

Chapter Title: Uncles and nieces: thefts, violence and sexual threats

Book Title: Gothic incest

Book Subtitle: Gender, sexuality and transgression

Book Author(s): Jenny DiPlacidi

Published by: Manchester University Press. (2018)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2204rt6.7>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>. Funding is provided by Knowledge Unlatched Select 2017: Frontlist.



JSTOR

Manchester University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Gothic incest*

*Uncles and nieces:
thefts, violence and sexual threats*



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

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

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

violence that are equally justified and supported by the familial and social structures that grant male control of female bodies and property. Eugenia C. DeLamotte argues that 'the mysterious crime at the heart of most Gothic plots is a transgression of legal barriers as well as, in many cases, a transgression of the stronger barriers of taboo – incest, the murder of a brother, patricide'.⁴ Within the realm of uncle–niece relationships these transgressions are combined with representations of property, genealogies and ideologies of gender and sexuality. Through an exploration of these thematics and the manner in which incestuous desires and threats become difficult, if not impossible, to extricate from their presence, a new paradigm of incest as both mutually enforcing and threatening to the patriarchal power structure and hegemony emerges.

Maggie Kilgour says of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) that the conclusion is 'a tidy way of suddenly resolving, in a highly oedipal text, the potential conflict between past and present, or guilt about the representation of the overthrow of a tyrannical father, by showing the father to have been a usurper all along'.⁵ If this is true of Walpole's work, then later Gothic novels take up this Oedipal drive in a different way, exposing the figure of the uncle as usurper of both the rightful father and the niece. Although many scholarly accounts claim that one of the hallmarks of the Female Gothic is a tendency to show the father as tyrannical, employing the paternal figure as one who persecutes the heroine to impress upon readers the dangers of patriarchy, more commonly it is the uncle who is the usurper: the tyrannical figure who threatens the lineage, fortune, property and namesake of the heroine.⁶ Because of the scholarly trend to view the father as representative of patriarchal dangers there is a corresponding tendency to overlook the figure of the uncle, who, in fact more frequently than the father, represents a physical, sexual and financial threat to the heroine. While the conflict between past and present in these novels is still very much a part of the plot, the resolution reveals, not a Walpolean false lineage from a servant who murdered the master, but a brother who murdered a brother and often the sister-in-law as well. The danger is not positioned outside the family line, but within it, not from the serving class but a member of the aristocracy who threatens the women of his own bloodline. Here it is not the heroine who transgress the incest taboo, often viewed as fundamental in maintaining the kinship system of exchange that reinforces the patriarchal power structure, but the uncle.⁷ In order to understand how the uncle is capable of violating the tenets of the incest taboo that uphold his power while remaining

a figure representative of the dangers of the dominant male hegemony and its corresponding ideologies, it is essential to look at the contexts in which the uncle violates the taboo.⁸

In the previous two chapters I have examined novels in which the incestuous desires between fathers and daughters and brothers and sisters are central; but even in texts that focus on these configurations there are still uncles looming within the storylines. Ann Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) feature uncles who either threaten incestuous desires or are murderous, imprisoning heroines and usurping their property. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) Heathcliff plays a dual role, shifting from the brother/lover into the threatening uncle with ease, propelled towards kidnapping, imprisonment and the theft of property from his niece. Angela Wright has recently pointed out that feminist critics have begun to focus increasingly upon the relationship between the law – particularly property law – and the Gothic.⁹ The centrality of law is often related in these Gothic novels to the figure of the uncle, the most common predatory or persecutory male figure who appears consistently and often initially makes himself felt as a desirous or lustful force towards the heroine before being revealed as blood kin. Often entrenched in murderous, incestuous plots driven by lust for the heroine, her mother or the familial titles and property belonging to an older brother, the uncle is a shadowy figure within the Gothic that seems representative of the genre itself. An assemblage of motives, desires and drives, a compilation of good and bad, condemned and saved, hideous and handsome, the uncle often acts as the Gothic text: joining together the old and new, the figure of the uncle represents and acts out seemingly oppositional roles. These contrasting positions have often caused scholars to treat the Gothic genre as having a limited ability to be radical or transgressive. As Kilgour points out, the Gothic novel seems to 'denounce precisely the transgressive qualities with which it was associated', dividing scholars on the question of whether the genre is conservative or radical.¹⁰ Part of what appear to be inconsistencies in the form are mirrored in the figure of the uncle, himself representative of both the older, aristocratic order and the destruction of it. Resembling the genre itself, the uncle adheres to and abuses the dominant cultural structures to usurp powers traditionally denied to his position.¹¹

The incestuous desires of the uncle towards his niece are bound up with generations of thefts of property and person. The heroine, frequently herself a physical reflection of her mother, acts as a younger

generation onto which the uncle can project his sexual longings, usually thwarted previously by the marriage of her mother to his older brother.¹² With the niece another opportunity is born to rewrite his own history, to use the property, title and wealth stolen from her father to attempt to force a union with the heroine. Sexual desires are consistently tied together with murderous desires, thefts of property and/or title and legal manoeuvrings. Law or legal language is often a recourse to which the uncle retreats, backing himself up with legal documents (real or forged) and legal standpoints (valid or not) in order to try to force his claims on the heroine's body or property.¹³ Binding incestuous desires together with persecutory intentions does seem a way of, as Kilgour puts it, 'cloaking familiar images of domesticity in gothic forms' in order to enable 'us to see that the home *is* a prison, in which the helpless female is at the mercy of ominous patriarchal authorities'.¹⁴

The combination of incest and law serves also to highlight the vulnerability of the heroine in the face of unwanted sexual desires complicated by questions of legality and the inalienable right of the heroine to make decisions regarding her body. By uniting the persecution of the heroine's body with concepts of liberty and law, Gothic writers mobilise the female body to enter the typically masculine arena of political rhetoric. Kilgour points to the association of the Gothic with British freedom from tyrannical laws as capable of being used both to demonise and idealise the past.¹⁵ This notion is examined by Diana Wallace in her analysis of Gothic and legal institutions that traces this association to Margaret Cavendish's 1662 'Female Orations'.¹⁶ Wallace, while focusing on 'the haunting idea' as Gothic and legal metaphor, makes important connections between legal institutions and the Female Gothic fixation on loss of female identity and property through the institutions of marriage and inheritance. I argue that because of their frequent positioning as the younger brother, Gothic uncles often inhabit a similar position to the heroines in terms of inheritance and identity, being unable to lay legal claim to familial property or title.¹⁷

Eighteenth-century legal scholar Sir William Blackstone famously described the English constitution and legal system as an inheritance: 'an old Gothic castle, erected in the days of chivalry, but fitted up for a modern inhabitant'.¹⁸ Wolfram Schmidgen discusses Blackstone's metaphor of law and the Gothic castle as an allusion that 'ties together the themes of property, common law, and the English constitution in a single image'.¹⁹ This notion of inherited rights is important in relation to the figures of

uncles and nieces, who are both portrayed as being denied their inheritances of property, title or rights. In contrast to the heroines, the uncles use violence and force to usurp the inheritances denied them and the positions of power and wealth held by their older brothers, displacing them as the bastions of patriarchy. Along with positions of patriarchal power, estates and titles that uncles usurp through their violent crimes, they inherit generations of female bodies from their brothers. In one sense, the figure of the uncle allows a reaffirmation of individual freedom over social contract or law before revealing the ultimate futility of a reaffirmation that results in a mere displacement of power rather than an abolition of its structures. As such, the uncle's compromised place within patriarchy makes him a useful figure to writers of the Gothic as he becomes reflective of the form and underscores the Gothic's location at the centre of radical discourse.

Representations of incest place desires, bodies and sexuality within the context of debates on freedom, choice and the ethics of tyrannical laws. In order more clearly to understand how writers of the Gothic used the figure of the uncle to represent a variety of legal and domestic dangers, it is necessary to examine a diverse selection of Gothic novels. *The Castle of Wolfenbach* by Eliza Parsons precedes the more celebrated works of Ann Radcliffe as well as the scores of Gothic novels written in the latter's style. It is therefore a useful text to look at both in terms of possible influences on Radcliffe's works but also as a novel that, in spite of being relegated to a mere footnote in discussions of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) list of Gothic novels, is one that deserves recognition for raising questions of ownership, independence and the origins of desire. Radcliffe's two most famous novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), are essential works to examine in a chapter considering uncle-niece incest and questions of property as both texts explore these topics in divergent ways. In *Udolpho* Radcliffe uses the figure of an uncle by marriage to depict the implications of property transfer upon marriage and the system of inheritance. While avoiding explicit incestuous situations, she positions the heroine as an object of both persecution and exchange by her uncle, who uses other male figures as proxy sexual threats to force compliance. In *The Italian* Radcliffe explicitly unites incestuous sexual desire and murderous desire, deploying the uncle as a figure conflicted over whether to rape or kill his niece, whom he has already left without property or title. When the common threads of legality and sexuality that are apparent within these different Gothic narratives by women are

unpicked a pattern emerges that links the figure of the uncle with sexual, incestuous threats, creating a subversive commentary on tyrannical persecution, oppression and the hypocrisy of 'natural' law.²⁰

NATURALLY ARISING DESIRES: RAISING THE NIECE TO
BECOME THE WIFE

The heroine of Parsons's *Wolfenbach* is Matilda Weimar, a young woman raised by her uncle, Mr Weimar, in a remote location in Austria. Matilda holds little affection for her uncle and guardian in spite of his extreme fondness towards her. Although Weimar takes a minimal interest in Matilda while she is young, once she goes through puberty and turns fifteen he grows intensely attracted to her. After Matilda overhears a conversation between Weimar and a servant that implies he plans to rape her she flees to Germany, seeking refuge at the Castle of Wolfenbach, where she meets the Countess Wolfenbach and with her help escapes to Paris to the Countess's sister and brother-in-law (the Marquis and Marchioness de Melfort). When Matilda next sees Weimar he tells her she is not his blood kin but is rather an unknown orphan he raised and fell in love with and proposes marriage. Matilda refuses, running away first to England and then to a convent in France before being abducted by Weimar and taken onto a ship. Overtaken by Turkish pirates, Weimar stabs Matilda and reveals the truth of her origins: she is his niece, the daughter of his older brother whom he killed for the inheritance. He switched Matilda as an infant with her wet nurse's dead daughter, taking her to Austria where he subsequently raised her as his niece. Matilda finds her mother and a joyful reunion with her and her love interest, the Count de Bouville, ensues.

Parsons's novel unites themes of inheritance, incestuous desires, threats of rape and female imprisonment with thefts of female-held property and the usurpation of the patriarchal position by the younger brother. Parsons embeds the thefts, usurpation and crimes in a heavily coded language of Gothic incestuous desires. The uncle, in stealing from the older brother, takes not just his property but his daughter, laying claim to Matilda's body as his own. Weimar's shifting desires towards Matilda show that his position as her father has culminated in the ultimate betrayal of power but also that such abuses of power and incestuous desires are the natural result of the available familial, legal and marital models. The abuses that occur are exacerbated in a perpetuation

of thefts, crimes and incestuous violence against women that reveal the threat of what Gothic scholar Ruth Binstock Anolik refers to as the possession of women in marriage.²¹ Weimar's incestuous threats and thefts of property are bound together, underscoring the function of the female body as a commodity to be exchanged between a patriarch and a non-kin male. That his desires and usurpations negate the necessity for this exchange locates the paradox at the heart of what Foucault refers to as the deployment of alliance and the deployment of sexuality.²² Parsons's novel demonstrates that incestuous desires and threats are the inevitable and unavoidable products of the power relations created by the customs and laws intended to prohibit incest in order to shore up eighteenth-century ideologies of kinship and sexuality.²³

It is apparent from the development of the plot that the novel follows an ostensibly recognisable Gothic arc, complete with persecutions, revelations and reunions. What is intriguing about the novel's depictions of incest is not only the way various characters react to Weimar's incestuous desires but also the way the desires develop and how Parsons links incestuous urges with questions of ownership, birth and property. This unification necessitates an examination of usurpation, violence and sexuality that is pointed towards by Kilgour in her reading of Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, in which she states: 'below the surface narrative lurks a story of usurpation. What is unusual, too, is that the suggested dispossession and perhaps murder is of a female by a male. Is this a subversive myth of the usurpation of female property and power by a patriarchal order?'²⁴ The question applies to all Gothic novels in which a heroine is deprived of inheritance and freedom by a male villain. When the male villain is also a family member who tries to force incestuous relations onto the younger female relative, the myth becomes not one of mere property usurpation but of sexual domination and physical violence. This type of dispossession and attempted murder of females is quite common in Gothic representations of uncles and nieces. Rather than understanding this frequent (though widely varying) plot line as a subversive myth, it is a sophisticated blending of traditionally masculine powers – sexual, financial and legal – that are manifested in the form of the uncle and wielded over the niece to expose the threats implicit in the dominant ideology.²⁵ The niece's position is one of legal (and at times physical) powerlessness rather than of moral or emotional helplessness; her persecution and usurpation by the uncle is one that is accommodated – and, in a sense, demanded – by the laws of society that are frequently articulated in the Gothic in the

very terms of desire and incest: as naturally occurring or unnaturally imposed.²⁶

