Terror of the dismemberment, disintegration, and decay of the body after death has been represented in ritual, myth, legend, art, and religious belief throughout the ages. So too has the wished-for triumph over these inevitable processes. Commonly, bodily experience after death is represented mentally in cannibalistic ideas of eating and being eaten, which are then countered by the wishful undoing of cannibalistic destruction through its reversal: swallowing as regurgitation, dismemberment as re-memberment, disintegration as reassembly. Luca Signorelli's fresco *The Resurrection of the Flesh* is part of his celebrated group of decorations (1499-1504) of the Cappella Nuova in the cathedral at Orvieto. The doctrinal, iconographic, social, and political contexts of this admired and influential work are explored in order to illustrate how and why this painting represents our greatest fears, along with our triumph over them, as well as our most destructive urges and their reparative counterparts. The photographer Sally Mann has explored these same themes. In *What Remains* (2003), a series of pictures with accompanying text, Mann documents her exhumation and reassembly of the body of her beloved pet greyhound. Two clinical examples illustrate some ways these concerns (cannibalism and reassembly) may make their appearance in psychoanalytic work.

A group of fantasies in which the human body is reassembled from its parts is surprisingly common in art, myth, ritual, and religious belief. Also discernible in psychoanalytic clinical work, these ideas may be of particular importance in mood-disordered patients. Although not uncommon, this group of fantasies has yet to have attracted much psychoanalytic attention. To redress this lack, I will first illustrate the
timelessness and universality of human concerns with bodily reassembly after
death, after which I will examine in detail the meanings and functions of this
group of ideas in two works of art, one a masterpiece of the Italian
Renaissance, the other a contemporary work. Finally, using two clinical
illustrations, I will examine some modes of their appearance and function in
the clinical situation.¹

Although the issue is controversial, some scholars (e.g., Burkert 1983)
have traced this coupling of ideas of killing and eating on the one hand and
restoring to wholeness and life on the other to the very dawn of civilization.
At the very least, concerns and rituals about postmortem bodily intactness are
demonstrable in many cultures, with bodily reassembly one process by which
intactness is restored. (Every bit as interesting is the fact that ideas of bodily
intactness parallel the perceived moral qualities of the deceased.) A few
examples of this fantasy of reassembly will suggest the ubiquity of variations
on this central narrative. In Ezekiel 37 (esp. verses 7-8), in the valley of the
dry bones, flesh returns to reassembling bones and whole humans

¹ The original ideas in this paper are my own, and I bear the entire
responsibility for these. However, I have had a lot of help along the way. I
owe a great debt of gratitude to the late Nicholas Young (d. 2005), who
tried his best to teach me the details of psychoanalytic “oral psychology.” I
absorbed some of his unparalleled knowledge, I am sure. Even so, there is
still so much that puzzles me about this important, too often overlooked
corner of clinical and theoretical psychoanalysis. Josephine Wright patiently
read and reread versions of the manuscript, sometimes having the courage to
tell me things I did not want to hear, as well as things I did. An earlier
version was presented in part to the New York Psychoanalytic Institute's
“Works in Progress” study group, chaired by Daniel Birger and Francis
Baudry. This resulted in many helpful suggestions for revision. The Program
Committee of the New York Psychoanalytic Society and its chair, Leon
Balter, reviewed an earlier version. These colleagues stimulated a
rethinking of that paper and a much improved revision. I am grateful as well
for the encouragement of Harold Blum and for the opportunity afforded me
by Nancy Olson and Yale University's Gardiner Series in Psychoanalysis
and the Humanities to discuss this work with its members. Elaine Pagels's
discussion of this work at the New York Psychoanalytic Society contributed
surprising and valuable insights.

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Psychiatry, March 16, 2005; the Atlanta Psychoanalytic Society, April 8,
2005; the Third Annual Conference on Psychoanalysis and Art, Florence,
Italy, May 7, 2005; the New York Psycho-analytic Society, November 8,
2005; and the Psychoanalytic Association of New York, December 11,
2006.
are reanimated from long-dead parts. In the ancient Egyptian legend of Osiris we learn that Isis (his wife and sister) gathered his scattered body parts from abroad, re-forming his body so as to make possible his eternal life in the City of the Dead (Segal 2004, pp. 39-43). And while all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again, we assume they tried.

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Viktor Frankenstein is “forced to spend nights in vaults and charnel houses” (p. 100) collecting body parts from here and there for his grand project, the reassembly and reanimation of a person representing his recently deceased mother. In the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood, especially in pre-Grimm brothers versions (Dundes 1989), Grandmother is devoured by the deceptive wolf, presumably torn asunder, bitten, chewed, and at least partially digested. But, remarkably, in the end she is returned whole and entire, restored and reassembled, completely unscathed.

In all of these examples—Ezekiel, Osiris, Humpty Dumpty, Frankenstein, and Little Red Riding Hood—the common theme is that of the undoing of destruction, or destructiveness. In Ezekiel the destruction was the scattering of the Jewish people following the razing of the First Temple (587-586 BCE) and consequent Babylonian exile. The prophecy of repair, reversal, or undoing came in 539 BCE, when Cyrus defeated the Neo-Babylonians, ending the Jews' exile. Osiris's destruction came at the hands of his wicked and jealous brother Seth, who after murdering him chopped his body into fourteen parts.

Segal observes that we do not today have the complete set of mythic variations that represent the true Osiris story. For, as with all living legends, these were stories, not a single story. But only a single story has come down to us, and that is because Plutarch probably conflated several versions of the story into a single consistent text. All that is extant is Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* and some other fragments.

The Book of Ezekiel is thought to have been written around the time of the victory of Cyrus over the Neo-Babylonian empire in 539 BCE. The prophet is thus understood to be predicting and urging that the newly freed Jews will be reassembled into the nation they once were. The image of reanimation is understood to have been in this sense metaphorical. But although metaphorical and concerning a people rather than a person, the imagery in Ezekiel was nonetheless highly influential in setting the terms for future representations of reassembly and resurrection of the individual in the Western tradition. Their connection to Signorelli's *Resurrection of the Flesh* (1499-1502) will be seen (below) to be far from accidental. In Ezekiel 37:5-10 the prophet writes that the Lord God says “to these bones: … I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath into you and you shall live…. And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.”
Humpty Dumpty, of course, had his great fall, while Frankenstein fantasied the destruction of his recently dead mother. As for Red Riding Hood, if we follow Bettelheim's persuasive suggestion (1989, p. 166), it was the cannibalistic rage of Red Riding Hood herself, projected onto the person of the wolf, that destroyed her grandmother.

Cannibalism in Psychoanalysis: A Brief History of a Concept

Before proceeding, I will briefly review the history of the cannibalism concept in psychoanalysis. We owe the idea of a developmental phase of normal cannibalism to Freud. Itself cobbled together from Darwinian evolution, late-nineteenth-century embryology, Haeckel's postulate (“ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny”), and the neurology of Hughlings Jackson, the cannibalism concept was applied to the experience of an infant at the breast. Groups thought to be “primitive” and to represent an early phase in the development of human societies were taken as models for the way things are during the earliest “phases” of individual development.

Freud relied heavily on these concepts. For example, in the Wolf Man case (Freud 1918, p. 108) he speculated that the developmental transition from the oral to the anal phase may represent a vestige of early man's need to use his musculature to subdue and immobilize prey preparatory to eating it. Not only for Freud, but for many other influential analysts who followed his thinking on this subject (e.g., Abraham 1916; Lewin 1950, pp. 136-137; Stone 1961; Shengold 1967, 1989), cannibalistic fantasy had intimate, concrete, and ultimately corporeal connections with the earliest “oral” phase of development—that is, the first months of life.

