Kent Academic Repository

GOTHIC INCEST: TRANSGRESSION AND COUNTER-HEGEMONY

by

JENNY DIPLACIDI

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF KENT

April 2012

Abstract

In this thesis I will analyze representations of incest in the Gothic from 1764-1847 and argue that the genre's critical genealogy, beginning with its contemporary reception, has viewed the Gothic as divided into a male tradition or its female counter, and subsequently informed understandings of incest as having distinct meanings produced by their presence in works designated as male or female. Although feminist criticism from the 1970s onwards has demonstrated that women writers articulated subversive views in the Gothic, such analyses have relied on psychological and sociological theories of incest that frequently reproduce gendered divisions and fail comprehensively to address the incest thematic. It is instead essential to do away with the genre's gendered bifurcation and employ a broad methodological framework that applies the insights in recent work by anthropologists, feminist, social, and queer theorists, geneticists, and legal and social historians to specific incestuous configurations. In so doing, I argue that the genre's complex depictions and disruptions of eighteenth-century ideologies of gender and sexuality are revealed through incestuous desires, threats, violence and transgressions.

This thesis is comprised of five chapters that explore the social, sexual and legal anxieties underlying representations of incest in different family relationships in the Gothic and contextualizes these accounts within analytic lenses suited to the particular kinship bond. It examines the ability of father-daughter incest to offer female sexual agency and to breakdown the exchange of women, and investigates the potential for equality in sibling relationships that troubled contemporary ideas of desire and laws as inherently natural or unnatural. It explores the sexual threats of uncles towards nieces that literalize the female body's status as property, and how cousin marriage negotiated the changing status of family and the conflict between individual desires and obligation to the family as state. It analyzes how mother-son incest exposes the inadequacy of available gender and sexual ideologies to account for female desire, agency and aggression. Through these analyses I argue that Gothic writers use the incest convention in order to reveal the arbitrary legal, economic and social limitations on behaviour that are enforced by heteronormative culture and offer alternative models of family, sexuality and desire that counter the hegemony.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Jennie Batchelor, whose support, expertise and patience have been invaluable to me throughout the writing of this thesis. One simply could not wish for a better supervisor with a wider breadth of knowledge on eighteenth-century literature and society. I cannot overstate the amount of time, effort and care Jennie has put into reading my many drafts, and her careful comments have given this thesis a clarity it would have not otherwise achieved. Her detailed suggestions during our many conversations have challenged my ideas, shaped my work and widened the range of sources I have used. She has always been readily available to answer my many questions and offered guidance beyond the scope of this thesis, encouraging my participation in conferences, workshops and fellowships. Under her supervision I have grown as a writer and reader, and her kindness, dedication and encouragement have been of inestimable importance to me throughout this process.

I would also like to thank my secondary supervisor, Prof Donna Landry, who has far exceeded my expectations in her thorough readings of my work. She has offered excellent suggestions that have guided my use of theory and has tirelessly corrected many drafts of this thesis. My arguments have benefited enormously from incorporating these theoretical lenses and my writing has improved technically from her efforts and expertise. For this, as well as her support and encouragement, I owe her a debt of gratitude.

My research and methodological framework has been widened through my participation in coordinating a series of workshops alongside Prof Karl Leydecker, and for this opportunity I offer him sincere thanks. Prof Leydecker has also provided excellent advice for my future research and professional development and has introduced me to useful European sources for my work. I would also like to thank Dr Vybarr Cregan-Reid, for his particularly useful comments and suggestions during my upgrade panel.

To the Centre for Studies in the Long Eighteenth Century, KIASH, the School of European Culture and Languages, and the School of English, whose funding made the 'After Marriage in the Long Eighteenth Century' workshops possible, I offer my sincere thanks. The School of English provided postgraduate funding that enabled my

Introduction: Disrupting the Critical Genealogy of the Gothic

Dreadful was the whole! truly dreadful! A story of so much horror, from atrocious and voluntary guilt never did I hear! Mrs. Smelt and myself heartily regretted that it had come in our way, and mutually agreed that we felt ourselves ill-used in ever having heard it.

Frances Burney, (1786)[1]

We do not pretend to give this novel as one of the first order, or even of the second; it has, however, sufficient interest to be read with pleasure. The terrible prevails, and the characters of the two heroes in crime, are *too* darkly tinctured [... .] There is no fine writing in these volumes [...] but in point of moral tendency they are unexceptionable.

Review (1794) of Eliza Parsons, *Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793)[2]

Frances Burney's assessment of Horace Walpole's play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) reflects a strong discomfort with its depiction of mother-son incest that offers revealing insights into the nature of the play's reception. Almost universally condemned or criticized, Walpole's play was unperformed in his lifetime and was read by a narrow audience as a consequence of its limited print run from Walpole's Strawberry Hill press. Burney's own experience of the play was itself suggestive of the illicit atmosphere that surrounded the work. Though long eager to read Walpole's work, Burney found that the play's restricted availability made this impossible until she received a copy from the Queen. After Burney's friends learned that the play was in her possession, they requested a reading. However, 'the loan being private, and the book having been lent to her Majesty by Lord Harcourt' subject to 'restrictions' of which Burney was not fully aware, she requested permission from the Queen before reading it aloud with Mr and Mrs Smelt, Mr de Luc and the Rev. Charles de Guiffardiére at a private gathering.[3] Burney's description of her reaction is characterized by horror, regret and ill-use at having been witness to, and participant in, the reading of the play. While Burney's belief that the play had forever prejudiced her against Walpole did not persist – on seeing him some months later she 'forget[s] the spleen I had conceived against him upon reading his tragedy' – her reaction

---

[1] Frances Burney, diary entry for 28 November 1786. *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, Author of "Evelina," "Cecilia," &c. Edited by Her Niece*, ed. Charlotte Barrett, 7 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), III, p. 235.

[2] *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, X (1794): 50.

[3] Burney, pp. 234-36. Burney notes the equally disgusted responses of those who participated in the play's reading.

illuminates the play's content as highly troubling.[4] Her pointing towards the 'voluntary' nature of maternal guilt is an allusion to the agency of the mother's instigation of incest by posing as a servant and having sex with her unwitting son. In the play the mother reveals her incestuous capacity to her son in a scene that disrupts the gender ideologies informing conventional representations of incest in which men are the active abusers of women. Burney's discomfort with the 'dreadful' and 'atrocious' work, typical of reactions to the play, indicates a sense of how deeply it troubles ideologies of gender and sexuality that implicitly inform readings of mother-son incest as the most disturbing of all incestuous relationships.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was even more repulsed by the play than Frances Burney, calling it 'the most disgusting, vile, detestable composition that ever came from the hand of man. No one with a spark of true manliness, of which Horace Walpole had none, could have written it.'[5] Coleridge's detestation of the play and his sense that it was 'vile' inform his disparagement of the author's 'manliness'; he believed that only an aberrant man could have imagined scenes of a passive and victimized son. Coleridge's assertion that a man could not have written the play underscores the extent to which he identified the victimization and passivity of the son as the conception of a non-normative male author. Coleridge's disgust is explicated by George E. Haggerty who argues that 'abject, passive masculinity challenges the status quo with the "disgusting" proposition that some men are victims too.'[6] It is not, however, only the passivity of masculinity that is revealed as disgusting to Coleridge but also the simultaneous agency of the mother that so upsets the dominant ideologies.

Conversely, the review of Eliza Parsons' *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), a Gothic novel that, like Walpole's play, centres on incestuous desire, is 'read with pleasure' by the anonymous reviewer. This is quite a departure from Burney's and Coleridge's reactions to reading the incestuous plot in Walpole's play. In fact, although the villains in Parsons' novel are described as 'too darkly tinctured' and the quality of

---

[4] Burney, diary entry, p. 371 (June 1787).
[5] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 20 March 1834. *Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Henry N. Coleridge, 2nd edn (London: John Murray, 1836), p. 293.
[6] George E. Haggerty, 'Psychodrama: Hypertheatricality and Sexual Excess on the Gothic Stage', *Theatre Research International*, 28:1 (2003): 32. Haggerty also argues that Coleridge's reaction reveals a sense that 'unmanliness is revealed by means of sexual excess' (21).

writing is not praised, the reviewer summarizes the narrative as morally 'unexceptionable.' The difference between the responses to these Gothic works lies in the type of incestuous relationships depicted. Parsons' novel depicts the growing romantic love of an uncle, Mr Weimar, for his niece, Matilda, who recounts: '[my uncle] was for ever seeking opportunities to caress me, his language was expressive of the utmost fondness, he praised my person in such glowing colours […] I began to be extremely uneasy at freedoms I scare knew how to repulse.'[7] The uncle's incestuous designs turn violent and culminate with him stabbing Matilda, who survives. Parsons' novel is praised (though faintly) by the reviewer because the form of incest appears to conform to conventional sexual and gender ideologies. An uncle's sexually violent pursuit of his niece positions the female as passive victim to an aggressive male sexuality that, while condemned for its violation of the incest taboo, nonetheless adheres to a familiar structure of power and sexuality. The reactions to these different configurations of incest in *The Mysterious Mother* and *The Castle of Wolfenbach* reveal a marked discomfort with incestuous behaviour that subverts heteronormative ideologies of gender and sexuality.[8]

What becomes clear in these examples is that incest is employed by male and female authors of the Gothic in a variety of familial relationships that vary as much in their formulations as they do in their functions. In this thesis I intervene in the scholarly accounts of incest that, much like the Gothic's contemporary readings, rely on gendered divisions of the genre that, I will argue, limit ways of reading incestuous relationships. By questioning the gender logic according to which the genre has been read, I argue that it is possible to see how incest functions in a number of paradoxical ways, acting as a consequence of patriarchy's control of female bodies and property, as an escape from this patriarchal control, and as an exposure of the inadequacy of heteronormative models of sexuality.[9] In so doing, I demonstrate that incest was representative of a range of interests

---

[7] Eliza Parsons, *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (London: The Folio Press, 1968), pp. 11-12.

[8] Michael Warner draws on the work of feminist theorists such as Judith Butler, Gayle Rubin and Adrienne Rich to define heteronormativity as 'basic conceptualizations [that …] presuppose and reinforce a paradigmatically male position' and describes 'the depth of the culture's assurance (read: insistence) that humanity and heterosexuality are synonymous'. See his 'Introduction', *Fear of A Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. xxiii.

[9] I argue, for example, that in configurations of incest between uncles and nieces such as in *Wolfenbach* incest often represents a combination of male abuses and control of women and their property while

crucial to writers of the Gothic – often women or homosexual men who adopted a critical stance in relation to the heteronormative patriarchal world. In repositioning the Gothic, representations of incest are revealed as synonymous with the Gothic as a whole: complex, multifaceted, and consciously resistant to the dominant social and sexual hegemonies in their models of alternative agencies, sexualities, forms of desire and family structures.

Whether defined in anthropological, biosocial, or psychoanalytic terms the incest taboo is viewed generally as an essential prohibition without which society would not function. The prohibition of incest was defined by Claude Levi-Strauss as 'the fundamental step' in forming society, the transgression of which causes atavistic endogamy.[10] Joseph Shepher located the incest taboo as being rooted in biology as well as social rules and customs and argued that violations against it are genetically and socially damaging.[11] The Freudian understanding of the incest taboo positions it as a necessary part of psychosexual development for adolescents that allows them to distance themselves from their sexual desires for their parents and form non-familial attachments.[12] While incest is understood by these scholars as a sexual act between biologically related family members, psychiatrist Judith Herman argues that incest should be viewed as a sexually motivated act that violates the relationship between a child and adult in a position of familial power, regardless of blood kinship.[13] In this thesis I widen Herman's definition to include any sexual behaviour (suggested or explicit) between people of any age involved in a familial relationship, regardless of a blood tie. My deployment of the term 'incest taboo' indicates established definitions of incest as a natural, universal proscription, a prohibition against violating positions of familial power and also understandings of it as law instituted by society.

---

incestuous relationships such as that of the siblings in Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798) represent the imposition and arbitrary nature of cultural rules and laws regarding desire and marriage. These regulations are escaped from through the recognition of incestuous desires and a retreat from society in novels such as Mary Shelley's *Matilda* (completed in 1820; published in 1959).

[10] Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1969), p. 24.
[11] Joseph Shepher, *Incest: A Biosocial View* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 97.
[12] Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 91.
[13] Judith Lewis Herman with Lisa Hirschman, *Father-Daughter Incest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 27.

Incest, a sexual act associated with transgression, violations of power and violence, has all too readily been conflated with sexual violence in Gothic scholarship and reductively consigned to one of two gendered plots. Anne K. Mellor, for example, argues that 'the Gothic novel written by men presents the father's incestuous rape of his daughter as the perverse desire of the older generation to usurp the sexual rights of the younger generation, while the Gothic novel written by women represents incest as a cultural taboo which functions to repress the sexual desires of women.'[14] Mellor's assessment represents what a large proportion of scholarship on the genre argues: that meanings of incest differ based on their presence in works designated as Male or Female Gothic. Such distinctions relegate individual depictions of incest into categories of overt masculine perversion or feminine sexual repression and entrench understandings of the Gothic novel as written by women as departures from or reactions to male-authored texts. This standard view is corroborated by David Punter and Glennis Byron: 'the male Gothic text, both in its subject matter and its narrative conventions, is usually considered to be particularly transgressive: violence, especially sexual violence, is dealt with openly and often in lingering detail [... .] In the female Gothic plot, the transgressive male becomes the primary threat to the female protagonist.'[15] While Mellor's argument pertains specifically to the author's sex and Punter and Byron focus on gendered plot conventions, both divide representations of sexuality into distinct male or female modes. As this thesis will demonstrate, scholarly understandings of representations of incest in the Gothic as having distinct meanings determined by authorial gender overlook the variety of ways in which writers use incestuous relationships and neglect the complexity of their implications.

Eliza Parsons' and Horace Walpole's Gothic works, like many other Gothic texts, resist the models of incest discerned by modern scholarship. Parsons' novel uses incest to highlight the inequities of primogeniture and the links between financial, sexual, and legal constraints with acts of violence against women. It would, however, be difficult to argue that Parsons' representation of incest positions Mr Weimar's violent and sexual

---

[14] Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 197-98.
[15] David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 278-79.

attacks on his niece as a cultural taboo repressing her sexual desires. As subsequent chapters will explore, there are examples of Gothic novels written by women in which incest functions in this way, but to attempt to fit Parsons' novel to the theoretical framework advanced by Mellor would be to distort its purpose.[16] Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* equally defies such paradigms of male- or female-authored representations of incest. The mother's agency in the play reveals, not a desire to usurp her son's sexual rights, but to reassert her own via the closest physical substitute for her husband. The play presents laws repressing female sexual desire outside of wedlock as aberrant, a theme close to what Mellor identifies as presented by the Gothic as written by women. Similarly, Parsons' fictional uncle, in his violent pursuit of his niece, is aligned with Mellor's understanding of male-authored Gothic incest as a perverse desire unjustly to control the younger generation. Such disparities reveal that scholarly accounts of two mutually exclusive modes of Gothic incest ignore the interconnected nature of incestuous representations.

The Formation of Male and Female Paradigms of Incest in the Gothic

Sexuality, questions of ownership, inheritance, women's subjugation to male authority, laws of coverture and primogeniture and issues concerning gender roles pervade Gothic works from the mid-eighteenth century on. Authors of the Gothic explore the non-normative and unconventional sexuality inherent in the genre to expose the limitations and dangers of conventional ideologies through incestuous configurations in importantly divergent ways. My use of the terms ideology and hegemony rely on Antonio Gramsci's deployment of them as well as later evaluations thereof by scholars such as Terry Eagleton and Raymond Williams. Gramsci understood hegemony as the consent of society to be dominated by force; a consent that is engendered partially through the use of

---

[16] *The Orphan of the Rhine* is, I will argue, critical of laws that deny or reject incestuous unions. Similarly, works by Ann Radcliffe that position the brother as an ideal mate who is legally denied as a marriage option include *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story* (1789) and *A Sicilian Romance* (1790). While these works fit partially the paradigm offered by Mellor, Parsons' novel does not.

ideology as 'an instrument of domination and social hegemony.'[17] Gramsci clarifies that ideologies operate as weapons wielded by the dominant social or political class in order to create a consensually subordinate society. He argues that 'the "normal" exercise of hegemony [...] is characterized by a combination of force and consent which balance each other so that force [...] appears to be backed by the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion.'[18] Gramsci's belief that the exercise of hegemony must not rely entirely on the government's 'power and material force,'[19] finds articulation in society through the function of ideology. Eagleton describes hegemony as 'the ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates'; that hegemony '*includes* ideology, but is not reducible to it.'[20] These understandings of hegemony and ideology contribute to my examination of the Gothic in part through the insights they make available regarding the genre's function and reception within its contemporary social hegemony; how representations of incest within the Gothic depart from or shore up various ideologies; and how scholarship has itself frequently adhered to such ideologies of gender and sexuality in its treatment of incest within the genre.

Heteronormative ideology ensures behaviour abides by seemingly 'natural' social rules and produces the heterosexual/queer binary that demonstrates the hegemony's ability to allow for resistance.[21] In such a system apparently transgressive behaviour can be tolerated, even though it is ostensibly taboo, if it ascribes to the overriding power structure. This can be seen in the aforementioned contemporary responses to Parsons' *Wolfenbach* and Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother*.[22] Walpole's work is no more radical

---

[17] Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks, Volume 3*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 213; 299.

[18] Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks, Volume 1*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 156-57.

[19] Gramsci, 1, p. 137.

[20] Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 112. See also Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2001), in which Williams argues that society's complex social relations, 'the social character – a valued system of behaviour and attitudes – is taught formally and informally' (p. 63).

[21] See Warner's examination of 'culture's assurance [...] that humanity and heterosexuality are synonymous', p. xxiii.

[22] As noted, Parsons' work was considered unobjectionable as the incest demonstrated a recognizable pattern of male-perpetrated sexual violence while Walpole's depictions of maternal incestuous desire

than Parsons'; however, Parsons' challenges to inheritance and marriage laws were largely overlooked given their deployment alongside a representation of incest adherent to the gender and sexual ideologies. As the critical genealogy of the Gothic demonstrates, the genre's readings have often been informed by their participation in these ideologies and attempts either to locate Gothic incest within the dominant discourses or to reject them act as what Eagleton describes as a form of institutionalized social control.[23] Such functions of power are insidious: 'it is preferable [...] for power to remain conveniently invisible, disseminated throughout the texture of social life and thus "naturalized" as custom, habit, spontaneous practice.'[24] Eagleton's description of power disseminated as customs corresponds to Foucault's understanding of 'mechanisms of power [...] irreducible to the representation of the law.'[25] Readings of the genre can thus consent to and act as mechanisms of hegemonic power in their reproductions of 'natural' ideologies.[26] This thesis participates in the work being done by scholars who reevaluate traditional accounts of the Gothic in order to argue that representations of incest frequently provide truly transgressive and counter-hegemonic models of desire, sexuality, gender and society.[27] These Gothic paradigms expose the dangers and effects of complicity to seemingly naturalized practices, rendering visible the invisible function of

exceeded the tolerated level of nonconformity in its simultaneous confrontations with sexual, gender and power norms.

[23] Eagleton, p. 116. See also Foucault's analysis of discourse and power in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 93-94.

[24] Eagleton, p. 116.

[25] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1979; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 89. Examinations of social customs that act as substitutes for the law are essential in analyzing Gothic writers like Eleanor Sleath, who describes female behaviour and desire as regulated by 'the laws of delicacy, which are sometimes severe and arbitrary' in *The Orphan of the Rhine* (London: The Folio Press, 1968), p. 127.

[26] By reproduction I mean scholarly accounts grounded in heteronormative approaches and their attempts to inscribe these ideologies onto the texts; see particularly Diane Long Hoeveler's arguments, influenced by psychoanalysis, that argue Gothic writers advocated victim feminism in *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), pp. x-xvi.

[27] For analyses of the Gothic that seek new modes of analysis and work against traditional accounts of the genre see, among others, Ellen Malenas Ledoux's 'Defiant Damsels: Gothic Space and Female Agency in *Emmeline*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Secresy*', *Women's Writing*, 18:3 (2011): 331-47; Maria Purves's *The Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009); and Lauren Fitzgerald's 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', in Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, eds., *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 13-25.

power to demonstrate that what society propagates as 'natural' practices are in fact highly unnatural constructs.[28]

The Gothic is still frequently understood, as it was by its contemporary readership, along apparently natural gender lines, in spite of its reclamation as a genre worthy of literary study in the 1970s by feminist scholars and later by queer theorists.[29] While Ellen Moers' first introduction of the term Female Gothic in the 1970s was not intended to position female written novels as a deviation from a male originary genre, this was a consequence of its usage.[30] The term, though newly coined, echoed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criticism in which female writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Eliza Parsons were set up as delicate and timid counters to the aggressive sexuality depicted in the works of male writers such as Matthew Lewis and William Beckford. As E. J. Clery explains: 'Novels where spirits are not rationalized, the most famous example in the 1790s being *The Monk* [...] are "real" Gothic, while the class of the "explained supernatural", largely authored by women, is a diminished, self-censoring version of the first'.[31] Sir Walter Scott certainly subscribed to such a view when he described Radcliffe's works as hesitant and tremulous in comparison to the bold and aggressive writings of Lewis early on in the Gothic's history by suggesting that Radcliffe's use of superstition was underpinned by 'anxiety' as opposed to Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), which was written 'as if he believed'.[32] Attempts to reposition the Female Gothic, such as Kate Ferguson Ellis's argument that the 'masculine Gothic' reacted to a female genus,

---

[28] By its effects I mean not only the perpetuation of submission and dominance within these relationships but also the reinforcement of the structures of law and inheritance that maintain social hegemony.

[29] Works by scholars who began to interrogate the traditional marginalization of the genre include Juliann Fleenor's *The Female Gothic* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1983), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Arno Press Inc., 1980), and Ellen Moers' *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (New York: Doubleday, 1976; repr. Oxford University Press, 1985).

[30] Moers, p. 90.

[31] E.J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 110. Similarly, Robert Miles argues that the critical distinctions made between the Female Gothic and the German schauerroman (shudder novel) and works like it – traditionally positioned as Male Gothic – are based on false perceptions of difference in depictions of violence and the supernatural in *The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 44.

[32] Walter Scott and J. W. Lake, *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, With a Sketch of His Life* (Philadelphia: J. Crissy and Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1838), p. xxii.

reiterate a conformity to gendered ideologies that is, as I will argue, at odds with the content of the novels to be examined.[33]

The terms Male and Female Gothic are used in more recent scholarship as a means of describing narrative technique or of characterizing the use of the supernatural and representations of violence. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith argue that in the 1990s 'critics came to distinguish between Female Gothic and Male Gothic, initially identified with the gender of the writer. The Female Gothic plot, exemplified by Radcliffe [...] [and] the Male Gothic plot, exemplified by Matthew Lewis's *The Monk.*'[34] The distinction reproduces the gendered structure underlying critical accounts of the supernatural that Clery points to as a means by which critics could dismiss Gothic novels by women as less valid than their male-authored counterparts. A similar division emerges in discussions surrounding depictions of incest in the Gothic. With the exception of Mellor's conclusion that the functions of incest are determined by authorial gender, scholarly accounts of incest do not usually articulate an adherence to the earlier critical convention of gendering incest. However, readings of incest are invariably predetermined by this gendered framework. Violent, consummated, male-perpetrated acts of incest allow texts to be considered masculine or 'real' Gothic, while incest that is averted, non-violent or implied is considered part of the Female Gothic tradition. Such a view is apparent in James Watt's argument that Lewis's deployment of sexuality 'amplified the suggestion of impropriety that was only implicit in the work of a writer such as Ann Radcliffe.'[35] Similarly, Vartan P. Messier's description of Radcliffe's use of incest as 'restrained' in comparison to the 'truly transgressive' Matthew Lewis shows how conceptions of incest and sexuality continue to be read as part of a male or female tradition.[36]

In this thesis I will employ the term Female Gothic in so far as it applies to the scholarship I discuss, and, in my own analyses, I will use the ungendered designation

[33] Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. xiii.
[34] Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, 'Introduction', *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, p. 3.
[35] James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 8.
[36] Vartan P. Messier, 'The Conservative, the Transgressive, and the Reactionary: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* as a Response to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*', *Atenea*, 25:2 (2005): 39.

Gothic regardless of the supposedly gendered plot or author's gender. The term Male Gothic will be used in reference to scholarly examinations of texts typically referred to as Gothic and understood as part of the male tradition. With these terminological distinctions I hope to reveal the gendered division of the genre as a restrictive manoeuvre that has contributed to reductive gendered readings of incestuous relationships. My desire to trouble the ongoing use of the term Female Gothic is not without precedent. Recent scholarly works such as *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (2009) question the term, though the study ultimately argues for its continued use.[37] Such scholarship subdivides the genre into families born of Radcliffean or Walpolian parents. But the Gothic's literary genealogy is, like the families in the novels themselves, a large and unwieldy one that defies such neat categorization. Though the clues may seem to point in one direction – a touch of the explained supernatural indicating 'Mother Radcliffe,' much like Ellena's miniature necklace points to Schedoni as her father in *The Italian* (1797) – characteristics can betray the imprint of more than one parent.[38] Gothic novels do not belong one of to two distinct, gendered approaches, but to one genre that uses representations of incest to demonstrate a range of violent behaviour, unjust legal positions, ideal egalitarian relationships and the demands and dangers of the heteronormative culture from which they deviate.

Modes of Reading Incest in the Gothic

If incest in the Gothic has been viewed by scholars through restrictive gendered lenses, modern literary analyses of the genre have equally been constrained by feminist perspectives on incest derived from sociological and psychological theories. The understanding of incest as a typically violent or non-consensual act reflective of male

[37] Wallace and Smith, p. 11. See also Lauren Fitzgerald's 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, pp. 13-25. Fitzgerald points to feminist critical accounts of the Gothic that adhere to its ongoing gendered division as consequently reproducing the plots of the Female Gothic in an attempt to reclaim the genre for women.
[38] John Keats to George and Georgiana Keats, 24 February 1819. *The Complete Works of John Keats Vol. 5, Letters, 1819-1820*, ed. H. Buxton Forman (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1901), p. 25. In this letter Keats refers to Ann Radcliffe as 'Mother Radcliffe'.

power is typified by psychologists and sociologists such as Lena Dominelli and Julie Brickman who view incest almost exclusively as the rape of girls by older male family members.[39] That such formations of this incest paradigm coincided with feminist criticism's reclamation of the Female Gothic in the 1970s undoubtedly determined literary scholarship to read incest in the Gothic as representative of violent sexual aggression.[40]

Seminal works on the Female Gothic by scholars such as Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) were written alongside works such as Juliet Mitchell's influential *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974) and Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977). Mitchell retrieved Freudian theory from feminist abandonment to explain that the oedipus complex 'is *not* about the nuclear family, but about the institution of culture within the kinship structure and the exchange relationship of exogamy [... .] It is specific to nothing but patriarchy.'[41] Mitchell's work examines how psychoanalysis can be used to understand patriarchal and capitalist adherence to the incest taboo while Irigaray's work troubles theories of the exchange of women as essential to the maintenance of patriarchal structures. The positions may seem diametrically opposed, but both Irigaray and Mitchell use Levi-Strauss's argument that the incest taboo is essential to society to analyze what feminist scholar Gayle Rubin calls 'the traffic in women'.[42] In contrast, Dominelli and Brickman contended that the taboo is constantly violated by the very men who should desire to uphold it. However, all these feminist scholars expose patriarchy's control of female sexuality through abuses of power

---

[39] See Julie Brickman, 'Feminist, Nonsexist, and Traditional Models of Therapy: Implications for Working with Incest', in *States of Rage: Emotional Eruption, Violence and Social Change*, ed. Renee R. Curry (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 15-34; and 'Female Lives, Feminist Deaths: The Relationship of the Montreal Massacre to Dissociation, Incest and Violence Against Women', *Canadian Psychology*, 33:2 (1992): 128-43; Lena Dominelli, 'Betrayal of Trust: A Feminist Analysis of Power Relationships in Incest Abuse and its Relevance for Social Work Practice', *British Journal of Social Work*, 19:1 (1989): 291-308 and 'Father-Daughter Incest: Patriarchy's Shameful Secret', *Critical Social Policy's Special Feminist Issue*, 6:16 (1986): 8-22; Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women* (1974; repr. as *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*, New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 370-78.
[40] Punter and Byron summarize the rise of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s as coinciding with and influencing the ways in which the Female Gothic was read in *The Gothic*, pp. 278-81.
[41] Mitchell, pp. 370-78.
[42] Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-210.

that are encoded within the social structure. In a sense, the exchange of women that demands the incest taboo concurrently creates a system of control over female bodies that lends itself to incestuous sexual abuse. These scholars have revealed through the intersections of psychoanalytic, cultural, and sociological discourses on incest the ways coercive or forced incestuous assaults reflect the wider structures of patriarchy's control of women.

The sociological understanding of incest as a violent abuse of male power inherent in the family structure is relied upon by much modern scholarship on the Gothic that thus reads incest in the Female Gothic as a violent expression of the dangers of patriarchy. This understanding of incest has focused scholarship most intently on instances of father-daughter incest to the exclusion of other configurations of incestuous desire. As Fred Botting writes: 'Familial and sexual relations, power and suppression, turn on the roles and figures of father and daughter.'[43] Similarly, the reliance of Gothic scholarship on Freudian models of desire that require the child's sexual desire for and rejection of the parent has contributed to the emphasis on readings of incestuous fathers and daughters.[44] Robert Miles, for example, observes the Freudian model of desire at work in Radcliffe's novels, noting that: 'the daughter is frequently in flight from the "father", or his substitutes, often with incestuous entanglements and overtones.'[45] The sociologically informed mode of understanding incest also focuses on the social implications of patriarchy, and scholars of the Gothic who work within this framework often examine the legal implications of coverture, primogeniture, divorce and issues of gender, sexuality, and family to demonstrate how incest is united with these themes under the rubric of abusive male power.[46]

Perhaps best exemplified by Ellis's groundbreaking and influential *The Contested Castle* (1989), this body of work exposes fundamental dangers in the assumed safe haven

---

[43] Fred Botting, *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 20.
[44] Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, p. 91; and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Avon, 1980), p. 256.
[45] Miles, *The Great Enchantress*, p. 106.
[46] See also: Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Ruth Bienstock Anolik, 'The Missing Mother: The Meanings of Maternal Absence in the Gothic Mode', *Modern Language Studies*, 33:1/2 (2003): 25-43.

of the home, establishing the correlation between Gothic representations of the family, domesticity and terror.[47] Building on such work, Ruth Perry describes incest as 'the meaning of the gothic novel' that represents through its repeated depictions of 'a girl singled out, against her will, in her own domestic space, for the sexual attentions of a father, an uncle, or a brother' the dangers of male tyranny.[48] Underscoring connections between family and fear, sexuality and imprisonment, feminist scholars equate patriarchal institutions with violence and terror, locating incest as an extension of these dangers.[49] In this vein Angela Wright argues that: 'the Gothic genre's treatment of violence, murder and incest is linked symbiotically with issues of sexuality and gender within the fiction'.[50] Wright's partnering of incest with violence is connected to Perry's description of a girl singled out in what should be a safe space. Relating sexual violation within the home to male tyranny, this model shows incest is understood as a culmination of public and private abuses.[51] When Maggie Kilgour argues that 'Incest [...] suggests an abnormal and extreme desire (a violation of natural familial ties)', she similarly picks up on the notion of incest as an aberrant violation of the bonds of family.[52] In locating incest as an unwanted and forceful transgression of 'natural familial ties' these desires are identified as synonymous with the equally unnatural abuses of power committed by male family members.[53]

When Gothic scholars privilege Freudian over sociological understandings of incest in their readings, the father-daughter relationship – while still emphasized – is read not only as an abuse of male power, but also as a threat existing sometimes solely in the

---

[47] Ellis, *The Contested Castle*, pp. 37-45.

[48] Perry, pp. 388-90.

[49] Betty Rizzo identifies the Gothic as a genre in which 'the usurping patriarch' abuses power inherent in the patriarchal structure of the conjugal family in 'Renegotiating the Gothic', in *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement,* ed. Paula Backscheider (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 61.

[50] Angela Wright, *Gothic Fiction: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 147.

[51] Rizzo, p. 63.

[52] Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 12.

[53] Recent work on the Gothic has opposed readings of the genre as always representative of patriarchal dangers. See, for example, Ellen Malenas Ledoux's excellent article 'Defiant Damsels: Gothic Space and Female Agency in *Emmeline, The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Secresy'*, *Women's Writing*, 18:3 (2011): 331-47, in which Ledoux challenges 'the domestic-imprisonment' understanding of the Gothic advanced by scholars such as Ellis, arguing instead that through their navigations of Gothic space heroines demonstrate agency and empowerment (333).

15

heroine's mind. Relying on Freud's psychoanalytic framework that argues that female sexuality develops in response to the father before being transferred to another man causes literary scholarship to position the Gothic heroine in flight from threats that are more fantasy than fact. Such arguments underpin Diane Long Hoeveler's claim that Female Gothic heroines imagine incestuous threats because they have 'an infantile desire to remain in the paternal and protective domicile of childhood' and can only reconcile leaving this sphere to marry an outsider if they 'fancy' their fathers are evil.[54] In using psychoanalytic theory to examine the Female Gothic's subversive nature, scholars point to the heroine's fantasy of paternal threats as reflective of a passive resistance to patriarchy.[55] Hoeveler argues that the Female Gothic reveals an 'originating fantasy: the notion that young women are the innocent prey of their parents' evil designs [... .] These fin de siècle anxieties express not only personal and psychological fears but social and economic anxieties.'[56] A contention held also by Eugenia C. Delamotte and Ellis, incest is understood by Hoeveler as representative of the distinctly unique experience of women and women writers in the long eighteenth century, serving to foreground their subjugation to patriarchal power, the trap of domesticity and anxieties relating to the changing structure of the family, and their shifting role therein as daughter and/or wife.[57] Incest is viewed as imagined by heroines who are shaped by their desires for their fathers or as a hyperbolization of their psychological anxieties and disempowered legal status.

The sociological and psychological understandings of incest that influence modern scholarship on the Gothic contribute to overlapping paradigms of incest that are inadequate to account for incestuous configurations that do not posit real or imagined threats from a father or father figure. The view of incest in the Gothic that arises from Freudian understandings of incest asserts heroines must invent incestuous threats in order to flee from their fathers and form attachments to non-kin lovers who will replace their fathers as their protectors.[58] The second model relies on feminist sociologists' definition of incest as a violent literalization of the unequal power relations in the patriarchal

---

[54] Hoeveler, p. 56.
[55] Punter and Byron, *The Gothic*, p. 280.
[56] Hoeveler, pp. 56-57.
[57] See: Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) and Ellis's *The Contested Castle*, p. 118.
[58] Hoeveler, pp. 34-35.

family. The psychological understanding of incest as integral to female development is, Haggerty reveals in his analysis of *The Italian*, also underpinned by the sociological understanding of the inherent violence in this incestuous configuration. Haggerty concludes: 'this midnight encounter of incestuous violation always already suggests the paternal [... .] Paternal violence shapes the heroine just as the terms of her very existence seem to depend on his whim, or rather his pleasure.'[59] Haggerty's reading demonstrates that these two models are not oppositional accounts of incest, but provide in their intersections of violence, sexuality, power and family a means of theorizing incest as a potential threat inherent within the power structures of male-female relationships.

It is easy to see why scholars of the Gothic subscribe to psychological and sociological paradigms of incest that so readily accord with the notion of the Gothic as a subversive genre, but they nonetheless limit incest to a 'bad daddy' model that claims older men as father-substitutes and positions both fathers and father-substitutes as inhabiting the same paternal role. In locating most older men as father-substitutes, the unique positions and important implications for non-paternal male relationships in which power and attraction are figured differently are overlooked. Hoeveler, for example, reads Schedoni in *The Italian* as Ellena's father rather than as her uncle when she argues Ellena 'fancies that [...] her father has tried to kill her.'[60] Similarly, Frances A. Chiu reproduces the reading of uncles as father-substitutes when she refers to Schedoni as Ellena's 'nominal father and church father' and describes Emily's uncle-by-marriage in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) as 'the father and his friends [who] are made to appear especially threatening to the child.'[61] However, as I argue in chapter 3, the fact that these men are not fathers but the heroines' uncles by blood or marriage is an important part of how Radcliffe models usurpations of power, property, and bodies as caused by attempts to rearticulate the available power structure informed by laws of coverture and primogeniture.[62]

---

[59] George E. Haggerty, *Queer Gothic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p. 31.
[60] Hoeveler, p. 57.
[61] Frances A. Chiu, 'From Nobodadies to Noble Daddies: Writing Political and Paternal Authority in English Fiction of the 1780s and 1790s', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 26:2 (2002): 9, 13.
[62] See chapter 3 of this thesis for a detailed examination of the role of uncle-niece incest in the Gothic.

Such accounts, which would have 'a father, an uncle, or a brother' represent the same types of abuses and threats, are ultimately too narrow to encompass the various types and functions of incest in the genre.[63] Scholars have used non-paternal relationships to corroborate an understanding of father-daughter incest that is not as monolithic as those following the psychological and sociological lines make out. While such approaches are fruitful, they are ultimately restrictive. The limitations become clear when the instances of father-daughter incest arising as a natural consequence of sympathetic minds and physical attraction, as sought by the daughter, or as unknowingly committed or sought are analyzed closely to reveal how they trouble notions of incest as imagined, violent or representative of male power.[64] The Gothic should be read independently of these understandings in order to account for the profound differences between configurations of incest featuring older male figures.

Defining Familial Relationships in the Eighteenth Century and the Gothic

In my analyses of incestuous relationships in the Gothic I borrow the insights of social historians who have widened understandings of the family in the eighteenth century to include equally conjugal, affinal and consanguineal relations as kin. The changing structure and understanding of family and kinship in eighteenth-century England is the subject of important recent work by Naomi Tadmor and Joanne Bailey, each of whom examines the shifts in configurations of kinship, sexuality, marriage and laws.[65]

---

[63] Perry, p. 290.

[64] Shelley's *Matilda* represents female-sought father-daughter incest between a like-minded father and daughter while Anne Ker's *The Mysterious Count; or, Montville Castle* (1803) shows a father's incestuous pursuit of a beautiful young woman who is, unbeknownst to him, also his long-lost daughter. Once this becomes known (via the plot device of a last-minute discovery of matching daggers) he ceases his pursuit and attempts to act in a strictly paternal role.

[65] Joanne Bailey's *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Naomi Tadmor's *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) are particularly useful studies of family and marriage in the long eighteenth century.

Lawrence Stone's narrative of the family as evolving linearly with the economic move towards capitalism into nuclear families grounded in companionate marriage has been largely displaced by the work of these more recent social historians, particularly by Tadmor's *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England* (2001) and Bailey's *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (2003).[66] Their accounts delineate the legal and social shifts in definitions of family to reveal that the historical narrative of family as moving away from an emphasis on consanguineal bonds to the conjugal tie is too simplistic. Rather, in the long eighteenth century, conjugal, affinal, and consanguineal relatives were all considered kin and integral to the family structure, which was, Bailey argues, much more adaptable than traditional evolutionary models suggest.[67] The familial bond existed regardless of actual kinship status and allowed for broader definitions of family than traditional narratives previously asserted. Drawing on these multiple models of family for analyses of incest is particularly fruitful for reading the Gothic, wherein multiple representations of family comprised of non-blood individuals, foster, adopted and blood kin overlap and blur. Historical accounts of kinship provide a social context for the sometimes elusive nature of family bonds underpinning representations of incest and not only allow for a greater range of relationships to be understood as incestuous, but also reveal that the Gothic engaged with wider understandings of marriage and family than previously thought.

Scholarship on the Gothic that relies on Stone's teleological narrative of family rather than the new insights provided by more recent social historians locates increased representations of incestuous desires as occurring alongside the development of a nuclear family that had less consanguineal loyalty and thus abided less by the incest taboo. This contextualization focuses scholarship on violent depictions of incest and leaves out the potential for female sexual desires and agency by positioning women as victims without offering an alternative narrative to their role within the family and home. In reading incestuous threats as created by a shift towards companionate marriage and a concurrent

---

[66] I refer particularly to the narrative advanced in Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1977).

[67] Joanne Bailey, Rev. of *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818* by Ruth Perry (H-Albion, H-Net Reviews, June 2006), <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11824> [accessed: 30 March 2011].

weakening of the incest taboo, Perry argues: 'both fathers and brothers began to see their female relatives [...] as possessions in their power and hence possible sex objects.'[68] In a similar vein, Margot Gayle Backus's account of the weakening of the incest taboo concludes that 'with the nuclearization of the family, the incest taboo [...] came to depend on the contingent goodwill, integrity, value and self-discipline of individual fathers and brothers.'[69] This account of a new, eroticized nuclear family focuses on the restraint required by fathers and brothers and the threat of masculine desire within the patriarchal family, but ignores female incestuous desires.[70] Perry maintains that the incest thematic in eighteenth-century literature, particularly the Gothic, is a consequence of the decreased emphasis on consanguineal bonds that enabled men 'to see their female relatives as sexual prey rather than co-inheritors of family traditions.'[71] Part of my investment in social historians' work on the family structure is that their insights into the co-existing nature of various family bonds open incest in the Gothic up to being read as not solely a threat to women in the nuclear family by their blood kin, as Perry suggests, but as a form of desire existing within the multiple definitions of family.

The concept of non-kin becoming like kin is a common thread in the eighteenth-century novel, particularly in the Gothic where non-kin are often co-reared. Sociologist Edward Westermarck argued that non-kin raised together during childhood form aversions to each other due to reverse sexual imprinting that makes marriages between non-blood related siblings impractical and undesirable.[72] Such an effect is seen in novels like Sarah Sheriffe's *Correlia, or The Mystic Tomb* (1802), Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798) or the anonymously written *Adeline or The Orphan* (1790), where family groups are composed of a variety of members who may eventually be revealed as sharing consanguineal ties. The co-reared foster/adopted/blood siblings in these novels are

---

[68] Perry, p. 377.

[69] Margot Gayle Backus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 43.

[70] Perry, pp. 375-76. Novels that undermine Perry's claim about brothers viewing sisters as possessions or sex objects include *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and *A Sicilian Romance*, both featuring protective and loving brothers who represent an ideal partner, as well as *Adeline or the Orphan* (1790), an anonymous novel in which the heroine forms a deep and lasting platonic love with her adopted brother.

[71] Perry, p. 376. Perry also describes the Gothic as offering 'the terms to critique a kinship system that invested a sinister degree of power in individual men over their immediate conjugal families' (p. 396).

[72] Edward Westermarck, *A Short History of Human Marriage* (London: Macmillan, 1926), p. 80.

assumed by their foster/adopted/blood parents to be capable of seeing each other only as siblings. However, this belief is frequently undermined by one or both offspring falling in love with their 'siblings'. It is not the specific kinship tie that is emphasized in these Gothic texts, rather, the feeling or understanding of an individual as family that is often capable of co-existing with erotic feeling. That in novels like *Correlia* we see different characters ascribe to each of these models – Correlia's foster brother loves her passionately and proposes marriage before discovering she is in fact his half-sister while Correlia only ever loves him as a sibling – highlights the ambivalence with which incestuous desires are depicted. Representations of incestuous love coexisting with family feeling resist the theory that relaxed consanguineal bonds led to a heightening of male sexual threats and support the idea that multiple concepts of family co-existed in the long eighteenth century.[73] Alternatively, depictions of family members who meet and fall in love as adults before discovering a blood kinship and conforming to a familial relationship privilege the blood tie as fundamental to family and incest as antithetical to this structure.[74] Kinship can be consanguineal or created from a shared childhood, and incestuous desires are capable of forming in both of these models of families, the recognition of which fact highlights the fluidity of conceptions of family, sexuality and desire. The feelings of those in the consanguineal family towards their non-kin relatives are crucial in establishing whether or not an individual is regarded as family and thus if erotic desires constitute incestuous desires.[75]

In the Gothic the incest taboo acts as a vehicle through which to literalize arbitrary laws and regulations as it is itself an arbitrary legal limitation on desire, behaviour and marriage that is flexible only insofar as it benefits the dominant

---

[73] Bailey, Review of Perry.

[74] Novels like *Correlia, The Mysterious Count* and Selina Davenport's *The Sons of the Viscount and The Daughters of the Earl* (1813) show the tensions in negotiating the demands of desires and consanguineal loyalties.

[75] In novels like *Adeline or the Orphan* where the heroine is raised in a foster family whose biological son is encouraged by his parents to view and treat her as blood kin, Adeline and her adopted brother only ever see each other as kin in spite of their and their parents' knowledge that there is no blood bond between them. This is in contrast to the siblings in Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* in which Laurette's presumed status as Enrico's illegitimate half-sister is no hindrance to their romantic love.

hegemony's financial and political control.[76] The repeated use of incest and differing kinship bonds exposes the paradoxical crack in the social contract that forbade whilst encouraging incestuous relationships and behaviour, and thus created multiple demands and restrictions across a multitude of incestuous configurations. These contradictory requirements can be seen in Anna Maria Bennett's *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794) in which the heroine is discouraged from a financially imprudent marriage with her co-reared (presumed) cousin but encouraged to marry her wealthy father-substitute. That the heroine's family views the threat of incest as an obstruction to the former marriage and not to the latter focuses attention on the financial motive and reveals the arbitrary nature of incest restrictions that are overlooked when so doing benefits the patriarchal structure of the family.[77] Making use of the variety of conceptions of kinship established by social historians when analyzing incest in the Gothic illuminates that Gothic authors' representations of different familial bonds as incestuous – or not – expose as arbitrary the laws governing desire and how readily they are transgressed.

As we saw in the previous section, incest is not always subsumed into a model of abusive patriarchal/familial threats and violence, but has frequently been described in terms of its transgressive and subversive nature. The incest thematic as employed by women writers in the early modern period is shown to be transgressively endogamic in Maureen Quilligan's excellent work on incest in Elizabethan England.[78] Pat Gill's study of Restoration drama describes incest as 'a metaphor for a fundamental disorder in the condition of the state', pointing towards its use as a social critique of a lack of control or order.[79] Such interpretations of incest are readily applicable to the breadth of relationships and depictions of incest in the Gothic as well as the variety of earlier time

[76] Adam Kuper, 'Changing the Subject – about cousin marriage, among other things', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)*, 14 (2008): 727. Kuper refers to how greed causes the incest taboo to become flexible when a less strict adherence could be beneficial – usually financially.
[77] It should be noted that Ellen's marriage to the wealthy Lord Howel allows her family to keep their ancestral estate, a fact that reinforces the benefits of flexible incest regulations that are, in this instance, tied up with symbols of aristocratic and patriarchal institutions.
[78] Maureen Quilligan, *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), pp. 1-32.
[79] Pat Gill, 'Pathetic Passions: Incestuous Desire in the Plays of Otway and Lee', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 30 (1998): 206.

periods used as Gothic settings.[80] As I will demonstrate in later chapters, incest, an act

that paradoxically demonstrates the control the law has over family and sexuality, can

equally stand for the extreme imposition of the hypocritical upholders of the law, an

active renunciation of these unfair laws, or the rejection of society and its laws.[81] Sought

after or forced, idealized or horrifying, incestuous desires and acts emblematize the

intersection of the individual with the controlling bodies of family and heteronormative

society. Relocating and identifying family becomes a transformative act in which the

legal and social constraints of society are avoided within a newly constructed and ideally

egalitarian circle of kinship, as exemplified by the endings of *The Italian* and Emily

Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847).[82] Family – previously lost through acts of violence

or usurpation required by a society with arbitrary laws governing inheritance and

sexuality – is reestablished as beyond the influence of such regulatory forces.

Disciplinary Approaches to Incest in the Gothic

My use of a broad methodological framework within which to analyze representations of

incest in literature has precedents in the work of scholars such as Ellen Pollak and Adam

Kuper. Pollak's important and comprehensive *Incest and The English Novel, 1684–1814*

(2003) troubles existing accounts of incest using a variety of historical, legal and

---

[80] In *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom*, Botting refers to the frequent use of historical settings as 'the continued fascination with the architecture, customs and values of the Middles Ages' (p. 5).

[81] For example, in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) Emily is held against her will by her uncle through marriage who uses legal rhetoric and illegal sexual threats in his attempts to steal her property; in *The Orphan of the Rhine* the co-reared foster siblings declare their love for each other in spite of their mother's fears regarding the illegality of their union; and in *Matilda* the eponymous heroine flees from the society that has caused her father's suicide through its prohibition of incest.

[82] In *The Italian* Ellena and Vivaldi marry at a new, idyllic estate in a celebration with individuals of all social ranks while in *Wuthering Heights* Cathy and Hareton's union binds individuals of very different social backgrounds into a family circle comprised of only themselves and a servant.

anthropological approaches to contextualize her literary analyses.[83] Kuper similarly supports an anthropological approach with social history and literary analysis in *Incest and Influence* (2009).[84] Other scholars, such as Hoeveler and DeLamotte, combine psychoanalytic frameworks with literary analysis to interpret incest and the Gothic.[85] I argue that in addition to these approaches, a yet more inclusive methodology that incorporates modern sociological and scientific research reveals the complexities of different incestuous configurations.[86] The various disciplinary approaches available for reading the Gothic provide important and useful accounts of incest that I have relied on, combined, and expanded on in my analyses, arguing that specific incestuous configurations lend themselves to different methodological approaches. A disciplinary flexibility is required in order to accommodate the various incestuous configurations within and beyond literature and fully to account for the complexity of these representations in the Gothic. By understanding incest in the Gothic using a broader methodology, the genre is revealed as even more politically charged than previously thought.

One of the frameworks that has dominated scholarly accounts of incest in the Gothic is the psychoanalytic approach, upon which I have already touched. Freudian theory underpins the works of Gilbert and Gubar, DeLamotte, Hoeveler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michelle A. Masse and Pamela Kaufman.[87] Psychoanalysis is also the

---

[83] Ellen Pollak, *Incest and The English Novel, 1684–1814* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Pollak's analyses of incest disrupt understandings of it as an inherently transgressive act while revealing this potential in its literary representations.

[84] Adam Kuper, *Incest and Influence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Kuper illuminates the role of incest in the private and public spheres of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England to shed light on the overlapping kinship networks created by (primarily) cousin and uncle-niece marriages that allowed families such as the Rothschilds to gain financial and political power.

[85] See DeLamotte; and Hoeveler.

[86] Research on genetics and attraction such as that undertaken by Maurice Greenberg and Roland Littlewood is discussed in Littlewood's *Pathologies of the West: An Anthropology of Mental Illness in Europe and America* (London: Continuum, 2002). Lynn Åkesson's 'Bound by Blood? New Meanings of Kinship and Individuality in Discourses of Genetic Counseling', in *New Directions in Anthropological Kinship*, ed. Linda Stone (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 125-36 reveals the influence of modern scientific advances on incestuous relationships and configurations of kinship. Susan McKinnon's 'American Kinship/American Incest: Asymmetries in a Scientific Discourse,' in *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*, eds. Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney (New York: Routledge, 1995) examines the role of gender ideologies underlying scholarly and cultural understandings of incest.

[87] See: *The Madwoman in the Attic*; *Perils of the Night*; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Toward the Gothic: Terrorism and Homosexual Panic', in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 83-96; Michelle A. Masse, *In the Name of Love:*

theoretical framework for Anne Williams' *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995) in which she argues that Male and Female Gothic narrative strategies are underpinned by different Greek mythologies.[88] Such strategies offer important readings of Gothic texts, but, as Williams' conclusion demonstrates, make it difficult to move away from a gender divided model of the Gothic through the use of a psychoanalytic lens that is predicated on such differences. The limitations of Freudian analysis are evaluated by Nancy Chodorow, who argues that Freudian psychoanalysts 'in the case of rape and incest [...] have found it hard to give up the view that unconscious desires on the part of the female victim are involved.'[89] Such feminist critiques help to demonstrate that Freud's theories are grounded in a heteronormative ideology that positions women as victims with rape fantasies. Additionally, using Freudian analysis risks relying on an ill-fitting model of desire as many representations of incest refuse classification within its requisite structure of an opposite sex-/dual-parent childhood to form incestuous desires. There is also an argument that Freudian theory stems from the situations and themes presented in Gothic literature: 'Prefiguring Freud as much Gothic writing does, moreover, there is a case to be made for reversing the direction of influence so that psychoanalysis becomes an effect of 150 years of monster-making.'[90] Botting's argument points to Freudian theory as a development of the Gothic, revealing a sense that its application to the genre that informed it is potentially anachronistic. In spite of the insights it has yielded to literary scholars of the Gothic, I argue that Freudian theories are of less use in understanding incestuous desires and models of sexuality than recent developments in the scientific and sociological fields.

Examinations of the development of the Gothic genre and its critical reception undertaken by scholars such as James Watt are particularly helpful to my argument that

Women, Masochism and the Gothic (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); and Pamela Kaufman, 'Burke, Freud and the Gothic', *Studies in Burke and His Time*, 13:3 (1972) in which Kaufman identifies the Gothic with a 'deliberate masochistic reveling in terror' in her Freudian reading of the genre (2179).
[88] Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
[89] Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989; repr. 1991), pp. 195-96. See also Samuel Slipp's exploration of the patriarchal and phallocentric premises that render Freudian analysis inadequate in Slipp, *The Freudian Mystique: Freud, Women, and Feminism* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp. 13-19 and 188-202.
[90] Fred Botting, 'Introduction', *The Gothic: Essays and Studies*, ed. Fred Botting (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 4-5.

Gothic scholarship's ongoing adherence to gendered paradigms is grounded in its contemporary reception. Watt uses critical receptions of the Gothic and its changing conventions to argue that the genre is far from cohesive and displaces Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) as 'an empowering fictional manifesto' that birthed Gothic spawn, examining the genre as 'an assimilative literary hybrid'.[91] Watt and I make related arguments that nevertheless diverge at a crucial point: Watt believes literary criticism understands the Gothic genre as homogeneous and argues that it requires a variety of labels including feminine (exemplified by Radcliffe) and canonical (as in Lewis's *The Monk*), while I argue that these labels rearticulate the same limited critical traditions.[92] However, Watt's methodology, with its incorporation of literary analysis and contemporary critical reception, is one that shows, in its displacement of *Otranto*, the potential for such analyses to yield new insights into longstanding scholarly understandings of the genre. I employ a similar methodology in my treatment of the critical reception of Radcliffe and Lewis in order to undo critical genealogies locating specific Gothic texts as male or female works that represent incest functioning in oppositional ways.

The legal lens is one that Gothic scholars frequently take up in order to explore the genre, locating within the texts criticisms and representations of specific laws and legal institutions. Historical legal contexts, such as that provided by William Blackstone's works, and current literary scholarship that uses legal frameworks with which to discuss the Gothic are integral to my readings of incest. Some of the scholars who focus on legal conventions in the Gothic include Sue Chaplin, Ruth Bienstock Anolik, Leslie J. Moran, Pollak, Punter, and Wallace.[93] Moran writes that 'the Gothic and law are intimately connected institutions', viewing the genre as a philosophy rich in meaning used in legal scholarship.[94] However, legal frameworks can at times limit literary analysis: Chiu's use of legal history to analyze the father figure is built on her

---

[91] Watt, p. 3.

[92] Watt, p. 4.

[93] See Sue Chaplin, *The Gothic and The Rule of Law, 1764-1820* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Leslie J. Moran's 'Law and the Gothic Imagination', in *The Gothic: Essays and Studies*, pp. 87-109; David Punter's *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, The Body and The Law* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998); and Anolik's 'The Missing Mother'.

[94] Moran, p. 91.

assumption that authors such as Radcliffe used 'wildly tyrannical' and 'indistinguishable' fathers, causing her to struggle to make her literary examples conform to the historical models she provides.[95] But other scholarly works – such as Punter's book, which argues that the intersections between the Gothic and law are productive of transgression, shows just how profitable the legal lens can be.[96] Wallace uses Blackstone's legal descriptions of civilly dead women in marriage to reveal how these metaphors haunt Gothic writing and inform feminist criticism on it.[97] Anolik examines the laws of coverture and primogeniture to argue that the effacement of the mother in Gothic works is a literalization of her legal status, an argument that informs my chapter on mothers.[98] Pollak's account of the changes in law under Henry VIII that allowed cousin marriage and altered the criteria for a relationship to be declared incestuous is particularly insightful.[99] Her discussion provides important background for my chapter on cousins, just as laws of inheritance and primogeniture underpin my arguments on younger brothers and sexual violence in my chapter on uncles.[100] Pollak's focus on legal and ecclesiastical laws as well as their intersections with philosophical understandings of natural law in eighteenth-century debates provides context for her discussion of incest's potential for transgression in the literature of this time and demonstrates the advantages of combining disciplinary methodologies.

The history of sexuality is also essential to my analyses of Gothic texts: Michel Foucault and Leo Bersani's understandings of power and sexuality inform my discussion of incest as politically conservative or radical.[101] Bersani's argument that reproductions of power are non-disruptive of the status quo if they simply reverse power structures provokes a reevaluation of the understanding of incest as inherently disruptive.[102] As such, instances of incestuous desires where power structures are reversed or rearticulated

---

[95] Chiu, 'Nobodaddies': 1-2.
[96] Punter, *Gothic Pathologies*.
[97] Diana Wallace, '"The Haunting Idea": Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, pp. 26-41.
[98] Anolik: 26. Similarly, Chiu picks up on this when she argues: 'Primogeniture was increasingly viewed as a means more destructive of than conducive to domestic harmony' (13).
[99] Pollak, pp. 30-51.
[100] Pollak, pp. 30-38.
[101] See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*.
[102] Leo Bersani, 'Foucault, Freud, Fantasy, and Power', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 2 (1995): 18.

without being disrupted, questioned, or redefined are not necessarily subversive of heteronormative ideologies or patriarchal structures. Thus, rather than locating incest as always radical, what Foucault describes as an 'object of obsession and attraction', may at times be presented as a rather prosaic marriage option.[103] Novels such as Elizabeth Thomas's *Purity of Heart; or the Ancient Costume* (1816) and Regina Maria Roche's *Clermont* (1798), both of which conclude with incestuous unions, are not necessarily subversive.[104] The representation of incest as a normative choice in Thomas's portrayal of cousin marriage is revealed as an unexpectedly conservative marriage option that shores up patriarchal structures. Novels in which incestuous relationships are rejected in favour of exogamy are not necessarily conservative, as in the case of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847).[105] Bersani's argument that representations of non-normative sexuality are not guaranteed to be subversive requires representations of incest to be analyzed within their literary and historical contexts and within the larger framework of desire, power, and sexuality. Foucault's understandings of sexuality place sexual desires within a socio-historical framework of power relations and Bersani's theories require each act to be scrutinized in terms of adherence to the power structures that inform potentially subversive acts.

Anthropological insights into the incest taboo are equally vital to my approach here. I argue that twentieth-century theories on incest aversion can be seen in readings of eighteenth-century Gothic works, demonstrating that modern understandings of incest have long been part of the cultural discourse of desire. The Westermarck Effect, as already outlined, though not taken up until the twentieth century, can nonetheless be identified as present in eighteenth-century depictions of those raised as siblings resisting or forming erotic desires for one another. Similarly, theories of women as gifts and objects of exchange advanced by Marcel Mauss and Levi-Strauss are anticipated in

---

[103] Foucault, p. 108.

[104] *Clermont* is not a wholly conservative or radical Gothic novel but in its representation of cousin marriage demonstrates the subversive potential of incest and the conflicts of individual desires and familial duty.

[105] Davenport's *The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl* depicts exogamy as subversive of normative models of desire in a portrayal of an uncle's desire to keep his niece within the family as caused by his privileged social status that creates a sense of entitlement to whichever female body he desires.

eighteenth-century understandings of marriage, society and incest.[106] Recent scholarship on gift exchange by scholars such as Cynthia Klekar and Linda Zionkowski demonstrates the relevance of these theories to the literature of the eighteenth century.[107] Ideas of gifts, exchange and endogamy are depicted through representations of desire in *The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl* in which an uncle's incestuous desire for his niece is portrayed as greed to keep beauty and wealth within the closed circuit of the family, thus illustrating authorial awareness of the balance between exchange and the incest taboo.[108] Representations of incest in the eighteenth-century Gothic are rooted in shifting economic and social systems and weighted with differing consanguineal, conjugal and affinal notions of kinship.[109] These representations demonstrate Gothic authors' awareness of the inconsistent and co-existing ideas of kinship, exogamy and endogamy, although they use a different vocabulary with which to discuss these tensions.

This different vocabulary is perhaps most readily apparent when we turn to the framework of genetics and attraction, which sheds further light on how and why incestuous desires are represented in such seemingly inconsistent ways in the Gothic. Advances in research pointing towards the influence of shared genetic material, which causes attraction between family members, give us a modern, scientifically based lexicon through which to discuss the mechanics of incest.[110] Borrowing this vocabulary to explore the implications of incest representations allows us to see how Gothic writers expanded on or departed from eighteenth-century understandings of blood recognition. The scientific lens allows for some of the physiological and biological aspects of

---

[106] See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1922), trans. W.D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990); Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*; and Margaret Mead *Male and Female* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001) for anthropological investigations of culture, the exchange of women and the effect of culture on gender formation.

[107] Cynthia Klekar and Linda Zionkowski, eds., *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[108] Klekar and Zionowski's arguments about gift exchange and notions of obligation provide important context for reading *Correlia*, in which the heroine's foster-father (who is later revealed to be her blood father) uses the language of obligation in attempting to solicit her love.

[109] See Mitchell, p. 380 for an analysis of incest as decreasingly taboo in capitalist society.

[110] Littlewood's *Pathologies of the West* examines genetic attraction and incest; David Haig (in 'Asymmetric Relations: Internal Conflicts and the Horror of Incest', *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, 20:2 (1999): 83-98) views incest's potential to create genetically healthy offspring. Justin H. Park's article, 'Is Aversion to Incest Psychologically Privileged? When Sex and Sociosexuality Do Not Predict Sexual Willingness', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 45:7 (2008): 661-65, contains an extremely useful review of anthropological, genetic, biological and sociological understandings of incest avoidance.

incestuous desires to be presented in the language that these writers were unable to access but nonetheless understood as the pull of blood. Maurice Greenberg (a psychotherapist), David Livingstone Smith (a cognitive psychologist) and Lynn Åkesson (an ethnologist) are researchers who investigate the relationships between shared genetic material, attraction, and the social consequences thereof. Smith writes: '[Genetic Sexual Attraction] suggests that inhibitions against incest must operate against an especially potent prior attraction: sexual feelings experienced by reunited relatives are often especially intense'.[111] What Greenberg's, Smith's and Åkesson's theories illuminate is that the notion of narcissism that so dominates discussions of sibling incest is more than a literary convention – in fact, a biological phenomenon.[112] Using scientific examinations of this 'especially potent' attraction reveals how Gothic writers explained the allure of incest and how their representations differ from other non-Gothic depictions in ways often overlooked.[113] While there is a tradition of viewing Gothic incest as encompassing 'less ideal themes of violence, incest, passion and agony' than are figured in the canonical texts of Romanticism, I argue that Gothic sibling incest prefigures narcissistic Romantic sibling attraction as a mutually sought and ideal relationship.[114] Gothic writers frequently used the language of desire, attraction, recognition and kinship to explain what scientists are just now beginning to understand as genetic sexual attraction.

<center>*   *   *</center>

The following five chapters address representations of incest within different family relationships, each exploring the underlying social, sexual, and legal anxieties the texts

---

[111] David Livingstone Smith, 'Beyond Westermarck: Can Shared Mothering or Maternal Phenotype Matching Account for Incest Avoidance?', *Evolutionary Psychology*, 5:1 (2007): 206.

[112] Narcissism and incest are discussed most often in relation to sibling incest in Romantic works, but the frequent absorption of the Gothic into this period has allowed scholars to look at these sibling relationships as narcissistic or an inversion thereof. See Alan Richardson, 'Rethinking Romantic Incest: Human Universals, Literary Representations, and the Biology of Mind', *New Literary History*, 31:3 (2000): 553-72.

[113] Romantic works of sibling incest, such as Lord Byron's *Manfred* (1817) or Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), often end in death for one or both siblings, while this is much less common in the Gothic. See also Gail Finney, 'Self-Reflexive Siblings: Incest as Narcissism in Tieck, Wagner, and Thomas Mann', *The German Quarterly*, 56:2 (1983): 243-56.

[114] Botting in *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom*, pp. 10-18 identifies the scholarly history of viewing the Gothic as broadly Romantic in nature while simultaneously positioning its themes as oppositional to many of the Romantic ideals, locating this tradition in Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* (1933) and Eino Railo's *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (1927).

articulate through a variety of analytic lenses suited to the specific kinship bond. My chronology 1764-1847 encompasses the works of Walpole through those of the Brontes, and covers this wide span in order to engage with the ongoing developments in representations of incest from the emergence of the Gothic genre in the mid-eighteenth century through what I will argue are the culmination of the genre's representations of incest within the Bronte's complex depictions of endogamic conjugality.[115] My range of texts is similar to that specified by Rictor Norton in *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840* (2000), to which I add the Brontes as an essential component given their distinctive treatments of the incest thematic.[116] I analyze this wide range of texts to point towards how early forms of the novel, for example, the sentimental and the romance, helped to shape the Gothic, which then influenced movements such as Romanticism, that, in turn, had distinct effects on late Gothic representations of incest. My selections, in this sense, owe a debt to the work of those scholars who Michael Gamer describes as having 'banished the traditional Walpole-to-Maturin, 1764-1820 account of the gothic, with its well-demarcated origins and endings.'[117] I argue that extending the traditional endpoint of the Gothic makes it possible to understand the full range of familial, legal, marital, sexual and class implications associated with the genre's deployment of incest that, in later interventions in the Gothic, take on more weight and are made possible due to their engagement with the conventions established through Romantic representations of incest.[118] In the first chapter I discuss how Freudian psychoanalytic theory requires a familial model that is not often found in the Gothic and has caused scholarship to focus on incest as a female fantasy.[119] I argue that feminist sociological understandings of

---

[115] I am not attempting to argue that the Gothic would have been recognizable to its contemporary readership as a distinct genre by the mid-eighteenth century, but that, as Michael Gamer argues, the conventions, aesthetics and aims that are associated with the Gothic, as well as the term, appeared consistently in texts from this time. See: Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 49.
[116] Rictor Norton, *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000).
[117] Gamer, *Romanticism*, p. 28.
[118] In this sense I take up the developments that Gamer finds have been made available by those scholars who 'have been arguing for a more intimate and active relation between romantic and gothic writers' (*Romanticism*, p. 28), pointing to the conventions of Romantic narcissistic incest or the Romantic siblings-as-soulmates configurations (see Gail Finney, 'Self-Reflexive Siblings: Incest as Narcissism in Tieck, Wagner, and Thomas Mann', *The German Quarterly*, 56:2 (1983): 243-56) within later Gothic works.
[119] Hoeveler writes: 'I read the female gothic novel [...] as an extended fantasy, an elaborate wish fulfilment, a hysterical discourse system' (p. xvi).

incest as synonymous with abuses of power inform and constrain scholarly analyses. In order to move away from these understandings of father-daughter incest I look to the works of Walpole, Radcliffe and Mary Shelley, locating within their depictions of incest tensions surrounding the exchange of women, marriage, desire, and female agency. I reposition Walpole, commonly understood as the father of the Gothic, by locating *Otranto* as a political parody of self-consciously conflicted parentage, troubling the Gothic's literary and scholarly genealogy. I argue that Radcliffe's novel *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) undermines scholarly notions of heroine-imagined danger in its depictions of a heroine imperiled by paternal sexual aggression and violence, resulting in her agency and the formation of a new familial model. A similar escape occurs in Shelley's *Matilda* (1959) in which a father's reunion with his daughter results in a reciprocated incestuous love that culminates with the father's suicide and the heroine's rejection of her role as a society heiress. I argue that, rather than serving as a fantasy or a metaphor for the dangers of patriarchy and male abuses of power, Gothic representations of father-daughter incest require a complete breakdown of the exchange of women and afford the daughter a position of power and agency previously denied her, thus revealing the freedom afforded by transgression.

Chapter 2 turns to representations of sibling incest in the Gothic to rework a common scholarly tradition: that of viewing brother-sister incest as exemplified by Lewis's *The Monk* as an inversion of Romantic narcissistic incest.[120] I argue that Radcliffe's first two novels influentially construct the brother as an ideal, equal mate and reject the scholarly positioning of Lewis's depiction of the sister's rape and murder as the archetype of sibling incest to which writers such as Radcliffe reacted. Writers such as Eleanor Sleath and Emily Bronte take up Radcliffe's model of the sibling as ideal lover in order to articulate views on equality in marriage, combining representations of sibling desire with the language of laws governing marriage and inheritance, uniting notions of the rules of attraction with those of society. Giving particular emphasis to laws regarding marriage and behaviour, Sleath presents in *The Orphan of the Rhine* a potentially unlawful yet ideal sibling relationship that depicts the laws governing desire (rather than

---

[120] Richardson: 555.

incest) as unnatural. Bronte's representations of incest in *Wuthering Heights* similarly use brother-sister desires to present endogamy as natural and exogamy as a lawful, but dangerous and stifling, social requirement. Such depictions work against the understanding of Lewis's text as the epitome of Gothic sibling incest, relying instead on Radcliffe's earlier paradigm. Sibling incest is neither modeled wholly on the incestuous relationships in Lewis, nor is it an inversion of that model deployed by the Romantics; rather it is a unique combination of potent attraction revealed as a natural consequence of kinship, a challenge to laws governing behaviour and desire, and a troubling of the contemporary notion of laws and desires as inherently natural or unnatural.[121]

In chapter 3 I argue that representations of uncle-niece incest are bound up in discussions of laws pertaining to inheritance and property, exemplifying patriarchy's usurpation of female property and title and revealing the laws limiting female ownership of property as equally limiting women's control over themselves. Using *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to emphasize the equation of body with property, I argue that Emily's uncle by marriage employs incest by proxy, threatening her with rape in order to force her to submit her estates to him. Radcliffe, Parsons and Emily Bronte unite sexual and physical danger with threats against female-held property, revealing in their correlation of male usurpations of female property with male usurpations of female bodies patriarchal society's positioning of women as property. I argue that the usurping uncle, inevitably the younger brother, seeks to take the wealth, property, and women denied to him by birth order and that his establishment as patriarch and violent incestuous desires reveal his subsumption within the dominant system. In the uncle-niece relationship incest becomes, not a transgressive departure from, but another way of reinforcing, the unjust structures of patriarchy.[122] Representations of uncle-niece incest show that family and social structures implicitly sanction the use of sexual violence and threats to control female bodies and property and reveal that laws in a society predicated on male power and

---

[121] Eighteenth-century works on law, liberty, free will and nature include David Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), Granville Sharp's *A Tract on the Law of Nature* (1777), John Millar's *Observations Concerning the Distinctions of Ranks in Society* (1771) and William Blackstone's comprehensive *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-69).

[122] Bersani observes this role reversal, linking it to a drive for pleasure seen in sadomasochism: 'But as we have seen over and over again, with dispiriting frequency, the oppressed, having freed themselves from their oppressors, hasten to imitate them [...] S/M makes explicit the erotic satisfactions sustaining social structures of dominance and submission' (22).

control of women – even when theoretically able to protect the interests of women – are irrelevant.

In chapter 4 I use legal and anthropological definitions of incest to position the cousin relationship as incestuous and argue that it highlights the tensions between differing definitions of kinship. The cousin is a family member whom the heroine can love erotically or platonically and with whom she can engage in flirtatious behaviour that would be inappropriate with non-kin but which also paradoxically sexualizes the kinship bond between them. The Gothic uses the figure of the cousin to continue to question definitions of family and blood bonds and reveals cousin marriage to be not so much a negotiation between exogamy and the maintenance of wealth as in contemporary society as a polarization of the conflict between individual rights and social demands.[123] Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* shows the crisis of this conflict in its depiction of two paradigms of cousin marriage: one a loveless familial demand and the other an ideal individual desire. Thomas's anti-Gothic novel *Purity of Heart* redresses Lady Caroline Lamb's representation of cousin marriage as mercenary in her Gothic novel *Glenarvon* (1816) through a depiction of cousin marriage as a kinship duty resulting in happiness. Thomas's novel highlights the contemporary understanding of Gothic novels as privileging individual rights over familial duty and obligation to the detriment of the family.[124] In examining a variety of Gothic novels such as Thomas's anti-Gothic work, sentimental Gothic novels by Davenport and Bennett, and Roche's Radcliffean novel *Clermont*, I argue that the cousin's position as kin or non-kin and the roles of desire, choice and family influence should be paramount in reading these novels as subversive of or adherent to cultural hegemony.

In chapter 5 I focus on mother-son incest, a relationship viewed as the most monstrous, unnatural and unacceptable by anthropologists, sociologists and geneticists

---

[123] See Kuper's *Incest and Influence*, pp. 244-50 for his account of cousin marriage in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England as a way of preserving family wealth while still marrying outside the nuclear family, particularly among the aristocracy.
[124] Botting points to this in *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom* when he analyzes the perception of the Gothic as 'giving free reign to selfish ambitions and sexual desires beyond the prescriptions of law and familial duty,' (p. 4).

alike.[125] In spite of the obsession with mother-son desires in the psychoanalytic discourse on incest, there are fewer cases of it in both fact and Gothic literature.[126] I argue that sociological explanations of mother-son incest as the result of departures from supposedly natural social and sexual roles are underpinned by gender ideologies that position women as passive victims of male sexual aggression.[127] My examinations of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criticism on the Gothic reveal continuities between perceptions of mother-son incest then as well as in modern discussion. By exploring these critical genealogies in conjunction with queer theory, I argue that mother-son incest in the Gothic disrupts heteronormative gender ideologies.[128] I focus on Gothics by Walpole, Lewis, William Beckford, Joanne Baillie and Charlotte Dacre that depict the mother as the agent of or victim to incestuous sexual relationships with the son.[129] In texts such as Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* mother-son incest depicts society as entrenched in gender ideologies that are unable to account for – or to allow – female sexual agency. Lewis's novel shows the consequences of these ideologies in Ambrosio's sexualized murder of his mother while Walpole rearticulates the power structure to position the mother as sexual aggressor. Though scholars often view these works as part of a Male Gothic genre, their representations of incest function in a similar manner to depictions of incest in Female Gothic texts: that is, they reveal inadequacies in heteronormative configurations of agency and desire. This common ground furthers the notion that distinctions between Male and Female Gothic works obscure the underlying structures of the texts.

Gothic authors deploy the generic convention of incest to reveal as inadequate heteronormative ideologies of sexuality and desire in the patriarchal social structure that render its laws and requirements arbitrary. I examine the various familial ties and

---

[125] See Shepher, *Incest*; McKinnon, 'American Kinship', and Karen Sanchez-Eppler, 'Temperance in the Bed of a Child: Incest and Social Order in Nineteenth-Century America', *American Quarterly*, 47:1 (1995): 1-33.

[126] Sanchez-Eppler points to the cultural fixation on mother-son incest in spite of it being the least practiced form of incestuous sex (9).

[127] See Shepher, p. 113.

[128] I rely particularly on Haggerty's examination of male victims in 'Psychodrama': 20-33 and his analyses of incest in *Queer Gothic*.

[129] I include Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806), which presents the mother's sexual agency as contributing to her daughter's acts of sexual aggression and violence. Her depiction is thus similar to the other mothers I consider.

incestuous relationships in the Gothic to show how they depict and disrupt contemporary definitions of gender, family and desire. Many of the methodologies adopted in Gothic scholarship and analyses of incest reveal ongoing continuities between their assumptions and those of the very ideologies Gothic authors strove to disrupt through their use of the incest trope. Methodologies such as Freudian psychoanalysis, as we have seen, can be positioned as a product of Gothic monster-making, showing the effect of Gothic conventions on psychoanalytic theories that are still in wide use today.[130] Similarly, Wallace's and Fitzgerald's points about the Gothic's ongoing influence on literary criticism and feminist metaphors usefully signal the reproduction of Gothic plots in the same scholarly accounts that seek to explain them.[131] Not only does modern literary scholarship often replicate the eighteenth-century understandings of incest in the Gothic and its division on gendered lines, as I have argued, but modern scholarship across a multitude of disciplines also reveals a similar adherence to heteronormative ideologies pertaining to incest that can be located in the original critical accounts of incest in the Gothic.

This adherence to eighteenth-century understandings of incest is revealed in current laws on incest and marriage, and the adherence is particularly dangerous when its complicity with the normative models of sexuality, desire and marriage is overlooked. When Mary Jean Corbett deploys the nineteenth-century debates over the illegality of marrying a dead wife's sister to argue that 'We are far removed from a time when some relations by marriage […] did figure by orthodox standards as […] those "consanguines" related to us by blood whom we cannot legally marry', she asserts that there are fundamental differences between the definition of family then and now.[132] Corbett's conclusion ignores modern laws on incest that equally limit marriage to affinal relations. In fact, although it has been legal since the 1907 Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Act to marry a sister- or brother-in-law, it remains illegal to marry a mother- or father-in-law unless all the original spouses are dead or to marry a step-sibling with whom one lived

[130] Botting, 'Introduction', *The Gothic: Essays and Studies*, pp. 4-5.
[131] Fitzgerald, pp. 13-25; Wallace, pp. 26-41.
[132] Mary Jean Corbett, *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 59.

before the age of eighteen or by whose parents one was raised.[133] Such laws indicate a continued uneasiness over notions of family and potential incest and are part of an ongoing debate over which relatives by marriage and with which individuals we were raised we may marry.

The idea of a gap between how the family was perceived during the long eighteenth century and current perspectives on family and incest fails to hold up under scrutiny. Modern legal, sociological and scientific analyses help to shed light on the structures of law and ideologies of sexuality that attempted to name and regulate incestuous behaviour in the long eighteenth century and that remain in place in modern society. Using the most current research on incest across the disciplines demonstrates that the works of the Gothic writers are not part of a long-dead past, but are still of significance in today's society, which continues to restrict certain desires while demanding others. These ongoing restrictions of desire and marriage, based partly in shifting definitions of kinship, reveal that we share many similarities with the Gothic world of draconian laws. In disrupting the gendered division of the Gothic and revealing the heteronormative ideologies underpinning scholarly discussions of incest, we can see the Gothic as a genre that operates against these ideologies. Through its representations of incest the Gothic genre offers a non-heteronormative understanding of social and sexual relations, making available alternative models of family, desire, and sexuality.

---

[133] 'Prohibited Marriages: Forbidden Degrees of Relationship', <http://www.weddingguideuk.com/articles/legal/prohibited.asp> [accessed 24 June 2010].

Chapter One

'Unimaginable sensations': Father-Daughter Incest and The Economics of Exchange

'Let a veil be drawn over the unimaginable sensations of a guilty father.'

Mary Shelley, *Matilda* (1959)[1]

There are several problems that usually emerge in scholarship examining representations of father-daughter incest in the Gothic, even in works by scholars whose goal is to lay bare the feminist themes that are central to the genre. Principal among these is that representations of father-daughter incest often cause works to be placed in the gendered subgenre of Female Gothic and to be viewed through a lens predicated on this generic division. What frequently stems from this homogenizing gesture is a misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the ambition of the Gothic as displaying what E.J. Clery refers to as an 'intrinsic "femaleness."'[2] This leads to texts being viewed as part of a Male or Female Gothic form and their representations of father-daughter incest to be understood through these gendered divisions. As I suggested in my introduction, the application of Freudian theory, sociological approaches to incest, and structural anthropological discussions of the incest taboo contributes to reading father-daughter incest within a gendered framework that tends to view this incestuous relationship as alternately imagined or abusive. Freudian approaches are often applied in conjunction with anthropological understandings of incest such as those advanced by Claude Levi-Strauss, who theorized that: 'the prohibition of incest is [...] the fundamental step [...] in which the transition from nature to culture is accomplished.'[3] The Freudian psychoanalytic preoccupations that underpin much scholarship on the Gothic similarly identify the prohibition of incest as fundamental to the formation of culture as incest allows adolescents to move from the

---

[1] Mary Shelley, *Matilda*, ed. Janet Todd (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 179. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[2] E. J. Clery, 'Ann Radcliffe and D.A.F. de Sade: Thoughts on Heronism', *Women's Writing*, 1:2 (1994): 203.
[3] Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1969), p. 25.

family into exogamic relationships that complete the transition into culture. Sociological approaches that are informed by the equation of father-daughter incest with abuses of power contribute to readings of these relationships as reflective of the abuses inherent in the emerging nuclear family and domestic spaces.[4] These understandings have focused scholarly readings of father-daughter incest in the Gothic on locating the perceived or real threats against the heroine within the home or castle. I argue that in moving away from these approaches to rely instead upon feminist theories on the traffic in women, representations of father-daughter incest can be understood as engaging with and troubling notions of the exchange of women deemed necessary to culture.

The Freudian mode of viewing incest is, inconveniently for those who use it to lend credence to their arguments regarding incest in the Female Gothic, predicated on the notion of children desiring the opposite-sex parent who raises them and seeing the same-sex parent as a rival. Sigmund Freud argued that 'the simplest course for the child would be to choose as his sexual objects the same person whom, since his childhood, he has loved with what may be described as a damped-down libido.'[5] Freud believed that incestuous desires re-aroused at puberty must be fought against in order for adolescents to distance themselves from their parents and therefore the incest barrier is 'a cultural demand made by society.'[6] In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) Freud's statement that 'boys regarded their fathers and girls their mothers as rivals in love, whose elimination could not fail but to be to their advantage,' was founded on his belief that the first sexual desire of children is towards their mothers, an argument explored further in *Totem and Taboo* (1912).[7] This theory, which stipulates that female desire and sexuality are developed in response to the father figure, allows first for a pre-oedipal stage in which the daughter loves and bonds with the mother before turning to her desire and love for the

---

[4] Julie Brickman, 'Female Lives, Feminist Deaths: The Relationship of the Montreal Massacre to Dissociation, Incest, and Violence Against Women', in *States of Rage: Emotional Eruption, Violence and Social Change*, ed. Renee R. Curry (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 15-34. See also: Lena Dominelli, 'Betrayal of Trust: A Feminist Analysis of Power Relationships in Incest Abuse and its Relevance for Social Work Practice', *British Journal of Social Work*, 19:1 (1989): 291-308 and 'Father-Daughter Incest: Patriarchy's Shameful Secret' in *Critical Social Policy's Special Feminist Issue*, 6: 16 (1986): 8-22.
[5] Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 91.
[6] Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, p. 91.
[7] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon, 1980), p. 256.

father, a stage that engenders rivalry with the mother. The incestuous desire is resolved later when the daughter is able to transfer her incestuous desires to another male. The oedipal phase has two periods, between ages three to five, after which there is a waning consequent upon repression, and then it is reactivated in puberty, when puberty makes possible the transference of incestuous desires.[8]

Freudian theories of incest have become increasingly discredited in the psychological community in part due to the work of modern psychologists who argue that Freud discounted the actual experiences of his female patients' sexual abuse and that his theories have limited applicability to female sexuality and desire.[9] Freud's displacement has been noted by psychologist Anne Cossins who describes his work on incest as 'discredited due to the circumstances surrounding his initial revelations of incest in patients he was treating and his subsequent repudiations of those claims', on the grounds that he believed his patients' claims of incest were fantasies.[10] Similarly, psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer states in an article that calls Freud modern history's 'most debunked doctor' that his work 'doesn't hold up very well at all […] every particular is wrong: The universality of the Oedipus complex, penis envy, infantile sexuality.'[11] In an article that describes the displacement of Freud's incest theories, Bruce Bower states: 'one current school of psychoanalytic thought rejects Freud's assertion that the Oedipus complex occurs universally, arguing instead that psychologically disturbed parents sometimes stir up incestuous and intensely competitive feelings in their children.'[12] Though this theory fails to account for incestuous feelings and desires exhibited by parents or children not raised by the relations they desire, it is more closely linked to the types of incest uncovered in the Gothic than a purely Freudian interpretation. The sexism underlying

---

[8] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 256.

