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“You, the Victim of Yourself”: The Unspeakable Story and the Fragmented Body

Laura Kremmel

Chuck Palahniuk has read selections from his 2005 novel, *Haunted*, at numerous book-store events across the country. Such readings—if they have included “Guts,” a story about an adolescent boy whose sexual exploration leads to a gruesome accident—have acquired a reputation for causing listeners to lose control of their bodies: 73 listeners have fainted, Palahniuk claims (411). The graphically-described stories of sex, death, and trauma seem to attract and affect in such a way that the text imposes upon our own bodies as readers and listeners, making us sick, making us cringe, and, in extreme cases, making us lose consciousness. The expectation from the very first line of the novel—“This was supposed to be a writer’s retreat. It was supposed to be safe”—is that language and story-telling can offer protection and relief, but it becomes clear that this will not be the case, not even for the reader. “Some stories, Mr. Whittier would say, you tell them and you use them up. Other stories, they use you up” (288).

Seventeen characters of various abnormalities and eccentricities have been attracted to Mr. Whittier’s writer’s retreat. What the advertisements do not say, however, is that this includes a three-month incarceration in an old, abandoned theater: time enough for them to create their masterpieces and be released. Participants are supplied with comfortable conditions, including food and work spaces, heat and electricity, and Whittier himself remains in the theater with them, along with his assistant, Mrs. Clark. After an initial period of indignant panic at this discovery, the attendees twist their retreat into a kidnapping and posit it as a way to capitalize on media’s glorification of victimhood. Convinced that imprisonment within a comfortable space will not gain this attention, however, they launch into a fame-inspired bloodbath of sabotage and self-mutilation for the purposes of showing future audiences just how much they have endured and how much sympathy they deserve... in the form of interviews, guest spots, and movie rights. The frame narrative of Palahniuk’s text, in which the confined collective gradually form their own society, serves as a catalyst for the individual short stories of trauma each character *needs* to tell. Despite their lust for the spotlight, *Haunted*’s characters are fraught with secrets buried in shame, embarrassment, and discomfort with their own bodily desires, desires that social convention outside the retreat walls has marked as monstrous. Though they produce no writing throughout the course of the novel, these characters are not without stories. Indeed, each one has had at least one traumatic defining experience that has lain in silence, festering under the surface and surfacing on the character’s body and identity. The tale-tellers obsess over this antithetical anxiety in between their stories: the desire to be seen and heard as victims *without* exposing the unsettling secrets of their *own* individual perversities. These characters, thus, attempt to re-write their bodies through their claims of kidnapping and various tortures, allowing their battered bones to tell a louder story than the whisper of their warped libidos. Better to cut up the body and blame it on someone else than allow it to prevail in its more sensitively damaged state.

For these characters, I argue, the need to talk through the body is born out of a silence *about* the body, a silence just as violent *towards* the body as any of the novel's gruesomely graphic scenes of mutilation, amputation, castration, and cannibalism. Violence and mutilation of the body in this case perform the cultural work of communicating *about* the body what that body cannot sufficiently say through mere speech and writing. As one character says within his own confessional tale, "some deeds are too low to get a name. Too low to get talked about" (13). In many situations, recollected events of trauma would not have escalated to such an extent had discourse about sexuality and bodily desires been free and open, thus snowballing a trauma that perpetuates itself by not speaking its own name. Adolescents whose parents never speak to them about sex, injuring themselves through sexual experimentation; nurses, not saying a word about their inappropriate relationships with patients, all falling prey to the same sexual predator; a police department whose members refuse to fess up to the use of certain sexually-shared equipment, spreading filth and disease among them: what connects them all is silence. Words, too embarrassing to share, find new ways to isolate the body.

This isolation, however, suggests that these stories are *not* special. For example, Mr. Whittier's own story about his manipulation of a nurse for material benefits, sexual favors, and eventual blackmail not only indicates that he shares this story with the nurse herself but that there are other nurses both before and after her: "None of them every went back to the old folks' home, so they never met each other. To each angel, she was the only one. Really, there were a dozen or more" (116). The isolation induced by traumatic events protects that trauma from being known, but, at the same time, also protects its sufferers from a community to which they may already exist. The stories may be figured as horrific and inhuman, but the point to which characters return to again and again—whether they believe it themselves or not—is that they are human. "Again," Director Denial says as her fellow police officers persist in violating the anatomically-correct dolls used for interviews with abused children, "it's what human beings do" (166).

In Palahniuk's text, then, I see deterioration of body and language as working in two ways. On the surface, the characters construct a highly-sensational communal "story" of their kidnapping in order to write over their individual stories of trauma. They mutilate their bodies to tell this story for fame and fortune but also to disguise, punish, and recreate those bodies for their original perversities: when they speak of the future, they speak of seeing themselves before audiences, as actors and performers who have distanced themselves from the trauma that once defined them. On another level, however, as they tell their individual stories, language fails to adequately express and alleviate the effects of traumas they have experienced or witnessed. This failure leads to a Lacanian struggle against language and the wholeness of the body in order to access a type of expression only available through a return to the semiotic, a return to a connection with others so close that language becomes unnecessary. Individuals soon become teams, which become the mob against the tyrant, which becomes a mess of body parts and patchwork stories that loses any distinction between "me" and "you," only "us" and "them".

Monstrous Victims of Monstrosity

In the first sense, the identification of "victim" is a powerful one: once a victim, a character ceases to be an individual and becomes a symbol or archetype, a figure upon which to project anger, fear, sympathy, empathy. Attracting emotional and sensational attention from an audience who *wants* to hear their stories, the retreat attendees can let their own personal traumas slip from them, diverting attention from their psychological wounds with their physical ones. By

placing themselves in a story—the grand rescue and subsequent media attention—in which they tell the stories of their captivity, the characters grant levels of discursive potential to the body that bury the original trauma so deep that it becomes practically nonexistent, as if it belongs to a *different* body altogether. The group therapy about which Palahniuk writes extensively in his other works has become merely a group fabrication of “a true-life horror story with a happy ending. A trial we’d survive to talk about,” drawing on what Mark Seltzer calls “wound culture” (Palahniuk 85). When the Matchmaker says that they are all about to be famous, “‘Well, all of us—except the Matchmaker, the man with no scars to show, no signs he did anything but not eat,’” he refers to this culture predicated on “the public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound” (Palahniuk 357, Seltzer 3). If the body has no scars, what interest can an audience have in a story in which they cannot participate through visual shock and reciprocal sympathy? Without the story written on the body, there can be no story. Chopping bits of hair off at the scalp, slitting noses, ripping fingernails, the less human they look, the more excusable the inhumanity of their perverse desires and deeds. Approaching the grotesque, they put monstrosity to work in such a way that provides twofold relief of their own traumas. It creates a kind of circular hierarchy of monstrous deeds and monstrous bodies. On one hand, the status of victim excuses their now-monstrous forms in favor of the monstrosity of their kidnappers, thereby prioritizing monstrous deeds over monstrous bodies. On the other hand, the numerous wounds that prove their new status as victims, so they expect, also erases and excuses their deeds of psychological perversity, both past and future. “A victim, someone with the missing toes and fingers to prove they suffered, they’ll have the world’s okay to be in always-bad taste,” the Missing Link thinks (359). Bodily injury will not only give them fame but also excuse and explain their depraved interests. Otherwise, those interests are merely human: a truly monstrous thought.

Fixated for a time on constructing a specifically Gothic story from their situation, the retreat attendees compare themselves to the fateful gathering of greats at Lake Geneva, providing a brief explanation of the masterpieces created there.¹ This, they believe, will be their legendary point of creation, and the text turns meta as they decide to add ghosts, villains, and victims, turning each other into plot points and archetypes. It is not insignificant here that these “writers” would choose to emulate the Gothic rather than a simple thriller or mystery. With its emphasis on fakery and artificial origin, the Gothic allows for the creation and recreation of identities and the artifacts that go with them, even if those artifacts are the body itself. Tracing it back to its earliest texts, the Gothic features figures who, through corrupt machinations and fabricated histories, place themselves in new stations and classes, from the lower-class Manfred posing as lord in *The Castle of Otranto* to Dracula’s impersonations of humanity. The Gothic, then, permits a certain amount of identity mobility, well-known to shake the stability of structure and disrupt knowledge of self and others. These same texts that make a king of a pauper, however, also expose him for what he is: Manfred is stripped of family and title and Dracula, of course, is hunted and defeated. For the “writers” in *Haunted* seeking to rewrite themselves, the Gothic portrays their dark passions and strange hobbies as an Otherness that secretly fascinates, not disgusts, by putting the spotlight on repression. “I believe that the nature of the gothic is to nurture,” says William Veeder (20). “Gothic can help heal the wounds of repression by putting into play what silencing, denial, and infantilization tried to police. Through its thematic and representational insistence upon outre desires, gothic acts as a counterdiscursive formation...” (28). With Mary Shelley’s canonical *Frankenstein*, we see a move from recreation of family history and social class to recreation of the body itself and all its abnormalities and perversities.

It is little wonder, then, that the characters of *Haunted* first choose this as the model for their own Gothic story.

Rather than assembling a body of parts in order to create monsters as in *Frankenstein*, however, here bodies are *disassembled*, indicative of a shift in contemporary Gothic fiction to locate monstrosity and chaos in the self rather than in a foreign Other. That self, however, is in no way whole. In order to recreate their traumas and reconfigure their status from victims of their own perversity to victims of an external “villain,” the bodies of *Haunted* must revert to a state of un-wholeness, to an earlier state of fragmentation before their individual traumas and the stigmas attached to them encompassed their bodies and selves. Lacking a whole body, the individual loses individuality, losing the sense that “I did that” or “I experienced that.” The characters, by becoming a part of the collective, lose a sense of personal history and responsibility. They must let themselves fall apart with the hopes that society will reconstruct them in a more acceptable fashion. At the same time, the horror of these scenes shakes society’s moral compass, insisting on a sense of doubt as it judges these characters. “Horror makes one look away from an unbearable image that threatens complete dissolution,” says Botting. “The imagined integrity of the body is ripped apart and so is sense: the abject... slices through comfortable modes of viewing, representing a body in pain and causing a bodily disturbance in *other* bodies. Also, another level of discomfort is evoked, a cognitive disturbance affecting the capacity to interpret and analyse” (140, italics mine). Meaning, morality, convention, structure all fall apart in the chaos of self-destruction as taboos becomes re-aligned to make the abnormal normal and the normal unsure of what it is.

Jumbled Words make Jumbled Bodies

In a text already fragmented and pieced together through poems and short stories, each character enters this confined space in order to escape lives of excruciating isolation and exclusion. Though their shared experiences of isolation certainly contribute to the craze for fame—in which they starve themselves because they are starving for attention—it has both resulted from and fed treatment of their traumas, relocating them from verbal discourse to a discourse of the body. The body has itself, then, become a speaking subject through its shape, scars, and eccentricities which form its words and sentences. Considering this dependence on the body to speak its piece, it is not insignificant that here we have characters like Saint Gut-Free, Miss Sneezy, and Baroness Frostbite. These identities are based on traumatic events, specifically named by the effects of those events on the body. The body, housing the traumatic narrative, becomes prey to that narrative the longer it remains trapped within it, thereby necessitating a full revision through mutilation.

Though vilified and fictionalized as Mr. Whittier’s assistant, Mrs. Clark claims, “Like the rest of you, I only wanted some way to tell my story” (137). She suggests that the traumatic and perverse nature of their stories prevents them from being told except in a particular “way”: the way of the writer’s retreat, a version of the therapy group mentioned above. Yet, it becomes apparent that the effects of breaking silence, rather than unburdening the body, instead reveal the *failure* of language, the classic Lacanian gap between desire and its linguistic expression. Though no change occurs within the individual after a telling, the collective group progressively becomes more violent as the stories unfold. The further language fails, the further it breaks bodies, wasting and fragmenting them in an exceedingly gruesome and highly visual mock-up of scenes reminiscent of slasher films and torture porn. These characters may claim to destroy themselves for the benefit of fame and fortune. But, it seems, they may not have had a choice.

This is not the first time Mr. Whittier has brought a “retreat” to this theater, and the freshly-spilt blood is not the first to stain those carpets. This is not the first time language has failed.

Only after creating the Gothic imprisonment setting—complete incarceration, dismantled modern conveniences, sabotaged food supply—do the characters, like actors suiting up for a performance, turn to producing the effects of torment on their bodies. Sidney L. Sondergard, however, sees this as somewhat paradoxical: “there’s a direct correlation between the power to destroy and the power to create, most dramatically enacted by the writers’ collective desire to make their shared story more violently compelling...by preying upon each other” (11). When the group first decides, as a unit, to begin this self-dramatization, its members undeniably act as individuals against individuals, eying up those who look weaker than others and, as with Miss Sneezy, urging them to hurry up and die, relinquishing yet another piece of the narrative they must share amongst those who survive. The betrayal of those who could be next does not let up in the text—no one is ever saved or helped by others—but moments of confusion insinuate a gradual melding of individual subjectivities, a fragmentation so extreme it becomes unclear where one character ends and another begins. In their attempts to out-mutilate each other, the characters at the same time—and perhaps for the *first* time—begin to see each other as more depraved and profane than themselves. “Screw the idea of inventing monsters,” the narrator says. Here, we just had to look around. Pay attention” (88). The suffering of one becomes the suffering—and celebrity—of them all.

The obsession with opening and ripping up bodies to such an extreme has become a frequent theme in contemporary Gothic literature and film, as described by Catherine Spooner, Judith Halberstam, and many others. Texts such as Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* (1991) and Katherine Dunn’s *Geek Love* (1989) explore the state of the dismembered and dissected body as a gleeful art form. Spooner describes the contemporary Gothic body as “lacking wholeness and integrity, as a surface which can be modified and transformed,” a concept also taken up by Fred Botting as he describes the gaps between exterior and interior, where the Gothic lies (Spooner 9).² The fragmentation in *Haunted* results not from a lack of wholeness, however, but from a *frustration with wholeness*. That wholeness—precipitated, according to Lacan, through the mirror stage—disallows a type of communication and community only possible through a loss of self and a return to the pre-language semiotic. Language cannot express the simultaneous pain and pleasure, guilt and pride, associated with trauma that has remained hidden for so long. But the expectation of release refuses to bury it back where it belongs. Thus ensues a marathon of increasingly horrific self-dismemberments and amputations as these self-starving bodies begin hacking off their own fingers and toes, shedding pieces of themselves and collecting wounds that will disrupt the wholeness that separates them from one another and from complete understanding.

Lacan directly links the development of one’s own identity with the visual: with the ability to see yourself comes the ability to understand yourself (4). In his description of this stage, an infant sees and recognizes him or herself in the mirror for the first time, thereby seeing the whole body as one entity, separate from the mother. This theory reifies the state of wholeness as positive and desirable and the state of fragmentation as degenerate, almost pre-human. Only the whole body knows that it was ever fragmented: the fragmented body has no awareness of its own fragmentation except in the case of unlikely regression to that state, a state of what Lacan calls “the body in bits and pieces,” (Bonner 239). In order to avoid this, the whole body creates defenses against a return to that state that would bring it back into disarray and closer to its pre-human state. The Gothic, however, thrives on this unsettling possibility, as Gothic writer Patrick

McGrath reminds us: it “consistently attempts to speak about the unspeakable” (154). In other words, the Gothic consistently engages with the failure of language and celebrates the fragmentation and disintegration that ensue. Individual narratives within the novel, structured by language, have maintained the wholeness of the tellers’ bodies by failing in perfect expression, restricted by powerful societal condemnation. Becoming the collective victims of *someone else*, then, relocates culpability for perversions the characters have committed as individuals. At the same time, losing selfhood and merging subjectivities removes the *possibility* of that individual culpability: if one is guilty, then they all are. The retreat turns out to be “safe,” after all.

Narrative, though it has failed for the individual, brings the community closer together through repetition of a *shared* narrative as boundaries become increasingly blurred and indistinct. The point of view starts to shift from “I” to “we.” “Some days, from lights-on to lights-out, we lie in bed... Each of us, reciting our story to our self” (345). This slippery subjectivity runs throughout the text as we realize that the first-person-plural narrator is not actually a recognizable member of the retreat.³ Moments of this narrative confusion insinuate a gradual melding of individuals, a fragmentation so extreme it becomes unclear where one character ends and another begins. Yet the characters in this text see this return to fragmentation with the same glee of the infant discovering wholeness, and the Gothic genre itself, as McGrath suggests, see a kind of redemption in reimagining the whole through fragmentation: “The Gothic has always been fascinated at the prospect of *undoing the human*” (McGrath 155). In the case of *Haunted*, however, the text “undoes the human” in order to expose that humanity, to break it into parts to see what it is made of and to access the parts we have a sneaking suspicion are also found in ourselves.

With body parts flying, and new stains adding to the old, the horror-story scene begins to increasingly resemble the story the characters plan to tell about it. It fills with not only dismembered and fragmented bodies but leaking bodies, one last attempt of these bodies to spill their unspeakable pasts and blend them with others. Janice McLane describes the wound created through self-mutilation as a mouth, which “can speak what the actual physical mouth has been forbidden to utter” (115). Fragmentation, in this sense, is often associated with consumption or absorption, combining elements of multiple bodies in order make those speaking bodies one. The temporary exit of Mr. Whittier early in the novel foreshadows this type of bodily expansion and distortion of boundaries. Having devoured an entire bag of dried dinners, his body begins to lose shape: “his stomach pulling apart on the inside, the cavities of him filling with blood, the dried chips of turkey still expanding, soaking up blood and water and bile, getting bigger until the skin of his belly looks pregnant” (106). Just as the foreign objects expand and warp Whittier’s body by devouring its fluids, the witnessing characters take this experience into their bodies and combine it with their own: “We were all soaking it up. Absorbing the event. Digesting the experience into a story” (106). Describing their processing of the event through shared bodily processes, the text presents the incorporation of foreign stories into the psyche as a process of incorporating it into the body at the same time: a food-chain narrative constructed without a word being written.

By absorbing and consuming each other’s individual stories, the new collective owners claim full possession of them. When the Matchmaker, who has just told a story about fatal fellatio, castrates himself and dies, the narrator says, “His family story about death camps and blow jobs, now it’s *our* story” (358).⁴ As the body and the trauma narrative have become inseparable, the assembled narratives replace the lost fingers, toes, ears, etc, merging the collective body and the collective story. By the end of the novel, the narrator says, “It takes all

our energy to repeat our story to each other,” making each character a simultaneous listener and speaker of the same story until no one can tell the difference (345, 377). Individuality becomes increasingly impossible as the storytelling itself becomes increasingly communal, the “our” becoming more congealed and ambiguous.

By the time the retreat attendees are eating one another, however, it seems that things have changed. A character returns to being an individual only once that character has shifted from a part of the group to a part of the food chain: no longer supporting the collective narrative but becoming the food that nourishes it. When they cannibalize Comrade Snarky, they comment, “We hold the truth about her in our hands. Wedged between our teeth” (255). The Comrade, who, incidentally, also devours a piece of her own flesh, only awakens into an awareness of herself when she recognizes her tattoo on a piece of “meat.” Her dying body has been reduced to the merest fragments, ingested and incorporated into the whole for rewriting. Her body becomes part of the collective body, hands, and teeth, through its consumption.

Yet, just as language fails, consumption and expansion of the group ultimately fails when it attempts the impossible: to disconnect and devour monstrosity’s source. The Matchmaker takes the collective perverse sexuality of them all, that guilty bodily pleasure and unpleasure, and castrates himself, killing himself in the process. Staring at the piece of his own body he’s about to sever, he thinks back on his family motto: “no matter how terrible something might look, it might not be around tomorrow” (355). Having heard over a dozen instances of unspeakable bodily appetites and deeds, human sexuality is looking pretty “terrible.” But, cut out sexuality, the text suggests, and you cut out the human. Thinking to incorporate that sexuality into his now mutilated and unrecognizable collection of body parts, the Missing Link swallows the dead penis, chokes, and also dies, thus enacting the Freudian origin of castration anxiety from the primal scene—from the sight of the father’s penis disappearing into the mother as though he were castrated—by making the already castrated penis disappear into his own body. Thus, the attempt to banish sexuality from the body or incorporate a sexuality not your own into your body leads to death and, more importantly, to silence: as Link chokes, “All of his efforts—all the crying, the slugging, the begging—silent” (359). Sexual perversity has, as it always has, induced a trauma that reestablishes silence. The attempt to banish sexuality from the body as suggested by the Matchmaker’s fatal castration cannot help but reinforce it. The Missing Link’s glutinous reaction sabotages the attempt to remove sexuality through a perversion of the primal scene, thereby renewing the cycle of trauma and silence. Sexual depravity, as it always has, induces a trauma that reestablishes silence for its participants, disrupting the fluidity of community and leaving the few survivors literally dying to tell the tale.

Rather than ostracizing the monstrosity found in the mutilated and deformed body, *Haunted* and its contemporaries put that monstrosity to work in order to expose the failure of linguistic expression but also the common *need* for such expression. Efforts by the characters to revert back to a pre-mirror stage through the fragmentation their own bodies, however unsuccessful, indicate a desire to pre-date traumas but also a desire to lose individuality in order to deter guilt, shame, and the judgment of conventional society. In attempting such, the characters have reduced themselves to a point beyond the capability of telling coherent stories, even if an audience were ready and available: their bodies, reduced to a mixture of limbs and fluids, have run together to create a series of parts without a center of language beyond the guttural repetition of the same convoluted story. Reappearing by the end of the novel to assess the damage, Mr. Whittier repeats for the last time, “Some stories you tell them and you use them up. Other stories...and Whittier gestures at our skin and bones” (380). Having formed into the

corporeal representation of his earlier pronouncement, these bodies have become perverse objects that speak not just for one, not just for the group, but for the secrets of the body hideous and repressed and so dangerously human.

