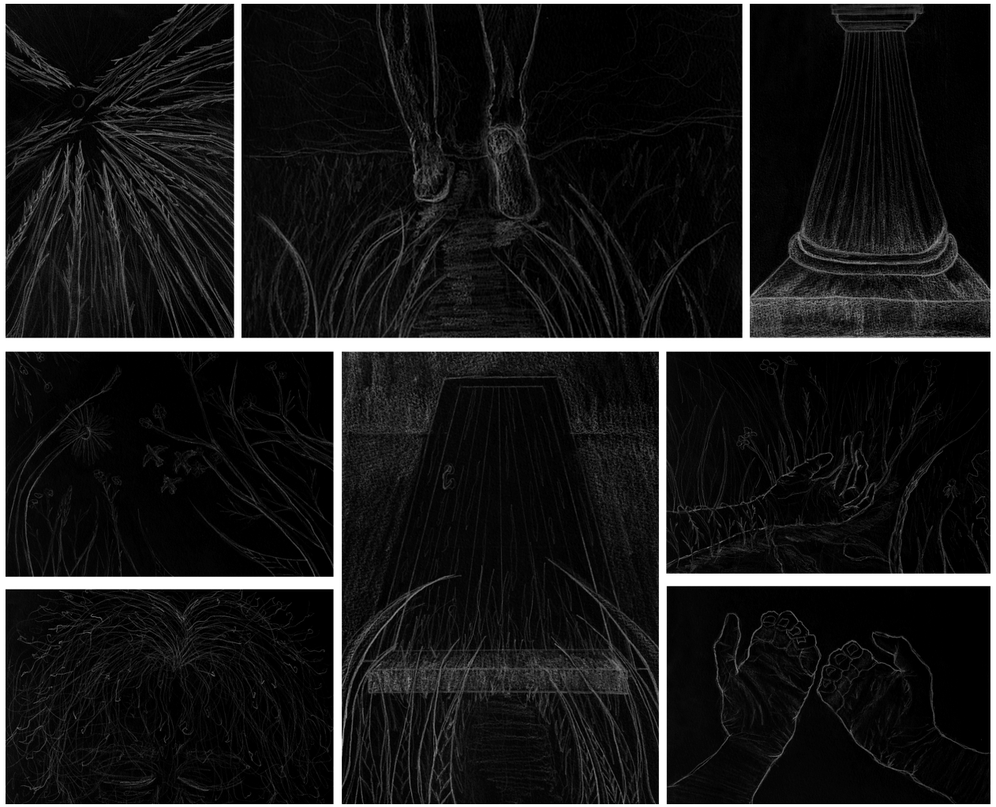


Figure 35. Material outcomes of decay in The Last Man. Sketches by author.

Deserted or Unkempt Human-Made Environment

Architecture, and the ways humans interact with the human-made environment decays during the plague. Three examples of decay in the relation between humans and the built environment include the desertion of cities, departures from houses, and architectural entities becoming remaining forms of companionship for Lionel.

Human 'Versus' the Natural World

The plague influences a detaching relationship between humans and the natural world. Examples of this detachment can be recognized in the transformation of memorable spaces due to nature's regrowth, the continuation of seasonal renewal that only brings renewal for nature but not humans, the new cycle of the plague that brings disease to humans, and recurring observations of a thriving, natural environment opposed by Lionel's constant thoughts of death.

Declining Physical and Psychological Conditions of the Human

Humans decay during the plague. This can be recognized in Lionel's descriptions of deteriorating qualities of the human body, mind, and senses.

Deserted or Unkempt Human-Made Environment

abandonment
changed demeanor of people
ransacked warehouses
neglected maintenance of streets

houselessness
lost meaning of home
separate modes of living

lost sense of belonging
emotional interactions with architecture

Human 'Versus' the Natural World

concealed recollections
overgrowth

misaligned cycles of life
paradoxical seasonal cycles

phenomenological disconnection with nature
thoughts of death

Declining Physical and Psychological Conditions of the Human

unkempt body
Lionel's body
dissociation

anxiety
Idris and tasks of care

lost sense of order
natural phenomena
ancient laws of nature seem broken

Abandonment: Cities become deserted.

Throughout the novel, Lionel observes the city of London growing deserted. The city is in a state of decay. Indications of this decay can be recognized through Lionel's observations of changed demeanours of remaining human occupants, ransacked places, and neglected maintenance of the cityscape.

(See Passage #1) During Lionel's limited visits to London during the plague, he observes people looking "different" from the "business-like" demeanor of Londoners from the past.

(See Passage #2) Lionel describes warehouses as "ransacked." This suggests decay for the city through a loss of order. With the range of material goods Lionel sees dispersed on the floor, humans are no longer using and occupying these kinds of spaces like before. Instead, they are ignoring prior rules of consumption as they transition into a new, survival mode of living.

(See Passage #3) Decay is also apparent in the neglected maintenance of the cityscape in London. For example, Lionel describes the decay of ornament on church facades caused by mildew and dampness. St. Paul's is an architectural reference that increases the physical dimension of decay from Lionel's point of view. In using the spatial reference of a "tomb" to describe his changed perception of St. Paul's now, this provides another tangible dimension to decay since the stone of the church became "blackened." Lionel also describes grass as growing high in streets which indicates not only the absence of regular maintenance, but renewal in nature that is beginning to reclaim the city. Birds begin to form their nests in consecrated spots of St. Paul's. The increasing absence of human occupants of the city reconditions the city as a place for nature and animals again. Humans relocate to outskirts of the city and are de-centralized out of fear of contracting the plague. So, the new growth, or renewal, resulting from the city in a state of decay begins to show in nature's regrowth.

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Figure 36. Worm's eye-view of tall grass. Sketch by author.

Houselessness: Departures from home.

Humans depart their homes in search of refuge from the plague. This renders the house in a state of decay. The decay of the house can be recognized through a changing perception of its traditional program, the lost meaning of home, and the abandonment of regular inhabitation.

(See Passage #4) The traditional concept of a house is a structure that provides accommodation for a family. This changes when families begin to separate and abandon their houses in search of refuge from the plague. Secondly, the meaning of home is not so much about a single structure but represents a deeper relation to the identity and greater emotional significance for the individual. The house loses this meaning of home during the plague since people start to live in fear. For example, the Windsor Castle suggests the decay of a traditional house when it transforms into a refuge for the public. The Windsor Castle is described as a "haven" and "retreat." Although described as a "haven," for the new visitors, this has instigated the decay of the inhabitation of their previous houses since the population assembles in this one castle.

(See Passage #5) Not everyone departs their house during the plague. But those who do begin living more isolated lifestyles. For example, fields become filled with pitched tents as residents abandon their own houses. This abandonment indicates a departure from memory, identity, and comfort associated with the home. What this results in is what Lionel describes as "careless" and "separate" modes of living.

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Figure 37. Worm's eye-view of lone individual departing home. Sketch by author.

Lost Sense of Belonging: Architectural elements symbolize a "voice of dead time."

As the last man, Lionel realizes the total absence of humans in his surroundings. Due to this, his sense of belonging begins to decay. This can be recognized in Lionel's interactions with architectural elements of Rome that now represent "a voice of dead time" to him, or in other words, a remaining, static form of human memory and companionship.

(See Passage #6) The architectural environment of Rome in the story represents remaining, tangible materials of human memory.

(See Passage #7) Lionel's deprived sense of belonging can be noticed through his emotional interactions with the architectural elements, including embracing columns and leaning his cheek on their cold surfaces. While these actions would be reciprocated by a human, here they are just one-sided. So, while Lionel's sense of belonging decays, his interactions with these architectural elements indicate that these "dumb things" have not decayed but remain as one of the few, or only, static memorabilia of the previous existence of humans for Lionel.

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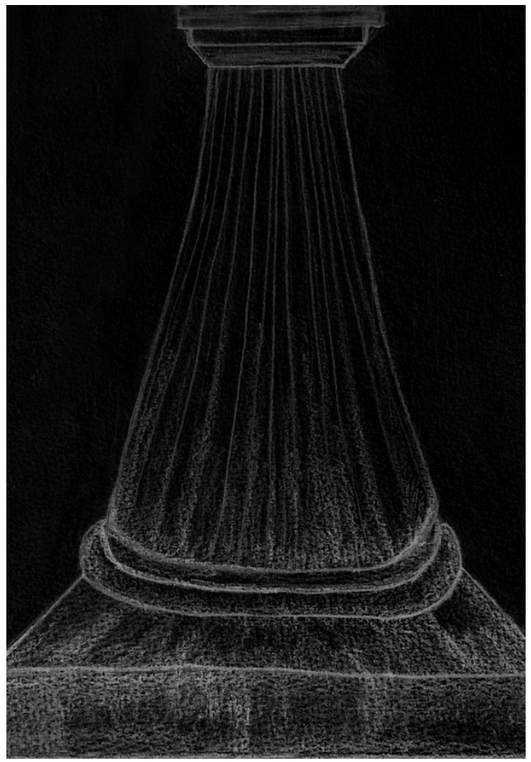


Figure 38. Worm's eye-view of a column. Sketch by author.

Concealed Recollections: Memorable spaces from the past are transformed by the growth of nature.

(See Passage #8) Lionel perceives the growth of nature transform the appearance of memorable spaces from his past. For example, Lionel visits his sister's abandoned cottage that used to be a site of fond memories for him. It transforms into a physical state of ruin and desertion when it becomes overtaken by the regrowth in nature. Considering Lionel's descriptions of the neglected garden, the broken palings, and grass growing, the cottage becomes a site of decay. While the growth of nature begins to physically conceal the cottage, this also diminishes Lionel's recollection of the place due to its physical transformation. The dynamic activity of nature surrounding the cottage signals a clear detachment from its previous state. For example, Lionel uses various verbs like "climbing," "growing," and "impregnating" to describe natural elements like flowers, air, and grass - activity that suggests the natural world continues to possess characteristics of growth amongst the plague. More than just growing, Lionel's description of the sky as "blue" and flowers as "rare" suggests a thriving natural environment that continues to hint at the growing detachment between the human and natural world that takes place during the plague.