Uncle Weimar's incestuous longings for Matilda begin, not when she is a young child in his care, but after she is a teenager and (perhaps more interestingly from an anthropological viewpoint) after he has returned from an absence of nine months.²⁷ Although as a child Matilda felt 'a repugnance to return his caresses', when she is fifteen he leaves for France and for the first time she feels affection for him: 'nothing could exceed the tenderness of his behaviour at parting, and for the first time in my life I was affected; I returned his embraces and shed some tears' (pp. 10–11). He returns after writing to her constantly; and although Matilda 'was overjoyed to see him ... the pleasure I felt and expressed fell very short of the rapture and transport with which he embraced and praised me; he dwelt on the improvement in my person with such delight, that I felt confused and uneasy; the attention which used to give me pleasure was now painful, and I repulsed his caresses involuntarily' (p. 11). When explaining to the Countess Wolfenbach why she fled from her uncle Matilda focuses on the attention Weimar lavished on her and his expectations of her responses to him that were disappointed by her hesitant or confused reactions. Weimar's sexual attraction for Matilda, though perhaps beginning earlier, is clearly pinpointed by Matilda as being inspired by the improvement in her person that has occurred during his absence.²⁸ Scholars often see incest in the Gothic as allied to that deployed by the Romantic writers, as a trope that 'suggests an abnormal and extreme desire (a violation of natural familial ties) that is antithetical to and subversive of social requirements'.²⁹ However, rather than being shown as 'unnatural' incest is often portrayed instead as a natural desire, as a 'more than' familial love; rather than a violation of familial love it is an extension of it.³⁰ The result of this representation is frequently a subversion of the legal as well as the social requirements regarding sexuality, exchanges of women and exogamous marriages. Parsons's Matilda is positioned in relation to her uncle's sexual persecution that is tied to his legal and financial control over her. Although she is able to escape the authority he has over her that facilitates his incestuous desires, they are presented as the natural consequence of his control over her body and property.

Weimar's fixation on Matilda is revealed as sexual in nature, not only by his dwelling on her appearance and the rapture with which he greets her, but also by the books he has brought back with him. Weimar has made purchases on his trip away that Matilda views as akin to

pornography, from which she instinctively recoils. The incident is, as far as I know, unique in early Gothic fiction. An uncle shows his young niece lewd images that distress her:

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

Weimar expects (or desires) Matilda to respond to the drawings with praise; whether he intends her to be aroused by them is arguable, but what is clear is that the sexual advances and desires here are linked to inappropriate images the uncle shows the niece.³¹ Her inability to view them with anything but distress is testimony to her innate virtue, a modesty that makes her shrink from the images and her uncle; she identifies the incident as unsettling although she cannot fully articulate why.³² It is also an act typical of male abusers, who take advantage of their power. In her article addressing abuses of power Lena Dominelli describes the overall denial that meets claims of the family structure promoting abuse: 'the public has generally resisted the feminist message that incest is widespread in our society and that it arises from the social legitimization of unequal power relations within the family'.³³ This abuse of power is frequently cited in scholarly examinations of the Gothic to equate incest in the genre with representations of male abuse. In spite of its over-application to all forms of incestuous relationships in the Gothic, the relevance of this paradigm to the incestuous advances of uncles that stem, in part, from the unequal distribution of power in the family structure is readily apparent. The feminist claim that father-daughter sexual abuse 'is a characteristic of a patriarchal society' explains how the social structure perpetuates abuses against women within the context of family.³⁴

The application of this sociological understanding of incest to the representations in the Gothic, though limiting in certain configurations that defy its construction as an abuse on the part of the paternal figure, is highly relevant in examinations of the uncle. The nature of incestuous sexual abuses as a violation of the taboo that is essential to the maintenance of the power structure that allows such abuses is a paradox

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

Seventeenth-century English theologian and clergyman Jeremy Taylor's understanding of incestuous unions is taken up by scholar Ellen Pollak in her comprehensive analysis of incestuous representations in English literature to discuss the transgressive nature of the uncle–niece relationship.³⁵ Pollak examines Taylor's argument (whose views influenced many later debates on marriage and kinship law) that only marriages between parents and children/children-in-law were against the prime laws of nature and that although unions between siblings were incestuous and illegal, they did not constitute a violation of the natural law. Neither were marriages between uncles and nieces a violation of the natural law as they did not overturn 'the proper order of familial authority' as the unnatural union of parent and child would.³⁶ Pollak's treatment of Taylor is intriguing because it illuminates both the widening gaps between divine law and natural law and how civil law was affected by these shifts. These ideas are further taken up by T. G. A. Nelson, who argues that Taylor's perspective reveals the contradiction between (in relation, specifically, to brother–sister unions) the natural propensity towards incest as checked by laws that have become so ingrained within us that they are now natural: 'such marriages have been outlawed, to the extent that the law against them has become a kind of secondary law of nature.'³⁷ Foucault refers to the paradox that Nelson examines as a system of knowledge produced through the ongoing reproduction of power, stating that 'we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has a need in order to function.'³⁸ That systems of

law and inheritance are designated in the Gothic as natural and unnatural in their reproduction is critical to examining how they are presented as lending themselves to abuses of power manifested as incestuous desires and threats, becoming a site of resistance to such reproductions without depicting the desires as inherently unnatural. More important for a discussion of Weimar and Matilda is the possibility that Weimar's position as uncle is not the relationship that would cause his marriage to his niece to be perceived as unnatural, but his usurped position as her familial head. Taylor's views indicate that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society would object to the disruption of familial authority resulting from Weimar's marriage to Matilda as his ward rather than to the idea of a natural law being violated by his marriage to her as his niece.³⁹ Weimar's role as Matilda's guardian and the familial patriarch puts him in a position of authority that, in conjunction with the usurpations of these roles, reinforces the depiction of incestuous desires occurring naturally within the unnatural structures of family and society.⁴⁰

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

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

Matilda's confusion at her uncle's advances is caused by her inability fully to comprehend the sexual nature of his caresses and compliments and how to stop him.⁴¹ She knows she does not like his behaviour but does not quite know why or what to do about it. This changes abruptly when Matilda overhears a servant counsel her uncle to tell her they are unrelated and do to her what he likes. The conversation convinces Matilda that whether or not Weimar is her uncle, he poses a clear threat to her person (her physical form, her virginity, her chastity) and she flees his estate. Matilda's flight and subsequent adventures underscore the tensions within scholarship's understanding of the Female Gothic as paradoxically conservative and radical in its destruction of the patriarchal past and its reconfiguration as a reformed ideal. Kilgour describes the Gothic as at once dismembering the present and re-membering the past

into something pure and idealistic, stating that: 'the gothic is better at dismemberment than re-memberment, at parody than the construction of an alternative'.⁴² Kilgour's argument and Kate Ferguson Ellis's analysis of the Gothic heroine's attempt to destabilise and then reform the nuclear family exemplify scholarly divergences on the function of the Gothic as a space in which writers articulated subversive views on patriarchy and family.⁴³

These divergent understandings of the Gothic's ability to reform (or re-member) the past into a new bourgeois family structure emphasise the difficulties scholarship has encountered in determining what the heroine achieves at the end of the Gothic novel. Does she re-member the dismembered and idealised past into a reformed family structure – and fail in doing so effectively, as Kilgour suggests – or does the Gothic fail as subversive if the heroine's aim in destabilising patriarchy is only to reform it, as Ellis's argument suggests? Matilda is a heroine who does neither. She does not fail in re-membering the past because she never attempts to do so; rather, she dis-members her present and creates a new family structure with an equal partner. That Matilda does not destabilise the family structure to reform it is a consequence of its extant weaknesses. The presence of undesired incestuous advances demonstrates that the available family structure permits unequal power relationships and is thus fundamentally compromised, necessitating the heroine's escape from its archaic structure. Rather than reform it, she must leave it behind forever. Matilda's escape from her uncle's home propels her forward into an even more violent family structure, that of the Countess Wolfenbach's home – her prison – in which she has been kept by a jealous and murderous husband for almost two decades and from which Matilda also escapes. The patriarchal underpinnings of the family and society are exposed as inherently unstable as they permit the legal imprisonment of women by their male family members and perpetuate a system of chronic injustice.

Matilda's perception of incest is intriguingly ambiguous. When she reflects on her loyal servant Albert, implicitly comparing him to her uncle, she views him as superior to the depraved Weimar: 'how much superior are their sentiments to those of better understanding and cultivated talents, when their minds are depraved by the indulgence of irregular passions!' (p. 23). Albert, although devoid of cultivated talents, has not been corrupted by the indulgence of irregular passions as Weimar has.⁴⁴ But it cannot be incest that Matilda calls an irregular passion, because

at this point she is no longer certain of Weimar's having a consanguineal tie to her and so her description of his passions as irregular applies rather to their exploitative nature and the force he planned to use on her.⁴⁵ In a contrasting perception of their connection, Matilda says to her uncle: 'heaven can witness for me how grateful I was for your kindness, until my delicacy was alarmed by freedoms I thought improper from our near connexion' (p. 61). Here, Matilda implies that it is the blood relationship that makes the freedoms alarming rather than the freedoms themselves that disturb her, contradicting her earlier assertion that Weimar's actions disturbed her innate sense of delicacy and modesty. It is an interesting turn of phrase when examined in conjunction with other Gothic heroines, such as Radcliffe's Ellena or Sleath's Laurette, who are represented more frequently as uncomfortable with caresses or freedoms taken by those outside of the family, by men who are not kin, and who consequently view proof of blood as a green light for caresses that would be otherwise inappropriate.⁴⁶ Matilda's honesty (like Laurette's) is, however, in this instance questionable given the context of her statement: she is refusing an offer of marriage from the man she believed her whole life to be her uncle after he has announced he is not blood kin and is thus capable of marrying her legally.

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

The conversation I overheard is ever present to my mind, and could I forget that, then my reverence for my uncle would return, and I should shudder at the idea of a nearer connexion. When I think of it, and indeed, Sir, I have endeavoured to think of it, an unaccountable repugnance makes the idea horrible to me; yet after all, if you persist in wishing me to become your wife, I do not think myself at liberty absolutely to refuse, but I tell you candidly, I never can love you; that though I will obey you and do my duty, I know I shall be miserable, and in that persuasion surely 'tis impossible I can make you happy. (pp. 67–8)

Matilda's first reason for resisting the marriage is not her memories of Weimar raising her as a niece but her knowledge of his plan to force himself on her. She phrases it so that her refusal is couched in terms of her inability to forget that conversation, which, even if forgotten, would then

cause her to view him again as her uncle, making the idea of marrying him horrible. She constructs a logical paradox that makes it impossible for her to marry him based on the tautology of his position as a potential rapist or as blood kin. Nonetheless, she undercuts the refusal this construct allows her by admitting that if he persists in his proposals she will marry him because she feels she owes him.⁴⁷ The obligation Matilda feels to her uncle is viewed primarily as a financial one, which is reinforced by Charlotte De Melfort's attempt to eliminate the debt on financial terms. Charlotte, acting as Matilda's protector, intervenes as a buyer in the market of female bodies and undermines Weimar's male privilege of purchasing and ownership. Trying essentially to buy Matilda from Weimar, Charlotte says she will give him the money for the expense he incurred in raising her to have adoptive claim to her (p. 102). It is made clear that Weimar's right to Matilda, once he has asserted that she is not his blood kin, is based on monetary obligation and that he will use this perceived debt to attempt to force Matilda into marriage.