Notes

¹ This, of course, refers to the gathering of Byron, Polidori, and Mary and Percy Shelley that inspired the creation of *Frankenstein*.

² In *Limits of Horror*, Botting opens chapter three with an account of French artist Orlan's operating theatre performance art, describing it as "an art that interrogates art by linking aesthetics and deformity, pleasure and pain" (139).

³ I would suggest that this unknown narrator, whose use of the "our" and "we" serves to include the reader in the narrative, making him or her a part of the collective and further emphasizing the common humanity of the characters and their plights.

⁴ Interestingly, the characters film every death that occurs, including that as part of the procedure to possess it. Limited to one tape, however, each even is erased and taped over: "This moment foreshadowing the real horror of the next. This moment's already taping over the death of Mr. Whittier, which taped over the death of Lady Baglady, which taped over Miss America holding a knife to Mr. Whittier's throat" (136). The only reality is the reality that can be shared and recreated: hyper-reality. Jean Baudrillard speaks at length in his excellent text *The Transparency of Evil* about simulation, loss of individuality, and the sameness that is perpetuated by this mentality. The characters of *Haunted*, limited in their technology, must perpetuate this hyper-reality by making their bodies into a new kind of media.

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From Picket Fences to Personal Computers: *Paranormal Activity* and the Suburban Gothic

Tyler Roeger

With the September 2009 release of *Paranormal Activity*, audiences witnessed a striking shift in what is often referred to as the Suburban Gothic. *Paranormal Activity* depicts a home that, while located amidst a crowded neighborhood of matching upper-middle class suburban houses, is isolated by the terror that takes place in the film.¹ Departing from the focus of late twentieth-century films like *The Amityville Horror* and *Poltergeist*, haunted house narratives that illustrated a focused haunting amidst a wider unsettling of suburban neighborhood securities, *Paranormal Activity* eschews the depiction of an unsafe neighborhood, instead, locating fear solely within a single home. Gone is the “There goes the neighborhood!” mentality of the haunted house films of the 1970s and 1980s with their attack on the unstable veneer of 70s and 80s American Suburbia. Replacing this collective anxiety, *Paranormal Activity* constructs a more narrow focus within the Suburban Gothic: in the middle class home of 2009, horror pertains to the isolated house rather than the secluded cul-de-sac.

Recognizing that gothic fictions never exist in a cultural vacuum, this departure prompts considerations of the reasons for, and implications of, this deviation in the Suburban Gothic.² In this paper, I will argue that in its shift from the destabilized neighborhoods of the Suburban Gothic of the 1970s and 1980s to the single, isolated home, *Paranormal Activity* illustrates the growing anxiety about isolation and disconnect within a society that projects itself as being increasingly connected by technology. Though the film’s use of social media and new technology proved extremely successful in its marketing strategy (*Paranormal Activity* became the most profitable film ever made, thanks, in part, to a request website and a youtube trailer that now boasts over 25,000,000 views), I will argue that the movie’s content draws attention to the far more unsettling reach of personal technology in its ability to isolate (“‘Paranormal Activity’- Official Trailer [HQ HD]”). Complicating and refusing the innocent, intimate connections proposed by new personal technologies, *Paranormal Activity* shows individuals tormented by threats that are inflected by the troubling isolation of new media.³

A History of Misleading Lawns and Suspicious Neighbors

Receiving wide release through Paramount Pictures in October 2009, *Paranormal Activity* follows the style of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *George A. Romero’s Diary of the Dead* (2007), what has come to be referred to as a “found footage” film (*Paranormal Activity*). *Paranormal Activity* shows Micah and Katie, a couple that is “engaged to be engaged” as Micah describes it, recording a series of increasingly threatening paranormal events in their home. In the film’s opening, Micah explains that he and Katie will turn the camera on and then are “just gonna film whatever happens.” What “happens” is that over several days and nights of filming, the events build from mysterious sounds to doors moving by themselves to, finally, Katie’s possession and murder of her boyfriend, Micah.

All of the events of *Paranormal Activity* are captured on the characters' digital camera and are set within an upper-middle class house in what appears to be an affluent suburban neighborhood. As an entry in the Suburban Gothic, the film locates horror in a familiar setting that is made insecure by disruptive threats. Though the threats of Suburban Gothic fictions are often reducible, symbolically, to interior anxieties and conflicts, the works often conjure an external figure of evil that violently attacks the world of PTA meetings and soccer practices that exists just outside of the imagined decay of the city. Projected in knife-wielding maniacs and haunted houses at the end of the block, the Suburban Gothic produces figures of horror that deconstruct the safety of the model home mentality. While recent studies of the Suburban Gothic provide helpful paradigms for considering how rapid social transitions in twentieth-century America created internal anxieties found in Suburban Gothic fictions, it remains important to recognize the presence of *external forces* that are shown to consistently challenge security within the Suburban Gothic.⁴ In the forms of haunted houses and maniacal murderers, the aspects of society that were eradicated and other(ed) to form a stable projection of middle-class security re-emerge to confront suburban homeowners with the realization that the suburbs are not the safe havens they were made out to be.⁵ While scholars appropriately locate the evil of the Suburban Gothic in "the house next door," it is important to point out that the films of the Suburban Gothic predominantly focus on an evil that, while nearby, was thought to have been buried in a severed historical past or vanquished to a distant location.⁶ In this sense, the Suburban Gothic is not simply a fear that evil is lurking in the house next door, but it betrays the terror that the evil we thought we were rid of has returned.

The tagline to the 1978 slasher film *Halloween* reads, emblematically, "The Night He Came Home," proclaiming Michael Myers's return to his hometown from a far off asylum. Films like *Halloween* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* as well as the haunted house films of the 70s and 80s show how a dark, other(ed) past destabilizes an entire neighborhood rather than a single person or a single home. In *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare* (originally intended to be the last of the *A Nightmare on Elm Street Series*), the villain, Freddy Krueger, speaks of the wide reach of his notorious razor-wielding glove, proclaiming to one of his impending victims, "Every town has an Elm Street!" (*Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare*). In *Halloween* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, as well as their combined 14 sequels, it is made clear that all of suburbia is now unsafe. Such wide destabilization also takes place within the haunted house films of the 70s and 80s despite the fact that figures of evil are rarely seen physically moving outside of the walls of the single home. The title of *The Amityville Horror* (1979) draws on the instability of the entire Amityville region of Long Island, signaling that the "horrors" reach beyond what happens to the unsuspecting Lutz family. 1982's *Poltergeist* depicts the tranquil neighborhoods of Cuesta Verde, full of children playing on manicured lawns, setting up the haunted house as an evil that deconstructs the entire neighborhood's sense of safety. In the Suburban Gothic of the 1970s and 80s, we might say that one loose thread unravels the whole façade, so to speak.

"You cannot run from this": A New Isolation

Compared to its haunted predecessors, *Paranormal Activity* brings American cultural anxiety regarding isolation and misplaced hopes in suburban veneer to a greater degree of seclusion. It is through a focus on technology that we can arrive at the most compelling, and perhaps most unnerving, explanation for why terror is now found in such isolation. Forsaking the way that malcontent spirits dismantle a secure suburban neighborhood like Cuesta Verde and yet not

depicting the “lonely house, withdrawn from everyday life” that scholar Barry Curtis locates in older haunted house films, *Paranormal Activity* shows a home that is completely evacuated from any sort of surroundings to reach out to (51). Throughout Micah and Katie’s tormenting, and eventually fatal, paranormal ordeal, throughout the entire 86 minutes of footage that comprises the film, the audience is only shown one brief glimpse of a world outside of the upper middle-class home. An early shot of what appears to be an affluent suburban neighborhood of matching homes is the only time the viewer is given a sense that a material world exists outside of the film’s presumably haunted house. Throughout *Paranormal Activity*, technology is a continual, looming specter that separates the characters and their home from the surrounding society, eventually creating a haunted individual rather than a haunted house.

From the very beginning of *Paranormal Activity*, personal technology is shown as an overwhelming force that surrounds Micah, the first character introduced. The film opens with a brief shot of Micah, using his camcorder to record a concert that plays on the enormous widescreen television in his living room. After this quick, initial shot, Micah receives a call on his cell phone. These scenes are rapidly interspersed with moments of Micah filming himself in a mirror in which it seems he is experimenting with his new camera, the device that will capture the entirety of the film. Such opening images gesture towards how prolific personal technology is in the lives of the characters. Micah’s focal point (the camera) is drawn to images and sounds mediated by technology. As Micah turns the camera toward the mirror, rather than recognizing his image through the mirror (as in the Lacanian mirror stage), he now forms his identity through the camera’s digital footage. He forms his self-image through a piece of technology that allows for a sense of control over his mediated-self. Following these initial shots, Micah is consistently shown surrounded by electronic devices. He often sits at a desk with two computer screens, each screen displaying several open web browsers. These computers go on to play a significant role in investigating the paranormal events as Micah uses the computer to slow down audio recordings of the demon (for the purpose of better discerning what is being said) as well as to surf the internet to discover a similar case of supernatural terror that foreshadows the couple’s horrific fate. These technologies are part of Micah and Kate’s home. Micah seeks to use technology to understand the paranormal events, playing back what is captured on film and audio.

The proliferation of technology, as well as its role as constant mediator, shapes the film’s isolated atmosphere and lends to the intense disconnect and doom that pervade the new haunted house of the Suburban Gothic. Beyond only the overwhelming amount of technology, the characters’ reliance on it to shape their understanding of the events that take place portrays technology not only as widespread but as invasive. The camera’s role is significant to the narrative as Katie links the camera’s intrusion into her home with the demon’s existence in her life. From the very beginning, Katie appears resistant to the camera’s intrusive presence. After her initial hesitation with the monetary cost of what she calls the “giant-ass-camera,” Katie becomes concerned with its invasion of privacy, an anxiety epitomized by Micah’s explanation that the two will be “sleeping with the camera.” As the paranormal events become more intense and more physically threatening, progressing from flickering lights to Katie being violently bitten by an unseen presence, Katie continues to construct a relationship between the paranormal events and the camera’s existence in the home. As the circumstances worsen, she becomes more explicit in her resistance towards the device, saying that events like hearing a loud growling “didn’t happen before the camera.” Near the end of the film, as Katie and Micah dispute the best solution for responding to the progressively unsettling situation, Katie exclaims, “Micah, you and your stupid camera are the problem!” Although it would seem that the camera’s only role

would be to record the events, Katie's focus on the equipment suggests that somehow the camera is implicated and holds some responsibility, that in its role as facilitating the horror, the technology now both allows and encourages its continuation. In other words, the horrific presence relies on technology to mediate it and make it more prominent in the characters' lives to the extent that the surrounding of technology, and dependence on it to create understanding, has made its terrifying effects unavoidable and inescapable.

When we consider the two primary threads that I've so far considered within *Paranormal Activity* (1. the shift in the Suburban Gothic towards a greater sense of isolation in the individual home and 2. the pervading, ominous presence of technology in that home), an important connection emerges: an increasing anxiety about personal technology's ability to isolate. The recent and ubiquitous anxiety that the spread of personal technologies like social media, youtube, and texting has created an unhealthy social construction of being physically isolated while technologically connected provides a compelling framework for considering what has led to a focus on the isolated home rather than the secluded neighborhood. While empirical studies about the social and psychological effects of digitally mediated relations are still inconclusive, and while it is far too easy and simplistic to claim that new technologies have universally and determinately harmed social relations, it remains important to explore the impact presented by the rapid changes of new technologies and what sociologist Manuel Castells has called the "network society."⁷ Further, it remains important to consider how these changes emerge within fictions. Within his popular essay "The End of Solitude," William Deresiewicz argues that isolation has become the primary source of anxiety in the age of digital connectivity, claiming that as the internet switches from "text to image" and as social media proliferates, visibility becomes what motivates the "contemporary self" (Deresiewicz). Deresiewicz goes on to write that "The great contemporary terror is anonymity," a fear that is realized in the loneliness of feeling disconnected in a time of unprecedented digital connectivity. In relation to this newfound anxiety of technology, *Paranormal Activity* can be seen as depicting the central fear engendered by social networking: being cut off from all social interaction. In the facebook generation, to belong to a damned neighborhood is a fine thing so long as you retain a neighborhood's collectivity. Terror is now the inability for communication to extend beyond the enclosing walls of the home.

As technology becomes more pervasive throughout a film like *Paranormal Activity*, there is not as much a fear of insecurity as there is a horror of extreme isolation. This shift to the alienated individual rather than the tormented neighborhood collective becomes most salient with the precise nature of the disturbances depicted in *Paranormal Activity*: while it contains markers of a haunted house, the film depicts an *individual* being haunted rather than a home. When talking with a psychic whom Katie and Micah invite into their house (one of the few people to come into the home from the outside world), Katie explains that she has experienced these paranormal events since she was eight years old. She would wake up at night to discover a shadowy figure standing at the edge of her bed. Picking up on clues that distinguish what Micah and Katie are experiencing from a traditional haunting, the psychic explains that what they're "dealing with" is attached, specifically, to Katie. She is plagued by a demon that is following *her* and not an evil spirit haunting *her house*. Elaborating on the personal nature of Katie's danger, the psychic has one of the more chilling lines of the film, telling Katie, "You cannot run from this. It will follow you...It will after a time try to contact you." In this shift in the Suburban Gothic, it is no longer the place that is unsafe, but it is an intrusive presence that surrounds the individual, Katie.⁸ The notion of being "contacted" by evil is significant in that in this world, the

only form of contact available becomes a debilitating connection that further cuts off Katie. Finally, she is possessed by the demon and, as the film ends, she approaches the camera, staring directly into its lens and quickly moving towards it in a way that ends by fusing her personal haunting with the camera that has been integral to the film's events.

Continually Remapping

Over the past decade, with the spread of new media and personal technology, the focus on the haunting of an individual rather than an entire home can be seen in a number of recent films, in addition to *Paranormal Activity*, that have focused on demonic possession. In 2005, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* was released, a film that depicts supposedly true events of the demonic possession of a young girl who is killed during an exorcism. 2010 and 2011 saw the release of *The Last Exorcism* and *The Devil Inside*, two “found footage” horror films that follow the events of an exorcism. The personal nature of the possessions in these films signals the respective shift in anxiety towards fears of alienation and the horrors of facing an entity that does not want to corrupt the neighborhood but only wants to torment the individual. This anxiety became most explicit in the tagline to the 2010 film *Insidious*, a movie that portrays two parents struggling to protect their young son from evil spirits that surround him. The film’s tagline proclaimed, “It’s not the house that’s haunted.”

Rather than *Paranormal Activity* inspiring such a shift in focus, a point made clear by the fact that *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* was released before *Paranormal Activity*, the film is instead emblematic of this greater shift in American suburban culture and of the response of several Gothic fictions to such a dramatic shift in social relations. Just as previous works of the Suburban Gothic often reflected, projected, and complicated particularities of the cultural moments that produced them, *Paranormal Activity* draws on the unsettling fear of disconnect and isolation that runs throughout our contemporary moment. The film represents a transition in both genre and culture by focusing on developing technology’s complicated relationship with both fiction and society. Recognizing *Paranormal Activity*’s significant divergence within the Suburban Gothic allows for a greater understanding of both how genre can capture current psychological paradigms as well as respond to such trends by emphasizing underlying questions such as the relationship between new media and alienation. As the Suburban Gothic continues to develop, we might ask how much more narrow can horror become? As the gothic has seemed to destabilize every American location imaginable, how do we move beyond the haunted individual? Perhaps an answer lies in considering not simply what the gothic can reflect but what it can speak back to. After all, stability may not always be a desired feature as spatial and psychological borders continue to be remapped and reconsidered throughout suburbia and the wider American Gothic.

Notes

¹ While this essay will use different generic terms like the Gothic, horror, and terror, I will primarily use the terms “horror” and “terror” to designate affective responses to the transgressions that shape Gothic fictions. For the purposes of this essay, I will consider the Gothic as a genre and horror as a range of affective responses, that as Noël Carroll has theorized, often elicit a combination of threat and revulsion. For more on such definitions of “horror,” see Noël Carroll’s *The Philosophy of Horror: or Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

² There is a rich history of scholarship on the American Gothic that looks to American culture to explicate the deep anxieties that permeate works of the genre. Such cultural readings run throughout treatments of the Gothic from such seminal works as those of Leslie Fiedler and Teresa Goddu. For more, see Leslie Fiedler’s *Love & Death in the American Novel*. New York: Stein and Day, 1966 and Teresa A. Goddu’s *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.

³ Considering “new media,” I am thinking of Robert K. Logan’s definition of “new media” as “those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication, and involve some form of computing as opposed to ‘old media’ such as the telephone, radio, and TV. These older media, which in their original incarnation did not require computer technology, now in their present configuration do make use of computer technology” (Logan 4). Within *Paranormal Activity*, I will primarily be concerned with the computer and the video camera as well as the greater atmosphere of new media that surrounds the film and its release.

⁴ In Bernice M. Murphy’s 2009 *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture*, Murphy argues that the subgenre’s rise can be traced to the rapid changes that took place in the 1950s and 1960s American social landscape, changes resulting from increasing home ownership and the development of expressway systems around metropolitan areas like New York and Chicago. Murphy claims that these rapid transitions caused “irreparable damage...to the psychological state of the people who moved into such new developments and broke with the old patterns of existence” (2). However, the “irreparable damage” of the initial transition Murphy points to pales in comparison to the terror developed later in the Suburban Gothic, terror from the homeowner’s discovery that the suburbs are far from the idyllic place of unquestionable innocence and security that they were first projected to be. Kim Iam Michasiw traces the Suburban Gothic through three distinct phases- anxiety over conformity, Gen X boredom, and eventual vegetable idiocy (244-5).

⁵ In his work on haunted house films, Barry Curtis considers the interior, repressed anxieties that form into external, haunting presences as “a need to acknowledge” and confront the metaphors of repression” (10).

⁶ Early in her work on the Suburban Gothic, Murphy writes of the genre, “one is almost always in more danger from the people in the house next door, or one’s own family, than from external threats. Horror here invariably begins at home, or at least very near to it, and in that sense the sub-genre continues the uneasy fascination with the connection between living environment and psychology which helped reinvigorate the haunted house story in the mid-twentieth century” (2).

⁷ In *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, Manuel Castells explores a wide range of the factors that led to, and the myriad results stemming from, what he calls “the network society.” For more on the network society, see Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

⁸ While this theme of evil following the individual does become explicit in the sequels to *Halloween* (most notably in *Halloween II* and *Halloween H20*) as well as *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*, I want to again stress that the aforementioned series pay careful attention to showing how the tormenting Michael Myers and Freddy Krueger threaten the security of their respective communities of Haddonfield, IL and Springwood, OH. In contrast, *Paranormal Activity* makes no move to pressure the safety of the presumed San Diego suburb that the film takes place in.

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Rhetorical Appearances of Alfonso the Good in *The Castle of Otranto*

Meghan Self

Authored in 1764 by Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* is a significant piece of fictional literature due its diverse elements and interpretations. The diversity allows for the novel to be read through multifaceted theoretical lenses. However, the majority of the scholarly research produced on *The Castle of Otranto* maintains a strict focus on reading the novel through a psychoanalytical approach¹. Meanwhile, other scholars provide an ample discussion on the historicity of this novel based upon Horace Walpole's personal life and political associations². Though these scholars provide accurate and in-depth analyses, their focus has been primarily arhetorical. This leaves an important gap for future scholarship to endure the research on the unexplored rhetorical readings of *The Castle of Otranto*. Therefore, I will analyze situations and occurrences that arise throughout the novel, as well as the speech of Alfonso the Good designated in traditional rhetorical roles of the orator³. These indications provide logical reasoning as to why reading *The Castle of Otranto* rhetorically is significant.

Many scholars direct their research to view Horace Walpole's life as an explanation and interpretation to why he wrote *The Castle of Otranto*. Max Fincher and Marcie Frank provide readings of the novel from a psychological and homosexual understanding⁴. They argue that Horace Walpole used his novel as a way to quietly, yet publicly, express his homosexuality and homosocial desires. Meanwhile, Ruth Mack asserts that Walpole's obsession with antiquity led to the creation of this novel⁵. Walpole mentions in the first preface to his novel that he is merely the translator of an ancient manuscript, believing it to be composed around the time of the First Crusade⁶. Yet, after wide public acceptance he includes a second preface claiming ownership. This leads to Sue Chaplin's interpretation that Walpole's novel is a self-reflection of struggles with authenticity, basis of origins and self-identity conflicts⁷. Though the previous research provides an insightful and enlightening discussion over Walpole's biographical history, there are many areas within the context of the novel that have yet to be explored.

It is surprising that a rhetorical examination of the novel is unprecedented due to numerous characteristics of rhetorical theory consistently appearing throughout the text. For the art of rhetoric to be successful, three main theoretical components must be present. First is the orator. In this case, the apparition of Alfonso the Good is the ideal orator. The second is the message. Alfonso the Good's speech does not embody the traditional length of an orator's speech, yet his omnipresence in the castle and his knowledge of the truth allow him to be examined rhetorically through more than just his laconic speech. The final component and arguably the most important is the audience⁸. There are various instances and methods of persuasion used throughout the novel for different purposes; however, there is only one truth available for the audience, which only Alfonso the Good knows. Using the rhetorical modes, ethos, pathos and logos, Alfonso the Good provides sound examples of persuasion on his audience to reveal the truth, which is understood as the castle's doomed prophecy. Because this novel is a piece of fiction many scholars would argue a rhetorical reading is unnecessary.

Although, the novel integrates the uses of rhetorical devices so eloquently, it is imperative to conduct an analysis of the versatile occasions in which rhetoric can be found; thus proving that even fictional literature can embody the use of rhetorical theory.