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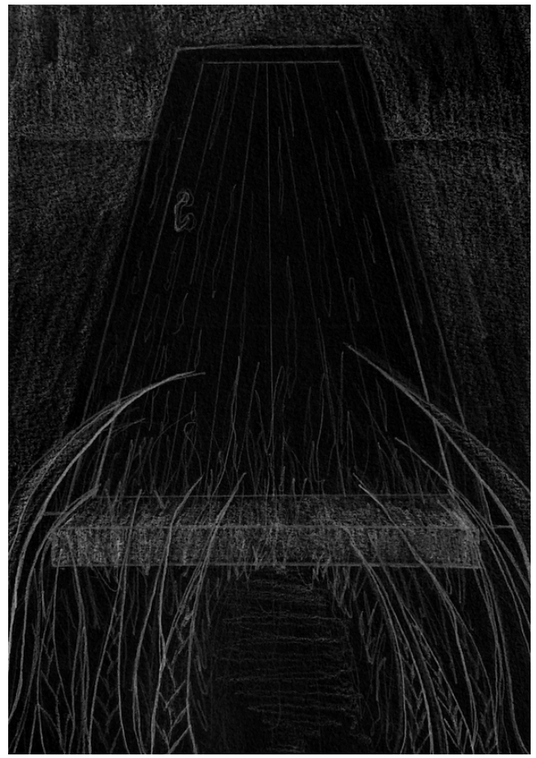


Figure 39. Worm's eye-view of an entry door to a deserted dwelling. Sketch by author.

Misaligned Cycles of Life: Paradoxical seasonal renewals and the emerging cycle of the plague.

While Lionel continues to perceive the occurrence of regular seasonal renewals, they become paradoxical to the emerging cycle of the plague that the human is forced to adjust to. Traditional cycles of life are therefore in a state of decay. Two examples of this include humanity's new-found comfort in the winter season since the effects of the plague diminish in the cold, and a growing sense of fear during the spring season that is influenced by the resurfacing of the plague and illness during warmer months.

(See Passage #9) Lionel begins to perceive characteristics of natural landscapes that used to provide warmth and comfort like "flower-covered" grounds and "cloudless" skies as materials of fear now.

(See Passage #10) Lionel describes nature as "fertile," "lovely," "happy," "wealthier," and "young" - all words that indicate prosperity and renewal for the land. This suggests the human is misaligned to the cycle of seasons and instead relies on the new cycle of the plague to survive. Lionel continues to suggest this detachment between humans and the natural world by describing nature as "laughing," "scattering," and "sparkling" – all words that suggest lively activity while he remains vulnerable to the plague.

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Figure 40. Worm's eye-view of a thriving landscape. Sketch by author.

Phenomenological Disconnection with Nature: Recurring scenes of a thriving natural environment and Lionel's ongoing thoughts of death.

(See Passage #11) Lionel observes thriving natural landscapes while his thoughts are constantly occupied with death. Considering this, the phenomenological connection between natural landscapes and the human is in a state of decay. This can be understood during Lionel's visit to the Apennine Mountains in Italy as the last man. He provides a vivid description of his perceived natural setting, recognizing sounds of "life," while his thoughts are of "death." Along with the foliage still present in the woods and a vivid sunset encompassing the scene, this strongly contrasts the decay that Lionel experiences in his inner thoughts that revolve around death.

(See Passage #12) Lionel describes nature as the "enemy" during the plague. This indicates a phenomenological disconnection between himself and nature as nature is no longer a setting for repose but an opposing condition to Lionel's current state.

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Figure 41. Worm's eye-view of a decaying body. Sketch by author.

Unkempt Body

(See Passage #13) The human is weakened by the effects of the plague. The decay of the human body can be recognized in Lionel's perception of people during the plague. For example, Lionel describes his own, physical self drastically changed through his reflection in a mirror. Some words he uses to describe his decayed appearance include "unkempt," "wild," "hollow," and "discolored." The biological changes Lionel's body has experienced indicates unkemptness through his long hair, jaundices on his skin, and his discoloured cheeks. To further emphasize this decayed transformation, Lionel refers to himself as a "miserable object" and "savage." These dissociative references suggest that Lionel no longer sees his identity in his physical form anymore.

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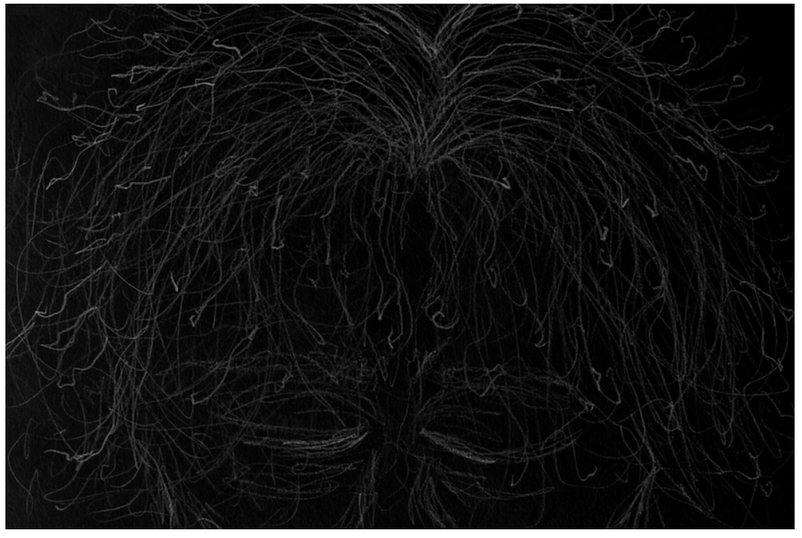


Figure 42. Disheveled man. Sketch by author.

Anxiety

(See Passage #14) Anxiety frequently appears in humans as a response to the plague. This can be recognized in Lionel's wife Idris while she adopts the role of caring for others during the plague. While the Windsor Castle becomes a large refuge from the plague for the public, Idris's anxiety develops out of growing fixation on the negative effects of the plague. For example, her anxiety deprives her of necessary elements of human functions including sleeping and eating. Lionel also describes noticeable changes to Idris's physical appearance which provides greater material dimension to the decaying effects of her psychological state. So, while caring for others suggests forms of new growth by healing, Idris's own psychological state begins to decay through her growing anxiety that is instigated by the plague.

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Figure 43. Worn hands. Sketch by author.

Lost Sense of Order: Uncontrollable natural phenomena.

(See Passage #15) Lionel observes unlawful natural phenomena during the plague. Because of this, the level of control that humans possess in their lives diminishes as they become helpless amongst uncontrollable natural events. Two examples of this include the air becoming empoisoned by the plague and Lionel's observations of a deadly sea storm in Dover. The emergence of the plague as a silent killer in the novel spreads panic because it was not known exactly what caused it or the influence of it spreading. Considering this, air becomes perceived as poisoned by the plague. If the plague has infected such an important life source like air, each breath, in Lionel's words, "inhales death."

(See Passage #16) Natural disasters force decayed outcomes like death and ruined landscapes. For example, Lionel provides first-hand observations of a deadly sea storm in Dover. He describes three meteors plunging into the sea. Using descriptions like "burning," "furnace," "fiery," and "flowing lava," this suggests a violent perception of the storm. In addition to this, animals flee in terror and become panic struck. By ending his observation of this meteor shower with a new perception of ancient laws turning into an "unknown," this confirms a sense that natural order has decayed during the plague.

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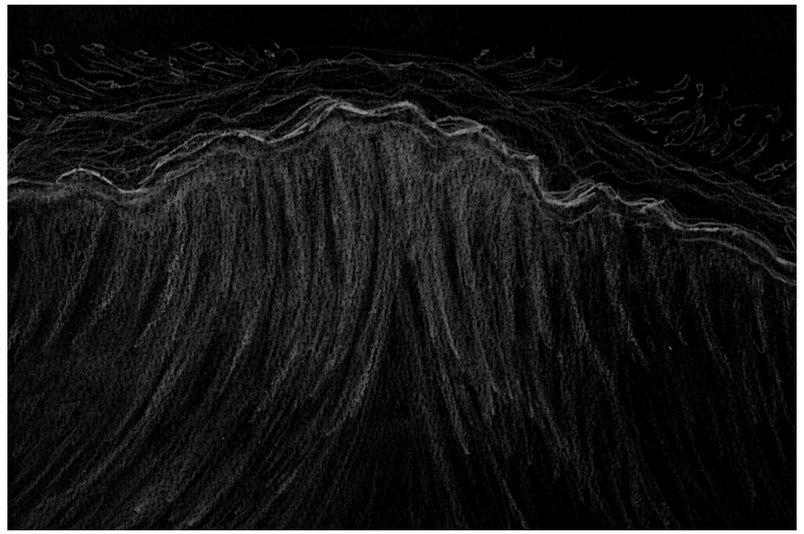


Figure 44. Towering wave of a sea storm. Sketch by author.

Addendum of Select Passages - The Last Man

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: re-conditioning

Selected Passages: Abandonment

#1. "There were no carriages, and ***grass had sprung high***[D] in the streets; the ***houses***[A] had a ***desolate***[B] look; most of the ***shutters***[A] were ***closed***[B]; and there was a ***ghast***[B] and ***frightened stare***[B] in the ***persons***[A] I met, very ***different***[B] from the usual ***business-like demeanour***[C] of the ***Londoners***[A]. My ***solitary***[B] ***carriage***[A] attracted notice, as it rattled along towards the Protectoral Palace – and the ***fashionable***[C] ***streets***[A] leading to it wore a still more ***dreary***[B] and ***deserted***[B] appearance."[153]

#2. "…the ***warehouses***[A] had been more ***ransacked***[B] than pillaged: bales of ***rich India goods***[C], ***shawls***[C] of price, ***jewels***[C], and ***spices***[A], ***unpacked***[B], ***strewed***[B] the floors…"[154]

#3. "…the ***churches***[A] were open, but ***no prayer***[B] was offered at the altars; ***mildew***[B] and ***damp***[B] had already ***defaced***[B] their ***ornaments***[A]; ***birds***[C], and ***tame animals***[C], now ***homeless***[B], had ***built nests***[D], and made their lairs in ***consecrated spots***[C]. We passed ***St. Paul's***[A] … Its ponderous mass, ***blackened***[B] stone, and high dome, made it look, not like a ***temple***[C], but a ***tomb***[B]."[155]

153 Shelley, *The Last Man*, 258. Emphasis mine on certain words.
154 *The Last Man*, 329. Emphasis mine on certain words.
155 *The Last Man*, 342. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: recovery

Selected Passages: Houselessness

#4. "There then in that castle – in ***Windsor Castle***[C], ***birth-place***[C] of Idris and my babes, should be the ***haven***[D] and ***retreat***[D] for the ***wrecked***[B] bark of ***human society***[A]. Its forest should be our world – its garden afford us food; within its walls I would establish the ***shaken***[B] throne of ***health***[A]."[156]

#5. "The ***inhabitants***[A] of the smaller towns ***left their houses***[B], pitched tents in the fields, wandering ***separate***[B] from each other ***careless***[B] of hunger or the sky's inclemency, while they imagined that they avoided the death-dealing disease.[157]

156 *The Last Man*, 269-70. Emphasis mine on certain words.
157 *The Last Man*, 277. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: reconceptualization