[9] See Bruce Bower, 'Oedipus Wrecked: Freud's Theory of Frustrated Incest Goes on the Defensive', *Science News*, 140:16 (1991): 248-51; and Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989; repr. 1991), pp. 195-96 for an evaluation of how Freudian psychoanalysts still tend to view female victims of sexual abuse as having underlying rape fantasies.

[10] Anne Cossins, *Masculinities, Sexualities, and Child Sexual Abuse* (New York: Springer, 2000), p. 35. Cossins points to a personal letter written by Freud in 1897 to William Fleiss in which he discounts his patients' claims of incestuous abuse as fantasy.

[11] Jerry Adler, Anne Underwood and Marc Bain, 'Freud in Our Midst', *Newsweek* 147:13 (March 27, 2006). <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=20199528&site=ehost-live> [Accessed 20 May 2009].

[12] Bower: 251.

Freudian theory is pointed out by feminist scholar Gayle Rubin, who finds it challenging to use Freud and Levi-Strauss to account for the incest taboo as '[they] write within an intellectual tradition produced by a culture in which women are oppressed [...] the sexism in the tradition of which they are a part tends to be dragged in with each borrowing.'[13] In spite of what Rubin describes as the misogynistic tradition underlying these modes of analysis that has led to a feminist reevaluation of Freudian psychoanalysis and Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology, these are still privileged approaches in analyses of female sexuality and incest that find their way into literary scholarship on the Gothic.[14]

Even scholars who seek to displace Freudian models of sexual desire sometimes return to the Freudian paradigms that are so entrenched in literary analyses of incest and sexuality more generally.[15] Julie Shaffer, for example, argues first that 'by situating explicit incestuous lust in the father's desire, such desire need not be projected onto the daughter in the way Freud does.'[16] However, Shaffer subsequently gives credence to Freudian theory when she argues: 'Arraigning patriarchal power in the form of the father figure [...] situates that power in the home, site of the construction of the female character's sexuality where it develops ostensibly in response to the father.'[17] In a similar way, Tania Modleski argues that Ann Radcliffe's plot 'became popular at a time when

[13] Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 200. See also Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982) for an examination of how women can reject the father's law by refusing to submit to either his desire or his prohibition of her desire and thus destabilize the categories of male/female through a challenge to language and law.

[14] For critiques of Freudian incest theory and its applicability to female psychology see Bower: 251; and Samuel Slipp, *The Freudian Mystique: Freud, Women, and Feminism* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp. 13-19 and pp. 188-202. For Gothic analyses based in Freudian theory see: Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998); Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press: 1989); and Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[15] Rita Felski, *Literature After Feminism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 153-55. Felski argues that feminist scholarship has allowed the Gothic to be revisited as a genre and explores how Freudian psychology has become intertwined with scholarly readings of the Gothic.

[16] Julie Shaffer, 'Familial Love, Incest, and Female Desire in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century British Women's Novels', *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 41:1 (1999): 78.

[17] Shaffer: 75.

the nuclear family was being consolidated [... .] It spoke powerfully to the young girl struggling to achieve psychological autonomy in a home where the remote, but all-powerful, father ruled over an utterly dependent wife.'[18] These readings demonstrate their reliance on both the psychological and sociological models of incest and although they provide important insights into viewing incestuous threats as linked to the domestic structure they focus exclusively on the father as a threat within the nuclear family.[19] Part of the problem in deploying this Freudian model to explain incest and female sexuality in the Gothic is that it requires father-daughter incest to be read as a product of a familial dynamic seldom present within the texts.[20]

Freudian theory that claims girls develop incestuous desires for the fathers who raise them is not applicable to the majority of Gothic novels in which girls are not raised by their fathers. Its application can thus lead to misreadings that diminish the importance of incest to the narrative and position heroines as victims of fantasies rather than threats. In order for incest to be a result of children desiring the opposite-sex parent who raises them in infancy and toddler-hood, there clearly needs to *be* an opposite-sex parent present during these developmental periods, which is not the case in many Gothic works. In addition to the lack of the appropriate family structure, authors did not often depict daughters who desire their fathers, but when/if they do, it rarely correlates to a synonymous hatred of the mother-figure, who in these instances is most often absent.[21] The Freudian paradigm is therefore irrelevant to analyses of novels where the narrative and/or familial structure prohibit conformity to it. Misapplying Freudian theory to analyses of heroines trivializes incestuous threats by framing them as fantasies. Hoeveler

---

[18] Tania Modleski, *Loving With A Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (Archon, 1982; repr. New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 11.

[19] See the 'Introduction' to this thesis for further analysis of how the understanding of the nuclear family as an emerging model in the long eighteenth century advanced by historian Lawrence Stone in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1977) contributes to reading the father as a powerful and sexually dangerous threat within the domestic space.

[20] For an overview of the feminist rejection of Freudian theory that examines both the psychological refutation of his ideas and the difficulty in using them in feminist analyses of literature, see Fiona Tolan, 'Feminisms', in *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 319-39, particularly pp. 327-35, in which she glosses the works of Elaine Showalter, Kate Millett, Germaine Greer, Betty Friedan, Shulamith Firestone, Simone de Beauvior and others in regards to feminist perspectives on Freud.

[21] Shelley's *Matilda* portrays one of the few instances of a daughter who desires her blood father, but as she meets her father as a teenager after being raised by an aunt after the death of her mother in childbirth, the depiction does not fit Freud's parameters for the formation of incestuous desires.

subscribes to such an argument when she asserts that Gothic heroines seek or fear incest because they have 'an infantile desire to remain in the paternal and protective domicile of childhood.'[22] Recognizing that she must leave home to marry, the heroine attempts to make her father appear evil as she

> does not want to leave her father and marry another [... .] Therefore, she fancies that her father has attempted to rape her (*The Romance of the Forest*) or her father is an adulterer (*Mysteries of Udolpho*) or her father has tried to kill her (*The Italian*). Only if she can convince herself that she exists in such a super-charged moral universe [...] can she agree to separate from the paternal abode.[23]

Hoeveler's argument regarding incest and Gothic tropes – here swept together are incest, murder, and adultery/hidden secrets – is used to corroborate Freudian theory on incest as fantasy or seduction. However, when the actual content of the novels Hoeveler uses to support her point is more closely examined some disturbing discrepancies emerge.

Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), which Hoeveler treats as featuring a heroine who 'fancies that her father [...] has tried to kill her', fails to conform to the model of incest in which Hoeveler frames it. If, as Hoeveler's argument posits, *The Italian*'s heroine Ellena di Rosalba encounters an internal struggle between remaining within the protective paternal home of her father, or marrying an interloper, she would necessarily have had to have experienced such an abode. However, Ellena was raised by her aunt after being orphaned at age two, and has no memory of a patriarchal house as she has since lived in an exclusively female society with her aunt and housekeeper. As such, a Freudian analysis of Ellena's desires and motivations becomes impossible to reconcile with her upbringing and experiences. Hoeveler's second point, that because of Ellena's desire to remain in the paternal abode she imagines an attempted murder by her father, misidentifies both the violent encounter and the relationship between Ellena and Schedoni, her relative. Schedoni enters Ellena's bedroom, intent on killing her, but is stopped by the sight of a miniature she wears that he thinks is his likeness. The attempted murder is real and, therefore, the use of the term 'fancies' with its implicit denotation of belief without fact or foundation is inaccurate. It is a misreading on multiple levels: first, because as Schedoni does indeed attempt murder, Ellena's recognition thereof should not

---

[22] Hoeveler, p. 56.
[23] Hoeveler, p. 57.

be called a mere fancy; secondly, because Ellena thinks Schedoni is present to rescue her rather than murder her; and finally, because Schedoni is not Ellena's biological father, but her uncle. Hoeveler aligns what she asserts is Ellena's murder fantasy alongside other Radcliffean heroines' 'fancies' of adultery and rape. Such a conflation of the Gothic tropes of terror, incest, and hidden secrets, which seeks to legitimize the use of Freudian theories, instead diminishes the relevance of individual conventions – particularly incest and its various configurations – to the subversive agenda of the Gothic.

Rather than apply a Freudian methodology that is often combined with structural anthropological and feminist sociological approaches, I argue that feminist theory on the exchange of women and recent advances in scientific and anthropological theory better serve analyses of representations of incest in the Gothic. Opponents of Freud's incest ideas include psychiatrists Mark T. Erickson, anthropologists Arthur P. Wolf and William Durham and feminist theorist Florence Rush, all of whom argue that rather than desiring those by whom one is surrounded in infancy and adolescence, humans tend sexually to reject those by and with whom they are raised.[24] This theory, put forth by sociologist Edward Westermarck and known as the Westermarck Effect, can be summarized as 'an innate aversion to sexual intercourse between persons living very closely together from early youth.'[25] An intriguing aspect of the Westermarck Effect is the notion that although brothers and sisters (and indeed, any non-related children) who are raised together will tend to be sexually averse to one another, if there is a separation at birth and siblings are not raised together they are likely to be highly sexually attracted to one another in adulthood.[26] Foreshadowing recent anthropological and scientific research, there are

---

[24] For analyses of the validity of the Westermarck Effect over Freudian paradigms of incestuous behaviour see Mark T. Erickson, 'Evolutionary Thought and the Current Clinical Understanding of Incest', in *Inbreeding, Incest and the Incest Taboo: The State of Knowledge at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Arthur P. Wolf and William H. Durham (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 161-89; and Arthur P. Wolf, 'Westermarck Redivivus', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 22 (1993): 157-75. See also Florence Rush, 'The Sexual Abuse of Children: A Feminist Point of View', Paper presented at the New York Radical Feminist Rape Conference, New York, April 1971; repr. in Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: The Sexual Abuse of Children* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980). Rush argues that Freud's portrayal of children as seducing parents contributes to the psychological oppression of women.
[25] Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1903), p. 320.
[26] See: Tamaz Bereczkei, Petra Gyuris and Glenn E Weisfeld, 'Sexual Imprinting in Human Mate Choice', *Proceedings of The Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 271 (2004): 1129-34; and Alix Kirsta, 'Genetic Sexual Attraction', *The Guardian* (2003) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2003/may/17/weekend7.weekend2> [accessed 15 December

many instances in Gothic texts of fathers and daughters and other blood relations who sexually desire or who are highly attracted to one another after a period of separation. Such texts deploy contemporary understandings of the pull of blood to trouble available models of female desire and the paternal exchanges of daughters.

In analyzing representations of father-daughter incest in the Gothic it is necessary to move away from Freudian approaches and examine more closely the attention paid in these depictions to issues of marriage, the exchange of women and female agency. The legal reality of women's experience of marriage was famously described by eighteenth-century legal scholar William Blackstone as a civil death.[27] Gothic scholars such as Ruth Bienstock Anolik and Diana Wallace have taken up Blackstone's description of women after marriage to argue that conventions such as the imprisonment, starvation, haunting, and disappearance of wives at the hands of violent husbands or brothers-in-law reflect this legal non-existence. The twin threats of patriarchy and domesticity to women are also manifest, as Ruth Perry and Kate Ferguson Ellis have argued, in the oft-employed Gothic trope of incestuous desires and relationships.[28] Gothic representations of the constraints and dangers experienced by women after marriage are, I argue, not only literalizations of their legal status and entrapment in domesticity, but are also the consequence of the economics of exchange that positions women as objects transferred and – as Anolik points out – 'possessed' by the husband in marriage.[29] In order more fully to explore the implications of these repeated concerns alongside father-daughter incest I look to the works of Luce Irigaray and Gayle Rubin, who question Levi-Strauss's widely accepted assumptions about the exchange of women as fundamental to society.

2008], in which Kirsta describes the nature of incest and attraction and when and how GSA first came into public discussion.

[27] William Blackstone wrote: 'by marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband.' *Commentaries on the laws of England. Book the first. By William Blackstone, Esq. vinerian professor of law, and solicitor general to her majesty*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765), I, p. 430.

[28] See Ellis, *The Contested Castle*, p. x; and Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 388-98.

[29] Ruth Bienstock Anolik, 'The Missing Mother: The Meanings of Maternal Absence in the Gothic Mode', *Modern Language Studies*, 33:1/2 (2003): 27.

Irigaray and Rubin articulate different understandings of the development of a (patriarchal) culture that demands the incest prohibition in order to facilitate the building of alliances through the exchange of women. Irigaray disrupts traditional thinking that the exchange of women as commodities is necessary to patriarchal society in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), in which she examines Levi-Strauss's premise regarding the incest taboo and the construction of culture through such exchanges. Irigaray argues that 'women are "products" used and exchanged by men. Their status is that of merchandise, "commodities." […] The use, consumption, and circulation of their sexualized bodies underwrite the organization and the reproductions of the social order, in which they have never taken part as "subjects."'[30] Gayle Rubin similarly questions Levi-Strauss's assertion that culture would not exist without the incest taboo and exchange of women, elaborating that culture is inventive and 'kinship systems do not merely exchange women. They exchange sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage names and ancestors, rights and people – men, women, and children – in concrete systems of social relationships.'[31] Rubin dislikes Levi-Strauss's structural anthropological understanding of the incest taboo as the basis of culture because 'there is an economics and a politics to sex/gender systems which is obscured by the concept of "exchange of women."'[32] I use these approaches to position the exchange of women as a necessary though not natural demand of patriarchy, arguing that in specific incestuous configurations women are removed from their position in the market economy as a method of exchange and wealth accumulation, causing a fracture in society that allows for the development of alternative models of female agency and desire.

In light of these insights, this chapter will set out to examine the incestuous relationships between fathers and daughters in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), and Mary Shelley's *Matilda* (1959), and the texts' attendant scholarship. These three particular works are important to examine in order to compare the way that incest is rendered in a representative

---

[30] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 84. Irigaray takes issue with Levi-Strauss's acceptance of the exchange of women as a natural requirement in the creation of culture, questioning why it is women rather then men who are the objects of exchange (p. 171).

[31] Rubin, p. 93.

[32] Rubin, p. 101.

chronology of Gothic texts beginning with what has been traditionally defined as the original Gothic novel. Incestuous desire is characterized in Walpole's work as a male-situated passion that threatens imminent danger; it is also one of the novel's means of political parody. This contrasts with representations of father-daughter incest in Radcliffe's later novel, in which such relationships are the underlying narrative force spurred by an at times reciprocal, though unrealized, desire. This incestuous relationship is reworked into a mutual desire that is presented as capable of being actualized in Shelley's text, which, like Radcliffe's, uses father-daughter desires to structure the novel. These three novels offer fertile ground on which to examine the effect of the depictions of incest in both male- and female-authored novels and over a half-century of changing social values, laws, and traditions. The representations of father-daughter incest and female exchange are essential to the social structure in Walpole's political/Gothic text while in the Gothic novels of Radcliffe and Shelley these representations allow escapes from and destructions of culture. Irigaray's point that 'the economy of desire – of exchange – is man's business' is prefigured by Gothic writers and through the incestuous configuration of father-daughter incest sought by the daughter Shelley offers a model of female desire that moves beyond the exchange of female bodies.[33] By positioning these works in terms of anthropological and feminist insights into sexuality I argue that father-daughter incest in the Gothic reveals the status of women as commodities and through incestuous sexual agency affords women a means to remove themselves from the marriage market. The result of father-daughter incest is often the destruction of the patriarchal family followed by the formation of alternative structures of family, female agency and desire.

I.   Returning to the Castle: Incest Restores the Rightful Heir in *The Castle of Otranto*

Literary scholars have long positioned *The Castle of Otranto* as the first Gothic novel and credited Horace Walpole as the genre's originator. Even feminist scholars, such as Ellis,

---

[33] Irigaray, p. 189.

who are invested in divulging the female roots of the genre, silently assent to the critical myth of Walpole as 'the father of the Gothic.' Ellis states that 'it was women writers in the late eighteenth century who took up [Walpole's] literary curiosity and transformed it into a vehicle capable of didacticism as well as entertainment.'[34] Subsequent attempts to reevaluate Walpole's role as Gothic progenitor have struggled to work against this long-standing tradition. However, that such attempts are beginning to take hold is evidenced by Michael Gamer's criticism that Rictor Norton's *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840* (2000) is not disruptive enough to the status quo of Gothic paternity and chronology, stating that 'here, Walpole is still the first Gothicist, and the proliferating categories […] are left intact and unquestioned' and that Norton's adherence to the traditional accounts of the Gothic is 'old-fashioned in its treatment of genre and literary periods'.[35]

The language that informs the scholarly placement of Walpole as the 'father of the Gothic' is haunted by the preoccupation with establishing paternity and genealogies that is present in Walpole's first introduction to *Otranto*. Walpole's assertion that he is the progenitor of the Gothic is compromised by the location of this self-conscious declaration within the framework of a text comprised of true and false fathers. By describing himself as the discoverer of the manuscript and then revising this statement within subsequent introductions, Walpole establishes himself as a claimant to a title who, much like Manfred himself, is relying on a false – or self-asserted – basis for his declaration. Walpole's position as a pretender to the throne of the Gothic thus parodies the claims of Manfred and the old and young pretenders to the English throne, James Francis Edward Stuart and his son and Charles Edward Stuart, and potentially also George III given that Walpole 'composed the novella during a fit of intense

---

[34] Ellis, p. 52.
[35] Michael Gamer, 'Gothic Origins: New Primary Scholarship', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 14:2 (2002): 217. In his work *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Gamer aligns himself with other scholars who argue for an earlier Gothic origin than 1764, stating that: 'with Ian Duncan, Robert Miles, and Edward Jacobs, then, I read the emergence of gothic fiction between 1760 and 1790 as a response *to* the novel', pointing to John Home's *Douglas* (1757) and Thomas LeLand's *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury* (1762) as, along with *Otranto*, 'the texts most often involved in literary histories of early gothic fiction and drama' (p. 57).

disillusionment with what he perceived to be George III's excessive use of the royal prerogative.'[36] His declared role as the originator of the Gothic draws attention to the falsity of such claims and ridicules pretend progenitors rather than being a serious statement of paternity. Benjamin Bird argues that 'in his fiction, Walpole found a safe outlet for the full extent of his frustration with the monarchial system of government' and notes that Walpole used the Gothic to 'parody the very notion of hereditary succession' in his later *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1785).[37] Walpole's use of parody is similarly noted by James Watt, who argues that '*Otranto*'s position within any larger cultural movement needs to be qualified, since it seems to construct the Gothic as a source of the ridiculous as much as the sublime.'[38] Walpole's use of parody criticizes notions of kingship, inheritance and paternity and begs his naming himself the father of the Gothic to be read as a deliberately troubled claim.

Walpole, under the fiction that he translated the text from an ancient manuscript, wrote about the imagined author: 'I could wish he had grounded his plan on a more useful moral than this; that *the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation.*'[39] That Walpole singled this out as the overriding moral of the piece locates the text's meaning in the language of paternity, a move that is underscored by the weight scholarship attributes to *Otranto*'s influence on subsequent Gothic generations. In the second introduction, though abandoning the fiction regarding the text's origins, Walpole lays further claim to his literary fatherhood as the genre's originator, stating that the novel was 'an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern' (9), concluding: 'I might have pleaded that having created a new species of romance, I

---

[36] Benjamin Bird, 'Treason and Imagination: The Anxiety of Legitimacy in the Subject of the 1760s', *Romanticism*, 12:3 (2006): 192-93. Bird argues that what 'particularly aroused Walpole's wrath was a case of seditious libel brought by the crown against forty-nine employees of the dissident journal "North Briton"' and cites his votes against the government in two parliamentary debates in 1763 in opposition of King George III's administration that made use of 'general warrants' which Walpole considered 'illegal and an abuse of the royal prerogative' (193).
[37] Bird: 193-94.
[38] James Watt, 'Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740-1830*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 120.
[39] Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. E.J. Clery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 7. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

was at liberty to lay down what rules I thought fit for the conduct of it' (14).[40] However, rather than being a wholly new creation, Walpole's work was shaped by contemporary novels and political allegories of which he would certainly have been aware.[41] Walpole described his writing of *Otranto* as a type of therapy 'during a particularly bad year in parliament', which evidences his recognition of the tale's function as a political parody. Sue Chaplin examines 'the fictions of origin Walpole himself generated in respect of this aberrant text', pointing towards it as 'a manifestation of [...] political anxieties.'[42] She argues that 'the giant hand of Walpole's dream-text represents the remnants of an aristocratic power that still had sufficient presence in the mid-eighteenth century to challenge the Whig conceptualization of liberty purportedly embodied in the 1688 settlement.'[43] Accordingly, to read *Otranto* only as a precursor of later Gothic works can lead to a misunderstanding of Walpole's text and the literary tradition of the Gothic.[44] Chaplin's argument that Manfred is an imposter who 'seeks to establish himself as the founding father of a new order of lineage', particularly her point that Manfred 'posits himself as the originating "name of the father" in respect of a political order that has not yet been properly legitimated', applies readily to Walpole and the Gothic genre.[45] When she argues that the novella's '"legitimate" heir ascends melancholically to a throne that [...] is only his by virtue of a convoluted, *matrilineal* genealogy [...] [that] the power of the maternal as an originating principle in *Otranto* is denied within an economy that posits paternal lineage as the only source of legitimate authority', Chaplin could equally be examining Walpole's reign as the father of the genre supported by a tradition in viewing him as such that is centuries old.[46] Walpole's forged and fake paternity is

---

[40] Frederick S. Frank argues that Walpole 'counterfeited his authorship' in claiming the book was an Italian manuscript translated by William Marshal and notes that Walpole's use of the term Gothic in the second preface recalls Bishop Hurd's 'earlier use of the phrase "Gothic romance"' in his 'Introduction', Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2003), p. 16.

[41] Walpole, for example, would likely have been familiar with Henry Fielding's play *The Welsh Opera* (1731), a political allegory that satirized his father, Robert Walpole's, government, and which is examined in this context in Albert Rivero's *The Plays of Henry Fielding: A Critical Study of His Dramatic Career* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1989), pp. 91-92.

[42] Sue Chaplin, 'Spectres of Law in *The Castle of Otranto*', *Romanticism*, 12:3 (2006): 177-78.

[43] Chaplin: 178.

[44] Michael Gamer, 'Introduction', Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002), p. xxviii.

[45] Chaplin: 182-83.

[46] Chaplin: 185-86.

sanctioned as legitimate while the maternal contribution to the Gothic has been long denied its status as real progenitor. Genres, like people, must have fathers, regardless of women's formative role in their creation. Thus, Walpole, by way of his parodic self-assertion in *Otranto*, is perceived as the paterfamilias of the Gothic, a genre in actuality born of many mothers.[47]

Displacing *Otranto* is a necessary disruption of the traditional genealogy which maintains that Walpole's work established Gothic tropes – such as incest – and their meanings to be taken up by subsequent writers.[48] In relocating *Otranto* as a hybrid of political parody and Gothic romance by a creator self-consciously playing with the notion of real progenitors, I argue that later works by Radcliffe can be understood as creating, rather than reacting to, configurations of father-daughter incest that function very differently from Walpole's representation of violent incest.[49] While Walpole's novel influenced the works of authors such as Clara Reeve, Radcliffe, Charlotte Smith, and the Brontes, so too did the emerging sentimental novel, from which Walpole and the later Gothic writers borrowed images and conventions such as those of the imperiled heroine and threats of incest.[50] In Walpole's deployment of incest, father-daughter desires are depicted as a consequence of patriarchy – in many ways, similar to the feminist sociological understandings of incest as an abuse of male power – and as a threat to women and the stability of society, as in Levi-Strauss's understanding.[51] Incest functions as one convention of many with which Walpole criticizes the political structure in general and the aristocracy in particular as overly invested in controlling the younger generations. Later Gothic novels use representations of father-daughter incest – that Walpole endowed with political significance in order to expose Parliamentary and governmental flaws –

---

[47] Watt points to the parodic nature of *Otranto* when he notes its 'playfulness' in *Contesting the Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 120-21.

[48] Watt, for example, argues that 'Walpole helped to establish a vocabulary of themes and tropes that was later resorted to across the genres' ('Gothic', p. 121).

[49] In contrast to most critics, Watt displaces *Otranto* as the first Gothic novel (*Contesting the Gothic*, p. 3).

[50] Modleski notes the conventions that Gothic novels and sentimental and domestic novels share, such as paranoia, persecution, and threatened domestic spaces (pp. 10-22). Examples of the sentimental novel include Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) and Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778).

[51] In 'Betrayal of Trust' Dominelli argues that 'like Freud, experts drawing on psychoanalytical approaches ignore the significance of gender in incestuous relationships, the power emanating from the subordination of women to men (McLeod and Saraga, 1988), and the impact of the power relations inherent in adult-child relationships' (292-93).

quite differently: in order to offer alternative social models to a society structured around the exchange of women.

Walpole's novel is unique in its sheer silliness. The humour of the servants and the confusion over birth, inheritance and identity are taken to extremes, as is the utter implausibility of the circumstances that bring the characters together at the castle. The manner in which the loose ends are tied together by disclosures from the key characters is also comedic in its improbability. Furthermore, the initial murder/destruction of Conrad, the son of the household, is never explained, by means wholly supernatural or other. Walpole describes Manfred, Conrad's father and the head of the castle and family, as: 'not one of those savage tyrants who wanton in cruelty unprovoked […] his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passion did not obscure his reason' (33). As passion always obscures Manfred's reason, Walpole's ironic description is one of many instances of humour in the text. Although Walpole's iconic scenes of ghosts and subterranean flights are reproduced in countless Gothic novels that followed, that very few of them maintain the humorous and parodic nature of his tale further supports a repositioning of Walpole's novel as a political parody veiled within a Gothic framework rather than the first Gothic novel. In this respect *Otranto* is more a precursor to George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) than the first example of the Gothic genre.[52] While sentimental, Romantic, and other Gothic novels use the convention of coincidence that stretches believability to breaking point, Walpole's integration of humour alongside this convention reveals his text as a work of parody rather than horror. Along these lines, Clery states: '[*Otranto*] seems at first glance to offer the basic stock of Gothic character-types, but closer attention suggests an ambivalence in each of them that verges on irony'; the novel's imagery, including the giant armoured hand, 'provides the opportunity for a humorous

---

[52] Cynthia Wall has written an excellent essay on Walpole's resentment of political authority and his use of subterranean images in his correspondence as well as his fiction, in which she argues that Walpole deploys the blending of genres found in Shakespeare in order to construct 'a nonspecific political satire against typical patriarchal assumptions' in '*The Castle of Otranto*: A Shakespearo-Political Satire?', in *Historical Boundaries, Narrative Forms: Essays on British Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century in Honor of Everett Zimmerman*, eds. Lorna Clymer and Robert Mayer (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), p. 195. Wall argues that the novel 'as gothic parent is only partly satisfactory' but if viewed as 'political and generic satire […] just might work' (p. 196).

subversion of authority.'[53] The size of the hand to which Clery refers links the enormity

of the title, land, and obligations of men to estate and nobility, subverting through the use

of ironic and parodic hyperbolic metaphor that is not often encountered in Gothic

novels.[54]

Otranto draws attention to size twice within the opening pages: first in reference

to the size of the rightful owner of the castle and lordship of Otranto and then in reference

to the size of a helmet that kills the presumed heir of Otranto. The hasty, intended

marriage of Manfred's only son, Conrad, to Isabella introduces the reader to the ancient

prophecy that 'the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family

whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it' (17). Almost

immediately, Conrad dies: '[Manfred] beheld his child dashed to pieces, and almost

buried under an enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever

made for human being' (19). When Father Jerome asks an unknown herald from whence

he comes the herald replies: 'from the knight of the gigantic sabre' (60). Walpole's

phallic symbol represents the true heir to the castle of Otranto. This size motif is repeated

throughout the novel, becoming synonymous with the bloated aristocracy and inheritance

structure of the wealthy, property-owning, titled elite. The sins of the father to which

Walpole directs attention in his first preface govern the plot of his novel that focuses on

inheritances as a metaphor for the state, and thus provide further evidence for a reading of

the text as a contemporary political criticism rather than as a straightforwardly Gothic

novel.[55] Clery points to Walpole's depiction of 'the nightmarish collapse of a system of

power that contains the seeds of its own destruction.'[56] In Walpole's tale order is restored

when the rightful male heir is placed in his kingdom, while in later Gothics it is the

heroine who is displaced, her property, wealth and lineage usurped before she reclaims

them. The issues with which Walpole's novel is concerned – unmanageable and

[53] E.J. Clery, 'Introduction', Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xviii.
[54] Anolik's 'The Missing Mother' examines how Gothic writers literalize women's disempowered status in society through their textual erasure, a technique similar to (though reversed in) Walpole's exaggeration of the physical symbols of the aristocracy to create political metaphors.
[55] This is not to suggest that Gothic novels do not have political messages, but rather, that political messages are part of a wider subversion that targets not just one political structure but culturally inscribed models of behaviour and sexuality as well as the social institutions.
[56] Clery, p. xxii.

dominating government, laws disregarded or distorted for personal gain, inheritance and social order – are similar preoccupations for subsequent Gothic writers who depict these issues as a consequence of heteronormative and gender ideologies rather than a specific political machine. Walpole shows the omnipresence of the political institutions as contrary to human felicity while later Gothic novels show their underlying ideologies (and most of the arbitrary laws and regulations of the patriarchy) as fundamentally opposed to female agency and desire, presenting these rights as obtainable only once the old order is broken down.

If Walpole's novel is the first to use the tropes that later became standard to the Gothic, then it is important to look closely at his treatment of female characters who supposedly provide the foundation for the Gothic heroines to follow. That the differences between Walpole's female characters and those who come after are glaring speaks to just how sharply the genre was defined by its later writers. The central female characters in *Otranto* are kind, dutiful, patient, and chaste. Stripped of voices with which to protest against anything but incestuous threats to their chastity, heroines are frequently depicted as silent or deaf even to these threats and often to their own desires. Though Hippolita, as a mother, is not a virgin, her piety and obedience towards her husband lend her a nun-like demeanour.[57] This otherworldly saintliness extends to Matilda, Hippolita's daughter, and Isabella, who would have been her daughter-in-law, both of whom are presented as seeing the convent and life as a nun as an appealing option.[58] The servant Bianca is the only character to protest the idea of life-long celibacy, saying to Matilda: 'I do not wish to see you moped in a convent, as you would be if you had your will, and if my lady your mother, who knows that a bad husband is better than no husband at all, did not hinder you' (40). Bianca's class enables her to voice the presence of 'masculine' passions, freeing her from the silence that Hippolita, Matilda, and Isabella must maintain regarding sexual desire.[59] When Hippolita is anxious to see her husband, 'Matilda made signs to

---

[57] For a comprehensive treatment of the maternal and sexuality in eighteenth-century literature, see Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 22-46.

[58] This is in stark contrast to how Radcliffe's heroine Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) views her potential life in the convent: as an overwhelming threat to her future and happiness that propels her into flight.

[59] Nussbaum points to this association of the domestic female servant with sexuality (pp. 25-26).

Isabella to prevent Hippolita's rising; and both these lovely young women were using their gentle violence to stop and calm the princess' (33). Walpole effectively mutes the women. Matilda does not speak to Isabella, she makes 'signs'. The beautiful and silent heroines exert a peculiarly feminine 'gentle violence.' Women are shown to be complicit in keeping other women from taking action; it is no coincidence that Matilda and Isabella prevent Hippolita from the traditionally male act of 'rising.' Walpole's female characters are entrenched in heteronormative ideologies of maternity and female sexuality. Though they are often viewed as stock figures of the Gothic, Walpole's depictions of women and incest here are very different from later Gothic novels in which depictions of heroines under similar threats affect escapes from the system of exchange through their own voice and agency.

The representation of father-daughter incest, a means by which the older generation seeks to extend the lifeline of patriarchal and aristocratic family structures, serves as a further disparagement of the state, but it does so by effectively silencing women and replacing the incestuous exchanges with non-incestuous ones. As Irigaray asks regarding the status of women as commodities or merchandise: 'How can such objects of use and transaction claim the right to speak and to participate in exchange in general? Commodities, as we all know, do not take themselves to market on their own.'[60] Irigaray's point is provocatively demonstrated in the effective silencing of Isabella when she attempts to control her own exchange by refusing to be Manfred's commodity. Women's words, when spoken, have little impact on those wielding the power in the patriarchal system they inhabit. When Manfred proposes to Isabella, the intended bride of his deceased son – and his daughter's contemporary in age and close friend – she shrieks, objects and is pursued by Manfred. Manfred repeatedly implores her silence when she protests he is still married to Hippolita, saying: 'I desired you once before not to name that woman' (25). Even when Manfred declares his desire to marry Isabella he urges her not to speak, not to utter his wife's name. He denies Isabella's right to be heard or participate in exchange by rejecting him as a marriage choice as he understands her only as an object he has inherited from his son. Manfred is all too capable of voicing his

---

[60] Irigaray, p. 84.

passion and desire. Isabella, however, is allowed voice only to protest against the proposed incestuous union (incestuous as although Isabella and Manfred are not blood-related, they were almost affinal kin and now share a ward-guardian bond) and even this voice is repeatedly stifled.

Hippolita is not only mute, but also metaphorically blind as well. She refuses to see the incestuous desires Manfred has for Isabella, and her blindness leads her to offer up her own daughter, Matilda, as a bride to Frederic, Isabella's father. She believes that this will avert the destruction of her family by unifying it with Frederic's, who will become the lord of Otranto. Hippolita's blindness, deafness, and muteness render her complicit in the incestuous urges of Manfred and Frederic. Isabella cries out that Hippolita will cause their downfall by refusing to acknowledge Manfred's desire, saying: 'The purity of your own heart prevents you from seeing the depravity of others. Manfred, your lord, that impious man–' (89). Hippolita refuses to listen to the truth regarding her husband's incestuous desires, speaking only to defend Manfred. Hippolita is dutiful beyond comprehension; when Father Jerome speaks pointedly about Isabella remaining in the convent for safety, Hippolita says: 'it is my duty to hear nothing that it pleases not my lord I should hear' (50). Hippolita's silent accession to violent incestuous male desires against other women is rewarded with lifelong celibacy in a nearby convent. That she happily exchanges her position as a wife for a non-sexualized existence and accomplishes this through her deafness to incestuous desires affords her an agency through passivity. In this way Hippolita represents Hoeveler's understanding of Gothic feminism; while I argue that Hoeveler's claims regarding Gothic heroines largely fail to account for their agency and sexual desires, Hippolita does in fact fit Hoeveler's model.[61] Hippolita's actions and their consequences are in direct opposition to what happens to female characters who are silent and complicit with unwanted or violent male incestuous desires in later Gothic works.[62] Walpole's passive and collusive mother is frequently

---

[61] Hoeveler, p. 246.

[62] Unlike Hippolita who is rewarded for her complicity with male-based incestuous desires, female characters who do not assist the heroines under sexual, mental, or physical threats in other Gothic works are punished, and severely. Madame Montoni in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) allows Emily (her niece and the heroine) to be offered to the richest suitor and is imprisoned by her husband and dies. The Marchesa in Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) dies of guilt after giving her consent to the heroine,

rejected by subsequent Gothic writers in favour of the missing and reclaimed mother who provides support and assistance to the heroine.[63]

Manfred's designs on Isabella conform, in part, to a father-daughter configuration of incest, although the violent and undesired nature of his incestuous desires share similarities to the model of uncle-niece incest.[64] While, as I have argued, sociological explanations of incest as an abuse of male power located in the nuclear family structure are inadequate to account for most father-daughter incest in the Gothic, the approach is a profitable one in terms of Walpole's work. Manfred's desires for Isabella can be located within the understanding of incest provided by feminist sociologists because Walpole's representations of incest exemplify the threat of male familial power as delineated in the sociological model. That *Otranto* fits this framework – as Hippolita fits Hoeveler's – furthers my argument that this work should be displaced as the originary Gothic text, in part because subsequent Gothic novels elude strict adherence to either Hoeveler's or sociological models of incest. Isabella is positioned as a daughter figure to Manfred as she was his intended daughter-in-law and she is now under his paternal protection. According to the laws of Walpole's time, Manfred's proposal to Isabella is perfectly legal in terms of existing incest laws: no marriage between Isabella and Conrad took place and so if Manfred is able to obtain a divorce from Hippolita, there is no legal obstacle to their union. Isabella's disgust at the proposed union between herself and Manfred is thus not a repulsion based on legal apprehension but a consequence of the familial ties by which she understands she is bound to Manfred. Isabella, on fleeing from Manfred and his proposal, decides, 'if no other means of deliverance offered, to shut herself up for ever among the holy virgins' (27). Isabella's iconic flight through the subterranean passage to the neighbouring convent is reproduced repeatedly, with subtle variations, in many Gothic

---

Ellena's, murder. In Charlotte Smith's novel *Emmeline* (1788) Emmeline's aunt, Lady Montreville, dies after a lengthy attempt to coerce the heroine into undesired marriages.

[63] See Anolik: 25-43. Examples of this type of mother or mother-substitute include Radcliffe's characters of Olivia in *The Italian* (1797) and the Marchioness Mazzini in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790); the Countess of Wolfenbach in Eliza Parsons' *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793); and Correlia in Sarah Sheriffe's *Correlia, or The Mystic Tomb* (1802), to name a few. An alternative to the Gothic missing mother is the sexually aggressive mother, such as Walpole's Countess in *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), a maternal model I analyze in chapter 5 of this thesis.

[64] See chapter 3 of this thesis for a detailed examination of violent uncle-niece incest as representative of male usurpations of property and female bodies.

novels.[65] However, what stands out the most about her flight is not the actual passage itself, but the paternal incestuous threat to her virginity that initiates it. Her final destination – a convent offering potential lifelong celibacy 'shut up for ever among the holy virgins' – is the only alternative model of sexuality available to Isabella if she refuses a paternal cycle of exchange.

Incest functions as a logical extension of male desires that turn Isabella into an object of desire for both her physical beauty and her ability to produce another heir for Manfred – to 'preserve his race' as Manfred himself phrases it. Incestuous desires do not turn Isabella into a physical object of desire; rather, it is her biological ability to produce children that affects the incestuous desires. Irigaray points to this when she asks: 'why are men not objects of exchange among women? It is because women's bodies – through their use, consumptions, and circulation – provide for the condition making social life and culture possible.'[66] Walpole positions incestuous desires as the natural consequence of male desires and their supposedly legitimate need to produce heirs. In seeming contradiction to Levi-Strauss's theories on the incest taboo as the requirement that allowed civilization to develop, Walpole presents incest as a culturally mandated male desire that is not at all at odds with reproduction and culture. The seeming paradox is resolved when it is understood that it is only Isabella who defines the desires as incestuous – a rejection that is meaningless if the male does not also so locate the desires. That these desires are unfulfilled confirms Walpole's novel to be deeply critical of the institutions of government and law that place such power to determine what constitutes incest in the paternal body of the monarch (here: Manfred).[67] That Isabella will be unable to remain in the convent is a given – she will be forced back into circulation as a commodity because while she views the potential union with Manfred as incestuous he does not; the commodity has no say in whether or not it will be exchanged.

---

[65] This trope recurs in novels such as Smith's *Emmeline*, Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Italian*, Parsons' *Wolfenbach*, Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798), and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), among many others.
[66] Irigaray, p. 171.
[67] This is similarly an implicit criticism of the changes in law regarding marriage under Henry VIII that allowed him to marry Anne Boleyn, who was technically within the forbidden degrees of affinal connection to him, given her consanguineal relationship to his first wife, only to later charge her with incest (among other crimes) in order to have her executed so he could marry Jane Seymour.

Walpole demonstrates the fluidity of conceptions of incest and the arbitrary nature of the law through comic irony. The novel's dual condemnation of the hypocrisy of the law and definitions of family is manifest in the depiction of Manfred as so blinded by lust and his desire to produce another heir that he pleads incest laws as an excuse to leave his marriage to Hippolita in order to commit incest with Isabella. Incest is first named by Father Jerome, who makes use of the term to draw attention to Manfred's proposed marriage with Isabella as the relationship that is incestuous, saying to Manfred: 'by me thou art warned not to pursue the incestuous design on thy contracted daughter' (50). Father Jerome's recognition of Manfred's desires as incestuous locates their function as causing what Ruth Perry identifies as a standard Gothic convention: 'a girl singled out, against her will, in her own domestic space, for the sexual attentions of a father, an uncle, or a brother.'[68] Walpole's purpose in so doing, however, seems less to point towards the threats of domesticity and the nuclear family than to demonstrate the potential danger of adhering to archaic laws. In the same conversation it is the legality of incest that is named as the means by which Manfred will attempt to free himself from his marriage vows to Hippolita: 'It is some time that I have had scruples on the legality of our union: Hippolita is related to me in the fourth degree [... .] Ease my conscience of this burden; dissolve our marriage' (50). Father Jerome sees through Manfred's transparent ploys to end his legally binding union to Hippolita, locating as incestuous the relationship that involves, not distant blood ties, but the abuse of paternal power from a guardian figure over his ward.

The union Manfred contemplates with his son's fiancée is more appalling to Father Jerome than Manfred's marriage to Hippolita because the affinal father-daughter bond he almost shared with Isabella is understood as a stronger kinship tie than that of blood four times removed. Thus, the repugnance at the idea of a father-daughter union, in spite of no actual blood tie, is stronger than the revulsion towards an actual – though diluted – blood tie. This understanding parallels Father Jerome's objection to incest with the understanding of seventeenth-century English theologian and clergyman Jeremy Taylor, who believed that marriages between parents and children or children-in-law

---

[68] Perry, pp. 388-90.

59

overturned 'the proper order of familial authority.'[69] Manfred's proposed marriage to
Isabella would violate the authority of the (patriarchal) family and so Walpole's priest is
ironically positioned as objecting to the union with Isabella as incestuous on grounds as
irrational as those on which Manfred proposes to divorce his wife. The consanguineal tie
is not presented an obstacle to marriage or an object of disgust as long as the blood is
diluted enough the make the transfer of property and wealth (and therefore accumulation)
a viable option within the context of a consanguineal union.[70] Adam Kuper discusses this
flexible nature of the incest taboo, arguing that the prohibition can be transgressed when
so doing benefits members of the dominant group (read: men).[71] The paradoxical and
arbitrary nature of the incest taboo is underscored by Manfred who bases the dissolution
of his union with Hippolita on the grounds that they are 'related within the forbidden
degrees' (69) while simultaneously clarifying that he wishes to marry Isabella, who is as
'dear to me as my own blood' (69). Manfred uses the language of consanguineal incest to
reject his wife who is no longer of child-bearing years as he attempts to unite with
Isabella, who he locates as having an equally, though non-consanguineal, claim of
kinship.

The incestuous lust that Manfred feels for Isabella is mirrored in her father,
Frederic, who has incestuous father-daughter desires for Matilda, Manfred's daughter.
Manfred, bent on fulfilling his desire to sire a son with Isabella, is happy to sacrifice his
own daughter to Frederic: 'Manfred [...] proposed the double marriage. That weak
prince, who had been struck with the charms of Matilda, listened but too eagerly to the
offer' (96). Frederic readily consents to his daughter's marriage to her contracted father-
in-law because it enables him to realize his desires for Matilda. The incestuous desires of
both older men are understood by one another and both are willing to sacrifice their own

[69] Ellen Pollak, *Incest and the English Novel, 1684-1814* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 37.
[70] It is important to point out that this is why in *Emmeline* Smith's heroine is not considered a viable option for her cousin. Although the blood ties are removed enough theoretically to allow property and wealth movement, because of the misappropriation of her father's property by her uncle, the wealth has already been reallocated to her cousin's family. It is not the blood tie that causes Emmeline's aunt and uncle to object to the union, but the fact that they do not need their son to marry Emmeline to gain access to her property. An incest taboo is necessary to patriarchy's maintenance of exogamic exchange; it can only be overcome if the exchange of wealth or power can coincide with the incestuous union.
[71] Adam Kuper, 'Changing the Subject – about cousin marriage, among other things', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)*, 14 (2008): 727.

daughters to the other in order to indulge their own desires. At this point both men are fully cognizant of just what they are exchanging their daughters for: they are trading ownership of their daughters amongst themselves in order to have sex with their daughters' substitutes. Irigaray describes: 'the law that orders our society is the exclusive valorization of men's needs/desires, of exchanges among men [...] wives, daughters, and sisters have value only in that they serve as the possibility of, and potential benefit in, relations among men. The use of and traffic in women subtend and uphold the reign of masculine hom(m)o-sexuality.'[72] The fathers embody Irigaray's points about the exchanges of women that uphold patriarchal society and sexuality. The proposed trade exposes that the girls are merely exchangeable commodities and the ease with which the fathers are willing to trade their daughters for one another points to the interchangeable, deindividuated nature of female bodies. Walpole depicts the lust Frederic and Manfred have for each others' daughters as a replacement of the lust they feel for their own daughters: 'That prince [Frederic] had discovered so much passion for Matilda that Manfred hoped to obtain all he wished by holding out or withdrawing his daughter's charms' (100). Matilda and Isabella have become nothing more than bargaining chips in the game of their fathers' lust.

The structure of marriage that Levi-Strauss described as an 'exchange [...] between two groups of men' is borne out in the reciprocal trade in which Manfred and Frederic participate and elides any remaining distinction between Matilda and Isabella.[73] While the exchange has an incestuous father-daughter configuration, the fact that there is no affinal or consanguineal tie allows for its occurrence without a legal violation of the incest taboo – though it clearly encroaches on the taboo as defined by theologians, sociologists and psychiatrists in that it violates a position of familial authority or power.[74] Manfred has complete control over Matilda's 'charms' – her beauty and virginity – and he holds them out as the prize to Frederic in exchange for Isabella's beauty, virginity, and

---

[72] Irigaray, pp. 170-71.

[73] Levi-Strauss, p. 115. Levi-Strauss' theories regarding women as objects of exchange in marriage is predicated on the idea that an incest taboo is essential to create exogamy, and thus culture. Without the ban on incestuous relationships, men would marry within their families and social structures and alliances would never be built.

[74] See previously cited models of incest as an abuse of power or violation of familial authority as analyzed by Dominelli, Brickman and Taylor.

presumed fertility. Frederic and Manfred exchange the virginity of one daughter for the virginity of the other. Indeed, the interchangeability of the girls that emphasizes their fathers' incestuous desires is brought to a head when Matilda is killed by her father. Manfred murders Matilda believing she is Isabella – the object of his desire – plotting with her lover. He slays his daughter by plunging his dagger into her bosom in an act symbolic of incestuous rape.[75] Matilda dies in part because she defied her father's wishes to free her lover Theodore and in part because of her desire for Theodore. When Matilda frees Theodore, she states that she knows her actions are unwomanly as they disregard her filial duty to her father. The act is a disruption of paternal authority in favour of female desire that will not go long unpunished. The interchangeability of Matilda and Isabella is reinforced when Theodore marries Isabella after the murder of his beloved Matilda. Regardless of his motive, the result of the action is that Matilda's dead body is replaced with Isabella's living one. Though the girls have managed to escape the incestuous designs of their fathers, they have done so through no direct action of their own – Matilda escapes only through death and Isabella becomes a replacement commodity to fill the gap Matilda has left in the market. Isabella avoided replacing Hippolita only to perform a near identical replacement of a body no longer capable of reproduction when she takes Matilda's place as Theodore's wife.

Walpole's novel, although not the original Gothic work it is so often purported to be within the critical genealogy of the genre, employs many of the conventions that scholarship signals as belonging to the Gothic. By understanding how *Otranto* contributes to the images and themes that are taken and reconfigured by later Gothic writers we can gain better insight into the meaning of these subsequent developments. Representations of incest in *Otranto* operate as hyperbolizations of antiquated social systems and laws that lend themselves to abuses of male power and desire, functioning to reinforce patriarchal dominance through the culturally demanded exchange of women as commodities. The insights of Levi-Strauss and Irigaray allow Walpole's representations to be placed within the anthropological understanding of the exchange of women as necessary to culture and feminist challenges to this theory. Such understandings

---

[75] This is similar to the scenes of incestuous stabbings (or near stabbings) in novels including Radcliffe's *The Italian*, Parsons' *Wolfenbach* and Anne Ker's *The Mysterious Count; or, Montville Castle* (1803).

demonstrate that although Walpole's often subversive parody plays with disrupting the notion that the incest taboo creates culture, the novel ultimately reinforces the position of women as commodities whose exchange is a social necessity. In recognizing these representations of father-daughter incest as aligned with the sociological model of incest as abuses of power encoded within the family and social structures, incest is revealed as a consequence of these structures of power. Walpole's work presents father-daughter incest as scholarship commonly perceives the function of incest in the Gothic: as an abuse against unwilling, young women that is the effect of archaic institutions of power, law, family and marriage. But as we will see, this understanding of father-daughter incest – and incest on the whole – is in fact largely questioned and overturned in later Gothic novels, in which father-daughter incest provides additional models of female desire and agency, affording an escape from the economics of female exchange as necessary to culture.

II. Escaping from the Castle: Incest and Heroinic Action in *The Romance of the Forest*

The striking similarities between many of the incestuous situations, characters' personalities, and even names, in Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* and Walpole's *Otranto* beg a comparison between the two works that provides an important means of repositioning Radcliffe's novel – and many that follow – as part of a Gothic tradition distinct from that represented by Walpole's parodic and satirical work. The contrast between the depictions of incest, sexuality and female agency in *The Romance of the Forest* and *Otranto* are marked in that Radcliffe's representations of father-daughter incest allow the heroine access to desire, voice, and action. Radcliffe reworks many of the conventions used in *Otranto* to model alternatives to the exchange of women that remains, in Walpole's work, the only means of theorizing culture. In reimagining the heroine as having sexual desires presented as naturally occurring, as capable of manipulating the father-daughter incestuous desires encoded within the ward-guardian power relation, and as able effectively to flee from incestuous threats and rescue

wounded heroes, Radcliffe establishes the heroine as an active agent who removes herself from the traffic in women. In analyzing Radcliffe's novel, I continue to rely on the theories of Irigaray and Rubin concerning the economy of female bodies and employ insights on representations of consanguineal bonds in eighteenth-century narratives from scholars such as Perry. Scholarship that approaches Radcliffe's novel as belonging to a Female Gothic tradition and relies on Freudian paradigms of incestuous desire, such as Hoeveler's reading, overlooks female agency and desire by focusing exclusively on the heroine as a manipulator of male desires. I argue that Radcliffe explodes the understood – though in her time as yet widely challenged – commodification of women that denies female action, desire and voice by using father-daughter incest as a means of troubling notions of the family, driving female action and depicting female desire as natural.

Radcliffe's novel opens with a description of the heroine, Adeline's, first father figure, Pierre de La Motte, who is described, like Walpole's Manfred, as lacking sufficient self-control to overcome his passions and desires: 'with strength of mind sufficient to have withstood temptation, he would have been a good man; as it was, he always a weak, and sometimes a vicious member of society [...] his virtue, such as it was, could not stand the pressure of occasion.'[76] La Motte and Manfred are both of naturally good character if not confronted with temptation and passion, which they allow to corrupt and dominate them. Adeline, Radcliffe's young, virtuous and beautiful heroine is, superficially, very similar to Walpole's young, virtuous and beautiful heroine Isabella. However, through a comparison of their actions and reactions towards father-daughter incest a significant difference in their characters and behaviour emerges. This uncanny doubling of characters is repeated by the echoing of names from earlier works – a common occurrence throughout the generations of Gothic texts – as Walpole's imprisoned young lover, Theodore, is refashioned in Radcliffe's imprisoned young lover, Theodore. That the very names, experiences and personalities of characters are reused reinforces the closed in and repetitious nature of the Gothic world.[77] The effect of the

---

[76] Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, ed. Chloe Chard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 2. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

[77] Modleski points to 'enforced confinement' as underlying the paranoia of Gothic heroines (p. 11). While I disagree with Modleski's psychoanalytic conclusions that identify Gothic heroines as paranoid, her treatment of claustrophobic domestic spaces yields important analyses of repeated Gothic conventions.

duplications not only creates a claustrophobic environment, but also gives a greater sense of freedom when the characters, previously viewed as synonymous with their literary predecessors, are able to break the mould of repetition and with it, the cyclical nature of the patriarchal power structure that previously contained them.

Incest, depicted in Walpole's novel as a male-desired and male-sought threatening horror to be fled from to the safety of a convent, is portrayed in Radcliffe's novel as a masculine weakness that allows the heroine the opportunity to save herself and her lover. While in Walpole's work incestuous desires reinforced the interchangeability of women and their place as marketable goods, the incestuous passions in Radcliffe's Gothic are manipulated and destroyed by the heroine and allow her to exhibit action, female desire and self-sufficiency. Adeline's agency is evinced through her ability to feel desire for and attraction to several of the male characters – who are often a blend of good and evil – and in her power to flee from the danger they present. The effect of this at times perversely presented attraction is described by Perry as mirrored in the reactions of the readers of the Gothic: 'the confusion of good and evil projected by the attractive male villain produces in its readers a perverse attraction to threatening force, a hankering after unnatural domination.'[78] I argue that this attraction is similarly found in Adeline who is initially attracted to the Marquis de Montalt, who becomes the greatest threat to her virtue, freedom and agency. The irrational attraction signifies a consanguineal relationship that is currently unknown to the heroine, exposing a desire that may – and in fact does – become dangerous.[79] Radcliffe reconfigures incest from its representation as a male-wielded weapon of female subjugation to an exploitable and destroyable weakness the heroine is able to employ to her own advantage. Father-daughter incest, whether desired or rejected by the heroine, thus becomes a transgressive force that enables her to fight free from the walls of the patriarchal castle and convent rather than remain within them as Isabella does in *Otranto*. Adeline rejects patriarchy's notions of female desire and uses the threat of incestuous assaults to escape, propelled into action to save her lover and leave behind the crumbling, unnecessary castles of archaic domination.

---

[78] Perry, p. 389.

[79] Perry describes the phenomena of feelings of kinship or attraction to those who turn out to be related as the '*cri du sang* or the call of blood [that] signified a fictional instinct whose popularity apparently reassured society that consanguinity was still powerful' (p. 95).

Gothic heroines frequently have to save themselves from the incestuous designs of an older male relative, guardian or father figure because there is no male hero or protector on whom they can rely, although this action and agency is often overlooked. 'Gothic feminism' is defined by Hoeveler as a 'pretended weakness, a pose of innocent victim, a masquerade of asexual passivity', although this explanation fails to take into account the contrasting depictions of heroines and their male counterparts in situations of imprisonment, threats, and violence.[80] I refer to 'Gothic feminism' as 'passive feminism' so as not to confuse Hoeveler's renaming of 'victim feminism' with the actual feminist themes found throughout the Gothic that are characterized by action and response rather than pose and passivity. Hoeveler's ideas on passive feminism are corroborated by scholars such as David Durrant, who asserts that the Radcliffean heroine ultimately 'ignore[s] the real world, and live[s] docilely as a child for all of her life. But it is worth it, the outside world is too fraught with perils to be endured.'[81] Durrant and Hoeveler both overlook the fact that the heroine triumphantly overcomes dangers and obstacles – an oversight necessary to maintain a notion of passive feminism. If the way that Gothic heroines manipulate the incestuous desires of the father or father figure provided the only escape from danger such a passive reading might be possible. But this manipulation of male desires is only one part of the heroine's action that culminates with flight and destruction of the patriarchy that secures her safety and allows her to rescue the hero.

Hoeveler's argument for passive feminism rests partly on her claim that: 'to the female gothic consciousness, the patriarchy [...] exists as a huge protection racket [... .] Gothic heroines, if they were to survive, were then forced to seek protection from any surrogate protection agency they could find [...] a means of protection that they did not possess in their own right.'[82] Hoeveler identifies the Female Gothic heroine as a woman who sells herself to most controllable bidder (man) the better to manipulate her putative protector, arguing that the wounding or imprisonment of the lover symbolically castrates

---

[80] Hoeveler lays claim to this label in the preface of *Gothic Feminism*, stating that it is a tactic found in the majority of Gothic heroines who 'cannot bare their teeth in anything other than a smile', taking what had previously been called 'victim feminism' in application to the Female Gothic and renaming it 'gothic feminism'. Further definitions are found throughout her book and a summary thereof can be found on page 246.

[81] David Durrant, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Conservative Gothic', *Studies in English Literature, 1500 – 1900*, 22:3 (1982): 528.

[82] Hoeveler, pp. 34-35.

him by relegating him to a position of eternal subordination or feminization. Thus, the true Gothic heroine chooses what Hoeveler calls the 'sentimentally feminized man' in order to have an easily controlled husband (protection system) behind her so that she may reclaim the title, wealth and property usurped from her.[83] But Hoeveler's claim here is invalidated by the simple fact that all the lovers of the Gothic heroines make full recoveries before their marriages or engagements. Even if the heroes, such as Walpole's and Radcliffe's Theodores, Vivaldi and Valancourt are metaphorically castrated for some part of the novel, they regain their masculinity by the novels' endings.[84] It is crucial to make the distinction between Gothic heroines being aware of their sexuality and beauty, of their value in the eyes of men and their ability to manipulate dangerous situations to their advantage and of Hoeveler's conclusion that these heroines turn to marriages that 'are quiet acceptances of their new keepers' in order to ensure a male protector.[85]

The shift from paternal patriarchy to spousal patriarchy that positioned first fathers and then husbands as male protectors and keepers of women is noted by Perry as occurring alongside the rise in Gothic fiction that protested against the change through its portrayals of dangerous and incestuous father figures.[86] This notion is corroborated by Hoeveler's argument; however, this understanding of male protection as located in either the husband or the father overlooks the ways many Gothic heroines in fact regain their names and families with little real male protection.[87] The convention of the wounded male lover, rather than creating a malleable protector, forces the heroine into successful self-reliance and navigation independent of male protection – reclaiming her name, property and family before marrying. The threat of father-daughter incest works similarly to the convention of the wounded hero: it does not offer the heroine a way to gain a permanent and compliant protector; rather, it affords the heroine an immediate way to

---

[83] Hoeveler, pp. 36-50.

[84] An exception to the recovery from wounding is Rochester in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) but the injury that blinds him hardly castrates or feminizes him. In fact, one can claim the wound serves to liberate Jane from the masculine gaze while still being able to enjoy a healthy sex life, and is examined further in chapter 4 of this thesis.

[85] Hoeveler, p. 36.

[86] Perry argues that consanguineal ties were loosening while the marriage bond and affinal relatives were of increasing importance in society, a shift in the family structure that produced anxiety evidenced through representations of kinship in the eighteenth-century novel, particularly in the Gothic, which hyperbolized the threats implicit in the new nuclear family (pp. 388-90).

[87] See Perry, pp. 86-88.

affect an escape from the very society that would require such protection. Incest, particularly in its father-daughter configuration, is such a pivotal part of uncovering the Gothic's rejection of patriarchal culture and passive feminism because it shows that the patriarchal protection system is one that cannot be trusted, no matter how available it is to manipulation. In contrast to the notion that Gothic heroines sell themselves to a controllable guardian, these women rather learn that there is no such male defender capable of being influenced permanently; that even fathers and guardians cannot be trusted, that to be safeguarded they must remove themselves from the patriarchal protection system that, in fact, offers them no material security at all.[88]

Patriarchy's inability to imagine or allow for female desire, a method of controlling and regulating female behaviour, is rejected through the representation of desire that allows Adeline to refuse a celibate life.[89] Radcliffe combines the convention of the convent with the threats of the father to reveal the sexual tyranny over women that fathers attempt to maintain, here using Catholicism and later incestuous threats as a means to enforce female celibacy. Adeline's repudiation of coercion into celibacy is a drastic revision of how Walpole's female characters view the option of life in a nunnery. Adeline describes her removal to a convent at the age of seven and the ongoing attempts of her (believed) father, Louis St Pierre, and the abbess to convince her to take the veil and her years of withstanding their efforts. Adeline refers to: 'the wretchedness of my situation, condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and imprisonment of the most dreadful kind, or to the vengeance of a father, from whom I had no appeal' (1, 55). The contrast to Walpole's characters is marked. While Isabella sees a lifetime in a convent as a sanctuary, Matilda debates taking the veil, and Hippolita retires to a convent, Adeline – like many Gothic heroines after her who are thrust into cloisters and forced, coerced or threatened into taking vows – identifies a life of celibacy as 'perpetual imprisonment.'[90]

---

[88] See Hoeveler, p. 36.
[89] See E.J. Clery, 'Horace Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* and the Impossibility of Female Desire', in *The Gothic: Essays and Studies*, ed. Fred Botting (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 23-46.
[90] Female characters are imprisoned in convents and threatened with perpetual celibacy following attempts to compel them into taking the vows of a nun in many Gothic texts, including George Moore's *Grasville Abbey* (1793), Radcliffe's *The Italian*, Lewis's *The Monk*, Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine*, and George Barrington's *Eliza, or The Unhappy Nun* (1803). My argument here is in contrast to that of Maria Purves in *The Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009). Purves argues that Gothic novels, while generally understood by

Convent life is viewed as a non-life: 'the horrors of the monastic life rose fully to my view [...] excluded from the cheerful intercourse of society [...] condemned to silence – rigid formality – abstinence and penance – condemned to forego the delights of a world' (1: 67). Radcliffe uses the word 'abstinence' rather than 'celibacy' to leave the meaning open to being read as abstaining from vices or indulgences although the sexual connotation was the most common contemporary understanding of the term.[91] That Adeline unites the words 'horror' and 'abstinence' makes explicit that her dread of the nunnery lies in the prospect of life without sexual, as well as social, intercourse, and it also offers an alternative meaning for a censorious readership that fears the expression and existence of female sexuality.[92] The convent, the physical manifestation of superstition and repression identified with Catholicism, is loaded with additional terrors through the heroine's dread of a permanent removal from a sexual existence.[93] Catholicism in the Gothic novel, described as exemplifying 'tyranny in all its forms: political, intellectual, and sexual' is tied here to the figure of the father and his demands.[94] In refusing the celibate life of the convent and her father's demand that she take the veil, Adeline rejects both institutionalized and familial attempts to curtail her sexual choices.

Not only does Adeline reject St Pierre's demand for her to become a nun, but she also uses it as reason to dissolve their father-daughter relationship: 'Since he can forget [...] the affection of a parent, and condemn his child without remorse to wretchedness and despair – the bond of filial and paternal duty no longer subsists – he has himself dissolved it' (1: 55). Adeline, far from the fearful justifications of Walpole's Matilda,

---

scholarship as presenting anti-Catholic and anti-monastic views, actually depict the convent as a space that offers safety to heroines, an alternative to the outside world and its threats, as opposed to being conceived as a threat to female liberty.

[91] Since the mid-fourteenth century 'abstinence' has been used to refer particularly to sexual appetites. <http://dictionary.reference.com/etymology/abstinence> [accessed 17 July 2009].

[92] Leaving available a substitute meaning would have been a real concern for Radcliffe who needed to maintain an image as a respectable woman writer in a genre frequently condemned for its promotion of individual desires. See Fred Botting, *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 1996), in which Botting describes the understanding of the genre as 'giving free reign to [...] sexual desires' (p. 4).

[93] Hoeveler explains Gothic representations of Catholicism as: 'a sort of leitmotif throughout the gothic novel, reifying British and Enlightenment dread of medievalism, superstition, and uninformed prejudice' (p. 52).

[94] Perry, p. 390.

succinctly justifies irrevocably severing the bond of paternal duty to her father.[95] Shortly after Adeline declares her filial obligation dissolved her father retrieves her from the convent, bringing her to the small house from which La Motte takes her. That night she dreams of her father:

> I thought that I was in a lonely forest with my father; his looks were severe, and his gestures menacing: he upbraided me for leaving the convent, and while he spoke, drew from his pocket a mirror, which he held before my face; I looked in it and saw, (my blood now thrills as I repeat it) I saw myself wounded, and bleeding profusely. Then I thought myself in the house again; and suddenly heard [...] 'Depart this house, destruction hovers here' (1: 61-62).

Adeline rejects the bonds of the father-daughter relationship because of unfair restraints on her sexuality and then has a dream involving her father filled with sexual imagery. The dream hints at incestuous passions that 'thrill her blood' – a far cry from the horror she felt at the prospect of an abstinent life. That she is upbraided and wounded after leaving the convent furthers the conclusion that Adeline eschews chastity in favour of sexual intercourse. Her father's anger at her for leaving the religious house warns her of the sexual danger she is in. The dreamed sexual encounter and its violent, destructive consequences embody the 'perverse attraction' towards danger that Perry describes in relation to readers' reactions to attractive villains. Adeline's agency and thrill at the sexual wounding experienced with (if not by) her father is a radical departure from the terror of male desire exhibited by Isabella in Walpole's novel. Radcliffe turns what was in Walpole's work female victimization by the father figure (made not only possible, but also mandatory, by the absence of female desire) into a dream of incestuous desires that provokes Adeline's flight from the father who would repress her sexuality.

There is a marked relationship between women, property and exchange in eighteenth-century literature, which is assessed by Pollak who argues that: 'as reproducers women alone made possible the orderly transmission of property and patronym from father to son. As objects of exchange in an exogamous kinship system, they were the conduits through which heirs were produced and fraternal bonds between

---

[95] Walpole's Matilda states that womanly modesty and filial obligation prevent her from freeing Theodore and justifies assisting him because holy charity allows it. Matilda is barely able to overcome filial ties to save a man's life while Adeline dissolves them when her sexual freedom is threatened. The contractual nature of her obligation to her father is voided by his refusal to grant her rights – see chapter 4 of this thesis for a more detailed analysis of obligation and individual rights in relation to incestuous relationships.

convent or the exchange between men and escaping to an alternative model of economy and sexuality with the lover of their choice.

This renunciation of exchange is exemplified in multiple interactions between La Motte and Adeline in which she demonstrates her value within the endogamic family unit by exploiting her sexual commodification and then abandoning the economy that makes such demands. Adeline's temporary manipulation of the culture of exchange in order to escape it belies Hoeveler's assertion that Gothic heroines assume a mask of femininity in order to gain a permanent and malleable male protector. Hoeveler's point is at odds with Irigaray's analysis of woman as performing a 'masquerade of femininity' on the exchange market for which she goes uncompensated 'unless her pleasure comes simply from being chosen as an object of consumption or of desire by masculine "subjects."'[100] Adeline's temporary masquerade is not performed for pleasure or a desire to gain a lasting protector, but is a calculated strike at the system that aids her escape from culture.[101] When La Motte, his wife and Adeline enter an abandoned monastery, although it is Madame de la Motte who voices the most fear, it is Adeline who clings to La Motte. In a description charged with sexual undertones, Adeline 'uttered an exclamation of mingled admiration and fear. A kind of pleasing dread filled her bosom, and filled all her soul. Tears started into her eyes: – she wished, yet feared, to go on; – she hung upon the arm of La Motte, and looked at him with a sort of hesitating interrogation' (2: 26). Adeline is ostensibly fearful of entering the passageway and the scene functions as a one of sexual transgression or loss of virginity. Adeline, with her new father figure and guardian, is both scared and desirous, fearing and wishing to proceed, and has instantly replaced Madame de La Motte's physical space by clinging to her husband's arm in the older woman's place. Adeline is here a willing usurper of Madame de La Motte, using her youth and beauty to influence La Motte.[102]

In unequivocal contrast to Hoeveler's description of '"professional femininity" – a cultivated pose, a masquerade of docility, passivity, wise passiveness, and tightly

---

[100] Irigaray, p. 84.

[101] Joan Riviere argued that 'womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it' in 'Womanliness as Masquerade', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929): 306.

[102] Hoeveler, p. xv.

controlled emotions', Adeline actively engages in both physical and emotional agency to gain control and receives the desired response from La Motte.[103] The effect of this father-daughter type relationship, which has such a charged incestuous sexual air, gives Adeline power – power over her father figure, and power over his wife, whose pleas he ignores in order to prove his bravery to Adeline. It is also important to note here that Adeline is both fearful and desirous – the dread she feels is 'pleasing' and though she looks at La Motte with a 'hesitating interrogation' it is clear that she is directing this scene; rather than being persuaded to go on against her wishes, she desires La Motte to continue. Radcliffe's heroine effectively manipulates the father figure into incestuous longings that keep her out of the convent and unexchanged.

In another scene, Adeline pleads with her guardian for her life and safety from the Marquis de Montalt, her uncle, who has both murderous and incestuous designs upon her. La Motte, who has entered Adeline's room at the Marquis' murderous bidding, gazes upon her beautiful sleeping form and listens to her sing in her sleep. When Adeline wakes she instantly fears La Motte is there to hand her over to the lustful Marquis. She throws herself on La Motte's mercy: 'You once saved me from destruction [...] O save me now! Have pity upon me – I have no protector but you' (2: 186). Adeline's plea appears spontaneous but it is unlikely she was singing in her sleep. She exploits her innocence, beauty and youth, placing herself as the object of her guardian's gaze, and she is successful. La Motte, overcome by her appearance, allows her to flee from the castle and Adeline undertakes a long, dangerous, and ultimately triumphant journey to escape from the Marquis. This exploitation of female sexuality that some Gothic heroines perform so effectively removes them from the market economy from which they receive nothing and affords them the temporary protection of a father/father figure until they can escape and reclaim their heroes. The Gothic heroine uses her sexuality in an incestuous explosion of traditional patriarchal values, figuratively laying down with the father to get to the hero, and thus breaking down the exchange of female bodies by men to gain freedom and choice. The choice rarely results in a physical, sexual consummation with the father figure as the tears, pleas, and emotional appeals for protection from the young,

---

[103] Hoeveler, p. xv.

vulnerable, and chaste heroine touch even the most corrupted of male hearts. Accessing their own sexuality allows heroines to control the desires of men and the course of their futures, disrupting the incest taboo and its simultaneous traffic in women.

Many Gothic novels, following Radcliffe, rework the eighteenth-century literary convention of instinctual kinship recognition and the corresponding disinclination to mate with unknown relatives into an immediate attraction or desire. Perry describes the instinctual repugnance characters often display towards members of their families who are hitherto unknown: 'instinctual disgust warned the sister and brother, although ignorant of their consanguineal connection, that their mating was somehow beyond the pale.'[104] Missing family members and displaced heirs, another literary convention of the time, are often hinted at by being presented as sexually unpalatable to the hero or heroine by a sort of sixth sense. In the Gothic, rather than the unknown relations feeling an initial disgust, there is often an instant recognition or familial attraction that helps the long-lost relative to discern his or her missing kin. The heroine feels this immediate attraction towards the unknown male relatives and to the man (kin or non-kin) she eventually marries. In this sense, the Gothic identifies kin both as those with whom we are related by blood and those we marry.[105] Adeline shows this immediate recognition or preference for her uncle, though the attraction is emphasized on the Marquis' side. When the Marquis first sees Adeline after she faints, the handsome man of about forty attempts to lift her:

> Upon Adeline, who was yet insensible, he gazed with an eager admiration, which seemed to absorb all the faculties of his mind [... .] Her beauty, touched with the languid delicacy of illness, gained from sentiment what it lost in bloom. The negligence of her dress, loosened for the purposes of freer respiration, discovered those glowing charms, that her auburn tresses, which fell in profusion over her bosom, shaded, but could not conceal (1: 131).

Perry's arguments about the initial and intrinsic repugnance towards a sexual relationship or familial recognition between previously unknown family members would imply this older, handsome soldier is certainly not related to Adeline. But the Marquis de Montalt is

---

[104] Perry, p. 397.
[105] See Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) for comprehensive treatments of family, kinship, and marriage in eighteenth-century England and the divergent yet coterminous emphases on affinal, consanguineal and conjugal relations.

in fact Adeline's paternal uncle, the owner of the abbey. The initial mutual attraction that is sexual rather than familial in nature reveals how Gothic writers trouble contemporary understandings of attraction and kinship. The existing normative accounts of instinctual recognition/disgust that Perry points to as operating in literature as warnings to the heroine that a potential mating is incestuously dangerous are subverted when female desire is depicted as an instinctive attraction towards the incestuous relationship.

That Radcliffe and other Gothic writers so consistently render the hero impotent to help the heroine enables the heroine to rescue herself. The passivity some scholars interpret as defining Gothic heroines is problematic when their actions are compared to those of the male characters who are frequently imprisoned, terrified, and in search of sanctuary, undergoing as much (if not more) imprisonment than the heroines.[106] Adeline's lover, Theodore, for example, is removed from the novel's action for quite some time after being arrested by the King's Guard; Radcliffe has incarcerated the male who would otherwise be the heroine's saviour. La Motte is similarly imprisoned at the novel's opening: 'Alone, unarmed—beyond the chance of assistance [...] he endeavoured to await the event with fortitude; but La Motte could boast of no such virtue' (1: 4). La Motte's confinement, though brief, shows his lack of courage and inability to effect an escape, a lack accentuated by Adeline's later unaided flight from first her (believed) father and then her uncle's estate. Adeline's manipulation of La Motte's potentially incestuous feelings and multiple escapes cause her to develop the self-reliance that later enables her to use legal recourse to exonerate Theodore from the false charges levelled against him and rescue him from his unjust imprisonment. The wounded hero who requires salvation from imprisonment or death is a means of showing female resilience, strength and recourse. Adeline, whilst held captive by her uncle at his chateau, refuses to be either his mistress or wife, unwilling to sell herself to him honourably or dishonourably and thus reenter the market of exchange.[107] The threat of incest underlies Adeline's escape from danger that propels her to rescue her lover. The heroinic action

[106] Imprisoned male characters – heroes or villains – include both Vivaldi and Schedoni in *The Italian*, Valancourt and Du Pont in *Udolpho*, Hippolitus de Vereza in *A Sicilian Romance*, and Albert in Anne Ker's *The Mysterious Count; or, Montville Castle* (1803), amongst others.

[107] The figure of the uncle who offers either a role as sex-slave or wife to his niece is similarly presented in Parsons' *Wolfenbach*, in which the heroine also rejects both options, locating them as equally objectionable and synonymous.

that follows breaks down gendered ideologies of masculinity and femininity by requiring that the hero be saved by the heroine.[108]

When the Marquis leaves Adeline for the night she searches for a means of egress. Seeing a window: 'she sprang forward and alighted safely in an extensive garden [... .] Thence she had little doubt of escaping, either by some broke fence, or low part of the wall' (2: 250). Adeline frees herself from her uncle and his harem-like imprisonment. It is not until after her escape from the confines of the Marquis' domicile and his sexual designs on her that Theodore 'rescues' her from the garden in an attempt that goes woefully awry. The Marquis tracks Theodore and Adeline to a small town where Theodore is placed under arrest after he is dangerously wounded in a fight with the Marquis. Adeline is once again reliant only on herself – this time, not only to save herself, but Theodore as well. The use of the incestuous threats to drive heroinic action comes full circle when the Marquis is brought up on charges regarding the murder of his brother, Adeline's father. The judge requires Adeline give evidence to save La Motte's and Theodore's lives (both of whom are in prison awaiting execution at this point) by incriminating the Marquis in the murderous plot against herself. Adeline reflects on the Marquis, whom she now (falsely) supposes is her father: 'her horror of the Marquis, whom she could not bear to consider as her father [...] redoubled, and she became impatient to give the testimony' (2: 239). Adeline is given voice in court to tell her story and condemn her pursuer: she 'gave her little narrative with clearness and precision' (2: 240) and makes public the incestuous crimes that would have otherwise been silenced. After court Adeline reflects on the circumstances of her birth: 'From an orphan, subsisting on the bounty of others, without family, with few friends, and pursued by a cruel and powerful enemy, she saw herself suddenly transformed to the daughter of an illustrious house, and the heiress of immense wealth' (2: 249).

---

[108] Hoeveler's use of the terms 'manly' woman and 'womanly' man in relation to *Emmeline* are an example of what the Gothic subverted – notions of implicitly gendered qualities. This is why I borrow terms such as 'heroinism' and 'heroinic' used by Rachel M. Brownstein in *Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) and Ellen Moers in *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (New York: Doubleday, 1976; repr. Oxford University Press, 1985) to describe the action of the heroines and to fill the lack of a language for women.

76

Adeline sees herself transformed because she has orchestrated this transformation; she has successfully refused to condemn herself to a life in a convent, fled from the incestuous and murderous uncle, prepared to testify against him in a public court, caused Theodore to be freed from prison and an execution sentence and learned the truth about her parents, lineage, and birthright. When Hoeveler describes Gothic heroines such as Adeline as: 'a professional girl-woman, a [...] creation of the fertile but bored brain of Ann Radcliffe, bourgeois wife of a man who stayed late at the office almost every evening [...] one bored and neglected housewife [who] decided to translate her personal and social anxieties into words that could be read by other presumably bored housewives' she oversimplifies both Adeline's power and agency and the talent and motivations of Radcliffe.[109] Adeline is far from the 'wily little woman [who] would triumph through her skillful use of femininity as manipulation and guile' and hardly supports the notion that 'Gothic feminism taught women that pretended weakness was strength, and that the pose, the masquerade of innocent victim, would lead ultimately to possessing the master's goods and property. Gothic feminists believed [...] women's best defenses were a beguiling demeanor and a sweet smile.'[110]

The most pressing danger in Hoeveler's conclusion is the potential for this definition of Gothic feminism to become accepted, and thus the possibility that the work of Gothic writers might be diminished to little more than a female anxiety release that taught women to become professional victims. Hoeveler's conclusion overlooks the physical threats and dangers, flights, difficult journeys, recourses to the legal system, use of voice, reliance on mothers and mother figures, pursuit of truth and the intelligence that contribute in large part to the ability of the heroines to destroy the patriarchal system that forced them to perform the very masquerade Hoeveler describes. While *Otranto* parodies the structure of exchange at play in society Walpole is unable to reimagine a world in which women do not function as objects of exchange and thereby foreshadows Levi-Strauss's view that an escape from the exchange is impossible. In contrast, Radcliffe depicts the destruction of the structure of exchange, completing 'the revolution in kinship' that Rubin theorizes as taking place 'if the sexual property system were

---

[109] Hoeveler, pp. 54-55.
[110] Hoeveler, p. 246.

reorganized in such a way that men did not have overriding rights in women (if there was no exchange of women) and if there were no gender.'[111] Adeline exemplifies female strength, action and desire and has the courage to use her voice, successfully dissolve paternal ties and gender ideologies and escape from the castle, driven by the Gothic incest thematic to forever break from the bonds of patriarchal power.

III.   Breaking Down the Castle: Incest Destroys Patriarchal Society in *Matilda*

Shelley's *Matilda*, written between 1819-1820 but unpublished until 1959, is a highly erotic Gothic work that focuses on the incestuous love between the sixteen-year-old heroine Matilda and her unnamed father. Although the incest within the novel is never actualized it is made overt through the father's verbal declaration and written confession and Matilda's later revelation of her own incestuous longings. That Matilda and her father's incestuous relationship is never consummated with sexual intercourse is a crucial point, as, in spite of the scholarly preoccupation with father-daughter incest, heroines rarely engage in forced or sought sexual intercourse with their fathers.[112] Although the heroine may be subjected to the incestuous desires of family members she is just as often the instigator of such relationships when she chooses a familial object of her own desires, though these are not frequently realized. In *Matilda* the eponymous heroine longs for the physical consummation of her love for her father. Shelley's biography has been used a basis for critical interpretation of the novel and its incest plot by scholars such as Terence Harpold, who argues *Matilda* relies a great deal on the details of Shelley's life and her relationships with her parents.[113] But Harpold's reading, like the majority of psychobiographical analyses of *Matilda*, relies too heavily upon the Freudian paradigm that attempts to situate desire and sexuality as responses to a nuclear family structure that

---

[111] Rubin, p. 199.
[112] Gothic heroines, in this sense, complete the disintegration of male/female distinctions and paternal authority suggested by Gallop without necessarily physically completing the incestuous sex act – their refusal to obey the father's law is almost always enough to cause the destruction of the patriarchal structure.
[113] Terence Harpold, '"Did you get Mathilda from Papa?" Seduction Fantasy and the Circulation of Mary Shelley's *Mathilda*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 28:1 (1989): 50-56.

does not exist in the novel.[114] Shelley's *Matilda* is, I argue by contrast, revealed as using father-daughter incest to refute definitions of women as exchangeable goods and as dissolving the market economy of women to replace it with the formation of an endogamic society.

In order to move away from psychobiographical readings of Shelley's novel I argue that such analyses inappropriately position Matilda as a passive spectator to the events surrounding her and too readily conflate Shelley's and Matilda's distinctly different upbringings to justify their comparison. The use of psychobiographical approaches is complicated by applying to Matilda the Freudian theory of female sexual development used to understand Shelley's psychological and sexual development in the absence of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Although aspects of the novel and Shelley's life are similar – Matilda's mother dies in childbirth – they also diverge in important ways – Matilda's father is unable to bear the grief of his wife's death and leaves the infant Matilda with her aunt while Shelley was raised by her father, William Godwin. Matilda's father returns sixteen years later to reclaim his daughter who has grown up with no outlet for her naturally loving nature. She bestows upon her father all her affection and he returns it until a combination of jealousy towards her potential suitor and his confession of his love for her destroy their reunion. Whatever the effects of Wollstonecraft's death on Shelley's relationship with her father, reading Matilda's mother's absence as causing the perpetual victimization of the daughter to her father's desires is inappropriate given that Matilda does not meet her father until age sixteen.[115] Applying psychological insights regarding Shelley to Matilda, given the differences in their upbringings and the formative years of sexual development, conflates the author with her character in order to interpret Matilda in a way the structure of the novel does not allow.

Such interpretations lead scholars such as Hoeveler to represent Matilda's role in her father's eventual suicide as one of passivity: 'Matilda's passivity or rather her ostensible lack of control over any of these events [mother's absence, father's suicide]

---

[114] In *Matilda*, as in the majority of Gothic novels, the daughter is raised without a father figure, rendering the application of the Freudian model of female desire, at best, flawed. Shelley's upbringing similarly fails to conform to the Freudian model.

suggests the nature of trauma, as well as the posture or pose of gothic feminism. The daughter effectively destroys both her parents simply by being; her very ontology is fatal.'[116] However, it is difficult to sustain Hoeveler's reading of Matilda as passive and adopting a Gothic pose when she is also depicted as desperate and impassioned, urging her father to divulge his secret of incestuous love for her. Similarly, Harpold's reading of Shelley's work as autobiography applies a Freudian interpretation of Shelley's relationship with her father to claim that Matilda is a product of Shelley's psychosexual development. Harpold argues: 'Mary's capacity for "pre"-oedipal identification with the mother [...] would have been sharply restricted, in effect, already oedipalized, irreducibly subject to the imperatives of the father's desire. This is what happens in *Mathilda*.'[117] Hoeveler uses the death of Shelley's mother to prove that Matilda's presence is fatal and passive while Harpold employs it to show Shelley as inactive in the face of the father's desires. Hoeveler is just as keen to treat the novel as autobiographical, arguing it 'reads [...] as an embarrassingly personal fantasy.'[118] While Harpold's understanding of Shelley's lack of agency positions it as a psychological stunting and Hoeveler's reading presents it as the effect of an adopted pose, both Freudian-based analyses are used to argue Shelley is psychologically incapable of the pre-oedipal state of loving her mother and will thus always and only be subject to the father's desires. Such readings of Shelley's work displace it from the literary realm to the autobiographical by applying Freudian theories of female desire and sexual development to an amalgam of Shelley and her character, and seem doomed to fail.