Freud did not write specifically of cannibalism until his 1915 revision of the Three Essays (Freud 1905). There he spoke for the first time about what he called the “oral, or as it might be called, cannibalistic

4 Isis (according to Plutarch) says: “Come that we may reassemble his bones!” (quoted in Segal 2004, p. 40). The reassembly and revivification of Osiris in this tale may also have had metaphorical intent. Indicative of this nonliteral meaning may be Isis's words: “Flow, lymph that comes from this blessed one! Fill the canals, form the names of the watercourses! Osiris, live, Osiris!” These words can be understood as referring to the need for the annual flooding of the Nile after its deathlike yearly ebb.
pregenital sexual organization” (p. 198). The cannibalism concept facilitated his remarkable contributions to our understanding of incorporation, introjection, and identification made during the five years between 1913 and 1918, from Totem and Taboo through “Mourning and Melancholia” to “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis.”

Freud’s thinking benefited from his association with Karl Abraham during this period. Abraham (1916, 1924) connected oral psychology with fantasies of cannibalizing the lost person in states of mourning, grief, depression, and loss. Later, Melanie Klein (1946), elaborating on Freud’s views while maintaining the metaphor of cannibalism, inferred that infants experience ideas of a cannibalistic attack on the maternal breast. The fantasied result of these oral attacks was that the breast—again, in fantasy—was sundered “in pieces.” Even the image of the breast itself was divided—into two breasts, a “good” and a “bad” one. The “bad” breast had been torn by aggression into pieces; the “good” breast was whole, entire, intact.

Although Freud had introduced the idea of splitting, and therefore of fragmentation, into psychoanalytic thought, it was Klein who introduced the fateful connection between splitting (a spatial metaphor) and morality. For Klein and for many analysts thereafter, wholeness—both of psychic structure and of imago—is associated with “goodness” and fragmentation is with aggression and “badness.”

Although cannibalistic fantasy can occur in the context of affection (adoring parent to child: “I could eat you up!”), many authors have stressed how often these ideas are bound up with aggressive feelings. Some analysts believe that aggression expressed as cannibalism or thoughts about it is the most extreme form of human aggression (Shengold 1971, 1989). Similarly, the psychoanalytically informed anthropologist Eli Sagan (1974) views cannibalistic aggression crossculturally and historically as the most destructive of human urges. Cannibalistic fantasies combine the obliterative destruction of another together with making that same other an inseparable part of oneself. No other group of fantasies can accomplish these aims simultaneously.

Freud’s case history of the Wolf-Man probably contains his most elaborated thinking on the subject. Here he describes his early idea on the developmental movement from the oral (or “cannibalistic”) to the anal phase, hypothesizing that the transition may involve the need to dominate and immobilize food prior to eating it. This idea is the beginning of a trend of thought that included Lillian Malcove’s attempt to
explain the origins of certain childhood phobias (1933). Malcove, like Freud before her, could see that cannibalistic concerns involve much more than the simple acts of biting, chewing, and swallowing. She understood that cannibalistic ideas are a part of all ideas in which we treat other persons (objects) as if they were food. As we might stalk, impale, skin, behead, dismember, or strip flesh from the bones of our food (and this list is only a sample, to which could be added freezing or preserving in brine or other fluids), so too we might imagine doing such things to persons who have become important to us.

My patient, in a fit of pique, accuses me of being interested in her only because of the analytic fee: “Of course you would want me to stay; I’m your bread and butter!” Here I am the cannibal and my patient is my food. This same patient, this time accusing me of empty flattery and manipulation, condemns me with the words: “You’re just trying to butter me up!” Again, I am the cannibal, preparing her to be all the more succulent and tasty. But this is also a patient who has stalked me and lain in wait for me, hiding in the stairwell of my office building in order to track me to my lair.

Examples abound, from within and without the consulting room. In the newspaper we read of the young man who had kept his mother's corpse in the deep freeze, preserved like so much meat; he was unable to part with her. We read of deranged serial killers who butcher their prey and preserve their parts in jars on the pantry shelf. We read of the trial of a man in Germany who ate another, willing, man alive. How we learn, are taught, or are hardwired to deal with our food all contribute to ways in which we may come to express and experience ideas of great love and great hatred toward others.

The ideas I wish to highlight in this brief review of the psychoanalysis of cannibalistic ideas are (1) that a cannibalistic attack may result in the object being treated as food and (2) that such treatment may involve ideas of rending into bits and pieces, as well as skinning, dismembering, and ultimately digesting the object (this last conceived of as such thorough pulverization as to totally obliterate the identity of the other).

Bearing these two ideas in mind, we will find ourselves positioned to make new sense of some otherwise puzzling artistic representations and clinical phenomena. We will first consider how Luca Signorelli's Orvieto fresco, *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, represents triumph over cannibalistic processes, their reversal, undoing, and repair. Next we
will see clearly how the photographer Sally Mann accomplishes the undoing of the death of a loved one. Finally, I will illustrate the clinical importance of ideas of bodily reassembly as these may provide a means for dealing with the terror of object loss, the ache of grief, and the pain of remorse brought on by destructive wishes.

**The Signorelli Frescoes at Orvieto and the Resurrection of the Flesh**

Between the years 1499 and 1504 Luca Signorelli created his decorations of the Cappella Nuova in the great cathedral at Orvieto, Italy. These decorations constitute the artist's acknowledged masterpiece. Important on their own, they are also widely viewed as having influenced works by other great artists, most notably Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel decorations. For many psychoanalysts, including myself, our first acquaintance with Signorelli came from the account Freud gave of his own visit to Orvieto in 1898. Having viewed the frescoes, Freud found himself inexplicably unable to remember the artist's name. His struggles to explain his amnesia and the conclusions he reached about the vulnerability of human memory to the vagaries of intrapsychic conflict are colorfully recounted in an 1898 paper and in the first few pages of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (Freud 1901). I will not present that familiar story here, but will note it only in passing as an example of a brief mental derangement brought about by a powerful aesthetic experience, very much along the lines made famous by Graziella Magherini (1995) as the Stendhal Syndrome (for an interpretation different from that tendered by Freud himself, see Owens 2004).

Construction of the Orvieto cathedral was begun in 1260 under papal patronage. Originally the building was of a single linear form, different from the cathedral we see today: there was only a nave, no transepts and no chapels. But today's north transept contains the apocalyptic Cappella Nuova and the Signorelli panel *The Resurrection of*...

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5 For many years the Florentine psychoanalyst Magherini was in charge of the psychiatric service of the Ospidale di Santa Maria Nuova, located not far from the Uffizi museum. While working there she had the opportunity to observe a series of individuals whose acute psychiatric disturbance had been provoked by their experience of viewing one or another of the great art works of that collection. In many cases she was able to trace the onset of mental disturbance to the subject matter and form of the work in question. So, for example, she found one young man with unconscious homosexual conflicts to have been briefly tipped into madness while viewing Caravaggio's *Young Bacchus*.
the Flesh that will be our main focus of interest. The south transept houses the cathedral's foundational relic, the Holy Corporale in its glorious reliquary (I will discuss this remarkable relic later in connection with the cathedral's overall theme of celebration of the flesh).