The ghost of Alfonso the Good maintains omnipresence in the castle and over its inhabitants. Even though Alfonso the Good only speaks once in the novel, his rhetorical motives and effects are copious. Each time he makes an appearance in the novel his intentions remain unknown to the characters, until the final chapter when he speaks a pivotal line declaring the rightful owner of castle. Identifying Alfonso the Good as the orator allows for a rhetorical understanding of his knowledge of the truth. He is the only character that can successfully prove and persuade the audience to know the truth of the castle's prophecy, and will attempt to reveal it to the castle inhabitants through several rhetorical strategies⁹.

The first instance of Alfonso's rhetorical motives is the opening scene of the novel. A giant marble helmet that is said to be, "an [sic] hundred times more large than any casque ever made for a human being" (19) murders the prince of Otranto's son on his wedding day. With the identification of the marble helmet missing from the statue of Alfonso the Good located in the nearby church of Saint Nicholas, and its astounding resemblance to the murder weapon in the courtyard, this can only be explained as Alfonso the Good's first attempt at persuasion. The helmet can symbolize such a secret, crushing the only heir to Prince Manfred's throne. An interpretation of this circumstance can be read as Alfonso the Good literally taking the cover off the truth and crushing the falsehood of the current ownership. This is also the first relation to Aristotelian rhetoric that claims, "men have a sufficient and natural instinct for what is true, and usually do arrive at the truth" (180). That is to say that the truth will always reveal itself in due time, which in the case of *The Castle of Otranto* would be when the prophecy, which states, "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) is rightfully fulfilled. However, Alfonso the Good's first attempt at exposure seems to fail first because only Manfred knows that the castle's ownership is not from his familial heritage but also because it is spoken without language. Furthermore, to question the orator's motives and moral character is justifiable and can be found in Plato's essay *Gorgias*. Socrates argues that, "above all things a man should study not to seem but to be good both in private and in public" (138). The fact that the orator's name in the novel is Alfonso *the Good* provides an adequate explanation that if the orator were not a good man, he would be unable to know the truth and effectively persuade his audience of this knowledge¹⁰.

Meanwhile, the size of the helmet symbolizes Manfred's enormous guilt and secrecy of knowing that he is not the rightful owner of the castle and his attempt to hide it from the other characters as well as hide it from himself. Alfonso the Good's helmet is the first indication that the truth will eventually be known. Manfred's guilt of knowing that his lineage is not the rightful heir to Otranto weighs heavily on him and leads to the literal crushing of his hope in maintaining his lineage and ownership of castle. Because of this, Manfred tries to persuade his would-be daughter-in-law, Isabella, to marry and give him a new heir. After making a proposal to Isabella, she is frightened and attempts to escape her doomed fate of being Manfred's incestuous concubine¹¹. In her attempt to escape the castle, Manfred orders all servants to pursue and capture her. During this pursuit, Alfonso the Good appears a second time.

Servants, Jaquez and Diego, begin their search for Isabella in the great gallery. As they begin to enter into the next room, Diego opens the door and sees a ghastly apparition that causes him and Jaquez to flee the room in terror. Jaquez and Diego encounter Manfred in their flight where Manfred aggressively questions the reason for their panic. Jaquez relays the event stating,

"I believe; he is all clad in armour, for I saw his foot and part of his leg, and they are as large as the helmet below in the court" (35). Under the condition that Alfonso the Good only allows the two servants to see his leg and foot, can be rhetorically understood as Alfonso the Good's second attempt to reveal the truth. With the notion that the legs and feet are designed for movement, Alfonso the Good is suggesting that once the truth is made known a dynamic shift in the castle's ownership will occur. However, his attempt fails again because the occurrence takes place outside of language. This repeated failure is embodied through Aristotle's argument, in his essay *On Rhetoric*, that humans can only obtain truth through a knowledge / language binary¹². Jaquez and Diego are unable to grasp knowledge of the truth because Alfonso the Good provides his persuasive argument foreshadowing change without the use of language.

The final revelation comes into play in chapter five including the female servant, Bianca. As she approaches the grand staircase she sees a giant armored hand at the top of the stairs. In fright she runs into an adjacent room where Manfred is located. When Manfred demands reason for her fright, Bianca exclaims, "I am sure I had not gone up but three steps, but I heard the rattling of armour... I saw on the uppermost banister of the great stairs a hand in armour as big... Tis' the same hand that he saw the foot to [sic] in the gallery-chamber" (102-104). With Jaquez and Diego's experience foreshadowing a shift in dynamics, the hand can be identified as a proposal for safety. Alfonso the Good metaphorically extends his hand to Bianca indicating that the anticipated change will likely provide her and the others with safety. Although the rhetorical effects Alfonso the Good produces do not go unnoticed, he ultimately fails to construct a clear argument for the truth through his lack of language. This is the precise moment when Alfonso the Good embodies Aristotle's notion of the knowledge / language binary. Aristotle argues that truth and knowledge can only be conveyed through the use of language¹³. For Aristotle, knowledge theoretically transcends language, yet because language is merely referential and does not have to be epistemic; it is only through language that truth and knowledge can make itself known.

In the concluding chapter of the novel, all of the characters gather in the castle court when before anyone can utter a word, "a clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations" (112) and Alfonso the Good appears to his audience to expose the rightful heir to the throne. Though Alfonso's speech is brief, the rhetorical effects of this final episode are momentous. As Alfonso the Good resurrects himself, "the walls of the castle ... are thrown down with a mighty force" (112) and Alfonso the Good exclaims: "Behold in Theodore, the true heir of Alfonso" (112)! Finally, spoken from the orator through the use of language, the truth is revealed. As Aristotle explained through the knowledge / language binary, this then allows for an understanding as to why the servants could not interpret Alfonso the Good's appearances, merely because there was no language to convey the truth. Because Aristotle asserts that the collaboration of language and knowledge reveals the truth, Alfonso the Good's previous attempts without language fail, but because Alfonso the Good employed language in his final attempt, the truth was exposed. Looking back through his role as the orator, Alfonso the Good also uses deductive reasoning to establish the truth of who is the rightful heir to the castle¹⁴. The first instance of his deductive reasoning happens in the opening scene of the novel. Theodore is quickly identified as an uncanny resemblance to the helmetless statue of Alfonso the Good erected in the church of Saint Nicholas. Being the first premise, this axiom only leads to further probable proof that Theodore is Alfonso the Good's rightful heir¹⁵. The second premise can again be founded upon Theodore's resemblance to Alfonso the Good as he is dressed in a suit of armor. Manfred cries out when he sees Theodore, "What, is not that Alfonso...Theodore, or

phantom, he has unhinged the soul of Manfred. – But how comes he here? And how comes he in armour” (83)? These two premises act as probable truth and reasoning until the final episode when language is used and the truth is revealed to the characters that Theodore is Alfonso the Good’s heir and the rightful owner of the castle. After this happens, the premises become absolute proof for his rhetorical and logical argument that the rightful heir is Theodore.

The intention of the orator revealing the truth so abruptly and sending the castle into ruins inhibits the audience from further hiding or covering the truth of the prophecy. The castle walls being thrown down “with a mighty force” (112) provides this scene with metaphorical effects of a rebirth. The castle of Otranto once hid the secret to the rightful heir of Alfonso the Good, it sheltered Manfred’s guilt of knowing he was not the rightful owner and it frees Theodore from Manfred’s jealousy and fear of rightful ownership. Before the episode of rebirth, the silence of the prophecy is confined within the castle walls, but upon Alfonso the Good rhetorically uncovering the truth through language, a new heir is born.

Alfonso the Good employs rhetorical methods to navigate through the novel, providing arguments for an indisputable truth. Identifying him as the orator supplies just one of the many rhetorical paradigms of how *The Castle of Otranto* can be expounded. Alfonso the Good uses rhetorical devices ideally to expose the truth. Because the truth is revealed and knowledge is gained once language exists provides proof to Aristotle’s statement that truth will uncover itself, but only through language. Alfonso the Good merely provides a concise and terse speech, yet the culmination demonstrates the use of Aristotelian theory of language and its rhetorical effects in *The Castle of Otranto*. Using rhetorical theory enables readers to assimilate and implement the functions it plays in all genres of literature that often appear at first glance to be arhetorical.

Notes

¹ See Marcie Frank, Sandro Jung, and Max Fincher's articles (works cited page) for further reading on a psychoanalytical approach to reading *The Castle of Otranto*.

² Sue Chaplin and Ruth Mack (works cited page) suggest that Walpole wrote this novel in hopes of revealing and criticizing, in a creative way, his personal and political life.

³ To persuade an audience of a specific topic or idea utilizing the rhetorical elements: ethos, pathos and logos.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ See the preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto*.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Although no rhetorician blatantly states that the audience is most important aspect of a rhetorical speech, it is a common understanding for rhetoricians.

⁹ Persuasion does not always have to come in the form of words. In the case of Alfonso the Good, his persuasive attempts are exposed through the emotional effect of fear in the characters that witness his manifestations.

¹⁰ Plato continues to explain, “that rhetoric is to be used for this one purpose always, of pointing to what is just, and so in every other activity” (138). Rhetoric is to be used by the good for good, always. Plato seems to be suggesting that only a good man can use effective rhetoric, and only a good man would use rhetoric for good purposes. This provides further evidence as to why Alfonso *the Good* can be the only successful rhetor in *The Castle of Otranto*.

¹¹ During Isabella’s flee scene, Walpole embodies the most common, yet successful Gothic elements such as: the supernatural elements of a talking portrait, subterranean passageways, an atmosphere of terror and suspense, locked and guarded gates, and “long labyrinths of darkness” (27). For a complete list of the most common elements that are dedicated to the Gothic genre, visit Robert Harris’ website. <<http://www.vitalsalt.com/gothic.htm>>

¹² Reference Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*, in the conclusion of his essay, Aristotle summarizes the knowledge/language binary by stating, “you must state your case, and you must prove it. You cannot either state your case and omit to prove it, or prove it without having first stated it” (240). Here Aristotle is suggesting that you must have the knowledge to produce the language to convey the truth, yet you must also begin with the truth in order to convey the correct knowledge and language.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Linking premises with the conclusion suggests that if the premises are true then based on the rules of deductive reasoning, the conclusion of the premises must also be true. To put it into a simple mathematical equation: if A=B and B=C, then the conclusion that A=C must be true by following the argument’s rules of logical necessity.

¹⁵ “I told you, madam, said Bianca, that I was sure he was some prince in disguise” (46). This is the first indication of foreshadowing that Theodore is the rightful heir to the throne, although this does not become apparent to Manfred until he witnesses Theodore dressed in a clad of armour.

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Delimiting the Unspeakable: Gothic Preoccupations in Joseph O Connor's *Star of the Sea*

Maria Beville

Introduction: Pushing the Limits of the Speachable

The Gothic is widely recognised for its concern with the unspeakable. Critical writings on the Gothic, particularly those which acknowledge the power of the sublime, stress the importance of this focus so much so that the Gothic has come to be generally acknowledged as a literature of the unsayable; a literature of the unconscious. Steven Bruhm insightfully considers the Gothic ‘the voice for an event that cannot be spoken’¹, highlighting the important social significance of the mode. To further this, I would argue that the as a key aesthetic experience of Gothic literature, the uncanny is intrinsically related to the Gothic voicing of the unsayable. The uncanny is an experience that plays upon the notion of limits and crosses the margins of both consciousness and cognition and as such, in Gothic writing, it has provided a basis for much philosophical enquiry. This paper will examine an Irish postmodern novel, *Star of the Sea*, by Joseph O’Connor and the place of the Gothic in this text as it works toward a presentation of the unspeakable events of ‘The Great Hunger’. The Gothic is often a transhistorical and transcultural literary mode and in O’Connor’s novel *Star of the Sea*, the subversive attitude of the Gothic works toward avoiding ‘grande narrative’ approaches to the unwritten personal stories of the famine period (c1845-51). I will argue that the presence of the Gothic in the novel and its insistence upon the uncanny, emphasises the unspeakability of the past while offering a discursive site for considerations of how history might be written. In this way, the Gothic delimits the unspeakable in the text. In posing this argument, the presence of the Gothic in the text will be traced, focusing on how the uncanny operates in a strategic manner as a historical metaphor across the narrative, linking textual and extra textual issues and reflecting the Gothic and postmodern facets of the text.

It is important to understand the taboo and unspeakability that surrounds the Irish famine in the context of its being a notable ‘limit event’, a point of fracture in historical and cultural narrative. As Simone Gigliotti explains, a limit event is ‘an event of such magnitude and profound violence that its effects rupture the otherwise normative foundations of legitimacy’². One might consider September 11th as such an event, given its repurussions for narrative, ideology and reality as outlined by many critics including Nicholas Royle, Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard, to name but a few who have critically analysed the void of language that surrounds the event³. Limit events overwhelm standard perception and forms of narrative, and as such a traumatic event, the famine can be recognised as bound by unspeakability. This could account for why it is, remarkably, largely absent from major Irish literature of the last hundred and fifty years⁴. In terms of its unspeakability, the famine is not only a sensitive event in that it involved the death of approximately one million Irish people through starvation and the emigration of one and a half million during a five year period – all of this occurring while large quantities of alternative food supplies were being exported in colonial taxation – it is a historical event that because of political developments in Ireland in the twentieth century, has been deprived of an adequate forum for its speaking. To speak of this atrocity and its repercussions for Irish language and culture would have, up until quite recently, in many forums, been taken as a nationalist gesture. Arguably, this would not have been ‘relevant’ to the cultural and political

rhetoric of a ‘diplomatic’ and ‘economically advancing’ state. Adding to this, it is worth considering the impossibility of literary representation in the wake of such a largescale traumatic national event. If we cautiously refer to Adorno’s idea that poetry after an event such as this would be barbaric, or grotesque⁵, we can see that there are not only political issues at stake but cultural and artistic concerns too. In any discussion of the mass starvation and death that resulted from the famine, there is simply a sheer absence of words to adequately encompass both the personal horrors and the shock impact that it had on Irish history, identity and language. Attempts at writing a literary account would run a high risk of negating artistic value. So, further to the lack of words to encompass the trauma is the taboo and artistic difficulty that surrounds its representation.

In this way the famine in a sense, is an event that ‘de-negates’ itself. As Derrida discusses in ‘How to Avoid Speaking’, ‘there is a secret of denial [*dénégation*] and a denial [*dénégation*] of the secret. The secret *as such*, as secret, separates and already institutes a negativity; it is a negation that denies itself. It de-negates itself’⁶. Using Derrida’s idea to interpret that avoidance of speaking about the famine in a literary context, the narrative of the famine responds to a limit event and subsequently de-limits itself. Speaking of the event, like speaking of a secret, is simultaneously limited and unlimited. There are boundaries prescribing what cannot be said, yet in its own right as an unmentionable thing, the event itself is without boundaries, and this raises important issues for literary representation. This idea of delimitation unveils an interesting idea that can be seen to drive O’Connor’s narratives forward. It highlights the fact that the relationship between word and event is problematic for history but that it is invigorating to fiction. Here, in *Star of the Sea*, the space between history and fiction, is where the negativity of the event can cancel itself out. It is the ideal space wherein the novel can illustrate its concerns with narrating the unnarratable and where its Gothic tendencies increase in terms of their symbolic potential.

Star of the Sea: an uncanny history

O’ Connor’s *Star of the Sea* is a complex novel that is distinctly postmodernist in its approach to history and also in its formal plurality which mixes and combines multiple historical and fictional modes. It is also an interesting example of a clear interaction between Gothic and postmodernist poetics, and its own formal hybridity reflects its content which is a multilateral perspective on Irish identity and history during the mid-nineteenth century. A postmodern self-consciousness underlies the novel’s dealings with the uncanny nature of history and subjectivity, and this becomes increasingly evident through the novel, which depicts the twenty six day Atlantic voyage of the ship named ‘Star of the Sea’.

During the ship’s passage to the United States from Ireland, a number of mysteries unravel while the destitute immigrants on board perish from starvation and disease and come to be listed in the captain’s daily log. Conjoining a number of the many stories present in the novel is the enigmatic figure of Mary Duane, a maid-servant with a secretive past. She connects the narratives of the primary characters, namely: ‘the Monster’ (Pius Mulvey), Lord David Merredith, and American journalist and writer, Grantley Dixon (who is allegedly the author of the novel we are reading). Significantly, the novel takes on an epistolary structure which is ideal in O’Connor’s effort to represent the complex and enmeshed versions of history associated with this troubled period. Echoing many earlier Gothic novels which adapted and developed this literary form (Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, being of note), the novel is a collection of fictional and non-fictional texts: newspaper clippings, historical documents, political cartoons, folk songs and

poems. The ‘historical’ narrative that results is one compiled from personal memory, public media reports, propagandist illustrations, professional records and a fictional rendering of a dramatic narrative.

Maeve Tynan has explicitly outlined how the novel operates as a standard model of Linda Hutcheon’s concept of postmodernism as ‘historiographic metafiction’⁷. Furthering Tynan’s reading, I would argue that a postmodern self-consciousness underlies the novel’s dealings with the uncanny nature of history and subjectivity, and this becomes increasingly evident through the narrative where the novel’s postmodernist attitude is expressed in Gothic tones. There are many obvious postmodern gestures to the Gothic in *Star of the Sea*, including, most notably, intertextual references to *Wuthering Heights*. The figure of Captain Lockwood parallels with Bronte’s narrator and a playful anagram is included as a coded message toward the end of the novel which spells out ‘Get him right sune, else be libel’. This translates to read as ‘Wuthering Heights’ and the official pseudonym of the author, ‘Ellis Bell’. One can also find playful references to *Jane Eyre* in the text, and the Monster as the character whom we meet first in the novel provides an interesting nod to Gothic themes. The atmosphere of superstition and brooding evil, as well as the significance of the sublime powers of nature during the icy passage across the North Atlantic imply a strong Gothic undercurrent to the novel. If we pay further attention, the standardised Gothic domain of the old ruinous manor house of the Merrediths, the remote past setting, and the interaction of old aristocracy and a catholic peasantry, come to reveal implicit Gothic elements in the narrative. However, while these ‘superficial’ Gothic elements are important to understanding how the novel uses the Gothic mode, it is more productive to focus on the more discursive qualities of the Gothic as they are present in the text and of these, most important is the uncanny.

The sense of the uncanny that pervades the novel is unambiguous and it is intricately connected to the idea of the perception of otherness in relation to history but also to identity. Interestingly, the narrative, which forms in the compilation of varied perspectives, is a story of mystery and suspense. Its dark nuances tell of not just the dramatic events of the culturally complex group of passengers but also of a potential supernatural or evil presence among them. This is embodied in the curious uncanny figure of Pius Mulvey, or ‘the Monster’, as he is referred to in the title of the preface to the book. Enigmatically, the Monster engages in unusual patterns of walking the deck of the ship in ‘the vaporous darkness’ of the night in silence and his ghostly presence is eerie and weird, arousing superstition among the passengers and even the captain and his crew. Further to this, there emerges a general superstition on board the ship relating to ‘the power of dark things’⁸ and this intensifies the sense of fear and fascination that develops around Mulvey’s character. Captain Lockwood comments: ‘[a]ll night long he would walk the ship from bow to stern, from dusk until quarter light, that sticklike limping man from Connemara with the dropping shoulders and ash-coloured clothes’⁹.

Significantly, in the captain’s log, it is recorded that the Monster carries with him some of the standard physical traits of the devil as he is known in Irish folkloric tradition. Cautious and furtive, he is always alone and he walks with his left foot dragging behind him ‘like an anchor’¹⁰. The captain describes the Monster’s ‘threadbare stateliness’ and his ‘mournful’ ‘disfigured’ face and also how his presence was often felt even in his absence evoking terror among some of the sailors on board¹¹. In this regard, he bears a resemblance to the devil of European tradition and the Goethan character of Mephistopheles in particular is playfully invoked in Mulvey’s injured leg¹². Similarly, his aimless wandering is reminiscent of Defoe’s Satan, the pitiable fallen angel who relates directly to the folkloric demonised character of ‘the wandering Jew’. These devilish

features are often echoed in the Gothic tradition and importantly connect to the concept of doubling and of an intrinsic strange familiarity that surrounds such curious features¹³. In addition, in the case of Mulvey, a macabre uncanny atmosphere is hinged to his monstrous being and his presence is accompanied by a mysterious putrefied odour. In typical Gothic fashion this horrendous stench infects the ship to the point at which the captain writes the following in his log: ‘there is a very strange and horrible smell about the ship tonight. I do not mean the usual odour emanating from our steerage where the poor people must contend as well as they can, but something much worse and quite pestilential. *It beggars description*’¹⁴. The result of this uncanny presence of Mulvey, whose presence is doubled in and through his familiarity but inherent strangeness to all on board, is that a heightened sense of suspense and anxiety begins to terrify the ship’s crew and passengers. The captain too expresses his fear and growing superstition in noting that ‘[t]he middling day of any voyage is regarded as unlucky, as on its own is the thirteenth day. For both to fall together as they do this day, is regarded as particularly ill-fated by seamen’¹⁵. As the day progresses he acknowledges that ‘the stench now became very evil indeed’¹⁶. We are told that one of the crew, Thierry-Luc Duffy of Haiti actually refused to leave his quarters for fear of witchcraft and voodoo.

While incredibly entertaining and highly symbolic, this portrayal offers no ordinary literary account of the uncanny. Being beyond words, this foul imposition on the senses is untraceable and as such is immediately interpreted as paranormal. It invades the ship as an abject and uncanny shadow of the Monster. As such it takes on theoretical aspects that extend outward to extra-textual issues. We can see this in the significant parallel that is immediately recognisable between the terrible nameless odour that seems linked to the devilish Mulvey and the very real and terrifying odour of the fungus *phytophthora infestans* that caused the rotting of the potatoes during the famine. The unspeakability of this sensory horror in the novel echoes the unspeakability of the mass death that was heralded by the arrival of the overpowering foul smell of rotting and decay caused by the potato eating fungus. Associated at the time with the devil through discourses of Irish folklore the stench as it is manipulated in O’Connor’s novel comes to function as a crucial historical metaphor. It presents the unrepresentable in an abstract and symbolic manner, circumventing the problem of verbal communication through a reliance on the sensory power of an odour. It does this while also reinforcing a Gothic atmosphere in the novel whereby the reader’s suspicion and superstition is aroused and the story itself comes to enforce a particular kind of reading pattern.

