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Mothers, Sons, and the Gothic Family in Brown, Poe, and Wharton

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MOTHERS, SONS, AND THE GOTHIC FAMILY IN BROWN, POE, AND WHARTON

by

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Introduction

> Mary does not die but rather—echoing Taoist and other oriental beliefs in which human bodies pass from one place to another in a never-ending cycle which is in itself an imitation of the process of childbirth—she passes over (Kristeva "Stabat Mater" 139).

In my first class abroad in "Fiction in Edinburgh/Edinburgh in Fiction" in Edinburgh, Scotland, the professor sat down at the head of the seminar table and took a look at us: all foreign students, come to study Scottish literature. The majority of students were Americans, but a number of representatives from Australia, Canada, France, Spain, and Poland, were present. The very first concepts he introduced to the class in his thick accent were "Caledonian" and "antisyzygy": Caledonia, the Latin name for Scotland, and antisyzygy, "a union of opposites" (OED). Or, as the professor explained it, in an antisyzygy two opposite forces inhabit the same space. As a reference, he described a particular stonework relief on St. Giles Cathedral up the road: an angel and a devil were carved into the same panel, bounded by the frame of the scene into one complete whole. Two discrete elements were combined into one piece of artwork. The example was simple, but we understood the point clearly. The Caledonian antisyzygy was a union of contradictions that still had a legitimate existence.

The professor further explained how this was a particularly Scottish feeling, for the Scots felt themselves pulled by radical antinomian Calvinists, who believed an individual could commit heinous crimes and yet still be counted among God's "saved." Additionally, the antisyzygy applied to the contradictory nature of their national character. The residents of Scotland are British, too, for the English had invaded Scotland and have interfered in Scottish affairs since the 1300s; as British citizens, they have been

part of a heritage and national identity they did not choose and still vehemently protest. The Scottish felt they needed to distinguish themselves and their culture from the English, and to articulate the state of contradiction in which they live. Writings such as James Hogg's *Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and Walter Scott's novels express the Scottish condition and participate in the Gothic tradition. If the Scottish, affiliated with Britain for so many centuries, felt it such a burden, then the literature of the United States, centuries younger, would also have to distinguish itself in contradistinction to the parent nation against which it rebelled.

One of the themes writers developed was the relationship between parents and children. In the Gothic mode, family relationships are often rife with secrecy, uncertainty, and sexuality, and I am concerned here with these themes—particularly the male perception of female sexuality—and how they are manifested in American literature. The Gothic is a suitable realm to discuss divergent family relationships and repressed feelings for family members, especially for parents. However, any definition of "American" Gothic must firstly acknowledge that it is an offshoot of the British Gothic. A late eighteenth-century development in literature, the Gothic was a reflection of how the past could influence the present in a horrifying manner. Often, these Gothic tales encase young women in restrictive social roles and positions. Starting with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in the late 18th-century, the Gothic would change and expand over the next two hundred and fifty years to incorporate works such as *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. These later works explore realms of forbidden knowledge, doubles, sexual transgression. In its early usage, as David Punter points out in *Literature of Terror*,

"Gothic" was a derisive term which described its referent as outmoded, if not barbaric (5). Jerrold Hogle states that though the Gothic is "pliable and malleable," Gothic stories occur in ancient spaces in which are "hidden some secrets from the past (sometimes the recent past) that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically, or otherwise" (2). Thus, a historied past is a fertile realm in which to write the Gothic.

Without a centuries-old history to look back to, early American writers had to look for other methods of expressing Gothic ideas, which accounts for its "darkness, its tendency towards obsession, its absorption with powerful and evil Europeans" (Punter 189). Early American fiction used the resources available to Americans: the landscape, Indians, a Puritan past, escape from Europe, and the imagination. Punter states that one of the focuses of early American writing—and even afterwards, as well—is guilt as the legacy of Puritanism and the American Revolution. The new American Gothic had "psychic grotesquerie" and "the worlds portrayed are ones infested with psychic and social decay… violence, rape and breakdown are the key motifs; the crucial tone is one of desensitized acquiescence in the horror of obsession and prevalent insanity" (Punter 3). These themes of psychological darkness continue beyond the realm of the early American Gothic to resurface and transform other eras of American Gothic writing.

The Gothic's seemingly innumerable parts suggest that it is the literature of resistance and rebellion, for it receives that which is uncomfortable and cast off from other literary bodies. As Ruth Bienstock Anolik points out in her essay "The Absent Mother," the mother is often "absent: dead, imprisoned, or somehow abjected" (96). She is notably missing in many Gothic texts, and Anolik's quote is a way to enter into the discussion of families in the Gothic mode. If the parents are missing, what are the

ramifications for the children? What happens when the mother, in particular, is missing? What is the interplay between parents and children? The mother's absence throws the family into confusion and disarray. The mother is brought back, typically, by forcing someone else into a mother-like or nurturing role. The mother can be reclaimed, but at great cost, for she is typically framed by male narrators within patriarchal constructs.

I will examine Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly*, Poe's three short stories "Morella," "Ligeia," and "Eleonora," and Edith Wharton's "Bewitched" are a sample of American Gothic literature from the beginning of American literature up to Modernism; these works were published over a 126-year period, between 1799 and 1925. Although such a broad span suggests that I trace a historical development of the Gothic over time, this is not my objective. Instead I am interested in how family relationships can be used to articulate male power, while at the same time undermining. This leads to the females' destruction, but it also weakens the male's power, for he is very dependent upon the female. The choice of Brown, Poe, and Wharton comprises a range of some of American literature's canonical authors of the Gothic. Although Edith Wharton's novels are not known for being Gothic, a number of her shorter works of fiction are ghost stories. Additionally, the inclusion of Wharton as a female writer of Gothic fiction is an important choice because she is a woman who uses a male narrator. Her narrator, more than any of the other male characters in "Bewitched" or in the Brown and Poe, is able to identify with the repression of woman's sexuality and its effects because, as some critics have claimed, Bosworth, her narrator is androgynous.[1] These male narrators are

[1] Monika Elbert makes this claim, and she also makes the claim that Wharton viewed herself as an androgynous writer. By crafting herself as such, Wharton attempted to gain more respectability and have her works criticized as if she were a male writer. Thus, she hoped to receive equal criticism.

important, because they elucidate disastrously males misunderstand females, female sexuality, and female roles.

At its core, no matter if the text is supernatural or psychological, the Gothic is the realm of the uncertain, of secrets, of history, and of sexuality. One of the centralizing themes of the Gothic is the family and the incestuous family romance, which in these texts revolves around the female's body. The Gothic reveals that the body and the identity dependent upon it are constructed, and therefore they are susceptible to demolition. With such instability comes the fear that existence and individual identity may be destroyed. This fear has its locus in "the body of a woman… we have archaically been both inside and outside the mother whom we now fear and desire at the same time" (Hogle 10).

In her seminal work *Powers of Horror*, French philosopher, feminist, and linguist Julia Kristeva traces how an individual can cross the boundaries between subject and object to become a third thing which is neither: the abject. Her theories rely on the idea that woman's body is the source of the self, and separation from the mother's body is concurrent with identity formation. In a child's infancy, the child and mother are "locked into a symbiotic relation, an experience of oneness characterized by a blurring of boundaries between mother and infant—a dual unity preceding the sense of separate self" (Kahane 336). This unity simultaneously presents an arcane desire and fear: desire to be nurtured by and become one with the mother, but fear of oblivion. The male narrators desire to be nurtured by their mother or even to rejoin her by returning to the womb, but they fear the power of females to create something outside of male jurisdiction.

The realm of Gothic literature is a viable and relevant location to explore such fears and desires. These texts are narrated by males, and the son is a witness to the particularly fearsome relationship between mothers and daughters. His desire to reclaim the mother and "[remodel] the world into a sublimated version of the infant's original pleasure" causes him to displace his mother's identity onto other females in his family circle, and in doing so he realizes the female fear which is that of becoming their mothers (Durham 172). This is how these texts are Gothic: the fears of the daughters become real, and they are brought about by the sons' fantasies. According to Luce Irigaray, Freud's conception of woman's identity is to "become her husband's mother" (Gallop 37). This is an important concept in my thesis, for the husband blurs his relationship to his wife by seeing her as a mother; this conflation of roles allows other displacements to occur. By regarding a wife as a mother, the male blurs her relationship to him. He can use her both as a figure for comfort and for sex. Being her husband's mother is not a woman's destiny, but it is nevertheless an important consideration in understanding how some males perceive females in the texts by Brown, Poe, and Wharton.

The ways in which a male sees a female depends on his perception of her sexuality. Typically, males have two perceptions of female sexuality: it is either radically overabundant or nonexistent. If overabundant, female sex must be controlled through male sexual domination and control. If nonexistent, then the male figure can possess the female as a comforting mother-figure. In some cases, such as with the narrator of Poe's "Ligeia," he possesses her as a mother-figure *and* a sexual partner; he receives double the fulfillment from her, but when she dies he feels his loss even more poignantly and has a harder time recovering. As male narrators search for mothers or adequate fulfillment

through a female partner, they regress in their development as autonomous, discrete human beings. Thus, male narrators conflate the distinction between mother and wife. These male narrators must balance having a nurturing female figure with retaining their autonomy; necessarily, these texts are mostly psychological in how they articulate male fears and desires.

By using male-authored or male-narrated texts, I am privileging the male experience and perspective. In "The Gothic Mirror," Claire Kahane points out, "male critics of the Gothic choose to focus on male authors and male protagonists in order to elaborate the Oedipal dynamics of a Gothic text, and effectively restrict if not exclude female desire even from texts written by women" (Kahane 335-336). Kahane's statement is true, and I collude with the male critics she mentions by focusing on male perception and the relationship between parents in texts in which the male often plays the dominant role. These texts look at heterosexual, Western, Anglo-Saxon families, with the role of father assigned to the male and the mother to the female. However, I do not place such emphasis on Oedipal desires but males' overwhelming desire for possession. If males have sexual feelings for their mothers or daughters, it is because they desire to possess *someone*, and their daughters happen to be the only women available. The narrators want stable family relationships, and this often means searching for an absent mother-figure, and if she cannot be found, then they substitute another woman for her. This objectifies females. Although some females are given a modicum of desire, it is always expressed in relation to the males. The women, in being given desire by their male counterparts use it to return, thus further fulfilling male desire. Thus, female desire in these narratives is merely relational; if it is not, then males take action to constrict female agency.

The desire for the mother in these works is articulated by the son, but complementary to it is the child's fear of the mother. This is particularly salient for the women in these stories, as they are in a vulnerable position regarding an all-devouring mother, who consumes female bodies in her return. Such an idea is supported by Nancy Chodorow, who says that a son's gender identity is formed in contradistinction to the mother, while a daughter's identity is formed through sameness and identification with the mother. Because mothers are more likely to identify with their daughters, mothers "[treat] daughters as an extension of themselves" with the effects of "more flexible, fluid ego boundaries… [and the] tendency to perceive reality in relational terms" (Garner 20). Although Garner is discussing the cultural explanation for why women have primarily taken the role of nurturer, I emphasize the connection between mother and daughter. By entering into motherhood, the daughter fears she will lose her identity and become her mother. Conversely, the mother sees herself as part of and close to the daughter already, which makes her a viable location for the mother's return. More importantly, the male narrators also see daughters as a viable place for the mother's return. The narrators do not allay female fears, or even give much voice to them, because they see the daughter's body as a potential realm in which to transplant the mother's body—in either trying to make the woman into *his* mother or his children's mother (by being his sexual partner). Thus, males' fantasies in these texts realize the female's fears of becoming her mother. If females are not supernaturally transformed into their mothers, their male kin project the role of mother upon their daughters or their sexual partners' successors. Thus, males realize the females' fears.

The transposition of mother onto daughter, and more broadly of one woman onto another by a male narrator, is a salient idea to consider. It suggests that the same individual is coerced into playing multiple roles to one other person, such as a father. Like the consideration of the "Caledonian antisyzygy," the role of mother, daughter, sister, and wife can be blurred, and the same individual can play all three roles at once. It is not a union of opposites per se, but rather the collapsing of divergent roles. All individuals play roles based on their social context, and in a family, an individual plays multiple roles to multiple people. For example, a man can play the role of son and brother, but he is not a son and a brother to the same person: he is the son of his mother, and the brother of his siblings. When one individual plays multiple roles to the same person (e.g. daughter *and* sexual partner, as Venny Brand does in "Bewitched"), then the boundaries between roles break down and the social relations in the text fall into complete disorder. By overstepping the bounds of family roles, the person playing two roles may be forced into a position in which she cannot function. When the blurring of boundaries becomes sexual, then the possibility of incest arises.

Unlike in the Caledonian antisyzygy, the unity I articulate collapses boundaries; it is not necessarily the combination of polar opposites into a composite, but rather the removal of distinction. As Kristeva describes it in her work, "Stabat Mater," about the ways in which motherhood is constructed, she says that in Christianity,

> some iconographic representations have Mary becoming a little girl held in the arms of her son, who now becomes her Father; she thus passes from the role of Mother to that of Daughter… Not only is Mary her son's *mother* and his *daughter*, she is also his *wife*. Thus she passes through all three women's stages in the most restricted of all possible kinship systems (Kristeva "Stabat Mater" 139).

The Virgin Mary loses any one distinct role, for she becomes all three. As mother, daughter, and wife simultaneously, she is a profoundly powerful religious figure. The same loss of distinction happens in these texts to the Gothic mother-figure, but with disastrous results. She seems unable to avoid death. Eventually, the man who has lost a female beloved must grow up and acknowledge his loss without having recourse to trying to recapture what he has lost. He must face his fears of losing the comforter, the teacher, and the nurturer. Thus, he is forced to mature, and he rises to the challenge with varying degrees of success in Brown, Poe, and Wharton.

These tales are about the relationship between mothers, fathers, and their children. When the mother is no longer around, her remaining relatives seek to replace her by projecting her onto another woman or onto an object—such as the landscape—in order to recover her. The choice of articulating women and mothers as landscape is not apparently obvious, but the earth has often been linked to the female body and typified as a "mother" figure. Whether wild or cultivated, the landscape has a profound effect on the individuals both who live in the region or seek out its more wild depths. When there are no readily available females to take the role of the mother, the landscape acts as a surrogate.

Vast and ostensibly uninhabited, the landscape presents an entity with which societies as well as individuals must come to terms. The "American Gothic" is an appropriate realm for the discussion of boundaries and order, for as David Mogen writes, early American authors "grappled with the most fundamental conflict shaping American experience, the battle between civilization and nature, between the mental landscape of European consciousness and the physical and psychical landscape of the New World" (15). To some degree, later American authors continued to grapple with the questions

concerning the landscape, which represents two opposing ideas and elements: the open land is a realm of possibility and self-creation, or it can be a frightful place which swallows up the intrepid frontiersman in loneliness and dissolution. In any case, the landscape influences its inhabitants, and individuals who are not strong enough to survive it will be overwhelmed by it.

It requires no great intellectual feat to recognize, as Claire Kahane has deftly pointed out, that Gothic texts explore female power and sexuality in a restrictive, patriarchal system. The men seek to be dominant father-figures and possess the mother-figure. Part of the Gothic consists of blurring boundaries, interrogating knowledge, and bringing to light that which has been repressed by society. In these texts, instead of allowing women to ask, "Who am I?" the males interrogate her and ask "What are you?" The males are unsure of the position of the women, and the male narrator's creation of women within their narratives contributes to the female's construction as subject/object, neither one or the other but both at the same time. The format of the narrative constructs females as literary creations, phantasms which can be used to play or fulfill any role. These males witness to a certain degree a female's struggle for autonomy, but the males are not sure what to do with female autonomy, which is inevitably threatening.

Edgar Huntly is the first exercise in this thesis of relocating absent parents—particularly mothers—in an American Gothic novel. Before the start of the novel, in the decades leading to the turn of the nineteenth century, Huntly's parents and an infant daughter have been killed as they were living on the frontier of Pennsylvania. Thus, he is in search of parents, and he finds Clithero as a brother-figure. He and Clithero act as doubles, and they even compete for a place to be within the same family structure. When

they are ousted from a family structure, and particularly denied a female sexual partner, they retreat to the wilderness. The landscape acts as a surrogate mother to Huntly, giving him power to combat the society which has rejected him. It is an absurd role to ask the landscape to play, but the wild landscape nevertheless offers nurturance. Eventually, he returns to society, but his return is marked by brutal savagery and murders; he is restored to his intellectual father, but at the cost of his strength and identification with a powerful, maternal source outside of society. Back in the folds of civilization, he matures, but his maturity is never quite assured or stable, for there is the possibility that Huntly may relapse and realign with his mother-figure.

Three of Poe's short stories, "Morella," "Ligeia," and "Eleonora" deal with the death of an unnamed narrator's beloved, who has acted in some capacity as a guide or a muse. Without a female character to nurture and adore him, Poe's narrators regress into childlike states. A mother-figure is central to these narrators. By trying to replace their women—or use multiple women to play the same role—males plunge further into the depths of disquiet and solitude. In these tales, the narrator rejects a second wife or daughter by conjuring the memories of his former, dead beloved. With the return of the first wife, macabre families are created, as the second woman acts as a mother to the first. The narrators fail miserably, destroying their women and themselves in the process. A woman cannot be reclaimed successfully and permanently by a male narrator in Poe; however, she can return briefly. She comes back from the dead to haunt the narrator who cannot let her go. By keeping family relationships so tightly bound, the narrator virtually destroys all individuals who participate in the return of the missing parental figure. Poe's

tales are the most psychological, and the women's return rely the most on men's fantasies.

Lastly, in Edith Wharton's "Bewitched," the family relationships undergo the most gruesome distortions. The New England landscape, a force which elsewhere may be nurturing, is hard and cold, and it drives away warmth from the community members' relations. The sexual relationships between the Brand father and his daughters transgress a deeply-ingrained taboo. However, the daughter appears as a ghost to a neighboring farmer, which ostensibly serves as an additional cover for the incest. Their incestuous relationship may give Brand and his daughter pleasure, but it is not condoned by society, and their relationship is no longer sustainable when other community members have intimations that incest is occurring. The female again is relegated to the landscape, but she is to be buried in it rather than use it as a method to escape proscriptive family roles. In "Bewitched," the father tries to make the females play multiple roles, but this fails as his women, in one way or another, outmaneuver him.

In all of these narratives, the women are hemmed in by male desire and powers of narration. Males desire power over female parents, yet they fear powerful females. Male preference for female sexuality is for her to coddle him; male narration manipulates the narrative so that females always serve his needs. As such, the males blur the females' roles, forcing her into multiple positions in order to satisfy their desires. This happens when the male narrator struggles against the father; he turns to the mother for comfort. Indeed, the narrator may even find such sublimation and maternal support in the landscape. Such fulfillment cannot be sustained for long periods of time; however, the narrator discovers that he cannot possess women in such a way. Without an equal,

healthy relationship, males demolish themselves as well as their females. Roles are collapsed and boundaries blurred to the point that both those who blur the boundaries and those whose boundaries are blurred are both effectually destroyed. The only autonomy a female has is in her relation to her males, but in reality, such desire is the result of a thinly-veiled subconscious need for the female to play a maternal role.