Inside the Cappella Nuova (or San Brizio Chapel), The Resurrection of the Flesh is situated directly above the tomb of Saint Pietro Parenzo, a papal legate martyred in the Church's struggle against the heretical Cathari, the dominant heretical sect in Orvieto (Lansing 1998). A complex set of stories is embedded in this fresco, a depiction of bodily resurrection at the Last Judgment. But to understand these stories requires that we briefly consider the development of the Church doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and the religious politics leading up to Signorelli's time. To more fully understand these stories, and therefore the fresco, some knowledge of the details of how medieval churchmen believed we all will be resurrected at the Last Judgment is essential. So too is some acquaintance with the very serious threats to the Church posed by the heresies and heretics of the High Middle Ages.

A Brief History of Resurrection

Of all of the world's major religions, only those that emerged in the Mediterranean basin developed a belief in the resurrection of the body after death (Pagels 1979). I have already illustrated the presence of this idea in the Hebrew Bible and in the religion of ancient Egypt. In the Christian tradition, the orthodox mainstream has always held that after his burial Jesus rose bodily from the dead. He is said to have arisen in the flesh—that is, the destruction of his body was undone, reversed. But with the 1945 discovery of the Nag Hammadi library containing the so-called Gnostic Gospels (Pagels 1979) we learned that the belief in bodily resurrection was not universal among firstand second-century Christians. Resurrection was central to the belief of all early Christians, as best we know, but some sects believed Jesus' resurrection to have been purely spiritual, not involving his body at all. This “heresy” appears to have been “early Christianity's gravest threat and most formidable enemy” (Kantor 1993, p. 393; see also Pagels).

It is likely that it was because of the seriousness of this threat that there was so much written by the early Church Fathers about just how bodily resurrection took place. By far the most important early writing about resurrection was that of Saint Paul, whose famous “seed metaphor” explained resurrection by analogy (I Corinthians 15). As the
newly germinating seed is to the fallen plant that produced it, so the resurrected body is to the fallen body. Importantly, for Paul the resurrected body had a continuity with the body fallen, but was not identical with it. Paul's view contrasted sharply with the one prevailing in Europe during the Middle Ages, in which the risen body was the very same body that had fallen.

Following Paul, the great Church Fathers Tertullian, Origen, and Augustine contributed to this conversation about bodily resurrection. It was the later writings of Augustine that became fundamental to the view of bodily resurrection that evolved during the medieval period. Augustine's were the views that became widely illustrated in the religious art of the Middle Ages, and these views persisted into Signorelli’s time. Augustine concerned himself with the most minute details of what happens when the body is resurrected at the End of Time. He asked, for example, at what age would our bodies be resurrected? (He said our bodies would all be resurrected as they were at age thirty.) What sex? Would scars—even the wounds of martyrs—be restored, or would we be risen in a state of bodily perfection? Augustine even wondered whether our fingernail or hair clippings would be restored.

The final medieval codification of the Church doctrine of fleshly resurrection was developed in Saint Thomas Aquinas's mid-twelfth-century Summa Theologica (ca. 1150). In sections devoted to the logical proof of resurrection and its nature, Aquinas addressed and refuted heretical beliefs in exclusively spiritual resurrection. In differing from Saint Paul's seed metaphor, he asserted that the body that rises is the very same body that has fallen. Resurrection had become a very literal, concrete, physical affair.

How could it happen? How could bodies long buried, their parts either scattered or eaten by grave-robbing animals, their remains long become “food for the worm,” rise again? Some idea of reassembly was required. Not only reassembly, but regurgitation and, as we shall see, all manner of bit-by-bit restoration (resurrection “by degree,” as Aquinas put it). Such restoration, as we shall see depicted in Signorelli's fresco, included the return of muscle to bone and the recovering of it all with skin.

**Heresy in Orvieto: Implications for Its Cathedral and for Signorelli’s Resurrection of the Flesh**

It is essential to understand that the entire history of the founding, patronage, and decoration of the Orvieto cathedral took place against a
background of a rising popular set of heretical beliefs that in certain places in Europe “in the eyes of the papacy and other orthodox believers everywhere in 1200 … constituted a cancer in the body of European civilization that had to be rooted out at all costs” (Kantor 1993, p. 389). In Orvieto the dominant heretical sect were the Cathars, a movement whose origins are not known with certainty. Although their history is beyond the scope of this paper, some of their beliefs are highly relevant to understanding the Orvieto cathedral and the place and purposes of Signorelli’s frescoes.

First and foremost, the Cathari did not believe in fleshly resurrection, either of Jesus himself or of the rest of humanity at the End of Time. The Cathari—the name derives from the Greek word for “pure”—believed the body is no more than meat, a place of suffering of the soul during its time on this earth. Worldly death, for the Cathari, was a moment of liberation of the spirit from its earthly imprisonment. At the time of resurrection the soul arose without any physical encumbrance.

Not believing in the fleshly resurrection of Jesus, the Cathari consequently had no use for the Eucharistic sacrament, nor for priest, papacy, or the entire organization of the orthodox church. In sharp contrast, the cathedral at Orvieto was dedicated to the doctrine of fleshly resurrection, to the Eucharistic sacrament, and to the Holy Office of the priest who performs this sacrament; and it was constructed under papal patronage.

During the reign of Pope Innocent III the threat of the Cathari in Southern France (the Albigensians, so called because of their location in the town of Albi) was viewed as so serious that the Pope sent a crusade (began in 1206) against them. This expedition and the slightly earlier Fourth Crusade (begun in 1204) were the first crusades directed not against the Moslem infidels but against papal enemies who identified themselves as Christians.

In Orvieto as well the Cathari had become a threat, with one result being the dispatching by the papacy of Pietro Parenzo to Orvieto to put down the heretical movement. Pietro was assassinated by the heretics. Significantly, his tomb is situated in the Cappella Nuova, just beneath Signorelli's Resurrection. Later on the pope sent a Franciscan Inquisition to Orvieto to root out the Cathari. Though less brutal than other Inquisitions, many Cathari lost their homes, property, and livelihoods as a result of it.

In 1263 the miracle that furnished the foundational relic of the Orvieto cathedral took place in the nearby town of Bolsena. There, it
was said, a priest who was skeptical of the truth of the doctrine of resurrection was nonetheless performing the Eucharistic sacrament. At the very moment of its consecration the host broke and bled! The blood made a believer of the priest as it spilled onto and stained the Holy Corporale, the cloth used in the sacrament. When the papacy began construction of the cathedral in 1290, the Holy Corporale became its foundational relic. It continues to be housed in the Cappella di Corporale in the south transept.6

My purpose in sketching the events in Orvieto that led up to the construction of the cathedral has been to demonstrate how the cathedral and its significant decorations, including Signorelli’s Resurrection of the Flesh, are all about the importance of flesh and blood; all about how the flesh and blood of the dead are restored; about how their division and destruction are undone, repaired.

The Dead Body as Food

Here my interest is in the representation of the body during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance in one very specific circumstance: after its worldly death. In Christian doctrine of the Middle Ages and into Signorelli’s time there were two phases to the afterlife: from the moment of physical death to the beginning of the End of Time, and from the sound of the final trumpet through the processes of resurrection and beyond.