Arguably, language in its own right, whether spoken or unspoken – and in particular in the case of the writing of history – is an example of the uncanny. The production of an inexact double is the result of all language and all history writing. In generating history, to gain objectivity, plurality and multiple perspectives are a necessity. This is an idea that is thematically present in O’Connor’s novel where a sense of dislocation from history is achieved through a pervasive uncanny atmosphere as it interacts with a self-conscious and intertextual narrative. Toward the end of the novel there is a quotation from Lord Merredith included as an epigraph to a chapter dealing with history which states that ‘history happens in the first person but is written in the third. That is what makes history a completely useless art’¹⁷. The simultaneous sense of proximity and distance involved in the uncanny is here reinforced. This exemplifies Nicholas Royle’s point that the uncanny is to do with what is not ourselves, not assimilable to ourselves, despite being something that is only experienced by ourselves¹⁸. There is a difficulty in writing history as a collective narrative when history is personal and its writing, subjective. To refer to Paul Ricoeur on this, history is also related to the uncanny in terms of its ontological relationship

to death. History, like memory involves ‘death’ and as such the presence of the past in the present is haunting and both strange and familiar¹⁹. Like memory, the inexact replication of narrative in the process of history writing is defined by otherness and this is what makes it an ideal subject for postmodern literary analysis. The ‘truth’ of history, is an unattainable goal, beyond all attempts to write it. This given, the emphemerality of history is what renders it uncanny and tied to the issue of a migrant passage as it is in *Star of the Sea*, this is further intensified. According to Royle, ‘uncanniness entails a sense of uncertainty and suspense. How ever momentary and unstable. As such it is often to be associated with the experience of the threshold, liminality, margins, borders, frontiers²⁰. The in-betweenness of the passage of the ship, of the migrants on board who are about to renegotiate their identities as immigrants in the United States, and of the novel itself, which lies somewhere on the border of fiction and history, thus brings the uncanny to the heart of the text.

In terms of understanding the importance of form to the novel’s rendering of an unspeakable past, postmodern and contemporary issues are seen to be evident in the layering of reference that we can uncover in what appears on the surface as a straightforward attempt at generating a weird and ominous atmosphere through the image of the monster and the mysterious unsourcable stench that invades the ship. Arguably too, the postmodern and the Gothic are closely related in this interesting readerly gesture. Importantly, this is not something that is exclusive to O’Connor’s novel. The Gothic and the postmodern complement each other in many ways and in many texts, In much postmodernist literature, the terrors of the postmodern condition can be heard in Gothic tones. David Punter and Glennis Byron agree that the postmodern is essentially a place of haunting, and ‘the distortion of perspective; the hallmark of the Gothic finds a home in postmodernism’²¹. In postmodernist fiction we find a number of standardised Gothic literary devices such as embedded narratives and strong narrative self-consciousness which places the reader in a position of uncertainty about the nature of the real. A significant intersection can also be demonstrated through a reference to Patricia Waugh, who claims that a key to postmodernism is the ‘construction of fictional illusion and the laying bare of that illusion’²², and this, as we know from Ann Radcliffe and others is a central feature of Gothic suspense narratives. We also find in postmodernism, a concern with the fabulous and fantastic which operates in a manner typical of Gothic literature to deconstruct ideology and binary notions of otherness.

Interestingly, postmodern theorists and critics turn consistently to the rhetoric of the Gothic. Michel Foucault in ‘A Preface to Transgression’, includes commentary on Radcliffe, the Marquis De Sade and Immanuel Kant²³. Derrida and Baudrillard alike, embrace the symbolic power of the spectre, the monster, and death in their respective dealings with hauntology and the postmodern culture of death. Many of the issues that are explored separately in the Gothic and postmodernism (both in text and theory), are one and the same, namely: crises of identity, fragmentation of the self, the darkness of the human psyche, and the philosophy of being and knowing. These important theoretical and formal overlaps are present in O’Connors novel. Metafictional and genre bending in form, it plays with notions of reality and history in its content and it is overtly concerned with the darkness of identity and colonial history in its themes. In O’Connor’s postmodernist text a further illustration of this relationship between the Gothic and postmodernism is evident in his handling of an unspeakable past. And this relationship evolves, as I interpret it, because the Gothic, as the subconscious of literature provides a unique discursive space for postmodern perspectives on historiography as it contends with the trauma of the famine in Irish cultural memory.

The Gothic and the unspeakable

The most pervasive aspect of Gothic writing is its capacity for dealing with the unspeakable. This is generally visible in the textual presence of the Gothic sublime, which revels in the depiction of experiences of fear of the unknown and unknowable. Such depictions rely heavily on the notions of extremes and thresholds, with depths and heights; essentially, limits and their traversal. According to David Morris, ‘in contrast to the eloquent silences favoured by neoclassical writers on the sublime, Gothic sublimity explores a terror of the unspeakable, of the inconceivable, of the unnameable’²⁴. Here the Gothic sublime is understood to be an inherently dark or negative sublime; that which is at once fearful and stimulating but which is beyond the conceptual range of the linguistic subject. This insistence on the importance of the relationship between the sublime and the unrepresentable, has origins in Kantian aesthetics which have been reinterpreted through Hegelian thought whereby the sublime is not just inspired by terror but is also evocative of terror. While the cognitive faculties conceive of the sublime object, the imagination experiences frustration at the inability to conceptualise and represent it in its totality. A stimulating situation of simultaneous fear and fascination results, driven by a void of epistemology. For this reason Edmund Burke, in his early consideration of the concept deemed terror – fear of the unknown – as ‘the ruling principle of the sublime’²⁵. Its limitless power of suggestion and its capacity as a catalyst to the imaginative drives of the individual was thus developed as a key feature of much Gothic fiction.

But the Gothic also has a penchant for dealing with the unrepresentable in relation to taboo and to the inaccessible corners of the human psyche. And the uncanny in Gothic writing is often a means of accessing the dark and unknowable aspects of the subject; those that are ultimately strange but intrinsically familiar to us as encounters with otherness. Punter suggests that we often misrecognise the operational space of the Gothic, or as he refers to it, ‘the literature of terror’²⁶. In presenting us with experiences of terror, the Gothic delivers the ‘real world’ ‘in inverted form’ often represents ‘those areas of the world and of consciousness which are, for one reason or another, not available to the normal process of representation’²⁷. Those areas of existence that are unrepresentable in the ‘normal’ sense can be said to be uncanny. We can encounter the uncanny on many levels and as Morris notes, ‘the terror of the uncanny is released as we encounter the disguised and distorted but inalienable images of our own repressed desire...[it is derived] not from something external, alien or unknown but – on the contrary – from something strangely familiar which defeats our efforts to separate ourselves from it’²⁸. Arguably, our inability to separate ourselves from the uncanny thing means that it is sublime in the conventional sense, connected, importantly, to an impossibility of naming. We can never say precisely what it is that is uncanny. Royle, in discussing the economy of the uncanny asserts that everyone’s experience of the uncanny is his or her own²⁹. So while the theoretical idea of the uncanny is speakable, the actual subjective experience of it is not and thus hinges on the sublime. The inaccessibility and inherent otherness of the uncanny encounter is what renders it as central to Gothic aesthetics and to the strategies that the Gothic relies upon in speaking the unspeakable.

Uncanny Spaces

In *Star of the Sea*, the central metaphor of the ship reveals further Gothic preoccupations of the novel in relation to the unspeakable and the uncanny. Telling of O’Connor’s playful style and use of expansive metaphor, the ship itself is an uncanny site and is doubled in its naming as ‘Star of the Sea’ which is a direct reference to the Virgin Mother in Catholic tradition as the Hebrew

translation of the name Maria. Importantly, the ship in its own right as a vessel at sea and as a doubled space in its naming, symbolises a typical Foucauldian heterotopia. It ‘contains’ many figures of otherness while reflecting a microcosmic alternative to contemporary society. In most cases, the depictions of the characters on board revolve around a significant recognition of otherness, whether it be in relation to personal identity, encounters with ‘other’ uncanny figures or in the very experience of the transitional space the immigrant passage.

Fred Botting claims that the heterotopia is an important feature of much Gothic writing as it operates as a liminal site for the displacement of the other: ‘a site where subjects and behaviours that fit only partially within dominant norms can be both contained and excluded’³⁰. Labyrinths, graveyards and mental asylums provide examples of this, mirroring Foucault’s initial example of the ship at sea as a ‘counter-site, an enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within a culture, are simultaneously represented and contested’³¹. According to Foucault the heterotopia is simultaneously real and unreal and the ship is ‘the heterotopia par excellence’. ‘[T]he boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea’³². As such it functions, on the margins of culture and society as a reflection and inversion of all other social zones. He adds that since the sixteenth century the ship has been the ‘greatest reserve of the imagination’. The liminality and otherness of the heterotopia are in plentiful example in *Star of the Sea* and the ship thus comes into force as an uncanny site. ‘Others’ on board, include, interestingly, Lord Merredith, whom we discover is not who he thought he was, but the illegitimate son of his landlord father and a peasant Irish woman from the local village. Other, ‘other’ characters might be seen not to exclude the Maharajah, who exists as an orientalised exotic whose presence is not much more than spectral across the various narratives. We also meet the Caribbean seaman Thierry-Luc Duffy, who is most probably, as the name implies, a Creole man of Irish and French descent. In addition to this mix of hybrid and ‘other’ characters, there are a number of figures whose otherness is made evident in their complete evasion of definition. The Monster, already described, is such a character and his many names testify to his plural and shifting identity, ranging from Pius Mulvey to ‘the Monster’, the Ghost, Malvey, Murphy and Frederick Hall, to name but a few.

As an uncanny space for these others, the ship, ‘Star of the Sea’ fulfills at least five of Foucault’s outlined principles of heterotopic space. It is a ‘multifunctional site’³³, testified to by its recognition as a coffin ship while simultaneously being bound to concept of rebirth in the symbolisation that the name of the ship involves through its connection with the Virgin mother. It is linked to ‘a slice in time’³⁴. The passage itself, being othered by the superstition of the number of days involved, hints at a series of events that take place when time is effectively ‘out of joint’³⁵ during the in-between and transitionary phase of the voyage. The ‘Star of the Sea’ also ‘juxtaposes in one real space, several spaces that are incompatible’³⁶: the various locations of narrative onboard the ship include the steerage hold below deck; the deck itself, where the Monster roams at night; the lock up; the dining hall; and the captain’s cabin, all of which function in their own right as spaces where identity can be defined in various ways. And finally, it fulfills its role as a heterotopia as a space for otherness that relates ‘to all the space that remains’³⁷. It provides a microcosmic reflection of British society and challenges the identity of that society in its own radical otherness and marginality.

Interpreting the ship as a heterotopia links it back directly to Gothic concerns with representations of subjectivity and otherness and this ties to the novel’s maintenance of a discussion of history and representation. The idea of history as uncanny comes to the fore again

as we consider the place of such characters in the official historical record. The Gothic here returns to its position in the novel as an important transhistorical and transcultural literary mode in which the concept of the unspeakable is an eminent narrative force. The subversive nature of the Gothic is rendered in the challenging uncanny space of the heterotopia as it works to counter nationalist, imperial, and/ or fundamentalist approaches to this silent moment in Irish history. As such, the otherness and unspeakability of the past is reinforced while at the same time a discursive space is opened up for consideration of how that past might come to be spoken of. Essentially, the questions of silence, of silencing, and of censorship seem to counterpoint the tremendous sense of disempowerment experienced when encountering the unimaginable and unrepresentable as it pertains to such a large scale traumatic event. In positing this idea, *Star of the Sea* as a postmodern novel draws largely upon the Gothic literary tradition to present an account of a traumatic history that is haunted by a sense of its own otherness. The novel unites both literary modes, postmodern and Gothic, in its concerns with the unspeakable and with historiography and thus presents a fluid and heterogeneous account of a history that has consistently proven itself to be unwritable. In its blending of the Gothic and the postmodern, the uncanny saturates the novel to the point that it is suggested that the writing of history itself is an uncanny process. The setting of the novel is a Gothic heterotopia where otherness is encountered in various forms, not just to intensify the Gothic atmosphere but again to comment on the plural nature of identity and culture and the inaccuracy of a unified narrative of a limit event. Furthermore, the collective perspective of the novel on this elusive historical period is an attempt at speaking the unspeakable, in which the Gothic offers a theoretical and metaphorical structure for the text's aesthetic discourses. As such, the Gothic, in *Star of the Sea*, can be seen as again asserting itself as a site for the delimitation of the unspeakable in contemporary postmodern fiction.

Notes

¹ Bruhm, qtd in Hogle, Jerold, E. 2002. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge).p 171.

² Gigliotti, S. 2003. "Unspeakable Pasts as Limit Events: The Holocaust, Genocide, and the Stolen Generations". *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, vol. 49. p 164.

³ According to Derrida, 9/11, as an 'ineffable', 'unqualifiable' and 'undeniable event', resulted in an impossibility of understanding the *thing* itself. We cannot get past naming and dating because 'in the end we don't know what' it is. See. Borradori, Giovanna. 2003 *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. (University of Chicago Press: Chicago). p25-30, 33-4, 85-90, 100-02. Etext at

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/066649.html>

*Note: this example is not intended to draw any parallels between the Irish Famine and the terrorist attacks of September 11th beyond the fact that both incidents can be seen to have had the same impact on narrative and discursive responses.

⁴ There is a notable silence on the famine in Irish literature. In certain works of Maria Edgeworth, Patrick Kavanagh and John Banville, the issue is certainly present, yet these examples represent a small minority within the grand scale of Irish literary output in the modern period.

⁵ Adorno (1951) in 'Cultural Criticism and Society' wrote that '[t]he critique of culture is confronted with the last stage in the dialectic of culture and barbarism: to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and that corrodes also the knowledge which expresses why it has become impossible to write poetry today' highlighting the invalidity of aesthetic responses to a history and reality that has been permanently changed. This conceptualisation of the problems of art and literature after such historical trauma offers a useful tool for understanding artistic silence on the subject of the famine.

⁶ Derrida, Jacques. 1989 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', In *Languages of the Unsayable*. S. Budick and Iser. W. eds. (New York: Columbia University Press) p25.

⁷ Tynan, Maeve. 2009. 'Everything is in the way the material is composed': Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* as Historiographic Metafiction. In. Beville, M, Tynan M & Ryan, M. (eds). *Passages: Movements and Moments in Text and Theory*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press). P79.

⁸ O Connor, Joseph. 2005. *Star of the Sea*. (London: Vintage) p 152.

⁹ O'Connor, xi.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The Junker Woland in the Urfaust text injured his leg during an orgiastic encounter with a group of witches in the Brocken Hills on the Walpurgis Night some time during the 18th century. See: Goethe. J.W. 1999. *Faust - A Tragedy in Two Parts and the Urfaust* (London: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.)

¹³ One could consider Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* for example.

¹⁴ O'Connor, 152. *Italics mine*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ O'Connor, 155.

¹⁷ O'Connor, 386.

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- ¹⁸ Royle, Nicholas. 2003. *The Uncanny: An Introduction*. (Manchester University Press: Manchester).vii.
- ¹⁹ Riceour, Paul. 2004. Memory, History, Forgetting. (London: University of Chicago Press) p39.
- ²⁰ Royle, vii.
- ²¹ Punter, David. & Byron, Glennis. 2007. *The Gothic*. (Oxford: Blackwell) p 53.
- ²² Waugh, Patricia. 1984, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. (London: Routledge) p17.
- ²³ Brown, Marshall. 2004. 'A Philosophical View of the Gothic Novel'. In: Botting, Fred. & Townshend, Dale. (eds.) *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. (Routledge: London). Vol.1. p172.
- ²⁴ Morris, David. B. 1985. Gothic Sublimity. *New Literary History*, 16:2. p312.
- ²⁵ Burke, Edmund. 1998. A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Sublime And The Beautiful. (London: Penguin) p101.
- ²⁶ Punter, David. 1998. 'Terror'. In: Mulvey-Roberts. Marie. (ed.) *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*. (London: Palgrave MacMillan) p238.
- ²⁷ Punter & Byron, 15.
- ²⁸ Morris, 307.
- ²⁹ Royle, 26.
- ³⁰ Botting, Fred. 2004b. 'Power in the Darkness. Heterotopias, Literature and Gothic Labyrinths'. In: Botting, Fred. & Townshend, Dale. (eds.) *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. (London: Routledge). Vol. 2. p242.
- ³¹ Botting, 243.
- ³² Foucault, Michel. 1967. *Of Other Spaces. Heterotopias*. Transl. Jay Miskowiec. Etext: <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>. Accessed January 15, 2012. (Foucault **)
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ibid.

A Goth Dressed in White: How Emily Dickinson Found Safety and Identity in the Shadows

Jeanean K. Kish

In a letter Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote to his wife, he quotes Emily Dickinson as saying “If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me I know *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry. These are the only way I know it. Is there any other way” [italics in original] (L 342a). If we were to take out the word “poetry” and replace it with the word “Gothic,” we would have a perfect definition for Gothic literature. Many critics have looked at the Gothic aspects of Emily Dickinson’s poetry, such as Daneen Wardrop in Emily Dickinson’s *Gothic: Goblin and a Gauge*, and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* have even read Dickinson herself as the embodiment of Romantic Gothic ideals. While it is clear that she was heavily influenced by Romantic writers, both poets and novelists, one must ask why as a Victorian writer she would take on this voice in her poetry. What was it about her situation that caused her to find expression in Gothic tropes?

Before explicating the meaning of her poem “One Need Not be a Chamber – to be Haunted -”, we first much understand what she defines as art. One of the most famous examples of her definition is found in a letter she wrote to Higginson, where she states “Nature is a Haunted House—but Art—a House that tries to be haunted” (*Letters* 459a). Like much of Dickinson’s work, this one line at first appears to be simple until we begin to peel away the layers of meanings. When looking at the first part of her statement, that “Nature is a Haunted House,” we must first ask under what basis she is constructing this metaphor. In *The Dickinson Sublime*, Gary Lee Stonum claims that Dickinson writes poems with the same subjects as having the identical or similar meanings or significances. In regards to her poems on nature, he says she usually “[represents] nature as an unremitting quiddity with which the self must battle to avoid a humbling affront” (20). While Stonum is referring to her poetry, his reading can help us to better understand her letter as well. If nature represents a sense of being that we must confront in order to find ourselves and be strong in our sense of self, then for nature to be haunted takes on the notion that this sense of being is one that will follow us always, like a ghost and particularly a doppelgänger, that will literally haunt our every movement, destroying us or as he says “humbling” us until we have confronted it.

If we then read the first part of her statement in this way, we now must turn to the second part in order to fully unpack her meaning. To say that art tries to be haunted is saying that art wishes to be like nature in that it is something against which we can better understand ourselves, our beings, or at least that should be its goal. Fred Botting, in his work *Gothic*, explains that Gothic literature written during the Romantic era is a literature that shows when “threatened with dissolution, the self, like the social limits which define it, reconstitutes its identity against the otherness and loss presented in the moment of terror” (9). Botting’s assessment of Gothic fiction and Stonum’s assessment of Dickinson’s nature poetry sound remarkably similar, both putting

forth the notion that we define ourselves against something else, against the Other in Botting's case and against nature in Stonum's. The lens created by these definitions then supplies us with a way through which we can better understand Dickinson's poetry.

Once we have established that her writing can be understood by reading it as Romantic Gothic works, we begin to find enriched meaning in her work. Richard Davenport-Hines, in *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin*, defines Gothic as "an aesthetic of interior disorientation and divided selves" (304). Dickinson's poem "One need not be a Chamber – to be Haunted –" shows this notion of an "interior disorientation and divided selves." In the poem she states that "Far safer, through an Abbey gallop/ The Stones a'chase – / Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter –/ In lonesome Place - " (J 670). Here we see the notion of the divided self by her mention of a person encountering him or herself somewhere. Not only does she explore this idea of a second inner identity, but in typical Gothic fashion, she claims that this second inner self is one that we should avoid. In fact, Mark Edmundson in *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism, and the Culture of the Gothic* explains this concept as "The idea of a second self – of a horrible other living unrecognized within us, or loosed somehow into the world beyond..." (Edmundson 8). Here she uses the image of the doppelgänger in order to show this evil side within ourselves, one from which many of us often hide.

At the end of the poem, she talks about the division between the mind and the body. She says that the body protects itself from "O'erlooking a superior spectre -- / Or More –" (J 670). In this way she sees the mind as being "a superior spectre" one that is stronger than the body, but one that is frightening as well. Interestingly, she uses a Gothic convention in a way that is opposite to the usual representation of the body/mind divide at this time. In many Victorian works, the mind is privileged over the body. The body is seen as a place of animalistic desires and behaviors. The mind, on the other hand, is the seat of logic and rationality. For an example of this dichotomy and the way the privileging works, one need only look to Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. However, since she is writing with more of a Romantic ideology behind her poetry, we find that she is privileging the emotion of the body or the sublime, rather than the rationality of the mind.

In addition to subverting the mind/body dichotomy, her use of the male pronoun here to represent the body is a puzzling one. When discussing the dichotomy of reason versus feeling, reason is generally associated with the male and feeling with the female. If we maintain our reading that the body is the site of feeling, then she should gender that body as female rather than male. In a traditional Gothic work, usually the gender of the body lost in catacombs and hiding from a threat is a female body. So why would Dickinson give us a male body in this stanza? By looking at the work of Judith Butler, we can use it to better understand what Dickinson is doing here. In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" Butler claims that "identity categories tend to be the instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression" (308). What Butler is arguing here is that our identity, in particular our gender identity, is one that is placed upon us by those in power in order to control our behaviors or it can be used to subvert that very control as well. This act of subversion is the one that we must consider when doing a Gothic reading of Dickinson's work.