Selected Passages: Lost Sense of Belonging

#6. "Every part of ***Rome***[C] is replete with ***relics***[C] of ***ancient***[C] times… The ***walls***[A] of the most penurious ***dwellings***[A] enclose a fluted pillar or ponderous stone, which once made part of the palace of Caesars; and the ***voice of dead time***[B], in ***still vibrations***[B], is breathed from these ***dumb things***[B], ***animated***[C] and ***glorified***[C] as they were by man."[158]

#7. "I embraced the vast ***columns***[C] of the ***temple of Jupiter Stator***[C], which ***survives in the open space***[D] that was the ***Forum***[C], and leaning my burning cheek against its cold durability, I tried to lose the sense of present misery and present desertion, by recalling to the ***haunted***[B] cell of my ***brain***[A] vivid memories of times gone by."[159]

158 *The Last Man*, 472. Emphasis mine on certain words.
159 *The Last Man*, 473. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: regeneration

Selected Passages: Concealed Recollections

#8. "I alighted at Perdita's ***ancient abode***[C], her ***cottage***[A]; and, sending forward the carriage, dedicated to walk across the park to the castle. This spot, dedicated to ***sweetest recollections***[C], the ***deserted***[B] house and ***neglected***[B] ***garden***[A] were well adapted to nurse my melancholy…
It was now in ***ruin***[B]: the ***deer had climbed***[D] the ***broken***[B] ***palings***[A], and ***reposed***[D] among the flowers; ***grass grew***[D] on the ***threshold***[C], and the swinging lattice creaking to the wind, gave signal of utter ***desertion***[B]. The ***sky***[C] was ***blue***[D] above, and the ***air***[C] ***impregnated***[D] with ***fragrance***[D] by the ***rare***[D] ***flowers***[C] that grew among the weeds… The time when in ***proud***[C] and ***happy security***[C] we assembled at this cottage, was gone - soon the present hours would join those past, and ***shadows of future ones***[B] rose dark and menacing from the womb of time, their cradle and their bier."[160]

160 *The Last Man*, 265-66. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: life-giving

Selected Passages: Misaligned Cycles of Life

#9. "But ***winter***[C] was coming, and with winter, ***hope***[D]… ***Frost***[D] would blunt the arrows of pestilence, and enchain the furious elements… It was no consolation, that with the first winds of March the ***lanes were filled with violets***[D], the ***fruit trees covered with blossoms***[D], that the ***corn sprung up***[D] and the ***leaves came out***[D], forced by the unseasonable heat. We ***feared the balmy air***[B] – we ***feared the cloudless sky***[B], the flower-covered earth, and delightful woods, for we looked on the ***fabric of the universe***[A] no longer as our ***dwelling***[C], but our ***tomb***[B], and the ***fragrant land smelled to the apprehension of fear***[B] like a wide ***church-yard***[B]… Pestilence had become a part of our future our existence; it was to be guarded against,…"[161]

#10. "How ***lovely***[D] is ***spring***[C]! As we looked from Windsor Terrace on the sixteen ***fertile counties***[D] spread beneath, speckled by ***happy cottages***[C] and ***wealthier towns***[C], all looked as in former years, ***heart-cheering***[D] and ***fair***[D]… reason told us that care and sorrow would grow with the opening year – but how to believe the ***ominous voice***[A] breathed up with pestiferous vapours from ***fear's dim cavern***[B], while ***nature***[C], ***laughing***[D] and ***scattering***[D] from her green lap flowers, and fruits, and ***sparkling waters***[D], invited us to join the gay masque of ***young life***[D] she led upon the scene?"[162]

161 *The Last Man*, 277-78. Emphasis mine on certain words.
162 *The Last Man*, 282-83. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: living qualities or actions

Selected Passages: Phenomenological Disconnection with Nature

#11. "The ***twitter***[D] of the ***young***[D] ***birds***[C] going to ***rest***[D], and their ***rustling***[D] among the trees, ***disturbed***[D] the ***still evening-air***[C] - the ***crickets***[C] ***chirped***[D] - the aziolo ***cooed***[D] at intervals. My ***thoughts***[A] had been of ***death***[B] - these ***sounds***[C] spoke to me of ***life***[D]. I lifted up my eyes - a ***bat***[C] ***wheeled***[D] round - the ***sun***[C] had sunk behind the jagged line of mountains, and the paly, crescent moon was visible, silver white, amidst the orange ***sunset***[D], and accompanied by one ***bright star***[D], prolonged thus the twilight. A ***herd of cattle***[C] ***passed***[D] along in the dell below, ***untended***[B], towards their watering place - the ***grass***[C] was ***rustled***[D] by a ***gentle breeze***[D], and the ***olive-woods***[C], mellowed into soft masses by the moonlight, contrasted their sea-green with the ***dark chestnut foliage***[D]."[163]

#12. "No, no, I will not live among the ***wild***[B] scenes of ***nature***[C], the ***enemy***[B] of all that lives…"[164]

163 *The Last Man*, 469-70. Emphasis mine on certain words.
164 *The Last Man*, 471. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: dissociated representation

Selected Passages: Unkempt Body

> **#13.** "What ***wild-looking***[B], ***unkempt***[B], ***half-naked***[B] ***savage***[B] was that before me? The surprise was momentary. I perceived that it was ***I myself***[A] whom I beheld in a large mirror at the end of the hall. No wonder that the ***lover***[C] of the princely Idris should fail to recognize himself in the ***miserable object***[D] there portrayed. My ***tattered***[B] ***dress***[A] was that in which I had crawled ***half alive***[D] from the empestuous sea. My ***long***[B] and ***tangled***[B] ***hair***[A] hung in elf locks on my brow - my ***dark***[B] ***eyes***[A], now ***hollow***[B] and ***wild***[B], gleamed from under them - my ***cheeks***[A] were ***discoloured***[B] by the ***jaundices***[B] which (the effect of misery and neglect) ***suffused***[B] my ***skin***[A], and were half hid by a ***beard***[A] of ***many days' growth***[B]. Yet why should I not remain thus, I thought; the ***world***[A] is ***dead***[B], and this ***squalid***[B] ***attire***[A] is a ***fitter***[B] ***mourning garb***[B] than the ***foppery of a black suit***[D]."[165]

165 *The Last Man*, 466. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: N/A

Selected Passages: Anxiety

> **#14.** "***She***[A] never complained, but ***sleep***[A] and ***appetite fled***[B] from her, a slow ***fever***[B] preyed on her ***veins***[A], her ***colour hectic***[B], and she often ***wept in secret***[B]; ***gloomy prognostications***[B], care, and ***agonizing dread***[B], ate up the principle of life within her… At night, when she could leave me unperceived, she ***wandered***[B] through the house, or hung over the couches of her children; and in the day time would sink into a ***perturbed sleep***[B], while her murmurs and starts betrayed the ***unquiet dreams***[B] that vexed her."[166]

166 *The Last Man*, 327-28. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entities that encounter decay

B = decayed transformation

C = entities from the past

D = renewal: N/A

Selected Passages: Lost Sense of Order

> **#15**. "The ***air***[A] is ***empoisoned***[B], and each human being ***inhales death***[B], even while in youth and health, their hopes are in the flower."[167]
>
> **#16**. "…three other ***suns***[C], alike ***burning***[B] and brilliant, rushed from various quarters of the heavens towards the great orb; they whirled round it. The glare of light was intense to our dazzled eyes; the sun itself seemed to join in the dance, while the ***sea***[C] ***burned***[B] like a furnace, like all Vesuvius a-light, with ***flowing lava***[B] beneath. The ***horses***[A] ***broke loose***[B] from their stalls in ***terror***[B] – a herd of ***cattle***[A], ***panic struck***[B] , raced down to the brink of the cliff, and ***blinded by light***[B], plunged down with ***frightful yells***[B] in the waves below… When – we dared ***not trust our eyes***[B] late dazzled, but it seemed that – the sea rose to meet it – it mounted higher and higher, till the ***fiery globe***[B] was obscured, and the wall of water still ascended the horizon; it appeared as if suddenly the motion of earth was revealed to us – as if ***no longer we were ruled by ancient laws***[B], but were turned ***adrift***[B] in an ***unknown***[B] region of space."[168]

167 *The Last Man*, 241. Emphasis mine on certain words.

168 *The Last Man*, 381. Emphasis mine on certain words.

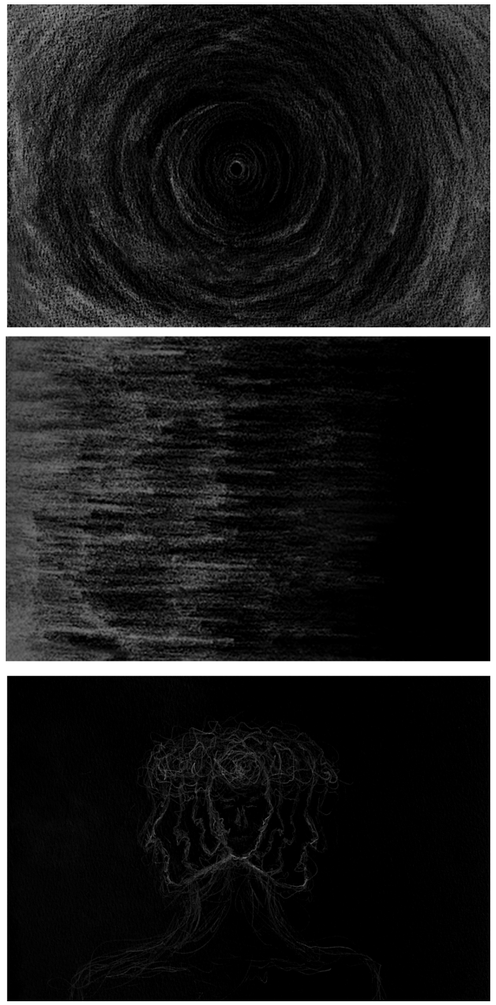


Figure 45. Material outcomes of decay in Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves. Sketches by author.

Loss of Light

Light decays when it dissolves into darkness. Three examples of light dissolving in Hopkins's sonnet include the initial transformation of evening turning into night, the sun setting, and the darkness of night symbolizing an end to life.

Dissolution of Colour

Colour decays when black takes over everything during the night in the sonnet. Three examples of this include Hopkins's descriptions of earth's previous variety, the physical transformation of the Sibyl's leaves, and the presence of black and white as the only remaining variety in colour.

Tormented Mind

The mind decays through inner turmoil. Hopkins writes of thoughts as stuck in a difficult motion of repetition where they move against one another. This type of movement suggests a similar disintegration into sameness which darkness creates.

