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Introduction

“I will read you their names directly; here they are, in my pocketbook. Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. Those will last us some time.”

“Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?”

“Yes, quite sure.”

This oft-quoted passage from Jane Austen’s _Northanger Abbey_ (1818), in which the character Isabella Thorpe provides the heroine Catherine Morland with a reading list of eighteenth-century Gothic novels, is the source from which critics would later assemble these individual volumes into a collective attribution known as ‘The _Northanger_ ‘Horrid’ Novels.’ Initially believed to be fictitious titles created by Austen, when rumors of their existence first began to circulate the critic George Saintsbury declared: “I should like some better authority than Miss Isabella Thorpe’s to assure me of their existence.”

So began a long tradition that inherently linked the ‘Horrid’ novels to Austen and _Northanger Abbey_—an association that would prove detrimental to the former. While various sources claim that the search for the ‘Horrid’ novels was instigated by Montague Summers in 1916 when he wrote a letter to the readers of _Notes and Queries_ inquiring after the “horrid romances” mentioned by Austen, the existence of the ‘Horrid’ novels was actually confirmed fifteen years prior by Professor John Louis Haney, who wrote to the Editors at _Modern Language Notes_ in 1901:

> It might be supposed that Miss Austen, in her evident satire of the Udolpho class of fiction, invented the above suggestive titles of contemporary romances. As a matter of fact, they were all actual romances which appeared at London between 1793-1798.

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Haney concluded his correspondence by providing “references to various magazines and reviews of the day” in order to substantiate his finding. The titles and their authors were revealed to include: Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793) and *The Mysterious Warning* (1796), Regina Maria Roche’s *Clermont* (1798), Peter Teuthold’s *The Necromancer: Or the Tale of the Black Forest* (1794), Francis Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell* (1798), Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798) and Karl Grosse’s *Horrid Mysteries* (1796). Surprisingly, for nearly thirty years following this discovery no further examination of the individual novels and their possible connections to Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* was undertaken. It was not until 1927 when Michael Sadleir presented the English Association in Westminster School Hall with his paper "The Northanger Novels: A Footnote to Jane Austen," that a critical analysis of the ‘Horrid’ novels first appeared. Sadleir argued that Austen’s selections of Gothic texts were “rather deliberate than random,” and chosen in part because of their representational status, which he categorized as including: “sensibility romances, pseudo-German terror novels, and mock-autobiographies.”

While Sadleir posited that Austen’s selections were “made for the stories’ rather than their titles’ sake,” Devendra Varma, in *The Gothic Flame* (1957), focuses on the latter, arguing that Austen’s reading list represents a careful deliberation that encompasses the development of the popularity of Gothic from its start to demise. Varma points, for example, to the structural similarities between Austen’s first title, Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, and Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, the latter of which is often considered the first Gothic novel. That both texts incorporate the word ‘castle’ is indicative, claims Varma, of Austen’s overall design, with her placement of Parsons’ title intended to signal the start of Gothic in its mimicry of

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4 Haney, “Northanger Abbey,” 446.
5 Michael Sadleir, “The Northanger Novels, A Footnote to Jane Austen,” *The English Association*, no. 68 (1927), 9. Tenille Nowak, “Regina Maria Roche’s ‘Horrid’ Novel: Echoes of Clermont in Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey,” *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* no. 29 (2007): 184-193. Conversely, Tenille Nowak argues, if in fact Austen had selected these texts based solely on their representative qualities, as Sadleir argues, there were a large number of contemporary texts that would have been far more appropriate.
Walpole. Varma’s analysis is ultimately problematic, as it remains confined exclusively to the titles of the ‘Horrid’ novels and their chronological arrangement within the list, thus disregarding the possibility of intertextual connections between the ‘Horrid’ novels and Northanger Abbey. Indeed, Tenille Nowak argues that Varma’s reliance on titles alone “severely limits understanding of and appreciation for…Austen’s writing abilities,” and instead suggests that Austen’s selections are based on “the inherent values and merits she discovered in each text.” Despite such claims, limited scholarship exists on the ‘Horrid’ novels, with references either confined to brief allusions or disregarded entirely within a type of criticism that continues to privilege the intertextuality between Northanger Abbey and the other two Gothic novels mentioned by Isabella Thorpe, Ann Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and The Italian (1797).

The aforementioned Michael Sadleir was among the first to speculate on Austen’s presumed disdain for the ‘Horrid’ novels, claiming that due to their “lack of restraint and very miscellaneous talent,” Austen “could have felt neither respect nor tendress” for them. Bette B. Roberts also argues for Austen’s disregard for the novels while, similarly to Sadleir and Varma, focusing her analysis on the textual placement of the novels within Thorpe’s list. Noting that “Austen does not arrange these books in chronological order; nor does she group together the two works written by one author, Eliza Parsons,” Roberts contends that “Austen does not list these particular works as representatives of the history of Gothic fiction rather, she regards them in all likelihood as typical of the very worst of the genre,” therefore suggesting that “Austen’s omission of Radcliffe from the list is no accident.”

More recently, Emily Auerbach conjectures that:

One suspects that Austen somehow knew even before she became a famous author that these lightweight gothic writers of the day would never become household words; that they lacked her own gift of

7 Varma, The Gothic Flame, 4.
universality. Can one imagine thousands of Mrs. Parsons society members with bumper stickers on their cars proclaiming, “I’d rather be reading Mrs. Parsons”?

The assumption that “Austen quietly distinguishes between Radcliffe and her imitators,” with “her satirical target…not so much Udolpho as the torrent of clumsy replicas that followed in its wake—replicas such as the seven novels ‘of the same kind’” continues to persist, relegating the “Horrid’ novels’ status to that of “bone-chillers” which “imitated and debased Radcliffe’s example.”

Minerva Press: Reception and Rejection

The relegation of the ‘Horrid’ novels to hack or pulp writing of inferior quality can perhaps partially be explained by their enduring connection to their publisher, Minerva Press, and its owner, William Lane. His official career as a bookseller began in his father’s poultry shop, with Lane eventually settling into the future premises of Minerva Press, at No. 33 Leadenhall Street, in 1775. Although Minerva Press dominated the publishing market by the 1790s—the decade in which all seven ‘Horrid’ novels were published—Lane continued to fight for “honourable recognition” among his contemporaries as “cartoons and satirical odes lampooned Lane as the ‘chicken-butcher’ and ‘scribbling poulterer,’” a nod to his humble beginnings.

In addition to the creation of his publishing house, Lane was also heavily responsible for the spread of circulating libraries throughout England as, realizing that the majority of the public was not willing, or indeed able, to purchase a novel printed by Minerva Press (as they were both expensive and meant to be read but once, purely for entertainment), Lane also placed a considerable amount of his energies into the creation

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of circulating libraries both in London and abroad. Lane’s own circulating library, situated at 33 Leadenhall Street, was well known during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Entitled ‘Lane’s General and Encreasing Circulating Library,’ or more commonly known as the ‘Minerva Press Library,’ by 1790, Lane claimed to have 10,000 volumes. This number rose exponentially as he continued to purchase stock, so that by 1802 the Minerva Catalogue held 17,000 separate titles. Lane also boasted of having a long and impressive list of subscribers to his library, although, like most subscription lists for circulating libraries in London, it appears to no longer exist. However, the readers of Minerva Press have not been entirely lost to history, as Lane’s unusual entrepreneurship has left behind a trace of his marketing efforts. Jan Fergus’ research into the records of booksellers suggests that Lane may have specifically marketed his novels to students at middle-class boarding schools. This idea is supported by Edward Copeland as, he argues, the work published by Minerva found “their most enthusiastic readership amongst the ranks of the lower middle class.” Copeland even suggests that Lane developed his circulating libraries with such “upwardly aspiring” readers in mind. Copeland further speculates that it was likely that the boys and girls who filled the boarding schools were drawn to such novels because they could relate to the characters created by the authors of Minerva Press, who were represented by a middle or lower middle class and thus embodied similar views and values. The circulating library was a profitable enterprise for Lane, as Stephen C. Behrendt notes that “Lane’s profits were fed not just by the sales of books themselves but also by the considerable fees accumulated through circulating libraries.” Indeed, Blakey writes

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14 The Dictionary of Printers and Printing writes of Lane: “He was long distinguished for his copious publications of novels, and for the energy with which he established circulating libraries in every town, and almost every village of the empire.” Charles Henry Timperley, A Dictionary of Printers and Printing, with the Progress of Literature; Ancient and Modern (London: H. Johnson, 1839).

17 Copeland, Women Writing About Money, 76.
that Minerva Press would never have achieved such a pinnacle of success were it not for Lane’s idea to start a circulating library on its premises. Behrendt notes that such enterprises were often “maintained by individual publishers and booksellers,” and, consequently, featured their own books, for which they were able to charge a varying fee depending on the individual book’s publication date.19

Behrendt writes that “it is hardly possible to underestimate the impact of the Minerva Press upon the publishing—and therefore reading—scene in early Romantic-era Britain,” as “during the 1790s, Minerva published fully a third of all the novels produced in London.”20 Behrendt argues the “contemporary notoriety” of Minerva Press is evident in that six of the seven novels recommended by Isabella Thorpe to Catherine Morland happened to be published by Minerva Press.21 In her study Minerva Press 1790-1820 (1939), Dorothy Blakeley notes that Minerva Press was known as “the most prolific producer of cheap, popular fiction” and the “chief purveyor of the circulating-library novel” during the late eighteenth century.22 Contributing to this reputation was the reportedly contradictory nature of Lane, as despite his assurances to the public that printing would be “executed with expedition, correctness, accuracy, and elegance,” the reality was that Minerva Press novels were often printed with numerous inaccuracies.23 In addition, Lane was known to buy up stock from other presses, reissue the books with his own title-pages or try to pass off previously published works as new Minerva Press offerings. Lane was also notorious for paying his writers very little, although the exact figure seems to be under some dispute. In his study Romanticism and the Gothic 2000, Michael Gamer writes that an “uncorroborated rumor that appears frequently in late-eighteenth-and early-nineteenth-century satirical and review writing” is “that the Minerva Press would pay £5 per volume for any manuscript regardless of quality so long as it proved to be in keeping with the tradition and conventions of Minerva

19 Behrendt, “Publishing and the provinces,” 156.
20 Behrendt, “Publishing and the provinces,” 162.
21 Behrendt, “Publishing and the provinces,” 162.
23 Blakeley, Minerva Press, 80.
fiction.” However, two of Lane’s authors under analysis here, Eliza Parsons and Regina Maria Roche, appear to never have received the advertised sums, as they were continually in need of assistance as proven by letters written to the Royal Literary Fund, which was established to aid struggling writers. This evidence seems to confirm the suggestion that Lane frequently employed new writers in order to keep costs low, a practice that included paying them smaller sums of money for their work. Such methods, combined with his background as a poulterer, and the increasing criticism faced by both popular novels and circulating libraries, ensured that Minerva Press, including Lane and his writers, were continually under attack.

Blakey notes that although later editions of novels by Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith “were issued from Leadenhall Street, writers of their distinction were not usually introduced to the public by William Lane.” Indeed, contemporary critics were notoriously unkind in their reviews of Minerva Press publications, with one critic noting that the works issued were “completely expurgated of all the higher qualities of the mind.” Blakey writes that so closely associated with cheap fiction was Minerva Press that to contemporary critics “the name Minerva meant little more than a convenient epithet of contempt.” The disdain for Lane’s publications is evident in the few reviews that the ‘Horrid’ novels garnered, with critics oftentimes comparing the novels in question to what they felt were superior authorial endeavors. Roche and Sleath were both met with contempt by The Critical Review, with the reviewer of Clermont limiting his response to only four sentences, the first of which read: “This tale reminds us, without any great pleasure, of Mrs. Radcliffe’s romances.” Eleanor Sleath’s The Orphan of the Rhine was similarly compared to the work of Radcliffe:

The creative genius and the descriptive power of Mrs. Radcliffe has given considerable popularity to the modern romance…If, however, we have sinned in suffering ourselves to be seduced by the blandishments of

27 Blakely, Minerva Press, 1.
elegant fiction, we endure penance adequately severe in the review of such vapid and servile imitations as the Orphan of the Rhine…

Eliza Parsons’ work met with less severity, although such leniency may have been the result of a campaign on her part to ensure that her work appeased the critics. In her study of the paratexts of Eliza Parsons’ novels, Karen Morton contends that the author worked to contrive a portrait of herself that would encourage reviewers to be kind to her works, thereby ensuring her recommendation to readers. In particular, Morton writes that Parsons used her dedications and prefaces “as a means of asserting her relationship to a particular type of reader,” addressing not only “the reader who is also a parent,” but also asserting “her claim to professional authorship.” By doing so, Morton contends, Parsons manages to present herself “as a modest private woman who tried to write because there was little other choice for her.” These attempts appear to have been successful, as evidenced in the reviews that Parsons received in response to The Castle of Wolfenbach and The Mysterious Warning. Parsons’ other books were treated with similar leniency, with reviewers noting the author’s diminished circumstances, before wishing that “our circulating libraries were always so well supplied.” The Castle of Wolfenbach was given a rather lengthy critique in The Critical Review, featuring two long paragraphs and an excerpt, with the conclusion that while “we do not pretend to give this novel as one of the first order, or even of the second; it has, however, sufficient interest to be read with pleasure.” Parsons’ The Mysterious Warning received correspondingly moderate treatment, with the reviewer noting that: “the style of the novel is not splendid, yet it is not defective.”

Lathom’s The Midnight Bell did not fare as well, with The Critical Review speculating on whether or not the novel was a translation or original work, complaining that the author or authors of the novel “seem not to care how absurd and contradictory

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31 Morton, A Life Marketed as Fiction, 80.
the story may be in its progress, provided they can make all plain and evident at the conclusion; but, indeed, they do not always attend even to this point.”

Teuthold’s *The Necromancer* received a middling review from *The Critical Review*, which credited the novel as serving “an additional purpose, of greater importance to the public,” beyond its entertaining tales, as “it exposes the arts which have been practiced in a particular part of Germany.”

However, Teuthold’s work received more biting criticism from *The Monthly Review*, which opined that “the extraordinary events, which occupy the first volume, are, in the second, not very dexterously unraveled.”

The *British Critic*, meanwhile, expressed their hope that “out of respect to such of our countrymen as are authors, we heartily wish it may be a translation,” as the critic “should be sorry to see an English original so full of absurdities.”

Furthermore, the critic noted a number of mistakes within the text, including: “errors of ignorance or of the press occur perpetually, such as affect for effect, adjectives used for adverbs, &c. &c.”

The *Horrid Mysteries* earned perhaps the harshest denouncement, with *The Critical Review* declaring that “more gross and absurd nonsense was surely never put together under the name of adventures,” before subsequently accusing the author of plagiarism.

Despite their lack of critical acclaim, the majority of these “lightweight” gothic writers enjoyed “immense popularity during the 1790s,” with Anthony Mandal noting that “the most productive novelist of the decade was circulating-library denizen Eliza Parsons,” while “Regina Maria Roche rose to prominence” as a result of the public’s growing interest in Gothic fiction.

Several works, most notably those by Lathom, Parsons, and Roche, enjoyed numerous reprints well into the mid-nineteenth century, an accomplishment that was extremely rare. In 1790, out of the seventy-four books published during this year, fifty-four of them were not reprinted. In 1799, of the ninety-

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35 Review in *The Critical Review* Vol. 23 (1798), 472.
nine books published, seventy-four of them were not reprinted.\textsuperscript{42} Such evidence suggests that readers did not place too much emphasis on reviews. In addition, although writers of Minerva Press did not often have subscription lists, Parsons was one who chose to employ this method. The advantage of this strategy was to cultivate interest in the author’s work, with the inference that only those who signed up would be likely to receive a copy. One such list, for Parsons’ sentimental novel \textit{The History of Miss Meredith}, is still in existence and much can be inferred from its contents: not only does it include a list of over 400 subscribers, but the readership shows both male and female readers who range from members of nobility to those of the merchant class.\textsuperscript{43}

Taking into account such evidence, the treatment of the ‘Horrid’ novels by contemporary critics raises the question as to whether their enduring critical neglect is located in their roots as Minerva Press publications and thus, their inevitable association with the modest beginnings of its publisher. In light of the instructive nature of \textit{Northanger Abbey}—and the repetition within scholarship that posits it as a pedagogical novel about novel-reading—it is important to remember that the character Isabella instructs Catherine to read the ‘Horrid’ novels, as well as the aforementioned Radcliffe novels. Therefore, while attention should be given to the entirety of the reading list provided within \textit{Northanger Abbey}, rather than a few selective texts, existing scholarship tends to address only the relationship between the ‘Horrid’ novels and Austen’s \textit{Northanger Abbey}, rather than analyzing the ‘Horrid’ novels as discrete publications. Focusing on the relationship between \textit{Clermont} and \textit{Northanger Abbey}, for instance, Nowak argues that Austen “either read or was exposed to Roche's text,” and that furthermore “Austen's own style and content…were strongly affected” by this work, the evidence of which can be found in the “numerous veiled allusions to Clermont.”\textsuperscript{44}

However, while the presence of such textual “echoes” suggests a more significant relationship between the ‘Horrid’ novels and \textit{Northanger Abbey} that has yet to be explored, this thesis goes beyond influence theory and even beyond evidence of intertextuality to argue for the importance of the \textit{Northanger} ‘Horrid’ novels in their

\textsuperscript{43} Morton, \textit{A Life Marketed as Fiction}, 243.
\textsuperscript{44} Nowak, \textit{Echoes of Clermont}, 184-193.
own right. In particular, this study will explore the presence of narrative levels within the ‘Horrid’ novels, arguing that the textual placement of secondary narratives or, narratives that temporally collapse the linear time of the central narrative, can be read as a signifier of absence. For while the protagonists of the secondary narratives reveal their stories to the protagonists of the first, or primary, narrative, they remain distinctly separate—their eventual inclusion within the primary narrative dependent on their ensuing ability to reintegrate themselves within patriarchy. The focus of these narratives is on the minority public, that is, a minority group that “coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group.” This minority public is, then, defined by way of the social majority—that is, those who maintain positions of power in society. This group is differentiated from the majority based upon such characteristics as gender and sexual orientation, reflected here as the narratives under analysis are concerned with the testimony of eighteenth-century women and sodomites, groups who are defined as the minority in that they existed outside of the majority, that is, patriarchy, and thus, patriarchal law. That the minority public is defined by way of the social majority is indicative here of the absence signified by the presence of the temporally displaced narratives. For just as the minority public is defined and explained by their “otherness” to the majority, so too are their narratives subject to definition and explanation within history written by and exclusively for those of the majority. That narratives of the minority are buried under the first, or primary, narrative (representative of the majority), is suggestive then of their absence within patriarchal law, and thus history, as defined by the majority public.

The Horrid Novels and Narratives of Temporal Displacement

The term “narrative levels” was first employed by the French literary theorist Gérard Genette as a means of discussing the hierarchies involved in narrative embedding. Genette states that “any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately

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higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed."^46

Thus, events recounted in a secondary narrative or a “narrative in the second degree” are
called metadiegetic narratives. Rather than simply labeling these narratives as a
metanarrative, or a narrative within a narrative, Genette employs the use of “diegesis” in
order to designate the universe of the second, that is, the fictional world of the secondary
story. This type of second-degree narrative,” Genette argues, “is a form that goes back
to the very origins of epic narrating,” one that “continues in the eighteenth century” and
which was frequently employed by contemporary Gothic novelists.^47

Allen Whitlock Grove notes that “almost universally Gothic texts are fragmented,
interrupted, unreadable, or presented through multiple framings and narrators.”^48
Examining these “Chinese-box narrative structures,” with “its multiple narrators and
interrupted stories,” Max Fincher argues that such narrative levels are a “symbol of how
we can read Gothic writing.”^49 The act of reading the Gothic, influenced and shaped by
the presence of narrative levels, is one that this thesis will explore in relation not only to
the real, historical reader (that is, the eighteenth-century reader of the novel), but also to
the reader, or listener, of the secondary narrative, as such narratives often exist to
influence or shape their own primary, or first, narrative. Particularly relevant, then, is
Susanne Becker’s examination of narrative levels

in her study *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions* (1999):

> The idea of a secret plot from the past that structures a contemporary
> narrative, for example, suggests an excess in narrative, a level of
> narration that doubles or contests—and thus problematizes—the
> conventions of a surface narrative pattern: for example, the pattern of the
> traditional ‘heroine’s text’—the text that ends in marriage or death.^50

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^48 Allen Whitlock Grove, “To Make a Long Story Short: Gothic Fragments and the Gender
Thus, Becker speculates that the secondary narrative functions as a subversive space, one in which Gothic writers could contest, and thus problematize, more conventional (and therefore patriarchal) Gothic plots.

Genette writes that the “main types of relationships that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the first narrative, into which it is inserted” fall into one of three categories. The first Genette terms “Direct Causality,” referring to the relationship between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, thus “conferring” on this secondary narrative a strictly explanatory function. The metadiegesis, then, exists to answer the question ‘why,’ and to explain events leading to the present situation. Conversely, the second category that Genette describes relates to a purely thematic relationship, one that requires no “spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis.” Instead, such metadiegesis serve as a “relationship of contrast” or “analogy,” that can “exert an influence on the diegetic situation.” The third and final relationship is one where no explicit connection exists between the two story levels. Instead, Genette writes, “it is the act of narrating itself that fulfills a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content,” thereby functioning as a distraction or obstruction.

Genette does not address whether a metadiegesis may be connected to the first narrative by more than one of these relationships, as is the case of the metadiegesis within the ‘Horrid’ novels, which often, although not exclusively, function to provide a direct casualty between the events of the first and secondary narratives, while at the same time suggesting a thematic relationship between two or more narratives. Therefore, while employing Genette’s definition of narrative levels, and thus the idea of a secondary, or metadiegetic narrative, as a necessary starting point, this study will refer to the embedding of a secondary narrative within the first as ‘temporally displaced narratives.’ Here the term ‘displaced’ reflects not simply the structure of the narrative, and thus a displacement in time as the embedding of the secondary narrative disrupts the

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linear time of the first, but it also simultaneously describes the focus of the secondary narratives on a displaced minority public: in this case, eighteenth-century women and sodomites. For although the events of the temporally displaced narratives influence and shape those within the first narrative, they remain isolated in their exclusion of the hero or heroine, as their displaced narrative does not involve them within its perimeters.

The embedding of such narratives was one that contemporary reviewers frequently lamented, writing of Francis Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell* that although “much curiosity is excited” by the events presented in the novel, “gratification [is] protracted by supernumerary episodes.”56 Similarly, one reviewer wrote of Clermont’s secondary narratives: “for, not content with such as are connected with the story, [Roche] details three instances at considerable length as episodes.”57 Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach* received comparable criticism, with *The Critical Review* complaining that “the two stories, besides, are not sufficiently interwoven together with one another,” and the critic arguing that the two narratives could have at least been “knotted” together by the marriage of the first narrative’s heroine and the “discovered son” of the secondary narrative.58 Yet the fact that Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning*, published three years after *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, features a similar type of narrative embedding ultimately suggests deliberate intent on Parsons’ part to include such “supernumerary episodes” within her work. Such narrative embedding is present within each of the ‘Horrid’ novels, as the first narrative, or diegesis, features a story of threatened violence, while the secondary narrative, or temporally displaced narrative, features a story of enacted violence, the latter of which this thesis is primarily concerned with. Therefore, the first narrative of *The Castle of Wolfenbach* features a heroine threatened with enforced marriage, while the heroine of the secondary narrative has already been forced into marriage. That this secondary heroine does not embody the typical conventions of a Gothic heroine—that is, young, innocent or virginal—requires that her story of marriage as a metaphorical prison be “hidden” or “buried” under the first narrative. Similarly, Lathom’s secondary narrative engages with the idea of torture

and imprisonment for murder as a metaphor for eighteenth-century sodomites and the violent, legal punishment for those discovered, and as such is hidden underneath the first narrative, just as sodomy was hidden from eighteenth-century society. In both instances, the word “buried” is apt as the secondary narratives are “buried” in the sense that they require the hero or heroine of the first narrative to uncover them.

**Gendered Narratives: Male and Female Gothic in the ‘Horrid’ Novels**

The frequent use of fragmented retelling further involves the hero or heroine, as well as the reader, in an act of uncovering or detection: the nonlinear time frame asks both protagonist and reader to participate in the construction of this “buried” narrative, one that repeatedly takes the reader out of the temporal present and into the past. In this way, then, the determination of the hero or heroine of the first story to uncover the secondary story confers upon them the role of historian and even editor, as they make space for the inclusion of these temporally displaced narratives. Anne Williams has argued that “Gothic narrative conventions (frame and embedded tales, ‘found’ or ‘translated’ manuscripts, many narrators) dramatize both the materiality of writing and its implicit inadequacies: its discontinuities, ambiguities, unreliabilities, silences.” As such, the embedding of the temporally displaced narratives within the ‘Horrid’ novels function as a space in which to reclaim history for those who have been neglected by records historically privileged by patriarchy. Historians Bonnie G. Smith and Christina Crosby suggest that history has been “gendered male by tradition, accident and circumstance,” and consequently, its construction has required “that ‘woman’ be outside history, above, below, or beyond properly historical and political life.” Yet as Diana Wallace has pointed out, “from the late eighteenth-century, women writers, aware of their exclusion from traditional historical narratives, have used Gothic historical fiction as a mode of historiography which can simultaneously reinsert them into history and symbolize their

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exclusion,” thus emerging “as the pre-eminent genre through which to explore the female condition.”

Female (and male) writers of the eighteenth-century, then, appropriated the Gothic as a means of reclaiming their history. As Rosemary Jackson has so rightly argued, ‘the fantastic’ “traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made absent.” Interestingly, recent scholarship has explored such subversive possibilities within Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, with Susan Zlotnick arguing that the novel defends the reading of Gothic novels “by offering an alternative vision, in which wise and judicious female reading emerges as a possible antidote to female victimization.” Ultimately, it is Catherine’s reading of the Gothic that encourages her to uncover the truth about Henry and Eleanor’s mother, while at the same time allowing her to recognize General Tilney as a tyrannical figure. Thus, according to Terry Robinson, “Catherine’s ability to interpret the past from an alternative perspective, one created by her reading of gothic fictions allows for her awareness of disturbing present realities, in particular, the violent erasure of women in history.” And yet, although both Zlotnick and Wallace contend that “novels in *Northanger Abbey* emerge as enabling fictions that offer women a vision of agency”—ones which “rewrite history to make space for women”—they simultaneously eschew any or all examination of the ‘Horrid’ novels in detail. For example, in her assertion

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61 Diana Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories: Gender, History and the Gothic* (University of Wales Press: 2013), 1. Wallace contends that “in the hands of women writers, Gothic historical fiction has offered a way of ‘interpreting’ or ‘symbolizing’ what Luce Irigaray calls ‘the forgetting of female ancestries’ and of re-establishing them within ‘History.’” Wallace then poses the question: “how do we shape accounts of what happened in the past (the events of ‘history’) into narratives (‘History’)?” Wallace then proceeds to explore how tropes used within the Gothic “explore the ways in which the ‘female line’ has been erased in ‘History,’” 5. Mary Spongberg, “‘All Histories Are Against You?’: Family History, Domestic History and the Feminine Past in *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*,” in *Reading Historical Fiction: The Revenant and Remembered Past*, ed. Kate Mitchell and Nicola Parsons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 57.


that the ‘Horrid’ novels can be read as “historical novels” in their reclamation of previously absented narratives, Zlotnick does not explore this idea as related to any one particular work, while Wallace’s own analysis is limited to Radcliffe alone.66

This thesis will take up where such discussions leave off, widening its scope to include male authors who represent similarly marginalized factions, in order to examine how the authors of the ‘Horrid’ novels use the temporally displaced narratives as a means of re-inserting previously absented narratives into history. While previous works on the Gothic have tended to expound upon the differences rather than similarities of Gothic written by male versus female authors, this thesis will explore the similarities between them as the narratives under analysis here are representative of the minority public, irrespective of gender. In doing so, not only does this work attempt to rescue these novels from the status of ‘trash’ to which they have historically been confined, but in the process of questioning pre-existing parameters of Gothic literature, it also interrogates the limitations of categorizing Gothic as either strictly ‘Male’ or ‘Female.’ For through the examination of these displaced narratives, this thesis ultimately addresses how the authors of the ‘Horrid’ novels (both female and male) use the Gothic as a means of empowering (by providing them with a voice) the minority public of both sexes. For this reason, it is appropriate that both female and male writers under analysis within this thesis make concerted use of the law and its injustices within their works, as it is through the enforcement of eighteenth-century law that women and sodomites were “silenced, made invisible, covered over and made absent.”67 Although law has historically “defined and regulated” women, so that it “has been one of the sites of the struggle against that subordination,” this study will explore such repression as experienced by both women and men (for example, eighteenth-century sodomites), and therefore “that which had been rendered obscure by masculinist histories.”68 As such, the source of ‘terror’ in many of the ‘Horrid’ novels is located not in the traditional

67 Jackson, Fantasy, 4.
Spongberg, “All Histories Are Against You?”, 57.
engagement of Gothic motifs, but rather, in the realities of eighteenth-century legal discourse.

Perhaps the most evident example of such subversion is in Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, discussed further in Chapter Two. The novel begins with the flight of the heroine, Matilda, and the temporary shelter she finds at the eponymously titled castle, where she is subsequently warned not to explore a particular wing as it is supposedly haunted. However, as Morton contends, “despite this being a Gothic novel with its share of the usual motifs, Eliza Parsons is inclined to approach them in a manner suggestive of subversion or parody.”69 For although the novel commences with the typical motif of a haunted castle, such elements are quickly cast aside as Matilda decides to explore the haunted wing, “undaunted by the possibility of the existence of ghosts,” as “her reason tells her they do not exist.”70 Instead, the real terror, Morton argues, “is present in the wife-abuse” that Matilda subsequently learns of upon her discovery of the imprisoned Countess of Wolfenbach.71 Morton notes that Parsons’ abandonment of fledgling Gothic conventions was clearly perceived by contemporary reviewers as a deficiency in her writing ability, and thus her work considered only as another “mere poor imitation of Ann Radcliffe’s”:

This novel is opened with all the romantic spirit of the Castle of Otranto, and the reader is led to expect *a tale of other times*, fraught with enchantments, and spells impending from every page. As the plot thickens, they *vanish into air*—*into thin air*, and the whole turn out to be a company of well-educated and well-bred people of fashion, some of them fraught with sentiments rather too refined and exalted for any rank, and others, deformed by depravity, that for the honour of human nature we hope has no parallel in life.72

When read as a deliberate choice rather than a lack of technique, Parsons’ engagement with eighteenth-century legal discourse rather than with typical Gothic motifs takes on a more subversive nature as Parsons makes spaces for the voices of abused married

women, and thus, those absented from historical record by dictation of contemporary law. Interestingly, as Morton addresses in her work, while it is the law that initially fails the Countess of Wolfenbach in the temporally displaced narrative, it is also the law that eventually saves both the Countess and Matilda. For, rather than a knight, as both representations of knights try and fail to save either woman, “laws are brought forward to protect [them], not swords or helpful magic spirits.”

In one of the temporally displaced narratives present within Francis Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell* (discussed in further detail in Chapter Four), the engagement with the Gothic is similarly dispersed in favor of the ‘terror’ instigated by eighteenth-century legal discourse. While the narrative begins with the Hermit seeking shelter at a mansion he happens upon during his travels, thus employing the Gothic motif of the haunted castle, such Gothic conventions are quickly abandoned as the nightmarish decent of his tale is predicated instead upon the laws of the land. His tale quickly becomes one of imprisonment, sentence and hard labor, his fears and misfortunes instigated not by ghosts or other supernatural occurrences, but by contemporary laws and legal practices. Reading the ‘Horrid’ novels as representative of authors motivated by an ideological agenda, whose narratives engage with the Gothic in order to recover narratives otherwise lost to a specifically male-authored history, suggests the necessity of the ‘Horrid’ novels inclusion in the examination of eighteenth-century Gothic canon. For, just as *Northanger Abbey* explores the erasure of women from history by what the character Eleanor Tilney refers to as “the real power” of men, so too do the novels of the ‘Horrid’ collection engage with the Gothic in order to recover narratives of those excluded by contemporary law, and thus from the narrative of male-authored history.

**Themes and Chapters**

This study is thematically arranged, so that each chapter explores specific examples of patriarchal violence addressed within the temporally displaced narratives of the “Horrid” novels, with particular emphasis placed upon the ways in which historically

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absented narratives are “recovered” through the author’s engagement with and subversion of contemporary patriarchal law. Chapter I, “In Absentia: Textual Displacement within Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine*, Eliza Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning*, and Regina Maria Roche’s *Clermont,*” will address the transformation of eighteenth-century marriage under the Marriage Act of 1753 and the subsequent exclusion of women from marital decisions. In particular, this chapter will consider how the temporally displaced narratives within Sleath’s, Parsons’ and Roche’s texts engage with ideas of exclusion through the textual absence of their heroines. While both novels allow for a superficial reading that endorses the Marriage Act of 1753—as all three heroines are punished for their participation in a clandestine marriage—it is ultimately through the use of this narrative that the authors covertly engage with ideas of absence and exclusion in relation to women and eighteenth-century law. In addition, within Sleath’s novel, attention will be focused not only on the use of temporally displaced narratives, but on the textual subsumption of the initial first story as Gothic fiction privileges narratives of young, virginal heroines.

Eighteenth-century marriage laws are also explored in Chapter 2, “‘Then I no longer exist, except for you?’: Domestic Violence and the Femme Covert in Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach* and *The Mysterious Warning,*” which builds upon the examination of the previous chapter by narrowing its focus to contemporary marriage laws. In particular, this chapter examines embedded narratives of violence within Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach* and *The Mysterious Warning,* with particular emphasis on how their engagement with the Gothic makes visible the injustices women suffered under the laws of coverture by representing their female protagonists as little more than ghosts haunting the domestic spaces in which they are confined. Read in the context of eighteenth-century domestic violence trials, these narratives become emblematic of the violence women endured under the sovereign-subject model of marriage that was sanctioned by contemporary law and subsequently reinforced through various political and social tracts. This chapter ultimately posits that these texts are suggestive of much-needed reform to eighteenth-century marriage laws.

Chapter 3, “Monstrous (Mis)Constructions: Narratives of Rape within The *Northanger* ‘Horrid’ Novels” expands upon ideas of absence and exclusion to consider
the historical (mis)construction of women by male voices. This Chapter’s focus is on those temporally displaced narratives within Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine* and Eliza Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning* that explore rape, both real and metaphorical, and the ways in which the female voice is subsequently read and mis(constructed) through the male voice. This chapter argues that each of these narratives is ‘structured’ and ‘arranged’ to construct a version of a woman at odds with femininity, one that deviates from ‘the natural order,’ so that her story becomes ‘deformed’ and ‘distorted,’ and her character condemned as ‘monstrous’ and ‘strange.’

Chapter 4, “‘Raising Ghosts’: The Spectral Presence of Sodomitical Discourse in *The Midnight Bell*, *The Necromancer* and *Horrid Mysteries*” will focus entirely on novels written by male authors, examining the use of temporally displaced narratives within Francis Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell*, and Peter Teuthold’s *The Necromancer* and *Horrid Mysteries*. This chapter will explore how the embedded narratives of trial, torture and imprisonment engage with contemporary discourse on the subject of sodomy and silence, as the violence that is used to simultaneously uncover the protagonists’ secrets and to silence them is representative of contemporary ideology and the law’s determination to silence sodomites. In a 1795 review of Peter Teuthold’s Gothic novel *The Necromancer*, one contemporary reviewer observed that “raising ghosts” is an “operation of frequent recurrence” within the novel, and one which this chapter will argue is a trope employed by Teuthold to raise the “ghosts” of sodomy and its historical associations with superstitions of sorcery, and by extension, monstrosity. In particular, this chapter will consider how these narratives engage with contemporary folklore that repeatedly linked the sodomite with sorcery, creating a portrait of the sodomite as more “monsterlike” than even the devil. As such, the law, and its related violence, is used to dehumanize the individual in question until death, both real and metaphorical, offers the only possibility of reclaiming agency.

The concluding chapter explores Diana Wallace’s idea of “haunting,” as she posits that “The Female Gothic is always ‘going back: texts are haunted by their

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predecessors and, in turn, haunt their descendants.”76 Examining how the “early roots of historical fiction are deeply entangled in the Gothic tradition,” Wallace further contends that “in traditional historiography the past is represented as static, completed and knowable; in the Gothic it does not stay dead, it returns, it haunts the reader.”77 Drawing on this idea, the concluding chapter will consider how the temporally displaced narratives within these novels ultimately haunt that of the central narrative, functioning as a warning to the primary hero and heroine. The conclusion also addresses the way in which the “Horrid” novels are “haunted” by their enduring relation to Northanger Abbey. For just as the ‘Horrid’ novels feature narratives of those excluded by history from patriarchal law, so too have these novels endured a history that excludes them from scholarship that is separate and independent of Austen’s famous text.

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76 Wallace, Female Gothic Histories, 132.
Chapter One

In Absentia: Textual Displacement in Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine*, Eliza Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning* and Regina Maria Roche’s *Clermont*

In 1617, Lady Elizabeth Hatton, wife of prominent jurist Sir Edward Coke, along with her fourteen-year-old daughter, Frances, escaped from their house in Stoke in order to seek temporary refuge at a cousin’s mansion. This exodus was prompted by Coke’s escalating efforts to coerce Frances into marrying the thirty-year-old John Villiers, a political ally whose union would benefit Coke’s own fledgling career. In response to Lady Hatton and her daughter’s defiance, “troops of bully-boys were hired, pistols issued to servants, and two doors smashed in with a heavy piece of timber.”

Accompanied by his sons and attendants, Coke purportedly “dragged Frances out of the closet” where she was hiding, placed her on a horse and “carried [her] away under the eyes of her agonized mother.” Once at his own mansion, Coke conveyed Frances “to an upper chamber, locked the door and put the key in his pocket,” while Lady Hatton was arrested and “kept in close confinement” until after her daughter had been wed. The wedding in question was allegedly agreed upon by Frances after Coke tied her “to the Bedpost and whipped [her] ‘till she consented to the match.”

The various accounts that detail this event contribute to the production of a spectacularly dramatic narrative that most likely owes more to embellishment than fact. For while various letters and court documents prove the validity of the kidnapping claim, along with Coke’s insistence that his daughter marry Villiers despite the refusal of both Frances and Lady Hatton, the allegations of Coke’s use of physical violence against his daughter were never substantiated. Frances would later write a letter to her mother insisting that “no violent means” were used to elicit her agreement to marry Villiers, although the fact that Frances’ letter was written following her kidnapping, and

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therefore most likely under duress, problematizes the validity of her words. However unsubstantiated, the image of the fourteen-year-old Frances Coke, held captive by her tyrannical father and whipped with a proprietorial instrument of oppression until she acquiesced to his wishes, was transformed over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from fiction to fact and later into written testimony, thereby transmuting into an invented artifact, which fueled a public appetite for lurid speculation as well as for more serious debates over the Marriage Act of 1753. While it was this particular part of the story that, according to R.B. Outhwaite, “fueled London gossip for years,” the public’s fascination with the lurid scene is also indicative of escalating debates over parental involvement in marriage, a dispute that, nearly two hundred years later and despite the passage of the Marriage Act, was still under interrogation upon the publication of the Northanger ‘Horrid’ Novels.

Yet the Frances Coke story serves not only as the embodiment of what some members of the public feared the Marriage Act would enable—that is, allow fathers to force daughters into marriage for their own personal gain—but also, more importantly, as a signifier of women’s absence within discourse on law. In the reduction of Frances from a woman to property, she becomes the spectre of women under eighteenth-century law: present in her physical submission but absent in her agency, as she is unable to move and speak independently due to the restraints, both literal and metaphorical, imposed upon her by her father, and thus patriarchy. Her story inherently linked with this narrative of abuse, Frances Coke becomes nameless in her universality. Indeed, Laura Norworthy’s discussion of the scene of the alleged whipping in her 1936 biography on Lady Hatton does not ascribe a name in her depiction, referring only to ‘her’ and the ‘sobbing girl,’ thereby confirming Frances’ transformation into the exemplification of women’s condition under eighteenth-century legal discourse, a warning of what the law could and would enable in order to serve patriarchy.

The sobbing girl-secured to the great four-poster—quivering under the lash as it fell again and again on her helpless limbs—her angry father

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82 Norworthy, Bleeding Heart Yard, 64.
towering above her thundering his ultimatum in her agonized ears—and finally the hopeless, helpless surrender.  

The *Northanger* ‘Horrid’ novels under analysis here serve a similar function, providing reimaginings of unrecorded history, narratives of abuse that may or may not have occurred, but which, under the Marriage Act, were rendered possible by law. In particular, both narratives deal exclusively with clandestine marriage and, more importantly, the difficulties faced by eighteenth-century women who were abandoned by husbands following a clandestine union, as the law left them with little recourse in which to prove their marriage valid. Such explorations underscore the vulnerability of women who dared to engage in decisions involving marriage (and therefore, matters that were coded as exclusively male), as they threatened to intercede with matters of patrimony. Therefore, the heroines in the temporally displaced narratives present within Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine*, Eliza Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning* and Regina Maria Roche’s *Clermont* are accordingly punished for their transgressions, signified in the eventual loss of their surnames. For, having defied patriarchy (and thus their fathers), they must relinquish the name conferred upon them by a patrilineal descent system while, following the abandonment of their husbands, they are simultaneously denied the acquisition of a new identity.

**Clandestine Marriage and the 1753 Marriage Act**

Prior to the Marriage Act, although canon law technically required parental consent, people continued to marry in a variety of ways that did not always fulfill these requirements, including irregular or clandestine marriages, which often were performed in order to evade parental consent. Outhwaite observes that bills to prevent clandestine marriages began to appear in Parliament around the latter part of the seventeenth century, following changes in the 1640s and 1650s that resulted in “large numbers of people marrying themselves in all sorts of irregular ways.” The underlying motivation for

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84 Norshworthy, *Bleeding Heart Yard*, 62.
these bills can be located in the title of a Bill that a Lords committee was ordered to prepare in 1670 and which was entitled, “Bill for preventing the marrying of Children without Consent of Parents,” and later amended to “An Act disabling Minors to marry without the Consent of their Fathers or Guardians.”\(^{86}\) Outhwaite writes that such bills betrayed the “fear expressed in the Upper House that patrimonies were threatened by the clandestine marriages of minors.”\(^{87}\) Under the new proposed bills, women would no longer be able to engage in a marriage contract without the agreement of their father, unless the woman in question was of a certain age, as the Bill ruled that “all marriages of those under the age of twenty-one, made without the written and witnessed consent of parents or guardians, should be null and void.”\(^{88}\)

Rebecca Probert’s recent scholarship on clandestine marriage contests the “belief almost universally shared that the Clandestine Marriage Act gave parents absolute control over the marriages of their minor children, and that a failure to obtain parental consent rendered a marriage void.”\(^{89}\) Instead Probert argues that the influence of the Act is greatly exaggerated by historians as the “canon law that regulated marriage prior to the 1753 Act did prescribe certain formalities, and…stated that parental consent should be obtained before a marriage went ahead.”\(^{90}\) However, her argument attempts to question the totality of the law by expounding various ways to circumvent the existing rules, rather than demonstrating that the rules themselves were not as intentionally rigorous as has been insisted by previous historians. Probert points to a number of examples, including the Scotland loophole, as a means of avoiding parental involvement in marriage. The only stipulation to be legally wed in Scotland was formal consent before witnesses, as the requirements mandated by the Marriage Act did not extend to those wed over the Scottish border. Assuming this loophole was a frequently employed method of evading parental consent is problematic, as the realities of financing the

\(^{86}\) Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage*, 13. Outhwaite writes that details of this measure can be found in the Ninth Report of The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts Commission, Part II (London, 1884) 90-91.

\(^{87}\) Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage*, 13.

\(^{88}\) Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage*, 78.


\(^{90}\) Probert, “Control Over Marriage,” 414.
required trip to Scotland was an expenditure that would have prohibited the participation from unprivileged socio-economic backgrounds. Probert’s other examples—having the banns published without a parent publicly dissenting to the marriage in the church where they were read or owning to parents who were unmarried or married outside of England—required either subterfuge on the part of the couple in question or the good fortune of being born to such parents. Consequently, while Probert provides a detailed examination of the ways in which a couple might navigate their way around these laws, there is little evidence to support her claim that the scope and influence of the Act itself was exaggerated as the intent was unquestionably to ensure patriarchal figures even greater control in the marriage of their children. At the most basic level, then, what changed with the passing of the Marriage Act was not the requirement of parental consent, but rather, the penalty for failing to obtain it. While under canon law marriage without parental consent would still be valid, under the Marriage Act, the absence of consent now carried the potential to render a marriage invalid.

The changes authorized under the Marriage Act were followed by the publication of various tracts and calls for repeal until the Bill was overturned in 1823. Interestingly, the 1790s, the time period during which all seven of the ‘Horrid’ novels were published, represents the only decade during which an appeal was not put forth. In the absence of such formal legal protests, continued engagement with the debate can instead be located primarily in literary texts and, more specifically, in the ‘Horrid’ novels, as authors Eliza Parsons, Eleanor Sleath and Regina Maria Roche examine the legal status afforded to married women through the use of their temporally displaced narratives. As Nancy E. Johnson notes, such explorations were not uncommon as the novel “played a key role in locating, elucidating, and defining concepts of rights and notions of the legal subject in the eighteenth century, also called ‘England’s century of law.’”91 Beth Swan suggests that “it is hardly surprising that women writers should have wished to address the law in their work” as “the very foundations of English law often

did not apply to women in practice.” Evidence of this exclusivity, Johnson argues, can be located in the notion that in order to be considered a “full legal subject” one had to be capable of “rational thought, economic independence and an acknowledgement of individual, inalienable natural rights,” thus rendering the obtainment of subjecthood for women impossible, as contemporary law not only “deemed women irrational” but also “economically dependent.”

Addressing the issue of natural rights, Swan first points to prominent seventeenth-century jurist William Blackstone’s assertion that every man has “the right of personal security, the right of personal liberty, and the right of private property.” Swan cites the exclusion of women from these rights, arguing that while they may apply in theory, the reality was that “a woman’s ‘uninterrupted enjoyment…of life,’” Blackstone’s own definition of ‘personal security,’ “depended on her father or husband respectively.”