Far from being passive or ruled by her father, Matilda's intense love for him is the result of her passionate nature that enables her to be an acting subject who transgresses the social prohibitions of incest and female desire and escapes the traffic in women. Matilda's sexual love for her father is revealed in her self-descriptions as an individual who loves passionately yet finds only one release for her love: 'the idea of my unhappy, wandering father was the idol of my imagination. I bestowed on him all my affections; there was a miniature of him that I gazed on continually [...] his first words [in my fantasies] were always "My daughter, I love thee"! What ecstatic moments were passed

---

[116] Hoeveler, p. 162.
[117] Harpold: 53.
[118] Hoeveler, p. 166.

in these dreams!'[119] Raised from infancy by an affectionless aunt, Matilda projects her love onto the image of her father. Reminisces of her early teen years offer no mention of young love or sexual awakening: all of her fantasies, fixations and hopes of future happiness are settled on the reunion with her father. The language used is essential to understanding the sexual rather than filial nature of Matilda's love for her father. Matilda passes 'ecstatic moments' in dreams with a man she has never met but on whose picture she gazes continually, making her father the object of her female gaze in a fixation of desire that functions in two important ways. First, it exemplifies what Judith Butler describes as the failure of the incest taboo, the existence of which: 'appears to suggest that desires, actions, indeed, pervasive social practices of incest are generated precisely in virtue of the eroticization of that taboo'.[120] Secondly, it defies the system of exchange that requires woman to be the object and demands 'that she herself never have access to desire', a condition that 'has as its founding operation the appropriation of woman's body by the father or his substitutes.'[121] Matilda, never within the system of exchange, challenges its requirements by having her father as the object of her female desire in a reversal of the normative. As Irigaray points out, 'where pleasure is concerned [...] to reverse the relation, especially in the economy of sexuality, does not seem a desirable objective.'[122] Matilda's objectification of her father via her gaze is a temporary reversal before she retreats from the patriarchal economy that requires her to be exchanged on the market.[123]

The moment of Matilda's reunion with her father is a more highly eroticized and romanticized moment than the reader expects from a first meeting between a teenage girl and her never-before-seen father that establishes the incestuous nature of their attachment: 'I approached the shore, my father held the boat, and in a moment I was in his arms. And now I began to live. All around me was changed from a dull uniformity to

[119] Shelley, p. 157.
[120] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 54.
[121] Irigaray, p. 189.
[122] Irigaray concludes that 'even supposing this to be possible, history would repeat itself in the long run, would revert to sameness' (pp. 32-33). This similarly is noted in Bersani's point regarding the futility of reversals of power/pleasure relations to be alone subversive.
[123] This is similar to the exploitation of male desire seen in Radcliffe's novel when Adeline manipulates the incestuous desires of her father figures and escapes from the economy of exchange with her lover.

the brightest scene of joy and delight' (161). This reunion is Matilda's rebirth; she begins to live only once she is in her father's embrace, which is equally her awakening and arousal and the description of their reunion certainly has orgasmic qualities. Matilda is jealous of her time with her father and her descriptions of her 'paradisiacal' time with him read like the musings of a lover: 'it was a subject of regret to me whenever we were joined by a third person, yet if I turned with a disturbed look towards my father, his eyes fixed on me and beaming with tenderness instantly restored my joy to my heart. O, hours of intense delight!' (163). Matilda enjoys her father's company to the extent that any outsider is looked upon as an intruder, potentially a usurper of affection, and a cause of distress. Shelley uses the language of romantic affection and desire rather than that of filial devotion to describe the emotions of Matilda towards her father. The father is hardly immune to Matilda as he clearly returns her looks, and she is obviously the focus of his masculine gaze just as he is the object of hers. When Matilda's father is upset with her and gives her no explanation for his sudden coldness she weeps, makes herself sick, worries, is miserable and incapable of eating. In short, she is far more upset than a daughter without incestuous desires would be. Her reaction is that of a lover separated from or abandoned by her beloved; the language Shelley uses repeatedly is the lexicon of romantic attachment rather than filial affection.

The father's incestuous desires are exposed partially through a depiction of his anxiety regarding a suitor interested in Matilda, an anxiety Matilda manipulates to demonstrate to him her value on the market of exchange so he will remove her from it. The suitor's presence creates tensions between Matilda and her father that reveal his emotions as too excessively jealous to be purely the product of paternal love. Matilda is aware of her father's unease, though she claims to be ignorant of its cause: 'I now remember that my father was restless and uneasy whenever this person visited us, and when we talked together watched us with the greatest apparent anxiety' (164). Whether or not Matilda recognizes her father's discomfort only in hindsight is impossible to determine, but it seems likely that she used the suitor to exhibit her sexuality – her desirability as a commodity – in order to elicit a certain response from her father.[124]

---

[124] Relating directly to the discussion of Adeline's self-sexualizing in the earlier section, Gothic heroines develop their sexuality before selecting and settling with their chosen mate.

Matilda's 'value' as a commodity is not shown in reference to another woman, which Irigaray argues is the only way for value to be assigned to an object: 'in order to have a relative value, a commodity has to be confronted with another commodity that serves as its equivalent. Its value is never found to lie within itself.'[125] Matilda establishes her own value in a way that Irigaray posits she cannot: she manipulates the system of exchange to position herself as valuable in relation to another 'buyer' on the market. Irigaray elaborates on Levi-Strauss's theories to argue 'the exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, currency all pass from one man to another; if it were otherwise, we are told, the social order would fall back upon incestuous and exclusively endogamous ties that would paralyze all commerce.'[126] Irigaray acknowledges the position of women as commodities but questions Levi-Strauss's assumption that society could not exist without such exchanges. Shelley's representation of Matilda's value and removal from commerce demonstrates the validity of both Levi-Strauss's and Irigaray's theories. When Matilda is removed from the marriage market there is a paralysis of commerce, as Levi-Strauss assumed, but the endogamous incestuous ties that are meant to be a consequence of the lack of exchange is instead the cause of it. Additionally, this paralysis of commerce – resulting from incestuous desires – enables the formation of a wholly new social order rather than the end of culture that Irigaray argues is an insurmountable flaw in Levi-Strauss's theory. That Matilda's father is incapable of offering his daughter as an object of exchange to the suitor begins the breakdown of the traffic in women that Matilda completes when she forces her father's incestuous declaration.

The letter Matilda receives from her father expresses his incestuous longings though its lack of details and fluctuating tone create a sense of hesitancy fully to disclose his desires and accept blame that refuses moral condemnation. The father claims he limits descriptions of his desires to keep vulgarity out of the letter: 'let a veil be drawn over the unimaginable sensations of a guilty father; the secrets of so agonized a heart may not be made vulgar' (179). However, this veiling of the 'unimaginable sensations' compels the reader to imagine them. Shelley thus allows the reader to judge the father's culpability

---

[125] Irigaray, p. 176.
[126] Irigaray, p. 192.

and leaves open the possibility of a reconciliation between him and Matilda. The metaphoric veil operates here in a more complicated manner than its typical use – concealing sexual activity or violence – becoming a tool of morality that enables the father to be both innocent and guilty and that permits the reader to condemn or to condone his desires. Even the clearest language that the father uses to express his feelings of guilt does not explicate the true nature of his love: 'if I enjoyed from your looks, and words, and most innocent caresses a rapture usually excluded from the feelings of a parent towards his child, yet no uneasiness, no wish, no casual idea awoke me to a sense of guilt' (179). The confession does not explain if the 'rapture' was a purely emotional response or a physical reaction to his daughter's caresses. While he clarifies that his feelings are excluded from the emotional range of other fathers, he immediately denies they caused him a sense of guilt. The language obfuscates his awareness of his loving Matilda incestuously. The word 'rapture' seems to indicate a strictly psychological state – that of ecstasy or bliss – but the fact that it is paired with 'innocent caresses' points to sexual ecstasy. Shelley's blending of the emotional and physical, psychological and sexual, paternal and incestuous alongside the use of the veil creates a fluctuating sense of guilt and morality and depicts incestuous desires as an unintentional emotional response the father struggles against acknowledging or indulging.

A refusal to condemn incestuous desires is present from the moment of reunion between Matilda and her father during which Shelley plays with the Gothic conventions of recognition, genealogy and Orientalism to render it possible for Matilda's father to fall in love with his daughter. Matilda's resemblance to her mother, Diana, plays a part in his incestuous love, as does his belief that Matilda is an angelic soul in a human body and/or the reincarnation of Diana's soul. This belief makes the idea of incest with his daughter less horrifying as her body is a shell housing his deceased wife's spirit. That the father's admission is contextualized within his earlier discussion of his sixteen years in the East lends credence to reading his desires as incestuous without inspiring guilt: 'The burning sun of India, and the freedom from all restraint had rather encreased the energy of his character [... .] He had seen so many customs and witnessed so great a variety of moral creeds that he had been obliged to form an independent one for himself which had no relation to the peculiar notions of any one country' (161). Matilda's father may be more

inclined to act on his incestuous desires or feel them without guilt because of the variety of moral codes he has witnessed. That incest in India was practiced relatively extensively is noted by psychohistorian Lloyd DeMause who describes its prevalence as going back 'as far as records exist'.[127] The Orientalism that often implies exotic sexualities and the mention of India and a variety of ethical creeds positions the father as altered in principles by years of exposure to incestuous customs.[128] This allows the father to escape the moral condemnation not permitted to a man with a wholly English experience of life.[129] This cultural dissonance is pointed to in William D. Brewer's examination of Shelley's 'unnationalizing' of male characters who 'find reassimilation into their native cultures difficult if not impossible.'[130] If Matilda's father feels guiltless rapture at his daughter's touch, the 'independent' ethical system he has formed suggests that incest is an inherently natural desire restrained by society, rather than morality. In complete opposition to Levi-Strauss's understanding of the prohibition of incest as creating culture, Matilda's father suggests that it is only the creation of (Western) culture that demands the incest taboo.[131]

Matilda claims repeatedly that the bliss of her and her father's reunion is ruined by no fault of her own but her part in pressing her father to confess his love for her is a calculated move that renders her self-absolution false. Her claim of innocence is

---

[127] Lloyd DeMause, 'The Universality of Incest', *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 19:2 (1991): 123-64. In this article DeMause cites the observations of scholars such as Catherine Mayo and Verrier Elwin, and includes the old Indian proverb: 'for a girl to be a virgin at ten years old, she must have neither brother nor cousins nor father' (125). Such observations support a reading Shelley's representations of the father as having an altered moral code regarding incest based on his time in India.

[128] This depiction of the East as having a more lax and passion-centred nexus of morality than that of Western societies echoes a monologue of the Marquis in *The Romance of the Forest* when, in an effort to persuade La Motte to murder Adeline, the Marquis insists that it is a sign of superiority to be able to lay aside the prejudices of education and country and to embrace one's nature as those from the East do. The Marquis manipulates a perception of Eastern culture to attempt to introduce a more fluid morality to La Motte. For an excellent treatment of eighteenth-century literature, Orientalism and conventions including representations of sexuality see Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[129] Hoeveler points to this passage as Shelley's way of allowing the father to 'rationalize incest in the extremely suspect regions of the Orient' but concludes that Shelley does this in order to reveal 'another way that the middle-class domestic abode can be seen as a haven for fostering perverse and perverting love' (p. 167).

[130] William D. Brewer, 'Unnationalized Englishmen in Mary Shelley's Fiction', *Romanticism on the Net*, 11 (1998) <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/mwsfiction.html> [Accessed 12 May 2009]. Brewer calls this 'unnationalized' man one who follows the 'Byronic pattern of transgressive action and self-banishment' supporting his claims with his understanding of Shelley's fiction relying heavily on her personal experiences with her husband and Lord Byron and the effects of their time abroad.

[131] Levi-Strauss, p. 25.

contradicted both by her actions and Shelley's Biblical allusions: 'I lament now, I must ever lament, those few short months of Paradisiacal bliss; I disobeyed no command, I ate no apple, and yet I was ruthlessly driven from it. Alas! My companion did, and I was precipitated in his fall' (162). When Matilda begs her father to speak he confesses and ends his tormented speech (that includes descriptions of his 'unnatural passion') with: 'my daughter, I love you' (173). With these words Matilda sinks to the ground, 'covering [her] face and almost dead with excess of sickness and fear' (173). The reaction is seemingly at odds with his revelation; after all, Matilda has not, like her father, had a sixteen-year exposure to the 'freedom from all restraint' that would allow her to identify incestuous desires; her sixteen years have been ones of innocence, emotional desolation and loneliness. Shelley implies that Matilda's sixteen years of intense longing for her father have similarly prepared her for the incestuous desires that have so affected her father. Matilda's reaction upon hearing her father's declaration of love can only be understood if she reciprocates this passion, otherwise the words 'I love you' would surely not have filled her – who has so frequently spoken of her love for him – with dread and fear. Matilda knows her father's love is incestuous because of her corresponding non-filial emotions towards him. Hoeveler regards this scene as 'a cover for Mary's own ambivalence towards Godwin [... .] The real passion motivating the relationship between father and daughter is hate.'[132] Hoeveler's use of autobiographical elements to position the daughter's and father's passion as turning on hate, though recognizing Matilda's aggressive agency, relies on an interpretation that posits Matilda's hatred as a 'negative Oedipus complex' that causes her to 'long to escape with an idealized and phantom mother.'[133] However, it is not her mother with whom Matilda longs to escape, but the father whom she loves and drives to confess his love to her.

Matilda's reciprocation of her father's love passionately incites him to declare it. Passive before his arrival, the incestuous desires he inspires turn Matilda into an active, aggressive agent. When Matilda reminisces about the day she entreats her father to speak she puts the blame of their ruin on herself, in contrast to her earlier self-absolution: 'had not I, foolish and presumptuous wretch! Hurried him on until there was no recall, no hope

[132] Hoeveler, p. 172.
[133] Hoeveler, pp. 172-73.

[... .] I! I alone was the cause of his defeat' (169). Matilda is the cause of her father's losing the fight to conquer his incestuous feelings because her demands that he speak lead him to divulge these desires and precipitate their ultimate ruin. She takes responsibility for this, reflecting that: 'it was May, four years ago, that I first saw my beloved father; it was in May, three years ago that my folly destroyed that only thing I was doomed to love' (209). Her love for her father blinds her to the regard of other men and any outside pleasure in life; and the loss of his esteem renders her near hysterical. After her father's confession Matilda resolves never to see him again; however, almost immediately she devises ways to reunite with him. She believes that if her father wanders for another sixteen years his passion will fade as he grows old and he can then love her as a father should, desiring that he: 'go, and return pure to thy child, who will never love aught but thee' (175). In spite of Matilda's declaration that she should never see her father again she plans an innocent reunion. Her resolution, however, is not sincere; it is an attempt to absolve herself from the guilt of desiring her father. Never to see him again is not an option but admitting this would reveal her sexual desires for him. It is only by metaphorically castrating her father with age that Matilda can reconcile being with him again – not because she wants him to be rendered impotent but because it is the only way she can conceive of in which they can be together without consummating physically their incestuous love. Her father's inability to so delude himself contributes to his suicide: an act of ultimate self-castration engendered by his fear at the power Matilda's reciprocal incestuous passion gave her over him.[134]

Matilda refuses to reenter the economy of exchange demanded by society. After her father's suicide Matilda's relatives force her to move to London and oppress her with their demands that she seek an appropriate suitor, but the confined world of patriarchal control and the overwhelming suffocation impel her to fake her own suicide and flee to solitude. Her apparent inaction in her small cottage on the heath is a deliberate rejection of the cultural demands of exchange, a choice to leave civilization and live in solitude wearing a 'fanciful nunlike dress' (187). The purity of the garb is off-putting to men,

---

[134] As Gallop argues throughout *The Daughter's Seduction*, the daughter's 'seduction' of the father – her refusal to be seduced by him or be submissive to the incest taboo – breaks down male/female hierarchies of law and desire, deconstructing rather than simply reversing them. Matilda's 'seduction' of her father so dismantles the hierarchies that she becomes his pursuer, driving him to suicide, until the law of father is not only inverted but destroyed.

rather like widow's weeds but here denoting virginity. Matilda is a bride of Christ, yet not of Christ; a bride who was allowed to remain untouched.[135] Matilda describes herself in her new life on the heath as 'a selfish solitary creature, ever pondering on my regrets and faded hopes' (189). The only hope she voices is that of a reunion with her father and a fairy-tale ending for their story. Matilda describes her emotional state after her father's suicide: 'infamy and guilt was mingled with my portion [of misery]; unlawful and detestable passion had poured its poison into my ears and changed all my blood [... to] a cold fountain of bitterness, corrupted in its very source' (196). The description co-mingles thoughts of her father where she wishes nothing more than to return to him with language that makes her sound hateful towards him. The tone of anger and hate employed to justify her indulgent grief and explain why she can never return to the world falls short. Hate and guilt do not reconcile themselves with her desire to reunite with her father and it is the faded hopes and sorrow that seem more honest than her expressions of anger. Matilda yearns for death and the grave and only refrains from suicide on religious grounds. She uses the language of anger and guilt to justify her need for solitude, pretending to be tainted by her father's incestuous desires, yet she consistently reveals that she yearns to return to him. Matilda is aware that her love for her father is the real reason she cannot accept a suitor or remain with her relations who would demand that she marry and this spurs her to dress in a nun-like habit far from the culture that traffics in women.

As she declares, Matilda does not ever love again. Woodville, a friend who intrudes on her self-imposed solitude, shows how totally she has cut herself off from the idea or possibility of any love other than her father. Woodville is undeniably brilliant, beautiful and kind but Matilda is so entrenched in her disappointed hopes that she is incapable of seeing him as a man capable of passions like her father, viewing him instead as a platonic friend. If Hoeveler's interpretation that the writers of the Female Gothic wound the hero to render him a safe, feminized mate for the heroine is correct, Woodville seems the perfect choice for Matilda. But this solution is never realized; Matilda does not desire a wounded and feminized hero/lover with whom she can share an asexual

---

[135] Hoeveler also points to this dress when she discusses how Matilda rearranges her nun-like garb to become her father's bride (p. 180).

relationship anymore than she truly desired her father to be rendered impotent with age, except as a psychological absolution of the guilt she feels for her incestuous desires.[136] Matilda wants to remain alone until her eventual reunion in death with her father: 'With all the energy of desperate grief I told him how I had fallen at once from bliss to misery; how for me there was no joy, no hope; that death however bitter would be the welcome seal to all my pangs; death the skeleton was to be as beautiful as love' (198). Death will be as beautiful as love because it is in death that she will be reunited with her love.

Matilda employs images of death united with the language of natural and unnatural emotions to trouble the surface narrative of pollution she associates with incestuous desires and reveal her understanding of her equally incestuous desires for her father.

> I was doomed while in life to grieve, and to the natural sorrow of my father's death and its most terrific cause, imagination had added a tenfold weight of woe. I believed myself to be polluted by the unnatural love I had inspired, and that I was a creature cursed and set apart by nature [... .] I was impressed more strongly with the withering fear that I was in truth a marked creature, a pariah, only fit for death (203-4).

The 'unnatural love' Matilda has inspired in her father is akin to the mark of Cain; she feels set apart from the outside world, separated by her father's love and the knowledge that she inspired it. Matilda later uses the word 'unnatural' to describe her childhood pleasures: 'I enjoyed what I may almost call unnatural pleasures, for they were dreams and not realities' (208). That the pleasures are 'unnatural' and the adjective is linked to her affectionless childhood and dreams that focused on her father's miniature image unites her father's incestuous love and the 'unnatural' pleasures of her youth.

In so doing Matilda represents her and her father's desires paradoxically as culturally unnatural yet naturally occurring. Matilda believes it is 'imagination' that causes the idea of being 'polluted' or made dirty and impure as opposed to the 'natural' sorrow she feels at her father's death. The use of the word 'imagines' in relation to her idea that she has been violated, her purity stolen by her father, is tied to the descriptions

---

[136] Hoeveler writes that Woodville's 'sufferings have effectively castrated him' but that in spite of this he is unsuitable for Matilda because she cannot 'find love or happiness with any living man, particularly one whose philosophical opinions bear such an uncanny resemblance to Percy Shelley's own ideas' (p. 179). Hoeveler again imposes Shelley's biography onto the text but such an explication diminishes Matilda's desire for her father and its incestuous nature.

of her childhood in which the word 'imagination' is so important. It was, after all, her childhood practice to envision her father's return to her and it was on his idea and image that her imagination dwelled: 'the idea of my unhappy, wandering father was the idol of my imagination' (157). Matilda, in one sense, blames herself for being the cause of her father's love and his declaration of it, using the same language she used to describe her childhood fixation with her father in her descriptions of the love that she incited him to verbalize. Matilda's feelings of guilt and pollution are bound up in the blissful love she has for her father. Perhaps this is why she emphasizes her 'mark' as being caused by 'imagination'; that she 'believes' herself polluted, that the idea she is a pariah is 'impressed' upon her clarifies that the pollution is not so much physical but emotional, caused by her recognition that her childhood imaginings make her as complicit in incestuous love as her father. What is explicit and 'natural' is her grief at being parted from her father through the realization of the love that she had for so many years fixated on.

The most concrete language Shelley uses in her depiction of incestuous love presents Matilda's life after her father's suicide as so unbearable that she jeopardizes her health in order to bring about her death and, thus, a reunion with her father.[137] Once aware of her impending death, Matilda states: 'I shall be with my father [... .] In truth I am in love with death; no maiden ever took more pleasure in the contemplation of her bridal attire than I in fancying my limbs already enwrapped in their shroud: is it not my marriage dress? Alone it will unite me to my father when in an eternal mental union we shall never part' (208). Matilda yearns for death, reaching towards it eagerly to join together with her deceased father, describing it as a unification with a lover. And a lover is exactly how she views her father – Matilda admits that her father is the only man she loves and that her death will allow their wedding night, hastening to add that this will enable an eternal 'mental' bond. Her shroud – here doubling as her wedding dress – seems to literalize Blackstone's understanding of wives as civilly dead after marriage.

---

[137] See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Tavistock, 1977; repr. London: Routledge, 2001) in which Lacan describes 'the armature of the Freudian edifice, namely: the equivalence maintained by Freud of the imaginary function of the phallus in both sexes [...] the castration complex found as a normative phase of the assumption by the subject of his own sex, the myth of the murder of the father rendered necessary by the Oedipus complex' (p. 144). Matilda's assumption of the seducer's role positions her as the male subject, both castrating and killing the Father and his law.

Shelley presents Matilda's union with her father as offering the eternal experience of life after death and 'after marriage', eliciting a comparison between this marriage and the Gothic wife's civil death explored by scholars such as Anolik and Wallace. Matilda's death and union challenge the scholarly understandings of marriage as resulting in the death of the narrative and the wife by requiring the heroine's death – and thus the death of the narrator and narrative – before the incestuous union can take place. Incestuous love here removes the female body from the marriage market but requires the ultimate erasure of self from culture before the father-daughter union can be consummated.

Hoeveler's reading of Matilda's death scene contrasts with her earlier claims that Matilda and her father hate each other: 'Living in an "eternal mental union" is as far as the sexes can get from the reality of their fallen and gendered bodies, while it is the dead father who is the love object, the ultimate goal at the end of the daughter's quest.'[138] It would, indeed, be almost impossible to interpret Matilda's death wish and clear statements of desire of reunification with her father as hate, but Hoeveler leaves unclear how this reconciles with her earlier claim that that 'the illness from which she [Matilda] truly suffers and has suffered throughout the text is hatred toward her father and guilt for that hatred.'[139] It is here, towards the end of her life and her disclosure of her life's events, that she has abandoned bitterness and sorrow and is instead filled with hope and yearning. Her final words are: 'Farewell, Woodville, the turf will soon be green on my grave; and the violets will bloom on it. There is my hope and my expectations; yours are in this world; may they be fulfilled' (210). Matilda's parting words reinforce her belief that her hopes and expectations lie in the grave. Her future is to be realized only with death, where she will join with her father in a 'mental' union.

Matilda, by reciprocating her father's incestuous desires, effectively destroys the patriarchal world of exchange that attempts to curtail and prohibit incest as a threat to its existence. When Matilda removes herself completely from the marital economy of exchange she is not merely fleeing from the metaphorical castles of patrilineal oppression, but destroying that very system. Matilda leaves her patrimony, her estates, her name – the very things that Gothic heroines often fight so hard to recover – in order

---

[138] Hoeveler, p. 180.
[139] Hoeveler, p. 173.

to await outside the society that condemned and destroyed the object of her incestuous passion, her death and reunification with her beloved father. She does not attempt to escape her female body by denying her desire or sexuality, but embraces it – dressing it with care in the death shroud/wedding dress in which she will meet her father.[140] Matilda's incestuous desires for her father are the effect of sixteen years of longing and imagining for a reunion that will eventually take place in another world that is beyond the system of exchange that would relegate her to the status of object/commodity that she actively rejects.

IV.   Conclusion

Incest, whether sought by the father, father figure or the heroine, cannot be dismissed as a mere Gothic convention or as a simple metaphor for the dangers of patriarchy or the middle-class domestic home. Incest is almost always the subtle means of destroying the patriarchal world that imprisons the Gothic heroine, acting as a multifaceted construction encompassing the ambivalence of father-daughter relationships, differing configurations of desire, the potential for liberation in transgressive choices, and the dangers of unchecked passions. Hoeveler's belief that Gothic heroines 'pretend' they are weak or passive belies the actual physical and emotional danger in which these women are placed and diminishes their struggles through the challenges and obstacles of a patriarchal system of exchange. The experiences of Gothic heroines cannot be reduced to an explanation of mere poses of weakness and victimization without adopting the language of patriarchal power that frequently ignores the abuses perpetrated against women. The Gothic heroine does not need to pretend to be a victim as the abuses and dangers Gothic heroines overcome are the real consequences of being female in a heteronormative world that demands the objectification and exchange of women.

---

[140] Hoeveler argues that Matilda seeks death in order to 'escape the corrupted body' as Shelley viewed 'all women as diseased, aberrant, and freakish composites of the hopes and dreams of other people [...] she inhabited a female body; she bled and caused bleeding in others, and those unfortunate facts defined for her and her fiction the gothic feminist nightmare in its starkest terms' (pp. 182-83).

When Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* is examined as a parody of political authority that employs Gothic tropes it becomes clear how later writers displaced the convention of incest from its position as a symbol of male power and control of female bodies and futures to be reimagined as a means of driving heroines into action and liberation. Unlike *Otranto*, in which the usurper to the title is punished and the rightful heir – a male – is restored, Radcliffe's rightful heir is an heiress; the hero is really a heroine. The heroine must exert effort and influence to free the hero who is languishing in a prison and save him from danger. Rather than simply exposing the challenges in the emerging ideology of individualism, Adeline and other Gothic heroines break free from the claustrophobic confines of patriarchal structures. The heroines' responses to incest – whether they fight, manipulate, flee from, take part in, desire or initiate it – show their ability to act and choose and enable them to escape the oppressive ancestral castles to form a new world that is not bound or limited by threatening paternal figures or the structures of power and exchange. Incest, rather than simply inspiring dread and terror of male family members in order to demonstrate the dangers of domesticity, provides a means of female liberation, a vehicle required for character growth and strength. Through representations of father-daughter incestuous desires the heroine is able to discover her story, claim her wealth/estates/power and choose the lover she desires. By assuming traditionally male positions of wealth and authority, the heroine destroys the objectification caused by patriarchal systems of exchange and becomes her own protector. It is only at this point that she chooses to become engaged or marry the man of her choice – a man she has often saved from prison or injury.

The incestuous father-daughter relationships in the Gothic allow the heroines to remove themselves from the cultural exchange of their bodies and lives between male recipients. Through this incestuous configuration the ideas of Irigaray, Butler and Levi-Strauss regarding the exchange of women between paternal figures of control are most clearly visible and underscore how dissolutions of paternal ties through incestuous desires break down the exogamic exchanges on which patriarchal society is based. In moving away from Freudian concepts that lead scholars to argue that 'phobias and persecution fears […] are crucially bound up with "normal" feminine psychological development' it becomes possible to see that the fears and phobias are in fact tangible

threats that women face in a culture that deals in the traffic of women.[141] By examining through historical, anthropological, and sociological approaches the incestuous desires of fathers and daughters in *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Romance of the Forest*, and *Matilda*, these desires can be seen as functioning as a complex reaction against the economics of exchange that locates women as objects. Father-daughter incest has a transgressive power to break apart the familial and kinship ties necessary to the patriarchal society of oppression and exchange, causing a rupture in the efficacy of patriarchy to make available an alternative model of female agency that reconfigures society without the exchange of female bodies.

---

[141] Modleski uses these Freudian insights to locate the Gothic as 'the paranoid text' (p. 23).

Chapter Two

'My more than sister': Reexamining Paradigms of Sibling Incest

[... T]he blush that suffused her cheeks [...] declared how tenderly she was interested in his concerns, and breathed more than sisterly affection.

Eleanor Sleath, *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798)[1]

In the first chapter relationships between fathers and daughters were examined; in particular, how the transgressive nature of father-daughter incest can cause a breakdown of traditional patriarchal society that is more complex than the model of incest that positions paternal incest as representative solely of a threat to the heroine. Incest in the Gothic does not, however, exist exclusively between heroines and their fathers and/or father figures. The relationships between female characters and their brothers or brother-substitutes are often fraught with underlying incestuous desires that are expressed as hidden subtext or explicit incestuous love. In contrast to the potential for abuses of power with which father-daughter relationships are endowed by the nature of the familial bond, the relationships between siblings are grounded in a more even distribution of power.[2] Ruth Perry locates the brother as equally dangerous to the heroine as the father or uncle, arguing that: 'both fathers and brothers began to see their female relatives [...] as possessions in their power and hence possible sex objects.'[3] However, in the Gothic novel the brother rarely presents a threat to the heroine, instead functioning more commonly as an equal sufferer under patriarchal power. It is, I argue, the potential for equality – akin to what Caroline Rooney calls 'a feeling of universal sympathy associated with the sister' – that underpins the relationships between brothers and sisters and makes the desires and relationships between siblings so dangerous and potentially destructive to

---

[1] Eleanor Sleath, *The Orphan of the Rhine* (London: The Folio Press, 1968), p. 184. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[2] See Lena Dominelli's 'Betrayal of Trust: A Feminist Analysis of Power Relationships in Incest Abuse and its Relevance for Social Work Practice', *British Journal of Social Work*, 19:1 (1989): 291-308.
[3] Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748 – 1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 377.

patriarchal society.[4] This potential for unraveling society (in a way that renders father figures both obsolete and unnecessary) causes sibling desire to be treated as, perhaps, the most dangerous and complicated of all the incestuous relationships represented in the Gothic. The destruction of patriarchal society is effected through the dissolution of social growth into a condition of familial stasis that, unlike father-daughter incest, excludes any paternal or head of family position.

The anthropological understanding of the incest taboo as necessary to culture advanced by Claude Levi-Strauss is similarly argued for by Leslie White, who describes the taboo's sociological impact as overcoming the human inclination to mate with intimate associates. While White, like Levi-Strauss, views this taboo as necessary to ensure the growth of communities and the formation of social ties, his analysis points to a human tendency towards incest.[5] This qualification is essential to an examination of sibling incest in the Gothic, which scholarship has so often viewed as an extension of the paternal incest threat, as many of these depictions are in fact bound up in the language of natural tendencies and desires.[6] Such representations frequently position brother-sister erotic love and familial love as equally instinctive emotions that grow alongside one another. For example, Leopold in Sarah Sheriffe's *Correlia* (1802) develops an incestuous love for his sister that is analogous to his brotherly love for her: 'by the time he attained his sixteenth year; he had imperceptibly, and without any sensible change from fraternal affection to one of a more tender nature, conceived a warm and lively passion for the humble companion of his infancy.'[7] White argues that the inclination

---

[4] Caroline Rooney, *Decolonising Gender: Literature and a Poetics of the Real* (New York: Routledge, 2007). Rooney refers to this quality in terms of Lord Byron's incestuous relationship with his half-sister Augusta Leigh and Goethe's description of this relationship as 'poetical' (p. 29). Rooney argues the destruction of patriarchy is possible through the sibling bond, examining Sophocles' *Antigone*, in which the sister stands by her dead brother against the state, and points to Nelson Mandela's view of Antigone as symbolic of struggles against government (p. 19).

[5] Leslie White, 'The Definition and Prohibition of Incest', *American Anthropological Association*, 50:3:1 (1948): 425. See also Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1969), p. 25.

[6] The paternal threat model of incest that is applied to brothers by scholars such as Perry is also apparent in the work of Kate Ferguson Ellis, who examines the threatening father figure and incest in *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), and in Margot Gayle Backus's *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

[7] Sarah Sheriffe, *Correlia, or the Mystic Tomb. A Romance*, 4 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1802), I, pp. 196-97.

towards incest would bar the alliance-building necessary to society and so 'a way must be found to overcome this centripetal tendency with a centrifugal force. This way was found in the definition and prohibition of incest.'[8] In other words, though we may instinctively sexually desire what we see – those with and by whom we are raised – society prohibits this inclination in order to promote group or social growth.

Feminist criticism has remained largely silent on the instances of brother-sister desire, which far from seeming threatening, in the majority of cases seem to exemplify an ideal relationship.[9] In addition to the paternal threat model, the understanding of representations of sibling incest as a form of Romantic narcissism has been taken up by scholars such as Alan Richardson to argue that sibling incest in the Gothic inverts Romantic paradigms.[10] However, both of these accounts fail fully to explore the complexities of the incestuous sibling relationships within the Gothic, on the one hand applying a model of incest that is predicated on a domestic and/or power threat and on the other employing retrospectively (and somewhat reductively) a paradigm of incestuous inversion. Rather than rely on these established modes of viewing sibling incest in the Gothic it is necessary to analyze the representations of brother-sister romantic love through a broader lens. In addition to relying on White's definition of incest as a basis of exploration, this chapter views sibling incest in the context of a wider anthropological and sociological understanding of the incest taboo. From this position analyses of sibling desire in the Gothic are revealed as being engaged not only with these understandings of the taboo but also with the corresponding concerns of the nature of family and attraction that prefigure the wider current scientific discourse on genetics and attraction.[11] The desires that underlie sibling relationships in the Gothic provide eighteenth-century

---

[8] White: 420-25. White notes the inclination existing between parent and child and brother and sister to mate with each other.

[9] This argument, discussed in the 'Introduction' to this thesis and the previous chapter is the common feminist critical stance regarding the presence of incest in the Female Gothic.

[10] Alan Richardson, 'Rethinking Romantic Incest: Human Universals, Literary Representations, and the Biology of Mind', *New Literary History*, 31:3 (2000): 553-72. See also Gail Finney, 'Self-Reflexive Siblings: Incest as Narcissism in Tieck, Wagner, and Thomas Mann', *The German Quarterly*, 56:2 (1983): 243-56.

[11] See David Haig, 'Asymmetric Relations: Internal Conflicts and the Horror of Incest', *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, 20:2 (1999): 83-98; Justin H. Park, 'Is Aversion to Incest Psychologically Privileged? When Sex and Sociosexuality Do Not Predict Sexual Willingness', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 45:7 (2008): 661-65 and David Livingstone Smith, 'Beyond Westermarck: Can Shared Mothering or Maternal Phenotype Matching Account for Incest Avoidance?', *Evolutionary Psychology*, 5:1 (2007): 206.

accounts of the pull of blood that, when examined through a modern scientific lens, illuminate the ongoing relevance of kinship to attraction. Genetics, though not labelled as such at the time, of course, is always at play within the Gothic. The bloodlines that are so integral to the novels' plots, convoluted and complex as they often are, are essential to both the incest thematic and to understanding the uniquely erotic and egalitarian nature of the brother-sister bond. This shift in disciplinary approaches is necessary given the many representations of sibling incest that resist dominant understandings of incest as a threat or inversion, which do not account for the ways these relationships are tied to questions of equality, natural desires, the bonds of blood and the law.

Those accounts of sibling incest that do exist are incomplete in part due to their reliance on Romantic and sentimental modes of understanding such relationships in the Gothic.[12] Romantic models of narcissistic love presume a heightened self-love often not present in Gothic heroines while sentimental models of incest rely frequently on a post-coital discovery of kinship or an implicit didacticism that is rarely present in the genre. The idea of blood telling, that blood will out, that nobility of birth shines through impoverished or hidden circumstances, is an oft-used trope within the eighteenth-century novel.[13] The widespread use of this convention created a context for readers of the Gothic; spontaneous attraction culminating in the discovery of blood kin would have been familiar to the eighteenth-century reader. However, the way in which Gothic writers subvert this device by both building on and altering it until blood and attraction become integral to their narratives emphasizes the focus on incest and kinship in the genre. Nowhere are the ties of blood more important than within the Gothic where hidden, missing and unknown relatives are often linked by familial blood as well as bound by sexual desires.

E.J. Clery refers to the Gothic combination of sexual, familial and economic restrictions that creates a constrained environment and forces the heroine to recognize

---

[12] Perry's understanding of incest in the Gothic is that of a heightened or exaggerated trope common to sentimental novels and eighteenth-century literature more generally (pp. 375-76).
[13] Perry's comprehensive *Novel Relations* examines this aspect of kinship, the *cri du sang*, throughout the eighteenth-century novel.

'the inescapable bonds of kinship.'[14] The hidden identities of characters and these 'inescapable bonds of kinship' that are linked to sexuality are revealed by endowing kin with either strikingly similar or opposite traits. Relatives are presented as either alike to the point of being interchangeable in looks, name, and nature or as stark opposites.[15] In this respect, Gothic writers foreshadow many of the theories of geneticists regarding attraction and kinship recognition before their advancement. What seems scientific precognition on the part of the eighteenth-century writer is rather the articulation of their understandings that bad and good blood is passed down through the generations and that nurture does not eradicate those bloodlines that will frequently inspire attraction. The nature versus nurture question that continues to be debated underlies Gothic representations of kinship and sibling incest that are now being increasingly substantiated by modern scientists.[16] Genetics – or blood – will tell, familial traits will be passed down and the power of attraction between two like beings is seen nowhere stronger than between siblings.

Geneticists call it 'GSA', short for 'Genetic Sexual Attraction' and it is a seemingly simple term for the complex realm of familial desires and the underlying factors that inspire incestuous attraction. The blood tie – or the genetic similarities – between two people often results in likenesses in looks, ideas, intelligence, speech patterns, handwriting, even in the way people move and the gestures they make.[17] These similarities are the exact and often unconsciously desired qualities we search for in a mate. A 2004 study on sexual imprinting shows that regarding mates or long-term partners: 'positive correlations have been found between their socioeconomic status, age, intellectual ability, education, personality variables, physical attractiveness, vocational interests and anthropometric measures [... .] One possible explanation is genetic-

---

[14] E.J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 120.
[15] Siblings in Gothic novels who show similarities or differences used by the authors to underscore the blood tie include Ambrosio and Antonia in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Isabella and Linton in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and the siblings in Regina Maria Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* (1796).
[16] See Maurice Greenberg and Roland Littlewood, 'Post Adoption Incest and Phenotypic Matching: Experience, Personal Meanings and Biosocial Implications', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 68 (1995): 29-44; and Roland Littlewood, *Pathologies of the West: An Anthropology of Mental Illness in Europe and America* (London: Continuum, 2002).
[17] Tamas Bereczkei, Petra Gyuris, and Glenn E Weisfeld, 'Sexual Imprinting in Human Mate Choice', *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 271 (2004): 1129.

similarity theory.'[18] Like Narcissus who fell in love with his own reflection, so too do many people fall in love with the familiar or recognizable. Scientists focusing on mate selection are finding that at the heart of desire is the pull of the similarities that stem from shared genetic material. The concept of GSA is based on these notions and research has revealed that sexual attraction between consanguineal relatives exists at unexpected rates.[19] Maurice Greenberg, who studies the prevalence of GSA between family members reunited after life-long separations, describes the attraction as one that is both a form of mirroring that occurs most often between siblings who look similar and a normal reaction to reunification with a blood relative.[20] In fact, GSA is thought to occur in fifty percent of reunions between once long-lost relatives.[21]

What is so interesting about GSA and how its core premise applies to brother-sister attraction in the Gothic novel is the basis of its argument: that the familiar and the similar cause an intense desire. When Catherine says 'Heathcliff is me!' in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) she is making a declaration that in essence is very true: if Heathcliff is indeed her bastard half-brother, he is her; her blood, her genes, her double.[22] Desire, attraction, love, here, stem from the premise of sameness, from a footing of equality and are equally sought by the brother or the sister. The footing of equality is a potential one that is consanguineally rather than socially formed; the siblings are born with a biologically based parity of genetics that causes similarities which effect desire, although society refuses this potential. Not only a biological sense of potential equality, but also a sense stemming from the placement of the brother as the other half – the sibling as a double of the self – contributes to an understanding of brother as a self-

[18] Bereczkei, Gyuris and Weisfeld: 1129.
[19] Maurice Greenberg's studies document the number of family members who, after reunification with a previously unknown family member, fall into a deep, borderline obsessive attraction. These attractions, often ending in a sexual affair, are extremely destructive to the families of those who become involved in the incestuous relationships. See Greenberg, 'Post-Adoption Reunion Are We Entering Uncharted Territory?', paper read at The Hilda Lewis Memorial Lecture given to the British Association of Adoption and Fostering, (Oct. 5 1993): 1-22. Paper available online at <http://www.geneticsexualattraction.com/AAPostAdoptionReunion.pdf> [accessed 21 May 2009].
[20] 'Forbidden Love: Pull of Attraction Felt Between Adoptees, Biological Family Members', *CBC News*, 7 May 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/05/06/f-gsa.html> [accessed 5 June 2009].
[21] Alix Kirsta, 'Genetic Sexual Attraction', *The Guardian*, 17 May 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2003/may/17/weekend7.weekend2> [accessed 16 November 2009].
[22] Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Pauline Nestor (London: Penguin Classics, 1995), p. 82. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

reflexive equal. The brother as other is the most dangerously seductive figure within the Gothic, presenting at once a mirror image and an escape from the patriarchal exchange of women, similar to that effected through father-daughter incest. As White clarifies, 'the desire to form sexual unions with an intimate associate is both powerful and widespread' and it is society and culture rather than instinct that create the taboo to prevent these unions.[23] The potential equality that siblings were born with was qualified by the laws of inheritance, such as primogeniture, as well as the social and cultural ideologies that enforced female subordination within and without the family. In order to achieve the potential equality, the siblings must remove themselves from the construction of society that prohibits its realization by forbidding the freedom to act on their incestuous desires. The Gothic deconstructs the family and social structures that prohibit incest in order to further exogamy, thus allowing the siblings to achieve endogamy.

The pathological exploration of kin and desire in the Gothic is at its pinnacle in the representations of sibling incest that are almost always shown to be ideal, positive, possible or limited only by the bounds of the arbitrarily created incest taboo. Sibling blood ties are presented as the cause of attraction rather than a hindrance to love and desire in a number of important Gothic texts. I will examine these bonds and the concurrent destruction and formation of familial and social structures to argue that a compelling model of Gothic sibling incest was established by Ann Radcliffe and departed from by subsequent writers in important ways, ending with the culmination of sibling ties and desires in Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. Beginning with Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), an overlooked work that centres on a brother-sister relationship and tracing Radcliffe's development of these themes in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), I argue that Radcliffe's first two novels establish a paradigm of the brother as hero which, given the immense popularity of her novels, provided a model to which subsequent Gothic writers adhered or from which they departed. The inclusion of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) is essential to disrupt the Gothic genealogy that so frequently reads Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) as a reaction to it, a misplacement of Lewis's novel that is in fact a response to and radical departure from the Radcliffean

---

[23] White: 433.

model of sibling incest. Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798), a Gothic novel that lacks detailed scholarly analysis, provides a fascinating and unique account of brother-sister desire intertwined with criticisms of the law. Sleath's novel adheres to the Radcliffean sibling incest model while inverting the incest plot of the sentimental novel by revealing the siblings to be non-kin after they fall in love. I conclude my analysis with an examination of Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* that follows a gap of some 47 years that often causes it to be read within a well-established tradition of Romanticism and narcissistic incest. By repositioning Bronte's novel away from the texts it is normally read alongside, I find that a wider range of interpretive possibilities of the incest thematic becomes available that demonstrates Heathcliff follows a Radcliffean sibling-hero model before evolving into the Radcliffean uncle-villain while encompassing aspects of the Romantic narcissistic incest model.[24] Disrupting the established genealogy of reading these texts is essential to breaking away from limiting models of incest and to place their subversive ambitions within a broader framework of incestuous desires, attraction, legal and familial structures and understandings of kinship.

In making this claim, this chapter does not suggest that all Gothic texts are necessarily intentionally subversive; neither does it intend to conflate the texts themselves by setting out deliberately to unify them under one thematic intent as scholarship has often conflated Gothic conventions.[25] The goal of examining the role that incest plays within the texts is not to reach an overarching conclusion about brother-sister relationships, but to understand several crucial things about the treatment of sibling love and how scholarship has traditionally treated it. Since the reclamation of the Female Gothic by feminist critics in the 1970s the genre has been delineated as articulating fears of domestic entrapment and patriarchal power. The incest thematic has primarily been theorized in such scholarship as a means of underscoring these fears as opposed to a

---

[24] Radcliffe's treatment of uncles is analyzed at length in chapter 3 of this thesis. Examples of Romantic narcissistic incest include Victor and Elizabeth in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Astarte and Manfred in Byron's *Manfred* (1817).

[25] See Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p. 57, for an example of how threats of incest, rape and murder are conflated as one overriding Gothic convention intended to demonstrate the heroine's infantile desire to remain in the paternal home.

means of resisting the forces of violence.[26] But as demonstrated in chapter one this assumption is destabilized upon closer examination of specific incestuous configurations and the narratives that give them shape. Sibling love is similarly represented in a number of texts as being incompatible with the view of the Female Gothic as subversive and feminist through this particular type of attack on the patriarchy. While the genre functions as a space in which writers did articulate these views it does so as part of the wider Gothic genre rather than from within a Female Gothic tradition that questions patriarchy by presenting incest as a sexualized abuse of the power imbalance inherent in the familial and social structures. When Fred Botting and Dale Townshend insist that 'incest in the Gothic novel is the visible or secret or absent centre of forbidden desire to which terror, always, ultimately, returns' they force incest into being read ultimately – and reductively – as a terror convention.[27] However, as I will argue throughout my examinations of the aforementioned Gothic texts, depictions of brother-sister incest trouble the heteronormative ideology of culture by presenting the relationship's potential for equality rather than through uniting sibling desires with terror. Representations of this egalitarian potential alongside rejections of paternal authority and the natural development of sibling desires that are frequently couched in legal language allow such relationships to resist placement within the traditional scholarly models of incest in the Gothic. Sibling bonds constitute a radical mode of destabilizing contemporary understandings of desire, laws and kinship.

I.   The Misplacement of *The Monk*

---

[26] See Kate Ferguson Ellis, 'Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics', in *Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 257-67; Ellis, *The Contested Castle*; Ellen Moers, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (New York: Doubleday, 1976; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Juliann Fleenor, *The Female Gothic* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1983) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Arno Press Inc., 1980) for feminist treatments of the Gothic as written by women as a distinct Female Gothic genre that exposes the dangers of patriarchy.

[27] Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, eds., *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 56.

A great deal of scholarly attention on incest in the Gothic has focused on Lewis's representation of sibling rape in *The Monk*, which is taken to be paradigmatic of sibling relationships in the genre. This understanding of Lewis's text as establishing a model of violent brother-sister sexuality has distorted readings of Radcliffe's sibling relationships and those that follow her example. This is in part because of the way *The Italian* has been read as a response to *The Monk* without first addressing Lewis's novel as a counter to Radcliffe's already well-established Gothic tradition. As Ellis has observed: 'the earliest male Gothicists undertook to wrest the form from the female hands in which they saw it too firmly grasped [... . Lewis] liken[ed] himself to the 'Villain' of *Udolpho* in a letter that acknowledges his debt to Radcliffe.'[28] Although Ellis points to Lewis's self-conscious use of Radcliffean elements, Lewis's novel is still frequently considered as offering the originary text of sibling incest. This understanding has limited readings of Gothic sibling incest to what is described as Lewis's perversion of the idealized sibling incest found in the works of the Romantics. The model of Gothic sibling incest as a distortion of Romantic narcissistic incest is exemplified by scholars such as Alan Richardson who argues it is 'a perversion or accidental inversion of the normal sibling relation' that is intensified and idealized in Romantic works.[29] While scholarship has begun to restore Radcliffe's work as a precursor of Lewis's, an adherence to the model of incest that arose from the misplacement continues to limit treatments of sibling incest.[30]

In locating Gothic incest as 'a perversion or accidental inversion' of the sibling bond rather than a Romantic intensification of it, the former is at risk of being reduced to a generic convention employed to produce disgust and terror. The conflation of the incest device with other Gothic tropes has supported scholarly readings of the brother-sister relationship as one fraught with violence and abuses of power. Similarly, the sibling

[28] Ellis, 'Can You Forgive Her?', p. 257.
[29] Richardson: 554. See also his article 'The Dangers of Sympathy: Sibling Incest in English Romantic Poetry', *Studies in Literature 1500-1900*, 25:4 (1985): 737-54; and Eugene Stelzig, '"Though It Were the Deadliest Sin to Love as We Have Loved": The Romantic Idealization of Incest', *European Romantic Review*, 5 (1995): 234-39.
[30] Scholars such as Clery in *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* and Lauren Fitzgerald in 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions* eds. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 13-25, have argued that Lewis reacted to a Radcliffean tradition rather than the opposite, although this is not the dominant scholarly positioning of the works.

relationship's alignment with the father-daughter and uncle-niece configurations of dangerous incest assists in this reductive understanding. Lewis's representation of a brother who rapes his younger sister is not the standard brother-sister Gothic relationship; rather it represents a deviation from the tradition that Radcliffe established. This misidentification has caused Lewis to be perceived as the subversive writer to whom the conservative Radcliffe reacted and offered correction.[31] However, Lewis's depiction of a rape inspired by the demonic urgings of a corrupt woman presents sibling desires as far less transgressive of the unequal and gendered power structures required by the incest taboo than Radcliffe's representations of egalitarian incest. It is, however, Radcliffe who radically placed the brother as the sibling-lover and removed incest from its location as a social taboo.

E. Baker's 1906 introduction to *The Monk* asserts that the differences between Lewis and Radcliffe demonstrate the inadequacies of Radcliffe's novels as Gothic fiction. Baker claims that *The Monk* achieves the genre's promise of unrestrained terror in contrast to Radcliffe's works that lack the appropriate masculine confidence:

> Instead of the mild titillation of the nerves produced by Mrs. Radcliffe's timid trifling with the world of phantoms and nameless terrors, [*The Monk*] threw away all restraint. There is nothing supernatural in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels; her ghosts are all make-believe, and the reader's alarm is carefully soothed before it exceeds the point of pleasant excitation [...] [Lewis] outdid Mrs. Radcliffe, and in the same way he outdid every other writer from whom he borrowed.[32]

Baker represents the underlying belief echoed in more recent criticism that Radcliffe's novels embody a delicacy that Lewis 'threw away' and implicitly correlates his gender with his rejection of Radcliffe's supposed timidity. The conclusion is clear: Radcliffe's femininity kept her from the masculine assertions of violence that Lewis revelled in and that, although failing in producing true 'terror' in the reader, succeed in producing

---

[31] For analyses of Radcliffe's work as a conservative response to Lewis's radical work see particularly Steven Blakemore, 'Matthew Lewis's Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in *The Monk*', *Studies in the Novel*, 30:4 (1998): 528; and Vartan P. Messier, 'The Conservative, the Transgressive, and the Reactionary: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* as a Response to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*', *Atenea*, 25:2 (2005): 39.

[32] E. A. Baker, 'Introduction', Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. Tom Crawford (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1907; repr. New York: Dover, 2003), pp. iii-xii. Subsequent references will be given in the text. Baker's description of Radcliffe 'soothing' the reader's alarm before it 'exceeds the point of pleasant excitation' portrays Radcliffe as a tender mother inhibiting the fulfilment of orgasmic terror.

'horror'.[33] While Radcliffe's atmospheres, Baker conceded, 'have not been without their influence on later literature', he simultaneously consigned her novels to the dustbin of feminine failure – narratives of terror bound by timidity from being transgressive.[34] Baker's introduction, albeit dated, continues to represent the assumption that male-written Gothics employ a 'masculine' ability to depict violence in ways that women cannot accomplish successfully.

As Clery notes, 'literary history provided a neat exemplification of the binary liberated/repressed [...] by the couple Lewis/Radcliffe. The analogy was strengthened by speculation that *The Italian* had been written as a moralizing corrective to *The Monk*.'[35] This idea is furthered by Fitzgerald's summary of scholarship that positions Radcliffe as writing a 'point-by-point' response to *The Monk*:

> According to Syndy Conger, *The Italian* is 'a sustained counterstatement' to and a 'near point-by-point refutation of ' *The Monk*. And for many critics, Ross reports, 'Radcliffe had the last word in this "debate".' Emily is finally able to reclaim her Gothic territory from Montoni; likewise, 'Radcliffe succeeded in claiming Gothic as "female"', Susan Wolstenholme argues, and in 'reclaiming a certain textual space' from male writers of the Gothic, particularly Lewis.[36]

The understanding of Radcliffe as countering Lewis is thus a traditional scholarly stance. While it may be appropriate in terms of *The Italian*, which chronologically follows Lewis's novel, it ignores what Ellen Moers calls 'Matthew Lewis' avowed imitation of [Radcliffe's] work in his shocking novel.'[37] Much like the establishment of the binary to which Clery points, male-written Gothics are often viewed as creating and establishing models for incest that are used to shore up the bifurcation of the genre into the Male Gothic and a Female Gothic counter.

It is essential to recognize that *The Monk* was written within the context of Radcliffe's established oeuvre in order to examine how Lewis's aggressive and violent

---

[33] Terror in the Gothic is produced after a finely-drawn atmospheric scene evokes fear, while horror is evoked through depictions of graphic violence or gore. Clery points to this divide in *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (p. 110), as does Robert Miles in *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 44.
[34] Baker, p. viii.
[35] Clery, p. 110.
[36] Fitzgerald: 13.
[37] Moers, p. 137.

portrayal of sibling rape reinforces patriarchal power and values and has come to be understood as paradigmatic of Gothic sibling incest.[38] Contrary to what the scholarly model of incest based upon Lewis's treatment thereof argues, Radcliffe's works imagine a truly radical and unrestrained sibling incest. The terror and disgust that are evoked by Lewis's deployment of the incest trope are viewed as characteristic of Gothic sibling incest: representations and perverted inversions of Romantic sibling relationships. That Radcliffe's novels lack terror and disgust in association with sibling incest does not demonstrate a repressed and timid femininity that shies away from such representations, but rather undermines the very notions of incest as taboo, of sibling love and erotic love as exclusive or perverted. I argue that the normalizing of incest that occurs from Radcliffe's conflation of sibling and hero is a radical disavowal of incest as forbidden, perverted, disgusting and affirms the potential for an ideal, incestuous relationship.

II.   The Comparison of Brother and Hero: Confusing Lovers and Siblings

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789) is Radcliffe's first, and most overlooked, Gothic novel. Claudia L. Johnson describes this work and Radcliffe's subsequent *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) as 'fascinating [...] in the sheer accretion of their conventionality.'[39] The conventionality to which Johnson refers, however, was for the most part established for the Gothic genre by Radcliffe in these early works. While the overwhelming body of scholarship on Radcliffe regards her first novels as conventional

---

[38] Radcliffe's inclusion of material from Horace Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) as epigraphs in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Italian* is consistent with an evaluation of her oeuvre as consciously subversive. Given the level of antipathy surrounding the play, referencing the drama in her novels disregards the potential damage to her reputation as a respected woman writer that such inclusions could cause. The reproduction of Walpole's 'disgusting' tale in epigraphs not only discounts public opinion (read: social control) but also attaches the spectre of horrifying maternal incest to that of Radcliffe's own – according to the aforementioned critical accounts – comparably cautious representations of incest, asserting the subversive and counter-hegemonic nature of her work. See Ellen Malenas Ledoux's forthcoming book *Fantastic Forms of Change: Mass Persuasion and Policy in Gothic Writing, 1764-1834* which examines Walpole's play as political allegory and Radcliffe's use of his work in her epigraphs.

[39] Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 76.

and focuses instead on her later novels, this tendency overlooks Radcliffe's innovations, which only later become conventions of the genre. Part of the focus on her last three novels may also be because of the progression of these works that critics can easily – though perhaps mistakenly – identify as improving successively.[40] To analyze incest within Radcliffe's works it is essential that a close examination be made of the first two novels in which the heroines interact closely with siblings. That this kinship bond is not present in the later novels is further significant.[41] While scholarship has noted this later absence it has never been satisfactorily accounted for. I argue here that Radcliffe eventually abandons the use of sibling relationships as the brother and the hero/lover are first made synonymous and then integrated in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and *A Sicilian Romance* in a conflation of the familial and romantic that leads to the ultimate erasure of the role of the brother in the subsequent novels.

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne features the parallel stories of two families connected through their sufferings at the hands of the proud and jealous Baron Malcolm. Malcolm murdered the late Earl of Athlin who was survived by his widow, the Countess Matilda, and two children, Osbert and Mary, who reside together in the castle of Athlin. Malcolm lives in the nearby castle of Dunbayne where he has imprisoned his brother's widow – his sister-in-law the Baroness Louisa – and her beautiful daughter Laura. The families are also connected through the peasant Alleyn who loves Mary and is eventually revealed as the long-presumed dead son of the Baroness. Alleyn is thus of noble blood but was given as an infant to a peasant couple by Malcolm who reported him dead to the Baroness so that he would inherit his brother's title and land in lieu of a male heir. They are further linked through Osbert, who while imprisoned by Malcolm meets the captive

---

[40] Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 69. Gamer argues that 'few writers […] have responded so directly to periodical criticism. Each successive work saw previous "errors" corrected', and views these corrections, in part, as negotiations that enabled Radcliffe to continue publishing in the Gothic genre. Gamer's analysis illuminates Radcliffe's absorption of and response to criticism and helps to understand why her earlier works are so overlooked. That Radcliffe's first novels are frequently read as conventional and inexperienced in light of the progressive modifications of her later works to reflect the criticism she received have made it difficult to legitimize those first two novels as little more than early and flawed attempts.

[41] Miles in *The Great Enchantress* and Hoeveler in *Gothic Feminism* pay attention to the fact that siblings appear in Radcliffe's first two works but are not present in the latter novels, although this shift in character deployment is not discussed at any length.

Laura and the Baroness and falls in love with the daughter, who strikingly resembles his sister Mary. These characters are the models of the later heroines, lovers, threatened/imprisoned wives and usurping uncles who are so frequently the basis of scholarly analysis of Radcliffe's works. The relationships between Laura, Alleyn, Osbert and Mary are not presented as explicitly incestuous but the similarities between and interchangeability of the siblings render their eventual marriages substitutions for incestuous sibling desires.

Much like the novel's double sibling wedding, depictions of families bound by consanguineal and conjugal ties and multiple imprisonments, the plot points upon which the work progresses are claustrophobically parallel representations of passions, violence and sexual desire. Osbert's passion for revenge against his father's murderer leads to his imprisonment by the Baron which in turn allows Malcolm to choose between his warring passions for sexual access to Mary and his desire to kill her brother. Malcolm's desire for Mary causes him to require that she choose between sacrificing herself in marriage to him or allowing her brother, Osbert, to be executed. By forcing Mary to choose between her brother's life and marriage to the murderer of her father Radcliffe puts Mary in an uncomfortably incestuous triangle that is accomplished by placing Mary as the object of Malcolm's masculine gaze: 'An accidental view he once obtained of her, raised a passion in his soul, which the turbulence of his character would not suffer to be extinguished [... . H]e resolved to obtain Mary, as the future ransom of her brother'.[42] While the situation is not unique – Gothic heroines are frequently subjected to sexual or romantic advances after being viewed without their knowledge – what is unusual here is the ransom of a brother as a bargaining chip to gain the heroine.[43] Malcolm puts the decision to marry him or see her brother be killed in Mary's hands without resorting to explicit threats of physical violence or rape. Mary is never in immediate bodily danger; rather, it is an emotional threat that forces her to choose to trade her life and virginity for Osbert's life. Malcolm's desire to kill Osbert that cedes to his desire to wed Mary is ironically

[42] Ann Radcliffe, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne Dunbayne: A Highland Story* (London: T. Hookam, 1789), p. 41. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[43] Antonia in Lewis's *The Monk*, Adeline in Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest*, Julia in Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*, Ellena in Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Laurette in Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* are among the many heroines who are the subject of a masculine gaze that turns sexually aggressive.

summarized as 'revenge, at length, yielded to love' (84). Malcolm decides to exchange Osbert's life for the body of the beautiful, virginal, teenage daughter of his murdered contemporary. The proposed exchange of Mary hyperbolizes typical exogamic exchanges of women in marriages that facilitate social growth and financial gain and in which women are legally bound to husbands who have control of their bodies and property.

The wounded hero is a frequently addressed element of Radcliffe's works and Osbert's injury and imprisonment is one of the crucial points in identifying the fusion of the brother with the lover.[44] Although in later novels it is the hero who is wounded and/or imprisoned in this first novel it is the brother who is held captive for over half the novel and stabbed almost to death. Mary's lover Alleyn assists her and offers her emotional support while she copes with her brother's suffering. In Radcliffe's second novel, *A Sicilian Romance*, there is a shift in roles so that it is the hero who is wounded and the brother who supports his sister and assists in her escape. The plot lines of these texts and Radcliffe's third novel, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), in which the heroine is held hostage by an older man who wounds and imprisons her lover, are strikingly similar. The brother's captivity and stabbing from the first novel are, in the same role shift that occurs in *A Sicilian Romance*, experienced again in *The Romance of the Forest* by the lover. However, the figure of the brother disappears entirely from the third novel. Instead, in *The Romance of the Forest* and Radcliffe's fourth novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), she introduces an obliging and noble friend (respectively, the young De la Motte and the Chevalier Du Pont) who loves the heroine but whom she views only as a friend. The substitution of this character for brother seems unnecessary as both figures appear to fulfil the same position. However, the inclusion of the non-kin figure becomes imperative when it is understood as functioning not as a replacement of the brother, but of the lover as represented in the first novel. The brother does not disappear from Radcliffe's later novels but is reimagined as the successful lover whom the heroine eventually marries. The newly introduced figure of the loyal friend performs the actions of the first lover,

---

[44] Hoeveler discusses the wounded hero in *Gothic Feminism* as have a range of critics including George E. Haggerty in *Queer Gothic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006) and 'Psychodrama: Hypertheatricality and Sexual Excess on the Gothic Stage', *Theatre Research International*, 28:1 (2003) as does Miles in *The Great Enchantress*. The latter two of these works also touch on the absence of siblings in Radcliffe's later novels.

Alleyn, while the role of the lover corresponds to that of the original brother, Osbert. The merging of the lover and the brother that occurs in the second novel is realized fully in *The Romance of the Forest*, wherein the heroine's platonic friend assists her to free her lover, and thus acts much as the original lover did. The lover is replaced with the friend and the brother is replaced with the lover. The substitution is heightened as the positively presented male roles within Radcliffe's novels, whether that of the brother, lover, or friend, are virtually interchangeable. Similar in looks, characteristics, education, class, and desires, the difference between these figures lies not with the individual but with the heroine's identification of them as kin or non-kin, marrying only he who is most like a brother.

The brother-sister bond between Mary and Osbert is not explicitly incestuous but it acts as an idealized model for male-female partnerships and marriages, grounded in a basis of equality and similarity of age, class, education and resources and based in respect, mutual love and reason. Each of these factors are points demonstrated within the text to be fundamental to happiness. The incestuous configurations achieved through the double marriage and the undercurrent of Osbert's desire for Mary expose the asymmetrical gender and sexual politics of the exchange of women. Finally, Radcliffe uses Osbert and Mary's relationship to point out that such ideal relationships are not only forbidden but also impossible in a society in which incestuous relationships are a threat to the patriarchal order. The only option for a perfect relationship is to remain in a sexless, unwed partnership with one's brother – the closest alternative is to marry a sibling substitute – thus, Osbert and Mary essentially marry mirror images of one another. The interchangeability of Alleyn and Osbert is underscored in a scene in which Mary is confronted with what essentially amounts to a choice between the two. It is in the contemplation of this choice that Mary conflates the presumed peasant Alleyn with her noble-born brother Osbert, assigning equally to Alleyn the personal qualities of nobility, bravery and virtue associated with her aristocratic brother and with those of noble blood generally. When Matilda requests that Alleyn lead an attack on Castle Dunbayne to rescue Osbert, Mary

> glowed with the hope of clasping once more to her bosom her long lost brother;
> but the suspicions of hope were soon chaced by the chilly touch of fear, for it was

> Alleyn who was to lead the enterprise [...] adorned with those brave and manly
> virtues which had so eminently distinguished his conduct: the insignificance of
> the peasant was lost in the nobility of the character (73-74).

Alleyn, it transpires, is not a peasant but the long-lost son of Malcolm's imprisoned

sister-in-law, and so he is of noble blood. However, Mary is unaware of this. It is not

through proof of his bloodline but through her thought processes, which link Alleyn's

demonstrated virtues to a wider network of aristocratic qualities, that lead to his

conflation with Osbert. His bloodline shows in his virtues that are linked in Mary's mind

to thoughts of reunion with her brother. Such hopes of physical reunion are followed by

fear for Alleyn and the elevation of the latter to the same social status as her brother.

Alleyn's virtue and class are merged with Osbert's in Mary's mind; contemplation of her

brother has allowed the peasant to be raised to noble status.[45]

Though Radcliffe's social criticisms are often overlooked by scholars such as

David Durrant, who views Radcliffe as a conservative bourgeois writer, her novels'

representation of aristocratic pride as the source of potentially dangerous incestuous

situations renders her Gothics socially subversive.[46] Osbert's rejection of Alleyn as a

suitor for Mary is ostensibly based on familial pride and social status but it is equally

informed by his desire for his sister to marry someone like himself. When Alleyn

expresses his love for Mary, 'the Earl listened to him with a mixture of concern and pity;

but hereditary pride chilled the warm feelings of friendship and gratitude' (195). Osbert's

pride precludes a contemplation of the union of his sister with the presumed peasant. The

importance placed on blood, hereditary ties, shared family history and the ensuing sense

of male ownership over female bodies cause Osbert to revolt at the idea of unlike blood

---

[45] This elevation of the male peasant to a higher social status before the revelation of his noble blood works against the representation of male social elevation as impossible in eighteenth-century sentimental or conduct novels, such as Samuel Richardson's 1740 *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). In Richardson's novel Mr B says 'a Man ennobles the Woman he takes, be she *who* she will; and adopts her into his own Rank, be it *what* it will: But a Woman, tho' ever so nobly born, debases herself by a mean Marriage, and descends from her Rank, to his she stoops to' (p. 422). The subtext is that a woman debases herself through a union predicated on her sexual desire and is unable to maintain her social rank while the male's role as the head of the patriarchal family permits both his sexual desires and the elevation of the low-born woman he desires. Radcliffe's presentation of Mary as mentally elevating Osbert to her brother's rank before the discovery of his social status challenges the rejection of female desire and female ability to improve or ennoble the male's social status.

[46] See David Durrant, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Conservative Gothic', *Studies in English Literature, 1500 – 1900*, 22:3 (1982): 520-28.

joining. Osbert's honour extends not only into the past but also into the future: Mary's womb and future children fall equally under the domain of his pride. While Mary can elevate Alleyn to her class in her mind based on his conduct, Osbert's desire to maintain control over Mary's (and his) bloodline creates an incestuous jealousy born of the need to maintain a noble family line. This is the cornerstone of the novel's criticism of a social system that creates such incestuous tendencies and jealousy that render character, bravery, and integrity irrelevant in the face of blood.[47] Durrant claims Radcliffe's novels begin and end in 'the pastoral Eden of safe family life' and suggest that 'the only solution to the problems of adult existence lies in returning to traditional, conservative values.'[48] But Durrant's assessment overlooks the atmosphere of grief, anger, and vengeance that fills the castles of Athlin and Dunbayne as well as the potential threat of incest caused by familial pride.[49] Radcliffe's novels do not depict the heroine's return to the old structure of the family that privileges and permits noble hubris, but instead portray her abandonment of this flawed structure in favour of a new composition of kinship. Misreading these plot developments leads to critical misunderstandings of the representation of family, desire, incest and thus Radcliffe's criticisms of society, class structures, the family, and women's roles therein.

These arguments are furthered by the double sibling wedding that fuses two sets of siblings into two couples and that relies partly on Osbert's conflation of his sibling and his lover. The description of Laura and the 'beautiful luxuriance of her auburn hair, which curling round her face, descended in tresses to her bosom' (125) is uncannily similar to that of Mary. Just as Mary flushes when she sees Alleyn, so too does Laura blush faintly when she perceives Osbert. Both women are 'of the middle stature' and 'extremely delicate and elegantly formed' and Laura, like Mary, has 'the bloom of her youth [...] shaded by a soft and pensive melancholy' (124-25). Osbert falls in love with the doppelganger of his sexually inaccessible sister. In fact, Mary and Laura are so

[47] While Osbert's jealousy never causes him to harm or threaten his sister, the novel clearly disapproves of the emotion. In Radcliffe's subsequent works such passions are transferred onto the actions and incestuous and/or prideful crimes of the father and then uncle figures.
[48] Durrant: 520.
[49] The pastoral, edenic upbringing to which Durrant claims Radcliffe forces her heroines to return is also undermined by the neglected adolescent years in a partially crumbling castle in *A Sicilian Romance*, the abandonment and near coercion into becoming an unwilling nun in *The Romance of the Forest* and the orphaned, genteelly poor existence of Ellena in *The Italian*.

similar that Osbert, whilst feverish after his near-death wounding, mistakes his sister Mary for Laura, his betrothed: 'Seizing one day the hand of Mary, who sat mournfully by his bed-side, and looking for some time pensively into her face, "weep not, my Laura," said he, "Malcolm, nor all the powers on earth shall tear you from me"' (244-45). Once Osbert mistakes one girl for the other their melding is complete and Osbert can now safely marry Laura because she is interchangeable with Mary. Osbert gives away his sister (and her reproductive capabilities) only once he has secured her replacement in Laura. Biologically, Osbert and Mary's unconsummated incestuous desires subscribe both to the theory of GSA and to Westermarck's theory of sexual aversion. Mary and Osbert would have a natural repugnance towards each other because they were raised together as children; however, the sibling is also attracted to those who look, act, speak and think most similar to him/her. Sexual repulsion between siblings is conditioned by upbringing, but the attraction towards each other (likely to be consummated without a mutual upbringing) is inherent. That Radcliffe highlights familial and amatory ties in the way she does underscores her recognition that consanguineal ties are enmeshed in a complicated nexus of kinship, desire and ownership that can only be uneasily resolved through a conflation of sibling and lover.

It is no coincidence that Radcliffe's novel, in which overt sexual incestuous desire plays little part, concludes with the brother giving away the sister as a gift in order to unite two households and fortunes. The marriages bind together, not just the families, as would any marriage, but more specifically, the sets of siblings. Robert Miles describes the double sibling wedding as one 'which not only restores order, but which binds together the formerly antagonistic houses with indissoluble ties of kinship and property.'[50] Radcliffe shows that in a society governed by patriarchal and aristocratic notions of blood and family, incestuous desire that is forbidden and repulsed serves only to strengthen the unjust system of inheritance and wealth.[51] The ideal relationship exemplified by Mary and Osbert cannot be realized in the castles of Athlin and Dunbayne and so substitutive marriages that can only mimic this relationship while continuing to

---

[50] Miles, p. 74.

[51] The baroness's criticism of this system reinforces reading Radcliffe as equally condemnatory of the limitations of the legal institutions to protect female interests, a criticism that will find full expression in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).

perpetuate an antiquated familial and social structure take place. Unlike her novels in which the heroine destroys the stifling social laws that control female desire and escape the archaic castles that constrain female desire, here Radcliffe depicts the world before it is destroyed by those later heroines. The castle is fortified before subsequent heroines reject it in an ironic strengthening of the patriarchal bonds through an exchange of sisters that shows women to be paradoxically interchangeable and necessary to exchange and forces them into exogamous marriages which have a distinctly endogamous feel. Unlike the interchangeability of Walpole's female characters, the men are just as interchangeable in Radcliffe's novels and the apparent strengthening of familial ties is precariously threatened by incestuous desires that underlie the sibling bonds. Society at once forbids incestuous desire as dangerous to the continuation of family bloodlines while demanding exchanges of women take place between men of similar backgrounds, exchanges that are jeopardized by the urge to mate with those most similar that necessitates the prohibition of incest. Radcliffe's representation of sibling relationships in *A Sicilian Romance* develops into an overtly sexual desire that enhances, complicates, and strengthens her subversion of normative social restrictions, particularly those concerned with male control of female bodies and the imposition of sexual constraints on women.

III.   The Integration of Brother and Hero: How the Sibling Became the Lover

In Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* the heroine's biological father is one of two chief villains and poses a threat to the heroine's freedom, chastity, choice and a danger to her sister, brother and mother. Of Radcliffe's deployment of violence and threats against the heroine, Durrant claims that 'to Mrs. Radcliffe, the world outside the family is utterly perverse in its villainy.'[52] Durrant's reading, which posits Radcliffe's adherence to a nuclear family structure, overlooks both the father's potentially incestuous longings for his beautiful daughter, Julia, and his imprisonment of her, which is intended to force her acquiescence to an undesired marriage. It similarly disregards the brother's more overt

---

[52] Durrant: 525-26.

incestuous desires for his younger sister, the murderous step-mother and the father's imprisonment and attempted murder of his first wife. Family is rendered as at once the seat of threats against female sexuality (the father confines his daughter's unruly desires to her chamber) and the potential for its liberation (the brother frees his sister in defiance of the father's law), acting as a core of potential villainy, coercion, and enslavement.

The plot of this novel differs substantially from that of Radcliffe's first novel; Miles describes it as demonstrating 'a developed form that feminist critics have come to call the "female Gothic", a narrative in which a daughter seeks for an absent mother.'[53] Julia resides with her sister, Emilia, and Madame de Menon, their governess and companion, in the Castle of Mazzini. Their mother, Louisa Bernini, is believed to have died after bearing the two daughters and a son, Ferdinand, to the father, Ferdinand, the Marquis of Mazzini. Subsequently, the Marquis marries Maria de Vellorno, a devious step-mother whose adulterous affairs with younger men lead her to hate Julia's lover, Hippolitus de Vereza. I argue that Radcliffe's Gothic novels move from using the figures of the brother and the hero as their principle male characters to those of the hero and friend, beginning with *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and concluding with *The Italian*. This shift, demonstrating Radcliffe's conflation of the hero and brother, is far from conservative but rather constitutes a profound challenge to constructions of law and desire. The transition of brother to lover that can be traced through Radcliffe's works is perhaps nowhere more important to examine than in *A Sicilian Romance*, the final Radcliffe novel in which the heroine has a brother.

The relationship between Ferdinand and his sisters is complicated by the fact that the two daughters have been raised in seclusion by Madame de Menon and have not seen their brother for years. They cannot, in fact, identify him by sight. When, after years of absence, the Marquis, his second wife and Ferdinand return to the Castle of Mazzini to refurbish it and host a series of parties there, confusion between the identity of Ferdinand and that of the novel's hero, Hippolitus, occurs: 'Julia pointed out to her sister, the graceful figure of a young man who followed the marchioness, and she expressed her

---

[53] Miles, p. 90.

wishes that he might be her brother.'[54] That Julia desires a handsome young man to be her brother – though this handsome man is in fact Hippolitus – indicates an immediate blurring of the boundary between sibling and lover.[55] Already Julia conflates the instant erotic desire she experiences on seeing Hippolitus with her familial love for her brother; she wants her brother to be the handsome man who is the unknowing object of her gaze. Indeed, Julia seems to think that she will instantly be able to identify her brother and that the attraction she feels for Hippolitus indicates that he is related to her. She believes that the physical attraction she feels for the stranger proves a pre-existing kinship. This explains her later disappointment and confusion when she discovers Hippolitus is not in fact her brother, or, indeed, a relative: 'the eager eyes of Julia sought in vain to discover her brother, of whose features she had no recollection in those of any of the persons then present. At length her father presented him, and she perceived with a sigh of regret, that he was not the youth she had observed from the window' (1: 35-36). Julia's regret that the unknown man she desires is not her brother is explicit and locates her understanding of consanguineal kinship bonds as compatible with – perhaps even productive of – physical attraction. Radcliffe depicts her characters as sensible of the mutual nature of sibling love and erotic love, establishing from the narrative's outset that such an amalgamation of desires is a natural consequence of the brother-sister bond.

Julia's desire for her brother to be the handsome object of her attraction is united to her hope that Ferdinand will be able to alleviate the tension she feels at being under the control of her father and step-mother. Francisco Vaz Da Silva discusses the role of the hero as saviour and supplanter of the father in his article on folklore and incest as: 'the universal dragon-slayer theme in which "to kill the monster means to incorporate it into oneself, to take its place. The hero becomes the new monster, clothed in the skin of the

---

[54] Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance,* 2 vols (London: T. Hookham and Carpenter, 1790), I, p. 34. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

[55] See Ruth Perry, 'De-familiarizing the Family; or, Writing Family History from Literary Sources', in *Eighteenth-Century Literary History: An MLQ Reader*, ed. Marshall Brown (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999). Perry, in an analogous reading, refers to the sibling desire in Aphra Behn's *Dumb Virgin; or, the Force of Imagination* (1700) as a 'confusion of family feeling and erotic love' (p. 163). Perry argues, however, that the sisters in Behn's work are able to mistake another man for their brother because 'so weak is the voice of blood' (p. 163). In contrast, I argue that Julia is able to 'mistake' Hippolitus for her brother because of her desire to discover that the attraction is inspired by consanguineal kinship.

old."'[56] These folkloric allusions, which da Silva locates as the basis of Freud's oedipal complex, describe the role of the son as slaying the father and taking on the role of the father, that is, of ruler of the kingdom and husband of the mother. I argue that when the traditional oedipal theme is complicated by the father's incestuous pursuit of the daughter the son's sexual role emerges in relation to the sister, rather than to the mother. In either case, the defeat of the father results not in the liberation of the daughter but in the creation of a new monster in his place. The folkloric tradition of this pattern, in which the son usurps the father, is thus an important one to regard in light of Radcliffe's plot developments throughout her career. As Radcliffe rewrites the myth, the son does not slay and take over the father's role. The father is always killed by another person: an evil, jealous, passionate man or woman who, far from usurping the role of the father and taking over the kingdom, is killed or dies themselves. In this reworking of the myth, the brother does not inherit the throne of patriarchy but is deliberately conflated with the hero and becomes the ideal sibling other half of the heroine. The distinction between brother and hero is erased just as the distinction between brother and sister is negated, paradoxically, through the incestuous union. As da Silva argues, 'the sexual drive minimizes ontological division after the model of mingling with one's own flesh and blood. And such mingling, of course, is what incest is about.'[57] This definition of incest demonstrates that the integration of the brother with the hero is a means for Radcliffe to allow her heroine a return to that pre-divided state, before marriage and before the incest taboo itself.

The brother, Ferdinand, and the lover, Hippolitus, seem to love and interact with Julia in equal measure. It is here that the brother shifts from the previous figure of ideal mate to one who has clear sexual desires for his sisters (particularly Julia) that cause his conflation with the hero and thus his subsequent elimination from the texts in the role of the brother. Ferdinand is, as we have seen, immediately confused by his sister with her eventual lover, but even before that he is the figure of a hero or saviour in the minds of the sisters: 'The purposed visit of their brother, whom they had not seen for several years gave them great pleasure [...] and [they] hoped to find in his company, a consolation for

---

[56] Francisco Vaz da Silva, 'Folkelore into Theory: Freud and Levi-Strauss on Incest and Marriage', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 44:1 (2007): 3.
[57] Da Silva: 5.

the uneasiness which the presence of the Marchioness would excite' (1: 32). A similar confusion of roles is engendered by Ferdinand when he uses Hippolitus as his physical substitute with Julia: 'the confusion of Julia may be easily imagined, when Ferdinand, selecting a beautiful duet, desired Vereza would accompany his sister' (1: 50). Ferdinand replaces himself in his sister's arms with his friend who acts as Ferdinand's physical surrogate regarding Julia throughout the novel. When the Marquis discovers the budding love between Julia and Hippolitus, a love that will hinder his plan for her to marry the obsessive and extremely wealthy Duke du Louvo, Hippolitus and Ferdinand come to her chamber to rescue her. Her brother says: 'I love you too well tamely to suffer you to be sacrificed to ambition, and to a passion still more hateful' (1: 140-41). Julia is in extreme distress because, although she wishes to flee with Hippolitus, she is extremely fearful of damaging her reputation. Ferdinand encourages her thus: 'Do not suffer the prejudices of education to render you miserable. Believe that choice which involves the happiness or misery of your whole life, ought to be decided only by yourself' (1: 143). Ferdinand regards Julia as more capable than their father of making her own decision regarding her future happiness.[58] He embodies the qualities of the ideal mate and partner whose desire is to see the woman he loves happy and who wishes her to make her own decisions on solely those grounds. Much as with Osbert and Mary we are able to see here the potential in the sibling relationship for perfect happiness. Just as Osbert and Alleyn were allied in Mary's mind, Hippolitus and Ferdinand are here depicted as one.

After Julia agrees to elope with Hippolitus he says he may now call her 'my love' but it is interestingly Ferdinand who next uses this appellation when he and Hippolitus return to her room the night of the planned escape. '"Come, my love," said he, "the keys are ours, and we have not a moment to lose"' (1: 152). Ferdinand and Hippolitus have, like Laura and Julia, and Alleyn and Osbert, become interchangeable at this point; the sister can safely marry the hero and thus the brother. However, the family offers no security here, as Durrant claims; rather it is precisely from the family (father) and family home that Julia must flee.[59] Julia, 'almost fainting', gives her hand to both Hippolitus and

[58] The role that the language of individual choice and individual rights plays in the context of incestuous relationships in the Gothic is examined in greater detail in chapter 4.
[59] Durrant: 523.

