

University of Alberta

Still Life:
Representations of Passivity in the Gothic Novel

by

Dana Wight

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
English

Department of English and Film Studies

© Dana Wight
Fall 2012
Edmonton, Alberta

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Libraries to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only. Where the thesis is converted to, or otherwise made available in digital form, the University of Alberta will advise potential users of the thesis of these terms.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis and, except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatsoever without the author's prior written permission.

For my grandmothers,

Marjorie Ethel Selena Stenning

and

Beverley Maudaline Wight

so absolute she seems
And in herself compleat, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do or say,
Seems wisest, vertuousest, discreetest, best.

~ John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (8.547-550)

Abstract

This dissertation explores the strategic possibilities of passivity as a form of agency in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British gothic novel in order to recuperate its representations of the passive female body as sites of feminist resistance. Using the methodologies of feminist and psychoanalytic theories and gothic literary criticism, this project examines four specific representations of passivity: fainting, sleep, illness, and death. These conditions are characteristic of a gothic mode that emerges with the birth of the novel, and continues to develop throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As such, this project closely examines key texts published at fifty-year intervals between 1740 and 1847. The first chapter considers Samuel Richardson's proto-gothic novel *Pamela* (1740), whose titular heroine repeatedly faints when she is attacked by her rapacious master. The second chapter investigates violent bedchamber scenes in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), in which the would-be victims of rape and murder prove impenetrable, as their sleeping forms render their attackers impotent and immobile. The third chapter moves into the nineteenth century with an analysis of illness as strategic incapacity in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), while the fourth and final chapter returns to Richardson with an examination of the heroine's will towards death in *Clarissa* (1748). The purpose of this project is to expand rather than narrow the gothic system of representation to include affirmative readings of passivity as a means to (re)discover embodied forms of subjectivity in the gothic novel.

Acknowledgements

With deepest gratitude, I would like to thank my committee, my family, and my friends for their encouragement and support, without which this dissertation would not have been possible.

Thank you to my supervisor, Katherine Binhammer, and to committee members Peter Sinnema and Corrinne Harol, for their enduring patience, diligence, and enthusiasm for my work (even in the absence of my own). I would also like to thank Lianne McTavish, George Haggerty, and Jo-Ann Wallace for their participation in the defense of this project. I owe its success to the guidance and encouragement I've received throughout the dissertation process.

Thank you to my parents, Lynn and Geoff Wight, for their unwavering and unconditional love and support, and to my brother Rick Wight, to whose wit and wisdom I can only aspire, and who has given me the incredible gift of a sister, Karla Sleightholme. I owe everything to the faith you have in me.

With much love, I would also like to thank:

My family: Tera Nelson, Dawne Nelson, Doug McFadden, Mark Stenning, Pat Hepper, Carol Hobbs, Barb Wight, Gord Wight, Patti Wight, my extraordinarily talented cousins, and my grandparents, Marjorie and Vic Stenning, and Bet and Duff Wight. I am so blessed to belong to such amazing people.

My other family: Chad Brunet, Chrissy Czembor, Anna Drake, Alex Kennedy, Jessica O'Neill, Drew Small, Karen Sung, Randie Sykes, and Chris Williams. I send my heart to you, my dearies.

My friends and colleagues: Mary Chan, Leigh Dyrda, Tessa Jordan, Sue McNeill-Bindon, and Melissa Stephens. I am so grateful for the company of such clever, well-informed people, with whom I have shared a great deal of conversation (among other things). There is neither world enough, nor time.

The Garneau Pub (Edmonton), whose staff and jukebox provided me with a home away from home. Our cups always runneth over.

Madame Luce Irigaray, Goodenough College (London), and the 2009 Irigaray Seminar participants, from whom I learned so much.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the University of Alberta, and the Bank of Mom and Dad, whose funding provided me with academic and professional development experience, research and travel opportunities, and loads of tea.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
<i>La nature morte:</i> Passivity and Agency in the Gothic Mode	
Chapter 1	38
“I fell into a Fit with my Fright and Terror”: Fainting and the Gothic Heroine in Richardson’s <i>Pamela</i>	
Chapter 2	86
“Beauty sleeping in the lap of horror”: The Somnolent Heroine in Radcliffe and Lewis	
Chapter 3	141
“I’ll cry myself sick!”: Wilful Illness and the Gothic Mode in Brontë’s <i>Wuthering Heights</i>	
Chapter 4	199
“I will die first!”: The Will Towards Death in Richardson’s <i>Clarissa</i>	
Works Cited	274
Appendix	293

Introduction

La nature morte:¹ Passivity and Agency in the Gothic Mode

The gothic heroine in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British novel is a remarkably resilient and enduring stereotype of weakness and debility. For two hundred and fifty years, the gothic heroine has persisted as a familiar model of exaggerated, if not idealised, femininity. As a generic derivative of the fairytale damsel in distress, the gothic heroine is “pale, passive, reluctant to eat, and prone to faint,” beautiful but piously virtuous, and in possession of an interminable capacity for submission and suffering (Gorsky 173). She is characterised by emotional excess that gives way to physical affliction as well as flights of fancy; her sensitivity and sensibility render her susceptible to suggestion, vulnerable to persecution, and seemingly helpless against the various malevolent forces she encounters. According to a large body of gothic criticism that reproduces this stereotype, the gothic heroine’s resistance to these forces “typically takes the puerile form of empty threats, unanswered prayers, or unheard shrieks. In less life-threatening circumstances, she frets and waits [...] Active, constructive resistance lies outside the ken or the capability of the early Gothic heroine” (Conger, “Reconstruction” 93). This frustrated criticism of the gothic heroine’s apparent weakness dismisses her passivity and debility as a failure to comprehend the nature of her persecution and actively confront or resist her

1 *La nature morte* is the French term for “still life,” the artistic representation of inanimate subject matter. The literal translation is, of course, “dead nature.”

oppressors. However, the heroine is only helpless within interpretive frameworks that elide explorations of passivity and debility as potential forms of resistance. While the heroine's passivity is a function of narrative and the modal and authorial apparatus of the text, it is also informed by the reader's encounter with the text, and the discursive frameworks that structure gendered assumptions about passivity. Affirmative readings of passivity demonstrate that the heroine's inactivity is precisely what garners her agency in the gothic novel, not as something outside the "ken or capability" of the character, but which requires a broadening of our own interpretive lens.

The project of this dissertation is to explore the strategic possibilities of passivity as a form of agency in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic novel, and to recuperate its representations of the passive female body as sites of feminist resistance. I use the term passivity to describe positions of stillness, debility, inaction, and unconsciousness — conditions that disengage the gothic heroine from the often violent activity of the scene — and argue that these conditions do not reduce the heroine to a helpless, eroticised body-object, but rather enable an embodied assertion of subjectivity. In the gothic mode, the assertion of subjectivity occurs primarily in opposition or resistance to (en)forced sexual relation, particularly in the contexts of imposed marriage and rape. The gothic plot hinges upon a formula of "virtue in distress," and the heroine's negotiation of a basic sexual imperative: marriage or death. Because, as Ian Watt notes, "the eighteenth century witnessed a tremendous narrowing of the ethical

scale, [and] a redefinition of virtue in primarily sexual terms," the heroine's negotiation of this imperative and her struggle for selfhood often involves the trial of her virginity (Watt 157). As Nancy Miller elaborates, "it is not surprising that the archetypal eighteenth-century novel of the feminine destiny should focus on defloration [...] Virtue would be neither interesting nor credible if untested. Virtue cannot be rewarded if untried" (N Miller 39). While the "virtue in distress" formula is neither original nor specific to the gothic, the gothic mode exaggerates its premise, producing a formula in which "a perverted, though remorseful, villain [...] is motivated by desires which he knows to be evil but cannot control; there is a central, brutal event or erotic crime; there is a tense atmosphere of domestic duplicity, internecine conniving, and family infidelity and scheming" (Frank 51-52). Though this formula reduces the nuances and variations of gothic literature to a more basic model of the violent conditions of virtue in distress, it accounts for its historical breadth and pervasiveness as the foundation of the gothic mode.

This project examines four recurring representations of passivity within this formula — fainting, sleep, illness, and death — specifically as they inform the construction and development of female agency and subjectivity in the gothic novel. These conditions have been repeatedly interpreted and nearly categorically misread as eroticised states of vulnerability, objectification, and submission, and as participatory or complicit in the heroine's subjugation. This dissertation will argue, however, that the gothic heroines' passive conditions

redirect the narrative away from violent sexual relation and towards the development of subjectivities that are not contingent upon this relation. When the gothic heroine is conscious and actively engages the villain through verbal or physical resistance, she is subject to being overpowered, silenced, or otherwise subdued. Active resistance, in the forms of written and verbal opposition as well as physical struggle, reinforces the villain's authority and subjectivity through his mastery of her person. Conversely, the heroine's embodied passivity disrupts this mastery, destabilising the relation and enabling an expressive, affective, and effective assertion of subjectivity. Like the dead weight of a motionless mass, the heroine's embodied passivity resists manipulation, control, defeat, and determination by a masculine aggressor. Rather than signify the heroine's weakness, complicity, or submissive acquiescence to the conditions of her oppression, this dissertation demonstrates that in the context of the gothic mode, passivity functions as a form of agency, as an embodied (rather than enacted) refusal of these conditions and of the contingencies of sexual relation.

Critical Position:

This dissertation considers the ways in which psychoanalysis and theories of the emergence (or production) of subjectivity are informed by the gothic fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, just as the history of gothic criticism is largely informed by psychoanalytic theory. While this project is not an attempt to develop a psychoanalytic reading of the gothic, it uses feminist and

psychoanalytic theories to develop an affirmative reading of passivity as a particular form of agency in the gothic mode. In order to situate my project within this critical field, I will provide a brief overview of the key topics in contemporary feminist and psychoanalytic gothic studies that inform my argument. As George Haggerty notes, gothic fiction is unique in its literary capacity to sustain anachronistic or “ahistorical accounts of personality and psyche that would have been unfathomable” to both their writers and their contemporary readers (Haggerty 1). The gothic lends itself particularly well to modern analyses of gender, sexuality, and the body, because its cultivation of fantasy and sensationalism enabled gothic texts to transgress the conventions and limitations of both formal realism and social propriety. As Judith Halberstam suggests, the gothic novel became “a privileged place for the production of sexuality because it creates sex as a narrative secret that is simultaneously disclosed and buried by language, by literary form, and by novelistic themes” (Halberstam 41-42). The gothic gives rise to the aberrant or perverse, even in its effort to contain and subdue it.

This dissertation contributes to an expanding body of gothic criticism that centralises sexuality and subjectivity by introducing passivity as a new interpretive model for subject development in the gothic mode. The terms subject and subjectivity refer to a conscious, cognisant agent, and conceptions or constructions of selfhood and identity. I use the term subjectivity to describe the complex relationship between a subject’s physical, psychological, and

phenomenological experiences, particularly as determined by narrative discourse. This project centralises embodied expressions of subjectivity and the concomitant cultural and linguistic discourses that determine subject formation, as a (loosely) Althusserian conception of the ideologically interpellated individual as subject, in the sense of “a free subjectivity, a center of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions,” and “a subjected being,” as produced and determined by discourse (Althusser 123). Following from a Foucauldian conception of the discursive subject not as an articulation of new discourses, but as a genealogy of these discourses as they inform subjectivity, this project examines the passive female subject as produced by and within the socio-linguistic structures that construct the narrative framework of the gothic text.² Philosophical and psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity position the subject as distinct from, and often opposed to, an other (subject), who is external to the subject’s apprehension of itself, and thereby reaffirms its selfhood as independent and contained. The active subject also stands in opposition to the passive object, which is acted upon and determined by a dominant, external force, as the constituted (rather than constitutive) half of a binary relation. This project focuses on the ways in which the gothic heroine disengages from this relational opposition, specifically by means of what I call “passive agency.”

2 It is perhaps necessary to note here that the scope of this dissertation is specifically limited to the literary, as a project restricted to representation without deliberate or intended application to the lived experiences of real women (as readers, writers, and discursive subjects). Literature can perhaps more readily imagine or represent alternatives to dominant discourse(s), and can thereby open up spaces for emerging discourses and subjectivities which can expand feminist theories of language and subject formation.

The critical intervention of this project is its expansion of feminist gothic studies to include passivity as a means of constructing and recovering embodied forms of subjectivity and agency in the gothic mode. Before outlining the project in more detail, it is perhaps useful to define the critical terms that recur throughout this dissertation. As it is largely “about” passivity as form of agency in the gothic mode, these terms require clarification. Passivity typically refers specifically to an absence of “activity, involvement, participation, or exertion” (OED 3), particularly as an object acted upon by an external agent or force (OED 1), while agency refers rather to an instance or presence of action and activity, inhering in one who exerts or asserts power, authority, or control (OED 1). These terms used together suggest an implicit contradiction, as passivity would seem to indicate a lack of agency. As passivity is defined primarily in terms of negation and alterity — by what is is not: namely, activity — it is de-privileged and displaced by the primacy of action, which entails the visibility of motion and mobility. By extension, passivity cannot be active or agential because it is still. This stillness, however, functions as a form of agency for the gothic heroine, not as resistance in the sense physically fighting or struggling against a male oppressor in direct confrontation, but as resistance in the form of indirect disengagement from confrontation through inaction and inertia. To redefine passivity in positive terms, for the purposes of this project, it is this quality of stillness, as physically embodied by the gothic heroine.

The passive agency this project proposes is grounded in the complexities

of resistance, and more specifically in the subtleties that distinguish between subjects and objects of resistance. To resist someone or something entails the action of opposing or withstanding an external force (OED 1a), the effect of impeding or stopping this force (OED 2a), and the power or capacity to do so (OED 3a). The earliest definition of resistance cites “the quality by which an inanimate body resists the action of another body” (OED) — a definition this project will argue is literalised in the gothic mode. The gothic heroine is the inanimate body who resists the action of an oppressive, masculine force, and her inanimateness is the quality by which she does so. This produces not only the effect of halting the force and arresting the action of both the oppressor and the narrative, but is also demonstrative of a particular power or capacity. Inaction as well as action, passivity as well as activity, constitute forms of agency, as an expression and exertion of control; the heroine’s inertia enables an embodied assertion of subjectivity that is independent of the force that seeks to subdue it. This definition of passive agency thus extends not only to the physical conditions of stillness, immobility, and incapacity that structure each chapter of the dissertation (fainting, sleep, illness, and death), but also to their disengagement from the violence that coincides with these conditions.³

The violence enacted against the gothic heroine, both physical and psychological, is almost always an enforced form of sexual relation, as either rape

3 As such, references to “unconsciousness” indicate a more literal, embodied state of not being conscious or awake, rather than its Freudian connotations of repression and the unconscious mind (or of pre- or sub-consciousness).

(or attempted rape) or an arranged marriage to which the heroine is vehemently opposed. At its core, the gothic mode is characterised by a pervasive and overwhelming sense of terror, generated by its transgression of normative formal and social structures. As Haggerty notes, this terror is “almost always sexual terror, and fear, and flight, and incarceration, and escape are almost always colored by the exoticism of transgressive sexual aggression” (Haggerty 2). The gothic heroine’s body is often the locus of this aggression, as “that which is put on excessive display, and whose violent, vulnerable immediacy” gives gothic fiction what Steven Bruhm describes as its “beautiful barbarity” (Bruhm xvii). The gothic body, and the female body in particular, signifies in terms of how it speaks of what it endures. It is a site of narrative exegesis, upon which the gothic plot is enacted, developed, and resolved. But in this way the passive body is also a site of resistance to the violent mechanisms upon which the gothic plot hinges. The gothic formulation of virtue in distress imposes sexual relation on the heroine as a violent double-bind, “an absolute, often institutional prohibition or imperative” in opposition to the heroine’s will or desire (Sedgwick, *Coherence* 14). Whilst still, the heroine resists violation, and her passive state functions as an expression or assertion of this resistance. In the absence or repression of other means of articulating resistance, such as verbal opposition or physical struggle, passivity becomes a form of agency, particularly when physical stillness and inaction are manifestations of the will: a cognitive desire or inclination (OED I: 1a). The heroine’s will towards embodied states or conditions of stillness is a

form of passive agency not because willfulness itself is passive, but because the passive states she wills herself toward are articulate modes of inactivity, expressions of the heroine's resistance to violent sexual relation and physical embodiments of this will.

The physical body thus cannot be separated or distinguished from psychological aspects of the gothic, in terms of the ways in which terror inscribes itself on the body, the bodily experience of emotional and psychological distress, and the passive agency effected by the still female form. As such, analyses of subject development in the gothic mode depend upon what Elizabeth Grosz describes as an "understanding of *embodied subjectivity*," according to which the body "must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution" (Grosz 22-23, original emphasis). Grosz's conception of embodied subjectivity decentres the primacy of the mind, as that which is traditionally opposed to the body (in a history of Western dualism), and its attending correlatives (psyche, interiority, consciousness, soul), in constructions of subjectivity, and reformulates them "through a reconfiguration of the body" (vii). In this sense, the body does not merely house or contain the more abstract and immaterial entities that comprise subjectivity, but rather informs and develops these entities in the formation of the subject. Embodied subjectivity erodes the binary distinctions between mind and body, interiority and corporeality, and engages a more fluid, transitive, mutually constitutive, and "volatile" understanding of the subject. Contemporary feminist

theories of subjectivity are largely divisive on the subject of embodiment: some theories propose “essentialist” or “reductive” models of female subjectivity grounded in biology and anatomy, while others dispense with the physical body in an effort to (re)formulate female subjectivity outside of biological determinism. However, to jettison the body entirely is similarly reductive, as it elides corporeality as an effect *on* as well as *of* discourse. Embodied subjectivity centralizes the body as the locus of subjectivity, an exterior that cannot be separated from its interior, and as something that both produces and is produced by discourse.

While the concept of embodied subjectivity is not specific or restricted to the feminine, the necessarily limited scope of this study will focus on representations of the female body and subject development in the gothic novel to the exclusion of other discourses that inform both bodies and subjectivities. Although this dissertation does not directly engage theories of gothic masculinity or queer studies, these fields could be enriched by further explorations of passivity as a form of agency in the gothic, or in other literary genres, modes, and forms. Moreover, this project does not propose a single, unified, comprehensive reading of female subjectivity in the gothic novel, but rather examines the ways in which passivity can open up new or alternative interpretations of agency and subject development, and the multiplicity of subjectivities it produces and enables. The purpose of this project is to expand rather than narrow the gothic system of representation to include passivity as a form of agency in embodied

subject development, as well as the texts across and outside of the traditional Gothic canon in which it is represented. I begin this study of passivity with the gothic because the gothic mode is grounded precisely in that which is unspoken, or unaccounted for, in other literary forms. It exposes the limits and omissions of particular narrative discourses, such that, as Eve Sedgwick argues, the gothic mode is founded upon the bodily expression of the “unspeakable” or “unutterable” (Sedgwick, *Coherence* 14). Thus, the gothic heroine engages an “heroics of embodiment” in her struggle “to express graphically through her bodily hieroglyphic what cannot come into existence as narrative” (vi). However, while Sedgwick explores the layers or web of metaphors that confound language and narrative expression in the gothic, this project focuses more specifically on the connection between representations of agency and embodiment. The heroine’s passivity enables an embodied assertion of subjectivity that is otherwise inarticulate or unutterable under oppressive or violent conditions, as well as within the larger narrative framework of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic novel.