Charlotte deploys Weimar's argument of financial obligation against him, freeing Matilda from a marriage repulsive to her by purchasing Matilda from her uncle in an act of exchange that reverses the traditional commerce in female bodies.⁴⁸ Her intervention reveals that it is in fact these exchanges and the ownership of women by family that reduces their bodies to currency, entailing incestuous and endogamous desires.⁴⁹ She further tries to use money to liberate Matilda in England, offering her '£400/year [to] make her independent – under no obligation to any young man' (p. 97) to free her from any obligations to Count de Bouville, Weimar or any other man. Matilda too finds the idea of obligation unsettling, preferring to belong to only herself rather than have potential debts used to force her compliance.⁵⁰ When Weimar tells Matilda her illegitimacy makes it unlikely that she will find any man other than himself willing to marry her, she says: 'I never will owe the obligation to any man, nor have the chance of being upbraided, that I belong to nobody' (p. 68). Matilda uses Weimar's assertion of her illegitimacy as an undesirable trait to renege on her verbal agreement to marry him by claiming that she will not let her obscurity (both her potential illegitimacy and her lack of fortune) degrade any potential husband. Matilda claims that rather than cause any such degradation she will become a lay-sister, a suggestion that indicates she will submit to celibacy rather than be an unequal partner in a marriage. When Weimar agrees to let Matilda stay with the De Melforts for a year, so long as she forms no attachment to any other man and writes

to him, the same scenario of proposed marriage and refusal is repeated with Matilda's lover, Count de Bouville. Matilda declines to marry and disgrace him because of her obscure origins, preferring instead to go to a convent. She rejects being a party to any relationship that places her under an obligation, financial or as an object of pity or disdain due to her illegitimate birth, leaving behind both Bouville and her uncle.

Matilda's resistance to the institution of marriage as offered by her uncle is presented as a natural disinclination predicated on both a distrust and dislike of Weimar coupled with her inability to view him as non-related given her upbringing. Her reluctance is strengthened by having met and fallen in love with the handsome and wealthy Bouville; her desire for Bouville jeopardises her uncle's continued control over her body. Robert Miles argues that Gothic representations of the institutionalisation of marriage in the eighteenth century are tied to threats against inheritance via desire: 'the plot of the Gothic romance is a threat to primogeniture, the arranged marriage gone wrong through the advent of a desire that proves literally unruly'.⁵¹ Miles argues that unnatural sexuality characterised anything that resisted the institutionalised discourses of marriage and procreation in the eighteenth century. In Parsons's novel the sexuality that withstands marriage is Matilda's; her natural desires for Bouville oppose a marriage that embodies the heteronormative ideologies of power and violence. Weimar's desires, although developing naturally in the context of his power over his niece's body, become unnatural as they endanger female liberty, desire and property ownership. Male sexuality formulated within the available power networks, particularly in relation to an already existing control over a female, engenders female resistance to marriage. Sexuality cannot develop into anything other than a threat within the confines of the existing ideologies and their reification in the family structure of Weimar and Matilda. Although all desires arise naturally, that they do so from within the uncle-niece configuration as Parsons delineates it – fraught with prior usurpations of property, name and body – brings about their manifestation of heteronormative structures that renders them unnatural threats to female desire, property and body.

Miles calls Parsons's novel a core Female Gothic narrative 'where the daughter leaves, or is abducted from, the castle of a Baron intent on making his daughter marry dynastically'.⁵² Yet in Parsons's novel Matilda does not leave because her father wants her to marry dynastically, she flees because her uncle threatens rape and proposes marriage.

As Weimar explains his attraction its development corresponds to Matilda's maturation and initially resists the tradition of institutionalised marriage: 'as Matilda grew up, I became passionately fond of her; my love increased with her years, and I determined to possess her ... I did not first intend marrying; I had an aversion to that tie' (p. 150). However, he would have succumbed to the institution of marriage had Matilda accepted him if that was the only way to indulge his sexual desire for her: 'it was my intention to have married you, unless you rejected me – in that case you must take the consequence' (p. 151). Weimar's desire works against Miles's assertions regarding unnatural sexuality resisting marriage and Parsons's novel as a narrative of flight from a dynastic marriage as it is traditionally understood. Rather, unnatural sexuality (Weimar's desires) eventually subscribes to the cultural convention of marriage as it is within this institution that such urges are indulged under the sanction of the heteronormative society whose laws and customs corroborate male desires. The marriage Weimar proposes is literally dynastic – within the same family line – however, it is not the father who attempts to enforce this incestuous marriage but the uncle, whose prior usurpation locates the proposed dynastic marriage as a further consequence of the unnaturally constructed intersections of desire, marriage and sexuality.

A discussion of rights and laws demonstrates the incestuous desires of the uncle to be a crossover between the control over women afforded to non-kin and kindred men – an unfairly weighty blend of authority over female sexuality, property and exchange in marriage. The convent in France to which Matilda retires offers her no protection from Weimar; although her uncle 'could not oblige her to marry him' (p. 100) nor prevent her entry to the religious house he can remove her from it by an order of the King. When the convent surrenders Matilda to Weimar she says to him: 'how you mean to dispose of me, or by what right you assume yourself master of my destiny, I know not; but of this you may be assured, no force shall prevail upon me to act contrary to my own inclinations and judgment; and since I am not your niece, you have no legal authority over me' (p. 142). Matilda believes that Weimar is not a consanguineal relative and therefore has no legal claim to or authority over her. Were Weimar Matilda's blood uncle her virginity would be safe (Matilda's understanding of kinship and sexual desire as incompatible has been enforced by Weimar's false assertions that he only loves her because she is not his kin), but the lack of a blood tie jeopardises her chastity just as its presence

puts at risk her whole body and future because it would grant Weimar control of those. Kinship and law are tied together paradoxically, as the presence of kinship grants male relatives legal control over female bodies and property while prohibiting (theoretically) sexual acts and marriage between kin, while the absence of blood ties renders the female unprotected and at the sexual mercy of all non-kin.⁵³ The relationship between kinship and the law in the eighteenth century forces women to be the objects of exchange – financial property – or the objects of desire – sexual property. Uncle–niece incest merges these forms of female commodification to locate the niece as an object of both sexual and financial value, who, in the uncle's ideal market, circulates within the confines of the castle. Matilda's refusal to submit to Weimar's false authority establishes her own inclinations and judgement as the superior power: she defies the subordinate positions afforded her through both consanguineal and non-consanguineal ties.

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

intensified after the nine-month absence that allowed him to re-form her into a sexually mature and accessible woman, as criminal or unnatural.

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

The figure of Weimar in many ways foreshadows the figure of Radcliffe's Schedoni, another uncle who does not know whether he should rape or kill his niece. But it is not only Radcliffe who takes cues from Parsons's plot and character. Austen, another author who focused on money, property and family, had at least heard of Parsons's novel, as is proved by her inclusion of it in her *Northanger Abbey* list; that she perhaps also used it as inspiration for parts of her plots is supported by my earlier comparisons of *Wolfenbach* with *Mansfield Park* (1814). Other points of similarity to Austen's fiction include Matilda's false belief that her lover, Count de Bouville, is already married to another woman, one undeserving of his worth, Mrs Courtney. Matilda cannot bear to inquire about the two for fear of hearing about their marriage (p. 165), much as Elinor fears Edward is married to another scheming woman, Lucy Steele, in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) only to be proved wrong. Moreover, the revelation of Bouville's continued single state as revealed by the Marchioness (p. 168) is highly reminiscent of the revelation of Edward's continued bachelorhood in Austen's novel. Another strong similarity to *Sense and Sensibility* occurs when the Countess asks Matilda if she loves Bouville,

to which Matilda replies: 'If, madam ... to prefer him to any other man I ever saw; if to confess that I think him deserving of the highest esteem from every one he honours with his acquaintance; if this is to be called love, I must answer in the affirmative' (p. 171). This evokes Elinor's near confession to Marianne about Edward: "I do not attempt to deny," said she, "that I think very highly of him – that I greatly esteem, that I like him."⁵⁴ Both heroines struggle with questions of money, emotions and the marital statuses of their lovers. That Parsons's work influenced that of other writers who focused at length on the ties of kinship and property reveals that the Gothic, while so frequently thought of as a genre obsessed with constantly recycled conventions, possesses a much broader range of concerns reflected in their reimagining in later non-Gothic novels. Not only do Gothic novels demonstrate their thematic range from the diversity of texts they influence, but they are also themselves engaged with the broader concerns of the various genres of fiction that precede and follow them.⁵⁵

RAPE BY PROXY: WITHDRAWING PROTECTION TO FORCE SUBMISSION

The wealth of criticism that focuses on representations of property in Radcliffe's novels, according to certain lines of scholarship, recapitulates the Gothic narratives of female victimhood and resistance. Lauren Fitzgerald, for example, writes that Ellen Moers's examination of property in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* demonstrates the ways feminist critics 'often reproduce the plots and characters of their object of study' by casting writers like Radcliffe in the role of the heroine beleaguered by male critic villains.⁵⁶ Such criticism is not unjust; much scholarship has been devoted to repositioning Radcliffe in light of Matthew Lewis and her male critics such as Sir Walter Scott, while even more has focused on ownership, inheritance and property in her novels.⁵⁷ Fitzgerald ultimately links feminist criticism's fixation on property to a desire to reclaim the textual property of women writers and ownership over a literary tradition.⁵⁸ It is, indeed, impossible to overlook so central a focus of Radcliffe's texts, particularly when the themes of property are intriguingly united with threats of incestuous sexual violence, which we have already seen in play in Parsons's work. E. J. Clery states that Radcliffe, 'by regularly endowing her female characters with inherited fortunes, foregrounds the ideological inconsistencies of the property laws relating to women of her

time.⁵⁹ Clery's well-made claim focuses on the flaws of the legal system and its failure to protect female control and ownership of property and wealth.⁶⁰ Recent critical work by Radcliffe scholars such as Miles hints at a link between the threats of sexual violence and property thefts: 'the true risks posed by Radcliffe's plots are not the rapes threatened with a surprising frequency in such a proper writer, but the alienation of property and place.'⁶¹ This conclusion tends to minimise the threat of rapes and their prevalence, yet the imbrication of body and property is central to the texts. Radcliffe's novels consistently navigate the legal complexities of female inheritance and its usurpation by male relatives – specifically the uncle – and risks of sexual violence, presenting incestuous threats as inextricable from property theft by relatives. Because threats to female-owned property become united with dangers to the female body – which is valuable to men through its potential for exchange – male usurpations of female inheritances become themselves an incestuous violation.

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

In her examination of father-daughter incest, Angie Ash states that 'explicit violence may not always be necessary to force a daughter's submission: rather, the threat of its uses, or the coercive nature of the father's behaviour in the family, may be sufficient to ensure the victim's cooperation.'⁶² Radcliffe's novel represents a distortion of Ash's description that

locates threats of violence as ensuring sexual submission. It is not that physical violence forces sexual acquiescence, but that threats of sexual violence are designed to extort submission to financial desires. Montoni's withdrawal of his protection underscores the sexual violence Emily will experience if she does not submit to his will – to his desire for her property. Montoni will use rape by proxy to secure his acquisition of female property that he feels is unjustly withheld from him. Radcliffe reveals that female inheritance threatens male control of women (and their bodies) and is potentially disruptive of the patriarchal structure that is re-established through the uncle's threats against the niece's female body. This body, itself a commodity or property within the existing structures of family, law and sexuality, becomes a contested site of ownership.

From early in the novel Radcliffe depicts Emily as forced into relative dependency on the will and authority of others, a position to which she consistently refuses to acquiesce. Montoni, her aunt, her maternal uncles, even the kindly Count de Villefort, all attempt to dictate her actions and/or control her property. At the point she decides to encourage their marriage, Madame Cheron says of Emily to Valancourt: "Well, I will take upon me to answer for her. But at the same time, sir, give me leave to observe to you, that I am her guardian, and that I expect, in every instance, that my will is hers."⁶³ This ownership of Emily's will by Madame Cheron is extended to Montoni when Madame Cheron tells Emily that "From this hour you must consider the Signor Montoni as your uncle – we were married this morning" (p. 141). In a rather Gothic twist on the transfer of a woman's property to her husband upon marriage, Emily is shown as the commodity in this transfer. When her aunt controls Emily, it is by legal guardianship due to her age; as Emily points out to Valancourt: 'in little more than a year, she should be her own mistress, as far as related to her aunt, from whose guardianship her age would then release her' (p. 147). Montoni, taking over as head of the family from Madame Cheron upon their marriage, becomes Emily's familial head and assumes control over her based on this power. Ash writes: 'power in the family lies with the patriarchal head, the father. That power is literal and symbolic. Literally, it denotes, for example, economic power and physical power.'⁶⁴ Montoni is quick to take advantage of this role via his attempts to sell and steal from Emily. He is not, however, alone in this assumption of power based on familial hierarchy; Monsieur Quesnel, Emily's maternal uncle, takes control of her land, seemingly in her interest, by renting out her paternal estate, La Vallée: 'that Mons. Quesnel should

let it, without even consulting her on the measure, both surprised and shocked her, particularly as it proved the absolute authority he thought himself entitled to exercise in her affairs' (pp. 194–5). Emily repeatedly rejects the attempts made to control her and force her submission to the assumed authority of those surrounding her, identifying their actions as indicative of unlimited power unjustly wielded.