As noted, women are usually the gender used to show fear and weakness in the face of a Gothic threat. Kate Ferguson Ellis in *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* explains, "writers... consciously used Gothic conventions to expose the evils of autocratic power, especially that exercised by men over women" (xiii). Doing so illustrated

the weakness that was ascribed to women by the patriarchy and the lack of autonomy they had within the hegemonic structure. To have a male body then take this position suggests that men, when confronted with female hegemony, if and when it exists, are also rendered powerless by the Other. In this way, the two genders as they are constructed by society are mutually exclusive and unable to combine into a stronger whole. Botting furthers this notion when discussing the role of the Victorian double or doppelgänger in Gothic works: “an uncanny figure of horror, the double presents a limit that cannot be overcome, the representation of an internal and irreparable division in the individual psyche” (93). So we are to understand that it is not only the role of the female gender that is harmed by the societally imposed gender norms, but the male is harmed by them as well.

We also must note her use of the word “haunted” in the poem. If the haunted house of nature is one that forces us to confront our sense of being, then when our mind is the entity being haunted, in order to, as Stonum puts it, “avoid a humbling affront,” we must confront this other self head-on. Unfortunately, not only would losing to this other self be humbling, but not confronting it at all is humbling as well. While she states throughout the poem that it is better not to confront this self, by saying that our mind is haunted by it, she is telling her reader that this second self will continue to dwell in the mind and haunt the individual. In the fourth stanza, she writes “Ourself behind ourself, concealed – / Should startle most –“ (J 670). This notion of the two selves brings to mind the idea of a fake persona that we feel the need to hide behind rather than show our true self to the world. Going back to our reading of the gender of the body present in the poem, we can see the notion that one may need to hide the way one actually feels internally because that self is unaccepted or powerless in the face of the hegemonic structure that determines such identity roles. We also can see the pain and fear that this hiding of self causes. By the last stanza of the poem, she has suggested a feeling that is both cold, lonely and leaves us with the feeling of powerlessness.

This final feeling that she leaves her reader with is significant in regards to the poem’s role as a Gothic work because she does not give us the typical emotional release or sense of catharsis that Romantic Gothic works were supposed to provide. Fred Botting explains that Gothic works were a “powerful means to reassert the values of society, virtue and propriety...[they] frequently adopt this cautionary strategy, warning of dangers of social and moral transgression by presenting them in their darkest and most threatening form” (7). He further explains, “Terror evoked cathartic emotions and facilitated the expulsion of the object of fear” (7-8). In this way, Dickinson varies from the typical Romantic Gothic format that uses the sublime and the other conventions to enact this catharsis. There is a reason for her variation, as evidenced by a close reading of the last stanza. She ends by saying “The Body – borrows a Revolver – / He bolts the Door – / O’erlooking a superior spectre – / Or More –“ (J 670). We are never able to see the “superior spectre”; we are never able to confront the terror at the door. Because we are not able to do so, we do not get the catharsis that we are meant to get by reading Gothic works. Instead, Dickinson forces us to deal with the one possible notion, which is that we can never actually face what is evil or detrimental because it is within ourselves. When reading descriptions of her behavior and her self-imposed seclusion, one can assume that she had some kind of anxiety disorder or even agoraphobia. If she did, then she would have been trapped by her mind, and the mind cannot be confronted physically and it most certainly cannot be overcome with physical objects such as a gun, unless those objects change it permanently through death. So by closing the poem in this manner, she illustrates what it is like to never have the release of confronting one’s enemy because that enemy is ourselves.

Another possible reading of this ending deals with the gender roles mentioned above. As previously stated, the society created these roles to be mutually exclusive, with each gender having its own behaviors and jobs that the other was not to practice. In this way, the two could never be combined. By leaving us with the notion that they cannot be integrated by dictate of the society, and leaving us with a feeling of discomfort and fear, she could be challenging the mutual exclusivity of these roles. In Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, he discusses how the gender roles were socially constructed and how homosexuality was defined. What concerns us about his argument is his notion of "psychic hermaphrodisim" (101). Foucault explains,

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was categorized...less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodisim of the soul. (43)

What Foucault is conjecturing here is that during this period, the Victorian period, homosexuality became more than just a sexual act. It was an actual identity, an aberrant one as viewed by the hegemony of the time, that one embodied within one's psyche. It was not performance but, instead, it was self, one that attempted to take on both genders in an androgynous nature.

This androgynous nature then, the blending of both genders in the psyche, is important in Dickinson's poetry in general. Quite a few of Dickinson's poems have her taking on the male role or using male pronouns or nouns with which to refer to herself. As an intelligent woman, her intelligence alone would have marked her as unfeminine, yet she did have stereotypical feminine qualities. In this way, she was herself an embodiment of both genders, of both identities; therefore, she understood the horrific position such a fused identity would create for a person in a culture that was unaccepting of that role. She also then had firsthand knowledge of the struggle one would have gone through to try to negotiate a bridge between the roles within a culture that would not allow one to do so. By taking on the psychological roles of both genders, she does take on Foucault's "psychic hermaphrodisim."

The ending of her poem then is further problematized by Foucault's argument that "discourse [of the Victorian era regarding sexuality] can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (101). By creating the genders through which to control individuals, the society also created homosexuality or "psychic hermaprodism" and the means through which this seemingly aberrant behavior could define itself against the hegemonic discourse and thereby naturalize itself. This naturalization then would remove the aberrant nature ascribed to it (101). In her poem, the two genders hide from one another, and as I mentioned she does not give us the cathartic moment of the two meeting that was typical of the Gothic. By not doing so, she shows that the prescribed behavior of maintaining the borders between the sexes is one that is detrimental to the psyche. And while the society sees the meetings of the two genders as dangerous, it is that very meeting and potential integration into androgyny that would bring the catharsis necessary for the work to follow the traditional Gothic convention. In essence then, the poem could be showing the need to get through this fear in order to find the catharsis, because the safest course is not always the best course.

In addition to representing the psychic divide within oneself, she is also, in the words of Fred Botting, “signifying the alienation of the human subject from the culture and language in which s/he was located” (11). What the speaker in the poem has essentially done by hiding from a confrontation with the other self is to lock that self away, thereby alienating it from any outside influence. According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Personal identity... is at no moment inherent in one but is applicable – is applied – only from outside, *après-coup*, and by a process of visual assimilation or ‘seeing as’” (262). The self, once it has hidden itself away is no longer “seen” by the culture, and, therefore, is no longer defined by that culture. While that may seem to be a freeing experience at first glance, upon further investigation we can find that being that isolated, no matter the level of freedom it provides, can also be abjectly lonely. What’s more, as human beings, we often need justification from outside sources, some more so than others. Her correspondences with Higginson and others illustrate that she did reach out for justification and criticism, even if she did not feel the need to find it through wide scale publication. As such, she would have felt the loss that such self-imposed isolation would have caused.

Not only does the society determine how we are viewed, individuals do as well. A person meets us or sees us for the first time, and that person determines how he or she views us, how we are to be understood, and in so doing that person imposes an identity upon us that is created by him or her rather than by how we see ourselves. Dickinson would have been aware of this contrived identity as a writer. For Dickinson, it was very important for her to define her own identity. Several critics have speculated that she did not publish because she wanted total control of her artistic vision; she did not want her poetry to be altered by male publicists. In *Emily Dickinson and Her Contemporaries: Women's Verse in America, 1820-1885*, Elizabeth A. Petrino explains “she distinguished herself as the only American Renaissance writer who valued her own conception so completely that she was willing to forgo publication” (20). In this way, she was unwilling to give the control over to anyone else. She wished to establish her own identity, her own boundaries, without having to confront another version of herself that was not her own. In fact, as Daneen Wardrop explains, “Dickinson painstakingly fashioned herself as a persona...The only Dickinson we can know well remains the written Dickinson, and the written Dickinson is nothing if not consummately crafted” (3). Because the readers and publishers cannot see the real her due to her constructed persona, because she is hidden away so as to refrain from “O'erlooking a superior spectre - ” she is protected from what it may do to her, how it might change her, but she is also isolated from a community of other authors and publishers that could help her develop her own identity more.

What we need to understand with Dickinson’s poetry then is that she is a bridge between the Romantic’s notion of the Gothic and the Victorian’s notion of it. She borrows from both forms in order to express her ideas to the reader. Once we understand that this is what she is doing, her poems open up to new meanings rather than being enigmas or a terror in and of themselves. The Gothic is known as a literary form that challenges boundaries, both those within us and those within society. Not only does Dickinson take on these tasks with gusto in her poetry, but she also challenges the boundaries of the Gothic itself by taking two distinct eras of it and combining their particular conventions in a way to force us to see the unreal nature of those boundaries built around our identity and sense of self and our compliance with their restrictions.

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The Impenetrable Veil: The Human and the Sublime in the Works of Arthur Machen

Laura Tykowsky

From its inception, the tradition of Gothic literature has been a vehicle for examining the social, political and religious anxieties that plague society. During the turn of the 20th century, Arthur Machen explored the most fundamental of human anxieties through his fiction: that of human origins and the future of the spirit. That Machen wrote most of his works from a position of solitude underscores both the individual and the universal nature of these fears. Machen had strong ties to both paganism and the Catholic faith. He utilized both in his writings as tools to examine the nature of the relationship between the spiritual and the human, which he shows to be both incompatible and inextricable. Direct contact with the divine realm is demonstrated in *The Great God Pan* to have devastating physical and psychological repercussions. When a young woman, Mary, is exposed, through a scientific experiment, to the image of the god Pan, she is driven instantly insane. Mary's daughter, Helen, who is born after this experiment takes place, is portrayed as an inhuman being who spreads evil to those close to her. In "The Inmost Light" Machen describes another experiment in which Dr. Black separates his wife's soul from her body. Mrs. Black's subsequent, monstrous transformation illustrates that an element of the spiritual, the soul, is essential for human existence. These works call into question man's ultimate desire to lift the veil that separates "the world of matter and the world of spirit" and gaze upon that which lies beyond (Machen *Great God Pan* 11). Through them, Machen does not provide an answer to humanity's ultimate anxieties, but demonstrates the impossibility of such an answer. These works illustrate the frailty of the human frame and its place in a sublime hierarchy beyond the possibility of human comprehension.

From earliest childhood, Machen was deeply steeped in Catholic religious tradition. However, in addition to his Catholic education, Machen also absorbed the much older pagan stories and customs of his native Wales. Machen envisioned the sublime as more than the Christian duality of Heaven and Hell, God and Satan, acknowledging the power of the pagan gods of antiquity, most notably the god Pan, as well. This juxtaposition of Christianity and paganism within his own spiritual belief system caused the two to be melded together in Machen's stories, giving an even greater depth and complexity to the already incomprehensible cosmos he sought to explore. Throughout both *The Great God Pan* and "The Inmost Light" Machen makes references to Christian concepts, particularly "hell," the "devil," and the "soul;" yet he casts the ancient god Pan as Helen Vaughn's sire and lover, and Mrs. Black appears to Dyson as the figure of a satyr. For Machen, the divine world these entities inhabited was a "real world" lying just beyond the limits of human perception, "as [if] beyond a veil" (10). The nearness of the sublime realm, as Machen perceived it, resonated not only with potential danger from ancient deities, but also with the danger of mankind's own inherent curiosity.

Machen was most certainly familiar with the Biblical story of "The Fall," in which Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden of Eden as punishment for eating an apple from the Tree of Knowledge. During Machen's lifetime, a new serpent was raising its head and holding out its

offer to slake mankind's insatiable desire for knowledge: the ever-growing and apparently limitless field of science. A hallmark of many of Machen's writings, including *The Great God Pan* and "The Inmost Light," is the danger associated with the application of scientific principles to the study of the spiritual realm. Like many other Gothic writers, Machen questioned the wisdom and the right of scientists to delve into realms previously known to God alone. In Machen's "The White People," the main character Ambrose defines sin as "'the attempt to penetrate into another and higher sphere in a *forbidden* manner' and 'the effort to gain the ecstasy and knowledge that pertain alone to angels'" (Joshi *White People* Introduction). In *The Great God Pan* and "The Inmost Light," Machen applies this definition to scientific exploration rather than sin, casting doctors Raymond and Black as violators of the divine realm whose efforts are met with disastrous consequences.

The Great God Pan opens with the performance of a scientific experiment designed to encroach irreparably into the spiritual realm. Dr. Raymond subjects a young woman, his ward Mary, to what he describes as a very minor brain surgery: "a microscopical alteration [of her cells] that would escape the attention of ninety-nine brain specialists out of a hundred" (Machen *GGP* 10). While the physical modification made to Mary's brain is minute, the effect of this alteration is profound. Clarke recalls seeing Mary upon her awakening after the surgery, her eyes

[shining] with an awful light, looking far away, and a great wonder [falling] upon her face...her hands [stretching] out as if to touch what was invisible; but in an instant the wonder faded, and gave place to the most awful terror...her face...hideously convulsed...[shaking] from head to foot; the soul seemed struggling and shuddering within the house of flesh...laying wide awake, rolling her head from side to side...grinning vacantly...a hopeless idiot... (16)

The result of this experiment which succeeds in lifting the veil between the "world of matter and the world of spirit" is Mary's swift and complete loss of humanity and identity (11). The nature of the sublime realm cannot adequately be defined in human language. As it relates to Machen's writings, Edmund Burke's description of the sublime as "vast," encompassing simultaneously what is most beautiful and most terrible, fits best. When Raymond's experiment exposes her to the full force of these comingled extremes of pleasure and agony, Mary's deterioration illustrates the fragility of the human frame in the face of the sublime. The veil between the human and the spiritual is a necessary protection; the human body and mind are designed specifically to perceive the physical realm, and exposure to the sublime in its naked form causes a devastating overload of the organic circuits that enable the processes of life and thought. Through Mary's destruction, Machen illustrates the awesome power of the sublime over the human and reinforces the need to maintain the delicate barrier between the two.

The most profound effects of Raymond's experiment, however, are not experienced by Raymond himself, nor even by Mary, but by Mary's daughter, the mysterious Helen Vaughan who is linked with violence and otherness from the moment of her conception. Though Machen does not define Helen's lineage explicitly, his description of Mary as "dressed all in white...blushing...[all] over face and neck and arms" suggests that she is a virgin prior to the experiment (15). As she is described by those who encounter her, Helen is the embodiment of Burke's sublime, "at once the most beautiful woman and the most repulsive...a sort of enigma" (31). Even from a pen and ink sketch of Helen, Clarke is able to recognize that she possess "something else," some unidentifiable quality not found in a mere human (37). This comingling of extremes within Helen suggests that she is more than a mortal woman born of two mortal

parents. The implication is that she has not simply been touched by the sublime, but begotten of it, by the god Pan.

The conception of Mary's daughter during the course of the experiment can also be seen as a manipulation of the Biblical tale of the virgin birth. Mary's name alone is highly suggestive of a relationship between her character and the virgin mother of Christ. In the Bible, Christ's conception is passive as the archangel merely needs to whisper in Mary's ear for the seed of life to be planted. The scene in which the young Helen is seen frolicking in the forest with a "strange" "naked" man, strongly suggested to be an earthly incarnation of Pan because of his satyr-like appearance, indicates that he would employ much more physical means to conceive his own offspring. Thus, in *The Great God Pan* Mary's impregnation transforms from an ethereal suggestion into a physical act of violation through which the human and the sublime are united.

Unlike Mary, Helen is not destroyed by her encounter with the divine realm, but rather becomes a force of destruction to which no human is immune. Prolonged proximity to Helen gradually produces a similar effect to that which Mary suffers after the experiment. While Mary's response to her vision of the Great God Pan is nearly instantaneous, the degenerative effect that Helen produces takes hold more slowly, but is perhaps even more devastating because it allows her victims to become aware of their mental and spiritual deterioration. The most developed of these unfortunate characters is Charles Herbert, whose marriage to Helen Vaughan has transformed him from a man of position in London society to a filthy beggar hardly recognizable to his former college acquaintance, Villiers. After only a year of marriage to Helen, Herbert states that he was corrupted by her "body and soul" (27). He is left "a man haunted, a man who has seen hell" (27). Even after Helen's prolonged absence, Herbert is not able to recover from her influence; she inspired in him "an indefinite terror which hung about him like a mist" that no force was capable of lifting (27). The progressive decline of Herbert proves that continued contact with Helen is not necessary for the effect of her otherworldliness to persist. In her absence he does not recover, but continues to fail physically and mentally up until the moment when he takes his own life. Direct contact with Helen is not even requisite for her influence to be felt, as Villiers suffers indirectly as a result of his encounter with Herbert. When Herbert departs, Villiers "shiver[s]... [and] gasp[s] for breath" and wonders what it is about his old friend's presence that "seemed to chill one's blood" (33). Helen's influence is infectious and even second-hand exposure produces a disturbing effect.

A very different experiment from the one that destroys Mary and creates Helen brings forth a second amalgamation of human and sublime in the striking transformation of Mrs. Black. In "The Inmost Light," Dr. Black, like Dr. Raymond, uses his knowledge of science to "penetrate" the spiritual realm and to unlock the secrets of the human soul. Rather than exposing his subject, his own wife, to the divine realm as Raymond does to Mary, Dr. Black instead extracts from Mrs. Black her divine "essence which men call the soul" ("Inmost Light").

The altered Mrs. Black has a very similar effect on those around her to that produced by Helen Vaughan in *The Great God Pan*. Dyson reacts to the sight of Mrs. Black at her window as if he were seeing "hell open before [him]...[his] face [streaming] with a cold sweat, and [his] breath [coming and going] in sobs" ("IML"). Dr. Black, when encountered after his wife's death, exhibits the same deterioration suffered by Helen's husband, Charles Herbert. When Dyson first glimpses Dr. Black coming "down the steps of his house at Harlesden, [Black is] an upright man, walking firmly with well-built limbs...in the prime of his life" ("IML"). The next time the two meet, Black is, like Herbert, a barely recognizable shell of his previous self, a "wretched creature, bent and feeble, with shrunken cheeks...hair that was whitening fast...limbs that

trembled and shook...and misery in his eyes" ("IML"). Like Helen, Mrs. Black produces a degenerative effect that cannot be reversed by separation. The effect of the sublime on the human body is permanent, destructive, and irreparable.

S.T. Joshi compares the two women, stating that Mrs. Black "like Helen Vaughan [presents] a visage of mingled beauty and horror" (*White People* Introduction). The doctor who examines Mrs. Black after her death also notes the "sublime" quality of her appearance: "quite placid, devoid of all expression. It must have been a beautiful face, no doubt, but I can honestly say that I would not have looked in that face when there was life behind it" ("IML"). Despite her physical beauty, her appearance, even in death, causes physical distress. Mrs. Black, though still technically living when Dyson encounters her at the widow, is less a complete being than a vessel that has been emptied of its proper contents and filled with some other unknown substance. Unlike Helen, Mrs. Black is an inactive entity, able to be confined within her home because her sublime and human elements lack unity. Helen, in contrast, is a new and complete being born with her sublime "elements enthroned...and triumphant in [her] human flesh" (GGP 23).

Mrs. Black can be linked more closely to Mary than to Helen because of the profound changes which take place within her brain. The official cause of Mrs. Black's death is reported as a new and severe form of brain disease. When describing his examination of Mrs. Black's grey matter, the young neurologist states that it was hardly possible to identify Mrs. Black's brain as the brain of a human being because her "nervous organization" no longer resembled that "either of man or the lower animals" ("IML"). In private, the doctor expresses that Mrs. Black possessed the "brain of a devil" ("IML"). The changes inside Mrs. Black's cranium are not, however, the result of any disease, but a reorganization necessary for her body to be inhabited by the otherworldly entity that would replace her soul. In both tales, Machen closely ties not simply science, but specifically the science of the human brain, with the barrier between human and sublime. In *The Great God Pan*, it is a surgery that alters the physical structure of Mary's brain and allows her to see the divine realm. In "The Inmost Light," the removal of Mrs. Black's soul, and the subsequent occupation of her body by a divine entity, results in an even more pronounced alteration in the organization of her brain matter. Through this commonality, Machen suggests that the veil between the human and the sublime is tangible and concrete. He gives it a home within the makeup of the human body, and thus illustrates that our separation from the sublime is a physical, and therefore scientific, part of the human condition. Like any other part of the body it may be altered or removed, but this would be a sacrilegious attempt at forced evolution, more likely to harm than to improve the subject. A connection between the sublime and the scientific can also be seen in the degeneration, or perhaps devolution, of Helen's body at the moment of her death.

transformed...skin, and flesh, and...muscles, and...bones...the firm structure of the human body...thought to be unchangeable, and permanent...began to melt and dissolve...[her] form [wavering] from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited...the body descending to the beast whence it ascended. (GGP 61-2)

This transformation can be read in a Darwinian sense wherein Helen's physical body regresses backward through the evolutionary stages from human being to primitive creature. However, it can also be seen as the dissolution of the body and the return of both Helen's physical and sublime components to "the primal ooze" from which all existence originates (Nash 114). Her

physical body cannot remain intact after her death because it is too firmly entangled with the sublime entity within to ever be separated from it.