Ferdinand, an indication that she sees them both as the hero. When the trio hears noises behind them, Julia 'hung upon Ferdinand' while Hippolitus 'vainly endeavoured to sooth her' (1: 154). Julia willingly places herself physically in the hands of both men. It is soon hereafter that Hippolitus is wounded and disappears from the text while Ferdinand remains to assist and comfort Julia, completing the reversal of roles from the first Radcliffe novel in which the brother is wounded and held hostage while the lover offers support to the heroine.

The scenes in which sexual desire and tension between Julia and Ferdinand are most clearly demonstrated are those in which Ferdinand makes repeated midnight visits to his sister's room in order to discover the origin of the mysterious noises therein. Radcliffe uses deliberately sexual pacing and language in order to underscore the incestuous desires between the protagonists. Importantly, these desires do not cause terror in the heroine; rather, Ferdinand's presence reassures Julia, who with her sister Emilia, beg his assistance in their chamber.[60] Ferdinand feels an intense urge to comply, accounted for by his desire to resolve the mystery of the southern side of the castle: 'his imagination [...] inspired him with an irresistible desire to penetrate the secrets of this desolate part of the fabrick. He very readily consented to watch with his sisters in Julia's apartment; but as his chamber was in a remote part of the castle, there would be some difficulty in passing unobserved to hers' (1: 84-85). Ferdinand's desire to 'penetrate' the secrets of his sisters' room is rooted in his sexual desire and mirrored by his psychological desire to ascertain the source of the unknown sounds. Miles describes the narrative style in instances such as these as creating 'tension between Radcliffe's surface narrative, which appears to go in a conservative direction, and her subtext, which moves in quite other ways, [and] is the source of Radcliffe's aesthetic dynamism.'[61] The dangers in passing to Julia's room unobserved are mentioned in order to highlight the sexual intent behind the midnight visit; that the visit necessitates hiding and a lack of observation are due to its sexual nature. The description resembles that of a secret assignation more than simply a brother visiting innocently his sisters' chamber. Perry

---

[60] Perry's assertion that the brother/father/uncle threatens the heroine in the Gothic is here undermined by the sister's entreaty of the brother to come to her, creating the very situation meant to represent male threats through her own desire (p. 389).

[61] Miles, p. 176.

describes incest as 'the meaning of the gothic novel' that represents through its repeated depictions of 'a girl singled out, against her will, in her own domestic space, for the sexual attentions of a father, an uncle, or a brother' the dangers of male tyranny.[62] In these bedroom scenes, although Julia is in her own private domestic space and her brother's attentions are implicitly sexual in nature, Julia is hardly 'singled out, against her will', but rather invites her brother into her domestic space; she appears to be an active participant in the incestuous desires. Rather than the brother being complicit with male tyranny through an undesired sexual pursuit, his position in the family is aligned with the sister's as equally fearful of paternal threats and power, thus necessitating the secrecy of his visits.

Alan Richardson claims that 'in eighteenth-century novels [...] the incestuous love (actual and apparent) is inspired *before* the revelation of any kinship bond. The same holds true for the British gothics that feature incestuous couplings for their shock value and to further intensify an atmosphere of moral squalor.'[63] However, since in this novel incestuous love does not occur before the revelation of kinship (as it does in *The Monk*), it is clear that 'shock value' is not the basis for Ferdinand's sexual desires and neither do they seem included to demonstrate 'moral squalour.' The reunion of the siblings functions in some ways as a revelation of kinships bonds because, although Julia knows Ferdinand is her brother, they have been parted for so long that she no longer recognizes him. That the incestuous desires are present before the sibling reunion (as demonstrated by her desire for her brother's presence and for the man she finds attractive to be her brother) and that they intensify after this reunion serve the opposite function of Richardson's explanation of Gothic incestuous desires inspired before kinship revelations. Ferdinand's desires and the encouragement they receive from Julia create an atmosphere of heightened arousal rather than one of shock or immorality; they add a pleasing tension to the narrative. As Julia waits for Ferdinand: 'the castle clock had struck one, and Julia began to fear that Ferdinand had been discovered, when a knocking

---

[62] Perry, pp. 388-90.
[63] Richardson, 'Rethinking Romantic Incest': 554. Richardson provides a useful summary of the Westermarck effect and argues that 'British Romantic writers did come up with a model for representing sibling incest with remarkable parallels to Westermarck's hypothesis [... .I]t is in the unique and specific character of Romantic-era culture and discourse that an interpretation of the literary Westermarck effect must be sought' (563).

was heard at the door of the outer chamber. Her heart beat with apprehensions, which reason could not justify' (1: 85). The siblings do not hear anything for several consecutive nights and Ferdinand is frustrated with waiting; he wants to 'penetrate' the mystery in his sisters' room without further delay. He 'determined, if possible, to gain admittance to those recesses of the castle which had for so many years been hidden from human eye' (1: 86). While one result of this search 'gives us [...] the "female Gothic", a narrative in which a daughter seeks for an absent mother' the more immediate and tangible effect is that of the sibling interaction.[64] The description of the castle's passages is highly reminiscent of Ferdinand's sisters: both have been hidden from the world for years and are suddenly starting to come to life. Julia's sexual awakening that occurs in response to Ferdinand's and Hippolitus's arrival mirrors the castle's internal stirrings.

The language here is explicit. The castle represents Julia's genitalia: a hidden, never seen area coming to life to which entry is sought by the brother. When successful penetration of the castle wall seems imminent, Ferdinand 'removed the tapestry, and behind it appeared, to his inexpressible satisfaction, a small door. With a hand trembling through eagerness, he undrew the bolts, and was rushing forward, when he perceived that a lock with held his passage [...] he was compelled to submit to disappointment at the very moment he congratulated himself on success, for he had with him no means of forcing the door' (1: 88-89). Ferdinand does not see an opportunity of accessing the castle's secret areas because his father has the necessary keys; the Marquis bars entrance to the impenetrable castle recesses just as he bars entrance to Julia's female body by Hippolitus, by literally holding her chastity captive under lock and key.[65] But if Hippolitus is the hero, why is it Ferdinand who seeks entry? The brother, I would argue, functions as the hero as it is the imprisoning paternal power that Ferdinand needs to defeat in order to gain access to the unexplored areas of the castle and, metaphorically, his sister's sexuality. The eventual conclusion to this usurpation of the heroic role by the brother is for Julia to marry Hippolitus, the non-blood-related brother-substitute, and for Ferdinand to join the army: 'the occupations of war engaged his mind, while his heart

---

[64] Miles, p. 90.

[65] The father's control of his daughter's sexuality extends here to control of his son's sexuality as well. The brother is as incapable as his sister of defying patriarchal control at this point, which renders the siblings equally oppressed by paternal authority and equally desirous of escaping it.

was solicitous in promoting the felicity of his family' (2: 215). Ferdinand never finds a non-kin substitute for Julia as Osbert does for Mary and having used Hippolitus as his surrogate he is unable to regain Julia; consequently, he remains unmarried. In *A Sicilian Romance*, Radcliffe has moved from her first novel's plot towards the more patriarchal-order destructive/escapist plots of her later novels, in which the brother, in his new role as the hero, becomes part of the heroine's created world. This completely re-imagined and female-constructed world is, however, difficult to understand without first looking at how Radcliffe leads us there via her first two novels through the use of transgressive and idealized incestuous desires.[66]

In Radcliffe's novels a conflation of the brother and the hero creates the somewhat uneasy sense that the ideal spouse with whom the heroine escapes the patriarchal castle is the sibling. The uneasiness derives, in part, from the way that incest is traditionally viewed in scholarship on the Gothic: as oppositional to Romantic portrayals of incest and as representative of the threats of male power. Richardson describes Romantic incest as fundamentally different from Gothic incest because it is portrayed 'not as a perversion or accidental inversion of the normal sibling relation, but as an extension and intensification of it.'[67] However, we are shown that Ferdinand and Julia's relationship is far from perverse or an inversion of the norm; it is rather natural and ideal. Scholarly arguments that place Romantic sibling desires and Gothic representations thereof at opposite ends of a spectrum are prevalent, and while I argue that incest functions differently within the Gothic from other genres it is reductive to argue that Gothic incest is always portrayed in a perverse light. Incest in the Gothic is so varied in its portrayals that an overarching generic consolidation of its depiction becomes an impossible task. In tracing the evolutions in representations of brother-sister incestuous desires, the sibling bond emerges as an idealized, egalitarian bond that necessitates male and female cooperation to escape paternal power.

---

[66] The incest is transgressive in that it ultimately allows penetration through the locked areas of the castle (metaphorically, Julia's genitalia) and is idealized in its portrayal of equally suppressed siblings working together to escape the confines of the paternal castle.

[67] Richardson, 'Rethinking Romantic Incest': 555. Richardson argues that Romantic portrayals of incest are unique in their paradoxical and ambivalent presentations of the bond as at once ideal yet capable of being viewed as unnatural (569).

IV.   Siblings and Lovers: Defying the 'Laws of Delicacy'

Eleanor Sleath is one of the more obscure Gothic writers, her works being almost lost

until Michael Sadleir, book collector and novelist, discovered a copy of Sleath's 1798

work *The Orphan of The Rhine* during the mid-1920s. Sadleir, who had been searching

for the books listed in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) for years, finally proved

the existence of the novel previously presumed a creation of Austen's imagination.[68]

Some forty years later, Gothic scholar Devendra P. Varma, who acknowledged the

difficulties in tracing the author definitively, located Mary Eleanor Sleath (born 1763) or

her brother's wife, Eleanor Martin Sleath, both of Leire, as the most likely candidates for

the text's authorship.[69] Yet in spite of the claims of romance novelist Carolyn Jewel to

have 'rediscovered' Eleanor Sleath, little factual material to support any one attribution

remains to be found.[70] Although interest was kindled by the find of Sleath's novel in the

1920s, little criticism since has focused on Sleath's works in their own right. Instead,

most focuses, misleadingly, either on *The Orphan of the Rhine*'s inclusion within

Austen's *Northanger Abbey* list or on the novel's relationship to the works of Radcliffe.[71]

When Sleath has been compared to Radcliffe it has been negatively; one contemporary

reviewer, after describing Radcliffe's 'creative genius' writes 'if we have sinned in

---

[68] Peter Otto, 'The Sadleir-Black Collection', *Gothic Fiction* <http://www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk/digital_guides/gothic_fiction/Introduction1.aspx> [accessed 20 November 2009].

[69] Devendra P. Varma, 'Introduction', Eleanor Sleath, *The Orphan of The Rhine* (London, The Folio Press, 1968), p. viii. Varma wrote that 'one still hopes that Eleanor will be traced somewhere, someday, somehow' (p. xi).

[70] Carolyn Jewel intended to deliver a paper: 'Eleanor Sleath: A Writer Rediscovered' at the March 2008 Popular Culture Association Annual Conference; however, notes on the conference show that she was unable to attend, <http://teachmetonight.blogspot.com/2008_03_01_archive.html> [accessed January 20, 2010]. Jewel states she 'discovered what no one else knew; that Eleanor Sleath was a wealthy widow who married Reverend John Dudley under rather scandalous circumstances' in an interview by Megan Frampton, 'Friday with Carolyn Jewel!', *Risky Regencies: The Original, Riskiest, and Forever the Friskiest Regency Romance Blog* (February 13 2009) <http://riskyregencies.blogspot.com/2009/02/friday-with-carolyn-jewel.html> [accessed January 20, 2010]. However, I am unable to find any material that would support these claims, and Jewel herself offers no sources.

[71] Many of the references to *The Orphan of the Rhine* appear in catalogues of *Northanger Abbey*'s Gothic list or in discussions of Austen's and/or her heroine, Catherine's, reading habits. See, for example, L. Erickson's 'The Economy of Novel Reading: Jane Austen and the Circulating Library', *Studies in English Literature*, 30:4 (1990): 573.

suffering ourselves to be seduced by the blandishments of elegant fiction, we endure a penance adequately severe in the review of such vapid and servile imitations as *The Orphan of the Rhine*.'[72] Not only does the language of seduction used in the review correspond to the eighteenth-century view of women novelists as morally jeopardized and Gothic novels as particularly sexually dangerous, but it also suggests that Sleath is a temptress whose wares are so second-rate that their consumption is a punishment.[73] Subsequent criticism has focused more on the novel's relationship to Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, but it deserves a place within the genealogy of the Gothic on its own merits: that is, as a novel of complex, layered incestuous relationships that are both unique in the reactions they cause in those surrounding the sibling pair and radical in their conclusion.

The Orphan of the Rhine tells the story of the beautiful Julie de Rubine who, having been orphaned, is sent to live with her aunt who tries to force her into an undesired marriage. Julie marries the Marchese de Montferrat in an (unknown to her) sham ceremony in order to escape the forced marriage and bears a son, Enrico, before the Marchese tells her that the marriage and infant are illegitimate and sends them away. Four years later the Marchese gives Julie a baby girl to raise and moves them to the Castle of Elfinbach. Julie presumes the infant is the illegitimate offspring of the Marchese and his last known mistress, the Signora di Capigna. The four-year-old Enrico and infant Laurette are raised as siblings, and although no information is ever given to the girl about her father, she knows the Marchese is responsible for her protection. The exact blood ties between the children are unknown to Julie, Enrico or Laurette, but Julie believes them to be half-brother and sister. Enrico and Laurette know only that they have been raised together by Enrico's mother who has cared for Laurette, since infancy, as a mother.

As we have seen, the Westermarck effect that posits children reared together will likely not be capable of sexual attraction towards each other – 'generally speaking there is a remarkable absence of erotic feelings between persons living very closely together

[72] Review of Eleanor Sleath, *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798), *The Critical Review, or, The Annals of Literature*, XXVII (1799): 356.
[73] Varma, p. ix. An interesting aspect of the religious language of the review is its implicit support of Varma's argument that Sleath, unlike Radcliffe, was not only a Catholic sympathizer, but also likely Catholic.

from childhood' – would seem to prohibit the development of any sexual attraction between Enrico and Laurette.[74] Westermarck's subsequent claim – 'their aversion to sexual relations with one another displays itself in custom and law as a prohibition of intercourse between near kin' – is also relevant and suggests that the natural aversion to sexual relations felt by those who live together closely from a young age has been absorbed into the collective cultural consciousness and is reproduced in the legal bans on incest.[75] The theory unites biological understandings of the incest taboo that argue the aversion is a natural repugnance to protect against inbreeding with a sociological position that focuses on co-rearing as creating aversion to reveal how societies implicitly and explicitly demonstrate an acknowledgement of both of these nature and nurture positions. Although he does not use the term, Westermarck identifies this implicit social ban on incest as 'custom.' It is an extension of what Foucault would describe as a type of discipline within power relations that functions to prohibit a behaviour that threatens the dominant social ideology.[76] The legal ban is the explicit prohibition – or punishment, in Foucauldian terms – of such behaviour.[77] Foucault's models of power and their relation to incest have been examined by Vikki Bell, who points out that these models, particularly juridico-discursive power 'in the capacity to command and to receive obedience' and disciplinary powers 'that "imprison" the one who is being abused' inform feminist analyses of incest.[78] My interest in these analyses, Foucault's understanding of knowledge and power and Bell's account of their overlap lies in how their intersections permeate representations of Gothic incest. That this is so reveals understandings of incest avoidance as having been historically located in both legal bans on the practice as well as prohibitions that are enforced by the dominant sexual and familial ideologies.[79] These

---

[74] Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1902), p. 80.

[75] Westermarck, p. 80.

[76] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A.M. Sheridan-Smith (London: Penguin, 1979), pp. 136-39.

[77] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1979; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), pp. 83-89. Foucault describes the juridico-discursive model of power that understands power as a ruler or head of state's ability to create laws and punish those who disobey them, although he argues that this model of power has 'gradually been penetrated by quite new mechanisms of power that are probably irreducible to the representation of the law' (p. 89).

[78] Vikki Bell, *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault and the Law* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 60-63.

[79] Foucault refers to this enforcement in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon and trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper

cultural and legal prohibitions on incest are challenged in Gothic works such as Sleath's, as they are in Radcliffe's, and demonstrate a resistance to the dominant ideology of heteronormativity.

David Livingstone Smith, whose research concerns the biological roots of human nature, breaks Westermarck's claim into three distinct hypotheses, one of which corresponds closely to the situation of Enrico and Laurette: 'protracted childhood coresidence inhibits sexual desire and promotes sexual aversion.'[80] Smith uses Arthur P. Wolf's studies of Taiwanese *simpua* marriage (arranged marriages in which an infant girl is adopted by the family of the boy she is to marry and is raised with him by his parents) to conclude that 'these negative effects [infidelity, divorce and infertility caused by sexual aversion] only occur if the *simpua* bride is adopted before her third birthday, which led [Wolf] to believe that the first three years of life are a sensitive period for imprinting on siblings.'[81] Although Enrico is four when Laurette joins the family, Laurette herself is only an infant, making Sleath's treatment of Laurette as attracted equally and reciprocally to Enrico problematic in terms of the Westermarck effect. As the novel progresses Sleath shows the more than sibling love develop between Enrico and Laurette on both sides, but, as is also the case in Eliza Parsons' *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), the sexual attraction manifests after an absence of some time occurs during female puberty.[82] What is particularly interesting about the relationship between Laurette and Enrico (and also Radcliffe's model of sibling incest/brother as hero) is how Westermarck's position that kin aversion manifests itself as custom and law and Foucault's description of power and discipline are prefigured by both Radcliffe and Sleath. Radcliffe, as we have seen, foreshadows such insights through the evolution of her brother figure into the hero; Sleath does so through her depiction of natural sibling desires that defy laws and customs. In their novels, sibling love and sibling-like co-rearing does not create a natural aversion that is confirmed by the cultural and legal prohibitions; rather sibling love, erotic love and romantic love are mutually informing

---

(Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), stating that 'we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has a need in order to function' (p. 93).

[80] Smith: 203.

[81] Smith: 205.

[82] Parsons' novel depicts an aggressive uncle whose sexual desires for his niece and ward begin after his nine-month absence during which his niece develops physically into a young adult. This novel is explored in detail in the following chapter.

expressions of emotion that are not naturally exclusive. In this regard, Sleath's use of Enrico as brother and lover epitomizes the model of sibling love as ideal romantic love that Radcliffe has set her readers up to expect, frequently framing the relationship between Enrico in Laurette in terms of legal language. The use of this language shows Sleath's treatment of incest and its legal prohibition, rather than stemming from a natural sexual aversion, as denouncing laws that arbitrarily limit human behaviour. Far from being a servile imitator of Radcliffe, Sleath, in her depictions of constraining laws, both works within Radcliffe's established pattern of heroines fighting against unfair legal systems regarding female inheritance and property and furthers the understanding of laws as unfairly limiting natural sexual desires.

Sexual desire between the siblings in *The Orphan of the Rhine* is established quickly and shown to be mutual. After Enrico returns from his first two years in the army he is described from Laurette's perspective as 'tall and finely proportioned; his eyes were full of fire, yet occasionally tender; and his countenance, which was frank, open, and manly, being animated with the most lively expression, betrayed every movement of his soul.'[83] Enrico describes Laurette, now fourteen, as having: 'just attained the age when the playful simplicity of childhood is exchanged for the more fascinating charms of the lovely girl [... . H]er features, which were soft, pensive, and interesting; and though not exactly answering to the description of a perfect beauty, possessed something beauty alone could not have bestowed' (123). These descriptions are followed by Julie's – now known by her pseudonym, Madame Chamont – realization that romantic emotions are developing between Enrico and Laurette. Indeed, Madame Chamont sees the affection shift towards romantic love before, perhaps, even Enrico and Laurette themselves are aware of it, and recognizes it with some unease:

> Madame Chamont was not insensible to these emotions, nor unsuspicious of the cause; she observed, with tender anxiety, the looks of her son when the subject of his departure was touched upon, and saw the colour fade from the cheek of Laurette as the necessity of it was mentioned, with evident concern. The suspicion that she was the daughter of the Marchese de Montferrat, and consequently nearly allied to Enrico, was a sufficient cause for distress; and as every circumstance she had collected seemed to confirm the justice of the supposition, the evidence, upon the whole, nearly amounted to conviction (125).

---

[83] Sleath, p. 123. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

Madame Chamont is nearly certain that Laurette is the daughter of the Marchese and thus Enrico's half-sister, but her feelings of distress are couched in a fascinating use of legal terms. Sleath chose words such as 'suspicion', 'collected', 'confirm', 'justice', 'evidence' and 'conviction' to describe Madame Chamont's reaction to witnessing her son and Laurette falling in love. Madame Chamont's description of what she believes is a half-brother/sister blood tie as 'nearly allied' is pointed in its refusal to label the alliance incestuous.

That Madame Chamont characterizes the relationship, not in the language of morality or nature, but through legal language, coupled with her refusal to cast the siblings' bond as incestuous, indicates that her objections to it are based in its legal prohibition and, specifically, in the possibility of evidence being used to convict the two young lovers of a crime. If, as she suspects, Signora di Capigna and the Marchese are the parents of Laurette, making Enrico and Laurette half-siblings, her knowledge would render her a party to the incestuous relationship. While corroborating Westermarck's claims that incest is prohibited in society by law, Sleath's characters show a natural propensity towards it that undercuts the notion that an aversion is caused by co-rearing. It presents sibling love as natural and as threatened by the law that is supposed to be a reproduction of the natural – or nurtured – aversion to incest. Sleath's siblings, raised in isolation beyond the implicit prohibition of incest that Westermarck calls 'custom', are similarly unaffected by the explicit 'law' of which their mother, familiar with social prohibitions on desire, is very aware.[84] Incestuous sibling desire adheres to the Radcliffean model of brother as hero and also depicts incest as the natural consequence of an upbringing outside of the prohibitive customs and laws of a society that uses these prohibitions to maintain its hegemony.

---

[84] Perry uses a situation similar to that of Enrico and Laurette in Eliza Haywood's *The Force of Nature; or, The Lucky Disappointment* (1724) to argue that the siblings therein who are raised together (though ignorant of their kinship) 'can hardly be said to illustrate the voice of blood, since they grew up together and their love developed from deep and familiar knowledge of one another rather than from mysterious, unseen forces'. She concludes, contrary to my reading of Enrico and Laurette, that the '*cri du sang* motif, central to [the] plot without ever providing definitive proof of the instantaneous power of kinship, come so close to the traditional use of the topos that their subversive differences almost seem like denials of its force' (Perry, 'De-familiarizing the Family', p. 163).

The legal focus on incest is sustained when Madame Chamont discovers that Signora di Capigna, the Marchese's mistress whom she believes is Laurette's mother, never had a child. This pleases her as she concludes:

> if Laurette was not the daughter of this unfortunate [...] it appeared highly probable that she was the orphan child of some deceased friend of the Marchese's, whom pity had induced him to patronize; and possibly, should time and reflection fix the attachment between her and Enrico upon a still firmer basis, no adverse circumstances might prevent their union (136).

Madame Chamont's thought process moves with ease from having believed for fourteen years that Enrico and Laurette are half-brother and sister to believing just as strongly that they are of no relation. Surely the most common step having once ascertained Signora di Capigna is not the mother of Laurette, and knowing the character of the Marchese, would be to assume Laurette is the fruit of another illicit union of the Marchese and thus still Enrico's half-sister. The possibility that the Marchese was induced by pity to patronize an orphan is surely an unlikely conclusion for the scorned mother of his neglected son to draw. However, not only does Madame Chamont not even touch upon the possibility that Laurette is the Marchese's daughter, but she also refers to the half-brother sister tie as no more than an 'adverse circumstance' that might have prevented Enrico and Laurette's union. Madame Chamont was, after all, so little bothered by the prospect of Enrico and Laurette forming a lasting attachment that she never even hinted to Enrico that he might be indulging in an incestuous love. She clearly does not see incest as something horrifying or repulsive, but rather as an 'adverse circumstance' (read: having the potential to be proved illegal). Once the possibility of proof of a blood tie through Signora di Capigna is removed she refuses to entertain any further possibilities of proof of kinship. Instead of desiring firm knowledge of Laurette's birth parents before acceding to the union she deliberately ignores all alternatives which would place Laurette in the 'adverse' sister relationship and approves of their union. Incest is not so horrifying to Madame Chamont as the possibility of her childrens' love being thwarted, further evidence that her previous objections are based on legal rather than moral grounds. Madame Chamont merely requires proof that the evidence she had been aware of was false, any further proof is unnecessary; the letter of the law has been fulfilled. She is concerned only with eluding potential punishment, not in adhering to any implicit customs framed as morality dictated by the social structures.

Enrico's feelings develop for Laurette in a way that presents her attributes as contrasted with the manners and looks of others, stressing the unnaturalness of other girls: 'When he compared her with many of her sex [...] whose manners contrasted with hers were coarse or unnatural; her superiority was too evident not to attract his admiration, and that admiration was of too exalted and refined a nature not to terminate in a softer passion' (125). Enrico views Laurette as the standard by which he measures other women, who fail to meet his expectations, in part, because of their 'unnatural' manners. While 'unnatural' may mean 'affected' it seems here more likely that the unnatural quality attributed to other women by Enrico is meant in a literal sense. Their manners seem such to him because they are different from Laurette's, which are natural to him, being the ones to which he has been accustomed his whole life. This sense deepens when we consider manners as 'the morals, the general way of life'; Enrico's identification of the customs of others as unnatural constitutes a significant commentary on the morality, customs and habits of society in contrast to his attraction to Laurette, which is cast as a normal emotional development unaffected by the arbitrary customs of the wider society.[85] Sleath thus suggests that incestuous feelings are inherent. Positioning Laurette as the natural choice for Enrico, given her questionable and potentially illegitimate origins, further naturalizes, or legitimates, both her origins and incestuous desires.

Laurette's feelings for Enrico are similarly bound up in the language of custom and law that at once distinguishes between the two restrictions on incestuous behaviour while blurring the boundaries between them. Sleath uses the term 'manners' to describe these customs or social norms and casts them as unnatural and so regulated that, in spite of being unenforced by legal punishment, they nonetheless become law. These social norms, or manners, are imposed to a greater extent on women who must regulate not only incestuous behaviour, but also the very appearance of sexual desire of any kind: 'Laurette, whose feelings were not less awakened or acute, was condemned by the laws of delicacy, which are sometimes severe and arbitrary, to conceal them under an appearance of tranquility' (127). Although she is bound by social rules to hide these

---

[85] The definition of 'manner' as 'a custom, a habit' and of 'manners' as 'the morals, the general way of life' is found in John Ash, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols (London: 1775), I.

feelings, Laurette experiences the same intensity of incestuous desires for her brother as he does for her. Sleath's condemnation of these customs as 'severe and arbitrary' deploys the language of law in order to affirm that they are no more than social standards of behaviour that uphold norms of gender and sexuality until they become law. This type of language focuses on Laurette's natural behaviour and desires and demonstrates that 'delicacy' is a gendered social construction enforced through normative behavioural expectations until it is as constrictive as a punishable law. Foucault's understanding of observation as a discipline that enforces behaviour is apparent here as is Judith Butler's discussion of gender as performance. Laurette is forced to perform appropriate feminine tranquility because custom forbids her expression of desire.[86] Laurette is 'condemned' or found guilty for her desires and her punishment – self-imposed – is silence. However, Laurette eventually transgresses these modes of discipline and punishment when she is moved to an even more isolated location where she can avoid the social repercussions to which her desire exposes her.[87]

Laurette's capacity for desire is as strong as that of Enrico's. Gayle Backus claims that 'with the nuclearization of the family, the incest taboo […] came to depend on the contingent goodwill, integrity, value and self-discipline of individual fathers and brothers'.[88] Yet we can see in Sleath's depiction of a heroine's love for her brother a formulation of female incestuous sexual desire of which Backus's understanding omits the possibility. Sleath's treatment of female sexuality clearly departs from representations of female desire in other Gothic texts such as *The Monk* in which Beatrice de las Cisternas has passions too masculine for a woman and female desire is portrayed as

---

[86] See Foucault's treatment of the panopticon in *Discipline and Punish* (p. 200) and his argument that disciplinary power necessitates surveillance to create 'comparative measures that have the "norm" as their reference,' (p. 193); see also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 175-86 and particularly her argument that 'gender is also a norm that can never be fully internalized; "the internal" is a surface signification, and gender norms are finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody' (p. 179).
[87] Foucault describes this self-regulation as the effect of observation: 'he who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it assumes responsibility for the constraints of power' in *Discipline and Punish* (p. 202). Bell uses Foucault's understanding of this type of disciplinary power to argue that 'if power is exercised and not possessed, contingent rather than static, feminist opposition to the various operations of power may expect to find more gaps and weaknesses in power's operations' (p. 41). Laurette demonstrates what Bell theorizes – an ability to find the gap in the power operations through the eventual expression of her incestuous love for her brother.
[88] Backus, p. 43.

inherently flawed. While Lewis's female characters have limited options in terms of desire – they may submit to masculine desire and thus survive, they may fight against it and die, or they may exhibit it and be damned – this is not true for Sleath, who takes care to show the desire and emotions between Enrico and Laurette as equal, though restricted by custom and laws that are arbitrary and severe indeed.

Enrico and Laurette's growing desires both shed light on and complicate Westermarck's theories regarding non-blood kin and Greenberg's alternative studies of genetics and attraction. As Smith argues

> GSA both supports and detracts from the cogency of [Westermarck's Hypothesis]. On the one hand, it demonstrates a clear relationship between early co-residence and incest avoidance. Reunited relatives do not have an opportunity to develop sexual aversions that would have protected them from incestuous passion. On the other hand, it suggests that inhibitions against incest must operate against an especially potent prior attraction: sexual feelings experienced by reunited relatives are often especially intense, suggesting that sexual aversions between co-reared non-kin and co-reared kin are not entirely comparable.[89]

Smith's account suggests Enrico and Laurette should not develop incestuous feelings because of their early co-residence causing sexual aversion but this is clearly not the case and GSA is somewhat at a loss to explain how Enrico and Laurette, who were not separated at birth and raised separately as the siblings in Greenberg's post-adoption incest studies were, are capable of sexual attraction towards one another.[90] The eventual revelation of their lack of an actual blood tie may contain the answer. Greenberg argues that co-reared kin develop a strong sexual aversion to one another in response to a genetic predisposition towards a strong attraction while co-reared non-kin do not have the same initial attraction and do not develop a corresponding and intense aversion. Thus, Enrico and Laurette, who do not share a genetic attraction, would not become averse to one another. Smith's 'Shared Mother Hypothesis' seems relevant here. It bases its theory on incest avoidance between co-reared children on a slightly different footing; the mother figure with which a given child identifies becomes that child's mother and the child

---

[89] Smith: 206.
[90] See Greenberg, 'Post-Adoption Reunion', for further context.

a writer to truly explore issues of sexuality', Sleath forces us to reexamine the boundaries of sexuality and family.[93] Romantic love and sexual attraction are an intensification of, not a departure from, sibling love.

This is confirmed when Laurette asks Enrico why he gazes on a portrait of the Madonna so earnestly; his response is: 'Because it resembles […] my too charming sister; she whose image is ever present to my mind, and who is dearer to me than my existence' (198-99). Enrico uses the term sister, rather than lover, to define his primary relationship with Laurette. In doing so in the context of viewing a painting of the Madonna, Laurette is compared to the virgin mother, a move that seemingly erases her sexuality yet simultaneously recalls *The Monk*, in which Ambrosio's sexual attraction to Rosario/Matilda is heightened by her resemblance to a painting of the Virgin Mary. Sleath unites increased sexual desire with intense emotional attachment and frames both by a context of forbidden or effaced sexuality that mirrors incestuous desire; sexuality is found in a place where it is traditionally taboo.[94] Even after they have assured each other of their mutual affection and desire, Enrico writes Laurette a letter in which he asks: 'but why, Laurette, will you forget that I am your brother? Why would you deprive me of the sacred power of protecting you, the primary wish of my soul; of defending you from future injuries, or of redressing them if committed?' (236). Enrico does not want Laurette to forget he is her brother; that his primary wish is to protect and defend her even if this is equally his wish as a lover. He has, after all, been raised with her as his sister regardless of their actual blood tie; there will be no moment for either Enrico or Laurette of sudden realization that they are not related. The relationship between them does not require any such revelation because it was never an obstacle to them, either because they never believed themselves to be blood kin or because it was irrelevant to their feelings. Thus, to Enrico and Laurette, the terms 'brother' and 'sister' will be forever, inextricably, linked to that of 'lover'.

---

[93] Beth Kilkenny, 'Representation of the Repressed: Women and the Feminine in Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* and *The Nocturnal Minstrel*', *The Corvey Project at Sheffield Hallam University*, <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/corvey/corinne/1%20Sleath/Sleath%20critical%20essay.htm> [accessed 8 July 2009].

[94] *The Monk* often places sexual desire in the context of forbidden desire due to religious vows or religious imagery and setting; Sleath combines religious imagery and a familial context that, opposed to Lewis's novel, deemphasizes the taboo nature of the sexual desire.

In seeming contrast to her ability to overlook brotherly bonds that have been in place since birth, Laurette asserts to the Marchese that she cannot disregard the idea of a paternal bond and love him romantically: 'I was taught from the earliest period of my existence, to consider you as my only surviving friend; and, when personally unknown to you, to honour and revere you as a parent; – forgive me when I say no other sentiment can be excited' (244). Smith's Shared Mother Hypothesis that states that 'the mother's behavioural markers of one's probable father and siblings activate different intensities of sexual aversion,' functions here in relation to the parent.[95] Laurette is averse to a potential sexual union with the Marchese due to Madame Chamont having raised her to view the Marchese in a paternal role. But Laurette's argument only further complicates her romantic love for Enrico, which easily overcomes the same boundaries she cites as prohibiting her from viewing the Marchese as more than family. Indeed, the only familial feeling the Marchese holds for Laurette is via his son, for whom he still maintains some semblance of fatherly feeling. It is this fatherly feeling that spares Enrico when the Marchese discovers him to be his rival for Laurette but also fans the flames of his father's rage: 'had his rival been any other than his own son, he would probably have meditated some dreadful revenge; but the ties of blood [...] prevented him from exercising any actual cruelty, though it tended not to mitigate his resentment, but rather added warmth to the violence of his unrestrained passions' (237). This is further evidence to that offered in chapter 1 of the paternal figure fearing not only the removal of his object of sexual desire and opportunity to use the female as an object of exogamic exchange, but also a fear of the dissolution of his power via a younger generation's endogamic choices.[96]

Gillian Beer says of Sleath's work that 'the heroine's female condition of passivity, isolation, and privation is strongly identified with silence both within and without doors [... .] In women's Gothic the woman author writes while the heroine is mute' in order to rebel against the muting of women.[97] It is not the silence of the heroine, however, or her passivity that allows for the rebellion of the woman author. Beer is

---

[95] Smith: 210.

[96] This is similar to da Silva's discussion of the dragon-slayer myth, the themes of which are identifiable in Radcliffe's use of the incestuous siblings to defeat the father in *A Sicilian Romance*.

[97] Gillian Beer, '"Our Unnatural No-voice": The Heroic Epistle, Pope, and Women's Gothic', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 12 (1982): 151.

correct that the author challenges the status of women, but Laurette is neither silent nor passive; she is 'condemned' to 'conceal' her feelings by the society she inhabits. But this concealment allows for a position of absolute refusal to male propositions while maintaining desire for her sibling. Laurette's refusal to consent to the Marchese's sexual desires/marriage proposals culminates in her removal from the castle and imprisonment. When she is finally found by Enrico we see her through his eyes: 'Enrico surveyed her pallid cheek, her thin emaciated form, and every symptom of alarming indisposition' (287). Imprisoned by the Marchese because she will not give in to the sexual impulses and desires of a father figure and because she overhears one of his murderous plans, she is starved to the point of near death.[98] Laurette's noncompliance with patriarchal demands of marriage for male sexual gratification and her very existence (as rightful heiress to the fortunes the Marchese has illegally claimed and her knowledge thereof due to her placement as listener and witness) cause the near erasure of her body. Her very ability to speak – to refuse, to bear witness against the Marchese – is a threat to the dominant paternal figure. The female body that voices resistance or defiance, particularly in favour of the incestuous and equal brother, becomes the site of punishment by the patriarch – here the Marchese – who demands compliance to the heteronormative exogamic culture.

The complications of the novel's incestuous world culminate with Enrico inheriting the Marchese's fortune in a plot twist that reveals the marriage between the Marchese and Madame Chamont to be legitimate. But the hero's legitimacy has consequences: Enrico discovers Laurette is also legitimate and was orphaned when the Marchese killed her father to steal her inheritance and therefore the money that Enrico inherits is rightfully Laurette's. Enrico conceals from Laurette the murder of her father by his and the novel ends with their wedding. Such a conclusion effectively negates the potential implications of Enrico's inheritance having rightfully belonged to Laurette; had she been the recipient of the Marchese's wealth rather than Enrico he would still have eventually gained control of the fortune with their marriage. The laws that govern female property are thus also brought to the reader's attention.

---

[98] Her imprisonment and starvation are noticeably similar to that of the mother and first wife, Louisa Bernini, in Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*.

Sleath expresses through sibling kinship in *The Orphan of the Rhine* a defiance of unnatural social customs and laws, a natural development of romantic love stemming from sibling love, and a reliance on individual choice in spouse selection. Westermarck's, Smith's and Greenberg's hypotheses on incest avoidance, genetic sexual attraction, and shared mothering contribute to understandings of the complicated nature of kinship, siblings, attraction and aversion and the deployment of the incest taboo in Sleath's novel. Foucault's, Bell's and Butler's insights into the power relations that are part of discipline and punishment and the performative quality of gender offer further important models through which to theorize incestuous behaviour in the text. Sleath's treatment of siblings willfully blurs the lines between brother and lover, demonstrating that siblings and spouses are far from antithetical. This understanding of incestuous love as a heightened culmination of brother-sister affection that ends happily and prosperously firmly places Sleath as a radical writer of the Gothic who presents patriarchal control, the incest taboo, and social dictates of female behaviour as at once severe and arbitrary.

V.   The Romantic Gothic: Narcissism and Incest

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is the fullest expression of the brother-sister incestuous bond, distinct from other Gothic novels in its representation of sibling desire as an apex of, paradoxically, equality and domination. The almost fifty year gap between Bronte's text and the Gothic novels analyzed in this chapter is bridged by the tradition of Romantic narcissistic incest that has been established in the interim. Bronte's novel is best reexamined within the genealogy of brother-sister incest in the Gothic that is itself frequently read within the later context of the Romantic incest model. This repositioning places Bronte's novel as simultaneously aligned with the Gothic texts and the Romantic tradition preceding it, allowing discussion of the distinct paradigms of incest from which the novel borrows and departs.[99] If Westermarck's, Greenberg's and Smith's theories combine to help explain the formation of incestuous desires within Sleath's work, one

---

[99] This tradition is examined in Richardson's 'The Dangers of Sympathy': 737-54.

need look no further than Greenberg to explain the magnetic attraction between Catherine and Heathcliff. While the concept of GSA as such was of course unknown to Emily Bronte, the intensity of desires that manifest as recognition in her characters is a nineteenth-century representation of what was then understood as the *cri du sang*.[100] Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship, when reexamined from its new vantage point, can be identified as a spectacular portrayal of sibling incest's power of attraction and the concurrent subsumption of individual identities within the network of kinship.

In spite of the importance of the incestuous desires between Catherine and Heathcliff to understanding *Wuthering Heights* the classification of their relationship as incestuous, though part of critical discourse for some decades now, is variously assented to and resisted by much of the scholarly community.[101] Some scholars demonstrate a positive distaste for including the incest possibility as part of their focus. Marianne Thormählen writes that the element of incest 'would go some way towards accounting for the kinship one senses between them [... .] But if Catherine and Heathcliff are indeed related by blood, they will hardly know it themselves [... .] Consequently, talk of "incest" seems a little off-target.'[102] This dismissal seems an inappropriate response to the incestuous possibilities afforded by the text. If the relationship's potential for incest is overlooked, along with its contextualization within the conventions of Gothic and Romantic sibling incest, analysis of the relationship veers off target. Thormählen's argument speaks to the flaws in overlooking the incestuous nature of the Catherine-Heathcliff bond: 'nor does she [Catherine] feel erotically attracted to him [Heathcliff]; "one does not mate with one's self, with one's kind", as one critic has pointed out.'[103] Thormählen's point relies on an assertion that denies the presence of incest in general and

---

[100] Perry, 'De-familiarizing the Family', p. 161. Perry describes eighteenth-century French comedy and tragicomedy novels in which 'a sudden and instinctive sympathy between strangers that signaled consanguinity – enabled family members [...] to recognize one another in time to avert, betrayal, incest, and murder' (p. 161). She goes on to argue that in French dramas characters sometimes 'confuse the force of blood with romantic love and mistake the magnetism of kinship for erotic attraction to someone who is really a sibling' and that this literary convention reappears in English fiction in the latter half of the eighteenth century as a 'plot in which biology asserts itself as intuition' (p. 161).

[101] For an early scholarly treatment of the possibility of incest between Catherine and Heathcliff see Eric Solomon, 'The Incest Theme in *Wuthering Heights*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 14:1 (1959): 80-83.

[102] Marianne Thormählen, 'The Lunatic and the Devil's Disciple: The "Lovers" in *Wuthering Heights*', *Review of English Studies*, 48:190 (1997): 190.

[103] Thormählen: 190.

its function as an established convention of Gothic and Romantic texts.[104] Other scholars similarly dismiss the possibility of incest. In the words of William A. Madden, 'Mrs. Leavis revives the unprovable and, in my judgment, unnecessary assumption that Heathcliff is Mr. Earnshaw's illegitimate son.'[105] Scholars who depict the incest potential as 'reviving' a theory both 'unprovable' and 'unnecessary' reveals an anxiety surrounding the possibility of a consanguineal bond that would render Catherine and Heathcliff half-siblings. Those who avoid the incestuous implications of the novel by arguing the existence of a blood relationship is unprovable echo the legal language of evidence Sleath employs to challenge such requirements. The demand for proof and the assertion that its absence renders a consideration of incest irrelevant effaces incestuous and female desire from the body of the text in a reinforcement of the gender and sexual ideologies that Gothic representations of sibling incest seek to subvert.

The consequences of denying the incestuous element of Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship are a denial of their love and a reduction of it to a pathological egotism. When Thormählen states, 'I have avoided referring to the bond between Catherine and Heathcliff as "love" [...] because the nature of their passions fits no description of the concepts known to me', she disregards the established conventions of Gothic and Romantic incest in which the representation of their love is, in part, grounded.[106] Without taking the possibility of blood kinship into account the Catherine-Heathcliff bond is instead viewed as a function of Catherine's egomania: Thormählen concludes that 'Catherine's inability to recognize the reality, even existence, of human needs and wishes outside her own is itself a sign of mental disturbance, and her self-identification with Heathcliff is another [... .] Catherine and Heathcliff might be called schizoid.'[107] Identifying the Romantic, narcissistic sibling love/self-love convention at the heart of the Catherine-Heathcliff relationship is crucial to accurately understanding the bond without simplifying it to simple egomania on Catherine's part. Rather than condemn Catherine and Heathcliff as schizoids and egomaniacs due to a refusal to

[104] Wade Thompson, 'Infanticide and Sadism in Wuthering Heights', *PMLA*, 78:1 (1963): 69-74.
[105] William A. Madden, '*Wuthering Heights*: The Binding of Passion', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 27:2 (1972): 132.
[106] Thormählen: 193.
[107] Thormählen: 190-91.

believe them related, one need only look at similar instances of the desperate sibling incestuous love in many other Romantic texts.[108] What Thormählen labels egomania is amply explained when analyzed in terms of Romantic incestuous sibling narcissism that, when not taken into account, leads to misreadings of the relationship.

My discussion of Catherine and Heathcliff as siblings is not without precedent. William Goetz argues: 'the novel presents a narrow, conspicuously defined set of relationships that practically begs to be considered in light of the incest prohibition and rules of exogamy' and that 'even if we do not accept the speculative hypothesis that Heathcliff is [...] a half-brother to Catherine, it is indisputable that Heathcliff's adoptive place in the family turns him into a brother of Catherine.'[109] Goetz's assertions highlight the multi-layered nature of the incestuous links between Catherine and Heathcliff, the fusion of ambiguous blood ties and their shared childhood. Similarly, Alan Richardson points to Romantic literature's emphasis on sibling incest that positions the identification of a sibling bond as privileging childhood experience over blood kinship.[110] Detaching Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship from its incestuous aspect based on the lack of proof of an actual blood tie thus becomes increasingly problematic. As Richardson points out regarding representations of sibling incest in Romantic poetry 'the strength of the sibling relationship is founded more on a shared childhood than on the blood tie.'[111] My location of the bond as incestuous relies on these understandings of kinship that define as kin those with whom one is co-reared and the presence of this convention in Romantic literature, and also draws on the intensity of the attraction as exemplifying the pull of blood identified as experienced by reunited kin in current studies of GSA.[112]

---

[108] See Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Osorio* (1797) and Ludwig Tieck's *Der blonde Eckbert* (1797) for further examples of Romantic sibling incest.

[109] William R. Goetz, 'Genealogy and Incest in *Wuthering Heights*', *Studies in the Novel*, 14:4 (1982): 360-63.

[110] Richardson, 'The Dangers of Sympathy': 739.

[111] Richardson, 'The Dangers of Sympathy': 740.

[112] Catherine and Heathcliff fall into both the category of co-reared kin as they share a childhood and the category of reunited kin as they are past the age of reverse sexual imprinting, generally agreed to be before the ages of three to eight, when they begin their co-residence. See Smith: 203; Joseph Shepher, *Incest: A Biosocial View* (New York: Academic Press, 1983); and Chuang Ying-Chang and Arthur P. Wolf, 'Marriage in Taiwan, 1881-1905: An Example of Regional Diversity', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 54:3 (1995): 781-96 for discussions of the critical period of reverse sexual imprinting.

Gail Finney's treatment of incest in the works of the German Romantics provides a useful definition of the narcissistic Romantic sibling love present between Catherine and Heathcliff: 'the myth of Narcissus [...] reveals the underlying nature of the incestuous bond: erotic energy is transferred from the narcissistic individual to the object most like himself, his sibling.'[113] This reflective self-love is further magnified by the Gothic obscurity concerning Heathcliff's actual origins and his status as Catherine's adopted brother. Heathcliff is at once a reflection of Catherine and her creation, her possible blood kin and her adopted brother. Any one of these facts make a discussion of incest relevant to the text; all four render it essential. The model of Romantic narcissistic incest serves as the basis of John Allen Stevenson's analysis of Catherine and Heathcliff; he argues that Bronte purposely crafts illegitimacy and mysterious origins for Heathcliff to necessitate the contemplation of Heathcliff as Mr Earnshaw's son, rendering him Catherine's half-brother and mirror image lover.[114] Stevenson uses this projection to argue that Heathcliff is 'the forbidden outsider and the forbidden brother' who 'perform[s] a paradoxical double-role, both brother and other [...] [that] demonstrates the dangers of both incest and excessive exogamy.'[115] In contrast, I argue that the presence of Romantic narcissistic incest confirms Heathcliff's identification with Catherine and, moreover, his representation as other is produced through his degradation at the hands of Catherine's other brother, Hindley. In this context, Heathcliff's othering is a failed attempt by Hindley, who fears Heathcliff's potential to usurp both his role as older brother and his inheritance, to prevent the disruption of wealth and property transfer that could occur if Heathcliff is identified as an Earnshaw. Hindley's eventual failure to other Heathcliff is inevitable as his bond with Catherine proves indissoluble even after death.

The othering of Heathcliff via Hindley (and to an extent through the servant, Nelly's, characterization of him as alien and foreign) is temporarily successful as it forces Catherine away from him and propels her into the marriage with Linton, the similar though non-related marriage choice that ends so disastrously. While Lord David Cecil, in an early analysis of the novel, argued that destructive marriages in *Wuthering Heights* are

---

[113] Finney: 243.
[114] John Allen Stevenson, '"Heathcliff is Me!": Wuthering Heights and the Question of Likeness', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 43:1 (1988): 62.
[115] Stevenson: 73-75.

the ones that occur from unlike marrying (Cathy to Linton and Heathcliff to Isabella), I extend this argument to show that Bronte asserted that like marrying like (kin to kin) creates a non-destructive marriage.[116] Indeed, every disastrous event that occurs in the novel does so because Catherine cannot marry Heathcliff – her kin – and instead chooses the unlike or non-kin. Heathcliff, the half-brother, the blank slate onto which she projects herself, is her true love – her soul – and the only real potential mate for her in the novel. Even critics such as Thormählen, who conclude by portraying Catherine as an egomaniac, do not consider Linton a suitable spouse for her and regard her actions, personality and behaviour as simply too different from Linton's to ever enable them to be reconciled with each other. Stevenson argues that their bond:

> has some of the practical effects of an actual wedding between them, effects that mirror the dangers of incest as Levi-Strauss describes them. Their love for each other encloses them in Wuthering Heights, making it impossible for the Earnshaw household either to give or receive [women] [... .] Her brother/lover has enclosed her heart, if not her body, in Wuthering Heights, and she finds herself unable to participate in that process of separation from the household of her parents and incorporation into the family of her husband that constitutes marital exchange.[117]

Stevenson, however, uses this to assert that Heathcliff and his incestuous love for Catherine exemplifies the dangers of Levi-Strauss's theory, acting as a 'paradoxical double crime in terms of conventional marriage customs, at once a hoarding and a theft' but this description still places Catherine as the object of transfer. This is true of her relationship with Linton but not with Heathcliff.[118] Such an endogamic move is repeated by her daughter and Hareton but again it is not shown as a danger. The 'hoarding and theft' Stevenson ascribes to Heathcliff are not actualized through marriage to Catherine – society as represented through the class spectrum of Nelly and Hindley has rendered that impossible – and it is not until death that they are united in their Heaven (the heath) that places no prohibitions on their relationship. The question of likeness is framed by the eternal bond between Catherine and Heathcliff (regardless of its perception to others) that is presented as the most important of their lives. The social demands of likeness in class and exogamy that forbid incest must be transcended in order for Catherine and Heathcliff

---

[116] Lord David Cecil, *Early Victorian Novelists* (London: Constable, 1934), pp. 152-67.
[117] Stevenson: 77.
[118] Stevenson: 78.

to unite. Their likeness – be it borne of projection, genetics or nature – draws them together and when thwarted leads to disaster; it is a similarity of self capable of realization only in nature or the afterworld. The created and man-made societies and prohibitions that forbid their love and demand Catherine's exchange must be left behind in order for the self to be reconciled to the self. Catherine cannot be with her brother/lover, herself, her soul, until the boundaries imposed by the incest taboo are disintegrated with death.

Regarding incestuous narcissism in Romantic and neo-Romantic literature, Finney states that 'narcissism in the guise of incest is a particularly effective expression of the individual's exclusion from society, since it adds the solitude of self-love to the guilt of a sexual taboo.'[119] Her reading of the twins Siegmunde and Sieglinde in Wagner's *Die Walkure* (composed 1854) concludes that 'the attraction between the two intensifies rapidly. Its narcissistic overtones echo and re-echo. For what joins them is their common isolation, their shared suffering as members of a strange breed […] which all others shun.'[120] The attraction and shared isolation of the siblings locates the work as operating in the tradition of *Wuthering Heights*, which Finney describes as an example of 'the siblings-as-soulmates configuration', in which incest is 'committed in conscious defiance of the norms of the society that has excluded them' and which makes Catherine and Heathcliff 'typically Romantic heroes, outsiders by virtue of their inherent social position or because of an exceptional sensibility which leads them to cast in doubt or completely reject their society's values.'[121] Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is situated alongside Wagner's in terms of the protagonists' common status as outsiders and their incestuous love, which, though incapable of being realized in their lifetime, transcends not only the values of the society that rejects them but also the event of death itself. Catherine and Heathcliff's bond is unique, embodying neither solely the siblings-as-soulmates incestuous narcissism of Romanticism nor the isolated individual narcissistic incest of neo-Romantic works. Rather, Bronte's novel provides an amalgamation of these incestuous conventions as well as exhibiting a variation of the

---

[119] Finney: 245.
[120] Finney: 248.
[121] Finney: 248.

Gothic's egalitarian and idealized brother-as-hero paradigm that corresponds to the work's status as both a late Gothic and a late Romantic novel. Catherine and Heathcliff's love does not simply fit the incest as Romantic narcissism model, though it is closely linked to what Finney describes as 'an irresistible, unconsciously generated passion, [where] the Romantic lover is defeated by his conscious rebellion against the society which has stigmatized him'.[122] Bronte's lovers, though self-obsessed and self-destructive, are very definitely lovers, who define themselves through and by their love and identification with one another.

Catherine's cry of 'I am Heathcliff' is the ultimate identification and integration of self with other that, even without the probable existence of a consanguineal bond, renders them kin through the declared melding of identity.[123] The affirmation of self and kinship through identification with the sibling that Catherine displays with this cry is similar to what Rooney observes in Sophocles' *Antigone* through Antigone's burial of Polynieces – an act that affirms her brother's existence and 'with this her own existence in that the brother and sister are conjoined, co-conjured, interdependent, similar but not identical beings.'[124] While Goetz reads this cry as an 'obscure acting out of the rule, which according to Levi-Strauss, stands at the basis of all culture: the renunciation of incest', it seems to embrace rather than renounce incest.[125] Although Goetz sees the marriages of Catherine to Edgar and Heathcliff to Isabella as fundamentally supporting the exogamic rules of marriage detailed by Levi-Strauss, this is a reductive view of the complex endogamic nature of the unions that Goetz himself points to as appearing in the repetition of characters' names. The surface appearance of exogamy is in actuality flawed and in danger of collapse: 'these doublings or overlappings of names […] they insist upon that general threat of incest that overhangs society, the threat of a union between

---

[122] Finney: 253.
[123] Bronte, p. 82. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[124] Rooney, p. 21. Rooney's argument is situated in the context of Judith Butler's work *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) in which, Rooney argues, Butler is concerned with giving 'the rhetorical speech act precedence over an action that would otherwise precede it so that the speech act appears to be the originating phenemenon. This is a matter of attempting to defend the logo-centric theory of performativity, together with the theory of gender as performativity, from the ways in which Antigone might occasion a call for the rethinking of such theories' (Rooney, p. 21).
[125] Goetz: 363.

characters who are *too "alike"*.[126] The repetition of names, as I have already argued, is common in Gothic novels and the subsequent creation of an ever-diminishing familial circle that is reborn in future, near-identical generations causes relationships to be endowed with incestuous undertones. Goetz's view of Catherine's marriage to Linton as 'the surmounting of the incest temptation and the willingness to leave the parental home and to become part of the system of exchange' is difficult to reconcile with her continued relationship with Heathcliff.[127] What is perceived as a willingness to leave the parental (paternal is actually a more accurate description) home is undercut by her desperate need to return to the heath and the wild nature found there. Rather than 'surmounting' the incestuous temptation of Heathcliff, she joyfully welcomes him back upon his return, risking her marriage in order to resume a relationship with him.

Catherine's self-identification with Heathcliff situates them as kin who are positioned as equally outside the kinship circles of the Earnshaws, who refuse fully to incorporate Heathcliff, and the Lintons, to whom both Catherine and Heathcliff remain perpetual outsiders. It is their self-reflexive love and the way that this love excludes them from subsumption into another family that causes all other relationships they undertake to fail, rather than Goetz's Freudian explanation that Catherine's lack of success with Edgar is due to her failure to transition from childhood to adulthood and overcome the oedipal complex.[128] Madden notes the outsider status of Catherine and Heathcliff and although he argues it motivates Catherine's 'attempt to reenter society through marriage to Edgar' – a conclusion akin to Goetz's point that Catherine overcomes her desire for Heathcliff to enter into exogamic exchange – he recognizes it as 'an attempt to evade the basic truth about herself, her being wedded to Heathcliff as a fellow outcast from that society [... .] Heathcliff is inseparably connected in Catherine's mind with her beloved moors "out there" beyond society.'[129] Catherine's entrance into the exogamic system fails, not because, as Goetz argues, she regresses to a childish state of incestuous desire but because her marriage was an 'attempt' rather than a willing participation in exogamy further hindered by her ongoing incestuous love for Heathcliff.

---

[126] Goetz: 364.
[127] Goetz: 367.
[128] Goetz: 368.
[129] Madden: 149.

Catherine never overcomes her love for Heathcliff as the narcissistic, outsider nature of their bond makes this impossible; to overcome Heathcliff would be to overcome herself. Indeed, her renunciation of Heathcliff is only ever a verbal one that when overheard by Heathcliff instigates his departure. Catherine never resists the love she claims would degrade her; Heathcliff simply leaves her behind to answer Linton's proposals. On his return their relationship is the same as it ever was, much to her husband's disapproval. In fact, Catherine clearly sides with Heathcliff against Edgar during an argument between the two men in which Edgar fears Heathcliff will strike him, crying to Edgar: 'if you have not the courage to attack him, make an apology, or allow yourself to be beaten. It will correct you of feigning more valour than you possess' (114). Catherine hardly chooses Edgar and exogamy over Heathcliff, as evidenced by her repeated defiant refusals to stop seeing Heathcliff. This is reinforced particularly in her death scene when she shrieks at the prospect of Heathcliff releasing her from his arms even though Edgar approaches: 'Oh, don't go, don't go. It is the last time! Edgar will not hurt us. Heathcliff, I shall die! I shall die!' (164). The notion of being without Heathcliff – who is as integral to her survival as herself – prompts a syntactic confusion over whether it is Heathcliff's proposed absence or an awareness of the severity of her illness that causes her to declare she will die. Heathcliff, of course, remains with her until she has fainted in his arms and Edgar enters, telling Catherine, 'Hush, hush, Catherine! I'll stay. If he shot me so, I'd expire with a blessing on my lips' (164). Heathcliff and Catherine defy not only propriety (or custom) but threats of violence and death (or punishment) in order to remain in each other's arms.

Catherine and Heathcliff are duplicated in the younger generation by Catherine's daughter, Cathy Linton and Hareton Earnshaw, the son of Catherine's brother Hindley. The novel's culmination in their eventual union, which is made possible only after obstacles identical to those faced by Catherine and Heathcliff are overcome, tightens the already endogamic circle created by their names and appearances. But while Goetz claims that 'likeness in physical appearance […] has been offset by a difference, or removal, in blood kinship' as an explanation of why these two can marry, this union in

fact seems even more incestuous than that of the preceding generation.[130] Cathy's marriages to her cousin Linton and then to her cousin Hareton serve as a continuation of Catherine's story rather than a correction. Cathy makes the same misguided first marriage to a weak, blonde Linton (the result of blackmail and lies which call into question Catherine's motivations for marrying Edgar Linton given the other parallels between the marriages) and then makes the correct marital choice in the form of the dark, brooding, handsome, strong Hareton. If Cathy is happy in her second marriage it only reinforces the misery of the first one, to which Catherine's marriage to Edgar Linton is the obvious mirror. To interpret the fact of their first cousin blood-tie as a weaker consanguineal bond than the adoptive brother-sister bond of Catherine and Heathcliff ignores the identical structure of Cathy and Hareton's existence, that of (after Edgar Linton's and Linton Heathcliff's deaths) two teenagers under the roof of one abusive father figure, Heathcliff. Before their love develops Cathy and Hareton have become Catherine and Heathcliff, the foster-siblings under the roof of an angry father figure. But while Hindley stood in the way of a union between Heathcliff and Catherine by degrading Heathcliff and the existence of the Lintons provided an alternative marriage option, Bronte has taken great care to remove any ultimate threat to the happiness of this younger generation. Cathy and Hareton are isolated from society even further than Catherine and Heathcliff were and are placed within a disruptive, fractured home environment that is more conducive to and receptive of incestuous sexual union than Catherine and Heathcliff's was.

The unstable and isolated family that Bronte creates for Hareton and Cathy is in anthropological terms explicable as the consequence of incestuous desires; Bronte's reversal of what would become common knowledge in anthropology offers an alternative model of incestuous cause and effect. Malinowski states: 'the sexual impulse is in general a very upsetting and socially disruptive force [...] incompatible with any family relationship [...] A society which allowed incest could not develop a stable family; it would therefore be deprived of the strongest foundations for kinship.'[131] But Bronte's unstable structure of family precedes the sexual impulse and, in effect, becomes part of

[130] Goetz: 369.

[131] Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Culture', *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. Charles G. Seligman, 15 vols (New York: Macmillan: 1930), IV, p. 630.

its cause. Bronte allows no exogamic possibility. Cathy and Hareton are the only option for each other; they look alike, they are essentially foster siblings, but in their relationship (rather than having, as Goetz argues, a weaker kinship status) the blood tie is strengthened and clarified. They are definitely foster family and definitely blood kin; the possible consanguineal ties that trouble Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship are here an absolute. It is within the fractured kinship circle of Wuthering Heights that Cathy and Hareton are able to combine notions of family and desire, defining one another, eventually, as both beloved and kin. Cathy creates Hareton in her image just as her mother did with the 'gypsy' Heathcliff, teaching him to read, write and behave. Although Hareton initially is kind to his cousin, her anger at her forced marriage to Linton and habitation at Wuthering Heights causes an escalating conflict that concludes with the end of their tentative friendship. When Cathy seeks Hareton's friendship again, apologizing and flirting with him, she does so in a language that blends consanguineal kinship and desire: 'Come, you shall take notice of me, Hareton – you are my cousin and you shall own me' (313). Cathy is not an object of exchange, she is the agent of it, choosing to give herself to Hareton and take him in return. Hareton remains steadfast in ignoring her, until 'she stooped, and impressed on his cheek a gentle kiss' (314). It is with these speeches and the kiss that Hareton and Cathy begin the transformation from kin and foster siblings to lovers, the same transformation that Heathcliff and Catherine underwent. Scenes of Cathy teaching Hareton reading and pronunciation only heighten the sense of a shared childhood, of siblings learning and developing together along with their love. It is not that 'the threat of incest […] loses the greater part of its force' but that the threat of incest is finally realized.[132] Endogamy is not threatened, it is actualized; the effect of their sexual impulses towards one another functions not to fragment a stable family structure, but rather, to allow its creation.

Wuthering Heights is the climax of sibling incest in the Gothic, in part, because of its Romantic influences. The self-reflexive sibling incest evidenced in the works of Romantic writers is embedded in Bronte's treatment of Heathcliff and Catherine. Catherine and Heathcliff are undeniable equals in the relationship, in spite of Heathcliff's

---

[132] Goetz: 369.

seeming dominance over all the characters, because he has been created from Catherine's imposition of herself onto his unformed self. Their bond, however, is deeper than just this reflexive nature. Likely half-brother and sister and certainly adoptive siblings their shared experiences as social exiles, as the unwanted children of Wuthering Heights, heightens the incestuous and exclusive nature of the relationship. Bronte's creation of a social world in which Catherine is propelled into an exogamic marriage as an object of exchange fails miserably, both in the marriage and in the exchange. For the attempted exchange, just like incestuous relationships, ends without any exchange at all: Bronte ensures this with the future generation, a mirror of Catherine and Heathcliff who unite the properties of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights and choose to live at the Grange. Rather than property being exchanged and expanded on, the social world is, rather than increasing, becoming ever smaller. Cathy and Hareton embody the incestuous relationship Catherine and Heathcliff shared but failed to realize; they are able to fulfil its promise by having no non-kin marital choices within their society or paternal agents to require Cathy's exchange outside the family.[133] Cathy and Hareton's status as orphans and shared isolation prohibit their entry into the world of exchange; Cathy is left with no one to demand her exchange and Hareton's poverty renders him incapable of participating in the economy of exogamic marriage. They become their own agents and owners, capable of giving or keeping themselves as they wish. Bronte depicts sibling desire as a viable and lasting love that transcends not only the social rules that forbid it, but also death itself. Sibling incest is capable of being realized and fulfilled when it is removed from a society that requires the exchange of women to a world outside of culture. Bronte's treatment of incest is a revolutionary reimagining of the causation and consequences of familial sexual desires that shows self-reflexive sibling love as a lasting bond that transcends barriers of disparate class, birth, wealth and education in its egalitarian nature and creates a stable and complete family structure in counterpoint to what is approved of by society and state.

---

[133] That Cathy's marriages to her cousins are endogamic exchanges is examined in greater detail in chapter 4 of this thesis.

VI.   Conclusion

Sibling incest in the Gothic has traditionally been limited to an understanding that defines it as an inversion of Romantic narcissistic incest, a convention used by female authors to evoke female fear of male aggressors. However, sibling incest operates in a variety of ways in order to impart a universal message. Part of the traditional scholarly understanding of the sibling incest thematic within the Gothic comes from the heightened attention that has been paid to Lewis's *The Monk* as the epitome of sibling incest within the Gothic, an understanding that simultaneously privileges Lewis's account as the origin and the prototype upon which other accounts of incest have been modelled. This misunderstanding not only incorrectly locates Lewis's novel as the assumed model of Gothic sibling incest, but also obfuscates the paradigm set forth in Radcliffe's novels in favour of a misleading emphasis on the violent horror of sibling incest. The prevalence of literary criticism that has focused on *The Monk* as the archetype of sibling incest while overlooking Lewis's novel as a response to Radcliffe's works bears reexamination. The immense popular success of Radcliffe's oeuvre caused many other novelists to follow her examples and a closer analysis of Radcliffe's works and these imitations reveal that her constructions of sibling incest play a larger role in influencing later depictions of sibling incest than previously imagined. Radcliffe's paradigm of the brother/lover conflation establishes the brother as an equal and a friend, a beloved companion of the heroine, before integrating him with a physically and emotionally similar lover. The model established, brother as unified with lover, is shown as an almost unattainable goal in a society that forces exogamy and one that can only be realized once the integration of two roles is completed.

This formation of sibling incest is altered within Sleath's work *The Orphan of the Rhine* wherein Sleath's emphasis on the legal prohibition of incest allows for a more radical acceptance of the possibility for sibling incest with, not a conflation of roles that culminates in a brother/lover figure, but the brother himself. Sleath's treatment of incest as a natural progression of brotherly and sisterly love departs from the established eighteenth-century literary convention of sexual attraction between unknown kin without

relying on Romantic models of narcissism or soulmate incest.[134] Sleath's portrayal of sibling incest, instead, shows sexual desire as a natural progression of a sibling love based in shared experiences, interests, and like tastes that culminates post-puberty in mutual desire. Her focus on the legal ban on incest as its principal objection for her characters rather than its perceived immorality calls the basis of the incest taboo into question. The juxtaposition of the prohibition of incest and the laws that govern female behaviour represent society as constructing rules of conduct that become law, forbidding through discipline and punishment that which is natural. Such a depiction of sibling incest reworks Radcliffe's model by focusing the legal emphasis, so often on property and inheritance in Radcliffe's works, more strictly on the unnatural taboos that society places on desire and behaviour to control and limit female action. The presence of blood kinship, Sleath posits, is irrelevant; desires occur regardless of familial relationship, stemming naturally from affection and love while the laws that attempt to control them are severe and arbitrary.

In Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* the brother figure is in turn a Radcliffean brother-lover, a Romantic narcissistic reflection of the heroine, a dark inversion thereof, and a villainous, ruthless uncle to the second heroine, Cathy. Bronte complicates the Radcliffean model by deploying conventions of Romantic sibling incest but further distorts her hero-villain by changing him into the bad uncle before immortalizing him as the eternal brother-lover. Heathcliff's metamorphoses reflect a feeling of change often said to be lacking in a repetitive world of incestuous doubling, a world in which Bronte clarifies that denying natural desires in place of socially dictated choices ends very badly. Bronte's representations of sibling incest reflect the dangers of socially enforced exogamy, of unlike people marrying and the inevitability of endogamy as the consequence of naturally occurring incestuous desires. Situating both fear and desire in the home, Bronte renders domestic dangers as inescapable until characters fulfil their incestuous, rebellious destinies. Generations mirror previous generations until, in the

---

[134] Smith, Wolf, Shepher and Westermarck believe that co-residence is detrimental to incestuous sexual attraction; Littlewood in *Pathologies of the West* argues for the inverse: that it is a lack of co-residence that allows for incestuous desire in the many incest cases that he and Greenberg interviewed that involved 'first-degree relatives who are unfamiliar with each other [and] later have sexual access to each other,' noting that such situations 'were a common theme of nineteenth-century Romantic literature' (pp. 136-37).

nature of endogamy, there will be no future generations to repeat the incestuous cycle, until the family tree can no longer be regenerated. But rather than this depiction ending on a note of degenerative failure, the endogamic union of Cathy and Hareton is revealed as the union that creates a stable family unit. Sibling incest creates the appropriate marriage and kinship structure that attempts at exogamy only fragmented and destroyed. This egalitarian relationship suggests wider social and political changes and, as Rooney claims, such brother-sister sympathy and love might serve as a revolutionary inspiration for such transformations.[135]

These depictions of incest challenge the established models of sibling love and trouble the traditional placement of Gothic texts as working in Lewis's paradigm. While the Gothic employs both terror and horror what is more revealing and characteristic are the numerous instances where incest is not linked to either of these emotions. Although there is seldom one clear, distinct message to be extracted from the varieties of and forms incestuous desire takes in the Gothic, there is an overwhelming insistence to reevaluate the demands and laws of patriarchal society. The construction of rules and laws that enforce and govern behaviour is often shown as nothing more than a veneer of civilization that keeps in check any desires – female or incestuous – that threaten its hegemony. In the representations of sibling incest, its potential for equality and its natural occurrence, the laws that society defines as natural are exposed as unnatural constructions that are enforced in order to maintain male control over female bodies and behaviour.

---

[135] Rooney, pp. 19-26.

Chapter Three

Uncles and Nieces: Thefts, Violence and Sexual Threats

'My uncle's behaviour was to me unaccountable, he was for ever seeking opportunities to caress me.'

Eliza Parsons, *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793)[1]

The relationships between heroines and their uncles in the Gothic novel are ones in which sexual threats are underpinned by financial entanglements and legal issues often to a greater extent than is the case with other familial relationships. Representations of family, finance, property, law and ownership are examined frequently by scholars of the Gothic but within the context of uncle-niece relationships that are complicated by incestuous desires these ideas are embedded in sexual language and meaning.[2] Incestuous relationships between uncles and nieces abound in Gothic fiction; in fact, even in novels where the primary incestuous focus is on a different consanguineal bond, there is often still an uncle in the background, his presence being part of the plot construction that drives persecution and usurpation. Susan Staves refers to the laws regarding married women's property in the long eighteenth century as a patriarchal code 'that justified the dominance and privilege of men by deference to their superior abilities to create good order in families and their duty to provide and support for subordinated women and children in their families.'[3] In the Gothic this code is revealed as inadequate through its manipulation and enforcement by the figure of the uncle and becomes entangled with the representations of incestuous desires and violence that are equally justified and supported by the familial and social structures that granted male control of female bodies and property. Eugenia C. DeLamotte argues that 'the mysterious crime at the heart of most

---

[1] Eliza Parsons, *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (London: The Folio Press, 1968), p. 12. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[2] Recently, chapters in Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, eds., *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) by Diana Wallace, Marie Mulvey-Roberts, and Lauren Fitzgerald have focused on the intricacies of Gothic heroines, estates, and legal rights within marriage, applying William Blackstone's 1765 legal text and its Gothic themes to representations of ownership of property, knowledge, and women in the genre.
[3] Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 25-26.

Gothic plots is a transgression of legal barriers as well as, in many cases, a transgression of the stronger barriers of taboo – incest, the murder of a brother, patricide.'[4] Within the realm of uncle-niece relationships these transgressions are combined with representations of property, genealogies and ideologies of gender and sexuality. Through an exploration of these thematics and the manner in which incestuous desires and threats become difficult, if not impossible, to extricate from their presence, a new paradigm of incest as both mutually enforcing and threatening to the patriarchal power structure and hegemony emerges.

Maggie Kilgour says of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) that the conclusion is 'a tidy way of suddenly resolving, in a highly oedipal text, the potential conflict between past and present, or guilt about the representation of the overthrow of a tyrannical father, by showing the father to have been a usurper all along.'[5] If this is true of Walpole's work, then later Gothic novels take up this oedipal drive in a different way, exposing the figure of the uncle as usurper of both the rightful father and the niece. Although many scholarly accounts claim that one of the hallmarks of the Female Gothic is a tendency to show the father as tyrannical, employing the paternal figure as one who persecutes the heroine to impress upon readers the dangers of patriarchy, more commonly it is the uncle who is the usurper: the tyrannical figure who threatens the lineage, fortune, property, and namesake of the heroine.[6] Because of the scholarly trend to view the father as representative of patriarchal dangers there is a corresponding tendency to overlook the figure of the uncle, who, in fact more frequently than the father, represents a physical, sexual, and financial threat to the heroine. While the conflict between past and present in these novels is still very much a part of the plot, the resolution reveals, not a Walpolean

---

[4] Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 21-22. DeLamotte's discussion continues by focusing on the 'deep structures' of women's psychological experiences relating to and in the Gothic genre, whereas my focus on transgressions will be on the legal, social, and anthropological overlappings of transgression and what this nexus means for traditional scholarly treatments of incest within the Female Gothic.

[5] Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 20.

[6] This is particularly true of Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998) in which she describes Gothic heroines as imagining their fathers are trying to rape or kill them (p. 57). A scholarly tradition that views the father as persecutor or the heroine as imagining this to be true when this is often not supported by closer textual analyses has been imposed on Gothic novels; this is particularly true of the novels by Radcliffe that I will examine in this chapter.

false lineage from a servant who murdered the master, but a brother who murdered another brother, and often, the sister-in-law as well. The danger is not positioned outside the family line, but within it, not from the serving class but a member of the aristocracy who threatens the women of his own bloodline. The incest taboo, often viewed as fundamental in maintaining the kinship system of exchange that reinforces the patriarchal power structure, is here transgressed, not by the heroine, but by the uncle.[7] In order to understand how the uncle is capable of violating the tenets of the incest taboo that uphold his power while remaining a figure representative of the dangers of the dominant male hegemony and its corresponding ideologies it is essential to look at the contexts in which the uncle violates the taboo.[8]

In the previous two chapters I have examined novels in which the incestuous desires between fathers and daughters and brothers and sisters are central; but even in texts that focus on these configurations there are still uncles looming within the storylines. Ann Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) feature uncles who either threaten incestuous desires or are murderous, imprisoning heroines and usurping their property. In Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) Heathcliff plays a dual role, shifting from the brother/lover into the threatening uncle with ease, his broken heart propelling him towards kidnapping, imprisonment, and theft of property from his niece. Angela Wright has recently pointed out that feminist critics have begun to focus upon the relationship between the law – particularly property law – and the Gothic.[9] The centrality of law is often related in these Gothic novels to the figure of the uncle, the most common predatory or persecutory male figure who appears consistently and often initially makes himself felt as a desirous or lustful force towards the heroine before being revealed as blood kin. Often entrenched in

---

[7] Juliet Mitchell believes patriarchal structures enforce the incest taboo as a way of maintaining control of the exchange of women, an exchange jeopardized by incestuous relations that would unbalance the power of the father (or father figure) in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women* (London: Allen Lane, 1974; repr. as *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*, New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[8] The appearance of law and property as a thematic alongside uncle-niece incest necessitates an examination of exchange. The threats and violence against female bodies aligned with property seizure reifies the concept of female exchanges between men.

[9] Angela Wright, *Gothic Fiction: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 135.

murderous, incestuous plots driven by lust for the heroine, her mother or the familial titles and property belonging to an older brother, the uncle is a shadowy figure within the Gothic that seems representative of the genre itself. An assemblage of motives, desires, and drives, a compilation of good and bad, condemned and saved, hideous and handsome, the uncle often acts as the Gothic text: joining together the old and new and capable of inspiring very strong reactions, the figure of the uncle represents and acts out seemingly oppositional roles. These contrasting positions have often caused scholars to treat the Gothic genre as having a limited ability to be radical or transgressive. As Kilgour points out, the Gothic novel seems to 'denounce precisely the transgressive qualities with which it was associated.'[10] Kilgour explains rather than asserts this claims in order to underscore the qualities of the Gothic that make it a topic of such heated debate among scholars who are divided between labeling the genre conservative or radical. Part of what scholars see as inconsistencies in the form are mirrored in the figure of the uncle, himself representative of both the older, aristocratic order and the destruction of it. Resembling the genre itself, the uncle adheres to the dominant cultural structures, abusing them to usurp powers traditionally denied to his position.[11]

The incestuous desires of the uncle towards his nieces are bound up with generations of thefts of property and person. The heroine, frequently herself a physical reflection of her mother, acts as a younger generation onto which the uncle can project his sexual longings, usually thwarted previously by the marriage of her mother to his older brother.[12] With the niece another opportunity is born to rewrite his own history, to use the property, title, and wealth stolen from her father to attempt to force a union with the heroine. Sexual desires are consistently tied together with murderous desires, thefts of

---

[10] Kilgour, p. 8. Kilgour further identifies the wealth of criticism that argues that 'whatever radical and subversive implications the gothic might have are radically limited by its own inconsistencies' (p. 9).
[11] As the uncle adheres to the available structures of law and power, so too does the Gothic adhere to a generic structure. The uncle uses these structures to usurp and grasp at the powers denied to him as the younger brother in the family just as the Gothic deploys the sexualities perceived by society as aberrant that are inherent in the genre to undermine gender and sexual ideologies. The Gothic ultimately shows the futility of using/abusing existing forms grounded in such uneven distributions of power as capable of only further entrenching one in the existing power relation, advocating instead the position taken by the heroine – to abandon existing forms instead.
[12] This is the case in Parsons' *Wolfenbach*, Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Italian* (1797) and Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798), in which fratricide and sister-in-law rape are part of the plot.

property and/or title, and legal manoeuverings. Law or legal language is often a recourse to which the uncle retreats, backing himself up with legal documents (real or forged) and legal standpoints (valid or not) in order to try to force his claims on the heroine's body or property. Binding incestuous desires together with persecutory intentions does seem a way of, as Kilgour puts it, 'cloaking familiar images of domesticity in gothic forms' in order to enable 'us to see that the home *is* a prison, in which the helpless female is at the mercy of ominous patriarchal authorities.'[13] However, the combination of incest and law serves also to highlight the vulnerability of the heroine in the face of unwanted sexual desires complicated by questions of legality and the inalienable right of the heroine to make decisions regarding her body. By uniting the persecution of the heroine's body with concepts of liberty and law, Gothic writers mobilize the female body to enter the typically masculine arena of political rhetoric. Kilgour points to the association of the Gothic with British freedom from tyrannical laws as capable of being used both to demonize and idealize the past.[14] This notion is examined by Diana Wallace in her examination of Gothic and legal institutions that traces this association to Margaret Cavendish's 1662 'Female Orations.'[15] Wallace, while focusing on 'the haunting idea' as Gothic and legal metaphor, makes important connections between legal institutions and the Female Gothic fixation on loss of female identity and property through the institutions of marriage and inheritance. I argue that because of their frequent positioning as the younger brother, Gothic uncles often inhabit a similar position to the heroines in terms of inheritance and identity, being unable to lay legal claim to familial property or title.[16]

Eighteenth-century legal scholar Sir William Blackstone famously described the English constitution and legal system as an inheritance: 'an old Gothic castle, erected in

---

[13] Kilgour, p. 9.

[14] Kilgour, p.14.

[15] Diana Wallace, '"The Haunting Idea": Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, pp. 27-31.

[16] In Parsons' *Wolfenbach,* Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, The Romance of the Forest,* and *The Italian* and Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine,* younger brothers are portrayed as bypassed by familial riches and usurpers of their older brothers' wealth, titles, wives and daughters.

the days of chivalry, but fitted up for a modern inhabitant.'[17] Wolfram Schmidgen
discusses Blackstone's metaphor of law and the Gothic castle as an allusion that 'ties
together the themes of property, common law, and the English constitution in a single
image.'[18] This notion of inherited rights is important in relation to the figures of uncles
and nieces who are both portrayed as being denied their inheritances of property, title, or
rights. In contrast to the heroines, the uncles use violence and force to usurp the
inheritances denied them and the positions of power and wealth held by their older
brothers, displacing them as the bastions of patriarchy. Along with positions of
patriarchal power, estates and titles that uncles usurp through their violent crimes they
inherit generations of female bodies from their brothers. In one sense, the figure of the
uncle allows a reaffirmation of individual freedom over social contract or law before
revealing the ultimate futility of a reaffirmation that results in a mere displacement of
power rather than an abolition of its structures. As such, the uncle's compromised place
within patriarchy makes him a useful figure to writers of the Gothic as he becomes
reflective of the form and underscores the Gothic's location at the centre of radical
discourse.

Representations of incest place desires, bodies, and sexuality within the context
of debates on freedom, choice and the ethics of tyrannical laws. In order more clearly to
understand how writers of the Gothic used the figure of the uncle to represent a variety of
legal and domestic dangers, it is necessary to examine a diverse selection of Gothic
novels. *The Castle of Wolfenbach* by Eliza Parsons precedes the more celebrated works
of Ann Radcliffe as well as the scores of Gothic novels written in the latter's style. It is
therefore a useful text to look at both in terms of possible influences on Radcliffe's works
but also as a novel that, in spite of being relegated to a mere footnote in discussions of
Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) list of Gothic novels, is one that deserves
recognition for raising questions of ownership, independence, and the origins of desire.
Radcliffe's two most famous novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian*

[17] Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the laws of England. Book the second. By William Blackstone, Esq. vinerian professor of law, and solicitor general to her majesty*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1768), II, p. 268.
[18] Wolfram Schmidgen, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 166.

(1797), are essential works to examine in a chapter considering uncle-niece incest and questions of property as both texts explore these topics in divergent ways. In *Udolpho* Radcliffe uses the figure of an uncle by marriage to depict the implications of property transfer upon marriage and the system of inheritance. While avoiding explicit incestuous situations she positions the heroine as an object of both persecution and exchange by her uncle who uses other male figures as proxy sexual threats to force compliance. In *The Italian* Radcliffe explicitly unites incestuous sexual desire and murderous desire, deploying the uncle as a figure conflicted over whether to rape or kill his niece, whom he has already left without property or title. When the common threads of legality and sexuality that are apparent within these different Gothic narratives by women are unpicked a pattern emerges that links the figure of the uncle with sexual, incestuous threats, creating a subversive commentary on tyrannical persecution, oppression, and the hypocrisy of 'natural' law.[19]

I.   Naturally Arising Desires: Raising the Niece to Become the Wife

The heroine of Parsons' *Wolfenbach* is Matilda Weimar, a young woman raised by her uncle, Mr Weimar, in a remote location in Austria. Matilda holds little affection for her uncle and guardian in spite of his extreme fondness towards her. Although Weimar takes a minimal interest in Matilda while she is young, once she goes through puberty and turns fifteen he grows intensely attracted to her. The attraction develops until Matilda overhears a conversation between Weimar and a servant that implies he plans to rape her. Matilda flees to Germany where she seeks refuge at the Castle of Wolfenbach where she meets the Countess Wolfenbach and with her help flees to Paris to the Countess's sister and brother-in-law (the Marquis and Marchioness de Melfort) in order to escape Weimar. When Matilda next sees Weimar he tells her she is not his blood kin but is rather an

---

[19] A more detailed analysis of eighteenth-century understandings of natural law and their application to Gothic representations of obligation, incestuous desire, and individual rights can be found in the following chapter.