Chapter One:
The Search for Satisfying Parents in *Edgar Huntly*

Charles Brockden Brown, born to Quaker parents 1771 in Philadelphia, is often called the first Gothic writer in the American tradition. Among the first Americans to make his fiction distinctly psychological, Brown was influenced by Enlightenment thinking, which many argue informs his themes. In a series of somewhat bizarre novels, he interrogates rationality and arrives at inconclusive endings, which lead some to say that his works are rough and half-finished. However, they have some logic to them, even if that logic is only to undermine clear understandings and interpretation. As with Brown's other novels *Wieland* (1798), *Arthur Mervyn* (1799), and *Ormond* (1799), which complicate and play with the American ideals of deduction, reason, and order, *Edgar Huntly* challenges the adequacy of European rationalism. It details Huntly's complicated and bizarre shift from an Enlightenment man into a murderer characterized as a savage.

Despite the complications in its theme and plot, at the heart of the novel is Huntly's implicit desire for a stable family relationship. Brown's writing may reflect the desire for an authoritative parent-figure in his own life; Brown's father Elijah was not a stable source of authority and frequently failed to support his family. Salient points in their relationship include Elijah's absences in 1777-1778 and 1784, his expulsion from the Quaker meeting their family attended, and his inability to provide adequate finances for his family. In 1777, when Charles was six years old, his father was arrested and imprisoned for eight months on account of not signing an oath of allegiance to the United States (Kafer 35-37). He would be imprisoned again for his debts, and Charles' mother Mary had to be practical and "guard over pennies" (Kafer 45). Brown may have looked to

local tutor and Quaker Robert Proud as a surrogate father-figure; Proud left England to find better prospects and teach in Philadelphia. Though somewhat haughty and cold, he bears a resemblance to Edgar Huntly's tutor Sarsefield. *Edgar Huntly*, written in 1799, references additional events that occurred in 1784. According to his biographer Peter Kafer, it was one of "the darkest times of [Brown's] life" because of his missing father and death of Anthony Benezet, a prominent Quaker leader (170). *Edgar Huntly* thus may have originated in Brown's own history of dark times.

Edgar Huntly is a double narrative, for Huntly's tale contains and mirrors the Irishman Clithero Edny's tale. Both Clithero's and Huntly's parents are missing, and they attempt to situate themselves in stable family relationships while simultaneously maturing enough to assert their authority against a father-figure. Early in their relationship, Huntly tries to act in a paternal capacity towards Clithero; he pursues the Irishman with the intent of "emulat[ing] a father's clemency, and restor[ing] this unhappy man to purity, and to peace" by listening to Clithero's crimes (Brown 24). Huntly fails in his paternal endeavors, however, and Clithero acts as *his* prototype and brother-figure. Clithero's overweening desire for females causes him to lose his only chance at a family. He has surrogate family members, but he makes a grave mistake and must flee; Huntly is unable to marry his fiancée due to societal obstacles. Both, desiring relationships with females, turn to the wild landscape for comfort and solace, which acts as a kind of mother. Because the wilderness is a space which is defined in contradistinction to society, Clithero and Huntly are outside of society's jurisdiction and mores. However, the landscape is also a dangerous place: Clithero goes mad, and Huntly is in danger of madness, but he is brought back to society by an intellectual father-figure. When mothers

are absent, and there is no female body on which to project the need for a female, then the landscape acts as a surrogate and endows her "children" with savage power. This places the origin of power and authority with the mother, and for Huntly the father-figure struggles against this force in order to reclaim authority over his son.

A bizarre and confusing tale, *Edgar Huntly* takes place on the border between the township Solebury and the mountainous wilderness of Norwalk in Pennsylvania. It is written in epistolary form to Huntly's fiancée, Mary Waldegrave, which gives Huntly narratorial authority. Before the novel begins, Huntly's parents and an infant sibling are killed in an Indian raid, and he and his two sisters go to live with their uncle Huntly. As the novel opens, Huntly's close friend and Mary's brother Waldegrave is murdered. Desperate to find the murderer, Huntly's suspicions rest on Clithero Edny the Irishman, a laborer at the neighboring Inglefield farm. Huntly discovers Clithero sleepwalking at the crime scene, and Clithero confesses to the murder and tells his life story. Full of fresh guilt, Clithero flees, and Huntly chases him again. After these events, Huntly has word that the fortune Mary inherits from her brother actually belongs to one Weymouth, and so they must break their engagement. Instead of anticipating a union with his fiancée, he is cut off from her. Distraught, he is awakened to find himself in a cave, where he will be transformed into a child of the landscape. In the caves, Huntly must fight his way out and back to civilization. Indians and settler alike attack him; he is even attacked by his old tutor and intellectual father-figure, Sarsefield, who has returned to Solebury. In returning to society, Huntly is reinscribed into a family structure because Sarsefield and his wife—the Irish lady whom Clithero served—offer him assistance and protection. The true killer of Waldegrave is revealed to be an Indian, and Clithero is absolved of all guilt, but his

madness has overtaken him. Erroneously, Huntly tries to alleviate Clithero's guilt by telling him that the Irish lady whom he served is still alive; in his maddened state Clithero sets out to kill her once more. He is apprehended by Sarsefield, and on the journey to an insane asylum, Clithero commits suicide by throwing himself overboard, thus ending a frenetic narrative.

As Huntly's double, Clithero sets the psychological pattern of revenge and madness which Huntly will follow. In a deft unveiling, Alan Axelrod traces the Irish family romance and Clithero's Oedipal complex. Mrs. Euphemia Lorimer, the local aristocrat, and her evil twin brother Arthur Wiatte act as Clithero's surrogate parents. Euphemia adopts Clithero into her household and raises him to be a servant. Wiatte, the only purely evil character in *Edgar Huntly*, gambles away his money, and is supposedly killed during a mutiny en route to the penal colonies in Australia. However, Euphemia does not believe this; she loves her brother to an almost incestuous degree and claims that they are so bonded by affection, she will die when he dies. Wiatte leaves behind a daughter, Clarice, whom Euphemia adopts. Clarice bears an uncanny resemblance in appearance and personality to Euphemia, literalizing the incestuous bond between Euphemia and Wiatte.

As time elapses, Clarice and Clithero confess their affection, and Euphemia sanctions the marriage. As their wedding approaches, however, Wiatte returns. Sarsefield, Euphemia's first love, also makes a reappearance, and Clithero and Sarsefield decide not to apprise Euphemia of her brother's whereabouts. Shortly after Wiatte's return, Clithero kills Wiatte in self-defense. Clithero hastens to kill Euphemia before news of Wiatte's death reaches her, thinking to spare her pain at her brother's death.

When he arrives at Euphemia's bedside, he is about to stab the sleeping figure, but Euphemia pulls Clithero's hand away. She prevents him from murdering Clarice, who is the one actually sleeping in her mother's bed. Once he realizes his mistake, he tries to commit suicide. Again, Euphemia prevents this from happening. Full of guilt and still believing Euphemia will die when she knows of Wiatte's death, Clithero flees from Ireland to America (Brown 25-62).

Clithero, until the moment almost kills Clarice, is in a nuclear family system. Euphemia regards Clithero "with the tenderness of a mother," and in response he serves her with filial fervor, regarding his life as "a cheap sacrifice in her cause" (Brown 28, 30-31). Clithero and Clarice fall in love. Euphemia, on his impending marriage to her daughter Clarice, tells him that he should "expect henceforth that treatment from me, not only to which your own merit intitles [sic] you, but which is due to the husband of my daughter" (Brown 40). Thus, Clithero will be connected to two women who have the capacity to adequately fulfill his needs: Euphemia will be his mother-figure, while he will have Clarice as a wife. Clarice acts as a sister-figure in this pseudo-family; by marrying her, Clithero participates in a relationship that has hints of incest. According to Clithero's account, Euphemia and Clarice are pleased; however, Sarsefield indicts the accuracy of the account by saying that to tell the "truth would prove him [Clithero] to be unnatural" (Brown 175). Clithero is satisfied, for he has female figures to surround him. The almost doppelganger-like resemblance of Euphemia and Clarice suggests that they have similar attributes; indeed, "nature seemed to have precluded every difference between them but that of age" (Brown 35). They are almost the same person but separated into two distinct

bodies. In such a way, Clithero can essentially possess the same woman in two different capacities.

Wiatte, who has been absent and is given to debauchery, represents the bad father-figure. His absence leaves Clithero unadulterated enjoyment of Euphemia and Clarice. When he makes his return, Clithero kills him in self-defense. Axelrod suggests that Clithero's murder of Wiatte fulfills Clithero's unconscious Oedipal fantasy: by removing Wiatte, he can thus possess his mother-figure, as well, without the threat of competition from another male. However, Wiatte proves to have more power over Euphemia in death than in life. Clithero fears the same act that killed Wiatte, his "father" figure, will kill Euphemia, his "mother" figure: she will die of grief over her brother. After Wiatte's death, he has less control over the females than he did when Wiatte was absent. He tries to kill Euphemia, but instead almost kills Clarice. In attempting to murder his "sister-mother-bride," he expresses unconscious fears about losing his mother and his wife (Axelrod 167). This reveals a disturbing struggle for control: if Clithero is to lose Euphemia, and by extension Clarice, Clithero thinks he should have control over the timing and manner of their deaths. Clithero is distressed that he must compete for, and fail to gain, the undivided attention and affection of his wife and mother-in-law. Clithero's expectations of female desire reflect infantile needs and fantasies.

In order to assert his control over Euphemia, Clithero gives up some of his sanity, rational thoughts, and rational feelings. In some degree, he experiences the loss of human feeling and sympathy. According to his tale, he desires to kill Euphemia to spare her from pain. His actions are not quite unforgiveable, but they are horribly misguided. After he has just killed Wiatte, Clithero muses to himself: "cannot I prevent thee [Euphemia] from

returning to a consciousness which, till it ceases to exist, will not cease to be rent and mangled? Yes, it is in my power to screen thee from the coming storm: to accelerate thy journey to rest" (Brown 58). His logic is flawed and frightening, but he believes he has altruistic motives for his actions: Euphemia's release from pain. Though he does not murder her with his dagger, he thinks that Euphemia dies from grief at the news of her brother's death. In feeling Ireland, he loses his mother-figure and sister-bride all at once. Wiatte's control, suddenly asserted, is an authoritative force which Clithero is unable to overcome.

Shaken from Euphemia's confidence and unable to conform successfully to the social and familial structure in Ireland, Clithero flees to the New World. Rejecting Philadelphia's society, he flees to the frontier and to the Inglefield farm where he finds employment. On the border of civilization and wilderness, he describes the landscape as a place where he "indulged in audible griefs on the cliffs… Often have I brooded over my sorrows in the recesses of that cavern. The scene is adapted to my temper… its headlong streams lull me into temporary forgetfulness of mankind" (Brown 62). Clithero's statements refer to the Romantic tradition that the landscape reflects the state of the viewer's mind. But it does more than that: it serves as a place of succor for Clithero, a place for him to indulge his melancholy. The landscape serves as a refuge for him, much as a mother would serve as a source of comfort. This is most noted in how the landscape helps him forget humanity; he is removed for a time from a society in which he cannot function and finds solace.

Clithero fails in his attempt to kill Euphemia, but Huntly unconsciously assumes Clithero's role, for his actions threaten Euphemia's life. By doing so, Huntly reinforces

his connection to Clithero and emphasizes their parallel histories. At the end of the novel, after Sarsefield and Euphemia marry, Huntly writes a letter to Sarsefield, telling him that Clithero is alive and after Euphemia. The letter accidentally falls into Euphemia's hands, and "terror" "imminently endanger[s]" her life, thereby making her miscarry her child (Brown 194). What is more, Huntly gives Clithero the Sarsefields' address, which enables Clithero to hunt them down. In doing so, Huntly "sets the seal on [his] identification with Clithero and his oedipal romance" (Axelrod 169). Huntly therefore inadvertently assumes Clithero's role; like Clithero and his failed attempt at murder with the knife, Huntly botches the job of killing Euphemia. He does succeed, however, in interfering with the next generation. If Sarsefield and Euphemia are his fulfilling, human parental figures, then another child would provide competition for his "parents'" affection. Huntly has already ousted his older "brother" and guide, Clithero; if Sarsefield and Euphemia have no more children, their affections can rest on him. However, such hostile acts towards the family may precipitate a reenactment of Clithero's history: Huntly may be expelled from his surrogate family.

Huntly as Orphan

Due to Huntly's interaction with Clithero and the Irishman's unsettling experiences, Huntly's own unconscious begins to get the better of him, and he begins to sleepwalk, too. Huntly loses his self-control when his marriage to Mary Waldegrave is no longer feasible: most of the $8000 she inherited from her brother was actually money kept in trust for a man named Weymouth. Without the money, Huntly and Mary cannot be wed. In order to cope with the loss of this prospective marriage, Huntly does not seek comfort with his sisters or uncle but in the wilds of Norwalk, the nearby wilderness. In a

psychologically unstable state due to his first experiences chasing Clithero, he regresses into a state in which he no longer has to deal with the effects of a capitalist, republican society. Through his sleepwalking, he puts himself in a position where he can regress into a state of oneness with a mother-figure. Returning to the "womb," however, is a longer and harder process than simply turning to a mother for comfort, for he must sever connections with his old psychological and social self.

Returning to nature is not a pleasant process because he will be physically and psychologically beaten down. Huntly must regress in order to rebuild. Huntly has allowed the Enlightenment to repress his feelings and emotions in a way that is unnatural and unhealthy. He is subject to certain preconceptions because of his Enlightenment training. Just after Waldegrave's death, Huntly seeks the murderer with "insanity of grief and vengeance" and feels that "to punish the crime was just" (Brown 6, 7). Upon finding that Clithero was indeed the murderer, Huntly writes to his fiancée: "you expect that, having detected the offender, I will hunt him to infamy and death. You are mistaken. I consider the deed as sufficiently expiated" (Brown 23). Huntly is enraged, but he quickly represses his feelings in favor of Enlightenment clemency, which does not allow Huntly to release his feelings. When he learns that "wedlock [with Mary Waldegrave] is now more distant than ever," he becomes frustrated (Brown 105). He cannot possess a wife, a sexual partner, or start his own family, and so he becomes vulnerable to the insanity which has already touched. Clithero. These repressed feelings will catalyze his sleepwalking into the wilderness, where he will gain power to vent his frustration against a society that denies him his desires.

During his first experiences in the wilderness, Huntly makes quick and rash judgments about the landscape which are overturned the more time he spends in Norwalk. At first, he finds it to be impassable, but then he navigates his way through it. Huntly finds Clithero in the midst of the wilderness, in one of its ostensibly impenetrable valleys. Huntly's initial suppositions about penetrating into the wilderness are incorrect; as he enters a crevasse through which a waterfall roars, he supposes "human feet had never before gained this recess" (Brown 71). Huntly has made the assumption that he is the only person to have experienced such magnificence in the reaches of Norwalk; however, "my attention lighted, as if by some magical transition, on… a human countenance!" (Brown 71). Clithero is there, having entered the wilderness earlier. The revelation of Clithero is indicative of Huntly's inflexible, inductive approach to his surroundings; Huntly's suppositions have just been proven wrong, and some of his suppositions and thought processes will continue to be proved wrong. This primes him for regression, because once he discovers his errors, he is more willing to accept occurrences that he did not think were possible. In his case, he will find a connection with a mother-figure in the landscape.

The Mother in the Landscape

Halfway through the novel in Chapter 16, the mother is recovered. Huntly, having fallen asleep, wakes to find himself in a pitch-black cavern. Unsure of what is happening or how he arrived at the bottom of a pit, he slowly comes to consciousness.[2] He must

[2] Huntly discovers later that he is sleepwalker, and in the night he went to Norwalk and lost himself down in the cave. He was prescient enough in his sleep to bring a tomahawk along with him. He stumbles over it a few feet away from where he wakes up. The tomahawk will be important when he fights the panther later in the chapter. Axelrod suggests he is pre-disposed to violence like Clithero, who ostensibly "found" the knife on Euphemia's beside table.

reassemble his thoughts and rebuild his consciousness. He is in complete darkness; cold, bruised, and half-naked, Huntly says, "I emerged from oblivion by degrees… I was conscious, for a time, of nothing but existence… My thoughts were wildering and mazy, and though consciousness were present, it was disconnected with the locomotive or voluntary power" (Brown 107). The use of "wildering" suggests that his thoughts are wild and wandering, reflecting the caverns he now inhabits: he identifies his thoughts with the wilderness. In his thought pattern, he is already becoming more susceptible to the landscape. His reawakening in the caves is not dissimilar from birth, for Huntly has lost his motor skills. Such a state is almost that of a newborn: weakened and confused. He says "I attempted to rise, but my limbs were cold, and my joints had almost lost their flexibility," and he feels as if he had been beaten by the "blows of a club, mercilessly and endlessly repeated" (Brown 107). Physically, Huntly's power has been taken away from him; he has been broken down by the process of arriving into the cave, so that he may heal stronger. He has to practice movement and re-learn to use his limbs. The process is expedited, though, because he has learned how to use his limbs before. However, he has never been in an environment quite like the one of the caverns. A new, "natural" identity will be formed by his interaction with nature, and he will be forced to compete and struggle for existence nature's womb. Caves are often connected metaphorically to the womb, but Huntly's connection to the womb will be forged in a grotesque manner. Nature is a mother, but a mother unlike Huntly has ever known. This maternal figure has the potential to give him a new identity and brute physical force.

Huntly's prenatal state is achieved partly through disconnection from society. Though Huntly remembers his life prior to the cave, he does not remember how he

arrived there. In an effort to maintain continuity with his former self, he "endeavored to recall the past, but the past was too much in contradiction to the present, and my intellect was too much shattered by external violence, to allow me accurately to review it" (Huntly 107). His immediate past is momentarily obliterated, which makes room for the re-attachment of mother and child and their refashioning into one entity. In the cave, Edgar Huntly is not unlike Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, another Gothic character, who severs connection with "other beings, and familiar nature[.] [H]e is intent on… [being] utterly alone. This ingressive movement is attended by self-loss, a radical shrinkage of his empirical self… [and] a heightening of his isolated selfhood to daemonic status. He becomes a force instead of a person" (Sherwin 892). Frankenstein and Huntly both desire solitude to perform their work. However, *Edgar Huntly* explores the other side of Shelley's novel: Huntly is not creator but a Creature. The caverns perform their work on his body and his identity, rather than Huntly himself performing the work. Huntly is merely complicit and will gain some of nature's force. He seeks solitude and refuge from society. With his previous identity lost, there is space for him to be molded by his experience through the caverns.