Blackstone’s meaning of “personal liberty” as the right of “removing one’s person to whatsoever place one’s own inclination may direct; without imprisonment or restraint, unless by due course of law,” also fails to be applicable as eighteenth-century women “generally needed their parent’s or husbands’ permission in order to travel,” and “could legally be effectively imprisoned by fathers and husbands.” The law also prohibited married women from owning personal property, as these assets were subsumed by her husband upon their union. This exclusion, Swan argues, accounts for contemporary women’s consciousness of law and its limitations, as these restrictions defined their lives. And yet, Swan claims that “one of the most important blind spots in literary criticism concerns the legal knowledge of eighteenth-century readers.” Not only was it “fashionable” for young gentlemen to have chambers at the Inns of Court, whether or not they intended on studying law, but court proceedings also attracted attention from the general public, as “spectators attended to

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97 Swan, *Fictions of Law*, 12.
hear the causes of their friends tried, and old prints show [omit] fashionably dressed ladies and gentlemen scatted about (Westminster) Hall...having looked in there apparently as part of the social round.”

Interest in, and by extension knowledge of the law and legal proceedings, were not strictly limited to the upper classes, as servants were also known to attend these proceedings. This evidence leads Swan to conclude that “it is not surprising that eighteenth-century writers expected their readers to be familiar with law” and that consequently, approaching novels with specific legal knowledge that eighteenth-century readers would have possessed, allows for an understanding of “subtle criticisms and challenges to the law.” Such awareness of the law is evident throughout the novels under analysis within this thesis, as the authors of the ‘Horrid’ novels repeatedly engage with notions of law (and the repression incurred by the law, as experienced by both male and female writers and protagonists) throughout their texts. The contention by Swan that eighteenth-century writers were knowledgeable about law in consequence of the way it defined and regulated their day-to-day lives is an argument explicit within this thesis, as close readings of the temporally displaced narratives demonstrate both an understanding of the law and its limitations. The protagonists of these temporally displaced narratives occupy a peripheral state within patriarchy, one that is located “outside” or “on the edge” of law, and as such, speaks to those experiences specific to a minority public. Therefore, ideas of exclusion are central to this chapter on Eleanor Sleath’s The Orphan of the Rhine, Eliza Parsons’ The Mysterious Warning, and Regina Maria Roche’s Clermont. For while all three novels provide a superficial reading that endorses the Marriage Act of 1753—as heroines are punished for their participation in a clandestine marriage—it is through the use of their temporally displaced narratives that the authors subversively engage with ideas of absence and exclusion from the law. The determination of the heroines represented in the following novels, and indeed, within all of the novels discussed throughout this thesis, demonstrate the writers’ engagement with “narrative dialogue that [wrestles] with female attempts to acquire agency and to be

98 B.M. Jones, Henry Fielding, Novelist and Magistrate (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1933) 31-33, quoted in Swan, Fictions of Law, 12.
99 Swan, Fictions of Law, 13.
regarded as full legal subjects.” While the heroines of these temporally displaced narratives are imprisoned for their attempts to usurp patriarchal power by making matrimonial, and therefore social, political, and economic decisions, their ultimate punishment comes in the form of exclusion from the novels. It is only once these heroines have been “punished,” their identity, and thus their agency, destroyed, that they are released and allowed to rejoin society. Their namelessness ultimately reinforces the consequences of unrestrained female behavior (that is, the attempt to engage with ‘masculine’ politics), as this loss of agency ultimately serves as a confirmation that their danger to patriarchal authority has been negated.

Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine*

In her authoritative biography of Eliza Parsons, Karen Morton argues that much of what has been written on Parsons has been based on incorrect information and that her own research “constitutes a retrieval of lost and previously unknown data,” some of which is based upon analysis of paratexts within Parsons’ novels.\(^{101}\) Widowed at the age of fifty, Parsons turned to writing as a way to support her eight children financially, a role that Morton claims required Parsons to assume a public persona, one which often conflicted with her private life. Through her examination of “incidental textual elements such as dedications, prefaces and requests for financial aid,” Morton contends that Parsons deliberately set out to create an image of herself as a “modest private woman” who wrote only as a result of economic necessity.\(^{102}\) Parsons’ efforts were rewarded as contemporary reviewers assured parents and guardians they need “not entertain a fear” in introducing the work of “a widow, reduced from a state of affluence to the hard necessity of writing…to the notice of those whose morals are the subject of their care and attention,” as the writer “appears grounded by modesty and simplicity.”\(^{103}\) Morton insists that this calculated construction suggests Parsons’ skills as a writer, despite

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\(^{100}\) Johnson, “Women, Agency and the Law,” 270.
\(^{103}\) Morton, *Life Marketed as Fiction*, 70.
Parsons’ frequent lamentations that she lacked talent. In other words, Parsons’ written words “skillfully ensur[ed] that the exact impression she wanted conveyed was delivered.” Morton maintains that Parsons engaged these “different aspects…depending on the role she [was] currently assuming…and depending on her aim.” For example, Parsons often used her role as a widow and mother in order to “petition for financial aid, to attract the sympathy of her readership, to forge professional relations or, most importantly of all, to make money.” It is these inconsistencies that, according to Morton, ultimately complicate our reading of Parsons. For just as Parsons presented an adopted guise to the public, so too it can be argued that her novels present a similar façade, with her temporally displaced narratives subversively confronting her characteristically conservative central narrative.

These challenges often subtly invoke matters of law, as Parsons’ novels frequently engage with contemporary discourse surrounding clandestine marriages, coverture and the legal representation of women who have taken part in sexual relationships outside of marriage. The inside of a courtroom was not unknown to Parsons, as she had been threatened with the King’s Bench prison for non-payment of debts and had been under house arrest for two years. Although she eventually avoided debtor’s prison, Parsons lived under its rules and consequently felt that she had “lost her liberty.” Prior to this, “she appeared as a prisoner before the magistrate at the Surrey Sessions,” accused of tax misdemeanors, and once had to abandon her home to escape debt collectors. As such, Parsons’ temporally displaced narratives serve as a “platform” that “permits her to draw upon personal experience and understanding in the

104 Morton, *Life Marketed as Fiction*, 60. Morton also points to Parsons’ private life, in which she counted among her acquaintances “the banned and deviant [Matthew] Lewis, his adulterous mother, and the once scandalous Mrs. Robinson,” relationships that stood in sharp contrast to the public persona Parsons created, 52.
105 Morton, *Life Marketed as Fiction*, 16.
106 Morton, *Life Marketed as Fiction*, 16.
107 Eliza Parsons has two novels named in *Northanger Abbey, The Mysterious Warning*, under analysis within this chapter, and *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, to be discussing in the following chapter.
representation of women’s opinions” and thereby “reflect the experience of a large and varied readership.”  

As previously noted in the Introduction, both The Critical Review and The English Review criticized Parsons’ use of embedded narratives, with the reviewer of The Castle of Wolfenbach stating that the stories “are not sufficiently interwoven with one another.”  

That Parsons’ chose to ignore this criticism, despite the fact that her livelihood depended upon garnering good reviews, indicates the importance she placed upon the inclusion of these narratives. Morton suggests that this technique of polyphonic writing allows for the inclusion of the testimony of women who have endured mistreatment permitted under eighteenth-century law. Regina Maria Roche suffered similar economic misfortunes, ones that led her to rely on profits from her writing, along with subsidies from the Royal Literary Fund, in order to survive. Her financial difficulties stemmed primarily from the loss of her estates in Ireland, but once “friends discovered the fraud,” Roche “took the case to chancery in 1820.” Roche wrote in a letter that the case in question “proved a millstone round our necks” for ten years, and that although she finally won the suit, it “entirely drained us of our last shilling.” It is these economic similarities that Edward Copeland arguesdifferentiates the women of Minerva Press from other authors of the time. While writers such as Austen and Radcliffe focused on tales of gentry, Parsons, Roche and Sleath focused primarily on heroines that represented their own realities of the middle or lower middle classes. Issues of economic independency are, it can be argued, intrinsically bound with 

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111 Morton, Life Marketed as Fiction, 19.
113 Morton writes that it is clear Eliza Parsons read her reviews, evident in the remarks she makes in her prefaces. Morton, Life Marketed as Fiction, 26.
matters of law, as both complicate issues of agency for the heroines of the temporally displaced narratives under analysis here.

Until recently, it was believed that few biographical details existed on Sleath’s life. There is no mention of her in The Dictionary of National Biography, and while her name does appear in the Biographical Dictionary of Living Authors, the entry features only a list of her novels. Until recently, it was believed that few biographical details existed on Sleath’s life. There is no mention of her in The Dictionary of National Biography, and while her name does appear in the Biographical Dictionary of Living Authors, the entry features only a list of her novels. What little information exists has been largely confined to assumptions made first by literary critic Michael Sadleir, and then echoed years later in Devendra Varma’s The Gothic Flame (1957). Varma speculated on the identity of Sleath’s husband, suggesting that Eleanor Sleath could be “the widow of a surgeon in Leicestershire who died in 1794.” He also submitted the possibility that she was either the daughter of John Sleath and Elizabeth Sedgley, or the wife of the son from this couple. However, recent scholarship has questioned the accuracy of this information, with Rebecca Czlapinski and Eric C. Wheeler contending that the work presented by both Sadleir and Varma is not only erroneous, but that Varma even attributed the author’s work to the wrong Eleanor Sleath. As part of their work tracing Sleath’s life from birth to death, Czlapinski and Wheeler claim that Sleath was “an educated woman,” born to a man named Thomas Carter, a country attorney. Among their discoveries comes the revelation that at twenty-one, Sleath, “a spinster well past the average age of marriage,” took part in what may have been a clandestine marriage. The marriage in question took place outside of her hometown of Leicestershire, in direct contrast to the weddings of her siblings, and was held at Calverton, the home of her fiancé, John Sleath. According to the Calverton parish register, not a single member of the Carter family appeared as witness to the marriage. Czlapinski and Wheeler assert that this raises questions of whether Sleath’s family might have been against the marriage, or whether she may have been pregnant prior to the union. If nothing else,

117 Devendra P. Varma, The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England: Its Origins, Efflorescence, Disintegration, and Residuary Influences (Scarecrow Press: 1988). Both authors focus on the employment of Sleath’s Catholicism within her novels, although recent scholarship suggests that she was, in fact, not Catholic.
circumstances surrounding her marriage suggest it was irregular in nature and most likely took place without the consent of Eleanor’s family. Several years later, John Sleath died at the age of twenty-eight, leaving Eleanor with an enormous amount of debt. Although there is evidence that family members offered their assistance, it is possible that Eleanor’s engagement with writing was also a means of repaying the debts her husband had incurred.

During her writing life, Eleanor was eventually drawn into a scandal that involved a married man, John Dudley, with accusations of their extra-martial affair eventually culminating in a suit for defamation brought before a judge. Czlapinski and Wheeler further note that Loughborough, the town where Sleath resided following the scandal, was “the location of the Petty sessions court, where local magistrates, including John Dudley, came to try cases.” While it is impossible to ascertain Sleath’s interest in or knowledge of the law, the fact that she was raised by a country lawyer and then later married to Dudley, a man who tried cases at the Petty sessions court, seems to indicate at least some familiarity. Thus, Sleath’s own personal life, including her engagement in a clandestine marriage when approaching the age of spinsterhood, might well have influenced the shaping of her unusual heroine in *The Orphan of the Rhine* as, from the beginning, the character Julie de Rubine, also known as Madame Chamont, is presented as a woman at odds with the more acceptable heroine, Laurette. Indeed, Ellen Moody asserts that “the tragedies, sexual scandals and constraints of Sleath’s life are those of vulnerable real gentlewomen in her era and of her imagined female characters,” even suggesting that “Madame Chamont stands in for Sleath.”

Although temporally displaced narratives are present within *The Orphan of the Rhine* in both the beginning (one which relates Julie’s misfortunes) and the conclusion of the novel (one which relates Julie’s kidnap and imprisonment by her husband), Sleath’s text is unique among the other ‘Horrid’ novels in its structure as Julie, the subject of the temporally displaced narrative, is also the heroine of the first (or primary) narrative. As such, the first temporally displaced narrative that details Julie’s

120 Czlapinski and Wheeler, “Real Eleanor Sleath,” 8.
participation in a clandestine marriage begins and ends with her additional presence as the heroine of the first story. It is Julie’s escalating attempts to reclaim her agency that lead to her ultimate displacement from the text, as she is absented from the first narrative and replaced by a younger, more appropriate heroine. While the other ‘Horrid’ novels engage with stories of displacement that require an interruption in both time and narrative, a process that involves looking back into the past, Sleath’s heroine navigates both the first and secondary narratives as the main heroine, with the novel introducing Julie, a single mother, living in a “secluded retreat” after “having met with some peculiar misfortunes,” and having “disengaged herself from the world” and “taken refuge in retirement.”

Here, the contemporary associations of the word “retreat,” particularly in the latter half of the eighteenth century when the novel was published, carries implications of an “establishment or institution for the treatment of people suffering from mental illness.” Hence, Julie’s initial assertion of free-will in “disengag[ing] herself from the world” is problematized by the combined association of her “retreat” with an institution that houses both voluntary and confined patients (1). Sleath’s word choice is particularly apt as it underscores the limitations imposed upon Julie by the law, as this enforced “place of seclusion” mimics her own placement within eighteenth-century legal discourse—that is, “separate” or “detached” from decisions made by the majority public.

Contributing to the difficulty in categorizing this retreat as voluntary is the motivation behind these actions, namely Julie’s participation in a clandestine marriage, which is the subject of the first temporally displaced narrative. This narrative is first preceded by the declaration that she, Julie du Rubine, is descended from an “ancient and illustrious family,” a sentiment that is similarly echoed in both Roche’s and Parsons’ embedded tales (31). The emphasis that Sleath, Parsons and Roche place on the “noble” background of their heroines, coupled with the trajectory of their individual tales, recalls

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122 Eleanor Sleath, *Orphan of the Rhine* 1798 (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2008), 1. Hereafter, when referencing the seven ‘Horrid’ novels, the initial citation will be placed within a footnote, while all following citations will be placed within the body of the text.

contemporary claims that “multitudes of honourable and reputable families [were] greatly injured, and many of them utterly ruined” by the allowance of clandestine marriage. In *The Orphan of the Rhine*, such injury and eventual ruination begins when the orphaned Julie is sent to live with her wealthy Aunt Laronne. Julie, heeding her mother’s warning that Laronne may wish to see her “advantageously married” in order to further her own position, refuses the hand of her Aunt’s chosen suitor, the wealthy Signor Vescolini. That Laronne’s interests in her niece’s marriage are self-serving in nature are first signaled through the heroine's immediate dislike of Laronne's “lofty and extensive” chateau, noting that it lacks “any traces of taste” in its “ostentatious magnificence,” a fact which Laronne does not notice while “anxiously displaying all the grandeurs” to her uninterested niece (42). As such, Julie refuses to marry her Aunt’s chosen suitor, declaring that “however such a connexion might appear in the eyes of the world,” she cannot marry him because “her heart has no interest” in the connection (49). Laronne’s refusal to accept her niece’s decision reinforces not only her position as a substitute patriarchal figure to the orphaned Julie, but, with her exaggerated wealth, her status as a representative member of the aristocratic class and therefore a reminder of the concerns expressed over their progeny being seduced and married into the “vulgar” classes.

Following this refusal, Laronne “descended from persuasion to invective, threatening” Julie that if she refused to contribute to her own happiness her “relation would compel her to accept the only conditions which would eventually secure it” (53). Such conditions include the imprisonment of Julie within her bedroom, as Laronne confines her niece to her chamber and releases her only in the evenings, during which time Julie is forced to converse with Vescolini. Julie herself acknowledges the change in her situation when noting that her “ancient and gloomy apartment” had now “become her prison,” the transformation of which is confirmed through her inability to move independently throughout the house, unless first summoned by Laronne (59). Even Julie’s meals are now brought to her by one of the domestics, confirming her status as a prisoner. It is this same domestic, a girl by the name of Dorothee, who notes upon

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124 Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage*, 16.
entering Julie’s room: “This is a poor forlorn looking place, Mademoiselle…I little thought Madame would have fixed upon this for your apartments, that looks for all the world as if it was haunted by spirits” (60). This statement not only highlights the precarious nature of Julie’s situation—one made possible by law—but also reinforces Laronne’s position as a substitute patriarchal figure and furthermore, that of a jailor. For, in her assumption of a masculine role, it is Laronne who is granted the authority to make decisions for Julie, and about Julie’s life. This totality of power ultimately recalls the image of Frances Coke, as Laronne, similar to Frances’ father, confines Julie within her chamber with the acknowledged intention of keeping her there until she acquiesces to a marriage with Vescolini or until the day of the wedding ceremony, where Julie will be forced to condescend to Laronne’s wishes. These threats are hinted at in Dorothee’s observation of the room being “haunted,” as her words ultimately function to “raise” the spectre of patriarchy, thereby suggesting that women are continually haunted by the threat of exclusion, and in this case, from decisions regarding their marital lives.

While Laronne confines and verbally admonishes Julie for her failure to obey, the spurned Vescolini applies physical intimidation, declaring that although “he had much rather use persuasion than force…if one would not prove effectual, the other must” (61). When Julie tries to retreat from Vescolini following her repeated refusal, “he caught her hand to prevent her retiring, and closing the door, led her to a chair…assuring her, that when he had attained the completion of his happiness, he would endeavor to insure hers” (60). Following Vescolini’s ensuing announcement that in a fortnight “you become my wife,” Julie “was unable for the moment to utter a reply” (61). Within this particular scene, the spatial symbolism of the “closing of the door,” coupled with Vescolini’s catching of Julie’s hand and placement of her in a chair, not only constructs a threatening pantomime of violence, but also implies Julie’s confinement within the domestic space and by extension her necessary exclusion from matters that occur outside. Concurrently, that Vescolini’s declaration is spoken in the indicative present rather than future tense suggests the inescapability of his pronouncement, while the language of his declaration that in order to “attain” (which comes from the Latin attingere, meaning “to attack…to appropriate”) the “completion” (the literal definition of “consummate”) of his happiness, reinforces notions of physical,
and perhaps more notably, sexual violence (61). Julie’s eventual realization of her entrapment by patriarchy, and thus her exclusion from marital decisions—exemplified in her physical entrapment within the room and below the body of Vescolini—is expressed through the absence of punctuation. Attempting to remove herself from the chair, “her limbs trembled her voice failed an ashy paleness overspread her face and she sunk into a state of insensibility;” here, the absence of grammatical control not only creates a sense of urgency to the rising fear experienced by the heroine, but more importantly, serves as a signifier of absence (61). Thus, it not only draws attention to what is textually present (that is, the description of Julie’s body under duress), but also to what is not: Julie’s agency. This idea is further exemplified in the conclusion of this scene, with Vescolini depicted holding Julie’s now submissive body, any attempt at resistance rendered impossible by her unconscious state.

In an attempt to regain her agency, Julie later accepts the offered protection of Montferrat, a friend of her Aunt’s, escaping with him and accepting the proposal of a clandestine marriage. However, Julie soon regrets her decision when she is informed that “their nuptials were not solemnized by a priest, and that the marriage was consequently illegal,” leading to her aforementioned retreat from society in order to raise her now illegitimate child (66). Years into this seclusion, Julie receives a letter from Montferrat, in which he offers to provide for their son on the condition that she agree to raise an anonymous orphan for him as well. As part of this agreement, she must allow for Montferrat’s appropriation of her name, as he believes that “to avoid the effects of an impertinent curiosity, it will be at once prudent and necessary to take another name and to assume the character of a widow” (3). The language here is interesting in that Montferrat inserts himself into the command, yet does so without referencing his name or the ‘I’ pronoun, so that his demands become one of universality. Patriarchy has given him the right to demand control over Julie’s identity, as well as the absence of her words, threatening that if she refuses him and dares to speak of the matter to anyone, “she has everything to fear from his displeasure” (3). “Revolted” at the idea of complying with Montferrat’s wishes, Julie also recognizes the “threat” present in his words. With no other recourse, Julie du Rubine is transformed into Madame Chamont, a widow raising two children.
This change, rather than representing an internal transformation as experienced by Julie, instead indicates the reconstruction of her identity by Montferrat. That no given name is granted to her, in addition to the imposed surname, signals the further denial of her existence as an individual. Instead, she is known only by her newly chosen patrilineal surname, thereby confirming the order of the patriarchal system. Unlike the other temporally displaced narratives that appear in the ‘Horrid’ novels, Julie’s story is not relayed in first person, but rather, through an omniscient narrator. As the heroine of both the temporally displaced narrative and the initial first narrative, Julie is left without a hero or heroine to uncover her story. In her acceptance of patriarchal law, as Julie agrees to keep her narrative secret in exchange for financial protection, her subsequent transformation into a widow allows her the fluidity to move back and forth between the first and secondary narrative. In the eighteenth century, the state of widowhood granted perhaps the most freedom when compared with others roles accessible to women within contemporary society. Not only did widows enjoy more financial freedom, they were also allowed to “own property, collect rents, manage shops,” in addition to being granted a “standing in court,” all of which were refused to married women. As a widow, then, Julie is allowed to move in spaces previously denied her. It is only when Julie, or now, Madame Chamont, decides to challenge patriarchy that she is at last displaced from the first narrative entirely.

Madame Chamont’s defiance begins with her participation in the rescue of a man named La Roque, a prisoner being held by Montferrat in a nearby tower. La Roque also happens to be the father of Vescolini (the man whom Chamont previously spurned), a fact which Chamont learns only after she has rescued La Roque from his chains. In addition to learning of the familiar connection that exists between the two men, Chamont is also informed that Vescolini is now dead, murdered by Montferrat. That Vescolini is absolved from his past sins (namely, that of his treatment of Julie) through his death is confirmed upon Chamont’s subsequent acknowledgment of her guilt for the part she played as “the innocent cause of the death of Signor Vescolini” (141). The divulgement of this information is presented within La Roque’s narrative of his own

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misfortunes, one that also involves his seduction of a girl named Laurentina, his eventual mistress (discussed in detail in Chapter Four), as well as his role in the accidental murder of his wife. This conflicting portrait, in which La Roque’s narrative is presented in order to garner sympathy while simultaneously presenting his own questionable attributes—coupled with the accompanying shift in depiction of Vescolini from predator to prey—further complicates the reading of the punishment that Chamont has been made to endure for her defiance of patriarchy. For while the initial depiction of Vescolini presented him as an oppressor of Chamont’s agency, the ensuing blame placed on Chamont for his death seems to suggest (at least, initially) Chamont’s guilt for absconding from Laronne and thus refusing to obey her patriarchal authority figure. However, the unreliability of La Roque’s narration (further examined in Chapter Three), as well as the past behavior of Vescolini towards Julie, suggests that the fault cannot be placed on Chamont alone, despite the guilt she feels at the “heart-rending sorrows of La Roque, the murder of Vescolini,” eventually intimating herself as “the primary cause” for both their misfortunes (143). Rather, Sleath seems to suggest that the fault lies somewhere in between—an argument that Parsons echoes within her own narratives of abuse (discussed in Chapter Two), and which ultimately condemn both parent and child for marital decisions made independent of one another.

Thus, La Roque’s chains serve as the metaphorical representation of Chamont’s own imprisonment, so that when Madame Chamont “release[s] him from his fetters” and raises the “pale emaciated figure” of La Roque from the ground and leads him out of the dungeon, the act is transformed into a vicarious escape from Montferrat that her own narrative deems impossible (100). That freedom is unattainable is confirmed by Madame Chamont’s subsequent return to the dungeon: following her complicity in La Roque’s escape, she “missed a bracelet from her arm,” one that “contained the portrait of her father” and which leads her to descend “once more into the dungeon” (142). That the image of the bracelet recalls La Roque’s fetters, coupled with the fact that Chamont’s bracelet, or “chain,” contains a portrait of her father, serves as a reinforcement of patriarchy’s previous hold on Chamont. Having cowered before to patriarchy in her acceptance of money from Montferrat, Chamont has now defied it in the breaking of La Roque’s chains and, symbolized here in the presence of her bracelet,
Chamont’s subsequent search for the missing bracelet leads her from the dungeon and into a graveyard hidden within a chapel, thereby foreshadowing her transformation from prisoner to metaphorical corpse, with her presumed death represented in her ensuing textual absence. Notably, while walking among the graves, Chamont notices “a tall white figure, who having emerged slowly from behind one of the gigantic statues at the remotest part of the building, glided into an obscure corner” (147). This perceived haunting—the second time the insinuation of ghosts has been introduced within Chamont’s narrative—suggests that although Chamont has broken free of the locked bedroom in which Laronne, and thus patriarchy, confined her, she is still haunted by its totality. That the breaking of La Roque’s fetters proves futile is confirmed as, terrified by this ghostly presence, whether “real or imaginary,” Chamont is disturbed by “confused, wild, and horrible” dreams (147-8).

Sometimes the image of Vescolini would present itself to her fancy, covered with blood and gaping in the agonies of death; at others, the ill-fated La Roque loaded with chains, weak, pale, and emaciated, torn from his tenderest connections, and consigned to a dungeon as to his grave (148).

Chamont’s visions betray not only her guilt, as previously mentioned, but also suggest existing correlations between imprisonment and death. For although Chamont has not been placed in a physical prison “loaded with chains” and sentenced to death, as was La Roque, she has nevertheless experienced a similar process of degradation. Shackled by the constraints of contemporary law, Chamont has been made to accept the monetary offerings of Montferrat, the transaction of which prohibits a return to her former life (thus requiring the necessary metaphorical death of Julie du Rubine), so that Chamont must remain imprisoned within the dungeon that Montferrat has constructed for her in his refusal to acknowledge the validity of their marriage. As such, Montferrat’s steward, Paoli, later discovers Madame Chamont’s broken bracelet “amid the files and other instruments which [Chamont] had employed in the accomplishment of her design, in the dungeon of the turret” (170). Paoli’s return of her broken “manacle” is accompanied by a “malignant sneer,” for as Montferrat’s steward, Paoli has been granted the authority to
“manage another’s property,” and thus seek retribution for Madame Chamont’s crimes (170). He is, in other words, the warden holding an escaped prisoner’s cuffs.

In her disobedience of Montferrat, Madame Chamont has intervened in matters of justice and thus, the masculine sphere of crime and punishment. Madame Chamont’s sentence for this defiance is her imprisonment within a nunnery, the confinement of which results in her textual absence from the novel as, following her insubordination, her narrative is replaced with that of the young, virginal, and therefore more appropriate heroine, Laurette.

Although Madame Chamont’s role as a participant in the first narrative is revoked, this substitution allows her ensuing textual displacement to be read as a signifier of repression, one that serves as a warning in its ‘haunting’ of the new heroine. Despite her absence, Madame Chamont continues to occupy a narrative space within the novel as Laurette, the once orphaned child and now heroine of the first story, is haunted by both the “uncertainty of the fate of Madame Chamont” (187) and the ensuing warning to “beware of him whom she had been taught to revere as a parent,” that is, Monteferrat (190). Previously denied a patrilineal name, as “she was called Laurette, but no other name was added,” Laurette soon realizes that “when blessed with the protection of Madame Chamont,” questions about her parentage were unnecessary and that upon her guardian’s disappearance this protection has been “withdrawn” (187). Now, “alone and unfriended,” Laurette is driven to discover her true parentage in the absence of Chamont and her protection (190). It is, then, through Chamont’s disappearance, and thus her mistreatment by patriarchy and the failure of law to protect her, that Laurette is forced to confront her own identity, and by extension, the possibility of what patriarchal law renders possible. While Laurette gains an identity in the absence of her guardian, Madame Chamont’s eventual reintroduction into the novel confirms the internal disintegration that her own identity has undergone during confinement.

It is worth noting that the recitation of Chamont’s temporally displaced narrative (one that does not verbally articulate her participation in a clandestine marriage but, rather, her kidnap and imprisonment), is related only to Laurette. Before commencing

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her tale, Chamont notes: “you are already informed, my dear child...of the principal incidents of my eventful story: and what I have to relate will, therefore, appear but like a repetition of what has before been recited; yet as you desire it, I will indulge you with pleasure” (398). It is only, then, because Laurette has requested Chamont to inform her of everything that has happened since Chamont’s disappearance from the castle that such a retelling occurs. And yet, the story that Chamont reveals is not the one that Laurette, as an unmarried woman, needs to hear. For, in Chamont’s story of capture and imprisonment, she reveals only the particulars of her kidnapping and her ensuing incarceration, rather than addressing how these misfortunes are connected to her engagement with a clandestine marriage. Laurette, of course, must be aware of the contents of Chamont’s narrative, as Chamont is eventually restored to the title of the Montferrat’s wife. However, it is peculiar that Sleath does not permit Chamont the textual space in which to voice her own narrative of misfortunes (and thus warning), as such recitations are a typical convention of the Gothic. Through this textual denial, then, Sleath seems to question what happens when narratives of abuse cannot be articulated, as is the case with Chamont. The answer, it seems, is the disintegration of identity.

While Chamont is eventually redeemed by Montferrat’s confession, and subsequently conferred the title of Montferrat’s wife upon his admission that their marriage was valid, this transformation does not signal a return to Chamont’s previous identity. For while the law is invoked to save Chamont, it can not restore her to her former self. The language of the law is frequently invoked during the latter part of the novel, eventually culminating with a packet delivered to Chamont which contains the acknowledgement that “Julie du Rubine, long known by the name of Madame Chamont, to be the lawful wife of the marchese de Montferrat,” followed by a will which “places Julie, his acknowledged wife, in undoubted possession of all the personal property, amounting to an astonishing sum” (419). Following Sleath’s recital of the packet’s contents, however, there is a break in the narrative, with no space provided for the “new Marchesa” and her reaction to be recorded. Little more textual space is dedicated to Chamont, instead the novel places its focus on Laurette and her eventual union with Chamont’s son, Enrico. Chamont's subsequent limited presence in the text, echoing her earlier disappearance, suggests that while Chamont has been redeemed in the public
admittance of her marriage as legal, she has not, it seems, been forgiven for her initial disobedience of patriarchal authority. Now “prey to causeless anxiety,” as “joy arid sorrow had so uniformly succeeded each other” throughout her life, Chamont’s disposition “lost much of its sanguininess,” or the “sturdiness, high color and cheerfulness” that had previously marked her character (407). Chamont’s newly acquired patrilineal name solidifies both the internal and external alternations she has endured—her weakened physical state ultimately recalling the moment her agency was first imposed upon by Vescolini—thus confirming the inescapability of Madame Chamont from patriarchy. Despite this reintroduction into the novel, Julie du Rubine has been permanently removed from the text.

**Eliza Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning***

In *The Mysterious Warning*, Parsons’ heroine Louisa first appears in the central narrative when the novel’s hero, Ferdinant, pauses to rest at an inn and subsequently encounters an “unfortunate girl” whose father has just died following an attack by banditti. The “unfortunate girl” in question is actually Louisa, a discovery that is revealed upon recognition by an old schoolfellow, Theresa D’Alenberg. Another occupant of the inn, Theresa enquires whether the grieving girl is indeed “Louisa Hautweitzer?”, to which the following response is offered: “Yes, I was called Louisa Hautweitzer, but now I am nobody…I am a wretch without a name, home or parent (emphasis original)” (179). The acknowledgement that the girl was called Louisa Hautweitzer, but now identifies as nobody, that is, the very absence of identity, ultimately confirms her loss of agency. Similarly to Sleath’s Madame Chamont, it is soon revealed that Louisa too engaged in a clandestine marriage that culminated in her imprisonment under a false identity. The ensuing revelation of Louisa’s narrative is recounted in the first person, despite the fact that the remainder of the novel is written in the third-person, with the viewpoint of an omniscient narrator. Morton points to the importance of these deviations within Parsons’ work, writing that “when [Parsons] chooses third-person omniscient

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narration, as she does in fifteen of her nineteen novels, she nonetheless often contrives to include embedded first person narratives.” Louisa, then, is given a voice as the inclusion of the temporally displaced narrative permits the recitation of her story in her own words, in epistolary form.

Letter-writing serves as a recurring motif throughout Louisa’s story, one that often functions to stress the importance of written words in matters of legality. This is evidenced when, confined within a nunnery, Louisa notes that although the nuns had examined her trunk, they had not “deprived” her of her writing box, a “treasure” of “inestimable value” (221). The importance of the written word is stressed in Sleath’s work as well, as Julie du Rubine, once rescued from the convent in which she was imprisoned, confesses that “during the first three months of my captivity, the use of pens, paper, and every other implement of writing, was denied me” (Sleath 404). The “more than ordinary restrictions” which are implemented in order “to prevent the circulations of letters between Chamont and her son” intimates the correlation between written word and truth (366). For Louisa, the presence of writing utensils ultimately serves as a means of allowing her to engage with the past, thus displacing the central narrative, as her words are first relayed and then copied into a transcript, acknowledged in the preface to her letter, which reads: “By permission of her friend, and at the request of her father, Miss D’Alenberg sends this transcript of Louisa’s misfortunes, in her own words, to Mr. Ferdinand Renaud” (Parsons 193). It is worth noting that Louisa has chosen Theresa, another woman, as the transcriber of her narrative. By denying tradition that exclusively placed men as the editors and publishers of texts, Parsons has given a woman the power of determining the final content of Louisa’s manuscript. Such female textual authority is absent elsewhere in the temporally displaced narratives of the novel, with Eugenia’s narrative of imprisonment and madness, discussed in the following chapter, being related through two male voices—that of the Baron (Eugenia’s captor) and the Count (Eugenia’s husband). Even the narrative of the femme fatale, Fatima (see Chapter Three), is undermined in its authorial intent, as her half-brother, Ferdinand, stands in judgment over her words, ultimately interpreting them for the reader.

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128 Morton, Life Marketed as Fiction, 26.
In her study on seventeenth and eighteenth-century epistolary texts, Katharine Ann Jensen notes that letter-writing was often employed by a “seduced, betrayed and suffering” woman who wrote “letter after letter of anguished and masochistic lament to the man who has left her behind.” Jensen further observes that “typically, the abandoned woman comes to writing because of her betrayal, to rehearse her pain and to relive her memories.” Yet “although she may write primarily for herself,” there is evidence of those who break free of this “circular trap.” Louisa is one example of a female heroine who breaks from the “circular trap,” as although Ferdinand is the one to request Louisa’s narrative, it is for Theresa that it has been written, and Louisa does so not simply to “relive her memories” but also to serve as a form of communication between author and reader, as well as between the women of the novel. Her letter functions as a warning to Theresa, who is quite literally in danger of following Louisa’s own mistake, as Theresa is engaged to Count Wolfran, who, over the course of the novel, weds two women and attempts to marry a third. All three women learn of his devious intentions through letters, as Louisa is first alerted to his true intentions through a letter written by the Count himself, while the Count’s unknowingly illegitimate second wife, Theodosia, learns of his original marriage after the discovery of a letter written by Louisa to her father. Theresa, the Count’s third target, learns of his actions through the epistolary text that Louisa dictates to her. In this way, Parsons’ decision to write Louisa’s narrative in epistolary form also serves as a means by which Louisa can testify to the wrongs committed against her, while momentarily decentering the first narrative.

Now focused on this secondary narrative of patriarchal abuse, Parsons’ novel allows for the existence of a preserved document of Louisa’s sufferings. Louisa’s written testimony then functions as a response, or rebuttal, to other written, and in particular legal, documents published on and about eighteenth-century women, but never by them. This defiance is evident in Louisa’s conclusion, as she instructs Theresa to write: “Thus concludes the narrative of the unfortunate Louisa, which she communicated at different periods, as her weakness permitted, and which Miss

D’Alenberg was allowed to commit to paper, for the perusal of her father and his friend” (231). Despite Louisa’s initial depiction of herself as unfortunate and weak, the remainder of her statement undermines this portrait. For in her concluding words, Louisa acknowledges that she is the one who has “allowed” not only the transcription of her narrative, but also the “perusal” or “examination” of it by two patriarchal figures, subversively claiming her authority while simultaneously declaring she has none.

The motivation behind Louisa’s irregular marriage occurs following the death of Madame Bouville, Louisa’s temporary guardian, as Louisa is no longer able to remain under the same household as Bouville’s husband the Abbe, her presence now deemed “improper” and “dangerous” (205). Although the Abbe suggests she retire to a convent until her father can be located, Louisa is so “infatuated” by “fatal passion, that it superseded every sense of decorum and propriety” (205). That Parsons depicts Louisa’s decision to marry the Count as one that is based upon a self-acknowledged “infatuation,” or “madness,” reads as Parsons’ disapproval of clandestine marriages, or more specifically, marriage without the consent of a parental figure. Thus, following her marriage, it is “concluded upon” that her husband, Count Wolfran, “should give up his hunting seat, discharge his servants, all but his valet, in whose secrecy he could depend, and take a small house in a neighboring hamlet, where, as Mr. And Mrs. Sulstbach” they would be able to live “unknown and unobserved” until Louisa receives word from her father and the Count can persuade his family to accept their marriage (207). In addition, it is agreed upon that the Count’s letters will be “addressed to and from the Abbe’s house” to further ensure secrecy (207). In describing these arrangements, Parsons highlights the precarious position of women who chose to participate in clandestine marriages, as, in order to prove the validity of a union by a suit of jactitation, the contesting party would be forced to rely upon either witness testimony that swore the couple had cohabitated or the presentation of letters addressed to one another.

The instability of Louisa’s position is soon demonstrated upon the death of the Abbe, as his absence leaves no other witness to Louisa’s marriage beyond that of her husband’s servant, which the Count himself notes, declaring, “except our Frank, there remains not a witness now of our union” (209). Louisa’s only way to prove the validity
of their marriage is with a certificate written by the Abbe and which she keeps in her “ivory cabinet, presented to [her] at the convent,” and which she locks “safely in [her] escritoire” (209). As Probert notes, “at a time when England was moving from an oral to a written culture, the sanctity of the written word [had] to be upheld” and that “in the late eighteenth century being convicted for forgery was more likely to lead to execution than any other felony apart from murder.” Furthermore, Probert acknowledges that the registration of marriages received extensive revision under the Marriage Act of 1753, with lengthy sections devoted to necessary amendments in response to “concern about the ease with which falsified entries could be inserted in registers, and the risk of registers that were not carefully kept being lost.” In accordance, punishment for tampering with the wedding register was particularly severe, as “every person so offending, and being thereof lawfully convicted, shall be deemed and adjudged to be guilty of felony, and shall suffer death as a felon, without benefit of clergy.” The “ivory” cabinet, which serves as a representation of “truth” and “justice,” is threatened when Louisa discovers that the “secret” drawer which houses her “treasure,” the written proof of her marriage, is now empty (211). Louisa’s suspicions that the Count has “rob[bed]” her of this “essential” paper is later confirmed upon receipt of a letter informing her that the Count’s father refuses to acknowledge their engagement, as he has already planned Wolfran’s marriage to another woman (211). Not only has Wolfran “robbed,” which conveys connotations of “rape” (thereby transforming his thievery into an act of violence), Louisa of her certificate, but he also writes that his father has “forbidden our marriage” (212). This declaration, made in writing and emphasized through the use of italics, ultimately asserts and draws attention to the Count’s fraudulent denial of their marriage. His subsequent construction of a narrative that will deny Louisa her agency begins when she refuses to accept his renunciation of her. In response, the Count warns: “You must know, that you can produce no claims upon me, if I chuse to disavow them,” adding that Louisa will “make an irreconcilable enemy” of him should she choose to disobey (216).

The Count works to dismantle Louisa’s narrative by overpowering it with the allusion of an ideology that deemed the masculine voice more authoritative and trustworthy than its female counterpart. Louisa defies her husband’s authority by declaring that her “days of weakness are no more,” warning the Count that “my fame, my character, shall be justified” (217). Engaging patriarchal law in order to challenge Wolfran’s declaration that in her defiance she has taken a “wrong step,” Louisa replies: “I hope not...for certainly what affects you must concern me. Man and wife can have but one interest.” (214). In her reference to coverture, and thus the suspended legal status of women during marriage, Louisa attempts to employ the doctrine for her own purposes, thereby directly challenging law that demanded the subjugation of women by their husbands. Louisa’s attempt to use patriarchal law as a threat against her husband fails, for as a woman she has no voice in the writing and enacting of such pronouncements. Following Louisa’s impassioned speech, the Count informs her that his Uncle has decided to help them with their cause and that they must go to him at once. Louisa fails to recognize, even as she observes the “narrow gloomy road,” and the pair of “iron gates,” through which her journey takes her, the trap that the Count has set for her (219). Louisa recollects: “I readily gave my hand to the base betrayer; entered the gates, and in a moment was in the great court, surrounded by eight or ten nuns, and my companion gone” (219). Throughout her testimony, Louisa frequently suspends the action of the narrative in order to make judgments, whether it is to berate herself for the decision to marry the Count without the approval of her father, or to question her ignorance regarding the Count’s true duplicitous nature. Here, she pauses to reflect: “where was my reason and prudence at that moment, when a duplicity so obvious, a scheme so ill contrived, never struck me as a fallacy” (219). Such musings function to remind the reader that the narrative is, in fact, a first person telling, one with an instructional goal. Here, then, is Louisa’s admonition of her own naivety and her warning (to Theresa, Theodosia and to eighteenth-century women at large) to remain vigilant—her warning coded within the Gothic in order to stress the severity of women’s precarious place within law. Indeed, her assertion that: “I scarcely missed his hand before I lost sight of his person” speaks to the ease with which husbands were able to abandon women following a clandestine marriage (219). Thus, Louisa finds herself
“cloistered,” which comes from the Latin *claustrum* meaning “enclosed place” and carries connotations from the Old English *clauster*, meaning “a shut up place, a cell.”

Unable to escape, Louisa appeals to the Abbess, who denounces Louisa’s narrative as an “extraordinary story” and “totally foreign” to the statement relayed by Count Wolfran (220). Functioning as both judge and jury to Louisa’s testimony, the Abbess’ denial of this narrative, coupled with her ensuing persistence in “always…calling [Louisa] Miss,” condemns Louisa to confinement within the nunnery, itself a reimagining of prison (222). For Louisa, having continually persevered to affirm her marriage to the Count despite all his designs to disavow it—including the theft of their marriage certificate, an act which suggests his interference with marital records—it is not until Louisa’s narrative (and thus her suit of jactitation) is denied by the Abbess (representative of the law), that Louisa is at last silenced. Left with no other recourse, Louisa descends into madness. Indeed, Louisa admits that brought down by “madness” and “despair,” she worked herself into a frenzy and “fought like a tyger [sic] with three of the nuns” (222). Interestingly, one eighteenth-century essay on madness observed that “upon the Access of Lunacy,” those who were of a “fierce” nature in their “natural Temper” would find themselves transformed “into Wolves, Bears and Tigers, and fancy they retain all the Ferocity of those savage Animals.” Eventually overpowered, Louisa is left “speechless and senseless,” before she is carried to the “apartment used as a prison,” where she reflects that she is a “lost creature” (222). Admonished for her defiance of patriarchal authority, Louisa’s punishment is to experience the physical manifestation of the female’s place in law, which is defined by way of absence. Consequently denied her narrative, Louisa refers to herself as a “creature,” “an animal, as distinct from a human being,” an idea which is reinforced upon her discovery of money from the Count, hidden in her cabinet (223). First offered to her in the letter he wrote denying their marriage, Louisa recalls this discovery towards the end of a break in

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her recollections, noting, “I had forgot to mention,” before informing the reader of the discovery among her other trinkets (223). The appearance of this payment further suggests the dissolution of Louisa’s identity, as it confirms the business transaction first proposed by the Count, that is, the exchange of currency for the repossession of Louisa’s married name.

Prohibited from returning to her maiden name, as the Abbess refuses to recognize any part of her narrative, it is only as a result of a letter from Louisa’s father, sent upon his discovery of her confinement, that Louisa’s identity is corroborated and her release from the nunnery secured. This reclamation proves temporary, as, with the death of her father, whom she acknowledges as “the author of my being, (emphasis original)” Louisa’s claim to the “Hautweitzer” name disappears when “he exists no more” (179). Following this, Louisa falls “into violent hysteric[s]” and experiences “a temporary madness” during which time she “rave[s] on Count Wolfran,” declaring “I am, I am, your wife (emphasis original)” (183). Wavering between two identities throughout the duration of her narrative—first as Louisa Hautweitzer and later as Count Wolfran’s wife—her father now dead and Count Wolfran refusing to acknowledge the validity of their marriage, Louisa is left without a name to define herself, leading to the declaration that she is “nobody.”

**Regina Maria Roche’s Clermont**

The first (or primary) narrative in Regina Maria Roche’s *Clermont* traces the story of Madeline and her eponymously named father, as secrets of his past (most notably, the truth surrounding his birth and subsequent inheritance) are revealed. The novel, then, is largely concerned with issues of identity and namelessness, predicated upon the mistreatment of women by the law and the precarious position they face upon abandonment by husbands—revealed through the existence of a previously buried narrative. It is the discovery of this secret that eventually allows Madeline to reclaim her own identity, one that is incomplete at the start of the novel as the name ‘Clermont’ is revealed to be only a pseudonym. To do so, however, requires the disruption of the first narrative, as Madeline must first look into the past in order to unbury the truth. In the
process of this unearthing, the temporally displaced narrative of Madeline St. Julian, Madeline’s paternal grandmother, is revealed, as is, correspondingly, Madeline’s true surname. Written in a document intended solely for her son, Madeline St. Julian describes the misfortunes of her life, from the moment she finds herself orphaned and placed under the protection of a maternal Uncle and Aunt who cannot conceal their “satisfaction” and “delight” at her choice to retire to a cloister, to her decision to instead accept the unexpected declaration of St. Julian, whom she has always loved.  

Unique among the ‘Horrid’ novels is the fact that this temporally displaced narrative features a narrator who speaks from beyond the grave, as the reader soon learns that the manuscript in question was written by Madeline St. Julian only shortly before she was “laid within [her] cold grave” (233). The presence of this letter functions as a type of haunting—for although the corporeal body of Madeline St. Julian has not been resurrected, her voice (and the implicit warning that it conveys), is raised in order to warn, or instruct, the heroine of the primary narrative. That “the spirit of [Clermont’s] mother” is speaking to Madeline “from that grave,” then, signals the repression of Madeline St. Julian and her narrative of abuse, which has been repeatedly buried—first by the husband who denies their marriage, and then, to some extent, by a son who conceals her testimony (233).