160

unknown orphan he raised and fell in love with and proposes marriage. Matilda refuses, running away first to England and then to a convent in France before being abducted by Weimar and taken onto a ship. Overtaken by Turkish pirates, Weimar stabs Matilda and reveals the truth of her origins: she is his niece, the daughter of his older brother whom he killed for the inheritance. He switched Matilda as an infant with her wet nurse's dead daughter, taking her to Austria where he subsequently raised her as his niece. Matilda finds her mother and a joyful reunion with her and her love interest, the Count de Bouville, ensues.

Parsons' novel unites themes of inheritance, incestuous desires, threats of rape and female imprisonment with thefts of female-held property and the usurpation of the patriarchal position by the younger brother. Parsons embeds the thefts, usurpation, and crimes in a heavily coded language of Gothic incestuous desires. The uncle, in stealing from the older brother, takes not just his property but his daughter, laying claim to Matilda's body as his own. Weimar's shifting desires towards Matilda show that his position as her father has culminated in the ultimate betrayal of power but also that such abuses of power and incestuous desires are the natural result of the available familial, legal and marital models. The abuses that occur are exacerbated in a perpetuation of thefts, crimes and incestuous violence against women that reveal the threat of what Gothic scholar Ruth Bienstock Anolik refers to as the possession of women in marriage.[20] Weimar's incestuous threats and thefts of property are bound together, underscoring the function of the female body as a commodity to be exchanged between a patriarch and a non-kin male. That his desires and usurpations negate the necessity for this exchange locates the paradox at the heart of what Foucault refers to as the deployment of alliance and the deployment of sexuality.[21] Parsons' novel demonstrates that incestuous desires and threats are the inevitable and unavoidable products of the power relations created by

---

[20] Ruth Bienstock Anolik, 'The Missing Mother: The Meanings of Maternal Absence in the Gothic Mode', *Modern Language Studies*, 33:1/2 (2003): 27.
[21] Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1979; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), argues that: 'the deployment of alliance has as one of its chief objectives to reproduce the interplay of relation and maintain the law that governs them; the deployment of sexuality, on the other hand, engenders a continual extension of areas and forms of control' and that the deployment of alliance has been, since the eighteenth century, displaced by the deployment of sexuality (p. 106).

the customs and laws intended to prohibit incest in order to shore up eighteenth-century ideologies of kinship and sexuality.[22]

It is apparent from the development of the plot that the novel follows an ostensibly recognizable Gothic arc, complete with persecutions, revelations, and reunions. What is intriguing about the novel's depictions of incest is not only the way various characters react to Weimar's incestuous desires but also the way the desires develop and how Parsons links incestuous urges with questions of ownership, birth, and property. This unification necessitates an examination of usurpation, violence, and sexuality that is pointed towards by Kilgour within the confines of her reading of Radcliffe's *Udolpho* in which she states: 'below the surface narrative lurks a story of usurpation. What is unusual, too, is that the suggested dispossession and perhaps murder is of a female by a male. Is this a subversive myth of the usurpation of female property and power by a patriarchal order?'[23] I would answer yes – though Kilgour leaves the question open in order to move onto a discussion of Radcliffe's use of mystery – and would apply the question to all Gothic novels in which a heroine is deprived of inheritance and freedom by a male villain. When the male villain is also a family member who tries to force incestuous relations onto the younger female relative the myth becomes not one of mere property usurpation but of sexual domination and physical violence. This, however, is far from the unusual occurrence that Kilgour describes it to be; rather this type of dispossession and attempted murder of females is quite common in Gothic representations of uncles and nieces. Rather than understanding this frequent (though widely varying) plot line as a subversive myth, it is a sophisticated blending of traditionally masculine powers – sexual, financial, and legal – that are manifested in the form of the uncle and wielded over the niece to expose the threats implicit in the

---

[22] Sociologist Vikki Bell suggests that Foucault's argument places incest 'at the crossroads between the two sex deployments [...] because whereas the deployment of alliance forbids incest, the deployment of sexuality actually incites it' in *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault and the Law* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 95. Foucault's chronology of the deployments of alliance and sexuality positions my examinations of representations of incest and its prohibition in eighteenth-century Gothic novels as written in the context of the deployment of alliance. I use Bell's point to argue that Gothic representations of incest prior to this deployment locate tensions between the prohibition of incest and incestuous desires as incited through the unequal power relations necessary to maintain the deployment of alliance.

[23] Kilgour, p 121.

dominant ideology.[24] The niece's position is one of legal (and at times physical) powerlessness rather than of moral or emotional powerlessness; her persecution and usurpation by the uncle is one that is accommodated – and in a sense, demanded – by the laws of society that are frequently articulated in the Gothic in the very terms of desire and incest: as naturally occurring or unnaturally imposed.[25]

Uncle Weimar's incestuous longings for Matilda begin, not when she is a young child in his care, but after she is a teenager and (perhaps more interestingly from an anthropological viewpoint) after he has returned from an absence of nine months.[26] Although as a child Matilda felt 'a repugnance to return his caresses' when she is fifteen he leaves for France to accept an inheritance and for the first time she feels affection for him: 'nothing could exceed the tenderness of his behaviour at parting, and for the first time in my life I was affected; I returned his embraces and shed some tears' (10-11). He returns nine months later, after writing to her constantly; and although Matilda 'was overjoyed to see him [...] the pleasure I felt and expressed fell very short of the rapture and transport with which he embraced and praised me; he dwelt on the improvement in my person with such delight, that I felt confused and uneasy; the attention which used to give me pleasure was now painful, and I repulsed his caresses involuntarily' (11). When explaining to the Countess Wolfenbach why she fled from her uncle Matilda focuses on the attention Weimar lavished on her and his expectations of her responses to him that were disappointed by her hesitant or confused reactions. Weimar's sexual attraction for Matilda, though perhaps beginning earlier, is clearly pinpointed by Matilda as being inspired by the improvement in her person that has occurred over the nine months he has

---

[24] What Foucault refers to as laws designed to reproduce the system of alliance (p. 106) are represented in the Gothic as the unnatural control of women, the exchange of women and laws surrounding female inheritance and property that incite incestuous threats. Such structures of law served to maintain male control over female bodies in order to exchange them and reproduce kinship circles while locating power within the hands of male kin. That the female body becomes a commodity under male control necessitates its sexualization and thus its location as a potential site of incestuous desires and threats.

[25] See Ellen Pollak's examination of the increasing naturalization of incest during the long eighteenth century in *Incest and The English Novel, 1684 – 1814* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Pollak argues that during the long eighteenth century legal impediments to marriage were being questioned and 'incest was increasingly being naturalized within emergent theories of natural law' (p. 19).

[26] Although anthropological theories on sexual aversion would point towards Weimar being disinclined to commit incest with his niece, his separation from her occurs at a critical moment in physical development – the change between pre- and post-pubescence.

been absent.[27] Kilgour sees incest in the Gothic as allied to that deployed by the Romantic writers, as a trope that: 'suggests an abnormal and extreme desire (a violation of natural familial ties) that is antithetical to and subversive of social requirements.'[28] However, rather than being shown as 'unnatural' incest is often portrayed instead as a natural desire, as a 'more than' familial love; rather than a violation of familial love it is an extension of it.[29] The result of this representation is frequently a subversion of the legal as well as the social requirements regarding sexuality, exchanges of women and exogamous marriages. Parsons' Matilda is positioned in relation to her uncle's sexual persecution that is tied to his legal and financial control over her. Although she is able to escape the authority he has over her that facilitates his incestuous desires they are presented as the natural consequence of his control over her body and property.

Weimar's fixation on Matilda is revealed as sexual in nature, not only by his dwelling on her appearance and the rapture with which he greets her, but also by the books he has brought back with him. Weimar has made purchases on his trip away that Matilda views as akin to pornography, from which she instinctively recoils. The incident is, as far as I know, unique in early Gothic fiction. An uncle shows his young niece pornographic images that distress her:

> he had brought me a present of some books and drawings, both of which he knew would be acceptable to me […] the latter were very beautiful, but the attitudes and want of decent drapery confused and hurt me, for although I had never received any particular lessons on delicacy or modesty, yet there is that innate virtuous principle within us, that shrinks involuntarily from any thing tending to violate that sense of decency we are all, I believe, born with; I therefore could not examine them with the accuracy I wished, much less praise them, as I saw he expected (12).

Weimar expects (or desires) Matilda to respond to the images with praise; whether he intends her to be aroused by the images is arguable, but what is clear is that the sexual

---

[27] See Judith Lewis Herman with Lisa Hirschman's *Father-Daughter Incest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), in which they argue that the common reaction of fathers to their daughters' reaching adolescence is often an attempt to establish total control over their emerging sexuality (p. 117). In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), the portrayal of Sir Thomas Bertram 'noticing' his grown-up niece, Fanny Price, bears similarities to Parsons' scene.

[28] Kilgour, p. 12.

[29] This notion, analyzed in greater detail in the preceding chapters, bears brief repetition in order to demonstrate how differently incest functions within the uncle-niece relationships than in those previously explored.

advances and desires here are linked to pornographic images the uncle shows the niece.[30] Her inability to view them with anything but distress is testimony to her innate virtue, a modesty that makes her shrink from the images and her uncle; she identifies the incident as unsettling although she cannot fully articulate why.[31] It is also an act typical of male abusers who take advantage of their power. In her article addressing abuses of power Lena Dominelli describes the overall denial that meets claims of the family structure promoting abuse: 'the public has generally resisted the feminist message that incest is widespread in our society and that it arises from the social legitimation of unequal power relations within the family.'[32] This abuse of power, one of the features of incest that is frequently cited in scholarly examinations of incest within the Gothic, is often used to equate incest in the Gothic with representations of male abuse. In spite of its over-application to all forms of incestuous relationships in the Gothic, its relevance to the incestuous advances of uncles is readily apparent. The unwanted sexual advances stem, in part, from the unequal distribution of power in the family structure that makes this paradigm relevant to analyses of the uncle figure. The assertion that 'father-daughter sexual abuse [...] is a characteristic of a patriarchal society' is a feminist claim that explains how the social structure perpetuates abuses against women within the context of family. [33]

The application of this sociological understanding of incest to the representations in the Gothic, though limiting in certain configurations (such as father-daughter incest) that defy its construction as an abuse on the part of the paternal figure, is highly relevant

---

[30] Instances of older male relatives showing pornography to their younger female relatives occur frequently in case studies on present-day incest abuse such as those detailed in Jean Renvoize's *Incest: A Family Pattern* (Worcester: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1982).

[31] See Jennie Batchelor's analysis of Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762) in which she argues that the gifts offered to a young ward by her older male guardian, and her reciprocal 'gift' of gratitude constitute an 'obligation he forces upon Louisa [that] will lead only to her destruction' in *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 47. That Matilda resists the obligation of gratitude intended by the gift giving that Batchelor notes eighteenth-century readers 'perceive [...] as an inevitable prelude to seduction' (p. 47) positions her as resistant to the sexual advances of her uncle that would have been anticipated by the novel's readers.

[32] Lena Dominelli, 'Betrayal of Trust: A Feminist Analysis of Power Relationships in Incest Abuse and its Relevance for Social Work Practice', *British Journal of Social Work*, 19:1 (1989): 291-308.

[33] Angie Ash, *Father-Daughter Sexual Abuse: The Abuse of Paternal Authority* (Bangor: University College of North Wales, 1984), p. 9.

in examinations of the uncle.[34] The nature of incestuous sexual abuses as a violation of the taboo that is essential to the maintenance of the power structure that allows incestuous abuses is a paradox relevant here. The uncle's violation of the power structure that seemingly reinforces his position of authority while concurrently jeopardizing it through the transgression of the taboo is further complicated through his simultaneous transgression of the structure of primogeniture and inheritance that does not occur with father-daughter violations. The uncle disregards a taboo that endangers his usurped power in order to strengthen his individual authority over the niece as well as his usurped position in the patriarchy. The incestuous threats serve as more than literalizations of paternal power, but inscribe the uncle's abuses within a network of usurpations that repeatedly represent the female body as the site of these transgressive thefts. His paternal role is appropriated as are all positions of power over female bodies and finance; the incestuous desires arise naturally in an unnaturally constructed configuration of family, economics, sexuality, power and discipline. All control is a false usurpation: the uncle demonstrates the implicit falsity of all hegemonic ideologies.

Seventeenth-century English theologian and clergyman Jeremy Taylor's understanding of incestuous unions is taken up by scholar Ellen Pollak in her comprehensive analysis of incestuous representations in English literature to discuss the transgressive nature of the uncle-niece relationship.[35] Pollak examines the argument made by Taylor (whose views influenced many later debates on marriage and kinship law) that only marriages between parents and children/children-in-law were against the prime laws of nature and that although unions between siblings were incestuous and illegal, they did not constitute a violation of the natural law. Neither were marriages between uncles and nieces a violation of the natural law as they did not overturn 'the proper order of familial authority' as the unnatural union of parent and child would.[36] Pollak's treatment of Taylor is intriguing because it illuminates both the widening gaps between divine law and natural law and how civil law was affected by these shifts. These ideas are further taken up by T.G.A Nelson who argues that Taylor's perspective reveals

---

[34] See chapter 1 of this thesis for examinations of how representations of father-daughter incest in the Gothic fail to adhere to the traditional scholarly assumption of threatening paternal incest that takes as its grounding sociological understandings.
[35] Pollak, pp. 36-38.
[36] Pollak, p. 37.

the contradiction between (in regards, specifically, to brother-sister unions) the natural propensity towards incest as checked by laws that have become so ingrained within us that they are now natural: 'such marriages have been outlawed, to the extent that the law against them has become a kind of secondary law of nature.'[37] Foucault refers to the paradox that Nelson examines as a system of knowledge produced through the ongoing reproduction of power, stating that 'we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has a need in order to function.'[38] That systems of law and inheritance are designated in the Gothic as natural and unnatural in their reproduction is critical to examining how they are presented as lending themselves to abuses of power manifested as incestuous desires and threats, becoming a site of resistance to such reproductions without depicting the desires as inherently unnatural. More importantly for a discussion of Weimar and Matilda is the possibility that Weimar's position as uncle is not the relationship that would cause his marriage to his niece to be perceived as unnatural, but his usurped position as her familial head. Taylor's views indicate that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society would object to the disruption of familial authority resulting from Weimar's marriage to Matilda as his ward rather than to the idea of a natural law being violated by his marriage to her as his niece.[39] Weimar's role as Matilda's guardian and the familial patriarch puts him in a position of authority over her that, in conjunction with the usurpations of these roles, reinforces the depiction of incestuous desires occurring naturally within the unnatural structures of family and society.[40]

Matilda's account of her uncle's behaviour to the Countess of Wolfenbach continues with further examples of his excessive praise and touching:

---

[37] T. G. A. Nelson, 'Representations of Incest in Dryden and his English Contemporaries', in *Incest and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Elizabeth Barnes, (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2002), p. 122; see also pp. 117-137.
[38] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 93.
[39] Pollak, p. 38.
[40] Herman and Hirschman give a definition of incest that locates incestuous behaviour as any sexually motivated act that violates a relationship between a child and adult in a position of familial power, regardless of blood kinship (p. 27). I widen this definition to include not only children, but adults as well, so that incest is any sexual behaviour (implicit or explicit) between people involved in a familial relationship regardless of consanguineal ties as well as between blood kin unaware of the bond or between blood kin who are aware of it but were not raised in a familial relationship.

> From this time my uncle's behaviour was to me unaccountable, he was for ever seeking opportunities to caress me, his language was expressive of the utmost fondness, he praised my person in such glowing colours as sometimes filled me with confusion. In short, madam, not to tire you, within three months after his return I began to be extremely uneasy at freedoms I scare knew how to repulse (12).

Matilda's confusion at her uncle's advances is caused by her inability fully to comprehend the sexual nature of his caresses and compliments and how to stop him.[41] She knows she does not like his behaviour but does not quite know why or what to do about it. This changes abruptly when Matilda overhears a servant counsel her uncle to tell her they are unrelated and do to her what he likes. The conversation convinces Matilda that whether or not Weimar is her uncle he poses a clear threat to her person (her physical form, her virginity, her chastity) and this prompts her to flee his estate. Matilda's flight and subsequent adventures underscore the tensions within scholarship's understanding of the Female Gothic as paradoxically conservative and radical in its destruction of the patriarchal past and its reconfiguration as a reformed ideal. Kilgour describes the Gothic as at once dismembering the present and re-membering the past into something pure and idealistic, stating that: 'the gothic is better at dismemberment than the re-memberment, at parody than the construction of an alternative.'[42] Kilgour's argument and Kate Ferguson Ellis's analysis of the Gothic heroine's attempt to destabilize and then reform the nuclear family exemplify scholarly divergences on the function of the Gothic as a space in which writers articulated subversive views on patriarchy and family.[43]

These divergent understandings of the Gothic's ability to reform (or re-member) the past into a new bourgeois family structure underscores the difficulties scholarship has encountered in determining what the heroine achieves at the end of the Gothic novel. Does she re-member the dismembered and idealized past into a reformed family structure – and fail in doing so effectively, as Kilgour suggests – or does the Gothic fail as subversive if the heroine's aim in destabilizing patriarchy is only to reform it, as Ellis's argument suggests? Matilda is a heroine who does neither. She does not fail in re-

---

[41] Austen echoes this with Edmund Bertram's comments regarding Sir Thomas's admiration of Fanny that distress her in *Mansfield Park*, ed. Margaret Drabble (New York: Signet, 1996) p. 181.

[42] Kilgour, p. 31.

[43] Kate Ferguson Ellis, 'Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics', in *Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 264-65.

168

membering the past because she never attempts to do so; rather, she dis-members her present and creates a new family structure with an equal partner.[44] That Matilda does not destabilize the family structure in order to reform it is a consequence of its already destabilized structure and extant weaknesses and flaws. The presence of undesired incestuous advances demonstrates that the available family structure permits unequal power relationships and is thus fundamentally compromised, necessitating the heroine's escape from its archaic structure. Rather than reform it, she must leave it behind forever. Matilda's escape from her uncle's home propels her forward into an even more violent family structure, that of the Countess Wolfenbach's home – her prison – in which she has been kept by a jealous and murderous husband for almost two decades, from which Matilda is also forced to escape. The patriarchal underpinnings of the family and society are exposed as inherently unstable as they permit the legal imprisonment of women by their male family members and perpetuate a system of chronic injustice.

Matilda's perception of incest is intriguingly ambiguous. When she reflects on her loyal servant Albert, implicitly comparing him to her uncle, she endows Albert with superior sentiments to Weimar, whom she describes as being depraved: 'how much superior are their sentiments to those of better understanding and cultivated talents, when their minds are depraved by the indulgence of irregular passions!' (23). Albert, although devoid of cultivated talents, has not been corrupted by the indulgence of irregular passions as Weimar has.[45] But it cannot be incest Matilda calls an irregular passion because at this point she is no longer certain of Weimar's having a consanguineal tie to her and so her description of his passions as irregular applies rather to the exploitative nature of his passion for her and the force he planned to use on her.[46] In a contrasting perception of their connection, Matilda says to her uncle: 'heaven can witness for me how grateful I was for your kindness, until my delicacy was alarmed by freedoms I thought improper from our near connexion' (61). Matilda here implies that it is the blood

[44] Although a re-memberment of Matilda's past does occur in terms of the reunion with her mother it is incidental to her actions rather than the result of them.
[45] What Parsons does with this manoeuvre is to effectively disintegrate the class boundaries between servant and master, elevating Albert above her uncle via his virtue and lack of depraved/incestuous desires.
[46] This would lend weight to Herman's definition of incest as one that is based more on an abuse of power than a transgression between blood kin. Matilda's distress is clearly a response to her uncle's plan to force her, an easy task given his position of authority, not on the possibility of his kinship (which is at this point unclear to her).

relationship that makes the freedoms alarming rather than the freedoms themselves that disturb her, contradicting her earlier assertion that Weimar's actions disturbed her innate sense of delicacy and modesty. It is an interesting turn of phrase when examined in conjunction with other Gothic heroines, such as Radcliffe's Ellena or Sleath's Laurette, who are represented more frequently as uncomfortable with caresses or freedoms taken by those outside of the family, by men who are not kin, and who consequently view proof of blood as a green-light for caresses that would be otherwise inappropriate.[47] Matilda's honesty is, however, in this instance questionable given the context of her statement: she is refusing an offer of marriage from the man she believed her whole life to be her uncle after he has announced he is not blood kin and is thus capable of marrying her legally.

Weimar relies on the notion of obligation to persuade Matilda to marry him as a repayment for his financial investment in her upbringing. Matilda says to her uncle on his offer of marriage that she feels unable to refuse him if he is not her uncle because of this debt, but that she will never love him:

> The conversation I overheard is ever present to my mind, and could I forget that, then my reverence for my uncle would return, and I should shudder at the idea of a nearer connexion. When I think of it, and indeed, Sir, I have endeavoured to think of it, an unaccountable repugnance makes the idea horrible to me; yet after all, if you persist in wishing me to become your wife, I do not think myself at liberty absolutely to refuse, but I tell you candidly, I never can love you; that though I will obey you and do my duty, I know I shall be miserable, and in that persuasion surely 'tis impossible I can make you happy (67-68).

Matilda's first reason for not wanting to marry Weimar is not her memories of him raising her as a niece but her knowledge of his plan to force himself on her. She phrases it so that her refusal is couched in her inability to forget that conversation, which, even if forgotten, would then cause her to view him again as her uncle, making the idea of marrying him horrible. She constructs a logical paradox that makes it impossible for her to marry him based on the tautology of his position as a potential rapist or as blood kin. But she undercuts the complete refusal this construct allows her by admitting that if he

---

[47] The different ways heroines regard family or non-family members who caress them is analyzed further in chapter 4 of this thesis in an examination of the presence or potential presence of a blood tie as alternately permitting or prohibiting physical and emotional closeness not allowed to a non-consanguineal relation.

persists in his proposals she will marry him because she feels she owes him.[48] The

obligation Matilda feels to her uncle is viewed primarily as a financial one, which is

reinforced by Charlotte De Melfort's attempt to eliminate the debt on financial terms.

Charlotte, acting as Matilda's protector, intervenes as a buyer in the market of female

bodies and undermines Weimar's male privilege of purchasing and ownership. Trying

essentially to buy Matilda from Weimar, Charlotte says she will give him the money for

the expense he incurred in raising her in order to have adoptive claim to her (102). It is

made clear here that Weimar's claim on Matilda, once he has asserted that she is not his

blood kin, is based on monetary obligation and that he will use this perceived debt to

attempt to force Matilda into marriage.

Charlotte deploys Weimar's argument of financial obligation against him, freeing

Matilda from a marriage repulsive to her by purchasing Matilda from her uncle in an act

of exchange that reverses the traditional commerce in female bodies.[49] Her intervention

reveals that it is in fact these exchanges and the ownership of women by family that

reduces their bodies to currency, entailing incestuous and endogamous desires.[50] She

further tries to use money to liberate Matilda in England, offering her '£400/year [to]

make her independent – under no obligation to any young man' (97) in order to free her

from any obligations to Count de Bouville, Weimar, or any other man. Matilda too finds

the idea of obligation unsettling, preferring to belong to no one but herself rather than

---

[48] See Cynthia Klekar and Linda Zionkowski, eds., *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) for an excellent treatment of gift exchange and theories of obligation in eighteenth-century England. Parsons invokes the language of obligation and liberty in a way that depicts the eighteenth-century understandings (evidenced in works such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right* (1762) and *Emile, or On Education* (1762)) of women as obliged to perform duties for family (and thus society) without the freedoms of liberty awarded to men as an unfair demand productive of female misery and enslavement.

[49] See Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), in which Irigaray argues against the traditional anthropological understanding of the exchange of women as essential to culture: 'the exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, currency all pass from one man to another; if it were otherwise, we are told, the social order would fall back upon incestuous and exclusively endogamous ties that would paralyze all commerce' (p. 192).

[50] This furthers my reading of Foucault's deployment of alliance as not exclusive of the deployment of sexuality. What Foucault discusses as 'the link between partners and the definite statutes' (p. 106) – the laws governing alliance and exchange – are themselves structures of power pertinent to the deployment of alliance. Such structures of dominance and submission are inherently sources of pleasure that, as representations of incest in the Gothic make clear, charge the laws and statutes governing kinship with a sexual element made explicit in the male control of female bodies within the family. For an excellent treatment of Foucault's denial of eroticism inherent in power structures, see Leo Bersani, 'Foucault, Freud, Fantasy, and Power,' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2 (1995): 17-19.

have potential debts used to force her compliance.[51] When Weimar tells Matilda her illegitimacy makes it unlikely that she will find any man other than himself willing to marry her, she says: 'I never will owe the obligation to any man, nor have the chance of being upbraided, that I belong to nobody' (68). Matilda uses Weimar's assertion of her illegitimacy as an undesirable trait to renege on her verbal agreement to marry him by claiming that she will not let her obscurity (both her potential illegitimacy and her lack of fortune) degrade any potential husband. Matilda claims that rather than cause any such degradation she will become a lay-sister, a suggestion that indicates she will submit to celibacy rather than be an unequal partner in a marriage. When Weimar agrees to let Matilda stay with the de Melforts for a year, so long as she forms no attachment to any other man and writes to him constantly, the same scenario of proposed marriage and refusal is repeated with Matilda's lover, Count de Bouville. Matilda refuses to marry and disgrace him because of her obscure origins, preferring instead to go to a convent. She rejects being a party to any relationship that places her under an obligation, financial or as an object of pity or disdain due to her illegitimate birth, equally leaving behind both Bouville and her uncle.

Matilda's resistance to the institution of marriage as offered by her uncle is presented as a natural disinclination predicated on both a distrust and dislike of Weimar coupled with her inability to view him as non-related given her upbringing. Her reluctance to marry Weimar is further strengthened by having met and fallen in love with the handsome and wealthy Bouville; her desire for Bouville jeopardizes her uncle's continued control over her body. Robert Miles argues that Gothic representations of the institutionalization of marriage in the eighteenth century are tied to threats against inheritance via desire: 'the plot of the Gothic romance is a threat to primogeniture, the arranged marriage gone wrong through the advent of a desire that proves literally unruly.'[52] Miles argues that unnatural sexuality characterized anything that resisted the institutionalized discourses of marriage and procreation in the eighteenth century. In

---

[51] Charlotte's attempts to free Matilda from male control provide a clear link to the sentimental novel, which often criticized women's dependence on men – writers such as Charlotte Smith, Sarah Scott and Frances Burney used the form of the sentimental novel to depict a female protagonist's struggles and highlight the dangers of female dependency on male authority figures, often family members.
[52] Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 25.

Parsons' novel the sexuality that withstands marriage is Matilda's; her natural desires for Bouville oppose a marriage that embodies the heteronormative ideologies of power and violence. Weimar's desires, although developing naturally in the context of his power over his niece's body, become unnatural as they endanger female liberty, desire, and property ownership. Male sexuality that develops within the available power networks, particularly in relation to an already existing control over a female, engenders female resistance to marriage. Sexuality cannot develop into anything other than a threat within the confines of the existing ideologies and their reification in the family structure of Weimar and Matilda. Although all desires develop naturally, that they do so from within the uncle-niece configuration as Parsons delineates it – fraught with prior usurpations of property, name, and body – brings about their manifestation of heteronormative structures that renders them unnatural threats to female desire, property and body.

Miles calls Parsons' novel a core Female Gothic narrative 'where the daughter leaves, or is abducted from, the castle of a Baron intent on making his daughter marry dynastically.'[53] Yet in Parsons' novel Matilda does not leave because her father wants her to marry dynastically, she flees because her uncle threatens rape and then proposes (or threatens) marriage. As Weimar explains his desires they arise naturally and initially resist the tradition of institutionalized marriage. Weimar states that: 'as Matilda grew up, I became passionately fond of her; my love increased with her years, and I determined to possess her' (150). The attraction increases as he watches Matilda mature. Weimar clarifies that marriage was not originally part of his plan: 'I did not first intend marrying; I had an aversion to that tie' (150). However, he would have succumbed to the institution of marriage had Matilda accepted him if that was the only way to indulge his sexual desire for her: 'it was my intention to have married you, unless you rejected me – in that case you must take the consequence' (151). Weimar's desire contradicts both of Miles' assertions regarding unnatural sexuality resisting marriage and Parsons' novel as a narrative of flight from a dynastic marriage. Rather, unnatural sexuality (Weimar's desires) eventually subscribes to the cultural convention of marriage as it is within this institution that his unnatural desires will be indulged under the sanction of the

---

[53] Miles, p. 98.

heteronormative society whose laws and customs corroborate male desires. The marriage he proposes is literally dynastic – within the same family line – however it is not the father who attempts to enforce this incestuous marriage but the uncle, whose prior usurpation locates the proposed dynastic marriage as a further consequence of the unnaturally constructed intersections of desire, marriage and sexuality.

The incestuous desires of the uncle are demonstrated through a discussion of rights and laws as a crossover between the control over women afforded to non-kin and kindred men – an unfairly weighty blend of authority over female sexuality, property and exchange in marriage. The convent in France to which Matilda retires after her time in England offers her no protection from Weimar; although her uncle 'could not oblige her to marry him' (100) nor prevent her entry to the religious house he can take her from it by an order of the king. When the convent surrenders Matilda to her uncle she says to him: 'how you mean to dispose of me, or by what right you assume yourself to master of my destiny, I know not; but of this you may be assured, no force shall prevail upon me to act contrary to my own inclinations and judgment; and since I am not your niece, you have no legal authority over me' (142). Matilda's belief that Weimar is not a consanguineal relative means that he has no legal claim to her; the lack of a blood tie allows her a lawful escape from his assumed authority. Blood ties are presented as a kinship bond that legally grants male control over women while keeping them (theoretically, in any case) safe from their sexual advances.[54] Were Weimar Matilda's blood uncle her virginity would be safe (Matilda's understanding of kinship and sexual desire as incompatible has been enforced by Weimar's false assertions that he only loves her because she is not his kin), but the lack of a blood tie jeopardizes her chastity just as the presence of a consanguineal kinship puts at risk her whole body and future because it would grant Weimar legal control of those. Kinship and law are tied together paradoxically as the presence of kinship grants male relatives legal control over female bodies and property while prohibiting (again, theoretically) sexual acts and marriage between kin while the absence of blood ties renders the female unprotected and at the sexual mercy of all non-kin. Just as the figure of the uncle represents both the dangers of patriarchal tradition and the destruction of it,

---

[54] We will see later how in Radcliffe's *The Italian* the sudden appearance of a blood tie grants a total stranger authority over the previously (relatively) autonomous Ellena.

the paradoxical relationship between kinship and the law in the eighteenth century forces women to be the objects of exchange – financial property – or the objects of desire – sexual property. Uncle-niece incest merges both forms of female commodification to locate the niece as an object of both sexual and financial value, who, in the uncle's ideal market, circulates within the confines of the castle. Matilda's refusal to submit to Weimar's false authority establishes her own inclinations and judgment as the superior power: she defies the subordinate positions afforded her through both consanguineal and non-consanguineal ties.

Matilda's belief that she is free from a blood tie to Weimar is short-lived as Weimar declares himself yet again to be kin, saying: 'well ungrateful runaway, you are once more in the custody of your true and natural protector' (142). The use of the terms 'true' and 'natural' implies that the protection Charlotte provided Matilda was unnatural and false due to her status as a non-kin female. When Weimar tells Matilda that she must once more be his 'niece' to preserve her character, she replies: 'do you think I will give a sanction to your falsehoods, and permit myself to be made a slave of?' (143). Matilda equates the blood bond to the bondage of slavery. Weimar's claim of kinship is – she believes – not only false but is also a means of maintaining her reputation that she rejects, risking her public character rather than be repositioned as kin and slave. Weimar kidnaps Matilda, forcing her onto a ship and when after two days at sea there is gunfire Weimar tells Matilda she has been their ruin, promptly stabbing them both with a large knife (144). The uncle who has tried to coerce and force his niece into a sexual relationship instead plunges a knife into her, figuratively raping her. Neither is wounded fatally (Matilda covers her breast, receiving a wounded arm) and while recovering Weimar tells Matilda that her death would have been a comfort as he cannot bear her to marry another, admitting that he is her uncle. Weimar further confesses to the murder of his elder brother that resulted in his inheriting familial property and titles, to switching Matilda at birth and his subsequent removal to Austria where he raised and fell in love with her. When he makes this confession to Matilda his repentance is for the murder, not the incest, which he never sees as criminal or unnatural, telling his niece: 'yet even at this moment I adore Matilda' (151). He regrets his crimes but not his desires; indeed, it does not even seem to occur to him to do so. Incestuous desires grew naturally as Matilda did, intensifying after

his nine month absence which allowed him to re-form her into a sexually mature and accessible woman regardless of blood relationship.

Weimar's confessions restore kinship status and legal claims to name and property to Matilda. Weimar states: 'I acknowledge Matilda to be the only child and heiress to the Late Count Berniti's estates, which I have unjustly withheld' (147). The blood tie is a legal one that gives her the ability to marry the man of her choice; blood – or genealogy – grants freedom of choice once it no longer entails being under Weimar's authority. Weimar believes 'the restitution of her estates would sufficiently prove his penitence for the intended wrong done to her' (159), though it is unclear what Weimar is referring to as 'the wrong' – his initial intended rape, his general incestuous designs on her, his attempts to force her to marry him under false pretenses or his final plot to keep her imprisoned as his sex slave if she refused to marry him. Given his admission of continued adoration of his niece it seems unlikely he views the incestuous aspect of his behaviour as wrong. Matilda herself seems to see it as less immoral than merely contrary to her desires. When her uncle recovers and establishes himself as a monk, she reads a letter from him describing his state of repentance: 'this letter affected Matilda greatly; she remembered the care he had taken of her youth, though she shuddered when she considered him as the murderer of her father' (175). It is her uncle's crime of fratricide, the murder of her unknown father, that makes her shudder rather than the incest Weimar desired (and threatened) to commit with her.

The figure of Weimar in many ways foreshadows the figure of Radcliffe's Schedoni, another uncle who does not know whether he should rape or kill his niece. But it is not only Radcliffe who takes cues from Parsons' plot and character. Austen, another author who focused on money, property and family, had at least heard of Parsons' novel, as is proved by her inclusion of it in her *Northanger Abbey* list; that she perhaps also used it as inspiration for parts of her plots is supported by my earlier comparisons of *Wolfenbach* with *Mansfield Park* (1814). Other points of similarity to Austen's fiction include Matilda's false belief that her lover, Count de Bouville, is already married to another woman, one undeserving of his worth, Mrs Courtney. Matilda cannot bear to inquire about the two for fear of hearing about their marriage (165), much as Elinor fears

Edward is married to another scheming woman, Lucy Steele, in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) only to be proved wrong. Moreover, the revelation of Bouville's continued single state as revealed by the Marchioness (168) is highly reminiscent of the revelation of Edward's continued bachelorhood in Austen's novel. Another strong similarity to *Sense and Sensibility* occurs when the Countess asks Matilda if she loves Bouville to which Matilda replies: 'If, madam […] to prefer him to any other man I ever saw; if to confess that I think him deserving of the highest esteem from every one he honours with his acquaintance; if this is to be called love, I must answer in the affirmative' (171). This is reminiscent of Elinor's near confession to Marianne about Edward: "'I do not attempt to deny," said she, "that I think very highly of him – that I greatly esteem, that I like him.'"[55] Both heroines struggle with questions of money, emotions, and the marital statuses of their lovers. That Parsons' work influenced that of other writers who focused at length on the ties of kinship and property serve to show that the Gothic, while so frequently thought of as a genre obsessed with constantly recycled conventions, actually possesses a much broader range of concerns reflected in their reimagining in later non-Gothic novels. Not only do Gothic novels demonstrate their thematic range from the diversity of texts they influence, but they are also themselves engaged with the broader concerns of the various genres of fiction that precede and follow them.[56]

The uncle seems to represent, more than any other male family figure in the Gothic, the threat of patriarchy in general terms – shadowy lurking men who are intent on a combination of thefts from women – thefts of their bodies through kidnap and rape, thefts of their property through usurpation of property and title, theft of their lives through murder. There is almost always an element of incestuous sexual abuse tied to thefts of property, a highlighting of the ties between body and purse, female genitalia and property seizure. Authors of the Gothic were perfectly aware of the way the female body figured into the exchange of money and property necessary to preserve patriarchy and through the figure of the uncle are able to literalize how dangerous the traditional

---

[55] Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), p. 18.

[56] We can see this in a number of examples, such as in how *Wolfenbach* influences not only *Sense and Sensibility* but is itself influenced by Sarah Scott's earlier *The History of Cornelia* (1750) and *Millenium Hall* (1762) regarding notions of unfair female obligation, relentless pursuits by men, and criticisms of female dependence.

structuring of family is to female liberty and desires. In Parsons' novel the figure of the uncle and the heroine are bound together by persecutions of her body and her property, thefts that threaten her physically and financially and are grounded in the laws of inheritance and male control over female family members.

II.   Rape by Proxy: Withdrawing Protection to Force Submission

It has been argued that the wealth of criticism that focuses on representations of property in Radcliffe's novels recapitulates the Gothic narratives of female victimhood and resistance. Lauren Fitzgerald, for example, writes that Ellen Moers's examination of property in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* demonstrates how feminist critics 'often reproduce the plots and characters of their object of study' by casting writers like Radcliffe in the role of the heroine beleaguered by male critic villains.[57] Such criticism is not unjust; much scholarship has been devoted to repositioning Radcliffe in light of Matthew Lewis and her male critics such as Sir Walter Scott, while even more has focused on ownership, inheritance and property in her novels. Fitzgerald ultimately links feminist criticism's fixation on property to a desire to reclaim the textual property of women writers and ownership over a literary tradition.[58] It is, however, impossible to overlook so central a focus of Radcliffe's texts, particularly when the themes of property are intriguingly united with threats of incestuous sexual violence via a withdrawal of male protection, which we have already seen in play in Parsons' work. E.J. Clery states that Radcliffe, 'by regularly endowing her female characters with inherited fortunes, foregrounds the ideological inconsistencies of the property laws relating to women of her time.'[59] Clery's well-made claim focuses on the flaws of the legal system and its failure to protect female

---

[57] Lauren Fitzgerald, 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, p. 15.

[58] Fitzgerald, pp. 12-16.

[59] E.J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 126-27.

control and ownership of property and wealth.[60] Even recent critical work by Radcliffe scholars such as Miles hints at a link between the threats of sexual violence and property thefts, though he fails to address their close association. Miles observes that: 'the true risks posed by Radcliffe's plots are not the rapes threatened with a surprising frequency in such a proper writer, but the alienation of property and place.'[61] However, this conclusion minimizes the threat of rapes and their prevalence and is immediately bypassed in favour of discussion of female genius and the sublime, ignoring the imbrication of body and property. Radcliffe's novels consistently navigate the legal complexities of female inheritance and its usurpation by male relatives – specifically the uncle – and threats of sexual violence, presenting incestuous threats as inextricable from property theft by relatives. Because threats to female-owned property become united with threats to the female body – which is valuable to men through its potential for exchange – male usurpations of female inheritances become themselves an incestuous violation.

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* Radcliffe addresses property, inheritance, and incestuous violence when Montoni threatens the heroine, Emily St Aubert, with rape by proxy through a withdrawal of his protection if she fails transfer her property to him. Emily is raised in the domestic tranquility of the family home La Vallee and falls in love with the Chevalier Valancourt while traveling with her father before she is orphaned by his death. Madame Cheron, Emily's paternal aunt and guardian after her parents' deaths, objects to the Chevalier as unworthy of Emily. Forced to leave France with her aunt who has married the aristocratic Italian, Montoni, Emily becomes little more than a piece of property Montoni attempts to marry off to the highest bidder in exchange for money to pay off his numerous debts. At Montoni's remote and ancestral Castle Udolpho, Emily's aunt dies and Montoni continually threatens Emily to sign over her properties (and those left to her by her aunt) to him. Montoni threatens to withdraw his protection of her, leaving her vulnerable to rape. Eventually Emily is able to escape and take full possession of all her properties and marry Valancourt. The parts of the story that are so relevant to an analysis of uncles, nieces, incest, and property, are those that take place at

---

[60] Fitzgerald, pp. 17-20.
[61] Robert Miles, '"Mother Radcliffe": Ann Radcliffe and the Female Gothic', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, p. 51.

the Castle Udolpho, and it is on those that I will most closely focus. Radcliffe's Montoni is a complex character, a clear 'bad uncle' figure, but one whose threats of sexual violence are made by proxy, and as such, are all the more terrifying to Emily.

In her examination of father-daughter incest, Angie Ash states that 'explicit violence may not always be necessary to force a daughter's submission: rather, the threat of its uses, or the coercive nature of the father's behaviour in the family, may be sufficient to ensure the victim's cooperation.'[62] Radcliffe's novel represents a distortion of Ash's description that locates threats of violence as ensuring sexual submission. It is not that physical violence forces sexual acquiescence, but that threats of sexual violence are designed to force submission to financial desires. Montoni's threats of withdrawing his protection are made to underscore the sexual violence Emily will experience if she does not submit to his will – to his desire for her property. Montoni will use rape by proxy to secure his acquisition of female property that he feels is unjustly withheld from him. Radcliffe reveals that female inheritance threatens male control of women (and their bodies) and is potentially disruptive of the patriarchal structure that is reestablished through the uncle's threats against the niece's female body. This body, itself a commodity or property within the existing structures of family, law and sexuality, becomes a contested site of ownership.

From early on in the novel Radcliffe depicts Emily as forced into relative dependency on the will and authority of others, a position to which she consistently refuses to acquiesce. Montoni, her aunt, her maternal uncles, even the kindly Count de Villefort all place themselves as attempting to dictate her actions and/or control her property. At the point she decides to encourage their marriage Madame Cheron says of Emily to Valancourt: '"Well, I will take upon me to answer for her. But at the same time, sir, give me leave to observe to you, that I am her guardian, and that I expect, in every instance, that my will is hers."'[63] This ownership of Emily's will by Madame Cheron is extended to Montoni when Madame Cheron tells Emily: '"From this hour you must

---

[62] Ash, p. 39. Ash's discussion is in the context of the threat of violence to enforce sexual submission of the daughter by the father, but its applicability to the uncle-niece binary is apparent.

[63] Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. Bonamy Dobree (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 138. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

consider the Signor Montoni as your uncle – we were married this morning''' (141). In a rather Gothic twist on the transfer of a woman's property to her husband upon marriage, Emily is shown as the commodity in this transfer. When her aunt controls Emily, it is by legal guardianship due to her age; as Emily points out to Valancourt: 'in little more than a year, she should be her own mistress, as far as related to her aunt, from whose guardianship her age would then release her' (147). Montoni, taking over as head of the family from Madame Cheron upon their marriage, becomes Emily's familial head, and assumes control over her based on this power. Ash writes: 'power in the family lies with the patriarchal head, the father. That power is literal and symbolic. Literally, it denotes, for example, economic power and physical power.'[64] Montoni is quick to take advantage of this role via his attempts to sell and steal from Emily. He is not, however, alone in this assumption of power based on familial hierarchy; Monsieur Quesnel, Emily's maternal uncle, takes control of her property, seemingly in her interest, by renting out her paternal estate, La Vallee: 'that Mons. Quesnel should let it, without even consulting her on the measure, both surprised and shocked her, particularly as it proved the absolute authority he thought himself entitled to exercise in her affairs' (194-95). Emily repeatedly rejects the attempts made to control her and force her to submit to the assumed authority of the people surrounding her. She finds their actions surprising, shocking and indicative of absolute authority unjustly wielded.

Even when threatened with a permanent break from Valancourt, Emily has no desire to flee to her uncle, Quesnel, as she is certain 'in flying to him she would only obtain an exchange of oppressors', and she does not assent to the clandestine marriage proposed by Valancourt although this would 'give her a lawful and generous protector' (203). Emily will not marry until she has no need for a protector; this is almost always the case in the Gothic, in spite of critical trends to see Gothic heroines as in perpetual need of or search for a protector.[65] When Emily questions Quesnel regarding La Vallee she describes him as 'conscious of possessing absolute power' (213). Like Montoni, Quesnel believes his authority is unconditional. His arrogance proves that power distribution on

---

[64] Ash also explores how this power subordinates women economically, politically, and legally, and fastens women into institutions that ensure their continued subordination.
[65] For example, Hoeveler writes in *Gothic Feminism* that heroines seek the most malleable and feminized male protector they can in order to manipulate him (p. 50).

arbitrary lines of gender and class creates petty tyrants. Quesnel also presses Emily to marry against her will, siding with Montoni in trying to coerce her into marrying the wealthy Morano. He is furious with her refusal to do so; Emily describes the 'cruelly exerted authority of M. Quesnel and Montoni' (215). Montoni's financial ruin makes him more desperate and brutal than Quesnel, who exerts authority merely as a matter of right rather than in an attempt to benefit himself directly. Emily's guardianship rests more firmly in Montoni's control via his wife, which gives him undue influence over Emily that he exerts to the full extent. Indeed, Montoni is so furious with her continued refusal to marry Morano and so sure of the breadth of his authority that he informs her that: 'he would no longer be trifled with, and that, since her marriage with the Count would be so highly advantageous to her […] it should be celebrated without further delay, and, if that was necessary, without her consent' (216). In Montoni's mind, his niece has no right to refuse consent to a marriage if it is financially advantageous; her will is moot, his power total. When Emily questions what right he has to exert such authority over her, Montoni replies: 'by the right of my will; if you can elude that, I will not enquire by what right you do so' (216-17). Emily is only reassured by the thought that the marriage could not be valid as long as she refused to repeat the ceremony before the priest: 'she trembled, more than ever, at the power of Montoni, which seemed unlimited as his will, for she saw, that he would not scruple to transgress any law, if, by so doing, he could accomplish his project' (219). In fact, Montoni need not transgress many laws to accomplish his goals; as Lee Holcombe writes the family is 'a microcosm of the larger society, authoritarian in nature and carefully constructed as to hierarchies and duties […] As such it had been buttressed by the provisions of the law.'[66] Radcliffe places Emily in the position of a victim without victimizing her; she shows the inequality and injustice of the power exerted over her without ever having her give in to the power. That Montoni's will and authority are unjust is clear, but the legal implications of this insinuation become irrelevant when his control extends to her body once she is removed to the Castle Udolpho and is physically at his mercy. In Venice, before this removal, Emily had some hopes of legal recourse but once cut off from any pretense of society or lawfulness

---

[66] Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 6.

Montoni's authority becomes absolute and Emily's refusal to capitulate becomes an act of defiance and bravery.

The removal to the castle and Emily's escape from the marriage to Morano are due, in part, to Montoni learning that Morano has lost his fortune and is penniless. Morano arrives at Udolpho and sneaks into Emily's room at night to attempt to liberate her from the castle and Montoni. Morano begs Emily to leave with him, telling her that Montoni is 'a villain who would have sold you to my love [... .] Can I love you, and abandon you to his power?' (262). Morano confirms what Emily had suspected: that Montoni did attempt to sell her to the Count, a clear exchange of his niece's body and chastity for direct financial gain. Emily realizes this and consequently concludes that Montoni must have another, wealthier, purchaser in mind for her: 'that Montoni had formerly sold her to Morano was very probable [... . A] scheme of stronger interest only could have induced the selfish Montoni to forego a plan, which he had hitherto so strenuously pursued' (262-63). Montoni then enters the room and says to Morano: 'was it that you might repay my hospitality with the treachery of a fiend, and rob me of my niece?' (266). The language repeated throughout this scene is that of economics – buying, selling, robbing, repayment – all used to describe Emily as a commodity, valuable for its youth, beauty, and chastity. It is interesting to note that Radcliffe's heroines never marry exceptionally wealthy older men, particularly when they themselves have yet to establish financial independence; Radcliffe never allows her heroines even the appearance of selling themselves.

One of the ideas that is consistently reiterated throughout the novel is that male demands for female acceptance of and submission to their unlimited control over their bodies and fortunes produce incestuous sexual violence; that the social structures that require obedience from women create a power relationship in which female compliance to all male desires is expected. Montoni suggests Emily set up her own attempted abduction and tells her she should 'learn and practice the virtues, which are indispensible to a woman – sincerity, uniformity of conduct and obedience' (270). Kilgour says of Montoni that 'his main vice is not lust but avarice' and 'his vision of female maturity is that of total acquiescence to male authority; in his terms, self-control means complete

abdication of female control and will to male sublime power.'[67] Montoni's repeated attempts to trap Emily linguistically into admitting her properties are his or that she is somehow out of control, willful, and bad, for attempting to keep them for herself always culminate in his outrage at her defiance of his will. Montoni embodies the patriarchal familial head representative of a society that typically punishes women for being assertive and Emily's assertions of her status as rightful owner of the estates provoke a backlash that culminates in sexual threats as punishment and threat.[68] Montoni is not ostensibly driven by sexual lust – although he takes advantage of it in others, exploiting his employees' desires for Emily to set them against each other in bartering for her and threatening to unleash their lust on Emily to force her acquiescence. However, his lust for her property and use of sexual threats demonstrate that his desires are as equally grounded in an exploitation of the female body as the incestuous threats of uncles like Weimar.

Radcliffe highlights the lack of kinship between Montoni and Emily to accentuate the impropriety of their living arrangements if her aunt is deceased, merging ideas of improper relations with a description of Montoni's will (or desire). After Emily believes Montoni has murdered her aunt she asks him to let her return to France. He refuses absolutely. Emily says: '"I can no longer remain here with propriety [...] and I may be allowed to ask, by what right you detain me." "It is my will that you remain here," said Montoni [...] Emily, considering that she had no appeal from this will, forbore to dispute his right' (361). Montoni tells her that her aunt is still alive and allows Emily to see her. Montoni's previous threat to his wife that she would 'understand the danger of offending a man, who has an unlimited power over you' (305) has been realized; Madame Montoni is near death, imprisoned in the east turret. After the death of his wife Montoni demands the properties in France that his wife would not sign over to him from Emily, who has inherited them, and she realizes that he will not give up his authority over her.

---

[67] Kilgour, p. 120. Emily, interestingly, the female, English version of Rousseau's eponymous Émile, refuses to submit to the vision of female compliance to male authority that Montoni desires and that reflects Rousseau's attitudes towards female education and placement in society detailed in *Émile*, particularly in 'Book V'.

[68] For further contextualization of how sexual threats are linked to women's fears of other types of assaults see Kenneth F. Ferraro, 'Women's Fear of Victimization: Shadow of Sexual Assault', *Social Forces*, 75:2 (1996): 667-90.

> she then feared Montoni was about to employ some stratagem for obtaining [the estates], and that he would detain her his prisoner, till he succeeded. This thought, instead of overcoming her with despondency, roused all the latent powers of her fortitude into action [... .] For Valancourt's sake also she determined to preserve these estates, since they would afford that competency, by which she hoped to secure the comfort of their future lives (379).

Although it is not clear how Madame Montoni's estates pass to Emily, escaping Montoni's control, Holcombe describes the establishment of married women's separate property as partially concerned with parents who wanted to ensure: 'that if there were no children of a marriage the property would not pass to their daughters' husbands but would return to their own families.'[69] It seems likely that since Montoni hounded his wife for these properties that she was 'allowed to dispose during her lifetime of real property settled upon her' and was further permitted to dispose of this separate property by will.[70]

Along with the possession of the estates Emily also inherits Montoni's avarice and schemes and cruelty; but what Radcliffe evokes in her heroine is not fear but fortitude. Willing to give up the estates to secure her aunt's health or safety, she is now able to undergo extraordinary suffering and imprisonment in order to preserve them for her and her future with Valancourt. Although DeLamotte refers to the repeated imprisonment of Emily as a: 'portrayal of the heroine's activity [that] centres on a portrayal of her feminine passivity' it is more to the point to say that her forced passivity portrays the imposition of culturally-enforced male control over female bodies.[71] Emily wants the estates because through them she can provide for Valancourt and herself; this is an uncommon example of a Gothic heroine calmly resolving to undergo imprisonment and torment to maintain financial independence. April London refers to this kind of 'individualist ethic' as one that resists familial demands in favour of personal integrity as

---

[69] Holcombe, pp. 38-39. Holcombe describes the ability of married women to retain separate property in several ways via the Court of Chancery, which allowed this to be done in equity, and generally accepted any trust created for a married woman.

[70] Holcombe, p. 43. Because Madame Montoni not only refused to sign documents that would give Montoni possession of her states and also left hidden papers for Emily that appear to give her possession of the estates (or reinforce Emily's right to the estates if they were already assigned to return to the family), one can assume she had 'unrestricted rights over her separate property' (Holcombe, p. 43) which, as Radcliffe has shown, did not provide wives adequate protection from a husband's avarice.

[71] DeLamotte, p. 181. This description is followed by an analysis of the constraints Gothic heroines face in having to maintain female decorum while preserving themselves. DeLamotte concludes that Gothic heroines can only really effect escape via mental transcendence in contemplation of the sublime, a difficult position to maintain given the repeated physical escapes Gothic heroines do in fact manage.

a recurrent feature in eighteenth-century novels.[72] Emily's fortitude is reinforced by what she knows to be Montoni's unjust abuse of misplaced power over not only herself but also over her aunt before her. Montoni's anger and abuse, part of her inheritance, impress upon the reader the repetition of paternal authority and constraints throughout generations of family until the cycle is broken and the inadequacy of even the most liberal laws regarding women and property to protect women from their husbands and 'protectors'. When it is later revealed that the Castle Udolpho is not justly Montoni's, but the property of Signora Laurentini, a female relative whom he attempted to court and marry for both love and money, an even more distinct pattern of usurpation that ties property to body emerges. Signora Laurentini, long missing, also dared to resist Montoni's advances and though Emily eventually discovers she is still alive, Montoni has simply taken over the castle as his own in her absence.

Just as Montoni attempts to usurp ownership of the estates, so too does he unjustly usurp control of Emily's body, which is, to him, another piece of valuable property. Miles argues that Emily's status 'is that of property, either to be bartered away – as Montoni attempts to do – or discarded, put out of sight, once her entitlements have fallen within the net of male acquisitiveness.'[73] When Montoni is unable to complete the transaction of Emily's sale to Morano, he resorts to attempts to coerce her out of her inheritances. He tries to trick Emily into signing papers, but she realizes what his plan is, and refuses to sign anything she has not read. Montoni tells her that 'I, as the husband of the late Signora Montoni […] am the heir of all she possessed; the estates, therefore, which she refused to me in her life-time, can no longer be with-held […] and I think you have more sense, than to provoke my resentment by advancing an unjust claim' (380). Emily replies, 'I am not so ignorant, Signor, of the laws on this subject, as to be misled by the assertion of any person. The law, in the present instance, gives me the estates in

<hr>

[72] April London, *Women and Property in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 25. London argues that the inevitable conclusion to the individualist ethic is either to establish the hero as landed gentry and cause the heroine's end via figurative death in marriage, or, failing this, a literal death. While I think this dichotomy tends to overlook other outcomes (such as endings where the heroine is established as the partner with property or novels where the hero's status as landed gentry was never questioned), the idea of the individualist ethic is a very helpful one in understanding Gothic heroines and their essential integrity.

[73] Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 137.

question, and my own hand shall never betray my right' (380-81). Emily affirms her knowledge of her legal rights while defying Montoni's threats against her person – the dual promise of freedom or risk of continued imprisonment at the castle. Montoni also, interestingly, uses the language of 'just' and 'unjust' to assert his claims on Emily's land in an inverted representation of the morality of the situation. While attempting to use incorrect legal information to trick Emily into betraying herself he clarifies that if she does not act according to his will he will exert his own over her body. This threat is made all the more potent when Emily realizes the real power Montoni has over her is not his ability to keep her captive at the castle but his ability to withdraw his protection from her person, leaving her open to the desires of his group of bandits.

It is this vulnerability to rape if she does not comply with Montoni's will rather than the possibility of imprisonment that weakens Emily's resolve to retain the properties. Montoni follows through with his threat: Emily is accosted in the hallway outside her room by one of Montoni's officers who grabs her and asks her to 'return with me to the cedar parlour, where you will be the fairest ornament of the party' (385). Emily frees herself from him, races to her room, secures the door, and reflects:

> It appeared to her, that Montoni had already commenced his scheme of vengeance, by withdrawing from her his protection [... .] To retain the estates seemed to be now utterly impossible, and to preserve her life, perhaps her honour, she resolved, if she should escape the horrors of this night, to give up all claims to the estates, on the morrow, provided Montoni would suffer her to depart from Udolpho (385).

However, Emily's decision to relinquish the estates is dismissed when she hears a song from her region of France being sung beneath her window; the possibility that the anonymous singer is Valancourt reinforces her determination. Montoni sends for her, saying: 'I [...] give you another opportunity of retracting your late mistaken assertions regarding concerning the Languedoc estates [...] Dare my resentment no further, but sign the papers' (393). Emily replies: 'If I have no right to these estates, sir [...] of what service can it be to you, that I should sign any papers, concerning them? If the lands are yours by law, you certainly may possess them, without my interference, or my consent' (393). What appears to be a rather cavalier attitude from Emily is a thinly veiled assertion that she is certainly aware of her legal rights and is choosing to engage in verbal sparring

with Montoni over her inheritance. She proves herself more than a match for him. The usurpation of women's property rights by men is, as demonstrated, an essential focus of the Gothic and is noted by Kilgour, who argues: 'from Walpole Radcliffe inherits a concern with inheritance itself, and the question of the rightful ownership of property'.[74] While I disagree with Kilgour's conclusion regarding Walpole's influence on Radcliffe's preoccupation with inheritance, the omnipresence of disputes over 'rightful ownership' and their unification with the bad uncle figure in her works is overwhelming.

Montoni's violence towards Emily, his designs, are via sexual substitutes to whom he will hand her over because she abides by the letter of the law in her refusal to give him property that belongs to her. Montoni uses his assumed control to order Emily from the castle with two attendants and Emily reflects on her precipitous departure: 'if he did not intend to destroy her, with a view of immediately seizing her estates, he meant to reserve her […] for some more terrible design [...] remembering Signor Brochio and his behaviour in the corridor, a few preceding nights, the latter supposition, horrible as it was, strengthened in her belief' (407). Emily acknowledges her fears that Montoni is going to give her to the men to punish her for refusing to sign the papers. Sexual threats are wielded for financial defiance with the additional benefit of gratifying his vengeance. The commodification of the female body as an object of male exchange makes it impossible for the male subjects in such exchanges to allow the possibility of a commodity owning property – physical property such as the estates or control over their own bodies.[75] What Miles calls the bartering away of Emily in marriage is also implicitly a threat that she will be bartered away for sex.[76] Marriage, no longer a viable prospect in the remote location and situation of Udolpho, has given way to the possibility of enforced prostitution, a possibility alluded to through Montoni's treatment of Emily and the arrival of prostitutes at the castle for the bandits' pleasure. Once back at the castle Emily overhears Signors Bertolini and Verezzi talking about her: 'each seeming to claim some former promise of Montoni' (430-31). These men pursue Emily through the castle's passages in the dark in an iconic Gothic flight that concludes with her making it safely to

---

[74] Kilgour, p. 120.
[75] See Irigaray, p. 84; pp. 171-89.
[76] See further discussion of this in Miles's *Ann Radcliffe*, p. 64.

her room with the help of her servant Annette. The next day, when Montoni sends for her, she tells him she was pursued by the two men and begs for his protection and he says: 'you know the terms of my protection [...] if you really value this, you will secure it' (436). His assertion 'shewed Emily the necessity of an immediate compliance with his terms; but she first demanded, whether he would permit her immediately to depart, if she gave up her claim to the contested estates' (436). Demanding female submission to male control through threats of rape is a situation Kathleen Barry defines as sexual slavery: 'regardless of how they [women] got into those conditions they cannot get out: and where they are subject to sexual violence and exploitation,' a definition that very clearly applies to Emily's position.[77]

Emily attempts to buy her freedom and safety from rape through the forfeiture of her estates to Montoni, effectively purchasing herself.[78] Afterwards, Emily 'endeavoured to believe, that Montoni did really intend to permit her return to France as soon as he had secured her property, and that he would, in the mean time, protect her from insult' (437). Of course, by 'insult' she really means rape and molestation. Unfortunately, Emily's belief in her safety is shaken by Montoni's dishonesty and continued imprisonment of her within the confines of the castle that causes her to fear he has taken her payment for her freedom without ever intending to grant it.

> She not only doubted, whether Montoni ever meant to release her, but greatly feared, that he had designs, concerning her, – such as she had formerly dreaded. Her name was frequently mentioned in the conversations, which Bertolini and Verezzi held together [... .] Montoni had lost large sums to Verezzi, so that there was a dreadful possibility of his designing her to be a substitute for the debt (445).

Throughout her interactions with Montoni Emily is subjected to being removed from her fiancé and home, essentially auctioned to the highest bidder, imprisoned in a foreign country, and threatened with rape by substitution – by the removal of protection against a gang of banditti. Montoni asserts absolute authority and power over Emily, regardless of his lack of legal claim to her estates or person, in order to acquire money through the sale

---

[77] Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), p. 163.
[78] Emily's 'purchase' of herself is akin to that of Charlotte's purchase of Matilda from her uncle in *Wolfenbach* and contributes to the destruction of the system of exchange that Irigaray describes as denying the woman as object/commodity such self-possession: 'how can such objects of use and transaction claim the right to speak and to participate in exchange in general? Commodities, as we all know, do not take themselves to market on their own' (p. 84).

of her body or through the acquisition of her property elicited by sexual threats against her. DeLamotte points out that: 'the real tyranny at issue in Gothic romance had not been superseded; it still existed in the patriarchal family of the eighteenth century, in which fathers could legally, if they wished, be virtual tyrants.'[79] The element of sexual threat by proxy charges this tyrannical situation with an incestuous current magnified by the familial structure that fosters this atmosphere of oppressor/oppressed.[80] Montoni places himself as Emily's paternal protector only to threaten the removal of his protection in order to force her submission of property, ultimately revealing the notion of paternal protection as oxymoronic in the extreme.

To Emily, property and money offer an escape from oppression that allows freedom of choice; it enables female independence from familial and male rule. Emily wants her estates 'for Valancourt' while ruminating that they could 'contribute little to the happiness of a life, in which Valancourt had no longer an interest' (560). The use of 'interest' ironically combines both emotional and financial connotations; Radcliffe implies Emily is a proper female who does not show excessive interest in money beyond what it can provide for her family while at the same time undercutting this conservative attitude with Emily's persistence in securing her estates. Whether Emily will be the provider for both her and Valancourt or just for herself, she manages to restore her inheritance and regain control of her estates. On the surface her desire seems conservative enough – to establish financial security for her family – but the consequence of Emily's persistence is complete freedom from any male protector, pursuer, family, or benefactor. After Emily's escape from Udolpho, Montoni is killed and the mystery surrounding the castle and its inhabitants clarified. As Kilgour puts it: 'Udolpho now passes to the impoverished Mme Bonnac so that it is restored to a female line, now a non-aristocratic one' and the same happens to the estates of Madame Cheron and St Aubert, which pass to Emily.[81] Still separated from Valancourt, Emily sells her aunt's grand chateau at

---

[79] DeLamotte, p. 156.
[80] DeLamotte discusses Emily's self-defense and conscious worth in contrast to Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-48), noting the ambiguity of Gothic writers in showing that consciousness of virtue is not enough to save the heroine; escape or salvation must remove them from the threat in another way as well (pp. 32-35). This inability of mere consciousness of worth to protect the Gothic heroine draws attention to the necessity of the law or society to offer protection that mere chastity and innocence will not.
[81] Kilgour, p. 138.

Thoulouse in order to purchase her father's childhood home from her uncle Monsieur Quesnel, to whom St Aubert had been forced by financial necessity to sell it some time ago. Emily considers her financial security as the cause of her freedom and independence rather than happiness: 'and now, when she had escaped from so many dangers, was become independent of the will of those, who had oppressed her, and found herself mistress of a large fortune, now, when she might reasonably have expected happiness, she perceived that she was as distant from it as ever' (619).

Like so many Gothic heroines, Emily must navigate the terrors of patriarchal structures herself, experiencing sexual threats from familial authority, imprisonment, and theft of property before securing her hero and home. Radcliffe's novels are not bildungsromans in which the heroine develops: the heroine remains constant; it is the unjust, unreasonable world in which she is subject to incestuous threats and the theft of her birthrights along with enforced choices that must be and is changed. Valancourt's return to the Chateau of Count de Villefort and ensuing explanations restore him to Emily and after their marriage is celebrated there they reside in La Vallee, 'the retreat of goodness, wisdom, and domestic blessedness!' (672). Kilgour says that Radcliffe's 'heroine's circular journey is a transformative one, in which the end both recovers and revises the beginning' and if Emily's return to La Vallee with Valencourt is read as revising the initial scenes of her childhood, Kilgour's reading seems accurate.[82] La Vallee, however, is no revised ancient estate but a more modern version altogether; additionally, Emily is the only Radcliffe heroine who had a happy childhood home to which to return. Emily's parents are the only ones in a Radcliffe novel to be untouched by personal involvement in murderous plots (St Aubert's sister, it is true, is a victim, but Emily is the sole Radcliffe heroine without a murdered parent). Emily can return to La Vallee without it being a restoration of conservative values because her parents before her were able to achieve a familial structure removed from the cycle of violence and imprisonment. Emily goes back to La Vallee only once she has been removed from it – thrust first into the control and chateau of Madame Cheron and then the dangerous confines of Udolpho. Udolpho reverts to female ownership after Montoni is killed; after

---

[82] Kilgour, p. 161.

all, Montoni was a usurper to Udolpho just as he was to Emily's property. All of Montoni's properties are eventually revealed as rightfully belonging to women; his (mis)use of their structures reconfigured after his death. His sexual threats against Emily are an echo of his undesired sexual advances to Signora Laurentini, this time exerted on a young female ward by proxy with the same result of unjust ownership of rightfully female spaces. Emily's ability to withstand Montoni's threats through her legal knowledge, strong sense of justice, ability to withstand imprisonment and suffering, and awareness of her rights epitomize the Gothic heroine; a woman who overcomes patriarchal threats against property and body to establish her own familial structure.

III.   To Rape or to Murder? Lust and Violence in *The Italian*

Radcliffe's *The Italian*, her most widely discussed and celebrated work, is an essential text for examinations of incest in the Gothic as the multi-layered relationship between Schedoni and Ellena di Rosalba positions the heroine alternately as Schedoni's intended victim, daughter and niece. While the layering of roles is not unique in the Gothic, what distinguishes this deployment of the convention is that Ellena occupies these positions concurrently with her recasting as the object of his lust and murderous designs and as the daughter of his previous rape victim. Such a reconfiguration causes Ellena to become the embodiment of his past crimes; Schedoni's attempt at their reinscription upon her present-day body attempts to repeat his previous usurpations of the female body and purse in a violent incestuous cycle. Ellena's future is imperiled as a direct result of both Schedoni's prior incestuous crimes – the marriage into which he forced his widowed sister-in-law and his subsequent legally-sanctioned rapes of her – and his present ones.

The novel follows Ellena and her lover Vivaldi as they flee from the machinations of Vivaldi's mother, the Marchesa di Vivaldi, and her confessor Father Schedoni, who she enlists to abduct and murder Ellena. Throughout the abductions and attempted murders Ellena encounters previously unknown members of her family: a sympathetic

nun, Olivia, is revealed as her mother and Schedoni, while attempting to murder and/or rape Ellena, confesses his belief that he is her father. Ellena is in fact Schedoni's niece, the daughter of his older brother di Bruno and his wife. Schedoni's position as the younger brother in the family structure is the impetus behind the murder of his older brother and usurpation of di Bruno's title and property, wife and family. He steals from his older brother his wealth and his female family members, the usurpations from the outset combining thefts of money and bodies. When Schedoni's small patrimony granted via the laws of primogeniture was spent his older brother could no longer afford to support him; this and Schedoni's envy of di Bruno's blessings – an unencumbered estate and a beautiful wife – prompted Schedoni to have his brother killed.[83] Schedoni displaces his brother as the patriarchal head, literally taking over his place in the family, marrying his sister-in-law and assuming control of the estates. The usurpation of what the laws governing inheritance denied is the younger brother's way of breaking the system of succession and tradition. Kilgour argues that the law 'ensures unbroken succession and so maintains the continuity of tradition.'[84] In light of this understanding of the law, the figure of the usurping uncle is a paradox who represents the destruction of tradition and the epitome of patriarchy's constraints of women. Schedoni's incestuous designs on his niece are complicated by his murderous impulses that are interlinked as the symptoms and requirements of his desire for power. The figure of the uncle becomes incapable of separating acts of theft, violence and incest, displacing the heroine's father through an act of rebellion that condemns the unjust repercussions of the legal system that created him just as it positions him as its new enforcer.

The meetings between Ellena and Schedoni alternate between evoking feelings of safety or rescue before undercutting this potential with her fear of him and his recognition of her that is tinged with murderous lust. In Ellena's first confrontation with Schedoni on the shores outside the house where she is held hostage she views Schedoni as a figure of potential protection. This idea is quickly dispelled when she catches a glimpse of his eyes and face: 'his air and countenance were equally repulsive [...] [Ellena] shrunk as from an

---

[83] Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian*, ed. Deborah Rogers (New York: Penguin, 1995), p. 417. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[84] Kilgour, p. 25.

enemy' (263). Her instinct to trust him as a rescuer is replaced with dread at his features –
Ellena fails to identify him as kin or as a protector. When Schedoni reveals he is acting in
collusion with the Marchesa and Ellena faints his initial hatred and desire to kill her are
lessened as he gazes upon her unconscious form and is touched by feelings of pity and
compassion, although he still plots to have her killed.[85] When the assassin Spalatro
refuses to do so, Schedoni reluctantly takes up the knife, questioning why he did not kill
her earlier and must steal himself for the task: 'the wine, with which Schedoni also had
found it necessary to strengthen his own resolution, did not secure him from severe
emotion, when he found himself again near Ellena' (276). This hesitation manifests
before Schedoni has any reason to believe Ellena is related to him – she is nothing more
than a stranger who stands in the way of his advancement within the church.

That Schedoni feels reluctance to harm her hints at a feeling of familiarity or
kinship strengthened by the image of her innocence, youth and beauty. Whether it is a
sense of kinship, the stirrings of lust, or both, Schedoni's reluctance to kill Ellena is
palpable. He enters her chamber to find her sleeping and as he watches, she smiles.
Schedoni shudders to see her smile in her murderer's face, her innocence affecting him.
At this moment his murderous intent becomes loaded with sexual undercurrents. The
following passage, often quoted in analyses of the novel, bears repeating due to the
unification of sexual and physical threats by a family member:

> He searched for the dagger, and it was some time before his trembling hand could
> disengage it from the folds of his garment; but, having done so, he again drew
> near, and prepared to strike. Her dress perplexed him; it would interrupt the blow,
> and he stooped to examine whether he could turn her robe aside, without waking
> her [… .] His agitation and repugnance to strike encreased with every moment of
> delay, and, as often as he prepared to plunge the poniard into her bosom, a
> shuddering horror restrained him (279).

Of this passage, Clery writes: 'finally Schedoni lifts the dagger (in a gesture which
carries resonances of sexual assault), but is halted by the sight of a miniature of himself

---

[85] The pity or compassion Schedoni feels reflects DeLamotte's understanding of the Gothic heroine's
ability to evoke pity in the villain as ambiguous and inadequate compared to Richardsonian heroines. Her
argument applies just as well here as Ellena's ability to inspire Schedoni with pity and hesitancy to murder
her is also, ultimately, inadequate. It is the mere chance of familial recognition that spares her, not her
innocence or virtue.

[...] since I never witnessed them before?"' – underscores her fears of Schedoni's caresses being sexual and inappropriate in nature (which they very well may be) and her inability to differentiate between sexual and paternal caresses and emotions as she has never before experienced either (281). Ellena has lacked paternal protection, affection and, as Schedoni points out, tenderness. However, these are also familial trappings she has never felt the lack of until her abduction and attempted assassination.

Ellena points out her lack of having experienced paternal signs of affection in order to keep Schedoni at arm's length until she can evaluate the evidence that has convinced him that she is his daughter. The 'proofs' that have convinced Schedoni are yet unknown to her and therefore his caresses are sexually threatening to her.[89] Evidence, not assurances, is required in lieu of an instantaneous familial recognition, such as the one she felt for her mother, Olivia.[90] While imprisoned at the convent Ellena is immediately drawn to Olivia: 'the regard of this nun was not only delightful, but seemed necessary to her heart' (115) and the immediate attraction Ellena feels is later justified by the discovery that Olivia is her mother. Kinship is evidenced by an instant fixation or attraction and subsequent feelings of mutual sympathy and understanding. Schedoni's belief that Ellena is his daughter is rendered questionable given her initial, terrified, emotional response to him. Later, this sense is reiterated when Ellena thinks: 'there were moments when she shrunk from the relationship of Schedoni with unconquerable fright. The first emotions his appearance had excited were so opposite those of filial tenderness, that she perceived it was now nearly impossible to love and revere him as her father' (353). Ellena attempts to find proof of kinship by examining the miniature and comparing it to Schedoni: 'Ellena did trace a resemblance in the bold outline of the features, but not sufficient to convince her, without farther evidence, that each belonged to the same person' (282). Schedoni subsequently gives her details that match those given by Signora Bianchi and convinces her of their kinship, promising that she will 'be restored to her home' (283). That Ellena is never able to overcome her initial fear and instinctual dislike

---

[89] See chapter 4 of this thesis for further analyses of proofs of kinship as allowing caresses or behaviour that would otherwise be considered inappropriate.
[90] See chapter 2 of this thesis for an examination of the proofs and evidences necessary to establishing kinship or denying the possibility of a consanguineal bond.

hanging round her neck, which reveals him to be her father.'[86] I would put it even more strongly: Radcliffe uses Schedoni's dagger as a metaphorical penis, turning his attempted murder into contemplated rape. The action becomes less physical assault with sexual resonances than voyeuristic sexual assault with murderous resonances. Even the 'shuddering horror' which restrains him from plunging the poniard into Ellena's bosom carries orgasmic implications.

Ellena's lack of experience with a father figure or protector causes her to require proof of kinship before submitting to the caresses and control that Schedoni immediately assumes as his paternal right.[87] After Schedoni pulls aside Ellena's dress (in preparation to stab her) he sees a miniature around her neck and demands of Ellena to tell him who the portrait represents. Ellena tells him it is her father and says: 'I never knew a father's care, nor till lately did I perceive the want of it. – But now – […] if you are not as a father to me – to whom can I look for protection?' (279). Schedoni paces, weeps, sighs and confesses to Ellena that he is her father, although he is labouring under a misapprehension as he is in fact her uncle. As Perry puts it, it is: 'a scene in which murder with incestuous overtones is averted at the last possible minute by recognition of a blood tie.'[88] Ellena believes Schedoni and calls him 'father', although it is unclear whether she is using his religious title or acknowledging his status as her kinsman, as moments later she realizes: 'whatever might be the proofs, that had convinced Schedoni of the relationship between them, he had not explained these to her […] it was not sufficient to justify an entire confidence in the assertion he had made, or to allow her to permit his caresses without trembling' (281). Ellena is not well-enough convinced of her paternity for her to permit Schedoni's touch without fear; she questions the proofs of a blood tie that would allow his caresses to be appropriate. The immediate recognition of kinship is lacking and so: 'she shrunk, and endeavoured to disengage herself; when, immediately understanding her, he said, "Can you doubt the cause of these emotions? These signs of paternal affection?"' (281). Ellena's reply – '"Have I not reason to doubt

[86] E. J. Clery, *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (Devon, U.K.: Northcote House, 2000), p. 82.
[87] Schedoni's understanding of a 'father' gives him the right at once to touch and command his presumed daughter.
[88] Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748 – 1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 102.

of Schedoni contextualizes her emotional response as a sort of ancestral memory of his acts of violence against her parents.

Ellena's conflicted perception of the attempted attack, in part, influences her ambivalent acceptance of Schedoni as kin. After the revelation of kinship Schedoni leaves Ellena alone; she sees the dagger he dropped and considers the possibility that he was going to kill her, although she quickly disregards that thought, preferring to view him as the hero who foiled Spalatro's plan. Schedoni, on the other hand, manages to move from feelings of guilt and horror at the murder/rape he nearly committed to chastizing himself for the crime because a marriage between his daughter and Vivaldi would elevate him even higher than he could have imagined. A conversation filled with layers of meaning regarding the dagger occurs between Ellena and Schedoni when she offers it to him as an object of gratitude for his saving her from an assassin: 'last night while I slept upon this mattress, unsuspicious of what was designed against me, an assassin entered the chamber with that instrument in his hand' (293). Radcliffe draws attention to the dagger (weapon and metaphorical penis), the attack (a veiled attempted rape and attempted murder), Ellena's misconceptions (that the attacker was someone other than her father/uncle, that the attack was only murderous in intent, that Schedoni saved her from another man), thus conspicuously highlighting Ellena's continued ignorance regarding Schedoni. The reader knows she is wrong about his character, so is it possible she is also wrong about his identity? Her attempt to return the dagger to him, given its metaphorical status, is fraught with sexual and sacrificial implications. Ellena has a difficult time reconciling the dark and alarming presence of Schedoni with a father figure; indeed, 'Ellena, whenever her eyes glanced upon him, suffered a solemnity of fear that rose almost to terror' (299). These feelings of fear and terror, however naturally occurring to her, do not preclude Ellena from putting her life in danger to preserve Schedoni when threatened by Spalatro on their journey homeward.

The scene combines references to Schedoni's near attack on Ellena with sexual imagery, causing the interaction to be loaded with incestuous meaning. When Schedoni asks Ellena where his would-be assassin has gone, Ellena perceives his intent to kill their attacker and hesitates to answer because she fears for both his safety and the life of the

wounded man. She begs him, instead of going to kill him, that they leave, arguing: '"Do not, by remaining here, leave me a possibility of grieving for you. What anguish it would occasion you, to see me bleed; judge, then, what must be mine, if you are wounded by the dagger of an assassin!" Schedoni stifled the groan which swelled from his heart, and abruptly turned away' (315). The language Ellena uses to describe a physical attack is sexually evocative, carrying with it allusions of lost virginity through the references to her bleeding and the mention of the dagger. Ellena reminds her father/uncle of what she believes was his rescue of her the night before while he remembers how he drew aside her dress in anticipation of using his dagger, frantic to disengage it from the folds of his robe. The scene is effective not only because the reader is aware that Schedoni is remembering, not saving Ellena, but almost killing her, but also because of the charged sexual atmosphere of the attempted murder and Ellena's continued ignorance thereof. Schedoni's groan that 'swells' further strengthens a reading of his thinking back with mingled lust, horror and regret on the sexual nature of his attack upon Ellena. Perry argues the near-attack on Ellena by Schedoni 'suggests rape rather than murder'[91] but it is the very conflation of the two acts that makes the scene so terrifying and layered in meanings. The unification of near-murder and near-rape demonstrates that the uncle's desire for increased wealth and power is a lust that he will attempt to act out by commodifying, sexualizing and victimizing the female body.

It is essential to understand Schedoni's incestuous lust as not only sexually and physically threatening but as equally concerned with the usurpations that are embedded in these violations against generations of female bodies. Some scholars are resistant to identifying sexual violation in the uncle's actions: Miles, for example, suggests of Schedoni that 'incestuous rape is not actually meditated' but springs to the reader's mind because of similar scenes in *The Monk* and *The Castle of Otranto*.[92] Certainly it does, but these are also scenes and texts with which Radcliffe would have been quite familiar and aware of evoking. Writing at the peak of Gothic popularity and the swirl of controversy surrounding *The Monk*, Radcliffe would have been keenly attuned to the effect her reworking of these scenes creates. While in *The Monk* the act of incestuous rape ends

---

[91] Perry, p. 395.
[92] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 171.

with the murder of the heroine, Radcliffe does not permit rape or murder to be committed; both acts are interrupted by a revelation of familial ties that in Lewis's novel comes post-rape.

Ellena's blood tie to Schedoni saves her from any physical sexual violence and murder while at the same time placing her firmly in the control of male hands that plan to barter her off for their benefit.[93] As Kilgour argues: 'in retelling his [Matthew Lewis's] story in *The Italian*, she [Radcliffe] reasserts narrative law and order, restoring the correct version he has corrupted, and reestablishes her authority, insisting on both the duty and the power of the author to control the plot she originated.'[94] Radcliffe reestablishes her authority over plot and exposes Lewis's rape of Antonia by her half-brother as little more than sensationalist scene-writing hinging on the age-old convention of men blaming women for tempting them into the act. Radcliffe's avoided incestuous rape/murder scene locates such threats as symptoms of a social structure that disempowers younger brothers and women in a perpetuation of unbalanced power and wealth.[95] Such a system is demonstrated as inherently unstable and flawed but as capable of being changed if the old order is eradicated in favour of a new one based on equality. Schedoni's rape of his brother's wife establishes him as able to commit sexual violence and tie together murder (of brother), rape (of sister-in-law) and usurpation (of title and estates).[96] By deploying incest alongside thefts of female property, such thefts are portrayed as endorsed by the same inherently aberrant structure of familial power that permits incestuous violence. Incest functions very differently here from its deployment in configurations that focus on its potential for creating ideal relationships or social structures.[97] In contrast, violent and threatening uncle-niece incest is united with murder, thefts and usurpations to expose

---

[93] Ironically, although Schedoni wants to exchange Ellena for increased status via a marriage to Vivaldi – a marriage she also desires – he cannot. He compromised his ability to promote this marriage to the Marchesa by having agreed with her that Ellena is a scheming girl with designs on Vivaldi prior to his discovery that she is his kin.

[94] Kilgour, p. 169.

[95] Perry states 'the effect of these legal innovations in marriage settlements of the late seventeenth century was to diminish the proportion of a family's resources that went to female offspring and younger sons,' (p. 213).

[96] Olivia, Ellena's mother and Schedoni's sister-in-law, is not explicitly described as being raped by Schedoni, but as her marriage to him was forced, it seems logical her sexual encounters with him were also non-consensual.

[97] See particularly chapter 2 of this thesis for analyses of the Gothic's representations of brother-sister incestuous relationships as ideal and egalitarian in nature.

socially endorsed systems of thefts from women as both unnatural and normalized by the existing patriarchal order.