Loss of Light

evening light transitions into night light
- light "strains"
- light is compared to architectural elements that are interiorized

yellow light from the sunset disappears
- yellow light is "fond"
- night light is "wild" and "hollow"

darkness is synonymous to death
- night is the "end"
- complete absence of light

Dissolution of Colour

disappearance of variety from the natural world
- earth's "dapple" is no more
- the earth becomes a singular entity in the night
- allusion to a black hole

the Sibyl's leaves and boughs become sharp
- fearful objects

remaining colours are black and white
- two "spools" become black and white

Tormented Mind

inner thoughts
- thoughts described as "grinding"
- emphasis on repetitive motion

Loss of Light

(See Passage #1) Evening light dissolves into night light. Hopkins uses the verb “strains” - a separative and tense action - to describe this transition. He depicts the night with objects, or rather architectural spaces, including the “womb,” “home,” and “hearse.” These are all forms of interior architecture that possess a separation or boundary between an interior and exterior. So, in this context, the quality of interiority of these objects suggests that light is travelling in an inward motion that is closing in and dissolving the amount of light there was during the evening.

(See Passage #2) Light sets to the west. Yellow light, or the light of the sun, is in a state of decay. This colour and reference to “fond” suggests warmth in this type of light. But as it sets to the west, the light transforms into something “wild” and “hollow,” indicating a re-conceptualization of light as something that is lost or no longer perceivable.

(See Passage #3) Nighttime assumes the idea of death. While the night is described to “end” whoever Hopkins has designated as “us,” the agent of light contributes to a decaying image of nature as something that is no longer recognizable in the growing absence of light in the night.

Loss of Light

evening light transitions into night light
light “strains”
light is compared to architectural elements that are interiorized

yellow light from the sunset disappears
yellow light is “fond”
night light is “wild” and “hollow”

darkness is synonymous to death
night is the “end”
complete absence of light

Dissolution of Colour

disappearance of variety from the natural world
earth’s “dapple” is no more
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fearful objects

remaining colours are black and white
two “spools” become black and white

Tormented Mind

inner thoughts
thoughts described as “grinding”
emphasis on repetitive motion

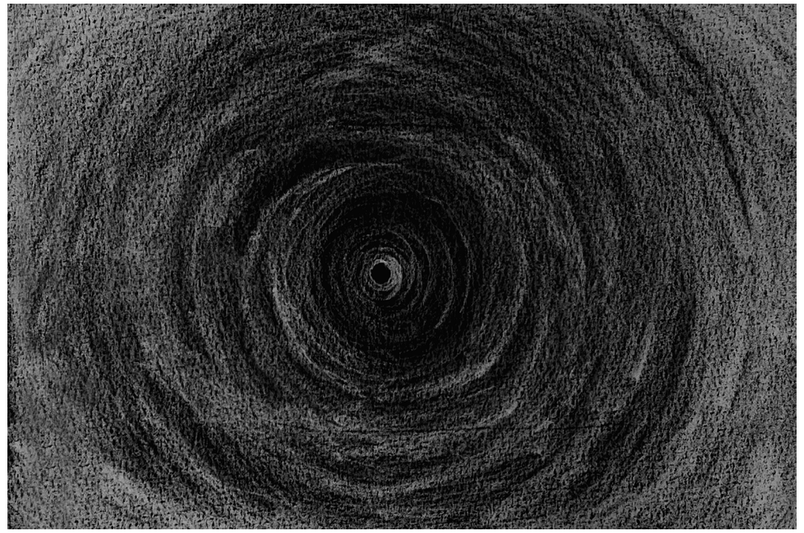


Figure 46. Black hole. Sketch by author.

Dissolution of Colour

(See Passage #4) The earth's "dapple" is described to have come to an "end." Considering that "dapple" is a term that describes marks and spots, this could allude to the disappearance of assorted colours of the earth's landscape in Hopkins's vision of night. In fact, the variety of colour has become "self in self steeped" which indicates the earth's "dapple" has transformed into something like a singular identity. "Disremembering" means forgetting so it can be considered an action of decay. If the earth is losing its variety in colour, memory is also something that makes part of this variety. The term "dismembering" suggests division or disjointedness. Darkness makes it difficult to distinguish differences because black absorbs all light. These details form an image of decay as a kind of black hole that has vacuumed all the variety of colour on earth.

(See Passage #5) Hopkins transforms boughs into "beak-leaved" and "dragonish" objects. The Sibyl's leaves, while undergoing this state of decay, begin to suggest that their physical transformation is a metaphor for fear.

(See Passage #6) The only colours that remain during the temporal transformation that Hopkins conveys are black and white. Hopkins's use of descriptive words like "stained" and "veined" could allude to the previous forms of colour on earth. A stain is a distinguishable change in colour, so it indicates a visibility of variety. "Veined" also represents a distinguishable marking. In this context, all stains and veins have dissolved once Hopkins introduces the metaphor of the two spools in the sonnet. Spools are cylindrical forms where material is wound around. By referencing spools, this renders the previous variety of colours on earth dissolved into a binary measure that leaves only two colours, or rather shades: black and white.

Loss of Light

evening light transitions into night light
light "strains"
light is compared to architectural elements that are interiorized

yellow light from the sunset disappears
yellow light is "fond"
night light is "wild" and "hollow"

darkness is synonymous to death
night is the "end"
complete absence of light

Dissolution of Colour

disappearance of variety from the natural world
earth's "dapple" is no more
the earth becomes a singular entity in the night
allusion to a black hole

the Sibyl's leaves and boughs become sharp
fearful objects

remaining colours are black and white
two "spools" become black and white

Tormented Mind

inner thoughts
thoughts described as "grinding"
emphasis on repetitive motion

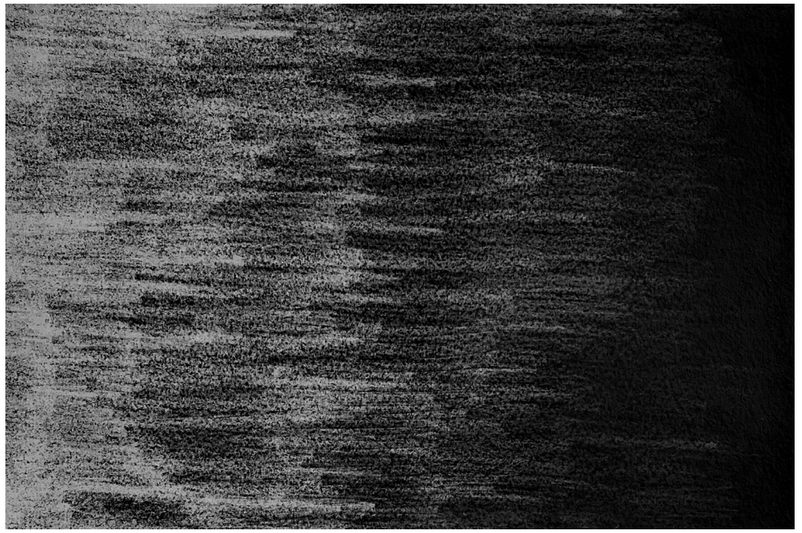


Figure 47. Black and white gradient. Sketch by author.

Tormented Mind

(See Passage #7) A dissolution of thoughts is initiated in the sonnet by the action verb “grind” which is typically defined as a reduction of material into smaller particles by being pressed together by friction between hard surfaces. In addition to this, this grinding motion is preceded by “groans.” Considering this terminological context, thoughts are undergoing a painful and decaying motion of movement by the end of Hopkins’s sonnet. These words produce a cyclical image of a constant battle between two things. So, the motion of thoughts can be interpreted as not one of harmony but of a repelling struggle. In this way, thoughts become synonymous with the process of decay the night has initiated for the earth. The final image of decay that Hopkins has generated in this sonnet is a painful dissolution of thoughts that grind in the consuming environment of the dark night.

Loss of Light

evening light transitions into night light
- light “strains”
- light is compared to architectural elements that are interiorized

yellow light from the sunset disappears
- yellow light is “fond”
- night light is “wild” and “hollow”

darkness is synonymous to death
- night is the “end”
- complete absence of light

Dissolution of Colour

disappearance of variety from the natural world
- earth’s “dapple” is no more
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- fearful objects

remaining colours are black and white
- two “spools” become black and white

Tormented Mind

inner thoughts
- thoughts described as “grinding”
- emphasis on repetitive motion

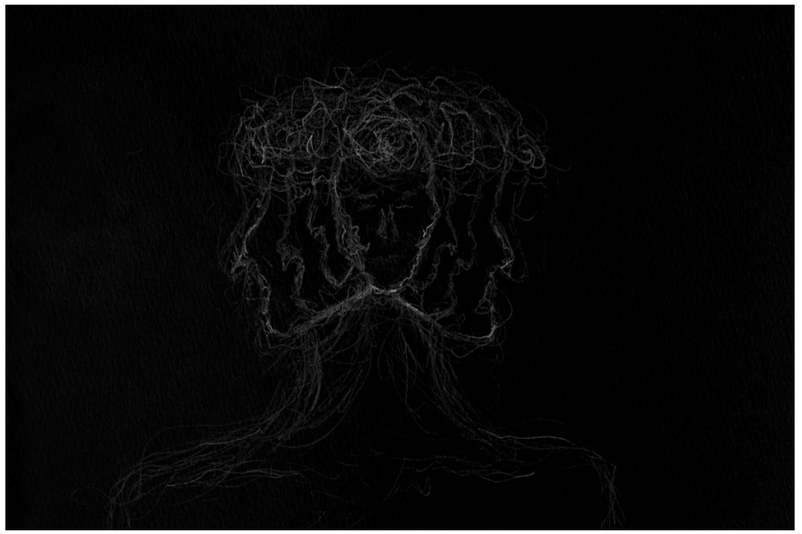


Figure 48. A tormented mind. Sketch by author.