Interestingly, Madeline St. Julian’s narrative begins with an account of her mother, whom the reader soon learns was similarly abandoned by her husband. Madeline St. Julian writes that her mother “selected for herself at an early age a partner whose only portion was merit, and thus disappointed the expectations which her birth, beauty, and accomplishments had raised in her family” and that “in consequence of doing so she was utterly discarded by every member of it” (222). The man in question, St. Foix, soon abandons his marriage, as “the delirium of passion over, and the pressure of distress experienced, bitterly regretted having yielded to an affection which heightened his cares…in little more than two years after his marriage, and a few months after [Madeline St. Julian’s] birth, he fell a victim to his feelings” (222). Now forsaken by her husband and unable to provide for herself or her child, the wife of St. Foix is taken in by

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137 Regina Maria Roche, *Clermont 1798* (Kansas City: Valancourt, 2006), 224.
her brother—the one family member not to resent her marital decision and who, having since married advantageously, can provide for her financially. However, the brother’s wife instills discord between the siblings as she resents having to part with her fortune. The inclusion of these monetary concerns highlights the realities that faced abandoned women, as without husbands (or the prospect of a new marriage), they were forced to find a way to earn a living to support themselves, and often, their children. The precarious nature of this situation is further underscored by the ensuing threat to place the future Madeline St. Julian into a convent—a decision that her mother rallies against as she does not wish to “entomb her child alive,” perhaps a reference to her own metaphorical placement within law (223). Notable in its absence is the name of Madeline St. Julian’s mother. For, throughout the temporally displaced narrative she is referred to only as “mother” or “daughter” and finally “she.” The absence of a name, similar to those narratives previously discussed within this chapter, signals the denial of agency, as she is unable to make claim to either the name of the husband who has abandoned her, or the family who has similarly discarded her for engaging in decisions regarding her marital state, as discouraged by law.

Despite bearing witness to her mother’s own misfortunes, Madeline St. Julian follows a similar path by accepting the proposal of a clandestine marriage. Repetition is a constant throughout the narrative: both mother and daughter partake in clandestine marriages only to be deserted, while given names are passed down between grandmother and granddaughter. Repetition has been noted as one of the elements that Gothic frequently returns to and here it is suggestive of the impossibility of breaking from patriarchy’s reach, as generation after generation enacts the same traumas. In her essay that explores repetition in Gothic, Michelle A. Massé locates the origin of this trauma as originating from the “prohibition of female autonomy in the Gothic, in the families that people it, and in the society that reads it.”138 Therefore, “history,” Massé argues, “both individual and societal, is the nightmare from which the protagonist cannot awaken.”139 Here, then, the deprivation of agency that both Madeline St. Julian

139 Massé, “Gothic Repetitions,” 681-682.
and her mother experience as a result of the vulnerable position in which they are placed by eighteenth-century law, is emphasized not only through repetition, but in the letter that Madeline St. Julian pens, as the written testimony of her words serve as a warning to future generations. That the repercussions of Madeline St. Julian’s misfortunes ‘haunt’ the first narrative is confirmed in Madeline’s persistent state of namelessness, as Clermont is a false surname. Therefore, in order for the Madeline of the first story to reclaim her identity, and thus her agency, she must confront the Madeline of the temporally displaced narrative, whose restless ghost refuses to be laid to rest until her story is known.

Madeline St. Julian initially leaves the narrative of her misfortune for her son, charging him to “vindicate her character” and “prove to the world” that she never disgraced her family (233). For St. Julian’s willingness to marry Madeline was, her narrative reveals, conditional, as he explains that their union is only possible because “he entertained of a splendid independence at the death of a very old relative” and therefore he was “consequently secured from suffering any pecuniary distress through the displeasure of his father, which he could not deny his thinking would follow the disclosure of [their] union” (225). His words convince Madeline to “consent to a private union, and put [herself] immediately under his protection” as he assures her “that the moment he could acknowledge [her] as his wife, without involving [her] in distress, with equal pride and pleasure he would do so” (225). The ensuing tale echoes the narratives of both Madame Chamont and Louisa, as Madeline and St. Julian are wed and afterwards “St. Julian then took lodgings for [Madeline] in a retired part of the town, under a feigned name, passing himself as secretary to a man of consequence, and unable, from his situation, to be always with [her]” (225-226). Just as Sleath and Parsons highlight the precarious nature of clandestine marriage in the tales of Chamont and Louisa by stressing the anonymity in which they find themselves following their unions, so too does Madeline find herself (although as of yet unaware of the implications) living under a false name, and unknown to those around her, so that consequently there is no one to attest to the validity of her marriage.

Following the birth of a son (the eventual father of the first narrative’s heroine), Madeline St. Julian notes: “the visits of your father became less frequent; he did not
assign any reason for their being so,” and that eventually “a long space ensued in which
[she] did not behold him” (226). Upon his reemergence, Madeline St. Julian notes the
“coldness in his manner” and how he “scarcely returned [her] caresses” or noticed their
newborn son (226). The reason for this shift in attitude is soon explained, as St. Julian’s
now late Uncle has left everything to a religious institution, leading him to make the
follow declaration:

I am therefore entirely at the mercy of my father; consequently to
disclose our marriage would be to involve me in certain ruin, as I am
convinced no supplications, no entreaties would ever avail upon him so
imprudent a step; ‘tis absolute necessary therefore that we should conceal
it for ever (227).

St. Julian suggests that rather than man and wife, they “be strangers to each other,”
allowing them to “each again enter the world free to make another choice” (227). When
Madeline expresses shock at his pronouncement, St. Julian responds by warning her that
if she were to “mix more in the world,” she would have “opportunities of comparing
[his] conduct with that of others,” which would convince her that “it is not quite so base
or cruel as [she] now imagine[s]” (227). He further declares that Madeline “will then see
numbers of your sex, perhaps as amiable as yourself, cruelly forsaken after the first
ardour of passion is extinguished” (227). However, St. Julian posits himself as superior
as he is offering to financially provide for her with “ample provision” (227). Despite the
fact that St. Julian forthrightly declares clandestine marriages and the subsequent
abandonment of women as commonplace, he also insists that their marriage be kept a
“secret,” one which he means will never “shall be known,” reinforced through his
continued attempts to silence her during their conversation as he instructs “do not
interrupt me,” upon “seeing [her] about to speak” (226-227). He suggests that Madeline:
“retire to some other part of France, where you are not known, and there, passing
yourself as a widow, bring up your son, and, perhaps make another choice more
calculated than your present one to render you happy” (227). The blame, then, for their
failed union, is transferred onto Madeline, as St. Julian both criticizes and punishes her
for so easily engaging in a private union that he himself championed.
Although *Clermont* is a Gothic novel, here, Roche presents her villain in decidedly non-Gothic terms. For, in St. Julian’s argument can be located notions of truth, as clandestine marriage, alongside the abandonment of spouses, was undeniably a part of eighteenth-century life. His claim, then, that he is not as “base or cruel” as a result of his offer to financially provide for Madeline is correct (however repugnant), as contemporary courts frequently witnessed cases in which women were left destitute by husbands who denied a union had ever taken place. However, that both St. Julian and Madeline should both be able to “enter the world free to make another choice” is an option viable only for St. Julian. With no recorded proof of their union, he is able to reenter society without consequence, as no evidence exists to damage to his reputation, thus leaving him free to marry again. For Madeline, however, the prospect of a new marriage is more problematic, if not impossible. No longer a virgin—the proof of which is in the child she has borne—another marriage would be less likely, as she no longer embodies the innocent, virginal requirements for a bride.

Incidentally, the offer that St. Julian makes to Madeline resembles the one accepted by Madame Chamont: the chance to retire in solitude as a widow so as to be able to raise her child with financial security. Madeline, however, refuses to accept and instead the second part of her tale resembles more of Parsons’ Louisa, as faced with disownment from her husband, Madeline refuses to submit to his will. Instead, she responds:

> No, St. Julian, (said I, in a solemn voice), never will I enter the road of infamy you have marked out for me to take; I am your wife, nor shall any power but that, whose mandate we must all obey, make me give up my claims (227).

Madeline invokes the mention of canon law here, a strategy also used in *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (see Chapter Two) in order to circumvent the laws of men. St. Julian’s response is identical to that of Louisa’s Count: he reminds Madeline “‘tis impossible, you know, for you to prove your marriage; there were, you may recollect, no witnesses to it, and with the name of the priest who performed the ceremony you are unacquainted” (228). Once more, as with both Chamont and Louisa, the law fails to
protect Madeline. Realizing that she will not be “assured” St. Julian’s name, and therefore having lost the protection and security that he initially promised, Madeline recounts that “had a dagger pierced my breast I could not have suffered greater agonies” (229). Carried away and locked up by St. Julian’s servants, “a kind of madness seized me—I could not weep—I could not speak, by cries, by groans I could alone express my misery” (229). Once more, the inability to articulate indicates the loss of identity, one that Madeline is ready to endure as “stripes, dungeons, or perpetual imprisonment” pose little threat to her as St. Julian has already stripped her of agency in her unnaming (230).

However, it is the presence of her child that prompts Madeline to beg a female servant for assistance in escape, as St. Julian plans to locks Madeline in “a house of penitents near Paris, where [she] will for ever be confined from the world.”(230).

Similarly to Louisa, Madeline’s refusal to obey her husband’s command threatens the stability of patriarchy, and St. Julian responds similarly to the Count, with threats of isolation and containment. Madeline is eventually discovered, following her escape into the woods, by the Countess de Valdore, an old acquaintance, who, along with her husband, the Count, offers protection to Madeline and her son. Despite this initial rescue, the loss of Madeline’s identity is further confirmed not only in the loss of her maiden name, but also her inability to claim the name of St. Julian. For, coupled with St. Julian’s denial of their union, Madeline soon receives the news that he has wed “the rich and beautiful heiress of Charette,” and as such, learns of his “attaining his paternal title, of his having a son, born to his wishes, and of his leaving a life of unbounded gaiety and pleasure” (232). Madeline realizes that if she were to return to society in order to make a claim as St. Julian’s true wife, she would be cast “as an artful woman, who had seduced his youth and endeavored to ruin his character,” thus requiring her exclusion from the world (232). Madeline’s loss of agency as a result of her namelessness is confirmed in her absence from the text, as until the moment when Clermont reveals the document, her story has been obscured and covered over.

Although absent from the majority of the text and existing only in a preserved document that requires a disruption in the linear time of the novel, the Madeline of the temporally displaced narrative continues to haunt the text through the presence of her granddaughter, similarly named Madeline. The use of Gothic doubling here, as
Madeline serves as a constant reminder of the oppression suffered by her grandmother, signifies the wrongs perpetrated against the Madeline of the temporally displaced narrative, in particular, wrongs which have gone unrighted as surnames have yet to be restored, and thus, identities reclaimed. As such, the Madeline of the primary narrative must avenge her grandmother by seeking the reclamation of the surname ‘St Julian,’ a process that involves first the discovery of the wrongs perpetrated against her grandmother under patriarchal law. And yet, although Madeline does uncover the truth, and in the process reveals the birthright of her father and reunites him with previously supposed deceased relatives, she remains haunted by the text of her grandmother. Madeline’s written words following her betrayal—“Oh, never let my sex again confide in man—Oh, never more let them gaze with pleasure upon the beam of tenderness, nor listen with delight to the language of love”—resemble a curse in their fairytale-like pronouncement, and in this way, promise to follow and haunt Madeline St. Julian’s granddaughter throughout the course of the novel and beyond (230).

Textual Displacement and Epistolary Form

While Sleath provides the most easily recognizable example of textual displacement (as Chamont is removed from the text altogether and replaced with another heroine), both Parsons’ Louisa and Roche’s Madeline St. Julian undergo a similar process of displacement. For not only are their stories embedded within the primary narrative, but their narratives of abuse are also conveyed in epistolary form—as neither Louisa or Madeline St. Julian are able to orate their stories, but instead, commit the record of their misfortunates to paper—further displacing them from the primary narrative. The engagement with this metafictional device is one that ultimately functions to stress the relationship between writer and reader—and by extension, raises questions of authority (that is, who is the writer: Louisa or Parsons) and questions of audience (who is the reader: the readers of the narrative within the text or the eighteenth-century public). For in the previously mentioned suggestion that “Madame Chamont stands in for Sleath,” debates of authorial intent can be similarly extended to Parsons and Roche in the engagement of their first-person narratives. In her study on epistolary form, Janet
Gurkin Altman argues that what ultimately distinguishes epistolary forms from other types of narrative techniques is “the desire for exchange,” one in which “the reader is called upon to respond.”¹⁴⁰ This “call to response,” Altman notes is evident in that “the epistolary reader is empowered to intervene, to correct style, to give shape to the story, often to become an agent or narrator in his own right.”¹⁴¹ Indeed, Louisa’s letter is directly solely to Theresa, who, as editor of the work, is in charge of the final content of Louisa’s manuscript, while the male readers subsequently pass judgment and therefore indirectly shape the content of Louisa’s narrative; in *Clermont*, the title character buries the narrative of his mother for most of the novel, so that in the act of withholding, he subsequently shapes his own narrative and that of his daughter. Altman also explores the role of the “internal reader-interpreter,” whose job it is to decode the text they hold, an idea that can be applied to the novels here in a two-fold manner.¹⁴² Firstly, there is the internal reader-interpreter (that is, the heroine of the primary text) who functions as the recipient of the temporally displaced narrative, as its contents ultimately serve as a warning or guide. In addition to this internal reader-interpreter, there is also, as Altman argues, the presence of a “real historical reader.”¹⁴³ However, while Altman does not address her idea of a “real historical reader” as it relates to fiction, within the narratives presented here, it is not the internal reader-interpreter alone who must decode the narratives of abuse presented, but rather, the “real historical reader” as well, or one that could be defined, perhaps, as an external reader-interpreter. For just as the internal reader-interpreter must discover (and record) the narratives of abuse that have previously been absented, so too must the external reader-interpreter detect and make space for the possibility of these imagined histories, ones rendered possible by contemporary law.

At the conclusion of these novels, all three women are “forgiven” for their participation in clandestine marriages, this pardon signaled by the return of Madame Chamont to the narrative, Louisa’s marriage to one of the novel’s heroes and the

¹⁴² Altman, *Epistolary*, 93.
reclamation of the name ‘St. Julian’ by Madeline’s granddaughter. However, as previously mentioned, Madame Chamont is never able to return to her original identity as Julie de Rubine, while Louisa’s only chance in reclamation of agency is presented in her subsumption under yet another patrilineal surname and Madeline St. Julian herself never lives to witness her vindication. In fact, all three of the women are only presented with the possibility of redemption upon the deaths of their husbands, as the repentance of all three men comes only in the face of death. Even then, notions of punishment persist, as, in *The Mysterious Warning*, the hero Ferdinand admits that while “the conduct and character of the Count was strangely inexplicable,” puzzling over “his baseness and folly,” that “out of a thousand instances of wretchedness in a marriage state, there is scarcely one that does not originate from the imprudence of youth, in forming connexion contrary to the advice and inclination of parents and friends” (232). Later, upon Count Wolfran’s demise, Ferdinand further declares: “Count Wolfran’s character and proceedings is, I think, the strangest medley of follies and inconsistencies I ever heard of,” and although such words as ‘villainy’ and ‘vice’ are also accordingly used, there appears, on the part of Ferdinand, a hesitancy in the outright condemnation of Count Wolfran’s actions (312). To describe Count Wolfran’s behavior in terms of ‘foolishness’ or ‘a lack of good sense’ while also hinting at Louisa’s own culpability in her misfortunes seems to intimate her own guilt in the matter. Furthermore, the assertion that “the indiscretion of Louisa, in marrying Count Wolfran without her parent’s sanction, she has amply atoned for, not only by her subsequent sufferings, but by a generosity of conduct that highly exalts her,” is indicative of the view that Louisa deserved her punishment. (337).

This is a sentiment echoed in Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (see Chapter Two), as her first narrative endorses patriarchal ideology with the continued avowal that the heroine of the temporally displaced narrative is at least partially responsible for her imprisonment. Although the Count has acknowledged Louisa as his wife upon his death, and therefore as the heir to his estate, Louisa refuses to corroborate his declaration as doing so would mean stripping Theodosia, Count Wolfran’s second wife, of her son’s inheritance. As Louisa has born no children and has no living family, she refuses to
condemn Theodosia and her son to the fate she herself suffered, despite Theodosia’s insistence. Louisa has the following “short declaration” drawn up:

Louisa, the daughter of Claude Hautweitzer, thus publicly acknowledges Theodosia—to be the true and lawful wife of Frederic Count Wolfran; and as such entitled to all his estates and effects in right of her son, heir to the late Count Wolfran.—This declaration made before, and witnessed by, &c. &c. (338).

Among the other reasons Louisa does not wish to make a claim on Wolfran’s name is the realization that her narrative would be made public knowledge. In this way, Louisa escapes the fate of the aforementioned Frances Coke, whose name has become historically linked with a narrative of abuse. Louisa does not wish to again renounce her identity, and so, she engages with the law, manipulating it to serve her own purposes in retaliation for what she has suffered under its failure to protect her. Instead, similar to Matilda and Madeline (and, to some extent, Victoria, as she aids Matilda in remaining undetected by her Uncle), Louisa becomes the ‘knight’ of another woman’s narrative, making use of the law in order to protect Theodosia. The following chapter examines similar episodes of female chivalry, as both women and the law are engaged in order to save other women forced into patriarchal marriages and subsequently imprisoned by jealous husbands. The physical imprisonment of the heroines discussed in Chapter Two—as they are buried within the castles of their husbands—is mirrored in the structure of the novel, with their narratives displaced by that of the first or primary narrative. Thus, the process of ‘unearting’ their narratives requires the reader (both internal and external) to piece together a series of fragments in order to discover their narratives of abuse.
Chapter Two

‘Then I no longer exist, except for you?’: Domestic Violence and the Femme Covert in Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach* and *The Mysterious Warning*

Following the publication of Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach* in 1793, *The Critical Review* noted that “the hint of it seems to have been borrowed from the adventures of the duchess de C. in the Theodore and Adele of Madame de Genlis.”144 Referring to a narrative embedded within Madame de Genlis’ novel *Adele et Theodore* (1782), the tale of the Duchess de C*** is based upon the real life experiences of Olimpia Barberini Colanna. Married to Gennaro Caracciolo, Duke of Girifalco, at the age of sixteen, the Duchess was later imprisoned by her husband within the dungeon of his castle. Claiming that his wife had died, the Duke held funeral rites in order to convince the public of his claim, and it was only when two Capuchin monks were passing by the castle late one night and overheard her groans that the truth was discovered. Although the Duchess’ story was “widely known in eighteenth-century Italy and was chronicled by several nineteenth-century Italian historians,” Genlis was first inspired to write about the Duchess’ story after she met her in Rome during an excursion to Italy in 1776.145

However, it was not the Duchess, but rather the Duchess’ father who related the story of her captivity to Genlis. In her Introduction to the English translation of Genlis’ tale, Mary S. Trouille, referencing Italian historian Pompeo Litta’s own “romanticized version” of the story, writes that “after Olimpia was rescued by her father and went to live in the convent, she never spoke a word to anyone about what had happened to her, nor did she allow others to speak of it in her presence.”146 While it is impossible to ascertain the validity of this statement, records indicate that Olimpia did in fact retire to the Teresian Monastery, where she remained until the time of her death in 1800. Similar to the Duchess’ inability (or refusal) to voice her narrative, Eugenia, the heroine of the

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temporarily displaced narrative in Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning* (Parsons’ other Gothic novel under analysis here), is equally unable to verbally articulate her narrative of abuse, conceding instead to its recitation by other (male) voices. Eugenia’s ending also echoes the Duchess’ in that, upon her rescue, she chooses to retire to a nunnery rather than enter back into society. Thus, the silence of the Duchess is suggestive of the loss of agency experienced by the women in the temporarily displaced narratives under discussion here and elsewhere within this thesis, as the inability to voice one’s own narrative serves as the ultimate confirmation of vanquished identity.

The “hint” of Genlis’ novel to which the aforementioned contemporary reviewer alludes, can be found within one of the temporarily displaced narratives present in *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, in which the heroine Victoria is forced into a patriarchal marriage and then subjected to repetitive applications of violence by her husband, the Count of Wolfenbach, who eventually imprisons her in his castle. Three years following the publication of *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, Parsons published *The Mysterious Warning*, which features a similar narrative of imprisonment and violence, as the heroine of the temporarily displaced narrative, Eugenia, is imprisoned by her husband, the Baron S***. Trouille suggests such imprisonment, or “live burial,” within the castle, serves as “a metaphor for the prison of forced marriage.”\(^{147}\) The castle, then, “embodies the law of the father (the absolute authority of fathers, husbands, masters, and Kings), just as the dungeon symbolizes that that the law represses,” in the case of Genlis’ *Adele et Theodore* and Parsons’ two Gothic novels, “unruly wives.”\(^{148}\) Trouille further observes that the “live burial” of the Duchess de C*** is mirrored in the structure of Genlis’ novel, as her tale is “buried” within *Adele et Theodore* as an embedded narrative.\(^{149}\) This embedding of narrative is evident within both of Parsons’ texts, as the stories of Victoria and Eugenia are located outside the first, or primary narrative, and require the heroine or hero, respectively, to discover, or exhume, their narratives of abuse.

In what would prove to be the most popular part of Genlis’ novel (as separate editions featuring only the story of the Duchess de C*** were printed in 1783), the

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\(^{147}\) Trouille, “Introduction,” 8.


\(^{149}\) Trouille, “Introduction,” 8.
secondary narrative follows the tyrannical Duke, who, convinced that his wife has been unfaithful, imprisons her within a dungeon and convinces the other occupants of the castle that she has died. When the Duke’s nefarious plan is at last revealed to the Duchess de C***, she responds: “Then I no longer exist, except for you?”¹⁵⁰ The implications of this question resonate throughout both of Parsons’ two Gothic novels as, employing a narrative structure similar to Genlis’ own, Parsons engages with questions of law and agency: both her temporally displaced narratives feature heroines who, similar to the Duchess, have been “let down by the law which cannot help her, since her husband is her lord and master.”¹⁵¹ Within the embedding of her narrative, then, Parsons employs Gothic tropes such as haunted castles, buried secrets and tyrannical husbands in order to underscore the power that eighteenth-century patriarchal law instilled in husbands. For upon marriage, the law required women to assume the role of the femme covert, a condition called coverture that not only upheld encoded gender ideology but also sanctioned the perpetuation of marital violence.

The Femme Covert and the Law of Coverture

Although the totality of coverture’s authority was exaggerated, stemming from inaccuracies in Sir William Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England (1774), eighteenth-century law favored his interpretation, which stated:

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our law-French a feme covert…and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture (emphasis original).¹⁵²

Mary Beard allows that it is “difficult, admittedly, to trace all the mental processes which converged into the idea that women were a subject sex or nothing at all,” however, she insists that “if one works backward in history hunting for the origin of the idea, one encounters...two illuminating facts,” the first of which is that the authority most often cited in debates on the restraints imposed upon women is Blackstone. The second, Beard notes, is that “it is also a matter of historical record that for nearly a century or more Blackstone's Commentaries was a standard textbook for the training of lawyers.” This reliance on Blackstone led to the interpretation that once the woman assumed the role of femme covert or ‘covered woman,’ she became a non-entity “suspended...or at least incorporated” into the male during marriage. She had “no personal freedom, no property rights, no rights to her child, her body, or her wages.”

This legal fiction of unity, which argued that husband and wife became one in marriage (an act which required the subsumption of women), ultimately suggests that the true intention of coverture was to make women the property of their husbands. Indeed, coverture became a tool that was used only when necessary, with the legal system making use of this legal fiction in order to solidify a hierarchal family structure, thereby ensuring the husband’s legal supremacy within marriage. Whether or not Blackstone intentionally “misrepresented and over-simplified the legal position of married women” is difficult to ascertain. Beard speculates that Blackstone oftentimes “indulged…in ‘elegant’ language,” as he was considered “easy reading” for those “who were in a hurry to learn what was known about the laws of England, including the common law.”

154 Beard, Woman as Force in History, 79.
156 Francis E. Dolan, Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 41. Dolan notes that in reality women actually had control of property, managed goods, and were often able to avoid the constraints of coverture, despite its “far-reaching imaginary resonance,” Dolan 41.
158 Beard, Woman as Force in History, 82.
exclusion of the laws of Equity. These laws were essential to understanding the legal rights of married women, as Equity “enforced trusts and other understandings that assured to married women rights of property denied to them by the Common Law.”  

The danger of this omission was that of the “men and women who for generations cited [Blackstone’s] statement as evidence of women’s subjection, few were well trained in the technicalities of law.”  

Beard further argues that when Blackstone wrote “the husband and wife are one” he was merely writing in metaphors, not exact terms, trying to interest those who did not like to read “dry facts” alone. Thus, Beard concludes that “it is not surprising that the statement became a main support, indeed the very basis, of a great fiction,” as, because of Blackstone’s metaphorical and undeveloped ideas regarding husband and wife, “generations of men and women, untrained in law and equity, accepted Blackstone’s statement on husband and wife as the whole truth of the married woman’s status.”  

As a result, the fiction persisted that women became “‘civilly dead,’ their very being suspended during marriage and their property, along with their bodies, placed under the dominion of their respective ‘lords’ or ‘barons.’”  

Examples of such female commodification (interestingly, Anna Clark notes that “commodity” was eighteenth-century slang for female genitalia) abound in Parsons’ narratives, as, despite the protests of both Victoria and Eugenia, their respective fathers force them into marriage. In The Castle of Wolfenbach, Victoria is exploited by her father for financial and personal gain when he “snatches” her hand and announces to the Count, “I give her to you.”  

Parsons’ suggestion that patriarchal marriage is linked intrinsically with the notion of women as property is further confirmed in a letter Victoria writes to her sister, the Marchioness, following her marriage to the Count of Wolfenbach. Victoria explains that she has “just recovered from the jaws of death,” as, following the wedding night, she “was in a high fever” and “near a month…confined to

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159 Beard, Woman as Force in History, 83.
160 Beard, Woman as Force in History, 84.
161 Beard, Woman as Force in History, 84-85.
162 Beard, Woman as Force in History, 85.
163 Beard, Woman as Force in History, 85.
[her] bed” (48). The implication of rape in the marital chamber, coupled with the Count’s title, which is suggestive of a “ferocious” nature, further reinforces Victoria’s depiction of her husband as a “morose, savage, sneering, revengeful” man (48). It is through Parsons’ use of the phrase “jaws of death,” coupled with the idea of Victoria’s husband wishing to devour her, that the Count embodies the representation of patriarchy that threatens to subsume Victoria. The Mysterious Warning’s Eugenia is similarly objectified, as she is ordered to “give [her] hand” by her father to the Baron, the former instructing her to “not only hear but obey (emphasis original)” his command, warning that if she does not, his “everlasting curses shall follow [her] to the grave!” Eugenia’s father then “snatch[es] her offered hand” and places it into the Baron’s own, once more signaling women’s inevitable reduction to property under coverture (103). In this moment of diminution, the oppression that Eugenia internalizes can be read in the subsequent description of her physical body as the Baron observes “a kind of wild horror” on Eugenia’s face, as she “seemed unconscious of the objects before her,” retreating into a “torpid” or temporarily “death-like” state (104).

The empowerment of the sovereign-subject model that requires both Victoria and Eugenia to submit first to their fathers and later to their husbands is one that Natalie Zemon Davis theorizes was engrained in England’s political structure by the late seventeenth century. With both marriage and the state viewed as forms of governance, “Kings and political theorists saw the increasing legal subjection of wives to their husbands…as a guarantee of the obedience of both men and women to the slowly centralizing state.” Thus, late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century advice literature promoted the importance of a government within the family household, arguing that “as every man’s house is his castle, so is his family a private Commonwealth, wherein if due government be not observed, nothing but confusion is to be expected.” If a man and woman were to be “good rulers at home” then the man,

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168 Davis, Society and Culture in Early Modern France, 128.
169 Richard Brathwait, Esq., The English Gentleman: containing sundry excellent rules, or exquisite observations (London, 1630), 155.
“as God’s immediate officer,” would need to be “the king in his family,” while the
woman acted as the “Deputie subordinate,” a position that was “not altogether
equall.” Championing the importance of a hierarchy, contemporary advice literature
sanctioned marital violence and ensured the continued subjection of women in the role
of the femme covert. However, while a majority of seventeenth-century advice
literature condoned wife beating as an effective method of governance within marriage,
others were more conflicted. Such was the case of author William Whately, who argued
against wife beating based upon the fictional unity of the husband and wife as one flesh.
However, by the printing of his second edition, he had changed his mind, allowing that
it could be used under certain circumstances.

Indeed, prior to the eighteenth century, violence was an acceptable way for men
to demonstrate their manliness, but as definitions of masculinity altered and
characteristics such as ‘politeness’ became popular, Robert Shoemaker contends that
men began to use violence as a form of rebellion, a way to assert their masculinity and
resist the feminization that new masculinity suggested. However, Elizabeth Foyster
warns of the danger in contrasting old and new models of masculinity, as the concepts
behind each were under a state of continual development, as they were “subject to
renewed waves of reform and control.” In fact, condemnation against marital violence,
and thus values of old masculinity, can be traced back to the start of the seventeenth
century with the publication of William Heale’s An Apology for Women 1609, in which
Heale argued that there was no legal basis for wife-beating. Anthony Fletcher writes
that Heale’s tract arose from a public disputation on the subject of wife beating,
prompting Heale to pen an explanation of why wife-beating has no legal basis based on

171 Robert Hyde, A Treatise of Feme Coverts, Or, a Lady’s Law: Containing all the Lawes and
172 Whately, A Bride-Bush: or a Direction for Married Persons (London, 1623), 58.
174 Elizabeth Foyster, Marital Violence: An English Family History, 1660-1857 (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2005), 64.
“the loving intimacy of the marriage bond.” However, despite Heale’s advocation against marital abuse, Heale argued he still subscribed to the idea of a hierarchical marriage, one in which the wife was subjected to the husband. By the eighteenth century, the legal system began to reflect changes in attitude towards such violence, with increasingly severe penalties for wife-abuse. Judges began to refer to the men involved in cases of marital violence as “unmanly” and began to associate the use of marital violence as “a lower-class vice.” And yet, even as physical strength became less linked with definitions of masculinity, and violence became associated with “unmanly conduct,” reflected in its “demonization” within eighteenth-century conduct books and popular literature, traditional values of domestic violence persisted. That the influence of the hierarchal model of marriage was embedded within the law (and as such, still current within eighteenth-century discourse) is perhaps best evidenced in the discrepancy of punishment handed out for the murder of one’s spouse. While men were charged with murder for the crime, women were charged with “a species of treason,” which carried a sentence of burning, the same punishment handed down for the murder of a king. By equating the murder of one’s husband with treason, and thus reinforcing the role of the husband as a social superior, the law helped to solidify the idea of the hierarchal model of husband and wife.

Such sentiments are encapsulated in the 1790 trial of one Augusta Evans, in which Sir William Scott (Judge Stowell), of the Consistory Court of London, dismissed Augusta Evans’ case for divorce, despite the corroborated depiction of her husband, Thomas Evans, as a man of a “morose, tyrannical, cruel and savage disposition.” In the months prior to the trial, while exhibiting articles of peace against her husband, Augusta Evans claimed that Thomas Evans had treated her with “great inhumanity”

176 Anthony Fletcher, Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 200.
179 John Haggard, Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London: Containing the Judgments of the Right Hon. Sir William Scott (London: Printed by A. Strahan for J. Butterworth & Son, 1822), 46.
during a voyage to England by “confining her to a cabin without sufficient air, and [that] upon her endeavoring to let in the air, he seized her, and threw her down with great violence.”\textsuperscript{180} In addition, “on the night of the fourth of October, while she was in bed, [Thomas Evans] assaulted her with his knees and violently drove her head against the bed-posts, so that she was found in the morning bloody and much bruised.”\textsuperscript{181} Augusta Evans also claimed to have suffered a miscarriage, which her French maid attested was “occasioned wholly by the pain, anxiety and terror that she was continually in, from the cruel treatment of Mr. Evans,” and perhaps as a result of a fall that took place during a social event where Mr. Evans allegedly pushed his wife down the stairs.\textsuperscript{182} Furthermore, it was testified to that during Augusta Evan's labor, her husband “barbarously refused to call any assistance to her,” and had “bolted the door upon her” despite the fact that “the pains of labor where then severely upon her.”\textsuperscript{183} Evidence was also presented showing that for six weeks after Augusta Evan's miscarriage, she was forcibly “confined to her room.”\textsuperscript{184} In addition to the violence that Augusta Evans purportedly endured, a contemporary newspaper noted that, “afraid for her life,” Augusta Evans left her husband’s household and went to reside with a relation, where she noticed that a “man has been seen lurking about the house, which she verily believes is for some bad purpose meditated by her husband.”\textsuperscript{185} Irrespective of Thomas Evans' conduct, Judge Stowell refused to grant Augusta Evans a divorce, arguing there was nothing in her testimony that led him to believe Thomas Evans acted “in a manner inconsistent with the duties, and the rights, of a husband.”\textsuperscript{186} 

That the violent enforcement of hierarchical roles was legitimized by law, then, ultimately allows the Count to imprison Victoria with the simple explanation: “Because I will be feared” (101). The Baron in the \textit{The Mysterious Warning} similarly wishes to “force [Eugenia] to submit,” reasoning that his use of violence against her is justified because of her abandonment (following their enforced marriage, Eugenia runs away and

\textsuperscript{180} \textit{India Gazette} (London), Monday, 31 May 1790, Issue 1227.
\textsuperscript{181} \textit{India Gazette} (London), Monday, 31 May 1790, Issue 1227.
\textsuperscript{182} Haggard, \textit{Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London}, 80.
\textsuperscript{183} Haggard, \textit{Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London}, 83.
\textsuperscript{184} Haggard, \textit{Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London}, 83.
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{India Gazette} (London), Monday, 31 May 1790, Issue 1227.
\textsuperscript{186} Haggard, \textit{Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London}, 77.
marries another man), declaring: “know you are still my wife, and I will prove my right by my power of punishing you (emphasis original)” (121). Here, Parsons’ places emphasis on the Baron’s use of the possessive adjective ‘my’ to further draw attention to his self-referential reasoning, as he claims that in order to prove his “right” to Eugenia, he will first utilize his “right” to punish her. Towards the end of Eugenia’s imprisonment, the Baron observes the changes his violence has wrought, noting how she “shrunk and trembled; she, who had heretofore braved death, and defied [his] power” (130). Described as both a “monster” and “savage beast,” the Baron, by his own admission, is ruled by his “violent passion” for Eugenia and “wishes to assert [his] claim as a husband, and force her to submit” (124).

Teresea A. Goddu argues that “if the gothic is informed by its historical context, the horrors of history are also articulated through gothic discourse,” and, as such, “history can be coded in gothic terms.”187 Parsons’ engagement with the Gothic, then, presents a “distorted…version of reality,” one that critiques patriarchal authority by presenting an exaggerated portrayal of what its endorsement allows.188 And yet, the content of Parsons’ narratives is not the sole focus of analysis here, as “fictional tales of sequestered wives and spousal abuse abound” during the late eighteenth century, with even The Critical Review noting the lack of Parsons’ originality in acknowledging her debt to Genlis.189 What is perhaps more notable is Parsons’ depiction of how and by whom such narratives are told. For, in their tendency to ‘haunt’ the domestic space within which they are imprisoned, both Victoria and Eugenia each become the literalization of the femme covert, their liminal status consequently imposing upon them a state of unspeakability, their voices silenced by their metaphorical death. The presence of ghosts within the Gothic often indicates a buried secret or repressed past. Here it instead signals the narrative of abuse sanctioned by eighteenth-century law.

Existing only for their husbands, Victoria and Eugenia can communicate solely through their enforced ghosting, that is, through the clanking of chains and the lighting of candles. It is not until they are discovered, or unburied, by the hero or heroine of the

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188 Goddu, Gothic America, 3.
first narrative that the possibility for the reclamation of their agency is presented. As previously mentioned in the Introduction, in *The Castle of Wolfenbach* it is Matilda, the heroine of the first narrative, who uncovers the secret of the haunted wing and Victoria’s repressed history. The first of several surrogate “knights” that come to Victoria’s rescue throughout her narrative, Matilda plays an integral part in uncovering Victoria from the veil of invisibility that the femme covert has cast over her. Morton notes that in this moment of rescue, Parsons’ text adopts a “fairy tale quality,” with Matilda assuming the position of the “quester who must by a test of skill or courage prove her worth and receive an award.” Victoria later “rejoices” that Matilda’s “curiosity and courage is superior to those terrors by which others have been intimidated,” the ‘others’ serving as a reminder of not just those who have come to the castle and fled, but, ultimately, of the male figures in Victoria’s life who have failed to save her (11). In their absence, it is Matilda who has “penetrated through [Victoria’s] secret” (18). The use of the word ‘penetration’ indicates a transference of gender roles, as Matilda has now assumed the masculine role of a knight, leading Victoria, in an appropriately fairy-tale like fashion, to conclude that Matilda’s discovery “will prove to be the happiest day of [her] life” (11). The ensuing recitation of Victoria’s narrative to Matilda, one that ultimately functions as a warning (and as Matilda’s reward), means that Victoria no longer exists solely for her husband as the telling of her story works to reclaim her agency. Conversely, in *The Mysterious Warning*, Eugenia is unable to recount her narrative of abuse and her agency is never restored. The differing fate of the two women suggests that narratives of abuse must be excised (as in the case of Victoria), for if they are repressed and kept buried (as in the case of Eugenia), there can be no hope for reclamation of agency.

**The Femme Covert in *The Castle of Wolfenbach***

Victoria’s narrative in *The Castle of Wolfenbach* is revealed through a series of fragment or interrupted breaks that take the form of oral tellings and written manuscripts,
originating from either Victoria or her sister, the Marchioness. In all instances, Matilda is the primary recipient. However, despite the community of women who attempt to save Victoria throughout the novel (among them: Matilda, the Marchioness and Mrs. Courtney), Victoria refuses to divulge certain aspects of her narrative, “determined to do [her] duty” to the Count despite his mistreatment (95). The reluctance of Victoria to share her narrative of abuse because of the “compulsory vows” she made to the Count, signals her status as the literalization of the femme covert, for although Victoria has been physically rescued from the dungeon of the Count’s castle, she remains imprisoned by dictation of contemporary law (94). Lawrence Stone writes that “England in the early modern period was neither a separating nor a divorcing society: death was virtually the sole agent for dissolving marriage.”\(^{191}\) He continues to note that only the rich were able to obtain a “full divorce,” which included the right to remarry. Chris Roulston agrees that “only the very wealthy could seek out this option,” noting that the only way to obtain a “full divorce…was by an Act of Parliament, for which adultery or life-threatening cruelty had to be proved.”\(^{192}\) Here, Victoria’s life has been threatened (as the Count attempts to murder her after eighteen years of imprisonment) and it is to the law that she now appeals for protection. First, however, Victoria must recite her narrative of abuse, the oration of which is prevented by her marital vows. It is only after a conversation with a Chaplain, in which she relates her story solely to him (and behind closed doors), that Victoria agrees to reveal her narrative. For, as a representative of patriarchy, the Chaplain (judge) has listened to Victoria’s words and corroborated their validity, sanctioning her ability to present her testimony to the other women (jury) who demand its telling.

Debates surrounding the definition of what constituted “life-threatening cruelty” culminated in the aforementioned Evans case, as Judge Stowell, in his ruling against Augusta Evans, set precedence for future divorce requests instigated on the grounds of marital violence. Questioning “What is cruelty?”, Stowell eventually declared that: “mere austerity of temper, petulance of manners, rudeness of language, a want of civil


attention and accommodation, even occasional sallies of passion, if they do not threaten bodily harm, do not amount to legal cruelty.” In Stowell’s contention that the party’s life must be threatened in order to consider a separation, he also insisted that “the Court is not to wait till the hurt is actually done.” In other words, the mere threat of life-threatening cruelty was now grounds under which a divorce could be sought. Following 1790, as a direct result of the now multifaceted meaning of “legal cruelty,” Stowell’s ruling was not only used in cases that sought to prevent divorce, but also to qualify the threat of violence as sufficient reason to end a marriage. Elizabeth Foyster furthers that the decision made in the Evans case was a “formalizing” of the changes reflected in popular attitudes, as “lay understandings” of cruelty already extended beyond the narrow legal definition of physical violence. Thus, Stowell’s judgment, whether it was his intention or not, and in part due to his insistence on “declin[ing] the task of laying down a direct definition [of cruelty],” would pave the way for future divorce requests based upon threats of violence.

Similar to Louisa’s recitation of her misfortunes in *The Mysterious Warning*, one which serves as a warning for the other women of the novel who have been—or are being—pursued by Louisa’s unscrupulous husband (see Chapter One), the divulgence of Victoria’s narrative by and for women suggests the instructive nature of its content. Victoria’s narrative functions as part of the action that drives the heroine of the first narrative forward, as Matilda’s attempts to circumvent the amorous intentions of her Uncle are entwined with her simultaneous quest to uncover Victoria’s narrative, and by extension, the “terror” that the law threatens to legitimize within her own.

Matilda’s role as ‘detective’ or ‘historian’ is one that is conferred upon her in the first pages of the novel, when Matilda uncovers the mystery of the haunting (and thus, Victoria) while exploring the castle. Tracing the relationship between early eighteenth-century Gothic novels and later detective novels featuring women protagonists, Lynette Carpenter argues that Matilda, in her act of uncovering Victoria, demonstrates “all the

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193 Haggard, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London*, 37-38.
194 Haggard, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London*, 40.
196 Haggard, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London*, 37.
pluck for which her literary great-granddaughter would become famous,” referring to the girl detective, Nancy Drew. Following Matilda’s initial meeting with Victoria, the two women eventually part, with Victoria promising Matilda the recitation of her narrative the following day. However, when Matilda returns to Victoria’s apartment, it is only to discover that she has vanished. Victoria’s disappearance requires Matilda to search out clues in order to ascertain the truth, as Matilda, examining Victoria’s now empty apartment, notes the “great appearance of disorder in the room,” leading her to conjecture that “the lady must have been carried away through the garden,” although she admits “by whom it was impossible to guess” (22-23). As part of her investigation, Matilda repeatedly questions the servant Joseph, the only other person aware of Victoria’s existence (excepting the Marchioness). However, Matilda is eventually forced to concede: “who knows what evils she may have to encounter with; a stranger as I am to her story, I have no clue to guide me who may have carried her off, or by whom the cruel action was committed” (23-24). Following Matilda’s acknowledgment that it is as a result of her lack of knowledge that she is unable to save Victoria, she wonders: “What will become of me?” (24). That this sentiment so closely follows the recognition of her ignorance pertaining to Victoria’s story, suggests the need of Matilda to uncover Victoria’s narrative in order to retain control of her own.

Matilda’s search eventually leads her to uncover evidence of Victoria’s imprisonment and the violence that she endured during her eighteen years of confinement. First, however, Matilda must make her way through two locked doors. Lynette Carpenter argues that within Gothic texts heroines “uncover and confront the terrifying secrets that they have been prohibited from seeing because of their gender.” Here, the terrifying secret of violence enacted by husbands against wives, and sanctified by law, is the secret that Matilda must uncover in order to banish its spectre from her own narrative. Matilda must, then, make her way through both doors in order to acknowledge the secret behind them. The first, which Joseph opens, reveals the body of Victoria’s elderly attendant, “a wound in her throat” (26). The second, the closet,

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Matilda opens with her own hand and discovers “it was all over stained with blood, dried into the floor” (27). While there is no corpse present within the confines of this space, the blood attests that it was previously the site of violence. Although Joseph holds the secrets to what occurred in this room, he is prohibited from voicing them, so that: “Poor Matilda concluded the wretched victim to some merciless man was sacrificed in that closet where the hand was deeply imprinted in blood on the floor” (30).

Tracing the origins of the female investigator, Lisa Dresner describes the Female Gothic heroine as an “almost-detective,” arguing that the heroine is never allowed to successfully conclude an investigation “through her own efforts” as a number of barriers conspire against her.\(^\text{199}\)

Indeed, Madeline in Clermont is shielded by her father from the secret of her grandmother and therefore the consequences of engaging in a clandestine marriage. As an unmarried heroine who must one day partake in a marital union of her own, such knowledge is indispensable. However, while Parsons’ Matilda actively pursues the secret that has been withheld from her, Roche’s Madeline is almost entirely passive throughout her narrative. Indeed, critics have noted that Madeline’s “passivity and her refusal to question the mysterious familial intrigues that constantly threaten her allow the plot to achieve its riddling complexity.”\(^\text{200}\) Therefore, it is, as Dresner observes, not through Madeline’s “own efforts” that such mysteries are eventually revealed.

In The Castle of Wolfenbach, such deduction ultimately requires a return to the site of Victoria’s trauma. Although Victoria’s narrative of abuse is textually contained, or separated, from the first, or primary, narrative, here, Matilda (however unknowingly) uncovers the place of Victoria’s initial confinement. However, despite her efforts, Matilda is thwarted by her own failure to correctly interpret the clues. For, despite Matilda’s knowledge that Victoria has been imprisoned within the castle, combined with Joseph’s revelation that the person in the closet was “intended to have been murdered... but thank God she escaped,” Matilda fails to associate the bloody handprint with Victoria (27). That she neglects even to attribute a gender to the victim (referring


instead only to a “wretched victim”) indicates that Matilda has yet to uncover the secret of legally sanctioned marital violence, thereby further stressing the importance of her solving the mystery of Victoria’s disappearance. In this way, then, the Castle of Wolfenbach is indeed haunted—for the violence that was enacted within the closet, and the return of Matilda to this spot, alongside the persistence of the bloody handprint, suggests that it will continue to haunt until its narrative is revealed. Interestingly, although Matilda “viewed it with horror,” she does not turn away, suggesting that she alone (as all others have refused to enter these rooms) will be able to penetrate beyond the veil of the house’s haunting and to locate the very real site of the trauma that Victoria has experienced (30). For, while the other women in the narrative (the Marchioness and Mrs. Courtney) want to hear the story of Victoria’s abuse and imprisonment, Matilda needs to hear the story. Therefore, she must accomplish the compilation of Victoria’s letters and various oral tellings into a finished piece (manuscript), so that she might be able to read their warning, as her happy ending is dependent on reading its contents. Carpenter argues that ultimately such warnings extend to the reading public, as “because reading is a visual activity, readers of all these works participate both directly and vicariously in the illicit or prohibited seeing in which their heroines engage.” The end result, then, is the “empowerment” of the reader.

Steeped in “cruelty,” Victoria’s narrative begins with the revelation of the Chevalier’s fate, the man whom she loved and was forbidden to marry by her father. Victoria recalls how the Chevalier was captured by the Count and brought before her with “his mouth bound, his hands tied, and every mark of cruel treatment” evident on his person (97). Here, the figure of the bound Chevalier serves as a symbolic representation of Victoria’s condition under patriarchy. His bound mouth reflects her inability to speak as, forced into silence by first her father and then her husband, prior to the telling of her narrative, Victoria has long been unable to use her voice. Even when confronted by moments of extreme violence, Victoria admits: “I sat like one petrified; I neither spoke, shrieked or groaned…I appeared insensible to every thing” (98). That the Chevalier’s hands are tied is further indicative of her powerlessness within marriage,

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just as “every mark of cruel treatment” evident upon the Chevalier’s body is suggestive of all that Victoria has suffered at the hands of her husband. Thus, the Chevalier’s external injuries are representative of the internal experience that Victoria has endured under the laws of coverture. This is further implied when, at the sight of the Chevalier, Victoria manages only to cry, “Spare, O spare!” as she falls to her knees (97). That she does not attach a name to her supplication makes the request ambiguous, suggesting that her plea is not only for the Chevalier, but also for herself. The Chevalier is then dragged into a closet and “immediately repeated stabs were given with a short dagger, by the Count, through several parts of his body; his blood flowed in torrent, and with groans he fell on his face and expired” (97-98). The repeated stabbing that the Chevalier endures with a “short dagger” is once more suggestive of Victoria’s own state, as it recalls the Count’s sexual penetration of Victoria, with the repeated invasion destroying her agency.