Even when threatened with a permanent break from Valancourt, Emily has no desire to flee to her uncle, Quesnel, as she is certain 'in flying to him she would only obtain an exchange of oppressors' nor does she assent to the clandestine marriage proposed by Valancourt, although this would 'give her a lawful and generous protector' (p. 203). Emily will not marry until she has no need for a protector; this is almost always the case in the Gothic, in spite of critical trends to see Gothic heroines as in perpetual need of or search for a protector.⁶⁵ When Emily questions Quesnel regarding La Vallée she describes him as 'conscious of possessing absolute power' (p. 213). Like Montoni, Quesnel believes his authority is unconditional. His arrogance proves that power distribution on arbitrary lines of gender and class creates petty tyrants. Quesnel also presses Emily to marry against her will, siding with Montoni in trying to coerce her into marrying the wealthy Morano. He is furious with her refusal to do so; Emily describes the 'cruelly exerted authority of M. Quesnel and Montoni' (p. 215). Montoni's financial ruin makes him more desperate and brutal than Quesnel, who exerts authority merely as a matter of right rather than to benefit himself directly. Emily's guardianship rests more firmly in Montoni's control via his wife, which gives him undue influence over Emily that he exerts to the full extent. Indeed, Montoni is so furious with her continued refusal to marry Morano and so sure of the breadth of his authority that he informs her that: 'he would no longer be trifled with, and that, since her marriage with the Count would be so highly advantageous to her ... it should be celebrated without further delay, and, if that was necessary, without her consent' (p. 216).

In Montoni's mind, his niece has no right to refuse a financially advantageous marriage; her will is moot, his power total. When Emily questions what right he has to exert such authority over her, Montoni replies: "by the right of my will; if you can elude that, I will not enquire by what right you do so" (pp. 216–17). Emily is only reassured by the thought that the marriage could not be valid if she refused to repeat the ceremony before the priest: 'she trembled, more than ever, at the power of Montoni, which seemed unlimited as his will, for she saw, that he would not scruple to

transgress any law' (p. 219). In fact, Montoni need not transgress many laws to accomplish his goals; as Lee Holcombe writes, the family is 'a microcosm of the larger society, authoritarian in nature and carefully constructed as to hierarchies and duties ... As such it had been buttressed by the provisions of the law.'⁶⁶ That Montoni's will and authority are unjust is clear, but the legal implications of this become irrelevant when his control extends to Emily's body once she is removed to Castle Udolpho and is physically at his mercy. Claudia Johnson refers to 'the brutal silencing of female protest compelled by Montoni's authority' that 'erase[s] female subjectivity'.⁶⁷ In Venice, before the removal to Udolpho, Emily had some hopes of legal recourse but once cut off from any pretence of society or lawfulness, Montoni's authority becomes absolute and Emily's refusal to capitulate becomes an act of defiance and bravery.

The removal to the castle and Emily's escape from the marriage to Morano are due, in part, to Montoni learning that Morano has lost his fortune and is penniless. Morano arrives at Udolpho and sneaks into Emily's room at night to attempt to liberate her from the castle and Montoni, begging Emily to leave with him, telling her that Montoni is "a villain who would have sold you to my love ... Can I love you, and abandon you to his power?" (p. 262). Morano confirms what Emily had suspected: that Montoni did attempt to sell her to the Count, a clear exchange of his niece's body and chastity for direct financial gain. Emily realises this and consequently concludes that Montoni must have another, wealthier, purchaser in mind for her: 'that Montoni had formerly sold her to Morano was very probable ... [A] scheme of stronger interest only could have induced the selfish Montoni to forego a plan, which he had hitherto so strenuously pursued' (pp. 262–3). Montoni then enters the room and says to Morano: "was it that you might repay my hospitality with the treachery of a fiend, and rob me of my niece?" (p. 266). The language repeated throughout this scene is that of economics – buying, selling, robbing, repayment – all locating Emily as a commodity, valuable for its youth, beauty and chastity. It is interesting to note that Radcliffe's heroines never marry exceptionally wealthy older men; Radcliffe never allows her heroines even the appearance of selling themselves.

One of the ideas that is consistently reiterated throughout the novel is that male demands for female acceptance of and submission to their unlimited control over their bodies and fortunes produce incestuous sexual violence; that the social structures that require obedience from women create a power relationship in which female compliance to all male desires

is expected. Montoni suggests Emily set up her own attempted abduction and tells her she should “learn and practice the virtues, which are indispensable to a woman – sincerity, uniformity of conduct and obedience” (p. 270). Kilgour says of Montoni that ‘his main vice is not lust but avarice’ and ‘his vision of female maturity is that of total acquiescence to male authority; in his terms, self-control means complete abdication of female control and will to male sublime power’.⁶⁸ Montoni’s repeated attempts to trap Emily linguistically into admitting her properties are his or that she is somehow out of control, wilful and bad for attempting to keep them for herself always terminate in his outrage at her defiance of his will. Montoni embodies the patriarchal familial head representative of a society that typically punishes women for being assertive, and Emily’s avowals of her status as rightful owner of the estates provoke a backlash that culminates in sexual intimidation as punishment and threat.⁶⁹ Montoni is not ostensibly driven by sexual lust – although he takes advantage of it in others, exploiting his employees’ desires for Emily to set them against each other and threatening to unleash them on Emily to force her acquiescence. However, his lust for her property and use of sexual threats demonstrate that his desires are as equally grounded in an exploitation of the female body as the incestuous threats of uncles like Weimar.

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

[S]he then feared Montoni was about to employ some stratagem for obtaining [the estates], and that he would detain her his prisoner, till he succeeded. This

thought, instead of overcoming her with despondency, roused all the latent powers of her fortitude into action ... For Valancourt's sake also she determined to preserve these estates, since they would afford that competency, by which she hoped to secure the comfort of their future lives. (p. 379)

Although it is not clear how Madame Montoni's estates pass to Emily, escaping Montoni's control, Holcombe describes the establishment of married women's separate property as partially concerned with parents who wanted to ensure 'that if there were no children of a marriage the property would not pass to their daughters' husbands but would return to their own families'.⁷⁰ It seems likely that since Montoni hounded his wife for these properties that she was 'allowed to dispose during her lifetime of real property settled upon her' and was further permitted to dispose of this separate property by will.⁷¹

Along with the possession of the estates Emily also inherits Montoni's avarice and schemes and cruelty; but what Radcliffe evokes in her heroine is not fear but fortitude. Willing to give up the estates to secure her aunt's health or safety, she is now able to undergo extraordinary suffering and imprisonment to preserve them. Although DeLamotte refers to the repeated imprisonment of Emily as a 'portrayal of the heroine's activity [that] centres on a portrayal of her feminine passivity', it is more that her forced passivity portrays the imposition of culturally enforced male control over female bodies.⁷² Emily wants the estates because through them she can provide for Valancourt and herself; this is an uncommon example of a Gothic heroine calmly resolving to undergo imprisonment and torment to maintain financial independence. April London refers to this kind of 'individualist ethic' as one that resists familial demands in favour of personal integrity as a recurrent feature in eighteenth-century novels.⁷³ Emily's fortitude is reinforced by what she knows to be Montoni's unjust abuse of misplaced power over not only herself but also over her aunt before her. Montoni's anger and abuse, part of her inheritance, impress upon the reader the repetition of paternal authority and constraints throughout generations of family until the cycle is broken and the inadequacy of even the most liberal laws regarding women and property to protect women from their husbands and 'protectors'. When it is later revealed that Castle Udolpho is not justly Montoni's, but the property of Signora Laurentini, a female relative whom he attempted to court and marry for both love and money, an even more distinct pattern of usurpation that ties property to body emerges. Signora Laurentini, long

missing, also dared to resist Montoni's advances and though Emily eventually discovers she is still alive, Montoni has simply taken over her castle as his own in her absence.

Just as Montoni attempts to usurp ownership of the estates, so too does he unjustly usurp control of Emily's body, another piece of valuable property. Miles argues that Emily's status 'is that of property, either to be bartered away – as Montoni attempts to do – or discarded, put out of sight, once her entitlements have fallen within the net of male acquisitiveness'.⁷⁴ When Montoni is unable to complete the transaction of Emily's sale to Morano, he attempts to coerce her out of her inheritances. He tries to trick Emily into signing papers but she refuses to sign anything she has not read. Montoni tells her that "I, as the husband of the late Signora Montoni ... am the heir of all she possessed; the estates, therefore, which she refused to me in her life-time, can no longer be with-held ... and I think you have more sense, than to provoke my resentment by advancing an unjust claim" (p. 380). Emily replies, "I am not so ignorant, Signor, of the laws on this subject, as to be misled by the assertion of any person. The law, in the present instance, gives me the estates in question, and my own hand shall never betray my right" (pp. 380–1). Emily affirms her knowledge of her legal rights while defying Montoni's threats against her person – the dual promise of freedom or risk of continued imprisonment at the castle. Montoni also, interestingly, uses the language of 'just' and 'unjust' to assert his claims on Emily's land in an inverted representation of the morality of the situation. While attempting to use incorrect legal information to fool Emily he clarifies that if she does not abide by his will he will exert his own over her body. This threat is made more potent when Emily realises the real power Montoni has over her is not his ability to keep her captive at the castle but that he can expose her to the desires of his group of bandits.

It is this vulnerability to rape if she does not comply with Montoni's will rather than the possibility of imprisonment that weakens Emily's resolve to retain the properties. Montoni follows through with his threat: Emily is accosted by one of Montoni's officers but breaks free and locks herself in her room, reflecting:

It appeared to her, that Montoni had already commenced his scheme of vengeance, by withdrawing from her his protection ... To retain the estates seemed to be now utterly impossible, and to preserve her life, perhaps her honour, she resolved, if she should escape the horrors of this night, to give up

all claims to the estates, on the morrow, provided Montoni would suffer her to depart from Udolpho. (p. 385)

However, Emily's decision to relinquish the estates is dismissed when she hears a song from her region of France being sung beneath her window; the possibility that the anonymous singer is Valancourt reinforces her determination. Montoni sends for her, saying: "I ... give you another opportunity of retracting your late mistaken assertions concerning the Languedoc estates ... Dare my resentment no further, but sign the papers" (p. 393). Emily replies: "If I have no right to these estates, sir ... of what service can it be to you, that I should sign any papers, concerning them? If the lands are yours by law, you certainly may possess them, without my interference, or my consent" (p. 393). What appears to be a rather cavalier attitude from Emily is a thinly veiled assertion that she is certainly aware of her legal rights and is choosing to engage in verbal sparring with Montoni over her inheritance. She proves herself more than a match for him. The usurpation of women's property rights by men is, as demonstrated, an essential focus of the Gothic and is noted by Kilgour, who argues: 'from Walpole Radcliffe inherits a concern with inheritance itself, and the question of the rightful ownership of property'.⁷⁵ Indeed, the omnipresence of disputes over 'rightful ownership' and their unification with the bad uncle figure in Radcliffe's works is overwhelming.