Addendum of Select Passages - Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves

Annotation Key:

A = entities that dissolve

B = transformation

Selected Passages: Loss of Light

> **#1.** "***Evening***[A] strains to be time's vást, ' womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all / ***night***[B]."[169]
>
> **#2.** "Her ***fond yellow hornlight***[A] wound to the west, ' her ***wild***[B] ***hollow***[B] hoar- / light hung to the height."[170]
>
> **#3.** "With: Óur ***évening***[A] is over us; óur ***night***[B] ' ***whélms***[B], whélms, ánd will / ***end***[B] us."[171]

Selected Passages: Dissolution of Colour

> **#4.** "For ***earth***[A] ' her being as unbound, her dapple is at an end, ***as-*** / ***tray***[B] or ***aswarm***[B], all throughther, in throngs; ' ***self ín self steepèd***[B] and / ***páshed***[B] – quite / ***Disremembering***[B], ***dismembering***[B] ' áll now."[172]
>
> **#5.** "Only the ***beak-leaved***[B] ***boughs***[A] ***dragonish***[B] ' damask the tool-smooth ***bleak***[B] / ***light***[A]; ***black***[B], / Ever so black on it."[173]
>
> **#6.** "… lét ***life***[A] / ***wind*** / ***Off***[B] hér once skéined stained véined varíety ' upon áll on ***twó spools***[B]; / párt, pen, pack / Now her áll in twó flocks, ***twó folds***[B] – ***black***[B], ***white***[B];"[174]

Selected Passages: Tormented Mind

> **#7.** "But thése two; wáre of a wórld where bút these ' twó tell, each off the óther; of a rack / Where, ***selfwrung***[B], ***selfstrung***[B], ***sheathe***[B]- and ***shelterless***[B], ' ***thóughts***[A] ***agáinst***[B] thoughts ín ***groans grind***[B]."[175]

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169 Hopkins, *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, 2, reference to line. Emphasis mine on certain words.
170 *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, 3. Emphasis mine on certain words.
171 *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, 8. Emphasis mine on certain words.
172 *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, 5-7. Emphasis mine on certain words.
173 *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, 9-10. Emphasis mine on certain words.
174 *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, 10-12. Emphasis mine on certain words.
175 *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*, 13-14. Emphasis mine on certain words.

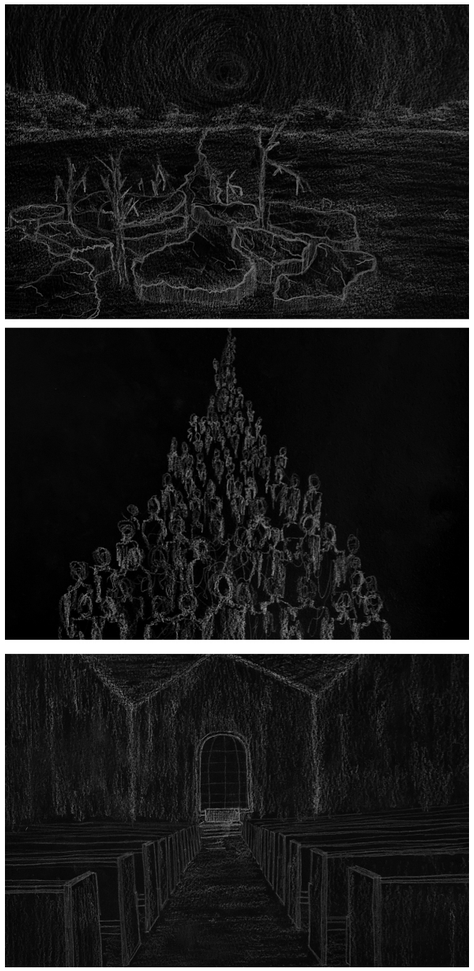


Figure 49. Material entities of silence in The Waste Land. Sketches by author.

Dead Land

Silence can be recognized in the land of the wasteland since it experiences no growth or cultivation. Three examples that represent this include seasonal paradoxes that eradicate the cycle of growth in nature, land described as dry, and the absence of water.

Silent Characters or Spectators

Silence is embodied by characters and spectators in the wasteland. Three examples of these silent figures include solitary walkers, observers, and listeners.

Absence

The state of absence in the wasteland evokes silence. Three examples of this include the absence of certain sounds, consumable objects, and unoccupied architecture.

Dead Land

seasonal paradoxes
- April cannot support growth
- Winter feeds life

dry land
- land cannot support growth

no water
- missing life source

Silent Characters or Spectators

silent walkers
- crowd of solitary people
- unrecognizable
- anonymous

silent observers
- blindness
- divine observation (inner sight)

silent listeners
- embodied silence
- being alone

Absence

unoccupied architecture
- empty chapel
- “wind’s home”

absent sounds
- no sound of water
- waiting for a knock on the door
- dry grass “sings”

absent consumable objects
- no objects are seen in the river Thames
- no sign of consumption means no sign of human gathering

Seasonal Paradoxes

(See Passage #1 and #2) In the first section of the poem, seasons are paradoxically represented in the wasteland. For example, April is described as the "cruellest" month, while winter feeds "little life." The emergence of spring in April is traditionally known to be a prosperous season of growth. By pairing April with cruelness, this suggests that the spring season struggles to produce growth. While the winter season brings death to nature, it suggests life in the wasteland. But this attempt at sustaining life is still unattainable considering the "dried tubers" that Eliot references. Tubers, if it regards plants, are ground-bred nodes that release new growth. However, by describing them as dry, this ultimately silences the potential for new growth. The winter season here ultimately functions by masking the land that is dead in the wasteland with layers of snow.

Dry Land

(See Passage #1) Land is often described as "dead" in the wasteland. This renders the land in a stand-still considering the inability to cultivate natural growth. For example, Eliot describes lilacs growing out of dead land, which is just another paradox since dead land cannot support their growth.

Absence of Water

(See Passage #3) There is no water in the wasteland but rather dry and rocky land. If the wasteland has no water, its absence indicates a lack of sustainability. Rock is a hard and solid material. Not only are rock and water physically opposed, their qualities of dryness versus fluidity indicate again that the wasteland is not fit for cultivation. While Eliot continues to hint at this incredibly dry and dead land, these physical characteristics of land promote the sense of silence in the inability to sustain new, natural growth without water.

Dead Land

seasonal paradoxes
- April cannot support growth
- Winter feeds life

dry land
- land cannot support growth

no water
- missing life source

Silent Characters or Spectators

silent walkers
- crowd of solitary people
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- being alone

Absence

unoccupied architecture
- empty chapel
- "wind's home"

absent sounds
- no sound of water
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absent consumable objects
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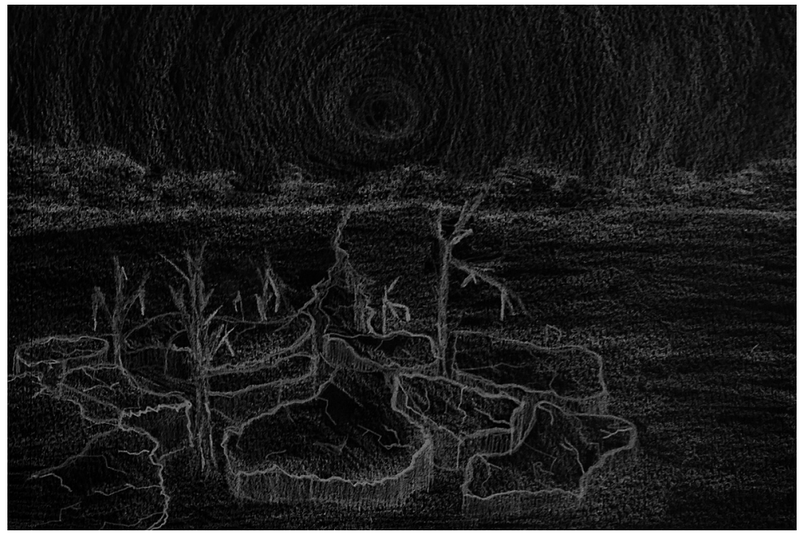


Figure 50. Dry and dead land. Sketch by author.

Silent Walkers

(See Passage #4 and #5) People are depicted walking in silence in different settings of the wasteland. For example, in the first section of the poem, a crowd of people walk across the London bridge. The crowd is addressed individually with each man looking down at the ground. This description expresses a detachment amongst a crowd of people where no connections are being established. So, the final image that forms is a silent walk-by where the only sound comes from the flowing movement of people on the London bridge that walk their own, individual paths. Similarly, a character called the "third" in the last section of the poem is described to be walking beside an undefined individual, while they remain unrecognizable. Therefore, silence is manifested by this character's anonymity as being hooded and wrapped. Their anonymity is never uncovered in the poem.

Silent Observer

(See Passage #6) Tiresias is in a state of silent observation as a physically blind observer. But, given Tiresias's divine ability, they still see in a different manner. This manner recoils the act of observing to the intangible mind. In this way, Tiresias embodies silence through their method of divine observation, rather than physical observation.

Silent Listener

(See Passage #7) The typist lady is in a state of silence while she is alone in her room. There are also no indications of sound until she puts a music record to play. Although the music is playing, the typist lady is still, like Tiresias, in a state of embodied silence.

Dead Land

seasonal paradoxes
- April cannot support growth
- Winter feeds life

dry land
- land cannot support growth

no water
- missing life source

Silent Characters or Spectators

silent walkers
- crowd of solitary people
- unrecognizable
- anonymous

silent observers
- blindness
- divine observation (inner sight)

silent listeners
- embodied silence
- being alone

Absence

unoccupied architecture
- empty chapel
- "wind's home"

absent sounds
- no sound of water
- waiting for a knock on the door
- dry grass "sings"

absent consumable objects
- no objects are seen in the river Thames
- no sign of consumption means no sign of human gathering

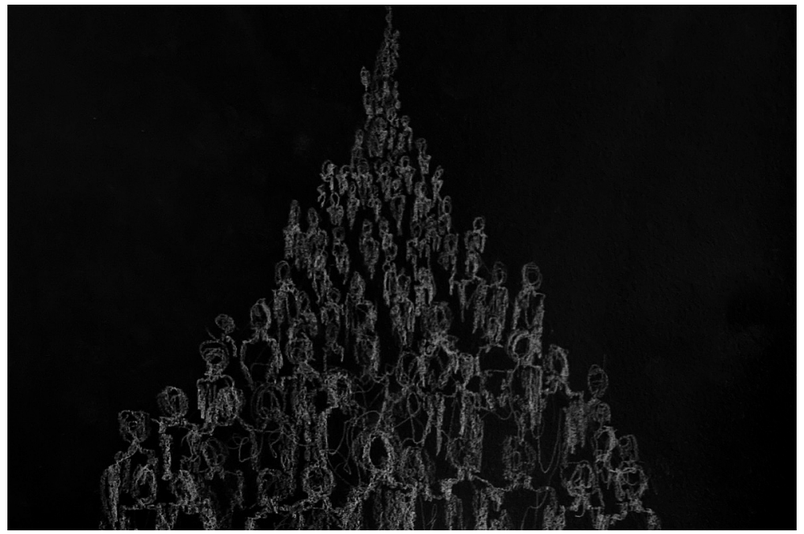


Figure 51. Crowd of individual people. Sketch by author.

Unoccupied Architecture

(See Passage #8) Some architectural settings remain unoccupied in the poem. For example, a chapel is described as the "wind's home" in the last section of the poem. The chapel is normally a frequented site for prayer and worship for people. Wind is a natural and invisible force of air. Since the chapel is now occupied by this invisible force, it only amplifies the silence of the people that are now absent.

Absent Sounds

(See Passage #9 and #10) Some sounds never surface in the wasteland. While a game of chess is being played in the second section of the poem, two individuals wait for the sound of a knock on the door. However, the sound never arrives. Additionally, the sound of water is absent in the last section of the poem. Its absence is emphasized by the personified description of dry grass as "singing."