Throughout Victoria's story, blood becomes a powerful, overdetermined symbol, resonating far beyond the initial act of the Chevalier’s murder, as it represents the violence perpetrated against Victoria and her ensuing metaphorical death. Blood held numerous meanings in eighteenth-century England; it was a powerful symbol that represented not only life, but could also shift in context when applied to men or women. When Matilda, the heroine of the primary text, first unlocks the closet “she saw it was all over stained with blood…” and that “on the floor was plainly mark’d the shape of a hand and fingers traced in blood, which seemed to have flowed in great quantities” (27). Despite the passage of eighteen years, the persistence of this bloody “stain” suggests the enduring taint of guilt associated with patriarchal authority and its treatment of women in marriage. The handprint, then, is the physical manifestation of everything that Victoria endured during her marriage, with the closet marking the site of her metaphorical death, as well as serving as testimony to her survival. Following the Chevalier’s murder, with his “blood flowing around her,” her clothes “covered in his blood,” Victoria is forced to confront the implications raised by the Chevalier’s failure to save her (98). As Victoria is “dragged,” “pushed” and “locked” into a closet with the now deceased Chevalier, the grotesque interplay of life and death not only highlights the

demise of her innocence, but also the vulnerability of women trapped in brutal marriages enforced by patriarchy (98).

Victoria’s confinement becomes increasingly claustrophobic as the level of violence against her escalates, with each restricted space representing a progressively violent reaction. And yet, despite Parsons’ emphasis on enclosed spaces, visual descriptions of these places are noticeably absent from Victoria’s narrative. Instead, it is from Matilda that the reader receives details of the bedroom within which Victoria was cloistered, and, in particular, the closet, and site of Victoria’s metaphorical death. The “very high window” that Matilda notices within the closet serves as a powerful symbol in Victoria’s story (27). The physical site of Victoria’s communication with the Chevalier (as several letters are exchanged between them) the window occupies a liminal space, functioning as both part of the castle that imprisons Victoria and part of the outside that contains the possibility of freedom. Notions of liminality are further emphasized in the textual containment of Victoria’s narrative, as throughout the novel her story of abuse continually threatens to transgress the boundary of the first narrative.

One night while looking out the window, Victoria:

too hastily stept back on the chair, which gave way, and [she] came with violence to the ground; at the same instant, [her] door opened: [She] received a dreadful blow on the side of the head, though it did not altogether deprive [her] of life, yet [she] was unable to speak (97).

In Victoria’s suspended state—alive but unable to speak—the Count’s impending violence against her is foreshadowed, as she, in consequence of her attempts to escape (through letters and window-gazing) will soon embody this liminal space permanently, both within the physicality of the castle and her textual placement in the novel.

Following the Count’s discovery of Victoria’s communication with the Chevalier, the window’s symbolic meaning transforms from one of hope and escape to one of imprisonment and despair. Iron bars are erected on the inside of the window (emphasizing the idea of keeping Victoria in, rather than keeping anyone out), the vantage point looking “…out toward a sort of battlement, which surrounded the back part of the castle, the north wind blew full upon it, the only prospects were the walls and
distant mountains” (29). The imagery of the "dry, cold" north wind, coupled with the castle's battlements and the imposing mountains in the distance, emphasize the impossibility of escape, both from the literal prison of the dungeon and metaphorical prison of the femme covert. Confined in ever-diminishing places, Victoria is moved from castle to bedroom to closet, eventually culminating in her realization that her own body is a source of restriction. The possibility of this is first alluded to when Victoria’s sister observes that, following Victoria’s marriage, her “fragile form” was only “the shadow of the once blooming Victoria” (50). This description of Victoria is complicated by the knowledge that she is at that moment far advanced in her pregnancy. The violent contrast between what her body should be described as (blooming, flourishing) and what it is described as (withering, wilting) suggests that even Victoria’s body is no longer her own.

It is the trauma of witnessing the death of the Chevalier, coupled with her subsequent imprisonment within the closet, that brings on Victoria’s labor; however, when Victoria is seized with “violent pains,” she first assumes that “the monster has poisoned” her (98). That the child Victoria now carries is a violation of her autonomy is implied in this association between her pregnancy and poison, along with the inference that it was something done to her, without her consent. Victoria’s labor further diminishes her autonomy, as she can no longer exercise control over her own body. This places Victoria further under the mercy of patriarchal authority, as only the Count can release her from the closet and allow her assistance in delivery. Victoria’s body, as well as her identity, is in tumult as the painful process of childbirth threatens “to wound, tear,” and “pull her to pieces,” an idea connected to the primary sense of the Germanic word “ghost.” Threatened into silence throughout the course of her marriage, Victoria endeavors to “bear [her] pangs without a groan,” however, “nature asserted its claims” and she could be silent no longer” (98). Victoria’s experience can be understood in the context of Steven Bruhm’s discussion on the treatment of pain in Romantic writing, where he describes how “the pained body...becomes the conduit through which one’s identity vacillates—now felt, now numbed; now empowered, now silenced; now self, 204

In the “autonomy granted by pain,” Victoria accuses the Count of being a “barbarian” who has “murdered a worthy man…[and] killed an innocent wife” (98). This momentary rebellion can be read as Victoria’s protest against the Count’s physical and mental rape, the labor of her pregnancy allowing her to “use [her] voice and body in a manner that usually the restrictive standards for female conduct make impossible.”

However, Victoria’s empowerment endures only for the length of her labor, for as soon as the child is born, the Count forces Victoria to agree to the fabrication that she has died in childbirth in order to prevent him from harming their child. To ensure that her presence remains unknown, the Count imprisons Victoria within the castle and commands her to “rattle a chain…groan, and make such kind of noises as may appall those who come here,” thus contributing to the myth that the Castle of Wolfenbach is haunted (101).

“Pulled to pieces,” the idea of Victoria’s metaphorical death is confirmed by her subsequent inability to nurse her child, as she admits that she has “no sustenance to give him” (99). As contemporary notions held that “milke is none other thing than blood made white,” Victoria’s lack of milk is here representative of her loss of blood, and thus, her life. Further rendered invisible by the Count’s ensuing necrology, Victoria is transformed into the literalization of the femme covert. The notion of this incorporeality is reinforced by the etchings that Matilda discovers scrawled into the window—a testimony to Victoria’s years of imprisonment—the inscription carved into glass, which, known for its transmutability, exists within a “jammed state” that is “somewhere between a liquid and a solid.”

That Victoria wavers between the metaphorical boundaries of life and death and has chosen to carve her words into a similarly malleable property, one that can be both looked at and through, is indicative of her liminal status. Furthermore, that she has used a diamond, presumably from her own

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wedding ring, contributes to the idea that patriarchy has condemned her to inhabit the vague, shadowy form that now haunts the castle. Victoria writes:

A Wife, a mother—sweet endearing ties!
Torn from my arms, and heedless of my cries;
Here I am doomed to waste my wretched life,
No more a mother—a discarded wife.
Would you be happy, fly this hated room,
For here the lost Victoria meets her doom.

O Sweet oblivion calm my tortur’d mind
To grief, to sorrow, to despair consigned.

Let gentle sleep my heavy eye-lids close,
Or friendly death, the cure for all our woes,
By one kind stroke, give lasting sure repose (29).

Recalling notions of namelessness discussed in Chapter One, here, Victoria, similar to Chamont, Louisa and Madeline, is threatened with the loss of not only her name, but also the titles that she had previously assumed. Moving between daughter, wife and mother (the only three roles, excepting widowhood, allowed by contemporary ideology), Victoria has now been denied all three. Her father dead, her husband having abandoned her through the falsehood of her death and her child taken away, Victoria is now prohibited from naming or defining herself. Interestingly, Victoria remains in a constant state of flux in relation to her surname, for as soon as she has the title Countess of Wolfenbach conferred upon her, it is taken away by her metaphorical death. Soon after her title is finally restored, upon the death of the Count, she must again relinquish it in preference of a second marriage. The reluctance to assume the name ‘Wolfenbach’ further implicates the denial of Victoria’s agency with the assumption of the name, as it is one that she never choses, but rather, has forced upon her. Now, left without a way in which to define herself as both the roles of mother and wife have been denied to her, Victoria wishes for “sweet oblivion” to “calm” her “tortur’d mind.” Such sentiments recall Victoria’s initial reaction upon first hearing of her intended marriage, when she declares that “death is far preferable to that situation” (48). Following this, she continues to hope that “her pilgrimage will be short” as her pregnancy might bring “an end too all
[her] troubles” and provide her “everlasting peace” (95). When Victoria first begins her labor and assumes that the Count has poisoned her, she admits that “the idea gave [her] pleasure” (98). Even after the birth, when she learns of her fate to be shut up in the castle forever, Victoria begs the Count to kill her, declaring that “death is far more desirable” (99).

However, although Victoria attests to craving the finality of death, referring to it as “friendly” and a “cure” to all her problems, it is important to note that she never seeks it through her own hand. Rather, her actions seem to belie her words, as her haunting, made perceptible to others through the arguably excessive use of chains, lights, and loud noises, suggests her desire to throw off the ‘cover’ of the femme covert. Such exaggeration is evident in the description of Matilda’s first night at the castle, where Matilda witnesses “a light glide by” and “the clanking of chains” followed by “two or three heavy groans,” and what sounds like “two or three doors clapping…with great force” (7). By the time of Matilda’s arrival, the story of the castle’s haunting has persisted for eighteen years and, as such, there exists no reason for Victoria to engage quite so aggressively with this deception, beyond the implication that she desires to be exposed. Morton reads Victoria’s haunting as one of rebellion, suggesting that “one might even say that she shakes her chains in defiance, symbolic, perhaps of her own strong will and choice in being incarcerated to save her son.”

Prior to the discovery of Victoria, Matilda observes that within the supposedly ‘haunted’ wing, “there were books and implements for drawing on the table” (10). Morton suggests that the presence of such materials indicates that instead of gazing out the window in search of solace like a Radcliffian heroine, Victoria (and the other heroines created by Parsons) actively search for a means of escape, whether literal or metaphorical. Interestingly, as previously noted, it is not swords or knights that are brought forth to save Victoria, but rather, the law and women. Specifically, it is Matilda who first uncovers Victoria; Mrs. Courtney who saves Victoria upon fleeing the castle; and the Marchioness who shelters Victoria and keeps her hidden from the Count. Rescue begins when Matilda first appears at the Castle and, once more evoking what

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Morton refers to as a “fairy tale-like” quality, seeks to vanquish (battle, conquer, defeat) the ghost of the Castle of Wolfenbach, thus embodying the role of knight for abused women. Following her escape from the castle (prompted by the Count’s attempt to murder her), Victoria is lying on the roadside, exhausted by her escape and certain that the Count will soon find her, when a carriage appears. Victoria identifies herself to the occupants of the carriage as “an unfortunate woman, escaped from being murdered,” pleading: “for god sake save me” (91). Her supplications answered, Victoria is placed into the carriage and, overcome with a mixture of joy, terror and fatigue, faints into the arms of her rescuer.

The image of a heroic figure holding a fainted heroine is a common image employed by Gothic writers, but one here that ultimately subverts gender norms. The Chevalier now dead, and Matilda, the previous quester, absent, Victoria awakens to find “the charming Mrs. Courtney, supporting [her]” (91). Here, the use of the word “support” is not only indicative of the physical act of this rescue, but also serves as a foreshadow with its implications of “assistance, backing, help, aid,” all of which Mrs. Courtney, and the other women, will provide for Victoria throughout the course of the novel in an effort to keep her hidden from the Count. Although there are also two men present in the carriage in addition to Mrs. Courtney, it is the latter that Victoria first acknowledges by “kiss[ing] her hand” in thanks (91). Once again, the practice of hand-kissing is implicitly a gendered one, however, in the absence of a male hero, the gesture is enacted between two women, just as, in the absence of a knight on his horse, Victoria is saved by Mrs. Courtney in her carriage. Similar to Matilda, Mrs. Courtney, in her new role as knight errant, has cast off her duty as a female to be chaste, silent and obedient, and instead displays attributes that could be described as “active, progressive and defensive,” her new role giving her the ability to become “the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender.”

Therefore, when Victoria informs Mrs. Courtney of her “intended journey to England” in order to escape the Count and reunite with her sister, the Marchioness, Mrs. Courtney responds with a oath of protection, thereby fulfilling the duties that her new role as Victoria’s knight demands. Together, they travel across

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the continent, with Mrs. Courtney continuing to serve as the “defender” “or “protector” of Victoria.

Once reunited with her sister, the Marchioness organizes the rescue of both Matilda and Victoria through her employment of her husband’s ability to engage with the law. That a third party is necessary attests to both the possibilities and realities of law, as Parsons illustrates its potential to save women, while also demonstrating its ability to injure them. Morton notes that “the character of the Countess’s sister is a strong one,” as throughout the novel “she is given financial and moral support by a compliant husband who also bestows status and respectability upon her.”

Interestingly, when the Marquis, the Marchioness’ husband, appeals to the Ambassador to protect Matilda and Victoria, the Ambassador responds, “smiling, “you are quite a knight-errant, to protect damsels in distress” (113). The Marquis responds “in the same tone,” observing that it is “a very honourable employment,” and that “though these are not the days of romance” he has “met with such extraordinary instances lately as carry much the face of the wonderful stories we have heard of in former times” (113-114). There is a sense here that Parsons’ portrayal of the Ambassador and the Marquis is subversive, as their joviality at the idea of adopting the role of knight in what they reimagine as a “Quixote like expedition” ultimately trivializes, and thus threatens to rewrite, the narratives of abuse endured by Victoria and Matilda (114). Furthermore, although the Marquis fancies himself as the ‘knight’ in the narrative of both Matilda and Victoria, Parsons has ensured that the reader is all too aware that his actions are motivated and encouraged by the Marchioness. After all, it is the Marchioness who has instructed the Marquis to visit the Ambassador for help, and again, the Marchioness who has constructed the plan to save both Victoria and Matilda from their husbands. As such, Parsons figures Matilda, Mrs. Courtney and the Marchioness as the true knights of her temporally displaced narrative, granting them the power to uncover and give voice to the histories of abuse endured by women under eighteenth-century law. Their final act of rescue (in which all three women participate) comes in the form of sought, and granted, permission for Victoria to recite her narrative of abuse. For, while it is

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211 Morton, A Life Marketed, 175.
ultimately the Chaplain who allows for Victoria’s narrative of abuse to be made public, it is at the continued insistence of the women that such permission is eventually won.

**Confinement in *The Mysterious Warning***

In *The Mysterious Warning*, Eugenia is eventually imprisoned alongside her lover, the Count M***, and their child, by the revengeful Baron S***. Similar to Victoria, Eugenia’s confinement becomes increasingly restrictive throughout her tale, as (already limited to the domestic space of her castle) she is imprisoned first within the castle’s dungeon by the Baron, and finally, as a result of escalating violence enacted against her, within her own mind. Consequently, Eugenia’s narrative is related not by her own voice, but alternately by the Baron and the Count. Ferdinand, the hero of *The Mysterious Warning*, acts as the receiver of both tales, as it is he who first discovers the Baron’s account in a diary, and later, is witness to the Count’s testimony describing their imprisonment.

The discovery of Eugenia and the Count, along with their narratives, is made possible only following the death of the Baron. For while Ferdinand (who rescues Eugenia and the Count from the dungeon) hears their cries for help, he is initially dissuaded by the Baron from investigating the source of the noise. During his first night at the castle, Ferdinand “conceived that he heard some faint shrieks as if at a great distance” (85). The next day, “he sat ruminating on the occurrences that had befallen him some time, when again his ears were assailed by the same cries, though rather fainter” (87). Similar to Matilda in *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, Ferdinand seeks to “penetrate into this mystery” as, akin to the aforementioned heroine, he shares a similar lack of belief in ghosts and thus suspects immediately that “some person was regularly ill-treated (emphasis original)” within the Baron’s home (87). Although Ferdinand tries to detect, and thereby solve, the mystery of the castle, “he was never alone, or if alone, always in view of [the Baron],” impeding his ability to investigate as Ferdinand is also prevented by the Baron from questioning Francis, the Baron’s servant. Ferdinand later learns that Francis himself has heard the same noises, but “believed it was ghosts,” a statement which raises the spectre of the femme covert as Eugenia, similar to Victoria,
has transformed into the literalization of the femme covert as a result of her imprisonment (92).

Eugenia’s story is first relayed to Ferdinand through the physical manuscript of the Baron’s Memoirs, in which the Baron warns his reader: “should these memoirs ever fall into the hands of an intelligent being…let him learn to detest the fascinating charms of false, deceitful woman…let him shun the syren woman” (emphasis original)” (98). However, while the Baron obviously seeks to rewrite (and vilify) Eugenia within the space of his memoirs, the reader is instead presented with a tale of a woman driven to madness by an obsessed, jealous man. For, unlike the portrayal of both Laurentina and Fatima (discussed in Chapter Four), who, through the words of male voices, are condemned as monstrous femme fatales, here, the Baron fails in his attempts to contrive such a portrait of Eugenia. The Baron’s testimony of madness and revenge is one that remains textually confined to the manuscript discovered upon his death. For, similar to Eugenia, the Baron is never able to verbally articulate his story, but instead leaves behind his written words to be discovered and read by the hero, Ferdinand. The importance of the written word during the eighteenth century has previously been discussed (see Chapter One) and here, for the first time, it is problematized by the content of the Baron’s manuscript. For while the relation of events seems to be accurately portrayed by the Baron (as later confirmed by the Count, in the temporal overlap of their stories), it is ultimately in the Baron’s depiction of Eugenia that matters of reliability are inevitably raised. It is worth noting that it is only when Ferdinand discovers the title of the manuscript (Memoirs of Baron S***) that a name is given to the man formerly referred to as “old man” and, more peculiarly, “the solitary.” The granting of this title, “the solitary,” one that Parsons frequently uses—although Ferdinand himself never voices the name—suggests the loss of identity that the Baron has undergone by the time the hero of the novel first meets him.

The absence of name, and thus identity, suggests that, here, the Baron is no longer a person, but rather a symbol of patriarchy—one that ultimately functions to question the reliability of history. For, as Wallace contends, while Gothic fiction “raise[s] the spectre of repressed and unrecorded female histories,” it also “ask[s] important questions about the writing and reading of history,” that is, questions of
When Ferdinand first discovers the manuscript, it is his own name that first draws his attention, as he notices the words: “the stranger, who calls himself Ferdinand” among the scattered pages (97). Later revealed to be part of a few brief notes that detail the Baron’s initial encounter with Ferdinand, here, the arrangement of the Baron’s words seem to suggest an address to Ferdinand—as if the Baron intended his new acquaintance to read (and judge) his narrative. Notions of Ferdinand as representative of patriarchal law are raised again upon the unearthing of Eugenia and the Count, as Ferdinand is later asked to sit in judgment of Eugenia’s crimes. The repetitive use of the words “transcript,” “judgment,” and “memoirs” within the pages of Parsons’ temporally displaced narrative reinforces the idea of subjective history, thereby interrogating the notion that Eugenia’s story can be accurately depicted by the voices of two men. Indeed, Wallace argues that “first-person narratives” allow the author to “offer conflicting interpretations of events,” ones which ultimately suggest “the constructed and subjective nature of history.” Here, then, the corruption of the Baron’s text must be judged alongside the Count’s testimony, as, in his madness (discussed in further detail below), the Baron’s testimony is no longer trustworthy and therefore requires Ferdinand to defer to the Count in order to provide a corroboration of the Baron’s words. Similarly, then, the Count must also provide Eugenia’s tale, as in the courtroom constructed by Ferdinand, his words hold more weight than his wife’s.

The Baron’s memoirs begin with his introduction to Eugenia, occasioned when she summons his help in assistance for her injured father. The Baron immediately notes upon seeing her face that he was “until that luckless hour a stranger to the captivating charms of beauty, a blaze of charms dressed in the fascination of tears and sorrow, and which conveyed a thousand tender ideas to a susceptible heart” (99). In exchange for his assistance in saving her father, the Baron asks for her hand in marriage—a proposal which Eugenia’s father readily accepts. The Baron is quick to acknowledge the real reason behind this approval of the marriage: “The Count’s character was propitious to


my views; he was naturally proud and avaricious, the want of a male heir had disappointed the first passion, and increased the second” (100-101). Despite this assessment, the Baron is enraged when he discovers that the ensuing pronouncement of Eugenia’s father—“Eugenia is your’s, I pledge you my word, and answer for my child”—is one that cannot be enforced, as he is “unaccustomed to meet[ing] with any opposition to [his] will” (100). Eugenia is visibly shocked by the suggestion of marriage and begs her father to reconsider, which the Baron interprets as evidence of “her coldness, her repugnance” towards him, neither of which she displays (102). In fact, unlike Victoria and Julie du Rubine (the latter discussed in Chapter One), Eugenia does not faint or fall silent at this insistence of marriage, but rather, attempts to speak with her unwanted pursuer, explaining to him that “I have no heart to give! that has long been in the possession of another” (102). However, the Baron refuses to hear her, instead writing her as “the false, dissembling, artful wretch!” despite the fact that by his own admission Eugenia never pretended to be love him and, in fact, attempted to explain why she never could (108).

The lone representation of Eugenia’s voice comes from the two letters that she writes following her disappearance, one to her father and one to the Baron. In Eugenia’s letter to the Baron she condemns him for forcing her hand in marriage and thus depriving her of a parent who now she must never see again. To her father, she writes: “Humbly on her knees the lost, unhappy Eugenia implores a father’s pardon” (110). In its contents, she questions whether she was not due a voice in the decision of her marriage, observing that “the most rigid duty cannot require such a sacrifice” (111). The only time the reader is witness to Eugenia’s testimony first hand—as even her eventual request to retire to a convent is voiced not through her own words, but rather the Count’s—confirms the portrait of Eugenia as a strong-willed woman, one entirely devoid of the duplicitous, coquettish nature that the Baron has sought to impose on her.

The remainder of the Baron’s tale is articulated in language that is suggestive of his madness, as he seeks to execute his plan of revenge on Eugenia and her new husband, Count M***. Indeed, the Baron demonstrates his unreliability as a narrator from the commencement of his memoirs in his admittance of murder in order to secure the imprisonment of Eugenia and his subsequent attempt to blame her for these acts, as he
exclaims: “‘Tis you, unjust and cruel woman, ‘tis you (cried I) who are the cause of all
those murders, of that ferocity and cruelty though upbraiest; ‘tis love, ‘tis hatred, that
 teaches me revenge; one passion shall at least be gratified (emphasis original)” (123).
The Baron’s madness is frequently conveyed throughout his memoirs through the
various disruptions in the text, as well as his frequent admissions that he is alternatively
entrallled and enraged by Eugenia’s presence, admitting that “he was tormented with
the idea, that even my prisoners experienced some satisfaction in being able to
communicate their feelings to each other” (127). The Baron’s instability is further
emphasized in his propensity to address himself within the pages of his own memoir,
writing: “O, beautiful, false, enchanting, destructive charmer! Woman, vile abandoned
woman! But I will be calm, am I not revenged? Yes, and that exquisite satisfaction shall
attend me to my grave!” (99). Thus, the Baron seeks to impose upon
Eugenia an exaggerated (and therefore, Gothic) form of the femme covert, demanding
that, in his “claim as a husband,” she “submit” to him (124). Shut up from the rest of the
world and unable to communicate with others—as the Baron admits to Ferdinand, “I
have been too long secluded from the world to find any satisfaction in a companion”—
the Baron has been consumed by his obsession with Eugenia, the evidence of which is
the physical manuscript that he leaves behind (89).

That the Baron fails to successfully rewrite Eugenia’s story ultimately questions
the nature of history written by men (about women) and the possibilities of
misrepresentation inherent in their records—an idea that is explored in further detail in
the following chapter. Therefore, the depiction of the Baron as an unreliable narrator
ultimately requires the participation of both Ferdinand and the reader, as they must
identify not only clues of the Baron’s madness, but also construct a portrait of Eugenia
independent of the Baron’s attack on her character, as the depiction of Eugenia through
the Baron’s words and actions repeatedly run counter to the many interjections of
condemnation that are present throughout his testimony. As such, the reader must
uncover the real reason for her imprisonment: that is, her refusal to adhere to the
prescriptive role of the femme covert that the Baron seeks to impose on her, and by
extension, questions that are necessarily raised relating to patriarchy and the foundation
upon which it is built. Wallace suggests that “it is as if the very act of reading itself can
raise a spectre from the past,” and here, for both Ferdinand and the real historical reader, the act of reading raises the spectre of the femme covert and the possibilities of what the law makes possible under marital law.¹¹⁴

Prior to her imprisonment, and following her enforced marriage to and subsequent abandonment of Baron S***, Eugenia is reunited with Count M***, whose child she subsequently bears. Frightened of discovery by either the Baron or Eugenia’s father, Eugenia and the Count remain within the boundaries of their castle, one that is surrounded by “the thickest of the trees, and far from any public road,” sending servants into town whenever goods are needed (115). Eugenia’s self-imposed confinement exemplifies the dilemma of eighteenth-century women who chose to abandon their husbands, as, coinciding with the view of women as property, the law allowed husbands to literally take back that which belonged to them. Isolated within her “solitary mansion,” Eugenia is arguably a prisoner of patriarchy long before any real chains constrain her (141). It is only upon discovery by the Baron that these metaphorical chains are made real, as Eugenia is imprisoned, alongside her husband and child, within the castle’s dungeon.

Restricted by “stout chain[s]” that hinder movement, Eugenia and the Count are unable to reach one another and forced to communicate through a “small opening” in the divide that separates them (125). Despite this, Eugenia declares to the Baron: “Whatever evils you have resolved to overwhelm me with, I can bear” (125). That a “violent storm of hail and thunder” later “confined” the Baron to his apartment for the remainder of the day, suggests that Eugenia’s agency has not yet diminished, as the physical manifestation of the storm serves as a representation of her anger (126). The source of Eugenia’s strength can be located in the corporeality of her child, the physical indicator of her agency, as the child’s existence is only possible through Eugenia’s ability to act independently. Although the child is never given a name and is often referred to by the Baron as an “object,” she becomes a symbol of perseverance throughout the story, as her presence enables Eugenia to withstand the Baron’s violence. It is only when the health of this child is threatened, brought about by the damp

conditions of the dungeon, that Eugenia’s resolve begins to waver. When her dying child calls out for water, Eugenia’s “weak and tremulous hand, too eager to grasp the prize” drops the jug (128).

The defiance of Eugenia’s will by her own body suggests that now under the imprisonment of the Baron, and thus patriarchal authority, her previously resilient nature has begun to waver. Although Eugenia begs the Baron for more water, he responds by telling her: “You have had your allowance, you must suffer for your own heedlessness” (128). These words suggest that Eugenia is being punished for her initial refusal to marry the Baron, coupled with her inability to anticipate the totality of patriarchy’s reach in her flagrant disobedience of her father and the laws written by men. Eugenia’s punishment is to bear witness to the violent death of her child, as she is seized with “convulsions,” the etymological meaning of which is to “to tear loose” or “to pull violently,” once more recalling the Germanic description of the word ‘ghost.’ The result is Eugenia’s loss of sanity, and thus agency, reinforced by Parsons’ depiction of her sinking onto the “damp,” or “deadening” ground, indicating her “live burial” not only within the dungeon, but within her own mind (128). No longer aware of her situation, Eugenia commands imaginary servants to:

Prepare the bed (said she) and I will follow; but my arms only shall convey my child, it sleeps sweetly now. Yes, yes, my love, your grand sire now relents; your birth-day shall be kept with splendor. Pray let us have a soft pillow, let us have music, the soft notes shall waft us to Heaven;—come, give me some food, I can eat now under this glorious canopy (129).

Envisioning a world in which her father (grand sire) has forgiven her and the birth of her child is cause for celebration, Eugenia calls for a “soft pillow” and “soft notes,” which will bring “little hardship or suffering,” declaring these will “waft us to Heaven” (129). Eugenia is thus “wafted,” or “awakened,” to the possibility of another world and it is under this “glorious canopy” that Eugenia finds happiness, allowing her to “eat” once more. The mention of food here, alongside Eugenia’s declaration that “I can eat now,” is

perhaps a subtle reference to the beginning of her tale and the description of her body upon learning of her enforced marriage. For in this moment, her “death-like” state also results in her rejection of food and water. Unable to “swallow” her sustenance, Eugenia’s inability to eat is indicative of her defiance, as the etymological meaning of swallow is to “accept without opposition or protest.” Following her inability to eat, Eugenia’s father insists that she drink a glass of wine, but once acquiescing to his command, she “burst into a torrent of tears” (107). The expulsion of her tears “lasts for upwards of an hour,” suggesting Eugenia’s attempt to expel the liquid she has been forced to imbibe, and thus protesting against the dismantlement of her agency (107).

In Eugenia’s imaginary world, such protest is rendered unnecessary, as the Baron observes that “she took the bread, and eat with eagerness…she drank [the wine] freely, talking wildly all the time, yet not with any violence” (129). Lost in this imagined “heaven,” the violence that previously marked Eugenia’s body dissipates and it is only when the Baron threatens to remove the body of her dead child that her dream world is shaken and the violence returns. It is after the Baron succeeds in “drag[ging] the dead object of her sorrows” from Eugenia’s view that he transforms into an object of terror (129). Now, at the sight of the Baron, Eugenia experiences “a temporary deprivation of her reason,” during which she violently shrieks and utters the “wildest lamentations” (130). The first time it occurs, the Baron threatens Eugenia with a dagger, warning her: “Woman, cease these screams, be composed and silent, or this weapon shall be buried in your bosom” (130). Following this, only mild violence is required, as the Baron has only to threaten her with a “whip or a stick” and “she shrinks down and is silent” (130). Eugenia persists in this “living death” for eight years, during which time she walks “backward and forward to the extent of her chain,” until one day “the sudden check of the chain” throws her onto the ground “with such force” that she strikes “her mouth and nose violently” and begins to bleed (132-133). Here, the “chains” that physically imprison Eugenia are representative of the chains of patriarchy, and as she walks “backward and forward,” Eugenia is testing the confines, just as she has done throughout her life. The “sudden check” is patriarchy’s reminder that these chains

cannot be broken, for to “check” is “to hold in restraint,” as patriarchy has done to Eugenia. Prevented by his chains from saving her, Count M*** is forced to watch as the fall causes Eugenia to experience a “temporary death” (133). While this initially stagnates “the powers of life,” the fall restores Eugenia to her senses (133). Here, patriarchy once more retains its grip on her, as even her madness cannot provide an eternal safe haven.

It is Ferdinand who functions as the historian, and therefore, judge of both the Baron’s and Eugenia’s stories, as he so often does throughout the novel—examined further in the following chapter. How Ferdinand interprets the temporally displaced narratives present within Parsons’ novel provides the reader with further clues in locating the secret they are charged with discovering. Here, upon completion of the Baron’s memoirs, Ferdinand is quick to denounce the Baron’s actions “scarcely believing there could have existed a man who had for years cherished in his bosom such a diabolical passion for revenge, and such a persevering cruelty” (131). And yet, in the final line before a break in the chapter, Ferdinand allows: “I can pity him, for his death, in such a frame of mind, disarms resentment” (134). Interesting parallels can be construed between the Baron and Ferdinand. Similar to Matilda, who, in *The Castle of the Wolfenbach*, must seek out the secret of domestic violence that haunts her in order to avoid its presence within her own narrative, here, Ferdinand must locate and expose the secret of the Baron’s madness (his attempts to force the femme covert onto a woman who does not wish to be with him) in order to avoid this fate. For, the entirety of the novel is predicated upon the mysterious warning that Ferdinand receives to fly from the arms of his wife—an action that he is unable to fully perform as his wife informs him that she is retiring to a convent for the remainder of her life. In response, Ferdinand departs from his family’s castle, wanders the land while pondering what to do next, and, most importantly, attempts to locate the nunnery in which his wife has secreted herself. Parsons’ depiction of Ferdinand’s ongoing search for his wife, and his ensuing assertion that it is his right as a husband to do so, at times mimics the language used by the Baron in his determination to enforce the role of subjugated wife upon Eugenia. One such episode takes place shortly before Ferdinand’s stay with the Baron, during which
Ferdinand approaches a convent that he is certain houses his wife, Claudina. He finds himself barred from entering by a Porteres:

“Was there not a young Lady brought here within this fortnight?” said he.

“There was (she replied) and what then?”

“I beseech you (said he) to tell her, her nearest relation wishes to speak with her.

“‘Tis very improbable a relation should come here to see her. Young man, you have not spoken the truth; nor will you, whoever you are, be permitted to see her (emphasis original).”

“Oh!...oh! tell her it is her husband, it is the father of her child; she has no right to withdraw herself from me, nor can you answer to it, to detain a wife from her husband without his knowledge or consent (emphasis original)” (73).

Ferdinand’s words summon notions of legality, for, as Claudina’s husband, it is Ferdinand’s lawful right to take back that which belongs to him—his wife. That Ferdinand’s words are addressed to a woman (the Porteres), alongside the ensuing emphasis his speech places on the word ‘you’ (as he exclaims “nor can you answer to it”), further suggests his engagement with an ideology that posits man’s authority over woman. It is interesting, then, that an old woman (the superior of the Porteres) next appears to inform Ferdinand: “The young Lady refuses to see you; she denies that you have any authority over her,” thus attempting to negate Ferdinand’s hierarchical claims (74). Ferdinand’s ensuing lamentations regarding his feelings for his wife bear a striking resemblance to the Baron’s, for, while one moment Ferdinand declares his love for Claudina, the next he exclaims: “Barbarous woman!...ungrateful and unjust!” (74).

In light of such evidence, Ferdinand’s determination (or obsession) to locate his wife can be seen as reflective of the Baron’s own obsession with Eugenia, as, following Eugenia’s disappearance after their wedding, the Baron continues to search for her over the years until eventually discovering and imprisoning her within her own castle. Ferdinand similarly wishes to discover his wife and change her mind (just as the Baron sought to change Eugenia’s), convincing her to return to the world with him and
continue to be his wife, despite her protestations. The violent enforcement of the femme covert, one technically sanctioned by law as both Eugenia and Claudina are legally married to their husbands, is thus exposed to the eighteenth-century reader as the actions of the Baron and Ferdinand are laid bare. As such, Eugenia haunts the narrative of Ferdinand, as, in her eventual end, Ferdinand can read the possibilities for his own wife, Claudina—as well as himself—should he continue to pursue and enforce his wife’s return to the world, and thus her resumption of the role of the femme covert.

The implications of Ferdinand’s aforementioned statement regarding the Baron’s actions are, then, twofold. The first, his affinity with the Baron, has been mentioned above, while the second, becomes apparent upon the eventual divulgement of the remaining tale. Ferdinand is anxious to hear the narrative of both the Count and Eugenia, referring to it as their “eventful history” (132). In fact, Ferdinand spends the day alternatively searching the Baron’s possessions and listening at the bedroom door of the Count and Eugenia, to determine if they are yet awake, so eager is he to hear their story of their imprisonment—suggesting once more that, similar to Matilda, Ferdinand does not simply want to hear the story, he needs to hear it, in order to banish its spectre from his own narrative. Upon the Count’s emergence, Ferdinand (despite the Count’s frail appearance) quickly informs him of the two points that are missing in the history he has thus far compiled—Eugenia’s escape and the story of her life until rediscovered by the Baron. Notably, then, while it is Eugenia’s story that Ferdinand wishes to hear, he appeals to the Count to reveal it.

Following its recitation, Ferdinand’s judgment of Eugenia’s narrative is initially withheld, for, unlike the conclusion of Ferdinand’s reading of the Baron’s memoirs (where he immediately gave his opinion, and thus judgment), here, before “Ferdinand could make any observations,” he is interrupted by Eugenia’s presence (143). However, the following day, Ferdinand is granted a more formal invitation to stand in judgment of Eugenia’s narrative when the Count appeals to him following Eugenia’s request to retire to a convent for the remainder of her life. In this mock trial, both the Count and Eugenia present their case to Ferdinand, asking him to “judge fairly between us” (146). Eugenia, following her early defiance, now exhibits remorse for her marriage to the Count, arguing that she “ought never to have approached the altar,” as “many innocent victims
bled for [her] crimes!” (147). Following this, she presents her evidence by listing the dead: “Arnulph, the faithful Agnes, Peter, and O misery, my child!” (147). Despite the fact that all of those she has listed have died by the Baron’s hand, Eugenia places the responsibility on herself entirely.

There is, of course, only one way for Ferdinand to respond: with words of condemnation for Eugenia’s actions. Ferdinand must condemn her decision to desert her husband, as he is at that moment reproachful of his own wife for doing the same. Therefore, while Ferdinand allows that “innocent she may be of any actual guilt,” it cannot be denied that “the death of so many persons was in consequence of her flight from the Baron” (147). Ferdinand finalizes his verdict with his noted approval of Eugenia’s decision to retire to a nunnery. While Ferdinand’s words are not as severe as the ones he will eventually address to his own sibling, Fatima, (discussed in the next chapter), here, Ferdinand similarly sentences Eugenia in consequence of her narrative—namely, that of indulging in marital decisions, ones prohibited to her by merit of her sex.

Despite the rescue of both Victoria and Eugenia from their physical confinement, notions of imprisonment persist. When Victoria writes in her poem, “Would you be happy, fly this hated room,” she acknowledges that it is not only the physicality of the room that has imprisoned her, but also the laws of marriage that render her invisible to society. Therefore, Victoria is unable to immediately “uncover” herself, hiding under an assumed name in fear that her husband will discover her. Thus, it is only in the Count of Wolfenbach’s death, and his subsequent repentance, that Victoria is able to find her beginning. And yet, even this new start is problematized by the conclusion of Victoria’s reinstatement into yet another patriarchal marriage. In The Mysterious Warning, although Eugenia and the Count are eventually rescued from the Baron, Eugenia makes the decision to retire to a convent despite her husband’s protestations. Eugenia’s inability to break from the “living death” the Baron S*** imposed upon her is foreshadowed in the description that the hero of the novel, Ferdinand, makes upon seeing Eugenia for the first time. He notes upon her emergence from the dungeon, that Eugenia possessed a “delicate thinness which the slightest blast of air might dissolve,” conjuring up images of translucency and suggesting Eugenia’s continued state as the literalization of the femme covert (144). Ferdinand observes of Eugenia’s face: “Roses
and lilies that once adorned it were all fled; the eyes hollow and sunk in the head, a silk hue over the countenance,” thus invoking connotations of incorporeality (144). Unlike Victoria, Eugenia never voices a wish to be “uncovered,” rather, after discovery by Ferdinand, Eugenia says to the Count “To be spared the misery of seeing you die…is all the boon I ask of Heaven!” (94). Therefore, in Eugenia’s vow as a nun to be “dead to the world,” she comes to embody “the living death” that the Baron sought to impose upon her.

Contemporary critics of the time disapproved of Eugenia’s fate, insisting that “Eugenia’s early errors were of the most pardonable kind; and her only real vice (emphasis original), the sacrificing her own happiness and activity, and wounding the peace of her husband, by a foolish, romantic monastic notion of heroism.” The bleak ending that Parsons ascribes to Eugenia can perhaps be located in the aforementioned duality that existed in both Parsons’ life and work. For although readers were certain to recognize the culpability of Eugenia’s father in the commodification of his daughter, Parsons seems intent on insisting that choice made independently of parents must be punished. Morton argues that “it would seem that she has sacrificed Eugenia for the sake of realism,” noting that “it is true that a bigamous woman would be shunned by her friends.” However, it seems more likely that Eugenia’s punishment is as a result of her refusal to obey not only her father, but also the laws of man, as she engages in two marital unions. In fact, chastisement for disobeying parental orders is present throughout both of Parsons’ novels. Accordingly, then, while Victoria is eventually rewarded with her return to the first narrative precisely because she followed her father’s instructions to marry the Count of Wolfenbach, first, she must demonstrate her regret at writing letters to the Chevalier following her marriage, as the engagement of communication with a man her father denied her from marrying can be read as a similar act of disobedience. This leads Victoria to declare: “I failed in the duty I owed my husband and myself, in permitting a clandestine correspondence, although I did not intend to continue it; and one false step, you see, brought on irreparable evils and eternal remorse!” (103). Indeed, Victoria’s sister the Marchioness comments upon the completion of Victoria’s narrative:

218 Morton, A Life Marketed, 198.
“I will not pretend, my dear Victoria, (answered the Marchioness) to exculpate you as entirely free from blame,” but argues that taking into account the actions of the Count, “some allowance ought to be made in [her] favor” (103). Louisa (another Parsons’ character, discussed in Chapter One) is similarly admonished for neglecting to obey the order of her father, or rather, for failing to obtain his approval of her marriage choice. However, following an appropriate demonstration of remorse for their actions, both she and Victoria are eventually integrated into the first narrative with their remarriage to another man. Interestingly, Count M***, after relinquishing hope that Eugenia will change her mind, is the one who eventually remarries Louisa. Eugenia, meanwhile, is punished for her defiance and condemned to a nunnery, thus resulting in her permanent removal from the text. It seems, then, that Eugenia’s greatest error is located not in the disobedience she displays towards her father, but rather, her refusal to admit her actions were wrong—although she does express regret for the misfortunates they have caused. This refusal, combined with the absence of female friends, results in the containment of her narrative from the first, or primary, story. For, in the novels by Parsons that are discussed within this thesis, it is ultimately because of the women that the heroines surround themselves with—for Victoria: Matilda, the Marchioness, Mrs. Courtney; for Louisa: Theresa and Theodosia—that they are eventually able to regain their agency and transgress the textual containment of their displaced narratives.

Contention surrounding how and by whom such narratives of abuse were told can be located in contemporary publications, as evidenced in the aforementioned Evans’ case. For, despite the testimony of several female witnesses attesting to the abuse that Augusta Evans suffered, Stowell rejected the corroborated evidence provided by her female witnesses, with the warning that “female friendships are often hazardous, in the case of married women,” as they result “in creating and in inflaming the differences between the husband and the wife.” Augusta Evans’ testimony is likewise condemned, her portrayal filtered through the lens of eighteenth-century patriarchal law (Stowell) that criticized the “passion” of her narrative, leading to what Stowell believed to be

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219 Haggard, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London*, 81.
“exaggeration” in her accusations.\textsuperscript{220} Indeed, one of the main arguments that Stowell makes for distrusting Augusta Evans’ accusations of her husband's cruelty is her silent response to such treatment. Referencing a past case (in which one Mrs. Prescott testified to the abuse enacted against her by her husband), Stowell praises the said Mrs. Prescott as, “that was a case, to be sure, of a person who had suffered as atrocious ill-treatment as one human being can receive from another, and she bore it with great, with wonderful resignation,” and there was “not a word of harshness in the style of her complaint” and her language, although strong, was “more expressive of sorrow than anger.”\textsuperscript{221} Victoria is similarly congratulated for her testimony as she demonstrates the appropriate emotions (sorrow and remorse), for the abuse that she had endured, thus allowing her admittance to the first narrative. Eugenia, however, despite the initial regret she demonstrates in the letter to her father, couches her apology in language of defiance, as she continues to defend her decision to defy him. This rebellion is solidified in her written testimony, mentioned earlier, in which she suggests that she was justified in her actions, even questioning the totality of her father’s commands (and thus patriarchy’s), when she posits:

\begin{quote}
You commanded your wretched daughter under the penalty of your ‘everlasting curses,’ dreadful denunciation! to give ‘her hand’ to Baron S***. He cruelly availed himself of the dread command, and she obeyed:
—But there your power ends (emphasis original) (111).
\end{quote}

Eugenia’s madness can be read as a further defiance, as even the Count admits to Ferdinand: “she lost her reason, and all sense of her miseries, and to that state I doubtless owe her life” (132).

Eighteenth-century reviewers of Eliza Parsons’ \textit{The Castle of Wolfenbach} protested that her novel’s temporally displaced narratives of domestic violence contained “interesting, though improbable situations,” with characters “deformed by depravity” and “too darkly tinted,” so that they hoped they “[had] no parallel in life.”\textsuperscript{222} The refusal to acknowledge such violence exists is one that Parsons herself seems to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{220} Haggard, \textit{Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London}, 69. \textsuperscript{221} Haggard, \textit{Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London}, 68. \textsuperscript{222} Review in \textit{The British Critic} Vol. 3 (1794), 199-200.
\end{flushright}
endorse in *The Castle of Wolfenbach*’s primary narrative, as the heroine is assured that: “in England no violence can be offered to you in any shape,” a statement that is reminiscent of Stowell’s most scathing condemnation of the testimony offered by Augusta Evans’ many female witnesses: “her deposition…is highly coloured and inflamed, very descriptive, fully of image and epithet, something in the style really of a *French* novel, of the trash of a circulating library (emphasis original)” (107).

And yet, the presence of Parsons’ temporally displaced narrative of violence and imprisonment ultimately belies this statement by engaging with both gothic tropes and eighteenth-century discourse on the violence women suffered under the laws of patriarchy. For, although both the tales of Victoria and Eugenia ultimately help to shape and influence the heroines of the first narrative, as they engage in a more successful version of marriage than their predecessors, these narratives of violence also haunt such happy endings. Just as their stories of imprisonment and abuse are eventually unearthed by the heroes and heroines of the primary tale, so too is the knowledge that contemporary marriage laws and customs make possible such imprisonment and abuse. In her portrayal of extreme violence, Parsons’ texts are suggestive of much-needed reform, insisting that patriarchal marriage not only imprisons women under its current system, but also subsumes them entirely, until they are nothing more than ghosts left to haunt the domestic space within which they are confined.