The link between representations of violence, incest and sexuality in the Gothic is noted by Wright, who argues that the 'genre's treatment of violence, murder and incest is linked symbiotically to issues of sexuality and gender within the fiction.'[98] I would go further to contend that violence, murder and incest are linked through sexuality and gender to theft, inheritance and law as well. In the uncle-niece configuration the act or desire of incest is not cast as unnatural or deviant but, when represented as violent or forceful, the actions of ownership, theft, and usurpation that it underpins are so presented. Incestuous desires and sexual threats from the uncle are bound up with the desire to own female bodies and possessions, of which rape and sex become another means of theft and control. Incest is not unnatural; however, the forcing of it – the unlawful seizure of property and the unlawful seizure of sexuality – is inherently unjust and endorsed by a social structure governed by the laws that prohibit female inheritance and ownership of property and body. Emily's attempt to purchase herself from Montoni and his men and Charlotte's purchase of Matilda from Weimar emphasize this issue of incest as a form of male ownership of female bodies. As women cannot own themselves (their bodies as property) before marriage, after marriage the ability to gain female self-control and ownership becomes even more improbable.[99]

Undesired incest functions to de-naturalize the male usurpation of female bodies and properties. Incest's unification of sex and family mirrors, in a distorted fashion, the concept of inheritance – itself a combination of wealth and family. When inheritance is seized wrongfully the action is presented as an unjust usurpation, just as when incest is forced or threatened the representations are grounded in the language of unnatural desires. By intertwining familial theft with familial rape the Gothic presents the complex relationship between patriarchal structures of inheritance, family and sexuality and

---

[98] Wright, p. 147.

[99] Though this generalizes the laws that moved female-held property to husbands and excludes exceptions (such as entailments or primogeniture instances where property remained in the family when a female was the sole remaining family member) that have been discussed in the section on Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, it reflects how these laws are represented in the Gothic. For a further examination of the restraints imposed by women's commodification see Irigaray, p. 84.

demonstrates how such structures allow men to use sex as a weapon against women, particularly those who defy the structures by ownership of property or wealth.[100] When women assert their natural claims of ownership of themselves and their property, they are raped, imprisoned, and murdered. The men who commit these acts of theft and violence are the younger brothers who did not inherit either title or fortune and have thus been impeded in their quests for female companionship in favour of their older, titled, landed brothers. The younger brothers reconstitute themselves as dominant by murdering the sibling they feel has displaced them through the privilege of birth and strip the women who have inherited, when they could not, taking what they were unable to inherit by force and sexual aggression.

The usurpation of what was denied by inheritance laws is the younger brother's way of breaking the legal system of succession and tradition. Of relevance here is Wolfram Schmidgen's discussion of Sir William Blackstone's metaphor of law and the Gothic castle in which Schmidgen states: 'the metaphor of the Gothic castle can be completely intertwined with the common law. That complexity is only increased by Blackstone's allusion to the popular notion of English constitutional rights as an inheritance [... .] Blackstone ties together the themes of property, common law, and the English constitution in a single image'[101] If English constitutional rights are an inheritance they are inherited by primogeniture, for it is clear that women were no more liable to receive justice under the law than they were able to receive property when they had a male sibling. Primogeniture, which is responsible for Schedoni's being entitled only to a small allowance as a younger brother, explains, in part, his actions. But in spite of his own rebellion against the system of property inheritance and continuity, Schedoni positions himself as patriarchal head of first Olivia and then Ellena. Once Schedoni has declared himself Ellena's father, Ellena finds herself for the first time under paternal protection that is depicted as worthless. Schedoni refuses to listen to anything Ellena has to say regarding her safety, future and desires. While traveling to Naples, Schedoni discounts Ellena's concerns regarding Spalatro and her guide. He refuses to answer her

---

[100] Examples of this include the repercussions suffered by Madame Cheron for attempting to keep her own property in *Udolpho*, Olivia for not wanting her brother-in-law in *The Italian*, and Matilda for resisting her uncle in *Wolfenbach*.

[101] Schmidgen, p. 166.

questions about Vivaldi's whereabouts and when he does finally answer, he lies. He informs Ellena that she will be placed in a convent instead of returning to her home as he promised and when she suggests her preferred convent he listens but does not respond. Whatever protection Schedoni's paternal status lends to Ellena is negated by the control he assumes over her life.

Schedoni's paternal authority echoes the maternal ownership the Abbess and the Marchesa attempted to wield over Ellena by stripping her of a voice in her future choices after her abduction and imprisonment, telling her: 'she must determine either to accept the veil, or the person whom the Marchesa di Vivaldi had, of her great goodness, selected for her husband' (109). Ellena's indignation at what she privately calls the tyrannical injustice of this proposal is evidenced through rebellion as she states: 'I am prepared to meet whatever suffering you shall inflict upon me; but be assured, that my own voice never shall sanction the evils to which I may be subjected, and that the immortal love of justice, which fills all my heart, will sustain my courage no less powerfully than the sense of what is due to my own character' (110). Ellena is defiant; she has a strong sense of entitlement based on her inner worth of character. Although Miles believes that while Ellena 'shows herself a true Gothic heroine in subordinating her desires to those of dynastically-minded parents [...] she also proves an atypical one, when, under the threat of having to abandon Vivaldi, she admits, and refuses to relinquish her desire, and this, as much as dignity, is shown to be "due to her own character."'[102] Ellena's resistance is, however, similar to that of most Gothic heroines who claim to abide by the dynastic requirements of the older generation while inwardly resolving to do the opposite. Kilgour notes the rebellious nature of this defiance, arguing that: 'the lovers themselves are revolutionary figures in their resistance to these false systems which unnaturally impede the fulfilment of their individual desires.'[103] Ellena (and Vivaldi) challenge the ancient and archaic systems that preceded them and revise the system – and its unnatural repression of desire – into a model that allows for individual choice and desires.[104]

---

[102] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 171.
[103] Kilgour, p. 177.
[104] I argue this in contrast to readings of the endings of Radcliffe's novels by scholars such as David Durrant in 'Ann Radcliffe and the Conservative Gothic', *Studies in English Literature, 1500 – 1900*, 22:3

This new structure is presented at the novel's end when individual desires are finally realized and the cycle of incestuous thefts has ended. When Vivaldi asks Olivia for Ellena's hand in marriage she consents if his father does, and once his father ascertains that Ellena is not the daughter of Schedoni but of the respectable and honorable Count di Bruno, he accedes to the union. As Kilgour describes it, the novel enables a reconciliation 'achieved by the removal of false figures of authority, and the gradual emergence of good models already present in the system. Schedoni turns out to be a false father, so that Ellena is not contaminated by her origins […] the text trots out the familiar themes of fraternal rivalry, jealousy, fratricide, and a usurpation of both property and wife.'[105] The couple marries and a fete is held at one of Vivaldi's estates that they choose as their main residence: a 'scene of fairy-land' (473) that stands on the entrance of a valley to the bay, with pleasure gardens and shores sloping to the water. There are groves of magnolia, ash and palms, with elegant halls and interiors and views; from the estate one can see 'beyond the rich foliage the seas and shores of Naples, from the west; and to the east, views of the valley of the domain, withdrawing among winding hills wooded to their summits' (473). This idyllic retreat is less a gradual emergence of a model already present in the text but appears as the Garden of Eden, a new world that has sprung whole out of nothing. So while Ellis describes the Female Gothic as a narrative in which 'the heroine exposes the villain's usurpation and thus reclaims an enclosed space that should have been a refuge from evil but has become the very opposite – a prison' – this only partially describes the narratives which more generally involve the heroine leaving the prison behind rather than reclaiming it.[106] Gothic heroines find new refuges, new structures in which to create an idealized egalitarian sphere. The domestic world Vivaldi and Ellena choose is a location untouched by the presence of the past and is radical in its democratic nature. The servant Paulo declares that they are in a paradise they had to travel through purgatory to reach, reiterating that they are in an Eden wherein all ranks of people are welcome and received as the couple shares their abundance and joy. The

---

(1982): 519-31, who believe that the conclusions symbolize a return to a safe bourgeois familial structure headed by a genial patriarch.

[105] Kilgour, p. 179.

[106] Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. xii. Just as Ellena leaves her prisons, so too does Emily leave the Castle Udolpho, Julia flees the patriarchal castle in *A Sicilian Romance* and Laurette abandons an ancestral home turned prison in *The Orphan of the Rhine*.

archaic constraints and structures of a social system that denies love based on genealogies and perpetuates thefts of female bodies and property by male family members are nowhere present in Ellena and Vivaldi's egalitarian society.

IV.   Conclusion

The figure of the Gothic uncle is paradoxical: he both rebels against the constraints of inheritance and re-enforces the patriarchal structures of sexuality and law in his treatment of the niece as property. When examining the role of the uncle and his actions towards his brother, sister-in-law, and niece, a layered critique of the dominant social structuring of family and the participants within it coalesces. The younger brothers rebel but ultimately become enforcers of the system as (in contrast to the heroines) their rebellions were designed to reposition themselves as the heads of the corrupt systems rather than to destroy the structure that initially denied them power. Such an understanding makes reading the Gothic as a conservative textual form impossible as the uncles are represented not as too rebellious, but rather as not rebellious enough. They react against the system that denied them wealth and title only in order to steal from the older brother. By murdering their older brother and killing/raping/marrying his wife, the younger brother attempts to assume the benefits of a social system that would seek to deny him these riches of wealth and title. Instead of removing themselves from the system they push their way into its injustice, claiming by force what was denied them by law. In this sense, the uncle fulfils a very conventional role: the abuse victim turned abuser, becoming complicit with the system having claimed a position of power within it.[107] The structure of the family and the laws of inheritance within the familial structure reinforce the relative powerlessness of the younger brother and women. The uncle, instead of resisting the system, embraces it, seizing power denied him by any means necessary to become a defender of the very structures that initially marginalized him. By killing his brother and

---

[107] See Bersani, in which he argues that 'the oppressed, having freed themselves from their oppressors, hasten to imitate them' (22).

taking his wife, the uncle displaces the patriarch to establish himself as familial head; in this respect, the uncle serves as a father to the niece.[108] The familial structure that places the uncle as the protector post-displacement of the elder brother lends itself to the usurpations, incestuous desires and abuses. This is true not merely in the cases of those who have killed their brothers and taken on their roles but also of the uncles who inherit this role without committing murder.[109] In the stolen role of patriarch, the uncle threatens his niece in a variety of ways (theft, imprisonment, violence, murder) that are embedded in incestuous desires.

The uncle threatens the lineage, namesake and inheritance of the heroine who, as a female free of a father to control her property and body, represents a dangerous threat to the hegemonic order.[110] In spite of their similarities in disrupting the traditional power structure, the uncle eventually emerges as an uncomfortable usurper of the role of the father, assuming patriarchal power and with it violent incestuous desires. The uncle realizes the power previously denied him by taking his older brother's place, reinforcing the structure that had compromised his status by perpetuating it and the abuses it propagates. While placing the uncle and niece as often experiencing uncomfortably close roles, existing in the margins of the society that denies them access to power, the Gothic ultimately shows the uncle joining into the power system while niece abandons it. One of the reasons the Gothic's radical ideas are so contested is because of how the transgressions within the genre are simultaneously celebrated and punished.[111] The figure of the uncle – who transgresses laws on incest, murder, theft and rape and is ultimately punished – remains a complex and paradoxical character who ultimately subscribes to the

---

[108] This blurring of roles between father and uncle is perhaps most pronounced in the confusion over Schedoni's status as father or uncle to Ellena, a position that is unclear due to both his belief he is her father based on her miniature and his having married and fathered a child with Ellena's mother.

[109] Montoni is an example of an uncle who inherits a position of power over his niece by marriage, as is Heathcliff in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

[110] The uncle's assumption of the paternal role is an attempt to reinscribe control over the relatively free body of the heroine, but in its assumption, highlights the sexual and incestuous nature of such a position of power.

[111] See Fred Botting, *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 4-11.

usurpations and violations of the female body that render his incestuous acts a mode of upholding the dominant hegemony's ideologies of sexuality and laws.[112]

The Gothic celebrates certain types of transgressions but never allows personal freedoms and liberty to be violated without punishment. The inheritance of rights Blackstone describes is, even while denied it, a central tenet of the heroines' belief systems. Women in the Gothic defend their rights and resist injustice, challenge the establishment and fight against patriarchal constraints that limit their choices and desires. Indeed, heroines can desire their brothers, fathers, uncles, sisters and other family members, just as they can be incestuously desired in turn. Heroines fight against imprisonment, strangling lineages, archaic institutions of law and religion, but their fight and actions are always controlled by a strong sense of justice and self-righteousness. The heroine is pitted against the family as a structure that dictates behaviour and action. In contrast, the uncle is a threat to his own family and genealogical tradition, using violence and incestuous sexual threats that establish him as part of the dominant institution. Incest in this case does not subvert, but upholds the unjust system. Kilgour's explanation of Gothic incest as abnormal and subversive of social requirements, reconfigured in light of incest's frequent portrayal as normal and natural in the Gothic, can be used to understand how incest is depicted as natural and normal while subverting social requirements and unnatural while maintaining them.[113] Incest in the Gothic is thus naturalized due to its location as abnormal and transgressive by the laws of a heteronormative society.

When women are denied their inheritance – of rights or of estates – it is because neither the constitutional freedoms nor legal protection of property applies to them. The uncle is representative of the patriarchal order: a thief who has stolen property, title, wealth and freedom. Uniting these thefts with sexual threats reiterates the way the structure of inheritance and law steals rights and wealth through a denial predicated on gender. Uncles threaten nieces with rape and rape by proxy in an abuse of power that

---

[112] One of the interesting ongoing topics for scholarly debate on the Gothic is whether the genre represents (overall) a radical commentary with pro-revolution themes, or a conservative, bourgeois understanding of family and society.

[113] See the introduction to and chapter 5 of this thesis for a more detailed examination of how male incestuous desires, while prohibited, are often normalized in incest discourse while female incestuous desires are both prohibited and considered especially deviant and unnatural.

mirrors the exchange of women in marriage, transferring wealth and property to benefit male family members. Just as primogeniture grants wealth and title to one brother but not to the other, society grants all its protection and benefits to only one gender. The male figure who represents what all women suffer in the patriarchal social structure is the younger brother, but while the heroine fights against this system by refusing to acquiesce to its unfair demands and maintaining her sense of justice, the younger brother violates the rights of others with murder, theft, and rape. The uncle's violations are against other people; the heroine transgresses only the unjust laws of the governing structure. The uncle's incestuous desires, whether developing naturally to be exploited later,[114] arising solely from the desire to force compliance,[115] or inextricably linked to past crimes and present ones,[116] are all unified with thefts of property and physical violence. The uncle illuminates the cyclical nature of injustice and abuse within a contained system, reiterating the necessity of the heroine's escape from and destruction of it in order to be free from the genealogy of usurpations. The incestuous violence underscores the family structure that inherently promotes such abuses, itself a microcosm of the larger social structure.[117] Incestuous threats, rape and violence are impossible to disentangle from their use as weapons to enforce the ownership and control of female bodies and properties and as productions of the uneven power distribution affected by a patriarchal culture that demands such controls.

---

[114] As in the case of Parsons' Weimar, whose incestuous desires for his niece develop as natural but are exposed as wrong, because of his abuse of power in attempting to coerce and later force Matilda into an undesired relationship.

[115] Montoni's incestuous threats by proxy to Emily develop from his avarice to acquire her estates rather than due to his attraction to her; rape is threatened to force compliance with his demands for property rather than body (though body and estate come together throughout Udolpho).

[116] The rape (or presumed repeated rapes) of Olivia by Schedoni is difficult to separate from his murderous/lustful designs on Ellena, exposing the familial and cyclical nature of abuse.

[117] Ash describes the behaviour of family members as reflective of broader social relations and power structures, and that the historic view of 'women and children as property of their male protectors [...] has supported the use of male aggression to maintain dominance' (pp. 4-5).

Chapter Four

More Than Just Kissing: Cousins and the Changing Status of Family

'My Welch cousin is the very thing for a tete a tete.'

<div align="right">Charlotte Smith, Emmeline (1788)[1]</div>

Amongst the many tangled familial relationships in the Gothic that are fraught with incestuous desires and passions, cousin relationships occupy a curious space in which the incestuous nature of the bond is at once diminished and heightened by its relative acceptance by both English society and the law. In order to label marriages and desires between cousins as incestuous, the question of whether such relationships are generally considered incestuous must be examined. Cousin marriages may be more permissible than other relationships between blood kin because the consanguineal tie, in terms of shared genetic material, is weaker than those between the more taboo incestuous relationships, such as mother-son, father-daughter or brother-sister. The difficulty in coming to a clear consensus regarding the incestuous nature of cousin marriage is demonstrated by the irreconcilable differences between leading scientists and anthropologists on cousin incest. Sociobiologist Joseph Shepher argues that 'most cultural forms of mating', including preferential cousin marriages, 'represent cultural regulations aimed at *optimum* inbreeding.'[2] Shepher defines incest as 'mating between relatives, called inbreeding' and that 'as a technical term, *inbreeding* is reserved for cases in which discernible traces can be followed back to common ancestors within two to three generations.'[3] Certainly cousins count in this regard, their shared relations being two generations back with mutual grandparents. But not everyone agrees with this definition of incest. Biologist William Shields contends that while extreme inbreeding is 'associated with incest', incest is defined only as 'parent-offspring or full sibling

---

[1] Charlotte Smith, *Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1788), I, p. 45. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

[2] Joseph Shepher, *Incest: A Biosocial View* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 98. Shepher uses Pierre L. van den Berghe's *Human Family Systems: An Evolutionary View* (1979) as a basis for his examination of cousins, inbreeding and incest.

[3] Shepher, p. 85; p. 88.

matings.'[4] However, while children generally lose sexual interest in the siblings with whom they are raised, geneticist Patrick Bateson argues that people also tend 'to choose partners who are a bit different, but not too different', making the case that cousins fulfil this urge to mate with the similar.[5] So similar, in fact, that Shepher demonstrates that while paternal uncertainty means that all cousin marriages are not genetically equal, nonetheless, 'to marry your mother's brother's daughter is to marry the closest kin of your generation who is not from your own clan.'[6] First cousins share 12.5% of their genetic material, compared to the 50% shared with full siblings and parents, or the 25% shared with grandparents; one is as genetically similar to one's first cousin as to a great-grandparent, and half as related as to a half sibling.[7]

Genetic and anthropological reasons for and against cousin couplings may seem to be coming from irreconcilably different schools of thought, but they both examine the seemingly contradictory nature of cousin marriage or mating. Genetically, such relationships can either benefit or harm a group depending on the presence of detrimental recessive alleles, making it a gamble, health-wise.[8] In anthropological terms, cousin marriage can result in either endogamy or exogamy, depending on the descent pattern of the social group and the type (cross or parallel) of cousin marriage.[9] While Claude Levi-Strauss's view of cousin marriage is founded on the belief that cross cousin marriage is exogamous and parallel cousin marriage is endogamous, other anthropologists, such as Martin Ottenheimer, challenge this assertion: 'close kin marriage does not necessarily result in social or genetic isolation. Marriages within a group may lessen the number of affinal connections between that group and others, but there are many other ways for

---

[4] William Shields, *Philopatry, Inbreeding and the Evolution of Sex* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 34.

[5] Patrick Bateson and Peter Gluckman. *Plasticity, Robustness, Development and Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 65. A summary of Maurice Greenberg's theories of Genetic Sexual Attraction and Edward Westermarck's hypothesis of reverse sexual imprinting can be found in chapter 2 of this thesis and demonstrates why individuals are attracted to kin with whom they are not raised. Bateson and Gluckman argue that cousin unions of the third or fourth degree provide the 'optimal degree of relatedness' (p. 65).

[6] Shepher, pp. 98-104.

[7] Steven Pinker, 'Strangled by Roots: The Genealogy Craze in America', *New Republic,* 237:3 (2007): 32-35.

[8] Bateson and Gluckman, pp. 66-70.

[9] Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1969), p. 14; pp. 47-48.

alliances between groups to be established: trade, agreements, treaties, adoptions, and the like.'[10] It seems, inevitably, that a consensus on either the genetic or anthropological consequences of cousin marriage is impossible to achieve. What becomes clear is that relationships between cousins are capable of benefitting or harming a family group in terms both physical and social.

The social aspects of cousin marriage that anthropologists have observed are equally scrutinized by historians and scholars who examine family and marriage in eighteenth-century British society. Ruth Perry analyzes the change in kinship structures throughout the eighteenth century as placing higher emphasis on conjugal ties than consanguineal, stating that 'the overdetermined emphasis on conjugality in English culture and the shedding of wider kin ties grew out of another economic imperative related to, but distinct from, issues of lineal inheritance or romantic love.'[11] Perry argues that the need for increased personal wealth in the changing economic structure contributed to making cousin marriage desirable, particularly among the members of the upper classes.[12] Cousin marriage became a viable option to allow the transfer of property from one paternal family to another while at the same time allowing the bulk of an estate or title to remain within the wider family line. In these instances cousin marriage is viewed, not with the horror of incestuous couplings that would destroy a patriarchal structure of exchange, but as a union that ought to be encouraged. Alternatively, it is just as possible for certain cousin marriages to do the opposite: to create an endogamic family that allows for title or wealth to remain in the family but does not allow for wealth or property to increase, or for the cousin to inhabit a position either outside of or socially inferior to the family. In these cases cousin marriage would ultimately damage the patriarchal structure that demands the exchange of women, and would thus require a prohibition.[13] The changing structures that allowed the cousin to, in certain circumstances, become a desirable marriage choice positions this family role as

---

[10] Martin Ottenheimer, *Forbidden Relatives: The American Myth of Cousin Marriage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), p. 145.

[11] Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748 – 1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 222.

[12] Perry, pp. 230-31.

[13] Examples include Emmeline in Charlotte Smith's eponymous novel, Hareton in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and St John in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847).

alternately kin or non-kin, one that is capable of a flexibility that renders it particularly profitable to politically conservative and radical writers of the Gothic.

One of the difficulties faced in attempting to trace representations of cousin incest in Gothic novels is not the lack of representations but the over-abundance of examples. The variety of cousin relationships has led me to include a greater number of texts here than in the previous chapters, in order more fruitfully to tease out the social, legal, and anthropological implications of their representation. The Gothic novels included do not focus solely on first cousin marriage or relationships, but rather on a sampling representative of the range of cousin relationships, including first cousins, half cousins, cousins by marriage, double cousins (the offspring of two sets of siblings) and cousins by adoption. Each of these different relationships are deployed in the novels to which they belong to emphasize a unique concern regarding questions of kinship, and through a detailed analysis of the nature of the relationship, the relevance of the blood tie becomes clear. How cousins are viewed within the novels, as family members or as non-kin, is one of the ways we can understand whether the author is privileging the conjugal or the consanguineal bond. Some of the cousins examined equate their familial bond to that of siblings, placing their love on an even more consanguineal and egalitarian footing with parallels to the positioning of the brother-as-lover, while for others the cousin bond is utterly insignificant to their romantic love.[14] Interestingly, Perry reads the legality of cousin marriage in the eighteenth century as implicit compensation for the loss of brother-sister kinship: to allow cousin marriage 'is to assume that there is no sibling unity that transcends generations and that the sibling tie is dissolved by adulthood and marriage [... .] Marriage between the children of siblings also strengthens consanguineal ties, cementing the connections among members of natal families of origin in the next generation.'[15] Perry's point reinforces the idea that conjugal ties were increasingly more important than consanguineal ties, and establishes the desire to link related families through marriage as based on economic necessity as well as a sense of familial obligation. The characters in the Gothic are driven to participate in cousin marriage from

---

[14] For example, Henry Fortescue in *The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl* (1813) repeatedly refers to his affection for his cousin as akin to that of his affection for his sister, while in *Clermont* (1798) Madeline and de Sevignie never discuss their kinship status.
[15] Perry, p. 121.

a variety of different motivations (duty and honour, threats, romantic love, sexual desire, financial need). Such a range of motivations and responses to cousin marriage establishes the complicated nexus the cousin as kin and/or spouse position inhabits, being at once legal and questionable, pressed for by family members and alternately repulsed by them.

It is essential to keep in mind when analyzing kinship systems and marriage that people readily manipulate their kinship bonds in order to attain the most desirable result.[16] The very history of cousin marriage in England shows this to be the case. King Henry VIII, for example, in order to pursue his own matrimonial desires, instituted legislature that allowed first-cousin marriages when previously such marriages had been illegal.[17] Cousin marriage remained an issue of debate throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in spite of Henry VIII having persuaded the church to accept it. Ellen Pollak points towards Samuel Taylor's *Marriages of Cousin Germans* (1673) and later works such as John Fry's *The Case of Marriages Between Near Kindred* (1756) as evidence of the ongoing controversy.[18] Pollak states, referring to the various changes in statutes following the 1503 papal bull that allowed Henry to marry Catherine: 'Henry's determination to make the rules bend to dynastic and personal interests made them seem arbitrary'.[19] This ongoing confusion over the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of cousin marriage continued for centuries, beyond even Chief Justice Vaughn's 1669 declaration of the legality of cousin marriage, and especially between secular and spiritual courts because the declaration 'challenged canon law'.[20] The challenge, however, did little to jeopardize the ecclesiastical courts' control over marriages between persons within the prohibited degrees for some centuries to come. As Polly Morris observes, 'In eighteenth-

---

[16] Napolean Chagnon, 'Male Yanamamo Manipulation of Kinship Classification of Female Kin for Reproductive Advantage', in *Human Reproductive Behaviour*, eds. Laura Betzig, Monique Borgerhoff Mulder and Paul Turke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 41-44.
[17] Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 18-19.
[18] Ellen Pollak, *Incest and The English Novel, 1684–1814* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 38.
[19] Pollak, p. 30.
[20] Pollak, p. 38.

and nineteenth-century England [...] canon law treated incest as an aspect of the church's regulation of marriage and dealt with it in the ecclesiastical courts.'[21]

The question of whether eighteenth-century literary representations of cousin marriage offer a suggestion of impropriety or immorality is contested by scholars in the field. Perry suggests such unions are presented as culturally accepted, stating that 'eighteenth-century fiction corroborates the cultural standing of these legal regulations. There is not the slightest indication of the least impropriety in first-cousin marriage in eighteenth-century novels.'[22] Pollak, however, argues in regards to Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) character Sir Thomas Bertram that 'his scruples also pertain to the moral character of close kindred marriages. Although its respectability was much debated, cousin marriage in and of itself was not illegal.'[23] Such disagreements speak to the contested nature of the marriages that, while not illegal, occupied an uneasy place between acceptable and unacceptable unions between kin and continue to cause scholarly divide on their deployment in the literature of the time. In citing seventeenth-/early eighteenth-century Bishop Simon Patrick, Pollak underscores the extent to which notions of honour, conscience and honesty as well as inheritance and property laws influenced 'moral determinations concerning the legitimacy of close kindred marriages.'[24] Concerns over conjugal legitimacy may account for the low occurrence of such marriages: 'it was uncommon in practice in aristocratic circles in the eighteenth century, when only one percent of aristocrats married their first cousins.'[25] These moral and legal concerns regarding cousin marriage and incest eventually gave way to questions of a political and philosophical nature.

---

[21] Polly Morris, 'Incest or Survival Strategy? Plebian Marriage Within the Prohibited Degrees in Somerset, 1730-1835', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2:2 (1991): 235.
[22] Perry, p. 122.
[23] Pollak, p. 165.
[24] Pollak, p. 164.
[25] Adam Kuper, *Incest and Influence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 23. Kuper notes that this rate increases sharply over the next century, peaking in the 1870s when nearly 5% of aristocratic marriages were between cousins, before dropping off dramatically in the following years (p. 23). See also Kuper's 'Incest, Cousin Marriage, and the Origin of the Human Sciences in Nineteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 174:1 (2002): 158-83, in which he writes, 'in the nineteenth century, cousin marriage became more acceptable among the gentry and middle classes' (166), citing Nancy Fix Anderson, 'Cousin Marriage in Victorian England', *Journal of Family History*, XI (1986): 291 and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (1987).

Pollak notes this shift, arguing that in regards to the earlier debates on cousin marriages that tended to locate the point of argument in 'the discourse of Reformation anticlericalism and seventeenth-century natural law, eighteenth-century writing about incest eventually reconstitutes its subject as part of a discourse of natural liberty.'[26] Pollak's understanding of this emergent discourse that privileged the nature of the human subject over the institutions of law, exemplifies the philosophical changes leading up to the French Revolution. These eighteenth-century philosophical discussions of natural liberty and rights, such as those of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, used notions of contract theory and obligation to the state to argue that women's duties within the state should be to raise good citizens through their status in the family.[27] This philosophical and political positioning of women as fundamental participants in the formation of good citizens cast their role in the language of both state and familial obligation. Eighteenth-century feminist thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft worried that the notions of contract theory and obligation to the state were manipulated unfairly by men in order to uphold familial models that denied women the right to exist as citizens and the freedom of choice, forcing them instead to exist as dependants within the familial structure.[28] Wollstonecraft intervened in Rousseau's debate, arguing that women must be citizens in order to fulfil this role and asserted the necessity of female citizenship and rights.[29] The social and familial demands on women without benefit of liberty and rights were thus repositioned as an unfair burden: an obligation without the corresponding gift of freedom or choice. Perry picks up on this in her analysis of how in the eighteenth century spouse selection took on a new weight when tied up in these notions of individual rights.[30] Representations of cousin marriage, which so often depict the competing demands of family and individual desire, are thus equally grounded in the discourse of Republicanism, natural rights, and obligation inherent within these debates and become

---

[26] Pollak, p. 44.

[27] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2008), p. 15; p. 77; and *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), pp. 362-77.

[28] Historian Linda Colley notes this in *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), writing that 'stripped by marriage of a separate identity and autonomous property, a woman could not by definition be a citizen and could never look to possess political rights' (p. 243).

[29] Colley, pp. 279-81.

[30] Perry points to the political and economic changes of the day that emphasized individualism and individual rights but that for women 'did not expand the sphere of their social or political power' while often pitting their individual desires against 'the interests of the family' (p. 221).

endowed with political significance in their appearance in the Gothic – a genre
preoccupied with subversion and rebellion. Gothic writers used the genre's convention of
incest and the contemporary discourse of natural liberty to charge representations of
cousin marriage with an endogamous and disruptive potential that questions notions of
female obligation to families (read: states) that would deny them the gift of individual
rights and choice.[31]

Cousin relationships in the Gothic frequently subvert the importance placed on
blood ties and compliance to familial marital demands and negotiate a focus on
individual desires and choice. These themes develop and manifest in the different
varieties of the Gothic I examine: the Radcliffean Gothic, the anti-Gothic, and the
sentimental Gothic. By locating the cousin as either kin, non-kin, or a combination
thereof, in order to trouble contemporary understandings of family and outsider, the
figure of the cousin becomes the most readily manipulated family figure through which
writers could locate anxieties over the changing status of family and marriage. Cousin
marriage is a versatile union in which incest is legal while still capable of being opposed
on moral, familial, financial and emotional grounds. As such, the role of the cousin is of
particular interest to writers of the Gothic who can use it to represent an aristocratic,
patriarchally-sanctioned incest, a threatening familial force, an ideal spouse reflective of
self, or a sibling-like friend incapable of being viewed sexually. Through these different
representations of the cousin as fluctuating between inside and outside the natal family,
Gothic writers reveal their moderate, conservative, or radical views regarding the
struggles between the individual and the family.

Beginning with Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788), which blends the genre of the
sentimental eighteenth-century novel with the Gothic, the cousin is ultimately rejected as
a spousal choice in favour of non-kin. Smith's constant repositioning of Emmeline as kin
and non-kin shows such classifications to be based on economic and social structures
similar to the structure of the patriarchal family and render them irrelevant to the heroine

---

[31] For examinations of the role of gift exchange in eighteenth-century literature see: Cynthia Klekar and
Linda Zionkowski, eds., *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave
Macmillan, 2009); and Jennie Batchelor's excellent synthesis of feminist theories on gift economy and their
application to literary scholarship on eighteenth-century texts in *Women's Work: Labour, Gender,
Authorship, 1750-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 44-58.

who privileges individual choice. It is an important place to start examining the figure of the cousin because it is the novel that most clearly demonstrates the struggle of the individual against a larger and more powerful institution – in this case, the heroine's family – in a radical rejection of kinship ties with parallels to the French Revolution. As such it stands at the beginning, chronologically, thematically, and contextually, of the debates on kinship and conjugality that are played out via the role of the cousin that develop in the subsequent Gothic novels. In *Clermont* (1798) by Regina Maria Roche, the mysterious familial ties surrounding the heroine and her lover (her almost-double cousin) emphasize instant familial attraction and female choice in spousal selection. Roche complicates an endogamic union sought by kin that creates a static family unit by making the marriage a love match based on the heroine's instant attraction to a penniless suitor. The novel is unusual in having the male love interest discovered to be the destitute son of an illegitimate younger brother; he is kin, but is compromised by his father's illegitimacy and his own lack of fortune.

Anna Maria Bennett's *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794) is a sentimental novel with Gothic elements that positions the cousin as sibling-lover and highlights the tensions between economic familial duty and individual choice, establishing the egalitarian consanguinity of the cousin/sibling as synonymous with romantic love. Cousin marriage is represented as a mature and sensible choice in Elizabeth Thomas's 1816 *Purity of Heart; or, The Ancient Costume*, which identifies kin as ultimately safe in comparison to the unknown non-kin.[32] The author makes clear in her preface that the novel is written to ridicule Lady Caroline Lamb's Gothic novel *Glenarvon* (1816). As such, the novel is a sort of anti-Gothic, an interesting piece of the incestuous milieu, literary and public, surrounding the Gothic novel and its writers and readers. *The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl: a Novel; Depicting Recent Scenes in Fashionable Life* (1813) by Selina Davenport, while not strictly a Gothic novel, revolves around a castle, an abandoned abbey, and a family secret. These highly Gothic themes surround the multiple sets of cousins who are married and/or pressured to marry each

---

[32] Interestingly, this depiction of kin as safe (in terms of character) compared to the heroine's first lover (who turns out to be dangerously unstable) foreshadows the theory that people marry cousins because they come from the same safe genetic material.

216

other, and present the role of cousin as one capable of fulfilling a variety of positions (sibling, spouse, protector, friend, beau) at once. The cousin becomes a safe option for the heroine to treat as a suitor without endangering her reputation; with him she can explore emotional and physical desires rendered socially acceptable by their kinship tie. Finally, *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Bronte's Gothic novel, and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), use intriguingly contradictory portrayals of cousin love and hate to disrupt notions of female respectability, familial obligation, individual choice, and social requirements, revealing as erroneous the understanding of the cousin as safe. Jane Eyre's reiteration of the marriage service that describes husband and wife becoming one flesh dismisses the notion that consanguinity creates family as it confirms her husband as her true kin, the final privileging of the conjugal bond. This variety of Gothic and Gothic-themed texts shows how the role of cousin was understood, portrayed, and manipulated in order to privilege either conjugal or consanguineal bonds, emphasizing the contemporary ideological uncertainties of cousin marriage and the cousin as kin. It is as a consequence of uncertain status, as inside or outside of the family, that the cousin becomes the most versatile figure through which Gothic writers of conservative or radical political persuasions can engage with questions of inheritance, family, conjugality, individual choice, sexual desires and duty, often revealing their political orientation in the process.

I.   *Emmeline* and *Clermont*: Familial Obligations and Individual Choice

Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* deploys what will become the Gothic convention of the insatiable desire of a male relative to trouble sentimental notions of the family as a safe haven. The novel negotiates the value of kinship and portrays a shifting definition of family through the depiction of cousin desires that are prohibited by family on the grounds of money and pride. Perry locates in the novel the 'conflict between romantic love and filial obligation [... . M]orally impeccable heroines always cast their lot with the consanguineal rather than the nuptial principle – proving their moral worth by siding with

families against upstart lovers.'[33] Smith's novel initially designates its eponymous heroine as the illegitimate daughter of Mr Mowbray, an elder son who died while Emmeline was in her infancy. Emmeline is raised in the family seat by the indulgence of her uncle, Mr Mowbray's brother, Lord Montreville. His son, Lord Delamere, meets and instantly falls for his indigent cousin, much to Lord Montreville's displeasure. The novel follows Delamere's parentally forbidden pursuit of Emmeline, her continual refusals and eventual acceptance of his proposals when his father reluctantly relents. Emmeline uncovers her birthright and fortune, is freed of her engagement with her cousin and marries the man of her choice, Godolphin. Emmeline's eventual exogamic marriage displaces her uncle's ill-gained fortune forever out of his family and the death of her cousin represents the end of the Mowbray and Montreville family lines. Endogamy is revealed to be a potentially resuscitative force for the family, but Emmeline willfully ignores it, leaving the family to die out instead. Emmeline's conflict, regarded as she is by her uncle and his wife as less than kin, is made easier; she is able to be both the morally impeccable heroine and choose the non-kin lover, in spite of a promise to marry her cousin, because she has been relieved of any real filial obligation. The disruption of Emmeline's sense of familial obligation reveals traditional understandings of family as flawed and calls into question the motivations behind her aunt's and uncle's actions. Smith's deliberate repositioning of Emmeline as kin and non-kin throughout the novel illuminates the changing importance of consanguineal family, only ultimately to place her within a new family, one she has discovered herself and chosen for herself. In this respect, the novel is important to analyze first; not only does its chronology place it ahead of the texts to come, but its treatment of cousin incest as being alternately dangerous and desired, inhabiting a first forbidden and then permissive place, also foregrounds the representations that follow and their attempts to negotiate the demands of kin and non-kin. Emmeline's fluctuating status as kin, mirroring the contemporary view of the cousin, renders the demands of consanguineous relations inferior to individual choice.

Emmeline is kin but her supposed illegitimacy renders her both potentially vulnerable to the sexual designs of her cousin, Frederic Delamere, as she would not be were she legitimate kin, and also makes her a non-viable marriage option. Rehearsing a

---

[33] Perry, p. 234.

conventional sentimental literary trope, Delamere falls for Emmeline instantly: he 'fix[es] his eyes on her face [...] examining the beauties of that lovely and interesting countenance which had so immediately dazzled and surprised him' (1: 42). Although struck by Emmeline's beauty, Delamere has no interest in marrying her; his desire is initially only sexual: 'I like her so well that I think it's a little unlucky I did not come alone. My Welch cousin is the very thing for a tete a tete' (1: 45). Lord Montreville perceives the danger in Emmeline's beauty and determines to stop the situation lest 'his son should form an attachment prejudicial to his ambitious views' (1: 48). This seems a perfect literary example of Adam Kuper's point that 'the formal rules [of cousin marriage] do not determine how the game is played. People act selfishly on the whole, but they can usually find some socially acceptable justification for their actions [...] the genealogies offering different options, kinship terms themselves open to manipulation.'[34] Lord Montreville manipulates Emmeline's kinship status to suit his inclination, claiming her as his niece when demanding her obedience and casting her off as illegitimate when his son expresses an interest in her.

The ambitions that Montreville has for Delamere complicate his more general sense of Mowbray family pride. When the castle steward tells Lord Montreville that he would like to marry Emmeline, 'family pride made a faint struggle in his Lordship's breast on behalf of his deserted ward. He felt some pain in determining, that a creature boasting a portion of the Mowbray blood, should sink into the wife of a man of such inferior birth' (1: 50). But family pride in regards to Emmeline is not enough when pitted against ambitions for his son and so he agrees to the marriage. When Emmeline refuses the proposed union she is sent away and given a small yearly stipend as long as she stays away from her cousin. Montreville makes clears that, 'to Mr. Delamere, my son, the heir to a title and estate which makes him a desirable match for the daughters of the first houses in the kingdom, you can have no pretensions' (1: 61-62). Regardless of their kinship, Emmeline's fortuneless state and questionable birth render her unmarriageable. Perry states that Montreville, 'opposes the marriage between Emmeline and his son, Delamere, not because they are first cousins – which appears to be irrelevant – but

---

[34] Adam Kuper, 'Changing the Subject – about cousin marriage, among other things', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)*, 14 (2008): 727.

because she has no fortune.'[35] Montreville's determination to sacrifice Emmeline, in spite of her 'portion of the Mowbray blood' to the greater ambitions he has for his son show the soluble nature of kinship and the disposability of women. The natal family and legitimate kin are given much higher preference than any lineal kin such as Emmeline. Smith shows definitions of family and blood are fluid, susceptible to change for material benefits. Although Montreville overlooks the blood tie between himself and Emmeline, Delamere uses it as a partial justification for his desires. When Emmeline's friend Mrs Stafford tells Delamere she will not counsel Emmeline to elope with a man whose family would not own her, he replies 'And who, Madam, has said that I dare not own her? Does not the same blood run in our veins?' (1: 126-27). Delamere points to their relationship as cousins as being grounds for their union to be accepted; he sees their kinship as proof she is not beneath him.

These multiple ways of viewing the cousin bond are reiterated when Mrs Stafford says to Montreville (thinking he is foolish for prohibiting the marriage), 'Miss Mowbray will reflect as much credit as she can borrow, on any family to which she may be allied' (1: 153). The irony is apparent: Emmeline is already allied, consanguineously, to Montreville's family, the affinal connection he so strenuously opposes has nothing to do with her character and everything to do with her lack of fortune. Viewing Emmeline as an outsider, as non-kin, is dangerous for her uncle and his wife because they give her no real incentive to deny Delamere's proposals. When Delamere presses his suit for a secret marriage, Emmeline 'feared her resolution would give way [... . S]uch unabated love [...] was seducing; and the advantages of being his wife, instead of continuing in the precarious situation she was now in, would have determined a mind more attentive to pecuniary or selfish motives' (1: 238-39). Emmeline weighs the considerations of her obligations to Montreville and her loyalty and friendship with Augusta (Delamere's sister) over the pecuniary advantages of a secret marriage, but it is her friendship with Augusta and a general disinclination to unite herself to Delamere that make her unwilling to upset her family, not a sense of obligation to her uncle. Emmeline discusses Augusta's family members as if they are exclusive of her own, rather than her kin too. She is further

---

[35] Perry, p. 122.

accused of non-kinship by her aunt, who tells her: 'you would like to hide your own obscurity in the brilliant pedigree of one of the first families in Europe. But know, presumptuous girl, that the whole house shall perish e're it shall thus be contaminated' (2: 37-38). Lady Montreville sees Emmeline as conniving and artful, attempting to trick her way into a 'pedigree' or bloodline that her blood would contaminate. Emmeline is perceived as a dangerous outsider, threatening the ambitions of Delamere's parents for him and the very bloodline of the family.

Although Emmeline has everything to gain from an alliance with Delamere, she is unable to view him as anything other than kin: 'she was not in love; and had rather the friendship of a sister for him than any wish to be his wife' (1: 179). Diane Long Hoeveler writes in regard to Delamere that 'the dominant and threateningly odious suitor has about him an incestuous air of familiarity'.[36] Though hardly odious, Delamere occupies a more incestuous role than cousin. Delamere and Emmeline are put into a sibling context by both her resemblance to his sister: 'there was in figure and voice a very striking similitude between her and Emmeline' (2: 173), and by Emmeline's attachment to him: 'her regard for Delamere [...] was the affection of a sister, somewhat heightened perhaps by his persevering preference of herself' (2: 172). This is similar to the way the cousins in *Mansfield Park* relate to one another for a large part of the novel. In her analysis of Austen's treatment of the cousin union Eileen Cleere writes: '[Fanny's] move from cousin to sister to wife in relation to Edmund has generated a large body of criticism about sibling incest.'[37] But while Fanny loves Edmund as a brother and a lover, Emmeline is unable to make this shift.[38] When Montreville and his wife eventually concede to the marriage, Emmeline's promise to marry Delamere is reluctantly given; she

[36] Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p. 38.
[37] Eileen Cleere, 'Reinvesting Nieces: *Mansfield Park* and the Economics of Endogamy', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 28:2 (1995): 113-30.
[38] Emmeline's love for Delamere is presented by Smith as a sibling-like love, but given Emmeline's upbringing – separate from Delamere – and that he has never behaved as a brother or cousin but only as a suitor, it seems unlikely that Emmeline finds Delamere an unacceptable choice because of the kinship bond, but rather because she simply is not in love with him.

claims she can only love him as a sibling. The affinity of values and social situation that make cousin marriage desirable do not here apply.[39]

Emmeline is released from her reluctantly given promise to marry Delamere and falls in love with Captain William Godolphin. Her origins are proved to be legitimate when she finds her parents' marriage certificate and her father's will, which 'gave Emmeline to her name and fortune' (4: 21), a fortune previously claimed by Montreville. When Delamere proposes again, Emmeline refuses him, but the knowledge of her legitimate birth and claim to Castle Mowbray is now (ironically) an impediment to a union with Godolphin:

> when she reflected on the character of Delamere, and remembered that his father would now claim an authority to control her actions – that one would think himself at liberty to call any man to an account who addressed her, and the other to refuse his consent to any other marriage than that which would now be so advantageous to the family – she saw only inquietude to herself and hazard to the life so dear to her, should she suffer the passion of Godolphin openly to be avowed (4: 152).

The restoration of her name and fortune positions her as legitimate kin with wealth – a highly viable option for Delamere. Emmeline's reflection demonstrates what Hoeveler describes as the 'sense of powerlessness experienced by a woman in the grip of two generations of patriarchal power.'[40] Her uncle will be happy to claim kinship with her now that she has been granted a fortune in order to regain the lost estate and money. The status of niece is paradoxical. As Cleere writes, she is 'simultaneously inside and outside of the family', capable of being exchanged in either direction.[41] Like Fanny in *Mansfield Park*, Emmeline is also 'the compromise between exogamy and incest, the sexual commodity that can be either exchanged outside the family, or "made the most of" within the family.'[42] Smith's and Austen's heroines are family and not quite family, a moveable good through which 'endogamy itself becomes an economic strategy.'[43] Emmeline is aware of this strategy as a motivating force behind her uncle's acquiescence to Delamere's desire to marry her; she says, 'the authority of my uncle [...] 'till I am of age,

[39] Kuper, 'Changing the Subject': 732.
[40] Hoeveler, p. 45.
[41] Cleere: 122.
[42] Cleere: 129.
[43] Cleere: 115.

will probably neither restore my fortune nor consent to my carrying it out of his family'
(4: 175). This recirculation of property and kin within the structure of the family is noted
by A. H. Bittles who argues that it allows 'the maintenance of family structure and
property; and the strengthening of family ties.'[44] Such a strengthening of the familial
structure through cousin marriage would, however, benefit the Montrevilles while placing
Emmeline even more under familial power and she rejects this false authority, resolving
instead to wait out the familial demands.

While Emmeline understands the paternal authority wielded by Montreville and
the obligation he demands of her she rejects the structure of family and endogamous
exchange within it that would forever entrench her within this cycle. Scholars such as
Cynthia Klekar point to Emmeline's awareness of Montreville's generosity, which leaves
her obligated to his paternal authority; Klekar argues that Emmeline is unable to 'escape
the asymmetrical cycle of exchange that subjects her to competing forms of male
control.'[45] Klekar asserts that Emmeline's 'promises to Montreville and Delamere cast
the heroine's reliance on patriarchal authority in the language of the gift and obligation,
depicting these relations as ostensibly based on filial affection.'[46] Emmeline's
acquiescence to Montreville's demands permits Emmeline to fulfil her own wishes – to
refuse Delamere. Emmeline's engagement with the language of paternal obligation
allows her to appear compliant with her uncle's requests; however, her seeming
participation with the patriarchal ideology is grounded not in her sense of filial affection
or obligation but because, for the moment, it corresponds with her desires. Smith reveals
the falsity underlying notions of paternal gifts and corresponding female obligation.
Klekar claims that in Smith's work: 'women can manoeuvre within but never escape
from the sense of obligation to a patriarchal ideology.'[47] However, it is not Emmeline's
sense of obligation that Smith cultivates when she describes Emmeline's 'indebtedness'
to her uncle for 'suffering' her to live in the castle, or her 'sacrifice' in continuing to
refuse Delamere's proposals. Smith ironically points to Montreville's greed and foolish

---

[44] A.H. Bittles, 'A Background Summary of Consanguineous Marriage' (unpublished manuscript, Centre for Human Genetics, Edith Cowan University, Perth, 2001), p. 5.
[45] Cynthia Klekar, 'The Obligations of Form: Social Practice in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline*', *Philological Quarterly*, 86:3 (2007): 271.
[46] Klekar: 269-70.
[47] Klekar: 277.

insensibility to Emmeline's legitimacy and rights to the castle and demonstrates that Emmeline uses her uncle's demands for her obligation to his to will to assert her own.

Klekar's reading of the end of the novel may account for her understanding of Emmeline as lacking both self-assertion and individual rights as she argues that Emmeline is only freed of Delamere when he dies, and that Smith is 'unable to imagine a narrative conclusion in which self-assertion, a claim to individual rights, or reason can release the heroine from her obligations.'[48] But, in fact, Emmeline is freed before Delamere dies in a duel, when Montreville sends back her signed promise to marry his son. Emmeline's refusal to become engaged again to Delamere, in spite of his pleas, those of his sister, and the acquiescence of Montreville, is a strong expression of self-assertion given her fears regarding the power Delamere and Montreville have over her. To deny Emmeline's self-assertion is to diminish her bravery and defiance of her cousin's will and her uncle's desires to see the fortunes united. Emmeline's individual rights are self-asserted and hard won, and to ignore them, and Smith's ironic undermining of the idea of obligation, is to misunderstand Smith's beliefs regarding individual rights.[49] Such a misreading positions Smith's work as conservative rather than as the deliberately radical rejection of notions of female economic value, familial dependence and obligation to kinship bonds that it is. Rather than being obligated to the familial structure, Smith shows Emmeline's roles as cousin and niece as ones that require no sense of obligation because these roles are in constant flux depending on the particular demands and desires of her relatives.[50] Her status as kin is alternately claimed or denied, and this constant repositioning causes notions of kinship obligation to become moot, leaving her free to escape all familial bonds and to marry the non-kin man of her choice.

Roche's *Clermont*, in seeming opposition to *Emmeline*, concludes with a very close kinship marriage highly sought by the cousins' fathers. But the endogamic union

---

[48] Klekar: 285.
[49] Smith's views seem aligned with Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and its rejection of Rousseau's demands for female participation in a state (here: family) that would grant women no rights. Smith, like Wollstonecraft, asserts women must have the same individual rights as men and shows Emmeline reject the structure of family and its concomitant demands for her obligation and denial of her rights.
[50] Hoeveler points to this disruption in familial definitions, arguing that Smith presents the patriarchy as comprised of 'a corrupt aristocracy and the old, kin-based order it implies and second the rising bourgeoisie characterized by its commitment to exogamous marriage' (p. 47).

that seems to privilege consanguineal bonds also exposes what we have seen in the examination of uncles and nieces: the dangers of patrilineal descent systems that bestow so much wealth upon the elder son. The novel follows the heroine, Madeline Clermont, as she uncovers family secrets, falls in love, is abducted, nearly raped and murdered, and is eventually repositioned as a wealthy heiress who marries her (almost double) cousin. Madeline's father, Clermont, is a man without a history, living a simple life below the status to which his educated background would seem to entitle him. The novel is discussed in scholarship almost exclusively in terms of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) list. However, *Clermont* is worthy of much closer analysis as it subverts its location of kin as a family-approved marriage choice.[51] Roche manufactures this subversion by initially depicting the protagonists' mutual desire as an instant attraction that occurs prior to the revelation of kinship and is disapproved of by the heroine's father. Allowing for a close kin marriage that is based on love rather than the blood tie or familial urgings privileges choice while incidentally accommodating the family's wishes. The complex genealogies that are unravelled throughout the novel eventually lead to recognition and familial acceptance for Madeline and her father, and the very complexity of the bonds of kinship makes Roche's work fascinating. Family is represented at once as friend and foe, the seat of companionship and cheerful domesticity and equally capable of inspiring jealousy and murder. Relationships interweave and overlap; sets of siblings marry sets of half-siblings, and legitimacy and inset narratives are interwoven in such layers that it is only through careful analysis that the true bonds of kinship can be understood. Roche's representations of family show individual romantic choice located within the seemingly inescapable consanguineal bonds, allowing self-assertion while exposing the dangers of kinship.

Kuper analyzes the preference of the bourgeoisie for 'marriages within the kinship network' and points to Goethe's characters in *The Man of Fifty* (1829) who are 'cousins [...] expected to marry each other in order to preserve their patrimony.'[52] He argues that sets of elite and upper-class families in both England and America in the

---

[51] Tenille Nowak, 'Regina Maria Roche's "horrid" novel: echoes of *Clermont* in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*', *Persuasions*, 29 (2007): 184-93. Nowak's article offers a point by point comparison with Austen's novel to demonstrate Austen's inversions of Roche's plot and characters.
[52] Kuper, *Incest and Influence*, p. 244.

eighteenth centuries 'coalesced into clans that persisted for several generations' to protect themselves and their fortunes, particularly in volatile times.[53] This seems an appropriate place to start an analysis of Roche's novel in which an upper-class family is presented in light of the marriage choices of its members. We see members marrying outside of their kinship circle with people unapproved of by their families and the disastrous consequences. Roche shows this mistake, made by the older generation, as being righted in the next. But the marriage of Madeline and Henri de Sevignie is not motivated by a desire to appease familial demands, or to correct previous mistakes; rather it represents an individual choice made by both of the cousins before their familial bond is revealed. Their fathers' desire to see them wed in order to protect the patrimony and unite family fortune with family name is a consideration only of the older generation, and not of the children. As such, it shows the older generation as continually misguided in spite of their children's correct ability to assert personal choice that happens to coincide with their family's desires. The cousins' desires are based on mutual attraction and love, and they are shown as willing to risk parental disapproval to be together, before this is rendered unnecessary by the plot revelations. But rather than this being the happy coincidence Perry deems revelations of this sort to be in eighteenth-century novels, it is cast in a darker endogamic light that hints at the danger of such close family ties.[54]

Madeline and de Sevignie share an instant attraction that, in its portrayal as a 'magic spell' that renders Madeline incapable of movement, suggests that she is pulled into a sort of stasis by her cousin and the bonds of kinship he represents. Madeline sees de Sevignie and they instantly fall in love: 'as if riveted to the spot by a magic spell, she stood immoveable' while the stranger 'wildly, yet delightedly, gazed on her.'[55] Although he seems to be a stranger, de Sevignie is accepted into the family fold until Clermont sees his love for Madeline and is concerned by his silence regarding his background. His inability to locate himself with a family and provide a personal history makes Clermont order him to leave them; his lack of history is a threat. But Madeline's other suitor, D'Alembert (her second cousin, Clermont's cousin) has too much history, and is too tied

---

[53] Kuper, *Incest and Influence,* p. 247.
[54] Perry, p. 369.
[55] Regina Maria Roche, *Clermont*, 4 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1798), I, pp. 30-31. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

up with her family's past, making him an even greater danger (he wants to kill his wife to marry Madeline who is, unbeknownst to her, sole heiress to a massive fortune). Eventually we learn that de Sevignie is Madeline's cousin; in fact, they are almost double cousins as his mother and Madeline's mother were sisters, and his father is Clermont's half-brother. De Sevignie is ignorant of this as he was raised in obscurity in an effort to conceal his true origins.

The plot, eventually uncovered via memories and inset stories, requires some summary. Clermont was the son of Count Montmorenci and his first wife. The count, knowing his father would disinherit him if he discovered his marriage to his penniless wife, denies the union. Clermont's mother leaves him to be raised by friends (the De Valdores), eventually dying in a nearby convent. Clermont's father, meanwhile, commits bigamy by marrying a rich heiress with whom he has a son, Philippe – the recognized heir. Clermont discovers his true origins and meets and befriends his younger half-brother, Philippe. The two travel, meeting sisters, and Clermont marries one, Geraldine, not knowing his half-brother has secretly married the other, Eleanora. Philippe and Clermont's uncle by marriage, D'Alembert, is heir to his brother-in-law Montmorenci's estate if Clermont and Philippe are dead or disinherited, and, in a further criss-crossing of familial and affinal ties, is father-in-law to Viola De Valdore – the daughter of Clermont's adoptive sister. Due to D'Alembert's conspiring, Clermont wrongly believes Philippe guilty of an affair with Geraldine and stabs his half-brother. Clermont has since lived in obscurity, believing his brother dead, but after Madeline meets her grandfather, Montmorenci, as she flees from young D'Alembert (Clermont's cousin/Viola De Valdore's husband), Clermont is reestablished as his father's heir. The senior D'Alembert threatens to reveal Clermont's crime and forces Madeline to promise she will marry his son in exchange for his silence (Viola, reported dead, is in fact imprisoned so the young D'Alembert can marry Madeline). Eventually the truth is revealed: Philippe survived the wound and was kept imprisoned by D'Alembert. De Sevignie (who is nearly identical to his father, Philippe) was raised by D'Alembert's colluding servants.[56] After learning this,

---

[56] A further cousin marriage is anticipated in a proposed union between de Sevignie and D'Alembert's daughter as part of an ongoing bribe to assure the silence of the servants who raised de Sevignie as a

de Sevignie rescues Madeline and Clermont from their imprisonment by the D'Alemberts. Clermont is restored as the heir of the Montmorenci estates, Philippe forgives him and Madeline and de Sevignie marry.

These relationships are excessively incestuous even for the family-centred plots of most Gothic novels, and Roche's use of them creates a series of affinal and consanguineal ties that repeatedly cross. Marriages unite families – the De Valdores and the D'Alemberts, the Montmorenci half-brothers with the sisters Geraldine and Eleanora, and proposed marriages would unite Madeline with the D'Alemberts and de Sevignie with the D'Alemberts – though both Madeline and de Seviginie are, in the end, shown to be Montmorencis. In fact, throughout the novel, the number of people originally thought to be unrelated diminishes until virtually all the characters are proved to be related to one another through blood or marriage. In this way, Roche effectively dissolves differences between affinal and consanguineal kin. When D'Alembert proposes to Clermont that his son and Madeline should marry she refuses. Clermont says her grandfather is in favour of the union because 'he highly approved of the projected alliance: he wishes to have the fortunes of the family united' (4: 41). Clermont's father desires the union between his granddaughter and nephew that would unite the family fortunes through an affinal connection to a blood connection, reinforcing the kinship tie with a legal one. But Madeline replies: 'The fortunes of the family! [...] and are such the considerations that sway the great world? Ah! no wonder, if the union of fortunes, not of hearts, is alone considered, that misery, vice, and dissipations from such connections should ensue' (4: 41-42). Her position is clear: to marry in order to unite family fortunes is essentially sinful; it is the heart that should be consulted. Madeline asserts her right to individual choice (similarly to Emmeline), but, ironically (and unlike Smith's heroine), she unknowingly selects her closest living kin, other than her father, with whom to fall in love. As we have seen, scholars are divided on the cultural and legal implications of first-cousin unions. Pollak's examination of the influence of property and inheritance laws on the status of cousin marriage demonstrates the desirability of these unions, just as Cleere points out their economically frugal nature. Madeline faces familial pressure to marry

---

marriage between their foster son and a member of the aristocracy would enrich and ennoble them. D'Alembert's daughter is actually de Sevignie's second cousin and is his father's first cousin.

D'Alembert because of her grandfather's desire to keep family wealth consolidated in the family, a desire exacerbated by the lack of a direct male heir.

Madeline's uncle, Philippe, views her as a potential gift to his son via marriage that would reimburse him for his suffering.[57] Philippe tells Clermont, 'by giving your daughter to my son, you can make me amends for all my sorrows' (4: 322). Clermont readily consents:

> in seeing the precious offspring of Elenora and Geraldine united, the most ardent wishes of my heart will be accomplished: in giving her to de Sevignie, I give her to a man, in whose favour I felt a predilection from the first moment I beheld him – a predilection, excited not only by his manner, but his strong resemblance to you. Take her (he continued, presenting her hand to de Sevignie), take her with the fond blessing of her father (4: 322-23).

Clermont's words are powerfully loaded with the language of exchange and ownership coupled with that of kinship recognition. If ever there were an eighteenth-century case of genetic attraction, it is clearly articulated here.[58] Both Clermont and his brother see Madeline as a peace offering, a gift that Clermont can give to Philippe's son that will compensate Philippe for years of misery. In an exchange reminiscent of the incestuous uncles examined earlier, the younger brother demands the daughter of the elder.[59] The overlapping familial bonds cast Madeline and de Sevignie's proposed marriage as incestuous; as one-and-a-half first cousins, they share three out of four grandparents – all but their paternal grandmother. Even half-siblings only share two out of four grandparents. Their bond, more closely allied than that of first cousins, does not give Clermont or Philippe the slightest pause; indeed, it only strengthens their desire for the

---

[57] Philippe, similar to Weimar in Eliza Parsons' *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), sees his niece's marriage as a method of repayment. Although Philippe envisions Madeline's union to his son as reimbursement for a debt of sorrow, while Weimar desires his niece marry him as a repayment for the money he spent raising her, both see the exchanges of their nieces' bodies through marriage as transactions that will settle debts. See chapter 3 of this thesis for a further analysis of obligation, debt and exchange in uncle-niece relationships.

[58] See Tamaz Bereczkei, Petra Gyuris, and Glenn E Weisfeld, 'Sexual Imprinting in Human Mate Choice', *Proceedings of The Royal Society B: Biological Sciences,* 271 (2004): 1129-34 for an account of human recognition of 'gene-related "strangers"' (1129).

[59] That Madeline is intended as a gift for Philippe's son and not for Philippe (particularly given his status as her uncle – almost always a role fraught with incestuous desires for the niece) is in a sense an inversion of what Anne K. Mellor describes as 'the perverse desire of the older generation to usurp the sexual rights of the younger generation' underlying the Male Gothic's deployment of father-daughter rape in her work; *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 197.

union. Perry's belief that 'marriage in some sense neutralizes siblinghood so that sibling incest taboos are not transmitted to the next generation'[60] underscores the extent to which Clermont and his brother's siblinghood and that of their sibling wives must be neutralized in order to promote the union between their children. However, far from offsetting the tie of siblinghood, Clermont and Philippe reconfirm it.[61] Clermont points to the bond of sisterhood between Geraldine and Eleanora as the reason he wants their children united and declares de Sevignie's resemblance to his brother caused an instant predilection for his nephew.[62] Endogamy is achieved through the union of Madeline and de Sevignie and the family has closed itself off from the existence of any outsiders, inhabiting a closed circuit environment.

In spite of this endogamic ending, Roche manages to achieve a curious balance between conjugal and consanguineal ties, privileging choice but allowing it to exist within the blood tie. For whenever it seems as though she is granting blood ties primacy we are quickly reminded that the most egregious crimes of the novel (murder, attempted murder, attempted rape, kidnapping, imprisonment) are perpetrated by family against family. In allowing Clermont to 'give' Madeline to her cousin – who is as related to her as a half-sibling, or, as closely related as Clermont is to Philippe – Roche allows her heiress heroine to marry the penniless son of the illegitimate Philippe. (Montmorenci's bigamous second marriage renders Philippe illegitimate, although this plot consequence is never mentioned.) This overlooked consequence of Montmorenci's bigamous marriage is that the lover is both kin and an outsider, like Emmeline's status before she discovers her legitimacy, except that for de Sevignie's father there is no legitimacy to find.

---

[60] Perry, p. 121.

[61] This type of cousin marriage – parallel cousins – is slightly less common than cross-cousin marriages. John Maynard Smith points to the more common prohibition of parallel cousin unions as a leftover from primitive societies in *The Evolution of Sex* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 144. Levi-Strauss describes women as being received (as wife) or given (as sister or daughter), arguing that parallel cousin marriages are less common as 'parallel cousins come from families in the same formal position, which is a position of static equilibrium' (Levis-Strauss, p. 138).

[62] As Philippe and Clermont are half-siblings who married full siblings, the parallel cousin bond is doubled, and with it, the risk of two brothers sharing one sister that Richard D. Alexander points to as a paternal uncertainty factor that renders parallel cousin marriage less than desirable in certain societies such as polygynous ones, where parallel cousins may also half-siblings. See Alexander, *Darwinism and Human Affairs* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), pp. 177-88. The potential then, is for Madeline and de Sevignie to be more than half, though less than full, siblings, a potential compounded by the charge of adultery levelled against Philippe.

Madeline's choice is de Sevignie before she knows he is kin, before their union is sought by their parents; Roche allows individual liberty but then undercuts it by showing that Madeline has chosen a very close relation, making kinship selection seem inevitable. In so doing, Roche points towards both the dangers implicit in the exogamic exchange of women so necessary to patriarchy (there are virtually no examples of happy marriages in the novel) and the equal danger of being pressured into a kinship marriage in order to maintain family fortunes. Roche hints that only marriage to kin for love can manage to escape either of these traps of women as exchange, but the language of Clermont that offers Madeline as a gift renders this option a highly uneasy compromise.[63] Madeline's choice of de Sevignie before his identity is revealed saves her from becoming an object moved between men and rewards individual choice while hinting the choice of kin is inevitable. Such an ending, subversive in its exposure of dangerous consanguineal demands, threatens to undercut its own radicalism in its endogamy but for the privileging of Madeline's desire for her cousin.

II.   Instruction or Destruction: The Dangers of Non-Kin Unions

In *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* Bennett couples the sentimental and the Gothic in a plotline that focuses on Ellen Meredith, her husband – who also serves as a father figure – and her cousin by adoption and second husband, Percival Evelyn. The incestuous implications of Ellen's marriage to her first husband, Lord Howel, are explicit: he sees her as an engaging child he wishes to educate and help raise properly, but also loves and marries her. Ellen, however much she grows to love her much older husband, is always in

---

[63] Marcel Mauss in *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990) examines the contractual nature of gift exchange (p. 4), while Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) describes how our social structure makes women "'products' used and exchanged by men. Their status is that of merchandise, "commodities."' (p. 84). Madeline is positioned by her uncle and father as a commodity Clermont is obliged to offer his nephew while she subverts this through her initiative as the pursuer in her interactions with de Sevignie.

love with her cousin by adoption who becomes her second husband. In an interesting twist on Gothic conventions, it is Percival who is forced to find his true name and genealogy before marrying his beautiful and wealthy cousin. Bennett's novel is also distinctive in its handling of the reformation of its chief villain, Lord Claverton, who turns out to be Percival's father. The incestuous bond between Percival and Ellen, unsubstantiated by blood, is nonetheless depicted as a relationship between kin because of their sibling-like bond formed in early childhood.[64] Their constant attachment to one another and their eventual union demonstrate the ease with which non-kin becomes kin through a shared childhood, the interchangeability of familial and sexual emotions and the need to balance individual liberty with familial duty.[65] Bennett portrays desires and romantic relationships as inherently incestuous but reveals the egalitarian cousin-sibling incestuous bond as most closely aligned with the brother-as-lover.

Bennett distinguishes Percival as Ellen's true choice by positioning them as equals. In a socially accepted model of the sibling-lover relationships analyzed previously, the cousin can fulfil the role of the sibling in a legal marriage, being an equal other half and viable marriage option. In opposition to the sibling-like bond she shares with Percival, Ellen is viewed as a child by the other men cast in the role of lover (and lover-villain), a beautiful girl whose innocence and unformed mind is part of her appeal. Lord Howel, 'undertook himself to begin the formation of a mind so open and naturally ductile'[66] before 'his heart claimed a different interest in' the 'beautiful and amiable child' (1: 176). Lord Howel's love for Ellen is, like Ellen's love for Percival, an example of familial or near-familial love evolving into or existing alongside romantic love, though it positions him as the father/instructor. Lord Claverton, a friend of Ellen's uncle, also

---

[64] See David Livingstone Smith, 'Beyond Westermarck: Can Shared Mothering or Maternal Phenotype Matching Account for Incest Avoidance?', *Evolutionary Psychology*, 5:1 (2007) for an analysis of childhood co-rearing causing sibling-like bonds between non-kin (203). See also chapter 2 of this thesis for a detailed exploration of sibling incest, particularly in Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798), in which the sibling bond and mutual love between the non-related Enrico and Laurette bears a marked resemblance to that of Percival and Ellen.

[65] Perry's exploration of the demands of family obligation and individual desires as increasingly difficult to negotiate in eighteenth-century literature (p. 221) is relevant here, although Ellen's subsumption of her desires in fulfilment of family duty reveals, not what Perry identifies as a nostalgia for stronger consanguineal bonds (p. 373), but a claustrophobic depiction of their unreasonable demands.

[66] Anna Maria Bennett, *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel*, 4 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1794), I, p. 122. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

views her as a child and his sexual desires are focused on this quality, explicitly centred on the entrapment and ruination of Ellen: 'tis true, beautiful as Ellen was, it was the beauty of a tall child; but neither did *that matter*, it was a fault every day would mend' (1: 34). He reflects upon seeing her: 'Heavens! What an object for attention – for admiration – for ruin!' (1: 42). These characters, very different types of men (Lord Howel is kind, intelligent and generous while Lord Claverton is dissipated and calculating, focused solely on his own desires) expose the pervasiveness of masculine desires centring on a younger, child-like girl they can either educate or ruin. Male passions are revealed as incestuous when shown to focus on the malleable, childish and immature qualities of their objects of desire. Percival, however, situated as both kin and contemporary, sees Ellen as an equal and companion instead of an object for instruction or destruction, and as such, proves himself her true partner. By creating this companion, sibling-like bond with the adopted cousin, Bennett has her heroine marry the forbidden brother without having completely to deconstruct the family structure to allow it, as Bronte does in *Wuthering Heights* or Eleanor Sleath does in *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798). The cousin is here presented as a viable alternative to the brother-as-lover and brother-as-self so often presented, as we have seen in chapter 2, as the ideal relationship in the Gothic.

Ellen's uncle Edmund Meredith is so attentive to his ward, Percival, that many believe Percival is Edmund's illegitimate child: 'Mr. Meredith's attention to his morals and learning was incessant, and as he grew up the affection of a father, was blended with the instruction of a tutor, in so much that many people gave him the credit of being one' (3: 70-71). Percival views Edmund as his adopted father and he is treated as kin by the Meredith family. Before the truth of Percival's birth is revealed (he is the legitimate son of Lord Claverton and his deceased wife, daughter of the conniving neighbor who nearly cheats the Merediths out of their family seat, Code Gwyn) Ellen believes Percival is not only her adopted cousin, but also her cousin by blood:

> Ellen's infant years had passed in the exchange of kindnesses with Evelyn, without thinking of enquiring about his parents; as love began to usurp his sway in her young heart, Evelyn's *self* still more engrossed her, but [...] since she had by accident heard the report of the country, her own observation on her uncle's extreme fondness, and Evelyn's implicit duty, had partially confirmed these reports (4: 190).

Part of what has caused Ellen to believe that Percival is her blood cousin instead of her adopted cousin is the 'implicit duty' Percival shows her uncle. Similar to Smith's use of irony to undermine notions of family duty and obligation, Ellen's equation of duty with kinship underscores Bennett's unification of family ties with notions of duty and obligation, an association that renders family burdensome.[67] The passage presents the infant years the two spent together as the cause of their mutual love. Kuper describes the casual intimacy of cousin relationships as partially responsible for the ease with which cousins could fall in love; 'cousins grew up in friendly intimacy [...] free to mix unchaperoned, cousins readily fell in love.'[68]

Percival and Ellen's shared childhood and mutual love corroborates Kuper's findings, rather than those of statistical geneticist Steven Buyske and anthropologist Alex Walter. Buyske and Walter argue that 'early childhood cosocialization makes a male over 3000 times more likely to be rejected as a marriage partner later in life [...] daily social contact in the first seven years ubiquitously disqualifies individuals as marriage candidates for female participants.'[69] Ellen and Percival's mutual childhood causes no disqualification of Percival as a marriage candidate; rather, it cements his place in Ellen's heart. Their relationship develops very similarly to the sibling bond Enrico and Laurette share in Sleath's novel, which grows into romantic love once the foster siblings have passed puberty, and similarly contradicts the idea that early childhood imprinting renders those raised in proximity sexually undesirable. Percival and Ellen's unchaperoned childhood allows for the strong development of emotional attachment that moves seamlessly into romantic love. The attachment is a familial tie supplemented with passion; 'a stronger attachment than that which grew up between Evelyn and our heroine,

---

[67] This sense of the familial burden is supported by Ellen's marriage to Lord Castle Howel to preserve her family's home after family pressure to do so, the representations of the many Meredith children living at Code Gwyn who contribute little or nothing to its maintenance, and Lord Howel's burdensome sister and aunts who demand both his financial support and a sense of familial duty.

[68] Kuper, *Incest and Influence*, p. 17. Kuper focuses particularly on upper-middle-class families in nineteenth-century England to argue that the casual and unchaperoned environments in which cousins associated facilitated the development of romantic attachments, but his point applies equally to the environment in which Ellen and Percival are raised.

[69] Steven Buyske and Alex Walter, 'The Westermarck Effect and early childhood co-socialization: Sex differences in inbreeding-avoidance', *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 21 (2003): 362-63.

could not perhaps be' (3: 169),[70] and 'as Percival was three years older than Ellen, he led in all their infant sports, and became her habitual protector' (3: 72). Their childhood bond develops into love over time until: 'the companion, who from his infant state, became a part of his vital existence' (3: 74). While initially positioned as a chivalrous, even paternal, figure offering protection and guidance, Percival's location as leader is destabilized through Ellen's maturation. Ellen becomes integral to Percival's existence, vital to his survival, because of how they are raised together; this is intriguing because it seems to repudiate traditional anthropological views on how kin is rendered unattractive.[71]

Bennett shows the cyclical and confining nature of kinship obligations through Ellen's first marriage. Code Gwyn, the family seat where Ellen was raised by her grandparents and with several aunts and uncles, is under threat by a cunning neighbour who has managed to put the Meredith family deeply into his debt, in large part because they are generous landowners.[72] In order to keep the home Ellen is obliged to marry Lord Castle Howel, the paternal figure who undertook her education.[73] Ellen allows the consanguineal ties of her family to persuade her into the marriage so that the ancient castle will remain in the Meredith family. The marriage required by the bonds of familial

---

[70] The representation of the mutual and natural development of Ellen and Percival's love echoes Alethea Brereton Lewis's *The Nuns of the Desert: or, The Woodland Witches*, 2 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1805), which describes the love between two sets of half-cousins as follows: 'Formed by Nature to constitute each other's felicity [... .] By pursuing their own wishes, each party gratified those of the other; so exactly consonant were their principles, their sentiments, and their dispositions. Nor was the union between Sophia Selwyn and Ferdinand less perfect' (2: 122).

[71] The Westermarck Effect that posits children raised together (whether blood kin or not) tend to become non-viable mates as they view each other as kin, typically when they share parental figures and are brought up in the same household, is bypassed here, and often is with cousins, as they typically do not share parental figures and/or households. See Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1903), pp. 320-30.

[72] In fact, the Merediths' carelessness in undercharging their tenants and being very generous to them, as well as Lord Howel's inattention regarding the money he gives his sister, are represented as acts of dangerous generosity. Inverting the typical Gothic trope of generosity being indicative of a highly moral and responsible character, in Bennett's novel it causes potentially devastating consequences.

[73] Ellen is coerced into being a gift for Lord Howel; her liberty of individual choice is denied in favour of fulfilling obligation to the family. That she is forced into this position due, in large part, to her family's own overinflated sense of obligation to their tenants, reinforces the sense that traditional economies of gifts, exchanges, obligation, and ownership have become onerous and incapable of proper management.

duty preserves the Gothic relic that represents 'imperfect laws'.[74] After Ellen's marriage to Lord Howel and the birth of their child, she still harbours romantic feelings for Percival: 'Ellen could not help remembering, the companion of her youth; she could not help feeling how superior he tower'd, both in person and understanding, above any young man she knew; but he was not her husband, the tender kind husband' (3: 170). She is torn between her conjugal tie to Lord Howel and the sexually attractive Percival. Klekar's analysis of obligation to family is relevant here; Ellen is obligated to her family because they raised her after she was orphaned, and she feels strong obligation to her husband because his wealth has saved her family home. After Lord Howel's death and the restoration of Percival's birthright any barrier to a union with his cousin is removed. As Smith's Emmeline disrupts the tradition of familial duty and obligation that plagued female marital choices by casting off family, Ellen also avoids the snare of consanguineal pressures in her second marriage choice by marrying her childhood love.

Bennett strikes a complicated balance between the demands of consanguineal, conjugal and affinal ties and personal desires, showing her heroine to be burdened with familial obligations that negate her ability to assert individual choice, but ultimately successful in fulfilling her obligations before selecting a spouse of her choosing. By making this spouse Percival Evelyn, Bennett creates an alliance that manages to escape the exchange of women (in this marriage, no one but Ellen and Percival benefit) and eludes the common reason society allowed cousin marriage: to preserve a familial estate or fortune. Percival's role as adopted cousin allows for a shared childhood bond equated with kinship but lacks the sense of implicit duty that is associated with other familial relationships. Comparable in its representation to that between Roche's Madeline and de Sevignie, Ellen and Percival's relationship lacks the closeness of the blood tie between those cousins while also breaking away from the pressures of consanguineal obligation and duty. Raised as kin, the cousins become an integral part of each other's beings and grow together as companions and friends, a basis of equality not present in the relationships Ellen has with Lord Howel or Lord Claverton, and that is more closely

---

[74] Code Gwyn is described as 'a large gothic mansion, built at a time, when imperfect laws and civil discord obliged the chiefs of the country to consult safety, more than pleasure and convenience, in the construction and situation of their houses' (1: 2).

allied with the egalitarian bond shared between siblings. As non-kin, Percival is excluded from the patriarchal reason for permitting cousin marriage and their union falls outside the traditionally proscribed option of either exogamous or endogamous and fulfils both positions. As such, this marriage between cousins/non-cousins represents a negotiation between familial duties and individual choice that concludes with privileging the ties of romantic love grounded in equality and individual choice and the security of near-family.

Cousin marriage desired by the family is depicted as a consanguineal obligation that, once fulfilled, brings true happiness to the heroine in Thomas's *Purity of Heart, or The Ancient Costume*. The novel is written in an anti-Gothic style that shows duty rather than individual desires or choices to be essential to happiness. The heroine, Camilla, avoids making her own spousal selection when she marries her parentally endorsed cousin in a relationship close to Bennett's depiction of Ellen's dutiful marriage to the older and wealthy Lord Howel. Camilla's marriage, based on filial duty, proves her to be the 'morally impeccable heroine' Perry describes by siding with the 'consanguineal rather than the nuptial principle'.[75] An attack on Lamb's *Glenarvon*, *Purity of Heart* describes in its preface Thomas's motivations for writing the novel as stemming from the dangerous and profane impressions left on her by Lamb's novel which caused her to need to respond to the work and the depravity of its authoress:

> The novel of Glenarvon [...] and its horrible tendency, its dangerous and perverting sophistry; its abominable indecency and profaneness, struck her with such force, that she could not resist the wish which started into her mind, of ridiculing it. The speeches of Lady Calantha Limb, are many of them copied from Glenarvon; and the greater part of them may be fairly inferred from the incidents and conduct of the Hero, and the Heroine of that work [...] if the world has indeed saddled the production of Glenarvon on the right owner, she hopes and believes it is one solitary incident of depravity which cannot be paralleled.[76]

I include much of Thomas's preface because the language used to describe Lamb's novel is important in establishing the milieu surrounding not only Thomas's own work, but that of *Glenarvon* itself and the incestuous Byron-Lamb-Leigh scandal, which is itself

[75] Perry, p. 234.
[76] Elizabeth Thomas, *Purity of Heart, or the Ancient Costume, A Tale, In One Volume, Addressed to the Author of Glenarvon* (London: W. Simplin and R. Marshall, 1816), pp. v-ii. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

reminiscent of a Gothic text. In attempting to ridicule the excesses of the Gothic, Thomas reveals her understanding of the form to be one that grants individual choice and desires precedence over the demands of family and duty. Thomas's text and commentary are highly illuminating in their positioning as a literary antidote to the subversive radicalism of Gothic sentiments. The novel, in its declared intention of ridiculing Lamb's work for its profaneness and depravity, offers the antithesis of Lamb's Lady Calantha in the heroine, Camilla.

In *Glenarvon* Lady Calantha (meant to represent Lady Caroline) is intended to marry her cousin William so he can keep the family estate and title – the marriage does not take place and is rendered undesirable by the economic motivation behind it and the murderous machinations of William's mother, Calantha's aunt. Lamb presents cousin marriage as a heartless contract entered into under familial pressures and doomed to failure, and presents an equally gloomy portrait of the relationship between Calantha and Glenarvon (the fictional character representing Lord Byron), based on sexual desire and irresistible powers of attraction. Thomas's novel replaces the heroine with Lady Camilla, but keeps Lady Calantha as her antithesis. The portrayal of cousin marriage, so divorced from affection and love in Lamb's novel, becomes the type of marriage that Camilla chooses and fights to preserve. Disappointed in love with her first fiancé, Camilla obeys her parents' advice to marry and selects a cousin of whom her mother approves. Camilla's cousin/husband grows inattentive and unfaithful and after Camilla's first lover returns to England she fights rumours, accusations and the threat of divorce to win back her husband's gratitude and love. Thomas's novel and her declared intention in writing it place consanguineal and conjugal duties as compatible in moral characters and expose their conflict with dangerous individual desires. Incest is shown as a horrifying taboo via Calantha's characterization, while cousin marriage is portrayed as a responsible choice for virtuous women. The implications of the representations of the two women are that sexual desire is incompatible with virtue in women, and that such rampant desires will inevitably lead to horrific incestuous couplings and unstable, unfeminine behaviour. But if Thomas's intention is to condemn female sexual desire by uniting it with the incestuous and the unfeminine and to sanctify female obligation and duty to family and husband, she does so in a lacklustre way that compromises her intention.

The marriage of Camilla and Sir Lusignan is described in loveless terms: 'Camilla had […] in compliance with the wishes of her parents, selected […] her present husband; who was the only surviving son of the elder brother of her mother; and who was in the possession of a very large fortune […] together with a baronetcy, which gave him the title of Sir Lusignan Dellbury' (33-34). Thomas makes sure to establish Sir Lusignan's pedigree, casting him as kin, wealthy, titled, and one of many candidates for Camilla. Camilla seems to feel no personal preference for him but accepts him in order to comply with her parents, and because his character and military achievements have fixed his position in the public world:[77]

> The many amiable qualities of Sir Lusignan, the pleasure which her mother seemed to take in his society, the high character he bore in the world, and the splendour which military achievements had thrown around him, all contributed to fix the choice of our heroine; and her parents in giving her to their nephew, felt certain that they had secured her happiness (34).

Sir Lusignan, already a member of her family, is unlikely to cause any disruptions as Camilla's first lover, the erratic Lord Ellesmere, did. Ellesmere, non-kin, is dangerously emotional, violent in his passions and temper, and jeopardizes Camilla's position in society before she breaks their engagement due to his demanding nature.[78] Camilla's cousin is far from demanding. At first he plays the doting lover; once they are married, Sir Lusignan 'slighted and forsook her' (35) in favour of other women. His inattention is a complete contrast to the obsessive love Ellesmere displays for her, and, intriguingly, Thomas seems to show this inattention as preferable. To prefer the obsessive love of Ellesmere, it seems to imply, would be to prefer being an object of sexual desire; much better to be forsaken for mistresses than be treated as one.[79]

---

[77] Thomas here creates Sir Lusignan in a model recognizable as Rousseau's male citizen, whose role in the public world is contrasted to that of women in the private sphere. Sir Lusignan's public life is appropriately grounded in patriotic military achievements. See Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, pp. 36-39.

[78] Ellesmere shares many qualities with *Emmeline*'s Delamere in this regard.