Absent Consumable Objects

(See Passage #11) In the third section of the poem, objects of the past that humans typically consumed are absent in the river Thames. This suggests a measure of silence considering their absence of consumption.

Dead Land

seasonal paradoxes
- April cannot support growth
- Winter feeds life

dry land
- land cannot support growth

no water
- missing life source

Silent Characters or Spectators

silent walkers
- crowd of solitary people
- unrecognizable
- anonymous

silent observers
- blindness
- divine observation (inner sight)

silent listeners
- embodied silence
- being alone

Absence

unoccupied architecture
- empty chapel
- "wind's home"

absent sounds
- no sound of water
- waiting for a knock on the door
- dry grass "sings"

absent consumable objects
- no objects are seen in the river Thames
- no sign of consumption means no sign of human gathering



Figure 52. An empty chapel. Sketch by author.

Addendum of Select Passages - The Waste Land

Annotation Key:

A = silent entities

B = silent traits

Selected Passages: Seasonal Paradoxes, Dry Land, Absence of Water

> **#1.** "***April***[A] is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the ***dead land***[B], mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / ***Dull roots***[B] with spring rain."[176]
>
> **#2.** "***Winter***[A] kept us warm, covering Earth in ***forgetful snow***[B], feeding A little life with ***dried tubers***[B]."[177]
>
> **#3.** "Here is ***no water***[B] but only ***rock***[B] / Rock and no water and the ***sandy road***[B] /"[178]

Selected Passages: Silent Walkers

> **#4.** "Unreal City, / Under the brown ***fog***[B] of a winter dawn, / A ***crowd***[A] ***flowed***[B] over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had ***undone***[B] so many. Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, / And each man ***fixed***[B] his ***eyes***[A] ***before his feet***[B]."[179]
>
> **#5. "**There is always ***another one***[A] walking beside you / ***Gliding wrapt***[B] in a brown mantle, ***hooded***[B] / I do not know whether a man or a woman / - But who is that on the other side of you?"[180]

Selected Passages: Silent Observer

> **#6.** "I ***Tiresias***[A], though ***blind***[B], throbbing ***between two lives***[B], / Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see / At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives"[181]

176 Eliot, "The Waste Land," in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 37 (reference lines 1-4). Emphasis mine on certain words.
177 "The Waste Land," 37 (reference lines 5-7). Emphasis mine on certain words.
178 "The Waste Land," 47 (reference lines 331-32). Emphasis mine on certain words.
179 "The Waste Land," 39 (reference lines 60-65). Emphasis mine on certain words.
180 "The Waste Land," 48 (reference lines 363-66). Emphasis mine on certain words.
181 "The Waste Land," 43 (reference lines 218-20). Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = silent entities

B = silent traits

Selected Passages: Silent Listener

> **#7.** "When lovely ***woman***[A] stoops to folly and / Paces about her ***room***[A] again, ***alone***[B], / She smoothes her hair with ***automatic hand***[B], / And puts a record on the gramophone."[182]

Selected Passages: Unoccupied Architecture

> **#8.** "There is the ***empty chapel***[A], only the ***wind's home***[B]."[183]

Selected Passages: Absent Sounds

> **#9.** "And we shall play a game of chess, / Pressing ***lidless eyes***[B] and ***waiting for a knock***[B] upon the ***door***[A]."[184]
>
> **#10.** "If there were the sound of water only / Not the cicada / And dry grass singing / But sound of water over a ***rock***[A] / Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees / Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop / But there is ***no water***[B]"[185]

Selected Passages: Absent Consumable Objects

> **#11.** "The river bears ***no empty bottles***[A], ***sandwich papers***[A], / ***Silk handkerchiefs***[A], ***cardboard boxes***[A], ***cigarette ends***[A] / Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed."[186]

182 Eliot, "The Waste Land," 44 (reference lines 253-56). Emphasis mine on certain words.
183 "The Waste Land," 49 (reference line 389). Emphasis mine on certain words.
184 "The Waste Land," 41 (reference lines 137-38). Emphasis mine on certain words.
185 "The Waste Land," 48 (reference lines 353-59). Emphasis mine on certain words.
186 "The Waste Land," 42 (reference lines 177-79). Emphasis mine on certain words.

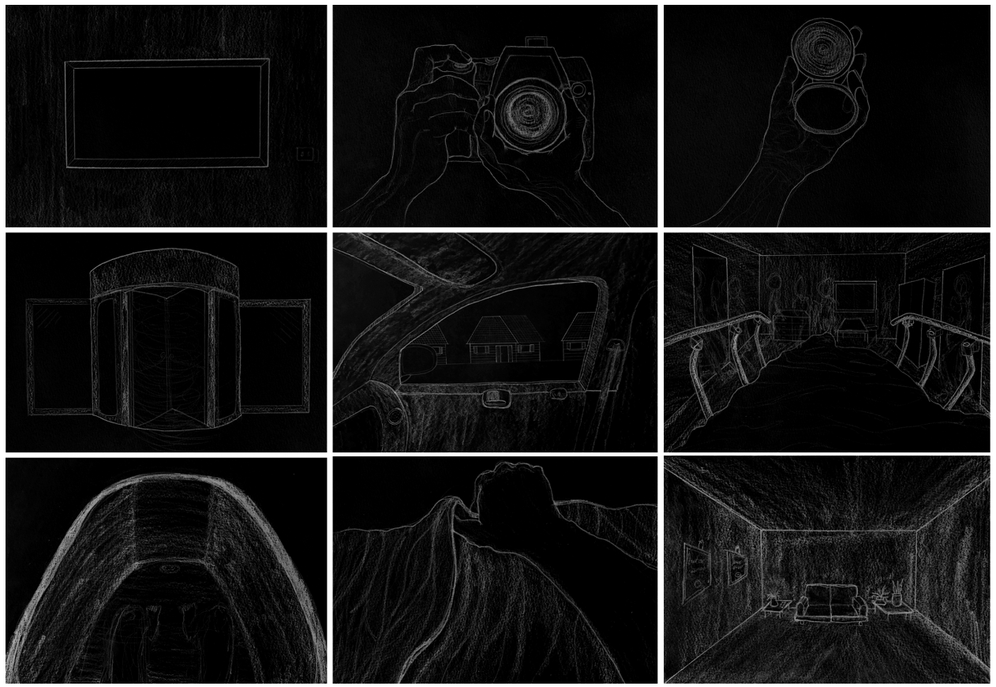


Figure 53. Material entities of visibility in The Bell Jar. Sketches by author.

Framed Spaces

Esther conveys a sense of discomfort and a lost sense of control of her identity in framed spaces or things. Examples of these include windows, pictures, and mirrors. Each of these examples impose a level of visibility for Esther that she cannot change or escape from.

Transitory Spaces

While transitory spaces provide some level of concealment, they do not provide Esther a sense of grounding. Examples of this include doors, cars, and Esther's temporary room in a hospital. These examples do not afford Esther grounding because of their dynamic and impermanent qualities.

Solid Spaces

Spaces with solid material qualities provide Esther with a grounded feeling of safety and control of her life that she is deprived of in the previous conditions. Examples of solid spaces include bathtubs, her personal bed, and a doctor's waiting-room. This feeling of safety can be understood by their regulated visibility: the tub is in a private bathroom and is concave, so the user can be hidden inside of its void. Esther's bed is in the privacy of her bedroom where she can control levels of visibility. The doctor's waiting-room has no windows or reflections, just solid walls.

Framed Spaces

windows
- being looked at
- on display
- public view

pictures
- freeze-frame
- false perception

mirrors
- reflection of physical self
- dissociation

Transitory Spaces

doors
- moving to another destination
- confusion
- no grounding

cars
- cage-like
- hidden inside
- limited view of the exterior

temporary hospital room
- open visitation
- being observed
- confined to one room

Solid Spaces

bathtubs
- purity
- womb-like
- private space
- clear water

Esther's bed
- refuge
- agency in adjusting visibility

Doctor Gordon's waiting-room
- no windows or reflective materials
- safe space
- regulated space from exterior

Windows

(See Passage #1) Esther watches a woman give birth in a hospital through a window. Although the event of giving birth is typically private, the window publicizes the event to an extent and provides what Esther describes a “perfect view.” Esther’s reaction to this constructed view likely influences her negative outlook on woman’s role in marriage and life since what she perceives in this scene strikes her as an “awful torture” rather than a joyful event. So, the window, while functioning to frame views in the architectural sense, also psychologically functions by revealing an “awful torture” to Esther.

Framed Spaces

windows
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- public view

pictures
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mirrors
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Transitory Spaces

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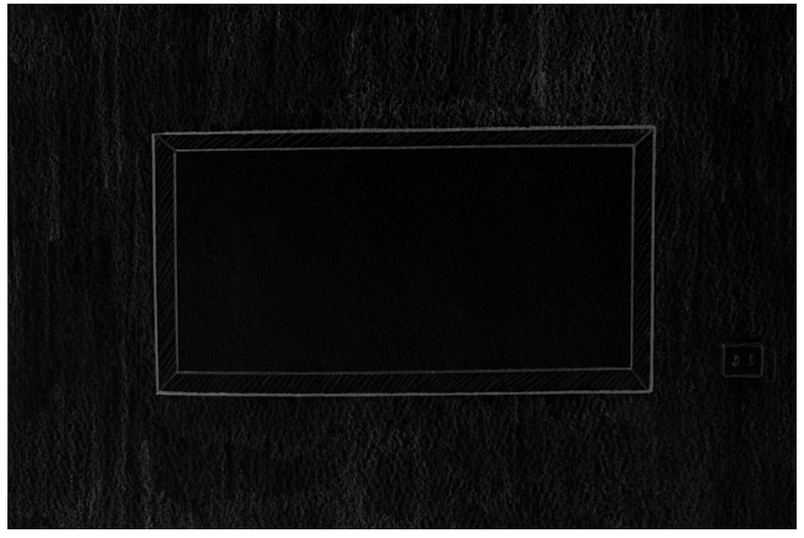


Figure 54. Hospital window. Sketch by author.

Pictures

(See Passage #2) During an event at work, Esther is required to have her picture taken which influences an emotional breakdown in her. While the purpose for the photo was to capture each intern with objects to indicate what they want to be in the future, this likely made Esther feel pressured considering her uncertain view of her own future. Pictures are static objects, so this freeze-framed condition also imposes a form of limitation on Esther's conception of her future by being frozen to this one, specific representation of her. After having her picture taken, Esther feels "betrayed" and "limp" while she cries alone after the event. Through the picture, it seems Esther does not feel truthfully seen, but rather an idealized perception of what her future could be in a static frame.