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223 Haggard, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Consistory Court of London*, 81.
Chapter Three

Monstrous (Mis)Constructions: Narratives of Rape in Peter Teuthold’s *The Necromancer*, Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine* and Eliza Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning*

“Out of resentment against the female sex”—so declares the ‘ghost’ in Peter Teuthold’s *The Necromancer*, when the landlord of the novel’s haunted house demands to know the reason behind the apparition’s persistent haunting. Of course, the ghost in question is not real, but rather an illusion created by the novel’s eponymous character, Volkert. One contemporary reviewer wrote that “raising ghosts” is an “operation of frequent recurrence” in *The Necromancer*, and here, as in the novels discussed in the previous chapter, it is one that serves to signal something repressed. Throughout much of the novel, Volkert remains an elusive figure: characters in the novel continually speak about him but never to him, and are driven by their desire to locate his whereabouts and seek retribution for his crimes. Towards the conclusion of novel, Volkert, caught, sentenced and soon to be executed for the crime of raising the dead, reveals his story in a temporally displaced narrative to one such pursuer, the Lieutenant.

Part of Volkert’s narrative, and the one under analysis here, concerns Helen, a girl with whom Volkert becomes acquainted when he takes lodging in her father’s reputedly haunted house. The haunting has persisted for six months upon Volkert’s arrival, creating a “general fear” among the townspeople so that most of the rooms remain unoccupied (144). However, Helen eventually confesses to Volkert that the true (and indeed, very corporeal) identity of the ghost is a man named Henry, another lodger in the house and the man her father refuses to let her marry. It is also the “unhappy” Henry who, under the guise of an apparition, began visiting Helen’s bedroom at night, “hurried by despaire into a resolution” that Helen claims has “destroyed” the “peace” of her mind (146). Helen professes that her:

> heart was thrilled with terror at first, and several nights elapsed in unspeakable horror, before I knew that my Henry was the spectre that

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visited me every night, and made my blood run chill with awful dread. At length he undeceived me, but, alas! it was then too late; my virgin honor was gone for ever (147).

Helen’s testimony suggests the novel’s engagement with contemporary notions that posit rape as humorous, as evidenced by the absurdity of her declaration that she initially believed a ghost, rather than a person, had violated her.

That notions of rape as comical persisted throughout the eighteenth century can be located in the existence of *The Humors of the Old Bailey* (1772), a publication which featured a selection of trials that were considered “humorous” by the contemporary public.226 Out of the twenty-seven trials that were included within this volume, two dealt with felonies, two with bigamy, seven with rape and sixteen with ‘privately stealing’ (or theft from the person of another). The inset title reads:

> Being a collection of all the many and diverting TRIALS for above these thirty years; particularly for Rapes and private Stealing: such as have made even the Judges on the Bench forge their wonteel [sic] Gravity; and caused scenes of Mirth very unusual in Courts of Justice.227

No alterations were made between the text that initially appeared in the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* and the ensuing volume, with the selected trials simply representing those that inspired the most “mirth” in the courtroom. The interpretation of rape as humorous was grounded in the eighteenth-century belief that the act itself was “impossible,” as, according to one contemporary medical source, a woman “always possesses sufficient power, by drawing back her limbs, and by the force of her hands, to prevent the insertion of the penis.”228 This issue was further complicated if the woman became pregnant as a result of the rape. The same medical text observed that if a pregnancy did occur after rape, it “may be necessary to enquire how far her lust was excited or if she experienced any enjoyment…for without an excitation of lust, or the

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226 *The Humors of the Old Bailey: or, Justice Shaking her Sides* (London: Sold by P. Wicks, 1772).
227 *The Humors of the Old Bailey*, Title page.
228 Samuel Farr, *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence: Or a Succinct and Compendious Description of Such Tokens in the Human Body as are requisite to determine the Judgment of a Coroner, and Courts of Law in cases of Divorce, Rape, Murder &c.* (London: Printed for J. Callow, 1814), 42.
enjoyment of pleasure in the venereal act, no conception can probably take place.”

This conjecture echoed contemporary notions that held female orgasm as necessary for conception, thus rendering rape impossible if a child were to result from the act. Thus, Jennie Mills argues that the public was taught—the ideology of which was reinforced by non-guilty verdicts of rape trials—that “the stories of rape and violence and forced sexual intercourse were not actually rape, but considered to be tales fabricated to convict an innocent man of consensual intercourse.”

**Rape Trials and Peter Teuthold’s *The Necromancer***

An initial reading of Teuthold’s temporally displaced narrative presents a farcical portrayal of Helen, one that not only coincides with notions of rape as impossible, but furthermore, following a sexual encounter between Volkert and Helen, raises “the spectre of woman as the more lustful sex, tempting man to his fate.” Volkert is instantly drawn to Helen, noting that she was “adorned with charms which conquered every heart almost irresistibly” (144). Such “charms,” Volkert explains, include a pale complexion, a sick and weakly constitution, and the ability to “infuse” his heart with “innocent virtuous love” (144). However, similar to Sleath’s Laurentina (discussed later in this chapter), Volkert notes that Helen “could not be called a beauty,” for although “admirable,” she was “bewitching” in nature, leading Volkert to construe her appearance as a “deformity,” recasting her attractiveness as dangerous and untrustworthy (144). Despite Volkert’s attempts to engage Helen in conversation, he notes that she “seemed to take the least notice of the attention” he paid her (145). In response to this silence, Volkert speaks to her in monologues,” to which her replies are always in “a pantomime, composed of a silent shaking or nodding of the head, accompanied every now and then by a gentle sigh” (145).

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Helen’s silence leads Volkert to admit that he has grown “tired of conversing with her,” and that he is willing to give up “such a lovely object” (145). This places Volkert in an interesting dichotomy, as the very reason he is attracted to Helen—that is, her pale, sickly countenance, one which restricts her to an “object” that cannot reply—is also the reason he becomes uninterested. Whether such ruminations on the part of Volkert reflect an exploration of the subjectivity required by women who strove to embody the feminine ideal or instead the confirmation of woman’s duplicitous nature, is complicated in Volkert’s ensuing depiction of Helen—including a recitation of the sexual tryst that later occurs between them. Volkert thus recasts the innocent young Helen to whom the reader is first introduced as a sexually-licentious femme fatale. Indeed, throughout Volkert’s testimony, there is a continued implication that Helen has tricked him into helping her, despite the fact that Volkert has himself built his life on trickery, a decision that has ultimately led to his impending execution. In addition, Volkert repeatedly observes that Helen is young, while he himself is already thirty-nine years of age, and yet his narrative persists in constructing a portrait of Helen as a seductive woman who has ensnared him. The shift in Volkert’s depiction of Helen—one that ultimately problematizes his status as a reliable narrator—raises questions of narrative, truth and agency, thus exemplifying the difficulty faced by female victims in the prosecution of eighteenth-century rape trials.

Further examination into contemporary trials suggests that rape was a notoriously difficult crime to prosecute in the eighteenth century, with the uncertainty surrounding its legal definition just one of the many factors contributing to the complexity of achieving a successful conviction. While William Hawkins wrote In a Treatise of the Pleas of the Crown (1716) that the legal definition of rape was the “unlawful and carnal knowledge of a woman, by force and against her will,” there was a question of whether “carnal knowledge” required both penetration and emission or just the former. Gregory Durston suggests that at the Old Bailey confirmation of penetration was often sufficient, although “evidence of ejaculation was highly desirable”

for conviction.\textsuperscript{233} Regardless, the obtainment of a guilty verdict depended almost entirely upon the representation of the female victim inside the courtroom, with trials of rape ultimately placing the accuser, rather than the accused, under interrogation and creating an atmosphere that Simon Dickie describes as “a plaintiff pleading her fruitless case before a sneering crowd and an incredulous male jury.”\textsuperscript{234} This attitude is illustrated in Volkert’s tale as the shift in his depiction of Helen can be located within the scene where she first describes the assault she has endured. Volkert’s temporally displaced narrative is one that requires a disruption in the linear time of the novel, as the events have occurred years prior. The process of looking back into the past allows Volkert to rewrite his narrative, and thus Helen’s, so that her transformation runs parallel to the articulation of her testimony.

In order to make a successful case, women were expected to submit to the criteria outlined by William Blackstone in his \textit{Commentaries on the Laws of England} (1765). In addition to being considered of “good fame,” Blackstone writes that “if she presently discovered the offense, and made search for the offender; if the party accused fled for it; these and the like are concurring circumstances, which give greater probability to her evidence.”\textsuperscript{235} If, on the other hand, she be of evil fame, and stands unsupported by others; if she concealed the injury for any considerable time after she had opportunity to complain; if the place, where the act was alleged to be committed, was where it was possible she might have been heard, and she made no outcry; these and the like circumstances carry a strong, but not conclusive, presumption that her testimony is false or feigned.\textsuperscript{236}

Durston writes that these factors were applied to rape trials “in an almost mechanistic fashion,” so that the absence of a recent complaint or an inadequate show of resistance

\textsuperscript{236} Blackstone, \textit{Commentaries}, 214.
was almost certain to end in acquittal.\textsuperscript{237} Such confirmation demanded that the victim provide intimate details of the assault in order to dissuade the aforementioned contemporary notion that held rape to be “impossible.”

Contributing to the jury’s underlying mistrust of accusations of rape was Blackstone’s echo of seventeenth-century jurist Matthew Hale’s comments that although “rape is a most detestable crime,” it “must be remembered, that it is an accusation easy to be made, hard to be proved.”\textsuperscript{238} Both Anthony Simpson and Laura Edelstein have written extensively on the topic of rape and malicious prosecution. While Simpson has concluded that charges of rape brought by female victims were part of a system in which women hoped to receive compensation, Edelstein argues that this thesis is “fundamentally mistaken” and that charges of malicious prosecution were “part of a defendant’s deliberate and conscious strategy to raise questions about the motives behind the rape prosecution and shift the focus of the trial away from the defendant to the prosecution’s case.”\textsuperscript{239} Despite the judge’s assurance that the alleged victim’s testimony was both necessary and permitted within the confines of the courtroom, the stigma associated with women who engaged in conversations about sex persisted, as “the very act of repeating incontinent language in court placed women in an ambiguous position” as it “attested to the sexual irregularity of the alleged victim.”\textsuperscript{240} This troubling paradox is best exemplified when the accuser, Mary Batten, testified that the prisoner “lay” with her:

\begin{quote}
Court. Lay with you! What, did he lay down by your side?

Batten. No, he lay upon me.

Court. And did he do anything to you?
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{237} Durston, “Rape in the Eighteenth-Century Metropolis,” 24.
\textsuperscript{238} Blackstone, \textit{Commentaries}, 215.
Batten. Lord bless me! What must I say?

Court. You must tell the court what he did.—There’s a necessity of speaking plain in such cases. —The life of a man is at stake…You ought therefore to express yourself in such terms as may signify what you intend, and nothing else: and, though decency might not admit of it on other occasions, it is requisite on this, and cannot be dispensed with.  

Batten’s hesitancy to voice the details of her alleged rape illustrates the reluctance of victims to engage in sexual discourse, as the very accusation of rape worked to ensure that the woman’s “reputation was destroyed…and with it her good character and the validity of her testimony.” For this reason, J.M. Beattie asserts that there was a “discouragement to prosecution,” as the possibility of trial meant that women were faced with the “embarrassment and pain” of discussing the attack in a public setting. This is reflected in the paucity of rape trials that occurred during the course of the 1790s at the Old Bailey. Of those nineteen trials, seven received guilty verdicts and of these, six involved children. The focus here is on complete rapes, rather than assault, for while women who fought back were able to recover their status in society, there was no such route available to women who had been raped as the “inadequacy of her resistance” translated to a ruined status. Additionally, rape trials under analysis here will focus on women who are above the age of legal consent, which was twelve years of age during the eighteenth century, as different issues arise with the representation of children in the courtroom. For of the seven cases that received non-guilty verdicts, four involved females under the legal consent, two involved children barely older than the age of consent, and one included no information regarding the age of the victim. Ultimately, this suggests that different standards existed for children, as the court was quick to convict the accused in cases that involved those under the legal age of consent. Further

241 *The Humors of the Old Bailey*, 27.
243 J.M. Beattie *Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1800* (Oxford Press: Clarendon, 1986), 124. In his study on rape trials from 1660 to 1800 in both Surrey and Sussex, Beattie found that a case of rape came before the Surrey assizes just once every year and a half, while the Sussex courts saw only one rape case every four years.
244 Mills, “Rape in Early Eighteenth-Century London,” 143.
differentiation can be located in the court’s printed materials, as reporters tended to
censure information pertaining to children, while cases featuring women over the age of
consent were less restrictive in the details they allowed to be printed. Information on the
twelve cases that received non-guilty verdicts is problematic, as the Old Bailey Sessions
Papers often failed to produce extensive details and contemporary newspapers were
irregular in their trial reporting. For while the majority of rape trials were relegated to
what John Langbein has termed ‘squib’ reports, in which only the barest of facts,
including the name of the accused, defendant and the ensuing verdict, are included,
others, most notably those in the beginning of the eighteenth century, were presented in
surprising detail, portraying stutters, pauses and other vocal tics.245

The shift between these two contrasting styles occurred over the course of the
eighteenth-century, with such extensive detailing disappearing by the latter half. While
the Old Bailey Sessions Papers provide information about all trials, their “level of detail
varies,” as, “after c.1790, the Court itself often responded to increasingly delicate public
sensibilities by expressly forbidding the publication of all but the most basic facts about
rape hearings.”246 Anna Clark locates this censure as occurring after 1796, when the
“Old Bailey Court began to suppress the publication of transcripts of sexual crimes,” as
“presumably, judges wished to protect the public from exposure to such ‘offensive’
testimony.”247 Printed testimony was also subject to “much deletion and compression,”
as Thomas Gurney, the official Old Bailey shorthand writer from 1748-1769 testified:

it is my method, if a question brings out an imperfect answer, and is
obliged to be asked over again, and the answer comes more strong, I take
that down as the proper evidence, and neglect the other…It is not to be
expected I should write every unintelligible word that is said by the
evidence.248

245 John Langbein, “Shaping the Eighteenth-Century Criminal Trial: A View from the Ryder
247 Anna Clark, Women’s Silence, Men’s Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845
(London: Routledge, 2009), 17.
248 “Trial of Elizabeth Canning,” in A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for
High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors, ed. T.B. Howell, Esq. (London: Printed by
T.C. Howard, 1816), 488. Following Thomas Gurney’s retirement as the shorthand writer for
the Old Bailey, his own son filled the vacancy.
Indeed, Langbein argues that “most of what was said at an Old Bailey sessions must have been omitted,” based upon the length of trials and the corresponding size of the pamphlet. The brevity of squib reports, coupled with a non-guilty verdict, not only trivialized the validity of such accusations, but also suggested that there was little, if any, evidence presented within the courtroom. Langbein has written extensively on the problematic nature of the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*, including their lack of details. He concludes: “The generalization that emerges is this: If the OBSP report says something happened, it did; if the OBSP report does not say something, it still may have.”

However, the existence of judges’ notes—or, the judges’ personal written analysis of the trial that was then circulated exclusively amongst their peers—challenges the suggestion of limited evidence. Langbein argues that judges’ notes, by which he means “the minutes written down in court by the presiding judge as he conducted the oral public trial,” offer “narrative trial reports” that can be cross-checked with the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* to provide a more complete narrative. Furthermore, Francis Oldham states that both Lloyd Kenyon and Francis Buller, judges who presided over rape trials at the Old Bailey during the 1790s, were known for copious amounts of written commentary, that Kenyon himself deemed “fuller or better than what was in print.” By withholding these details from the public, the judicial system ultimately contributed to the misconstruction of rape victims, for while various other official records exist that detail the charges and outcomes of those who stood before the Old Bailey Court, these

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249 John Langbein, “The Criminal Trial Before the Lawyers,” *Faculty Scholarship Series* 45, no. 2 (1978): 271. Langbein writes that “in the 1730s a single session lasted two to five days and processed fifty to one hundred felony cases. Pamphlet reports of the size in question could not begin to capture the full proceedings,” 271.


252 James Oldham, “Manuscript Case Notes,” in *Making Legal History: Approaches and Methodologies*, ed. Anthony Musson and Chantal Stebbings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 41. Oldham writes that Buller created “an extensive MS case note collection that he put to effective use later in his judicial opinions. Buller’s manuscript case notes were shared widely and were acknowledged to be authoritative.” Similarly, Oldham asserts that Lloyd Kenyon “was a hard-working, practical, inelegant lawyer who also came to the bench with an extensive collection of MS case notes,” 40.
documents, including “indictments, trial rosters, recognizes, depositions and so forth,” do not include a narrative of the trial.  

Unlike the following chapter (which details how eighteenth-century narratives of sodomy trials were silenced), narratives of rape do exist within contemporary publications. Their problematic nature lies, then, not in the existence or otherwise of information, but in its composition and dissemination, as narratives of female rape victims were first shaped and then later conveyed by male voices. These inconsistences are exemplified in the three reports that exist on Ann Cadwell, as the fractured pieces of her narrative can only be read through male voices that both ventriloquize and condemn her. Appearing in court on 27 October 1790, Thomas Bolton was indicted at the Old Bailey Court for a rape on Ann Cadwell, a charge for which he was found not guilty. Following this verdict, the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* printed the following details:

Thomas Bolton was indicted for rape on Ann Cadwell.  
Not Guilty.  
Tried by the second Middlesex Jury before Mr. Baron Hotham.  

As the lone court record produced on the trial of Thomas Bolton, this document neglected to provide any details pertinent to the accusation and acquittal. Instead, particulars of the trial were divulged to the reading public by two London-based newspapers, the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* and *Argus*. While the former addressed the details of the alleged rape, reporting Ann Cadwell’s testimony that “on the 21st of June she was at work for a Mrs. Bolton, the prisoners grandmother,” when the prisoner “came up to her and without any ceremony, put her hands across, threw her down, and committed the offence stated in the indictment,” the latter omitted these details entirely. Indeed, the focus of both articles was not Cadwell’s testimony, but on the manner in which she conveyed it to the court. The *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* reported that Cadwell described “the circumstances” of the rape with “great volubility and effrontery,” with the Judge observing, “he had never recollected a witness

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in a case of rape give her evidence in a manner more flippant and incredible."\textsuperscript{256} The \textit{Argus} made similar claims, writing that Cadwell relayed the “transaction and crime” with “such a degree of fluency and boldness” that the Judge claimed to “never during the time he had sat in [his] court heard any evidence which had less weight with him.”\textsuperscript{257} Although Cadwell’s actual words were never recorded, the judge’s accusation of “fluency” and “boldness” in Cadwell’s speech exemplifies the inherently problematic aspect of reading contemporary rape trials. For while legal codes “forced” the female victim to “abandon the normal prohibitions and protocols placed upon her speech by the codes of proper femininity,” this language ultimately “violated the codes of female sexual behavior.”\textsuperscript{258} As such, the depiction of Ann Cadwell typifies the troubling dichotomy experienced by female rape victims within the courtroom: viewed through the lens of eighteenth-century patriarchy, Cadwell is seen as “bold,” or “obscene,” her character vilified and her testimony subsequently rendered invalid.

Similarly, Volkert’s narrative presents a (mis)construction of Helen. Volkert recounts to the Lieutenant how, one night, just as he was about to retire to sleep, “a white figure” appeared in his apartment and Volkert “seized the phantom with a powerful hand” (146). The “apparition” responded by exclaiming: “Jesu Maria…for God’s sake be quiet” (146). Volkert immediately recognized the voice as belonging to Helen, whose verbally aggressive introduction here stands in sharp juxtaposition to the weak and sickly woman previously described. Volkert notes that Helen “groans” her words, implicitly suggesting something guttural, sexual, and unrefined—all associations that once again problematize Volkert’s previous observations. In the next instant, Volkert observes how Helen switches to a “whisper,” using a “faltering accent,” when she assures him that it is only Helen who has appeared at his door, thereby reinforcing the suggestion of her duplicitous nature (146). Following Helen’s admission about Henry, she invokes Volkert’s aid in the matter, declaring that he “shall save [her] from destruction” by winning her father’s “sanction” for her love (146). Volkert, hesitant to help Helen, as it means engaging with the tricks of necromancy that he has since

\textsuperscript{256} \textit{Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser} (London, England), Friday, Oct. 29, 1790, Issue 19313.  
\textsuperscript{257} \textit{Argus} (London, England), Friday, Oct. 29, 1790, Issue 513.  
\textsuperscript{258} Mills, “Rape in Early Eighteenth-Century London,” 156.
abandoned, is forced to reconsider when Helen pays him a second visit and reminds him “of [his] promises, and of ---” (148). A suggestion of what has previously occurred between them is recounted by Volkert’s confession that:

she pressed me to her heaving bosom, her burning kisses thrilled the very pulses of my heart with voluptuous rapture, her lily arms encircled my neck, her whole lovely form seemed melted into one with mine—but you may easily guess what was the consequence!” (147).

It is worth noting here that, like the narratives of Laurentina and Fatima (which will be analyzed later within this chapter), Helen’s narrative is not recounted through her own voice, but rather through that of Volkert, a man whose advances she has dismissed and with whom she engages sexually only in order to serve her own purposes.

The motivation behind Helen’s sexual relationship with Volkert is not desire, then, but rather one of survival. Helen acknowledges that if she is unable to marry Henry, “disgrace and ruin will seize [her] with merciless fangs,” with the Old English for “fang” holding meanings of “booty, plunder, spoils” as well as a “catching or seizing” (147). Just as Parsons’ Fatima is considered “spoils” of war for Heli, so too is Helen an “object” that Henry has “seized.” For whether or not Helen was complicit in the act, her reputation has still been taken from her by decree of patriarchal law. Consequently, Helen expresses not a desire but rather a need to marry Henry, as a result of the rape that he committed on her. Such sentiments are echoed in one of the trials that appear in the *Humors of the Old Bailey*, in which the accuser, Mary Hicks, is asked by the Judge if she would like to see the prisoner hanged, to which she responds: “No, I had rather marry him than hang him.” Although the reading public of the eighteenth century was amused by Mary Hicks’ answer (for the statement itself does seem comically absurd), there is an undeniable practicality in her words. After publicly declaring her rape, Mary Hicks is rendered unmarriageable, her body unwillingly transformed as patriarchal authority declared that a “deflowered woman was devalued as

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a moral and social entity.” Helen’s seduction of Volkert suggests that she is similarly aware of the grim future that awaits her if she is unable to secure her marriage to Henry. That Volkert is conscious of this precarious position and still engages with her sexually, ultimately challenges the reliability of his narrative. In particular, Volkert’s declaration that “the lover of the afflicted disconsolate girl did not deserve [his] assistance” presents the possibility that Volkert’s testimony has been influenced and shaped by Helen’s preference for Henry—epitomized in Volkert’s inconsistent portrayal of Helen (148). His simultaneous (and silent) attack on the character of Helen’s father—as Volkert continually refers to him as a ‘simpleton’ or a ‘simple superstitious man’—suggests that Helen’s behavior is not that of a “monstrous” femme fatale, but rather a desperate woman who realizes the realities facing a woman in her situation (149). Although the house in question is reputed to be haunted “by a spirit, who disturbed the tranquility of the inhabitants, though he never had injured any body,” Volkert himself notes that Helen has in fact “suffered most from the dreadful apparition,” that is, she has been injured in the irreparable damage to her reputation (144).

Volkert’s eventual consent to help—and the form in which such assistance materializes—complicates existing paradigms of the ‘Male Gothic.’ For although the ghost that Volkert “manifests” is a male who has been wronged by “the cruelty of a lady he had been in love with” during life, the ghost is invoked in order to aid a woman who has been wronged—if not by a man, than certainly by the laws of man (150). As such, the ghost demands the reconciliation of two lovers separated “by a cruel parent’s tyranny” (recalling the conventional plotline of various female-penned Gothic novels) in order to cease his ghosting (150). Throughout The Necromancer, Volkert “raises” a number of female ghosts, including one who has been “assassinated” by her husband. While Jeffrey Cass notes in his Introduction to the recent 2007 Valancourt Edition of The Necromancer that “[the ghost] does not call for justice to which ‘she’ is entitled,” but only wishes for “easeful death and obscurity,” he neglects to explore the implications of the ghost’s initial formidable presence upon being disturbed and her agreement to leave only when Volkert promises assistance: “unhappy spirit, betake

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261 Hutton, Prospect Before Her, 303.
thyself again to rest; by my power; which every spirit dreads, he shall disturb thee no more—be gone (41).\textsuperscript{262} When the ghost of the assassinated woman’s husband does arrive, demanding forgiveness from his wife, Volkert exclaims: “How darest thou claim it, reprobate villain? Return to thy damned companions in hell” (43). Once in disguise, Volkert frequently assumes the role of defender of women, as evidenced here, performing what Cass refers to as Volkert’s “unique version of the Female Gothic.”\textsuperscript{263} As such, when the ghost raised by Volkert to help Helen responds that his reason for haunting is “out of resentment against women,” his haunting can be read, not as a result of anger against women, but rather, as a result of anger on behalf of women. Therefore, the ghost’s haunting is manifested, or made possible, as a result of the resentment incurred by law’s continual exclusion of women, represented in his subsequent demand: the reunion of a couple parted by a “parent’s tyranny.” That the word “tyranny” refers implicitly to a male figure reinforces the notion that the ghost’s haunting functions to illuminate and right the wrongs perpetrated by patriarchy against Helen, and thus eighteenth-century women.

Eleanor Sleath’s \textit{The Orphan of the Rhine} and Eliza Parsons’ \textit{The Mysterious Warning}

Ann Cadwell’s name has become eternally linked with Thomas Bolton, her narrative historically defined by the interpretation of male voices that judged (and ultimately condemned) her words. Just as Thomas Bolton’s name is connected with his acquittal, and thus the words ‘non-guilty,’ Cadwell, by necessity, becomes associated with the condemnation ‘guilty.’ For, as Blackstone asserts, if a woman’s testimony of rape is unconvincing, “her testimony is false or feigned.” There exists no middling space in which a conviction might not be successful but a woman’s testimony could be true; instead, a non-guilty verdict awarded to the accused man confirms the woman’s words as false. It is in Blackstone’s ensuing assertion, then, that “she be of evil fame” (as this

\textsuperscript{262} Jeffrey Cass, “Queering \textit{The Necromancer},” in \textit{The Necromancer} 1794 (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2007), xxiii.
\textsuperscript{263} Cass, “Queering The Necromancer,” xxiv.
alteration in character requires the rewriting of the woman’s narrative) that Ann Cadwell is transformed into a “repulsive character,” or “monster.” Notions of the female as monstrous are explored within Eleanor Sleath’s *Orphan of the Rhine* and Eliza Parsons’ *The Mysterious Warning*, as both novels contain temporally displaced narratives of rape (real and metaphorical) that are (mis)constructed by male characters. As such, each narrative is structured and arranged to construct a version of a woman at odds with desired and appropriate forms of femininity, one that deviates from ‘the natural order,’ so that her story becomes ‘deformed and ‘distorted,’ and her character condemned as ‘monstrous’ and ‘strange.’ Left with no other recourse, the women of these embedded narratives ultimately embrace their enforced monstrosity in order to reclaim their agency, and by extension, their own narratives.

Eighteenth-century rape narratives provide tangible evidence of the treatment that women associated with sex outside of marriage endured. Eleanor Sleath may herself have experienced a similar process of degradation and subsequent ostracization as a woman publicly accused of engaging in an extra-martial affair (see Chapter One). As part of their work tracing Sleath’s life from birth to death, Czlapinski and Wheeler uncovered a series of letters that establish the damage Sleath’s reputation sustained as a result of this scandal. Following the death of her husband, Sleath began to meet with “a small group of intellectual and literary-minded neighbors,” during which time she began a platonic relationship with the Reverend John Dudley. Following a comment made by Eleanor’s sister-in-law “about the nature of the friendship” between the two, Dudley’s wife “became hostile to Mrs. S. and injured her indiscreetly and secretly in various ways,” eventually leading to disunion within their group. Feelings of antagonism towards Sleath were amplified when rumors that she was carrying the illegitimate child of Reverend Dudley began to circulate, leading one member to send an anonymous letter threatening Sleath to leave the Dudley family alone. Although Reverend Dudley eventually sought to defend Sleath’s honor by filing a citation in

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ecclesiastic court for defamation against the instigator of the claims, Sleath’s reputation was already “tarnished by gossip and rumors.”

It was during this time that Sleath wrote and published *The Orphan of the Rhine*, a four-volume novel that tells the story of Julie de Rubine who, following a clandestine marriage, finds herself an unwed mother raising her child in a cottage removed from society. However, when the Marchese, the man who deceived her, sends a letter promising to provide a fortune for their child in exchange for her assistance in raising an infant of anonymous origin, Rubine accepts his proposal (for further details, see Chapter One). It is while caring for these two children under the imposed pseudonym Madame Chamont, that she discovers a man named Conte della Croisse, imprisoned by the Marchese in a Gothic structure a few leagues from her home. After helping the prisoner escape, Madame Chamont is rewarded with the prisoner’s tale, one that focuses on an extra-marital affair that della Croisse, now named La Roque, had with a woman named Laurentina. Similar to the way in which Sleath’s narrative is told through a series of male voices in the letters that detail the accusations of her alleged affair, so, too, is the narrative of Laurentina relayed by her former lover in a manner that recalls the misconstruction and ultimate condemnation of female rape victims by male voices. For, unlike Sleath, who later reclaimed her reputation by her marriage to Reverend Dudley, Laurentina fails in her aspiration to the title of wife as her employment of violence to recover her own narrative consequently places her outside the realm of accepted gender codes.

La Roque opens with his initial encounter with Laurentina, claiming he was “arrested” by the sound of a lute “accompanied by a female voice, which breathed such exquisite sweetness that [he and his friend] were unable to move from the spot.” He soon identifies the female voice which “possessed such power of enchantment” as belonging to a woman in an approaching gondola (111). Here, the placement of Laurentina in the water, coupled with her simultaneous use of music to “bewitch,” recalls the mythological sirens who lured sailors to their deaths with the sound of their voices, just as Laurentina’s voice is able to “catch and hold” La Roque. Thus, La Roque

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267 Eleanor Sleath, *Orphan of the Rhine* (Dodo Press, 2008), 111.
relates the scene of their meeting in a way that not only prefigures Laurentina’s role as a “young, calculating, and manipulative Italian seductress,” but also raises the “spectre of woman as the more lustful sex, tempting man to his fate.”

Furthering this idea is La Roque’s observation that Laurentina’s face, at first hidden underneath a veil, “did not possess the insipid uniformity of perfect beauty” (111). This lack of symmetry, coupled with La Roque’s later observation that “when under the dominion of passion…vice…loses her deformity,” suggests a further allusion to the sirens, whose own beauty is eventually revealed as duplicitous, with the water serving as a “veil” or “cover” for their “disfigurement” (114). Now “captivated,” La Roque and his friend decide to follow Laurentina, despite his admission that after detecting their presence she quickly drew a veil over her face with a look of “distress” and “taking the arm of her companion, hastened along the banks of the river” (112).

La Roque’s ensuing “pursuit” of this “beautiful Stranger,” coupled with the “anguish” and “suffering” that Laurentina’s physicality communicates, works to undermine the previous configuration of Laurentina as a “calculating seductress” (112). Their “persecution”—a definition of the word “pursuit,” which holds such etymological meanings as: “action of chasing (a person or animal), especially with intent to overtake and capture, harm,” “the wooing of a girl or woman (c.1400),” and “assault, attack”—ultimately betrays the instigation of their relationship as non-consensual.

The women discussed in Chapter One are similarly pursued (and promptly abandoned) in their narratives: however, the relationships presented there are reciprocal and because they involve a lawful union, the women are eventually allowed to reclaim their narratives. The suggestion that here the pursuit of Laurentina by La Roque is not, in fact, reciprocal is furthered when Laurentina, upon detecting their continued pursuit, “hastened her steps, as if anxious to elude [their] observation” (112). La Roque’s following statement that “our curiosity was now too much excited to enable us to relinquish a project, whose


n novelty was attended with so much pleasure,” is suggestive of the pervasive eighteenth-century belief that force was a normal, necessary part of sexual intercourse (112). In her study on rape in eighteenth-century London, Jennie Mills writes that sexual discourse flooded literature, medical texts, and erotic fiction, all of which contributed to the public’s perception of rape, and subsequently, how the accused should be handled in court. That most trials ended in a non-guilty verdict can be located, Mills argues, in the normalization of violent seduction that was encountered not only in public discourse, but also in erotic and mainstream literature. As all three taught “the height of male pleasure is achieved in effecting [the] transformation from restraint to abandonment in the woman,” the public was provided with “the lesson that it is both the man’s obligation and his pleasure to override female objections to defloration.” Since rape “too closely resembled normative erotic experience,” violent sexual behavior was often accepted as normal in court cases, rendering “the very possibility of rape questionable.” Consequently, rape became “synonymous with sex,” represented here in La Roque’s unsolicited “pursuit” of Laurentina.272

The discrepancy between the boundaries of sex and rape can be read in La Roque’s admission that “the law of politeness…compelled [them] to recede” once they reached “a gate, leading into a kind of shrubbery,” which he recognizes is a “private entrance” to Laurentina’s villa (112). With the “gate” serving as a “barrier” to La Roque’s desires, it is only when a snake concealed in the grass “assailed the ankle of the youngest Signora” and La Roque releases Laurentina “from this venomous attack,” leaving her to fall “senseless in [his] arms,” that he is able to “breach” the “opening” (113). The exposure and ensuing bite on Laurentina’s ankle not only reinforces her vulnerability, but also the violent nature of the “assault,” as she is “bitten” by the snake, “bitten” coming from the root word bheid, and which means “to strike, split.” It as a result of this “invasion,” which is “venomous” or “poisonous” in nature—with the word

270 Mills, “Rape in Early Eighteenth-Century London,” 145. Furthermore, Mills writes that although in “real-life, rape was illegal, it was almost indistinguishable as such, because it too closely resembled” the violent seduction encountered by the public in various publications.


“venom” connected here to notions of “erotic love”—that she becomes “poisoned” or “tainted.” The “snake,” then, is suggestive of La Roque himself, an idea that is further reinforced as he holds her “senseless” body in his arms, ultimately recalling contemporary pornographic texts that often depicted the “transformation” of the sexually submissive heroine from “restraint to abandonment.”

It is through this metaphorical assault that La Roque is able to “obtain…the gratification [he] desired;” that is, entrance to Laurentina’s house, and by extension, her body (113).

In an effort to rewrite their encounter as one of mutuality, La Roque imposes his own interpretation on Laurentina’s responses, relating how she “thanked [him] rather with her looks than with her words” upon his saving her from the snake, and that when she addressed herself to him “there was a bewitching softness in her eyes, a fascination in her voice and manner” (113). It was not uncommon for the accused to rewrite an accusation of rape into one of consensual pleasure, as illustrated in one contemporary trial where the accused claimed: “Whatever I did, I did not force her, nor did she shew any resentment of the usage that she met with over-night; for she drank coffee with me at breakfast.” In response, the accuser argued that while she did drink coffee with the accused the next morning, it was a duty that she could not avoid in her situation as a servant. Just as the accused infers the accusers’ willingness to have coffee with him as proof of his innocence, so too does La Roque interpret the invitation into Laurentina’s home as evidence of her “enchantment” with him. However, such an analysis is negated by the reality of Laurentina’s situation as the “female character was synonymous with sexual continence” and any suggestion of impropriety damaged her marital value.

Following La Roque’s “pursuit” and metaphorical “attack,” Laurentina’s character is now “tainted.” Her societal value thus compromised, Laurentina’s autonomy is diminished as, following the assault, it is “at the desire of Signora Bairdiella” that Laurentina must present La Roque “with some fruit, the produce of her garden” and then later “at [La Roque and Signora Bairdiella’s] joint solicitation” that Laurentina play her lute (113).

275 The Humors of the Old Bailey, 11.
That the word “solicitation” and the phrase “produce of her garden” carry sexual and monetary connotations is suggestive of Signora Bairdiella’s intentions upon witnessing Laurentina’s “attack.” La Roque therefore interprets Signora Bairdiella’s actions as confirmation of his ability to procure Laurentina as his mistress. He also relies on his friend’s assurance that he has learned of “some traits in the character of [Laurentina’s] aunt” that might “prove favourable to [La Roque’s] wishes,” coupled with hints from “a native of Padua respecting the conduct of Laurentina” which “were of a nature to encourage hope” (114). La Roque’s friend, who acknowledges that Laurentina is “as beautiful as an angel,” further assures La Roque that if he “continued the siege,” once more suggesting violence in his domination of Laurentina, “she would not long continue inexorable” (114). The impact that such character sketches had in contemporary society is demonstrated in the 1795 trial of George Byche, where, despite the statements of five individuals that the accuser, Elizabeth Bragginton, was “modest, chaste and even diffident,” their testimony was rendered invalid by claims that she had acted with “great freedom” in her behavior towards the prisoner, leading to a non-guilty verdict and condemnation of her character. Therefore, La Roque is filled with “surprise and consternation” when Laurentina’s Aunt at first “objected to the proposition” of Laurentina becoming his mistress “with a degree of earnestness…considering what was past, and the report [he] had heard previous to this declaration” (115). However, the reservations of Signora Bairdiella, coupled with the description of Laurentina as an “angel,” thereby aligning her with innocence and purity, ultimately work to imply the possibility of Laurentina’s virginity prior to her introduction to La Roque, and as such, questions not only the validity of the reports concerning her previous “conduct” but also La Roque’s evaluation and presentation of her character.

Laurentina’s reputation now “injured,” her Aunt finally agrees to allow La Roque to take her niece as a mistress on the condition that he marry Laurentina and repair her status in society should he ever become a widow. The consummation of their relationship thus implied, La Roque begins to immediately regret his actions and the

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injury they will cause his wife, Helena, whose “innocence,” “purity” and “tenderness” he now recalls (116). Mills argues that “virginity was one of the primary tropes in eighteenth-century eroticism,” and that consequently, once a woman lost her virginity, she was “devalued as a moral and social entity.”

As such, once Laurentina becomes his *wif of purchase*, a term for concubine, his fascination with her wanes and he seeks to create a different portrait of her, one that echoes the determination of contemporary ideology to demonize women publicly associated with sex outside the sanctified realm of marriage. La Roque now alleges that the “softness,” “tenderness” and “innocence of Laurentina’s looks and manners” were only a character “she had artfully assumed for the accomplishment of [his] destruction” (117). He subsequently accuses her of being “passionately fond of equipage and shew” and demanding a “profusion of jewels” that were “adequate to the expenses of [La Roque’s] household” (117). However, prior to these accusations, La Roque also makes the admission that he has “lost considerable sums at the gaming table,” and yet, despite this, continues to attribute his misfortunes to “the immense sums [Laurentina] had squandered” (117). Consequently, as La Roque’s distrust escalates in the certainty that Laurentina has other admirers, based once more upon second-hand conjectures, his narration becomes increasingly unreliable. His unrelenting determination to uncover Laurentina’s association with other men recalls the cross-examination that female rape victims endured as prosecutors attempted to prove their characters unworthy by associating them with previous liaisons. Just as the judicial system worked to uncover evidence that would align the accuser with “the loose and lascivious,” so too does La Roque work to condemn Laurentina.

Pursuing such confirmation, La Roque arrives unannounced at Laurentina’s apartment during the day, where he discovers a miniature of a “young Signor in a military habit” which he believes is “some favoured lover” and finds himself consumed “with it all the tortures of jealousy and resentment” (119). Laurentina, according to La Roque, “started in visible confusion” at finding him in her apartment, despite his own acknowledgement that he typically visited at night (120). That Laurentina manages to recollect herself and assume “an appearance of composure” fills

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him with “astonishment” since the portrait, and thus the “testimony” to her “falsehood,” is still in his hand (120.) Despite his accusation, Laurentina does not seem “to regard” the miniature, although La Roque explains away her composure by suggesting that “she was too able a practitioner in the art of dissembling” (120). However, when Laurentina explains that the portrait is of her brother, even La Roque is forced to retract his accusation, as “there was too much appearance of truth to justify suspicion” (120). And yet, despite the fact that “nothing material could be alleged against [Laurentina],” La Roque is seized by the “violence of contending passions,” and as such follows the advice of his friend to announce his temporary departure from the city while observing “her actions in those places of public resort to which she was the most attached” (121). La Roque’s insistence on placing “[his] first trial” at a masquerade, an eighteenth-century social gathering known for its libertine atmosphere, highlights his determination to vilify Laurentina’s character (121). For masquerades, connected to the figurative sense of “false outward show,” are not only suggestive of the duplicitous nature that La Roque has previously intimated following his purchase of Laurentina, but also reinforces his allegations of her alleged licentious nature as “conventional wisdom” held that women were susceptible to “an abrupt loss of sexual inhibition” upon donning the masquerade’s requisite mask.

The masquerade also functions as the setting of La Roque’s final physical description of Laurentina, as he manages to identify her among the anonymity of dominos as a result of her “more than ordinary elegance” and the “jewels that braided her hair” (121-122). Here, the androgyny of the domino—as the loose, hooded cloak was popular among both men and women—allows Laurentina to assume typically “male” characteristics such as “aggression, dominance, and control, attributes previously unattainable to her sex, while the jewels “weaved” in her hair attest to the retention of her femininity, the duality of which is made possible against the background

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of the masquerade (121-122). Serving as the culmination of the portrait of her that La Roque has attempted to construct from the beginning of his testimony, here, Laurentina is depicted as a woman who has violated the expectations of female conduct in her embodiment of male and female characteristics, ultimately undermining contemporary medical understandings that posited the two genders as separate and distinct. For under the theory of the two-sex model, the female body became one of the “most significant sites where contemporary medical theorists wrote the text of woman’s otherness, weakness, inferiority, and passivity.” Recasting women as the chaste angel, one whose passions and desires were non-existent, medical texts solidified the belief that it was a woman’s duty to be chaste, silent, and obedient in the marital relationship, ensuring her continued subordination to her husband. Correspondingly, definitions of the proper woman hinged upon the possession of such attributes as purity and submissiveness, and by extension, while contemporary ideology held that women were expected to remain chaste, men were free “to prove their manhood by sexual activity.” In order to fill this need, men sought women who had already been deflowered and thus had “her sexual appetite whetted so she could fornicate again.”

As the mistress of La Roque, Laurentina embodies the troubling dichotomy in which “one set of women [were] immolated to preserve another set,” thus “engender[ing] a violent response.” Having been “killed” or “destroyed” by La Roque in his obtainment of her as a mistress, Laurentina, now imbued with the “abnormal” or “monstrous” qualities of both genders, embraces violence as a means to avenge the “sacrifice” that was demanded of her and thus reclaim her narrative. These actions are presented in La Roque’s subsequent discovery of Laurentina’s plan to poison Helena, as

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280 Mary Anne Schofiled, Masking and Unmasking the Female Minds: Disguising Romance in Feminine Fiction 1713 to 1799 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 26.
281 Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 18. Under the two-sex model, men and women were viewed as complete opposites and attention was placed on the differences between male and female organs, with gender rooted in biology.
282 Hufton, Prospect Before Her, 304.
283 Hufton, Prospect Before Her, 304. Hufton writes that while sexual activity for men was entirely normal, women were precluded from this and as such, men looked for “fallen” or “common women from lower classes in order to satisfy their sexual needs.
284 Hufton, Prospect Before Her, 320.
it is only through this death that Laurentina’s reputation can be recovered. Female murderers were of particular fascination to the eighteenth-century reading public, instilling “fear” and “anxiety” while “functioning as a crucial site for competing ideologies and mythologies of femininity.” Here, La Roque’s insistence that Laurentina is “the mad or bad other,” her violence located in her “monstrous unwomanliness,” lies in direct opposition to the fact that it is La Roque, and not Laurentina, that eventually murders Helena.  

However, as Laurentina’s aggression subverts gender norms, and therefore serves as “a threat to masculine authority and patriarchal familial order,” La Roque must attempt to contain the danger that Laurentina’s “monstrous” body represents by “drawing [his] stiletto from [his] cloak” and “plung[ing]” it “into her heart” (126).

That the recipient of the violent “thrust” is Helena, once more suggests the unreliability of La Roque as the narrator of Laurentina’s testimony. For while much of his tale is configured to confirm Laurentina’s monstrosity, his narration ultimately reveals him to be the author of his own misfortunes. Additionally, it worth noting that the accusations of Laurentina’s murderous intentions are relayed to La Roque by a monk who claims to have heard of the plot from an “unknown” penitent, who in turn had been persuaded to poison Helena after being seduced by a man who himself was employed by Laurentina. That La Roque does not question such information, but treats it as proof of Laurentina’s guilt, emulates his earlier denunciation following hearsay of her infidelity, in that, once more, he is unable to find anything “material” or “substantial” to confirm these accusations. La Roque’s persistence in privileging the testimony of others (men) over Laurentina recalls eighteenth-century rape trials that granted greater credence to the voices of men (accused) rather than women (accuser). That La Roque is enacting his own form of justice is further suggested in his use of the word ‘trial’ when he enacts his plan to entrap Laurentina and prove her unfaithfulness. Thus, when La Roque learns of Laurentina’s alleged plan to murder his wife, he works to condemn the character of Laurentina, berating the “fresh proof of her ingratitude,” and acknowledging that his

286 Doody, “Those Eyes are Made so Killing,” 19.
“rage increased to such a height at the idea of having been so long the dupe of an infamous designing woman” (126). His final verdict condemns Laurentina to death, as he believes that “nothing less than death …seemed adequate to her crime,” a pronouncement that La Roque decides upon while “worked into a fit of desperation by the violence of contending passions,” thus suggesting his true aim is one of revenge rather than justice (126). This self-acknowledged lack of control further undermines La Roque’s testimony. For, ultimately, it is La Roque, and not Laurentina, who has taken a lover, just as it is La Roque, and not Laurentina, who murders his wife, Helena. Following these events, Laurentina is “conveyed to her former place of residence” and paid “the settlement which she demanded” (128). That Laurentina, having failed in her attempts to reclaim her narrative through violence, is once more ensconced in her villa at the conclusion of her tale suggests the impossibility of compromised women being reintegrated back into society.