In a series of carefully researched monographs, the medievalist and church historian Carolyn Bynum (1987, 1991a, b, 1995) has explored aspects of the beliefs of late medieval Christians as these concerned the fate of the body after death. She found that for orthodox Christian believers ideas of what happened to people's bodies after they died were cast prominently in the imagery of cannibalism. Dead human

6 In May 2005 I was granted a private tour of the Cappella di Corporale. Overshadowed by the fame of its north transept counterpart, this chapel attracts neither tourists nor descriptive writings. Yet it is remarkable and must have been aweinspiring to believers. The relic itself is hidden from view, but at the flick of a switch it rises slowly from its altar, illuminated in modern times by spotlights. What one sees is a square-shaped old piece of cloth, spotted with brownish stains (the blood of the host). Surrounding the altar and Corporale is an array of frescoes depicting the story of the skeptical priest of the 1263 miracle, the Bolsena Eucharistic celebration, and the bleeding onto the Corporale. The air of magic is irresistible, even today. (Also of interest is Rafaello's famous and imposing rendering of the Bolsena miracle, which hangs today in the Papal Palace in the Vatican.)
bodies were food: food for grave-robbing animals, birds, worms, and for the earth itself. Postmortem bodies were bitten, chewed, devoured, broken, and rent, the flesh taken from the bones, corrupted, disintegrated, dispersed.

In addition, and in complete accord with the ideas of being cannibalized after death, resurrection was conceived of as the reverse of these destructive processes. Resurrection involved regurgitation, the reassembly of dispersed parts, the restoration of limbs (re-memberment), the returning of flesh to bare bones, the re-covering with skin. In short, resurrection was a complex process in which bodily intactness was completely restored. The orthodox medieval Christian understood resurrection as involving the step-by-step reversal of cannibalistic destruction, with intact perfection of the body the end result.

Bynum (1995) notes that “damnation is eternal swallowing and digestion; eternal partition; the mouth of hell is a real mouth; second, final, definitive death is mastication…. redemption therefore is triumph over fragmentation, digestion, and rot …” (p. 186). And even for the bodies of souls not condemned to eternal damnation, between the moment of death and the moment of resurrection, swallowing, digestion, partition, and mastication are the common fate. Thanks to Bynum's painstaking work, these relationships between death, cannibalism, and resurrection are easy to demonstrate and provide us the tools to decode what is otherwise so puzzling in Signorelli’s Resurrection.

A twenty-first-century viewer might easily imagine that pictured in the left portion of Figure 1 are people in various stages of being eaten by a fish, birds, animals, and monsters. In fact, the reverse is true: in this illustration of a medieval Last Judgment these people are being regurgitated by the very beasts that previously had devoured them. In the commonplace medieval iconography of the Last Judgment, of which this detail is not atypical, resurrection begins with regurgitation, the very opposite of devouring and digesting. In the many visual representations of which Figure 1 is typical, devouring and regurgitation are indistinguishable: the act and its negation, reversal, repair, or undoing appear one and the same.

In the thirteenth-century German miniature of the Resurrection seen in Figure 2, a corpse (center figure, read bottom upward) rises

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7 From Herrad of Hohenbourg, *Hortus Deliciarum*, fol. 251r (ca. 1176-1196; tracings made in the nineteenth century from a destroyed manuscript). “At the sound of the trumpet … body parts are regurgitated from the craws of birds and beasts….”
in its shroud, disentangles itself, and receives the garment of salvation. Other corpses (left and right) receive their missing parts from the beasts who have devoured them. These once-dead and dismembered bodies are reassembled and made whole again.

In depictions of hell, it was similarly commonplace for the suffering of sinners' souls to be understood in terms of their bodies being treated as food. Damnation was a matter of being eaten: the bodies of the lost could be depicted as being hung sausage-like from ropes, or—in the case of some Jews—as being cooked in a cauldron.

**Resurrection: Signorelli's Interpretation**

**The Apocalyptic Climate**

Begun just before the turn of the year 1500, the cycle reflects in part the millenarian and apocalyptic concerns rampant at that time throughout Europe. For many Christians the end of the fifteenth century signaled the coming End of Time; Aquinas had written that mankind was just then living in the sixth or last stage of its earthly existence; false prophets preached heresies, even in Orvieto itself; war and death were in widespread evidence. The Church's studies and teachings known as eschatology, or the study of “last things,” seemed especially timely. These last things included such essential and pressing matters as the coming of the Antichrist, general resurrection, the Last Judgment, and eternal punishment or reward. Indeed, it is these last things that are the subjects of Signorelli's work in the Cappella Nuova. Not surprisingly, apocalyptic preoccupations led to
the creation of many Last Judgments throughout Christendom during this period.

Entering the chapel one is immersed in a total experience, made to feel physically small in the midst of an otherworldly place. The veil between our own world and the usually invisible world of God, angels, and devils has been rent.

The visual impact of Signorelli’s virtual apocalypse is overwhelming. One sees to the left the elect rising to Heaven, balanced to the right by the damned being delivered to Hell. This is the place and time of final judgment. Just within the chapel's entrance is a scene of apocalypse, the sky discolored, the planets awry, as demons rain down hail and fire upon a terrified humanity. Nearby, the Antichrist preaches his heresies. On the wall opposite is the fresco with which I am primarily concerned. There one gazes upon a glorious celebration of the resurrection of the flesh.

The Resurrection of the Flesh (Figure 3) is a powerful assertion of orthodox eschatological doctrines, of resurrection itself, and, by strong implication, of the Eucharist. It is a celebration, a triumph of the flesh, of incarnation and reincarnation through faith. As Saint Paul wrote, “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Corinthians 15:52). Above is the heavenly realm, from which the archangels Michael and Gabriel announce the End of Time, their trumpets attached to banners of the Cross of the Resurrection, the emblem worn by Jesus at his own resurrection.

Below, twenty-six gorgeous nudes, men and women, all exactly the same age of thirty (as had been suggested more than a millennium earlier by Augustine), have risen from within the earth and stand in dazzling corporeal glory. They are reuniting with one another, rejoicing, embracing, reaching heavenward. Intermixed with them are others in the process of resurrection. Some are struggling to extricate themselves from the earth. They push down with their arms, up with their legs. This vision of unearthing is Signorelli's own, his invention, and is strikingly different from the medieval interpretation of corpses rising from their graves, from sarcophagi. But one can fully understand his remarkable Renaissance vision only if one includes the history of the ideas represented here. That history has been incorporated into the work itself.
The Uniqueness of Signorelli's General Resurrection

Signorelli's rendering of the general resurrection is exceptional in several respects. His *Resurrection of the Flesh* stands alone as a large fresco, rather than as a detail of a larger canvas, panel, or wall. It is exceptional in yet another way. However, for its time, the late quattrocento, a time when bones and body parts no longer appeared in such compositions, it was highly unusual in that bones most assuredly do form part of the composition. And these skeletons appear bare. They have not yet received flesh. In addition, Signorelli's bones differ significantly from many of the medieval bones depicted as rising from the dead. His are all shown as integrated into intact skeletons. Nowhere does one see a loose bone or stray skull. This is important to understand, because a skeleton portrayed in its entirety is not dispersed or torn asunder, or it has been already been reassembled from its parts. Surely Signorelli's imagery would not have disturbed my analysand, Mr. A. (see below) as much as did his unexpected confrontation with a nineteenth-century collection of bones.
Two additional innovations are worthy of mention. First, although it has previously been observed that Signorelli was the first to show resurrected individuals in groups (see Figure 4), embracing, apparently recognizing each other from their past association, no previous commentator has connected these unique groupings with the idea to which they are clearly related: reassembly. In this sense, Signorelli has created an echo of the idea of reassembly evident in the individual bodily processes of the return of bone to bone and flesh to bone in his grouping of individuals once separated by death and now brought back together at resurrection.

Finally, Signorelli shows us, in the fresco's lower right (Figure 5), a man in the process of resurrection whose flesh, though returned and covering his bones, is nonetheless rendered as transparent. This X-ray-like representation may be a deliberate reference by the artist to the Augustinian notion of the transparency of bodies in heaven. But such an explanation seems less likely to me than that Signorelli is attempting to show graphically, and in greater detail than had his predecessors, the precise anatomy of reassembly.