The purest and also the most tangible expression of the spiritual in these two works is Mrs. Black's soul. While Mrs. Black's physical remains are eerie and unearthly, that for which she was sacrificed, the gem containing her human soul, is an object of incomparable beauty that "flame[s] and sparkle[s] with such light as no eyes of man have ever gazed on" (Machen "IML"). Unlike every other representation of the spiritual in *The Great God Pan* and the "Inmost Light," Mrs. Black's soul is unique in that its beauty outweighs the fearsome power that lies behind it; like the human body, the soul is fragile and ephemeral. Like its more disturbing counterparts, however, Mrs. Black's soul is utterly destroyed. Dyson looks at the jewel with "unutterable, irresistible horror surging up in his heart" ("IML"); yet, that horror is not directed at the object (the gem and the soul it conceals within), but at the act which created it. Unlike the birth of the undeniably evil Helen Vaughan, which is by definition a creation, the imprisonment of Mrs. Black's soul within the opal gem is an act of destruction because the soul can never be reunited with its physical partner. Dyson's intention when he hurls the jewel to the ground and "trample[s] it beneath his heel" is unclear; one cannot be sure if he means to destroy the soul or release it. The remains of the gem, however, illustrate clearly the result of his action. It is left lying on the ground "like a cinder, black and crumbling to the touch" with all vestiges of life and beauty erased ("IML"). A human soul that is still within the confines of its physical human body at the time of that body's death would most likely, in Machen's Catholic mind, depart from the body at death and ascend to Heaven, descend to Hell, or become ensnared in some form of Purgatory. Even the pagan faiths which influenced Machen would have allowed for some form of afterlife where the spiritual essence of a person would continue to exist. The soul that has been removed from Mrs. Black's body, however, has none of these options. Mrs. Black's physical body has been dead for many years before Dyson discovers the jewel, and even if her body had still been alive it is unlikely that the new entity residing within would have permitted the re-entrance of her soul. Once the connection between the physical body and the soul has been severed, Machen's tale suggests that it is severed permanently. Without the fundamental connection with the body that gives the soul meaning through its relationship with a specific human individual, the soul, though beautiful, is reduced to a meaningless spark of the sublime, easily extinguished and possessing no spiritual future. Just as Helen Vaughan and Mrs. Black fail to qualify as human because they possess no soul, the soul without its physical counterpart is likewise devoid of meaning or purpose.

In *The Great God Pan* and "The Inmost Light," Machen synthesized aspects of the Catholic faith with which he was raised and of the pagan traditions that saturated the culture of his native Wales, and utilized the resulting spiritual amalgamation as a tool to explore the nature of the relationship between the human and the sublime. Machen recognized the intense curiosity inherent in human nature, and not-so-gently cautioned against indulging those impulses. Living in the early days of the scientific revolution, Machen specifically opposed the steadily increasing tendency to qualify all things, even God, in physical, scientific terms. Machen possessed an intense belief in the existence of "ancient realms beneath us and the power their inhabitants exert over our souls and, ultimately our flesh" (Del Toro *White People* Foreword). Undoubtedly he believed in the reality of the human soul and its necessity for every human life. Through his works, it is obvious that he also saw immense danger in transgressing the boundary between man and spirit. While the soul is indispensable to life, the vision of the sublime is conversely devastating to it. What Machen ultimately uncovers in *The Great God Pan* and "The Inmost

Light" is that in this very mortal life there are no answers to the ultimate questions, no relief from the anxieties aroused by the incomprehensibility of the soul's origin and future. There is only this life and the mystery of what may follow. To seek for more is to profane against all that has been given.

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Propriety, Property, and Passion: The Emergence of the Undisciplined Woman from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to *Zofloya*

Jessica Rich

We are sorry to remark that the ‘Monk’ seems to have been made the model, as well of the style, of the story. There is a voluptuousness of the language and allusion, pervading these volumes, which we should have hoped, that the delicacy of the female pen would have refused to trace; and there is an exhibition of wantonness of harlotry, which we should have hoped, that the delicacy of the female mind, would have been shocked to imagine.¹

This quotation, from an 1806 review of Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya*, is characteristic of the negative reception her novel had from critics, although it is a much more scathing indictment of gender transgression than other contemporaries offered.² Much has been made of Dacre’s daring to portray characters that are overcome by passion and vice, but such attention to vivid and frank descriptions detracts from her story’s important place in the transition of the gothic genre. More significantly, it also ignores *Zofloya*’s connection to, and reflection of, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. As linked texts, they show the transition from female gothic to something other, and it is through such a complementary reading that one can more thoroughly understand how disciplined femininity allows a woman to have agency, while sexual profligacy ensures her ruin.

Generically, Dacre’s writing is neither strictly female, nor completely male gothic, and its liminal position marks the evolution to a more complicated source of horror: the evil within that manifests as the monster without. As such, her work seems to stand in stark contrast to Radcliffe’s, for whom “the Gothic novel was a device to send maidens on distant and exciting journeys without offending the proprieties” (Moers 126). Although Dacre’s insistence on examining the origins and development of the wayward female would never fit into Radcliffe’s romantic action and idyllic settings, it is *The Mysteries of Udolpho* that provides the base upon which *Zofloya* rests as a study of passion and moral decay. Dacre combines the counter to Radcliffe’s disciplined femininity with Walpole’s warning that the sins, in this case of the mother, will be visited upon the future generations.

The Mysteries of Udolpho is driven by the heroine’s practice of disciplined femininity, that is, the balance of sensibility with rationality, the refusal to give in to desire, and the protection of one’s propriety. St. Aubert, whose sons both died in infancy, has only Emily upon whom to rest his hope for the future. His intention is not to make Emily more masculine, or to replace dead sons with a daughter, but to ensure her ability to make decisions with reason rather than with emotion. He watches her develop with “anxious fondness,” observing that her beauty, her sensibility, and her “warm affections” would make her very attractive to men. It is his duty to teach her discipline through role-modeling so that she might internalize his lessons, and thus be able to protect herself against impropriety without his guidance.

The ideal set forth by such discipline is not to turn a woman into an unfeeling entity, nor does it posit masculinity as an answer to a perceived natural inclination women have toward emotional response. St. Aubert is just as vulnerable to being overcome, particularly when his wife dies, and Valancourt is likewise a slave to his feelings for Emily; in contrast, Montoni suffers from an abundance of reason that manifests as greed to ensure his future comfort. Finding the balance between feeling and thinking is the key to happiness, but slipping off track in either direction is the first step toward vice, which consists of voracity for anything in abundance, particularly money or love.

At first glance Emily appears to be Radcliffe's stock heroine. Pure, devoted, obedient, and artistic, she represents the ideal British middle-class woman, and her perfection rests on the disciplined femininity that she exhibits throughout the story. Indeed, it is the basis of the novel's purported moral work: if a woman guards against even the faintest hints of impropriety, she will receive great reward. Superficially this works with the action of the novel and the behavior of the heroine, but one might ask why such prolixity should be spent on that simple lesson. Clery seems to think that the attention to setting flatters the protagonist: "Radcliffe's heroines are women of imagination. By their taste for scenery and aptitude for fancy they transform the plots of sentimental fiction into otherworldly romance: they are effectively the co-authors of their own stories. Their risky adventures give them every opportunity to display their "genius," and they are amply rewarded in the end" (51).

Clery's analysis diminishes the agency of a character like Emily, as it suggests that the plot is merely a kind of "finishing school" for heroines. By her great capacity for imagination Emily does, to a certain extent, "co-author" her story, but it is her tempered whimsy that allows her to investigate the mysteries that her father's suspicious papers had set forth. Emily's detective work is not merely coincidental with strange occurrences that she encounters at a mysterious castle. In having taken the place of spouse, she is trying to figure out whether her father has been unfaithful. The terror of that idea is so great that, although she repeatedly tries to put it out of her thoughts, it perpetually "occupies and expands [her] mind." The castle symbolizes Emily's inner self, and her exploration of it is a maturing process in which she must confront her fears about her father's fidelity and her own desires for Valancourt. Annette, her servant double, represents the part of her that wants to give into superstition and fear, but Emily consistently checks her emotional side with reason (quite often chiding Annette to get to the point), and is thus able to negotiate her time at Udolpho without succumbing to panic.

Emily does get home, wealthy and in possession of Valancourt's redeemed affections, but those points, though demonstrating her reward, belie the subtler outcome. Emily's attention to discipline allows her, with propriety intact, to accomplish the novel's underlying task of redeeming her father's memory. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* might be a novel of romance and adventure that showcases a plucky, yet proper heroine, but it is also an intricately woven tale of how Emily is able to gain enough wealth without displaying greed, or without selling herself into marriage, to buy back her father's estate. St. Aubert's own father had, through "extravagance," lost enough of the family fortune that St. Aubert had to sell his ancestral land. With no property and no male heir, there is nothing to attach to the St. Aubert name, particularly once Emily marries. He instructs his daughter to give her the mental strength she will need to find a way to ensure that St. Aubert will live on: "there is a period when all reasoning must yield to nature; that is past: and another, when excessive indulgence, having sunk into habit, weighs down the elasticity of the spirits so as to render conquest nearly impossible; this is to come. You, Emily, will shew [sic] that you are willing to avoid it" (Vol. 1: Ch. 2: 21).

She is touched by his faith in her and wants to say, ““I will shew [sic] myself worthy of being your daughter;’ but a mingled emotion of gratitude, affection, and grief overcame her.” As she travels through the novel, using the skills her father taught her, Emily gets better at mastering her emotions, coming closer to proving St Aubert’s fidelity and her own maternity, and finally reclaiming the ancestral land. When she falters, Radcliffe inserts St. Aubert to keep her on course, as when Emily and her aunt are suffering at the hand of Montoni and she recalls hearing mysterious music from another place in the castle: “perhaps those strains I heard were sent to comfort,—to encourage me! Never shall I forget those I heard, at this hour, in Languedoc! Perhaps, my father watches over me, at this moment!”” (Vol. 2: Ch. 12: 340). St. Aubert’s very resting place serves as another important reminder for Emily. Hoeveler asserts that his burial next to his sister undermines his connection to La Vallee and his wife by explaining that, “In choosing ‘blood’ over ‘sex,’ St. Aubert in death reasserts his upper-class privileges and effectively traces his middle-class wife out of existence” (95). This interpretation of St. Aubert’s grave does not fit with his own opinions on aristocratic life, as symbolized by M. Quesnal, however. Instead the site of the burial has two purposes: when Emily stays with the Count de Villefort, he overwhelmingly reminds her of her father. St. Aubert’s proximity to her there, in his grave, is a constant reminder to her not to be so susceptible to the kindness of Villefort as to fulfill his wish for her to marry DuPont. St. Aubert’s presence in death is also a marker for her to follow, in her investigation of his life. She finds in the same abbey Agnes/Laurentini, who ultimately enables Emily to re-establish her father as ideal parent, and who gives her financial means to reassemble the paternal estate. Far from abandoning the place of his marital felicity, he allows Emily to complete the work of bringing his spirit (in her) back to his land.

Emily gains the financial means of recouping the family losses through Laurentini’s bequest. Thus we see that not only is passion deadly, and the slippery slope of indulged emotion leads quickly there, but that if one is virtuous, she will gain reward through the sinner’s loss. Though integral to the plot in that way, Laurentini has a superficial existence only as the foil to Emily’s disciplined femininity. She is terrifying, because she transgresses disciplined femininity, but Radcliffe’s use of her is so slight that the overall moral is illustrated more by the “positive” actions of Emily. Radcliffe does not seem to want the reader to become too focused on this bad woman because the author is disciplining us, too. This discipline carries the reader through the overwhelmingly detailed descriptions of landscape, frustratingly longwinded servants, and numerous fainting spells. Careful reading enables us to feel the length of the journeys that Emily takes, and we mirror her movement toward discovery and resolution.

Laurentini’s lapse of morals and her murderous rage stand out starkly from everything else that Radcliffe creates in the story, and despite her desire to keep the reader on track, it is difficult not to wonder about this character. “The primordial passion in this history, the evil from which all others stem, turns out to be Laurentini’s illicit love for the count and its murderous outcome” (Clery 76). Critics condemning Dacre for her expansion on this theme seem to forget that Radcliffe invented the character. *Zofloya* answers the question we want to ask about Laurentini: beyond her existence as the moral foil for the heroine, what could make her yield to her basest passions? If discipline is all it takes to be a good woman, why would any woman stray? Radcliffe created Laurentini as a warning against the excess of passion, and Dacre took that idea and ran with it. The first sentence of *Zofloya* reads:

The historian who would wish his lesson to sink deep into the heart, thereby essaying to render mankind virtuous and more happy, must not content himself with simply detailing a series of events—he must ascertain causes, and follow progressively their effects; he

must draw deductions from incidents as they arise, and ever revert to the actuating principle. (39)

In other words, a moral is more powerful if one can understand what is *actually bad* about being bad. It is not enough to tell a story, one must delve more deeply into the reasons people behave in one way or another. Laurina is the link to Laurentini in that Dacre's work is an investigation of how Radcliffe's bad woman came to be so. Laurentini is a close diminutive of Laurina, as if a daughter. Victoria, as Dacre's study in the overabundance of passion, is thus doubled with Laurentini, and through her Dacre explains what Radcliffe will not.

Laurina abandons her family not properly through death, but illicitly through indulging her passion for another man. Radcliffe has already taught us through Laurentini that falling to an excess of emotion brings about moral suffering, but she has also shown how the threat of parental infidelity can haunt the child. Emily only has a suspicion that her father has behaved immorally, but proving to herself that it is untrue is one of her driving forces through the novel. By dutifully filling the role as wife replacement, she redeems her father and is rewarded for her effort. In contrast, Victoria is certain that her mother has violated her marriage, so she has no motivation but her own self-indulgence.

Disciplined femininity seems to start with the daughter's replacement of the mother. Because she dies, St. Aubert can properly mourn his wife, and Emily can move into her place as the woman of the house. As her father grieves, he finds that his teachings have given Emily strength enough to carry him on, and he dies peacefully. She develops her self-sufficiency through her detective work, and in the end she does her duty to her father by resurrecting him through the reclamation of ancestral lands—what is rightly his, and thus hers. The protection of propriety becomes the protection of property.

In contrast, the Marchese cannot truly mourn the loss of his wife, because she still exists; there is no opportunity for him to move on and let her go. Her place in his life is not vacant, so Victoria is left on the periphery. She can neither take up the responsibility of wife replacement, nor can she reap the benefits of a maternal role model. She remains in self-centered adolescence, driven by passion and lacking discipline. She provides no comfort to her father, so his turmoil continues until his wife's indiscretion symbolically kills him. The family has dissolved unnaturally, and his son has fled, leaving property in question. Indeed, the idea of ancestral land plays no part in the text, which is symbolized by the family's residence in the watery city of Venice.

Victoria has no role model, no capacity to care for her father, and no property to consider. According to Radcliffe's formula, that is a recipe for the very opposite of disciplined femininity. The importance of ancestry and a reliance on the child to maintain the paternal estate that dominates *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is missing in Dacre's story. In fact, procreation does not play an important role at all in *Zofloya*. The description of the Marchese's and Laurina's relationship notes that, "Two children, within two years after their marriage, has been its only fruits" (39). They indulge Victoria and Leonardo so as never to see them unhappy, but they are unable to see the debilitating effects such treatment has: the couple is too intently focused on their passion for each other to notice. The idea of nurturing the line of descent or protecting ancestral land does not play into the concerns of the characters; indeed, the hallmark of each is a deep interest in the present, the future existing only to ensure the fulfillment of one's desires.

In his explanation of Galen's one-sex model of sexual formation, Thomas Laqueur describes how gender was not considered dependent on sex, but rather that the bodies of females were merely the inverse of male anatomy. Women and men were the same but for the lack of

“vital heat” in the former, making them less perfect versions of a male standard. As Laqueur points out, the possibility for lax boundaries was thus plain: “There are hirsute, viral women—the virago—who are too hot to procreate and are as bold as men” (Laqueur 52). He adds that women who were infertile were often marked by the following characteristics: “Excessive desire; curly, dark, and plentiful hair (in men hair was a sign of virility, bravery, and vital heat that arose in adolescence and distinguished them finally from women” (Laqueur 101). This model is useful in reading Radcliffe and Dacre in several ways. First, it coincides with Victoria’s physical description—having a lot of dark curly hair, taking on male secondary sex characteristics, and possessing extraordinary desire---and it explains the insignificance of procreation, because Victoria and her mother are so full of heated passion as to not be focused on the womanly duty of childbearing. The one-sex model also opens up possibilities about the more subtle role of disciplined femininity. Besides limiting a woman’s susceptibility to vice, it also enables her to ward off the perceived threat that if she acts in ways that are not appropriate to her gender, she risks turning into a man. Emily can confidently advocate for her rights to property, act as detective, and defy tyranny because she is conscientious about her propriety. Having no such sense of managing her own morals, Victoria leaves herself susceptible to vice. The more she indulges her passions, the more she takes on a masculine appearance.

It is important to note that Victoria’s transformation does not come about merely because she is improper, and that is where Dacre distinguishes her objective from Radcliffe’s. The latter author stops at the stern warning for her heroine to “beware of the first indulgence of the passion; beware of the first” (Vol. 3: Ch. 16: 646). Dacre wants to show what happens after that. Clearly Laurentini suffers for her indulgence, but just how much? Victoria’s impropriety, and her first passion for Berenza, is the weakness that allows in the evil which eventually causes her ruin, but it is her increasing passions for love, lust, and finally blood, that mark her transition from a womanly desire to a barbaric, manly one.

That *Zofloya* is a reworking of *The Monk* is certainly worth consideration. Victoria, like Ambrosio, is an object of the devil’s amusement in effecting her destruction, and both novels are similarly shocking in their depictions of passion and sexuality. However, beyond an acknowledgement that Dacre was able to illustrate a depraved woman as startlingly as Lewis portrayed his fallen monk, we gain little insight from such an observation. One of Dacre’s reviewers noted that she did nothing particularly clever in her writing, especially as Victoria is fairly bad all along, while Ambrosio undergoes a true moral fall. He points out that Dacre need not have included the devil, as the character has no work to do in the novel.³ That analysis misses the point that Ambrosio is a man of hubris, taking pride in both the respect he gains for his asceticism and the awe he inspires by his oration. It is this weakness that draws the devil, as it is Victoria’s weakness of virtue that does the same. Significantly, Ambrosio is tempted to sin merely by a devilish agent, while Zofloya is Satan himself; the implication is that, regardless of each character’s initial state of moral decay, a woman’s resolve merits the attention of the strongest embodiment of evil.

In contrast to *The Monk*, in which the visual supernatural plays a part in Matilda’s demonstration of her influence to Ambrosio, Zofloya’s power rests in his appearance to Victoria whenever she has an evil feeling. Although Victoria is ethically suspect in the early part of the novel, her actions do not turn toward violence until she falls for Henriquez and determines that Berenza is an impediment to her true desires. It is then that Zofloya first appears to her in a dream, and that her alliance with evil begins. While Matilda’s actions suggest that she, though possessed of the power of the devil, has her own desires for Ambrosio, Zofloya comes across as

less interested in Victoria's person than he is in her soul. His lack of distinct personhood and Victoria's ability to conjure him indicate a move to a more psychological explanation of the supernatural. "Victoria's dreams present us with the possibility that the character we recognize as 'Zofloya' is actually less a real personage than a representation of the dark and demonic forces within Victoria's own psyche" (Hoeveler 148). When Victoria does turn to murder, the only powers Zofloya uses to help her are suggestion and his knowledge of poison; she kills her victims by her own hand, even questioning Zofloya's direction in using poison on Berenza, afraid that it is not working quickly enough for her desire.

Dacre endeavors to examine the causes of behavior such as Laurentini's and Victoria's, and to trace the effect of a bad origin to the final outcome. Because there is little, if any, attention to religion in the lives of the characters, the devil is less likely the literal cause of Victoria's moral and physical demise. Instead he is the embodiment of her own capacity for evil, enlarged by her growing indulgence in her passions. As he grows in size, she does, too, until her passions outgrow her ability to house them, finally overcoming her.

Zofloya is a character study that, because of its bold depiction of the sexual woman, demands us to ask if that makes Victoria freer than Emily, who seems desperately restricted by propriety. Dacre herself offers no positive take on sexual liberty as each character that possesses it, meets a grim end, nor does she indicate that propriety itself, as symbolized by Lilla, gets a woman anywhere. By killing Lilla, Dacre is not necessarily satirizing Radcliffe's heroines, but rather distinguishing disciplined femininity from mere innocence and dignity. Indeed, Emily's trials remove innocence while leaving virtue; she accomplishes the reunification of her father's vindicated memory with his ancestral lands, and she does not give in to her own desires until she has done that.

The benefit of reading *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Zofloya* in dialogue is that they complement and contrast each other in such a way as to allow the reader to discern more meaning from their respective narratives. Dacre uses Laurentini as her link to Victoria, and she creates an explanation for a woman's submission to passion. In so doing, she is acknowledging the difficult place in which women find themselves located in society: if they maintain proper discipline they are passionless, but if they yield too much to their feelings, they become outcast. The unifying theme of both novels is the susceptibility of humans, and women in particular, to base desires. Radcliffe gives us a model for how women might avert temptation in the character of Emily, while Zofloya shows what happens when women do not practice moral discipline. Once one feels too deeply, that leaves him or her open to increasing degrees of immoral behavior, which supersedes the more pressing work of familial duty. As tempting as it may be to position Charlotte Dacre's work in contrast to the romantic gothic of Radcliffe, such a simplification of their styles obscures important similarities that amplify the way one reads each author's female characters. Dacre herself, in both her first sentence and in her last—"consider not this as a romance merely.—Over their passions and their weaknesses, mortals cannot but keep a curb too strong"(254)—contrasts herself with Radcliffe, but it is *The Mysteries of Udolpho* that gives Zofloya a more meaningful grounding in the gothic than *The Monk* does. Perhaps it is more shocking that Dacre breaks down the categories of male and female gothic, developing a textual version of the one-sex model, and focusing on psychological explanations, than it is that she writes about passionate women. In either case, she relies heavily on Radcliffe's influence, if only as a starting point from which to move into a new form of the genre—one that moves away from the disciplined heroine and toward the examination of the inner demon.