The separation from his environment is important, but more important in the process of Huntly's rebirth is his physical interruption from his past because the caverns assume a maternal role. Huntly awakes to find himself in a cave, ostensibly so dark he cannot see his hand in front of him. Huntly is in pitch-darkness, so there is nothing which visually separates him from his surroundings, and he has no perceivable form. He can sense the air around him, and through touch he is contiguous with the air which is contiguous with the rock cavern. He was previously socialized as a young, country-

dwelling gentleman, but the environment that allowed him to be such is no longer accessible to him. This interruption and "breaking away" from his past is a moment of reverse identity formation (Kristeva 13); he returns to the womb and attains a pre-lingual, pre-Oedipal state without a father, the father who is the origin of "all sign, meaning, and discourse" (Kristeva 53). The novel's epistolary form necessitates his transcription of the events, but at the moment in which he experiences the cave's darkness, there is no need for words, language, or any differentiation from the womb. Instead of seeing himself as a distinct person with a past, Huntly is one with the body of the mother.

Within a physical space to claim a new identity, he begins to rebuild through hunger and desire. Desire here is critical, because desire affects how Huntly relates to his body. In the process of becoming something and rebuilding himself, Huntly hungers and must search for a source of nourishment. His search wipes away any last vestiges of gentlemanly behavior and propriety. He says of his hunger, it "urged me to a phrenzy [sic]" and "speedily became ferocious" (Brown 110). To assuage the hunger pangs, "I tore the linen of my shirt between my teeth and swallowed the fragments. I felt a strong propensity to bite the flesh of my arm" (Brown 110). Huntly sees his body as something devourable. Huntly's frenzy is apparent, quickly escalating from eating inanimate matter to becoming grotesquely autophagous. In eating linen he becomes bestial, but resorting to eating his own flesh is worse than bestial. Feeding on his own flesh thrusts Huntly within the boundaries of Julia Kristeva's abject. In the abject, someone is neither "subject nor object," but a third category of being. Kristeva says that the act of eating helps to create the self because to an infant food "is not an 'other' for 'me,' who am only in their desire, I expel *myself,* I spit *myself out*, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I'

claim to establish *myself*' (Kristeva 3). Eating sustains and nourishes the child, but the child has not yet quite recognized that the food is not part of its body. Parents' desire for infants to eat food makes the infant conscious of itself, but its identity is still in an interstitial phase. The child is in the process of forming a discrete identity by expelling the food it's beginning to recognize as not a part of itself.

Huntly has an identity and a sense of self already, but he expresses desire for his own body and thereby returns to the state of Kristeva's child. He desires to feed himself with his own flesh: he becomes both desiring subject and desired object. Not only are the boundaries of his identity destabilized, he is neither "subject nor object" but both at the same time (Kristeva 1). No further depravity can be experienced than having to eat oneself. Torn down by his bruising journey into the caverns, and forced by the extremity of hunger, he does not recognize himself as a rational being. Instead, he lets instinct and desire fuel his actions, even to the point where he would destroy himself physically, having already broken down his position as an articulate subject by attempting to destroy himself with his own desire.

Once he has reached this point, the landscape-mother offers Huntly nourishment to rebuild his body and identity. In the midst of the cavern, his eyes alight on the eyes of a panther.[3] Using the tomahawk Huntly finds shortly after waking up, he kills the panther by hurling it into the animal's skull. In the midst of immediate safety and relief, "the first suggestion that occurred to me was to feed upon the carcass of this animal[…] My hunger had arrived at that pitch where all fastidiousness and scruples are at an end. I crept to the spot… I will not shock you by relating the extremes to which dire necessity had

[3] According to Huntly, the panther's eyes "resembled a fixed flame" that "created no illumination around them" (Brown 111). Ostensibly, the panther's eyes give off some form of light even in the pitch-dark cave.

driven me" (Brown 112). The second set of ellipses in the passage are diegetic. Huntly cannot narrate this scene to Mary Waldegrave. The very act of this eating cannot be spoken for it is too shocking to be told. In the elided speech lies the possibility that he has satisfied his previously-imagined delight in rending flesh and drinking blood. His humanity and civility are forgotten, discarded, but by censoring his feelings about eating the carcass, he preserves the genteel image of himself to Mary Waldegrave. By omitting this portion he illustrates that there is a part of birth and the relationship between mother and child which cannot be accessed by anyone other than the mother and child.

This event with the panther is also related to the nourishment which a mother gives her unborn fetus. As a child uses the nutrients in its mother's blood to nourish itself, so does Huntly take the cavern's version of blood. The blood is also a stand-in for a mother's milk. Fluids are able to traverse boundaries and borders and are important in re-constituting Huntly's identity. One of two fluids the wilderness has to offer him along with water, blood is a fluid that like "spittle… milk, urine, feces or tears [which] by simply issuing forth [has] traversed the boundary of the body" (Kristeva 69). The fluid flows across boundaries, an object of the mother which helps reconstruct Huntly's physical body. He delights in this shameful, uncivilized act. He takes the nourishment in order to become a son of nature.

Regression and identification with the mother cannot last forever, however; the infant must be expelled from the womb and enter the world. Brown complicates the idea of birth; instead of receiving a new body that has been growing, Huntly's body undergoes a transformation. After eating the panther meat, his "stomach was seized by pangs whose acuteness exceeded all that [he] had ever before experienced" (Brown 112). He states that

if he had known of these pains beforehand, "I should have carefully abstained, and yet these pangs were a useful effort of nature to subdue and convert to nourishment the matter I had swallowed" (Brown 113). Brown uses "pangs" a total of four times in one paragraph, which recalls "birth pangs." In an almost exact parallel to the feeding child who rejects the food its parents give it, the child "[gives] birth to [itself] amid the violence of sobs, of vomit," as does Huntly (Kristeva 3). Huntly is giving birth to himself, his new body, his new identity, and the landscape has been the effective mechanism of his transformation. This is a process of digestion, incorporation, and self-realization, and it brings Huntly closer to a state of naturalization through identification with the landscape. The landscape—his new mother—is a powerful force and which gives him strength beyond that which is found in society. As he has more contact with society, Huntly will become more violent but at the same time will lose his power, dramatizing the conflict between nature and civilization. He will move from the landscape as a mother-figure back to society and human parental figures, dominated by the father.

Exiting the Womb

Huntly's expulsion from the cave indicates that the transformative power of the cave has reached its limits and his metamorphosis is complete. Now the efficacy of his experience will be tested. Drawn by thirst and the sound of rushing water, he comes to the mouth of the cave where he sees four sleeping Indians, a captive young woman, and an additional Indian acting as sentry. Huntly, almost wild with thirst, takes advantage of the opportunity to seize a nearby musket and hatchet. He says "no words can describe the torments of my thirst. Relief to these torments, and safety to my life, were within view…

Yet I did hesitate. My aversion to bloodshed was not to be subdued but by the direst necessity" (Brown 119). He is given his chance: "to take the life of another was the only method of averting it [his own death]… the muscles would have acted almost in defiance of my will" (Brown 120). Bill Christophersen says that this killing is "both unavoidable and cleanly executed" (134). This is his first encounter with society since claiming nature as a mother-figure. He has barely left the "womb," and he is already assailed by members of society who push up into nature's recesses. Huntly must kill out of a desire for self-preservation, a killing which is not willed and of which he is not apparently guilty.

Self-preservation, however, is overtaken by the desire for revenge the longer Huntly is out of the cave. Even as he considers killing the first Indian sentry, the desire for revenge is in the back of his mind and provides additional justification; he feels "these very men were the assassins of my [parents]" (Brown 119). As Christophersen says, Huntly's brutality only increases with each life he takes (130). He deftly dispatches the first Indian; he shoots the second, third, and fourth. The fifth killing is the most brutal, for he shoots the Indian in the leg, then the head, and he finally must stab him in the heart. As Christophersen observes, "the closer he gets to civilization the more we see the barbarity civilized man—Edgar included—partakes of" and that "Edgar's main motive has become revenge" (131, 135). By preserving himself against the panther, and also again against the Indians, he indicates that he is nature's child. Nature can be a brutal mother, but civilization can be even more brutal. Revenge occurs in society; thus, revenge belongs to the realm of the father. By allying himself with revenge, Huntly begins to leave nature and make his way back to society.

Huntly feels rage, but the only way he can successfully and acceptably express it is by killing Indians. He is somewhat shocked by the "transition I had undergone" in the caves, but his perspective changes in front of Deb's hut. (Brown 129). After he kills three of the Indians, settlers come to rescue the girl. Huntly faints, and the settlers mistake his faint for death and leave him. Rejected by the same society which deprived him of Waldegrave and Mary, he feels rage towards society. However, the fifth Indian becomes his victim. Though Huntly protests, "my abhorrence of bloodshed was not abated," he also asks "why should he [the Indian] be suffered to live?" (Brown 133). He takes out his rage against society for abandoning him on the hapless Indian. Huntly kills him brutally with two gunshots and a stab of the bayonet. The previous killings did not take this long and were not so brutal; as Christophersen says, each killing is "progressively more brutal, less discriminate, and less defensible" (134). Though he does not consciously admit it, he allows himself to become more brutal. Huntly's rage and brutality are expressed against the Indians, which in the context of the novel is an acceptable form of expression.

In exchange for a maternal figure, Huntly loses access to his existing family members. He finds his own decorated musket in the hands of the Indian he killed, and he assumes that his uncle and sisters have been killed and their house razed. He laments: "I, who ought to have been their protector and champion, was removed to an immeasurable distance, and was disabled, by some accursed chance, from affording them the succor which they needed" (Brown 124). He exhibits paternal feelings as protector of his family, but he is not yet mature enough to take on the responsibility. He assumes the worst fate possible has been wreaked upon his relations. Huntly's strange and unrealistic patterns of thought are manifested here; firstly, his musket being carried by an Indian does not mean

that all his family is dead.[4] Secondly, even if he had been at home, he, like his sisters and uncle, would have been "defenceless [sic] and asleep," and Huntly would have been unable to defend himself or his family (Brown 124). He takes responsibility and feels guilt for something which is beyond his control, and in reality what he fears did not actually come to pass. Thus, there are no real consequences. This is a sign of Huntly's immaturity because he deceives himself into thinking that he is responsible when in fact he is not. The things for which he really has responsibility, such as the deaths of the Indians, he feels no compunction for.

Huntly misunderstands the situation regarding his uncle and sisters because he erroneously infers from one single musket that his entire family is dead. Thus, Huntly's situation beguiles him and confuses him, leading him to incorrect conclusions. However, he does realize that his first suppositions were too rash, and that he needs to ascertain the truth of "the condition of my family" (Brown 142). This episode's conclusions are confusing and erratic: with his limited knowledge, the landscape ostensibly saved him from sharing the fate of his family members, but also prevented him from assisting them. However, Huntly also withdraws his previous assessment until he can gather more evidence: this indicates that he is beginning to remember his Enlightenment training in induction rather than deduction. With a thought-pattern that is more inductive, he primes himself for re-entry into society and reuniting with a nuclear family structure.

[4] The conclusion is a rash and grandiose one. Indeed Mr. Huntly is dead, as he joined a party of settlers to attack a marauding band of Indians. Mr. Huntly used his nephew's musket, which is how the sentry Indian at the cave got it. Edgar Huntly's sisters are safe at Mr. Huntly's farmstead.

Return to the Father

In a number of Gothic works, mothers are absent, but that convention is somewhat reversed in *Edgar Huntly*. Both parents are lost, and the mother is recuperated before the father. For Huntly to be his strongest self, motivated by strength and survival, he needs to repudiate society. In doing so, he identifies with a strong, maternal landscape which endows him with physical power. This is also Huntly's way of trying to find his own authority, but it ends in his own disastrous regression; he must be brought back into society and corrected by Sarsefield's paternal injunction to "be more circumspect and more obsequious for the future." This admonishment reinforces his authority as a father over Huntly (Brown 194). It must be remembered that the entire narrative began because Huntly was trying to enact vigilante justice on his own by finding Waldegrave's murderer; he paternally tries to help Clithero expiate his sins, but Huntly is not mature enough and is swept up by Clithero's tale of murderous behavior in lieu of any other guide. He consciously desires to return to society, but his return is facilitated by the strong father-figure who invites back into the family structure, ostensibly severing his connection to the wilderness. Huntly finds comfort and strength in the wilderness, but in order to achieve rational control over his behavior, he must return to the father.

Long before the narrative begins, Sarsefield became Huntly's intellectual father-figure. Edgar Huntly prefers Sarsefield over his uncle Huntly, for his uncle is less intellectual. Huntly identifies himself as Sarsefield's "child," a relationship which he and Huntly foster. During his exile from Ireland and before his return to Euphemia during Clithero's tale, Sarsefield was Huntly's tutor. At their reunion at the end of the novel, Huntly describes Sarsefield as the "parent and fosterer of my mind" and declares himself,

upon Sarsefield's non-recognition, as "Edgar Huntly, your pupil, your child" (Brown 159, 160). Huntly thinks of himself, and presents himself to Sarsefield, as a son. This is highly significant, for it indicates that Huntly chooses to identify with the tutor more than with his uncle. Such a relationship suggests that, through Sarsefield, Huntly has a way to enter into Clithero's pseudo-family described above.

In contrast to Sarsefield, Huntly's uncle is a bellicose frontier settler, and Huntly does not identify with him. Huntly's uncle has an "alacrity and vigor age had not abated, [and he] eagerly engaged" in organizing a group to combat a party of raiding Indians (Brown 166). In the process of attacking the Indians, Mr. Huntly is killed and thus falls "victim to his own temerity and hardihood" (Brown 162). Edgar Huntly thinks of himself as peaceful. Huntly, in his intellectual pursuits, chooses to identify more with Sarsefield than with his uncle, though it seems that Huntly and his uncle have more in common than Huntly supposed, for they engage in living on the frontier and fighting Indians. At their reunion, Sarsefield does not recognize Huntly, for the qualities which he once prized have been replaced by the qualities of strength and endurance which nature privileges for survival.

In *Edgar Huntly*, society is an establishment which makes individuals weak because they start to rely on one another for survival, instead of their own powers. After Huntly collapses in front of Old Deb's hut, a party of settlers comes along to aid him and the girl he rescued. Huntly says:

> the spirit which had hitherto sustained me, began now to subside. My strength ebbed away with my blood... and I fainted on the ground. Such is the capricious constitution of the human mind. While dangers were at hand, while my life was to be preserved only by zeal and vigilance, and courage, I was not wanting to myself. Had my perils

> continued or even multiplied, no doubt my energies would have kept equal pace with them, but the moment that I was encompassed by protectors, and placed in security, I grew powerless and faint. My weakness was proportioned to the duration and intensity of my previous efforts, and the swoon into which I now sunk, was no doubt, mistaken by the spectators, for death. (Brown 130)

He uses blood as a way to explain his loss; the blood which used to be part of the panther, of nature, has now become part of him, and it is ebbing away before the gaze of society. He has no need to protect himself for he is among friends, and they will take care of him. Thus in society weakness is sanctioned, but weakness is not tolerated by nature. The strength which he received to "do the labors of Hercules" is no longer present with him because he feels that it is no longer required for his survival (Brown 121). However, he is not fully assimilated back into society. None of the settlers recognizes him, and, though he is unconscious of his appearance, he knows he is half-naked and must be covered in blood. Momentarily, he takes on the aspect and mode of the corpse, throwing off consciousness. Huntly straddles two places, two identities: as a socialized man and as a naturalized man.

Even Sarsefield misrecognizes Huntly and is incredulous about the power of the wilderness which stems from "Nature". This power is evident in Huntly, for until he returns to Solebury, Huntly and the settlers continually misinterpret one another. Upon their meeting, Sarsefield summarizes the seemingly supernatural actions which Huntly has performed:

> You have twice been dead and twice recalled to life; that you move about invisibly, and change your place by the force, not of muscles, but of thought… [you were] a lifeless and mangled corpse upon the ground, whom my own eyes saw in that condition… You had vanished. Again I met you. You plunged into a rapid stream, from an height from

> which it was impossible to fall and to live… you floated; you swam. Thirty bullets were aimed at your head… Yet after these accumulated deaths, you light upon this floor: so far distant from the scene of your catastrophe; over spaces only to be passed, in so short a time as has since elapsed, by those who have wings. (Brown 160-161)

Huntly appears to die multiple times, yet he survives in the most unlikely of manners. Sarsefield expresses his disbelief at Huntly's seemingly miraculous list of accomplishments. Indeed, Huntly has shaken the faith in Enlightenment learning to which Sarsefield subscribes; before Sarsefield's series of contacts with Huntly in the wilderness, "to credit or trust in miraculous agency was foreign to my [Sarsefield's] nature, but now I am no longer sceptical" due to what Huntly has accomplished in the space of twenty-four hours (Brown 160). Only after the ostensible "deaths" does Huntly have a chance of being recognized, and then not even. Sarsefield first identifies him as a corpse, "breathless and mangled" in the yard in front of the Indian Old Deb's hut (Brown 169). This suggests that the process which Huntly underwent in the caverns makes him utterly unrecognizable even to his mentor-father; he has been marked by maternal power. To Sarsefield, nature has "botanical and mineral production[s]" to be investigated, classified and categorized (Brown 67). Sarsefield understands nature as something which can be conquered, not a source of power. Huntly's appearance, as well as his actions, suggests that he has indeed some superhuman powers or an uncanny ability for survival. Sarsefield's statements reflect Huntly's own estimation of Clithero earlier in the novel: Clithero was a person "whom an effort of will… had transported hither" (Brown 14). This disbelief confounds the ostensible father-figure, and marks Huntly as a product of the maternal landscape, which at times is mysterious and unreadable to the father.

In a sense, Sarsefield is Huntly's intellectual father, yet Huntly gains some measure of influence over Sarsefield: he surprises Sarsefield and proves that the tutor is not always correct. What is more important, Huntly has experienced a measure of growth without Sarsefield's tutelage. However, Sarsefield ensures that this does not go too far; the integrity of Huntly's thought process has been contaminated by Clithero's influence. As Sarsefield points out, Clithero's logic is flawed, and his intentions do not excuse or legitimate his actions. Clithero believes he must kill Euphemia and suffer guilt for it, in an almost antinomian fashion. Huntly has imbibed Clithero's way of thinking, but in a more positive and redemptive way: he believes that bringing Clithero and Euphemia together again would "win the maniac from his solitude, wrest from him his fatal purposes, and restore him to communion" with his former benefactress and betrothed (Brown 177). Huntly thinks absolving Clithero is a good idea, but Sarsefield disagrees because he believes Clithero is a fiend. Donald Ringe argues that Huntly's return to rationality is partially enabled due to "the interposition of Sarsefield's mind, which, view[ing] the phenomena dispassionately and observing their true meaning and significance, can help [Huntly] to reestablish in his mind the rational order of things" (53). Sarsefield as a father-figure separates him from the landscape, and instills in him the "correct" way of thinking. This reinscribes Huntly into an Enlightenment system of thinking and asserts Sarsefield's authority as a father-figure.

With Sarsefield's reintroduction, Huntly can be interpolated as a member of Sarsefield's family. As mentioned above, Sarsefield has married Euphemia. Sarsefield says that Euphemia "longs to embrace you as a son. To become truly her son, will depend upon your own choice and that of one, who was the companion of our voyage" (Brown

175). Sarsefield and Euphemia would sanction the marriage to Clarice; indeed, by telling Huntly that Clarice is with them and a prospective marriage partner, Sarsefield indicates that he desires their union. Thus, Huntly would truly become Sarsefield's son, but this echoes the family romance, for Clarice would become his sister-wife. By marrying Clarice, Huntly would also usurp the place that had been Clithero's. Consequently, Euphemia would become his mother-figure, and Clarice would be a sister. Instead of having no female sexual partner, Huntly's family is suddenly rife with female figures: Euphemia as a mother and the choice of a wife between Mary Waldegrave and Clarice Wiatte.