The very glory and dazzling beauty of the flesh that Signorelli does portray as the end product of resurrection, the gorgeous thirty-year-old
bodies of the men and women who stand, gaze, embrace, and marvel, is in
keeping with the iconographic developments of his time. But there can be no
doubt that in Signorelli’s rendering one can detect the implicit presence and
significance of the iconographic program of the medieval Last Judgment. In
some instances its presence and significance is quite explicit. Altogether,
though Signorelli has brought an early Renaissance sensibility to the problems
of the general resurrection, those problems—and their solutions—remain
palpably present in his work. Resurrection still represents man’s hope for the
defeat of death—of the body as well as of the spirit. In the background,
corporeal death continues to be imagined as the partition, decay, dispersal,
and rot of the body, with all of the cannibalistic resonances we know to have
been historically associated with these processes.

Aquinas wrote of resurrection “by degree” (quoted in Riess 1995a, p. 56),
and that is precisely what Signorelli has illustrated. He shows us how our
resurrecting bodies rise up from within the earth, inch by inch. He shows us
two additional bodily processes as well: the return (reenfleshment) of our
own devoured or rotted flesh to our bones and the re-covering of those
muscles and sinews with our skin. In one amazing detail he provides what
amounts to an X-ray view: the muscle mass covering newly enfleshed bones
(femur, pelvis, lower leg bones) appears transparent, as Augustine had once
described it, revealing the bony structure beneath.

Figure 5. Detail, Signorelli’s Resurrection of the Flesh.
One can see skulls, shoulder girdles, arms, and upper chests struggling to extricate themselves from the devouring earth. Elsewhere, other bodies, appearing already to have had their flesh restored, struggle mightily to lift themselves, in two instances with the help of someone already risen. And most remarkably, to the far right is a macabre group of six erect skeletons, standing fully upright, arms hanging jauntily at their sides, mandibles slack, creating that familiar deathly smile. These men and women have yet to have their flesh returned to their bones.

**Sally Mann's What Remains**

In her recent exhibit and book, *What Remains* (2003), the photographer Sally Mann has set out her preoccupations with death. The ambiguity of her title is, of course, deliberately crafted. She asks, all at once, how we continue to exist in the grief and memories of those who survive us (What remains?); she asserts that, yes, something does remain (that which remains); and she proclaims the glory of our remains (What remains!). But what concerns her most here is our corporeal death and the postmortem fate of our bodies. Absent her text it would be impossible to know what she wants to show us in her photographs, for we see only an incomprehensible display of corpses in varying states of decomposition, the bones and hide of an unknown animal, haunting images of an unknowable landscape, some indistinct close-up facial portraits, and a visual record of an unknown police action in a rural setting.

But her words, and words borrowed from others such as Whitman and Pound, make everything much clearer. It then becomes overwhelmingly evident that Mann is stricken with a desire to know what happens to us and our loved ones after we die; she wants desperately to study these phenomena in order to undo death itself. In this way she is like Frankenstein, who after the death of his mother began his frantic study of the processes that lead from life to death in order to learn to reverse them: to transform what is dead into something that lives.8

8 “Darkness had no effect upon my fancy, and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay and forced to spend nights in vaults and charnel-houses…. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life …” (Shelley 1818, p. 100; emphasis added).
What Remains is a work of grieving. Having suffered painful losses, Mann yearns to be made whole again. She imagines her losses in the language and imagery of eating and being eaten, redolent of cannibalism. She quotes her father, whose “death laid [her] flat for almost a year.” He would, she recalls, recite a peculiar grace to begin a holiday meal: “Bless this shadowy food of substance whose last eater shall be the worm….“ He had lived during a time, she reflected, when “death was normal. People died at home. Animals eaten by a family were usually killed on the property. Their culture did not have the buffers that ours does protecting us from death's realities” (p. 5). (We may observe that “death's realities” here refers to how one is killed or dies only to become food!)

She “wept noisily,” she writes, over the death of her beloved greyhound, Eva. Claiming mere curiosity (but we see that it was much more than this), she exhumed the dog's corpse after a year. She wonders, “Was it ghoulish to want to know? Was it maudlin to want to keep her, at least some part of her?” Death, she writes, “is the … terrible mother … by whom we are one day devoured” (p. 6).

She thus leaves little doubt about the nature of her project. She works driven by a yearning to reclaim those she has lost to a bodydevouring death. She works by a close, unflinching examination of those devouring processes. Her project is nothing short of resurrection. And, as it was for Christianity during the Middle Ages, piece-by-piece bodily reassembly was an essential operation.

Here (6) Mann shows us a detail: her reassembly of the bones of one of Eva's legs. Yet in a more important way the joining together in seventeen photographs of parts of Eva's dead body into a single chapter—photographs of her pelt, skin, fur, teeth, bones, muzzle, and a claw—represents the true goal achieved by Mann's efforts at reassembly: the undoing or repair of Eva's destruction.

What Remains comprises photographs and text organized into five parts, each dealing concretely with the problem of the body's fate after death. The impetus for the work seems to have been a series of unbidden visits by death itself: the deaths of her father, of her beloved greyhound, and of an armed and dangerous stranger in the woods behind
her house. Beyond these events of self-evident traumatic impact, Mann seems to experience the bodily maturation of her children as similarly traumatic. Her peculiar family photographs suggest that she is shaken to her depths by her children's physical maturation; experiencing an anxiety of loss, she views their physical development and intimations of their future separation from her as aspects of a process continuous with death and with the bodily changes that follow it.

In Figure 7 she has produced a photographic image of the face of one of her children that makes it appear as though the child is in the process of postmortem decay; the image is reminiscent of the preceding images of decaying corpses in a field and in the woods.

Figure 6. Mann reassembled the limbs piece by piece and studied the manner of articulation of the parts. From S. Mann (2003), What Remains. Boston: Little, Brown, pp. 25, 29, and 31.

Figure 7. From S. Mann (2003), What Remains. Boston: Little, Brown, p. 114.
There are many such images of family members. From what we have by now come to understand about the iconography of death and resurrection, we might truly wonder whether what we are observing here is a portrait, not only of decay, but also of its reversal. Other than the artist's immersion in a culture continuous with that of medieval Europe, there is some evidence for this speculation in Mann's text itself. Not only does she show us and tell us about the reversibility in imagination (and art) of postmortem physical processes, but she adds that “it was the iconography associated with [death] that most interested [her physician father] all his life”; she recalls that “from cave to cathedral … for decades he researched how artists from all cultures have portrayed death” (p. 5).

It is interesting to compare these images of Mann's children, in which they appear if not dead then certainly moribund, with their images in her earlier work. In the earlier family pictures one sees not death itself but youth, growth, beauty, and joy infected somehow with an eerie, uncanny, even sinister quality. Informed by our present knowledge, we may come to understand what that eerie quality is about. It is about transience. It is the adumbration of loss, perhaps loss tinged with intimations of cannibalism, of eating and being eaten.

In the present pictures—and in Mann's present state of grieving—the balance is shifted far in the direction of loss. The images are of death or near-death. This loss of equilibrium is perhaps what makes the present work much less successful than the earlier photographs, in which loss and death are present, but only as disturbing grace notes.

In his brief but profound “On Transience,” Freud (1915) argued that the refusal to experience the transient beauty of living things precisely because of their transience reflects a deeper refusal, a refusal of mourning with its attendant emotional anguish. In the aesthetically flawed images of her family in What Remains, Mann seems unable to show us the beauty of her children: their very transience has caused her to withdraw from them. That is why, in my view, this work lacks the strangely compelling allure of her earlier images.