Notes

¹ Review no. 2 found in Appendix B (542) of *Zofloya*, originally published in *The Annual Review* (1806).

² *Ibid.*, Review nos. 1-5.

³ Review no. 1 found in Appendix B (542) of *Zofloya*, originally published in *Monthly Literary Recreations* 1 (July 1806) 80.

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A Reexamination of the Feminine in *The Monk*

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In her introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of *The Monk*, Emma McEvoy presents the possibility of finding evidence for "latent misogyny" within the text.¹ McEvoy has not been the only critic to associate Lewis, and specifically *The Monk*, with misogynist views. In an article aimed at Lewis's short-lived gothic play, *The Captive*, Jack DeRochi refers back to *The Monk* and claims that "[i]n *The Monk*, women are reduced to spectacles."² Perhaps the most notable misogynistic reading of *The Monk* can be found in a collection of essays aptly titled *Misogyny in Literature*. In her essay dealing with *The Monk*, Kari J. Winter claims that from the opening scene of the novel "the narrator's misogyny is immediately apparent."³ She directly links Lewis's views with those of the narrator by stating that "the book's perverse anti-eroticism appears unselfconscious, which leads readers to suspect that it expresses Lewis's own views towards women," citing what she views as attempts to eroticize the rape of Antonia and the confusion of maternal affection with necrophilia in the scene with Agnes and the corpse of her baby.⁴

In reading *The Monk*, we cannot ignore that Lewis presents his powerful female characters in a negative light, as seen with Matilda, the Baroness Lindenberg, and the Prioress of St. Clare. Initially these portrayals, as well as the brutality visited upon the heroines, seem to support a misogynistic reading of the text; however, such a reading fails to acknowledge the satirical nature of the work. In her article, "Satire in *The Monk*: Exposure and Reformation," Ann Campbell asserts that "Satire permeates the novel, obtruding into even the most gruesome scenes,"⁵ and she is not the first critic to acknowledge this. Campbell cites the opening of the novel, with its "imitation of Horace," as evidence that Lewis "aligns himself with the tradition of reformative verse satire."⁶ Satire, by its very nature, is a violent and non-subjective mode that utilizes techniques such as burlesque, irony, hyperbole and parody, all features clearly found in *The Monk*. Satire also tends to imitate other genres, "[borrowing] its ground-plan, parasitically and by ironic inversion."⁷ In *The Monk*, Lewis borrows from romances and his gothic predecessors, utilizing character types found in these genres to expose social corruption. Misogynistic readings of *The Monk* oversimplify the text and fail to address Lewis's relentlessly satirical approach. When viewed with the satirical intent in mind, the portrayals of women in power and the heroines' suffering within Lewis's brutal satire call attention to the plight of women and related social issues.

In his comparison of *The Monk* and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, a direct response in novel form to *The Monk*, Vartan Messier asserts that, unlike its gothic predecessors, "*The Monk* can be read as a work of social criticism."⁸ When acknowledged for its satirical aims, it becomes clear that the novel works to critique a society that endangers women through its limiting expectations of them and failure to educate them. Also, through a sympathetic, but not idealized, portrayal of his heroine-figures, Lewis mocks the objectifying and idealizing of women often endorsed in 18th century Britain through popular literature and conduct manuals. By revealing the potentially brutal results of these views, Lewis alerts readers to the potential dangers women

face. Lewis may not be a pure-hearted reformer, but his efforts to reveal social corruption illuminate the problematic position of women.

Utilizing character types commonly found in Neoclassical and Romantic literature, Lewis exposes, problematizes, and challenges social expectations of women. Examining the three powerful women in the novel, we find Matilda, the archetypal seductress, the Baroness, an image of the false mother and the woman scorned, and the Prioress a depiction of the hypocrite and the sadistic nun. Taken out of context these representations could be seen as reinforcing negative views of women; however, within the novel they serve Lewis's satirical aims and in doing so work more in the service of women than against them. While we might view the general transparency and flatness of these female characters as evidence of misogyny, we must not ignore the fact that this is a characteristic of satire and that the main character, the male Ambrosio, is as much a stereotype as any female character.

Lewis establishes Matilda, one of the most prominent characters, as a figure of temptation, whose primary power is seduction. Winter uses the exchanges between Matilda and Ambrosio as evidence of the "tone of contempt for women" she finds throughout the novel.⁹ She goes on to say, "Ambrosio, Lewis's protagonist, is a saintly monk who is tempted into depravity by Matilda, a demon disguised as a woman."¹⁰ This assertion reveals one of the problems with a misogynistic reading of the novel. In order to designate Matilda as representing the vilification and condemnation of women, Winter dangerously oversimplifies Ambrosio's role. To refer to Ambrosio as "saintly" completely ignores the narrator's introduction of the monk prior to Matilda's temptation in which Lewis reveals that Ambrosio's demeanor of humility is merely a "semblance combated with the reality of pride" and that once alone he gives "free loose to the indulgence of his vanity."¹¹ The narrator also reveals the monk engaging in sexualized fantasies of the Madonna whose portrait he worships: "Were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom!"¹² This is hardly the picture of a saint; from the very beginning the narrator clearly illuminates the monk's hypocrisy and dangerous vanity. Thus his depravity comes from internal characteristics, not merely the external influence of Matilda, as Winter suggests. Within the novel, Ambrosio is characterized as a corrupted and corrupting entity just as much, if not more so, than Matilda and all of the other women in positions of power. Also, at the end of the novel, Matilda does not suffer and is freed to continue tempting others while Ambrosio loses all of his power and suffers a torturous and humiliating death; thus Lewis chooses to save Matilda, a powerful female, and not her male counterpart. If Lewis truly relished the downfall and destruction of women, as those who view him as a misogynist suggest, why would he free Matilda?

In contrast to misogynistic readings, such as Winter's, the character of Matilda can be viewed as challenging traditional notions of women. In her essay on "European Disruptions of the Idealized Woman," Angela Wright notes, "it is Matilda who is responsible in this novel for destabilizing the equation of women and modesty, and, as such, she occupies an important space."¹³ A large part of Matilda's importance lies in her exposure of the absurdity and danger present in the iconic romanticizing of virgins, as shown through her ability to "[seduce] Abrosio through his own constructions of the idealized female."¹⁴ This destabilization, promoted by Matilda's character, challenges the traditional feminine ideal and places Lewis's other representations of the feminine ideal within the realm of satire. Wright also observes that in Ambrosio's search for the idealized woman, "he looks for someone to affirm his ideal of himself as a 'superior being' and confirm his elevated status in society."¹⁵ By putting Ambrosio under the control of Matilda, his first idealized woman, and by ultimately destroying Ambrosio's self-

congratulatory view of himself through Antonia, his second idealized woman, Lewis highlights the faulty and potentially corrupting danger of men seeking assurance of their own status through gaining control over passive heroine figures. Thus after gaining physical and sexual control over Antonia through raping her, Ambrosio is left feeling “how base and unmanly was the crime, which He had just committed.”¹⁶ Through taking the search for the idealized woman to a brutal extreme, Lewis illuminates the destructiveness of this search on both women and men. For men, Lewis presents such objectification as unfulfilling and leading to uncontrollable, corrupting desires. He also shows how society’s promotion of the objectification of women places them in danger.

As with Matilda, when taken out of context, we might find evidence for misogyny in the portrayal of the Baroness, but once again, in context, clear arguments about Lewis’s misogyny cannot succeed. Unlike Matilda the temptress, the Baroness is a woman who fails to seduce; her power is in the control she holds over her niece, Agnes, and the threat she poses Agnes’s would-be lover, Don Raymond. When Don Raymond rejects her unwanted advances, the Baroness Lindenberg’s response to the wounding of her pride provides the image of the dangerous power of a woman scorned: “My love is become hatred, and my wounded pride shall not be un-atoned. Go where you will, my vengeance shall follow you!”¹⁷ The Baroness’s response to Don Raymond’s rejection does not provide a very positive portrayal of a woman scorned. Her vehement reaction stems from embarrassment: that is to say pride fuels her vengeance. She even goes so far as to hire a hit man, but this attempt, like her attempts to win Don Raymond’s love, ultimately fails. And although the Baroness is initially threatening, she is ultimately left powerless.

The portrayals of the Baroness and the Prioress, another women who abuses her position of power, might suggest that Lewis views the sin of pride as a womanly attribute, but we must not forget that Lewis presents Ambrosio as the most prideful character in the novel, and that he is the one who succumbs to temptations that ultimately lead to damnation. Also, as with the Prioress, it is a woman with whom readers sympathize as the primary victim of the Baroness’s rage—her niece, Agnes. Both situations involving the powerful women reveal the fact that maidens, such as Agnes, are granted little power by society and thus set up as easy victims. In her criticism of *The Monk*, Winter uses the assertion that “Lewis depicts women as natural rivals and enemies” as evidence for her claims of *The Monk*’s misogynistic nature.¹⁸ I would argue, however, that oftentimes the systematic oppression of a segment of society becomes self-perpetuating. Thus, the Baroness, as a woman who perpetuates society’s entrapment of women, reflects the way in which the subjugation of women can become so engrained that women not only accept but also reinforce the oppressive limitations and dangerous expectations placed upon them. The fact that women place each other in positions of danger within the novel is evidence of a larger social problem, not a refusal to acknowledge that such problems exist.

Lewis’s use of the Prioress serves both to reinforce this idea of the self-perpetuating subjugation of women and as a critique of the danger of sheltering women. The character of the Prioress also provides a satirical look at the image of the sadistic nun and at the concept of convents, and even, more broadly, Catholicism. When readers first see the Prioress in action, she appears as a merciless woman who looks at Agnes with “menace and malignity.”¹⁹ Lewis reveals that her severe punishment and torture of Agnes is due more to shame and embarrassment at having the indiscretion of one of her nuns exposed in front of Ambrosio, who she refers to as “the Idol of Madrid,”²⁰ than to religious conviction. Through establishing the Prioress as an evil, unsympathetic character, Lewis also allows readers to feel satisfaction when the angry mob

assails the Prioress until she becomes “no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless, and disgusting.”²¹ Within the context of the novel, this moment appears to be a revelation of the Prioress’s true nature; her physical being now matches what we know about her interior life. Her “sanctified exterior” no longer exists.²² Now we might see Lewis’s characterization of the Prioress and her death, which he portrays as a justified end, as a warning about placing women in positions of power. However, we may hold to this reading only by forgetting that the novel is satiric, and that the character of the Prioress represents social corruption on a larger scale, even as she represents the way in which women become agents in their own demise and proponents of stereotyped feminine roles. Viewing the death of the Prioress as merely a warning about women in power also requires forgetting that Lewis portrays the violent death of Ambrosio in even more gruesome detail than that of the Prioress and that he also presents Ambrosio as a largely unsympathetic character.

Just as the character of the Prioress serves a symbolic purpose, the cloister serves as a microcosm for the larger social problem of women being poorly educated and left unprepared to deal with the dangers of the world. In her very function as head of the convent, the Prioress is cast as the protector of female modesty. She is to ensure that the women placed under her care remain chaste and sheltered from the outside world. As the matron, she is to keep the maidens ignorant and protected from potentially corrupting knowledge. The Prioress and the convent also highlight the way in which the romanticizing of virginity and idealizing of passivity lead to the victimization of women. Through the Prioress, as well as other characters in the book, Lewis assigns Catholicism a role in the fetishizing of virgins, a suggestion that is first introduced through Ambrosio’s fantasies involving the Madonna. This sacrificing of virgin women to the wills of men is highlighted through Lewis’s allusions to saints who were virgin martyrs. Fittingly, the Prioress orchestrates a procession of the nuns which features St. Lucia of Syracuse and St. Catherine of Alexandria, both virgin martyr saints. Agnes, the name of one of the main heroines in the book, and the victim of the Prioress’s torturous treatment, is also the name of one of the most famous virgin martyr saints who, like St. Lucia, was condemned to a house of infamy and then killed. St. Agnes of Rome is regarded as a patron for young unmarried girls.²³ Thus, through the Catholic Church, and more directly through the Prioress and Ambrosio, passive virgins are lifted up as the ideal and sacrificed as victims to depravity.

Lewis uses the Prioress and her cloister to portray the way in which Catholicism and catholic martyrdom serve microcosmically to represent the position of women in general. Thus, it is fitting that the nuns of St. Clare are ultimately imperiled by their position in the convent. After the destruction of the Prioress, the angry mob “[resolves] to sacrifice all the Nuns of that order to their rage.”²⁴ When viewed against the backdrop of the procession, this scene can be viewed as a satiric attack on Catholic martyrdom. If these nuns, rather than fleeing for their lives, would passively stand and accept their fate it would be a scene of mass martyrdom, yet Lewis suggests the ridiculousness of such a stance by creating the possibility for such martyrdom while presenting the potential murder of these nuns as a barbaric, meaningless act of destruction performed by an angry mob. Likewise, the hypocrisy of the Prioress can be likened to that of the larger society, which claimed to protect women but actually trapped and endangered them, as seen through the Prioress’s “instructive” treatment of Agnes, and through the fact that the nuns, when faced with real danger, are proven ill-equipped to face it.

A misogynistic reading ignores Lewis’s satirical critique, through Ambrosio, Matilda, and the Prioress, of the hypocrisy and potential agents of corruption he associates with the Catholic Church. Through the character of Lorenzo, he warns that “a sanctified exterior does not

always hide a virtuous heart” and calls those who are unaware of the hypocrisy “the Dupes of deceptions.”²⁵ Through the novel’s treatment of Catholicism, Lewis highlights not only the endangerment of women through the fetishizing of passivity and virginity, but also a larger hypocrisy. Through the above-mentioned characters, Lewis uses the standard gothic motif of the Catholic other, suggesting that while the Catholic Church may appear virtuous, there is a danger of corruption in an organization that holds such power. Through Ambrosio and the Prioress, he provides a realization of the danger of such corruption both to individuals within the church and to those they have the potential to control.

Moreover, Lewis satirizes the ideal of the virtuous, faultless heroine. He does this in part by inverting traditional expectations of the typical heroine of the literary traditions he imitates. Through challenging the expectations associated with heroines, he reveals such expectations as unrealistic and limiting. One instance of this occurs in the image of unveiling. The unveiling of a beautiful woman, whether enacted literally using a veil or through other acts of unveiling, is a trope of the fictionalized female. Lewis initially deflates the moment of unveiling through the aged and homely Leonella who “[throws] up her veil in order to take a clearer look round the Cathedral... and [squints].”²⁶ Here is the ungraceful unveiling of an ugly, squinting woman, who crudely throws off her veil. Even the unveiling of her attractive niece, Antonia, disappoints the expectations held for a heroine as “The several parts of her face considered separately, many of them were far from handsome.”²⁷ Once again the expectations associated with the unveiling of a woman are somewhat deflated. Literary and social tradition have led to the expectation that the unveiling of a woman should be an awe-inspiring revelation of beauty and perfection. While Antonia’s face is described as having an overall effect of attractiveness, the imperfection of her various features disappoints readers’ expectations of a heroine. In describing the parts of Antonia that contribute to her imperfection, such as her freckled skin, small eyes, and short lashes, Lewis also inverts the traditional fragmenting of a woman’s features as an act of praise or erotic adoration. While Antonia is not established as the primary heroine within the novel, Lewis uses her to deflate the image of heroine as idol.

Lewis also uses the unveiling of Antonia to foreshadow the danger of the role of the idealized heroine. Leonella forces Antonia to unveil, showing that young women, in their passivity, may easily be placed in danger by older members of their own gender, as seen with the Baroness and the Prioress. The forced unveiling of Antonia also alludes to her later forced “unveiling,” as consummated in Ambrosio’s raping of her. Lewis also sets up the potential danger of the role of the perfect, chaste female by having Lorenzo, Antonia’s admirer, compare her to a hamadryad, “a wood nymph associated with the spirit of a particular tree, with which she comes into existence and dies.”²⁸ Even in this mythological rendering of the idealized female, the female is presented as trapped and doomed to die. While this reference can be viewed as foreshadowing Antonia’s demise, it can also be viewed as reinforcing, in the same way as the martyrs, the dangerous position of women due to society’s idealized and unrealistic expectations of them.

This unveiling scene and the character of Antonia expose the dangerous double bind in which women have been placed. Women are expected to be virtuous and chaste, yet they are set up to be sexualized and objectified through the male gaze. The image of the veil highlights this double bind. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, “[T]he veil that conceals and inhibits sexuality comes by the same gesture to represent it...Like virginity, the veil that symbolizes virginity in a girl or nun has a strong erotic savor of its own.”²⁹ The scene of Antonia entering the church towards the beginning of the novel supports this assertion. Lewis shares the reaction of two men

who watch Antonia approach: “the delicacy and elegance of whose figure inspired the Youths with the most lively curiosity to view the face to which it belonged.”³⁰ Even in Antonia’s modesty, she becomes the object of a sexualized gaze. Also, the practice of veiling intensifies the act of unveiling; when Antonia is forced by her Aunt to remove the veil, she is exposed. Similarly, Ambrosio finds Matilda most attractive when she is veiled in the habit of a friar. With her womanly body and identity covered, even the unveiling of the lower arm becomes a source of desire.³¹ Thus an act of modest covering, even in Matilda’s feigned modesty, becomes charged with sexual suggestion.

Lewis also utilizes the expectation of women blushing to highlight their forced position of duplicity. Women are expected to show their virtue and modesty through blushing, and yet naturally blushing, the act of blood rushing to the face, can be a revelation of a woman’s sexual desire. The problem of the expectations associated with a woman blushing are shown most clearly through Antonia, who, despite her lack of knowledge of sex and attraction, reveals her desire for Lorenzo by blushing whenever he is around. She clearly knows on some level that she is revealing something she ought not as she seeks to hide the coloring of her cheeks, such as when Lorenzo first comes to call and she “[strives] to conceal her emotion by leaning over her embroidery frame.”³² What society has deemed as an act of revealing one’s innocence is truly a revelation of desire. In highlighting the duality of blushing, Lewis once again problematizes the social notion of the idealized, innocent heroine. In order to fulfill the ideal, women must be unaware of even the cause behind their own bodies’ natural responses.

Lewis further satirizes the idealized heroine through a perversion of the image of the virtuous heroine being admired as an exemplar of modesty and beauty. Lewis establishes the scene of Ambrosio observing Antonia by using many typical conventions. Antonia is set up as the ideal beauty with “admirable symmetry” and the modest attitude of the “Venus de Medicis.”³³ However, the context of Ambrosio’s gaze shatters the illusion of the ideal. Ambrosio is watching Antonia through the aid of a magic mirror provided by Satan. Also, Ambrosio is watching Antonia standing naked in preparation for bathing, a pornographic moment of voyeurism far from modesty and virtue. The fact that Ambrosio witnesses Antonia unclothed destroys the image of chastity, as his ability to view her naked soils her in a way. Although she does not know it, she has been exposed. This is a far different moment from the typical hero chastely witnessing his love from afar. In allowing Antonia to be exposed, Lewis highlights the danger for the passive heroine captured by the gaze of men. Here helplessness and naïveté are not presented as qualities of attractiveness, but as qualities that endanger the women who possess them. Lewis also makes the moment comical by adding a bird into the picture and having it “[nestle] its head between her breasts, and [nibble] them in wanton play.”³⁴ The fact that the bird appears improbable and ridiculously out of place within the context of the novel makes this portrayal of the ideal woman, loved by nature, appear comical and ridiculous. Through exaggerating an image associated with the virtuous heroine, Lewis shows that such notions of femininity are unrealistic. The scene works to both taint the innocence of Antonia and challenge the fictionalized, and potentially dangerous, ideal of the virtuous woman.

By highlighting the chastity and innocence associated with the heroine role, Lewis also illuminates the menace and hypocrisy underlying the eroticizing of virginity. This fetishizing is first brought to the surface through Ambrosio’s adoration of his painting of the Madonna and his erotic dreams about the painting. Lewis writes of Ambrosio’s repeated dream: “He pressed his lips to her, and found them warm: The animated form started from the Canvas, embraced him affectionately, and his senses were unable to support delight so exquisite.”³⁵ The object of

Ambrosio's lust and "unsatisfied Desires"³⁶ is not only a virgin, but the consummate virgin. Thus once again, as is typical with *The Monk*, Lewis criticizes social reality through a perverse and grossly exaggerated representation of that reality. Ambrosio's relationship with Matilda further explores this fetishizing. In a way, Matilda serves as a literal rendering of the Madonna/whore opposition; she is "the exact resemblance of [Ambrosio's] admired Madona,"³⁷ yet she is revealed as a crafty seductress. It is in part Matilda's flattery of Ambrosio that causes him to desire her, but his passions are truly inflamed by her resemblance to the Madonna, both in physical appearance and, seemingly, in her submissive virtue. Yet once Matilda loses her chastity and modesty, Ambrosio no longer desires her. Ambrosio complains that Matilda "gluts [him] with enjoyment" and "glories in her prostitution."³⁸ Her sexual availability and immodesty, both of which allow him sexual access to her, become repulsive to him. Ambrosio exclaims, "Did [Matilda] know the inexpressible charm of Modesty, how irresistibly it entralls the heart of Man...?"³⁹ Through Ambrosio, Lewis articulates the problem of eroticizing modesty; women's modesty, which is supposed to protect them and their honor, causes them to become the objects of seduction.