Edgar Huntly is a novel in which substitute parent-figures are sought in order to repair fractured families and provide satisfying relationships with parents. The patriarchal, nuclear family is all but completely restored, but some questions remain unresolved: Huntly is unable to rejoin fully the ranks of Enlightened society. When no woman is available to offer comfort, Clithero and Huntly turn to the wilderness. Ntably, the elided mother returns, but in a weird form. In the cave, Huntly experiences a return to a mother-figure, ostensibly to find comfort but finding something more terrifying and powerful in it, as well: a return to a pre-civilized state. He regresses to the state of a child in order to forge a fundamental connection to the landscape and gains power from it. The landscape is not necessarily a comforting force, and it has little subjectivity. It imparts its substance to Huntly, which he incorporates into his body. Sarsefield strives against the power of the maternal landscape and wins Huntly from the natural mother's grasp, but Huntly's psychology is tainted. He still has a firm hope of absolving Clithero; he thinks

he knows better than his father-figure, Sarsefield, and so to some degree he does not mature and still requires paternal guidance.

Edgar Huntly reveals masculine discomfort with a powerful, maternal force. Civilization, Huntly shows, can be brutal, particularly towards individuals who gain power from the wilderness. For the adequate development of individual, there needs to be a balanced relationship between father, mother, and child, and *Edgar Huntly* suggests that for the adequate development of an individual one must have both a mother- and a father-figure. With a missing parent, the education and growth of the individual therefore becomes unbalanced and strife ensues. Concurrent with a desire for both parents is also the desire for independence yet approval from the father. Huntly needs parent-figures to serve as guides and comforts; however, the landscape serves as both a guide and a comfort. It gives him strength and power, but it also separates him from society and releases repressed feelings; society would characterize such expressions as brutish. Nature nurtures but culture has the power to civilize.

The father and the mother are both necessary to successful maturation in *Edgar Huntly*. Huntly has family figures, for Sarsefield and his uncle serve as father-figures, and Clithero acts as brother and a guide, leading him into the wilderness. However, Huntly notably does not have a mother-figure. He desires to marry Mary Waldegrave, but he is unable to do so; she may serve as a locus for ideas of home and family, which suddenly become inaccessible to Huntly. He therefore displaces his frustrations onto the landscape, seeing a mother-figure in it. Viewing the mother in the landscape helps to disrupt the traditional structures of patriarchy and gives another way—even if still framed within a male's narrative—of conceptualizing how an individual can conduct his life. Huntly's

distinction between who can actually serve as a mother-figure and what he constrains into a mother-figure to fulfill his own desire breaks apart his ability to distinguish friend and foe. For Huntly, the boundaries between himself and other individuals are not broken down (except in the case of his relation to the landscape).

Chapter Two:

Into the Abyss: Revivifying the Beloved in Poe

Edgar Allan Poe's literary works are considered part of the American Gothic, but his work does not fit comfortably into any specific category. Indeed, he seems to be an outlier in American Literature, for he uses motifs found more in British Gothic than American Gothic, such as the haunted castle and the ancient family line. Many of his short stories and poems deal with the death of a beautiful woman, which Poe believes to be the most poetic topic. As such, he attempts to reclaim dead females in his literary works. His biography helps elucidate this theme, for he was virtually orphaned in 1811 at the age of two. His father James had abandoned his family, and Poe's mother Eliza Arnold was dead of illness. Poe was fostered in the home of George and Frances Allan, who raised him but never adopted him. He was interested in a series of women, including Fanny Osgood, Sarah Helen Whitman, and Elmira Shelton. According to his biographer, Kenneth Silverman, Poe had a pattern of "ethereal little sisters" for lovers, which was contrasted sporadically with older, fiscally stable matrons (427). Most notably, his beloved cousin-bride, Virginia Clemm, died in 1847 at the age of twenty-five, twelve years after her marriage to Poe at age thirteen. Poe's art is a way to bring back lost women, if only to lose them again in fantasy.

Three of Poe's short stories, "Morella," "Ligeia," and "Eleonora" are among his "dark lady stories," which deal with the death of a beautiful young woman. Poe's narrators desire figures to adore them. Such adoration equates to emotional and intellectual nurture in the narrators' eyes, and it is achieved through a female wife and tutor. Although the female tutor-wife's presence permits him to act as a child would, he

becomes too dependent on her intellect. These tales do not focus on the death of a mother per se but rather on the death of a lover and a tutor. The woman's terrifying return is enabled by the desire of the male. To bring the lost love back, she has to be reborn; this necessitates her becoming a daughter. In Poe's short stories, the return of the mother works because males fail to distinguish among females: any woman may be a "mother" figure. The mother, as Jane Gallop suggests, becomes the daughter and fulfills the role of mother in order to satisfy *his* desire. We are thus left with a continual chain of psychological transference which is never quite completed within the narrative, for the narratives are cut short and the woman has the tendency to die again immediately after her return. Thus, the revivification of the mother is a futile undertaking and demonstrates that the narrator, to begin with, is a child who cannot mature. His love is always a child's love based on fantasy and need.

In these three short stories, the psychology of the male narrator revivifies the dead woman by projecting her onto another entity. In "Morella" and "Ligeia," a man enables the woman's return using another woman's body, while in "Eleonora" the narrator uses another woman's body as well as the landscape to recuperate her. Typically, the second generation of women is consumed by the first. How and to what extent the women return is dependent on the narrator and his reliability. Often, the women's return is psychological and aided by the use of opium. Such a return obviates a tension between the psychological and the supernatural, and these narratives are indeed primarily psychological, but they contain some uncanny, supernatural events. Their return jettisons them from the purely psychological into the real. To inform my discussion of Poe's "dark ladies" and their methods of return, I will refer to Joan Dayan, a critic of Poe who argues

that, according to Poe's poetical metaphysical treatise *Eureka*, matter and spirit are fundamentally tied together.

The restoration of women—typically wives or paramours—articulates the equivocal place female power has in the male psyche. The narratives are controlled by men, who use language to construct women as guides and comforts. They fear female sexuality and intellectual power; however, the male narrators recognize their loss, and they desire their females to return. Men want control and comfort, which in Poe's writing appear to be mutually exclusive. By forcing a female into the role of mother or daughter, males complicate unnecessarily their relations to females. Recuperation of the female comes at the expense of another female body. This return creates ambivalence, for returning women become a potential threat to living women by destroying them. Each narrative appears more fantastical than the last, as they interrogate family roles and relationships. In "Morella," "Ligeia," and "Eleonora," the males' ability to distinguish between female roles decreases to the point where Poe's narrators cannot differentiate between sister, mother, and wife. Though all three roles exist and are accessible, ostensibly in the same woman's body, Poe's narrators lose their women again on the cusp of possessing them.

Daughters to Mothers in "Morella"

"Morella," first published in Richmond, Virginia's *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1835, is the tale of a scholarly male narrator's insecurity with his own sexuality. This narrator, like Poe's other stories in which women are erudite, briefly chronicles his relationship with his tutor-wife and his reaction to her death. This short story displaces traditionally gendered parental roles as defined by a nurturing mother and an intellectual

father. The displacement radically affects father, mother, and child. To deal with the mother's loss, parental roles are revised. The narrator, who is also the father, returns developmentally to the state of a young child when his wife Morella passes away. He then becomes a mother-figure to the child born on Morella's deathbed. Thus motherhood is separated from its traditional gender. Typically, the body is the realm of motherhood, while language—and thus symbolism and abstract ideas—are the realm of the father. This reversal of gendered parental roles suggests that men and women can take either role of father or mother, but inappropriate desire for the female contrives the absent mother's return. In the process of return, participating individuals are destroyed.

The plot of "Morella" is fairly straightforward. The narrator and Morella are two scholars who seek education; their mutual interests throw them into one another's company, and they become friends. The narrator claims he has no romantic feelings for Morella, but he nevertheless marries her, thereby suggesting that sexuality is an underlying tension in the story. As husband and wife, they study German mysticism together. She offers him knowledge which seems forbidden, and their relationship sours. He begins to detest her and wishes that she were dead, at which point she falls prey to an illness. On her deathbed, she summons him and gives him a fateful prophecy that she shall live again, and the narrator will adore her after she dies. The narrator is rendered almost speechless, only able to utter her name. Morella, we find out, is pregnant, and on her deathbed she delivers a daughter. The daughter receives no name, and for ten years the narrator raises her with adoration in seclusion. According to the narrator, she is a miniature copy of Morella in appearance, speech, thought, and education. When it comes time for her to be baptized, the narrator compulsively names her "Morella." The daughter

responds, “I am here,” and falls down dead. He lays her body in the same tomb where the mother Morella was laid; he notes that there is no physical trace of the mother. Ever after, the narrator hears “Morella” whispered about and sees shadows of Morella everywhere he looks.

Among Poe’s narrators, the narrator of “Morella” is ostensibly the most reliable. His recollections of Morella are not clouded by memory or opium. Some things seem beyond question: Morella is his wife, not a figment of his imagination as Ligeia and Eleonora. However, there is a psychological component to this story. While Morella is alive, the narrator fears her because of her sexuality, and more importantly, the sexual desires she awakens in him. The moment she dies, he is safe from her sexuality, and so he desires her again. He desires her so much that he projects her identity onto the living entity that most closely resembles Morella: their daughter. This act of projection is motivated by guilt for his treatment of her and desire for her body. To the narrator, if Morella is reborn in the guise of their daughter’s body, he can possess her asexually. “Morella” is not a tale of incest, but rather a tale of sexual aversion and transformation while maintaining possession over a female body.

Curtis Fukuchi in “Repression and Guilt in Poe’s ‘Morella’” reads the relationship between the narrator and Morella as one of repressed sexuality. His observation is a fairly standard one, but his work serves as an entry point into the discussion of the narrator’s sexuality. The narrator describes Morella as his “friend,” but he marries her with no “thought of love” (“Morella” 667). There is no physically erotic component to their relationship, yet his soul feels “fires it had never before known” fires he cannot define or articulate (“Morella” 667). He feels something for Morella, but he refuses to recognize

and analyze it. Instead, he registers his feelings as something foreign but unworthy of investigation. The narrator "fears his wife because of the passion she arouses," and so he unconsciously represses his feelings for her (Fukuchi 149). It is not her sexuality he fears most, but rather his own. His world has thus far been scholarly, erudite, and detached from society, and so he does not know how to mediate his feelings. He sublimates his sexual desires by desiring her education instead. If their relationship is to continue in its homeostatic state, he cannot feel sexual love towards her, nor can she reciprocate it.

The relationship between Morella and the narrator is ostensibly founded on two things: their mutual education and their friendship. This is significant because these two parts are related on a continuum, for friendship can turn into love and the desire for knowledge turn into sexual knowledge. Jules Zanger, writing on forbidden knowledge in Poe, traces the interaction between the narrator and Eleonora to the temptation of Adam and Eve. He notes that sexuality, if not the forbidden original sin itself, is closely linked to it (Zanger 536). Morella can give him more knowledge; "knowledge" acquires a secondary, sexual meaning. Though the narrator desires knowledge, Zanger notes that Poe's narrators are "reluctant seekers after revelation" (534). Poe's narrator is a reluctant seeker after *sexual* knowledge and revelation. The narrator characterizes their mutual studies as mystical and "forbidden" because they imply sexuality and he does not want to understand them ("Morella" 667). The narrator has the option of exploring the realm of the "forbidden sexual," but he is reluctant to do so.

The relationship between Morella and the narrator illustrates an untraditional power dynamic, for she is more learned and more intellectually active than he is. The narrator avows that "Morella's erudition was profound" ("Morella" 667). With such a

power dynamic, he gives himself up to "the guidance of [his] wife" ("Morella" 667). Morella is thus uncommon and intriguing to the narrator, and she tutors him. Although she is alluring, she is simultaneously threatening to him: in the context of the nineteenth century, her sexuality and her knowledge offer a potential "persistent and explosive threat to the survival and prosperity" of the narrator as he competes in the same sexual and intellectual realm (Barker-Benfield 46). As a woman who is intelligent and learned, she gains power and preeminence over her husband. She pursues the knowledge, while Poe's protagonist, according to Zanger, is the passive participant in their relationship. He becomes as a child, allowing his seemingly desexualized wife to guide him through intellectual mysteries. Thus, Morella becomes his intellectual mother, and sexual mysteries are repressed under the guise of intellectual inquiries.

However, he is not as asexual a being as he professes himself to be. Some aversion to sexuality must have been overcome because Morella is pregnant and carries an embodied "pledge of… affection" ("Morella" 669). Morella's pregnant body is the locus for that which the narrator cannot understand about femininity. The narrator says: "I met the glance of her meaning eyes, and then my soul sickened […as] one who gazes downward into some dreary and unfathomable abyss" ("Morella 668). More than his sexual desire for her body, he fears her uncanny ability to create another being from her body. A child comes from the abyss; it represents oneness with the mother, and therefore the absence of identity. Grace Jantzen says that in medieval literature, the abyss was a source of power and connection to God, and the abyss symbolized the womb. In entering the abyss, into a sexual relationship with a beloved in which God is also present, the goal is "not primarily pleasure or delight but *fruition*: this is more about making babies than

about sexual ecstasy" (Jantzen 249). But in this story, what was once a mystery to be embraced in the medieval world has become a darkness to be feared. The female body, for Poe's narrator, is important because it is the locus and a source of non-identity; in her body, he can lose his identity, which is frightening and simultaneously attractive, returning him to a pre-Oedipal unity.

The "unfathomable abyss" is manifold but centers on the changing relationship between himself and Morella: his sexuality is the cause, and the child is—to the narrator—its horrifying consequence. The relationship between Morella and the narrator changes over time as their marriage progresses. Morella acquires another role: mother. This is an acceptable secondary role because she plays mother to a second person. The role of mother is in contrast to having to play the double role of wife and intellectual mother to the narrator. The narrator's role, too, is ostensibly, expanding, because he becomes a father. However, he does not appear at first to take his responsibility seriously. With her pregnancy, no longer is the narrator the center of Morella's attention; he must compete with their child. He is threatened and displaced by the expectation of their child.

Up to this point, I have discussed the relationship of the narrator and Morella in general terms. However, I have not discussed how the narrator's language constructs Morella. Whatever fears the narrator has are ungrounded, technically, because he has control over the narrative. As someone who traffics in language and writing, he has the option to claim linguistic power over Morella. In Lacan's terms, the father catalyzes his child's participation in the symbolic realm by "annulling the mother-child unity, creating an essential space or gap between mother and child" (Fink 57). This is accomplished by language. Since language and symbolism, according to Lacan, is made possible by the

phallus, it may be said that language is part of the realm of masculinity and fatherhood. Thus, the narrator has power of authorship and paternity, and he frames Morella's existence within patriarchy by framing her within language.

This changes when Morella lies on her deathbed, as this is the first point in the narrative where actual dialogue is recorded. Speaking first, she controls the conversation. She calls the narrator to her side, and he transcribes her prophetic words:

> "It is a day of days," she said, as I approached; "a day of days either to live or die. It is a fair day for the sons of earth and life—ah, more fair for the daughters of heaven and death!"
> I kissed her Forehead, and she continued:
> "I am dying, yet shall I live."
> "Morella!"
> "The days have never been when thou couldst love me—but her whom in life thou didst abhor, in death thou shalt adore."
> "Morella!"
> "I repeat that I am dying. But within me is a pledge of that affection—ah, how little! Which thou didst feel for me, Morella. And when my spirit departs shall the child live—thy child and mine, Morella's. But thy days shall be days of sorrow… thou shalt bear about with thee thy shroud on the earth, as do the Moslemin at Mecca" ("Morella" 668-669).

She foretells her own death in a format not unlike an incantation, saying mysteriously that in dying she still will live, and that the narrator will love her after her death. It is notable that she does not expressly state when she will return to him, or if she will return to him at all. She is cursing him, indeed, but the "shroud" she foretells he will carry is ambiguous, and the promises of her prophecy take root in his psychology. The "shroud" could be her spirit, or a manifestation of his guilt at her death. By giving him this seemingly magical prediction, she ensures that she will have some form of existence in the narrator's psychology. This is her revenge for his unwillingness to understand her.

The strength and fervor of the narrator's psychology, however, will bring her back to his reality by invoking the powerful properties of the name.

By calling her name aloud on her deathbed, the narrator tries to reclaim some of his power over Morella, but he ironically finds himself entrapped in Morella's linguistic structure. He is only able to name her, while she is able to name him as well as herself. In "Friday: or, the Power of Naming," Maximillian E. Novak traces the use of names as a way to establish colonial power in *Robinson Crusoe.* He says that Crusoe "uses language as a form of dominance. By renaming [Friday], Crusoe assumes possession of him" (Novak 117). This gives some degree of power to those who are named, however, for names "[betray] the power and desire that stand behind the screens of politeness and grammatical necessity… a name expresses and enforces the desire of the namer" (Bottum 437). In "Morella," the narrator remains mysterious to the reader, as he has never revealed his name nor has Morella spoken it. He betrays his desire for her by crying "Morella!" a total of four times; calling her name signifies his attempt to claim power over her, but he is foiled. James Gargano notes that a "morel" is a nightshade mushroom, as well as the fact that "Morella" contains the Latin root for death (263). Hence, her presence is persistent—like the mushroom—yet equated with death. Unable to say anything but her name, the narrator is trapped in articulating his repressed desire for her. He complies with *her* system of language by calling her name. He is caught in her incantation, parroting her name, deprived of all other power than to stay by her side and listen. This dramatizes the change in power relationships between Morella and the narrator when he became her pupil. His position as a male who participates in language has been reduced in favor of Morella's power.

Morella's death catalyzes a change in traditional parental roles. Morella's daughter takes her first breath when Morella takes her last; scholars like Joan Dayan note that this is the moment Morella's soul is transferred to her daughter's body, but this actually does not occur until he names his daughter. Even then, he only psychologically reads her as Morella. Such transference constitutes the Gothic portion of the text; he believes his daughter to be Morella returned from death. The narrator does not name his daughter for ten years after her birth: he calls the infant "her child," though later he transitions to calling her "my child" and "my love" ("Morella" 669, 670). Nevertheless he is left to raise the child. This leaves him two important roles. Firstly, by raising the child, he takes on the role of both mother *and* father: he must educate her and nurture her. Secondly, by refusing to name her, he does not claim paternity. However, he also does not semantically acknowledge her existence as separate from his own. Indeed, the unnamed daughter avoids any acknowledgement of her father's desire. Without a name, she is not differentiated from the father, but her identity remains epistemologically in a pre-linguistic stage because she has no name of her own.