Framed Spaces

windows
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- on display
- public view

pictures
- freeze-frame
- false perception

mirrors
- reflection of physical self
- dissociation

Transitory Spaces

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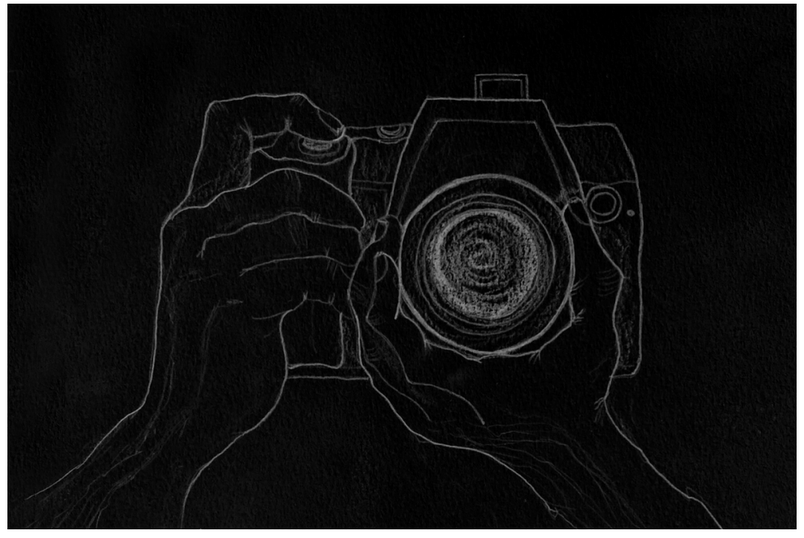


Figure 55. A man holding a camera. Sketch by author.

Mirrors

(See Passage #3 and #4) The mirror becomes a dissociative object for Esther that reflects an image of her rather than a sense of her identity. For example, she describes her reflection as “the face.” She also describes her reflection as “the person.” For Esther, the mirror seems to function the same way a picture does as a static and curated form of visibility. The mirror is only showing her a mask, since what Esther sees in the reflection is not “her” but a physical object that she observes or “paints” with makeup for the public to see.

Framed Spaces

windows
being looked at
on display
public view

pictures
freeze-frame
false perception

mirrors
reflection of physical self
dissociation

Transitory Spaces

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Solid Spaces

bathtubs
purity
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private space
clear water

Esther’s bed
refuge
agency in adjusting visibility

Doctor Gordon’s waiting-room
no windows or reflective materials
safe space
regulated space from exterior



Figure 56. A compact mirror. Sketch by author.

Doors

(See Passage #5) Doors are spaces of confusion for Esther. She passes through several types of doors throughout the novel from office doors, residential doors, hospital doors, and commercial doors. Her sense of control of her life is primarily affected by her uncertainty in what she wants to do in the future, and the pressure of this question that reappears throughout the novel. Revolving doors metaphorically separate her internal desires from her physical self. As she is "spewed" out of the door, this revolving mechanism hints a sense of confusion that Esther seems to be stuck with in her life. The glass material indicates a transparent boundary that can be seen through. In this way, doors provide no grounding for Esther's identity, only a public passing-by to somewhere else.

Framed Spaces

windows
- being looked at
- on display
- public view

pictures
- freeze-frame
- false perception

mirrors
- reflection of physical self
- dissociation

Transitory Spaces

doors
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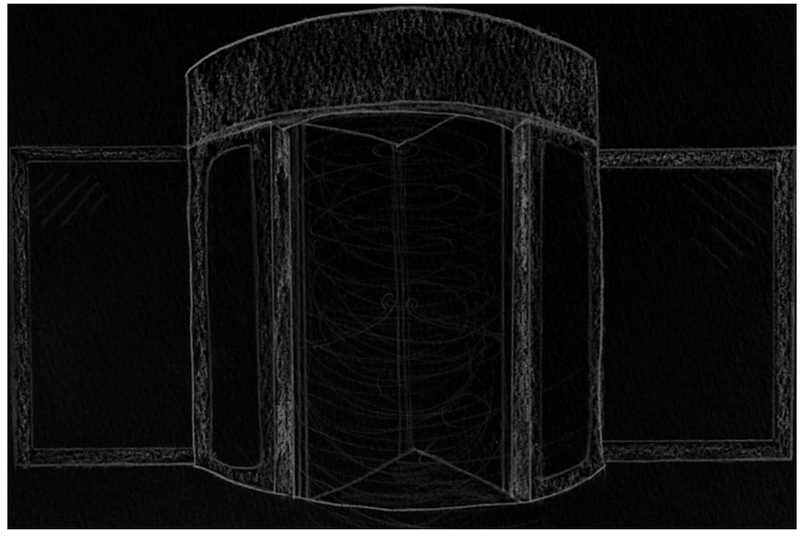


Figure 57. A revolving glass door. Sketch by author.

Cars

(See Passage #6) Esther becomes a hidden observer inside of cars. Through this condition, visibility is not directed on her but towards her surroundings. She is transported by various cars throughout the novel including cabs, hospital trucks, and family cars. Like the level of visibility windows offer, Esther has a framed and limited view of the world inside of the car. At one point in the novel, Esther is being driven back home by her mother from New York. In the car, Esther observes a suburban neighbourhood. What she perceives of suburbia are identical houses that she relates to the confined setting of an “escape-proof cage.” Through this constrained perception, she tries to hide herself from the entrapment of suburbia by sinking her body under the level of the car windows. With this partial inside-looking-out condition, cars provide Esther a less imposed level of visibility on her but still a confined, moving image of life that is only impermanent.

Framed Spaces

windows
- being looked at
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pictures
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- false perception

mirrors
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Transitory Spaces

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temporary hospital room
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- confined to one room

Solid Spaces

bathtubs
- purity
- womb-like
- private space
- clear water

Esther’s bed
- refuge
- agency in adjusting visibility

Doctor Gordon’s waiting-room
- no windows or reflective materials
- safe space
- regulated space from exterior



Figure 58. View of suburban homes from a car window. Sketch by author.

Temporary Hospital Room

(See Passage #7 and #8) Esther's room at the hospital becomes a transitory site of visitation where the level of visibility is directed on her. She becomes observed and examined by visitors. The hospital room can be seen as synonymous to Esther's metaphor of the bell jar since it is a confined space of viewership. The material references she makes to glass suggests that the room, although confined, is not private but a publicly visible, transparent space. This is further supported by the various visitors that enter the room. For example, Esther describes her hatred of visitations because she is observed and examined - both traits of visibility that indicate a lack of control in her life. This all indicates that there is no comfortable level of privacy for Esther in this space. While a room is typically considered a site of grounding, it is only a thin shell of privacy here where others travel through while Esther remains stuck inside.

Framed Spaces

windows
being looked at
on display
public view

pictures
freeze-frame
false perception

mirrors
reflection of physical self
dissociation

Transitory Spaces

doors
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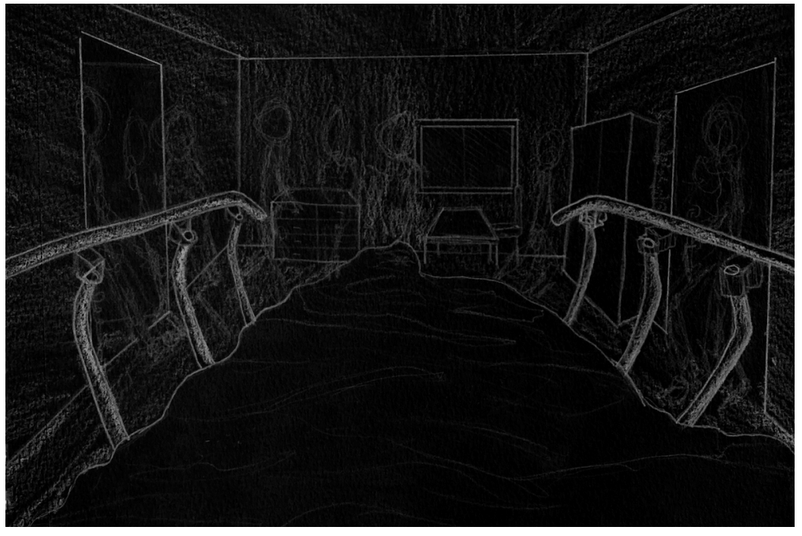


Figure 59. A temporary hospital room. Sketch by author.

Bathtubs

(See Passage #9) Esther consistently describes herself as feeling pure while inside a bathtub. The bathtub is typically a private space, so it eliminates any sense of public perception that could be imposed. Although the water could be considered reflective, Esther describes it as clear, which could be interpreted as something that she sees through. This coincides with her fixation on purity while inside the bathtub. In the privacy of the tub, it is as if Esther is washing away all the expectations and observations from the public world. In this way, the bathtub is a solid space of safety for her where she reclaims some agency in her personal identity, but in an isolated environment.

Framed Spaces

windows
- being looked at
- on display
- public view

pictures
- freeze-frame
- false perception

mirrors
- reflection of physical self
- dissociation

Transitory Spaces

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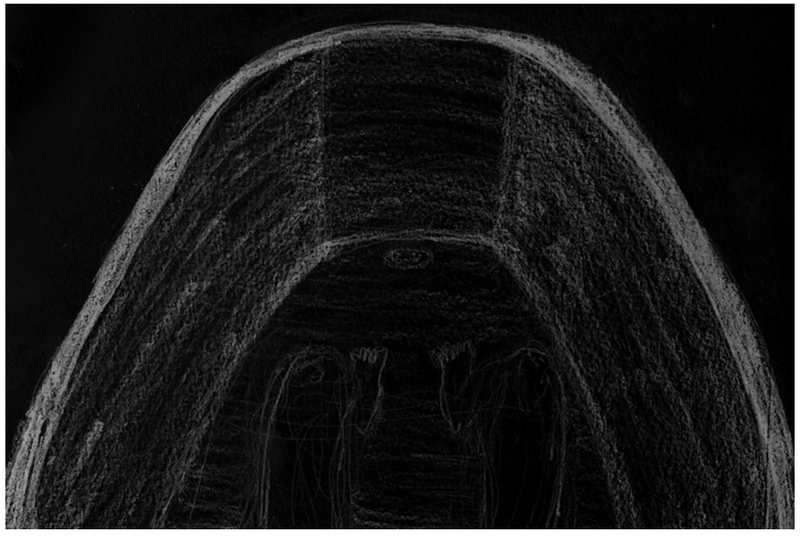


Figure 60. The inside of a bathtub. Sketch by author.

Esther's Bed

(See Passage #10 and #11) Esther locates refuge in her own bed. The bed offers a greater sense of agency for Esther since she could control levels of visibility while occupying it. In terms of the physical level of visibility, beds hold many layers from sheets, pillowcases, blankets, comforters and throws that Esther can hide under. Therefore, the immediate vicinity of the bed is a very local and small-scale space that offers agency and control that Esther is deprived of in the large-scale, public places that she interacts with throughout the novel.