Montoni's violence and designs towards Emily cause her to reflect: 'if he did not intend to destroy her, with a view of immediately seizing her estates, he meant to reserve her ... for some more terrible design ... remembering Signor Brochio and his behaviour in the corridor, a few preceding nights, the latter supposition, horrible as it was, strengthened in her belief' (p. 407). Emily now fears that Montoni is going to give her to the men to punish her for refusing to sign the papers. Sexual threats are wielded for financial defiance with the additional benefit of gratifying his vengeance. The commodification of the female body as an object of male exchange makes it impossible for the male subjects in such exchanges to allow the possibility of a commodity owning property – physical property such as the estates or control over their own bodies.⁷⁶ What Miles calls the bartering away of Emily in marriage is also implicitly a threat that she will be bartered away for sex.⁷⁷ Marriage, no longer a viable prospect given the remote location of Udolpho, has given way to the possibility of enforced prostitution, a likelihood alluded to through

Montoni's treatment of Emily and the arrival of prostitutes at the castle for the bandits' pleasure. Emily overhears Signors Bertolini and Verezzi discussing her: 'each seeming to claim some former promise of Montoni' (pp. 430–1). These men pursue Emily through the castle's dark passages in an iconic Gothic flight that concludes with her making it safely to her room with the help of her servant Annette. When Emily tells Montoni of the attempted attack and begs for his protection, he replies: "you know the terms of my protection ... if you really value this, you will secure it" (p. 436). His assertion 'shewed Emily the necessity of an immediate compliance with his terms; but she first demanded, whether he would permit her immediately to depart, if she gave up her claim to the contested estates' (p. 436). Demanding female submission to male control through threats of rape is a situation Kathleen Barry defines as sexual slavery: 'regardless of how they [women] got into those conditions they cannot get out: and where they are subject to sexual violence and exploitation' and is characteristic of Emily's position.⁷⁸

Emily attempts to buy her freedom and safety from rape through the forfeiture of her estates to Montoni, effectively purchasing herself.⁷⁹ Afterwards, Emily 'endeavoured to believe, that Montoni did really intend to permit her return to France as soon as he had secured her property, and that he would, in the mean time, protect her from insult' (p. 437). Of course, by 'insult' she really means rape and molestation.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, Emily's belief in her safety is shaken by Montoni's dishonesty and her continued imprisonment and she fears that he has taken her payment for her freedom without ever intending to grant it: 'She not only doubted, whether Montoni ever meant to release her, but greatly feared, that he had designs, concerning her, ... Montoni had lost large sums to Verezzi, so that there was a dreadful possibility of his designing her to be a substitute for the debt' (p. 445). Montoni asserts absolute power over Emily, regardless of his lack of legal claim to her estates or person, to acquire money through the sale of her body or the acquisition of her property. DeLamotte points out that: 'the real tyranny at issue in Gothic romance had not been superseded; it still existed in the patriarchal family of the eighteenth century, in which fathers could legally, if they wished, be virtual tyrants.'⁸¹ The element of sexual threat by proxy charges this tyrannical situation with an incestuous current magnified by the familial structure that fosters this atmosphere of oppressor/oppressed.⁸² It is likewise exacerbated by what Johnson describes as Emily's 'fearful attraction to the very qualities that make Montoni so forthrightly misogynist.'⁸³

Montoni places himself as Emily's paternal protector only to threaten the removal of his protection in order to force her submission of property, ultimately revealing the notion of paternal protection as oxymoronic in the extreme.

To Emily, property and money offer an escape from oppression that allows freedom of choice; it enables female independence from familial and male rule. Emily wants her estates 'for Valancourt' while ruminating that they could 'contribute little to the happiness of a life, in which Valancourt had no longer an interest' (p. 560).⁸⁴ The use of 'interest' ironically combines both emotional and financial connotations; Radcliffe implies Emily is a proper female who does not show excessive interest in money beyond what it can provide for her family, while at the same time undercutting this conservative attitude with Emily's persistence in securing her estates. On the surface her desire seems conventional enough – to establish financial security for her family – but in addition to gaining her inheritance and estates she achieves freedom from any male: protector, pursuer, family or benefactor. After Emily escapes from Udolpho, Montoni is killed and the mystery surrounding the castle and its inhabitants clarified. As Kilgour puts it: 'Udolpho now passes to the impoverished Mme Bonnac so that it is restored to a female line, now a non-aristocratic one' and the same happens to the estates of Madame Cheron and St Aubert, which pass to Emily.⁸⁵ Still separated from Valancourt, Emily sells her aunt's chateau at Toulouse to purchase her father's childhood home from her uncle Monsieur Quesnel, to whom St Aubert had been forced by financial necessity to sell it some time ago. Emily considers her financial security as the cause of her freedom and independence, if not happiness: 'and now, when she had escaped from so many dangers, was become independent of the will of those, who had oppressed her, and found herself mistress of a large fortune, now, when she might reasonably have expected happiness, she perceived that she was as distant from it as ever' (p. 619).

Like many Gothic heroines, Emily must navigate the terrors of the patriarchal structure before securing her hero and home. Radcliffe's novels are not bildungsromans in which the heroine develops: the heroine remains constant; it is the unjust world in which women are subject to incestuous threats and thefts that must be and is changed. Valancourt's return and explanations restore him to Emily and after their marriage they reside in La Vallée, 'the retreat of goodness, wisdom, and domestic blessedness!' (p. 672). Kilgour says that Radcliffe's 'heroine's circular

journey is a transformative one, in which the end both recovers and revises the beginning' and if Emily's return to La Vallée with Valancourt is read as revising the initial scenes of her childhood, Kilgour's reading seems accurate.⁸⁶ La Vallée, however, is not so much a revised ancient estate but a more modern version altogether; additionally, Emily is the only Radcliffe heroine who had a particularly happy childhood home and the sole Radcliffe heroine without a murdered parent. Emily can return to La Vallée without it being a restoration of conservative values because it represents a family structure removed from the cycle of violence, imprisonment and male ownership. Like La Vallée, Udolpho reverts to female ownership after Montoni is killed and, indeed, all of Montoni's properties are eventually revealed as rightfully belonging to women; his (mis)use of their structures reconfigured after his death. His sexual threats against Emily are an echo of his undesired sexual advances to Signora Laurentini, as are his usurpations of rightfully female spaces. Emily's ability to withstand Montoni's threats through her legal knowledge, strong sense of justice, ability to endure imprisonment and suffering and awareness of her rights epitomise the Gothic heroine; a woman who overcomes patriarchal threats against property and body to establish her own familial structure.

TO RAPE OR TO MURDER? LUST AND VIOLENCE IN *THE ITALIAN*

Radcliffe's *The Italian*, her most critically praised work over time, hinges upon the multi-layered relationship between Schedoni and Ellena di Rosalba that positions the heroine alternately as Schedoni's intended victim, daughter and niece. While the layering of roles is not unique in the Gothic, what distinguishes this deployment of the convention is that Ellena occupies these positions concurrently with her recasting as the object of his lust and murderous designs and as the daughter of his previous rape victim. Such a reconfiguration casts Ellena as the embodiment of his past crimes; Schedoni's attempt at their reinscription upon her echoes his previous usurpations of the female body and purse in a violent incestuous cycle. Ellena's future is imperilled as a direct result of both Schedoni's prior incestuous crimes – the marriage into which he forced his widowed sister-in-law and his subsequent legally sanctioned rapes of her – and his present ones.

The novel follows Ellena and her lover Vivaldi as they flee from the machinations of Vivaldi's mother, the Marchesa di Vivaldi, and her confessor Father Schedoni, whom she enlists to abduct and murder Ellena.

Throughout, Ellena encounters previously unknown members of her family: a sympathetic nun, Olivia, is revealed as her mother and Schedoni, while attempting to murder and/or rape Ellena, confesses his belief that he is her father. Ellena is in fact Schedoni's niece, the daughter of his older brother di Bruno and his wife. Schedoni's position as the younger brother in the family structure is the impetus behind the murder of his older brother and usurpation of di Bruno's title and property, wife and family. He steals from his older brother his wealth and his female family members, the usurpations from the outset combining thefts of money and bodies. When Schedoni squandered his patrimony granted via the laws of primogeniture, his brother could no longer afford to support him; this and Schedoni's envy of di Bruno's unencumbered estate and beautiful wife prompted Schedoni to have his brother killed.⁸⁷ Schedoni displaces his brother as the patriarchal head, literally taking over his place in the family, marrying his sister-in-law and assuming control of the estates. The usurpation of what the laws governing inheritance denied is the younger brother's way of contravening the system. Kilgour argues that the law 'ensures unbroken succession and so maintains the continuity of tradition'.⁸⁸ In light of this understanding of the law, the figure of the usurping uncle paradoxically represents the destruction of tradition and the epitome of patriarchy's constraints of women. Schedoni's incestuous designs on his niece are complicated by his murderous impulses that are interlinked as the symptoms and requirements of his desire for power. The figure of the uncle becomes incapable of separating acts of theft, violence and incest, displacing the heroine's father through an act of rebellion that condemns the legal system that created him just as it positions him as its new enforcer.

The meetings between Ellena and Schedoni evoke alternately a sense of safety or possible rescue with her fears and his murderous lust. In Ellena's first confrontation with Schedoni outside the house where she is held hostage she views Schedoni as a figure of potential protection. This idea is dispelled when she catches a glimpse of his eyes and face: 'his air and countenance were equally repulsive ... [Ellena] shrunk as from an enemy' (p. 263). Her instinct to trust him is replaced with dread at his features – Ellena fails to identify him as kin or as a protector. When Schedoni reveals he is acting in collusion with the Marchesa and Ellena faints, his initial hatred and desire to kill her are lessened as he gazes upon her unconscious form and is touched by feelings of pity and compassion, although he still plots to have her killed.⁸⁹ When the assassin Spalatro

refuses to do so, Schedoni reluctantly takes up the knife, questioning why he did not kill her earlier and must steel himself for the task: 'the wine, with which Schedoni also had found it necessary to strengthen his own resolution, did not secure him from severe emotion, when he found himself again near Ellena' (p. 276). This hesitation manifests before Schedoni has any reason to believe Ellena is related to him – she is nothing more than a stranger who stands in the way of his advancement within the church.

That Schedoni feels reluctance to harm her hints at a feeling of familiarity or kinship strengthened by the image of her innocence, youth and beauty. Whether it is a sense of kinship, the stirrings of lust or both, Schedoni's reluctance to kill Ellena is palpable. He enters her chamber to find her sleeping and as he watches, she smiles. Schedoni shudders to see her smile in her murderer's face, her innocence affecting him. At this moment his murderous intent becomes loaded with sexual undercurrents. The following passage, often quoted in analyses of the novel, bears repeating due to the unification of sexual and physical threats by a family member:

He searched for the dagger, and it was some time before his trembling hand could disengage it from the folds of his garment; but, having done so, he again drew near, and prepared to strike. Her dress perplexed him; it would interrupt the blow, and he stooped to examine whether he could turn her robe aside, without waking her ... His agitation and repugnance to strike encreased with every moment of delay, and, as often as he prepared to plunge the poniard into her bosom, a shuddering horror restrained him. (p. 279)

Of this passage, Clery writes: 'finally Schedoni lifts the dagger (in a gesture which carries resonances of sexual assault), but is halted by the sight of a miniature of himself hanging round her neck, which reveals him to be her father.'⁹⁰ I would put it even more strongly: Radcliffe uses Schedoni's dagger as a metaphorical penis, turning his attempted murder into contemplated rape.⁹¹ The action becomes less physical assault with sexual resonances than voyeuristic sexual assault with murderous resonances. Even the 'shuddering horror' which restrains him from plunging the poniard into Ellena's bosom carries orgasmic implications.

Ellena's lack of experience with a father figure or protector causes her to require proof of kinship before submitting to the caresses and control that Schedoni immediately assumes as his paternal right.⁹² After Schedoni pulls aside Ellena's dress (in preparation to stab her) and sees

the miniature around her neck he demands to know who the portrait represents. Ellena tells him it is her father and says: "I never knew a father's care, nor till lately did I perceive the want of it. – But now – ... if you are not as a father to me – to whom can I look for protection?" (p. 279). Schedoni paces, weeps, sighs and confesses to Ellena that he is her father, although he is labouring under a misapprehension: he is in fact her uncle. As Perry puts it, it is: 'a scene in which murder with incestuous overtones is averted at the last possible minute by recognition of a blood tie.'⁹³ Ellena believes Schedoni and calls him 'father', although it is unclear whether she is using his religious title or acknowledging his status as her kinsman, as moments later she realises: 'whatever might be the proofs, that had convinced Schedoni of the relationship between them, he had not explained these to her ... it was not sufficient to justify an entire confidence in the assertion he had made, or to allow her to permit his caresses without trembling' (p. 281). Ellena is not well-enough convinced of her paternity for her to allow Schedoni's touch without fear; she questions the proofs of a blood tie that would allow his caresses to be appropriate. The immediate recognition of kinship is lacking and so: 'she shrunk, and endeavoured to disengage herself; when, immediately understanding her, he said, "Can you doubt the cause of these emotions? These signs of paternal affection?"' (p. 281). Ellena's reply – "Have I not reason to doubt ... since I never witnessed them before?" – underscores her fears of Schedoni's caresses being sexual in nature (which they very well may be) and her inability to differentiate between sexual and paternal caresses and emotions as she has never experienced either (p. 281). Ellena has lacked paternal protection, affection and, as Schedoni points out, tenderness. However, these are also familial trappings she has never missed until her abduction and attempted assassination.