Eliza Parsons’ Fatima has garnered criticism similar to Sleath’s temptress, Laurentina, with Karen Morton, one of the few critics to examine The Mysterious Warning in detail, referring to her as “worthy company for Lewis’s Ambrosio and Dacre’s Victoria.” However, Fatima’s ability to “run wild and create havoc” in the latter part of the novel stands in sharp contrast to her initial introduction as a spoil of war. The primary narrative in Parsons’ The Mysterious Warning begins as the hero, Ferdinand, is disinherited by his dying father, Count Renaud, as punishment for taking part in a clandestine marriage. Following his father’s death, Ferdinand receives a mysterious warning from a disembodied voice instructing him to flee from his wife in order to “avoid sin and death.” This warning, coupled with the loss of his fortune, prompts Ferdinand to join the army, where he is taken prisoner by the Turks. It is during his imprisonment that he encounters another captive of war, Fatima, who happens to be the daughter of his father and also, coincidentally, the half-sister of his wife. Heli, the

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Turk who has offered to help Ferdinand escape his current imprisonment in Turkey, introduces Fatima as his mistress and a woman who was formerly a Christian and is now “a true disciple of Mahomet” (260). The name ‘Fatima’ is significant here as it questions the validity of Heli’s statement by indicating the violation that Fatima’s physical body has endured. “Fatima,” a derivation of the name “Fatinah,” finds its etymological root in the Latin captivus, “to take, to hold,” and which also “had a transferred sense” of “to entrap,” thus suggesting her current status as a captive of war.290 This stands in direct contrast to Fatima’s original name, Charlotte, the Old German origin of which is “free man,” a definition Parsons may well have been aware of given the fact that she marketed The Mysterious Warning as a ‘A German Tale.’291

Upon discovering their familial connection, Fatima explains—in a temporally embedded narrative that calls for Ferdinand to assume the role of listener—how, following their father’s abandonment and her mother’s subsequent death, she chose to become the mistress of a nobleman of high rank in the army, as it presented the “alternative of independence, pleasure, and an agreeable lover,” rather than lead a life of impoverishment (266). It was when she accompanied her lover to battle that, under siege, Heli and his men “surrounded the tents, where the women and officer’s baggage remained, pillaged them, beat off the guards, and carried [her] and several other women off in triumph” (266). That Fatima is confined in the same tent that also houses the officer’s luggage implies her status as property, for, as Barbara J. Baines writes, “between men rape signifies the destruction of one man’s property by another and that between men and women rape is the ultimate form of the subjugation of women by men.”292 Therefore, when Heli’s men “pillage,” another word for rape, Fatima and the other women are “subjugated,” or “enslaved,” by their captors as to the victor goes the “spoils.” Fatima is confined for two months, during which time she “expected death,” before Heli takes her as one of his many mistresses (266). Here, the absence of

resistance weakens the implied accusation of rape, as Durston attests that the lack of an “outcry” during an assault in the eighteenth century was often considered to be an indicator that no rape had occurred at all, while Beattie writes that if “during the attack she made no attempt to cry out for help,” this lack of a struggle was translated to “a weakness in the case.”

The importance of sufficient resistance as evidence of a woman’s good character is further established in the 1793 trial of John Curtis. In her testimony, Sarah Tipple makes a point of acknowledging that when Curtis threw her down on the bed, she “called for assistance,” and “shrieked out once,” at which point Curtis “put his hand and crammed the sheets into [her] mouth.” The prosecution focused on the amount of struggle that Tipple applied to her attacker, rather than the amount of force he used against her:

Court. What passed then, did you make any resistance?

Tipple. Yes.

Court. How did he manage to keep you down on the bed, did you resist?

Tipple. He forced me down and laid on me in such a manner that I could not get away.

…

Court. Did you make all the resistance in your power? Consider one hand was engaged at your mouth?

Tipple. I resisted as much as I could.

The Court continues to interrogate Tipple, demanding to know whether she managed to injure Curtis in her opposition, thus demonstrating that any lack of resistance was aligned with an absence of virtue on the part of the victim. If found wanting, this served

as an indication that the accusation could be false. As Laura Gowing notes, “the stories that men told about sex automatically received more credit than those of women.”

Similar to Laurentina, whose precarious position in society following La Roque’s unsolicited advances placed her outside the proper sphere of society, thus entrapping her into the role of mistress, Fatima’s situation is complicated by her status as a captive and the implication that her only choice is Heli or death. Therefore, when she testifies that Heli’s “generosity and affection won [her] heart,” such dissembling can be interpreted as her continued endeavor to preserve her safety, particularly as Heli, her captor, is present throughout the recitation of her tale (266). At the completion of her narrative, Ferdinand remains silent, reflecting that “he found little to congratulate himself on the discovery of a relation so nearly connected by blood: whose conduct, even by her own acknowledgement, had been so faulty and reprehensible” (266).

Ferdinand’s negative reaction to Fatima’s narrative is anticipated in two earlier events, the first when Fatima, learning of her connection to Ferdinand, “sunk back…repeating the word sister, sister” and exclaiming “oh! If that is true, you must despise and hate me” (267). Fatima then “burst into tears, and drew down her veil,” suggesting both her desire to “hide” her story and her acknowledgement that despite the validity of her claims, eighteenth-century ideology deems her behavior at fault (267). The second circumstance occurs when Ferdinand declares to Fatima, prior to hearing her testimony: “Whoever you are, in me you will find a friend ready to promote your happiness with Heli, since he is the man of your choice” (264). These words, spoken in direct opposition to the obvious implications of the situation, serve as a foreshadowing of Ferdinand’s subsequent denial of her rape narrative. Consequently, Ferdinand is disgusted by the recitation of her testimony, finding that the word “sister,” seemed “unwillingly pronounced” on his lips (267). However, it is not by her capture and ensuing rape by the Turk, but by her own decision, and simultaneous admission, to take the aforementioned nobleman as a lover that Ferdinand condemns her behavior as “faulty” and “reprehensible.” Ferdinand’s reaction to Fatima’s testimony recalls the temporally displaced narratives discussed in Chapter One, in which the female

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characters, similar to Fatima, are punished for their participation in clandestine marriage and thus the necessary disobedience to patriarchy that this action demands.

Durston points to Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* when he writes that “women of bad reputation had little prospect of success and any suggestion that a complainant had been sexually active outside marriage would hugely undermine her case.” Beattie supports this idea, arguing that “any doubts” raised by examining the victim’s “character and past life” were “often sufficient to overthrow the charge.” Similar to Cadwell, Fatima’s acknowledgement of a previous love affair aligns her with prostitution, thus making her claim of rape impossible. Moreover, it is because of Fatima’s ability to engage in language strictly forbidden by contemporary codes of femininity that her narrative is condemned by Ferdinand, here representing both prosecutor and judge, with his decision to disregard the obvious implications of rape serving as his denouncement of Fatima’s accusation. It is for such transgressions that Ferdinand wishes to exile Fatima from society in “either a residence in the country with some worthy family” or in “a convent, where [he] will pay for [her] pension” (267). However, Ferdinand observes that “the libertine life in which she had engaged by her own confession, gave but small hopes that she could be reconciled to a retired and regular mode of conduct” (268). Originally, “libertine” was defined as “a freedman, an emancipated slave,” and it was only after the sixteenth century that it took on a darker meaning in a misunderstanding that has been traced to the Latin word *libertinus*. Here, although Ferdinand intends the latter interpretation, for Fatima, the original and true meaning of the word *libertine* correlates to her own emancipation as she has now left Turkey, the site of her enslavement, leading her to proclaim: “I am now free” (267). Despite her assertion, Heli plans to retire Fatima to a secluded location where she will not “be exposed to the eyes of men” (268). Yet this attempt at further subjugation is rendered impossible, for just as accusations of rape destroyed a woman’s reputation and by extension her acceptance into society, so too does Fatima’s admission prevent her return to a “regular” or “normal” mode of life.

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Following her declaration of freedom, Fatima’s previous deference to Heli is excised as her determination to regain autonomy leads her to rebel against his authority. This revolt is discovered when Ferdinand later visits Heli’s cottage and learns that Fatima has since deserted the Turk. Recounting the circumstances surrounding her alleged abandonment, Heli describes how when two men approached their cottage, Fatima came out and began to talk to them, at which point Heli “commanded her, pretty roughly, to retire” (276). However, Fatima refused and Heli, “highly provoked” at her behavior, “pushed her in, and shut the door” (276). Still refusing to obey, “the traitress opened the window above,” and Heli, “enraged to madness…flew in, dragged her from the window, and gave her a little chastisement, though not what she deserved” (276.) At this point, Fatima began to cry out, which brought the two men into the house, where they forced the door and “snatched her” from Heli’s hands. (276) Following this, she ran down the stairs and out the front door, where she was placed on one of the men’s horses and then disappeared with them. Although Heli seeks to impose his own interpretation onto the events, his recitation betrays Fatima’s disappearance as one of “escape” rather than “desertion,” with the two men serving as her liberators as opposed to thieves who “snatch” her from Heli’s hands. At the conclusion of Heli’s tale, Ferdinand declares:

I despise and detest Fatima; she is a worthless woman; you may rejoice to get rid of one who would have proved a constant source of trouble to you; I vindicate her not; not do I desire ever to hear of her more, because I am convinced she is incorrigible (277).

Following this, Ferdinand offers Heli, the man who has raped his sister and who at this moment also happens to have an unconscious woman (Louisa from Chapter One) in his home whom he intends to similarly rape and take as his captive, “any services” he can offer him (277). Ferdinand’s proclamation that Fatima is a “worthless” woman can be located in her employment of violence, which threatens to breach social order. Garthine Walker writes that the “ability to assault and fight one’s enemies” was “thought to arise from the emotion of ‘boldness,’” an attribute that, in men, was considered to be “noble”
but which did not extend to women.\textsuperscript{300} Rather, Walker notes that one contemporary tract claimed that when “boldness passeth the bounds she ought to keep, none causeth greater disorder, no is more an enemy to man, and to civil society.”\textsuperscript{301} Consequently, Fatima’s engagement with violence—a “language” or “communication” that contemporary ideology reserved exclusively for men—renders her an “enemy” or “demon,” once more recalling images of “abnormality” and “monstrosity.”

Fatima’s ability to transgress gender boundaries is also made possible through her cross-dressing. Fatima first appears in the novel disguised as a male soldier with a “drawn scimitar” and is “so perfectly disguised by her dress and mustaches, that [Ferdinand] had not the least suspicion of her sex” (262). And yet, even when her true identity is revealed and she is introduced to Ferdinand in her “proper habit,” he “recoil[es] a few paces back, with all the marks of strong surprise, and even terror in his countenance” (264). Although Ferdinand attributes this temporary loss of composure by explaining that Fatima “bears the strongest resemblance to my late dear and honored father, that ever I beheld in two persons of different ages and sex,” it is Fatima’s alignment with the masculine that causes “great fear” and “dread” to Ferdinand (264).

Catherine Craft-Fairchild notes that while cross-dressing for women during the eighteenth-century was accepted and in some cases praised, such sentiment began to change as the century drew to a close.\textsuperscript{302} This shift can be located in Thomas Lacquer’s introduction of the two-sex model, replacing pre-existing notions that the female body was merely an inverted version of the male. Now, genders were considered distinct and opposite and this “stability” was dependent upon “the maintenance of a clearly visible line of demarcation between the roles of men and women,” and which the act of cross-dressing violated.\textsuperscript{303} As such, women who donned masculine disguises were considered

\textsuperscript{300} Garthine Walker, \textit{Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England} (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003), 85-86.
\textsuperscript{301} A Physical Discourse Touching the Nature and Effects of the Courageous Passions (London 1658), 4-6, 30-1, quoted in Garthine Walker, \textit{Crime, Gender and Social Order}, 86.
\textsuperscript{303} Craft-Fairchild, “Cross-Dressing and the Novel,” 177.
threatening in their potential to “usurp male privileges,” transforming the engagement of cross-dressing into an “unnatural and subversive” action.\textsuperscript{304}

This threat is literalized when Fatima, adorned in a “man’s dress” and pointing her sword at Ferdinand, states: “if you insult, detain or give me up, I will immediately declare my affinity to you, claim the late Count Renaud as my father, protest he was married to my mother, commence a process against you for his fortune” (316). Here, Fatima embodies the image of the violent woman that “haunted the eighteenth-century imagination as a threat to masculine authority and patriarchal familial order.”\textsuperscript{305} Her ensuing warning, “one word of discovery, and you are ruined,” attests to the power that Fatima has to endanger Ferdinand’s inheritance (316). This threat feminizes Ferdinand into an ensuing silence, as he “kept his eyes on her as long as she remained in sight, with so much mute surprise, such horror and astonishment, that it took from him all power of speech or motion for some minutes” (316). After reclaiming his ability to speak, Ferdinand ponders how it is “possible that woman, so soft, so lovely, so interesting in her gentleness, can, by vice and profligacy of manners, attain to such a degree of boldness and impudent bravery, as would shame the most hardened of mankind!” (317).

Once more aligning Fatima with masculinity, Ferdinand’s simultaneous questioning of the “possibility” that woman could acquire such traits works to suggest the “impossibility” of Fatima’s survival. Craft-Fairchild has noted that any cross-dressing female character within a novel published between 1790 and 1835 is “condemned” by either social ostracisation or death.\textsuperscript{306} Fatima’s gender dissembling therefore foreshadows her own demise, with her eventual death a result of her determination to retain a “casket of jewels” which belongs to her (316). The ownership of these valuables is a source of constant contention throughout the novel, as Ferdinand, believing them to belong to Heli, orders her to return “the casket of jewels” she has stolen. Fatima responds:

\textsuperscript{304} Craft-Fairchild, “Cross-Dressing and the Novel,” 173.
You may do with me, sir, as you please; you are my brother; it will be honourable for you to deliver your sister into the hands of justice; but be assured, whilst I have life I will retain my jewels; jewels which Heli plundered me of, when he basely broke into the women’s tents, rifled our baggage, and carried me off; these jewels were my property, and I will swear to it (316).

Regardless of origin, these jewels are representative of Fatima’s agency and thus are essential in the reclamation of her narrative. Now free from the censure of Heli, Fatima can reveal her full story to Ferdinand, testifying how Heli “basely” or “despicably” “broke into” or “breached” the “tents” or “shelter” of eighteenth-century law and “rifled” “stripped” and “plundered” her body before claiming her as his property (316).

Similar to Laurentina, Fatima’s final appearance is androgynous in nature as she emerges “wrapped in a cloak, and her head so covered that no part of her face was visible but her eyes” (380). Throwing off her hood and declaring that she seeks “justice” from Ferdinand, she identifies herself as “No longer Fatima…but Charlotte, daughter of the late Count Renaud, as such entitled to be provided for by his heir” (380). Having escaped both Turkey and Heli, Fatima now frees herself from the final vestige of her captivity, her enforced name. The transformation from Charlotte to Fatima and finally to Charlotte, daughter of Count Renaud, underscores issues of namelessness that persist in nearly all of the temporally displaced narratives under analysis within this work. For, similar to the other heroines of temporally displaced narratives discussed previously, Fatima’s continual shifting of names, and thus identities, suggests the difficulty in retaining agency. That Fatima chooses her given name of “free man,” in conjunction with her claim of entitlement to her previously denied patrilineal surname, not only suggests her recent emancipation but also her “monstrous” gender liminality.

Once more endangering the patriarchal position of Ferdinand, Fatima announces: “I come to claim by my right, and to tell you, that secure as you think yourself of the title and estates you take possession of, I can annihilate your claims in a moment, if you dispute mine” (380). In retaliation towards Fatima’s “boldness” or “insolence,” Ferdinand informs her that not only has Heli “instituted a criminal process” against her for the robbery of the jewels, but that her story will soon be made public and thereby prove the “depravity of [her] mind” (385). Faced with the realization that her testimony
will be vilified by the masculine voices of Ferdinand and Heli, coupled with the impossibility of reclaiming her jewels and thus her autonomy, Fatima “snatched a dagger from her side…and then plunged it into her own bosom” (386). The implications of Fatima’s final words, “Heli, you, and all revenged, and I am beyond your power,” resonates with her final violent and masculine act, as she manages through death to reclaim her narrative by subverting patriarchy’s attempt to vilify her (386).

(Mis)Representation and Punishment

In *The Necromancer*, Helen, despite her apparent transgressions, eludes the punishment often inflicted upon female characters who breach the boundaries set by patriarchy. In fact, Volkert concludes Helen’s tale by informing the Lieutenant that he was eventually able to secure her marriage to Henry, additionally noting that they seemed happily married. For although she is mis(represented) as a sexually-licentious femme fatale, Helen, according to Volkert’s depiction, falls short of the “monstrosity” invoked by the depictions of both Laurentina and Fatima. Ultimately, then, it is in the engagement of decidedly masculine attributes that the need for punishment can be located. For, while Laurentina’s narrative (as told by La Roque) concludes with the knowledge that she is given a monetary settlement and retires to her former abode, Laurentina is forever defamed by her depiction in La Roque’s narrative and his subsequent (mis)representation of her. Indeed, one of the final references to Laurentina is when La Roque says: “she whose Circean charms had accomplished his overthrow” (450). Within the space of his narrative, La Roque has presented Laurentina as a siren and now concludes with likening her to the even more treacherous (and powerful) figure of Circe, a woman inherently aligned with witchcraft. In this final pronouncement, La Roque not only further condemns Laurentina, but also places his “overthrow” on her entirely, once more absconding from the responsibility that his actions have led to such misfortunes.

Fatima too fails in the obtainment of a happy ending, despite her repeated efforts to reclaim her narrative. Following Fatima’s death, her servant, Dupree, corroborates her master’s testimony that Heli has no rights to the “box of jewels,” as the “Count had
given to [Fatima] (emphasis original)” these valuables (387). Dupree makes this confession upon her deathbed, her impending demise the result of a death wound inflicted by Fatima. Therefore, Dupree is no longer bound by loyalty to her mistress. Freed from this bond, Dupree confesses to the falsehoods of Fatima (including that Ferdinand’s father had lawfully wed her mother), and yet still maintains that the jewels belonged to Fatima, given to her by the Count. Despite the validation of Fatima’s testimony, Ferdinand concludes that he “must ever pity her fate,” as she was “deserted by every connexion,” while simultaneously refusing to acknowledge his own complicity in Fatima’s eventual suicide (388). Here, the jewels function to confirm the validity of Fatima’s testimony, however, even in light of the evidence now presented by Dupree, Ferdinand chooses to ignore it, as he has already made his conviction. Similar, then, to the Evans case discussed in Chapter Two (in which the Judge dismisses the testimony of all the female witnesses), Ferdinand disregards the voice of Dupree, for as a woman, her words have no weight within the courtroom manifested by Ferdinand. Transgressions are frequent within *The Mysterious Warning*, as explored in Louisa’s narrative (Chapter One) and Eugenia’s narrative (Chapter Two), but forgiveness for such crimes is rare. Out of the three women (Louisa, Eugenia and Fatima), it is Louisa alone who manages to reclaim her narrative and is rewarded with another patriarchal marriage, while Eugenia condemns herself to a nunnery and Fatima commits suicide. The difference in their fates suggests a varying scale of offense, as both Eugenia and Fatima willfully, and with full knowledge, attempt to challenge patriarchy—the first by engaging in a second marriage after running away from her initial enforced marriage and the second by engaging in a sexual relationship outside of marriage. Conversely, Louisa’s engagement in a clandestine marriage is legally (it is eventually revealed) legitimate, even if she did wed without her father’s consent—indeed it is important to note that her father did not object to the marriage in question, but rather did not know about the marriage. That the fate suffered by Fatima is the most violent can be read as punishment for her additional rebellion against gender norms dictated by patriarchy, as she fluidly moves between male and female, adopting characteristics and dress to suit her means. Fatima’s final act, then, can be read as an extension of such defiance. For in Fatima’s conclusion, Parsons does not submit her to the judgment of law, but allows her, once again, to defy
patriarchy in her refusal to adhere to contemporary ideology.

While the temporally displaced narratives discussed in this chapter engage with the misrepresentation of testimony in eighteenth-century cases of rape, the following chapter addresses the exclusion of testimony in eighteenth-century sodomy trials. As previously mentioned, contemporary references to sodomy were excised from print, and accordingly, references to sodomy are buried within the temporally displaced narratives penned by the male authors of the ‘Horrid’ novels. As such, the following chapter explores narratives of imprisonment and torture and the ensuing metaphorical implications that align these experiences with those incurred by convicted sodomites. In this way, both chapters interrogate the absented histories of the minority public excluded by legal texts, and the corresponding transformation by eighteenth-century ideology of these groups into something “monstrous” or “not fit to be mentioned.”
Chapter Four

‘Raising ghosts’: The Spectral Presence of Sodomitical Discourse in *The Midnight Bell, The Necromancer and the Horrid Mysteries*

On 27 September 1810, thousands of spectators lined the streets awaiting the passage of six convicted sodomites, who were sentenced to stand in the Pillory in London's Haymarket. One journalist reported that “at an early hour the Old Bailey was completely blockaded,” causing the closure of the Sessions, as well as local shops from Ludgate-Hill to the Haymarket, and leading several newspapers to declare the event as “the most astonishing public punishment of the century.”

Sentenced for a crime that contemporary publications deemed “not fit to be mentioned,” the convicted were met with the arrival of “ammunition wagons” selling “offal, dung” and rotten fruit and vegetables, “together with the remains of divers dogs and cats.”

One account notes that “the first salute received by the prisoners was a volley of mud,” so that by the time they had reached half way to the pillory, the prisoners, or “monsters,” as they were referred to in contemporary accounts, were “completely disfigured” and “not discernible as human beings.”

Ian McCormick writes of the incident, “dehumanized, [the convicted] became the perverse spectre of sodomy itself, all too present in its offensive exhibition, absent in its eradicated humanity.”

“Disfigured,” or “destroyed” by “mud” the prisoners embody the contemporary portrayal of sodomites as something “not fit to be mentioned,” as illustrated in the 1750 edition of *Old England: Or, Broadbottom Journal*, in which one anonymous author concluded that: “There are not words in our Language expressive enough of the Horror of it (emphasis original).”

The link between ‘horror’ and ‘sodomy’ is furthered conveyed in the physicality of the prisoners, who are, not only covered in mud but also

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308 Fone, *Columbia Anthology*, 212.
309 Fone, *Columbia Anthology*, 213.
311 *Old England: Or, Broadbottom Journal* 2 June 1750.
“battered” by “hits in the face,” leaving one with “a lump...as large as an egg” and another bearing “two eyes...completely closed up.” 312 In their indistinguishable state, as “so thickly covered with filth, that a vestige of the human figure was scarcely discernable” they are transformed into something “disfigured.” 313 The conflicting duality of the accused’s simultaneous presence and absence is an exemplification of the contradictory juxtaposition of contemporary ideology on sodomy—one that culminated in the latter half of the eighteenth century, with the demand for both silence and public punishment.

The establishment of such practice is often traced back to the sixteenth-century jurist Sir Edward Coke, although it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that accounts of sodomy trials began to disappear from publications that had once printed “vibrant and detailed evidence” for public consumption. 314 In *The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England* (1628), Coke writes that sodomy, or buggery, is “a detestable and abominable sin, amongst Christians not to be named,” thereby initiating what legal commentators and scholars refer to as “the injunction to silence.” 315 The influence of Coke’s objection to the ‘naming’ of sodomy is evident in various pamphlets that appear throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with writers condemning sodomy as an “unnatural crime” that carried the potential to unleash an “uncontrollable confusion” among society. 316 Netta Murray Goldsmith argues that the influence of Coke’s “injunction to silence” can be seen in the courtroom as early as

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312 Fone, *Columbia Anthology*, 213.
314 Clive Emsley, Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, "Communities – Homosexuality," *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, www.oldbaileyonline.org (December 7, 2013). Coke is often credited as being the initiator of the movement to silence all mention of sodomy in legal matters. Although it would take until the eighteenth century to adopt his suggestion completely, contemporary critics and historians point towards Coke as the reason that such silence was enacted.
316 Some of the more famous pamphlets that were published included: George Lesly’s *Fire and Brimstone, Or, the Destruction of Sodom and A Treatise and Wherin are Strict Observations upon That destestable and most shocking sin of sodomy* (1728).
1742, when one reporter from the Old Bailey expressed his hesitation in writing down the physical details of a sodomy case as “they were not fit to be committed to paper.”

George Haggerty further notes that within contemporary publications there was a continued absence of description when it came to defining the actual act of sodomy, with broadsides and fictional accounts of sodomy remaining deliberately vague, while trial accounts managed to “talk around sodomy” altogether.

Over a century later, William Blackstone echoes Coke’s sentiments in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765), writing:

I will not act so disagreeable a part, to my readers as well as myself, as to dwell any longer on a subject, the very mention of which is a disgrace to human nature. It will be more eligible to imitate in this respect the delicacy of our English law, which treats it, in its very indictments, as a crime not fit to be named.

Accordingly, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the words “sodomy” and “buggery” were replaced in print by “unnatural crime,” “detestable and abominable crime,” one “not fit to be mentioned,” and “among Christians not to be named,” as the former were thought to be “utterly unfit for the public eye.”

The *Daily Advertiser*, for example, refused to name sodomy, instead referring to it as “the unnatural and abominable crime of ****,” the asterisks in use representing a popular method of exclusion called “gutting.” Consequently, throughout the 1790s, it was common to find that Courts “ordered the publication of [sodomy cases] to be suppressed,” claiming

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the evidence presented was “unfit for publication” as “the nature of [such] case[s] obviously preclude[d] [them] from stating the particulars of it.”

The motivation behind the demand for silence on matters of sodomy can be located, Jody Greene argues, in anxieties about contamination. Such threats prompted contemporary debates about the risk of making trials involving sodomy known to the public. In his pamphlet *Principles of Penal Law* (1771), William Eden questioned whether it was safe to have public prosecutions for sodomy, as he worried that such publicity would encourage the continued perpetuation of such crimes. In 1780, Edmund Burke gave a speech on the crime which he stated “could scarcely be mentioned, much less defended or extenuated,” further warning that sodomy was “a crime of all others the most detestable, because it tended to vitiate the morals of the whole community, and to defeat the first and chief end of society.” Burke’s words betray the real threat that sodomy posed, as the word itself represented “all that lies outside the system of alliance that judicially guarantees marriage and inheritance, the prerogative of blood, as the linchpin of social order.” Coke warned that sodomy was treason against the King of Heaven: thus, it was not considered a crime against persons or property, but was treated similar to treason in that it was “a crime against order” and patriarchy. The punishment for treason was to be hanged and quartered, the process of which including the evisceration of bowels, or “gutting,” incidentally, the same name of the popular method used to exclude the word ‘sodomite’ from print. That sodomy contained the power to upset “the order of things” is evident, McFarlane argues, in the

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326 Haggerty, “Keyhole Testimony,” 27.
portrayal of sodomy in literature as a “disordered inverted, or ‘preposterous’ act.” McFarlane cites the OED’s definition of “preposterous” as “contrary to the order of nature,” once again aligning sodomy with something that is outside the natural order.

In an effort to contain the spread of sodomy and the threat it presented to patriarchy, the suppression of knowledge on sodomy was made possible.

Much of the information gathered on sodomy in the eighteenth century originates from trial records, a source which increasingly becomes problematic in the second half of the century as “trials for sodomy itself gradually fall silent.” H.G. Cocks notes that “the attempt to prevent discussion of sodomy was an established part of English legal tradition,” and as such, sodomy cases were either not recorded or destroyed. Cocks writes that proceedings for sodomy cases were not recorded from 1775 onwards, despite the fact that every other criminal trial was covered in detail and recorded in bound volumes. Leslie Moran further supports this view when he maintains that “in order to speak of buggery within that legal tradition, the speaker had to proceed according to a command to remain silent,” and that eighteenth-century cases “demonstrate this juxtaposition between the injunction to silence and the requirement to speak.” By failing to keep any written records of these trials, the “verdicts and names were the only way in which those convicted of unnatural crimes were recorded in official legal documentation.”

Such anxieties regarding the naming of sodomy in public also affected the voice of the accused during trial. Goldsmith claims that defendants not only had the right to speak for themselves, but that those who could afford to do so were permitted to hire a lawyer. However, such claims are challenged by Cocks’ contention that an

329 McFarlane, *The Sodomite in Fiction and Satire*, 34. The latter is taken from Cleland’s *A Woman of Pleasure*, where he describes a sexual act between two men as a “project of preposterous pleasure.”

330 McFarlane, *The Sodomite in Fiction and Satire*, 34.


unprecedented “silencing of the accused by the trial process” took place during the late eighteenth century.\footnote{Cocks, \textit{Nameless Offences}, 87. Goldsmith, \textit{The Worst of Crimes}, 42.} For while Goldsmith explains that the sodomite could “cross-examine the prosecution witnesses…could also call his own witnesses…and give his version of events,” Cocks references John Langbein’s seminal work on the criminal trial in the late eighteenth century to corroborate his argument that those accused of the criminal offence of sodomy were denied the privilege of speech.\footnote{Goldsmith, \textit{The Worst of Crimes}, 42. H.G. Cocks, “Making the Sodomite Speak: Voices of the Accused in English Sodomy Trials, c. 1800-98,” \textit{Gender & History} 18, no. 1 (2006): 87-107. Cocks writes that John Langbein shows that in the late eighteenth century “rules of evidence began to emerge which prevented defendants from giving evidence, until 1898, when these rules were partially overturned,” 88.} Cocks claims that newly introduced rules of evidence forced defendants into silence, a state that was in “stark contrast” to trials of the previous centuries, which “not only featured strong participation by the defendant, but…were surrounded by a vibrant print culture.”\footnote{Cocks, “Making the Sodomite Speak,” 87-89. Cocks locates the sodomite’s ‘voice,’ in exculpatory texts, radical squibs, and criminal petitions. However, Cocks places his argument primarily in the nineteenth century, with all evidence originating from 1800 onwards. These opportunities for speech did not seem to be available to the accused men of the 1790s.} The “injunction to silence” in both the courtroom and in print took place at the same time that “public anxiety about the existence and activities of sodomites led to an increase in public fascination with their punishment.”\footnote{Fone, \textit{Columbia Anthology}, 211.} Consequently, it was during this period of silence that the greatest number of prosecutions for sodomy took place, as officials believed they could curtail such a spread with notices of severe punishment.\footnote{Cocks, \textit{Nameless Offences}, 7-8. Cocks asserts that “Starting in about 1780, increasing numbers of men were prosecuted for homosexual offenses.” It was an increase that lasted throughout the nineteenth century, although he locates the majority of these prosecutions to have taken place between 1780-1850.}  

Over the course of the 1790s, the Old Bailey tried six cases that featured men who “feloniously wickedly diabolically and against the order of nature” committed acts of sodomy.\footnote{Old Bailey Sessions Rolls. 24 February 1790, No. OB/SR. 274, Joseph Bacon/Richard Briggs.} During the eighteenth century, the word ‘sodomy’ was not tied exclusively to homosexuality. It contained a myriad of definitions, including “a sin committed by mankind with mankind or with brute beast or by womankind with brute
beast.” Additionally, sodomy was not limited to sexual acts between men, but included women as well. As such, although there are numerous cases involving sodomy that appeared at the Old Bailey during the 1790s, the scope here has been limited to those that present the probability of consensual relationships. For the purposes of this thesis, a relationship is defined by those cases that were classified as offenses rather than assaults, which indicates the use of violence. Furthermore, they involve accusations brought by a third party and focus on relationships between men who are of legal age.

Newspaper references to these trials are brief and contain little information. When Joseph Bacon and Richard Briggs were tried in 1790, the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* reported that evidence from the trial was “utterly unfit for the public eye,” while in 1790, when Alexander Leake stood trial for sodomy, the Sessions Papers wrote only that “The evidence Upon this Trial being so indecent, is unfit for publication.” Just one year later, in the trial of William Winklin, the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* observed that “the evidence on trial being extremely indecent, the court ordered the publication of it to be suppressed.” Similarly, local newspapers were restrictive in the details they allowed to be printed, noting only the convict’s crime, and avoiding the terms “sodomy” and “buggery” in preference to references such as “a most detestable crime” or a crime “not fit to be mentioned.” The Old Bailey Sessions Rolls provides only the charge, the outcome, and in a few cases, the accuser. As such, the accused are defined only by their name and their crime, as no records featuring their individual voices exist.

J.M. Beattie makes a similar argument about the relationship between self and act when discussing the eighteenth-century punishment of the pillory, the very intention of which was to “mark [the sodomite] out in public” so that the townspeople would know he was “a person not to fit to be trusted, but to be shunned and avoided by all

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creditable and honest men.”

Jody Greene too, notes that the pillory, by publicly associating the accused with their crime, “made acts into behaviors, and behaviors into enduring personal attributes.” The public censure of these men operates in the same fashion. With criminal law “determin[ing] what could and could not be said legitimately about homosexuality,” coupled with the law’s continual referral to sodomites as “the thing that cannot be named,” the accused sodomite transforms into that very thing which society warns against. As the law’s authority sanctioned force, it became a form of violence in its “termination of a person’s liberty and freedom” and “prohibition of particular social relations.” Moran argues, then, that law can be read as an act of violence: violence is defined by the use of force and the law must be enforced, therefore, the law is violent.

The first part of this chapter argues that the temporally embedded narratives of trial, torture and imprisonment within Francis Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell* engage with contemporary discourse on the subject of sodomy and silence. Although the accused featured in *The Midnight Bell* are guilty of murder, the violence used to simultaneously uncover their secrets and silence them is representative of contemporary ideology and the law’s determination to silence sodomites. Just as the image of the muddy, “disfigured” sodomites signals their dehumanization, when read in the context of eighteenth-century sodomy trials, Lathom’s narratives become emblematic of the silence and the discursive strategy of debasement that accused sodomites experienced under eighteenth-century law. As such, within *The Midnight Bell*, the law or violence or both is used to dehumanize the individual until “death,” both real and metaphorical, offers the only possibility of reclaiming agency.

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346 Greene, “Public Secrets,” 213.
Secrecy and Display in Francis Lathom’s Life

Francis Lathom may well have been aware of the relationship that existed between silence and sodomy, as various biographies have long speculated about his own connection with homosexuality. In the absence of facts, much has been conjectured about Lathom’s life. Born in Rotterdam in 1774, Lathom moved to Norwich, England when he was a young man and subsequently became a successful playwright and novelist. However, despite this success, in either 1802 or 1803, Lathom relocated to Scotland, where he remained until the time of his death in 1832. It is the question of what precipitated this move that has garnered the most attention among his biographers. While some have surmised that Lathom was the illegitimate son of a wealthy Englishman, thus ensuring an annuity that allowed him to continue writing in any location, David Punter has rightly questioned the validity of this assertion. Tracing the claim of Lathom’s illegitimacy to a passage written for the Dictionary of National Biography during the nineteenth century, Punter writes that since its publication, no evidence has been discovered to substantiate his parentage. Others biographers believe that Lathom’s relocation to Scotland was the result of a homosexual affair that forced him to flee from England.

Such speculation first originated in Montague Summer’s The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel (1938), despite no evidence to prove his theory. More recently, James D. Jenkins writes that although a homosexual affair was possible, another explanation could be “that, in a city as charged with political and religious discord as Norwich was in the late 1790s, the cause of Lathom’s departure from Norwich resulted from a falling-out over politics or religion.” However Jenkins does acknowledge that the notion of Lathom being homosexual is “quite plausible” based on “the portrayal of male-male friendships in many of Lathom’s novels…where the

350 David Punter, “Introduction,” in The Midnight Bell, by Francis Lathom (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2007), viii. David Punter writes that Lathom’s move to Scotland must have been well-funded, “to an extent not entirely to be accounted for by his literary career,” but that the origins of these funds remain unknown.

“friendship” between the two young men…is obviously of a homosexual nature.”  

Furthermore, Jenkins cites Franz Potter’s biography on Lathom, the latter of which argues that Lathom’s decision to leave Norwich might have originated as a result of his father’s will, which contained the stipulation that Lathom must separate himself from his wife and three children in order to continue receiving his annuity. Jenkins points out that this account might be explained by Lathom’s homosexuality if one were to posit that the reason behind Lathom’s father’s request for his son to absent himself from his wife and children’s lives was because he did not approve of him for these exact reasons.  

Only the barest facts are known of Lathom’s personal life in Scotland, although he is reported to have settled in Fyvie, Aberdeenshire, with a friend name Alexander Rennie. A local publication, The Banffshire Journal, reported that "[Lathom] was somewhat of a mystery” as "he didna wear the clothes of hearabouts." Instead, “he put on parti-coloured garments with grace and elegance in the manner of a play actor. He developed a taste of whiskey which "he drank a little too freely and a little too often." Lathom’s “mysterious” life is complicated further by the fact that, upon his death, he was “buried in a lonely churchyard…in a grave marked by the wrong name.”  

Punter considers Lathom’s life as “a construct, a narrative,” in which the dichotomy of “secrecy and display” are apparent in Lathom’s “dandified” appearance and his simultaneous refusal to “drop not a single reliable hint about his own family and ancestry” to the villagers he lived among. Such notions of “secrecy and display” recall the relationship between the demand for silence on the subject of sodomy and its public punishment in the latter part of the eighteenth century. It is perhaps for this reason, then, that questions of identity resonate within The Midnight Bell, as the two

356 Jenkins, “Introduction,” x.  

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embedded tales under analysis exemplify the accused sodomite’s struggle to retain individualism when faced with a contemporary ideology determined to silence and punish all evidence of sodomitical practices.

The primary narrative of *The Midnight Bell* begins as the hero of the novel, Alphonsus Cohenburg, receives instructions from his mother to flee Cohenburg Castle. Clutching a bloody dagger, she informs Alphonsus that his father has been murdered and demands that her son leave for fear that he too is in danger. During his exile, Alphonsus is tormented by the question of what befell his parents that mysterious night, eventually finding himself at the Convent of St. Helena. Here, Alphonsus meets, falls in love with, and marries Lauretta, a young novice at the church. Not long after, an aristocrat named Theodore hires a group of bandits to kidnap Lauretta in an attempt to steal her from Alphonsus. The remainder of the novel is dedicated to Alphonsus locating Lauretta and attempting to solve the mystery surrounding Cohenburg Castle. Embedded within this first, or primary, story is the temporally displaced narrative of the Hermit, whom Lauretta encounters while fleeing from the bandits.

Ideas of containment are central to the Hermit’s tale, reflected in both its content and structure. When first introduced to the heroine, the Hermit is living in self-imposed seclusion, his exile from society an extenuation of the confinement he has previously endured. This demarcation is mirrored in the structure of Lathom’s novel, as the Hermit’s narrative is separate and distinct from that of the first or primary narrative. For, although the Hermit is present within the first story (he offers assistance to Lauretta as she is fleeing Theodore), his tale of misfortune remains entirely contained within his narrative of temporal displacement. Indeed, even his brief presence within the first narrative is eventually negated as he fails in his attempts to aid the heroine: upon articulation of his narrative, he succumbs to old age, leaving Lauretta defenseless and open to the impending attack of Theodore. Notions of containment are further emphasized through the anonymity of the Hermit’s identity. While the employment of disguise is more explicit in Lathom’s other embedded narrative (discussed later in this chapter), notions of secrecy and display still persist throughout the Hermit’s tale. Patricia Duncker notes that “queer lives…are often lived within Gothic codes,” and that
such narratives often “hinge upon transvestitism, seeming, and disguise.” Here, the Hermit reveals to Lauretta the truth of who he once was—without ever revealing his name—an admission that betrays the designation of ‘Hermit’ to be a concealment, an identity that he has adopted for fifteen years only in order to survive. The notion that this disguise is one that has been assumed (rather than reflect an internal transformation) is intimated in the Hermit’s own admission that his current abode once belonged to someone else and that he had “found it deserted; its late possessor having been some years dead” (89). Therefore, the character of the Hermit (and his place of residence) is one that has been consciously inhabited by the man now known as the Hermit in order to stay hidden from the rest of the world, thus containing the secret of his former self.

The Hermit's tale focuses on his relationship with a man named Dulac, whose subsequent abduction places the Hermit on a trajectory that recalls eighteenth-century anxieties over the spread of sodomy. The name ‘Dulac’ is significant here, as the French translation of “du lac” is “lake,” an image that, because of its relation to water, is “closely connected with the symbolism of the abyss” and “serves to corroborate the fatal implications of the lake-symbol.” In Middle English “lake” also carried the dual meaning “pit of hell,” a definition that stands at odds with its traditional association with “self-contemplation, consciousness and revelation.” While both definitions resonate within the text, it is Dulac’s association with the “fatal implications” of the symbol that serve as a foreshadowing of the Hermit’s descent into “hell” or a “state of misery.” This descent commences at the very start of his tale, when, on a journey to visit his recently-wed sister, the Hermit’s horse is injured, forcing him to seek assistance at the nearest mansion. The owner is Dulac, and although he has no rooms to spare, he offers the Hermit a place to spend the night, explaining that: “if you would condescend to accept half of my pallet, you [are] heartily welcome to it.” Contemporary audiences may have been aware of the implications of this offer, as Rictor Norton writes that while it

was common practice in the eighteenth century for men to share beds, early Victorian magazines nevertheless made clear the threat of sodomy that came with such hospitality. Norton references an early pornographic magazine which features “an exquisite tale about a merchant's lad who shared a bed with a stranger” and who, after falling asleep, was "awaked in the night, by a most acute smarting pain, and a horrible commotion in his guts. In fact, he found the enemy in full possession of his close quarters, who would not retire until he had completed his errand."362

Following the Hermit’s acceptance of Dulac’s bed, the two journey to “the margin of a small lake,” where the Hermit admits that he is “entranced” by “the most romantic scenery imagination can figure” (79). Here, rather than “fatal” implications, the lake is transformed into a place of comfort for the Hermit, with the lake holding “the significance of a mirror, presenting an image of self-contemplation, consciousness and revelation.”363 Two paths are then revealed to the Hermit: to the right “lay the ruins of an ancient monastery, with its decayed bridge, forming a hazardous pass over a bubbling rivulet”; while on the left “the open country afforded a prospect of many leagues in extent, speckled at intervals with clusters of trees; straggling cottages, easy hills and browsing cattle” (79). While the left represents the possibility of hope in the tranquility of a pastoral scene, the other way contains the “ruins” of a “monastery,” the former of which finds its etymological meaning in “to live alone,” while similarly, “Hermit,” from the Greek eremos means “uninhabited, empty, desolate” (79).364 Thus, the path of “ruin” serves to indicate the Hermit’s own eventual fate, confirmed in his namelessness, as the prospect of this pastoral scene is eventually rendered impossible.

However, in this moment, as both men “reclined on the velvet turf,” the Hermit observes: “With the setting of that sun, whose glories I then admired, set my felicity on earth.” In that instance, he “felt sensations of the most exquisite happiness” (79). The only moment throughout the Hermit’s narration where the notion of happiness “on earth” is considered is here with Dulac beside him. Such idealism is soon threatened

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363 Cirlot, Dictionary of Symbols, 175.
when, returning to this same spot at sunset with Dulac’s nephew Bertrand, the man who will later imprison him, the Hermit observes: “A part seemed now to be vanishing, for the ingenious purpose of fixing the attention more strongly on that which was visible” (79). In this idea of “vanishing,” or “disappearing,” from the Latin evanescere or “die away,” the Hermit’s uninhibited path is once more stressed, as Lathom cannot foresee a future in which the Hermit can retain such “sensations of exquisite happiness.”

Furthermore, both visits to the lake, although they occur on the same day, are described as taking place at sunset. While this inconsistency in time may be nothing more than Lathom’s error, the strong contrast of these two scenes suggests the inner struggle of the Hermit, recalling Punter’s notion of the “secrecy and display” present in Lathom’s own biography.

Notions of secrecy are furthered in the burgeoning relationship between the Hermit and Dulac, perhaps most noticeably in the scene that takes place prior to their retiring for bed, and which depicts them as the sole inhabitants of the mansion, despite the noted presence of others. After returning to the castle, Dulac notices the Hermit’s fatigue and offers him a drink. The Hermit recalls that he “drank with pleasure of the cup as it went around,” finding himself “refreshed and exhilarated” (80). The evening soon passes “with the same harmony and satisfaction that the former one had done” and “about the same time as the preceding night,” they “retired to rest” (80). Allen Whitlock Grove, whom Punter names as “one of Lathom’s few commentators to date,” argues the “important presence” of this scene, writing that “Lathom describes the Hermit and his companion going to bed in a realistic…loving language absent elsewhere in the novel” and that such “minute details create a sense of domesticity and affection.” Punter furthers this argument, writing that the sharing of a bed “might be enough to raise the issue of the homoerotic liaison, even without the additional rites of bloodshed, shame and melancholy with which Lathom addresses the aftermath.” The bloodshed in question comes later that same night, when the Hermit wakes to discover that he has

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begun to “bleed violently at the nose” and although he “endeavored in vain for some
time to stop the flowing blood,” he is unable to do so (80).

While Punter attributes the blood to “rape and death” or a possibility of “re-
birth,” Julia Peakman argues that narratives involving fluid point “to the impossibility of
containing excess bodily fluids in relation to sexual outpourings as bodily
transgressions,” coinciding with the “eighteenth-century belief that the body would go
its own way, despite any constraints placed upon it.” An entry from an eighteenth-
century encyclopedia corroborates this idea, explaining that “nature, they say, left to
herself causes hemorrhages…we are not always alert to the fact that nature follows
particular laws in its system of “drainage,” that nature chooses precise times to act.”
Read in this context, the Hermit’s nosebleed becomes symbolic of nature’s response to
the “bodily transgressions” that society demands be kept “silent.” Therefore, the
“flowing blood” is representative of the Hermit’s inability to “stop” that which
contemporary law sought to keep “silent,” transforming the scene beyond simply a rite
of a passage and into a scene of protest. It is only when the Hermit draws a bucket of
water that “the cold soon produced the desired effect of stopping the blo-
od” (80). However, rather than the “shame” that Punter associates with this act, the conversation
leading to the Hermit’s decision to wash away the blood hints at motivations of self-
preservation as opposed to guilt.