The final two sections of Mann's graphic meditation on the fate of the body after death present photographic studies of corpses in various states of decay, disintegration, and rot (part of a government experiment)

9 An exploration of the resonances of this remarkable but little-known essay is the subject of an illuminating and valuable book by von Unwerth (2005), in which it was brought to my attention.
and scenes of the Civil War battlefield at Antietam in which no flesh, human or animal, alive or dead, is any longer to be seen.

In the context of the present discussion, what is most striking about this work is its intense and unswerving focus on the concrete physical processes of our corporeal existence after our deaths: decay, disintegration, and ultimately total disappearance. Existing in tension with these is a focus on resurrection, reassembly, and reintegration every bit as intense, every bit as concrete, and every bit as physical. For Mann, as for Signorelli, we are food, eaten after our bodies die. The evidence of our struggle to undo the terrible damage that will be (or has been) inflicted (by others and by ourselves in imagination) can be seen in our representations of regurgitation (as exhumation), the return of torn-off parts, reassembly, and the undoing of rot.

Reassembly, Repair, and Resurrection in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapeutic Work: Two Illustrations

If we exclude psychoses and religious ecstatic states, the psychoanalyst is unlikely, clinically, to encounter conscious explicit fantasies of resurrection, much less of resurrection accomplished by exhumation or reassembly. But it has been my experience that these ideas are discernible in certain patients in derivative form. Their presence in some may be clinically important, in that these ideas have a significant organizing effect on the patient's emotional life and conflicts.

As I have shown, these are powerful, universal, and astonishingly enduring themes. Whether we conceive of them as “hardwired” inborn schemata, learned at a very early age, or as “natural” consequences of psychological predispositions, they may function as important determinants of our emotional lives. It would seem inescapable, then, that the paired impulses that exist in our minds in states of mutually negating tension, impulses toward killing and reviving, of cannibalistic destructiveness and resurrection, would make significant appearances in the psychoanalytic consulting room. How do we know them when we confront them? And what do they signify when they do appear?

I will limit myself to two illustrations from my own clinical experience, but I believe that once attuned to these matters any working psychoanalyst will recognize these familiar fantasy structures. Moreover, not to do so is to omit an important dimension from analytic
work with some patients. My choice of the following examples was
determined by the unusual, indirect, or disguised manner in which these
complexes made their appearance.

**Mr. A. and the Paris Catacombs: Old Bones in New Patterns**

Mr. A. had been in analysis, five days a week, for several years. I had
gotten to know him well. Especially, I had become familiar with the way in
which intimations of loss gripped him with an abrupt and surprising emotional
violence, even when the loss was anticipated. This was, of course, especially
palpable within the transference relationship. My absences, although nearly
always planned, anticipated, and discussed, whether for weekends or
vacations, had this effect. So too, often enough, did my presentation of my bill
for the previous month's work. My knowledge of his characteristic reactions
to loss notwithstanding, I found myself at once puzzled and taken by surprise
when on a Monday morning he excitedly entered my office.

"Here, look!" he directed me urgently as he sat on the side of the couch and
withdrew a periodical from his briefcase.

It was an art magazine. The item of such great interest was an article
generously illustrated with black-and-white photographs: white bones, a crypt
of some kind, perhaps an ossuary. The pictures were not contemporary; they
were old, dark, indistinct.

I looked carefully, as I had been told to do. But not only could I not quite
make out what I was seeing; I also did not understand its urgent importance to
Mr. A.

"These really unnerved me. Don't you understand?" he said. "Over the
weekend, in fact yesterday, I got to reading this piece by [an author and critic
personally known to Mr. A.]. It's really good. Really interesting. But when I
looked at the photographs I got really upset."

He lay down on the couch.

"These are the earliest photographs ever taken of the Paris catacombs. It
turns out that [the catacombs] were exposed when the city's streets were being
torn up for Haussmann's 'urban renewal' projects— you know, revising the
street plan of Paris, the broad boulevards, the spokes … ?"

"What is it that gets to you so much?" I asked.

"I can't tell you exactly … but it's made me terribly uneasy, fright-ened
even. I couldn't wait to show it to you and talk with you about it."
I almost called you up. The weekend seemed somehow very long on account of it.”

As puzzled as before, but impressed by his references to our separation, to the too-long weekend, his inability to wait, his being frightened—yet all, evidently, about something that might not be understandable and that he could not quite put into words—I began to scrutinize the old photographs.

Neatly organized arrangements of bones, apparently human: bins filled with bones and bones used as repeating decorative elements. There were rows of skulls running for great spans, parallel to the ground but capping arrangements of other kinds of bones. In one photograph, crossed femurs were deployed repeatedly as design devices used to visually frame groups of other bones. The aggregations of bones were, I began to notice, homogeneous: there they were, hundreds if not thousands of long bones, neatly stacked like so much firewood. But the stacks were made up entirely of long bones. The effect was curiously eerie, an effect I first dismissed as being due to the reference to death. But that was hardly the entire story. Mr. A. continued, explaining.

“‘I think it's got something to do with—You won't believe this!— the fact that there are no whole skeletons present.”

Without missing a beat:

“I looked for you on the highway, in your car, last night as we were driving back to the city, but I didn't see you. Do you remember, that time when I saw you and your wife in your car as we were driving back on a Sunday night? When I couldn't see your children, or your dog?”

At this point I was trying to work out what, if any, connection there might be between whatever it was that had upset him about the pictures of the Paris catacombs—the absence of whole skeletons—and his frustrated search for me the previous night. An idea was forming dimly in my mind.

Again, without apparent transition:

“Look at them. Can you see how there aren't any skeletons? It's as if the people had been scattered and collected again without regard for their individuality: rows of heads, rows of arms, heaps of pelvises …”

My growing sense was that the disturbance Mr. A. was feeling was related to his realizing that there had been destruction but no repair; rending and tearing, dismemberment without reassembly; loss of being, identity; permanent and hopeless loss. I decided to try out my idea. I said, “The people whose bones are in the catacombs have
been destroyed, disappeared—not simply because they are dead, but because
their remains have been irretrievably scattered and put to other uses. Might
you have feared that something like that had happened to me over the weekend
as well?” I asked him, “What did it feel like to search for me and my car and
find not a trace?”

My questions led to his recollection of the feeling he had had the previous
Friday, our most recent session, which had ended with his feeling dismissed.
He had felt increasingly alone as the session neared its end. I hadn't said
much. When he stood up to leave he looked back at me and said, “I hate it
when you don't speak.”

These are ordinary analytic occurrences: weekend, separation, loss, angry
feelings, destructive wishes, varied forms of anxiety. What in my view is
unusual here, and what I wish to highlight, is the presence in this slice of
analytic work of the pairing of a dismembering kind of destructiveness toward
the analyst with the impulse toward repair or reassembly, toward a kind of
resurrection. The pairing is prominent here—but not really: the more
“reassuring” piece is missing, at least in the disturbing photographs of the
Paris catacombs, and this absence is responsible for the eruption of the more
powerful forms of anxiety (“unnerved,” “really uneasy,” “terribly uneasy,”
urgently frightening).

Mr. B.: Wrecked Cars and Homes

Mr. B. was fifty-one years old. “I have a mean streak,” he told me. Over the
course of our several initial exploratory sessions he made clear just what he
meant by this. By his own account, Mr. B. had a cruel, vicious, positively
sadistic streak that, he believed, had been the ruin of his most important
relationships. These same traits now threatened his second marriage, as well
as his relationship with his only child, a boy of eight who was in
psychoanalysis at the time. Mr. B.