Ellena points out her inexperience with paternal signs of affection in order to distance Schedoni until she can evaluate the evidence that has convinced him. The proofs that have satisfied Schedoni are yet unknown to her and therefore his caresses are sexually threatening.⁹⁴ Evidence, not assurance, is required in lieu of an instantaneous familial recognition, such as the one she felt for her mother.⁹⁵ While imprisoned at the convent Ellena is drawn to Olivia: 'the regard of this nun was not only delightful, but seemed necessary to her heart' (p. 115), a feeling that is later justified by the discovery that Olivia is her mother.⁹⁶ Kinship is evidenced by an instant fixation or attraction and subsequent feelings of mutual sympathy and understanding. Schedoni's belief that Ellena is his

daughter is rendered questionable given her initial, terrified, emotional response to him. Later, this sense is reiterated when Ellena thinks: 'there were moments when she shrunk from the relationship of Schedoni with unconquerable fright. The first emotions his appearance had excited were so opposite those of filial tenderness, that she perceived it was now nearly impossible to love and revere him as her father' (p. 353). Ellena attempts to ascertain kinship by examining the miniature and comparing it to Schedoni: 'Ellena did trace a resemblance in the bold outline of the features, but not sufficient to convince her, without farther evidence, that each belonged to the same person' (p. 282). Schedoni subsequently provides details that persuade her of their blood tie, promising that she will 'be restored to her home' (p. 283). That Ellena is never able to overcome her initial fear and instinctual dislike of Schedoni contextualises her emotional response as a sort of ancestral memory of his acts of violence against her parents.

Ellena's conflicted perception of the attempted attack at least partly influences her ambivalent acceptance of Schedoni as family. After his revelation of kinship Schedoni leaves Ellena alone; she sees the dagger he dropped and considers the possibility that he was going to kill her, although she quickly disregards that thought, preferring to view him as the hero who foiled Spalatro's plan. Schedoni, on the other hand, manages to move from feelings of guilt and horror at the murder/rape he nearly committed to chastising himself for the crime because a marriage between his daughter and Vivaldi would elevate him even higher than he could have imagined. A conversation filled with layers of meaning regarding the dagger occurs between Ellena and Schedoni when she offers it to him as an object of gratitude for his saving her from an assassin: "last night while I slept upon this mattress, unsuspecting of what was designed against me, an assassin entered the chamber with that instrument in his hand" (p. 293). Radcliffe draws attention to the dagger (weapon and metaphorical penis), the attack (a veiled attempted rape and attempted murder), Ellena's misconceptions (that the attacker was someone other than her father/uncle, that the attack was only murderous in intent, that Schedoni saved her from another man), conspicuously highlighting Ellena's continued ignorance regarding Schedoni. The reader knows she is wrong about his character, so is it possible she is also wrong about his identity? Her attempt to return the dagger to him, given its metaphorical status, is fraught with sexual and sacrificial implications. Ellena struggles to reconcile the dark and alarming presence of Schedoni with a father

figure; indeed, 'Ellena, whenever her eyes glanced upon him, suffered a solemnity of fear that rose almost to terror' (p. 299). These feelings of fear and terror, however naturally occurring to her, do not preclude Ellena from putting her life in danger to preserve Schedoni when threatened by Spalatro.

The scene combines references to Schedoni's 'rescue' of Ellena with sexual imagery, causing the interaction to be loaded with incestuous meaning. When Schedoni asks Ellena where his would-be assassin has gone, Ellena perceives his intent to kill their attacker and hesitates to answer because she fears for both his safety and the life of the wounded man. She instead begs him to leave: "Do not, by remaining here, leave me a possibility of grieving for you. What anguish it would occasion you, to see me bleed; judge, then, what must be mine, if you are wounded by the dagger of an assassin!" Schedoni stifled the groan which swelled from his heart, and abruptly turned away' (p. 315). The language Ellena uses to describe a physical attack is sexually evocative, carrying with it allusions of lost virginity through the references to her bleeding and the mention of the dagger. Ellena reminds her father/uncle of what she believes was his protection of her the night before while he remembers drawing aside her dress in anticipation of using his dagger, frantic to disengage it from the folds of his robe. The scene is effective not only because the reader is aware that Schedoni remembers, not saving Ellena, but almost killing her, but also because of the charged sexual atmosphere of the attempted murder and Ellena's continued ignorance thereof. Schedoni's groan that 'swells' further strengthens a reading of his thinking back with mingled lust, horror and regret on the sexual nature of his assault. Perry argues that the near attack on Ellena by Schedoni 'suggests rape rather than murder'⁹⁷ but it is the very conflation of the two acts that makes the scene so terrifying and layered in meanings. The unification of near murder and near rape demonstrates that the uncle's desire for increased wealth and power is a lust that he will attempt to act out by commodifying, sexualising and victimising the female body.

It is essential to understand Schedoni's incestuous lust as not only sexually and physically threatening but as equally concerned with the usurpations that are embedded in these violations against generations of female bodies. Some scholars resist identifying sexual violation in the uncle's actions: Miles, for example, suggests of Schedoni that 'incestuous rape is not actually meditated' but springs to the reader's mind because of similar scenes in *The Monk* and *The Castle of Otranto*.⁹⁸ Certainly it

does, but these are also scenes and texts with which Radcliffe was familiar and aware of evoking. Writing at the peak of Gothic popularity and the swirl of controversy surrounding *The Monk*, Radcliffe would have been keenly attuned to the effect her reworking of these scenes creates. While in *The Monk* the act of incestuous rape ends with the murder of the heroine, Radcliffe does not permit rape or murder to be committed; both acts are interrupted by a revelation of familial ties that in Lewis's novel comes post-rape. Ellena's blood tie to Schedoni saves her from sexual violence and murder while at the same time places her in the control of male hands that seek to barter her off for their benefit.⁹⁹ As Kilgour argues: 'in retelling his [Lewis's] story in *The Italian*, she [Radcliffe] reasserts narrative law and order, restoring the correct version he has corrupted, and re-establishes her authority, insisting on both the duty and the power of the author to control the plot she originated'.¹⁰⁰ Radcliffe also exposes Lewis's rape of Antonia by her half-brother as sensationalist scene-writing hinging on the age-old convention of men blaming women for tempting them into the act. Radcliffe's avoided incestuous rape/murder scene locates such threats as symptoms of a social structure that disempowers younger brothers and women in a perpetuation of unbalanced power and wealth.¹⁰¹ Schedoni's rape of his brother's wife establishes that he is able to commit sexual violence and tie together murder (of brother), rape (of sister-in-law) and usurpation (of title and estates).¹⁰² Incest functions very differently here from its deployment in configurations that focus on its potential for creating ideal relationships or social structures.¹⁰³ By positioning uncle-niece incest alongside murder, thefts and usurpations, such thefts and violence are portrayed as unnatural yet endorsed and normalised by the inherently aberrant structure of familial power in the existing patriarchal order.

The link between representations of violence and incest in the Gothic is noted by Wright, who argues that the 'genre's treatment of violence, murder and incest is linked symbiotically to issues of sexuality and gender within the fiction'.¹⁰⁴ These concerns are further united with theft, inheritance and the law as well. In the uncle-niece configuration the act or desire of incest is not cast as unnatural or deviant but, when represented as violent or forceful, the actions of ownership, theft and usurpation that it underpins are so presented. Incestuous desires and sexual threats are bound up with the desire to own female bodies and possessions, of which rape and sex become another form of theft and control. Incest is not unnatural; however, the forcing of it – the unlawful seizure

of property and the unlawful seizure of sexuality – is inherently unjust and sanctioned by a social structure governed by the laws that prohibit female inheritance and ownership of property and body. Emily's attempt to purchase herself from Montoni and his men and Charlotte's purchase of Matilda from Weimar emphasise this issue of incest as a form of male ownership of female bodies. As women cannot own themselves (their bodies as property) before marriage, after marriage the ability to gain female self-control and ownership becomes even more improbable.¹⁰⁵

Undesired incest functions to denaturalise the male usurpation of female bodies and properties. Incest's unification of sex and family mirrors, in a distorted fashion, the concept of inheritance – itself a combination of wealth and family. Much as inheritances seized wrongfully are presented as unjust usurpations, forced or threatening incest is likewise grounded in the language of unnatural desires. Intertwining familial theft with familial rape, the Gothic presents the complex relationship between patriarchal structures of inheritance, family and sexuality and demonstrates how such structures allow men to use sex as a weapon against women, particularly those who defy the structures by ownership of property or wealth.¹⁰⁶ When women assert their natural claims of ownership of themselves and their property, they are raped, imprisoned and murdered. The men who commit these acts of theft and violence are the younger brothers who did not inherit either title or fortune and have thus been impeded in their quests for female companionship in favour of their older, titled, landed brothers. The younger brothers reconstitute themselves as dominant by murdering the sibling they feel has displaced them through the privilege of birth and strip the women who have inherited when they could not, taking by force and sexual aggression what they were unable to inherit.

The usurpation of what was denied by inheritance laws allows the younger brother to break the legal system of succession and tradition. Schmidgen argues regarding Blackstone's metaphor of the Gothic castle that it 'can be completely intertwined with the common law. That complexity is only increased by Blackstone's allusion to the popular notion of English constitutional rights as an inheritance.'¹⁰⁷ If English constitutional rights are an inheritance they are inherited by primogeniture, for it is clear that women were no more liable to receive justice under the law than to receive property when they had a male sibling. Primogeniture, which is responsible for Schedoni's being entitled only to a small allowance as a younger brother, explains, in part, his actions. But in spite of his

own rebellion against the system of property inheritance and continuity, Schedoni positions himself as patriarchal head of first Olivia and then Ellena. Once Schedoni has declared himself Ellena's father, Ellena finds herself under paternal protection that is depicted as worthless. Schedoni refuses to listen to Ellena regarding her safety, future and desires, discounting her concerns regarding Spalatro, refusing to answer her questions about Vivaldi's whereabouts and ultimately lying to her. He informs Ellena that she will be placed in a convent instead of returning to her home as he promised and when she suggests her preferred convent he does not respond. Whatever protection Schedoni's paternal status lends to Ellena is negated by the control he assumes over her life.

Schedoni's paternal authority echoes the maternal ownership the abbess and the Marchesa attempted to wield over Ellena by stripping her of a voice in her future choices after her abduction and imprisonment, exemplified by the abbess's command that Ellena: "must determine either to accept the veil, or the person whom the Marchesa di Vivaldi had, of her great goodness, selected for her husband" (p. 109). Ellena's indignation at what she privately calls the tyrannical injustice of this proposal is evidenced through rebellion as she states: "I am prepared to meet whatever suffering you shall inflict upon me; but be assured, that my own voice never shall sanction the evils to which I may be subjected, and that the immortal love of justice, which fills all my heart, will sustain my courage no less powerfully than the sense of what is due to my own character" (p. 110). Like Emily, Ellena is defiant; she has a strong sense of entitlement based on her inner worth of character. Scholarship is divided on the question of Ellena's defiance or passivity; Johnson suggests that despite her refusal to relinquish Vivaldi, 'Ellena is the most classically feminine of Radcliffe's heroines, a model of passive fortitude enduring the action of others upon her rather than initiating her own.'¹⁰⁸ In contrast, Miles finds that Ellena's unwillingness to surrender her lover is unconventionally defiant, arguing that she 'shows herself a true Gothic heroine in subordinating her desires to those of dynastically-minded parents ... she also proves an atypical one, when, under the threat of having to abandon Vivaldi, she admits and refuses to relinquish her desire, and this, as much as dignity, is shown to be "due to her own character"'.¹⁰⁹ Ellena's resistance is typical of most Gothic heroines who claim to abide by the dynastic requirements of the older generation while inwardly resolving to do the opposite. Kilgour notes the rebellious nature of this defiance, arguing that: 'the lovers themselves are revolutionary figures

in their resistance to these false systems which unnaturally impede the fulfilment of their individual desires.¹¹⁰ Ellena (and Vivaldi) challenge the ancient and archaic systems that preceded them and revise the system – and its unnatural repression of desire – into a model that allows for individual choice and desires.¹¹¹

This new structure is presented at the novel's end when individual desires are finally realised and the cycle of incestuous thefts has ended. When Vivaldi asks Olivia for Ellena's hand in marriage she consents if his father does and, having ascertained that Ellena is not Schedoni's daughter but that of the respectable Count di Bruno, he accedes to the union. As Kilgour describes it, the novel enables a reconciliation 'achieved by the removal of false figures of authority, and the gradual emergence of good models already present in the system. Schedoni turns out to be a false father, so that Ellena is not contaminated by her origins ... the text trots out the familiar themes of fraternal rivalry, jealousy, fratricide, and a usurpation of both property and wife.'¹¹² The couple marries and a fete is held at one of Vivaldi's estates that they choose as their main residence: a 'scene of fairy-land' (p. 473) that stands on the entrance of a valley to the bay, with pleasure gardens and shores sloping to the water. There are groves of magnolia, ash and palms, elegant halls and views; from the estate one can see 'beyond the rich foliage the seas and shores of Naples, from the west; and to the east, views of the valley of the domain, withdrawing among winding hills wooded to their summits' (p. 473). This idyllic retreat is less a gradual emergence of a model already present in the text but appears as the Garden of Eden, a new world that has sprung whole out of nothing. While Ellis describes the Female Gothic as a narrative in which 'the heroine exposes the villain's usurpation and thus reclaims an enclosed space that should have been a refuge from evil but has become the very opposite – a prison' – this only partially describes the narratives which more generally involve the heroine leaving the prison behind rather than reclaiming it.¹¹³ Gothic heroines find new refuges, new structures in which to create an idealised egalitarian sphere. The domestic world Vivaldi and Ellena choose is untouched by the presence of the past and is radical in its democratic nature. The servant Paulo declares that they are in a paradise they had to travel through purgatory to reach, reiterating that they are in an Eden wherein all ranks of people are welcome and received as the couple shares their abundance and joy.¹¹⁴ The archaic constraints and structures of a social system that denies love based on genealogies and perpetuates thefts of female bodies

and property by male family members are nowhere present in Ellena and Vivaldi's egalitarian society.