Conceptual Framework:

The association of passivity with femininity and the body in contemporary constructions of subjectivity is rooted in binaries of male/female, active/passive, mind/body, and subject/object, in which the passive, feminine body-object is defined against the active, masculine, rational subject. In order to

disengage passivity from binary relation and contingency, this project proposes an Irigarayan model of passivity that can be theorized using the representational metaphor of the vagina.⁴ Luce Irigaray's early work in both *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) and *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977) rejects the traditional location of the penis/phallus as the centre of the symbolic and the correlative emphasis on sight in theories of sexuality and subject formation, and argues against the emphatic "overcathexis of the eye, of appropriation by the gaze, and of the phallogomorphic sexual metaphors, its reassuring accomplices" (Irigaray, *Speculum* 47). This rejection of the visual dominance of the one sex/organ — the penis/phallus — that points toward feminine absence enables the rearticulation of an imaginary that privileges neither visibility nor singularity. Irigaray uses the metaphor of the vagina, as "two lips in continuous contact," to describe an imaginary that centralizes plurality rather than singularity, touch rather than sight, and contiguity rather than separation (*This Sex* 24). Phallogocentric language is the disruption of this contiguity — a fellatory phallus forcing itself between woman's lips and suffocating her ability to speak (ie: her entry into language and the symbolic order). However, as Irigaray suggests, while the penis/phallus as a site of sexual pleasure must always be mediated (by the hand, the vagina, etc), the vagina requires no external intervention as it is always

4 Although Irigaray has been criticised for what is perhaps an essentialist or reductive model of feminine discourse and subject development, it is useful here to help conceptualise passivity outside of its traditional (often negative) connotations of receptivity and contingency. As this project examines the representation (rather than reality) of female subject development and embodied subjectivity, it is concerned with the literary (rather than literal) implications of this model, and will not digress into further discussions of essentialism or material feminism.

already in continuous contact with itself. The vagina thus is *not* passive, in the traditional sense — it does not lie dormant, waiting to receive the penis/phallus; rather, it is what is already active within a symbolic order in which touch is not mediated by sight or motion — it just doesn't *look* active when activity is contingent upon visible mobility.

The metaphoricity of the vagina, as that which is already active in its stillness because it always touches itself, shifts the terms of representation to enable an articulation of passivity outside of a symbolic order in which it remains a derivative, supplementary failure. This representational model destabilizes the distinctions between I/Other and Inside/Outside, which replicate the traditional 1/0 binary of phallus/hole. The vaginal "hole in men's signifying economy" is an alternative to systems of representation that reproduce passivity as an instantiation of failed phallic signification (Irigaray, *Speculum* 50). Irigaray's conception of the vagina thus destabilises the primacy of the phallus, and proposes an alternative representational model that not only dislocates passivity from binary contingency, but also dispenses with necessarily hierarchised constructions of sexual relation. The relational imperative imposed upon the gothic heroine is a romanticised reduction of Hegel's "lordship and bondage" model of self-consciousness in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), wherein he describes the realisation of or coming to self-consciousness in terms of mutual recognition. For Hegel, self-consciousness "exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged"

(Hegel 111). This acknowledgement effaces both the self and the other, as it loses itself in its otherness, and subordinates the other in the assertion of its sameness. The self only becomes self-conscious when it recognizes itself in relation, as other to and for an/other being. Each being is simultaneously for itself and for the other, and mutually recognise one another as “self-identical consciousnesses” (113). Confronted by another self, the self is threatened and the two must engage in a struggle for pre-eminence, in which the victor emerges Master and the defeated consents to its own bondage.

Irigaray describes an alternative to Hegel’s process of mutual recognition, and re-forms the relational model in terms of the recognition of the other as an irreducible “You who are not and will never be me or mine” (Irigaray, *To Be Two* 19). It is in this recognition that Irigaray sees a way out of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, and out of a hierarchised model of subject formation that is contingent upon sexual relation. Irigaray’s process of mutual recognition is predicated on corresponding difference rather than sameness. She argues that this path diverges from Hegel’s in that its “purpose is not to assume the all into the absolute perfection of a world appropriate to a unique subject. It is rather to maintain the duality of the subjectivities and of their own worlds” (“Why Cultivate Difference?” 84). For Irigaray, the act of “saming” is what excludes women from subjectivity, as it reduces woman as other — not as an other consciousness, or even as not-male — to an inferior, defective masculinity; female subjectivity thus demands the mutual recognition of irreducible difference. In

order to account for this difference, Irigaray's later work theorizes a transition away from sexual relation and "being-to" (as to or for the other), towards a vaginal model of "being-two." "Being-two," like the two lips in continuous contact, plural or multiple but never reducible to one, recognizes the irreducible difference between multiple subjects without being contingent upon relation and reduction, and "represents another way of entering into relation with oneself, with the world, with other(s)" (82). "Being-two" cannot be represented as a relational binary, as with subject/object or I/other (and male/female, active/passive, etc), as it accounts instead for a plurality of subjectivities that cannot be reduced to a single, universal subject whose primacy is contingent upon the subjugation of another.

Following Irigaray's position that the purpose of a larger, feminist, psychoanalytic project is not simply to re-form an imaginary in which the female is subject rather than object (which would simply reproduce the dichotomy), but to destabilize the mechanism of subject formation at its core, this dissertation endeavours to dislocate passivity from a binary relational model in order to trace the emergence of a female subjectivity that is neither contingent upon nor subordinate to male activity. In gothic literature, it is precisely when and where conditions of passivity disengage the heroine from the violent imposition of sexual relation that she presents herself as subject. In these scenes, conditions such as fainting and illness occasion moments of narrative arrest, which halt the action of the text and provide the opportunity for narrative intervention and

exegesis. Narrative arrest recalls Irigaray's description of "rest" as the "availability of a still unconstrained energy, the serenity of Being-as-action that does not know itself as such" (Irigaray, *Forgetting* 66). The gothic heroine's passivity interrupts and redirects the the narrative; like Irigaray's model of the vagina, the heroine is not a dormant object laying in wait, waiting to come into being as being acted upon, but is (always) already active, already doing, already being-in-action. The arrest is active, as "the act of standing still, halting, or stopping" or of "remaining, abiding, continuance" (OED I: 1, 2). It contains a simultaneity of being at rest and at attention (OED I: 4), of seizure and imprisonment (OED II: 7, 9), of apprehension in both the active (to apprehend) and passive (to be apprehensive of) senses. It means to stop, to continue, to rest, and to wrest (from the Latin *comprendo*: to seize, to embrace, to include, to grasp, to comprehend). Passivity, as an embodiment of rest that occasions narrative arrest, enables the assertion of female subjectivity outside of sexual relation and contingency. This affirmative reading of passivity opens up the possibility for alternative representational modes wherein female subjectivity is not sacrificed to sexual relation, in being to or for the other.

Irigaray exposes the imperative of relational contingency that attend representations of passivity in phallogocentric symbolic economies. Historical constructions of passivity invoke a similar model, in which passivity signifies in relation to an external, dominating force. Scott Gordon, for example, links literary representations of passivity with virtue in terms of its early modern

Protestant association with disinterestedness and benevolence. He examines the “discourse of passivity” as an historical tendency to “construe behaviors as passive (or natural) [in order] to deny that individuals calculate their interest. This construction locates the agency for such behaviors outside the individual [...] They locate the source of crucial behaviors not in the individual will but elsewhere [...] and thus depict the agent as more passively prompted than actively choosing” (Gordon 4-5). This discourse of passivity “constructs a self whose disinterestedness is guaranteed by forces outside conscious control” (5). For Gordon, passivity signifies as an absence of individual will and (self-) conscious choice and control, such that the agent submits to or is determined by an authoritative external force. In more contemporary histories of material feminism and other social and political movements, passivity often signifies in terms of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance to such authoritative or oppressive forces, in the form of hunger strikes, sit-ins, and boycotts, for example. While this interpretation of passivity is perhaps analogous to passive agency in the sense of passive resistance, its purpose is to confront rather than disengage from the oppressive force. The material conditions and political discourses associated with passive resistance are beyond the scope of this project, which is limited to the representational economies of the gothic novel.

However, the conception of passivity in terms of receptivity and the capacity to suffer is similarly reproduced in the feminist theories of sadomasochism that permeate the gothic critical canon. These formulations of

passivity focus on its contingency, such that the passive (female object) is acted upon, determined by an external agency, and subject to imposition and suffering (OED 2). For many feminist and psychoanalytic gothic critics, masochism marks the locus or intersection of passivity, agency, and subjectivity for the gothic heroine. Michelle Massé, for example, argues that female masochism is “the centre of the Gothic,” and that gothic heroines “remain victims or accomplices” of masculine authority and sexual tyranny (Massé 2-5). As masochism is the implicit or expressed pleasure derived from suffering, critics like Massé interpret the gothic heroine as a complicit participant in the violence enacted against her, and suggest that the development of the heroine’s subjectivity is contingent upon submission, suffering, and sacrifice. Eugenia DeLamotte contends that masochism “is a form of pseudopower, which gives the victim the illusion of willing circumstances she cannot control. It allows for an honest attribution of the physical source of those sufferings to be someone else, but it mystifies their cause by deluding the victim into experiencing her passive victimization as active, self-generated desire” (DeLamotte 157-158). Laura Hinton similarly identifies a “sadomasochistic structure underlying the heroine’s desire for [...] radical autonomy and social submission” (Hinton 294). These interpretations of passivity and female subject development tend to reproduce a reductive economy in which the heroine participates in the rituals of sexual relation in terms of “*either* passive acquiescence *or* active resistance,” without exploring the strategic possibilities of passive agency as embodied conditions of stillness,

immobility, unconsciousness, and debility (Bowers, "Representing" 146).

Moreover, critics like Haggerty and Halberstam use queer theory to propose a more fluid spectrum of sexual agency and demonstrate the subversive possibilities of transgression beyond sadomasochism, but similarly exclude passivity from analyses of sexuality and subjectivity.

While theories of passivity in relation to agency and subject development rarely acknowledge other forms, this dissertation considers representations of non-participation, inactivity, and stillness in precisely these terms. In this sense, passivity is not limited to the subordinate term in "an active/passive pair of opposites but would signify a different economy, a different relation" (Irigaray, *I Love to You* 38). Rather than continuing to reproduce a critical interpretive framework in which the passive gothic heroine signifies only in proximity, in approximation, in relation *to*, this project explores passivity in relation to expressions of the heroine's subjectivity that are not determined by an imperative of enforced sexual relation. In her analysis of Augustan seduction fiction from Aphra Behn to Samuel Richardson, Toni Bowers examines sexual relation in terms of the relative (in)distinction between rape and seduction, "force or fraud."⁵ Bowers suggests that this "or" is a discursive indeterminacy that "functions less to distinguish synonyms from alternatives than to complicate the

5 Bowers's book *Force or Fraud* takes its title from Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (1712), in which the Baron pauses to consider the best strategy for obtaining Belinda's curl: "For when Success a Lover's Toil attends, / Few ask, if Fraud or Force attain'd his Ends" (Pope 2.33-34). Bowers contends that force and fraud "become interchangeable at the very moment the Baron pauses to choose between them" (Bowers, *Force* 2).

very idea of making such a distinction" (Bowers, *Force* 3). Bowers considers the ways in which amatory fiction produces "models of gendered sexual agency besides the model of male initiatory desire and subordinate female response, the latter limited to resistance 'or' consent [...] and permits glimpses beyond that reductive binary," as amatory writers "worked to imagine subordinated (sexual) agencies that, when presented with 'force or fraud,' responded in excess of resistance *or* consent" (Bowers, *Force* 4). This study of the gothic mode, beginning where Bowers ends but before the gothic canonically begins, examines passive agency as a means of rejecting this "or" and its premise of sexual relation, and of enabling the assertion of subjectivity dislocated from this contingency.

Periodisation and Historical Scope:

The classification and periodisation of the gothic remains one of the central contentions in gothic criticism. What is called "gothic" expands with increasing inclusivity, but implodes and subdivides with greater specificity, such that the "notorious difficulty of defining the Gothic genre lies in its being at once highly formulaic and subject to great variability" (Shapira 11). The gothic formula tends to centralise a collection of tropes and thematic devices — the trappings or accoutrements that characterise the extensive body of what is called "gothic" literature. As Maggie Kilgour suggests, generic analysis of the gothic "often devolves into a cataloguing of stock characters and devices which are simply recycled from one text to the next" (Kilgour 4). Such interpretations

reduce the gothic to its generic conventions, the collection of “Spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits [who] populate Gothic landscapes as suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats” (Botting 2). This collection of tropes can then be subdivided with greater specificity and variability according to the historical period or “wave” to which the text belongs, as in historical analyses of the genre’s popularity in the 1790s and 1890s; the socio-cultural and geographic setting of the narrative, such as the influences of Mediterranean Catholicism or Ancient Egypt on the production of British gothic texts; the gender of the author and/or protagonist, including studies of the “female gothic” or gothic masculinities; or the innumerable permutations of literary and thematic devices the text employs.

The Gothic, as a proper noun identifying a specific generic and canonical literary repertoire, refers to a body of texts situated within a particular historical and cultural mode of production. Most critics mark the birth of the Gothic canon with Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and include within this “first wave” of Gothic literature the extensive collection of gothic texts published in the 1790s and early nineteenth century, concluding with Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). The “second wave” of the Gothic generally refers to the Gothic revival during the *fin-de-siècle* period of the late nineteenth century, while subsequent waves locate specific historical moments in Gothic literature throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Stephen Bernstein notes that the “comprehension of a genre which has now spanned over two hundred years

as simply and monolithically ‘the gothic’ is a problematic, though not infrequent, approach,” and suggests that “it appears more reasonable to see the gothic as a pure genre only during the primary period of its inception, [...] during which the various strands which combine to create the genre show remarkable cohesion” (Bernstein 151). This project, however, is distanced from the Gothic (as proper noun), which refers to the more precise, historical instantiation of the genre that Bernstein describes, and will instead use the gothic (as an adjectival noun) to refer to a broader, more ahistorical, literary mode. The gothic mode proposed in this dissertation is not bound by the historical or canonical limitations of the Gothic genre; it expands the scope of the gothic to include texts situated between “waves” and reads connections between texts beyond the historical and material conditions of their production.

While a literary text occupies a particular place in its own history, and is itself an instantiation of that history and of that specific moment of meaning and representation, it also persists across or through this history, continually re-presenting itself, indiscreet in its persistence (simultaneously *here* and *nowhere*, or perhaps *now/here*), fluid across a literary plane of re-presentation. As Fredric Jameson suggests:

when we speak of a mode, what can we mean but that this particular type of literary discourse is not bound to the conventions of a given age, nor indissolubly linked to a given type of verbal artifact, but rather persists as a temptation and a mode of

expression across a whole range of historical periods, seeming to offer itself, if only intermittently, as a formal possibility which can be revived and renewed. (Jameson 142)

While Jameson uses this definition of mode to support an historical account of “romance as genre,” he also opens analyses of literary modes to greater interpretive possibilities beyond the historical. The gothic mode is perhaps unique in its persistence and longevity, as it recurs, in various forms and iterations, throughout more discrete literary histories, and resists limitation to the specific conditions of those histories while inscribing them within larger literary contexts. As Haggerty suggests, the gothic mode is thus useful to feminist and psychoanalytic literary analysis, as “gothic works defy limits and preconceptions of behavior and offer a usefully uncategorized range of personal, sexual, and emotional behaviors and attitudes. In doing so they add to an understanding of the sexual past and enrich understanding of the culture of which they are a part” (Haggerty 202). They can also be interpreted independent of these conditions, as forming and contributing to a larger literary system of representation, in which this range of behaviours and attitudes can signify new, imagined, or alternative subjectivities that are not articulated elsewhere or otherwise.

The gothic mode thus describes a system of representation that continues to reproduce its own conventions across an extensive literary history. As noted above, Horace Walpole founded what would become the Gothic canon with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. Walpole’s narrative follows an

aristocratic family plagued by the tragedies and supernatural vengeance incited by their villainous patriarch. The lord of the castle, consumed by semi-incestuous lust and greed, pursues a chaste and beautiful heiress through a labyrinthine estate in partial ruin and the catacombs of a nearby church. The villain is eventually vanquished by a valiant peasant, later revealed to be a prince, who rescues and marries the heroine. As Haggerty summarizes, Walpole's text "combines the sexual anxiety of a victimized female, the incestuous desire of a libidinous male, the use of the actual physical features of the castle to represent political and sexual entrapment, and an atmosphere deftly rendered to produce terror and gloom" (Haggerty 22). This narrative forms the basis of the gothic plot, and provides the model for an overwhelmingly prolific literary genre. In the preface to the second edition of *The Old English Baron* (1777), for example, Clara Reeve acknowledges that her story is "the literary offspring of the Castle of Otranto, written upon the same plan" (Reeve 2). The tale is rewritten again in *Clermont* (1798) by Regina Maria Roche, in which the chaste and beautiful heroine Madeline undergoes various tests of honour and trials of her virtue. She is trapped and assaulted in a crypt and nearly blackmailed into marriage by a malevolent stranger before discovering her noble heritage and reuniting with her beloved De Seignie. Reeve and Roche repeat Walpole's story with little variation, solidifying the gothic formula as it developed.

This narrative is liberally reformulated and retold throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both within and outside of the Gothic

canon, with increasing variation and embellishment. In Eliza Fenwick's novel *Secresy* (1795), for example, the heroine Sibella is imprisoned by her villainous uncle, who seeks to control her fortune. In an attempt to escape his persecution, Sibella entrusts herself to another male authority, and enters into a clandestine relationship that results in her pregnancy. In Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), sometimes read as a precursor to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the heroine Lucy's engagement to her beloved Edgar, son of her father's enemy, is thwarted by her ambitious and manipulative mother, who forces Lucy to marry against her will. Immediately following the wedding ceremony, Lucy stabs her husband, and soon after descends into madness, falls ill, and dies.⁶ Both Scott and Fenwick expose the social mechanisms that hinge upon women's sexual virtue and economic dependence on men, and destabilise the period's normative class and gender structures. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu revisits and reimagines this plot in numerous texts, including the novellas *Spalatro* (1843), whose protagonist takes his name from a minor villain in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), and *Carmilla* (1872), whose heroine Laura is tormented by the titular lesbian vampire, who succeeds Polidori's *Vampyre* (1818) and precedes Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1898). Le Fanu connects and transitions between the historical waves of the gothic canon, and contributes to an evolving literary mode that continues to draw from the formula Walpole foregrounds in *The Castle of Otranto*.

⁶ See Lakshmi Krishnan's article "'It has devoured my existence'" (2007) for a detailed comparison of *The Bride of Lammermoor* with *Wuthering Heights*.