The narrator uses his daughter to replay his history with Morella and thereby turns his daughter into a substitute. As with Morella, the narrator "snatch[es] [his daughter] from the scrutiny of the world" ("Morella 669-670). They seclude themselves in their study, and he watches over her. By doing so, he "has essentially entombed the living child" (Dayan 163). The narrator can displace what he believes to be nonexistent erotic feelings for his wife on the body of their daughter. Morella "is but a memory, and [he] perhaps loves the child so fervently because, as a child, she too is now a safe object of affection" (Fukuchi 152). Morella, her sexuality, and the sexual feelings she arouses in

the narrator are no longer a problem, and he has no reason to fear his daughter. The daughter becomes the method by which the narrator can asexually possess Morella. He has buried her and will effect a transformation by treating her in the same manner as he treated her mother. The narrator's home, and particularly the sepulcher which is next to the baptismal font, will act as a womb where the first Morella can return in the form of her daughter. The daughter is young and asexual, but this will not last forever. She grows, and the narrator recognizes in her a budding sexuality. Due to no fault of her own, she will continue to disrupt the traditional ordering of the family.

The daughter, a semantic appendage of her father, resembles her mother because the narrator projects Morella's qualities onto their daughter. However, this can only last so long. He notes her "rapid increase in bodily size," and that she has "the adult powers and faculties of the woman [Morella]… the lessons of experience fell from the lips of infancy" ("Morella" 669). Like "knowledge," "experience" has a double meaning: the narrator hears the words of a sexually experienced woman in his daughter's speech. Every day he notices that the "resemblance in the child to her mother… hourly, grew darker" ("Morella" 669, 670). He is uneasy because, particularly as she grows up, he sees "the daughter becoming, like the mother, an attractive woman… she does not remain the perpetual, sexually unthreatening child he would wish" (Fukuchi 152). As she grows, she develops. The narrator's sexual fears are acknowledged when he names his daughter.

In naming his daughter "Morella," the narrator acts as a midwife for his own wife's return in their daughter's body. In a compulsive moment, a "demon prompts the narrator to christen his daughter "Morella" ("Morella" 670). In response, a "fiend convulsed the features of my child, and overspread them with hues of death… falling

prostrate on the black slabs of our ancestral vault, [she] responded—'I am here!'" ("Morella" 670). The *name* brings Morella back, and articulates his unconscious but consuming desire for his wife's body, which he no longer has access to. In the moment of naming, the daughter Morella's body convulses and dies. Until this act of naming, the narrator sees Morella's traits in their daughter and exaggerates them. However, in giving his daughter the name "Morella," he recalls Morella's spirit, and she takes over their child's body momentarily before it dies. In Morella's curse, she never says that she will possess the child; it is the narrator's mind that projects the mother onto the daughter, believing the daughter has been Morella all along. According to Dayan, the narrator facilitates Morella's return in the very fact of telling the story: by thinking about Morella, he calls her into being, and his mind imprints the memories of Morella onto the material matter of her daughter's body. The narrator's fantasy and desire turns the daughter into a phantasm of the repressed.

In Poe's short story "Morella," the mother returns from the grave to haunt the narrator and remind him of her presence. Morella, in dying is able to live again, even if it is only in the guise of another. By transforming his daughter into his wife, and his wife into a mother-like figure, he deprives Morella and the daughter of their subjectivity. The father makes real the daughter's fears that she will become the mother, but nowhere do we see the daughter's perspective or feelings—just the father's. The first Morella adores him but never has agency; her daughter shares her experience. The narrator sees his daughter as fundamentally linked to her mother; by keeping control over her in her youth, he identifies the first Morella as a mother-figure while simultaneously circumnavigating his sexual desire for the first Morella. Gender-affiliated parental roles are subverted: the

male takes on the duty of nurturing his daughter. The father becomes a mother and, by never naming the daughter, does not allow her a semantically separate existence from himself. The role of mother and father will continue to be disrupted as the wife makes a real, horrific return in "Ligeia."

The Cannibal Mother and the Real

Like "Morella," Poe's "Ligeia" is a tale of psychological fantasies coming to life through the narrator's excessive desire. First published in 1838, it is one of his most famous short stories. Its supernatural and psychological ambiguities have garnered much critical attention; many scholars such as Charles May have suggested that Ligeia is a figment of the narrator's imagination, rather than a real woman. Others such as John R. Byers argue that it is Rowena, the second wife, and not Ligeia, who is the dream-woman. Ligeia is a psychological-supernatural tale in which the psychological fantasy is imposed upon the real world. Like Morella, Ligiea is a psychological projection and therefore a product of the narrator; any desires which she has are really the desires and tendencies of her creator. However, unlike Morella, she takes that desire and returns. She begins as a psychological fantasy in the first half of the narrative, before her death. In the story, the narrator's mother-like wife dies; distraught, he must fill the vacant role of mother. With no daughter-figure to use as a method of return, the dead beloved must use the next available female: the narrator's second wife. The narrator, Ligeia's intellectual son, becomes Ligeia's midwife, and Rowena's body must serve as a place for her rebirth. Thus, Rowena is a type of mother to Ligeia as well as her successor. The desire of the narrator and subsequently Ligeia's "desire," which is really the narrator's, allows her to return to life and the narrator's consciousness by taking over the body of Rowena.

In “Ligeia,” the narrator opens the story with an epigraph attributed to Joseph Glanvill, stating that God’s will is in everything, and man would not die if his will were stronger. This force of will is crucial, for the narrator thinks Ligeia’s immense “force of will” shall allow her to return. Immediately after the epigraph, the narrator begins his recollection of Ligeia, stating that he cannot remember how or where he first met her, or even her patronymic. Her beauty is so ethereal it might be part of a hallucination, and he spends a considerable amount of time describing her physical attributes, particularly her face, her forehead, her dark hair, and her eyes. Her eyes instill in him a particular sentiment which he cannot fully grasp but feels when he looks at the ocean, listens to music, or reads certain texts, among other things. They study together; Ligeia’s learning exceeds the narrator’s to the point that he becomes her pupil and cannot learn without her. As he studies with her, she falls ill and dies. Distressed at her death, the narrator moves from his home on the Rhine to an old English abbey, which he outfits with exotic and decadent furniture. He remarries but despises his new wife Rowena, and soon after their marriage she too falls ill and dies. As the narrator performs a vigil over her body, he sees signs of life in her. She begins to revive but relapses, for he fails to help her regain consciousness. He leaves her alone, but she arises. To his delight and horror, Ligeia arises and sheds the burial shroud. She is a figment of his imagination projected onto Rowena’s body, thus grotesquely recovering the mother-figure who was one lost to him.

Despite the extensive physical description, Ligeia’s corporeality is questionable. The less corporeal she is, the more plausible it is that she is a figment of the narrator’s imagination. Her body is ethereal and fairy-like: “tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated… [she had] incomprehensible lightness and elasticity [in] her

footfall. She came and departed as a shadow" ("Ligeia" 654). Jack and June Davis use this description of physicality to declare that Poe makes Ligeia a figment of the narrator's imagination rather than a person. D.H. Lawrence says Ligeia "was never quite a human creature to him [the narrator]. She was an instrument from which he got his extremes of sensation" (65). The physical description is of an idealized woman, one who is quiet, spirit-like, and wanders about with no will of her own. Like a shadow, she is attached to and only has her existence in relation to the narrator. She is an object designed to satisfy Poe's narrator's needs.

The narrator can inscribe on Ligiea the role of mother because she is his dream. Having no corporeal body of her own, she is indistinct, and he can impress his history upon her. Her past is mysterious and shrouded in cloudy memories of a "decaying city on the Rhine" ("Ligeia" 654). Even his memories of her are questionable because he is caught in the "trammels of opium" after her death ("Ligeia" 660). These details of her are hazy and unspecific. He recollects that he has "never known the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed" ("Ligeia" 654). Poe's narrator locates Ligeia outside of a patriarchal family system, and more broadly out of any describable social system. Thus, she is an entity without classification; by marrying her, the narrator stamps upon her his last name. Claiming her through his name is ironic, because the narrator himself never reveals his name. Thus, he, too, is shrouded in mystery, suggesting that he and Ligeia are more alike than the narrator is aware of. By using his last name to inscribe her into his family system, her position in his family becomes ambiguous: she could be either his wife or his mother. If she were articulated as a discrete person with her own name, it would be more difficult to recursively construct her as a mother-figure.

Ligeia serves as a mother-figure to the narrator; he has no other family present in the short story. She is an accomplished scholar like Morella, and so he turns her into his intellectual mother. He says he has "never known her at fault" regarding erudition, and her learning was so "immense," it surpasses his own ("Ligeia" 657). She is perfect, and he desires to possess the same knowledge she possesses. Similarly to "Morella," knowledge has sexual connotations; however, he does not shun this knowledge for he willingly follows her down the "gorgeous" path of "wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden" ("Ligeia" 657). Unlike the narrator of "Morella," this narrator has no problem accepting his sexuality and the education Ligeia can offer him. Ligeia thus becomes the narrator's tutor. He decides to "resign myself, with a child-like confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation" ("Ligeia" 657). However, he goes too far in allowing Ligeia to guide him. By resigning himself to her care, he becomes a child who cannot conduct his own studies by himself. He becomes dependent upon her, wishing her to take care of him and to perform all the necessary work of scholarship while enjoying the fruits of her labor.

The narrator's comfort with Ligeia as an intellectual mother does not last, however, for he desires to use her up and surpass her. The narrator says that her knowledge was "such as I have never known in woman—but where breathes the man who has traversed, and successfully, *all* the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science" as she has ("Ligeia" 657)? By invoking a man who has perfected his learning, Poe's narrator articulates gender tensions. To him, women should not be more highly educated than men. The man whose learning equals Ligiea's does not exist; he wants to become that man and play the male counterpart to Ligeia and at least equal

her learning, if not exceed it. Thus, he would pass from the position of son to husband, a role he plays sexually. Education constitutes his chance to define his "maleness in opposition to [his] primary sense of oneness with a mother-woman" (Garner 20). For Ligeia's narrator, he can do so by surpassing her intellectually. But this is no longer possible because his dependency on her has reduced him to a state where "without Ligeia I was but as a child groping benighted" ("Ligeia" 657). He cannot achieve parity with Ligiea because he refuses to be a disciplined, self-sufficient adult. However, if Ligeia were to die, his learning would then exceed hers. As a wife-mother whose intellectual powers are desired but not sustainable because she is a woman in the nineteenth century, Ligeia becomes a paradox. She is necessary, but she also does not fit comfortably within the narrator's patriarchal paradigm. Though she is idealized, her knowledge and wisdom are menacing since they supersede the narrator's. Thus, a fantasy of the narrator's psychology becomes a threatening phantasm.

Ligeia's sickness precipitates a change in her relationship to her husband, as did Morella's sickness and death. If she dies, he will not have to compete to surpass her, but his own knowledge will not increase. The narrator is no longer threatened by Ligeia, but his designs for knowledge are frustrated, too. Since she is a product of his imagination, he has at least some degree of control over her, and her death impedes his desire to be adored. Her love "amounted to idolatry" and her "more than womanly abandonment to a love, alas! [was] all unmerited" ("Ligeia" 658). By again referencing Ligeia's gender, he makes the statement that there is something more than feminine—and thus possibly masculine—about Ligeia's feelings. Perhaps in her, he recognizes strains of himself; indeed, this is the case, for she is his fantasy and his mind is her ontological basis. Her

death makes him the dominant male, but so do her confessions of love. Adoration and intellectual superiority seem to be mutually exclusive here: he attains one but then also desires the other. Poe implies that the male is not whole without a female-figure to complement him. As she dies, she deprives him of the love that he desires to receive as an adored husband-son.

While she is living, the beauty of Ligeia's features transcends her body and is sublimated into the surroundings. This sublimation continues after her death, because he sees her features in the English abbey to which he moves after her death. John R. Byers, in "The Opium Chronology of Poe's 'Ligeia,'" makes a connection between the bridal-burial chamber and Ligeia's physical traits. He notes that "the narrator refers to the 'lofty' forehead of Ligeia; the ceilings and the walls of the bridal chamber too are called 'lofty'" (Byers 43). As the narrator saw the expression in her eyes reflected in his surroundings, so does Ligeia becomes immanent in the setting. Her immanence suggests a complex set of images. The bridal chamber becomes Ligeia's womb, for it is "hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry—tapestry of a material which was found… as a carpet" ("Ligeia" 661). This chamber will contain a second womb—Rowena's body—which will bring forth Ligeia's resurrection. The narrator, too, is in the womb, and so he feels a sense of connection with the mother-figure. The narrator's psychological projection fosters Ligeia's return by seeing her embedded in the chamber.

One of the major conceits of the story is the desire for life. In the epigraph misattributed to Joseph Glanvill, Poe states that humans die because of "the weakness of [their] feeble will" ("Ligiea" 654). The misattribution appears to add legitimacy to the

tale, but the quotation, like Ligeia, is an imagining of the narrator. The narrator believes that, if humans had stronger wills, they would outlast death. The will, then, and its desires thus become Ligeia's apparent method of return. In the professions of love Ligeia makes on her deathbed, the narrator recognizes "her longing… for the life which was now fleeing so rapidly away. It is this wild longing—it is this eager vehemence of desire for life" which is her singular object, tied up with the desire to be with the narrator ("Ligeia" 658). Though he states that it is Ligeia's will that suddenly returns, it is actually the *narrator's* agency which brings her back. Ligeia has no true will of her own because she is a dream. Any fear of her superiority will be overridden by his desire to retain her. The narrator, Ligeia's intellectual son, will be the conceptual father and midwife for Ligeia's return.

Ligeia's poem "The Conqueror Worm" symbolizes the narrator's shift from a masculine role to a feminine role. It foretells, as well, how Ligeia will return. In the poem "The Conqueror Worm," "mimes" feast and carouse. Poe would have known a "mime" to be a comedic, farcical actor with allusions to Classical history (OED). The revelry is broken by the appearance of a red worm, which chases and consumes the mimes. Thus, death is a fearsome conqueror and the poem a commentary on the brief vanity of life. Critics have suggested that the worm is a phallic symbol, and indeed it may appear so at first, but it becomes vulvic. The crowd runs "through a circle that ever returneth in/ To the self-same spot" ("Ligeia" 659). By chasing after the crowd of mimes, the worm takes on a circular shape, thus representing the female reproductive organ. To sustain itself and eat, the worm must become a symbol of the feminine. This gender shift is similar to that of the narrator; he too will have a feminine role to play. It is prophetic, because Ligeia

will become death. By writing the poem, it also appears that Ligeia has creative agency and will be able to return. However, like Ligeia's professions of desire, her agency is but a fiction of the narrator's psychology in order to trick himself into believing Ligeia is real.

After her death, the narrative shifts. Instead of being within the narrator's fantastical dream, the narrator returns to a reality bereft of the dream-woman Ligeia. Ligeia's loss catalyzes the full regression of Poe's narrator into childhood. As J. Gerald Kennedy points out in *New Essays on Poe's Major Tales*, Ligeia's death leaves him "not simply bereaved but prostrated by melancholy. He has no existence apart from the consciousness of separation from the beloved and finds his life reduced to exercises in self-inflicted anguish" (117). Not only does he become a child intellectually, he regains the capacity for self-indulgence. He regresses in order to recapture his dream-woman. He purchases a dilapidated abbey in England, which he redecorates "with a child-like perversity, and perchance with a faint hope of alleviating my sorrows… even in childhood, I had imbibed a [regal] taste, and now they [the tastes] came back to me as if in the dotage of grief" ("Ligeia" 660). He arranges his home as if he were still a child, throwing a melancholic tantrum until her return, for if he cannot have her, then the narrator sees to it that he has everything else his child-self desires. He is despondent, having no wife or mother-figure to console him or fulfill his desires of having either an intellectual mother or a sexual partner, for he is now in the realm of reality.

The narrator makes preparations for her return by arranging his bedchamber in such a way as to invoke magical incantations. The narrator seems to think magic will bring her back; he does not consciously know that she is a figment of his imagination,

and so he will see what he wishes to see. Stephen Rowe's article on the arcane rituals at work in "Ligeia" elucidates the ritual significance of the narrator's room. The bridal chamber in the abbey is "a pentagonal room which is enclosed within a turret (pentagon within a circle)" and the room is "furnished with geometric form[s] [and] mystic inscriptions" (Rowe 47). The furniture, including a "censor… Saracenic in pattern" completes the "requirements for necromantic conjuration" ("Ligeia" 660, Rowe 47). The most prized furnishings of the bedroom are the tapestries that cover the walls and floor, which "partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view" ("Ligeia" 661). The narrator is setting the stage for the revivification of Ligeia in a room where perceptions are distorted. The narrator is desperate for access to Ligeia, and so he does what he can to find her, even by arranging the place where he lives for a false magical incantation. The chamber is a place where he thinks she will be able to return; she will return, but it will only be a phantasm.

The narrator's desire cannot be satisfied by a replacement; when he attempts to replace his wife, his desire becomes even more destructive. When a second woman comes into the story, she will be used to reclaim Ligeia. After Ligeia's death, he marries the blue-eyed, blonde-haired Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine—herself named and firmly situated within a patriarchal system. Rowena has literary ascendency, for "Rowena" is the name of the dark-haired Jewess in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, and "Tremaine" appears in Scott's *The Bridal of Triermain* and Coleridge's *Christabel* (Pollin 332). Rowena's appearance in other works gives her degree of legitimacy, even realness, which Ligeia does not have. The narrator finds pleasure in loathing Rowena. With a "spirit fully and freely burn[ing] with more than all the fires of her [Ligeia's]

own," the narrator wishes he "could restore her [Ligeia] to the pathways she had abandoned" ("Ligeia" 661). His desire is the seminal factor; it starts the process of Rowena's transformation when she falls sick. On her deathbed, the narrator sees a ghost, who pours four red drops of liquid into Rowena's wine. Jack and June Davis think that the narrator "unconsciously discloses his murder of Rowena" and uses the ghost to articulate his act (Davis and Davis 171). The Davis' statement is astute, but they do not see that the narrator is preparing to impose his imaginary world on reality, not use the ghost as a scapegoat for a murder. The poisoning is preparation for Ligeia's return and will help her conquer Rowena's body, just as the sepulcher is next to the baptismal font in "Morella." That which is poison to Rowena becomes the vehicle through which Ligeia can return; to the narrator, Rowena's poison becomes Ligeia's nurturing milk.

The narrator dons a female role by becoming Ligeia's midwife. Her rebirth is conceptual, and his presence recalls his memories of Ligeia's identity. The narrator has already seen Ligeia in the room, the ocean, and the stars, and so seeing Rowena as Ligeia, then, is just one small epistemological step. As in "Morella," the narrator "call[s] aloud upon her [Ligeia's] name" in drugged fits of madness ("Ligeia" 662). Poe's narrator sees signs of life on Rowena's shrouded body, and he chafes Rowena each time she makes a movement. With each of his attempts, she relapses into seemingly irrecoverable death. The successive revivification and relapse cycle is akin to that of a mother and her contractions. The narrator's touch defiles and halts the transformative process, however, contaminating the connection between unwilling mother, Rowena, and deadly daughter Ligeia. Since this is a fantasy, touching Rowena destroys the illusion. He can only relate to Ligeia in a non-tactile manner; he "[hears] the noise," from Rowena's body and sees

the “very feeble, and barely noticeable tinge of color [that flushes] up within the cheeks” (“Ligeia 663-664). This also suggests that the process of rebirth and revivification is one over which females have power and privilege. The mother and daughter have a connection in which the narrator has no part whatsoever until the takeover of Rowena’s body is complete. Roles shift once more: with Ligeia as the vengeful daughter, Rowena is turned into the hapless mother and Poe the midwife.