When examining the role of the uncle and his actions towards his brother, sister-in-law and niece, a layered critique of the dominant social structuring of family and the participants within it coalesces. By killing his brother and taking his wife, the uncle displaces the patriarch to establish himself as familial head.¹¹⁵ The uncle thus fulfils a conventional role: the abuse victim turned abuser, becoming complicit with the system having claimed a position of power within it.¹¹⁶ Such an understanding makes reading the Gothic as a conservative textual form impossible: the uncles are not too rebellious, but rather not rebellious enough. The familial structure that places the uncle as the protector post-displacement of the elder brother lends itself to the usurpations, incestuous desires and abuses even when the uncle inherits this role without committing murder.¹¹⁷ The uncle then threatens the lineage, namesake and inheritance of the heroine, who, as a female free of a father to control her property and body, represents a dangerous threat to the hegemonic order.¹¹⁸ While the uncle and niece often experience uncomfortably close roles, existing in the margins of the society that denies them access to power, the Gothic uncle ultimately joins the system. One of the reasons the Gothic's radical ideas are so contested is because of how the transgressions within the genre are simultaneously celebrated and punished.¹¹⁹ The complex and paradoxical figure of the uncle subscribes to the usurpations and violations of the female body that render his incestuous acts a mode of upholding the dominant hegemony's ideologies of sexuality and laws.¹²⁰ Kilgour's explanation of Gothic incest as abnormal and subversive of social requirements, reconfigured in light of incest's frequent portrayal as normal and natural in the genre, can be used to understand how incest is depicted as natural and normal while subverting social requirements and unnatural while maintaining them.¹²¹ Incest in the Gothic is thus naturalised due to its location as abnormal and transgressive by the laws of a heteronormative society.

When women are denied their inheritance – of rights or of estates – it is because neither the constitutional freedoms nor legal protection of property apply to them. The uncle is representative of the patriarchal order: a thief who has stolen property, title, wealth and freedom. Uniting these thefts with sexual threats reiterates the way the structure of inheritance and law steals rights and wealth through a denial predicated on

gender. Just as primogeniture grants wealth and title to one brother but not to the other, society grants all its protection and benefits to only one gender. The uncle's incestuous desires, whether (like Weimar's) developing naturally to be exploited later, arising solely from the desire to force compliance (as Montoni's) or inextricably linked to past crimes and present ones (as Schedoni's are), are all unified with thefts of property and physical violence, illuminating the cyclical nature of injustice and abuse within a contained system and reiterating the necessity of the heroine's escape from and destruction of it in order to be free from the genealogy of usurpations. The incestuous violence underscores the family structure that inherently promotes such abuses, itself a microcosm of the larger social structure.¹²² Incestuous threats, rape and violence are impossible to disentangle from their use as weapons to enforce the ownership and control of female bodies and properties and as productions of the uneven power distribution affected by a patriarchal culture that demands such controls. The uncle seems to represent, more than any other male family figure in the Gothic, the threat of patriarchy in general terms, shadowy, lurking men who are intent on a combination of thefts from women – of their bodies through kidnap and rape, of their property through usurpation of property and title, of their lives through murder. There is almost always an element of incestuous sexual abuse tied to thefts of property, a highlighting of the ties between body and purse, female genitalia and property seizure. Authors of the Gothic were perfectly aware of the way the female body figured into the exchange of money and property necessary to preserve patriarchy and through the figure of the uncle are able to literalise how dangerous the traditional structuring of family is to female liberty and desires.

NOTES

- 1 Eliza Parsons, *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (London: The Folio Press, 1968), p. 12. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
- 2 In addition to Sue Chaplin's important studies of the Gothic and law, recently, chapters in Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (eds), *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) by Diana Wallace, Marie Mulvey-Roberts and Lauren Fitzgerald have focused on the intricacies of Gothic heroines, estates, and legal rights within marriage, applying William Blackstone's 1765 legal text and its Gothic themes to representations of ownership of property, knowledge and women in the genre.

- 3 Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 25-6.
- 4 Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 21-2. DeLamotte then focuses on the 'deep structures' of women's psychological experiences relating to and in the Gothic genre, whereas my focus is on the legal, social and anthropological overlappings of transgression and what this nexus means for traditional scholarly treatments of incest within the Female Gothic.
- 5 Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 20.
- 6 See Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), in which she describes Gothic heroines as imagining their fathers are trying to rape or kill them (p. 57). A scholarly tradition that views the father as persecutor or the heroine as imagining this to be true when this is often not supported by closer textual analyses has been imposed on Gothic novels; this is particularly true of the novels by Radcliffe examined in this chapter.
- 7 Juliet Mitchell believes patriarchal structures enforce the incest taboo to maintain control of the exchange of women, an exchange jeopardised by incestuous relations that would unbalance the power of the father (or father figure) in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women* [1974] (repr. as *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*, New York: Basic Books, 2000).
- 8 The appearance of law and property as a thematic alongside uncle-niece incest necessitates an examination of exchange. The threats and violence against female bodies aligned with property seizure reifies the concept of female exchanges between men.
- 9 Angela Wright, *Gothic Fiction: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 135.
- 10 Kilgour, p. 8. Kilgour further identifies the wealth of criticism that argues that 'whatever radical and subversive implications the gothic might have are radically limited by its own inconsistencies' (p. 9).
- 11 As the uncle adheres to the available structures of law and power to usurp and grasp at the powers denied to him as the younger brother, so too does the Gothic adhere to a generic structure. The Gothic deploys the sexualities perceived by society as aberrant that are inherent in the genre to undermine gender and sexual ideologies, ultimately showing the futility of using/abusing forms grounded in such uneven distributions of power as capable of only further entrenching one in the existing power relation, advocating instead the position taken by the heroine - to abandon the extant forms.
- 12 This is the case in Parson's *Wolfenbach*, Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Italian* (1797) and

- Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798), in which fratricide and sister-in-law rape are part of the plot.
- 13 One of the most important examinations of the Gothic and law is Sue Chaplin's *The Gothic and the Rule of Law, 1764–1820* (Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), in which she argues that 'Radcliffe's cryptic, Gothic, *maternal* spaces are subversively implicated in the law's economy of familiarization, remembrance and retribution' (p. 96) and that 'Radcliffe's female Gothic interrogates more deeply than [Sophia] Lee's possibilities and problematics of feminine inheritance within a legal temporality that is radically "out of joint"' (p. 96).
 - 14 Kilgour, p. 9.
 - 15 Kilgour, p. 14.
 - 16 Diana Wallace, '“The Haunting Idea”: Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory', in Wallace and Smith, *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, pp. 27–31.
 - 17 In Parsons's *Wolfenbach*, Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Italian* and Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine*, younger brothers are bypassed by familial riches and usurp their older brothers' wealth, titles, wives and daughters.
 - 18 Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the laws of England. Book the second. By William Blackstone, Esq. vinerian professor of law, and solicitor general to her majesty*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1768), II, p. 268.
 - 19 Wolfram Schmidgen, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 166.
 - 20 A more detailed analysis of eighteenth-century understandings of natural law and their application to Gothic representations of obligation, incest and individual rights can be found in the [following chapter](#).
 - 21 Ruth Bienstock Anolik, 'The missing mother: the meanings of maternal absence in the Gothic mode', *Modern Language Studies*, 33:1/2 (2003), 27.
 - 22 Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley [1979] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, repr. 1981), argues that: 'the deployment of alliance has as one of its chief objectives to reproduce the interplay of relation and maintain the law that governs them; the deployment of sexuality, on the other hand, engenders a continual extension of areas and forms of control' and that since the eighteenth century the deployment of alliance has been displaced by the deployment of sexuality (p. 106).
 - 23 Sociologist Vikki Bell suggests that Foucault's argument places incest 'at the crossroads between the two sex deployments ... because whereas the deployment of alliance forbids incest, the deployment of sexuality actually incites it' in *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault and the Law* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 95. Foucault's chronology of the deployments of alliance and sexuality positions my examinations of representations of incest and its prohibition

in eighteenth-century Gothic novels as written in the context of the deployment of alliance. I use Bell's point to argue that Gothic representations of incest prior to this deployment locate tensions between the prohibition of incest and incestuous desires as incited through the unequal power relations necessary to maintain the deployment of alliance.

- 24 Kilgour, p. 121.
- 25 What Foucault refers to as laws designed to reproduce the system of alliance (p. 106) are represented in the Gothic as the unnatural control of women, the exchange of women and laws surrounding female inheritance and property that incite incestuous threats. Such structures of law served to maintain male control over female bodies in order to exchange them and reproduce kinship circles while locating power within the hands of male kin. That the female body becomes a commodity under male control necessitates its sexualisation and thus its location as a potential site of incestuous desires and threats.
- 26 See Ellen Pollak's *Incest and the English Novel, 1684–1814* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Pollak argues that during the long eighteenth century legal impediments to marriage were being questioned and 'incest was increasingly being naturalized within emergent theories of natural law' (p. 19).
- 27 Although anthropological theories on sexual aversion would point towards Weimar being disinclined to commit incest with his niece, his separation from her occurs at a critical moment in physical development – the change between pre- and post-pubescence.
- 28 See Judith Lewis Herman with Lisa Hirschman, *Father–Daughter Incest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), in which they argue that the common reaction of fathers to their daughters' reaching adolescence is often an attempt to establish total control over their emerging sexuality (p. 117). In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), the portrayal of Sir Thomas Bertram 'noticing' his grown-up niece, Fanny Price, bears similarities to Parsons's scene.
- 29 Kilgour, p. 12.
- 30 This notion, analysed in greater detail in the [preceding chapters](#), bears brief repetition to demonstrate how differently incest functions within the uncle–niece relationships than in those previously explored.
- 31 Instances of older male relatives showing pornography to their younger female relatives occur frequently in case studies on present-day incest abuse such as those detailed in Jean Renvoize's *Incest: A Family Pattern* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1982).
- 32 See Jennie Batchelor's analysis of Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762), in which she argues that the gifts offered to a young ward by her older male guardian and her reciprocal 'gift' of gratitude constitute an 'obligation he forces upon Louisa [that] will lead only to her destruction.' Jennie Batchelor, *Women's*

- Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 47. That Matilda resists the obligation of gratitude intended by the gift giving that Batchelor notes eighteenth-century readers ‘perceive[... as an inevitable prelude to seduction’ (p. 47) positions her as withstanding the sexual advances of her uncle that would have been anticipated by the novel’s readers.
- 33 Lena Dominelli, ‘Betrayal of trust: a feminist analysis of power relationships in incest abuse and its relevance for social work practice’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 19:1 (1989), 291–308.
 - 34 Angie Ash, *Father–Daughter Sexual Abuse: The Abuse of Paternal Authority* (Bangor: University College of North Wales, 1984), p. 9.
 - 35 Pollak, pp. 36–8.
 - 36 Pollak, p. 37.
 - 37 T. G. A. Nelson, ‘Representations of Incest in Dryden and his English Contemporaries’, in Elizabeth Barnes (ed.), *Incest and the Literary Imagination* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2002), p. 122; see also pp. 117–37.
 - 38 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 93.
 - 39 Pollak, p. 38.
 - 40 Herman and Hirschman define incestuous behaviour as any sexually motivated act that violates a relationship between a child and adult in a position of familial power, regardless of blood kinship (p. 27). I widen this definition to include adults, so that incest is any sexual behaviour (implicit or explicit) between people in a familial relationship regardless of consanguineal ties as well as between blood kin unaware of the bond or between blood kin who are aware of it but were not raised in a familial relationship.
 - 41 Austen echoes this with Edmund Bertram’s comments regarding Sir Thomas’s admiration of Fanny that distress her in *Mansfield Park*, ed. Margaret Drabble (New York: Signet, 1996), p. 181.
 - 42 Kilgour, p. 31.
 - 43 Kate Ferguson Ellis, ‘Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics’, in David Punter (ed.), *Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 264–5.
 - 44 With this manoeuvre Parsons effectively disintegrates the class boundaries between servant and master, elevating Albert above Matilda’s uncle via his virtue and lack of depraved/incestuous desires.
 - 45 This lends weight to Herman’s definition of incest as based more on an abuse of power than a transgression between blood kin. Matilda’s distress responds to her uncle’s plan to force her, an easy task given his position of authority, not to the possibility of his kinship (which is at this point unclear to her).