While Matilda's modesty is false, and merely a tool used to ensnare Ambrosio, Antonia is presented as a victim of this double bind. As her veil in church excites the interest of Lorenzo, her genuine modesty inflames the desire of Ambrosio. Ambrosio notes that Antonia's modesty "only made him more anxious to deprive her of that quality, which formed her principal charm."⁴⁰ Ambrosio's admiration of Antonia's virtuous qualities moves him towards the act of her ultimate demise. In her article on satire in *The Monk*, Ann Campbell writes, "The climactic scene in the novel, Ambrosio's graphic rape of Antonia, may be read as yet another manifestation of the satirist's desire to violently expose the affectation of society and convention."⁴¹ Adding on, I would suggest that, in part, what Lewis satirizes in *The Monk* is the dangerous notion of eroticized virginity, which endangers those who seek to protect it and problematizes relationships, marital and otherwise, in which both willingly succumb to sexual desire. After raping Antonia, Ambrosio's prior adoration of her turns to "aversion and rage."⁴² And while the other heroines enjoy better fates, Antonia is sacrificed to the fetishizing of virginity.

Both Antonia and the other more clearly established heroines in the book—Agnes and Virginia—have notable imperfections. In each, the feminine ideal is soiled in some way. Antonia has physical imperfections, as previously mentioned. Also, even before her purity is ultimately destroyed by the incestuous rape of Ambrosio, the monk continually challenges her chastity through his acts of voyeurism, his plotting against her, and his physical violation of her breasts. Through the encounters between Ambrosio and Antonia, Lewis provides a subversive reading of the hero/heroine exchange in which the gaze and actions of her would-be lover render the heroine a victim rather than a rescued damsel. In subverting these roles, Lewis shows that being an idealized "damsel in distress" is not far from being a victim of the kind of distress that so often makes the damsel even more attractive. Readers are left with the final image of Antonia as "a Female bleeding upon the ground."⁴³ The description of her as bleeding reminds us of Ambrosio's final acts of penetration—his first act of penetration, the rape, which leaves her soiled and far removed from the idealized feminine that is threatened but never compromised, and the final mortal penetration of his knife into Antonia's bosom. Through the brutal realization of the danger Antonia faces throughout the book, the idea of the imperiled female as desirous is brought into question. Lewis shatters the feminine ideal and leaves us with a human woman who suffers and dies due to another's objectification of her.

Some have used Antonia's suffering as evidence of the novels' misogyny, citing the rape in particular. In commenting on the rape of Antonia, Winter asserts that Lewis "provides Ambrosio with supernatural help to fulfill his fantasies."⁴⁴ The suggestion that Lewis desires to "help" Ambrosio and the positive connotations associated with the word "fantasy" suggest that Winter views the rape of Antonia as an actualization of Lewis's misogynistic desires. Within the context of the novel, however, it is clear that Antonia's rape is not an event to be relished or celebrated. Rather the rape highlights the problematic position of women, a position directly identified by Yael Shapira in an article on Ann Radcliffe's gothic works. She maintains, "Within the eighteenth-century polite feminine ideal, most directly articulated in the conduct manual, an aura of danger surrounded the [female] body."⁴⁵ While fully realizing this danger, Lewis presents Antonia in a sympathetic light, as a victim of an evil man and of a society that failed to educate or protect her. Consistent with Lewis's violent and, at times, outrageous satirical approach, Antonia's rape and subsequent suffering and death provide a brutal and extreme realization of the problematic position of women,

As with Antonia, Lewis's use of Agnes as a heroine challenges expectations of female victims and villains. A subversive character, Agnes is established even more clearly than Antonia as a feminine ideal. Upon meeting her, Don Raymond notes, "Her person light and elegant was already formed; She possessed several talents in perfection."⁴⁶ While physical clues suggest Antonia's imperfection from the outset, Agnes has no such physical markers and possesses all the attributes "in perfection" that a cultured young lady should have. However, Lewis has this idealized female succumb to the seduction of Don Raymond and become pregnant. He also allows her to be imprisoned until her physical appearance deteriorates to an unrecognizable state. Lorenzo, her brother, finds her emaciated, chained to a wall, and clinging to the rotting corpse of her baby: "She was half-naked: Her long disheveled hair fell in disorder over her face, and almost entirely concealed it."⁴⁷ Readers are presented once again with a heroine who is exposed; her nakedness also serves as a reminder of her lost virtue, as does the rotting corpse of the baby that she is still holding when rescued. Lorenzo further reveals her condition through his reaction upon finding her: "He was petrified in horror. He gazed upon the miserable Object with disgust and pity."⁴⁸ The conventional imperiled heroine is generally not compromised in a way that deteriorates her exterior charms. Yet once again, as with Antonia, the masculine gaze upon the imperiled female is forced to shift from desire to an acknowledgment of suffering, and eventually to disgust at the results of such suffering. Throughout the novel, Lewis does not allow his imperiled females to remain idealized objects of attraction, and, in doing so, he reminds readers of the real danger that lies beneath the compromised position of women.

Virginia, a heroine who is not soiled in as obvious a way as that of Antonia and Agnes, is introduced to readers as the niece of the evil Prioress of St. Clare. Thus, even before readers know Virginia, her character is brought into question through her close association with the hypocritical Prioress. After Lewis introduces Virginia to readers, he further places her character in question. Although Virginia is extremely beautiful, she is not shown as being pure of heart. Even when she extends acts of charity, such as helping Agnes return to health, Lewis tells readers that she agrees to do this "more from consideration for herself, than for either Lorenzo or the Captive."⁴⁹ Lewis portrays Virginia as a self-interested female who, far from being demure, works to manipulate Lorenzo, with the help of others, into falling in love with her. Although Virginia does not lose her virginity as Antonia and Agnes do, she is a nun, promised to God, who abandons her vows to marry Lorenzo; so even though she does not have premarital sex, she is still presented as a heroine whose chastity is compromised. The fact that Lorenzo ultimately

returns her love suggests that perfection is not required for a woman to be considered attractive, an idea also shown in Don Raymond's unwavering desire for Agnes.

Lewis utilizes both the subversion of a heroine, Agnes, and an anti-heroine, Leonella, to show both the danger of keeping women sheltered and naïve and the benefits of allowing women access to knowledge. Lewis's awareness of the danger women face due to society's desire to keep them ignorant and passive is supported by the fate Antonia suffers and by the success of both Agnes and Leonella, two women placed in vulnerable positions, who survive through moving beyond innocence and passivity to action and knowledge. The first hint of Agnes's knowledge is given through her desire to have Don Raymond win the favor of her relatives and her hand in marriage, despite her family's wishes that she join a convent. Agnes does not wish to be protected by the veil of innocence promised her by the convent. She is also shown to have some knowledge of the ways of the world early on when she is shown drawing a picture of a legendary ghost who haunts the castle where Agnes lives, the Bleeding Nun: "Her dress was in several places stained with the blood which trickled from a wound upon her bosom. In one hand She held a Lamp, in the other a large Knife."⁵⁰ While Don Raymond dismisses her drawing and story as "playful imagination,"⁵¹ Agnes's visual rendering of the Bleeding Nun suggests an at least subconscious knowledge of the dangers that the world poses for women. Although Agnes does not seem to know all of the sordid details of Beatrice's story, the blood trickling from Beatrice's bosom and the blood stains on her dress allude to a subconscious awareness of Beatrice's loss of virginity and her undignified death.

Agnes also gains knowledge of the ways of love through suffering the results of her Aunt's jealousy. She sees the violent results of passion both through Beatrice and through her Aunt's response to Raymond's rejection. She responds to this knowledge by taking action, directing Don Raymond on how to help her escape from her Aunt. Once in the convent, Agnes also chooses to meet with Don Raymond secretly and submits to his sexual advances. Once Agnes engages in intercourse with Don Raymond all illusions of her innocence and ignorance are lost. Yet Lewis still has the respectable Don Raymond desire to have Agnes as his own, a challenging of the sexual double standard, as having already possessed Agnes he would be seen as having no incentive or obligation to make her his wife. Lewis portrays Agnes as assertive once again as she formulates escape plans—this time from the convent.

In viewing the story of Agnes, we cannot ignore the tremendous suffering she endures at the hands of the Prioress for the consummation of her relationship with Don Raymond and her plans to leave the convent. This suffering can be viewed as revealing the fact that even a spirited woman was allowed limited control over her own life, given eighteenth-century social constraints and expectations. The suffering of Agnes also shows what could happen to women who challenged their roles, suggesting that a woman could not win through either passivity or action. Even in his brutal satire, the fact that Lewis redeems Agnes suggests a privileging of the active, knowledgeable woman over the passive, naive heroine figure.

It seems, in part, due to the loss of her "veil of innocence" (on several levels) that Agnes survives. Lewis shows her assertive nature as a positive attribute, rather than a flaw. Although she does not succeed in her escape plans, at least she tries and appears aware of the dangers she faces. Her knowledge and lack of passivity form the strong will that enables her to survive, even in the face of tremendous suffering. It is in part because she knows a love that accepts her imperfectly that she fosters a desire to live that sees her through. In contrast, Antonia is not allowed knowledge until she has been completely victimized, and then, as a true victim, Antonia sees death as a better option than living. It is noteworthy that in losing her innocence and

ignorance Agnes does not lose her goodness, showing that true virtue does not depend upon innocence and naiveté. She offers forgiveness for those who tormented her, and she is shown as a loving wife, friend, and sister. She even forgives the Prioress who submitted her to torture, saying, “Peace be with her; and may her crimes be forgiven in heaven.”⁵² Through showing her forgiveness of others, Lewis elevates her, not as an idealized object but as a human woman who suffers and overcomes.

While perhaps not as endearing a character as Agnes, Leonella is a woman whose knowledge of the world and lack of passivity prove helpful to her and lead her to a happy ending. Perhaps it is due to her role as a matronly figure (safely distanced from the oppressive and limiting feminine ideal) that she does not need to suffer in order to succeed. In contrast to the heroines, Leonella is a woman who clearly knows about the arts of seduction, and the expectations placed on women, and uses them to her advantage. When Lorenzo comes to visit and she expects that Don Christoval, whom she greatly admires, has accompanied him, she feigns modesty. Lewis writes, “She affected to blush and tremble.”⁵³ In a sense Leonella rejects the double binds placed on her by society by directly utilizing gestures of modesty as a means to reveal her desire. Fittingly, Lewis, within his satire, presents this knowledgeable woman who blatantly defies social expectations just as society would view her—as a joke. Lewis mockingly presents her immodesty by making her look the fool through her vainly mistaking Don Christoval’s willingness to converse with her as a confession of love. As befits his satirical look at society, Lewis presents Leonella comically, but he ultimately rewards her for actively pursuing her desires by having her find a young husband to marry while she travels independently in Cordova. A reading of Leonella as a character who Lewis may secretly admire can also be supported by the fact that he allows Leonella to be the only one who immediately senses Ambrosio’s true nature. In spite of the blind adoration of the others who have watched him, after seeing him speak Leonella exclaims, “I never saw such a stern-looking Mortal, and hope that I never shall see another...when he spoke about Sinners He seemed as if He was ready to eat them.”⁵⁴ Leonella senses that Ambrosio is a man not to be admired, but a man whose very being threatens to devour others, as he does in various ways throughout the novel. As shown through her attempts to seduce Don Christoval and her keen perceptions of the monk, Leonella is not blind to the ways of the world and not afraid to take action, albeit sometimes crudely. And Lewis rewards this aggressive, knowledgeable woman with life and satisfaction, unlike her sister and niece.

In addition to examining the expectations placed upon women through his use of heroine figures, temptresses (both failed and successful), and matrons (both dangerous and benign), Lewis also utilizes a maternal figure, Elvira, to reinforce the danger in which society places women by what it chooses and refuses to teach them. As modeled by the various heroine figures, women are taught that passivity and naiveté are virtues that should be adopted, but these “virtues” lead women into danger. While other works suggest the dangers of prizing these traits, these dangers are actualized in *The Monk*. The dynamic between Elvira and her daughter, Antonia, provides a powerful example of the danger posed by remaining ignorant and inactive. Readers are told about Elvira’s decision to protect Antonia by providing her with an edited version of the Bible, a version which she has copied with “all improper passages either altered or omitted.”⁵⁵ Lewis also writes, “[Elvira] would have preferred putting into her Daughter’s hands ‘*Amadis de Gaul*,’ or ‘*The Valiant Champion, Tirante the White*.’”⁵⁶ Elvira would prefer her daughter to read chivalric romances rather than the Bible. Here, Lewis seems to suggest that the education women receive from these romances does them a disservice. These romances serve to

perpetuate the feminine ideal of passive naiveté that contributes to both the deaths of Elvira and her daughter, Antonia. It is also somewhat ironic that the Bible, which Elvira feels she must censor, would actually provide knowledge that could help Antonia by teaching her about sex and the dangers and temptations associated with it.

Antonia's mother, Elvira, serves as both an object of and vehicle for satire. As a result of being sheltered herself, Elvira is a lousy educator. The only way she knows how to protect Antonia's innocence is by keeping her ignorant. Elvira recognizes her daughter's vulnerable position. She says, "My health is declining...My Daughter will be left without Parents...She is young and artless, uninstructed in the world's perfidy, and with charms sufficient to render her an object of seduction."⁵⁷ Despites her awareness that her daughter does not understand the dangers that the world poses for her, Elvira does not educate her daughter about these dangers. The narrator makes it clear that Elvira loves her daughter deeply, and implies that Elvira's unwise decision to let Antonia remain ignorant, despite the awareness that with her death her daughter will be left unprotected, is due to Elvira not knowing any other way to address the situation. Elvira is also aware that the only person she has directly asked to protect her daughter, Ambrosio, has evil intentions. Yet even after Elvira catches Ambrosio touching her daughter's breast and becomes convinced that he intends to seduce Antonia, she still does not make Antonia fully aware of the danger she faces. She merely suggests that Antonia "be upon her guard" (although she does not tell Antonia what she must guard against) and tells her to only receive Ambrosio "in company."⁵⁸ As it was generally expected for a proper young lady to receive male guests in the company of others, this second admonition serves only as a reminder to Antonia of proper conduct.

In part, Elvira does not educate Antonia based on the fear that by "removing the bandage of ignorance, the veil of innocence should be rent away."⁵⁹ There is the sense that innocence is what renders the idealized woman attractive. It seems somewhat ironic that Elvira would wish her daughter to retain the very charms that ignorance brings when she is aware that such charms, along with Antonia's physical beauty, cause her to be an object of seduction and place her in a vulnerable position. Both the images of the "bandage" and the "veil" suggest society's preference that women remain blind. Lewis reveals that leaving women blind also leaves them vulnerable. Lois Bueler, in her article "The Tested Woman Plot," addresses this potential vulnerability through discussing the dangers associated with a woman's chastity being her "primary moral obligation...[,] her primary social obligation...[, and] where her honor chiefly lies."⁶⁰ Bueler goes on to assert that "when the only virtue lies in refusal, then virtue can be demonstrated only under pressure."⁶¹ While other novels, gothic and otherwise, hinted at this reality by repeatedly imperiling their heroines and placing them in situations that challenge their virtue, what sets *The Monk* apart is the way in which Lewis makes this danger brutally apparent through a refusal to save the heroines before any damage is done. While we might argue that Antonia could not have escaped her fate, it cannot be ignored that her ignorance and innocence contribute greatly to the enflaming of Ambrosio's passion and also cause her to walk right into his traps, from her innocent expressions of fondness to her seeking him for help even after he clearly (at least clear to all who have such knowledge) attempts to force himself upon her physically (only to be interrupted by Elvira). When Antonia does gain knowledge, through being raped by Ambrosio, it is too late for her to save herself as the dangers about which she needed to be aware have been fully realized.

Elvira could be seen as following the only models provided for her: the heroines in romance novels and the martyred saints. The chivalric romances offer visions of women who

passively wait in positions of distress for men to rescue them, and the martyred saints offer models of women who are typically passive, suffering victims. Like these models Elvira remains relatively passive in the face of danger; she knows that she and her daughter are in a vulnerable position, and yet she simply waits for help to present itself. She knows that at least one man, Ambrosio, is actively seeking to seduce her daughter and yet she does not take any direct action. She also does not take an active stand on protecting her daughter from Ambrosio by refusing him admittance; instead she simply decides to watch him more closely, watching being inherently a passive act. She could have actually gone to the Marquis de las Cisternas herself, or have sent Antonia, to seek for necessary protection, yet she does neither, even as she sees her death approaching. If she would have sought the Marquis's help, she and her daughter might have been protected from the late night visit of Ambrosio that leaves her dead. Her daughter also reflects this learned passivity when faced with her mother's death. Antonia simply waits for her aunt to arrive and for the Marquis de las Cisternas, her nearest relation, to respond to her letter. Although she acts in writing the letter, she follows this single action with passive waiting and does not even consider visiting the Marquis to implore for his help as a possibility. If she had been under the Marquis's protection, perhaps Ambrosio may not have had an opportunity to poison her, and certainly if her mother had educated her about Ambrosio's intentions she would not have allowed him into the house and would have been more suspicious of all that he does. Through Antonia's actions following her mother's death, we see the legacy that mothers and saints leave female children due to their failure to educate young women in anything other than innocence, graciousness, and passivity.

In utilizing Elvira as a vehicle for his critique of society's failure to educate women in a useful way, Lewis reveals, once again, the problematic double binds in which society has placed women. Although Elvira can be viewed as passive and as failing to protect her daughter through educating her, we cannot miss the fact that Elvira is also shackled by social expectations and constraints. She could tell her daughter about sex and warn her bluntly about the attempts she will face on her virtue, but that would be inappropriate, given the social context. Likewise, it would be improper for her to impose herself directly upon the Marquis, even if necessity seems to demand that she do so. Thus she, like Antonia, is hindered and endangered by the etiquette society demands of her gender, and as a result she, as well as every other female not under the protection of a man, is left vulnerable.

Through its exploration of traditional female character types, *The Monk* satirically reveals the danger in which society places maidens by idealizing, objectifying, and fetishizing them and by failing to educate them. In challenging the fictional notion of the perfect female and the desirable "damsel in distress," the work highlights the danger of such ideals. Through preventing readers from objectifying his heroines and placing them in the removed position of idols, Lewis forces readers to see these women as people who have flaws (although he does not condemn his heroines for their imperfection) and who truly suffer. He also reveals their suffering to be the result of society's placement and expectations of them. Although Lewis does not completely shatter the double standards and double binds society has placed upon women, he brings many of them to light, allowing readers a chance to grapple with the issues themselves. Thus, his criticism is aimed more at a society that endangers women than the women themselves.

Notes

- ¹ Emma McEvoy, Introduction and Notes, *The Monk*, By Matthew Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) xx.
- ² Jack DeRochi, “A Feminine Spectacle: The Novelistic Aesthetic of Matthew Lewis’s *The Captive*,” *Prologues, Epilogues, Curtain-raisers, and Afterpieces: The Rest of the Eighteenth Century London Stage*, Eds. Daniel James Ennis and Judith Bailey Slagle (Newark: University of Delaware, 2007) 242.
- ³ Kari J. Winter, “Sexual/Textual Politics of Terror: Writing and Rewriting the Gothic Genre in the 1790’s,” *Misogyny in Literature: An Essay Collection* Ed. Katherine Anne Hackley (New York: Garland, 1992) 94.
- ⁴ Winter 94.
- ⁵ Ann Campbell, “Satire in *The Monk*: Exposure and Reformation,” *Romanticism On the Net* 8 (November 1997): 1, *Erudit*, 19 August 2006.
- ⁶ Campbell 1.
- ⁷ Frederick Stopp, *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of the Artist*. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958) 201.
- ⁸ Vartan P. Messier, “The Conservative, the Transgressive, and the Reactionary: Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian* as a Response to Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*,” *Atenea* 25:2 (2005): 43.
- ⁹ Winter 94.
- ¹⁰ Winter 95.
- ¹¹ Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 39.
- ¹² Lewis 41.
- ¹³ Angela Wright, “European Disruptions of the Idealized Woman: Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* and the Marquis de Sades’s *La Nouvelle Justine*,” *European Gothic: A Spirited Exchange*, Ed. Avril Horner (Manchester, England: Manchester UP, 2002) 48.
- ¹⁴ Wright 46.
- ¹⁵ Wright 47.
- ¹⁶ Lewis 384.
- ¹⁷ Lewis 144.
- ¹⁸ Winter 94.
- ¹⁹ Lewis 48.
- ²⁰ Lewis 48.
- ²¹ Lewis 356.
- ²² Lewis 346.
- ²³ McEvoy 455.
- ²⁴ Lewis 357.
- ²⁵ Lewis 346-47.
- ²⁶ Lewis 9.
- ²⁷ Lewis 11.
- ²⁸ McEvoy 444.
- ²⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” *PMLA* 96.2 (March 1981): 256.
- ³⁰ Lewis 9.
- ³¹ Lewis 78.
- ³² Lewis 203.
- ³³ Lewis 271.

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- ³⁴ Lewis 271.
- ³⁵ Lewis 67.
- ³⁶ Lewis 67.
- ³⁷ Lewis 81.
- ³⁸ Lewis 243.
- ³⁹ Lewis 243.
- ⁴⁰ Lewis 257.
- ⁴¹ Campbell 6.
- ⁴² Lewis 384.
- ⁴³ Lewis 391.
- ⁴⁴ Winter 93.
- ⁴⁵ Yael Shapira, “Where the Bodies Are Hidden: Ann Radcliffe’s ‘Delicate’ Gothic,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18 (2006): 457.
- ⁴⁶ Lewis 130.
- ⁴⁷ Lewis 369.
- ⁴⁸ Lewis 369.
- ⁴⁹ Lewis 375.
- ⁵⁰ Lewis 138.
- ⁵¹ Lewis 142.
- ⁵² Lewis 415.
- ⁵³ Lewis 203.
- ⁵⁴ Lewis 22.
- ⁵⁵ Lewis 260.
- ⁵⁶ Lewis 259.
- ⁵⁷ Lewis 210.
- ⁵⁸ Lewis 264.
- ⁵⁹ Lewis 264.
- ⁶⁰ Lois E. Bueler, “The Tested Woman Plot,” *The Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, Ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia, PA: 2004) 295.
- ⁶¹ Bueler 295.

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