Learning of the Hermit’s situation, Dulac “advised” him “to go and wash at the
well, in a small yard adjoining to the garden,” questioning “if [the Hermit] had ever
opened the door which led out of the house into the garden?” (80). Upon the Hermit’s
return, Dulac once again questions “if [the Hermit] had shut the outward door?” (80).
Here, Dulac, whose conversation the Hermit has previously acknowledged to be
“instructive” in nature, seems to be engaging in argot specific to sodomites, as he
advises the Hermit how to accomplish a task in secrecy. Norton writes that argot first

29.
369 Encyclopédie, 4:481, col. 2., quoted in Robert Purks MacCubin, ‘Tis Nature’s Fault:
Unauthorized Sexuality During the Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1998), 47.
emerged in the beginning of the eighteenth century, and here, Dulac’s repeated insistence that the “outer,” or “back,” door be locked is significant in that towards the end of the century, argot used to define sodomites referred to them as “gentlemen of the backdoor.”\(^{371}\) The presence of a secret language that keeps silent the true meaning of Dulac’s repeated questioning, alongside his urgency that the Hermit should be able to enter and exit the garden without the notice of others, can be read in light of contemporary anxieties of being associated with sodomy. Such secrecy recalls the need to keep “silent” or “out of public view” as any association with sodomy had the power to ruin one’s reputation.\(^{372}\) Indeed, Netta Murray Goldsmith writes, “short of being put to death, a man could suffer no worse fate than to be publicly branded a sodomite.”\(^ {373}\)

Later, when Dulac’s nieces visit their Uncle’s bedroom and return with “terror painted on their countenances” exclaiming “that [their] Uncle’s bed was all over blood!” the Hermit “blushes” and attempts to explain to the family the source of the bloody sheets (81). Realizing that Dulac’s family suspects him of harming the now missing Dulac, the Hermit finds “the door was now locked upon [him], to prevent [his] leaving the house” (82). The family’s reaction to Dulac’s disappearance, coupled with the “terror” or “great fear” that Dulac’s nieces experience, is symbolic of eighteenth-century anxieties about sodomy. Their decision to “lock” up the Hermit indulges in the eighteenth-century fear that sodomy was something that could be caught and then spread. Exemplified in the warning that Dulac’s nephew issues the Hermit—“tremble, young man; for offended justice is diligent in detecting the breakers of her law”—the family, now transformed into representations of this law, must “confine” the Hermit, just as the courts “confined” the “secret” of sodomy within the walls of the courthouse (82). The Hermit’s failure to “declare his innocence,” as “astonishment prevented [his] utterance,” becomes illustrative of the powerlessness of the sodomite to speak within a legal tradition “that required the speaker to proceed according to a command to remain silent” (82). Following his initial shock, the Hermit makes several attempts to explain the particulars of the previous night, but despite the Hermit asking the family “to hear

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[his] vindication,” his words are rendered ineffectual as they “did not seem to attend to [the Hermit], nor [he] believe listened” (82). Similar, then, to the narratives discussed in the previous chapter, the Hermit’s narrative undergoes a process of misrepresentation, as the family of Dulac, and therefore its patriarchal head, Bertrand, impose their own interpretation onto his testimony. For, as the Hermit’s narrative threatens eighteenth-century ideology in its (sodomitical) contents—just as Fatima’s narrative did in her acknowledgement of sex outside marriage—it is condemned and reconstructed into something “monstrous” in nature. Here, this monstrosity is confirmed when the Hermit is found with Dulac’s knife, “open, and bloody,” upon his person—indicating that his crime is now similarly “open” or “exposed” to the public—along with an ensuing guilty verdict, as the Hermit relates “my trial was short, and I heard myself condemned to die” (83-84).

Eighteenth-century law demanded proof of penetration and emission in order to convict one of sodomy. Here, there is evidence of emission in the bodily fluid of blood and penetration in the symbolic form of the bloody knife. The Hermit’s crime now “exposed” to the public, coupled with Bertrand’s previous refusal to hear his words, confirms the Hermit’s loss of identity as, publicly associated with his crime, he has been transformed into “the wrongful act” that eighteenth-century law demanded be “named by way of silence.” In light of such evidence, the family “bound [him] their prisoner” in an attempt to contain the threat that sodomitical practice posed to “the order of things,” as defined by patriarchal law (83). Eventually, the Hermit is sentenced to life as a slave on the island of Corsica, once more reinforcing the idea of sodomy as something to be contained and kept away from society. After twenty-two years, the Hermit is reunited with Dulac, who relates his own tale of kidnap and imprisonment by “suspicious characters” who had entered the house “by the door from the garden” (85). The reference to the garden door recalls the “instructions” given on that last night and suggests the reason for their dual suffering can be located in the impossibility of keeping their secret silent, thereby ensuring that the path of happiness glimpsed on their first day together remains unattainable. That this path will be denied to them is reinforced on

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374 Goldsmith, Worst of Crimes, 34.
their journey home, when their ship encounters a “violent” storm and the vessel is “split into two equal parts” (88). The Hermit is forced to watch as the ship is “swallowed up in a whirlpool,” once more recalling the “fatal implications” of the lake imagery that the Hermit’s association with Dulac forewarned. In this moment, he loses Dulac, observing that “he had vanished from my sight…Dulac was gone for ever” (88). Thus, Dulac (and their sodomitical relationship) remains firmly ensconced within the temporally displaced narrative, and thereby separate from the primary (patriarchal) story. Lathom’s refusal to admit either the Hermit or Dulac to the first narrative suggests the impossibility of their remittance to society, for, as convicts (guilty of sodomy) the evidence of their crime (their relationship) is now “open” and “exposed” to the public.

The loss of Dulac “is the completion of [the Hermit’s] misery” and he “had no interest in the world, but rather a wish to secret [himself] from it” (88-89). Unable to prove his innocence to Dulac’s family, the Hermit’s subsequent inability to return to his former life confirms the idea of his identity as intrinsically linked with his crime. The impossibility of autonomy is further reinforced in the Hermit’s lack of possessions, as he notes that upon his arrival back home, he “possessed nothing in the world, for [his] property had been confiscated on [his] receiving sentence of banishment (89-90). The one thing the Hermit does retain is his story and in the presence of Lauretta, a woman who has no voice in the dictation of patriarchal law and therefore does not demand his crime be “named by way of silence,” the Hermit is at last permitted to speak. However, because of patriarchal society’s insistence that both factions remain silent, his words are rendered ineffectual and the only prospect of autonomy is presented in his eventual death. The Hermit’s body is never buried: instead, it is left within his hermitage, once more emphasizing the refusal of society to separate the Hermit from his crime. Thus, Lathom suggests the impossibility of men associated with sodomy being able to enter back into society, perhaps echoing his own exile to Scotland in order to start anew in a place where he was unknown. Read against the prior scene where the Hermit is presented with two different paths, the pastoral scene that “afforded a prospect of many leagues in extent” might suggest the opportunity of happiness and autonomy in a country abroad (hinted at in the “many leagues”), while the path of loneliness and ruin is limited in its immediacy and implies the impossibility of happiness to those who remain.
Imprisonment and Torture in Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell*

H.G. Cocks writes that as the law both encourages “the naming of the crime and its erasure,” so too in novels does the law encourage characters to “admit guilt, while also trying to ‘erase’ them.” Such threats of expurgation are a recurrent theme in Count Byroff’s tale, one that is exemplified both in the Count’s continual use of false names and in the subsequent pursuit of authority figures to uncover his true identity. Byroff’s narrative is recounted through a series of fragments (rather than one full movement, as was the case with the previously analyzed narrative of the Hermit), to Lauretta, the heroine of the primary narrative and, it is eventually revealed, the daughter of Byroff. The narrative in question is repeatedly disturbed by a number of external diversions, including: Byroff’s own silence, a shepherd who enters the room and breaks his concentration, and, even, the appearance of those who seek to find and punish him. The latter interruption occurs following Byroff’s divulgement of the imprisonment and torture he has previously endured (his narrative culminating with the revelation of his escape) when the shepherd again enters the room in order to inform him “that two men, who had seen his horse in the stable, had declared they knew it” and were now coming to find him (143).

The identification of Byroff by the two men, in conjunction with the implicit threat that their presence poses, suggests that, similar to the Hermit, Byroff’s secret is in danger of being exposed. Interestingly, in this moment, the following scene is depicted: “the count raised his eyes in silence to Lauretta; they betrayed the wildest agitation and fear; Lauretta rose from her seat, and threw herself upon her father’s neck” (143). The description of this act seems to suggest if not forgiveness for Byroff’s transgressions (as his narrative of imprisonment and torture reads as a metaphor for sodomy and the punishment incurred by those who were exposed), than at least an acceptance on the part of Lauretta. Following this absolution, Byroff is permitted to continue with the recitation of his narrative, this time to both Lauretta and the hero of the primary narrative, Alphonsus. The implication of an additional (male) witness to Byroff’s

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episodic narrative eventually reveals itself at the conclusion of Byroff’s tale—and his subsequent inclusion within the primary narrative—when compared to the fatal denouement of the previously discussed Hermit.

While Byroff’s narrative is not didactic in nature—as was the case in the temporally displaced narratives discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two, and, to a certain extent, here, within the Hermit’s tale—comparisons between the narratives of Byroff and Victoria (see Chapter Two) can be perceived in the hesitancy of both speakers to voice their accounts. Such reticence is signaled by the fragmentation of their narratives (which ultimately function as testimony or confession), thereby suggesting the ‘unspeakability’ of their contents. For, while Victoria is prevented from voicing her narrative of abuse by patriarchal law (confirmed through her literalization as the femme covert), Byroff is likewise prohibited from articulation, as his narrative (a metaphor for sodomy), must also be silenced. That Byroff has previously evaded revelation of his testimony—even while imprisoned and questioned by the law, despite the use of torture—further confirms the unspeakable’ nature of its contents.

For although the Count’s crime is one of murder, the ensuing torture and incarceration that he endures can be read as representative of both the real and metaphorical experiences that sodomites faced under eighteenth-century law. Guilty of murder, Count Byroff signs away all of his possessions, adopts the name of Montville and exiles himself to Paris, where he lives in “an obscure part of the city” in an attempt to remain hidden—recalling the Hermit’s efforts to remain secluded from society. Byroff’s attempt at secrecy exemplifies the sodomites need to remain undetected by law—one which proves impossible as, after residing in Paris for several years, Byroff is discovered. The Count relates to both the hero and heroine of the central narrative how: “two men, whom I had for some time perceived to be following me, followed me into the house where I lodged, and introduced themselves into my apartment” (128). The threat implicated by their presence recalls the language of 1790s blackmail trials, for although this decade witnessed all detail of sodomy trials expunged from print, “fraud and extortion cases continued to retail at length detailed accounts of alleged sexual
encounters between men.” Lathom seems to borrow from such cases here, as the language employed in the Count’s recollection of the two men is similar to passages printed in contemporary newspapers. One such case that appeared before the court in 1799 related how “On Saturday night, the 15th of September, as the prosecutor [Mr. Charles Fielding] was passing into Cheapside from St. Paul’s Church-yard, he perceived the prisoner; that afterwards he perceived him again in Friday-street.” The prisoner then “followed the prosecutor from street to street,” threatening to expose him as a sodomite if he did not produce money. Another account involved four men who were charged for “feloniously extorting” money from Henry Sharpe by threatening to accuse him of an “unnatural crime.” Sharpe noted in court that he was “passing along Ormond-Street, when he was met by [the men], who stopped him, and asked him for money.” Both Charles Fielding and Henry Sharp are threatened with the tarnishment of their reputation rather than the promise of torture or imprisonment that the Count experiences, however, the implications of both threats carry similar connotations in that sodomites were constructed as “figure[s] to be shunned with horror or brought to the punishment of the law” and as such, the threat of uncovering their secret and exposing their true identity implies a punishment of equal proportion.

Blackmail “threatens guilt with shame by the revelation of a secret,” and here, blackmail is employed as a form of torture to extort the men accused of sodomy. Byroff is similarly intimidated into silence when the two men produce a “fatal paper,” the lettre de cachet, often used to imprison people who threatened the French monarchy in an effort to “contain” them, as most recipients of these letters were denied not only a trial, but also the opportunity of a defense. The Midnight Bell was published eight years later.

378 Legal Recreations, 69-77.
380 World, Issue 1205.
381 MacFarlane, The Sodomite in Fiction and Satire, 109.
after the use of the lettre de cachet was abolished, thereby transforming the article into
an overdetermined symbol that not only emphasizes the injustice suffered by those who
received such letters, but also highlights the similarity of the situation experienced by
those accused of sodomy. Issued letters were frequently sealed blank, leaving the
accuser to fill in the intended name after its delivery. Such anonymity highlights the fear
that eighteenth-century sodomites faced, as the concealment of their secret was
necessary to escape prosecution from authorities. For as the lettre de cachet sought to
“contain” those whose views threatened to contaminate the public against the monarchy,
accusations of sodomy likewise worked to “contain” the spread of the “unspeakable
crime,” in order to curtail the threat it posed to patriarchy. Injustice is emphasized
further in that the name written on Byroff’s letter cannot possibly be his own, as he is
living under a pseudonym, thereby suggesting that justice is not the true intention of its
delivery. That Byroff does not receive a petition (made available to the public) naming
his crime, but rather, an anonymous letter which carries authority to declare him guilty
without trial or accusation, further recalls law’s determination to silence sodomy.

Forced to accompany the strangers to the Bastille, Byroff is placed in a carriage
with “the blinds…drawn up” so that he could not see out, though he “felt” himself
“passing over the draw-bridge which leads to the mansion of wanton tyranny and
despair” (128). For Byroff, this journey represents the beginning of his metaphorical
death, as the dual tactics of imprisonment and torture are used to strip away his
autonomy so that, similar to the Hermit, death is his only means of reclaiming agency.
Byroff himself acknowledges as much when he explains: “many unhappy men had been
to waste away a life of solitude and misery within the dreary and unrelenting walls
within which I was now a prisoner” (129). Here the literal prison that holds Byroff,
similar to the one that imprisoned the Hermit, underscores the metaphorical prison
within which eighteenth-century law placed sodomites. For the Hermit and Byroff are
not simply placed in prison, only to be released. Rather, both of them remain for the
length of over a decade, during which time their lives are transformed into a daily quest
for survival as the law threatens to erase them, both literally and metaphorically. The
desolation of this situation is represented in the physical prison surrounding Byroff, as
he is conducted through “many intricate passages” until arriving “at an iron
door...terminated by a narrow window through which the iron bars, fastened across it, suffered but a small portion of light to enter” (129). Locked inside this room, he observes that it consists of only “a broken table, a stool, a mattrass, and a quilt...the walls, which had been of plaster, were mouldering away in many parts, and in others being covered with a green scurf” (129). The image of the prison, with its “many intricate passageways,” serves as a representation of patriarchy, one that threatens to subsume Byroff, so that his individual voice is lost within the anonymity of its walls. In her essay “An End to Audience,” Margaret Atwood speculates that “the aim of all oppression is to silence the voice, abolish the word, so that the only voices and words left are those of the ones in power.” As Gerry Turcotte notes, “those with the power to imprison/silence, are invariably male.” However, although Gothic criticism has a tendency to focus on the imprisonment (and suppression) of female heroines, here, such violence is enacted against a male hero in a similar act of repression. For, as Byroff’s narrative is representative of sodomy, the decision of patriarchal law to imprison (and silence) him is indicative of his marginality, as he is, similar to the heroines discussed in previous chapters, representative of a minority public.

Despite his surroundings, Byroff initially maintains his composure, noting he feels “secure in [his] innocence” (130). It was not unheard of in eighteenth-century sodomy trials for defendants to claim they had done nothing wrong in committing the act of sodomy. Perhaps the most famous, and often cited, case is that of William Brown, who, in 1726, stood trial at the Old Bailey, where he offered the following defense: “I did it because I thought I knew him and I think there’s no Crime in making what use I please of my own Body.” However, at night, the “the horrors of [Byroff’s] situation seemed to accumulate” (130). He notes that “there was only one window in [his] prison, and it was strongly grated with iron bars; [he] placed the stool under it, and having got

384 Gerry Turcotte, Peripheral Fear: Transformations of the Gothic in Canadian and Australian Fiction (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009), 224.
upon it, [he] perceived that the window looked into a court” (130). The scene that Byroff encounters upon peering out of his window stands in sharp contrast to the one viewed by Victoria in Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (Chapter Two). While the stark imagery in Victoria’s narrative seems to highlight the improbability of escape, here, despite the fact that the window is “strongly grated with iron bars,” Byroff is able to fix his sights on the court, suggesting a more tangible goal (130). It is only when the guards take him out for air onto “a platform of about twelve feet square, but so closely surrounded by other parts of the building, that no object except the sky was discernible from it,” that Byroff is faced with the impossibility of his situation (130). The initial false promise of escape can be compared to the misleading respite that blackmail offered to those accused, as the possibility of freedom remained as long as money was paid, although the reality was a prison just as indomitable as the one in which Byroff finds himself. Thus, Lathom constructs Byroff’s incarceration as a seeming metaphor for the prison that eighteenth-century blackmailers created for their victims.

Now imprisoned, Byroff’s captors refuse to name the crime for which he has been imprisoned, declaring: “You are to answer, not to question, young man” (132). The “injunction to silence” is symbolized, then, in the absence of the crime’s name, as “in order to speak of buggery…the speaker had to proceed according to a command to stay silent.” And yet, this is complicated by the determination of Byroff’s captors to uncover his true identity, suggesting that their objective is one of punishment rather than the obtainment of confession. Attempts to erase Byroff’s narrative (indicated by the repeated refusal to name his crime) can be seen in both the verbal interrogation of Byroff and the ensuing torture he endures. The interrogation itself mimics the examination of witnesses in sodomy trials featured in contemporary publications. The following is a passage from *The Midnight Bell*:

> Are you a Frenchman?
> No.
> You are an Italian?

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No.

Do not attempt to deceive me, or it will be worse for you. You say you are not an Italian?

I am not.

But you came from Italy to Paris?

I did (131).

Notable here is Lathom’s structure of dialogue, as it mimics the transcripts that were printed of trials in contemporary publications. The following is a transcript from a sodomy trial heard in the Old Bailey:

What are you? - A cabinet and chair-maker by trade.


What do you know of the prisoner? - I saw him guilty of a very dirty action.

Begin regularly? - Last Wednesday I was at the Harlequin in Drury-lane, and had a pint of beer; the prisoner came in.

At what time? - About eight o'clock, as near as I can guess.387

The engagement of such a similar style suggests on Lathom’s part a familiarity, or at the very least, an awareness of the sodomy trials that were reported on within contemporary publications. Present in the first text is a lack of description or explanation, one that suggests through its limited dialogue a focus on how the questions are intended to shape (or suppress) the narrative, working to condemn the accused irrespective of their answers. Such interrogation ultimately suggests that this is not an opportunity to prove one’s innocence, but a determination on the part of law to retain control of the narrative and to mould it so that it confirms, rather than questions, patriarchal law. Cocks writes

that “newspapers sought to legitimize the naming of unnatural desire by imitating the style of the court, and thereby presenting an apparent “transcript” of what had been said.” 388 By portraying this interrogation in a “legal form,” the intent was to generate authority and to “present powerful claims to truth,” providing a justification for the ensuing punishment. 389 The difficulty for the press was “in creating a form of discourse which simultaneously referred to homosexual desire and tried to cover all traces of its existence with circumlocution and evasion.” Here, Lathom similarly engages with a “legal form” in order to highlight the abuses of a judicial system bent on the simultaneous naming of the crime, as well as its erasure.

Byroff eventually confesses to the murder of which he is guilty, although he refuses to provide his interrogators with his real name, claiming he has “particular reasons for wishing to conceal it” (131). It is in his state of being “nameless” that he comes to embody its etymological meaning: “too abominable to be named.” 390 In response, “innumerable instruments of torture… suspended against the walls, and scattered on the floor” are introduced and Byroff is “placed in a chair, and a circle of about three inches in diameter on the top of [his] head shaved bare of its hair” (134-135). Although the imagery of Byroff’s shaved head recalls a common punishment handed out at the pillory, which included the shaving of some or all of the prisoner’s hair in a further attempt to elicit shame and guilt, the intent here is the discovery of Byroff’s secret. 391 Torture and truth are intrinsically linked, with warrants from Medieval England declaring its purpose as the “discovery of the truth.” 392 However, the “boulting forth of the truth” is unnecessary in this case, as Byroff has already confessed to

388 Cocks, Nameless Offences, 8.
389 Cocks, Nameless Offences, 8. Cocks writes that the reason newspapers decided to employ the use of “legal form” in their publications was to portray a sense of authority as well as to “present powerful claims to truth.”
391 Greene, “Public Secrets,” 203-232. Greene confirms the relationship between the pillory and torture, writing that the pillory carried connotations of “torture” to the average eighteenth-century person.
murder. Thus, the use of torture here represents not an uncovering of truth, but rather a punishment, the other purpose inherently linked with torture. Due to the “unspeakable” narrative that sodomy presents, Byroff’s captors are unable to respond verbally as the naming of the crime is forbidden. As such, torture provides his captors with an alternative language in which to speak about the unspeakable and to provide a punishment for such transgressions:

My hands and feet were bound; I had bit my tongue, till the blood streamed from my mouth upon my breast; and my eyes, which the pain I was undergoing had widely extended, from being exposed to the fierceness of the fire, were far from forming the least part of my sufferings (135).

The use of torture continues to silence Byroff, the physicality of his body becoming increasingly confined as he is denied all methods of communication, once more recalling the imprisonment experienced by Victoria, and to some extent Eugenia, in The Castle of Wolfenbach and The Mysterious Warning. Not only are Byroff’s hands and feet bound, his mouth is filled with blood after he “bit [his] tongue,” the “organ of speech” and “language.” Now “tongueless,” or “speechless, silent,” Byroff is also denied sight, as his eyes, “exposed to the fierceness of the fire,” prevent him from being able to “behold, observe.”

His captors also employ the contrasting hot-cold method of torture, as “the soles of [his] feet and [his] breast were afterwards bared, and being fastened in the chair, it was drawn near to the fire, to the fierceness of which the naked parts of [his] body were exposed, whilst large drops of the coldest water were made to fall singly on the crown of [his] head (135). Tormented by the “intense” contrast of “feelings,” Byroff “shrieked violently” (135). Much like the Hermit’s nosebleed (a rebellion that his body articulated when he attempted to suppress his natural desires) the dichotomy of hot and cold here, accompanied by Byroff’s scream, implies a similar internal struggle. Byroff, “exhausted by the agony” that he has endured, “fainted whilst yet bound in the chair of torture” (135). Now “contorted,” “twisted,” and “distorted,” coupled with his acknowledgement

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393 Heath, Torture and English Law, 201-229.
that had he been able to “conceive of any other means of freeing [himself] from the sufferings...[he] should without hesitation have adopted it,” the loss of Byroff’s agency is confirmed (135). Lathom relates the torture that Byroff endures in great detail, beginning with his recollection: “I was dragged into that earthly hell, where demons, in the shape of men, riot in acts of wanton cruelty” (134). It takes Byroff nearly six months to regain his strength as a result of the torture he endures, a process that Lathom portrays by chronicling Byroff’s gradual recovery of both his “bodily and mental faculties” (136).

In his study on the politics of pain in Romantic fiction, Steven Bruhm references Edward Peters claim that “by the late eighteenth century the use of torture was being abandoned by the courts of Europe as a remnant of the ancien régime.” However, despite increasing calls for its absolution, Peters notes that the use of torture still persisted into the decade during which Lathom penned *The Midnight Bell*. It was not, Peters claims, until the period following the French Revolution, when the “revulsion against torture” was so great, that no record of torture existed, as “the world of torture and brutal forms of execution came to be regarded as even more hideous than they in fact had been.”

The alignment of torture with the ancien régime is exaggerated in Lathom’s comparison between the enforcers of law and “demons,” the image of which signals the lack of justice involved in this nevertheless judicial act. Thus, Lathom’s presentation of the jailors, alongside the depiction of Byroff’s physical and mental injuries as a result of the torture they inflict upon him, rewrites the law as something violent and uncontrolled, a notion that is further emphasized in the subsequent revelation for Byroff’s decade-long imprisonment: “they were afraid to let you out, for fear you should expose the secrets of their tyranny” (155).

Imprisoned now for the duration of one year, Byroff’s hope returns in the form of a redbreast, which flies into his cell and provides him with a “moment of unexpected happiness” (137). Byroff notes that its “plumage was rough, and raised against the cold, and it bore every mark of having suffered from the inclemency of the season” (137). Obvious similarities exist between the redbreast and Byroff, although Byroff reflects

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that the bird “has a balm for all the sufferings,” that of liberty, which, when “deprived of it, all other ills in life are light” (137). Seven more years of imprisonment pass and the bird continues to visit Byroff every winter. It is during the seventh winter, that “the jailor entering with [his] breakfast, and observing [the bird], darted across the prison, and, ere [Byroff] could stop his cruel arm, seized [his] unconscious favorite, and wrung his neck” (139). When Byroff requests the dead body of the bird, “[the jailor] aimed to throw it out of the window but, missing his cast, it fell back into the room; [Byroff] sprang forward to seize it, but [the jailor] had snatched it up, and his second aim being more successful, it was gone for ever ere [Byroff] reached the spot” (139). The death of the redbreast signals Byroff’s foresight of his own certain death within the walls of the prison. Thus, Lathom writes Byroff’s ensuing metaphorical death as necessary for his return to society.

While the Hermit is never able to free himself from his imprisonment (represented in his continued seclusion from society), Byroff eventually escapes from his cell and reclaims his agency through the articulation of his narrative—made possible by his simulation of death, an act that requires him to cross dress. Byroff’s dual engagement with cross-dressing and death recalls The Necromancer’s Volkert and his employment with cross-dressing in order to raise ghosts—an act which Cass refers to as “death through cross-dressing.” While Cass never fully explores his own statement, here, the combined spectacle of death and cross-dressing serve as a signifier of transgression. Instructed by Jacques (the new jailor who has “taken a liking to [him] above any of the prisoners [he] attended”), to drink whatever is given to him (it is later revealed that Jacques has swapped the intended fatal poison for a mix of laudanum, treacle and water), Byroff reflects:

“What a moment of horror was this! Uncertain whether or not I had swallowed the draught of death: if I had, how near the brink of eternity was I now standing!—if I had not, how dreadful a fate might await both me and the young man, should his stratagem fail! (155).

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The “dreadful fate” that Byroff mentions can ultimately be read as a consequence not for their attempt at escape, but rather, for the relationship that they have engaged in. Jacques’ tampering with the potion, then, is the physical evidence of their relationship, and so Byroff, in order to save both himself and Jacques, must literally bury the secret within himself. In *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic* (2013), Katie Garner writes of ‘liminality’: the liminal subject’s terrifying experience of death is frequently explored in Gothic texts.” Here, in his in-between state of simulated death, Byroff’s status as a liminal “other” is once more emphasized. After swallowing, Byroff observes:

> Within the course of an hour a faint sickness seized me. I lay down upon my mattress, and pulled the blanket over me; an icy coldness ran through my veins and big drops of perspiration started on my forehead: in a short time a heaviness, which I could not struggle against, weighed down my eye-lids, and in less than two hours after my swallowing the draught, I sunk into what I then thought the sleep of death! (143).

Byroff is now dead, but also alive—just as he was a prisoner, but one that was never charged with a crime. Prior to his confinement, Byroff was a free member of society, but one that lived on the outskirts in anonymity as he strove to remain secluded, and thus hidden, from law. That Byroff is given the potion by Jacques further emphasizes his “otherness,” as the imbibing of the potion results in Byroff’s feminization. Not only is he now rescued by another male character, but the result of the potion is the image of Byroff’s body rendered lifeless, and therefore, defenseless—an image in Gothic that tends to be associated solely with the female body. Indeed, it is while still unconscious that Jacques informs Byroff: “I directly set out putting on you this gown and petticoat, and hat, and apron, and cloak, that I had taken from the old woman in the Bastile” (160). Therefore, despite his successful escape from prison, upon awakening, Byroff’s liminality is once more reinforced through this exchange of identity, as well as his continued habitation on the fringes of society—both of which reinforce notions of displacement, as Byroff’s engagement with disguise and his eventual decision to live

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with a group of Banditti are made in order to remain hidden from eighteenth-century law.

Max Fincher writes that one of the main elements of Gothic writing is “its multiple narrators and interrupted stories,” a technique that “invite[s] a circuitous reading attitude.” Fincher contends that this:

roundabout approach stands as a symbol of how we can read Gothic writing at the level of narrative as intimately related to the ‘perversion or ‘wayward.’ Gothic stories never follow a ‘straight’ course, a fact that in itself makes them queer.  

Lathom’s novel, then, is “wayward” in its narration, as it does not follow a “straight” course, but instead, is presented as a temporally displaced narrative that frequently disrupts the linear time of the first, or primary, narrative. Byroff’s story, in particular, is presented in fragments, so that his tale begins and stops at several different intervals throughout the novel. Therefore, this interrupted telling suggests not only the unspeakability of the narrative’s contents, but also, further suggests Byroff’s liminal status as he negotiates the boundaries between the first and secondary narratives of the novel, attempting to transgress his own narrative of suppression and cross the border into the first, or primary, narrative.

When Byroff awakens, he finds himself “habited in the garments of a French woman of mean rank,” for, although he has escaped from the physical confinement of prison, his previous identity is still denied to him as a result of his secret (151). Therefore, when Jacques asks him to “pretend to be [his] wife” as his “features are very delicate, and [Byroff] may easily pass for a woman,” Byroff must continue this guise, retiring to bed “in the characters of husband and wife,” in order to retain his new freedom (152). Already outside the boundaries of law as a member of the minority public (that is, sodomite), Byroff now further engages in crossing transgressive boundaries by dressing in the “garments of a French woman” (151). In his study Outlawry in Medieval Literature (2011), Timothy Scott Jones notes that “rather than

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merely taking on the appearance of another individual, the outlaw invariably adopts disguises that cross social, ethnic, gender and racial boundaries.”

Jones argues that in outlaw narratives such transformations are rooted in the “outlaw’s location in the liminal, unstructured space outside the law.”

Byroff is condemned to inhabit different disguises as his place outside the law (not solely as an outlaw who has escaped prison, but also as a sodomite) requires him to continually transform in order to survive. However, such transformation also allows him to engage with a male-male friendship, one that is implicative of romantic love.

The suggestion of a homosexual relationship that Lathom presents between the Hermit and Dulac is here echoed in Byroff’s relationship with Jacques. Ten years into his imprisonment, Jacques replaces the original jailor in charge of Byroff—following which Byroff works to “tempt him into farther conference,” as he observes that Jacques’ hesitancy in speaking to him “was not from want of inclination on his part” (140). Some months later, Jacques offers the possibility of escape, in exchange for Byroff’s assurance that: “you won’t let me starve” (141). With Byroff’s ensuing pledge, he agrees to provide for and take care of Jacques for the remainder of his life. These implications are furthered upon Jacques’ confession that once he had taken “a liking” to Byroff, he began “wishing” that: “we might run away together; I knew, if I could contrive it, you could not dislike it, and there was something in your countenance that told me you would be kind to me afterwards” (153).

Jacques also serves as a reminder of the patriarchal system of law. For, as the nephew of the man who runs the Bastille, Jacques witnesses first hand the logic upon which the system of punishment operates. When he pleads for the wellbeing of the prisoners, his Uncle answers: “‘Jacques, I am a true lover of my king, and I’ll never treat those kindly, depend upon it, that it is his pleasure to have otherwise dealt by’” (154). His accompanying declaration that “‘the king is representative of God on earth, chosen by himself; thus we can never be doing wrong, while we implicitly obey his commands,’” echoes contemporary literature discussed in Chapter Two that reinforced

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400 Jones, *Outlawry in Medieval Literature*, 90.
the hierarchal structure of patriarchy in order to ensure the continued subjection of women (154). Here, it functions in a similar manner, working to ensure that “otherness” or those who threaten patriarchy, are justly punished for their transgressions. As such, Jacques confesses that although he wished “to sit and talk half an hour or an hour” with Byroff, he was unable to do so, as “all the walls in that Bastile [sic] have eyes and ears…for nothing can be said or done but what is known by my uncle and the governor” (155). In their enforcement of the law, both the Uncle and Governor serve as representations of patriarchy. Jacques’ fear of the consequences for betraying his “liking” for Byroff, then, reinforces their (Jacques’ and Byroff’s) standing as members of the minority public, and thus their necessary subjective status to the majority.

The “specter of sodomy” is also present in the latter part of Byroff’s tale, as Lathom’s text “tropes queer male desire through its representation of…illicit male groups”—discussed in further detail later within this chapter, as relates to The Necromancer and Horrid Mysteries. Once Byroff is rescued by Jacques, the two men wander together until they encounter a group of banditti, coincidentally commanded by Jacques’ brother, a man known only as the Captain. It upon their arrival that the Captain assures Byroff: “we are brothers in affliction…most of us whom you here behold, have been driven from the haunts of men, by the cruelty of man” (165). However, unlike the band of men that Volkert, and to some extent Carlos, join (discussed later in this chapter), here the group of banditti abscond from violence, swearing:

> there is not one of us whose heart has been steeled by his misfortunes into inhumanity: never has the traveller whom we have plundered borne the marks of our violence,--never have we left the poor man destitute,--the rich and profligate alone have been our prey,--the unfortunate at all time our care (165).

They are criminals, but criminals who, similar to Byroff, have been driven to such activity by “the despotism of tyrants, and the malice of an envious world” and therefore invoke the code “honour amongst thieves” at all times (165). The struggle to remain at liberty within a world controlled by a majority public that eschews “others,” is evident

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401 Cass, “Queering The Necromancer,” xix.
in their determination to live outside its boundaries, and the anonymity that they still retain, signified in the Captain’s namelessness. It here, then, among this band of similar outcasts that Byroff exists for the span of eight years. Byroff’s continued attempts to outrun the law means that he continually “transgress[es] borders and destabilize[s] hierarchies,” thereby threatening “the order constructed by legal, political and cultural authorities.”\textsuperscript{402} This act, Jones contends, “often result[s] in the imposition of some form of textual or extratextual containment.”\textsuperscript{403} In fact, this “containment” is the initial absence of Byroff from the first, or primary, narrative, as his story is confined as a temporally displaced narrative “buried” underneath the central story. Notions of containment also extend to Byroff’s physicality within the novel, as, now a member of the banditti, he is required to remain on the fringes of society and thus, outside the limits of town. Ensconced in a decayed mansion, Byroff is charged with the task of the evening watch, which functions solely to alert the other banditti of any “officers of justice” that may have “entered their haunt during their absence” (168). The emphasis on the need for secrecy and the ability to remain hidden from these “officers of justices” emphasizes the position of the banditti as a group that operates strictly outside of the boundaries of law, and therefore, the exclusion (or containment) of these men from society.

This chapter has already explored notions of disguise as relates to the Hermit and his textual containment within the novel. However, while the Hermit’s narrative remains separate and distinct from the first, or primary, story, Byroff is eventually granted permission to cross these boundaries. For, as the father of Lauretta, Byroff has participated in heteronormative activities, despite his current engagement with both homosocial (banditti) and homosexual (Jacques) bonds. This relationship is necessary to the reclamation of Byroff’s agency, and his permission to enter into the first narrative, as it is only by way of his familial association with Lauretta that he is able to abandon his vows to the banditti (who retaliate by trying to find and punish him), join with Lauretta and Alphonsus, and at last give voice to his narrative. For, it is only when Byroff reveals his story that he is once more able to reclaim his true name (he is

\textsuperscript{402} Jones, \textit{Outlawry in Medieval Literature}, 90.
\textsuperscript{403} Jones, \textit{Outlawry in Medieval Literature}, 90.
currently hiding under the assumed name of Ralberg, a bandit of “scowling mien and haggard looks,”), and thus, his identity (54). Furthermore, unlike the Hermit, Byroff recounts his story to both Lauretta and her husband Alphonsus, suggesting that patriarchal authority is needed to confirm Byroff’s identity as well as permit its reclamation. This is reinforced in the revelation that it is “in complaisance to the curiosity of Alphonsus” that Byroff voices his narrative, thereby suggesting that Alphonsus (as the embodiment of patriarchy) also has the authority to deny this narrative (151). The absence of a male figure to listen to the Hermit’s tale, coupled with his inability or refusal to transform, as he remains nameless throughout his tale, may account for his ultimate condemnation. For while Byroff adapts and changes with each situation presented to him, eventually finding his way back to his original identity, the Hermit secludes himself from the rest of the world in order to keep his secret hidden. Lathom himself may have undergone a similar metamorphosis, potentially in an effort to escape persecution in England. That Byroff is rewarded with a happy ending in the reunion with his family (and, eventually, Jacques) seems to indicate that it is the Hermit’s refusal to adapt that ultimately causes his own demise.

**Part II: Translations of Sodomy in *The Necromancer* and *Horrid Mysteries***

The history that inherently links homosexuality with sorcery is perhaps best epitomized in Edward Coke’s legal treatise, in which he places sodomy in a trio formed by “sorcerers, sodomites and heretics.” Indeed, Alan Bray writes that the idea of sodomy and sorcery “is part of a mythology, [that] embrac[ed] werewolves and basilisks, sorcery and the devilry of the Papists; and it was within its mould that the images of the sodomite were cast.” As such, sodomites were considered to be more “monsterlike” than even the devil—something rejected by both heaven and hell, as “the myths insists

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in fierce terms on what homosexuality is not but does not say what it is.\textsuperscript{406} That such notions persisted into the latter half of the eighteenth-century is clear in contemporary publications, including the following letter addressed to the Editor of \textit{London’s Morning Post} in which one Mr. Amator Faeminarum wonders whether an alternative punishment to the pillory should be introduced in fairness to the guilty party, as they are subject to “the vengeance of a justly enraged mob” who is capable of “going greater lengths than are prescribed by the laws of this country.”\textsuperscript{407} Faeminarum proposes that to punish a “wretch who commits a crime so unnatural and unmanly,” should instead require the “depraved monster” to be displayed “in a wooden or iron cage, suspended upon a gallow.”\textsuperscript{408}

This demand for public punishment (and the simultaneous classification of the sodomite as monster) is echoed in the fate of the eponymous character of Peter Teuthold’s \textit{The Necromancer} when the public demands the spectacle of the necromancer’s execution. Volkert has been transformed into a “monster” by association with his crimes. The scene in which Volkert atones for his transgressions recalls the London Haymarket incident, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, as the narrator observes:

> the streets were crowded with a noisy multitude…a gaping multitude was standing around, awaiting with cruel insensibility, and with more than beastly satisfaction, the dreadful catastrophe which was to terminate the life of their fellow creatures (165).

In an attempt to “queer” the ‘Horrid’ novel, Jeffrey Cass writes that “the rooting out and punishing of Volkert” at the conclusion of the novel “reinforces the public desire to

\textsuperscript{406} Bray, \textit{Homosexuality in Renaissance England}, 23. Ian McCormick, “Introduction,” in \textit{Sexual Outcasts, 1750-1850: Sodomy}, ed. Ian McCormick (London: Routledge, 2000). Ian McCormick writes that the notion of “the sodomite as demonic beast belonged to a grotesque idiom that was rather outdated and outmoded; yet the older form persisted throughout the period,” 5. The “eighteenth-century homosexual rendered himself monstrous by importing qualities that ‘properly’ belonged to the other sex.” Either the sodomite “monstrously erased his sexual organ…giving up his manhood and turning to foppish effeminacy; or, in using his orifice ‘improperly’ he became more monstrous still, as a sodomite,” 9.

\textsuperscript{407} London’s Morning Post (London), 14 April 1780.

\textsuperscript{408} London’s Morning Post (London), 14 April 1780.
banish dangerous otherness in its midst.”

Here, then, sorcery stands in for sodomy, the linking of the infernal trio providing a speakable way in which to speak (and punish) the unspeakable, much the same way that the language of torture functioned for Byroff’s captors. Cass notes that the description of Volkert’s execution, as the narrator “beheld Volkert undressing himself and approaching with firmness the stool stained with the smoking blood of his friend,” locates the “real Gothic terror” in the spectacle of this public punishment, rather than in the ghostly illusions that have previously served as the source of “terror” in the novel. Instead, it is now “the condemning public that is guilty—of scapegoating, of hypocrisy” as the “community asserts its moral authority and heteronormativity by eliminating social and sexual otherness.”

That the novel’s culmination is a “juridical process, in which Volkert confesses, is found guilty, and is executed,” is an observation that is particularly significant, in light of this thesis’ examination of the exclusion of the minority public by law. In fact, for many of the novels under analysis here, the resolution of the text is granted only after invoking the law, whether to condemn or to save, or, more commonly, a combination of the two. Here, the law condemns Volkert: the existence of his narrative is erased through his execution, the finality of which is required in order to contain the threat of ‘otherness’ that his narrative threatens. For in his embodiment of the “unspeakable,” Volkert must be couched in terms that describe “a violence, a horror, a monstrous other that could threaten the entire fabric of culture.” Appropriately then, within the text of The Necromancer, Volkert’s narrative is buried within a series of other temporally displaced narratives, revealed only towards the conclusion of the novel. That Volkert’s death (or exclusion by law) is necessary as a result of his crime (sodomy) is further confirmed in the outcome of Volkert’s accomplice, Wolf. The architect of the criminal operation in which Volkert becomes entangled, Wolf is nevertheless given a reprieve for his crimes—a verdict that becomes significant in light of the text’s complicated publishing history.

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410 Cass, “Queering The Necromancer,” xxi.
413 George Haggerty, Queer Gothic (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 112.
Both *The Necromancer* and *Horrid Mysteries* present a challenge unique among the other ‘Horrid’ novels. As the only authentic translations from existing German novels (a fictional claim made by several of the ‘Horrid’ authors, as per the fashion of the decade), questions of content and interpretation are ultimately problematized, as the act of translating requires the displacement of the original author. Sharon Deane-Cox argues that literary translations are “an act of interpretation which crystallizes a series of (un)conscious (mis)readings of a given source text.”⁴¹⁴ Therefore, the translator of *The Necromancer* reframes the writing of the original author through their translation, oftentimes with a “manipulative trace” of the translator’s interference.⁴¹⁵ These “traces” are particularly evident within *The Necromancer*, as comparisons between the original text and translation have revealed considerable discrepancies. *The Necromancer: Or the Tale of the Black Forest* is a translation of the German work: *Der Geisterbanner: Eine Wundergeschichte aus mundlichen und schriftlichen Traditionen gesammelt* (1792) (which James D. Jenkins writes “translates roughly as The Spectral Banner: A Wondrous Tale Collected from Oral and Written Traditions), attributed to Lorenz Flammenberg, a pseudonym used by the author Karl Friedrich Kahlert.⁴¹⁶ Biographical details on Kahlert reveal that while he was the author of numerous stories and plays in German, none of them seem to have ever been translated into English.

Prior to James D. Jenkins’ “Preface” to the 2007 reprint of *The Necromancer*, the translator of Kahlert’s text was credited as Peter Teuthold. However, research conducted by Norbert Besch has since uncovered (a week before the aforementioned edition went to press) that Teuthold was in fact only a pseudonym used by a man named Peter Will.⁴¹⁷ The truth behind Teuthold’s identity is one that Jenkins claims is hinted at in the “Translator’s Preface” of *The Necromancer*, as its contents allude to the plot of another novel (one translated under the name of Peter Will), published one year later. To

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⁴¹⁷ Jenkins, “Preface,” ix. Jenkins notes that Teuthold’s name is drawn from German literature, as “Teuthold” is the “name of the amoureur in the German national epic “Hermannsschlacht” (Hermann’s Battle) and the morpheme “Teut” stands for “Deutsch” (German)."
date, little has been published about Will’s life. A German-born minister who relocated to London (various biographies refer to him as an English translator), Will translated a number of German texts into English, although his title of ‘translator’ has since been contested. In an essay that explores cultural transfer through translation, Barry Murnane writes: “A work going by the title The Necromancer and claiming to be a translation of Kahlert’s novel appeared in London in 1794.”418 Murnane explains that his deliberate use of the phrase “claiming to be,” is based upon the earlier work of Alan Menhennet, which “has previously shown, the translator has rather adapted the German original for what he considers to be English taste.”419 Examining the differences that exist between Teuthold’s The Necromancer and the original work, Murnane further observes that “Teuthold does his utmost to exaggerate the terror in Kahlert’s original text.”420 In particular, he notes:

Whereas the German source text focused on the narrator’s reactions to the criminal manipulations (by the anti-hero and supposed necromancer Volkert) within the secret society in the first volume and thereby aimed to create a psychological narrative mode drawing on the individual’s reaction to mystery and the supernatural, only then to explain the manipulative ghostly activities (rather tediously) in the final volume, Teuthold’s eccentric and hyperbolic amendments to Kahlert’s work serve to de-centre this specifically Enlightened focus.421

Therefore, Murnane contends that it is not so much the content that Teuthold altered in his translation, as it is the thematic influence, as Teuthold “aims to heighten the horror of the events by depicting the narrator’s reaction to such pseudo-supernatural events in even more extravagant terms.”422 The result, Murnane concludes, is a text that while “remaining faithful to the original intent,” also “diminish[es] its horrors into incredulity.”423 Steven Moore similarly references Teuthold’s translation as an

420 Murnane, “Uncanny translations, uncanny productivity,” 156.
421 Murnane, “Uncanny translations, uncanny productivity,” 156.
422 Murnane, “Uncanny translations, uncanny productivity,” 156.
423 Murnane, “Uncanny translations, uncanny productivity,” 156.
“adaptation,” explaining: “among the liberties taken by the English translator, Peter Will, he pads out Kahlert’s original novel with a true-crime story written by Schiller several years earlier.”424 The alteration was one that Kahlert apparently enjoyed, as he republished his work in an extended edition that included this new episode, crediting Teuthold in his revised novel. This act, Murnane argues, “seems to deny any real assumption of authorship” as “Kahlert’s own text becomes somehow estranged from his authority as writer by re-translating and incorporating most of Teuthold’s amendments.”425

Murnane contends that Teuthold’s additions revel in “the bizarre, shocking and distasteful,” arguing that the clearest example of this can be seen in Teuthold’s major addition to the text, his rewrite of an episode from Schiller’s Der Verbrecher aus verlorenen Ehre (1792), or, The Criminal of Lost Honour.426 While Frederich Schiller’s original text focused on “the psychological study of criminality,” Murnane suggests that Teuthold, in his adaptation, “is only interested in the actual violence.”427 However, in Murnane’s focus on what the addition of the narrative obscures (that is, Schiller’s original examination of the psychology of criminality), he fails to recognize what the addition elucidates. The episode in question (referred to earlier as the “true-crime story” by Moore) is the temporally displaced narrative of Wolf’s trial, the addition of which further underscores the implications of Volkert’s execution. Cass notes that although Wolf’s crimes “far surpass Volkert’s…they somehow fail to threaten (or to thrill) an audience in the way that Volkert’s do”—for Wolf’s pardon is conditional, based upon his failure to raise the spectre of sodomy, as Volkert has done.428 Additionally, “unlike Volkert, Wolf notices women,” his narrative providing a detailed account of a past relationship, and thereby aligning him with the idea of heteronormativity mentioned by Cass.429 Wolf’s corresponding alliance with heterosexual norms can be further located in his appearance: “he was of a gigantic make, near seven feet high, his robust limbs

428 Cass, “Queering The Necromancer,” xxv.
corresponding with his extraordinary size, his black and bushy hair covered part of his sunburnt face, which was disfigured by two gaping scars across his left eye” (166). Volkert, by comparison, is often associated with feminine characteristics, as his brand of necromancy involves the raising of female spectres (and necessarily, then, cross-dressing), leading to what Cass refers to as Volkert’s “unique version of the Female Gothic.”

Wolf’s trial also confirms his ability to voice his narrative within the confines of the law; while conversely, Volkert’s narrative is relayed only to the Lieutenant, and therefore outside the jurisdiction of law. This confirms Volkert’s story as unspeakable, thereby further aligning him with sodomy and demanding his ensuing ‘exclusion,’ the ultimate form of which is represented in his execution. Therefore, while “Wolf may be the greater criminal,” Volkert, because of his association with necromancy (with it suggestion of a link between sorcery and sodomy) “is the greater menace.”