[79] Perry argues that the kinship changes throughout the long eighteenth century positioned women 'as the sexual property of their husbands rather than as partners and co-owners of the marital household' as part of their increasing commodification (p. 251) and that 'if women were to stay put as the sexual property of one man and one man only, they had to be trained to feel repugnance for physical relations with anyone else. The emphasis of woman's sexual allegiance to a mate, rather than her obedience to a father, also signaled the realignment of kinship along a conjugal rather than consanguineal axis' (p. 254). Camilla's representation negotiates sexual repugnance towards Ellesmere with sexual fidelity to her cousin/husband, blending fidelity and duty to both models of sexual allegiance and repugnance, and obedience to family.

Camilla's overinflated sense of familial duty and wifely obligation engender a child-like dependency on her husband that robs her of real power, which would typically be the advantage of consanguineal ties to her husband.[80] After Camilla and Sir Lusignan marry, though Sir Lusignan is 'always attentive to her wishes, when chance or circumstance brought them together; [...] he rarely sought her society' (40). Camilla copes with this treatment by ignoring his affairs and being faithful until he leaves her for his current lover, after which she tracks him to the continent and takes a residence near him. Presented throughout as almost saintly in her behaviour, Camilla is in fact more the angel of the house of Victorian fiction than a Gothic heroine. She even says to her cousin/husband, 'in my dependence upon you, Dellbury, I wish always to be a child' (37), firmly putting herself into the parent and child binary from which Ellen must escape in order to find happiness in Bennett's novel. The role of the wife is made equivalent to the role of the child by virtue of its dependency. Perry's point about the more radical implications of a consanguineal relationship – that 'advantages women with respect to gender politics and sexual power'[81] – is missing in the representation of Camilla. Her obedience to her husband is reiterated later when her father tries to persuade her to divorce her husband; while she pleads the conjugal tie over the consanguineal, she remains dutiful to family as her conjugal bond is also a blood one. The only time Camilla resists parental persuasion is in this instance; she defies parental authority only to abide by the higher authority of her cousin/husband. Camilla states 'from the moment I gave myself to Sir Lusignan, I lost my individuality [... .] I can think only as the wife of Sir Lusignan; to make him happy, to dwell in his house, to nourish his children, to pray for his reformation, and to wait [...] for his return; this, this is my duty' (140-41). Thomas demonstrates that Camilla sees herself, her possessions, and her children as the property of Sir Lusignan.[82] Camilla's complicity in the patriarchy's placement of children and possessions under the husband's domain and adherence to conjugal and consanguineal

---

[80] Camilla's role within Sir Lusignan's house is akin to that advocated for wives by Rousseau in *Emile*: 'the obedience and the fidelity she owes to her husband and the tenderness and the care she owes to her children are consequences of her position so natural and easily sensed that she cannot without bad faith refuse her consent to the inner sentiment that guides her, nor fail to recognize her duty if her inclinations are still uncorrupted' (p. 382).

[81] Perry, p. 124.

[82] This is quite different from Linton's speech over Cathy's possessions in *Wuthering Heights* where the husband's ownership of wifely possessions is shown to be a cruel tyranny.

ties is shown as her duty as a virtuous woman, regardless of how it renders her powerless and inactive.[83] Camilla's refusal to divorce Sir Lusignan fulfils her duty to him as both husband and family, privileging the marriage bond that is also a blood one in what amounts to a subordination of her individual rights and liberties to consanguineal and conjugal duties.[84]

Part of what distinguishes *Purity of Heart* as a conservative text is the way it sets itself up as a foil to Lamb's novel; designed to react against a radical Gothic work it becomes anti-Gothic. In spite of Thomas stating that *Glenarvon* is a work of dangerous depravity, her representation of Calantha, in places, seems to glamorize her. Calantha is so unfettered by social restrictions that this portrayal comes across as less a condemnatory one than a comparison between the two women that exposes them as both fighting to save their relationships. That Calantha does so through an act of trasvestitism troubles Camilla as it empowers Calantha. While Camilla waits to hear from her husband, Calantha joins a Prussian corps and dresses as an officer in order to fight in the Algerines: 'De Lyra […] was taken prisoner by the barbarians, and I am going […] to save my love. O how exquisite will be my delight in fighting against these renegades, in rescuing him' (191). Calantha explains if the fight fails, she will take off the uniform, charm the enemy captain and then stab him. Camilla's response, 'you are beyond nature horrible' (193) demonstrates the unnatural way she sees Calantha. It is unnatural for women to act, to fight, to prefer their lover to their husbands and to declare it to the world: it is unnatural for a woman to speak of 'stabbing' a man when the Gothic tradition specifies that act as the special prerogative of men.[85] Calantha bends gender ideologies in, not only her

[83] The negotiation between parental authority and individual choice or affinal ties is a common one in the eighteenth-century novel, particularly the Gothic. In Lewis's *Nuns of the Desert* the villain, Mr Selwyn, says to his daughters: 'you are already acquainted with your lot in future life; it being the result of both the wisdom and affection of those who have, as they ought to have, unlimited power over your destiny' (1: 120). The girls defy their father's desire to become nuns, fleeing from the convent and renouncing his authority in favour of their own destinies (one sister marries her half-cousin, the other announces she will live a cheerful single life), and the rebellion ends with both sisters happy.
[84] Camilla exemplifies Rousseau's understanding of the ideal wife: she remains entrenched in the private sphere and in marrying her cousin she submits to both conjugal and familial obligations. Rousseau asserts that 'to please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet – these are the duties of women at all times' (*Emile*, p. 365).
[85] See chapter 3 of this thesis for an examination of the phallic knife wielded against women in the Gothic, particularly in scenes depicting uncles with incestuous desires for their nieces.

actions, but also her costume. This is an important point; the novel concludes in Sir Lusignan's words: 'Virtue, Camilla, is the ancient costume of Britain; let us not cast it aside for foreign frippery and tinsel' (273). To Sir Lusignan and the system for which he and Camilla stand, virtue is the costume of Britain, and Calantha has clearly compromised not only her gender but her nationality in casting it aside and donning the Prussian uniform in favour of freedom and choice. In Thomas's novel, foreign costumes are highly dangerous to British values of virtue and female nature.[86]

Calantha's character is that of a transgressor. Unlike Camilla, Calantha cannot be swayed by any amount of family pressure; she has no sense of obligation to conform to social mores or gender and sexual ideologies. She says to Camilla: 'I love to step over every bound, to run to every verge, to post myself on every promontory. I love to scale fences, break walls, throw aside props, and walk alone; I love to run fearlessly forward, in spite of the maxims of the world; to do that which no one has ventured to do' (181). Camilla, in response to this speech, says, 'the woman who moves out of that beaten path, which custom has prescribed for her footing, will generally make some false steps' (182). Camilla is content only to follow in the beaten path prescribed for women; Calantha's desires will always move her beyond any attempt to control her. Thomas uses this in an attempt to privilege Camilla's sense of duty and obligation, tradition and custom, and to cast Calantha as a dangerous and unnatural madwoman. Calantha cites incest as an example of how much allure the taboo holds, 'As if love is not twenty times more attractive, when it is forbidden, and sinful [...] it would have tempted me to fall in love with my great grandfather, if I had had the awful prohibition always before me' (175-76). Thomas uses the image of incest across generations to strong effect; this type of incest is considered to be the most distasteful.[87] This deployment of incest demonstrates the unnatural quality of Calantha's desires and points towards their horrific nature in contrast

[86] The dangers of foreign influence on British women is a convention of much literature written during and following the 1790s; Linda Colley examines the impact of the execution of Marie-Antoinette on British anxiety over the treatment of women during the French Revolution as it became clear that domesticity was no longer safe for wives and mothers in France, arguing that 'in Great Britain, woman was subordinate and confined. But at least she was also safe. The twin themes of the peculiar safety of British women and of their danger from the French were played on assiduously by loyalist propaganda during the wars' (p. 262).
[87] In *Pathologies of the West: An Anthropology of Mental Illness in Europe and America* (London: Continuum, 2002), Roland Littlewood examines the higher social stigma against cross-generational incest due to the sexualization of power and the erosion of care-giving involved in such relationships (p. 145).

to cousin incest, which is represented as having very little to do with desires. Camilla and Sir Lusignan are restored to one another after she nurses him through a fever and he forgoes his adulterous ways to enjoy domesticity with his wife.[88] Camilla, however, never views him with the desire and liberty of choice that make the cousin the flexible kin/non-kin role inhabiting both familial and sexual roles that it is in the Gothic. In Thomas's depiction, the cousin remains entrenched in the kinship bond in spite of also being a marriage choice, unintentionally reinforcing Gothic novels (and specifically *Glenarvon*) that identify a strict fulfilment of duty as incompatible with individual choice.[89] What becomes of Calantha and her lover is never related, and so the reader is left with two contrasting images: the angelic Camilla who patiently followed and waited for her adulterous husband and the transgendered Calantha, described by Camilla as having a 'masculine daring in her air and manner, which terrified and alarmed [...] so totally dissimilar from all other women' (67-68).

The two women embody two representations of incest: Camilla's first-cousin marriage is desired by her parents as a safe matrimonial option that keeps her child-like and submissive to her husband's will, while Calantha claims she so loves the forbidden that she would desire her great-grandfather. What Thomas does with these representations is not, perhaps, what she claims to be her stated goal of ridiculing *Glenarvon*. The representations of incest and gender may attempt to make Calantha ridiculous, and may succeed in places, but Thomas has also effectively resuscitated Lamb's Calantha from her watery grave and turned her into a sword-wielding soldier on the brink of rescuing her imprisoned lover. In the end, Thomas seems incapable of escaping from this highly Gothic plotline; in spite of the attempt to position Camilla and Sir Lusignan as the domestic ideal, it is Calantha with her transgressive desires who lives to fight, avoids Camilla's beaten path, and continues to 'run fearlessly forward, in spite of the maxims of the world'.

---

[88] The illness may be what robs Sir Lusignan of his desires for extramarital affairs; in so doing Thomas would be drawing on the Gothic tradition of wounded heroes, but in this case, using it to imply a lessening of sexual power not alluded to in earlier Gothic texts (in spite of certain critical claims to the contrary).
[89] In a likely unintended consequence, Thomas acknowledges that notions of female obligation and duty will not result in liberation as Camilla never becomes a 'citizen' – she exists only as a dependent in Sir Lusignan's home; Calantha, conversely, becomes liberated from the confines of gender ideologies through her unruly and socially unacceptable desire that defies the demands of duty and obligation.

III.   The Burden and Benefit of Kinship: The Many Roles of the Cousin

The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl by Davenport is a sentimental
Gothic novel, in many respects similar to *Emmeline*. But while Emmeline is pursued by a
cousin who defies paternal orders to stay away from her, the protagonists of Davenport's
novel struggle to obey parental commands. Angeline and Elvira De Courci are orphaned
sisters living in their ancestral castle, raised by an aunt and under the care of an uncle.
The De Courci castle is near Fortescue Abbey, whose owner, Lord Fortescue, has
forbidden his sons, Henry and Sidney, to meet or speak with the De Courcis. In spite of
the prohibition, Sidney meets and falls in love with Elvira. In the following London
season Elvira marries another man in a fit of pique at Sidney, who still loves her.
Meanwhile, though it is clear Henry and Angeline are attracted to each other, Henry is
obliged to marry his cousin. Eventually Henry's wife dies in childbirth, Sidney marries
his sister's friend, and Elvira dies. The secret that caused the Fortescue-De Courci enmity
is revealed (Lord Fortescue's sister was engaged to Elvira and Angeline's father who had
sex with her before the wedding, causing her to be 'ruined' and die) and Henry and
Angeline overcome the paternal ban against their union. Incestuous marriages between
cousins are portrayed as highly sought by the older generation: Henry's father promotes
his marriage to his cousin; Lord De Courci tries to persuade his son Lord Reginald to
propose to his cousin Elvira; and Angeline's cousin Desmond is advanced as a potential
suitor. But Davenport, just as she shows the older generation advocating these cousin
unions, depicts them as undesired by the cousins themselves. The younger generation is
more outward looking, moving beyond the realm of kinship to find spouses from other,
forbidden families. The role of the cousin is multifaceted, used to show the subordination
of individual desire to family duty and honour while ultimately rewarding individual
choices that defy paternal expectations. That the cousin is positioned as alternately kin or
non-kin incorporates the respectability of family protection with the potential for
romantic attachment, reflecting the ease with which the familial bond can co-exist with

sexual desire, and granting cousin relationships a flexibility and liberality denied in other male-female courtships.

Lord Fortescue phrases his ban on involvement with the De Courcis in the language of blood, telling his sons 'never to let the pure and noble blood of the Fortescues be contaminated by mixing with that of the detested Earl's.'[90] Much as Emmeline's blood is described as a contaminant to the Montreville line, Lord Fortescue believes pure bloodlines can be sullied by mixing with impure ones.[91] Henry's marriage to his first-cousin, the daughter of Lord Fortescue's brother, has been arranged for some time. Perry refers to the preference of the aristocracy for first-cousin marriage, explaining that:

> the marriage-of-incorporation did not pose the same kind of threat to the consanguineal family as the marriage-as-alliance because by extending and adding to the natal family it shored up the principle of consanguinity. The marriage-as-alliance on the other hand expressly put the interest of the new unit above the interests of either of the spouses' natal families.[92]

Marriage-as-alliance has already been attempted by the Fortescue family and it ended with the corruption of Lord Fortescue's sister and her death and the dissolution of Lord Fortescue's engagement with Lady Desmond, Lord De Courci's sister. Now Lord Fortescue looks to his own family for a spouse for his son in a relationship that Perry would describe as a marriage-of-incorporation, which will 'shore up the principle of consanguinity' that is so important for Lord Fortescue to maintain.[93] Incest, in this case, is sanctioned and promoted by the older generation who has the interest of the natal family at heart.

The ways in which family resemble each other are represented as a method of making compatible pairings. Lord De Courci promotes cousin marriages in his family,

[90] Selina Davenport, *The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl*, 4 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1813), I, p. 42. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[91] In *Incest and Influence* Kuper argues that the 1858 Bemiss report that claimed both close kin unions and miscegenation caused birth defects due to bad blood was the impetus behind laws that banned biracial and cousin marriages in America (p. 249); Davenport's language reveals such understandings of contaminated blood were part of earlier ideas regarding family bloodlines. That Davenport locates the sullied blood within non-kin who are like kin reveals an ambiguity similar to the Bemiss report's assertions regarding the danger of unions either too similar or too different.
[92] Perry, pp. 230-31.
[93] Perry, p. 230.

requesting his son, Lord Reginald, to marry his niece, Elvira. He says: 'Reginald will not make a bad beau for Elvira; and should the young Lord Desmond resemble his mother […] he will be an excellent companion for my little Angeline' (1: 149). Lord De Courci knows what his sister and niece are like, and so he knows his nephew, who resembles them both, will be a good spouse to Angeline. But when Lord De Courci tells Reginald he wants him to marry Elvira, his son replies: 'My heart will never feel any other affection for Elvira but that of a relation' (1: 188). Reginald's statement, juxtaposed with his feelings for Angeline, demonstrates the cousin bond as one in which kinship affection and romantic affection can become interchangeable. While Reginald says he will only ever see Elvira as a relation, he views Angeline as a potential mate: his 'heart immediately acknowledged a preference, which increased as he became more intimately acquainted with [Angeline's] virtues' (1: 157). The instant attraction he feels for Angeline is grounded in the language of siblings: 'Lord Reginald took her hand, and with the affection of a brother carried it to his lips. "With such a companion as you, my dear cousin, the country would be a paradise at any season of the year"' (1: 161). Davenport uses the word 'brother' in an attempt to de-sexualize the attraction Reginald feels for Angeline. But Reginald himself explains to his new wife Mary Evelyn thus: 'Had my heart been free from the magic of thy charms, my Mary, it would certainly have been devotedly attached to my cousin Angeline' (1: 208). While Davenport employs the language of siblings to try to impart a degree of non-sexuality to the attraction and attachment of cousins, it is belied by the characters' own desires. Sibling status is not incompatible with attraction and desire as it is used to describe Reginald and Angeline's bond.[94]

Elvira's beauty makes her a prize that should not be allowed to leave the family. Lord De Courci says to her, 'I wish to secure you, my beloved niece, in my own family. When you are presented, some happy man may run away with my charming Elvira; and I shall lose all the pleasure I have promised myself from her society' (1: 190). Davenport suggests that endogamy is the inevitable consequence of familial pride as, in order to

---

[94] The cousin bond here demonstrates its flexibility, allowing cousins to relate to one another as siblings, and, as argued in examinations of various sibling-lovers in chapter 2 of this thesis, allows for attraction and desire to exist within the cousins' simultaneous identification with the sibling tie.

keep valuable women within the family and to marry a spouse at the same level of birth and blood, kin must marry kin. Lord De Courci promotes cousin marriage as a means to keep a prized beauty in the consanguineal family (he is, like Sir Thomas, being economical) believing that her perfect form and face make her highly valuable. Instead of wanting to exchange her outside of the family, he desires her to remain within it; De Courci is already titled, landed, and wealthy, so the need for exchange is lessened, and Elvira's beauty makes keeping her within the family more advantageous than whatever she could bring in an exchange.[95] The pleasure he will take in having her remain in the family is his priority, and so he wishes to 'secure' her in his own natal family, where he will have continued access to her society. Lord De Courci is furious with his son's lack of familial duty in his refusal to propose to Elvira, not merely because Reginald defies his parental command, but also because he will lose his niece to an outsider (again, the uncle tries to control access to the niece's body either himself or by proxy).[96]

That kin, cousins specifically, are perceived as safe companions in terms of sexual reputation, is an idea Davenport portrays particularly with regard to the relationship between Angeline and her cousin Desmond. When Angeline and her cousin meet they are instantly attracted to each other; Desmond thinks Angeline's amiable nature renders her 'an object to inspire the tenderest affection, the most lasting friendship; and he regarded her in the light of a beloved sister' (1: 191). Angeline is equally fond of Desmond, though their family and friends believe them to be more closely attached than the sibling-like bond they claim for each other and desire their union. Not only does Lord Desmond feel that Angeline is like a sister, but they also look alike; they 'would have passed for brother and sister' (1: 163). But siblings they are not, and their status as cousins makes their potential union an appropriate option. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall point out, 'cousins were favoured as close friends [... .] The fact that cousins could marry, however, could make the relationship of male-female cousins problematic [... .] Male

---

[95] Irigaray's point about the commodification of women within the structure of exchange is relevant here as Davenport's description of beauty deliberately reveals Elvira's true value is as an object; Davenport similarly seems to play here with the Gothic convention of incestuous uncles, underscoring the dangers of endogamic desires and the paternal power that seeks to confine Elvira within the familial structure.

[96] Like Philippe, Lord De Courci wants to control the daughter of his older brother; both here and in Roche's novel the uncle selects the beautiful niece for his son's wife. In the novels examined in chapter 3 of this thesis the younger brothers who threatened their nieces with rape, violence, and theft had no sons to use as sexual substitutes.

cousins could be called upon to perform general masculine functions of advice and protection, if not support'.[97] Although the older generation hopes for their union the cousins view their bond as a sibling one, though their relationship is nonetheless charged with sexual undertones. When Desmond discovers Angeline crying, 'accustomed to look upon him as a brother she threw her white arms around his neck, and wept unrestrained, while his lordship, pressing her still closer to his bosom, wiped away her tears' (2: 160). Here Desmond is portrayed as a brother rather than a cousin, but there are still frissons of sexuality in the interaction. The label of brother does not preclude desire, as seen in Sleath's depiction of the siblings Laurette and Enrico, but it is here shown as a safe way of exploring desires.[98] Desmond is positioned as an almost-suitor, a companion who offers the safety of kinship with the power of attraction.

The cousin is a person with whom the heroine can indulge sexual desires, constant attention and familial affection without the censure of society. No other role allows for an unmarried woman to hold constant discourse with a man in such a way without being married or engaged to him. The cousin's status as kin makes him safe to dance with, flirt with, appear in public with, be alone with and have as a constant escort and companion without a loss of reputation. The heroine can rely on him for the kind of physical comfort (such as hugs and 'brotherly' kisses) that would be considered an outrageous liberty coming from a non-relative, and she can use his presence to discourage unwanted suitors. When Desmond faints, Angeline 'pressed her lips to his cold damp face – her tears, her sobs, alone possessed the power to reanimate him. He groaned as he again felt the pressure of her lips to his' (4: 6). Henry, in love with Angeline, sees this interaction between the cousins as enviable but they are still actions that Angeline can commit without risk of her reputation specifically because it is her cousin, a relation, who receives her kisses.

Henry's marriage to his cousin Lucinda is similar to Perry's description of Edmund and Fanny's marriage in *Mansfield Park* as one that will 'strengthen

---

[97] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Hutchinson Education, 1987; repr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 353-54.
[98] The sibling-like quality of their relationship that causes them to be so compatible echoes the idealization of such brother-sister relationships as that of Ferdinand and Julia in Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790).

consanguineal bonds and consolidate family feeling.'[99] While Lucinda loves Henry as a husband, he repeatedly describes his attachment to her as solely familial and their marriage as a duty he was obligated to fulfil.[100] Henry says 'my uncle's partiality made him desirous that the happiness of his child should be committed to my care. My dear father's heart was also fixed upon the match' (1: 128). As Lucinda's cousin, Henry is a safe option for her father to fix upon; he knows that Henry will provide protection and constancy to his daughter because he knows his character and that his understanding of familial obligation will render him a good husband. Thomas's *Purity of Heart* also attempts to show the cousin as a safe option encouraged by the family; though she endangers this positioning of kin as safe with Sir Lusignan's repeated infidelity, he is eventually redeemed through Camilla's goodness (as Lucinda is not), rewarding filial and conjugal duty and obligation. On Henry and Lucinda's wedding day, Lord Fortescue says to Lucinda: 'would that your father was here, my dear child, to witness this happy event, to behold the long desired wish of his heart gratified!' (1: 184). His language here is similar to the wording used in Roche's *Clermont* regarding the desires of the parents to see Madeline and de Sevignie married; but of course, in Roche's novel, the union is wished for by the cousins before the parents. This is not the case in Davenport's text, where the marriage so sought after by the parents is destined to be a failure.

The parental generation that so earnestly desires Henry and Lucinda's union is blinded to the cousins' incompatibility. Henry says, 'I love Lucinda with brotherly affection […] but the differences in our tastes, in our inclinations, are so striking […] I foresee we shall lead a life but little consonant to my taste or wishes' (1: 178). Henry knows the marriage will be an unhappy one, that he and his cousin have little in common and that his affection for her is brotherly. His father does not realize this until after the marriage has taken place, 'convinced, when too late, that his niece was not the woman calculated to make happy such a heart and mind as his beloved Henry's' (2: 63). Davenport complicates the meaning of 'brotherly' because Henry does impregnate Lucinda after their marriage, establishing that a sexual union of some sort exists between

---

[99] Perry, p. 123.
[100] Like Bennett's Ellen, Henry is obligated to undergo a first marriage due to familial pressures before the fortuitous death of the spouse enables the marriage based on individual choice.

them, after which he continues to describe his feelings for Lucinda as brotherly. After Lucinda dies in childbirth, Henry is able once again to reflect on Angeline, whom he continues to love in spite of his father's ban on the De Courci family. Henry describes to Angeline his marriage to Lucinda as follows:

> The engagement […] was made by my father and uncle [… .] Duty and honour overcame, for a time, the secret prepossession of my heart, but even these were insufficient to wholly banish the angel form of her who alone had taught me the sweet feelings of a lover. Attached from childhood as a brother to my cousin… I mourn her loss as a beloved sister (4: 174-75).

Even the duty and honour that Henry feels for the Fortescue family are insufficient to let him forget Angeline, his forbidden love of choice. Once Lord Fortescue releases the ban on Fortescue-De Courci marriages, Henry marries Angeline without defying the paternal prohibition.

Davenport's novel is rife with endogamous marriages and near marriages, and more are implied than are actually supported by consanguineal ties. Lady Desmond describes the childhood relationships between herself, her brother, and the Fortescue siblings by saying, 'From infancy […] we seemed to be but one family, and as we grew up to years of maturity our affection increased' (2: 149). The original inhabitants of the abbey and the castle grew as one family, intimacy developing alongside familial love. The original engaged couples, as sets of siblings, would have made Elvira, Sidney, Desmond, Angeline, Reginald, Cecil and Henry all double cousins. The families, structured as separate and forbidden, are only so divided because of the ban that severed what had promised to be one large family united through marriage and sibling ties. In a statement that equates love to an inheritance, Cecil says of her love for Desmond, 'But is it to be wondered, that his child's heart should not prove insensible to the merits of the son of his once adored Emma?' (3: 191). In a very real sense this is true; the children of the De Courci and Fortescue families do seem destined to fall in love with each other.

The paradoxical representations of cousin relationships show them to be analogous to a sibling bond but also sexualized. Just as the De Courci and Fortescue families are delineated as kin who love and sexually desire one another, the cousin tie allows for the coexistence of familial and erotic love. The role of the cousin, shown

through the relationships of Desmond, Reginald and Angeline, offers practice in relating to the opposite sex, protection from undesired suitors, affection, and very often shared mutual sensibilities and desires. A female cousin can marry her male cousin, but she can also know him first in ways not readily permitted to non-kin. With the cousin there is the most opportunity to touch, to learn, to converse, and to spend time alone with in ways that would be forbidden with non-kin. The relationship between cousins is filled with potential opportunities to explore emotions and physicality in a socially acceptable way as they are protected from disgrace by the consanguineal bond that allows sexual attraction within the safety of a familial relationship. In Davenport's text cousins can be family or lovers, but they must be able to make this decision for themselves without the interference of an older generation who, blinded by a slavish loyalty to family pride and honour, can attempt to wrest individual rights from their children in favour of tightening consanguineal bonds.[101] A careful balance between family duty and individual desire is essential for happiness.

IV.   Rejecting the Cousin as Familial Obligation or Duty

A later debate in the Gothic is interesting because in the more than 30 years between Davenport's novel and those of the Bronte sisters, while political reforms occurred, the essential position of women as lacking citizenship remained unchanged. Historian Constance Rover points to the Reform Act of 1832 as one that, while enfranchising male persons, provided an explicit statutory bar to women's voting.[102] The ongoing exclusion of women from the political and public arena in spite of the newly afforded rights granted to men makes these later representations of cousin marriage in the Gothic and their privileging of female rights over familial obligations demonstrably relevant to an analysis

---

[101] Davenport's depiction of familial obligation as largely incompatible with individual rights and choices is another example of a novel that struggles to conform to the overarching narrative of nostalgia for kinship that Perry identifies in eighteenth-century literature sentimentalizing 'the consanguineal basis for obligation' (p. 8).

[102] Constance Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1914* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1967), p. 3.

of the Gothic's subversive and politicized use of such unions. In Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) two disparate cousin marriages take place that underscore the extremes of dangerous consanguinity and patrimonies and the rejection of exogamy in favour of familial anarchy. The first union, between Cathy Linton and Linton Heathcliff, represents the violent power and destructive nature of paternal authority wielded by Heathcliff as a perverse inheritance from Mr Earnshaw and his son, Hindley. The second marriage, between Cathy and her cousin Hareton Earnshaw, allows an endogamic union that both stems from an overabundance of overlapping family ties and ends in a marriage utterly devoid of familial interference. Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) also features a heroine with two very different male cousins; and though only one of them proposes, she rejects the offer in favour of a marriage of questionable respectability. *Wuthering Heights* shows the consequences of patriarchy in Heathcliff's schemes that result in his son's marriage to Cathy, and, in the ensuing union of Cathy and Hareton, a complete lack thereof. Both heroines marry husbands who are masculine, dark, and powerful; in Emily Bronte's novel the sexualized hero is the cousin, and in Charlotte Bronte's he is non-kin, but both novels reflect a rejection, in favour of individual rights and desires, of the duties that coincide with family.

Pauline Nestor, in her introduction to *Wuthering Heights*, argues against the conclusion of scholars such as David Cecil who suggest that the union of Cathy and Hareton brings a restoration of order to the novel. Instead, she focuses on the 'ever-present potential for reversion' in the novel: 'we cannot assume that the change in Hareton is any more secure.'[103] Nestor's point about the 'precarious nature' of conversion is convincing, as is her scepticism regarding the novel's ending as representing a restoration of order. Heathcliff's determination to destroy the Earnshaw and Linton familial lines has been partially realized; certainly there are no Lintons left as Cathy Linton has become a Heathcliff and is on the verge of becoming an Earnshaw. But neither is there any real order; the two large estates are being managed by two young people, but mostly by the old housekeeper, Nelly. Wuthering Heights is on the verge of being left to the servants when the young couple moves to the Grange, and it is hard to

---

[103] Pauline Nestor, 'Introduction', Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. xxxi.

imagine Hareton playing convincingly the role of landed gentry, no matter how well his cousin has taught him to read. But what the ending means, and how Bronte structured the familial ties in order to arrive there, ought to contribute to the way the novel's conclusion should be read.

Nestor writes 'the transgressive power of the novel is further evident in its flirtation with the fundamental taboos' of which incest resonates in the 'intermarriages of the second generation, in which Catherine marries her two cousins in succession, virtually without ever meeting an eligible male outside her family'.[104] That the novel flirts with the taboo of incest is apparent from the outset and Catherine's marriages, made without any extra-familial courtship, heighten the claustrophobic sense of endogamy and confusion over character roles and relations. The narrator, Lockwood, not knowing the genealogies of his landlord, incorrectly guesses at first that Catherine is Heathcliff's wife, then Hareton's: 'The clown at my elbow […] may be her husband. Heathcliff, junior, of course. Here is the consequence of being buried alive: she has thrown herself away upon that boor, from sheer ignorance that better individuals existed!'[105] Lockwood, the unreliable narrator, manages to get everything wrong and right at once. Catherine is not Heathcliff's wife (though he wanted her mother to be), and she is not Hareton's (though she becomes his wife) and Hareton is not Heathcliff's son (though he resembles him more than he does his father Hindley). But his incorrect/almost-correct assumptions reflect the distorted genealogies and incestuous endogamy of the household he has stumbled upon. Wuthering Heights is established as a location filled with overlapping and confusing relationships of kinship and marriage, where almost all the characters are related to each other via both blood and marriage.[106] They also all resemble each other in different ways; Nestor discusses the confusion of names and resemblances, writing that 'lineage seems unclear […] Cathy's nephew Hareton resembles her more closely than her daughter Cathy, while Hareton seems the truer son of Heathcliff than his biological offspring Linton'.[107] In this exceptionally small family group, lines of blood and

---

[104] Nestor, p. xxix.

[105] Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Pauline Nestor (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 13. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

[106] Similarities to the overlapping of kinship ties across generations in *Clermont* are readily apparent.

[107] Nestor, p. xxvi.

resemblance overlap. Both the family and their crossing ties of consanguineal and affinal connections allow Heathcliff to achieve his goal of securing Linton's estate and fortune for his own.

Catherine's first encounters with her cousins are far from the instant attraction/recognition-filled meetings common in the Gothic. She meets Hareton when she is thirteen and he is 'a great, strong lad of eighteen' (193). She first thinks his father is the owner of Wuthering Heights and is upset to find out that this is not the case, mistaking him for a servant. Another servant corrects Cathy, telling her, '"Though Mr Hareton, there, be not the master's son, he's your cousin"' (195). Cathy is appalled: '"my cousin is a gentleman's son – That my –" she stopped, and wept outright; upset at the bare notion of a relationship with such a clown' (196). Cathy is aggrieved at the idea of being kin to a servant; when she hears her father will be bringing her cousin Linton home she is overjoyed: she 'indulged the most sanguine anticipations of the innumerable excellencies of her "real" cousin' (199) who will be the 'gentleman's son' Cathy believes her cousin should be. Cathy's meeting with Linton, however, also fails to meet her expectations. The 'pale, delicate, effeminate boy' with a 'sickly peevishness' (200) does little more than sob and complain before Heathcliff sends for his son to live at Wuthering Heights.

In spite of Linton's initial poor impressions Cathy desires to renew their acquaintance, and her father, because of the kinship tie, eventually acquiesces; both Heathcliff and Linton seek a union between the cousins, though for very different reasons. Heathcliff confides his plan to Nelly:

> 'My design is as honest as possible [... .] That the two cousins may fall in love, and get married. I'm acting generously to your master; his young chit has no expectations, and should she second my wishes, she'll be provided for, at once, as joint successor with Linton.' 'If Linton died [...] Catherine would be the heir.' 'No, she would not [...] there is no clause in the will to secure it so; his property would go to me; but, to prevent disputes, I desire their union, and am resolved to bring it about' (215).

When Linton acts peevish and sickly around Cathy, she placates him; though sick, he is also fretful and irritable. She strokes his hair and says 'Pretty Linton! I wish you were my brother' (238); an interesting shift in roles from a cousin with whom she has just been

exchanging love letters. As in Davenport's and Bennett's novels, *Emmeline*, and *Jane Eyre*, the cousin bond is again manipulated into one of siblinghood, regardless of romantic desires.[108] Edgar allows the cousins to meet in the hopes that they may form a real attachment to one another, but also because Linton, as his male next of kin, will inherit the Grange. Nelly states that Linton 'had a natural desire that she might retain, or, at least, return, in a short time, to the house of her ancestors; and he considered her only prospect of doing that was by a union with his heir' (259). Linton seeks a union between the cousins because he wants Cathy to be able to stay in Thrushcross Grange after his death. But Linton's desire for this seems woefully naïve; he is aware of Heathcliff's ability to manipulate and the power he has over his son, but he still hopes that somehow the cousins could have a happy marriage. Bronte emphasizes not only the injustice of patrimony, but also the child-like faithfulness of Linton in the system of inheritance and kinship, a faith that is proved to be ill-founded. Heathcliff desires the marriage because it is a legal way of solidifying his grasp on the Grange when Linton dies and of claiming the fortune as well as the estate, as Cathy's money would go to Linton on their marriage.

When Heathcliff tricks Catherine into accompanying her cousin into Wuthering Heights and locks her and Nelly in, Linton explains, 'Papa wants us to be married [...] he's afraid of my dying, if we wait; so we are to be married in the morning' (272). Nelly is outraged even beyond Cathy, saying her charge would never marry a weakling like him. The comparison to her other infant charge, Hareton, is clear; Hareton and Cathy are strong and alike and Linton is a weak 'changeling' who is unfit to marry Cathy. After Cathy is forced into the cousin marriage to Linton, he tells Nelly that his uncle Edgar is dying, saying:

> I'm glad, for I shall be master of the Grange after him – and Catherine always
> spoke of it as her house. It isn't hers! It's mine – papa says everything she has is
> mine. All her nice books are mine – she offered to give me them, and her pretty
> bird, and her pony Minny, if I would get the key of our room, and let her out: but I
> told her she had nothing to give, they were all, all mine (280).

---

[108] Cathy's desire to identify Linton as a sibling is not concurrent with feelings of romantic love in spite of the previously exchanged love letters as Bronte represents the exchange as resulting from Cathy's immaturity and frustration at being prohibited from visiting her cousin rather than a true desire or passion for Linton.

Linton, vicious, weak, and petty, delights in the benefits granted to him by his sex.[109] He is infuriated by the notion that Catherine should claim as 'hers' anything that is 'his' based on the patrimony or their marriage that rendered her personal possessions also 'his'. Part of Perry's argument concerning cousin marriage in Austen revolves around an uneasiness occasioned by the motivation of wealth accumulation; she writes 'the possible paternal first-cousin matches […] are tainted by social ambition and the venal desire for accumulation of wealth […] because of the concentration of wealth and title in the male line. Maternal first-cousin marriage did not profit from this fact of inheritance'.[110] Linton exemplifies cousin marriage for wealth accumulation; manipulated into the match by his father, his true nature delights in the rewards he reaps from the marriage.

Because Edgar Linton realizes on his deathbed Heathcliff's goal of gaining Cathy's personal property as well as the Grange, 'he felt his will had better be altered – instead of leaving Catherine's fortune at her own disposal, he determined to put it in the hands of trustees [... .] By that means, it could not fall to Mr Heathcliff should Linton die' (282). The lawyer, however, is under Heathcliff's commands and the will remains unaltered. Cousin marriage is exposed as a sham sought in order to gain control of property and fortune, and marriage in general is presented as fraught with the danger of being under the command of tyrants who gain total control of female property and fortune. Linton dies within a month of his marriage to Cathy, though it is too late for her to retain any of her personal possessions. Heathcliff is now in possession of everything relating to the Grange and Cathy; as described by Nelly, '[Linton] had bequeathed the whole of his, and what had been her moveable property to his father [... .] The lands, being a minor, he could not meddle with. However, Mr Heathcliff has claimed, and kept them in his wife's right, and his also [... .] Catherine, destitute of cash and friends, cannot disturb his possession' (294). Cathy is far from reconciled to this appropriation; when he upbraids her for daring to disturb bushes in the garden she says, 'you shouldn't grudge a

---

[109] Cathy's attempt to buy her freedom from her cousin/husband is futile as he already owns all her possessions. Bronte provides a parallel to the contemporary laws that denied citizenship without property ownership and shows the impossibility of female participation in the state. Colley's point bears repeating: 'stripped by marriage of a separate identity and autonomous property, a woman could not by definition be a citizen and could never look to possess political rights' (p. 254). Cathy cannot buy her freedom from her husband and women could not buy the individual rights guaranteed by citizenship as both family and state repress female rights through the law.
[110] Perry, p. 123.

few yards of earth, for me to ornament, when you have taken all my land! […] and my money […] and Hareton's land, and his money' (319-20).

Instead of the landed aristocracy desiring this union between cousins as a way to maintain familial wealth and title, it is sought by two servants; one because she raised and loves them both, one because she wants to see Cathy brought lower.[111] After Linton's death Hareton makes overtures of friendliness to Cathy; he is attracted to his cousin as a 'child to a candle' (296) but after she unleashes her temper on him – emphasizing his ignorance – he will have nothing more to do with her. This state of affairs does not long continue; Cathy, trapped inside or within the boundaries of the garden by Heathcliff's orders, is bored beyond measure. In an echoing of Lockwood's earlier remarks regarding 'the consequence of being buried alive' (13), Cathy looks to Hareton for companionship. Zillah, the housekeeper, wants to see Cathy with Hareton as a means of lowering her pride, saying to Nelly: 'you happen to think your young lady too fine for Mr Hareton […] but, I own, I should love well to bring her pride a peg lower' (295). A potential union between the two is shown as degrading to Cathy, who nonetheless persists in seeking a relationship with her cousin. Apologizing for her previous bad behaviour – 'I should like you to be my cousin' (312) – she uses their kinship as a basis for a friendship that would be impossible without it, given his position as a destitute, uneducated servant.[112] Cathy says, 'Come, you shall take notice of me, Hareton – you are my cousin, and you shall own me' (313). They fall in love and Nelly says to Lockwood that 'the crown of all my wishes will be the union of those two' (316). The lowering that Zillah refers to is akin to the degradation Catherine feared through a union with Heathcliff, her inferior in social class, though it was her union with her equal in status, Linton, that was so unhappy.[113] Bronte represents surface and social differences – such as Hareton and Heathcliff's

---

[111] Heathcliff echoes Zillah's sentiment that a union between Hareton and Cathy will end badly: 'if I see him listen to you, I'll send him seeking his bread where he can get it! Your love will make him an outcast, and a beggar' (p. 321). Heathcliff means literally Hareton will be a beggar because he will cast him out with nothing, but he also refers to Catherine's love that sent him beyond the walls of Wuthering Heights only to return too late, as a permanent outsider.

[112] This is parallel to the relationship Cathy's mother had with Heathcliff and is similar to that between Roche's Madeline and de Sevignie.

[113] Bronte, in a sense, foreshadows and rejects the beliefs underlying the later American bans against cousin and interracial marriage that Kuper describes as grounded in the idea that 'in the one case the "blood" was too similar, in the other too alien' in *Incest and Influence*, p. 249.

darker coloration and lack of status – as minor impediments while underscoring consanguineal likeness as crucial to conjugal happiness.

With no families to whom Catherine owes obligation and duty and no paternal figures against whom to fight, the estates have evolved into a state of near anarchy, with the housekeeper in charge and the heiress marrying the former stable boy. When Lockwood returns to Wuthering Heights, he asks Nelly for the master in order to pay the rent and Nelly tells him, 'it is with Mrs Heathcliff you must settle […] or rather with me. She has not learnt to manage her affairs yet, and I act for her; there's nobody else' (309). Cathy is now mistress of the Grange, engaged to her cousin Hareton, and prepared to return to the Grange. Although it is not explicitly stated, it seems Wuthering Heights is now Hareton's property in the absence of a will, given his family's ancestral ownership of the property. Nelly's words 'there's nobody else' are the stark truth: Cathy is alone in the world; all the Earnshaws, Lintons, and Heathcliffs, with the exceptions of Hareton and her, are dead. This is important because it does seem yet another return to Lockwood's words regarding Cathy and Hareton – is she only marrying him because there is no one else? Bronte takes care to show the evolution of their relationship and Hareton's manners, but she is equally careful to position an unreliable narrator and Zillah to trouble our conception of their potential happiness.

Either way, what is made explicit is the absence of family besides the cousins; there can be no consanguineal obligation or duty that presses them to wed, no need to preserve estates or patrimonies or parental desires to contend with. Cathy and Hareton are free to assert their individual rights, but by the time this is true, they have already been raised in the highly incestuous environment of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights. If Cathy has only seen three eligible males in her life, Hareton has only seen her. Heathcliff uses consanguineous marriage to achieve the exact opposite of the traditional reasons permitting it – maintaining estates, wealth, and lineage – in a distortion that is undertaken to disperse and destroy these symbols of the Linton and Earnshaw families. The ending may be many things, but Nestor is right, a return to order it is not. Bronte's final cousin marriage is agreed upon for none of all the traditional reasons therefore, and

is only made possible in the absence of all other family who may have resisted the union, rendering any outside interference in the cousins' spousal selection impossible.

The novel that perhaps most clearly embodies the shift from the privileging of consanguineal obligations to the increasing importance given to individual choice is that of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. While her sister's novel shows an eventual removal of family members until there is no one left but the cousins-in-love, Charlotte Bronte's novel places her heroine within a family but without familial ties. Jane Eyre is raised in her uncle's home but the Reed family is unkind to the niece/cousin they treat as inferior and Jane discovers sympathetic family only later in the three Rivers cousins. Jane rejects her cousin St John Rivers' marriage proposal and its basis in his desire for respectability, instead marrying Rochester in a celebration of mutual love. While feminist critics such as Eugenia C. DeLamotte point to the novel as having a 'domestic' ending with a sexually tamed husband,[114] I argue that the novel's conclusion emphasizes the sexual desires between Jane and Rochester and their role in creating a kinship bond between the two. *Jane Eyre* is a strong assertion of female rights and desires, presenting a radical realignment of what constitutes consanguineal and conjugal bonds. Showing the sacrament of marriage that unites husband and wife in a bond of kinship as essential to Jane's understanding of her relationship with Rochester, Bronte equates the conjugal tie to the consanguineal in a love-based egalitarian union.

In her Rivers cousins Jane finds perfect sympathy with her female kin, but none with her male kin. Jane describes St John Rivers as comparable to a statue with a 'high forehead, colourless as ivory'[115] and understands that 'he might well be a little shocked at the irregularity of my lineaments, his own being so harmonious' (396). Jane and St John do not resemble each other; she is unattractive to him and he seems like a marble statue to her. In contrast, in her female cousins, Jane discovers a pleasure 'arising from the perfect congeniality of tastes, sentiments, and principles' (402). Ambitious and unhappy in his profession as a priest, Bronte portrays St John as the icy antithesis to Jane's fiery

---

[114] Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 224.
[115] Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Stevie Davies (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), p. 396. Subsequent references will be given in the text.

temperament. DeLamotte writes: 'The ice-cold St John [...] offers religious ecstasy, enlightenment, release. But in the imagery associated with their relationship Jane suffers torture, darkness, and imprisonment instead'.[116] Jane divides her inheritance of £20,000 between herself and the Rivers, discussing how splitting it four ways will give each cousin freedom; in dismantling the inheritance Jane does away with the system of keeping wealth intact through the generations by dispersing it amongst the kin laterally. Dispersal of wealth weakens the total power of a family but it increases the individual power of its members, a revolutionary idea that St John is hesitant to agree to. When St John suggests she may not want to disperse the money like this as she could marry well with the fortune intact, Jane says (perhaps unconsciously describing St John and then Rochester): 'I do not want a stranger – unsympathising, alien, different from me; I want my kindred: those with whom I have full fellow-feeling' (447). They agree to view each other as siblings; St John says 'I feel I can easily and naturally make room in my heart for you, as my third and youngest sister' (447) while Jane thinks: 'it seemed I had found a brother: one I could be proud of—one I could love' (444).

In Bronte's novel opposites destroy each other; like must be allied with like in marriage, but here, such a bond is not to be found with kin.[117] St John's relationship with Jane develops but she finds he gains a control over her through a withholding of emotion she finds unbearable: 'I daily wished more to please him; but to do so [...] I must disown half my nature' (460). The cousins may think they share a sibling-like bond but in his treatment of Jane, St John comes closer to Lord Howel's education of Ellen; he appears as a father figure rather than a brother. Though kin, they are not kindred, they look different and they think differently. St John proposes that Jane marry him and accompany him to India, enumerating the qualities that make her a good missionary's wife. Jane contemplates the loveless marriage they would have and decides 'as his sister, I might accompany him – not as his wife' (467). St John recoils at this idea but Jane concludes that as his wife she would constantly have to disown her true nature, which she will not do. St John uses respectability as a reason to press for the marriage, saying 'How can I, a

---

[116] DeLamotte, p. 217.
[117] As in *Wuthering Heights*, and the sibling relationships examined in chapter 2 of this thesis, like and like are ideally united in marriage in order to create sympathetic and egalitarian unions.

man not yet thirty, take out with me to India a girl of nineteen, unless she be married to me?' (470). When Jane declares she will go only as his assistant he is icily enraged; her willingness to go with him without benefit of marriage makes him view her as sexually accessible. In a complete dissolution of the notion of the cousin as safe, St John reveals the bond of cousin as providing no protection for the reputation. Jane, however, does not regard the benefit of marrying St John to preserve her reputation as enough incentive to marry without desire, offering him only her companionship. He uses, not the language of familial obligation and duty, but of Heavenly duty and respectability to persuade her. His rhetoric does not convince Jane to accept a loveless marriage. She has no romantic love for St John as they lack the similar looks, values, and temperaments associated with the brother-lover, in spite of their belief that they view each other as siblings.[118]

Rochester's fiery nature and St John's icy one are opposites and after she rejects her sexless cousin it is Rochester to whom Jane runs, and is rewarded for her rejection of endogamic celibacy with a more virile and masculine lover. DeLamotte argues that 'the ideology of Gothic romance idealizes female passivity and dependence. At the crucial moment Gothic heroines are rescued, almost always by a man',[119] stating that Rochester's cry for help is Jane's salvation from St John's marriage proposal. But this seems an odd kind of rescue, for Jane has already refused St John once when she mentally hears Rochester's cry for help and goes to save him. Jane finds him missing an eye and a hand, nearly blind from the injuries sustained in the fire, though he looks remarkably unchanged. Jane reflects, looking at him, 'not in one year's space, by any sorrow, could his athletic strength be quelled or his vigorous prime blighted' (497-98). He is hardly the wounded hero rendered feminine, as Hoeveler calls him.[120] DeLamotte also thinks Rochester is somehow neutered; she describes him as 'a husband whose sexual energies have been distinctly tamed.'[121] But 'tamed' is difficult to reconcile with the man Jane describes as strong and vigorous, and the wound sustained damaged his vision rather than his genitals. While Rochester's wounding may have had a levelling effect on their

---

[118] As in Cathy's voiced desire to have Linton as a brother, here the claims for a sibling bond are expressed rather than felt. The desire for the bond is present, but the bond itself is not.

[119] DeLamotte, p. 222.

[120] Hoeveler, pp. 221-22.

[121] DeLamotte, p. 224.

relationship, it seems premature to conclude his sexuality has been domesticated. In fact, Rochester has attained even more signs of dangerous masculinity in the fire than he has supposedly lost; his injuries making him dearer to Jane: 'it is a pity to see […] the scar of fire on your forehead: and the worst of it is, one is in danger of loving you too well for all this' (503). The mark of fire on his forehead, much like that of thunder on Satan in *Paradise Lost*, pulls Jane to him;[122] she is drawn to the darkness and the signs of sin that brand him. St John's icy purity and punctilious duty to God were never the enticement that Rochester's signs of fierce strength and desires are. Rochester describes St John as Apollo and himself as a Vulcan. The reference to Vulcan, the Roman God of destructive fire, is an important one in proving his heightened sexuality and contrasting it to St John's marble sexlessness. Not only does it relate to Rochester's physical appearance – dark and powerfully built – but the mythical being is also associated with male fertility.[123] Jane's stated 'danger' in loving Rochester 'too well', after seeing the mark of fire, alludes to a heightened sexual relationship, not a 'tamed' one. She is free with him as she never was with St John: 'there was no harassing restraint, no repressing of glee and vivacity with him; for with him I was at perfect ease, because I knew I suited him' (504). Bronte portrays the potential cousin marriage as frigid, while with the powerful and sexual Rochester, Jane is able to live without St John's 'harassing restraint' and lack of physical desires. Rather than having to repress half her nature as she did with her cousin, Jane finds in Rochester complete freedom of self-expression and sexuality, so that he proves himself truly kindred.

The true kinship bond between them is reinforced with the imagery associated with their union, a melding of flesh and bodies both sexual and spiritual. After their marriage Jane reinforces their unification by saying 'no woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh' (519). Stevie Davies's note regarding this allusion states: 'the book of Common Prayer incorporates this kinship into the sacrament of the marriage service'.[124] Bronte affirms that Rochester is absolutely Jane's family through Jane's reiteration of the sacrament, that

---

[122] Stevie Davies, 'Notes', Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), p. 577.
[123] Eli Edward Burriss, 'The Use and Worship of Fire Among the Romans', *The Classical Weekly*, 24:6 (1930): 45.
[124] Davies, p. 578.

their true kinship is of the soul. DeLamotte argues that Bronte sees domesticity as blissful only with 'the self-knowledge and mutual knowledge the male-female relationship at its centre is capable of accommodating [... . A] vision of such radical equality of communication at the centre of a marriage was not common'.[125] However, this radical equality of communication is common in the Gothic. The main attraction between Gothic heroines and heroes is that they are perfectly sympathetic to each other, sharing the same tastes in music, art, and literature, and having the same views on philosophy and religion. Often from the same family, or from closely connected families, they frequently come from an equal footing of birth, education, age, and sentiment; these similarities are all almost always present in the marriages that take place between the Gothic protagonists. This is partially what makes even non-incestuous relationships feel incestuous. Bronte's vision is radical, but for Gothic writers, it is far from uncommon. What makes Jane and Rochester distinct is Bronte's articulation of their non-consanguineal union as kinship through their nuptial vows and mutual love; their freedom with each other creates a consanguineous conjugal family.

Bronte causes the role of the cousin to shift from one of implicit safety and respectability to one of potential danger, even from such a highly respectable and sexless man as St John. In this shift Bronte draws attention to the erosion of familial bonds and the perception of safety therein, revealing kin-based male-female relationships as no longer socially privileged or even respectable. At a time in England when cousin marriage, increasingly acceptable and popular, was nearing an all-time high,[126] the role of the cousin became that of a potential mate rather than merely that of kin, and thus the respectability afforded by the consanguineal bond diminished. Jane tries to re-endow the cousin with respectability by offering to accompany him on his missions without benefit of marriage, but succeeds only in making him question her morality. Bronte troubles the idea of consanguineal ties as equivalent to family, showing Rochester turn from lover to husband to family in a way Jane's blood kin never could. Hoeveler writes that we see the 'incestuous suitor' rejected again in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* in the characters of

---

[125] DeLamotte, p. 226.
[126] Kuper 'Incest, Cousin Marriage, and the Origin of the Human Sciences in Nineteenth-Century England': 219–22.

St John Rivers and Heathcliff, and that 'moving out of the family kinship clan and into an exogamous alliance, based on the property of one's own body rather than one's blood, proved to be an enormously anxious and ambivalent activity for middle-class women and writers'.[127] But as Perry has so clearly demonstrated, the anxiety felt is often due to a privileging of conjugal over consanguineal ties, not the notion of one's body as property; hardly a new idea for women who, be it based on blood or body, were quite accustomed to being the object of exchange. As Jane demonstrates in her rejection of St John, it is inside a marriage of physical passion that she firmly places herself. Rochester's vigour and virility are Jane's refuge while her cousin's icy reserve was a certain death. The traditional ideology behind cousin marriage does not apply to Bronte's heroine, but neither does St John's attempt to establish a new ideology based on female reputation and Christian duty. Bronte's use of these substitutes as inadequate demonstrates the truly radical nature of her text in privileging individual choice and female sexual desires over respectability, familial obligation and heavenly duty.

V.   Conclusion

The contested role of the cousin as legitimate marriage choice or not, as kin or non-kin, as lover or sibling, respectable or potentially dangerous, reflects the flexible nature of the cousin's role and the relative ease with which definitions of family could change.[128] Reflecting the shifts in eighteenth-century society regarding the importance of consanguineal, affinal, and conjugal ties, the cousin becomes aligned with these evolving ways of seeing kin. Especially useful to writers of the Gothic, the complexity of the cousin's situation allows for these writers, so invested in subversions of patriarchal structures, readily to manipulate the bond in order to privilege individual rights and desires over duty and obligation. Gothic conventions such as overlapping family ties, the

---

[127] Hoeveler, p. 38.
[128] Kuper, 'Changing the Subject': 727

discovery of kin, forced or pressured marriages, and claustrophobic domestic spaces are used to position the cousin with or detach him from these consequences of patriarchy.

One of the ways that Gothic writers utilized the role of the cousin and its contested status was to express anxieties regarding the underlying causes of this incestuous configuration's social acceptability. The Gothic, indebted to the philosophical and political discourses of the eighteenth century, took up the language of individual rights and social and familial obligation in its representations of cousin marriage. Participating in the prevailing discourses allowed writers to trouble the notion of female obligation to a patriarchal structure – such as the state or the family – that denied women individual rights. Representations of cousin marriage as an unfair familial demand presented to heroines as a female obligation necessary to maintain familial estates and wealth brought to light the hypocrisy of demanding obligation to a family structure that afforded women no rights within it. The need to maintain property within the family necessitated female compliance to demands for cousin marriage and subsequently rendered the property and wealth inaccessible by the married woman. The grounds on which cousin marriage permitted incest were thus exposed as benefitting the perpetuation of the family structure at the expense of women's rights, access to property, and potential citizenship within the family and the state. In spite of the causes for the socially acceptable nature of the relationship that would seem to designate cousin marriage as a conservative option, such unions in fact occupy a curiously versatile position in the Gothic. Because of the flexible nature of the cousin bond, its frequent depiction as akin to an egalitarian sibling-bond, the influence of familial pressure on cousin unions and the desires of the cousins, cousin marriage is capable of being presented as fulfilling a conservative obligation to the family or a radical rejection thereof.

In *Emmeline* Smith uses the cousin's role to represent the dangerous demands of family structures that require and deny notions of familial ties and obligations as it benefits them.[129] Emmeline's exogamic marriage rejects the false systems of power she would be subject to in a cousin marriage and refuses further entrapment within the family

---

[129] The institution of family thus comes to represent other forms of arbitrary power systems, such as the legal and political institutions.

structure.[130] Conversely, Roche's *Clermont* positions its heroine in a web of interrelated family members who desire that she marry her almost-double-cousin for financial as well as disinterested motives. The novel negotiates the demands of familial duty and individual choice, showing the dangers of both affinal and consanguineal bonds. Bennett's novel contends with questions of duty and choice by obliging the heroine to marry exogamically, saving the family estate, before privileging the sibling-like bond between adopted cousins as the basis for conjugal happiness.[131] Thomas's *Purity of Heart* is a conservative response to the sexually-charged *Glenarvon* and depicts parentally-advocated cousin marriage as free of the dangerous sexual desires of non-kin suitors, idealizing the heroine's child-like dependence on her husband and submission to consanguineal and conjugal duties. In contrast, Davenport's novel portrays parental demands as responsible for incompatible cousin marriages while deploying the role of the cousin as a suitor/relation, a potential mate with whom the heroine can engage in physical demonstrations of affection and flirtation without risking her reputation as similar actions with non-kin would. *Wuthering Heights* employs cousin marriage to expose the dangers of familial interference in spousal selection, locating Cathy and Hareton's upcoming nuptials in an environment devoid of family and familial obligations to demonstrate the necessity of cousins to marry removed from the traditional, destructive reasons for such unions. In *Jane Eyre* these inducements to cousin marriage are again revealed as meaningless as Jane rejects her cousin's loveless proposal based in his desire to preserve her reputation in favour of the vigorous and compatible Rochester.

The definition of incest taken from Shepher as mating between relatives who share family as far back as three generations clarifies that sexual relationships between cousins fall into this category.[132] Yet as Kuper suggests, individual selfishness (here, the united selfishness of patriarchal society) renders kinship bonds mutable.[133] The cousin is generally, socially and legally, an acceptable incestuous partner in a social system that, while often demanding the exchange of wealth and property, also requires in certain cases

---

[130] Pinker describes cousin marriages as unions that 'enmesh them [married cousins] in a network of triangular relationships' (34).

[131] This is portrayed in opposition to the exogamic male tendency to view woman as sexually desirable children, as demonstrated through Lord Claverton's attraction to Ellen, previously discussed in this chapter.

[132] Shepher, pp. 85-88.

[133] Kuper, 'Changing the Subject': 727.

its consolidation in a family. Typically when families grow small, male heirs in the direct line of descent are limited, or wealth is jeopardized, cousin marriage presents an attractive alternative to exogamy. Incest is not only justified, but also required in order to maintain the patriarchal structure of family, itself a microcosm of the wider patriarchal society. In the novels with more sentimental themes, such as Bennett's and Davenport's works, a compromise is achieved by balancing the demands of the family with individual choice. Texts that declare themselves as anti-Gothic or reacting against the Gothic, such as Thomas's novel, depict the heroines submitting to the obligations of family and surrendering individual choice and its connotations of sexual desire. In the more overtly Gothic or radical texts, such as those by the Bronte sisters, there tends to be a more complete rejection or acceptance of the cousin-as-suitor, showing that one must either throw off the bonds of kinship when making a spousal choice, or only select a cousin when there is no familial influence interfering with the choice.

The Gothic makes use of the role of the cousin to privilege the rights of the individual over the force of the family, even if the heroine chooses a cousin. The cousin demonstrates the changeable nature of definitions of kinship, capable of being recognized as family or rejected as outsider. The shifts in eighteenth-century definitions of the family demonstrate a similar evolution, a transition we can locate as contributing to the flexible status of the cousin role. How different Gothic novelists locate this figure as kin or non-kin reveals radical, conservative, or moderate views of the struggle between familial obligations and individual rights reinforced by the particular genre of Gothic (Radcliffean Gothic, anti-Gothic, sentimental Gothic). Entrenched within the kinship changes of eighteenth-century society, locating the cousin in or removing him from the patriarchal structure reveals him as alternately rejected or desired by the heroine who refuses to participate in the dominant ideology of patrilineal inheritance, exchanges of women, and demands of female obligation and duty.

Chapter Five

Queer Mothers: Female Sexual Agency and Male Victims

[O]n genetic grounds, mother-son incest should be the rarest, brother-sister more common, and father-daughter the most common.

Joseph Shepher, *Incest: A Biosocial View* (1983)[1]

In examining the occurrence of mother-son incest what is striking is just how infrequent examples of mothers and sons engaged in sexual relationships are, in both literature and life. And yet, as Karen Sanchez-Eppler states, 'If father-daughter incest has been found to be most prevalent in practice, erotic relations between mothers and sons have long dominated the symbolic discourse of incest'.[2] Her point is an important one that I believe illuminates a disjunction between the prevalence of scholarship featuring *Oedipus Rex* and Freud in discussions of incest and the actual limited occurrence of mother-son incest, particularly compared to father-daughter incest.[3] The disparity between the statistics on mother-son incest compared to those on other incestuous relationships is accounted for in biological terms by the genetic disadvantages of mother-son inbreeding.[4] Shepher's attempt to account for the rarity of mother-son incest through its corresponding low genetic gains moves from the biological to the social. Shepher argues that the incest inhibition proscribed by the maternal act of nurturance does not exist in mothers such as 'queens who did not have time for such every day activities, upper middle-class mothers who were too busy with shopping and philanthropic activities, and prostitutes who had to supply their clients.'[5]

The shift from emphasizing the incest taboo as biologically rooted to using a sociopolitical lexicon attempts to explain the conditions that lead to incest as both

---

[1] Joseph Shepher, *Incest: A Biosocial View* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 97.

[2] Karen Sanchez-Eppler, 'Temperance in the Bed of a Child: Incest and Social Order in Nineteenth-Century America', *American Quarterly*, 47:1 (1995): 9.

[3] Many scholars who study incest note that, while it is impossible to give clear numbers on rates of incest in society, estimates show boys are the victims in only 10% of the cases.
<http://www.faqs.org/health/topics/68/incest/html> [accessed 11 March 2011].

[4] Shepher, p. 97.

[5] Shepher, p. 113.

culturally created and unnatural. This positions mother-son incest as a failure of women to act according to their biological nature as a consequence of social conditions that enable (or force) them unnaturally to work or otherwise abdicate their maternal obligations. Locating the socially proscribed gender ideologies that render mother-son incest unlikely as being biologically grounded or natural exposes the same understandings of mother-son incest that have underpinned both literary representations of and scholarly discourse on the topic. The links between positions of power, non-maternal instincts and dangerous sexual promiscuity illuminate the sociopolitical investment in maintaining the myth of biologically determined gender ideologies. These ideologies, enforced by the mother's position as nurturer or deviant, are equally informed by the sexual politics of power and desire as described by scholars such as George E. Haggerty in *Queer Gothic* (2006), Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977) and Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1976). Examining the intersections of sexuality and power within the representations of mother-son incest in the Gothic reveals the complexities of the radical destabilizations of gender and heteronormativity occurring therein.[6]

Leo Bersani argues that attempts to subvert heteronormativity through sadomasochism fail because the nature of s/m is a reproduction of the power dynamics that it seeks to subvert.[7] Bersani uses the presence of sadomasochism within gay sexual culture to demonstrate that the power dynamics of this type of sexual encounter are connected to the overall ideology of power relationships in society. In troubling the idea of sadomasochism as a challenge to authority, Bersani exposes the inadequacies of mere rearticulations truly to subvert ideologies.[8] I believe Bersani's argument can be applied to literary portrayals of rearticulated ideologies to reveal the paradoxical nature of these depictions as challenges to heteronormativity. In this respect Bersani's argument is particularly profitable in terms of incest representations that present sadomasochist structures as inherent in incestuous relationships and in representations that reimagine

[6] Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1:1 (1993): 17-32. Butler examines 'the extent that homosexual attachments remain unacknowledged within normative heterosexuality', by interrogating desires, forms of sexuality and gender norms (25).
[7] Leo Bersani, 'Foucault, Freud, Fantasy, and Power', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 2 (1995): 18.
[8] Bersani: 18.

similar incestuous relationships devoid of these elements.[9] Bersani states: 'S/M profoundly – and in spite of itself – argues for the continuity between political structures of oppression and the body's erotic economy.'[10] This understanding reveals that the models of sexuality and power available in the Gothic allow writers not merely to rearticulate, but also to literalize the political structures of oppression through incest. Such literalizations subvert the structure of male power and dominance by revealing its dangers to the male and female bodies that do not conform to heteronormative ideologies of power and desire. The Gothic by writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Eliza Parsons challenges the notion of chaste maternity by revealing the mother as sexually desirable and aligning her rediscovery with her daughter's sexual awakening.[11] Gothic texts by writers such as Matthew Lewis, William Beckford, Eugenia de Acton and Charlotte Dacre rearticulate this subversion through a queering of desires that creates male victims of maternal desires or agency and disrupts cultural requirements of male dominance. Though these modes of the Gothic respond to the figure of the mother differently, both position her as aligned with sexuality and disruptive to heteronormativity's restrictive models of sexuality.

Heternormative fears of maternal sexuality are exacerbated by the idea that mothers could use sexual agency, in a socially disruptive way, to seduce, force or coerce their sons into a sexual relationship. As Susan McKinnon puts it: 'Where sexual intercourse is thought to involve the "naturally" assertive, even aggressive, agency of men and the equally "naturally" passive acquiescence [...] of women, it follows that paternal incest would be viewed in terms that stress its relative "normalcy" at the same time that maternal incest would be viewed in pathological terms.'[12] In reexamining

---

[9] That the so-called Female Gothic is closely aligned to what is known as Male Gothic when it represents instances of uncle-niece incest, which rely on literalizing power structures and their inherent violence in this relationship, while in father-daughter, brother-sister and cousin relationships these heteronormative structures are eliminated, demonstrates the inherent instability of such gendered generic distinctions.

[10] Bersani: 18-19.

[11] Examples of mothers used as objects of sexual desire in the Gothic include Olivia in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), Louisa Bruyere in Eliza Parsons' *An Old Friend with a New Face* (1797), Lady Correlia in Sarah Sheriffe's *Correlia, or The Mystic Tomb* (1802), and Camilla in Elizabeth Thomas's *Purity of Heart, or the Ancient Costume* (1816).

[12] Susan McKinnon, 'American Kinship/American Incest: Asymmetries in a Scientific Discourse', in *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*, eds. Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 42.

accounts that claim father-daughter incest is caused by the mother/wife's neglect of the family (for example, in seeking work outside the home for any reason, or if the husband is 'relegated' to traditionally wifely positions in the household such a child-minder or housekeeper) McKinnon reveals that such understandings view incest as 'caused' by the father/husband's relocation into a traditionally female function in the house. Why then is it so monstrous for women to commit incest when it is shown as a natural and logical consequence of their traditional position when this position is taken on by the husband? The horror 'with which women contemplate its [incest's] possibility, is due to the "naturally" nurturant role of women as mothers' that men do not possess, and so when forced into a role incompatible with their masculine 'nature', incest follows.[13] As McKinnon points out so succinctly, mothers are assumed incapable of assaulting their sons because 'they lack the sexual equipment necessary for direct sexual agency or assault. Without a penis women are assumed to be the acquiescent objects, not the active agents, of sexual acts.'[14] The idea of women as actively assaulting men sexually is such a troubling idea to normative definitions of female agency that the existence of such acts is often dismissed.[15] Though McKinnon is referring to the way modern Americans view the role of the mother, its applicability to the British eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic is aptly demonstrated in her assertion that: 'the only way to account for the contravention of the "natural" is by conjuring the "unnatural" – a woman whose intellectual deficiency or psychological pathology completely undermines her maternal nature.'[16]

This 'unnatural' mother, one capable of aggressive sexuality or sexual agency, is a figure often represented in the Gothic as a stepmother or similar relation. In this genre populated with incestuous relationships, mothers who are involved in sexual liaisons with their sons or daughters are hard to find.[17] Although Haggerty points to the erotic mothers

---

[13] McKinnon, p. 37.
[14] McKinnon, p. 37.
[15] McKinnon, p. 37.
[16] McKinnon, p. 40.
[17] Sexually aggressive women in the genre tend to appear as figures whose sexual liberality has disastrous consequences. Examples include Mrs Ashwood in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788), Maria de Vellorno in Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), Signora di Laurentini and Madame de Chenon in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), The Bleeding Nun in Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and the Countess of Dunreath in Maria Regina Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* (1800).

of Radcliffe's novels, he identifies an 'erotics of loss' rather than a physically or emotionally sexual relationship (though this does not preclude the possibility of a sexual element).[18] The heroine's birth mother is more often a victim of the patriarchy than a sexual aggressor.[19] Ruth Bienstock Anolik describes this latter type of mother as a figure in constant peril: 'the typical Gothic mother is absent: dead, imprisoned, or somehow abjected [... .] Those Gothic mothers who are not actually dead are effaced by their husbands or other representations of the patriarchy in some way.'[20] This analysis of the mother is particularly relevant to scholarly discourse positioning the Female Gothic in opposition to the Male Gothic as in the latter the mother is often rearticulated into the most 'unnatural' mother of all: the incestuous mother capable of aggressive sexual agency or the power to refuse sexual access to the female body. An overrepresentation of mother-son incest in the Gothic written by men – predominantly homosexual men – and frequently absent mothers in the Radcliffean Gothic is apparent. Scholars such as Toni Bowers, Felicity A. Nussbaum, and Ruth Perry have theorized that from the mid-eighteenth century onwards motherhood is characterized by the removal of the sexual from the maternal.[21] The Radcliffean Gothic reworks this tradition by removing the maternal from the narrative until the heroine can reclaim her mother as she simultaneously locates her own sexuality. The Gothic as written by authors such as Beckford, Lewis, and Horace Walpole responds to the mother by relocating her as the sexual centre of the text as victim or perpetrator, making the chaste maternal monstrous through mother-son incest. Representing mothers as capable of sexual aggression and holding positions of power, male bodies are revealed as vulnerable to aggression and capable of submission. This use of the sexually aggressive incestuous mother radically destabilizes the tradition of heteronormativity and conventional power dynamics that

[18] George E. Haggerty, *Queer Gothic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 32-37.
[19] We see such 'unnatural' mothers in more peripheral positions or as stepmothers in Gothic novels such as in Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Sheriffe's *Correlia; or, The Mystic Tomb*.
[20] Ruth Bienstock Anolik, 'The Missing Mother: The Meanings of Maternal Absence in the Gothic Mode', *Modern Language Studies*, 33:1/2 (2003): 25-26.
[21] For further analyses of the roles of mothers in eighteenth-century literature see Toni Bowers' *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Felicity A. Nussbaum's *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality and Empire in Eighteenth Century English Narrative* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) and Ruth Perry's *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748 – 1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

demand and naturalize male dominance and female submission. The Gothic, whether reclaiming the mother or demonstrating her sexual agency, exposes heteronormative society as at once creating and rejecting queer sexualities.[22]

Part of the title of E.J. Clery's essay on Walpole, 'the impossibility of female desire', summarizes the extent to which female desire is viewed as unimaginable, and as such, already queer, already placed outside the heteronormative realm, and thus transgressive.[23] Ruth Perry points out that 'gothic fiction [...] was written in the closing decades of the eighteenth century by women and homosexual men.'[24] Because of what we know of authors' sexual orientation and the genre's fixation on transgressive sexuality the application of queer theory to Gothic texts is one that has been widely made use of by scholars such as Max Fincher and Haggerty.[25] It seems particularly appropriate to apply this methodology to the instances of mother-son incest that combine the queerness of female desire with the queerness of male passivity and the queerness of incest. Bersani uses Foucauldian ways of thinking about pleasure to argue that the intolerance of homosexuality reveal: 'a more profound anxiety about a threat to the way people are expected to relate to one another, which is not too different from saying the way power is positioned and exercised in our society'.[26] If we replace the intolerance of queerness with the intolerance of incest, another type of sexuality that falls outside of the normative constructs, we can see how Bersani's point about anxieties regarding power relationships applies here. The incest that is the least heteronormative of all, I would argue, is mother-son incest, because of the reasons for its rarity advanced by sociologists, anthropologists and geneticists. Mothers using sexual agency to coerce their sons thoroughly disrupts traditional understandings of passive women and aggressive men and the maintenance of power implicit in these constructions. This type of incest, like homosexuality in Bersani's terms, reveals through its social production of intolerance, similarly profound anxieties

---

[22] The use of the mother to destabilize heteronormative ideologies demonstrates the correlation rather than opposition between texts positioned as part of a Male or Female Gothic tradition, and, I argue, suggests such distinctions lead to misreadings of plot and conventions.

[23] E.J. Clery, 'Horace Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* and the Impossibility of Female Desire', in *The Gothic: Essays and Studies*, ed. Fred Botting (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 23-46.

[24] Perry, p. 396.

[25] See Max Fincher's *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age, The Penetrating Eye* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and Haggerty's *Queer Gothic*.

[26] Bersani: 11.

about power and social relations. What appeals to me the most about Bersani's use of Foucault to shape an understanding of the social intolerance of homosexuality and my desire to apply it to incest intolerance (read: social revulsion) – particularly incest of the mother-son variety – is that it speaks to my overall argument regarding power relations in the Gothic. For if, as Bersani states, there are connections between 'the way we take our pleasure and the way we exercise power' then there must certainly be something seriously destabilizing to traditional power relationships – sexual and political – in the mere idea of mother-son sex.[27]

In order to explore the implications of the representations of mother-son incest I will analyze Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), a Gothic play involving mother-son incest in which the mother seduces her son on the night of her husband's funeral. The text unites a condemnation of the Catholic church with anxieties over inheritance and female sexual agency. Walpole's play is unique not only in the clear description of sexual intercourse between mother and son, but also in its convoluted publication history and contemporaneous condemnation. Though Walpole's work is a play, the representations of incest function very much like those of mother-son incest in the Gothic novels I analyze in part as a result of its treatment as tragic and the presentation of aggressive female agency. In Beckford's novel *Vathek* (1786), Vathek's mother Carathis is the epitome of maternal evil. Obsessed with the dark arts and, though celibate, overly focused on her son's sexual encounters, she is fixated on being admitted to hell with a near-sexual desire. Her ability to manipulate Vathek into evil-doings to promote their descent to the Halls of Eblis, where the forbidden can be known, is, in itself, an incestuous structure that highlights the dangers of mothers educating sons and positions female power as masculinizing. In Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) the titular character murders his mother in a sexually motivated act that Radcliffe will later rework in another violent and incestuous scene. I will also briefly discuss *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus: A Tale* (1819) by John Polidori, a novel in which Polidori, perhaps most famous for *The Vampyre* (1819) and his role as Lord Byron's personal physician, depicts twin siblings haunted by their mother. Polidori's novel represents the mother as an erotic and ghostly

---

[27] Bersani: 12-13.

figure, physically effaced while remaining maternal and seductive. In analyzing these texts and their accompanying criticism it becomes clear that the figure of the mother tends to be characterized in one of two ways: either as overly maternal or non-maternal. Both of these characterizations, in their incestuous incarnations, reflect an extension and conflation of the two functions already present for mothers in the Gothic: that of the nurturing good mother or the sexual bad mother. In combining and exaggerating these roles, Gothic writers trouble the either/or dichotomy of good or bad, virgin or whore, absent or present mother that tends to dominate examinations of the mother. In focusing on these particular Gothic texts that range from implied, explicit, and violent depictions of mother-son incest the absent or hyper-present mother becomes an impossible to ignore figure who disrupts traditional models of female sexuality and desire.

I.   The Mysteriousness of Mothers Having Desires

Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* is described by David Punter and Glennis Byron as a: 'tragic contemplation of human desire and suffering [...] a darker, more serious and more psychologically complex vision of what Edmund [...] calls "this theatre of monstrous guilt."'[28] The play depicts the Countess of Narbonne's incestuous relationship with her son Edmund and his subsequent incestuous relationship with his daughter/sister, Adeliza. On the night of her husband's funeral the Countess discovers her son has a rendezvous planned with a servant. She disguises herself as the servant, intending to chastise Edmund, but is instead overcome with desire based on Edmund's physical similarities to his father and has sex with him. Edmund is sent away to war and his mother has their child, Adeliza, who is raised in the nearby convent as the Countess's ward. The Countess maintains possession of the castle and property while Edmund fights in wars for the next sixteen years, returning home to fall in love with Adeliza and marry her. This prompts the Countess finally to reveal all and go mad. She stabs herself, after which Edmund rushes to die in battle as Adeliza is sent to a convent. The play has attracted much critical

---

[28] David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 169-70.

attention in part because of the agency of the mother in the incest scene, causing disagreement between scholars such as Robert Miles and Clery regarding the play's subversiveness or adherence to social and political institutions.[29] Regardless of the play's intention to uphold or ridicule the legitimacy of government and religious institutions, the figure of the mother, in her sexual agency, reveals anxieties about the female body as capable of having aggressive designs on unsuspecting (or passive) male bodies. The inversion of male/female gender ideologies and their respective sexual positions as aggressor or passive receiver is realized through the mother's desires and deviousness. Walpole queers the 'unnatural mother' of Gothic fiction into ultimately wielding the phallic sword on her own body in a final act of sexual aggression and suicide.

Contemporary criticism of the play is wide and varied; Haggerty points particularly to Coleridge's take on it: 'no one with a true spark of manliness, of which Horace Walpole had none, could have written it'.[30] Haggerty's reading places the 'unmanning' of Edmund as lying with the daughter-incest aspect of the plot: 'Just as Edmund, the play's hero, is unmanned by the news that his bride is in fact his daughter, Walpole's interest in this incest plot unmans him because it places him in lurid relation to the erotics of family life.'[31] The 'unmanning' is a consequence of Edmund's ignorance regarding the incest; he is 'unmanned' or 'feminized' by his ignorant and passive position. Haggerty believes that Walpole's presentation of incest as a spectacle reveals his sexuality as it positions Walpole 'outside the normativity that he would attack.'[32] Coleridge's criticism of Walpole and scholarly understanding of the play's status as a challenge to normativity speak to the queerness of the play's subject matter: incestuous relationships the male hero enters into unknowingly, and thus against his will. This

[29] Robert Miles believes the play upholds political institutions, arguing in *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (London: Routledge, 1993) that: 'the mother/son incest suggests the origin of this taboo is the nexus of father/church/state, the play's offended parties. As the Gothic aesthetic insists (through its idealization of Romance) these taboos are rationally rooted in a providential nature, supporting political and familial legitimacy' (p. 119) while Clery finds the play resistant to its contemporaneous political hegemony.
[30] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1835), I, p. 154; reprinted in *Horace Walpole: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Peter Sabor (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 148; quoted in George E. Haggerty, 'Psychodrama: Hypertheatricality and Sexual Excess on the Gothic Stage', *Theatre Research International*, 28:1 (2003): 21.
[31] Haggerty, 'Psychodrama': 21.
[32] Haggerty, 'Psychodrama': 21.

'disgusting' subject matter – men capable of victimization at the hands of active female agents – was alluded to by Walpole himself.[33] In a June 1791 preface to the play Walpole writes that the author: 'is sensible the subject is disgusting […] all the favour the author solicits, or expects, is, to be believed how unwillingly he has submitted to its appearance'.[34] Walpole's protests at letting the material out into the world unwillingly are substantiated by his hesitation to have it performed and perhaps also influenced by the play's reception as by the time he wrote the preface the play had been circulating for over twenty years.

Jeffrey N. Cox questions Walpole's hesitation to have the play performed as follows: 'the assumption has always been, from Walpole forward, that the play was unstageable because it presented mother-son incest'.[35] Cox points to the play as suggesting that the absence of religion leads to unrestrained and terrifying sexuality. But Walpole's own discussion of rationality and sexual urges seems more an ironic treatment of conventional sexuality than a commentary on the tragedy of the unrestrained. In his postscript Walpole describes the rational and irrational aspects of the play: 'in order to make use of a canvas so shocking, it was necessary to palliate the crime, and raise the character of the criminal […] the moment in which she has lost a beloved husband, when grief and disappointment, and a conflict of passions might be supposed to have thrown her reason off its guard' (87). Walpole attempts to justify the Countess's act of sexual agency by emphasizing her grief, highlighting a lack of reason that 'might be' behind the incestuous encounter. But what Walpole really intends regarding the Countess's actions can perhaps be understood by his further postscript: 'I here place my fable at the dawn of the reformation; consequently, the strength of mind in the Countess may be supposed to have been borrowed from other sources, besides those she found in her own understanding' (88). Walpole explains that the Countess's reason is beyond that found in typical weak (female) understanding and fixes on the historical context of the reformation

---

[33] Marcie Frank, 'Horace Walpole's Family Romances', *Modern Philology*, 100:3 (2003): 418. Frank argues that Walpole was aware of his play's themes being 'subsum[ed] under the rubric of sexual perversity and homosexuality.'

[34] Horace Walpole, *The Mysterious Mother. A Tragedy.* (London: 1791), iii. Subsequent references will be given in the text. The play does not include line numbers. References cite act, scene, and page number.

[35] Jeffrey N. Cox, 'First Gothics: Walpole, Evans, Frank', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 46:2 (2010): 121-22.

and its surrounding emphasis on free will. The explanation – which combines references to the Countess's strength of mind while describing her as irrational from grief – is curiously ambivalent. Nowhere in the play does Walpole expose the strong-minded mother as influenced by anything other than rational thought or desires. His explanation of her as deranged by grief thus becomes specious at best; a palliation designed to appease rather than be believed.

Such half-hearted explanations are hardly unique to Walpole's postscript; John Polidori makes a similar assertion in his novel *Ernestus Berchtold*. Written decades after Walpole's play it too features themes of mother-son and brother-sister incest. Polidori claims in his introduction:

> A tale that rests upon improbabilities, must generally disgust a rational mind; I am therefore afraid that, though I have thrown the superior agency into the back ground as much as was in my power, still, that many readers will think that the same moral, and the same colouring, might have been given to characters acting under the ordinary agencies of life; I believe it, but I had agreed to write a supernatural tale, and that does not allow of a completely every-day narrative.[36]

Both authors make sure to emphasize their distance from the 'disgusting' nature of their works, clarifying the impact of either grief or supernatural agency on their characters and their actions. The distinction frequently made between the explained supernatural and supernatural Gothic tales seems less important than the use authors made of these different elements to effect (or to claim to effect) the same end: abdicating responsibility for what readers would see as the disgusting subject matter of mother-son desires. The rejection of rational thinking Cox sees as a tragedy (perhaps even a tragic failure on the part of Walpole) is in fact Walpole's deliberate positioning of rational and irrational elements in order to justify before disrupting the generic conventions of female agency and rationality.