Framed Spaces

windows
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on display
public view

pictures
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mirrors
reflection of physical self
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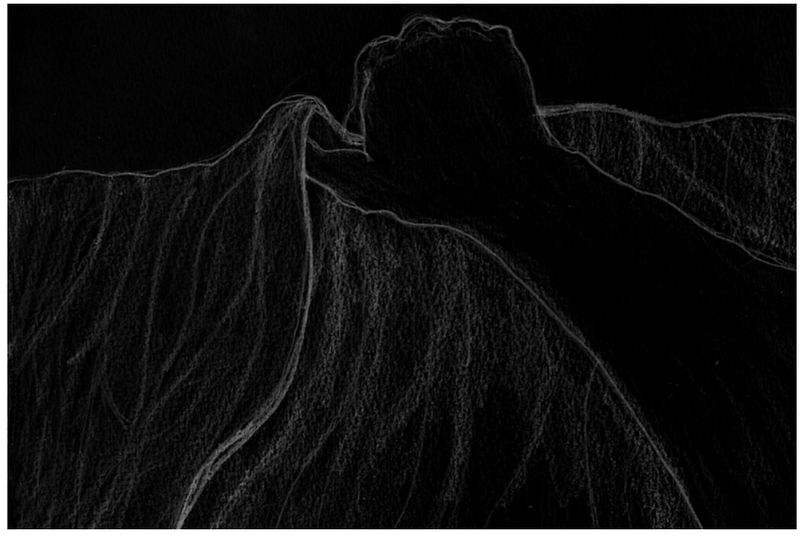


Figure 61. Under bed sheets. Sketch by author.

Doctor Gordon's Waiting-Room

(See Passage #12) Doctor Gordon's waiting-room portrays Esther's ideal environment of safety considering the absence of windows and mirrors. In this non-reflective space, the solid qualities of the waiting-room represent a sense of grounding for Esther's identity where she could be in the present moment and not worry about exterior perceptions or projections of her identity. In the waiting-room, Esther is present as herself.

Framed Spaces

windows
- being looked at
- on display
- public view

pictures
- freeze-frame
- false perception

mirrors
- reflection of physical self
- dissociation

Transitory Spaces

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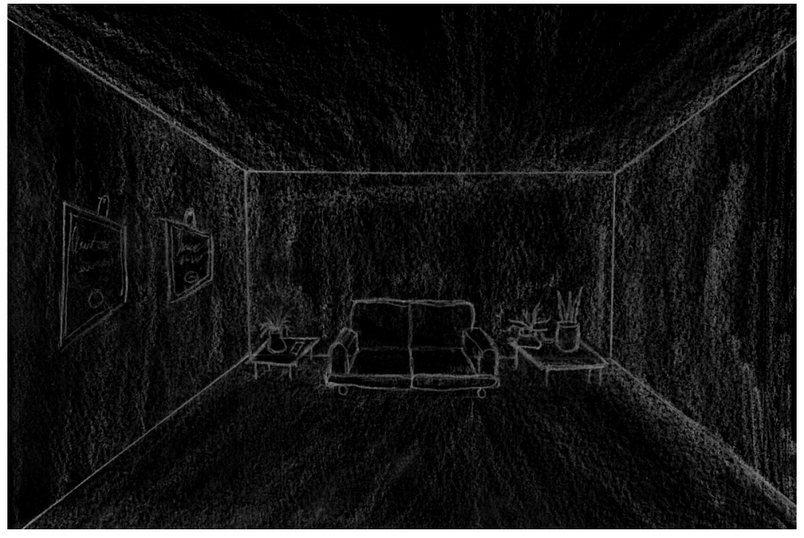


Figure 62. A Doctor's waiting room with no windows. Sketch by author.

Addendum of Select Passages - The Bell Jar

Annotation Key:

A = entity that constructs level of visibility

B = outcome and/or reaction to level of visibility

Selected Passages: Windows

> **#1.** "I was so ***struck***[B] by the sight of the table where they were lifting the woman ***I didn't say a word***[B]. It looked like some ***awful torture***[B] table, with these metal stirrups sticking up in mid-air at one end and all sorts of instruments and wires and tubes I couldn't make out properly at the other. Buddy and I stood together by the ***window***[A], a few feet away from the woman, where we had a ***perfect view***[B]."[187]

Selected Passages: Pictures

> **#2.** "I didn't want my ***picture***[A] taken because I was going to ***cry***[B]… we were supposed to be photographed with props to show what we wanted to be… When they asked me what I wanted to be I said I didn't know… 'Give us a smile.' At last, ***obediently***[B], like the ***mouth of a ventriloquist's dummy***[B], my own mouth started to quirk up.
> …
> I ***buried my face***[B] in the pink velvet façade of Jay Cee's love-seat and with immense relief the salt tears and miserable noises that had been prowling around in me all morning burst out into the room. When I lifted my head, the photographer had vanished. Jay Cee had vanished as well. I felt ***limp***[B] and ***betrayed***[B], like the ***skin shed***[B] by a terrible animal."[188]

Selected Passages: Mirrors

> **#3**. "I fumbled in my pocketbook for the ***gilt compact***[A] with the mascara and the mascara brush and the eyeshadow and the three lipsticks and the side ***mirror***[A]. ***The face***[B] that peered back at me seemed to be peering from the grating of a ***prison cell***[B] after a prolonged beating… I started to ***paint***[B] it with small heart."[189]

187 Plath, *The Bell Jar*, 68-69. Emphasis mine on certain words.
188 *The Bell Jar*, 107-108. Emphasis mine on certain words.
189 *The Bell Jar*, 108. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entity that constructs level of visibility

B = outcome and/or reaction to level of visibility

> **#4**. "At first I didn't see what the trouble was. It wasn't a ***mirror***[A] at all, but a ***picture***[B]. You couldn't tell whether ***the person***[B] in the picture was a man or a woman, because their hair was shaved off and sprouted in bristly chicken-feather tufts all over their head. One side of ***the person's***[B] face was purple, and bulged out in a shapeless way, shading to green along the edges, and then to a sallow yellow. ***The person's***[B] mouth was pale brown, with a rose-coloured sore at either corner."[190]

Selected Passages: Doors

> **#5.** "My ***secret hope***[B] of spending the afternoon alone in Central Park died in the ***glass***[A] egg-beater of *Ladies' Day*'s ***revolving doors***[A]. I found myself ***spewed***[B] out through the warm rain and into the dim, throbbing cave of a cab, together with Betsy and Hilda and Emily Ann Offenbach, a prim little girl with a bun of red hair and a husband and three children in Teaneck, New Jersey."[191]

Selected Passages: Cars

> **#6.** "I ***slunk down***[B] on the middle of my spine, my nose level with the rim of the ***window***[A], and ***watched the houses***[B] of outer Boston glide by. As the houses grew more ***familiar***[B], I ***slunk still lower***[B]. I felt it was very important ***not to be recognized***[B]. The grey, padded ***car roof***[A] closed over my head ***like the roof of a prison van***[B], and the white, shining, identical clapboard houses with their interstices of well-groomed green proceeded past, one bar after another in a large but ***escape-proof cage***[B]. I had never spent a summer in the suburbs before."[192]

190 *The Bell Jar*, 183. Emphasis mine on certain words.
191 *The Bell Jar*, 43-44. Emphasis mine on certain words.
192 *The Bell Jar*, 121. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entity that constructs level of visibility

B = outcome and/or reaction to level of visibility

Selected Passages: Temporary Hospital Room

> **#7**. "The air of the ***bell jar***[A] wadded round me and ***I couldn't stir***[B]. I had my own ***room***[A] again. It reminded me of the room in Doctor Gordon's hospital – a bed, a bureau, a closet, a table and chair. A ***window***[A] with a screen, but no bars. My room was on the first floor, and the window, a short distance above the pine-needle-padded ground, overlooked a wooded yard ringed by a red brick wall. If I jumped I wouldn't even bruise my knees. The ***inner surface of the tall wall seemed smooth as glass***[A]… I ***lay on my bed under the thick white blanket***[B], and they entered my room, one by one, and introduced themselves."[193]

> **#8**. "I ***hated***[B] these ***visits***[A], because I kept feeling the visitors ***measuring***[B] my fat and stringy hair against what I had been and ***what they wanted me to be***[B], and I knew they went away utterly confounded."[194]

Selected Passages: Bathtubs

> **#9.** "I never ***feel so much myself***[B] as when I'm in a hot bath. I lay in that ***tub***[A] on the seventeenth floor of this hotel for-women-only, high up over the jazz and push of New York, for near on to an hour, and I felt myself growing ***pure***[B] again… The longer I lay there in the ***clear hot water***[A] the purer I felt, and when I stepped out at last and wrapped myself in one of the big, soft, white, hotel bath-towels I felt pure and ***sweet as a baby***[B]."[195]

Selected Passages: Esther's Bed

> **#10**. "What I decided to do in the end was to lie in ***bed***[A] as long as ***I wanted to***[B] and then go to Central Park and spend the day ***lying***[B] in the grass, the longest grass I could find in that bald, duck-ponded wilderness. I told Doreen I would not go to the show or the luncheon or the film premiere, but that I would not go to Coney Island either, I would ***stay***[B] in bed."[196]

193 *The Bell Jar*, 195-96. Emphasis mine on certain words.
194 *The Bell Jar*, 213. Emphasis mine on certain words.
195 *The Bell Jar*, 21-22. Emphasis mine on certain words.
196 *The Bell Jar*, 31. Emphasis mine on certain words.

Annotation Key:

A = entity that constructs level of visibility

B = outcome and/or reaction to level of visibility

> **#11**. "I crawled back into ***bed***[A] and ***pulled the sheet over my head***[B]. But even that didn't shut out the light, so I ***buried my head***[B] under the darkness of the pillow and pretended it was night."[197]

Selected Passages: Doctor's Waiting-Room

> **#12.** "***Doctor Gordon's waiting-room***[A] was ***hushed***[B] and beige. The walls were beige, and the carpets were beige, and the upholstered chairs and sofas were beige. There were ***no mirrors or pictures***[A], only certificates from different medical schools, with Doctor Gordon's name in Latin, hung about the walls. Pale green loopy ferns and spiked leaves of a much darker green filled the ceramic pots on the end-table and the coffee-table and the magazine-table. At first I wondered why the room ***felt so safe***[B]. Then I realized it was because there were ***no windows***[A]."[198]

197 *The Bell Jar*, 124. Emphasis mine on certain words.
198 *The Bell Jar*, 134. Emphasis mine on certain words.

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