However, the conventions of the gothic plot that Walpole established are original to neither the author nor the generic canon.⁷ The gothic elements of transgression, terror, and sexual threat of virtue in distress in particular are present at the birth of the novel itself, troubling the classification and periodisation of the gothic novel even as it emerged. Samuel Richardson's mid-eighteenth-century novels (and even earlier texts, such as Eliza Haywood's 1718 novel *Love in Excess*, for example) are largely "about" sexual threat, and this trope persists throughout the development of the novel, both within and outside of the scope of the gothic mode. Though excluded from the generic catalogue of the Gothic canon, these texts (in)formed the gothic mode from its inception. Many critics agree that the gothic heroine was "transported directly from the sentimental novel," but one can similarly propose that, within a larger scope of the gothic mode, the sentimental heroine is rather gothic (MacAndrew and Gorsky 736). As Frederick Frank argues, Richardson's novels not only prefigure the sentimental tradition, but also introduce the gothic "prototype of the victimized and violated female sufferer, a maiden who is by temperament something of a hedonist-hysteric, addicted to nightmarish fantasies of carnal anguish and cravings for sexual martyrdom, a Gothic woman of feeling who secretly desires to be brutalized rather than loved" (Frank 50). Despite his

7 The full title of the novel's first edition is *The Castle of Otranto, A Story. Translated by William Marshal, Gent. From the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto*, and claimed a sixteenth-century Italian manuscript as its source material. Walpole later acknowledged sole authorship of the text, but his original title draws attention to pre-existing source material, albeit fictitious. It is significant that even the acknowledged originator of the Gothic canon gestured towards a larger literary mode to which his narrative contributed.

reductive stereotypes, Frank has a point: “Richardson’s two famous novels of feminine distress, masculine malignancy, and flight and pursuit are in many fundamental respects ur-Gothic texts,” as instantiations of “a fantasy of the multiple self under unbearable stress from within and without” (50).

Richardson’s novels establish passive agency as a means of resisting the untenable conditions of virtue in distress, which are variously explored and exploited throughout the development of the gothic novel.

This project thus engages the gothic mode (rather than the historical genre) to explore recurrent representations of passivity within a larger narrative framework of virtue in distress, beginning with Richardson’s *Pamela*. As Frank suggests, the “Gothic pretext” of Pamela’s narrative often overshadows its moral context, and its incidents and characters “helped to inaugurate the Gothic novel” (Frank 59). But while scholars generally credit Walpole with the birth of the Gothic canon, *The Castle of Otranto* and the gothic mode it produced cast “uncanny shadows” on “the privileged loci of realism” established in Richardson’s novels (Botting 15). In this sense, *Pamela* “gothicises” the literary tradition of virtue in distress by casting “uncanny shadows” on a servant-girl’s rise in social and economic status. Armstrong suggests Richardson “deployed the strategies of conduct-book literature within fiction, and he contained the strategies of the most deleterious fiction — a tale of seduction — within the framework of a conduct book” in an effort to “domesticate fiction” (Armstrong 109). The practical applications of the conduct book combined with the “uncanny

shadows" cast on the seduction narrative combine to produce a literary tradition from which the gothic mode emerges. Pamela's first-person account of the trial of her virtue transforms the real(ist) circumstances of her plight into particularly gothic tropes: abduction and imprisonment in an isolated location, relentless persecution at the hands of a morally-bereft hero-villain and his agents, and the persistent threat of sexual violence. As Armstrong describes, Pamela's circumstances are "grimly gothic": estates become prisons, neighbours and servants act as guards and spies, the housekeeper appears a "procuress," "witchcraft" transforms livestock into evil manifestations of the spirits of her persecutors, and her employer is a malevolent would-be rapist in constant pursuit of Pamela's ruin (123). The novel is thus proto-gothic in its representation of a seemingly benign marriage plot as an elaborate labyrinth of sexual predation from which the heroine must escape with her virtue intact.

Maggie Kilgour notes that gothic novels most commonly delineate "a battle between antithetical sexes, in which an aggressive sexual male, who wants to indulge his own will, is set against a passive spiritual female, who is identified with the restrictions of social norms" (Kilgour 12). In many ways, Richardson introduces this conflict in *Pamela*, as the novel demarcates what Kate Ferguson Ellis identifies as a "shift in the representation of temptation." She suggests that "before 1740 sexual temptation was a force that heroines were either unwilling or unable to resist [...] With the publication of *Pamela*, the possibility of resistance is called forth and participates as a necessary component in the new discourse on

female virtue" (Ellis 20). Resistance became an essential means of demonstrating and defining virtue, and virtue in distress thus provided the principle narrative framework in which to represent the trial necessary for its demonstration. As Bowers delineates in the context of eighteenth-century amatory fiction, this framework often complicates the conditions of sexual relation, conflating or confusing circumstances of:

courtship, supposedly a process of mutual consent, *seduction*, which involves the gradual achievement of female collusion with primary male desire, and *rape*, an act of force defined by female resistance or non-consent [...] courtship, seduction, and rape tended to overlap, like the consent, complicity, and resistance that supposedly distinguished them. (Bowers, "Representing" 141)

In the later gothic mode this dissertation explores, resistance is set apart from consent and capitulation, and the conditions are further complicated and exaggerated by generic tropes of abduction, isolation, and enclosure; physical and psychological trauma; terror, horror, and an overwhelming sense of impending sexual threat. In the gothic mode, resistance becomes a primary form of self-assertion, which manifests in the various representations and articulations of passive agency with which the heroines negotiate their peril.

Chapter Breakdown:

This dissertation begins its exploration of representations of passivity

with Samuel Richardson, and then examines novels published incrementally across the broad historical scope of the gothic mode. The chapter breakdown is structured so as to analyse four recurrent representations of female passivity: fainting, sleep, illness, and death. The first chapter considers Richardson's proto-gothic novel *Pamela* (1740), whose titular heroine repeatedly faints when she is attacked by her rapacious master. The second chapter investigates the violent bedchamber scenes in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), in which the would-be victims of rape and murder prove impenetrable, as their sleeping forms render their attackers impotent and immobile. The third chapter moves into the nineteenth century with an analysis of mental and physical illness as strategic incapacity in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), while the fourth and final chapter returns to Richardson with an examination of the will towards death in *Clarissa* (1748). Pamela, Clarissa, and the gothic heroines who follow in their wake form a trajectory for the development of female subjectivity through passive agency, as it is embodied in conditions of stillness, debility, and willful illness and death. These texts are exemplary not only of the passive conditions explored in each chapter, but also of the gothic mode to which I argue they belong. While this dissertation expands the historical scope of the gothic to include Richardson's mid-eighteenth-century novels, it focuses on popular texts (rather than lost or understudied, such as those mentioned above) published at fifty-year intervals to demonstrate the breadth and depth of representations of passive agency in the the gothic mode.

Chapter 1 examines the fainting heroine as a central figure in the emergence of the novel, and a precursor to the gothic heroine. Richardson's first novel *Pamela* foregrounds representations of unconsciousness as moments of narrative arrest, particularly in response to sexual threat, as the heroine repeatedly defends herself from rape and dishonour by fainting. Pamela's personal account of her ordeal, in the epistolary form of letters and journal entries, exaggerates the realist courtship narrative into a gothic melodrama of virtue in distress, transforming her experience from real(ist) to gothic. She is abducted and confined within an isolated estate, suffers physical and psychological persecution by a rapacious villain, and is terrorised by the persistent and overwhelming threat of sexual violence. As Frank observes, in *Pamela*, "Lover and beloved are exaggerated into victimizer and victim, pursuer and pursued, precisely the relation in which the villain stands to the maiden in the typical Gothic novel" (Frank 52). While Pamela's physical and verbal resistance to Mr B's advances has little to no effect, her fainting fits prevent Mr B from raping her because her unconscious state renders him unwilling or unable to do so — it is her inert, inactive body, rather than her active verbal resistance, that successfully signifies in the text. The fainting fits demonstrate the inefficacy of Pamela's language; her virtue triumphs not because of her verbal protestations and repeated avowals to preserve her chastity until marriage, but because fainting provides physical proof of her sincerity. Fainting interrupts Mr B's violent seduction ritual by disengaging Pamela's participation in it, and this

passive resistance proves her virtue worthy of his love and respect. As a plot device, Pamela's fainting spells construct and develop the narrative in fits and starts, arresting the rape-plot and redirecting the narrative action so that the marriage-plot can unfold. They enable Mr B's moral reformation and Pamela's transformation from servant to wife, thereby producing the conditions favourable to a more amicable sexual relation.

In the canonical gothic novels of the 1790s, sleep similarly functions as a form of passive agency that protects the heroine from penetrative masculine violence. Not only does sleep give way to dreams and nightmares that portend of immanent peril, warning the heroine of the dangers awaiting her while further developing the gothic plot, it also forestalls these dangers even as they loom over her. Chapter 2 explores the recurring similarities between bedchamber scenes in novels by Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, in which the unconscious vulnerability of the sleeping heroine momentarily paralyses the villain and interrupts the impending violence. In each scene, the villain is arrested by the sight of the sleeping heroine, both in the sense that is he rendered impotent and immobile, unable to act out his malevolent designs, and in that he is given narrative pause to (re)consider the subject position of the heroine. In the gothic mode, the sleeping heroine is suspended between active and passive, subject and object: her passive state subverts the villain's authority and the primacy of the masculine gaze, usurping the subjectivity of the observer and shifting the heroine's position from object to subject. According to Linda Bayer-Berenbaum,

sleep in the gothic novel is a form of “night-consciousness,” in which “a person is more susceptible to the power of suggestion, less analytical or rational, less strictly controlled; the defense mechanisms of the psyche become weary and less effective” (Bayer-Berenbaum 26). While this chapter explores sleep as a form of agency, a close-reading of the bedchamber scenes will show how the sleeping heroine is paradoxically *more* effective and expressive than while awake. Sleep enables a passive expression of subjectivity that does not signify while the heroine is conscious, when she stands in relation to the villain as an object to be violated, subjugated, or subdued. As this chapter will show, sleep destabilizes this relation by disarming the villain, rendering him impotent and immobile while affirming the subject position of the heroine.

Following the popularisation of the gothic novel at the end of the eighteenth century, the Romantic gothic mode shifted in focus from feminine virtue in distress to masculine existential crisis, until mid-century writers like Emily Brontë resurrected the gothic narrative apparatus of passive agency in the form of illness in *Wuthering Heights*. Chapter 3 examines illness as a form of self-assertion — a means of preserving and articulating the heroine’s subjectivity outside of the normative domestic constructs of marriage. Catherine Earnshaw repeatedly wills herself sick in response to the imperative of sexual relation, and specifically in the rejection of her husband Linton’s ultimatum that she choose (to signify only in relation to) Heathcliff or himself. Brontë represents Catherine as complexly self-aware, and Linton’s ultimatum threatens her perception of herself

as subject. In order to preserve and assert herself as such, Catherine wills herself sick. While Catherine differs from earlier gothic heroines in that she is more fully developed and not subject to the conventional limitations of sexual virtue, the physical expression of her internal conflict and romantic distress is characteristic of the gothic mode. Catherine's invocation of illness is an assertion of cognitive will over the physical body. Sickness thus becomes an embodied manifestation of Catherine's crisis of identity and the psychological distress occasioned by Linton's ultimatum, such that, as Miriam Bailin suggests, "somatic disorder" is her "primary form of self-assertion" (Bailin 48-49). As Catherine's verbal demands go largely unheeded or ignored, her embodied articulation of illness is more legible in the text than any other expression of identity or subjectivity. Catherine's repeated bouts of illness manifest in the text as moments of narrative arrest, and signify a retreat from the conditions of discursive determination. Her sickness is significantly non-discursive, in that it is represented as a textual abyss or gap in the narrative. Like Pamela's fainting fits, Catherine's illness interrupts the narrative, and disengages her from the imperative of sexual relation.

Chapter 4 makes a recursive return to Richardson's *Clarissa* as the limit case for this study, and logical end to its larger thematic structure. Rather than focus on Clarissa's rape as narrative apotheosis, this chapter argues for the primacy of Clarissa's death as the text's climax and narrative drive. Throughout the entire novel, Clarissa expresses her preference for death over the conditions of marriage and sexual relation, and the text is dedicated to her dying. Clarissa

would rather die than marry, or otherwise signify in terms of sexual relation, and she is good to her word. From the outset of the novel, Clarissa declares that she would prefer live burial, cruel torture, and any form of death to avoid marrying against her will and inclination. When she is tricked by Lovelace into fleeing from her family and forced nuptials, Clarissa finds herself in a similarly dire situation. While Lovelace threatens her chastity with increasing aggression and violence, Clarissa repeatedly reaffirms her preference for death over sexual relation. After Lovelace succeeds in his designs and rapes Clarissa while she is drugged unconscious, she dedicates herself to dying. Clarissa invokes her illness and death, just as Catherine Earnshaw does one hundred years later in *Wuthering Heights*. While the will to death does not often receive affirmative readings within a liberal humanist interpretive framework (including feminist criticism), this chapter demonstrates that, in the context of the gothic mode, death can be a successful form of passive agency for the disenfranchised heroine. The representation of Clarissa's expressed wish to die and realisation or accomplishment of this desire is a means of self-assertion and self-determination that defies the conventions and authorities that attempt to speak for her.

The following chapters explore passivity as both a means of resisting the violent conditions of sexual relation, and of enabling the assertion of embodied forms of subjectivity. Fainting, sleep, illness, and death are among the most recurrent tropes of the gothic, but are also exemplary representations of passivity as agency. Passive agency, like the gothic mode itself, is characterised by an

indiscreet set of conventions that is paradoxically both limiting and productive. Both restrict the development of the subject within a particular discursive apparatus, but this framework exposes its own limitations by destabilising the narrative and generic structures by which it is constructed and contained. As Halberstam suggests, the gothic is marked by “the breakdown of genre and the crisis occasioned by the inability to ‘tell,’ meaning both the inability to narrate and the inability to categorize” (Halberstam 23). By expanding and exposing the discursive scope of the gothic mode, this dissertation demonstrates how passivity works within this formula as a means of resisting its conventions. As the heroine in Radcliffe’s *The Italian* describes, it is a retreat from the gothic nightmare of “what is called the world” (Radcliffe, *Italian* 303); however, as Conger suggests, this movement is “a retreat to something as well: to the feminine self” (Conger, “Sensibility” 137). In reconceptualising passivity as a form agency that enables embodied assertions of subjectivity, this dissertation offers an affirmative reading of passivity that recovers the gothic heroine from the narrative and critical traditions by which she is reduced to a complicit and compliant stereotype, and reinterprets the gothic heroine as an active, sentient subject.

Chapter 1

“I fell into a Fit with my Fright and Terror”:
Fainting and the Gothic Heroine in Richardson’s *Pamela*

beware of fainting-fits ... Though at the time they may be refreshing & Agreeable, yet believe me they will in the end, if too often repeated & at improper seasons, prove destructive to your Constitution ... My fate will teach you this ... One fatal swoon has cost me my Life ... Beware of swoons Dear Laura ... A frenzy fit is not one quarter so pernicious; [...] Run mad as often as you chuse; but do not faint—

~ Jane Austen, *Love and Freindship* (1790)

There’s a way out of places you want to leave, but can’t. Fainting is like stepping sideways, out of your own body, out of time or into another time. When you wake up it’s later. Time has gone on without you.

~ Margaret Atwood, *Cat’s Eye* (1988)



Joseph Highmore - “Pamela Fainting” (1745)⁸

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a propensity to faint signified the fragility and refinement characteristic of and appropriate to a woman of leisure.

Unlike women of the labouring classes, whose socio-economic positions required

⁸ Plate 3 of 12. Held by the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne, Australia).

healthy, hearty constitutions, women of privilege cultivated delicacy of both manner and body. Fainting indicated a natural sensibility considered innate to those of genteel birth; in servants and other labourers, fainting often suggested posturing or affectation rather than genuine affliction — a presumption of delicacy appropriate to neither class nor blood. But whether afflicted or affected, a woman who fainted assumed a position of social privilege, and by the mid-nineteenth century, fainting was firmly established as fashionably feminine. *The Lady's Companion* (1854), for example, describes fainting as “a pleasure — not a healthful one, certainly, but still a pleasure — to enjoy so much sympathy about one [...] to hear expressions of concern, and pity, and admiration” (*Lady's Companion* 61). Fainting offered women an opportunity to display their delicacy as debility, and provided men with an occasion for heroism and noble action. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medical discourse does not make much of fainting, typically attributing loss of consciousness with a general weakness of constitution or faculties, and therefore tending to adhere more in women.⁹ Fainting was considered symptomatic of other ailments rather than a disorder in itself, and is listed among other minor symptoms of feminine afflictions, including heightened sensibility and hysteria. The limited medical discourse of the period suggests that fainting was more the subject of gossip and literature than of medicine.¹⁰ Indeed, the romantic possibilities of the faint made it not only

9 See entries on “syncope” and “lipothymy” in Robert James’s *Medicinal Dictionary* (1745).

10 The subject of fainting is relatively incidental to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medical discourse. For more on this dearth of documentation, see Zschirnt (1999), Summers (2001), and Csengei (2008).

fashionable socially, but also a particularly attractive literary trope. In the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel, fainting is romanticised rather than medicalised; according to Douglas Thorpe, “characters in fiction rarely faint for physiological reasons” (Thorpe 105). In gothic and sentimental literature in particular, fainting is the physical manifestation of an overwhelming experience of emotion, ranging from grief to joy to terror. It is the embodiment of emotional excess, which is perhaps why it lends itself so readily to romanticisation and exaggeration.

The above caution against fainting in Jane Austen’s *Love and Freindship* (1790) warns of the potential dangers of emotional excess. The epistolary short story, written when Austen was only fourteen, parodies the romantic novels of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that Austen read as an adolescent. In a letter from the heroine Laura to her young friend Marianne, Laura recounts the story of an unfortunate accident that widowed she and her friend Sophia. Overcome with grief after the deaths of their husbands, Sophia and Laura fall into fits: Sophia repeatedly faints, while Laura runs mad (Austen, *Minor Works* 99-100). Though both are insensible, Sophia’s weak constitution and repeated loss of consciousness prove fatal, while Laura’s madness warms her blood and protects her against the chill to which Sophia succumbs. Sophia’s final words warn Laura of the dangers of fainting (102). Laura’s hysterical episode demonstrates a strength of spirit lacking in Sophia’s overdeveloped sensitivity and delicate constitution, which prompt the fainting fits that precipitate her

death. Though the juvenile burlesque of Austen's early work hyperbolises the trope of the fainting heroine, her caricature emphasizes its narrative significance in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Austen again addresses the effects of fainting in *Emma* (1815), in which she develops the fainting trope beyond its stereotypical indication of women's delicacy, and suggests that the disruption it causes requires immediate narrative attention and explanation. When Harriet faints upon her arrival home after being accosted by a group of beggars, the narrator interjects with a brief note on the necessity of attending to the fainting victim: "A young lady who faints, must be recovered; questions must be answered, and surprises be explained. Such events are very interesting, but the suspense of them cannot last long" (*Emma* 294). Austen's ironic editorial interjection emphasizes its own narrative necessity; in literature, fainting produces a form of narrative arrest which halts the immediate action of the plot and requires intervention and explanation. It is not only the physical well-being of the fainted woman that demands attention, but also the circumstances that cause her to faint. Harriet's physical collapse excites the novel's characters and readers alike, and the narrative suspense it creates necessitates a detailed account of its precipitating events. According to Austen, the narrative gap fainting incurs must be discursively accounted for in the text.