10 In the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center on
September 11, 2001, it became the job of many city workers to sift through
the enormous heap of rubble for the remains, body parts, and possessions of
those who were killed in the attack. For some workers, the recovery of the
body parts became an “obsession”: they felt they could not rest until all the
parts were found. Some workers, struggling with enormous fatigue, would
sign up for extra work shifts so that they would not have to leave the task,
even for a night’s sleep. Others presented false identification in order to be
allowed to continue the job of recovery. There was a frantic quality to their
efforts. Body parts that could be identified were then reassembled in the
morgue and the human beings so reconstituted was photographed. It is the
frantic, urgent quality of these efforts to recover the parts and reassemble the
bodies that I wish to stress here, a quality that was related to me by an
intimately involved New York City employee.
attributed his son's need for treatment at least in part to his inability as the boy's father to control his vicious streak. “I've always been angry,” he summarized his emotional life. “That was the reason that I was kicked out of every one of the schools I attended. That's why I left this country and lived for years in Europe.”

A middle child among the eight born to an heiress and her attorney husband, he recalled always having felt abandoned and neglected. As best I could determine, his assessment was accurate. His mother was crippled with depression, bedridden during much of his childhood. She did little to care for her large brood, partly because the family had servants and partly because she was simply unable to muster sufficient energy. Mr. B.’s most prominent memory of his mother was of her in her room, in bed, unable to go out and about. His father, a prominent, well-regarded attorney, had no time for family life. Mr. B. reported that his feelings of rage toward each of his parents had not at all moderated with time.

In his marriage he described a repetitive pattern that he felt he needed help with. He would react to disappointments with his wife, he said, with attacks he described as vicious, cruel, sadistic, and unrelenting. Once he got going, he said, he was unable to stop himself. And, he observed with combined shame and pride, he could be “very hurtful.” In the end his wife would withdraw, abandoning him, he felt, even more than she had originally. He thought he was making things worse, yet he felt that he had very little control over this behavior.

With his son the story was similar. He had a towering intolerance for those of his son's behaviors that disappointed him. In particular, any sign of the boy's shyness, social isolation, penchant for television and video games, lack of athletic ability, or tendency to withdraw to his bedroom could easily provoke a sadistic attack from Mr. B. Unlike his wife, who responded to the attacks with withdrawal and abandonment, his son did not withdraw but instead matched his father's explosive fury megaton for megaton. It was for this “problem,” his son's “anger,” that the boy was in treatment, ultimately benefiting from a combination of psychoanalysis and fluoxetine.

Mr. B. felt an increasing sense of sorrow at his isolation within his own family. It reminded him of his childhood loneliness within his family of origin, a state of affairs he began to correct only after some years of our therapeutic work.
Mr. B.'s exquisite sensitivity to feelings of abandonment rapidly became the central theme of his intensive psychoanalytic psychotherapy. In fact, although initially I failed to grasp its significance, this theme was sounded in our very first exploratory meeting when he announced his “fundamental rule”: he did not want a silent, inactive analyst; he had already had that, he explained, citing his “classical” psychoanalytic treatment years earlier. He was wary, he said, of becoming “trapped” in an analytic relationship in which the analyst was inactive.

“I need you to get in there and really mix it up with me,” he told me with a passionate earnestness.

I agreed that I would do my best.

Inevitably, my “best” did not always satisfy Mr. B. When I let him down, he would not always provide overt indications of his disappointment and anger. But the regular occurrence of a particular constellation of associations helped me begin to understand how he dealt with his overwhelming disappointment, sorrow, and rage at such moments. His thoughts would turn to one or another of his restoration projects: old cars, homes, landscapes.

One such momentary lapse on my part contributed, I believe, to the emergence of his deeply cherished memory of having been given his first car as an early teenager. His paternal uncle had a place in the dunes and brought him to see his “gift,” a wreck of an ancient automobile, partly buried in the sand. “It's yours,” said his uncle. “If you can get it to run, you can have it.” Young Mr. B. became excited about his project in a way he could not recall ever having happened before that time—and only rarely since. His excitement seemed unbounded: the quest for new parts, sealing the leaks, replacing the tubing, hoses, and fluids, cannibalizing other wrecks for other parts. He couldn't wait for school days to end, for the weekends to arrive, and for vacations to draw near. He lived for this project, visiting his heap nearly every day. The crowning moment when he finally turned the key in the ignition and the crank-crank of the starter motor gave way to the rhythmic hum of the engine was engraved in his mind.

Bringing the dead, dismembered, and rotted back to life— it turned out— was a passion of Mr. B.'s. I understood this as in part an outcome of his struggle with the destructive, dismembering, partly cannibalistic rage that swept over him at moments of disappointment, or that pervaded his affective life during more extended periods of feeling abandoned, neglected, and cast off. As he feels moved to destroy a loved
one and consequently create in himself a state of sorrow, so he also feels an excited sense of triumph and relief in reversing those same destructive processes.

The recognition of disguised derivatives of bodily reassembly and resurrection fantasies does not require great leaps of intuition on the part of an analyst once the presence of such ideas is suspected. When later in his treatment Mr. B. reacted to one of my vacations with the excited purchase of a vacation home for himself and his family, I did not at first suspect that bodily reassembly was involved. But he had, it turned out, bought a place that had seen better days and had fallen into a grave state of disrepair. Weeds had overgrown the yard; parts of the roof had collapsed; the house had not been occupied for years. Yet, as though a man possessed, Mr. B. set about his restoration project: pipes, structural members, the innards such as heating and plumbing systems, all needed replacement and repair. The fact that nearby, in the hardscrabble neighborhood where he had found this “wreck,” there were automobile graveyards merely added to the appeal of the place. He bought an ancient wreck of a car, leaving it in his yard as he replaced its parts, rebuilt the engine, and got it back to life again.

Our psychotherapeutic work increasingly revealed that a large portion of Mr. B.’s emotional energy seemed to have found lifelong deployment in his inner struggle over destructive impulses and wishes toward those he loved but who made him feel disappointed, abandoned, and neglected. Some, but by no means all, of these destructive wishes were cannibalistic in nature. That is, they involved fantasies of dealing with his loved ones as though they were his food: breaking, rending, tearing apart, ripping with his teeth, biting, chewing, and swallowing, vicious and violent activities the ancient Greeks called sporagmos and omophagia. The overt and conscious presence in Mr. B. of remorse, sorrow, loneliness, and isolation suggested that, for him, the arousal of countervailing wishes and impulses having to do with repair, reassembly, and resurrection likely had a defensive or reparative function.

**Further Clinical Discussion**

I intend these two clinical vignettes to illustrate how cannibalistic ideas of tearing apart, breaking, and rending may exist in states of tension with their opposites—resurrection, repair, and reassembly. Aggression and hatred, often stimulated by perceived abandonment or neglect, may tip the balance in the direction of fantasies of destruction.
of the object. Remorse, depressive affect, and various anxieties may tend, on the other hand, to add weight to the reparative side, with a resulting foregrounding of ideas of regurgitation, reassembly, and resurrection. In the consulting room, of course, one observes a shimmering, multiform state, the momentary features of which will depend on the immediately shifting impingements.