In the Gothic mode, family roles are completely uprooted when one individual, particularly the mother, goes missing. The male narrator, when lacking the mother figure, must contrive means by which he can replace his mother. In “Ligeia,” the female is found in his own fantasy. She represents all that is inaccessible to him, among which are female sexuality and a source of validation. She may be a product of his psychology, but death offers an opportunity to connect psychological dreams and reality in “Ligeia.” The narrator sacrifices another woman’s body in an attempt to make her real, but it fails. Though the narrator takes on roles that are outside of traditional gender roles, he seems to feel that only women can be nurturers and partners. The female returns because of male desire; her return is not real, but only a psychological projection. As for Rowena, she is the unfortunate collateral in the return of the wicked stepmother. Her body, though it is dead, is grotesquely forced to collude with the narrator in recuperating Ligeia. In the narrator’s mind, Rowena’s identity is devoured by Ligeia. The female in Poe’s Gothic narrative experiences an equivocal victory: the first mother is allowed to return, but only at the expense of her rival. Thus, her return is triumphant but disturbing.

Orphans, Prisons, and Social Birth

"Eleonora," published in 1842 in the Philadelphia annual, *The Gift*, differs notably from "Morella" and "Ligeia" in its plot and ending. Although the first beloved dies, the narrator finds fulfillment in a second love without any vengeful haunting or rebirth. Because of its simple narrative and lack of obvious tension, "Eleonora" has been considered a fable and a parable by various scholars, and it is one of the narratives Poe scholars frequently overlook. However, "Eleonora" belies several conclusions about differentiating the roles of mother, sister, and wife. Biographical data can help elucidate how Poe perceived women during this time, for the setup of "Eleonora" closely resembles his living situation with his cousin-wife Virginia and aunt. According to his biographer Kenneth Silverman, during late 1841 and early 1842, the same year "Eleonora" was published, Poe lived "lived cut off from the world… he also became, as he also greatly desired, the center of an exclusive and doting attention" (Silverman 180). Poe thus satisfied the male need for adoration and security in his personal life.

In the story, the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass is an ethereal and a difficult place to get to. Its seclusion suggests that it is a highly imaginative construct of the narrator's mind. The narrator's time in the valley serves as an incubatory period where he discovers how to see relations between people and objects. Since the entire valley and its inhabitants are psychological fantasies, the narrator can be said to be in love with himself and his own fancy. Ligeia's narrator can also said to be in love with himself, but not to the same extent as Eleonora's narrator. The narrator of "Eleonora" takes imagination to an absurd extent, for inside the valley he fails to distinguish selves. The same problem is encountered outside of the valley. Poe revives the beloved Eleonora but at the expense of distinguishing unique individuals, for he projects Eleonora onto other women and

objects. By failing to distinguish roles, he is able to recuperate the mother, but it is a meaningless recovery, for he sees a mother-figure in Eleonora, Ermengarde, and the valley.

The absence of parents forces the narrator to adopt creative methods of relating to his surroundings. At the beginning of the story, there is one parent: Eleonora's mother, who disappears shortly after the narrative's beginning. No mention of fathers is ever made in the narrative. Without a father- or a mother-figure, parents must be found in other entities, and Eleonora and the narrator must teach themselves how to be adults. The landscape is a mother-figure because it serves as a type of womb for the narrator and Eleonora. Eleonora is metaphysically tied to the landscape, and the barriers of what constitutes given family roles and the boundaries of identity begin to dissolve. When he leaves after Eleonora's death, the narrator's social life expands outside of his family circle. There is nothing to stop him from finding her in another woman such as Ermengarde. In finding Eleonora to be transcendent, the narrator does not recognize that it is his psychology which is tricking him. The narrator never matures or is able to come to terms with the fact that the life he believes he had in the valley is now over and irrecoverable.

As in many of the short stories, the narrator explains that he is descended from a family known for passion, feeling, and madness, arguing that "madness is the loftiest intelligence" because it sees patterns lower intelligences cannot ("Eleonora 649"). He concedes that he is mad, and he divides his life into two parts: the former epoch within the valley, and the latter outside the valley. The former is bright and lucid; the second epoch is dark and nightmarish but correlated with reality. Within the ephemeral valley,

the narrator's aunt raises him and his cousin Eleonora, who is five years his junior. The three of them are alone in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass, which is secluded from society by mountain ranges and dense undergrowth. When the narrator is twenty and Eleonora is fifteen, they discover incestuous love for one another; the valley reflects the change in its plant and animal life. With this new experience of love, Eleonora then begins to talk only of death. She sickens and dies, and the narrator is cast into solitude in the confines of the valley. In his solitude, Eleonora's presence visits him via sounds and sighs made by the valley. At length he leaves the valley and successfully marries Ermengarde, a foreign woman. Eleonora visits him in the night and absolves him of any consequences for breaking his vow. She says that everything will be explained after death.

The ending is one of the reasons why the tale has been passed over. However, Joan Dayan says that "Eleonora" is one of Poe's most interesting tales because it "shows us how *not* to read its ending" (Dayan 211). That is, critics should not read its ending as that of a simple tale devoid of complexity but should interrogate the tale's unity as oversimplified. Because of the narrator's madness, it is not unreasonable to say the entire valley is a dream. He calls the first period of his life "lucid and bright" ("Eleonora" 649). His recollections of the former epoch of his life are so bright because they are fantasy and surpass anything he could experience in real life. If "Eleonora" is read as a psychological narrative, and the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass is one of his dreams, then Eleonora and her mother are the narrator's psychological projections of what he needs and wishes to have. His consciousness underlies the valley's existence because he is its creator, and it exists within his mind. It reflects his state of being rather than external reality. When he

falls in love with Eleonora, he falls in love with his own fantasy and thus with himself. Thus the family is contained, indeed to an absurd degree, because the family is only made up of the narrator. The narrator has achieved a state of unity and satisfaction, but only within himself, which suggests what he has attained is a unity without meaning. When he exits the valley, he has not learned how to distinguish self from others because he *cannot*, for so far he has only encountered himself.

In the fantastical valley, the narrator can practice social behaviors that are otherwise taboo. The narrator's mother is "long departed," and so the only maternal figure is Eleonora's mother, who raises him ("Eleonora" 649). The relationship between the narrator and his aunt is somewhat suspicious; because of this suspicion, the true nature of their relationship comes under question. The aunt may in fact be the narrator's mother, which would mean that Eleonora and the narrator are siblings, and the narrator may portray her as his cousin to make the tale more acceptable to his audience. Even if the narrator and Eleonora are really just cousins, nevertheless they are raised as brother and sister, so their relationship has tones of incest. Thus, it is necessary for the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass to shut them up together. This hides their relationship from the scrutiny of the outside world. Additionally, their limited social circle ensures that they only love each other, but also endangering the family line. Their heritage, of madness—or "the loftiest intellect"—and passion, would be contained ("Eleonora" 649). However, by being in the valley, family and reproduction are so tightly contained that the family line destroys itself. Eleonora and the narrator are *too* similar both genetically, for they are siblings, and also ontologically, for the valley and Eleonora are the products of the narrator's imagination.

One of the valley's salient features is its isolation, which indicates that the narrator's consciousness is locked within the valley. The narrator, his mother-aunt, and sister-cousin "lived all alone, knowing nothing of the world without the valley" ("Eleonora" 650). The valley is protective, nurturative. No personage from the outside world interrupts the narrator's fantasy, thereby making a clear distinction between the fantastical valley and the outside world. The only way to penetrate the boundaries of their valley is to find one's own path through "the foliage of many thousands of forest trees, and [crush] to death the glories of many millions of fragrant flowers" ("Eleonora" 649). The valley is beautiful and verdant, and it is not unusual for valleys to be deemed "happy." In Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* "Emily is returned to the happy… [of] La Vallée" (Kahane 340). Kahane states that Emily's valley stands in contrast to the sexual center of Udolpho; however, unlike in *Udolpho,* sexuality is endemic to Eleonora's valley and reflects her sexual status. The narrator's and Eleonora's situation is Edenic, but also prisonlike, because it restricts their mobility and social lives. In this isolated circle, they are released from societal constraints. Brought up socially as siblings, the narrator and Eleonora practice divergent—incestuous—social relations.

The sense that their relationship is discordant is reflected in the interplay between darkness and light found in the landscape. Within this story, Poe implies that the darkness hides an incestuous relationship. The region beyond the mountains is "dim," and the bright river that flows through the valley disappears in a "shadowy gorge, among hills still dimmer than those whence it had issued" ("Eleonora" 650). However, there is light and joy to be had in such an arrangement. The trees "[slant] gracefully toward the light that peered at noon-day into the center of the valley" ("Eleonora" 650). The regions of

the valley are dim, but light creeps in, thereby making the valley brighter and more beautiful. Flowers bloom in those places: daisies, buttercups, and violets, all of which grow in the spring. Notably, the narrator discusses the asphodel, a flower that was associated with the afterlife and chthonic deities in Archaic and Classical Greece, for it was eaten during times of famine (Reece 267). The valley is shrouded in darkness, but the patterns of light and darkness make the valley beautiful. Thus, the light and darkness sanction the incestuous relationship the narrator has with Eleonora.

The landscape demonstrates the connection between Eleonora and the narrator, and this is furthered when the narrator ties the valley's natural features to Eleonora's beauty. In the dimness of the valley, the "River of Silence" runs; it is "brighter than all save the eyes of Eleonora" ("Eleonora" 650). The bark of the trees "was smoother than all save the cheeks of Eleonora," and the brook's murmur was the sweetest sound imaginable, "save for the voice of Eleonora" ("Eleonora" 650). The narrator's syntax suggests Eleonora is immanent in the valley, for he first introduces an aspect of the valley and then connects it to her. She is superlative and transcendent, but such comparison nevertheless reduces her to the position of object. Indeed, she shares a fundamental connection with the landscape, for any changes which occur in Eleonora's life will be manifested as changes in the valley; when she dies, the valley only puts forth violets. Eleonora is thus an indicator of the narrator's mental state; he sees her in the valley, and finds comfort and solace in her. He exists in a state of projection which will accompany him outside the valley, thereby suggesting that one can function with madness and without the capability to distinguish one person from an object or one person from another.

The valley undergoes a transformation when their relationship becomes sexual. Instead of seeing her as a sister, he sees her as a wife; this, in turn, translates to being a mother-figure. It closes them up, becoming womb-like and productive. The valley becomes verdant with vegetative excess. Most notably, a "voluminous cloud" of "crimson and gold" settles down over the valley, enclosing the narrator and Eleonora in "a magic prison-house of grandeur and glory" ("Eleonora" 651). To some, the prison may be a limitation, but Daneen Wardrop states that they can "identify self-volition and power" and "the power to choose or not choose [one's] inmate" when the prisons are locked from the inside (29). No one can intrude, and they have control and choose solitude together. They are free to do as they please, instead of feeling constrained by the dictates of society. In the prisonlike, womblike valley, the narrator ostensibly develops his sexual identity. With the cloud over the top of the valley, no peeping eye can look and see the abomination of their relationship. The nature of their relationship is only an abomination to those who are outside the valley. With an erotic, incestuous, self-loving relationship, however, comes death.

Eleonora's death signifies that incest is unsustainable. During their dalliance, the asphodel, the flower associated with death, increases drastically in number, blatantly presaging Eleonora's death. Their endogamous relationship does not produce children. The valley dries up and decays, even though it is the narrator's creation. He has lost his love, and he is losing the nurturing valley as its wonders fade away. Even in his own fantasy, the narrator does not seem to have absolute control. Subconsciously, he knows that he must leave his dream-valley and enter society. Now that this second change has come upon the valley, the "ruby-red asphodels faded away; and there sprang up, in place

of them, ten by ten, dark, eye-like violets" ("Eleonora" 652). It becomes a place of sorrow and death. The valley is saturated with memories of Eleonora, so he must leave. In leaving, he leaves the comforts of the valley and all of the familiar things he has ever known for "a strange city" ("Eleonora" 653). He exits the valley and enters society, thereby undergoing a social birth because the fantastical valley can nurture him no longer.

Because Eleonora has become imminent in the valley and in nature, she can thus be perceived anywhere the narrator is—even in the body of another woman such as Ermengarde. In the valley, he hears manifestations of her presence and the promise that she made to him in "sounds of the swinging of the censers of the angels" ("Eleonora" 652). Only when "the manifestations [of Eleonora's presence] ceased" does the narrator begin to search—and find—Eleonora's presence elsewhere. In a foreign city, he finds Ermengarde, who is described as "ethereal," "divine," and "seraphic," qualities which would not be out of place in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass ("Eleonora" 653); amidst the darkness and confusion of the city, he clings to Ermengarde's beauty and finds in her familiar qualities. When he looks "down into the depths of her memorial eyes, I thought only of them—and *of her*," the "her" mentioned is Eleonora ("Eleonora" 653). He sees Eleonora in Ermengarde, much like the narrator in "Morella." Joan Dayan says that the narrative of "Eleonora"

> confounds our sense of progression… the question of truth or falsity, reason or fantasy has no place in this narration: for whether the locale is full or empty—materialized or spiritualized—does not matter. In the succession of scenes, selves, and bodies, Poe portrays the impermanence of consciousness (or love, belief, memory) and the very human need to feign permanence where there is none (216).

Dayan then goes on to state that "the lady is invoked through ever-deepening etherealizations, ending up as nothing but idea" (221). The narrator does not translate Eleonora into an idea, for she has been an idea all along. Because Poe's narrator sees her as a transferable idea, she becomes more transcendent than she was in the valley. She has little autonomy, but her presence and identity are indestructible. The narrator deludes himself with ideas of immanence, and he creates a world of delusions which appear to have constancy, which is achieved by divesting them all of meaning. He exists in a state of unchanging delusion. This makes possible the reading of Eleonora as his cousin-sister-wife-self. However, once we arrive at the point where Eleonora is his mother, and he is Eleonora, then all meaning and significance collapses.

When the narrator of "Eleonora" tries to arrange his world, meaning falls apart. The significance of this indicates that the beloved cannot be wholly recovered without some major delusion on the narrator's part. Poe's story, like any transcription, is logocentric, since it is entirely mediated through the narrator's words and perception. Thus, immediately, the narrative is linguistically constructed as the narrator's realm. By describing Eleonora and the valley, he has complete control over her. In order for her to exist once again in the landscape as well as in the body of another woman, her existence must be translatable and transferable. To make such translation possible, the narrator must fail to make major distinctions, such as those between one individual and another or between mother and landscape. As a part of his imagination, she can be found in everything he thinks about. When he no longer sees or hears her, he looks for her in other places, and finds her in the body of Ermengarde. To him, she is actually *immanent* in Ermengarde's body, and so by marrying her, he does not break himself of his vow.

Indeed, he has only made the vow to himself and to his imagination, and if he finds Eleonora in Ermengarde, then the promises he made to Eleonora are retained. The recovery of the wife-figure, and by the affiliation of wives with mothers, the recovery of the mother, is possible in "Eleonora" through the failure to perceive difference.

The subjectivity of the women in Poe's short stories is missing. They are repressed, deprived of their subjectivity, and killed. His narrators desire comfort and adoration, but are unwilling to give it, at least to a real person who fails to live up to the narrators' expectations. More often than not, the returning women are products of the imaginations of Poe's narrators. Thus, the males are left to wander and delude themselves into thinking that the creations of their imaginations are real. In "Morella," Poe's narrator forces his daughter into the role of her mother; in "Ligeia," she is transferred and imprinted onto the body of her successor; in "Eleonora," she is found everywhere because the narrator cannot distinguish between what is real and what is imagined. When the narrator's desire is strong enough, his perceptions have very real effects.

In Poe's tales, women are used as substitutes for other women in a seemingly endless cycle of repetition and destruction. In Poe, the female is asked to mimic the role and identity of her predecessor, the "mother." This illustrates an unwillingness on the narrator's part to see the female as a unique individual with discrete attributes and characteristics. Only when the narrator is a madman like the narrator of "Eleonora" can happiness be achieved, but that happiness, too, is an illusion. These tales illustrate a fascination with femininity, death, and the recovery of something that was lost. Having a woman who is happy and fulfilled is not important to these narrators, for they only see

females in relation to themselves. Because females are constructed by male narrators through the medium of words, a masculine agenda dictates their actions, and they often express both desire for and fear of a woman who can exceed their abilities. Poe's narrators are grown men who desire to return to childhood and to remain infants; to do so, they need women, and it does not matter what type of woman they find, because they will make her fit the role that they choose. In their refusal to grow up and let go of the roles they had in the past, the narrators cannot move forward and mature. In remaining in a childlike state and trying to recover mothers and wives, relationships between men and women become contrived and destructive.

Chapter Three:

Family Secrets and Incest in "Bewitched"

First published in the *Pictorial Review* in 1925, Edith Wharton's "Bewitched" interrogates constrictive relationships between men and women in a rural family setting. Instead of actually bringing the mother back in a supernatural format, males will commit incest in order to have a mothering lover-figure in their lives. Gender relations and societal constructs are themes with which Wharton constantly dealt; in novels such as *Ethan Frome* (1911), the eponymous character Ethan develops feelings for his wife's cousin Mattie. He cannot run away from his sickly wife Zenobia, so the only course he and Mattie have is to commit suicide. Ethan's and Mattie's resolve fails at the last moment, and they are both left crippled and in Zenobia's care. In Wharton's novel *Summer* (1917), Charity Royall explores her sexuality and finds fulfillment with the visiting architect Harney, but their affair does not last. Pregnant, she marries her guardian, Mr. Royall, in order to have security, but she will not love him the way she did Harney. In all of these novels, society and circumstance obstruct fulfilling relationships. This is continued in "Bewitched," but the story incorporates the Gothic elements of secret histories and family romance.

In "Bewitched," the male father-figure, Sylvester Brand, seems to use his daughters as sexual partners. It is reasonable to suppose that they were coerced into a sexual relationship, for Brand has a "rough, bullying power" (Wharton 133). The text is narrated by a male, and in the narrative, male desire negates concern for other individuals involved. This partially constitutes the "unpardonable sin" which Nathanial Hawthorne considers in "Ethan Brand." The "unpardonable sin" means to disregard intentionally the

effect of one's actions on another, thus having no sympathy or feeling for them. "Bewitched" has uncanny parallels and resonances with "Ethan Brand," such as the name of Brand and the New England town name of Starkfield. In "Bewitched," family and neighbor relationships are cold and distant, and these relationships border on disregard for human sympathy. Notably, the mother-figure is either absent or unnervingly cold; the main mother, Mrs. Brand, is dead before the story even begins. Most of the women who are left are versions of the "bad" mother, such as Mrs. Prudence Rutledge, who destroy younger living women for having sexuality which is too robust. Cold, wicked mothers appear to destroy other women, but in reality male desire for control brings about the females' deaths.