Austen's editorial attention to fainting in *Emma* highlights a strategic narrative function that both the gothic and sentimental literary traditions exploit. Harriet is overcome with fear and emotion, the requisite conditions for the

literary swoon, as female characters faint “out of fear, strain, or out of the sheer over-refinement of [their] sensibility” (Thorpe 106). Thorpe locates the literary origins of the faint in the gothic, the sentimental, the melodrama, and the penny-dreadful — genres in which the fainting woman is susceptible to the malevolence of a villain and/or dependent upon the prowess and nobility of the hero. The faint thus engages a specific heteronormative gender dynamic in which the passive woman signifies in relation to an active male subject. In the gothic, this dynamic often manifests as sexual threat, rendering the unconscious woman vulnerable to violence and rape, while in the novel of sensibility, it exaggerates the heroine’s delicacy and emotion in order to cultivate sympathy and desire in an equally sensitive hero. Austen’s nod to both traditions acknowledges the concomitant generic evolution of the trope, but as this chapter will show, the fainting heroine in fact predates the birth of both genres, and is a central figure in the emergence of the novel itself. The threat of sexual violence, implicit in what became known as the “female gothic” and explicit in the “masculine gothic” in the 1790s, was already very much a part of the literary tradition in which Samuel Richardson was writing fifty years earlier.

This chapter will focus on Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) as a case study of fainting in response to immediate sexual threat, and examine how Richardson’s text establishes fainting as a trope of the gothic mode. Richardson’s novel is composed of a series of private journal entries and the letters the titular heroine writes to her parents, in which she recounts her experiences in the household

service of Mr B, a wealthy rake who lusts after his young maid. The chaste and virtuous Pamela verbally resists Mr B's repeated advances, but it is her propensity to faint when physically threatened that protects her from Mr B's rapacious designs. Pamela's unconscious state renders Mr B unwilling or unable to continue his attacks, and Pamela remains inviolable. Her steadfast protection of her maidenhood, aided by the delicacy of her constitution, eventually earns Mr B's respect as well as his love, and he rewards her virtue with marriage. The fainting fits occasioned by Mr B's incessant sexual advances cease once his desire is sanctioned by church law, but they enable Pamela's transformation over the course of the novel from servant girl into the wife of a nobleman. As Ian Watt notes, for female literary characters (and Pamela in particular), "a conspicuously weak constitution was both an assertion of a delicately nurtured past and a presumptive claim to a similar future" (Watt 161). Pamela's rewarded virtue and rise in social status is enabled by the natural frailty of her constitution, as it indicates the feminine delicacy and refinement of character necessary to her new position. While Watt's description of the "model" heroine as "very young, very inexperienced, and so delicate in physical and mental constitution that she faints at any sexual advance" fits the stereotype of female characters in gothic, sentimental, and other literary modes both pre- and post-dating Richardson's first novel, Pamela's fainting fits inaugurate the strategic narrative function of fainting specific to the gothic mode (161). Mr B's persistent sexual pursuit of Pamela drives the plot, while Pamela's swoons repeatedly halt it, forming a

stilted and protracted courtship narrative that later becomes characteristic of the gothic novel.

Richardson represents Pamela's fainting fits as a form of *deus ex machina*, a divine intervention that preserves her honour and virginity. Pamela exclaims that she has "Reason to bless God, who, by disabling me in my Faculties, enabled me to preserve my Innocence; and when all my Strength would have signified nothing, magnify'd himself in my Weakness!" (Richardson, *Pamela* 205). Contrary to Armstrong's famous assertion that Pamela "cannot be raped because she is nothing but words" (Armstrong 116), this chapter will argue that Pamela cannot be raped because, when unconscious, she is nothing but body. Armstrong suggests that "it is not a creature of flesh and blood Mr B encounters in the body naked and supine upon the bed, but a proliferation of female words" (116), but in the moments of direct sexual attack, it is precisely Pamela's naked and supine body, and *not* her verbal articulation, that prevents Mr B from raping her. As a closer examination of these moments in the text will demonstrate, Pamela's verbal resistance serves to encourage and strengthen Mr B's attempts on her honour, while her fainting fits immediately subdue them. Thus, when Lovelace threatens Clarissa in Richardson's second novel that "fainting will not save" her (*Clarissa* 378), the warning engages an intertextual acknowledgement of the trope, as readers familiar with *Pamela* will recall that this is precisely what fainting does. Fainting prevents Pamela from being raped, thereby enabling her to resist Mr B's advances and disengage from the violent conditions of sexual

relation he attempts to impose upon her.

Fainting also provides evidence of Pamela's virtue and transforms Mr B's sexual interest into concern for her health and well-being, aiding in his moral reformation — the conditions necessary for marriage and the amicable terms of sexual relation upon which Pamela insists. As this chapter will demonstrate, fainting facilitates the marriage plot as Pamela's story transforms from "virtue in distress" to "virtue rewarded," which culminates in "narratological and interpretative closure, marked in a wedding that legitimates simultaneously social status, states of feeling, Christian virtue, and moral worth" (O'Connell 386). However, as Richardson delineates in the second half of the novel, in order to earn this reward and achieve the marital partnership she desires, Pamela must also surrender her authorial voice. Pamela's fainting fits occasion narrative gaps and lapses in consciousness that compel Pamela to account for herself from Mr B's perspective, and she reconstructs her subject position accordingly. Mr B's moral reformation has similar implications, as it prompts him to redirect his efforts to control Pamela from her body to her pen. Because he cannot possess Pamela physically, he instead endeavours to possess her textually, as reader, editor, and, as Pamela claims towards the end of the novel, "Author" of the narrative she produces (*Pamela* 353). Fainting preserves Pamela's virtue, which is what fuels Mr B's desire to possess her — sexually at first, but eventually in marriage. As Corrinne Harol argues, Pamela's "virtue comes to represent the intangible qualities that make her suitable for the wildly implausible

hypergamous marriage with Mr B" (Harol 198). Pamela's virtue transforms Mr B's sexual desire into respect and esteem, and makes her worthy of his rewarding it with marriage. In this sense, the interruption Pamela's fainting fits produce in the rape-plot also functions as narrative impetus: it is what prompts the marriage-plot to unfold.

The Sacrificial Virgin: Fainting and the (Re)Construction of Subjectivity

Pamela's fainting fits recur throughout the novel, and are almost always occasioned by a direct physical threat against her person. As Mr B's attacks grow increasingly violent, so do Pamela's fits, and the degree of her physical response is proportionate to the level of threat he poses. Mr B's initial attempt to insinuate himself to Pamela occurs early in the text. In Letter XI, she tells her mother of the liberties Mr B takes with her in the Summer-house. While his actions are somewhat benign — he merely puts his arm around her — Pamela is "so benumb'd with Terror" that she nearly swoons: "I sunk down, not in a Fit, and yet not myself; and I found myself in his Arms, quite devoid of Strength, and he kissed me two or three times, as if he would have Eaten me" (*Pamela* 23).

Pamela's terror manifests itself physically; while she does not completely lose consciousness, she becomes senseless, and is not her "self." Pamela's identity is so closely tied to her maidenhood that any threat to her virginity is also an assault on her sense of self. She conflates modesty with identity, professing to know nothing "but how to cherish her Virtue and good Name," because for

Pamela, one is inseparable from the other (31). Mr B's attack compromises Pamela's sense of self because it transforms her from maid into prey. She fears he will sacrifice her innocence to his hunger — that he will consume her as the wolf does the lamb — and she loses herself in her terror. As she struggles to free herself, Mr B detains her and demands to know what harm he has done, to which Pamela replies: "You have taught me to forget myself" (23). While "self" in this sense can refer to her "place" or station — Pamela's subservient position to her employer and master, which is compromised by Mr B's attention — but it also suggests that, in forgetting herself, she becomes (or imagines she becomes) someone or something else. Pamela's identity is threatened not only by Mr B's lack of conscience, but also her own lapse in (self-) consciousness.

Following the Summer-house attempt, Pamela resumes her domestic duties despite her fear of Mr B and the threat he poses to her honour. Pamela continues in his service only because the housekeeper Mrs Jervis assures Pamela that her virtue will protect her. Mrs Jervis contends that because Pamela "behav'd so virtuously, [Mr B] will be asham'd of what he has done, and never offer the like to [her] again" (*Pamela* 26). Pamela's obsessive preoccupation with the maintenance of her virginity is perhaps less absurd than some critics suggest, as both her parents and Mrs Jervis imply that Pamela's virtue is not only her dearest and most endearing quality, but somehow also a form of insurance in and of itself: Pamela's virginity is unassailable by virtue of her virtue. This circular logic conflates Pamela's (physical, embodied) virginity with her (interior, subjective)

virtue. As Harol suggests, while Pamela's "virtue depends upon preservation of her virginity (while she remains unmarried), it ultimately transcends physicality," and is constitutive of her identity and construction of selfhood (Harol 198). Pamela's honour, "that Jewel [...] which no Riches, nor Favour, nor anything in this life, can make up to" her, is thus integral to her sense of self (worth) because it is, in effect, more valuable than her own life (*Pamela* 14).

Pamela promises her parents that she would "die a thousand Deaths, rather than be dishonest in any way" (15), and later tells Mrs Jewkes that she believes "to rob a Person of her Virtue, is worse than cutting her Throat" (110). Though Clarissa similarly asserts that "my honour is dearer to me than my life!" (*Clarissa* 725), she is adamant that she would prefer death to any sexual engagement, including marriage, while Pamela values her virginity as a claim to marriage. Pamela privileges her maidenhood over life itself because, as a servant without familial means for a dowry, virginity is her only currency in the upper-class marriage market. Unlike Clarissa, who has independent means to support her desire to remain single, marriage is the only way Pamela can legitimize a rise in social and economic status. Pamela thus protects her virginity with the reflex and vehemence characteristic of a basic instinct for self-preservation.

When Mr B challenges Pamela's commitment to chastity, she prays: "may I never survive one Moment, that fatal one in which I shall forfeit my Innocence" (*Pamela* 31). He accuses her of foolish logic, appealing to the story of Lucretia in an effort to convince her that her innocence would remain intact if she was taken

by force. He asks: “Who ever blamed *Lucretia*, but the *Ravisher* only?,” arguing that rape is the fault of the rapist, not the victim, and only the rapist would hold the victim accountable for his actions (32). But Mr B’s argument does not take the consequences of dishonour into account. According to Roman legend, *Lucretia* commits suicide after being raped in order to restore her virtue, and her death prompts the expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome and establishment of the Roman Republic (c500 BCE). Pamela is keenly aware that *Lucretia* only earns her legendary absolution because she kills herself — she had to die in order to reestablish her innocence. As Ian Donaldson explains in *The Rapes of Lucretia*, “The ultimate act of physical violence administered by the woman to herself is intended to cancel the earlier act of physical violence, administered to her by another [...] Like a religious sacrifice, the suicide seems to cleanse the effects of pollution, and to restore lost purity and innocence” (Donaldson 25). *Lucretia*’s suicide mitigates the shame and stigma of rape, thereby recuperating her lost honour. Pamela thus appropriates Mr B’s appeal to the legend in her reiteration of her oath: “May I, [...] *Lucretia* like, justify myself with my Death, if I am used Barbarously” (*Pamela* 32). In effect, Pamela threatens to kill herself if Mr B rapes her because it is the only way she could recover her innocence.

In the midst of their discussion, Mr B attempts to test Pamela’s resolve by putting his hand in her bosom. Pamela’s subsequent letter to her parents indicates that she only narrowly escapes Mr B’s inappropriate gesture. Inspired with the speed and strength of indignation, she flies from him to the adjacent

room, where she faints:

I just remember I got into the Room; for I knew nothing further of the Matter till afterwards; for I fell into a Fit with my Fright and Terror, and there I lay, till he, as I suppose, looking through the Keyhole, spy'd me lying all along upon the Floor, stretch'd out at my Length; and then he call'd Mrs Jervis to me, who, by his Assistance, bursting open the Door, he went away, seeing me coming to myself. (*Pamela* 32)

Pamela imagines that Mr B spies on her through the keyhole, visually pursuing her where he physically cannot. Richardson re-envisioned this scene in *Clarissa*, when Lovelace peers through the keyhole into Clarissa's chamber, and "beheld her in a sweet slumber, [...] sitting in her elbow-chair, her apron over her head, and that supported by one sweet hand, the other hanging down upon her side, in a sleepy lifelessness; half of one pretty foot only visible" (*Clarissa* 904). The sleeping Clarissa and unconscious Pamela, both locked in their chambers with the doors bolted against their attackers, remain vulnerable to the scopophilic gaze.¹¹ In both texts, the keyhole is a site of violence and penetration, a sinister "rape of the lock." After being raped by Lovelace, Clarissa describes her violation

11 The violence of the male gaze is the subject of an overwhelming body of psychoanalytic theory and criticism. For example, in the widely anthologised article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), Laura Mulvey examines how conventional cinema constructs the pleasurable gaze in phallogocentric terms. Mulvey argues that the act of pleasurable looking is divided between the active/male and passive/female binaries, suggesting that women are subjected to and subjugated by the male gaze. She describes scopophilia, or voyeuristic pleasure derived from looking, as "the surreptitious observation of an unknowing and unwilling victim" (Mulvey 9), affirming the primacy of the active masculine desiring subject (he who looks) over the passive feminine erotic object (she who is looked at).

in precisely these terms. She writes to Lovelace: "when all my doors are fast, and nothing but the key-hole open, and the key of late put into that, to be where you are, in a manner without opening any of them" (*Clarissa* 894). Lovelace's physical penetration of Clarissa, like Mr B's visual penetration of Pamela, is an act of violence against her person, a breaking and entering of the metonymic private space behind the closed and bolted door of chastity. But both literally and figuratively, the locked door does not protect either woman from violation.

Neither of Richardson's heroines can escape the penetrative eye of the men who pursue them, nor the narrative eye that allows the reader to peer through the keyhole as well. However, the scenes differ in their narrative point-of-view: Lovelace actively spies on Clarissa, while Pamela only "supposes" Mr B spies on her. Pamela's recollection of the event again calls attention to her lapse in self-awareness: she cannot possibly know what, if anything, transpires at the keyhole while she is unconscious. In reconstructing the scene, she adopts Mr B's perspective, shifting her narrative position from the subject of her text to the object of Mr B's surreptitious gaze. As Kristina Straub suggests, Pamela's "visualizations of her own femininity are positioned in the narrative *not* as valid alternatives to the falsifications of male projection, but rather as symptomatic of equally distorting subjective fears and desires" (Straub 75). Contrary to claims that Richardson's novel produces or represents a distinctive female subjectivity, Pamela's recollections serve rather to expose the discursive mechanisms by which she is created, and creates herself. In simultaneously constructing and observing

herself as the object of Mr B's voyeurism, Pamela recognizes herself as other — specifically, as an other to and for Mr B. She identifies herself as the object of his gaze, displacing her own subjectivity onto the masculine observer. Tassie Gwilliam notes that the syntax of Pamela's supposition suggests a "double state" in which she both "experiences her prostration and reports the gaze that observes it" (Gwilliam 37). Unable to account for herself from her own perspective, Pamela instead adopts his; in her recollection of the event, Pamela both represents and reproduces herself as the object of masculine scopophilic desire.

Mr B's voyeurism proved popular, however, as *Pamela's* contemporaries were apparently just as eager to share his gaze. The anonymous author of *Pamela Censured* (1741), for example, took particular delight in providing the details missing from Pamela's account of Mr B's view through the keyhole:

The Young Lady by thus discovering a few latent Charms, as the snowy Complexion of her Limbs, and the beautiful Symmetry and Proportion which a Girl of about fifteen or sixteen must be supposed to shew by tumbling backwards, after being put in a Flurry by her Lover, and agitated to a great Degree takes her smelling Bottle, has her Laces cut, and all the pretty little necessary Things that the most luscious and warm Description can paint, or the fondest Imagination conceive. How artfully has the Author introduced an Image that no Youth can read without Emotion! The Idea of peeping thro' a Key-hole to see a fine

Woman extended on a Floor in a Posture that must naturally excite
 Passions of Desire. (*Pamela Censured* 31-32)

These “passions of desire,” however, belong decidedly to the Censurer, and are absent not only from Pamela’s recollection of the scene, but from Richardson’s text entirely. The lurid details apparent to this reader are not a part of Pamela’s or Richardson’s representation of events. Pamela does not describe her appearance, nor reach for her smelling salts, and no one is there to cut her laces — like Pamela, the Censurer (and like-minded reader) merely “supposes” what Mr B sees. Turner notes that the Censurer “pornographizes those situations that for Pamela herself provoke terror rather than erotic reverie,” eliding the possibility of a reader’s sympathetic identification with Pamela (Turner 78). Instead, the Censurer interpolates Mr B, Richardson, and the reader according to his own voyeurism.¹² Pamela’s terror in this scene is explicit; the erotic possibilities are imposed. The Censurer simultaneously accuses and lauds the author/rapist for discovering to the reader Pamela’s “hidden Beauties” and “put[ting] them in Life by a Flurry lest they should appear too dead or languid,” animating Pamela’s senseless body with a virility Mr B appears to lack (*Pamela Censured* 29). The author of *Critical Remarks* (1754) on Richardson’s novels, also anonymous, shares the Censurer’s opinion, declaring that “Pamela is a pert little minx whom any man of common sense or address might have had on his own terms in a week or fortnight” (*Critical Remarks* 58). *Pamela* is, in effect, *Censured* because Mr B is an

¹² I take the liberty of assuming the Censurer is male.

impotent clod (a “Booby,” according to Fielding) rather than a successful rapist.¹³

Criticism of Mr B’s “performance” — his “failure” to consummate his sexual desire and “reluctance” to rape Pamela while she is unconscious — shifts the focus from fearful sympathy for Pamela to anxiety and frustration with Mr B. As Jessica Leiman suggests, it “reduces Richardson’s central question — ‘Will Mr B rape Pamela?’ — to the more basic and devastating question: ‘*Can* he rape her?’” (Leiman 224).¹⁴ Mr B’s apparent crisis of masculinity, occasioned by his “inability” to rape Pamela, also prompts the question: “*Why* doesn’t (or can’t) he rape her?” Armstrong suggests that Mr B’s failure to seduce Pamela “tells us that this woman possesses some kind of power other than that inhering in either the body of a servant or in that of a prominent family” (Armstrong 113). Leiman similarly argues that Mr B’s “inability” to rape Pamela demonstrates Pamela’s triumph of words, rather than Richardson’s authorial failure. She maintains that Pamela’s words are “her sole means of defence” against Mr B, whose “abortive advances show the extent to which Pamela’s voice prevails against her master’s rakish designs” (Leiman 225). But while Pamela and Mr B’s conversations rhetorically engage the contemporary moral and philosophical discussions of rape, marriage, virtue, and gender, the “warm” scenes in Richardson’s novel emphasize action rather than discourse. The numerous occasions on which Mr B thrusts his hand into Pamela’s bosom cause Pamela to faint, rather than verbally

13 In Fielding’s *Shamela* (1741), Squire Booby’s social and sexual ineptitude parodies Mr B’s apparent incompetence.

14 Judith Wilt raises a similar question about Lovelace in her “Modest Proposal” about *Clarissa* (1977).

protest. Both Armstrong and Leiman fail to note that Pamela's verbal resistance goes largely unheeded, and that it is Pamela's physical unconsciousness that ultimately "saves" her. Pamela's fainting fits render Mr B unable to perform because his desire depends upon her participation: "the more she resisted, the more she charm'd" (*Pamela* 8); the louder she protests, the greater his passions increase; to Mr B, Pamela is prettiest when she cries (186). Mr B is no more swayed by Pamela's protestations than Pamela is by his attempts to seduce her. Fainting, on the other hand, momentarily disengages Pamela from the seduction plot because she can no longer actively participate in it.