In the vignette from the analysis of Mr. A., the most prominent clinical feature was the eruption of an anxiety that seemed to me to have been due to Mr. A.'s shocking confrontation with a picture of the undefended consequences of his destructive transferential fury. He had left Friday's session disappointed, angry, and feeling abandoned by me. His search to find me whole on Sunday night had been frustrated, and the photographs of the unreassembled bones gave him a frightful sense of the loss that was an imagined consequence of his fury. In other words, Mr. A. became terrified when he was temporarily deprived of his defensive ideas of reassembly.

Mr. B., in contrast, undertook his project of reassembly at a frantic pace, as if “a man possessed.” He undertook it for reasons not dissimilar to those of Mr. A.: the repair of loss that, I assumed, was brought about in fantasy at least in part by his destructive wishes. However, Mr. B.'s interest in unearthing, reassembly, repair, and resurrection was more than momentary and had more of a quality of characterological response to loss and chronic depressive affect. Mr. B.'s interest in reassembly and resurrection was more like a character trait than it was for Mr. A. Moreover, the driven, obsessive, even frantic quality of Mr. B.'s repairing activities seemed to me to have had a manic quality: it was not just that a body was symbolically being reassembled, but that a mood—depression—was being warded off. These last observations of Mr. B.'s psychology suggest that in some patients there may be more than an accidental connection between ideas of reassembly and mood-disordered states such as depression and grief. The idea of such a connection is consistent with Abraham's early clinical descriptions (1924) of explicit fantasies and dreams of cannibalism in states of grief and depression. It is consistent also with our observation in Mann's work of the intimate coexistence of her grief and her ideas of cannibalism and bodily reassembly.

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Summary and Concluding Reflections

Psychoanalytic thinking once traced the origins of cannibalistic urges and imagery back to the very earliest months of extrauterine life. The study of individual development subsequently made it clear that the cannibalistic narratives and images expressed by older children and adults, even if their roots may reach back to the dawn of life, are complex constructions that require cognitive and emotional input that develops only later (Gottlieb 1993). More recent “two-person” formulations would insist that such urges and images trace their origins back to early relationships with others. An object relations perspective tells us that one person may yearn to stalk, impale, rend, cook, and devour another and that another may yearn to be devoured.

At the same time, we know as analysts, and I have illustrated, that processes may be represented by their reverse. Doing and undoing may be identical except for directionality. There is an equivalence between destructiveness that involves dismemberment, tearing flesh from bones, and the digestion of remains on the one hand, and reassembly, reenfleshment, and regurgitation on the other. The differences between these can be indicated by a minus sign. They seem often—if not always—to exist in a state of tension with each other.

These considerations of developmental and structural aspects of cannibalistic fantasy led us to deepen our understanding of the Christian doctrine of resurrection of the body as it evolved during the Middle Ages in Europe and as it was represented in the art of that period. We traced these trends to their glorious expression in one of Luca Signorelli’s Orvieto frescoes, The Resurrection of the Flesh in the Cappella Nuova. Radiantly beautiful as the painting is, we came to see it as also embodying a tradition of cannibalistic fantasy by the visual representation of its opposite.

But to know this about The Resurrection of the Flesh, whatever the heuristic value of this knowledge, is deeply unsatisfying. A masterpiece such as Signorelli’s cannot be reduced to its archaic unconscious determinants. Signorelli had a vast talent, disciplined by years of study and apprenticeship with Piero della Francesca and perhaps Verrocchio and Perugino as well (Henry and Kanter 2002, pp. 13-14). His work provides ample evidence of his knowledge of the artistic tradition within which he was embedded, as well as of his familiarity with the great literary works of his era and of preceding ages. Included in his
highly complex Cappella Nuova decorations are portraits of Dante, Virgil, Lucan, and Ovid, among others, as well as detailed illustrations of episodes from their writings.\textsuperscript{11} His mastery and transcendence of contemporary religious iconography is everywhere displayed.\textsuperscript{12}

There were other influences impinging on him as well as he set about the Cappella Nuova frescoes, influences involving the Church and its politics, its struggles against heresy, and the tradition embedded (or literally interred) in the Cathedral itself—its relic (the Holy Corporale), depictions of martyrs, and the magnificent relief façade (also apocalyptic in theme). There were additional influences that we do not and cannot know with certainty, including the death of Signorelli's son, Antonio, who was also his assistant, in July 1502, during Signorelli's work on the Cappella Nuova. It would surprise neither layperson nor psychoanalyst to find that Signorelli's grief over this loss was linked to ideas of return from the dead. Psychoanalysis provides an additional insight that would connect such a terrible loss to ideas of the doing and undoing of cannibalistic incorporation and destructiveness.

The human terror of having our bodies serve as food for others has certainly not disappeared since the Italian Renaissance. Fears of our destruction by cannibalistic means, of our wishes to so destroy others, and of our countervailing impulses to repair, undo, and vitiate the damage done remain aspects of our ideas about our deaths and the deaths of others, as was apparent from our examination of \textit{What Remains}. Mann first exhumed the remains of her long-buried, beloved greyhound, Eva, following which she carefully reassembled her body parts; finally, she captured the reassembled whole as a visual image

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\item Here too there is uncertainty and controversy over the identification of the figures of the \textit{grisailles} that decorate the \textit{basimenti}. One learned commentator, contra the prevailing opinion, submits evidence that these portraits are not of literary figures at all, but rather depict prominent citizens of Orvieto, including one of the heretics! (Gilbert \textit{2003}, p. 149). Others subscribe to the identification of the likes of Ovid, Lucan, Virgil, Dante, Cicero, Statius, and Empedocles, but with varying degrees of certainty about each (\textit{Riess 1995a}; \textit{Henry and Kanter 2002}).
\item Although the precise individuals responsible for the theology of the program of the Cappella Nuova decorations are unknown, it is acknowledged that it was not Signorelli's intellectual conception. His contributions were in its interpretation and execution, its realization in paint. One commentator has suggested that the two men in the lower left foreground of the panel \textit{Deeds of Antichrist}, thought by many to be Fra Angelico and Signorelli himself, may instead be portraits of patrons or of the men who conceived the program. “These must certainly be portraits of two of them,” wrote Henry and Kanter (\textit{2002}, p. 63).
\end{enumerate}
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on film. Reflecting on her irresistible urge to do so, she asks, “Was it ghoulish … ?”—as direct a reference as one could make to ideas of eating the body.\textsuperscript{13} Death, cannibalism, reassembly, and resurrection are all very much in evidence in this work of an acknowledgedly griefstricken artist. They are the terms in which she struggles with and represents the emotions, images, and conflicts summoned within her by her losses.

In the clinical situation, one may, if attuned, observe resurrection fantasies, replete with ideas of regurgitation and reassembly, though these may be disguised. A mother's body may be represented as an old, half-buried wreck or as a ruined resort home in the mountains. Regurgitation of devoured parts may be represented as parts “cannibalized” from other wrecks or from “living” cars; reassembly as the replacement of parts, the restoration of missing plumbing; re-skinning as repainting. The presence of such narratives in the clinical situation, especially if prominent and repetitive, may signal the presence of grief, disturbances in mood regulation, and other aspects of organization around cannibalistic themes.

Our terror of annihilating and annihilation by cannibalistic means may have reached an historic climax of expression during the Middle Ages in Christian Europe—in its theology and its apocalyptic art—but it is surely an abiding terror still with us today. Although our plagues, wars, and cosmologies have changed, our genetic endowment and certain crucial experiences during our psychological development apparently have not. So today too, certainly in the consulting room, we may well encounter wishes such as to tear another apart with one's teeth, inevitably paired with ideas of repair, restoration, and undoing.

References


\textsuperscript{13} Ghoul: “A legendary evil being held to rob graves and feed on corpses” (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, unabridged).


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