Peter Will is also the “translator” of the seventh and final ‘Horrid’ novel: Horrid Mysteries, a translation of the German novel by Carl Grosse, Der Genius (1791). In light of Will’s previous contribution to an original text, questions of his “interference” with Der Genius must necessarily be raised. In his dedicated study of Grosse’s Der Genius, Robert Ignatius Le Tellier writes of the opening narrative, which involves the narrator (Don Carlos) listening to a temporally displaced narrative related by his friend, the Count:

Here an idyllic love scene in a garden is suddenly and brutally interrupted by members of the secret society, who subject both the Count and his companion, Franziska, to a terrifying experience that culminates in her violent death.

It is difficult to ascertain whether Tellier’s reference to the interrupted “idyllic love scene in a garden” is one that takes place between Don Carlos and the Count, or

432 Der Genius claims one other translation (preceding Will by only one year in its publication), by Joseph Trapp, titled The Genius, or the Mysterious Adventures of Don Carlos de Grandez.
433 Robert Ignatius Le Tellier, Kindred Spirits: Interrelations and Affinities Between the Romantic Novels of England and Germany, 1790-1820 (Humanities Pr Publisher: 1982), 168.
between the Count and Franziska, but in Will’s version, neither exists. Of course, the exclusion of the garden setting may not prove influential, although Le Tellier posits Gross’ repetitive structural use of the garden as a signal for the Fall of man, while Robert Miles speculates its representation as a “topography of political freedom.”

Nevertheless, the absence of such details indicates that changes, however minor, have occurred in the transformation from original to translated text. *Horrid Mysteries* remains the sole novel of the ‘Horrid’ collective yet to be reprinted by Valancourt Press, although the publication is noted as forthcoming. Judging from the additions that Will inserted into his translation of *The Necromancer*, Valancourt’s impending publication may reveal further disparities between the texts, with a focus not just on what is missing, but on what, if anything, has been added.

Both of Will’s novels begin (at least in the translations) with the depiction of male friendship. It is ultimately this privileging of masculine relationships that differentiates *The Necromancer* and *Horrid Mysteries* from the other ‘Horrid’ novels. The remaining texts, while also including depictions of male friendships, are often balanced by parallel depictions of female friendships, or in the place of this, more comprehensive portrayals of female characters. Even Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell* differs in that it portrays the relationship between Lauretta and Alophonsus, one that occupies a substantive space within the text. *The Necromancer* and *Horrid Mysteries* tend to confine depictions of women to brief interludes, often ones that are sexual in nature. While Moore notes the importance of male bonding within *Horrid Mysteries*, he does not address suggestions of homosexuality implicit in the language used to describe the bond that exists between the narrator, Don Carlos, and Count S—.

Haggerty writes that:

> male-male relations are so often the basis of a gothic plot that their significance may sometimes be missed. The figure of the two men locked in a psychological bond—whether friendship or rivalry—so intense that they are spiritually a single being is everywhere in gothic fiction.

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Interestingly, the friendship that exists between Carlos and the Count is frequently described in similar language, as Carlos refers to himself and the Count as “congenial souls.” Le Tellier (while also eliding the possibility of a romantic relationship between the two), notes that “this friendship constantly provides Karlos with new resolution and courage” and that it “represents the transfiguration of the self by the noble emotion engendered in the union of two congenial souls.”

In Will’s translation, the importance of the relationship between the two men is foregrounded within the first few pages of the novel, as Carlos, looking back into “the course of [his] history,” commences his tale with the recollection of his reunion with the Count, “an uncommon handsome and amiable young man” whose voluntary services in Gibraltar has temporarily separated them. Joining the Count at his estates in Germany, Carlos recounts how he was “enraptured to embrace him once more,” finding him “far handsomer and more amiable than he had left [him]” (4). The two men pass their days together with “economical concerns, and billiards,” while after a “frugal supper” they “seated [themselves] in sweet tranquility by the fire side” (4). Carlos then declares:

Whoever knows what real friendship is, and what congenial souls experience when exchanging harmonious ideas; whoever knows those charming fancies, that are so apt to inebriate our mind by the side of a dear friend, and the glow of innocent hilarity, will easily believe that we were happy in each other’s company, that we avoided numerous circles, and very rarely had another talker with us besides the garrulous fire in the chimney (4).

The two “exchanged the adventures of [their] life and travels” and “frequently were so much absorpt in listening and relating, that neither offered to stir before the dying flame in the chimney and the cold reminded [them] of Germany and the comfort of a warm bed” (4). The scene in question recalls that of the Hermit and Dulac (discussed in Part One of this chapter), and what Allen Whitlock Grove describes as ‘loving language’

437 Le Tellier, Kindred Spirits, 162.
employed to create “a sense of domesticity and affection.” Le Tellier writes of the relationship in Der Genius: “Don Karlos’s friendship with Count S. becomes a symbol of permanency and meaning in this whirl of confusion and threatened identity,” reinforced when they “swear a vow of friendship,” one “that endures under all circumstances.”

This “vow of friendship” also appears in Will’s translation and is raised when the Count demands to know whether Carlos is his friend, to which the latter answers in the affirmative. Following this, the Count asks: “Will you ever preserve me your affection,” with Carlos asserting “By Heaven! For ever!” (27). The Count responds with the following declaration:

Then come to my heart, my brother, and receive from me the same vow. I swear to be inviolably your friend; and may I be left without comfort in my dying hour, if ever I forget this promise only for a single moment. May Heaven preserve me your friendship; that is all that I wish (27).

The Count’s vows, accompanied by Carlos’ ensuing pronouncement—“I follow you withersoever you go, in spite of all the disasters that may befall you”—are reminiscent of marriage vows, ones that, rendered inexpressible in light of the unspeakable narrative they present, are allowed here under the guise of friendship (27). While the original German novel and the translation may consist of differentiations in the text, based upon the comparison of Tellier’s notes of Der Genius and Will’s translation, it appears that the relationship between the two men is faithfully reproduced.

Haggerty writes that the “often sensational configuration” of a male-male friendship “is emotional and erotic in ways that defy conventional descriptions of male friendship or rivalry” and that Gothic plots ultimately make use of such relations in order to “explore questions about identity and dissolution.” The relationship between Carlos and the Count is perhaps best examined through the depiction of the two more dominant women in the Horrid Mysteries—the wives of Carlos and the Count—who

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440 Le Tellier, Kindred Spirits, 162.
441 Haggerty, Queer Gothic, 109.
ultimately function as conduits through which the men can enact their desires. The affections of both women are fluid, transferring from Carlos to the Count and back again, with the lack of differentiation between the two men further suggesting “the union of two congenial souls” that has occurred. The conclusion of the novel features the feminization of both Carlos and the Count, as their wives take on the masculine role of knight (emphasized in their cross-dressing) in order to save their husbands from bandits. Once Carlos unmasks his wife, he writes: “I raised her up, and led her to the Count, where we jointly embraced Caroline” (230). This depiction is the final image of the novel, excluding a brief afterword in which Carlos pronounces the conclusion of his manuscript. This strange convergence of four emphasizes not only the importance of the relationship between the two men, but also the function that the women provide: that is, a disguise for their husbands’ transgressive relationship, one that ultimately threatens social mores.

Lucien Jenkins similarly observes that *The Necromancer* is almost “exclusively masculine and the relationships that matter are those between men.” The text begins with the relationship between Herrman and Hellfried, the narrators who initially frame the multiple temporally displaced narratives within the novel. As Herrman and Hellfried exchange stories based upon their personal encounters with the necromancer, Cass argues that they “‘come out’ of their mental and emotional closets to reveal to one another (and to us) their unspeakable secrets, which until the moment of revelation, they have kept well hidden.” Moore, however, finds Cass’ location of a homosexual subtext “unconvincing, especially as Cass neglects to mention the one arguably homosexual attraction in the novel, that of Hellfried (the principal narrator) for an Austrian officer.” It is worth noting here that Moore is erroneous in his assertion that it is Hellfried who is attracted to the Austrian. The “homosexual attraction” in question actually occurs in a temporally displaced narrative presented to Hellfried by his friend, the Lieutenant, in which the latter describes his relationship with the Austrian. The Lieutenant notes that during a separation from his friend “wherever I went, the image of

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the darling of my heart was hovering before me, and I was haunted every where by the distressing painful thought that I should see him no more” (108). He recounts “how my bosom panted with rapture, when, in the evening of a toilsome day, I could rest on his heart, and listening to the effusions of his noble mind, could sympathize with him in his virtuous feelings” (108). Such “emotion[al] and erotic” language ultimately suggests a relationship that transgresses patriarchal codes of male-male friendship, one that is echoed in the relationship between the two initial narrators.

Similarly to the Hermit and Dulac (and Carlos and the Count), Hellfried and Herrman are presented in a scene of loving domesticity, the only such depiction included in the novel. The description of their encounter begins with Hellfried’s admission that “anticipating the pleasure of pressing him once more to his bosom,” caused him to hurry into his carriage in order to “hasten to his embraces” (6). Finally reunited, Hellfried recounts how “he hung on Herrman’s neck, a gentle tear of joy sparkled in his eye, as he pressed him tenderly to his bosom” (6). When Hellfried declares “let us forget our age and let us live together, as long as I can remain with thee,” Herrman’s “cheek glowed with pleasure” in response, and “he squeezed his Hellfried’s hand (emphasis mine)” (7-8). Similar to the previously mentioned couplings within this chapter, their days are described in domestic normalcy, with hunting and rambling filling their afternoons, while at night they ate a “substantial meal, and a bottle of old Rhenish wine,” and sat “drinking and talking “till night came on” and they had to put their chairs close to the fire in order to continue conversing (8). And yet, upon completion of his narration, Herrman refuses to give Hellfried the manuscript that explains the secret they share between them (necromancy and the true identity of Volkert, and thus sodomy), but instead informs his friend: “these papers you shall not get before your departure” (48). Herrman, soon after parting from his friend (“alas! for ever”) soon “went over to that better world, where good men will meet again the friends of their bosom, never to part again” (49).

These words seem to indicate the impossibility of Herrman and Hellfried remaining together in life, despite their previous avowal. That Herrman is unable to verbally recount the remainder of the narrative suggests the unspeakability of its contents, thus underpinning the notion of sorcery as a representation for sodomy. Cass
notes that “the profusion of narrators in *The Necromancer* and the mounds of documentation that they introduce…produces a deliberately confused narrative that ‘irrupts’ in plain sight the actions of the necromancer himself.” Indeed, Cass mistakenly identifies Hellfried as the character unable to voice his narrative, although it is in fact Herrman who provides his friend Hellfried with the said manuscript. The complex labyrinth of the ensuing narration is further displaced by the fact that once Hellfried has the documentation (comprised of various narrators), he then performs his own rewrite prior to his death. That within these pages exists the necromancer’s narrative (and thus the narrative of sodomy) once more reinforces the notion of it as unspeakable, and one that must remain hidden in order to survive.

Cass further locates the spectre of sodomy within *The Necromancer* not only in the relationship that exists between Herrman and Hellfried, but in how Kahlert (Cass references Kahlert as the author of the text, not Teuthold) “tropes queer male desire” through the depiction of “homosocieties that actively recruit men for membership.” Invoking once more Coke’s infernal trio (sodomy, sorcery and heretics) the various groups of men that abound in both *The Necromancer* and *Horrid Mysteries* inhibit the definition of heretics in their refusal to adhere to “accepted belief[s] or doctorine[s].” The threat that these societies pose is underscored in the sentence of Wolf, as it is only though the renunciation of his membership to such groups that allows for his pardon and reintegration into a heterosocial community—an act which ultimately recalls Byroff’s denunciation of the banditti. Contemporary anxieties about sodomy, then, can be located in the presence of these secret societies—and the simultaneous demand for their disbandment and absence from the text—that abound in both novels. Similar “homosocial bands” can be located in *Horrid Mysteries*, as the presence of a secret society determined to initiate Carlos (and his subsequent attempts to free himself from them) advance the movement of the novel.

Haggerty asserts that sexuality and religion “are inextricably bound in the cultural imagination” and that Gothic fiction frequently invoked the image of religious

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446 Cass, “Queering *The Necromancer,*” xix.
institutions in order “to explore same-sex and otherwise transgressive desire.”

Frequent images of sex, violence and death are accordingly summoned with the appearance of the secret society within *Horrid Mysteries*, as Susan Allen Ford notes that even Carlos’ “oath of eternal love” to the Illuminati is an example of “word made flesh”: “I was in the twinkling of an eye encircled by every arm; and the horrid vow escaped my lips at the altar, amid the kisses of my new brethren” (61). Marie Mulvey-Roberts writes that secret societies also played on the paranoia of the public, and accordingly, in both novels, they can be read as engaging with the public’s fears and anxieties of sodomy and its contagion. Further contributing to this interpretation is Robert Miles explanation of the secret society in *Horrid Mysteries* as “an organization apparently bent on the death of patriarchy” as chief among their crimes is “the destruction of marriage.” This is evidenced in the assassination of Carlos’ first wife and the repeated attempts to destroy his relationship with the Count—the latter once more aligning Carlos’ relationship with the Count as one that transgresses male friendship as the secret society classifies this relationship as one equal in importance to marriage.

Critics alternatively identify the secret society in *Horrid Mysteries* as representative of either the Illuminati or the Rosicrucians. Tompkins writes that the presence of secret societies was common within German Gothic, reflective of the “rumors of secret societies and wide-spread conspiracies [that] flew thick” during the culmination of the century as, “changes were in progress, and men of liberal sympathies and men tenacious of ancient forms of life were alike prone to see something monstrous and abnormal in each other’s activities.” As such, Tompkins argues that within literature “Rosicrucianism was a beneficent mystery or a sinister deceit” while “Freemasonry either liberated the spirit of man and forwarded the era of his perfection,

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447 Haggerty, *Queer Gothic*, 64.
450 Miles, *Gothic Writing*, 89.
or, by relaxing moral restraints, plunged him into cynical debauchery.” Volkert, then, is eventually labeled as “monstrous,” as in his supposed ability to raise the dead he represents that which is outside of patriarchal law and as such, must be excluded from its text. Sodomites underwent a similar rewrite, so that by the eighteenth-century their association with sorcery and heretics confirmed them as monstrous in nature and demanded the aforementioned contradictory juxtaposition of silence and public punishment.

**Reportage in the ‘Horrid’ Novels**

The construction of *The Necromancer* has led some critics to refer to it as “incomprehensible,” with Michael Sadleir declaring it as “having the most incoherent and baffling plot of the seven horrid novels.” Moore writes that it “lurch[es] from third-person narrative to a first-person document with interpolated tales,” one that begins as a “ghost story but morphs into a detective novel.” This layering (and ensuing confusion) is perhaps best exemplified in the aforementioned temporally displaced narrative of the Lieutenant in *The Necromancer*, as Moore erroneously attributes the writer (and therefore subject) of the homosexual attraction of “Hellfried (the principal narrator) for an Austrian officer,” while Ann Blaisdell Tracy correctly writes that “a document from one of Hellfried’s friends tell yet another story…A soldier who was one of the ghost-seeing company above tries to find out more and made friends with a man called ‘The Austrian.’” The narrator in question, as attested by Tracy, Hellfried’s friend, the Lieutenant, but such discrepancies are not surprising when taking into account the presence of numerous temporally displaced narratives within the novel. Jenkins traces the narrative as following:

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We proceed from the first two friends at the beginning, first to Baron R- and then to Lieutenant, later Major, B-. Although the Lieutenant remains the central narrator, six other narrators also play a part: The Austrian, The Old Woman, John, Volkert and Wolf all take turns at the narration before the story is rounded off by an anonymous ‘friend.’

Throughout these various narratives, Jenkins notes that the novel “maintains the atmosphere of reportage, documentary proof and true confession.” This type of first-person witness account begins in the preface of the novel, in which the translator attests to the truth of the narrative, as it is “founded on facts.” The Translator’s Preface in the *Horrid Mysteries* similarly attests to the validity of the story presented within the novel, labeling it as a “confession” rather than fictional work. Furthermore, Jenkins points out that names are frequently withheld in the text of *The Necromancer*, so that, for example, Major B—‘s real name is never revealed: “this withholding of information, as in the reports in the newspapers of some trials, is suggestive that certain people’s privacy is being protected, or perhaps that the author is protecting himself from legal proceedings.”

In light of this chapter’s focus on sodomy and silence within the ‘Horrid’ novels, the mimicking of newspaper reports, coupled with the withholding (or silencing) of information, emphasizes the relationship between sodomy and silence within contemporary publications. Therefore, the physicality of the manuscript (told from various narrators and including different sheets of paper) represents the reconstruction of a narrative previously absented from history. With records of sexual “otherness” expunged by law from the pages of history, the lives of eighteenth-century sodomites are here reimagined and reinserted into the space of eighteenth-century texts through the fictional narratives of the Gothic. Both Hellfried and Herrman, then, serve as historians in their attempt to trace the story of necromancy (sodomy), creating an invented artifact rendered necessary in the absence of other such existing narratives. Such elements recall Punter’s criticism of Lathom and the previously mentioned notions of “secrecy and display”—one that can likewise be applied to Will’s life, as records have been similarly

difficult to uncover. Their narratives, then, like that of the sodomite, require a restoration, as various pieces of information are used to construct their lives in absence of detailed records.

The linkage of *The Necromancer* to reportage, thus invoking matters of truth and justice, is one that can be extended not only to the other male-penned novels under analysis within this chapter, but also, to the previously discussed female-penned novels. Similar to Teuthold, is Parsons’ engagement with the mimicry of trial reports within both of her texts, as evident in *The Mysterious Warning* (discussed in Chapter One), when Louisa dictates her narrative to an editor, Theresa, who then assembles her words into a manuscript to be presented for a reading public (Ferdinand, the hero of the primary narrative). In *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, documentary proof is presented in the various letters and oral tellings that require assemblage in order to prove Victoria’s narrative of abuse. In both instances, the end document functions, just as in *The Necromancer*, as an invented artifact, one that serves to reinsert the histories that have been previously excluded by the primary (and therefore patriarchal) narrative. In the absence of such written proof, the temporally displaced narratives function as first-person witness accounts, ones that make similar claims to previously buried truths. The necessary exhumation of these narratives by the hero and heroine of the first, or primary, narrative attests to the interference of eighteenth-century law, and the oft-ensuing textual displacement of the minority public within contemporary records. This threat of expurgation —located across the spectrum of the seven ‘Horrid’ novels—is exhibited in the constant state of namelessness that continually threatens each narrative. Thus, the inability of characters in the temporally displaced narratives to retain a single name for the duration of their narrative—or the concealment of names, as with *The Necromancer*’s Lieutenant and the Austrian (among others) and the *Horrid Mysteries* Count S--,—signals the loss of agency. That all three novels discussed within this chapter explore the theme of repression as experienced by an eighteenth-century minority public—one that is male in both its protagonists and authors—suggests the necessary reevaluation of Gothic criticism that repeatedly posits male and female gothic as categorizes that are separate and distinct.
Conclusion

To these few lines from *Northanger Abbey* seven fictions, which would otherwise have faded into oblivion, owe a rueful immortality. So long as Jane Austen is read—which will be for as long as there are readers at all—the titles at least of [these novels] will survive as tiny stitches in the immense tapestry of English language.\(^{459}\)

Michael Sadleir’s words are a testament not only to the enduring status of the ‘Horrid’ novels as a ‘footnote’ to Jane Austen’s work, but also of the effect this connection has had on their place in the Gothic genre and the literary canon more generally. Indeed, Austen has ‘haunted’ the ‘Horrid’ novels since the discovery of their existence—a search instigated by Montague Summers in an effort to ascertain whether the ‘horrid romances’ Austen listed within her novel were in fact real. Their subsequent classification as the ‘*Northanger* ‘Horrid’ Novels’—invoking not only Austen but also her character Isabella Thorpe in their nomenclature—ensured their permanent association with Austen, one which has been carried on through literary criticism which tends to explore the novels only in relation to *Northanger Abbey*. In his essay, Sadleir notes that “perhaps such miniature and derisive perpetuity is all they deserve,” before allowing that “there is at least ground for satisfying oneself on this point by examining the books themselves, for that, having examined them one may endorse or revise Jane Austen’s raillery.”\(^{460}\)

Since the publication of Sadleir’s essay, criticism dedicated to addressing this latter point—namely, that of Jane Austen’s raillery and whether or not such intent is even implicit within her parody—has emerged. In part, such criticism is a response to changing conceptions of *Northanger Abbey* itself. Published posthumously, *Northanger Abbey* was Austen’s first novel and initially engendered a “long tradition in Austen criticism [which] approaches *Northanger Abbey*…as [an] early novel[, (plural removed)]” one that betrays “an aspiring twenty-something writer who was steeped in


\(^{460}\) Sadleir, “The *Northanger* Novels,” 3.
the fiction of her published contemporaries and yearned to join their ranks.”

Consequently, there has been a repeated tendency to discuss Austen’s first novel alongside her juvenilia, with the implied understanding that such writings are representative of an “immature Austen.” However, recent scholarship has begun to re-examine themes within Austen’s first novel “not [as] the product of youthful self-assurance, as earlier critics have claimed, but rather the well-considered voice of experience.” Particular attention has been placed on Austen’s engagement with popular fiction and her parodic use of the Gothic genre, thus challenging the notion that *Northanger Abbey* is a simple parody of ‘terror fiction.’ Instead, critics such as Thomas Keymer argue that this interaction showcases Austen’s “exuberant immersion in, even a wry appreciation of, the nervy routines and tawdry formulas of circulating-library fiction.”

Austen herself was an unapologetic reader of such works. Tracing Austen’s reading habits, Katie Halsey notes that Austen had access “to her father’s library of some five hundred volumes,” and later “borrowed books from the circulating libraries…and enjoyed borrowing and reading books from the private libraries of relations.” Austen’s personal correspondence further confirms not only her membership of circulating libraries, but also her enthusiasm for novels. In response to Mrs. Martin’s invitation to join a circulating library—one in which Mrs. Martin took care to assure Austen that “her Collection is not to consist only of Novels”—Austen wrote to her sister, Cassandra: “I have received a very civil note from Mrs. Martin...she

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465 Katie Halsey, *Jane Austen and her Readers, 1786-1945* (London: Anthem Press, 2013), 17. Halsey writes that throughout her lifetime Austen continued to borrow books from circulating libraries, depending on her current residence. In addition, she at one point formed a Book Society and later when “she belonged to the prestigious John Murray stable of authors, she received the last publications as loans from her publisher,” 17.
might have spared this pretension to our family, who are great Novel-readers & not ashamed of being so.”

It is perhaps appropriate, then, that Austen’s first endeavor at writing a novel should also contain her “most explicit defense of the novel, in defiance of public opinion.” This defense, Keymer claims, extends particularly to Gothic fiction, as Austen refuses to “turn ‘contemptuous censure’ on pulp fiction and will not echo reviews who drone on about ‘the trash with which the press now groans.’” During the decade in which Austen penned *Northanger Abbey*, Fred Botting notes that critics “were almost univocal in their condemnation of what was seen as an unending torrent of popular trashy novels.” In particular, Townsend contends that “reviewers in the 1790s castigated Gothic fiction as the ‘trash of the circulating libraries’—that is, as a cheap and tawdry form of popular entertainment” that was condemned because of its “formulaic and highly repetitive nature.” Austen’s enthusiasm for circulating libraries, along with the novels found there, has already been established, and thus, an inference as to her opposition to such reviews can be made. As Keymer rightly suggests, it “is worth taking more seriously than critics sometimes do her refusal to denigrate [Gothic literature] explicitly” within the pages of *Northanger Abbey*. While Austen sometimes engages with commonly used Gothic tropes only in order to dismiss them (Catherine’s discovery of a manuscript that turns out to be nothing more than a laundry list is one such example), “alarms concerning the central gothic figure, the tyrannical figure…are commensurate to the threat they actually pose.” For although Catherine is not herself a heroine in a Gothic novel—that is, she is not imprisoned and persecuted by a tyrannical male figure—her eventual eviction from Northanger Abbey by General Tilney ultimately suggests that “forms of persecution and entrapment…continue to

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467 Halsey, *Jane Austen and her Readers*, 42.
468 Keymer, “*Northanger Abbey,*” 29.
471 Keymer, “*Northanger Abbey,*” 29.
operate, though in a new guise, in a world of polite sociability.” And while General Tilney “may not literally have confined his fevered wife in a turret…he did commit a muted version of the same crime, imprisoning his wife in a loveless marriage.”

Such arguments challenge previous criticism that dismisses Catherine Morland’s enthusiasm for Gothic literature and her corresponding disregard for ‘real solemn history’ as frivolous. Textual evidence proves Catherine’s reading is not confined to the Gothic alone, as she makes reference to poetry, plays and travel accounts, thereby suggesting that her rejection of the history of men, like that of her author, “represents not the voice of ignorance or even immaturity, but rather the opinions of a well-read young woman.” Some critics have accordingly argued for an alternative interpretation of Catherine’s declaration during the infamous passage on Beechen Cliff:

history, real solemn history I cannot be interested in…The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all—it is very tiresome; and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention.

Here, rather than epitomizing the “frivolous” viewpoint of a young woman, read by critics as representative of both Catherine and Austen herself, Gill instead counters that:

Austen is pointing out that historical representations were (and still are) centered on great (and not so great) men doing great (or not so great) things as framed by an author who cannot help but be motivated by an

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476 Austen, Northanger Abbey, 74.
ideological agenda and therefore cannot help but frame and shape history in a way that represents ideological values.\footnote{Linda Gill, “Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey: Narrative, Empowerment, Gender and Religion,” \textit{Pennsylvania Literary Journal}, 5, no. 3 (2013): 40.}

While it has been established that Austen was an accomplished reader, “reconstructing Austen’s reading,” along with her responses to the literature she engaged with, can be “both difficult and inevitably patchy.”\footnote{Halsey, \textit{Jane Austen and her Readers}, 18.} However, Halsey notes that there does exist some “marginalia in both the \textit{History of England} and the \textit{Elegant Extracts}” which “demonstrate Jane Austen’s disagreements with received versions of history.”\footnote{Halsey, \textit{Jane Austen and her Readers}, 18.} In particular, these disputes are “reminiscent of Catherine Morland’s view of history in \textit{Northanger Abbey} as ‘the quarrels of popes and kings,’” that is, history limited in scope to an exclusively male viewpoint.\footnote{Halsey, \textit{Jane Austen and her Readers}, 18.}

Austen’s “passionate refusal of masculinist history,” Wallace argues, “actually prefigure[s]…feminist critiques of the invisibility of women in history.”\footnote{Wallace, “Gothic Reader,” 139.} Since the twentieth century, scholarship has explored the ways in which women have been previously absented from history, as both subjects and authors. Thus, as previously mentioned in Chapter One, Historian Bonnie G. Smith proposes the notion that history has been “gendered male by tradition, accident and circumstance.” Christina Crosby fursers that “‘history’ is produced as man’s truth,” one “which in turn requires that ‘women’ be outside history.”\footnote{Christina Crosby, \textit{The Ends of History: Victorians and “the Woman Question”} (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1.} Women, then, according to Crosby, are the “unhistorical other of history.”\footnote{Crosby, \textit{The Ends of History}, 1.} However, while Crosby posits that women are absent from history, she contends that their presence can instead be located in fictional texts, arguing that such works “participate in a widespread discourse about history”—a sentiment echoed more recently by Devoney Looser in her assertion that theories on women’s exclusion from history “require revision.”\footnote{Crosby, \textit{The Ends of History}, 1. Devoney Looser, \textit{British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670-1820} (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 1.} In particular, Looser notes that earlier feminist theory
on the history of women led to the creation of the historical method, which placed women at “the center of an alternative narrative of past events,” and which in turn “provided a means for feminist historians to explore issues and materials by and about women that had been previously neglected or ignored.” However, Looser argues that future scholarship must widen its definition of ‘history,’ as this previous method ultimately eschews “women’s important contributions to historical discourse before the nineteenth century.” For while Looser concedes that although “history has not been an entirely male preserve…feminists are justified in faulting its long-standing male contours,” and therefore such revisions must allow for the acknowledgement that “the ways women writers drew on historical discourse in their texts varied,” including, and perhaps most notably for the purposes of this thesis, the “manipulations of historical material in fictional works.”

In *Writing History: Women’s History Since the Renaissance* (2002), published just two years after Looser’s work, Mary Spongberg presents a similar argument in her assertion that although “there is evidence to suggest that women have engaged with historical writing from the first century CE,” it must also be acknowledged that “women’s participation in the making of history during the eighteenth century was largely constricted to the production of family history.” Focusing instead on how literature (and in particular, the Gothic), provided women writers with an alternative method in which to engage with history, Spongberg contends that such works “function[ed] as a particular form of memory work, engaging ruins, hauntings and violence and incarceration as a way of representing and recasting the traumas and exclusions of family and national history,” as well as the “growing dispossession of women and their increasing vulnerability to their male kin.” It is not surprising, then, the Gothic writers of the late eighteenth-century turned to Gothic fiction as a way of representing histories absented as a result of their representative status of the minority

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489 Spongberg, “‘All Histories Are Against You?’”, 3.
public. In her recent study, *Female Gothic Histories* (2013), Diana Wallace contends that since the seventeenth century, “fiction has been one of the primary ways in which women writers have written history, and written themselves into “History.” Agreeing with the aforementioned historians, then, Wallace argues that “the invisibility of women from mainstream history, and as historians, obscures the fact that women have not only participated in historical events but engaged with history for as long as we have had historical records.” However, Wallace contends, it is because of this exclusion of being placed outside of history that women have been able to “be most subversive in their critiques of traditional historiography and its effects.” Arguing for the inclusion of fiction as an alternative history, particularly Gothic fiction, Wallace notes that “the past in the Gothic never quite stays dead.” Therefore, the Gothic allowed women writers to “represent that which had been rendered obscure by masculinist histories,” and in the case of this thesis, narratives that have been particularly neglected as a result of their exclusion (as a minority public) by law.

Austen, then, participates in this tradition, as her novel makes space for the history of abused wives—a narrative previously excluded (or misrepresented) by male voices. This interpretative space allowed readers to detect and piece together the missing history of Tilney’s wife, and thus the narrative of abusive marriages. Tracing Austen’s engagement with history within the pages of *Northanger Abbey*, Looser notes that “linking Jane Austen with history was once unthinkable,” or, as she quotes Raymond Williams: “It is a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen chose to ignore the decisive historical events of her time.” Now a permanent feature of criticism on Austen, Spongberg claims that within *Northanger Abbey* (and *Persuasion*), Austen presents “the novel as the ideal space for articulating women’s historical experience.” Therefore, Austen’s engagement with the Gothic, and her subsequent listing of the ‘Horrid’ novels, can be read not as a condemnation of such works, but rather a

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491 Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories*, 3.
492 Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories*, 3.
493 Spongberg, “‘All Histories Are Against You?’”, 57.
495 Spongberg, “‘All Histories Are Against You’””, 52.
deliberation on what the Gothic illuminates as well as what it obscures. For just as Austen's use of the Gothic allows her heroine to “recover” the history of Tilney's wife, whose narrative has been buried by masculinist history, so too do the ‘Horrid’ novels’ engagement with the Gothic allow their heroes and heroines to strive for the reclamation of agency in defiance of patriarchal law that seeks to erase them.

In her essay “‘The Haunting Idea’: Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory,” Diana Wallace explores Mary Beard’s ‘the haunting idea’: “the image of woman throughout long ages of the past as a being always and everywhere subject to male man or as a ghostly creature too shadowy to be even that real.”\(^{496}\) Wallace focuses her essay on what she calls ‘Female Gothic metaphors,’ that is, the metaphor of woman as ‘‘dead’ or ‘buried (alive)’ within male power structures which render her ‘ghostly.’”\(^{497}\) Of particular interest here is Wallace’s engagement with notions of law and subjectivity, as she notes the house “itself a metaphor for the legal institutions of marriage and patrilineal inheritance (enacted through the ‘bed’) which erase the female name.”\(^{498}\) Within the ‘Horrid’ novels, names function as signifiers of agency, ones that are continually revoked and renewed dependent upon the actions of the hero or heroine in question. Hidden, or buried, underneath assumed identities, these characters (both male and female) work to reclaim their original surnames, and thus their agency. Such metaphors of burial, Wallace asserts, are “a particularly powerful way of figuring the erasure of the female self,” and one that this thesis has demonstrated is not exclusive to the Female Gothic.\(^{499}\) For while women within the female-penned ‘Horrid’ novels are buried within castles (and thus by patriarchal law), in Lathom’s novel, both the Hermit and Byroff are buried in their enforced seclusion from society. The result is the same—the required erasure of the character’s name, as their imprisonment, whether within castle or hermitage, demands the relinquishment of their agency. In Teuthold’s *The Necromancer*, similar metaphors of live burial can be read in the structural placement of


\(^{498}\) Wallace, “‘The Haunting Idea,’” 29.

\(^{499}\) Wallace, “‘The Haunting Idea,’” 30.
Volkert’s narrative within the text. In *Gothic Writers, A Critical and Bibliographical Guide*, the authors note of Volkert’s narrative:

> The main story of *The Necromancer*’s Volkert is buried deep in the interior of the novel’s layers of oblique narratives and wild subplots. Penetrating to this central story is an ordeal even for the experienced Gothic reader.

The required unearthing of Volkert’s narrative (and thus the disinterment of the past) recalls Wallace’s assertion that “the Female Gothic is always ‘going back’: texts are haunted by their predecessors and, in turn, haunt their descendants.”⁵⁰¹ In a similar fashion, within the space of the ‘Horrid’ novels, the first narrative is haunted by the presence of the temporally displaced narrative, as the hero or heroine of the first is continually “going back” to recover histories otherwise absented. The idea of ‘haunting’ extends not only to the content of the ‘Horrid’ novels, but also to its complicated history of publication. For not only are the seven novels ‘haunted’ by their enduring connection to Austen, but also to their association with Minerva Press—both of which have led to their dismissal or complete disregard in scholarship of the Gothic.

This thesis has examined novels written by both male and female authors—thereby addressing the invisibility of the minority public from male-authored history—and, as such, existing delineations of Male and Female Gothic have been necessarily problematized. This categorization has been in contention since the term “Female Gothic” was first coined by Ellen Moers in 1976, when she wrote:

> What I mean by Female Gothic is easily defined: the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic. But what I mean—or anyone else means—by “the Gothic” is not so easily stated except that it has to do with fear.⁵⁰²

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⁵⁰¹ Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories*, 132.

It was due to this “deceptively simple” definition that attention was first afforded to the existing correlations between gender and Gothic, and therefore, the necessary acknowledgement of Gothic fiction written by women. In their collection *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (2009), Wallace and Smith contend that following Moers’ definition, classifications of Female Gothic, and necessarily, then, Male Gothic, were “initially identified with the gender of the writer,” as intimated by Moers herself. While the female-authored narrative was typically defined as featuring an “imprisoned and pursued heroine threatened by a tyrannical male figure,” the male counterpart contained a narrative of “masculine transgression…characterised by violent rape and/or murder,” exemplified by Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, respectively. In the years following Moers’ influential study, scholarship sought to further expand upon what Moers meant by the ‘Female Gothic,’ and by extension, then, ‘Male Gothic.’ Despite the wealth of criticism this debate inspired, a universal definition of the Female Gothic has yet to emerge. However, more recent scholarship has begun to question the necessity for this continued distinction between ‘Female’ and ‘Male’ altogether. In his work, *Gothic Writing: 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (1993), Robert Miles speculated on what he calls “moments of cross-over,” that is, when “female writers mount interventions into the Male Gothic, or vice versa,” problematizing clear distinctions between ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ Gothic.

More recently, Miles has questioned whether the Female Gothic is even still a “viable category,” by which he means, whether it is “still capable of critical work.” Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith further ponder “the usefulness of the ‘Female Gothic’ as a separate literary category or genre,” noting:

> today, over 25 years later, the terms beings offered—‘women’s Gothic,’ ‘feminine Gothic,’ ‘lesbian Gothic,’ even ‘Gothic feminism’—appear to

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503 Robert Miles, “‘Mother Radcliff’: Anne Radcliffe and the Female Gothic,” in *The Female Gothic*, ed. Wallace and Smith, 43.
504 Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, “Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic,” 3.
505 Wallace and Smith, “Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic,” 3.
507 Miles, “‘Mother Radcliff,’” 44.
suggest that Moers’ definition is too much of an umbrella term, and, possibly, too essentialising.  

Lauren Fitzgerald, in her essay “Female Gothic and the Institutionalisation of Gothic Studies,” also questions whether “Female Gothic [has] anything left to offer,” as “this critical category seems to many to have outlived its usefulness.” However, Fitzgerald argues that there is still a “critical lesson to be learned” from Female Gothic, particularly in light of its past contributions to feminist criticism, namely that of liberating female writers from the obscurity to which they had been confined. This thesis has attempted a “liberation” of a similar kind, rescuing the novels of the ‘Horrid’ collective from the ‘trash’ to which they have been historically relegated—just as Radcliffe, now the preeminent figure of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, was once similarly consigned.  

Smith and Wallace argue that the “correlation of plot or genre with authorial gender made by Moers was first interrogated at the start of the decade in Alison Milbank’s Daughters of the House: Modes of Gothic in Victorian Fiction (1992), when Milbank “discussed male writers’ appropriation of Female Gothic.” For, as Milbank demonstrates in her work, “masculine authors” can “speak ‘as woman’” through their engagement with “first-person female narrators.” The continued interrogation of Moers’ term has since elicited arguments such as Susanne Becker’s, one which furthers Milbank’s work in its suggestion of an amendment to the use of the term ‘Female,’ arguing instead for a ‘Feminine Gothic,’’ one that shifts the “(traditional) critical interest from the gender of the author (female gothic) to that of the speaking subject in the text (feminine gothic).” Angela Wright contends that such interrogations of Moers’ definition “have usefully promoted a critical wariness of the term ‘Female Gothic,’ and that ultimately the definition “has proved to be of value less for its argument than for the

510 Wallace and Smith, “Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic,” 3.  
512 Susanne Becker, Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 10.
debates that it continues to provide.”

In her essay “Disturbing the Female Gothic: An Excavation of the Northanger Novels,” Wright examines how “the development of a recognizably ‘Female Gothic’ form in the 1790s owed much to these pioneering novels.”

Focusing in particular on Parsons’ The Castle of Wolfenbach and Lathom’s The Midnight Bell, Wright posits that Lathom’s novel “participates in a ‘feminine’ tradition of Gothic” in the feminization of the hero, Alphonsus.

More notably here is Wright’s observation of the “shar[ed]…narrative perspective between the young hero Alphonsus and his wife Lauretta.”

Wright contends that “foregrounding a married couple is in itself unusual, but the way in which Lathom then shifts spontaneously between male and female perspectives is highly significant.”

As Wallace and Smith note, Wright challenges the term “Female Gothic,” as defined by Moers, by observing that the “lack of discrimination in terms of authorial gender in Isabella’s list indicates that the Female Gothic aesthetic is feminine, rather than female.”

This leads Wright to conclude that the “‘Northanger Novels’ evade our current understanding of the label ‘Female Gothic’ almost completely.”

In the process of repetitively “going back” to Moers, the notion of Female Gothic (and its enduringly evasive definition) has persisted in haunting Gothic criticism. The allowance that constraints posed by Moers’ original definition suggest the impossibility of a definitively Female and Male Gothic—particularly as explorations that move beyond the canonical names of Radcliffe and Lewis demonstrate an increasing resistance to fit such categorization—present new and interesting avenues for Gothic criticism to explore. Such existing correlations suggest the need for a more pliable definition, one that allows for feminine aesthetics by male authors, and vice versa, as demonstrated by the critics mentioned above. For, within the Northanger Collective, both male and female writers constantly challenge existing notions of Male

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513 Angela Wright, “Disturbing the Female Gothic: An Excavation of the Northanger Novels,” in The Female Gothic, ed. Wallace and Smith, 61.
514 Wallace and Smith, “Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic,” 7.
515 Wright, “Disturbing the Female Gothic;” 72.
516 Wright, “Disturbing the Female Gothic;” 70.
517 Wright, “Disturbing the Female Gothic;” 70.
518 Wallace and Smith, “Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic,” 8.
519 Wright, “Disturbing the Female Gothic;” 73.
and Female Gothic. Both Parsons and Sleath make use of exaggerated violence within their temporally displaced narratives of marital abuse, while Lathom features narratives of imprisonment and persecution, as applied to male characters, and even Teuthold complicates definitions with Volkert’s engagement of the Female Gothic. In “raising” female ghosts, Volkert articulates the repression experienced by eighteenth-century women—thereby challenging notions of authorial gender and speaking subject. That Teuthold later, within the space of the same novel, extends such notions of repression to also encompass eighteenth-century sodomites (through the punishment of Volkert’s “otherness”), suggests the possibilities of connection that exist between these repressed minority groups.

As narratives of violent repression abound in the texts written by both the ‘Horrid’ novels’ male and female authors (and, corresponding, on and about male and female protagonists), this thesis has argued that such narratives of subjugation are not exclusive to Female Gothic. Indeed, Wallace’s assertion that Female Gothic metaphors such as live burial “have enormous power to convey women’s experience of living in a culture which historically denied them legal status” is malleable in that it can also be applied to the experience of others excluded by patriarchal law, such as eighteenth-century sodomites. As previously mentioned in the Introduction, a minority public is one whose existence depends upon the presence of a majority group, and is therefore subordinate in nature—a distinction predicated upon a number of differing factors, including sexuality. This connection is one that Paulina Palmer speculates on in Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions (1999), noting how “Gothic and ‘queer’ share a common emphasis on transgressive acts and subjectivities.” Although she is referring specifically to Lesbian Gothic, it is a comparison that can be made between all seven of the ‘Horrid’ novels (both male and female), and one which once more contributes to the destabilization of Moers’ definition.

More recently, in his study Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age (2007), Max Fincher furthers this argument in his exploration of the similarities between the repression of women and homosexuals in Gothic fiction. As part of his study, he

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520 Wallace, “‘The Haunting Idea,’” 38.
necessarily ponders the usefulness of Male and Female Gothic as distinct categories, questioning: “Can ‘social repression’ encompass repression that extends to both men and women, particularly with reference to the prohibition of specific sexual desires?” Fincher rightly answers in the affirmative, arguing that “social repression should be taken to include the unequivocal enforcement of the law of ‘heterosexuality’—an idea which has been demonstrated within this thesis as the narratives located within the ‘Horrid’ texts ultimately portray the social repression as experienced by both women and sodomites. Consequently, Fincher warns that “framing a discussion of Gothic writing in terms of ‘male’ or ‘female’ ignores or covers those instances where the terms overlap or interchange their characteristics with one another.” Fincher asserts that his thesis does not intend to argue against or discount existing readings of such canonical works as *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and *The Monk* (1796), which explores the excessive violence enacted against women, but rather to argue that not all readings of ‘Male’ Gothic conform to this structure and that ignoring the similarities that do exist in Gothic fiction written by men and women is to ignore the possibilities within each.

The goal of this thesis has been to demonstrate how the presence of temporally displaced narratives within the seven ‘Horrid’ novels allows for the encoding of alternative histories that have been excluded by eighteenth-century patriarchal law and by modern critics alike. It has traced the complicated history of each of the seven ‘Horrid’ novels from their production (and sometimes ensuing translation) and reception by eighteenth-century critics and the public to their neglect in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Edward Copeland suggests that the popularity of these texts in their own time—despite garnering such harsh criticism from critics—can perhaps be explained by the reading public’s ability to locate their own economic realities within the ‘Horrid’ novels: as he points out, “Ann Radcliffe speaks to a readership with different experience altogether, as does Jane Austen” while novels by the ‘Horrid’ authors are “middle class gothic in contemporary dress.” This thesis suggests that the

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523 Fincher, *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age*, 3.
524 Fincher, *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age*, 3-4.
‘Horrid’ novels present a further attraction to the reader, in that they can see not only their own economic realities reflected, but also the realities of their exclusion from the discourse of law—particularly as it pertains to the legal position of women and eighteenth-century sodomites. As such, this thesis has necessarily explored how temporally displaced narratives, read against contemporary legal documents, consider the exclusion from law as experienced by various minority publics—in particular, groups whose existence as individuals threaten the stability of patriarchy.

Through an examination of these narratives, this thesis has considered the participation of the hero, or heroine of the first, or primary, narrative, as well as the historical reader of the text. Called upon to investigate, speculate, and piece together narratives into one collective manuscript, the hero or heroine of the story must uncover the secret which the presence of the secondary narrative indicates, one which has been absented from the primary narrative. The definition of the term “historian” distinguishes its position from that of a mere chronicler, a sentiment that is echoed in several of the ‘Horrid’ novels. For both The Necromancer and Horrid Mysteries contain paratexts, “those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book and outside it,” in order to attest to the “translation” of the novel—thereby invoking the physical act of writing.526 Furthermore, within The Necromancer, the reader is informed that both Herman and Hellfried contribute their own edits to the manuscript in question, rather than just compiling various documents, while in the Horrid Mysteries, the text itself uses a framing device in which Carlos deliberately (and to the notice of the reader) sets down his words in writing. In Parsons’ The Mysterious Warning, Louisa relays her story to Theresa, who serves as editor, and thus inserts her own revisions of the narrative, rather than simply transcribing and compiling Louisa’s words.

The word “history” claims etymological meanings of “investigation, inquiry, research, account, description,” one that ultimately provides a “chronicle, account of events as relevant to a group of people,” and here, to a group of people previously

526 Gérard Genette, Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), i.
The end result is what this thesis has previously referred to as an “invented artifact.” For while “invented” is defined as something that is “devised, contrived; made up, fabricated, feigned,” it can also carry meanings of “discovered, found out.” Ultimately, both of these definitions address the function of these narratives as, previously mentioned in Chapter One, they work to provide a reimagining of unrecorded history, narratives of abuse that may or may not have occurred, but which were made permissible under eighteenth-century law. The end result, then, is an “artifact,” “an object made or modified by human workmanship,” one that exists in the universe of the book in the form of the oral tellings or written documents, and in the world of the historical reader as a tangible object. Thus, the public’s demand for the Gothic can be read not simply as their desire for, but rather, their need of, the existence of such an artifact, particularly in the absence of legal documents that allow for the testimony of their current temporal reality.

The presence of these narratives indicate that the Northanger ‘Horrid’ Novels are worthy of examination in their own right, and that connections to Northanger Abbey need not be invoked in order to validate their inclusion within the canon of Gothic literature. While the presence of Jane Austen will continue to haunt criticism written on these seven novels—as Austen’s parodic engagement with the ‘Horrid’ novels itself can be read as a form of textual haunting—their contribution to the Gothic canon is one that demands the reassessment that this thesis, among other studies, has begun. For although these novels may not rival other texts in terms of their technical superiority, their engagement with important contemporary discourses on law, rights, and patriarchy as well as their influence on subsequent works—including Austen’s own Northanger Abbey—suggests that they do not deserve the “miniature and derisive perpetuity” to which they have been subjected.