Fainting and Embodied Subjectivity

The cat-and-mouse game of seduction, wherein a "virtuous young heroine" consents to sex because she "is seduced into believing her lover's vows," was popularised in the literature of the second half of the eighteenth century (Binhammer 1). In these texts, resistance to men's sexual advances is part of the ritual of seduction, designed to generate masculine desire while simultaneously absolving women of intentionally provoking it. As such, the eighteenth-century seduction plot hinges upon the protracted weakening of the heroine's resolve. *Pamela* does not follow the typical narrative of seduction, however, as Pamela's resolve never weakens; she remains steadfastly protective of her virginity until marriage. Pamela's resistance to Mr B's repeated advances is evidence of her virtue, and what ostensibly earns her marital "reward." Michael

McKeon notes that “Pamela’s essential power is the passive and negative one of being virtuous, of resisting the sexual and social power of others” (McKeon 364), while Watt cites Pamela’s “epic resistance” as the impetus for the birth of the British novel itself (Watt 165). But what actually enables Pamela to maintain her innocence is not her active verbal resistance, but the physical passivity of her unconscious body. What fainting accomplishes is not resistance in the sense of participation in Mr B’s efforts to seduce her, but rather a physical disengagement from the seduction ritual. Pamela’s unconscious body forces Mr B to look at (rather than listen to) Pamela’s terror. When he sees Pamela lying motionless before him, all the more vulnerable in her unconscious state, he softens. Whether read as impotence or moral reformation, Mr B’s “failure” to rape Pamela when unconscious points toward an embodied form of agency more effectual than words. While Armstrong stresses that Pamela’s struggles against Mr B’s advances do not “point to some order of events going on outside of language” (Armstrong 109), I would argue that Pamela’s fainting fits actually demonstrate the failure of her language.

As the following analyses of the fainting scenes in *Pamela* will demonstrate, both Pamela’s body and her words are subject to masculine violence, but where her language fails, her body successfully resists, enabling her virtue to triumph. In the Bedfordshire closet scene, for example, Pamela prepares for bed with Mrs Jervis, and, upon hearing a rustling of papers, discovers Mr B has secreted himself in the closet. He approaches the bed, threatening Mrs Jervis

and demanding to “expostulate a Word or two” with Pamela before once again groping her breast: “I found his Hand in my Bosom, and when my Fright let me know it, I was ready to die; and I sighed, and scream’d, and fainted away” (*Pamela* 63). Pamela is able to escape Mr B’s previous attempt by locking herself in her closet before she faints; inside the bedchamber, however, she has nowhere to run, and no doors left to bolt. Mrs Jervis tries to protect “poor Pamela,” whom she worries “is dead for certain,” and draws Mr B’s attention to her fainting fit. Mr B, “upon Mrs Jervis’s second Noise on my going away, slipt out” (64). Alerted to Pamela’s unconscious state, Mr B ceases his attack and leaves her chamber. Pamela then relies on Mrs Jervis’s account of what transpires, as her repeated fits of unconsciousness render her unaware of her circumstances. She writes to her parents that, “to be sure, I was [dead] for a time; for I knew nothing more of the Matter, one Fit following another, till about three Hours after” (63). Pamela’s later reconstruction of events gives her pause to consider the “Freedoms” Mr B could have taken while she was unconscious, and she asks the parenthetical rhetorical question: “(tho’ what can I think, who was in a Fit, and knew nothing of the Matter?)” (64). Pamela’s answer is to reconstruct the gap in her narrative from a third-person perspective. Upon recovering herself, Pamela asks Mrs Jervis: “Where have I been?” (64). She is troubled not by questions of identity or location, as in “who am I?” or “where am I?,” but by her inability to locate herself in hindsight, as if she cannot account for her unconscious whereabouts.

While unconscious, Pamela’s narrative position is uncertain; just as she

cannot identify her “self” except as the object of Mr B’s gaze in the previous Summer-house scene, in this scene she cannot identify where she has been, and she must rely on someone else to recreate the narrative for her. Joseph Highmore’s depiction of the “Affair of the Closet” (Plate 3, above) visually recreates this external perspective. Highmore’s twelve-plate *Pamela* series constitutes the first set of paintings based on an English novel, and was likely influenced by Hogarth’s popular narrative series *A Harlot’s Progress* (1732) and *A Rake’s Progress* (1735), both of which depict the moral decline and fall of their subjects (Keymer and Sabor, *Marketplace* 163).¹⁵ Highmore’s series focuses on the text’s “warm” scenes (as Richardson described them), and highlights Mr B’s scopophilic desire with Pamela as its object. The third plate, entitled “Pamela Fainting,” depicts an unconscious Pamela splayed across the bed with her bosom partially exposed. Mr B is leaning across her, caught between sexual desire and fear for Pamela’s health. In the background, Mrs Jervis appears terrified. The caption for Antoine Benoist’s engraving reads: “Pamela swooning, after having

15 Highmore was not Richardson’s original choice of illustrator. Perhaps similarly inspired by the *Progresses*, Richardson initially engaged Hogarth for two frontispieces, which were never used and subsequently lost. Richardson then commissioned Gravelot and Hayman to produce the twenty-nine plates that became the “official” *Pamela* illustrations in the 1742 octavo edition, though this is the only English edition in which they were published. Highmore’s series was completed in 1745 (reissued in 1762), and became the most popular illustrated version of the novel. His illustrations were succeeded by the more titillating representations of Pamela’s exposed breast and leg when rising from her bed and adjusting her stocking, as depicted by Philip Mercier (c1745). In addition to these well-known works, *Pamela* also inspired illustrated fans, murals, wax-works, and pirated and embellished paintings and prints, including an illustrated series by Edward Burney, Frances Burney’s cousin, in 1786. For a more complete history of the illustrated *Pamela*, see T C Duncan Eaves’s article “Graphic Illustration of the Novels of Samuel Richardson, 1740-1810” (1951), Keymer and Sabor’s second volume of *The Pamela Controversy* (2001), and their chapter on the visual culture of the novel in the more recent *Pamela in the Marketplace* (2005).

discovered Mr B in the closet. He (frightened) endeavouring to recover her. Mrs Jervis wringing her hands, and screaming.”¹⁶ Though the plate depicts Mr B’s attempted assault of Pamela at Bedfordshire, it seems to conflate this scene with a similar scene at Lincolnshire. At Bedfordshire, Mr B is “desperate angry” (*Pamela* 63) with Pamela’s fits, and far less concerned for Pamela’s well-being than he is at Lincolnshire, where he is “frighten’d at the terrible manner in which [she] was taken with the Fit” (204). As Louise Miller suggests, Highmore’s visual representation of this scene seems to “import into the portrayal of the *first* attempt Mr B’s own account of his response to Pamela’s fit on the Lincolnshire occasion” (L Miller 127). Highmore depicts Pamela’s swoon as death-like, and Mr B as both perpetrator and remorseful witness of her suffering. Mr B, rather than Pamela, is the central figure of the plate, and though the image shifts Mr B from his position as the voyeur of the text to the subject of the painting, it retains his point of view with Pamela as the object of both his and the audience’s gaze.¹⁷

While Highmore’s painting is the only extant illustration depicting

16 Highmore’s series was engraved by two French artists, Antoine Benoist and Louis Truchy, and the engravings were subtitled in both English and French (though there is no indication of whether the captions were written by Richardson, Highmore, or the engravers). The engravings are very close to the original paintings, though all except the first and ninth plates are reversed.

17 In a departure from the novel’s plot, Miriam Dick delineates an alternative narrative based on an apparent discrepancy between the engravings and their captions. She describes the scene in Plate 3 as follows: Mr B “is seated on the bed, bending over to the right side of the engraving, and holding in his arms the fainting Pamela, whose breast is greatly exposed. Mr B’s face expresses concern. Sitting up in bed is Mrs Jervis. While looking in the direction of the two young people, her hands are raised towards the left side of the engraving and are clasped in prayer” (Dick 38). Her impression of the scene, and of the narrative to which she imagines it belongs, is not of “a deceitful young man and a distressed girl, but rather a hospitable young man and a shy girl” (Dick 40). She also describes the significance of Pamela’s movement from right to left sides of the engravings but does not acknowledge that most of the engravings are reversals of the original paintings, which compromises her reading of Pamela’s movement as indicative of her socio-economic journey from servant-girl to aristocratic wife.

Pamela unconscious, it anticipates an extensive illustrative and literary preoccupation with representing women in suggestive states of unconscious repose.¹⁸ Turner describes Highmore's painting as "a Gothic drama" that exaggerates the eroticism of the exposed bosom and supine female figure in Richardson's text, which, he argues, suggests "a sensuous fascination with the swoon itself" (Turner 84). But this fascination with the fainting motif is significant not only for its eroticisation of female inactivity, but for what Thorpe calls its "narrative suspension" (Thorpe 108). Like Austen, Thorpe focuses on this suspension in terms of the opportunity it gives to scrutinize and explain the action of and subsequent reactions to fainting. Highmore's painting captures the ambiguities and complexities of Pamela's swoon because it fixes the series' "progress" at a moment of narrative interruption, prompting the author/artist and reader/viewer to generate an explanation for the event. The engraving's caption provides narrative context for Pamela's swoon in much the same way Pamela accounts for it in the novel. Moreover, by transposing Mr B's response to Pamela's fit from the Lincolnshire attack to the Bedfordshire scene, Highmore's painting provides visual explanation for Mr B's progress alongside Pamela's. The moral reform her fainting engenders in Mr B is captured here in Highmore's painting — several scenes before the novel makes it apparent, but still associating Mr B's reformation with Pamela's physical response to sexual threat. The

18 See, for example, Bram Dijkstra's chapters on "The Collapsing Woman" and "The Weightless Woman" in *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986).

“warmth” of the scene in the text is incited by Pamela’s partially-exposed breast, but the illustration removes Mr B’s hand from Pamela’s bosom, which shifts the reason for her fit from explicit in the novel to implicit in the painting, and thus subject to the viewer’s interpretation and imagination.

Later editions of the novel share Highmore’s revision of the “Affair of the Closet” scene. Richardson’s own revisions remove Mr B’s wandering hand from both Pamela’s bosom and the scene altogether. The revised version reads: “The wicked wretch still had me in his arms. I sighed, and screamed, and then fainted away” (*Pamela*, Revised Edition 96). In the original version, Mr B’s assaults against Pamela’s person repeatedly take this form; in the revised edition, Mr B gropes Pamela’s bosom only in the second bedroom scene at Lincolnshire, while “his other mammary explorations are deleted” (Eaves and Kimple 81).¹⁹ The difference between editions can perhaps be read in terms of the critical distinction between the masculine “horror” of obscene presence and the feminine “terror” of the unknown or unrepresented in the gothic novel. Terror in the female gothic engages affect without cause — fear occasioned without apparent or concrete reason (both rational and causal). Horror in the masculine gothic, on the other hand, engages cause without affect — the actual presence of the source of horror in the text leaves little to the characters’ or readers’ imaginations. Thus, the presence of Mr B’s hand in Pamela’s bosom poses a very real physical threat to her person, while its absence from the revised scene renders Mr B’s threat

¹⁹ See Eaves and Kimple (1967) for a detailed account of Richardson’s subsequent revisions of *Pamela*.

imagined or implied, transferring the origin of the danger from Mr B's hand to Pamela's imagination. Accordingly, this revision shifts the cause of Pamela's fit from the physical to the discursive. Mr B's desire to "expostulate" becomes the impetus for her fainting, making their struggle verbal rather than sexual (Leiman 229 *n*19). Richardson's revision of this scene emphasizes the narrative shift in textual authority from Pamela to Mr B, whose verbal threats eventually supplant his physical ones in his effort to control Pamela's text instead of her body. But significantly, Pamela's response in both versions is embodied: she faints.

Fainting, Feinting, and Other Literary Swoons

Following the "Affair of the Closet," Mr B wonders at Pamela's "lucky Knack at falling into Fits, when she pleases" (*Pamela* 65). Mr B's scepticism of the authenticity of Pamela's fainting fits evokes the duplicitous potential of the "faint" as "feint." Interestingly, the etymology of the word "faint" already destabilises notions of authenticity, especially in its relation to "feint" or "feign." All three words derive from the Old French *feindre*, meaning "to contrive," which itself comes from the Latin *fingere* (to shape or form; to adorn; to dissemble; to teach), the root of the English word "fiction." The noun (in the sense of faintness) and the adjective (as feigned or pretended) emerged simultaneously (c1300), and the verb form shortly thereafter, conflating affliction with affectation at its origin (OED). Contemporary anti-Pamelists were quick to exaggerate the question of authenticity, and both Haywood and Fielding exploit this etymological

ambivalence when their low-born “heroines” feint rather than faint. In Fielding’s parody of the bedroom assault, Shamela and the housekeeper are both “shamming a Sleep” while in bed with Booby. As Booby steals his hand into Shamela’s bosom, she “pretend[s] to awake” and then “counterfeits a Swoon” (Fielding 247). Not only is Shamela’s unconsciousness performed, but Booby is easily fooled: he mistakes the artifice for an authentic display of virtue and sensibility. Haywood’s Syrena Tricksey is similarly skilled in the art of “feinting,” but her companion is less gullible. When Syrena has “Recourse to Fits,” she “swoon’d so naturally, that if he had not been well-versed in this Artifice of the Sex, [Lord R—] would have taken it to be real” (Haywood, “Anti-Pamela” 150). Like Mr B, Haywood and Fielding are both sceptical of Pamela’s tendency to faint and the convenience it affords her. Their “heroines” exploit the apparent virtue associated with female delicacy; by feigning unconsciousness, they attempt to absolve themselves of any responsibility for the sexual desires they provoke in their companions, and take advantage of the attention paid to their swoons. Even Pamela recognizes the potential of her delicate constitution, noting that “Health is a blessing hardly to be coveted in my Circumstances, since that fits me for the Calamity I am in continual Apprehensions of; whereas a weak and sickly State might possibly move Compassion for me” (*Pamela* 178-179).²⁰ But while the anti-

20 Clarissa similarly considers the strategic potential of poor health. Out of fear that her family will force her to marry Solmes at an earlier date than they had promised, she vows to become “very ill. Nor need I feign much; for indeed I am extremely low, weak and faint” (*Clarissa* 341). Chapter 3 will examine this potential more thoroughly, as represented in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*.

Pamelists doubt the veracity of Pamela's fainting spells, the fits are occasioned by what Richardson represents as a very real threat to her person, as a physical response to the fear and impending danger that becomes characteristic of the gothic heroine.

The spurious faints in Haywood's and Fielding's *Pamela* parodies, like the fainting episodes exaggerated by Austen, diminish the sense of fear that occasions fainting in *Pamela* and later gothic novels. However, not all fainting scenes, in *Pamela* or the gothic mode, are precipitated by terror or the threat of sexual violation. One of the recurrent tropes *Pamela* shares with both the gothic and sentimental traditions is that of the daughter's reunion with her father — scenes in which the heroine usually swoons. For example, when Goodman Andrews visits his daughter at Lincolnshire, Pamela is so overcome with emotion that she "gave a Spring, overturn'd the Table, without Regard to the Company, and threw myself at his Feet, O my Father! my Father! said I, can it be! — Is it you? Yes, it is! It is! O bless your happy — Daughter! I would have said, and down I sunk" (*Pamela* 294). An excess of emotion overwhelms Pamela's senses, and her swoon anticipates the conflation of physical and emotional response in novels of sensibility. The sentimental heroine in Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) describes meeting her father as a terrifying experience: she is "almost senseless with terror," and turns "so sick, that Mrs Selwyn was apprehensive [she] should have fainted" (Burney 371). When she at last sees her father, she screams and sinks to the floor (372). Matilda responds similarly upon meeting her father in

Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791): "her fears confirmed it was him. — She gave a scream of terror — put out her trembling hands to catch the balustrades on the stairs for support — missed them — and fell motionless into her father's arms" (Inchbald 274, original emphasis). In Horace Walpole's gothic novella *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Isabella is similarly conflicted when she discovers that the knight who has nearly given his life to save her is in fact her father: "then thou — said the knight, struggling for utterance — seest — thy father! — Give me one — Oh! amazement! horror! what do I hear? what do I see? cried Isabella. My Father! You my Father!" (Walpole 130). Though these reunion scenes evoke feelings of terror and horror in the daughters, they are overcome with sentiment, not fear. The heroines are overwhelmed by the mix of emotions they feel upon seeing their fathers, rather than the threat of physical danger or sexual violation.

The gothic faint is most often occasioned by the immediate threat of violence, which produces an overwhelming sense of fear and terror that causes the (usually female) character to faint. In Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Matilda faints upon hearing her father order Theodore beheaded, Hippolita faints with fear for the life of her son Conrad, and Isabella nearly swoons when she realises Manfred's sexual designs upon her. In each instance, the female character faints from fear — a characteristic trope of the gothic. Fainting in Walpole's text signifies differently from fainting in the sentimental tradition, in which characters like Burney's heroine in *Evelina* are apparently overcome by "extreme terror," but this terror does not derive from any immediate threat or danger.

Similarly, when Evelina is treated rudely and familiarly by Madame Duval, she “thought [she] should have fainted away” (Burney 86), and Lady Louisa threatens “I shall faint, I shall faint” when confronted with a pet monkey (400). Although Burney ironically suggests that terror is the impetus for these fainting spells, there are considerable differences between Burney’s text and Walpole’s in terms of the origins and implications of terror, which similarly distinguish the literary modes to which they belong. In the gothic text, terror derives from a threat of violence, often sexual; in the novel of sensibility, characters faint from exaggerated emotional states. As Kate Ferguson Ellis states so succinctly, the sentimental novel has “no villains, only victims” (Ellis 26). In the gothic novel, on the other hand, fainting is occasioned by the confrontation between victim and villain. In Radcliffe’s *The Italian* (1797), for example, when Ellena meets Schedoni on the beach, she faints the moment she apprehends his villainy:

Overcome with astonishment and terror, Ellena remained silent. She now understood that Schedoni, so far from being likely to prove a protector, was an agent of her worst, and as she had believed her only enemy; and an apprehension of the immediate and terrible vengeance, which such an agent seemed willing to accomplish, subdued her senses; she tottered, and sunk upon the beach. (*Italian* 223)

In gothic texts, female characters faint upon the realisation of impending violence and in close proximity to the villain. Mr B’s attempts to rape Pamela escalate her

terror because they increasingly encroach upon her privacy and person. As the proximate distance between them closes, the level of sexual threat increases, Pamela's terror becomes more desperate, and the violence and duration of her fainting fits grow proportionately.

Much of the tension and suspense in the gothic novel derives from the creation and dissolution of space between the heroine and villain. While the gothic heroine tends to faint during scenes of confrontation with the villain, she also does her share of running from him whenever possible. The chase scenes in gothic fiction expand upon Pamela's numerous flights from Mr B's tempers and passions. Immediately preceding the keyhole scene, for example, Pamela struggles free of Mr B's grasp and flees to an adjacent chamber: "I got loose from him, by a sudden Spring, and ran out of the Room; [...] but he follow'd me so close, he got hold of my Gown, and tore a piece off" (*Pamela* 32). Later, when Mr B frightens Pamela by forcibly kissing her, she again flies from him up the stairs and locks herself in a closet, where she hides "quite uneasy and fearful" (192). Pamela's terrified flights from Mr B, like her similarly-occasioned fainting fits, anticipate analogous scenes in later gothic novels. For example, when the rapacious Manfred pursues Isabella in *The Castle of Otranto*, she escapes through a secret passage in a lower part of the castle: "An awful silence reigned [...] through that long labyrinth of darkness. Every murmur struck her with new terror [...] Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind [...] and she was ready to sink under her apprehensions" (Walpole 82-83). This scene

is repeated with little variation in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788), when the heroine is frightened by Delamere and flees through a dark passageway:

A total silence had long reigned in the castle [...] her terror increased [...] she ran lightly thro' the passage, which was very long and dark, [...] towards the next door, with exclamations of increased terror [...] but fear had so entirely overcome her, that she could only sigh out [Delamere's] name, and gasping like a dying person, sat down on a bench. (Smith 71-72)

These scenes distort and elongate Pamela's earlier flights from Mr B, lengthening the stairs and hallways and protracting the escape, while maintaining a similar level of terror and threat of sexual violence.