Hermione Lee, a biographer of Edith Wharton, points out that writing was a way for Wharton to make sense of and come to terms with many aspects of her life. As such, some of Wharton's themes were influenced by biographical events and figures; her parents were important individuals in her life. Wharton's mother, Lucretia Jones, was distant and un-nurturing, and she elicited feelings of "anxiety and guilt[,] produced by disapproval" in Wharton (Lee 35). "Bewitched" may be Wharton's attempt to bury her cold, distant mother in the landscape; however, her mother's presence is still felt because it influences Wharton's writing and relationships. Conversely, Wharton's relationship with her father is a source of warmth; she felt he was a man of culture. "Beatrice Palmato," an unfinished story, is about a daughter who willingly engages in a sexual relationship with her father. Unlike "Beatrice Palmato," "Bewitched" reveals the dark, coerced side of incest as witnessed by a third-party observer.

In the way she structures her writing, Wharton takes another cue from Hawthorne, this time with his "twice-told tale" structure. For Wharton, double narratives and secrets are not uncommon. She once wrote a candid draft of her autobiography, entitled "Life and I," which was unpublished during her lifetime. In it, she was explicit about her relationship to her mother and how strained it was; she published *A Backward Glance*, which was a much more sedate and censored account of her life. Similarly, in 1908 she kept two diaries about vastly different subjects. Her first diary was a respectable and publishable account of her social life, while the second, "kept under lock and key," documented a scandalous affair with Morton Fullerton (Lee 10). Hence, Wharton led a type of double life, one which was "a cover, with tremendously articulate activity on the surface, and secrets and silences below" (Lee 10). Like her life, it is useful to read Wharton's ghost stories with a discerning eye for hidden plots.

In "Bewitched," the narrator, Orrin Bosworth, arrives at the neighboring Rutledge farm along with Deacon Hibben and Sylvester Brand. Mrs. Prudence Rutledge explains that the ghost of Ora Brand, Brand's daughter, returns and draws her husband Saul Rutledge to Lamer's pond in order to have trysts. We find out that, several years before, Ora was engaged to Saul Rutledge, but she was sent away by her father to learn bookkeeping. She returned to her father's farm only to fall sick and die. To exorcise the ghost, Prudence suggests they drive a stake through the dead girl's body. Reflecting on other superstitious happenings in the New England settlement, Bosworth remembers visiting his mother's mad aunt, Cressidora Cheney, whose mental condition was kept hidden. Other events in the town have a "deep fringe of mystery," such as the burning of a witch some years before (Wharton 139). Bosworth begins to believe in supernatural

occurrences, and the three men resolve to deal with the ghost by intercepting Rutledge and Ora's ghost on the following day. However, Bosworth and Hibben see tracks in the snow—a woman's footprints—and instead of returning home after their meeting at the Rutledges', they follow the tracks to the hut. They meet Brand, who wants to resolve the trouble once and for all. In the hut, Bosworth says that a white, wraithlike thing arises in the corner, and Brand fires his revolver at it. Outside, Brand remarks "they *do* walk, then" (Wharton 144). The next day, Brand's living daughter, Venny, comes down with pneumonia, and she is buried three days later. Ostensibly, the ghost will no longer be lonely because her sister lies next to her.

Though the story occurs in the lonely areas around Starkfield and Stotesbury, the narrator Orrin Bosworth is a vital figure to consider. Bosworth has a liminal position in the town's society, for he was born and raised "under the icy shadow of Lonetop," yet he has "had more contact with the modern world" (Wharton 138). Bosworth has an entrepreneurial and political streak, for he uses new techniques to increase his crops' productivity, and he has been elected a selectman. However, he has a farmer's heritage and understands the loneliness of life in Hemlock County. He is aware of his superstitious roots, for he can feel that Hemlock County has mysteries. When he and Deacon Hibben see the tracks in the snow, they read the footprints as marks made by "the feet of the dead" (Wharton 144). However, Venny Brand has spent much time in the wilderness, and it is not unreasonable to suppose she goes barefoot. After their conversation with Prudence, they have it in their heads that the landscape is haunted; they choose to read the footprints as evidence of a supernatural being. The parts of Bosworth which are "modern" are overridden by the parts which are superstitious. Bosworth is

swayed by the experience and the vengeful desire of Prudence Rutledge, who has a degree of asexual, cold force about her.

Bosworth's status as a liminal character is not limited to his position as half-cosmopolite, half-country bumpkin; rather, as Monika Elbert suggests, he is a somewhat androgynous narrator. Bosworth is described as "imaginative," like the young son Joe in Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand," "who is scolded for his femininity and concern for Ethan" (Elbert 231). Bosworth sympathizes with his great aunt Cressidora Cheney in her loneliness to the point where he brings her a canary. He sympathizes with constricted femininity, but his sympathy makes him susceptible to over-identify with the plight of females. The day after Brand shoots his daughter, Bosworth chops wood "covered with an icy sweat," trying to get over the crime he witnessed in the hut "like a man getting over a fever" (Wharton 144). Bosworth is silenced, and Elbert equates this silencing with feminization: "he does not expose Venny's secret… but merely stares into space" (Elbert 231). Bosworth must keep "his own sensitivity…repressed" (Elbert 231). He begins to see into the mystery of femininity and the repressive structures that constrict females, but he refrains from speaking. His silence distances him from his sister and his own identity as a sensitive individual; he has been shocked. In his own way, Bosworth, too, like Venny, is a victim of what he sees. He sees the mystery unfolded before his eyes, but does not want to understand it much further than that, for the truth is much uglier and more disturbing than even he could have imagined. Bosworth is thus a male who can identify with females, but one of his methods of identification—silence—manipulates him into the same position as the females. Thus, he can offer no assistance.

It must be noted that "Bewitched" is the story of superstition in small-town New England related indirectly and from an outside source. The most interesting events, and most compelling proof for Sylester and Venny Brand's affair is not recorded within the text, so the proceedings—particularly the incest plot—must be inferred. The thematic elements and the narrative frame contribute to the classification of "Bewitched" as a short story in the Gothic mode. As Jenni Dyman writes in the preface to her analyses of Wharton's ghost stories, *Lurking Feminism*, "Gothic symbolism and techniques provide [Wharton] with a framework. She depicts a male-dominated culture that restricts women to small worlds represented by Gothic enclosures" (xiii). Kathy Fedorko locates the forbidden mystery in femininity and the story's involvement in "women's lives and the male power that keeps their female power restrained" (111). Venny is enclosed in a male-narrated text. Bosworth, the narrator, is unaware of the history until the end of the story, when he becomes complicit in Venny's death.

The culture may be male-dominated, but males are also subject to the culture's forces: they must marry. Marriage itself is not necessarily a repressive structure, but due to the limited number of sexual partners in Hemlock County, marriages have the potential to become harmful. This increases the likelihood of adulterous relationships. Even more disturbingly, some of the sexual relationships may become incestuous, such as occurs in the Brand family. The family is already amiss in the eyes of the community, as Brand "married his own cousin" (Wharton 139). With a limited number of sexual partners, the males will be more likely to retain their hold on choice sexual partners, even if these partners are dead. Sexual histories are kept hidden, and what understanding Bosworth has of the events in Hemlock County are subject to misinterpretation.

Because so much is left up to the reader's inference, "Bewitched" becomes a prime example of a Gothic tale. Uncanny events are explained as part of supernatural occurrences, but that is because the story is narrated by someone who is outside of the circle of "mystery." Incest is at the heart of "Bewitched;" if there had been looser restrictions, or perhaps more people in the community, then there would not have been a need to resort to incest. Venny plays the dead bride-to-be Ora Brand to the Rutledges, and she plays the dead mother-who-has returned to Sylvester Brand. Thus, she plays many roles to many men as they try to recuperate their dead women. Men use women to fulfill their desire for a good mother. This is made possible by the desire and projection of the people with whom she surrounds herself, but the ability of one girl to play so many roles—to so few people in such a stifling community—causes friction among males for possession. Their friction turns the females into victims.

Haunted Landscapes

Hemlock County, the setting for "Bewitched," has a cold, lonely air about it which does not invite questions or transparent dialogue. Hauntings begin with "secrets from the past" which remain unresolved (Hogle 2); such a haunting begins with the history of the landscape. Hemlock County has a history which has been concealed. From mysterious happenings with sick cattle and foaming children to mad aunts locked away, strange events occur but little is discussed openly. North Ashmore, one of the settlements, was first settled by an English officer, but all remnants of the buildings that existed there were destroyed except the foundations, and the only other evidence for the settlement is the silver Communion plate. The "deep fringe of mystery, secrecy, and rumor" becomes

translated into an oppressive atmosphere which pervades the area and its people (Wharton 139). Tied up in the land's mystery is the Brand family, who "[have] been… in Hemlock County ever since the white men had come there" (Wharton 139). The history of the Brands could be tied up with the fate of North Ashmore since the Brands have been in the county for so long. The wordplay on their last name: "brand" conjures up religious images of the mark set on Cain; the Brands may have a family sin which polluted the landscape. The secrecy practiced by the Hemlock County families perpetuates superstition and perversity.

The name of the county itself, Hemlock, evokes poison and death. The region in which they live is described as "unsocial," and other town names include "Lonetop," "North Ashmore," and "Cold Corners" (Wharton 127-8). Wendy Gimbel states, in her dissertation on Wharton's orphaned characters and their quest for survival, that in each of Wharton's novels, "houses are symbolic places, each expressing a possibility for selfhood" (Gimbel 4). In contrast to houses, the landscape in "Bewitched" is an ostensibly oppressive and potentially destructive force. It may be a place for self-expression, but the wilderness is also at odds with society. Any self-expression that takes place in the wilderness will be considered uncivilized. Such a socially constructed boundary indicates that people who connect with the landscape, such as Venny, will appear aberrant to the rest of society. The environment's influence creates a silent, deathly atmosphere and frigid, unfeeling beings.

Even husbands and wives who live together are cold and distant. Jenni Dyman states that in such an environment, "people develop puritanical and rigid personalities and behaviors, influencing generation after generation. Few, if any, are able to counteract the

stultifying effects of climate and habit that go hand in hand. The conditions are repressive, the people incommunicative" (97). Prudence Rutledge falls into Dyman's description of a rigid, incommunicative individual. Prudence asks for help, and Bosworth, Hibben, and Brand come quickly to her response, but it has taken a year for her to reach out. She needed proof that her husband Saul was sleeping with a "ghost," but she first noticed he was acting strangely a year before. Deacon Hibben describes the Rutledge farm as "far away from humanity" but "not so in miles" (Wharton 128). Thus, through the landscape's influence, people wait until they are driven to desperation before they ask for help. The landscape is unsettling, for it promotes unnatural relationships among and even within households.

Venny Brand communes with and personifies the landscape, for she has been under its influence more frequently than any of the other characters in the community. Venny, after having spent three years "wild on the slopes of Lonetop" has incorporated the traits of the wilderness into her personality and conduct (Wharton 139). Due to her roaming on the mountains and in the wilderness, Venny seems to have become, like nature, polymorphously perverse. She does not understand propriety, and, according to local opinion, she is "too wild and ignorant" of social conventions such as taking care of her mother's and her sister's graves (Wharton 140). She may be ignorant of social conventions, but Venny nevertheless learns other things in places "far away from humanity." For example, she learns how to pass through the landscape in harsh conditions—as she leaves footprints in the snow. The landscape influences the community members, and so does Venny. By impersonating her sister, she plays on the desires and fears of her neighbors. Venny's habits of roaming the wilderness make her

susceptible to the landscape's influences, and her family's history makes her a candidate for the recapitulation of mysterious happenings, of which incest is preeminent. The Brand farm is almost outside of the reaches of humanity and human influence, which allows Venny to be wild and unconventional and to express her sexuality, both with her father and with Rutledge.

Women in "Bewitched"

With the exception of Bosworth's father, only women die in "Bewitched." Even when Saul Rutledge is absent from Venny's funeral at the end of the story, he is attending the funeral of his aunt. The notable women in "Bewitched" include Mrs. Brand, Ora, Venny, Mrs. Prudence Rutledge, and the Bosworth women, Aunt Cressidora Cheney, Bosworth's mother, and Loretta Bosworth. These women have three typical fates: death, coldness, and insanity. Prudence is cold, Cressidora is insane, and the Brand women die. Only the Bosworths seem to have the qualities of the "good mother," for they effectively care for others; however, the Bosworth women's preoccupation with gossip indicates they are somewhat shallow and therefore susceptible to coldness. Otherwise, mothers are relegated to the grave in this history without having much subjectivity.

Venny's mother and sister die before the narrative even begins. The Brand mother's death is mysterious and suspicious. Bosworth says that "Mrs. Brand pined away and died" (Wharton 139). He does not elaborate how she died, but he does emend his statement by saying that he didn't think "anything had been wrong with her mind" (Wharton 139). Bosworth uses the term "pine," which indicates that she was lonely and unhappy living with Bosworth and longed for a life without him. Ora Brand, as well, is dead before the narrative begins; after spending three years in Starkfield learning

bookkeeping, she returns to Bearcliff where she "sicken[s] and die[s]" (Wharton 139). The women die of unknown causes; this indicates that Brand could have physically or emotionally abused them. When they die, they are buried and are returned to the earth, and so they become one with the cold, hard landscape. Disturbingly, their deaths not only allow them to escape potentially oppressive relationships, their absences remove their sexual availability from Brand. The landscape serves as a way for Venny, the living daughter, to escape society's conventions, too, but the only thing that avoiding society achieves is female death. Thus, efforts to limit male power result in daughters' deaths.

The female perpetrators are not the only individuals harmed; Aunt Cressidora is a victim, for someone may have slept with her husband or beau. Females like Venny whose vitality is robust "are considered out of control and [when they] no longer secretly meet men's needs, [they] must be subdued to preserve the social order" (Dyman 99). This not only includes a young woman like Venny who has an incestuous relationship with her father, but any woman who has sex outside of marriage. Venny's strategy of masquerading as Ora is almost discovered when Prudence calls the three men to her home. As such, she must be subdued: by removing the ghost, the homeostasis of the Rutledges' marriage can be restored. However, and more importantly, Brand's incestuous relationship with Venny comes dangerously close to being exposed, and she will have to be subdued for doing so. Brand's jealousy will cause him to punish Venny for finding sexual fulfillment outside of the family circle, and his pride will keep her from exposing their transgression of the incest taboo.

Sexual Histories, Coldness, and Insanity

The relationship between dead mothers and living daughters is not intentionally vindictive, but the relationship between living women is competitive because of sex. Living females have no sympathy for one another, and by being selfish they participate in one aspect of the unpardonable sin. Prudence Rutledge understandably has no sympathy for the ghost which is sleeping with her husband. However, she has little other option than to be unsympathetic with the ghost: this is a small economy and so the choice of a marriage partner, for both men and women, is limited in scope. The remaining women who survive are either given to coldness or insanity. They suffer insanity or coldness because of women such as Venny against whose sexuality they cannot adequately compete. Bosworth draws a parallel between Cressidora and Prudence, noticing that Prudence's hands are like Cressidora's when she "[strangled] the canary-bird because it fluttered" (Wharton 146). The similar appearance of their hands suggests that they are subject to similar circumstances. Individuals in Hemlock County are driven by sexual competition, and only when an individual does not have something at stake is she willing to assist others.

Bosworth's interaction with his Aunt Cressidora indicates the madness that some women experience if they are denied sexual partners. Bosworth brings her the canary, and she screeches at it when it starts to flutter. She calls it a "she-devil" and wrings its neck (Wharton 138). Cressidora indicates a gender, "she," and ties it to "devil," a word with religious and superstitious connotations, which suggests that Cressidora sees a morally reprehensible woman in the bird. If Cressidora's case is consistent with the theme of "Bewitched," the memory of the woman which the bird conjures is connected to

sex. Cressidora's reaction and calling the bird a she-devil suggests that another woman's sexuality negatively impacted Cressidora, probably through an affair with her husband or beau. Cressidora would understandably be furious because she had an unfaithful lover, particularly when her sexuality was not transgressive. The bird has vitality, and Cresidora conflates woman and bird. Hence, when the bird begins to do display energy and not submit to Aunt Cressidora's complete control, Cressidora overreacts and kills it. In her mind, she wreaks revenge on another female who has wronged her.

Much like Cressidora, Prudence does not transgress social conventions, yet she feels the effects of such conventions. She is gray and cold, and she "might have been anywhere from thirty-five to sixty" (Wharton 129). Some critics locate her gray lifelessness and indeterminate age as the cause for Saul Rutledge's infidelity; they say he seeks Venny's allure "in contrast to [Mrs. Rutledge's] implied frigidity" (McDowell 146). This is true, but Prudence's sexual competition exacerbates the problems of her age and coolness. Bosworth compares her and her eyes "to the sightless orbs of a marble statue" (Wharton 130). Such sightless eyes indicate Prudence's attempt to withdraw into herself and become like a statue. She becomes rigid and sees things in a certain way, refusing to see that is actually Venny, not Ora, who is sleeping with her husband. Once she believes that she is dealing with a ghost, she acts consistently for the remainder of the story. Women whose husbands are unfaithful become even more gray, lifeless, and rigid, or they become less and less sane. The sexuality of other women seems to sap them of life and sanity, for they are passed over in favor of someone else. For Prudence and Aunt Cressidora, coldness and insanity serves as a mechanism for survival.

Again, we may find some form of biographical influence the for repression of sexuality. Warton's own sexuality in "Bewitched" has parallels with the canary in the cage, for Wharton's own mother stifled Wharton's sexuality by not giving her adequate knowledge about sex. The most notable case is the night before Edith's wedding to Teddy Wharton when Edith asked her mother what happened on one's wedding night. Her mother, uncomfortable and flustered, did not give her daughter explicit sex education; she asked if Edith had noticed in statues and paintings that men and women have different parts. When Wharton did not seem to follow, her mother said that Wharton shouldn't ask about such things because "they weren't nice" (Lee 76). Lucretia Jones' censorship of Edith's sexual knowledge did not help make her subsequent marriage to Teddy Wharton comfortable. During their marriage, their physical relationship would be awkward. Lucretia Jones' sex instruction was later regarded by Edith Wharton as stifling, and sex would be something Wharton would have to come to terms with throughout the remainder of her life. As such, Wharton may have found the image of the caged and strangled canary a compelling image for sexual constriction.

In Wharton's life her affairs were often triangulated, typically connecting herself, her husband, and a lover; this pattern is reflected in "Bewitched." Ora Brand and Saul Rutledge were engaged, but then Sylvester Brand proved an obstacle by sending Ora away, and so Saul married Prudence. The number of triangulated sexual partners appears to increase, for both Saul Rutledge and Sylvester Brand get in the way of Venny's marriage to the Bedlow fellow mentioned by Loretta Bosworth. Because no one explains the history of these matters, the adulterous affairs have the potential to be repeated by other members of the society. It seems that in "Bewitched," marriages are made difficult

or impossible because of jealousy. "Bewitched" is not a short story in which the characters find fulfilling relationships or mutual help with one another; rather they are often in competition with others in the community for a limited set of sexual partners.