The play's combination of tragedy, tale, satire and comedy resembles the generic mixture I observed in relation to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764).[37] In his postscript Walpole wrote: 'The subject is so horrid, that I thought it would shock, rather than give

---

[36] John William Polidori, *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus. A Tale*, (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819). Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[37] In chapter 1 I discuss *Otranto*'s blending of forms as creating a sort of Gothic political parody.

satisfaction […] the subject is more truly horrid than even that of Oedipus' (84-85). Clery describes Walpole's delayed revelation of incest in the play as essential to its tragic effect which enabled incest to be depicted without offending audiences: 'incest as it appears within this literary schema was by no means shocking to polite theatre goers of the eighteenth century'.[38] But the Reverend William Mason, a contemporary of Walpole's who read his manuscript, found the agency of the mother objectionable: 'In Mason's view the Countess sacrifices all claims to pity by her active sexuality, her voluntary commission of incest'.[39] Such a rejection of the Countess's agency shows the desire to privilege tragedy as the appropriate mode in which to portray incest. Clery's point that 'the reconstruction of the tale as a tragedy was an acknowledgement that in an age of sensibility, stories of female sexuality could only end in disaster' demonstrates that Walpole's blending of forms reveals that society conceives of female sexual agency as disastrous.[40] This adherence to viewing incest as tragic is described by Frank as a critical failure: 'Considering that high tragedy has been the privileged mode in Freud's centring of sexuality in the family through incest and its prohibitions, it is not altogether surprising that psychoanalytic accounts have failed to appreciate Walpole's parodic family romances'.[41] Incest itself is not repugnant as a theme but the structural changes Walpole uses to depict it are because they destabilize the traditional messages conveyed in incest tales or tragedies.[42]

While Clery's conclusions rely partially on Walpole's delayed revelation of incest, I argue that Walpole establishes secrecy and sexual transgression on the Countess's part from the beginning of the play, self-consciously offering the reader (or viewer) the idea of incest early on. A conversation between monks discussing the Countess establishes their belief that a sexual transgression is the reason for her self-

---

[38] Clery, p. 32. Clery analyzes the differences between the incest tale and the incest tragedy, defining incest tales as bourgeois conduct lessons and incest tragedy as representative of larger social chaos and attributable to no personal fault (p. 31).
[39] Clery, p. 26.
[40] Clery, p. 37.
[41] Frank: 428.
[42] Clery, p. 32. Similarly, Jill Campbell in her article '"I Am Not A Giant": Horace Walpole, Heterosexual Incest, and Love Among Men', *The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 39 (1998) writes of the incestuous references in Walpole's letters and works that: 'their most surprising feature has to do with tone: these stories are consistently given comic or satiric rather than Gothic or high tragic treatment' (243).

imposed constant prayer and atonement without confession. Benedict says of the Countess's devotion for penance of this secret sin: 'this woman was not cast in human mould' (1.2: 7). The monk unwittingly voices the church's perception of the incest that prompts her devotion as monstrously unnatural. Edmund says of his mother: 'she herself was woman then, a sensual woman. Nor satiety, sickness and age, and virtue's frowardness, had so obliterated pleasure's relish – she might have pardoned what she felt so well' (2.1: 18-19). He believes that his mother, a 'real' woman with sexual desires, would have forgiven his sexual trangression with the maid. Edmund compares his active male sexuality to that of his mother. He says that after his night with Beatrice his mother changed: 'her heart, never too partial to me, grew estrang'd. Estrang'd! – aversion in its fellest mood scowl'd from her eye, and drove me from her sight. She call'd me impious: nam'd my honest lewdness a profanation of my father's ashes.' (2.1: 19). The anger Edmund feels from the Countess after that night follows a lifetime of maternal indifference and neglect.[43] Edmund thinks the sexual intercourse he engaged in was 'honest lewdness' and does not understand that his mother's overreaction is caused by her guilt, though it is clear to the reader that something serious is at play here. Edmund has fought in wars and is weary of his mother's banishment: 'to stain my sword with random blood' (2.1: 21) no longer pleases him; he wants to return home. Walpole uses the Gothic metaphor of sword for penis in a typically bloody image, uniting it to incest via Edmund's desire no longer to stain his sword with foreign blood but to return it to his native soil, into the sheath, as it were, of family.

The argument that the revelation of incest is a shock at the play's ending becomes strained under the repetition of sexual allusions united to images of the mother, father and home; the reader expects some sort of incestuous reveal. Cox points to the Countess as a sexual being with passion for her husband: 'It was this passion that hurled her into the arms of her son'.[44] While Cox's language ignores the mother's agency in the sexual act, implying she was mindlessly propelled by passion rather than cunningly disguising herself to deceive her son into sex, the play suggests this incestuous agency from the very

---

[43] Clery points to this crucial difference between Walpole's Countess, who lacks maternal feeling, and other mothers in incest tales who typically have strong maternal bonds with their sons prior to the incest (p. 36).

[44] Cox: 133.

start. Peter, the porter of the castle, says of the Countess regarding her deceased husband: 'I marvel not my lady cherishes his remembrance, for he was comely to fight, and wondrous goodly built. They say his son Count Edmund's mainly like him.' (1.2: 4). Peter's description counters Cox's tendency to overlook the Countess's action; comparisons between the physical appearances of family members, particularly cross-generation, often cause sexual desires.[45] Walpole's descriptions of the Countess desiring her son based on his 'wondrous' physical similarities to his father are intended to draw attention to her sexual desires. The Countess calls herself a monster and describes her sins as unheard of, as 'horrors', and says of Edmund: 'has not a mother's hand afflicted you enough?' (3.1: 36). It is apparent her deeds are taboo transgressions rather than typical sins, and she acknowledges her own agency by her reference to her hands as the cause of Edmund's miseries. Her agency inverts traditional paradigms of sexuality by casting her as the aggressor. When the Countess asks Adeliza if she loves her suitor (unaware it is Edmund) she replies 'yes, with such love as that I feel for thee. His virtues I revere: his earnest words sound like the precepts of a tender parent: and next to thee, methinks I could obey him' (3.2: 41). Adeliza compares her love for Edmund to that for her mother; a strong indication that her passionate love is based partly in unconscious familial recognition. By loading their speeches with the language commonly preceding familial or incestuous revelations, Walpole provides the play's readers and viewers with a context with which they would have been familiar.

A challenge to patriarchal power comes, as it often does, in the form of inheritance disruption. Clery finds in the Countess 'hints that female desire […] might be impervious to the social desiderata of sexual reproduction and the patriarchal family, that it might even be at war with them.'[46] The disruption that female desire presents to the patriarchal family is manifested in the disordering of patrilineal inheritance caused by the Count's love for his wife. This excessive love, resulting perhaps from the Countess's noted strong sexual desire for her husband, puts her in the unusual position of power in

---

[45] Mary Shelley's *Matilda* (1959) also employs the convention of similar physical characteristics between mother and daughter to presage the father's incestuous desires for his daughter as does Sheriffe's *Correlia, or the Mystic Tomb* (1802) while Emily Bronte uses cross-generational doppelgangers in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) partially to explain sexual attraction.
[46] Clery, p. 36.

her role as mother and wife.[47] Anolik writes: 'Gothic representations of marriage as dangerous and confining to the wife, and of motherhood as resulting in the disappearance of the mother, work to literalize and thereby reveal the horror implicit in two legal principles that governed the lives of women in England through the middle of the nineteenth century: *coverture* and primogeniture.'[48] Because the Countess defies this disappearance through the inheritance disruption, she becomes a highly dangerous figure: this rearticulation of the power structure has successfully destroyed the tradition of primogeniture.[49] Frank ties the inheritance of property to the inheritance of transgressive desires that she describes as perversions: 'the very means by which Edmund seeks to secure his patrimony invalidate it; his desire to marry Adeliza, his own daughter, reveals that in place of his father's estate, he has inherited his mother's perversion'.[50] This description of incest as an inherited trait bears resemblance to the generations of incest in other Gothic novels such as Regina Maria Roche's *Clermont* (1798) and Selina Davenport's *The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl* (1818), but Frank sees it as a perversion rather than the deliberate disruption of inheritance structures that it is. Edmund's naïve hope that a marriage to Adeliza might reconcile his mother with him gestures ironically towards this genealogy of past and future incestuous acts: a multi-generational destruction caused by uncontrollable desires.

The consequences of the Countess's sexuality and sexual agency, which have already proved inimical to patrilineal inheritance, continue to derange social structures. Clery writes: 'the incest which is a consequence of female desire must blow the family apart.'[51] The Countess, who believes Edmund is dead, faints upon seeing him alive. Edmund says: 'stand off, and let me clasp her in my arms! The flame of filial fondness shall revive the lamp of life, repay the breath she gave, and waken all the mother in her soul' (3.4: 45). Of course, Edmund's 'filial flame' is the precise 'fondness' that has led to his banishment and the loss of his mother. On reviving, the Countess repeatedly asks if

---

[47] Clery cites 'conjugal passion' as responsible for the Countess's replacement of Edmund as his father's heir (p. 36).
[48] Anolik: 26.
[49] Frank makes a similar argument to Anolik, noting that 'incest blocks inheritance', pointing to incestuous behaviour as threatening to the proper means of transferring wealth and property (417).
[50] Frank: 420.
[51] Clery, p. 37.

Edmund is Narbonne, a confusion of husband and son that confirms the idea that this conflation has happened before. Clery's point about Walpole's blending of the two types of incest narratives is evident here; Walpole implies a confusion or mistake between Edmund and his father (as occurs in incest tragedy), but it is by design (as in the incest tales) that the Countess has slept with her son.[52] The Countess asks Edmund: 'art thou my husband wing'd from other orbs to taunt my soul? What is this dubious form, impress'd with ev'ry feature I adore, and every lineament I dread to look on! Art though my dead or living son?' (3.4: 46-47). The confusion underscores the physical likeness and desirability of both father and son. When the Countess pulls away in horror from Edmund he says: 'to thy eyes I seem'd my father, at least for that resemblance-sake embrace me', to which his mother replies: 'horror on horror!' (3.4: 47). It becomes clear that this confusion between father and son brings back the memory, now horrifying, of the Countess's sexual transgression with her son. Walpole plays with the possibility of adhering to the tragic form, but it is already here implied that this text's seeming adherence to the accidental nature of incest in its tragic form has been undercut by the Countess's agency and desires.

The Countess further troubles convention in her use of the knife/metaphoric penis of Gothic fiction. When she reveals her daughter is the child of sin she says: 'pity would bid me stab thee' (4.4: 60). She is tempted to wield the phallic knife usually found in the hands of violent male aggressors against her daughter, but does not. Rather than simply invert the paradigm of male aggression and violence, Walpole implicitly acknowledges the limits of such inversions. Instead, Walpole mirrors the incest act by having the Countess take the sword from Edmund and stab herself with it. When the Countess explains her actions to her son she says she was in a state of grief and disappointed desire for her dead husband: 'my fancy saw thee thy father's image [...] while thy arms twin'd, to thy thinking, round another's waist, hear, hell, and tremble! – thou didst clasp thy mother!' (5.6: 80-81). Edmund's reply reveals his impotency to act against his mother: 'my dagger must repay a tale like this! Blood so distemper'd – no – I must not strike – I dare not punish what you dar'd commit' (5.6: 81). The Countess orders him: 'Give me

---

[52] Clery, pp. 30-32.

the steel – my arm will not recoil!' (5.6: 81). As she stabs herself with Edmund's sword, the Countess takes agency, again, away from her son in a final act of suicidal, metaphorical rape. The play concludes with Edmund rushing off to war as he commands the clergy to take Adeliza to become a nun.[53] He says: 'to th' embattl'd foe I will present this hated form – and welcome be the sabre that leaves no atom of it undefac'd' (5.7: 83). He commits his 'hated' and fetishized body – hated for its submission to his mother's sexual agency and for its likeness to his father that made him the victim of maternal desires – to death by sabre. It is no coincidence that Edmund's attempt at suicide is a final act of submission to the sword of an other – this time, a male. His inability to perform the act himself is concretized in these lines as is the mysterious, disastrous, gender-neutralizing results of female sexual agency that disempower the male at the hands of the mother. Beckford takes up these notions of male disempowerment caused by an active mother in *Vathek*, wherein transgressions of gender ideologies pervert the natural development of masculinity and femininity.

II.   The Evils of Maternal Influence

William Beckford, an Englishman notorious in his own time for his love affairs with adolescent males and his immense fortune, wrote the Oriental Gothic novel *Vathek*, which frequently has been analyzed in relation to Beckford's sexuality and his relationship with his mother.[54] Though scholars such as Roger Lonsdale have questioned the designation of the novel as Oriental, Donna Landry argues that for Beckford, 'an Orientalized eroticization of everyday life offered a licence for transgression, and a

---

[53] This is somewhat similar to Mary Robinson's Gothic novel *Vancenza; or, The Dangers of Credulity* (1792), in which the lovers discover they are siblings just before their wedding; the sister dies of a fever and the brother joins the army, the implication being that he hopes to die in battle.
[54] Rictor Norton, 'William Beckford: The Fool of Fonthill', *Gay History and Literature*, updated 16 Nov. 1999 <http://www.rictornorton.co.uk/beckfor1.htm> [accessed 21 March 2011]. Norton describes the autobiographical elements of *Vathek*, noting similarities between Carathis, the mother in the novel, and Beckford's own mother.

means of protesting against English society by pursuing queerness in various forms.'[55] It is this 'Orientalized eroticization' that forms the basis of *Vathek*, a work preoccupied with transgression and queerness. Landry's analysis of *Vathek* points to Beckford's 'attraction to things that are horrifying [...] and the illicit pleasure associated with that attraction' and underscores the extent to which the novel is discussed in light of its author's sexuality and personal life.[56] The novel follows the journey of the Caliph Vathek, who is a 'most curious' man 'much addicted to women' with 'indulgencies unrestrained',[57] on his descent into hell. *Vathek* fluctuates between focusing on the Caliph's desires for adolescents and his use as the tool of his manipulative and evil mother, Carathis.[58] Carathis, while given influence and importance in the narrative, is presented as evil, immoral, and wicked in her desires. Carathis is incapable of maternal feelings and has incestuous desires towards Vathek that become apparent in her intrusions into his sexual relationships and her control over him. Fincher points to Carathis's 'implied incestuous desire for her son' as being located in her hatred of his lover, but I argue it is grounded in her position of gender-ambiguous power and her corruption of the chaste ideal of motherhood.[59] Maternal desires are presented as uncontainable and dangerous forces with sexual connotations, highly disruptive and transmitted to the son via the powerful influence of the mother's position.

Beckford aligns the insatiable appetites of Vathek and his mother with sexuality but depicts the mother's to be a darker, more evil and destructive type that involves the control and manipulation of her son. Carathis is described as 'wicked, as woman could be' (29), a woman 'passionately attached [...] to the infernal powers' (31). Vathek is aware of his mother's unrestrained appetite for experiments in the dark arts and makes

[55] Donna Landry, 'William Beckford's *Vathek* and the Uses of Oriental Re-enactment', in *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context*, eds. Saree Makdisi and Felicity A. Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 175.
[56] Landry, p. 169. Landry also links the work with the Gothic: 'reliving in memory and imagination, the ruinous and doomed give Beckford's writing a certain affinity with the Gothic' (p. 169).
[57] William Beckford, *Vathek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-2. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[58] D.S. Neff includes in his article 'Bitches, Mollies, and Tommies: Byron, Masculinity, and the History of Sexualities', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11:3 (2002): 395-438 a useful bibliography on Beckford's homophilia, citing Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) and Adam Potkay's 'Beckford's Heaven of Boys', *Raritan*, 13.1 (1994): 73-83.
[59] Fincher, p. 85.

sure she is sated while he goes away. 'Take care to supply whatever her experiments may demand' (37), says Vathek to his mother's servant. He tries to keep her satisfied, to appease her appetite by giving her a male substitute.[60] We are told that Carathis 'enjoyed most whatever filled others with dread' (90). This description is similar to the words Calantha uses in Elizabeth Thomas's *Purity of Heart; or, The Ancient Costume* (1816) when she describes her potential for incestuous love: 'As if love is not twenty times more attractive, when it is forbidden, and sinful.'[61] Calantha's words, like the description of Carathis, are used to display the monstrous and dreadful appetites of these women for the transgressive. Carathis's manipulation of Vathek is clear in places where she is shown as the only person capable of reasoning with him when he is in a rage: 'her tears and caresses called off his attention' (8). Her depiction as capable of soothing and controlling Vathek encompasses male and female gender ideologies; she possesses the ability to soothe her son's passions but does so to use him to attain a position of power.

Similarities in representations of rampant sexual or deviant appetites, evil or witch-like behaviour, manipulative and power-seeking desires are part of the myth established by a threatened patriarchy to denounce and destroy any non-conforming woman in a position of power. The rhetoric is similar in the propaganda Lynn Hunt identifies as depicting Marie Antoinette as having monstrous sexual appetites that led to incest: 'a creature whose voracious sexuality knows no limits and no gender differentiation (or, for that matter, class differentiation).'[62] Fincher describes Carathis as a mother who: 'connotes deviance and a dominant sexuality, traditionally associated with masculinity.'[63] All transgressive sexualities are united as dangerous in their non-heteronormative queerness. Fincher writes: 'Throughout the eighteenth century the term

---

[60] Marie Mulvey-Roberts offers an excellent treatment of Gothic women and the consequences of their 'excessive desire to know' in her chapter 'From Bluebeard's Bloody Chamber to Demonic Stigmatic', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, eds. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 98. Mulvey-Roberts' analysis of forbidden knowledge makes use of Georges Bataille's assertion that transgression and taboo are inseparable, a notion readily applicable to Carathis's quest for knowledge. This appetite for forbidden knowledge is also discussed in Landry's chapter in which she argues Carathis's 'quest for occult knowledge becomes itself a field sport' (p. 189).
[61] Elizabeth Thomas, *Purity of Heart; or, The Ancient Costume, A Tale, In One Volume, Addressed to the Author of Glenarvon* (London: W. Simplin & R. Marshall, 1816), pp. 175-76.
[62] Lynn Avery Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 115.
[63] Fincher, p. 84.

"monstrous" was used a constructive synonym for the bodies and desires of queer men', a point that strengthens the link between monstrous as descriptive of the transgressive nature of both mothers and queer men.[64] Homosexuality, much like voracious female sexuality, was linked to a dangerous blurring of gender, class, power and sex threatening to the patriarchy, and found (re)articulation in the Gothic.

Carathis's appetites are portrayed in a deliberately ambiguous sexual/asexual light, affording her words and actions sexual and incestuous hints within a patently nonsexual framework. Part of this nonsexual framework is built upon descriptions of Carathis as described as 'chaste', although these foundations are destabilized by their conjunction with her deliberate self-insertion into her son's sex life.[65] In a scene rife with actions emblematic of the tearing of a hymen, Carathis enters a tented pavilion area where her son is bathing with his teenage lover. 'Carathis [...] broke through the muslin awnings and veils of the pavilion [... .] Carathis, still seated on her camel, foamed with indignation, at the spectacle which obtruded itself on her chaste view' (93). Carathis performs a traditionally male act in this scene as she not only penetrates the veils but then 'foams' with indignation on viewing her son and his lover together.[66] Fincher describes this scene as establishing Vathek's virility through a spectacle or performance but I would contend that it is rather destructive to the ideas of masculinity and male virility.[67] The consummation is frustrated by the intrusion of the mother. It is her self-insertion that denies Vathek's insertion, rendering him impotent rather than virile and positions the mother as more masculine than the son. Much like the Countess in Walpole's play, Carathis is loaded with the aggressive agency usually only wielded by men and it makes her monstrous.[68] This is not the first time Carathis has attempted to control or restrain Vathek's passions. When the evil Giaour restored Vathek's health, Vathek 'leaped upon the neck of the frightful Indian, and kissed his horrid mouth and hollow cheeks, as though

---

[64] Fincher, p. 69.

[65] Landry points to Carathis's chasteness as an allusion to Diana, the huntress (p. 189).

[66] A scene similar to this is found in Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) in which a brother's attempts to penetrate mysterious passageways in his sisters' room are frustrated by his inability to force through the barrier.

[67] Fincher, p. 74.

[68] Alethea Brereton Lewis's novel *Nuns of the Desert; or, The Woodland Witches* (1805) includes a similarly power-hungry and sexually voracious mother, Beatrice, who has affairs with young soldiers while she colludes with her husband's and son's plans to sexually assault the young friends of her daughters.

they had been the coral lips and roses of his most beautiful wives. Nor would these transports have ceased, had not the eloquence of Carathis repressed them' (15). Here Carathis inserts herself between two men, cutting off a scene of potential same-sex desires before it leads further. Carathis, the bad mother, acts as a barrier to a homoerotic experience, repressing her son's enthusiastic embrace of the Indian with her own overflowing words.

Vathek sees Carathis's evil nature as the reason for his ultimate eternity in the hellish underworld, the Palace of Eblis. He ignores his own appetites, desires, and actions that led him to commit acts of murder and torture, blaming his damnation on his mother. Carathis has driven him towards acts of extreme violence, like the mother in Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806), who, Haggerty concludes, has a murderous nature and is responsible for her daughter's inability to have a significant relationship.[69] Haggerty's reading locates the mother as a powerful figure who controls the sexual development of the child in her absence or presence, a notion Vathek seems to subscribe to in his mother-blame.[70] Vathek says: 'the principles by which Carathis perverted my youth, have been the sole cause of my perdition!' (115). Carathis's 'perverted' education of Vathek has caused his eternal sufferings. Vathek further heaps blame on Carathis when she is brought to Eblis's palace: 'execrable woman! […] cursed be the day thou givest me birth! [… .H]ow much I ought to abhor the impious knowledge thou hast taught me' (117). The knowledge imparted by the mother is impious and cursed; the mother who has desires for power will inevitably fail as an educator because such knowledge from a woman will always be tainted by its nonconformity. Carathis, unlike Vathek and Nouronihar, is undeterred by the terrible things she sees in the palace or the words of the condemned Soliman; instead: 'nothing appalled her dauntless soul' (118) and 'she even attempted to dethrone one of the Solimans, for the purpose of usurping his place' (119). This final attempt to usurp the ultimate male position of power is ultimately denied. Carathis, in spite of her lack of fear or penitence, immediately turns into one of the countless wanderers of the palace, whose

---

[69] Haggerty, *Queer Gothic*, p. 74. Haggerty views Victoria's shortcomings as the ultimate consequence of having a mother who does not provide the bond that allows for female-female, non-heteronormative (and thus safe, non-sadomasochistic) desires to form.

[70] Haggerty's use of this Freudian model to read Carathis requires a nurturing mother for healthy psychical development, a model of maternity that McKinnon assesses as based on a flawed ideology.

hearts are consumed by fire and in eternal agony. Again, comparisons to the paradigm of
the voracious, monstrous mother of sociological understandings of incestuous mother-son
relationships are easily drawn. As Landry argues, Carathis is 'the character whose
excesses exceed even her son's [...] the power behind the throne, this mother of all
caliphs and sultans.'[71] Carathis seems the epitome of the conceptualizations of mothers
who McKinnon describes as displaying 'a sexual agency that is fully active and
aggressive, one that does not display "proper" female reserve, control, and modesty.'[72]
Much like Fincher's description of queer men who endanger 'the authenticity and
stability of masculinity or femininity', Carathis's assumption of traditionally masculine
qualities troubles such gender ideologies.[73] Beckford channels Carathis's aggressive and
unfeminine appetite into a desire for power, the dark arts and forbidden knowledge and
her representation is aligned with that of the uncontrolled, unmotherly incestuous mother.

This voracious mother is continually indicated as responsible, through her
unmotherly urgings and non-maternal neglect, for her son's actions and his sexual desires
and appetites.[74] Vathek's insatiable desire for Nouronihar stems, in part, from his ability
to view her as a mother substitute as a consequence of her relationship with her
cousin/lover, Gulchenrouz, with whom she has an eroticized maternal bond. Gulchenrouz
is described as a highly effeminate male who 'seemed to be more feminine than even
herself [Nouronihar]' (66). Positioned as a feminine child, Gulchenrouz treats Nouronihar
as a mother: 'nestling, as usual, in the bosom of Nouronihar, [he] pouted out his
vermillion little lips against the offer of Sutlememe; and would take it, only, from the
hand of his cousin' (68). Vathek describes him angrily as an emasculated infant and asks
Nouronihar's father: 'would you surrender this divine beauty to a husband more
womanish than herself [...] a girl dressed up like a boy' (74-75). He is highly aware of
Gulchenrouz's child-like dependence on Nouronihar, who treats her lover as a son,

---

[71] Landry, p. 188.
[72] McKinnon, p. 40.
[73] Fincher, p. 68.
[74] That Beckford's portrayal of Vathek shares similarities with scholarly readings of the heroine's
psychosexual development in the Female Gothic as related to imagining bad fathers – see Diane Long
Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes*
(Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p. 56 – or relocating good mothers – see Haggerty, *Queer
Gothic*, p. 31; Robert Miles, *The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.
106 – further troubles the Gothic's division into Male, Female or Queer categories.

representing the good mother whom Vathek lacked. The Caliph's desire for her increases on seeing her maternal interactions with her cousin/lover as he wants both her maternal nurturance and desires her sexually.

The depictions of Nouronihar and Gulchenrouz are reimagined in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) in the relationship of the maternal Cathy and her effeminate, sickly, cousin/lover Linton, who is equally despised by the masculine and powerful Hareton. It is also possible to view Vathek's desire for Nouronihar as a substitute for his same-sex desire for the adolescent, child-like Gulchenrouz. We have already seen Vathek engaged in a scene with naked male youths when the Giaour demands the blood of fifty beautiful, noble-born children.[75] Vathek plots to feed them to the voracious Giaour by having a competition: 'the fifty competitors were soon stripped, and presented to the admiration of the spectators the suppleness and grace of their delicate limbs' (25-26). He commands the crowd to let the boys come to him one by one as he has a gift for each, starting with his jewels and 'to the rest, each a part of my dress, even down to my slippers' (26), giving away pieces of his attire to the naked and beautiful boys as he throws them (he believes) to the cannibalistic genie. Vathek's violence and transgressive sexuality are revealed to be the product of both his innate desires and his mother's demands and show his willingness to feed the monstrous, taboo appetites of individuals who command him to do so.

Ultimately, McKinnon's conclusion about the assumptions made regarding mother-son incest can be seen in Beckford's portrayal of the dominant and 'masculine' Carathis and the effects of this voracious mother on Vathek. 'Descriptions of maternal incest offenders often stress that these women [...] are sexually compulsive, indiscriminate, and conspicuous. The sexuality of incestuous mothers is more "male" than "female"'.[76] McKinnon demonstrates that maternal incest is blamed on a non-traditional family structure: an overwhelming mother and a passive father who does not pose enough of a 'castrating fear' in his son; the father is condemned for his passivity, the mother for her agency, and maternal incest is again shown as a consequence of

---

[75] Fincher argues that Vathek's interactions with the fifty children and with Gulchenrouz are metaphoric of sexual desires and penetration (pp. 73-76).

[76] McKinnon, p. 40.

'unnatural' gender positions in the home. Carathis is delineated as the aggressive and powerful mother, one who has taken on the function of the absent father in a way that causes the disastrous miseducation of Vathek. In her attempts to seize power and gain knowledge she exercises witchcraft and drives her son to acts of violence that have clear sexual undertones. Her deliberate and active presence in his sexual relationships causes incest by proxy. Beckford's mother-son relationship reveals impossible to resolve anxieties over the figure of the mother, her influence and power, and control over her son's sexuality and education. This rearticulation of power dynamics results in a display of misplaced appetites and aggressions revealed as violent and voracious as those of the traditional structures.

Carathis's assumption of the father's role and her control of her son's sexuality are reworked in Lewis's *The Monk*. Lewis employs Elvira, the chaste and ideal mother turned active protector of her daughter, and Matilda, the image of the Virgin Mother who corrupts and incites her 'son' to ever greater sexual depravities, to depict the two extremes available to the maternal role.

III. The Danger of Mothers Denying Male Pleasure

Matthew Lewis's novel *The Monk* traces the descent of the pious monk Ambrosio into evil after being corrupted by the beautiful, gender-ambiguous Matilda/Rosario, into murdering his mother and raping and murdering his sister. Matilda, the exact image of the Madonna painting to which Ambrosio prays, epitomizes both the chaste ideal of motherhood and the ultimate monstrous, evil mother in her sexual corruption of Ambrosio. Anolik's point about the effacement of women after marriage and motherhood in the Gothic is perhaps nowhere more apparent than when Ambrosio murders his mother in an attempt to remove her as an obstacle to his rape of her daughter.[77] Peter Brooks

---

[77] Anolik argues Elvira 'must be disposed of before the narrative can follow its course [...] the author of the equally exciting and equally deviant Gothic text feels threatened by the presence of the normalizing and censoring mother' (27).

points to these scenes of rape and murder as culminating in 'disgust' and contextualizes the novel's exposure of repression's consequences, illuminating the relevance of both feminist and queer readings of the text.[78] In finding her mother and restoring her in the family, Anolik argues that Radcliffe alters traditional eighteenth-century narratives positioning the mother as the daughter's enemy.[79] Lewis's removal of the mother inverts the Radcliffean model (itself a reversal) of locating and reuniting with the mother. In its representations of violence and sexual assault Lewis's use of incest resembles the violent usurpation of female wealth and title by uncles, wherein female positions of power are attacked by younger-brother uncles intent on acquiring the dominance denied them by social institutions.[80] Lewis's depictions of mothers reiterate the implicit violence of heteronormativity and the consequences of institutional demands for conformity.

Bersani's examination of political structures of oppression evidenced through the body in sadomasochism is seen in Ambrosio's sexually-charged murder of his mother. In this scene bodily oppression is depicted via the suffocation of the mother, a literalization of the political institution's oppression of female agency. The attack is a physical manifestation of the ideology of male dominance over female bodies and effaces the mother's textual presence. Elvira challenges the dominant hegemony by taking on the traditionally male role of protector and, in her defence of her daughter, denies her son's sexual desires. Ambrosio's violent aggression stems from his adherence to the ideology privileging male (sexual) power we have seen, not only historically and within the Gothic, but also in the scholarly accounts that understand mother-son incest as monstrously unnatural. In this context, Ambrosio's actions are the consequence of heteronormative ideology. The murder Ambrosio commits in order to rape his sister is rife with erotic, incestuous undertones and sadomasochism.

> [W]ith one hand he grasped Elvira's throat so as to prevent her continuing her clamour, and with the other dashing her violently upon the ground, he dragged her towards the bed [...] snatching the pillow from beneath her daughter's head,

---

[78] Peter Brooks, 'Virtue and Terror: *The Monk*', *ELH*, 4:2 (1973): 259. Brooks analyzes the novel as part of its contemporary movement in which authorial revelations of repression and its consequences underpinned many texts.
[79] Anolik concludes that this causes the Gothic to be of ongoing use to writers desirous of subverting the patriarchy (32-40).
[80] See chapter 3 for an examination of representations of uncle-niece incest in the Gothic.

covering with it Elvira's face, and pressing his knee upon her stomach with all his strength, endeavoured to put an end to her existence [... . L]ong did the sufferer struggle to disengage herself; but in vain. The monk continued to kneel upon her breast, witnessed without mercy the convulsive trembling of her limbs beneath him, and sustained with inhuman firmness the spectacle of her agonies.[81]

The murder is described in sexual language that implies a desire similar to that of Ambrosio for his sister. Not only does the scene occur in a bedroom, but Ambrosio also uses a pillow from his sister's bed to smother his mother, symbolically uniting the murderous attack with the sexual one.[82] Kneeling on his mother's breast as she vainly struggles beneath him, convulsing and trembling, Ambrosio 'sustained with inhuman firmness' this spectacle. These words are laden with sexual connotations and are more descriptive of a scene of rape than murder. While the incestuous aspect of his crimes is yet unknown to Ambrosio, their existence causes Lewis's work to posit violent incest and matricide as the result of a patriarchal ideology. But in spite of the clear aggressive, sexually motivated attack, many scholarly accounts deliberately overlook the implicit incest here.[83]

Steven Blakemore mentions only that Ambrosio is 'the aggressive killer of his mother'[84] and nothing about the incestuous relevance of this scene, of the sexual desires and language that position Ambrosio as more than just a killer. Blakemore is not alone in ignoring the incestuous subtext. In analyzing the differences between Lewis's scenes of violence and Radcliffe's, Vartan P. Messier writes that 'in contrast to Radcliffe, Lewis is considerably more daring [... .] By making unprecedented use of transgressive elements, his strategy is one of unconcealed, unadulterated shock and horror.'[85] While Messier notes the connection between sex and violence in the scene of Antonia's rape and murder he concludes that Radcliffe: 'substituted Lewis' incest episode [...] by having Schedoni

[81] Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. Tom Crawford (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), p. 199. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
[82] Ambrosio's smothering of his mother is equally a (sm)othering of his (m)other in that the murder renders his biological parent forever unknowable to him; he permanently others his other mother.
[83] This is similar to how scholars frequently overlook the incestuous threat in Radcliffe's reworking of this scene in *The Italian* (1797), discussed in greater detail in chapter 3 of this thesis.
[84] Steven Blakemore, 'Matthew Lewis's Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in *The Monk*', *Studies in the Novel*, 30:4 (1998): 528.
[85] Vartan P. Messier, 'The Conservative, the Transgressive, and the Reactionary: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* as a Response to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*', *Atenea*, 25:2 (2005): 39.

spare Ellena when he realizes she might be his daughter.'[86] The really interesting thing about these critical comparisons of Lewis and Radcliffe is the way they overlook the incestuous implications in either one or both of these scenes. Messier's deliberate placement of Radcliffe's scene as outside the incestuous framework is meant to attest to its correspondence to a kinder, gentler (Female) Gothic novel than Lewis's. Of course, Radcliffe's representation of the evil Schedoni's very phallic knife that so nearly penetrates his niece's dress just as closely literalizes sex and violent aggression as Lewis's novel does. In claiming that Lewis makes 'unprecedented use of transgressive elements' Messier ignores the many spectacles of incest and violence in earlier Gothic novels by Radcliffe and others. Scholarly reproductions of the positioning of Radcliffe as writing a weak, feminine Gothic novel in comparison to Lewis's aggressive male version mirror the gender ideologies these Gothic writers strove to disrupt.

Images of disgust at female bodies dovetail remarkably neatly with Haggerty's understandings of male forms in peril. Haggerty's argument that 'abject, passive masculinity challenges the status quo with the "disgusting" proposition that some men are victims too […] expos[ing] the crack in normative masculinity'[87] illuminates how writers of the Gothic use the genre to explore the dangers of heteronormativity for men as well as women. After Ambrosio's murder of Elvira, her body becomes disgusting, a thing of repulsion to him: 'Ambrosio beheld before him that once noble and majestic form, now become a corpse – cold, senseless, and disgusting' (199). He is similarly disgusted by the body of his sister, Antonia, once he has raped her, and becomes repulsed by Matilda after he has had sex with her. Haggerty's treatment of the fetishized male allows us to see how these writers based the model for the fetishization of the wounded or vulnerable male body on the effaced figure of the mother. The figure of the wounded, murdered, imprisoned and/or emaciated mother literalizes the dangers of heteronormative society that dictates the legal and social subjugation of women.[88] Similarly, Haggerty finds Lewis's inversions fetishize male bodies, citing the emaciated and chained body of

---

[86] Messier: 41-42.
[87] Haggerty, 'Psychodrama': 32.
[88] Anolik: 23-46.

Reginald in Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (1797) to argue: 'the lurid discovery here is the spectacle of pale, broken, and effectively castrated masculinity.'[89]

Haggerty argues that the spectacle 'exposes the vulnerable centre of heteronormativity itself'[90] just as Anolik's arguments point to this function of the imprisoned or absent mother. Anolik focuses on the mother's role in exposing the realities of legal and social conventions that cause the erasure of women, while Haggerty locates the violence implicit in such representations. Both arguments demonstrate the importance and ambivalence surrounding the figure of the mother. Using Joanna Baillie's *De Montfort* (1807) as an example, Haggerty argues that the play's homoerotics are eventually replaced with incest and demonstrate Baillie's work's similarity to 'Walpole's fascination with similar tropes'.[91] These culturally inscribed representations of mother, incest and wounded male are merged in the Gothics written by Lewis, Beckford, Dacre, Baillie and Walpole to show the similar subjugation and vulnerability of or violence towards those outside of heteronormative culture.[92] In this sense, the mother and the man who defies normative sexuality share many of the same qualities (the mother/whore dichotomy is similar to the masculine man/non-masculine way that Coleridge describes Walpole) and are thus subject to the same treatment. The queering of the Gothic becomes a crucial mode of theorizing the role of the mother and understanding her placement in the genre, as well as allowing us to view depictions of similarly positioned men in a more complex way.

While some scholars, such as Blakemore, understand *The Monk*'s conclusion and Ambrosio's death at the hands of the demon as Lewis's correction of a dangerous inversion, such a stance privileges the very gender ideologies that Lewis subverts. Blakemore concludes: 'writing [...] when the French Revolution seemed to be inverting the "natural" order of things, Matthew Lewis, in the end, restores the natural order'.[93] The 'natural order', simultaneously upheld (through an aggressive male act of sexual

---

[89] Haggerty, 'Psychodrama': 23.
[90] Haggerty, 'Psychodrama': 23.
[91] Haggerty, 'Psychodrama': 31.
[92] Dacre's *Zofloya* shows the impact of the sexually aggressive mother on the daughter in ways akin to Walpole, Beckford, Lewis and Baillie's fetishized male victims, which is why I include her here in spite of her representation of a mother-daughter relationship.
[93] Blakemore: 536.

violence) and inverted (through the eventual revelation of the transgression) via the incestuous murder of his mother and rape and murder of his sister seems far from restored. It is at the novel's end that the first mention of incest is made when the virgin/whore mother turned gender-ambiguous demon says: 'That Antonia whom you violated was your sister! That Elvira – whom you murdered gave you birth! Tremble, abandoned hypocrite, inhuman parricide, incestuous ravisher!' (289). Ambrosio ignores the disclosure, complicating how the revelation should be treated; he is uninterested in the aspect of his crimes revealed as incestuous and instead worries that he will be killed by the demon. His attitude toward his mother correlates to a line in Walpole's play in which Benedict says of the Countess: 'I cannot dupe, and therefore must destroy her' (4.1: 51). The passage summarizes the way Ambrosio comes to murder Elvira – she sees through his mask of piety – and the attitude of patriarchal institutions towards women who defy them. Blakemore's conclusion points to Lewis's novel as ultimately upholding the dominant social institutions and ideologies that contributed to the incestuous rape and murders because it ignores the presence of mother-son incest. However, I argue that Lewis's unifications of murderous and incestuous desires indicate that the novel is extremely critical of such institutions.

Ambrosio's discovery of his mother's identity reinforces his guilt for his destruction of the eroticized, subversive mother who held the key to his identity.[94] As we have repeatedly seen in the Gothic the heroines' quests for their maternal origins are always linked to their ultimate happiness. But in the case of Lewis and Polidori the heroine's quest is inverted into the villain/hero's discovery of the dead rather than of the living: knowledge only concretizes these men's incapability of having a maternal figure. Polidori links the ghostly apparitions of Ernestus Berchtold's mother with the yearnings and desires experienced by the titular character, uniting sexual desires to an immaterial presence impossible to realize them with. Polidori describes the appearance of Berchtold's mother in ghost form as: 'a figure; I cannot describe it to you. Arrayed in a dress foreign to these mountains, her white drapery, breathed on by the wanton breeze,

---

[94] Anolik points to the mother as subversive through her categorically dangerous position, being neither virgin nor whore (30). See also Kelly A. Marsh, 'Jane Eyre and the Pursuit of the Mother's Pleasure', *South Atlantic Review*, 69:3/4 (2004): 85, in which Marsh argues 'the mother's story is potentially subversive.'

now betrayed the delicate form of her limbs, – now hid them from my sight.'[95] These authors place their male characters in the framework of incestuous mother-son relationships while denying the presence or realization of desires to which the very structure of the relationships and depictions attests. Diana Wallace emphasizes the importance of the mother to lineage and identity in the Female Gothic, if often as a ghost or haunting presence.[96] The further disruption of paternity through missing or dead fathers makes impossible the villains' ability to legitimize their desires through knowledge of their fathers; as demonstrated in *Vathek* and *The Mysterious Mother* it forces their development in regards to the unknowable mother. This type of inversion and reversal of the Radcliffean Gothic show the conjunction between what are viewed as two distinct modes of gendered Gothic writing. Rather than functioning as separate genres, the Gothic texts analyzed in this chapter use similar methods to those explored in the rest of this thesis, one model relocating the missing mother to reclaim a matriarchal tradition, and the other eliminating the mother in order to show the paradoxical inevitability and impossibility of queer desires in a heteronormative ideology.

Mother-son incest, the most abhorred incestuous relationship of all, is unilaterally viewed as highly unnatural and the least beneficial by sociologists, geneticists and anthropologists. But, as McKinnon points out, this most taboo of forbidden relationships seems to dominate the discourse on incest even while it remains the least practiced. The idea of female sexual agency as incompatible with motherhood in particular, and women generally, contributes to this type of incest being positioned as the most horrifying. When Haggerty's observation that the 'disgusting' notions of male victims in the Gothic are assessed in conjunction with the horror of mother-son incest, a clearer picture emerges. Male victims of sexual assault or abuse are disgusting, particularly so at the hands of a woman who is meant to be a passive maternal ideal. The queerness of active, sexually aggressive mothers, like representations of chained and fetishized male bodies, disrupts conventional gender ideologies. The Gothic as written by Radcliffe, Parsons, and Roche tends to locate the mother as the missing meaning of self rather than as a sexual

[95] Polidori, p. 19.
[96] Diana Wallace, '"The Haunting Idea": Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, pp. 26-41.

aggressor. Concerned with exposing the dangers of patriarchy and heteronormativity to women, these texts have less need to use mother-daughter incest as a convention because society demands female victimization through its ideology of legally and socially sanctioned violence against and domination of women. Gothic texts by authors such as Baillie, Dacre, Polidori, Beckford, Walpole, and Lewis depict the mother as either the instigator or victim of incestuous sexual desires, employing mother-son incest to demonstrate the inability of heteronormative society to acknowledge male victims. These authors make spectacles of sexuality in which men are dominated or manipulated by the figure patriarchal society typically positions as the most passive, most invisible, least powerful and least capable of sexual agency of all: the mother. The figure of the mother, while seeming to fulfil irreconcilably different roles in what have been viewed by scholarship as the two types of Gothic, really provides in both a subversion of the constraints imposed by heteronormative society and its gender and sexual ideologies that reveals the categories of Male and Female Gothic as ultimately reductive. Destabilizing traditional power relationships, the figure of the incestuous mother is eventually recovered, and it is at her mysterious, active hands that fetishized male bodies remain constant victims. Such a destabilization remains paradoxical in its rearticulation of the power structures it disrupts, inverting the normative to stress heteronormative society's simultaneous and perpetual construction and destruction of queer sexualities.

Conclusion

Incest and Beyond

[T]he female gothic novelist constructs female characters who masquerade as professional girl-women caught up in an elaborate game of playacting for the benefit of an obsessive and controlling male *gaze*.

Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (1998)[1]

This thesis has sought to bring to light the variety of incestuous configurations in the Gothic. In order to do this, I have relied not only on existing literary scholarship, but also on a broad methodological approach that includes anthropological, political, philosophical, legal, and scientific insights. Such insights are useful as they enable readings that expose how different incestuous relationships engage with eighteenth-century concerns of family, social obligation, individual rights, inheritance laws and desire, and trouble traditional feminist readings that equate most representations of incest with the dangers of patriarchy. I have sought to illuminate the breadth of incestuous relationships and the anxieties with which they are united, and also to open up new lines of enquiry for Gothic scholarship as a whole. The fruits of this broad methodology are evidenced through recent works on the Gothic such as Andrew Smith and Diane Wallace's *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (2009). This collection of articles, all of which, to different ends, explore the Gothic while paying close attention to scholarship's traditional views on Gothic tropes and using a range of analytical tools, demonstrates

---

[1] Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p. 4. Hoeveler, while claiming to resist the trend of criticism to 'participate in the very fantasies that the genres have created for their unwary readers', nonetheless asserts a new master-narrative for the Female Gothic, arguing it 'accomplishes the cultural work of group fantasy for women' (pp. 4-10). Rather than attempt to move away from a genealogy of Gothic scholarship only to create one equally constraining, I have attempted instead to offer new approaches and raise questions regarding Gothic conventions – of both the genre and its scholarship.

how this approach is essential to rejuvenating Gothic studies and in bringing fresh perspectives to the foreground of the field.[2]

In examining the Gothic it becomes essential to recognize the genre as an unwieldy one that resists homogenizing gestures of gendering either in its contemporary reception or in later corrective attempts by scholarly readings.[3] In moving away from accounts of a gendered, Female Gothic and the equally restrictive counter categories of Male Gothic or Queer Gothic in order to examine a broader cross-section of the genre and its representations of incest, this convention's traditional location in scholarship – as a metaphor for parental and patriarchal threats – is problematized. My desire is not, however, to attempt to reject the earlier scholarship on the Gothic that uses the term the Female Gothic; the wealth of criticism on the Female Gothic has enabled the subversive potential of the genre to be reclaimed and evaluated in highly profitable ways. Nor do I wish to distance myself from the feminist perspective that has allowed incest to be understood as an abuse of power reflective of patriarchy's control over female bodies. Instead, I hope that my work shows that such an understanding is merely one of the ways in which incest has been deployed by Gothic writers, and that by opening the genre up in such a way that gender and sexuality are not the primary categories of analysis, further paradigms become visible.

Rather than offer a final word on the role of incest in the Gothic, I wish instead to raise here some further questions, to provoke further discussion and debate on generic conventions and to propose an ongoing troubling of traditional scholarly perspectives. To this end, instead of attempting to assert a new narrative on incest in the Gothic, it seems more profitable to construct a broad and flexible approach towards analysis that can in turn be applied to other generic conventions and the genre as a whole, and avoids the danger of becoming entrenched within the sometimes claustrophobic narrative of Gothic

---

[2] Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, eds. *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[3] See the 'Introduction' to this thesis for an examination of the Gothic's early reception and how the genre's eighteenth-century positioning as divided along distinct gendered lines contributed to later scholarly readings of the Gothic as such.

criticism.[4] In employing approaches to the Gothic that resist labelling it within a Male/Female subdivision or radical/conservative binary, scholarship can avoid essentialist understandings that risk repositioning the genre on the literary sidelines. Similarly, it can provide new insights into the concerns and anxieties explored through generic conventions as common to writers of either gender and various political and religious beliefs, in such a way as to reveal that eighteenth-century explorations of natural rights and laws, female desire, inheritance, social and familial structures, egalitarian relationships and the distribution of power were not schematically determined by an author's gender or political or religious affiliations.

The Gothic's exploration of these issues through the convention of incest reveals a preoccupation with how institutions of power (be they political, legal, religious or patriarchal) deny freedom through systematic oppression and violence that is almost always sexualized. In what amounts to a prefiguring and disruption of Foucault's defense of s/m as a radical reimagining and sexualizing of unequal power in society, the Gothic reveals that power relations inevitably sexualize the body of the subordinate.[5] It is almost impossible to discuss the Gothic without the benefit of feminist theory and its contributions to various methods of scholarly analysis. Because so much feminist theory is itself grounded in the principles of the Enlightenment which the Gothic frequently sought to undermine in its representations of incestuous desires – individual rights and obligation to family – analyses grounded in or influenced by feminism have certain limitations.[6] In forging new ground on which to conduct future examinations of the

---

[4] Lauren Fitzgerald in her chapter 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, pp. 13-25 points to the binary of male/female oppression found in Gothic plots as replicated through the conventions of feminist criticism that seeks to liberate the Female Gothic from its marginalization by earlier male critics.

[5] See Foucault's statements regarding s/m in 'An Interview: Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity', *Advocate*, 400 (August 7 1984): 26-58; and Leo Bersani's argument that the fundamental problem in Foucault's claim that acting out sexualized reversals of dominant-subordinate power relations is a challenge to the social hierarchies of power is that such reproductions are themselves respectful of the 'dominance-submission dichotomy' without questioning fully the value of structures of power or the inherent eroticism therein, 'Foucault, Freud, Fantasy, and Power', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 2 (1995):15-17.

[6] Felicity A. Nussbaum describes the Enlightenment as 'the defining moment for European and North American feminism' in *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 207. I argue in chapter 4 that Gothic depictions of cousin marriage frequently challenge the Enlightenment positioning of women as obliged by

genre, it is important to understand and analyze, rather than to ignore and leave behind, previous modes of approaching the Gothic and the socio-historical conditions and events that gave rise to them. In so doing, the genealogy of Gothic scholarship – its different but related families, if you will – becomes itself a revealing method of examining the Gothic's literary and historical significance and its ongoing position as an object of fetishized scrutiny.

The Gothic's location as such has informed my discussion of representations of incest within the genre. Working against traditional understandings of the Gothic as preoccupied with deviant or aberrant sexuality, I seek instead to expose such labels as couched in the language of heteronormativity that the Gothic itself denied.[7] While scholarship on the Gothic was reinvigourated through its reclamation by feminist critics that helped to establish the genre's importance as an intervention into the contemporary debates of the eighteenth century, incestuous representations remain largely understood as offering only one mode of resistance – that of exposing patriarchal threats. In using a variety of incestuous configurations, Gothic writers reify the dual constraints exerted by family and society, the imbrication of power, desire and violence, the potential for egalitarian conjugality, denials of male victimization and female desire and the exchange of women. Their concerns are embedded within incestuous desires and violations, underscoring how familial structures reproduce social rules and engaging with contemporary debates regarding the nature of kinship and individual rights. In these representations, Gothic writers offered resistance to the heteronormative demands that would deny any desires with the potential to subvert the economy of exchange necessary to patriarchy and the erotic aestheticization of violence implicit in the control of those

---

society to raise model citizens while simultaneously denying women equal citizenship, protection and rights.

[7] See Ruth Perry's discussion of the Gothic's 'point' being 'to evoke a nameless, foreboding dread of sexual danger' in *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 389; Philip Hallie, *The Paradox of Cruelty* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969); Alan Richardson, 'Rethinking Romantic Incest: Human Universals, Literary Representations, and the Biology of Mind', *New Literary History*, 31:3 (2000): 553-72 and 'The Dangers of Sympathy: Sibling Incest in English Romantic Poetry', *Studies in Literature 1500-1900*, 25:4 (1985): 737-54; and Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), pp. 10-15.

resistant to the normative. The Gothic is not limited to designations such as 'male', 'female' or 'queer' but offers, as a whole, sites of subversive rebellion for all those disenfranchised or forced into subordinate, silenced and sexualized positions. In examining representations of incest, I wish not only to participate in the ongoing analysis of the genre's challenge to heteronormativity, but also to contribute to opening up analysis of the Gothic through a broad methodology that reinvigourates and reevaluates traditional scholarly paradigms of Gothic conventions, of incest and beyond.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

[Anon.], *Adeline; or the Orphan*, 3 vols. London: W. Lane, 1790.

[Anon.], *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, X (1794).

[Anon.], *The Critical Review, or, The Annals of Literature*, XXVII (1799).

[Anon.], *Montrose, or the Gothic Ruin, A Novel*, 3 vols. London: R. Dutton, 1799.

Ash, John, *The new and complete dictionary of the English language. In Which All the Words are introduced, The Different Spellings preserved, The Sounds of the Letters occasionally distinguished, The Obsolete and Uncommon Words supported by Authorities, And the Different Construction and Uses illustrated by Examples. To which is prefixed, a comprehensive grammar. By John Ash, LL.D. Author of Grammatical Institutes; or, An Easy Introduction to Dr. Lowth's English Grammar. In Two Volumes*, 2 vols. London: Edward and Charles Dilly; and R. Baldwin, 1775, vol. I.

Austen, Jane, *Mansfield Park* (1814), ed. Margaret Drabble. New York: Signet, 1996.

—— *Northanger Abbey* (1817), ed. Deborah Rogers. New York: Signet, 1995.

—— *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), ed. Claudia L. Johnson. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002.

Barrington, George, *Eliza, or The Unhappy Nun: exemplifying the unlimited tyranny exercised by the abbots and abbesses over the ill-fated victims of their malice in the gloomy recesses of a convent. Including The adventures of Clementina, or The constant lovers, a true and affecting tale*. London: Tegg and Castleman, 1803.

Beckford, William, *Vathek* (1786), ed. Richard Lonsdale. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Behn, Aphra, *The Dumb Virgin; or, The Force of Imagination* (1700), in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992, vol. 3, pp. 335-60.

Bennett, Anna Maria, *Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress. Interspersed with Anecdotes of a Nabob*, 4 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1785.

———— *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel*, 4 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1794.

Blackstone, William, *Commentaries on the laws of England. Book the first. By William Blackstone, Esq. vinerian professor of law, and solicitor general to her majesty*, 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765, vol. 1.

———— *Commentaries on the laws of England. Book the second. By William Blackstone, Esq. vinerian professor of law, and solicitor general to her majesty*, 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1768, vol. 2.

Bronte, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre* (1847), ed. Stevie Davies. London: Penguin Classics, 2006.

Bronte, Emily, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), ed. Pauline Nestor. London: Penguin, 2003.

Burney, Frances, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, Author of "Evelina," "Cecilia," &c. Edited by Her Niece*, ed. Charlotte Barrett, 7 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1842, vol. 3.

Byron, George Gordon Lord, *Manfred* (1816), in *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome McGann, 7 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, vol. 4.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 2nd edn., ed. Henry N. Coleridge. London: John Murray, 1836.

Dacre, Charlotte, *Zofloya; or, The Moor: A Romance of the Fifteenth Century* (1806), ed. Adriana Craciun. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1997.

Davenport, Selina, *The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl*, 4 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1813.

Defoe, Daniel, *Moll Flanders* (1722), ed. Edward H. Kelly. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973.

Fielding, Henry, *The Welsh Opera: or, the Grey Mare the better Horse*. London: E. Rayner, 1731.

Fuller, Anne, *The Convent: Or, The History of Sophia Nelson,* 2 vols. London: T. Wilkins, 1786.

Haywood, Eliza Fowler, *The Force of Nature; or, The Lucky Disappointment* (1724), in *Secret Histories, Novels and Poems*, 2nd edn., 4 vols. London: Dan Browne and S. Chapman, 1725, vol. 4.

Helme, Elizabeth, *Louisa; or, The Cottage on the Moor*, 2 vols. London: G. Kearsley, 1787.

Hervey, Elizabeth, *The Church of St. Siffrid*, 4 vols. London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797.

Holford, Margaret, *Warbeck of Wolfstein*, 3 vols. London: Rodwell and Martin, 1820.

Inchbald, Elizabeth, *A Simple Story*, 4 vols. London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1791.

Jamieson, Frances, *The House of Ravenspur, A Romance*, 4 vols. London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1822.

Keats, John, *The Complete Works of John Keats Vol. 5, Letters, 1819-1820*, ed. H. Buxton Forman. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1901.

Kelly, Isabella, *The Abbey of Saint Asaph*, 3 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1795.

———— *Madeline; or, The Castle of Montgomery*, 3 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1794.

———— *The Ruins of Avondale Priory*, 3 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1796.

Ker, Anne, *Emmeline; or, The Happy Discovery; A Novel*, 2 vols. London: J. Bonsor, 1801.

———— *The Mysterious Count; or, Montville Castle. A Romance,* 3 vols. London: D. N. Shury, 1803.

Lamb, Lady Caroline, *Glenarvon*, 3 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1816.

Lee, Sophia, *The Recess; or, A Tale of Other Times*, 3 vols. London: T. Cadell, 1785.

Lewis, Alethea Brereton, *The Nuns of the Desert: or, The Woodland Witches*, 2 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1805.

Lewis, Matthew Gregory, *The Monk* (1796), ed. Tom Crawford and 'Introduction' by E.A.Baker. New York: Dover Publications, 2003.

Maturin, Charles Robert, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), ed. Victor Sage. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Meeke, Mary, *Palmira and Ermance: A Novel*, 3 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1797.

Millar, John, *Observations Concerning the Distinctions of Ranks in Society*. London: W. and J. Richardson for John Murray, 1771.

Moore, George, *Grasville Abbey, A Romance,* 3 vols. London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797.

Parsons, Eliza, *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), ed. Devendra P. Varma. London: The Folio Press, 1968.

—— *The Mysterious Warning, A German Tale* (1796), ed. Devendra P. Varma. London: The Folio Press, 1968.

—— *An Old Friend with a New Face: A Novel*, 3 vols. London: T. N. Longman, 1797.

—— *The Peasant of Ardenne Forest: A Novel*, 4 vols. Brentford: P. Norbury, 1801.

—— *The Valley of St. Gothard, A Novel*, 3 vols. Brentford: P. Norbury, 1799.

Polidori, John William, *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus. A Tale*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819.

Radcliffe, Ann Ward, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. A Highland Story*. London: T. Hookham, 1789.

—— *The Italian* (1797), ed. Deborah Rogers. New York: Penguin, 1995.

—— *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), ed. Bonamy Dobree. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

—— *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), ed. Chloe Chard. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

—— *A Sicilian Romance,* 2 vols. London: T. Hookham, 1790.

Reeve, Clara, *The Old English Baron* (1777). Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2007.

Richardson, Samuel, *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady* (1748), ed Angus Ross. New York: Penguin, 1995.

—— *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), ed. Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Robinson, Mary, *Vancenza; or, The Dangers of Credulity,* 3rd edn., 2 vols. London: the authoress, 1792.

Roche, Regina Maria, *The Children of the Abbey*, 4 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1796.

—— *Clermont*, 4 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1798.

—— *Nocturnal Visit: A Tale,* 3 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1800.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Emile, or On Education* (1762), trans. by Alan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

———— *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right* (1762), trans. by G. D. H. Cole. New York: Cosimo Inc., 2008.

Scott, Sarah, *The History of Cornelia*. London: A. Millar, 1750.

Scott, Walter and J. W. Lake, *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, With a Sketch of His Life*. Philadelphia: J. Crissy and Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1838.

Sharp, Granville, *A Tract on the Law of Nature, And Principles of Action in Man*. London: B. White and E. and C. Dilly, 1777.

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein* (1818), ed. J. Paul Hunter. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995.

———— *Matilda* (1820) ed. Janet Todd. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992.

Sheriffe, Sarah, *Correlia, or the Mystic Tomb. A Romance*, 4 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1802.

———— *Humbert Castle, or The Romance of the Rhone. A Novel*, 4 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1800.

Smith, Charlotte, *Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle*, 4 vols. London: T. Cadell, 1788.

Sleath, Eleanor, *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798), ed. Devendra P. Varma. London: The Folio Press, 1968.

Stuart, Augusta Amelia, *Cave of Toledo; or, The Gothic Princess. A Romance*, 5 vols. London: The Minerva Press, 1812.

Taylor, Sarah, *Glenalpin, or the Bandit's Cave*, 2 vols. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, and S. Wilkin, Norwich, 1828.

Thomas, Elizabeth, *Purity of Heart, or the Ancient Costume, A Tale, In One Volume, Addressed to the Author of Glenarvon*. London: W. Simplin and R. Marshall, 1816.

Walpole, Horace, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), ed. E.J. Clery. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

———— *The Mysterious Mother. A Tragedy* (1768). London: 1791.

Weston, Anna Maria, *Pleasure and Pain, or the Fate of Ellen; A Novel*, 3 vols. London: Thomas Tegg, 1814.

Wollstonecraft, Mary, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798), ed. Janet Todd. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992.

─────── *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), ed. Miriam Brody.
Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992.

2.   SECONDARY SOURCES

Adler, Jerry, Anne Underwood and Marc Bain, 'Freud in Our Midst', *Newsweek* 147:13
(March 27, 2006).
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=20199528&si
te=ehost-live> [Accessed 20 May 2009].

Alexander, Richard D., *Darwinism and Human Affairs*. Seattle: University of
Washington Press, 1979.

Anderson, Nancy Fix, 'Cousin Marriage in Victorian England', *Journal of Family
History*, 11:3 (1986): 285-301.

Anolik, Ruth Bienstock, 'The Missing Mother: The Meanings of Maternal Absence in the
Gothic Mode', *Modern Language Studies*, 33:1/2 (2003): 24-43.

Åkesson Lynn, 'Bound by Blood? New Meanings of Kinship and Individuality in
Discourses of Genetic Counseling', in *New Directions in Anthropological
Kinship*, ed. Linda Stone. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001, pp. 125-38.

Ash, Angie, *Father-Daughter Sexual Abuse: The Abuse of Paternal Authority*. Bangor:
University College of North Wales, 1984.

Backus, Margot Gayle, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice,
and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999.

Bailey, Joanne, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-
1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

─────── Review of Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in
English Literature and Culture 1748-1818*. (H-Albion, H-Net Reviews. June
2006) <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11824> [accessed: 30
March 2011].

Baker, E. A., 'Introduction' to Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. Tom Crawford.
London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1907; repr. New York: Dover, 2003.

Ballaster, Ros, *Fabulous Orients*: *Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Barry, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*. New York: New York University Press, 1978.

Batchelor, Jennie, *Women's Work*: *Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750-1830*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.

Bateson, Patrick and Peter Gluckman, *Plasticity, Robustness, Development and Evolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Battestin, Martin C., 'Henry Fielding, Sarah Fielding, and the "Dreadful Sin of Incest"', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 13:1 (1979): 6-18.

Beer, Gillian, '"Our Unnatural No-voice": The Heroic Epistle, Pope, and Women's Gothic', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 12 (1982): 125-51.

Bell, Vikki, *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault and the Law*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Bereczkei, Tamaz with Petra Gyuris, and Glenn E Weisfeld, 'Sexual Imprinting in Human Mate Choice', *Proceedings of The Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 271 (2004): 1129-34.

Bersani, Leo, 'Foucault, Freud, Fantasy, and Power', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 2 (1995): 11-33.

Bird, Benjamin, 'Treason and Imagination: The Anxiety of Legitimacy in the Subject of the 1760s', *Romanticism*, 12:3 (2006): 189-99.

Bittles, A.H., 'A Background Summary of Consanguineous Marriage', unpublished manuscript, Centre for Human Genetics. Perth: Edith Cowan University, 2001.

Blakemore, Steven, 'Matthew Lewis's Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in *The Monk*', *Studies in the Novel*, 30:4 (1998): 521-39.

Botting, Fred, ed. with Dale Townshend, *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 2004.

———— 'Introduction' to *The Gothic: Essays and Studies*, ed. Fred Botting. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001.

———— *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Bower, Bruce, 'Oedipus Wrecked: Freud's Theory of Frustrated Incest Goes on the Defensive', *Science News*, 140:16 (1991): 248-51.

310

Bowers, Toni, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680-1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Brewer, William D., 'Unnationalized Englishmen in Mary Shelley's Fiction', *Romanticism on the Net*, 11 (1998) <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/mwsfiction.html> [Accessed 12 May 2009].

Brickman, Julie, 'Female Lives, Feminist Deaths: The Relationship of the Montreal Massacre to Dissociation, Incest and Violence Against Women', in Renee R. Curry, ed., *States of Rage: Emotional Eruption, Violence and Social Change*. New York: New York University Press, 1996, pp. 15-34.

————— 'Feminist, Nonsexist, and Traditional Models of Therapy: Implications for Working with Incest', *Women and Therapy*, 3:1 (1984): 49-68.

Brooks, Peter, 'Virtue and Terror: *The Monk*,' *ELH*, 40:2 (1973): 249-63.

Brownstein, Rachel M., *Becoming a Heroine*: *Reading About Women in Novels*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Burriss, Eli Edward, 'The Use and Worship of Fire Among the Romans', *The Classical Weekly*, 24:6 (1930): 43-45.

Butler, Judith, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

————— 'Critically Queer', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1:1 (1993): 17-32.

————— *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Buyske, Steven and Alex Walter, 'The Westermarck Effect and early childhood co-socialization: Sex differences in inbreeding-avoidance', *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 21 (2003): 353-65.

Campbell, Jill, '"I Am Not a Giant": Horace Walpole, Heterosexual Incest, and Love Among Men', *The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 39 (1998): 238-60.

Castle, Terry, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Cecil, Lord David, *Early Victorian Novelists*. London: Constable, 1934.

Chagnon, Napolean, 'Male Yanamamo Manipulation of Kinship Classification of Female Kin for Reproductive Advantage', in Laura Betzig, Monique Borgerhoff Mulder and Paul Turke, eds., *Human Reproductive Behaviour: A Darwinian Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 23-48.

Chaplin, Sue, *The Gothic and The Rule of Law, 1764-1820.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

―― 'Spectres of Law in *The Castle of Otranto*', *Romanticism*, 12:3 (2006): 177-88.

Chiu, Frances A., 'From Nobodadies to Noble Daddies: Writing Political and Paternal Authority in English Fiction of the 1780s and 1790s', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 26:2 (2002): 1-22.

Chodorow, Nancy, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989; repr. 1991.

Cleere, Eileen, 'Reinvesting Nieces: *Mansfield Park* and the Economics of Endogamy', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 28:2 (1995): 113-30.

Clery, E.J., 'Ann Radcliffe and D.A.F. de Sade: Thoughts on Heronism', *Women's Writing*, 1:2 (1994): 203-14.

―― 'Horace Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* and the Impossibility of Female Desire', in Fred Botting, ed. *The Gothic.* Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2001, pp. 23-46.

――'Introduction' to Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

―― *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

―― *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley.* Devon, U.K.: Northcote House, 2000.

Colley, Linda, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.

Conniff, Richard, 'Go Ahead, Kiss your Cousin Heck, Marry Her If You Want To', *Discover*, 24:8 (2003), <http://discovermagazine.com/2003/aug/featkiss> [accessed 20 March 2009].

Corbett, Mary Jean, *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Cossins, Anne, *Masculinities, Sexualities, and Child Sexual Abuse*. New York: Springer, 2000.

Cox, Jeffrey N., 'First Gothics: Walpole, Evans, Frank', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 46:2 (2010): 119-35.

Davidoff, Leonore and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*. Hutchison Education, 1987; repr. London: Routledge, 2002.

Davies, Stevie, 'Notes' to Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin Classics, 2006.

DeLamotte, Eugenia C., *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

DeMause, Lloyd, 'The Universality of Incest', *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 19:2 (1991): 123-64.

Dominelli, Lena, 'Betrayal of Trust: A Feminist Analysis of Power Relationships in Incest Abuse and its Relevance for Social Work Practice', *British Journal of Social Work*, 19:1 (1989): 291-308.

———— 'Father-Daughter Incest: Patriarchy's Shameful Secret', *Critical Social Policy's Special Feminist Issue*, 6:16 (1986): 8-22.

Durrant, David, 'Ann Radcliffe and the Conservative Gothic', *Studies in English Literature, 1500 – 1900*, 22:3 (1982): 519-31.

Eagleton, Terry, *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso, 1991.

Ellis, Kate Ferguson, 'Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics', in David Punter ed., *A Companion to the Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, pp. 257-68.

———— *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

English, Deirdre, Amber Hollibaugh and Gayle Rubin, 'Talking Sex: A Conversation on Sexuality and Feminism', *Feminist Review*, 11 (1982): 40-52.

Erickson, L., 'The Economy of Novel Reading: Jane Austen and the Circulating Library', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 30:4 (1990): 573-90.

Erickson, Mark T., 'Evolutionary Thought and the Current Clinical Understanding of Incest', in Arthur P. Wolf and William H. Durham, eds., *Inbreeding, Incest and the Incest Taboo: The State of Knowledge at the Turn of the Century*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, pp. 161-89.

Fawcett, Mary Laughlin, 'Udolpho's Primal Mystery', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23:3 (1983): 481-93.

Felski, Rita, *Literature After Feminism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Ferraro, Kenneth F., 'Women's Fear of Victimization: Shadow of Sexual Assault', *Social Forces*, 75:2 (1996): 667-90.

Fincher, Max, *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age, The Penetrating Eye*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Finney, Gail, 'Self-Reflexive Siblings: Incest as Narcissism in Tieck, Wagner, and Thomas Mann', *The German Quarterly*, 56:2 (1983): 243-56.

Fitzgerald, Lauren, 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', in Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, eds., *The Female Gothic: New Directions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 13-25.

Fleenor, Juliann E., *The Female Gothic*. Montreal: Eden Press, 1983.

[N.A.] 'Forbidden Love: Pull of Attraction Felt Between Adoptees, Biological Family Members', *CBC News*, 7 May 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/05/06/f-gsa.html> [accessed 5 June 2009].

Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A.M. Sheridan-Smith. London: Penguin, 1979.

—— *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley. London: Allen Lane, 1979; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981.

—— *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980.

Frank, Frederick S., 'Introduction' to *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother*, Horace Walpole. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2003.

Frank, Marcie, 'Horace Walpole's Family Romances', *Modern Philology*, 100:3 (2003): 417-35.

Freud, Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and trans. James Strachey. New York: Avon, 1980.

———— *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

———— *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1955; repr. London: Routledge, 1999.

Gallop, Jane, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Gamer, Michael, 'Introduction' to Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002.

———— *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

————'Gothic Origins: New Primary Scholarship', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 14:2 (2002): 215-22.

Gilbert, Sandra M., 'Jane Eyre and the Secrets of Furious Lovemaking', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 31:3 (1998): 351-72.

———— and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984.

Gill, Pat, 'Pathetic Passions: Incestuous Desire in the Plays of Otway and Lee', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 30 (1998): 192-208.

Goetz, William R., 'Genealogy and Incest in *Wuthering Heights*', *Studies in the Novel*, 14:4 (1982): 359-76.

Gonda, Caroline, *Reading Daughters' Fictions 1709-1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Gramsci, Antonio, *The Prison Notebooks, Volume 3*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

————*The Prison Notebooks, Volume 1*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Greenberg, Maurice, 'Post-Adoption Reunion Are We Entering Uncharted Territory?', paper read at The Hilda Lewis Memorial Lecture given to the British Association of Adoption and Fostering, Oct. 5 1993: 1-22.

<http://www.geneticsexualattraction.com/AAPostAdoptionReunion.pdf>
[accessed 21 May 2009].

———— and Roland Littlewood, 'Post Adoption Incest and Phenotypic Matching:
Experience, Personal Meanings and Biosocial Implications', *British Journal of
Medical Psychology*, 68 (1995): 29-44.

Gubar, Susan, 'Representing Pornography: Feminism, Criticism, and Depictions of
Female Violation', *Critical Inquiry*, 13:4 (1987): 712-41.

———— 'What Ails Feminist Criticism?', *Critical Inquiry*, 24:4 (1998): 878-902.

Haggerty, George E., 'Literature and Homosexuality in the Late Eighteenth Century:
Walpole, Beckford, and Lewis', *Studies in the Novel*, 18:4 (1986): 341-52.

———— 'Psychodrama: Hypertheatricality and Sexual Excess on the Gothic Stage',
Theatre Research International, 28:1 (2003): 20-33.

———— *Queer Gothic*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Haig, David, 'Asymmetric Relations: Internal Conflicts and the Horror of Incest',
Evolution and Human Behaviour, 20:2 (1999): 83-98.

Hallie, Philip, *The Paradox of Cruelty*. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969.

Harpold, Terence, '"Did you get Mathilda from Papa?" Seduction Fantasy and the
Circulation of Mary Shelley's *Mathilda*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 28:1 (1989):
49-67.

Herman, Judith Lewis with Lisa Hirschman, *Father-Daughter Incest*. Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University Press, 1981.

Hoeveler, Diane Long, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from
Charlotte Smith to the Brontes*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998.

Holcombe, Lee, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in
Nineteenth-Century England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983.

Hunt, Lynn Avery, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*. Berkeley, CA:
University of California Press, 1993.

Irigaray, Luce, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke.
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Jacobs, Janet Liebman, 'Reassessing Mother Blame in Incest', *Signs*, 15:3 (1990): 500-
14.

Jewel, Carolyn, 'Eleanor Sleath: A Writer Rediscovered'
	<http://teachmetonight.blogspot.com/2008_03_01_archive.html> [accessed 20
	January 2010].

———— Interview with Megan Frampton, 'Friday with Carolyn Jewel!', *Risky Regencies:*
	The Original, Riskiest, and Forever the Friskiest Regency Romance Blog
	(February 13 2009) <http://riskyregencies.blogspot.com/2009/02/friday-with-
	carolyn-jewel.html> [accessed 20 January 2010].

Johnson, Claudia L., *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the*
	1790s. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Kaufman, Pamela, 'Burke, Freud and the Gothic', *Studies in Burke and His Time*, 13:3
	(1972): 2179-92.

Kilgour, Maggie, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Kilkenny, Beth, 'Representation of the Repressed: Women and the Feminine in Eleanor
	Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* and *The Nocturnal Minstrel*', *The Corvey*
	Project at Sheffield Hallam University
	<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/corvey/corinne/1%20Sleath/Sleath%20critical%20essay.ht
	m> [accessed 8 July 2009].

Kirsta, Alix, 'Genetic Sexual Attraction', *The Guardian*, 17 May 2003,
	<http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2003/may/17/weekend7.weekend2>
	[accessed 16 November 2009].

Klekar, Cynthia, and Linda Zionkowski, eds., *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-*
	Century England. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

———— 'The Obligations of Form: Social Practice in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline*',
	Philological Quarterly, 86:3 (2007): 269-89.

Kuper, Adam, 'Changing the Subject – about cousin marriage, among other things',
	Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.), 14 (2008): 717-35.

———— *Incest and Influence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

———— 'Incest, Cousin Marriage, and the Origin of the Human Sciences in Nineteenth-
	Century England', *Past and Present*, 174:1 (2002): 158-83.

Lacan, Jacques, *Écrits*. Tavistock, 1977; repr. London: Routledge, 2001.

Landry, Donna, 'William Beckford's *Vathek* and the Uses of Oriental Re-enactment', in Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum, eds., *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 167-94.

Ledoux, Ellen Malenas, 'Defiant Damsels: Gothic Space and Female Agency in *Emmeline*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Secresy*', *Women's Writing*, 18:3 (2011): 331-47.

———— *Fantastic Forms of Change: Mass Persuasion and Policy in Gothic Writing, 1764-1834* (forthcoming).

Levi-Strauss, Claude, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. London: Taylor & Francis, 1969.

Littlewood, Roland, *Pathologies of the West: An Anthropology of Mental Illness in Europe and America*. London: Continuum, 2002.

London, April, *Women and Property in the Eighteenth-Century Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Madden, William A., '*Wuthering Heights*: The Binding of Passion', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 27:2 (1972): 127-54.

Malinowski, Bronislaw, 'Culture', in Charles G. Seligman, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 15 vols. New York: Macmillan: 1931, vol. 4, pp. 621-46.

Marsh, Kelly A., 'Jane Eyre and the Pursuit of the Mother's Pleasure', *South Atlantic Review*, 69:3/4 (2004): 81-106.

Masse, Michelle A., 'Gothic Repetition: Husbands, Horror, and Thing That Go Bump in the Night', *Signs*, 15:4 (1990): 679-709.

———— *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism and the Gothic*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Mauss, Marcel, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls. London: Routledge, 1990.

McKinnon, Susan, 'American Kinship/American Incest: Asymmetries in a Scientific Discourse', in Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney, eds., *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*. New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 25-46.

Mead, Margaret, *Male and Female*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

Mellor, Anne K., *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Messier, Vartan P., 'The Conservative, the Transgressive, and the Reactionary: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* as a Response to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*', *Atenea*, 25:2 (2005): 37-48.

Miles, Robert, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

———— *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy*. London: Routledge, 1993.

———— '"Mother Radcliffe": Ann Radcliffe and the Female Gothic', in Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, eds., *The Female Gothic: New Directions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 42-59.

Mitchell, Juliet, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women*. London: Allen Lane, 1974; repr. as *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Modleski, Tania, *Loving With A Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*. Archon, 1982; repr. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Moers, Ellen, *Literary Women: The Great Writers*. New York: Doubleday, 1976; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Moran, Leslie J., 'Law and the Gothic Imagination' in Fred Botting, ed., *The Gothic: Essays and Studies*. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2001, pp. 87-109.

Morris, Polly, 'Incest or Survival Strategy? Plebeian Marriage Within the Prohibited Degrees in Somerset, 1730-1835', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2:2 (1991): 235-65.

Moser, Thomas, 'What is the Matter with Emily Jane? Conflicting Impulses in *Wuthering Heights*', *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 17 (1962): 1-19.

Mulvey-Roberts, Marie, 'From Bluebeard's Bloody Chamber to Demonic Stigmatic', in Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, eds., *The Female Gothic: New Directions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 98-114.

Neff, D.S., 'Bitches, Mollies, and Tommies: Byron, Masculinity, and the History of Sexualities', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11:3 (2002): 395-438.

Nelson, T. G. A., 'The Ambivalence of Nature's Law: Representations of Incest in Dryden and His English Contemporaries', in Elizabeth Barnes, ed., *Incest and the Literary Imagination*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002, pp. 117-37.

Nestor, Pauline, 'Introduction' to Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*. London: Penguin, 2003.

Norton, Rictor, *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764-1840*. London: Leicester University Press, 2000.

———— 'William Beckford: The Fool of Fonthill' *Gay History and Literature*, updated 16 Nov. 1999 <http://www.rictornorton.co.uk/beckfor1.htm> [accessed 21 March 2011].

Novak, Maximillian E., 'Gothic Fiction and the Grotesque', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 13:1 (1979): 50-67.

Nowak, Tenille, 'Regina Maria Roche's "horrid" novel: echoes of *Clermont* in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*', *Persuasions*, 29 (2007): 184-93.

Nussbaum, Felicity A., *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

O'Toole, Tess, 'Siblings and Suitors in the Narrative Architecture of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 39:4 (1999): 715-31.

Ottenheimer, Martin, *Forbidden Relatives: The American Myth of Cousin Marriage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Otto, Peter, 'The Sadleir-Black Collection', *Gothic Fiction* <http://www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk/digital_guides/gothic_fiction/Introduction1.aspx> [accessed 20 November 2009].

Park, Justin H., 'Is Aversion to Incest Psychologically Privileged? When Sex and Sociosexuality Do Not Predict Sexual Willingness', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 45:7 (2008): 661-65.

Perry, Ruth, 'De-familiarizing the Family; or, Writing Family History from Literary Sources', in Marshall Brown, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Literary History: An MLQ Reader*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 159-72.

——— *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748-1818*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Pinker, Steven, 'Strangled by Roots: The Genealogy Craze in America', *New Republic*, 237:3 (2007): 32-35.

Pollak, Ellen, *Incest and The English Novel, 1684 – 1814*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Potkay, Adam, 'Beckford's Heaven of Boys', *Raritan*, 13.1 (1994): 73-83

Praz, Mario, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. Angus Davidson. London: H. Milford, 1933; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

[N.A.] 'Prohibited Marriages: Forbidden Degrees of Relationship', <http://www.weddingguideuk.com/articles/legal/prohibited.asp> [accessed 24 June 2010].

Punter, David and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

——— *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, The Body and The Law*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998.

Purves, Maria, *The Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009.

Quilligan, Maureen, *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Radway, Janice, 'The Utopian Impulse in Gothic Literature: Gothic Romances and "Feminist" Protest', *American Quarterly*, 33:2 (1981): 140-62.

Railo, Eino, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism*, 1927; repr. New York: Humanities Press, 1964.

Renvoize, Jean, *Incest: A Family Pattern*. Worcester: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1982.

Richardson, Alan, 'The Dangers of Sympathy: Sibling Incest in English Romantic Poetry', *Studies in Literature 1500-1900*, 25:4 (1985): 737-54.

——— 'Rethinking Romantic Incest: Human Universals, Literary Representations, and the Biology of Mind', *New Literary History*, 31:3 (2000): 553-72.

Rivero, Albert, *The Plays of Henry Fielding: A Critical Study of His Dramatic Career*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1989.

Riviere, Joan, 'Womanliness as Masquerade', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929): 303-13.

Rizzo, Betty, 'Renegotiating the Gothic', in Paula R. Backscheider, ed., *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 58-103.

Rooney, Caroline, *Decolonising Gender: Literature and a Poetics of the Real*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Rover, Constance, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1914*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1967.

Rubin, Gayle, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', in Rayna R. Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975, pp. 157-211.

Rush, Florence, 'The Sexual Abuse of Children: A Feminist Point of View', Paper presented at the New York Radical Feminist Rape Conference, New York, April 1971; repr. in Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: The Sexual Abuse of Children*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980.

Sanchez-Eppler, Karen, 'Temperance in the Bed of a Child: Incest and Social Order in Nineteenth-Century America', *American Quarterly*, 47:1 (1995): 1-33.

Schmidgen, Wolfram, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Schmitt, Cannon, 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationalities: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*', *ELH*, 61:4 (1994): 853-76.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. New York: Arno Press Inc., 1980.

———'Toward the Gothic: Terrorism and Homosexual Panic', in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 83-96.

Shaffer, Julie, 'Familial Love, Incest, and Female Desire in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century British Women's Novels', *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 41:1 (1999): 67-99.

Shepher, Joseph, *Incest: A Biosocial View*. New York: Academic Press, 1983.

Shields, William, *Philopatry, Inbreeding and the Evolution of Sex*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982.

Slipp, Samuel, *The Freudian Mystique: Freud, Women, and Feminism*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.

Smith, David Livingstone, 'Beyond Westermarck: Can Shared Mothering or Maternal Phenotype Matching Account for Incest Avoidance?', *Evolutionary Psychology*, 5:1 (2007): 202-22.

Smith, John Maynard, *The Evolution of Sex*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Solomon, Eric, 'The Incest Theme in *Wuthering Heights*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 14:1 (1959): 80-83.

Staves, Susan, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Stelzig, Eugene, '"Though It Were the Deadliest Sin to Love as We Have Loved": The Romantic Idealization of Incest', *European Romantic Review*, 5 (1995): 230-51.

Stevenson, John Allen, '"Heathcliff is Me!": Wuthering Heights and the Question of Likeness', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 43:1 (1988): 62-75.

Stone, Lawrence, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*. London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1977.

Tadmor, Naomi, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Thompson, Wade, 'Infanticide and Sadism in Wuthering Heights', *PMLA*, 78:1 (1963): 69-74.

Thormählen, Marianne, 'The Lunatic and the Devil's Disciple: The "Lovers" in *Wuthering Heights*', *Review of English Studies: The Quarterly Journal of English Literature and the English Language*, 48:190 (1997): 183-97.

Tolan, Fiona, 'Feminisms' in Patricia Waugh, ed., *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 319-39.

Trumbach, Randolph, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England*. New York: Academic Press, 1978.

Twitchell, James B., *Forbidden Partners: The Incest Taboo in Modern Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Van den Berghe, Pierre L., *Human Family Systems*: *An Evolutionary View*. New York: Elsevier, 1979.

Varma, Devendra P., 'Introduction' to Eleanor Sleath, *The Orphan of The Rhine*. London: The Folio Press, 1968.

Vaz da Silva, Francisco, 'Folkelore into Theory: Freud and Levi-Strauss on Incest and Marriage', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 44:1 (2007): 1-19.

Wall, Cynthia, '*The Castle of Otranto*: A Shakespearo-Politcal Satire?', in Lorna Clymer and Robert Mayer, eds., *Historical Boundaries, Narrative Forms: Essays on British Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century in Honor of Everett Zimmerman*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007, pp. 184-98.

Wallace, Diana, '"The Haunting Idea": Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory', in Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, eds., *The Female Gothic: New Directions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 26-41.

———— and Andrew Smith, 'Introduction' to *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, pp. 1-12.

Warner, Michael, 'Introduction' to *Fear of A Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Watt, James, *Contesting the Gothic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

———— 'Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740-1830*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 119-38.

Wein, Toni, 'Gothic Desire in Charlotte Bronte's *Villette*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 39:4 (1999): 733-46.

Westermarck, Edward, *The History of Human Marriage*. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1903.

White, Leslie, 'The Definition and Prohibition of Incest', *American Anthropological Association*, 50:3:1 (1948): 416-35.

Williams, Anne, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Williams, Raymond, *The Long Revolution*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2001.

Wolf, Arthur P., 'Westermarck Redivivus', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 22 (1993): 157-75.

Wolff, Cynthia Griffin, 'The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality', *Modern Language Studies*, 9:3 (1979): 98-113.

Wolstenholme, Susan, *Gothic (Re)Visions: Writing Women as Readers*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Wright, Angela, *Gothic Fiction: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Wyatt, Jean, 'A Patriarch of One's Own: Jane Eyre and Romantic Love', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 4:2 (1985): 199-216.

Ying-Chang, Chuang and Arthur P. Wolf, 'Marriage in Taiwan, 1881-1905: An Example of Regional Diversity', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 54:3 (1995): 781-96.