Female characters across the gothic mode are beset with physical and psychological distress occasioned by the threat of masculine violence. The terror associated with "an omnipresent sense of impending rape" is, according to Ellis, one of the most significant "achievements of the Gothic tradition" (Ellis 46). Ellis suggests that what distinguishes Pamela from the gothic is that Pamela has specific knowledge and apprehension of what occasions her terror — namely, Mr B's desire to rape her — while the gothic heroine is too virtuous even to recognise rape as the potential danger, and is simply overwhelmed by the masculine power that confines her (46). But the threat of sexual violence is far from unnamed in the gothic tradition. When Ambrosio takes "indecent liberties" with Antonia in Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), for example, "Antonia's ignorance was not proof against

the freedom of his behaviour. She was sensible of her danger" (Lewis 381).

Earlier, Ambrosio's suspicious attention to Antonia drives her mother Elvira to investigate his behaviour, and in doing so, interrupts the attempted rape (301).

The fear female characters experience in the gothic novel derives from the specific threat of physical violence, of penetration of the borders of their person. Their abject terror, to use Julia Kristeva's term, and their subsequent fainting fits come from the dissolution of these borders. As Kristeva writes: "How can I be without border? That elsewhere that I imagine beyond the present, or that I hallucinate [...] it is now here, jetted, abjected, into 'my' world. Deprived of world, therefore, I *fall in a faint* [...] I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders: fainting away" (Kristeva 4, original emphasis). The world of which she is deprived is that of a private space that is not threatened by the violent insertion of a masculine force, which causes the faint. For Pamela and later gothic heroines, fainting is a physical response to a threat against the body, a psychological reaction to the visceral fear of the erasure of its borders, and an assertion of the self in the face of an external, penetrative force.

Lincolnshire and Pamela's Psychological Terror

Both *Pamela* and the gothic novels that follow are imbued with the ominous threat of impending masculine violence. As this threat against the body manifests itself psychologically as well, gothic heroines are both physically and mentally oppressed by the overwhelming sense of terror that permeates their

worlds. The mental and emotional distress incited by threatened and attempted attacks against the body can unsettle the heroine's rational capacity, often prompting fits of delirium, hysteria, and other flights of fancy and disorientation. Following the Summer-house attempt, the ominous shadow Mr B casts over the estate drives Pamela nearly to distraction, and shifts the seat of her fear and disorder from her body to her psyche. Bedfordshire becomes gothicised in Pamela's imagination. When she writes to her mother to apologise for remaining in Mr B's service, Pamela conflates her fear of Mr B's sexual advances with the house itself. She writes: "don't be angry I have not yet run away from this House, so late my Comfort and Delight, but now my Anguish and Terror" (*Pamela* 26). Pamela is terrified of the house as well as its occupant, and her fear foreshadows the fates of many future gothic heroines sequestered by rapacious villains in isolated estates. Pamela's mother begs her to "flee this evil Great House and Man, if you find he renews his Attempts" (27).²¹ But when she does finally attempt to escape, she is abducted and taken to Lincolnshire, where her fears of imprisonment and persecution are more fully realised.

At Lincolnshire, Pamela is held prisoner by Mr B, his servant Colbrand, and the odious housekeeper, Mrs Jewkes. Pamela's description of the estate upon her arrival and the fate that she imagines awaits her there anticipates the gloomy estates, half-ruined castles, and beleaguered heroines of later gothic tales. She

²¹ Pamela's mother's request is later reiterated by parental figures in numerous gothic novels. For example, in Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), Adeline dreams that her father warns her to "Depart this house; destruction hovers here" (Radcliffe, *Romance* 41).

notes in her journal that at “About Eight at Night, we enter’d the Court-yard of this handsome, large, old, and lonely Mansion, that looks made for Solitude and Mischief, as I thought, by its Appearance, with all its brown nodding Horrors of lofty Elms and Pines about it; And here, said I to myself, I fear, is to be the Scene of my Ruin” (*Pamela* 108-109). Lincolnshire looms large in Pamela’s imagination as a “gothic quandary” in which everything she once found comfortably familiar “become[s] eroticised, menacing, fanciful, and extreme” (Warner, *Licensing* 189).²² Everything attending her life at Bedfordshire appears at Lincolnshire larger and deformed: the maternal Mrs Jervis, who protected Pamela’s virtue as vehemently as Pamela herself, becomes the menacing Mrs Jewkes, whose aid in Mr B’s sexual persecution has its own sapphic undertones; the community of Bedfordshire and its proximity to her home is replaced with isolation and estrangement; Pamela’s letters are intercepted, and the comfort she seeks in corresponding with her parents is redirected to the private narrative she constructs in her despairing journal, which is discovered and perused by Mr B. The dissolution of every point of solace and familiarity causes Pamela to doubt herself and her ability to interpret any aspect of her environment.

Pamela begins to distrust her own interpretive abilities, which causes her to descend into a state of near-hysterical despair. Her journals make repeated

22 Significantly, the gothic aspect of Lincolnshire is directly associated with the threat of sexual violence that surrounds the estate. Pamela’s marriage to Mr B transforms Lincolnshire from gothic to pastoral. On the afternoon of her wedding, she remarks: “What a different Aspect every thing in and about this House bears now, to my thinking, to what it once had! The Garden, the Pond, the Alcove, the Elm-walk. But, Oh! my Prison is become my Palace; and no wonder every thing wears another Face!” (*Pamela* 349).

reference to the dark forces of witchcraft, and she suspects that her oppressors are possessed by the devil. When out wondering through the gardens, Pamela imagines she sees a bull on the path between herself and back door to the house, and a second bull coming towards her from the opposite direction. As she records in her journal: “thought I, here is double Witchcraft, to be sure! Here is the Spirit of my Master in one Bull; and Mrs Jewkes in the other; and now I am gone, to be sure!” (*Pamela* 153). Pamela suspects “witchcraft” has transformed these bulls into the spirits of her tormentors, but it is her own imagination that has transformed harmless cows into bulls in the first place.²³ A second look reveals “only two poor cows, a grazing in distant Places, that my Fears had made all this Rout about” (153). It is significant that Pamela’s fears lead her not only to misrecognise harmless creatures as potential danger, but also to mis-identify the sex of these creatures and interpret the harmless females as posing a masculine threat. The overwhelming sense of impending sexual violence characterises not only Lincolnshire’s human inhabitants, but its livestock as well. Mr B’s attacks and Mrs Jewkes’s “unwomanly” assistance in his designs are transposed onto these poor cows, which become menacing, angry males in Pamela’s terrorised imagination. Just as Clarissa’s opiate-induced delirium transforms the grotesque

23 Dussinger compares Pamela’s vision of bulls to other “bestial incarnations of the id” characteristic of the gothic, such as those depicted in Fuseli’s painting *The Nightmare* (Dussinger 384). See my discussion of the same painting in Chapter 2, and compare with Fuseli’s *The Débutante* (1807), which some critics suggest depicts Pamela seated at breakfast with the grotesque figures of Mrs Jewkes, the cook, and the maidservant (Myrone 168). For a more specific analysis of the sexual implications of the bull scene and Pamela’s misrecognition, see Castle’s article “P/B: *Pamela* as Sexual Fiction” (1982).

and treacherous Madam Sinclair into Lovelace's demonic familiar, Pamela's hysterical grief and fear metamorphose the benignly bovine into monstrously masculine terror. Pamela's hallucination both masculinises the threat she imagines the animals pose, and casts Mr B's violence against her as monstrous, inhuman, and inhumane.

The persistent threat of sexual violation imbues all aspects of Pamela's existence, both real and imagined, driving her to contemplate suicide. Having escaped the house and found her way into the gardens only to discover herself locked within them, Pamela momentarily considers drowning herself. Trapped at Lincolnshire and beset from all sides, Pamela wonders "What to do, but throw myself into the Pond" (*Pamela* 171). She considers her circumstances and finds herself bereft of any hope or means to "avoid the merciless Wickedness of those who are determin'd on my Ruin," save for the remorse and pity they might feel "when they see the dead Corpse of the unhappy Pamela dragg'd out to these slopy Banks, and lying breathless at their Feet" (172). In this scene, Pamela's perspective shifts from first to third person, adopting her oppressors' point of view to imagine what effects her death might have on their behaviour. Once again, Pamela adopts an external perspective to create a narrative in which she is other than "I" — in this case, a dead body mourned over by her oppressors. Pamela's suicidal musings recall her earlier insistence that she would rather be dead than dishonoured, and she finds temporary solace in imagining a condition that would ensure the preservation of her virtue. But it is precisely Pamela's

virtue that intervenes in her meditations: Pamela's piety interrupts the "presumptuous" vanity of imagining herself above or beyond "the Mercies of a gracious God," and she dutifully retreats from the banks in "Resignation to the Divine Will" (174). But while Pamela's religious virtue prevents her from taking "the dreadful Leap" (172), Divine Will does not save her virtue from further trial.

Upon returning to the house, Pamela is so weak with "Dejection, Pain, and Fatigue" that she faints when going up the stairs (*Pamela* 177). She recovers only to have Mr B take advantage of her fragile mental state by disguising himself as the maid Nan in order to gain access to her chamber. Dressed in women's clothing, Mr B secrets himself in Pamela's closet and then joins her and Mrs Jewkes in bed.²⁴ Together, Mr B and Mrs Jewkes pin Pamela's arms against the bed so she cannot escape from Mr B's attack.²⁵ When Pamela cries out and helplessly struggles to free herself, Mr B exclaims: "You see, you are now in my Power! — You cannot get from me, nor help yourself" (203). Once again, he gropes Pamela's breast, which causes her to faint. She recalls: "he put his Hand in my Bosom. With Struggling, Fright, Terror, I fainted quite away, and did not come to myself soon" (204). Mr B's disguise tricks Pamela into momentarily

24 Highmore illustrates the Lincolnshire bedroom scene in Plate 7: "Pamela in the Bedroom with Mrs Jewkes and Mr B" (c1743). Pamela, fully conscious, is at the centre of the painting, in the process of unlacing her stocking. Her dress is slightly dishevelled, exposing her left shoulder and partial breast (Philip Mercier depicts a similar, though more suggestive image of Pamela c1745). Pamela is looking over her bared shoulder at Mrs Jewkes, who is in bed, while Mr B, hidden in the back left corner, dressed in women's clothes and partially hidden by his apron, watches Pamela. The engraving's caption reads: "Pamela undressing herself (Mrs Jewkes being first got to bed) while Mr B disguised in the maid's clothes, with the apron thrown over his face, is impatiently waiting for the execution of his plot" (Eaves, "Graphic Illustration" 361 n7).

25 Clarissa is similarly betrayed by Mrs Sinclair (see Chapter 4 n99).

letting down her guard, and he seizes upon the opportunity it presents.

However, unlike Lovelace, who drugs Clarissa in order to rape her during her unconscious state, Mr B does not — or cannot — take full advantage of Pamela's condition. Though he ignores her verbal resistance while she is conscious, when Pamela is silenced by her fainting fits, her physical protestation speaks loudly and clearly, and Mr B halts his attack. Pamela's fainting fits are so severe that both Mr B and Mrs Jewkes fear for her life. No longer suspicious of Pamela's "knack" for fainting and convinced the fits are genuine, Mr B's sexual desire transforms into anxiety for Pamela's well-being (which Highmore retroactively transposes onto his depiction of the Bedfordshire scene). Pamela recollects the "Pity and Concern" he shows during her fits, and the measures he takes to pacify her (204).

Once Pamela has sufficiently recovered herself, Mr B assures her that she has suffered no harm while unconscious. Significantly, Mr B's account of the events specifically acknowledges Pamela's fainting as the reason he halts his attack. He tells Pamela that, "as soon as I saw you change, and a cold Sweat bedew your pretty Face, and you fainted away, I quitted the bed [...] my passion for you was all swallow'd up in the Concern I had for your Recovery; for I thought I never saw a Fit so strong and violent in my Life; and fear'd we should not bring you to life again" (*Pamela* 206). Pamela's fainting fit, in effect, renders Mr B impotent. His sexual desire is "swallow'd up" by his concern for Pamela's well-being, which he admits is occasioned by the love he feels for her. This scene marks Mr B's turn towards moral reformation. Though he curses this

transformation of lust to love as “my Weakness and my Folly,” he promises that he will henceforth leave Pamela unmolested. Moved by what Pamela’s “Sex can show when they are in Earnest,” Mr B swears: “if I am Master of myself, and my own Resolution, I will not attempt to force you to any thing again” (206). Though he is unmoved by Pamela’s verbal resistance, the apparent earnestness and sincerity of Pamela’s violent physical reaction to his attempts on her honour prompt Mr B to reconsider his intentions. Richardson represents (and Mr B interprets) Pamela’s fainting fits as an embodied assertion of her will to remain chaste, and incontrovertible evidence of her inherent virtue. Similarly, Mr B’s reaction to her fits demonstrates the development of his moral reform, and provides evidence of his growing love to both Pamela and the reader. Mr B realises that “Terror does but add to her frost [...] I should have melted her by Love, instead of freezing her by Fear,” shifting the terms of his intentions from a gothic plot to the marriage plot (209). Pamela’s fainting fit thus disengages her from the immediate violence of Mr B’s attack, but also furthers the evolution of their emotional development and burgeoning romantic relationship.

Failure of the Feminine “I”

The severity of Pamela’s fainting fit during the Lincolnshire attack abruptly halts Mr B’s attack, redirecting the narrative away from sexual violence and towards the courtship plot. However, in order to recover herself and reconstruct her subject position following the absence in consciousness her

fainting fits occasion, Pamela must once again rely on third person perspectives and recollections of events. She grieves that “poor Pamela cannot answer for the Liberties taken with her in her deplorable State of Death” (*Pamela* 204); this use of the third person emphasizes her shift from subject to object in the narrative she recreates. Because she cannot “answer” for what happens while she is unconscious, she must rely on her persecutors to answer for her, and assure both her and the reader that her innocence remains intact. The “deplorable State of Death” she experiences during her prolonged unconscious state occasions another epistemological crisis. Just as she does not know her “self” in the Summer-house, or her whereabouts in the “Affair of the Closet,” in the wake of the Lincolnshire attack she does not know what she means or says. Upon regaining consciousness, Pamela demands that Mr B tell her what has transpired while she has been unconscious, but is not certain of what she says: “O tell me, yet tell me not, what I have suffer’d in this Distress! And I talked quite wild, and knew not what; for, to be sure, I was on the Point of Distraction” (204). Her lapse in consciousness first destabilises her identity, then her location, and now her language, and she can only account for them from an outsider’s perspective.

When Pamela is abducted from Bedfordshire to Lincolnshire, Richardson’s editor steps in as omniscient narrator to assure the reader that Pamela, though beleaguered by Mr B’s attempts on her virtue, is still a virgin when she leaves. The editor justifies this narrative intrusion by supposing that “it is necessary to observe” that “the poor Virgin” has yet to withstand “the worst”

of her trials (*Pamela* 92). This interjection not only confirms the physical state of Pamela's virtue — that is, her virginity is intact — but also its strength. The editor notes that, despite Mr B's best efforts, Pamela's "Virtue was not to be subdu'd" (92). The editor's third-person observation from outside the narrative is mirrored by Mr B's from within, but shifts the source of strength from Pamela's virtue to his own sense of compassion and moral reform. Following the Lincolnshire attack, Mr B confesses that "Had I been utterly given up to my Passions, I should before now have gratified them, and not have shewn that Remorse and Compassion for you, which have repriev'd you more than once, when absolutely in my Power" (213). This shift marks the narrative turn from Pamela's perspective to Mr B's, as he becomes the sole authority on the events that transpire while she is unconscious and "absolutely" in his power. Mr B assures Pamela (and the reader) that she is "as inviolate a Virgin as you was when you came into my House," because Pamela herself does not know (213). She cannot speak to the state of her innocence, and requires external verification. In this sense, Pamela's crisis is also ontological, in that she is uncertain if the "self" she comes to is that which is so emphatically predicated on her virginity.

Pamela's ontological crisis previously reached critical mass at Bedfordshire, when she donned the country dress of her prior service under Mr B's mother, before she inherits her mistress's clothes. Mr B pretends not to recognise her as Pamela, and she allows him to steal a kiss before revealing her identity: "O Sir, said I, I am *Pamela*, indeed I am: Indeed I am *Pamela*, *her own*

self!" (*Pamela* 56, original emphasis). Once again, Pamela's self-identification requires external verification. The emphatic "indeeds" and repetition of both first- and third-person identification, *I* and *Pamela*, suggest that Pamela has difficulty apprehending and articulating "her own self." Though she attempts to signify as the *I* of the text she produces, she finds she must also identify as *Pamela*, in relation to Mr B as the authoritative masculine subject. Richardson's editorial interjections and Pamela's reliance on Mr B's interpretive authority suggest that Pamela cannot escape discursive determination; she remains, as Terry Castle describes, "a prisoner in her own text" (Castle, "P/B" 489). While affirmative, feminist readings of *Pamela* argue that Richardson's novel produces an interiorised female subject — the first-person *I* that gives Pamela, and the female subject, a "voice" — Pamela's assertion of *I* is subject to the same violent appropriation as her body. Pamela's outburst reflects her efforts to retain ownership or possession of the virginal self she values so highly: she insists she is "her own self." But in assuming Mr B's wholesale account of events, her narrative defers to a masculine authority, and Pamela self-identifies instead in relation to Mr B. Moreover, in reconstructing these events and confirming Pamela's version of her "self," Mr B usurps control of both Pamela's narrative authority and self-identification.

Pamela's narrative shift from self to other parallels the redirection of Mr B's interest in Pamela from her body to her pen. Following the Lincolnshire attack, Mr B is good to his word, and no longer physically forces himself on

Pamela's person; instead, he insinuates himself in her writing. Mr B takes authorial credit for Pamela's journals, which he then uses to demand physical possession of them. The journals are sewn into Pamela's skirts and undergarments in what critics have called a "paper pregnancy," and Mr B endeavours to access them in the novel's infamous strip-tease scene, during which he attempts to divest Pamela of her clothing, her journals, and her narrative authority.²⁶ Mr B contends: "As I have furnished you with the Subject, I have a Title to see the Fruits of your Pen. — Besides, said he, there is such a pretty Air of Romance, as you relate them, in your Plots, and my Plots, that I shall be better directed in what manner to wind up the Catastrophe of the pretty Novel" (*Pamela* 232). By insinuating himself as the subject of her text, Mr B argues that the issue or "fruits" of Pamela's pen are his in both name and content. Mr B inverts the Aristotelian model of generation, according to which a masculine principle gives form to feminine matter. In this case, Pamela's pen gives form to Mr B, the matter or "substance" of the "pretty Novel" she creates. Pamela's text, according to Castle, thus functions as both pregnancy and phallus, "given form in the shape of the narrative itself. She gives intellectual expression to the fantasy content *within* her discourse; yet this discourse, in its physicality, takes its place in her world as material object, as fetish. It veils that very portion of her anatomy which is the hidden subject of the text" (Castle, "P/B" 485). In attempting to remove Pamela's papers from beneath her petticoats, Mr B conflates Pamela's

²⁶ See Tassie Gwilliam's analysis of Pamela's "paper pregnancy" in *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender* (1993).

literal and literary identities; in this moment, taking her journals is more important to him than taking her virginity.²⁷ Rather than subdue her body, Mr B instead attempts to subdue Pamela's text: his moral reformation takes the form of textual appropriation.