- 46 The different ways heroines regard family or non-family members who caress them is analysed further in [Chapter 4](#) in an examination of the presence or potential presence of a blood tie as alternately permitting or prohibiting physical and emotional closeness not allowed to a non-consanguineal relation.
- 47 See Cynthia Klekar and Linda Zionkowski (eds), *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) for an excellent treatment of gift exchange and theories of obligation in eighteenth-century England. Parsons invokes the language of obligation and liberty in a way that depicts the eighteenth-century understandings (evidenced in works such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right* (1762) and *Emile, or On Education* (1762)) of women as obliged to perform duties for family (and thus society) without the freedoms or liberty awarded to men as an unfair demand productive of female misery and enslavement.
- 48 See Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* [1977], trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), in which Irigaray argues against the traditional anthropological understanding of the exchange of women as essential to culture: 'the exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, currency all pass from one man to another; if it were otherwise, we are told, the social order would fall back upon incestuous and exclusively endogamous ties that would paralyze all commerce' (p. 192).
- 49 This furthers my reading of Foucault's deployment of alliance as not exclusive of the deployment of sexuality. What Foucault discusses as 'the link between partners and the definite statutes' (p. 106) – the laws governing alliance and exchange – are themselves structures of power pertinent to the deployment of alliance. Such structures of dominance and submission are inherently sources of pleasure that, as representations of incest in the Gothic make clear, charge the laws and statutes governing kinship with a sexual element made explicit in the male control of female bodies within the family. For an excellent treatment of Foucault's denial of eroticism inherent in power structures, see Leo Bersani, 'Foucault, Freud, Fantasy, and power', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2 (1995), 17–19.
- 50 Charlotte's attempts to free Matilda from male control provide a clear link to the sentimental novel, which often criticised women's dependence on men – writers such as Charlotte Smith, Sarah Scott and Frances Burney used the form of the sentimental novel to depict a female protagonist's struggles and highlight the dangers of female dependency on male authority figures, often family members.
- 51 Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750–1820: A Genealogy* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 25.

- 52 Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 98.
- 53 We will see later how in Radcliffe's *The Italian* the sudden appearance of a blood tie grants a total stranger authority over the previously (relatively) autonomous Ellena.
- 54 Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 18.
- 55 We can see this in many examples, such as in how *Wolfenbach* influences not only *Sense and Sensibility* but is itself influenced by Sarah Scott's earlier *The History of Cornelia* (1750) and *Millenium Hall* (1762) regarding notions of unfair female obligation, relentless pursuits by men and criticisms of female dependence.
- 56 Lauren Fitzgerald, 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', in Wallace and Smith, *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, p. 15.
- 57 See Jerrold E. Hogle's recent chapter 'Recovering the Walpolean Gothic: *The Italian: Or, the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1796–1797)', in Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (eds), *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 151–67, in which he re-examines *The Italian* as both a response to Lewis's *The Monk* and, importantly, as an attempt to achieve the blending of new and old forms of romance that Walpole outlines as his goal in *Otranto*.
- 58 Fitzgerald, pp. 12–16.
- 59 E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 126–7.
- 60 Fitzgerald, pp. 17–20.
- 61 Robert Miles, "Mother Radcliffe": Ann Radcliffe and the Female Gothic', in Wallace and Smith, *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, p. 51.
- 62 Ash, p. 39. Ash's discussion is in the context of the father's violent threats to enforce the daughter's sexual submission, but its applicability to the uncle–niece binary is apparent.
- 63 Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 138. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
- 64 Ash explores how this power subordinates women economically, politically and legally, fastening them into institutions that ensure their continued subordination.
- 65 For example, Hoeveler writes in *Gothic Feminism* that heroines seek the most malleable and feminised male protector they can to manipulate him (pp. 36–50).
- 66 Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 6.
- 67 Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 99.

- 68 Kilgour, p. 120. Emily, interestingly, the female, English version of Rousseau's eponymous Emile, refuses to submit to the vision of female compliance to male authority that Montoni desires and that reflects Rousseau's attitudes towards female education and placement in society detailed in *Emile*, particularly in Book V.
- 69 For further contextualisation of how sexual threats are linked to women's fears of other types of assaults, see Kenneth F. Ferraro, 'Women's fear of victimization: shadow of sexual assault', *Social Forces*, 75:2 (1996), 667–90.
- 70 Holcombe, pp. 38–9. Holcombe describes the ability of married women to retain separate property in several ways via the Court of Chancery, which allowed this to be done in equity, and generally accepted any trust created for a married woman.
- 71 Holcombe, p. 43. Because Madame Montoni refused to sign documents that would give Montoni possession of her states and left hidden papers for Emily that appear to give her possession of the estates (or reinforce Emily's right to the estates if they were already assigned to return to the family), one can assume she had 'unrestricted rights over her separate property' (Holcombe, p. 43), which, as Radcliffe shows, did not protect wives from a husband's avarice.
- 72 DeLamotte, p. 181. This description is followed by an analysis of the constraints Gothic heroines face in having to maintain female decorum while preserving themselves. DeLamotte concludes that Gothic heroines escape via mental transcendence in contemplation of the sublime, yet Gothic heroines also manage physical escapes.
- 73 April London, *Women and Property in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 25. London argues that the inevitable conclusion to the individualist ethic is either to establish the hero as landed gentry and cause the heroine's end via figurative death in marriage, or, failing this, a literal death. While this dichotomy tends to overlook other outcomes (such as endings where the heroine is established as the partner with property or novels where the hero's status as landed gentry was never questioned), the idea of the individualist ethic is essential to understanding Gothic heroines and their integrity.
- 74 Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 137.
- 75 Kilgour, p. 120.
- 76 See Irigaray, p. 84; pp. 171–89.
- 77 See further discussion of this in Miles's *Ann Radcliffe*, p. 64.
- 78 Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), p. 163.
- 79 Emily's 'purchase' of herself is akin to that of Charlotte's purchase of Matilda from her uncle in *Wolfenbach* and contributes to the destruction of the

- system of exchange that Irigaray describes as denying the woman as object/commodity such self-possession: 'how can such objects of use and transaction claim the right to speak and to participate in exchange in general? Commodities, as we all know, do not take themselves to market on their own' (p. 84).
- 80 Johnson argues, by contrast, that Emily and her aunt 'possess more in the way of manly spirit than men do in the novel. Any emancipatory import this chiasmus might support, however, collapses; a woman's heroism stops with her body. She cedes her property as soon as Montoni threatens her with gang rape', pp. 108–9.
- 81 DeLamotte, p. 156.
- 82 DeLamotte discusses Emily's self-defence and conscious worth in contrast to Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–48), noting the ambiguity of Gothic writers in showing that consciousness of virtue is not enough to save the heroine; escape or salvation must remove them from the threat in another way as well (pp. 32–5). This inability of consciousness of worth to protect the Gothic heroine draws attention to the necessity of the law or society to offer protection that mere chastity and innocence will not.
- 83 Johnson, p. 104.
- 84 Johnson describes Emily as 'framing her resistance to Montoni in Wollstonecraftian terms of rights' and notes her 'suffering to keep her property for Valancourt' while he is gambling in Paris (p. 108).
- 85 Kilgour, p. 138.
- 86 Kilgour, p. 161.
- 87 Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian*, ed. Deborah Rogers (New York: Penguin, 1995), p. 417. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
- 88 Kilgour, p. 25.
- 89 The compassion Schedoni feels reflects DeLamotte's understanding of the Gothic heroine's ability to evoke pity in the villain as ambiguous and inadequate compared to Richardsonian heroines. Her argument applies here as Ellena's ability to inspire Schedoni with pity and hesitancy to murder her is ultimately inadequate; it is rather the chance of familial recognition that spares her.
- 90 E. J. Clery, *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000), p. 82.
- 91 Johnson likewise notes the sexual violence of the scene, describing Schedoni as attempting to 'penetrate/murder the sleeping girl' p. 127.
- 92 Schedoni's understanding of a 'father' gives him the right at once to touch and command his presumed daughter.
- 93 Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture 1748–1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 102.

- 94 See Chapter 4 for further analyses of proofs of kinship as allowing caresses or behaviour that would otherwise be considered inappropriate.
- 95 See Chapter 2 for an examination of the proofs and evidence necessary to establishing kinship or denying the possibility of a consanguineal bond.
- 96 Johnson argues that the intensity of the attraction between Ellena and Olivia 'momentarily threatens to overturn the heterosexual plot altogether by privileging erotic sisterhood' but that this potential is 'finally reabsorbed into the heterosexual economy: once Olivia is identified as Ellena's long-lost mother, her importance subsides' (p. 135).
- 97 Perry, p. 395.
- 98 Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 171.
- 99 Ironically, although Schedoni wants to exchange Ellena for increased status via a marriage to Vivaldi – a marriage she also desires – he cannot. He compromised his ability to promote this marriage by having agreed with the Marchesa that Ellena is a scheming girl prior to his discovery that she is his kin.
- 100 Kilgour, p. 169.
- 101 Perry states 'the effect of these legal innovations in marriage settlements of the late seventeenth century was to diminish the proportion of a family's resources that went to female offspring and younger sons' (p. 213).
- 102 Olivia, Ellena's mother and Schedoni's sister-in-law, is not explicitly described as being raped by Schedoni, but as her marriage to him was forced, it follows that the sex was non-consensual.
- 103 See particularly Chapter 2 for analyses of the Gothic's representations of brother-sister incestuous relationships as ideal and egalitarian in nature.
- 104 Wright, p. 147.
- 105 Though this generalises the laws that moved female-held property to husbands and excludes exceptions (such as entailments or primogeniture instances where property remained in the family when a female was the sole remaining family member) that have been discussed in the section on Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, it reflects how these laws are represented in the Gothic. For a further examination of the restraints imposed by women's commodification see Irigaray, p. 84.
- 106 Examples of this include the repercussions suffered by Madame Cheron for attempting to keep her own property in *Udolpho*, Olivia for resisting her brother-in-law in *The Italian* and Matilda for refusing her uncle in *Wolfenbach*.
- 107 Schmidgen, p. 166.
- 108 Johnson, p. 134.
- 109 Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 171.
- 110 Kilgour, p. 177.

- 111 I argue this in contrast to readings of Radcliffe's conclusions by scholars such as David Durrant in 'Ann Radcliffe and the conservative Gothic', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 22:3 (1982), 519–31, who believes that the endings symbolise a return to a safe bourgeois familial structure headed by a genial patriarch.
- 112 Kilgour, p. 179.
- 113 Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. xii. Just as Ellena leaves her prisons, so too does Emily leave Castle Udolpho, Julia flees the patriarchal castle in *A Sicilian Romance* and Laurette abandons an ancestral home turned prison in *The Orphan of the Rhine*.
- 114 In contrast, Johnson argues that the 'purely imaginary landscape of fairy-land' and Paolo's 'effusive absurdity' at the novel's conclusion indicate the extent to which Radcliffe must go to reconcile the 'plethora of last-minute adjustments too strained to stand up to scrutiny' and 'establish an epithalamium' (p. 136).
- 115 This blurring of roles between father and uncle is most pronounced in the confusion over Schedoni's status as father or uncle to Ellena, a position that is unclear due to both his belief he is her father based on her miniature and his having married and fathered a child with Ellena's mother.
- 116 See Bersani, who argues that 'the oppressed, having freed themselves from their oppressors, hasten to imitate them' (22).
- 117 Montoni, like Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), inherits a position of power over his niece by marriage.
- 118 The uncle's assumption of the paternal role is an attempt to reinscribe control over the relatively free body of the heroine that, in its assumption, highlights the sexual and incestuous nature of such a position of power.
- 119 See Fred Botting, *Gothic: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 4–11.
- 120 An ongoing topic of scholarly debate on the Gothic is whether the genre represents (overall) a radical commentary with pro-revolution themes or a conservative, bourgeois understanding of family and society.
- 121 See the [Introduction](#) and [Chapter 5](#) for a more detailed examination of how male incestuous desires, while prohibited, are often normalised in incest discourse while female incestuous desires are prohibited and considered deviant and unnatural.
- 122 Ash describes the behaviour of family members as reflective of broader social relations and power structures, and that the historic view of 'women and children as property of their male protectors ... has supported the use of male aggression to maintain dominance' (pp. 4–5).