Prudence continues this competition, for she acts as a catalyst for the events of the story. She is not, however, as powerful as Monika Elbert and Margaret McDowell make her out to be. Margaret McDowell finds Prudence to be the "presiding genius of the action" and a "rural Clytemnestra" who vehemently wishes that a stake be driven through the body of Ora Brand. Ora Brand, to Prudence, is "a succubus who must afford Saul intense if illicit sexual satisfaction in contrast to her own implied frigidity" (McDowell 146, 148). Prudence does not play the part of a fulfilling sexual partner or even warm mother—indeed, she is childless—and so she is merely a player and parrot of the superstitious, religious culture. She starts the conversation and icompels the men to destroy the ghostly witch, arguing religious justification. She clings to the vengeful God of the Old Testament, asking for retribution against the creature who has wronged her. If women are unable to correctly fulfill their relationships, they do not displace their sexual desires on someone or something else. Women with adulterous husbands seek vengeance, not replacements.

Religion in "Bewitched"

Women with robust and potentially transgressive sexuality are considered to be a threat, even though it is often the narrow parameters of society which have driven them to such lengths. Once a woman is outside of acceptable sexual conduct, the farmers do not seem to distinguish between types of sins. Infidelity and incest, though sins, are sins

which have different gravity. Incest is a perversion of adultery occurring within a kinship group, and therefore much worse, but to the farmers like Prudence there is no difference among sins. When one has overstepped the law, he or she has committed a sin, and all sin has the same degree of blackness. Wharton thus portrays a very rigid and Puritanical New England social environment. However, it is important to recognize that the Rutledges, Bosworth, and Deacon Hibben do not know about the incest plot at the beginning of the story, so Prudence's condemnation of the adulterous sin is somewhat more forgivable. It appears that only Brand understands what is actually occurring because he is the perpetrator. Incest is not something that the community appears to have much experience with, thus they have difficulty seeing and explaining it. According to the local people, they would be more likely to encounter a witch or a ghost than an incestuous father-daughter pair. Because it is a taboo, incest is only discussed and related in the narrative in terms of superstition and magic.

Religion is an excuse for the reinforcement of taboos and the achievement of personal revenge. Since Wharton was writing in the early twentieth century, many of her readers would be familiar with the Bible's stories and moral injunctions; indeed, "Bewitched" has several instances comparable to the Old Testament. When Bosworth, Hibben, and Brand are in her parlor, Prudence points to the scripture hanging on the wall: "The Soul That Sinneth it Shall Die" (Wharton 130). After Rutledge has explained his condition, she points out in Exodus in the Bible that "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Wharton 138). She uses religion as a way to catalyze actions which will bring her revenge, but she is also reinforcing the religious system that has given her an unsatisfying marriage to Saul Rutledge. "Bewitched" has several instances where it parodies what the

Bible says about men and women. The verse about the witch which Prudence quoted is Exodus 22:18; immediately before it, in verses 16 and 17, the Bible says "And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife; If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins." Brides and witches are juxtaposed, suggesting that they are linked. Brides, and therefore sexual partners, in this Judeo-Christian society are treated as commodities by their male relatives.

Within "Bewitched," an obedient woman is ostensibly a bride; if she has an extramarital affair, she may be condemned as a witch. Ora Brand was engaged to Saul Rutledge, but then she dies; a person in the guise of Ora comes to consummate her contract. Saul Rutledge pays the bride-price for her with his health and his wife's warmth. When Brand finds out about the affair, he yet again refuses to give his daughter to Rutledge. Sylvester Brand, himself participating in an incestuous relationship, must pay the bride-price, too, but payment comes in a non-pecuniary format: he pays for their relationship with Venny's death and his ensuing loneliness. Obviously, the daughter's "payment" is far greater than her father's, which again suggests that the males have little to no empathy for females. Regardless of Venny's feelings towards their relationship, Brand must have committed in some degree the unpardonable sin, for he disregards proper family relationships and order. Ostensibly, Brand may feel guilt for his incestuous relationship with Venny, but not enough to end the sexual component of their relations. As her father, he has more jurisdiction over Venny than Rutledge does, and he asserts that power by killing her. Just as the strife between the women results in death and insanity, "male energy encounter[s] other male energy over a dead woman's body"

(Elbert 239). Conflict, and the male desire for a female's body, only results in her death and objectification.

The Bible also has another parallel to Brand and his daughter, albeit in a twisted and dark way. Brand's story parallels that of Lot, Abraham's nephew: like Brand, Lot has two daughters. The two daughters, realizing their father is in need of heirs, each get their father drunk and sleep with him. They think they are the only women available to continue their father's line, seeing as their mother was turned into a pillar of salt. The account in Exodus 19 is neutral about the incestuous relationship, for the Bible neither condones nor condemns this instance of incest. Lot was unconscious of what happened, and his daughters wanted to preserve their father's line, and so they did so in the only way they deemed possible. Lot did not incur divine retribution. Wharton parodies and makes perverse a somewhat unsettling Bible story; in the context of "Bewitched," father-daughter incest is not condoned, and Brand's punishment is being forced to kill his own daughter. Thus, the same forces that catalyze the story are reinforced, but not in ways Prudence imagined. She desires a vampiric ghost to be destroyed.

Deacon Hibben, the figure of religious authority, is a minor character but he plays an important part in developing the idea that the towns are diseased and blighted. His name is reminiscent of Hawthorne's Mistress Hibbins from *The Scarlet Letter*, who is a witch and the governor's sister. Hibben is initiated into the mystery of the land and knows about diseases, else people wouldn't come "from all over the place come to him when their animals had queer sicknesses, or when there was a child in the family that had to be kept shut up because it fell down flat and foamed" (Wharton 139). He is a hypocrite, for he is a religious figure who dabbles in arcane practices. What's more, as

Gerard Sweeney suggests, Deacon Hibben has syphilis, which is manifested by the blotches in his face which declare him a sexual sinner. This aligns him with Hawthorne's "polluted priest," Arthur Dimmesdale, and suggests that "the sins of the past have an impact on the present" (Sweeney 200). Sweeney, however, overlooks some of the most important aspects of Deacon Hibben's syphilitic condition: madness. Madness occurs only after the skin blotches have disappeared; since the Deacon's face is described as "queerly blotched and moldy-looking" does not have syphilis in his nervous system yet ("Bewitched" 128). Nevertheless, madness is a possibility in the future. Being a syphilitic within the context of Wharton's "Bewitched" insinuates that there is disease among the families of Hemlock County. Indeed, there may be multiple infections of various diseases. With Deacon Hibben, it is syphilis; the Bosworths have a strain of mental instability; the Brands are incestuous. The diseases fester in the lonely landscape and do not promote a warm, expansive, healthy community.

The Father and His Daughter-Wife

Sylvester Brand, after his wife's death, tries to find some form of comfort. He cannot find it working his "barren Bearcliff acres" or in "the 'dives' of Stotesbury" (Wharton 139). However, that is not all he turns to. He turns to his daughters as sources of sexual fulfillment; how frequently and with what degree of complicity on their part is unclear. The fact that both Ora and Venny seek a relationship with Saul Rutledge indicates that their relationships with their father are sexually oppressive. Venny, after Ora's death, fulfills the role of both her mother and sister when she participates in a sexual relationship with her father. She thus is the latest link in a chain of sexual

transference; she assumes the roles her sister Ora played and thus becomes "the mother." In this way, the number of individuals who play parts in the nuclear family structure dwindles, but the number of positions remains constant. All of the positions remain filled. Brand resumes the same role as always as husband and father, while Venny takes the role of daughter, sister, and mother.

Venny's double role-playing allows her to have a relationship with Saul Rutledge. When Prudence discloses that Rutledge has been sleeping with Brand's daughter, Brand becomes angry. Bosworth believes he sees "a sort of inner flush darken the farmer's heavy leather skin" (Wharton 131). He is jealous that Venny would lavish her attentions on someone else. That is, he is jealous until Prudence clarifies that Ora Brand, the dead daughter, is the sexual partner; then, he relaxes into a "natural and imperturbable expression" (Wharton 139). Brand is jealous of his daughter; it is unclear if he knows that Venny was Ora or not, but it seems that thinking of his dead daughter Ora assists him in controlling his emotions. Psychologically, he may compartmentalize Venny's roles; by thinking of her as his dead and therefore inaccessible daughter Ora, Brand thus makes it possible for him to maintain his control at the Rutledge's farm. More importantly, he keeps hidden the secret of his affair with Venny. By thinking of Venny as Ora, with certain roles to play and fulfill, he can come to terms with the fact that his daughter is playing so many different roles and not go mad with jealousy, loneliness or revulsion.

Adultery and incest occur because the men cannot seem to find warm women to fulfill the role of "good mother" in their lives and households. Saul Rutledge uses Venny as a stand-in for Ora Brand, the woman he was supposed to marry. However, incest is the root cause of the problems with which Orrin Bosworth and the Rutledges must deal; if

Sylvester Brand had not obstructed Ora's marriage to Rutledge—on account of the desire to regulate Ora's body—this history would not have occurred. Notably, Venny's oppression finds ways to express itself by looking for a sexual partner outside of the family circle. Though his jealousy for his daughters' bodies affects his daughters and the Rutledges in a very tangible way, the daughters attempt to circumnavigate Brand's oppression in ways that he cannot regulate. Venny does this by taking her sister's place and going outside of the family romance.

By playing her sister, Venny is indeed letting her sister "come back" (Wharton 136). Saul and Prudence Rutledge believe her to be Ora Brand; Saul is her lover and thus in very close contact with her. He should be able to distinguish one sister from another, but he fails to do so. Instead, he projects what he desires to see; so to Saul and Prudence Rutledge, Ora Brand does indeed walk again. It is notable that Rutledge says that, before she died, Ora promised she would return to him. She also "draws" him to the hut by Lamer's pond, where they have their trysts (Wharton 136). These two parts of the narrative are somewhat unsettling, and they lead to some critics to read "Bewitched" as a supernatural tale. Indeed, it is for the most part psychological, but there are still some strange occurrences and resonances which are not accounted for, such as the coincidence of Venny haunting Rutledge when Ora said she would return to him. Whether supernatural or psychological, Venny has some unusual and magnetic qualities and capabilities about her. By acting as her sister, in some measure Venny *is* allowing her sister to walk again, because others perceive her to be Ora.

The landscape hides histories of incest and does not promote successful relationships. The land holds within the itself secrets and coldness, holding deeply to the incest taboos. Repressed, incestuous histories surface in the form of ghost stories, for incest can only be discussed in terms of the supernatural. Even after Brand shoots Venny in the hut, Bosworth and Deacon Hibben only have the intimation that something is not right in the Brand family. Incest, taking on the disguise of overabundant female sexuality, is the root cause of these problems. Male and female desire for what they cannot have also exacerbates the problem of constricted sexuality; however, it is not the fault of the males or the females typically, but rather the misfortune of the setting. The most grievous sin, however, rests with Sylvester Brand; he forces himself on his daughters in order to fulfill nostalgia for a wife-figure. He asks them to play two roles—wife-figure and daughter—which they cannot do because they have their own desires, as well, which brings Saul Rutledge into competition with Brand. The combination of a society in which sex is restricted to married couples and the limited choice of sexual partners does not presage well-matched marriages.

In "Bewitched," males seek a mother and sexual partner, but they fail. Nature and the boundaries of death are dissolved in the male psyche; by using Venny as her mother's replacement, Brand appears to combat time and reality, refusing to acknowledge his depravity and the fact that time passes and the original mother does not return. He tries to recuperate the mother-figure, his wife, by using his daughters, but it does not bode well. Brand knows that Venny and Ora are his daughters, yet he does not acknowledge the fact that his daughters both have desire and autonomy. By killing Venny, he asserts his control over his daughter's body, but he is left with no females and no home to return to.

"Bewitched" indicates how males can project upon females the role and position of mother, with a heavy reliance on psychological projection. Brand desires the fulfillment provided by a sexual partner and nurturer, which he receives at the expense of his daughters.

Conclusion

Mothers, their absence, and the power they represent play a vital role in how males are socialized and gendered. Both parents are crucial for the development of identity and gender, but mothers play a more critical role for boys than fathers do. This is reciprocated by the mother, for, as Nancy Chodorow says, a mother's relationship to her son is "anaclitic," or marked by warmth or dependence (Chodorow 195). The child's first, pre-Oedipal, pre-semiotic bond is with the mother, and so the mother is the original source of identity. The male child experiences his sex as different from the mother's; she represents both an attractive and repulsive force, for with her a child can attain both unity and dissolution. When the father is absent, the child is the mother's sole object of affection. He can indulge his desire for unity with the mother and become dependent upon her. However, his dependence negates his autonomy, and to a certain extent, his authority. Thus, a son has the potential to regress to a state of infancy, but such regression comes with dangers. When he regains the mother, potentially he may allow himself to be over-indulged by her comfort and attention.

The mother's presence commoditizes and makes valuable the father. During a typical child's development, the mother is almost always present. Too much of the mother helps to produce "women's secondary valuation and sexual inequality" (Chodorow 185). The father thereby becomes more important to the child because his appearance is rarer, and so "boys fantasize about and idealize the masculine role and their fathers" (Chodorow 185). By seeing that the male is the valued position and gender in society, boys feel that they have a degree of authority and influence over girls—however, such authority is entirely a social construct. In the texts by Brown, Poe, and Wharton,

males deprived of mothers appear to overcompensate when they attain a mother, and their dominance is manifested when the males objectify females in their relationships. The male narrators search for females to call their own. Once they attain a female as a nurturer or sexual partner, they lose self-restraint and force her only to exist in relationship to himself. Frequently, the ideal female—who is nurturing and powerful yet subservient to the male—is only a fantasy created by the narrator.

A male who is bereft of a family indeed desires to possess the female unilaterally. This is an articulation of Oedipal desires, and the identification of Oedipal structures is useful because it elucidates males' desire for control. The male typically does not have to combat his father to gain possession of the mother-figure, but he may have to struggle against another male in the community. By possessing a female, a male has the opportunity to take the position of the husband and therefore the father, thus gaining the father's authority. Simultaneously, he tries to remain the child of his wife. In these texts, it appears that male dominance and receiving nurturance or guidance from a female are mutually exclusive: to accept help indicates that one is in some capacity inadequate, inexperienced, or helpless. Though he desires to have guidance and authority simultaneously, he can only successfully have one. When he attempts to have both in a family setting, disaster ensues.

Though the males infrequently have father-figures in these texts, they implicitly take upon themselves the role of father. The males' ascendency is particularly salient for daughters and the second generation of women. Though Chodorow states that the son "threatens [the] husband and causes him to resent his son" (131), this is true of any child which interrupts the sexual relationship between men and women. Regardless of its sex,

any child is threatening to the father because the father no longer has the mother's undivided attention. To deal with these fears, the male in these texts turns the second generation of women into mother-figures. In doing so, he removes the threat (his daughter) by turning her into that which can afford him satisfaction (his mother). Thus, the male both fulfills his desire for a mother and to become one with her, while simultaneously removing the object—the child—which originally separated him from his sexual partner.

The males who turn wives and sisters into mothers perceive the females' status as both a subject and an object. Males desire females, thus perceiving females as objects; however, the males desire females to reciprocate that desire. Hence, females are also seen as subjects. Ostensibly, a woman is an autonomous being and therefore subject, but once she enters into the male's perception, she is at risk of being turned into an object. Mothers have wives have agency, but in the male perception that agency is only acknowledged in relation to the male narrator. In male fantasy, the mother-wife's desire is solely concentrated on the male. When the male detects that the female has other desires—such as for another male figure or for a child—then the male must enter into competition to retain his female's affection. This competition is destructive, and it frequently victimizes the female.

The relationship between men and women in a familial setting has the potential to spiral out of control, thereby harming—if not completely destroying—the individuals involved. Male desire for the female is present and pervasive, and it may turn any hapless female into a potential mother-figure; once a woman has been established as a potential mother, she can then fulfill any familial or sexual role which the male requires. I began

this thesis relying on Freud's statement that, to a *man*, the wife becomes a mother to her husband; this statement indeed blurs roles, for it articulates the first transference in a series. The wife may indeed be seen as a replacement for—and heir of—the mother. David Punter locates one of the Gothic's main tensions in its attempt to deal with "problems of sexuality," which include repression, rape, and incest (411). I have tried to articulate the problems of sexuality in regards to the family from the son's perspective, which facilitates and necessitates the discussion of family romance and incest. Incestuous, distorted family relations frequently occur when a male is unable to achieve a loving, stable family because his parents are missing. He must take the place of the father and coerce another woman into taking the place of the mother. Male desire in these texts blurs the boundaries between filial love for a mother and erotic love for a sexual partner.

Perception is at the heart of the Gothic, and with perception there is the chance that the relationships, objects, dreams, and signs may be misinterpreted. Punter adds that one of the fundamental tensions in the Gothic is "between the imaginary and the real" (Punter 402). Indeed, repressed desires arise through fantasy and idealization. Phantasms and dreams replace the real parent-figure in a series of displacements that have the potential to become endless: if a secondary female who receives additional roles dies, her successor takes on all the roles previously acquired by her predecessor. By projecting an idealized mother-lover onto another woman, not only does the man fail to attain a stable family, the family falls apart because he fails to perceive differences between women. He relates to his surroundings in a solipsistic daze, unwilling to engage with the real world and callously ignoring the ways in which real, autonomous females act, think, and feel.

He forces women to adjust to his system, which appears to work for a time, but it falls apart due to social scrutiny, as in the case of incest, and the female's resistance.

Many Gothic novels focus on the heroine who is entrapped and somehow repressed. However, the Gothic is a genre that is not separated into distinct binaries of "male" and "female," as Anne Williams argues in *Art of Darkness*. The Gothic is neither male or female but a combination of both. These two sexes entrap one another, but the female is far more frequently a victim of the male. The very structure and nature of these texts, which are narrated by males, biases the power in his favor. Framed by male perception and desire, the females nevertheless have some degree of power over the males, for the males are depend upon females for validation and succor. Even when males appear to have the most control, control and happiness elude the males. He fails to retain his perfect family, for the female is repressed and killed, but the male narrator is caught up in his own desire. He does not die, but he is left to suffer in loneliness. Men fail to recognize that the attainment of their fantasies limits the agency of the women with whom they are connected.

In these texts by Brown, Poe, and Wharton, men whose mothers are missing feel a particularly strong need to be in control and to be nurtured. However, these two goals are mutually exclusive. The males are unsympathetic effectors male who realize females' fears. By pursuing selfish desires, the male realizes the female's fear of losing her identity in a grotesque and horrifying fashion while also hurting himself. Thus, in these Gothic texts, the opposite of what is desired is achieved: instead of having a wholesome, happy family, the individual narrators are driven further from the relationships they so desperately need and desire; their own repressed fears of loneliness and separation are

realized. By only thinking selfishly of themselves, these males thus sever human connection. Fantasy and misperception are the operative forces which allow male figures to destroy the distinct boundaries and roles that females play within the family. Once the fantasy has faded away, all that is left for these psychologically unstable males is their loneliness and grief over a lost sister, daughter, wife, and most importantly, mother.

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