Mr B's reformation allows him to assume possession and control of both Pamela's papers and body on Pamela's terms: marriage. She gives up narrative control of her text in exchange for wedding vows. Following their marriage, Pamela refers to Mr B as the "generous Author of my Happiness," suggesting that he is responsible not only for her rise in social and economic status, but also for the narrative it produced (*Pamela* 353). Mr B even tells Pamela that he "will stop your dear Mouth" (354), and later, "My beloved wants no language" (366), diminishing — if not annihilating — Pamela's narrative voice. She is overcome with emotion, and confesses: "I have not Words, or else the English Tongue affords them not, to express sufficiently my Gratitude. Learn me [...] some other Language, if there be any, [...] that I may not thus be choaked with Meanings, for which I can find no adequate Utterance" (365). Pamela's inability to express her gratitude demonstrates a completion or finality in her narrative shift from first to third person. Once Pamela surrenders her journals, and shortly thereafter, her person in marriage to Mr B, her story dwindles into an account of mundane household activities and marital monotony. Many critics lament Pamela's lack of vigour and imagination in the second half of the novel. The submissive and

²⁷ See a similar exchange in *Clarissa*, when Lovelace attempts to steal a letter concealed in Clarissa's skirts, then forcibly kisses her (*Clarissa* 572-573).

demure Pamela B loses much of the energy and willfulness characteristic of Pamela Andrews.²⁸ As Castle notes, when Pamela alters her writing to serve Mr B as reader, her narrative, “before, a clandestine, adversary speech — is usurped: it becomes the banal sign of her acceptance. Her powers of articulation are subsumed, taken over, and exist finally only in the service of this master” (Castle, *Ciphers* 169). But this shift is far from sudden, as Pamela has been slowly surrendering her words, and the identity her narrative constructs, from the beginning. Moreover, in doing so, she has struggled with the difficulty of expressing her “self” except from a third-person perspective. When Pamela falls into fainting fits, her unconsciousness removes her from physical danger, but upon coming to, she accounts for herself as object, not subject.

Conclusion

Fainting interrupts Pamela’s first-person account of events, prompting her to assume an external, third-person interpretation of her unconscious state. She imagines, speculates, supposes, and ultimately constructs the story of what transpires during her “absence” from the narrative she produces. But when she regains consciousness and attempts to reconstruct these events, Pamela’s narrative *I* cannot speak or account for itself. Her recollections adopt a masculine, third-person point of view, and she objectifies herself in accordance with the text’s larger interpretative and editorial framework. Pamela’s letters and journals

28 For a thorough discussion of Pamela’s submissive obedience, see Helen Thompson’s *Ingenuous Subjection: Compliance and Power in the Eighteenth-Century Domestic Novel* (2005).

indicate a compulsion to “make up” the lost time incurred by her fainting fits, and she asserts, inserts, and inscribes her self as an object rather than the subject of her text. Pamela’s subsequent efforts to recreate in her own narrative the scenes of her unconsciousness are what reinscribe her within the text’s discursive framework, and her words come to stand in for the physical body Mr B endeavours to control. Fielding’s derogatory suggestion that Pamela’s narrative “stretched out this diminutive mere Grain of Mustard-seed (a poor Girl’s little &c.) into a Resemblance of that Heave, which the best of good Books has compared it to,” calls attention to this conflation of Pamela’s body with the text she produces (Fielding 237). As the editor’s gloss notes, the &c. here (and elsewhere in Fielding and other eighteenth-century texts) alludes to the slang term for female genitalia, which suggests both abbreviation and unutterability (Fielding 237 n3).²⁹ The term *etcetera*, while generally indicating continuation and enumeration, is also used as a substitute for a suppressed substantive, often indelicate or vulgar (OED 2b). The use of &c. suggests the possibility that not only are the specific terms belonging to the gynæcological lexicon words a gentleman declines to say, but that the referent cannot be fully articulated or wholly apprehended within an impoverished masculine symbolic economy, wherein it only vaguely signifies as an attenuated abbreviation. The significance of Pamela’s narrative *I* is reduced accordingly. Unable to account for herself in her own terms, Pamela produces an other speculative identity according to what

29 “O that she were / An open et cetera, thou a pop’rin pear!” (*Romeo and Juliet* 2.1.38-39).

she imagines Mr B sees, a literary identity she eventually surrenders. Pamela's language "triumphs," to use Armstrong's term, only insofar as it is the means by which it silences her.

This reading of fainting in *Pamela* thus cannot contribute to a feminist affirmation of Richardson's text as producing a distinctively female voice or representing a fully-realised form of female subjectivity. Fainting can perhaps be read in opposition to this argument, as Pamela fills the narrative gaps her fits produce by accounting for them from a masculine perspective, according to which she self-identifies in relation to Mr B. Fainting thus operates from within the masculine authorial and editorial confines of the text, and upholds the narrative framework of "virtue rewarded," wherein both virtue and its reward are contingent upon sexual relation. In the context of the novel, female chastity signifies as virtue and marriage is its reward, and fainting functions as a means of preserving virtue and enabling this reward. However, fainting should not be discounted in feminist readings of *Pamela* for serving this narrative function. Firstly, fainting intervenes in the rape plot by "saving" Pamela from Mr B's attacks. He is unable to rape her unconscious body because he desires her active participation in the seduction. Fainting functions as a passive form of resistance, and proves far more effectual than Pamela's verbal protestations. Secondly, Pamela's fainting fits encourage Mr B's moral reformation, allowing the marriage plot to unfold. They are testament to her virtue, and Mr B comes to respect Pamela's virtue more than he physically desires her body. By "showing" rather

than “telling” Mr B the sincerity of the terror she experiences during his attempts on her honour, Pamela softens his resolve and transforms his lust into love. Finally, though fainting does not undermine the text’s overarching masculine system of representation, in which the female *I* cannot signify and is ultimately subsumed by the male subject, it works to expose the mechanisms of the text’s discursive apparatus. As Eugenia DeLamotte suggests, “Gothic romance is [...] about the nightmare of trying to ‘speak ‘I’ in a world in which the ‘I’ in question is uncomprehending of and incomprehensible to the dominant power structure” (DeLamotte 166). Pamela’s fainting fits thus show her, and the reader, the limits of female signification in the novel. It is Pamela’s body, not her words, that signifies in the text. As *Pamela* demonstrates and Chapter Two will further delineate, the passive female body is more than just an erotic tableau on which the male subject plays out his fantasies; it is also a site of feminist resistance and recuperation.

Chapter 2

“Beauty sleeping in the lap of horror”:
The Somnolent Heroine in Radcliffe and Lewis

To see your mistress fast asleep, smiling in her dreams, peaceful under your protection, loving you even as she sleeps, just when she appears least conscious, still offering you her silent mouth which speaks to you in her sleep of that last kiss! To see a woman trusting, half-naked, but wrapped in her love as if in a cloak, and chaste in the midst of disorder; [...] the woman it protected no longer exists, she belongs to you

~ Honoré de Balzac, *The Wild Ass's Skin* (1831)

we look into every corner and closet for fear of a villain; yet should be frightened out of our wits were we to find one. But 'tis better to detect such a one when awake and up, than to be attacked by him when in bed and asleep.

~ Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (1748)³⁰



Henry Fuseli - *The Nightmare* (1781)³¹

30 In a letter to *Clarissa*, Anna Howe contends that it is to a woman's advantage to be consciously aware of any threat of masculine violence (Richardson, *Clarissa* 577). Lovelace later proves her point by drugging *Clarissa* with opiates and raping her while she is unconscious. Lovelace draws similar attention to this vulnerability in a conversation with Mr Hickman, in which he suggests that "ladies are very shy of trusting themselves with the modestest of our sex, when they are disposed to sleep; and why so, if they did not *expect* that advantages would be taken of them at such times" (1094).

31 Currently held by the Detroit Institute of Arts.

As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, female characters faint when the close proximity between victim and villain poses an immediate threat of physical or sexual violence. Fainting often enables the heroine to escape this threat (of abduction, imprisonment, rape, murder, etc) because it disengages her from conscious confrontation with the villain. The heroine who speaks, cries, flees, resists, or otherwise engages her persecutor is rendered more vulnerable because of this engagement: she must speak *to* or flee *from* the attacker. The heroine who faints, however, immediately disengages from the confrontation, and from the imposition of violent or undesired sexual relation. This dislocation occasions a momentary suspension of action that requires intervention and explanation, providing an opportunity for narrative exegesis. The heroine's fainting fits in Richardson's *Pamela* thus enable the novel's marriage plot to unfold because they protect Pamela from Mr B's attempts to rape her, provide proof of her virtue, and help instigate Mr B's moral reform. Pamela's fainting fits, occasioned by Mr B's persistent advances and the overwhelming sexual threat he poses, arrest and protract the courtship narrative that would later characterise the gothic novel, and prefigure the passive agency embodied by the gothic heroine.

The elements of the gothic mode foregrounded in Richardson's *Pamela* increased in literary fashion over the second half of the eighteenth century, and by the 1790s, representations of the fainting heroine permeated gothic fiction. Later gothic novels, such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), repeat with slight variation the fainting trope Richardson established in *Pamela*. When *The Italian's*

heroine Ellena encounters the villainous Schedoni on the beach, for example, she faints when she realizes that he intends to harm her. Ellena's "apprehension of the immediate and terrible vengeance, which such an agent seemed willing to accomplish, subdued her senses; she tottered, and sunk upon the beach" (Radcliffe, *Italian* 223). Just as Pamela loses consciousness when she apprehends Mr B intends to rape her, Ellena swoons when she realizes Schedoni intends to kill her. In both cases, the heroines faint in response to the immediate threat of physical violence against their person, and the male attackers experience a form of impotence or paralysis when confronted with the unconscious forms of their would-be victims. Mr B is unable to rape Pamela while she is unconscious because his desire is fuelled by her physical resistance to his attacks. Her silence and immobility soften his resolve, and he is eventually overcome with concern for Pamela's well-being. In *The Italian*, Ellena's swoon awakens in Schedoni a sense of sympathy and compassion, which similarly causes him to falter. Like Mr B, Schedoni finds himself unable to perform: "As he gazed upon her helpless and faded form, he became agitated [...] The conflict between his design and his conscience was strong, or, perhaps, it was only between his passions [...] even he could not now look upon the innocent, the wretched Ellena, without yielding to the momentary weakness, as he termed it, of compassion" (*Italian* 223). Though Ellena's unconsciousness grants him the perfect opportunity to carry out his intentions, Schedoni cannot bring himself to act. In both novels, the heroine's fainting spell immobilises her attacker.

Though Richardson's *Pamela* predates Radcliffe's *The Italian* by over fifty years, the parallels between fainting scenes speak to the strategic potential of female passivity in contexts of masculine violence. As the gothic mode developed over the second half of the eighteenth century, the increasingly violent threats against virtuous heroines prompted an expansion of the conditions of passivity. By the 1790s, writers like Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Charlotte Dacre, and Charlotte Smith had raised the stakes in Richardson's ur-gothic formula of rapacious desire and virtue in distress to include murder as well as rape, and gothic heroines feared for their lives as well as their honour. The conditions of female passivity expanded accordingly to include sleep as both a means of disengaging from circumstances of masculine violence, and as an authorial opportunity for narrative development and exegesis. This chapter will explore the strategic functions of sleep in Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, two of the most popular gothic novels of the 1790s. A comparison of recurrent bedchamber scenes will demonstrate that while *The Monk* and *The Italian* are often considered as representative of different gothic modes, they share a similar system of representation in which sleep functions as a form of agency for their respective heroines. These similarities destabilise the gendered distinction in gothic studies between feminine terror and masculine horror, and contribute to the development of a larger, more cohesive gothic mode.

In the bedchamber scenes this chapter examines, the heroines are vulnerable to premeditated plots of rape and murder, but prove impenetrable to

masculine violence, as the villains in both novels hesitate when observing the heroine's passive condition. Though their unconsciousness heightens their vulnerability, sleep saves the heroines from their attackers because the villains are temporarily paralysed by their own voyeurism. In these texts, sleep functions as a form of what Diane Hoeveler calls "wise passiveness" — a strategic subject position that destabilises the male/female subject/object hierarchy of the gaze (Hoeveler 7). This chapter will explore how the sleeping heroine disrupts the primacy of the male gaze and the authority of the observing subject over the observed object by displacing the subjectivity of the observer, which halts the narrative action of the text and shifts the heroine's position from object to subject. Both fainting and sleep disengage the heroine from violent sexual relation, exposing the necessity of physical resistance to masculine desire, and rendering impotent the villain's capacity for violence. Fainting produces and provides evidence of an interiorised conscience, the virtue and moral reformation necessary for Pamela and Mr B to come together in marriage. The sleep scenes in later gothic texts expand this interiority to produce a self-reflexive villain confounded by his recognition of the sleeping female subject. The sleeping heroine gives the villain pause to consider his actions, disrupting narrative linearity and opening up the possibility for alternative subjectivities and narrative trajectories. Like fainting, sleep functions as a form of agency for the gothic heroine, and as an exegetic narrative device in the gothic novel that produces embodied forms of subjectivity.

Terror, Horror, and Gender Distinctions in the Gothic Mode

The last decade of the eighteenth century witnessed an explosion of the gothic in the literary marketplace. The popularity of the genre among the emerging literate middle classes led to a proliferation of gothic texts both in England and abroad. Capitalising on this popularity, *The Monk* was first published in 1796, after nineteen-year-old Matthew Lewis spent only ten weeks preparing the manuscript. The text contains many elements by this time considered characteristic of a gothic literary mode, from disenfranchised heroines and evil religious figures to labyrinthine catacombs and supernatural occurrences. Lewis's novel draws not only from a British gothic lineage (including Radcliffe), but also borrows extensively from German sources, such that Lewis was popularly reputed to belong to the *Sturm und Drang* "German school" of gothic literature.³² While Lewis acknowledged many of these sources in the novel's advertisement, the influence of these texts ranges from inspiration to plagiarism: the final pages of the novel, for example, are nearly a verbatim translation of Veit Weber's "Die Teufelsbeschwörung" (1791).³³ But the sensationalism of Lewis's novel overshadowed its derivativeness, as immediately upon publication, *The Monk* was widely criticised not for its lack of originality,

32 *Sturm und Drang*, or "Storm and Stress," refers to the early-Romantic German literary movement of the second half of the eighteenth-century. *Sturm und Drang* literature reacted against realism and rationalism, giving expression to extreme or excessive emotional experiences.

33 Lewis's advertisement references a number of influential sources, and makes "a full avowal of all the plagiarisms of which I am aware myself; but I doubt not, many more may be found, of which I am at present totally unconscious" (Lewis 6). For more on Lewis's influences, see Emma McEvoy's "Introduction" to *The Monk* (Lewis vii-xxx) and Syndy Conger's article "Sensibility Restored" (1989).

but for its apparent lack of morality. The novel was variously described as blasphemous, libidinous, lewd, depraved, and corrupt, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously derided the then-anonymous author who had the audacity to sign “himself a LEGISLATOR! We stare and tremble” (Coleridge, “The Monk” 198). Lewis did not immediately take credit for the novel: the first issue of the first edition was published anonymously, and Lewis claimed authorship only after its success (the novel was reissued with full authorial credit four times between 1796 and 1798). Lewis quickly became so intimately associated with the novel in public opinion that he took on not only responsibility for its authorship, but also the properties of its villain, resulting in the rather unfortunate moniker: Matthew “Monk” Lewis.³⁴ The conflation of the author with the novel’s antagonist contributed to its notoriety, and *The Monk* became one of the defining texts of the Gothic canon.

Radcliffe’s final novel was published only one year after Lewis’s, and though Radcliffe was already long acknowledged by the literary public as the feminine voice of the gothic, *The Italian* is almost always read as a response to *The Monk*. However, as this chapter will show, in addition to the German texts from which he borrowed so liberally, Lewis’s novel also engages the gothic mode established in Radcliffe’s earlier novels. Radcliffe popularised a gothic formula in

³⁴ Ed Cameron is perhaps the most recent in the long list of critics who relate the apparent psychopathology of the novel to the biography of its author: he claims that the neurotic structure of *The Monk* “can be seen at work in [...] the personal life of Matthew Lewis” (Cameron 172). Nina Nichols similarly argues that the events of the novel “cannot help but suggest Lewis’ own homosexual misogyny. His relation with his mother seems to have been close and devoted, and at times, according to his letters, deeply passionate” (Nichols 203).

which an innocent, vulnerable, and disenfranchised young woman is persecuted by an oppressive masculine force; imprisoned or sequestered in isolated locations, where she is accosted by malevolent forces of both human and imagined supernatural origin; and whose honour, virtue, and estate (an unknown inheritance or potential marital acquisition) are subject to persistent threats of violation and appropriation throughout the course of the novel. Both *The Monk* and *The Italian* exemplify this gothic formula, but their similarities are often taken for granted in favour of the gendered differences between masculine and feminine gothic modes. These modes, characterised by Lewis and Radcliffe, respectively, have divided gothic writers and critics alike, and have produced many insightful, though often limiting, interpretations of the gothic novel.³⁵ As Winter suggests, because gothic fiction “is primarily about fear [...] the different subject positions that women and men have occupied in the world have produced different experiences of fear” (Winter 91). The apparently gendered difference in the generation and experience of fear produces the distinction between “male gothic,” which derives from a masculine subject position and engages with masculine fears, and “female gothic,” which derives from a feminine subject position and engages with fears associated with femininity. The

35 Natalia Soloviova, for example, proposes a popular, though reductive, reading of gender distinction in her exploration of subject development in the gothic novel. She argues that the “Two gender positions of the gothic are completely different in representation of character and narrative structure. The male gothic focuses on the individual as ‘satanic revolutionary superman’ that can not be integrated into society. The narrative structure is linear and casual, whereas the female gothic pattern is circular. The heroines in female gothic explore the ways of reconciling individual interests with the demands of the society and are brought safely into social order through marriage” (Soloviova 39).

correlative assumption is that the male gothic concerns the socio-political, and the female gothic the domestic and familiar.

The gendered modes of the gothic can be similarly described in terms of the properties of the sublime — namely, the distinction between “horror” and “terror.” Radcliffe herself is the most oft-cited source for the literary distinction between terror and horror. In the posthumously published dialogue “On the Supernatural in Poetry” (1826), Mr W— maintains that “Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. [...] where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil?” (Radcliffe, “Supernatural” 150). Though Mr W— refers to the works of Milton, his assertion that terror resides in that which is “not distinctly pictured forth, but is seen in glimpses through obscuring shades, the great outlines only appearing, which excite the imagination to complete the rest,” could also describe Radcliffe’s own aesthetic (150). In the gothic mode, terror lurks in shadows, misapprehensions, half-sentences, and the limitless imagination. Horror, conversely, reveals itself in monstrous detail and obscene specificity. Radcliffean terror is characterised by its obscurity and the generation of fear and anxiety in both characters and readers alike. Her novels centralise the characters’ psychological rather than physical experiences, broadening the spectrum of terror to include imagined as well as real or actual threats. Narrative obscurity permeates Radcliffe’s gothic oeuvre,

exacerbating a sense of terror, mystery, and suspense until nearly the last page of the novel, at which point the villain is apprehended, the invariably human origins of apparently supernatural activity are revealed, and the heroine, reunited with her family and fortune, happily marries. By delaying narrative explication and resolution until the last possible moment, Radcliffe implicates the readers' imagination in the generation of terror, and then alleviates their anxiety by restoring reason and order to the narrative.

Lewis's narrative style, on the other hand, is more intrusive. Unlike Radcliffe, who "de-emphasizes the body's material presence and implicitly contains its scrutiny within a polite discourse of sensibility," Lewis generates horror with the disturbance, disruption, and proliferation of bodies and defiance of discursive propriety (Shapira 12). Vartan Messier suggests that while "Radcliffe carefully aims to gently entertain her reader by providing a moral framework, rationalizing the supernatural, and merely suggesting an idea of terror, Lewis literally 'attacks' his audience's senses and sensitivity [...] for these depictions not only break taboos and social guidelines, they also question the system of meaning in which they originate" (Messier 46). The visceral horror of Lewis's text exploits the gaps and absences in Radcliffe's system of representation; Lewis violates Radcliffe's mode of gothic conservatism not only by leaving very little to the imagination, but by describing the lurid details of its violation. *The Monk* is the first novel of its kind to expose the horrors lurking in the shadows in almost pornographic detail; as Yael Shapira so aptly asserts,

“Lewis did not simply choose a different authorial path; he tore off the decorous exterior of Radcliffe’s fiction and offered a look at what lay beneath” (Shapira 14). The text incited a moral and critical (as well as legal) association of obscenity with the gothic novel more generally, and stigmatised the genre well into the nineteenth century; however, the reasons for the novel’s censure are precisely those of Lewis’s legacy.³⁶ Lewis is often valorised (particularly by male critics) for “daring” to break Radcliffe’s conservative mode of gothic terror with the “unprecedented use of transgressive elements” and the “unconcealed, unadulterated shock and horror” for which *The Monk* is so infamous (Messier 39). H P Lovecraft, for example, lauds Lewis for having “never ruined his ghostly visions with a natural explanation. He succeeded in breaking up the Radcliffean tradition and expanding the field of the Gothic novel” (Lovecraft 31).³⁷ Evidently, Lovecraft was disappointed with Radcliffe’s rational explanations for the terror her novels generate, and appreciated Lewis’s horrific sensationalism. But Lewis’s apparent expansion of the gothic does not so much defy the genre as exploit it on its own terms. His novel adopts an analogous narrative framework and invokes

36 For more on the accusations of obscenity and critical reception of *The Monk*, see Michael Gamer’s article “Genres for the Prosecution: Pornography and the Gothic” (1999). Gamer argues that pornography and the gothic have “overlapping constitutive histories” made apparent through their reception histories (Gamer 1052).

37 *The Monk* enjoyed immense popularity despite (or perhaps because of) its scandalous sensationalism, and went on to influence future gothic works, including Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya* (1806). *Zofloya* is an excellent example of the misleading, if not objectively inaccurate, gendering of gothic modes according to distinctions between “terror” and “horror.” Often viewed as a rewriting of *The Monk*, Dacre’s novel defied these stereotypes even as they were being formed. *Zofloya* follows its vicious heroine’s relentless pursuit of sexual power, which is depicted with the grotesque and visceral horror characteristic of the “male” gothic. Lovecraft, however, includes *Zofloya* in the “dreary plethora of trash” that followed in Lewis’s wake (Lovecraft 36).

the same tropes and conventions as Radcliffe's.

Despite their overt similarities, comparisons between Lewis and Radcliffe often reproduce the correlative gendered assumptions that attend their apparent distinction. Psychoanalytic critics like Ed Cameron, for example, suggest that while terror in Radcliffe's novels develops from narrative obscurity, the horror of Lewis's text "offers everything up in its obscene presence," and thus the "male" gothic is about the "horror" associated with the recognition of the Other's lack, and the "female" gothic is about the "terror" of incompleteness (Cameron 169). According to Cameron, Radcliffian terror reveals only its own insufficiency: an "inability to 'say it all'" (169). Psychoanalytic readings like Cameron's suggest that Radcliffe's text is "lacking" in relation to Lewis's. The "obscene presence" of Lewis's text points toward an absence in Radcliffe's, suggesting that it is a deficient or malformed version of a privileged, masculine model. Moreover, the gothic mode itself is a perversion of realism, and numerous psychoanalytic interpretations of the gothic diagnose its masculine mode as neurotic and the female gothic as hysterical versions of realist fiction. As an hysterical text, the gothic novel engages affect without cause. Gothic terror invokes fear of the supernatural without supernatural occurrence, such that one is frightened without reason, both in the causal and the rational senses of the term. In the neurotic text, gothic horror engages cause without affect. There is no fear of the unknown, because one must actively confront the supernatural as the real of the text. As such, the male gothic produces a direct mode of conflict, while the

indirectness of the female gothic leaves the nature of conflict and danger to the characters' and readers' imaginations.³⁸ Though these distinctions have proved useful for close analyses of the texts, reading Radcliffe and Lewis in opposition to one another often replicates the interpretive model's implicit gender hierarchy.

Psychoanalytic interpretations of the Radcliffe/Lewis distinction tend to privilege the direct violence of Lewis's text over Radcliffe's "mere suggestion": Lewis's text is active, Radcliffe's passive. Even the grammar of these arguments indicates as much. For example, Cameron suggests that while "Radcliffe's narrative *is haunted* by its own otherness, Lewis's narrative *constructs* something other than it that then *haunts* its interior" (Cameron 187, emphasis added). The implication is that Lewis's text produces an other, and Radcliffe's text is the other it produces. Many feminist critics of psychoanalysis and the gothic similarly argue that Radcliffe's texts *reproduce* their own otherness, in that they are conservative representations of already dominant social and sexual ideologies concerning gender and class, and women writers like Radcliffe affirmed their own socio-cultural positions by reinforcing the status quo in their novels.³⁹ This persistent effort to distinguish between Lewis and Radcliffe in feminist and psychoanalytic criticism speaks both to an historical effort to maintain masculine

38 In this sense, affect and cause refer to a precognitive sense or experience of fear and an agent, object, phenomenon, or condition that produces or engenders this fear, respectively. As such, these terms engage a more psychological definition than the Deleuzian conception of affect as a capacity to act (to affect or be affected by) that is independent of the subject (Deleuze and Guattari xvi).

39 See, for example, Michelle Massé's *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic* (1992) and Cynthia Wolf's chapter in *The Female Gothic* (1983).

authority within the gothic mode as it was encroached upon by Radcliffe and other women writers, and to recover a female gothic lineage from a patrilineal literary history. As a result, the novels themselves are nearly always read in relation and contrast to each other, as they will be in this chapter. Rather than highlight their differences, however, this analysis will focus on the similarities of the texts' systems of representation to elucidate a shared discursive mode that cannot be reduced to that "masculine" and "feminine" versions of the gothic. Instead, this chapter will demonstrate how representations of female passivity in both texts, specifically in the form of the sleeping heroine, destabilise the subject/object hierarchy Cameron and other critics argue the novels reinscribe, and belong to a larger gothic system of representation in which passivity produces rather than limits female subject development.

Sleeping Heroines in Radcliffe and Lewis

Representations of the passive female body are of strategic narrative significance in the gothic mode. In the gothic novel, the somnolent heroine inhabits a subject position that cannot be dominated or subdued by penetrative masculine force. The hesitation that gothic villains experience when their intended victims are unconscious suggests that female passivity can function as a form of resistance to masculine violence. Just as fainting prevents Pamela from being raped by Mr B in Richardson's text — a trope Radcliffe replicates in the beach scene between Ellena and Schedoni — sleeping saves heroines from rape

and murder in the canonical gothic novel. In both cases, the heroines' passive state not only protects them from harm, but also gives their attackers pause to consider and reflect upon their actions against the female subject, allowing for further narrative complication, development, and resolution. To borrow from Georges Didi-Huberman's description of "hysterical sleep," in the context of the gothic novel, sleep functions as "an arrested attack, or rather, an attack that is indefinitely retarded" in terms of its narrative intervention (Didi-Huberman 182). While I do not wish to diagnose the heroines (or the novels, or their authors) as hysteric, Didi-Huberman's description helps to articulate the discursive space the sleeping heroine occupies in these novels. The villains' various (physical and sexual) assaults on sleeping heroines are both protracted and momentarily arrested. When confronted with the form of the sleeping woman, both Schedoni and Ambrosio halt their attacks. In these moments the villains are paralysed, limited to observation rather than action — they can look, but cannot touch. As the following comparison between bedchamber scenes in novels by Lewis and Radcliffe will demonstrate, the sleeping heroine inhabits a passive subject position that usurps the villain's agency by destabilising the subject/object hierarchy of the gaze.

The remarkably similar bedchamber scenes in these texts represent the sleeping heroine as alarmingly vulnerable, splayed across the bed for the attacker and quite literally unconscious of her peril. In *The Monk*, the titular villain Ambrosio stands over the unconscious Antonia, on whom he has cast a mystical

slumber so that he can ravish her while she sleeps. His evil consort Matilda, an emissary of the devil, provides him with an enchanted myrtle flower that both allows Ambrosio to access the locked chamber, and plunges the already sleeping Antonia into a “death-like slumber” (Lewis 278).⁴⁰ After approaching the bed on which she rests, Ambrosio stands transfixed by the sight of her beauty while Antonia appears blissfully asleep:

She lay with her cheek reclining upon one ivory arm; The Other rested on the side of the Bed with graceful indolence. A few tresses of her hair had escaped from beneath the Muslin which confined the rest, and fell carelessly over her bosom [...] An air of enchanting innocence and candour pervaded her whole form; and there was a sort of modesty in her very nakedness, which added fresh stings to the desires of the lustful Monk. (300)

Antonia’s passivity emphasizes her innocence, while revealing the extent of her charms to Ambrosio. Her unconscious state removes any shame from her nakedness, and preserves the modesty the Monk finds so compelling. Just as Pamela’s virtue incites Mr B’s desire in Richardson’s text, Antonia’s innocence similarly fuels Ambrosio’s lust, making him “more anxious to deprive her of that quality, which formed her principal charm” (256). Sleep and unconsciousness temporarily disturb the trappings of modesty, as the dishevelled heroines cannot

⁴⁰ The enchanted myrtle and “soporific draught” Ambrosio uses to incapacitate Antonia are reminiscent of the opiate (the “somniferous wand”) Lovelace uses to drug Clarissa (Lewis 278, 329; Richardson, *Clarissa* 887).

attend to the sheets and skirts that veil their bodies from the men who visually pursue them. But while Mr B can only gaze upon the unconscious Pamela from the keyhole of her chamber door, Ambrosio takes this opportunity to indulge his scopophilic desire. Once he assures himself that Antonia is fast asleep, Ambrosio ventures “to cast a glance upon his sleeping Beauty. A single Lamp [...] permitted him to examine all the charms of the lovely Object before him [...] He remained for some moments devouring those charms with his eyes, which soon were to be subjected to his ill-regulated passions” (300). But Ambrosio’s eyes ultimately thwart his passions: the rape plot is foiled because Ambrosio is caught up in looking rather than doing. Though she is in a passive state of vulnerability, Antonia’s sleeping form momentarily paralyzes Ambrosio, which ultimately saves her from his attack.

The fleeting moments spent in observation cost the Monk his opportunity, as he is interrupted by Elvira, Antonia’s mother, before he can act on his desires. Elvira catches Ambrosio mid-gaze, but before she can raise any alarm, Ambrosio smothers her with a pillow. This interruption in the Monk’s designs shifts the nature of his crime: the violence is redirected from daughter to mother, from penetrative to suffocative, from premeditated to impulsive, and from sexual to precautionary. Ultimately, Ambrosio commits murder to conceal the rape he fails to commit. After smothering Elvira, the Monk is again immobilized by his predilection for observing his victims. Once she ceases to struggle, Ambrosio removes the pillow and gazes upon his lifeless victim. He “beheld before him

that once noble and majestic form, now become a Corse [*sic*], cold, senseless and disgusting. This horrible act was no sooner perpetrated, than the Friar beheld the enormity of his crime" (Lewis 304). The sight of Elvira's dead body occasions a moment of visual paralysis analogous to that which Ambrosio experiences when observing Antonia. It is not simply Elvira's transformation from a "noble and majestic" subject to a "senseless and disgusting" object that Ambrosio finds disturbing; Elvira's dead body functions as an abject *memento mori*, which shows Ambrosio his own inevitable otherness.⁴¹ Once he recovers himself, Ambrosio finds he cannot rouse himself to take advantage of the opportunity to resume his plan to rape Antonia. The sight of Elvira's dead body stifles the Monk's "desire to profit by the execution of his crime. Antonia now appeared to him an object of disgust" (304). Both Elvira's corpse and Antonia's sleeping form give Ambrosio pause specifically because they share a state of passivity that disrupts the primacy of the subject. The emphasis on Ambrosio's gaze in this passage distances him from his actions. As Kari Winter notes, Ambrosio becomes "a voyeur rather than a murderer," a passive spectator rather than an active agent (Winter 95). The crime shifts from rape to murder, but returns Ambrosio a state of visual paralysis.

In an analogous bedchamber scene in Radcliffe's *The Italian*, Ellena lies sleeping while Schedoni approaches, preparing to stab her with a poignard. Though Schedoni's intended crime is similarly penetrative, his interests are

41 Elvira's dead body warns Ambrosio of his own mortality, recalling the Capuchin *memento mori*: "What you are now, we once were; what we are now, you shall be."

motivated by socio-economic aspirations rather than sexual desire. Schedoni is employed by the treacherous Marchesa, who has confided in him that she desires to end her son Vivaldi's relationship with Ellena by any means necessary. Schedoni formulates a plan to kill Ellena in order to ingratiate himself to the Marchesa, who will help elevate his position in the Church. With the aid of Spalatro, one of the Marchesa's minions, Schedoni steals into Ellena's bedchamber, intending to murder her while she sleeps. But like Ambrosio, who is momentarily paralysed by the sight of the sleeping Antonia, Schedoni hesitates when he is confronted with Ellena's sleeping form:

She lay in deep and peaceful slumber, and seemed to have thrown herself upon the mattress, after having been wearied by her griefs; for, though sleep pressed heavily on her eyes, their lids were yet wet with tears. While Schedoni gazed for a moment upon her innocent countenance, a faint smile stole over it. He stepped back.

"She smiles in her murderer's face!" said he, shuddering. (*Italian*

234)

In this scene, Schedoni also stands transfixed, suspended between murder and paralysis.⁴² Ellena's vulnerable state, rather than enabling him to act unimpeded, literally stays Schedoni's hand. Schedoni's "agitation and repugnance to strike increased with every moment of delay, and, as often as he prepared to plunge

⁴² The verb *transfix* is useful here, as it connotes both immobility (OED 1b: "to render motionless") and penetration (OED 1a: "to pierce through with, or impale upon, a sharp-pointed instrument").

the poinard [*sic*] in her bosom, a shuddering horror restrained him. Astonished at his own feelings, and indignant at what he termed a dastardly weakness, he found it necessary to argue with himself" (234). Schedoni suffers a debilitating sense of compassion for the slumbering Ellena. His "weakness" recalls Mr B's inability to take advantage of Pamela's unconsciousness during her fainting fits because he is overcome with concern for her well-being. Though by all narrative accounts Schedoni is capable of great sin, the sight of the passive vulnerability of her unconscious form gives him pause.

During this moment of hesitation, Schedoni discovers a miniature around Ellena's neck — a portrait of himself that misleads him to believe that Ellena is his own daughter. The discovery of the portrait, and his apparent relation to its bearer, intensifies Schedoni's hesitation and paralysis, as "after gazing for an instant, some new cause of horror seemed to seize all his frame, and he stood for some moments aghast and motionless like a statue" (*Italian* 234). The sight of the miniature renders Schedoni impotent and immobile: he turns to stone. Unable to follow through with his plan to murder Ellena, Schedoni instead attempts to recover his sense of self, and endeavours to ascertain an identity in relation to Ellena. Schedoni awakens Ellena in order to question her about the origins of the miniature and her relation to its subject. She correctly assumes Schedoni has come to murder her, and, pleading for mercy, calls Schedoni by his religious title, "Father." Though she refers to his vocation, not his paternity, Ellena unintentionally verbalises Schedoni's suspicion that she is his estranged daughter

by his brother's wife Olivia, whom he abducted after murdering his brother.⁴³ Schedoni's mistaken apprehension of his relation to Ellena forestalls his original intentions. But whereas the parental interruption in *The Monk* saves Antonia because it shifts Ambrosio's criminal action from rape to murder, here parental interruption saves Ellena because it awakens Schedoni's compassion and fills him with a remorseful sense of paternal affection. As Schedoni presses Ellena "to his bosom, and wetted her cheeks with tears," she both physically and intuitively rejects Schedoni's claims of parentage, which he has not proved sufficiently "to justify an entire confidence in the assertion he had made, or to allow her to permit his caresses without trembling. She shrunk, and endeavoured to disengage herself" (237). Ellena recoils not only from his embrace, but from the relation that would secure for Schedoni any claims to her person.

Though many critics read this scene in *The Italian* as an appropriation or revision of the bedchamber scene in *The Monk*, both scenes bear more than an incidental resemblance to a scene from Radcliffe's second novel, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791).⁴⁴ In this text, the orphaned Adeline entrusts herself to the protection of the La Mott family, who must sequester themselves in an abbey to avoid financial ruin. The abbey's proprietor, the Marquis, has libidinous designs

43 Ellena confirms the portrait is of Schedoni, but both have misunderstood the origin of the miniature. Although the miniature bears Schedoni's image, he is not Ellena's father; her father was in fact Schedoni's brother, and the portrait is thus of her uncle. This fact is not revealed until much later in the text, when the testimonies of various characters prove that Ellena is indeed Olivia's daughter, but not Schedoni's.

44 Syndy Conger, for example, calls Radcliffe's bedroom scene an "obvious remodeling" of Lewis's (Conger, "Sensibility Restored" 129). She reads Radcliffe's "fictional revision of Lewis's story" as a form of "literary protest against *The Monk*" (113-114).

on Adeline, who rejects his advances. He and Monsieur La Mott conspire to stab her while she sleeps — a narrative trope with which Radcliffe is obviously preoccupied (*Romance* 226-227). The scene in which La Motte approaches the sleeping Adeline to carry out the Marquis's design clearly anticipates its later version in *The Italian*, as well as the bedchamber scene in *The Monk*:

La Motte now stepped hastily towards the bed, when, breathing a deep sigh, she was again silent. He undrew the curtain, and saw her laying in a profound sleep, her cheek yet wet with tears, resting upon her arm. He stood a moment looking at her; and as he viewed her innocent and lovely countenance, pale in grief, the light of the lamp, which shone strong upon her eyes, awoke her.

(*Romance* 230)

La Mott is not crippled by the sudden onset of compassion, like Schedoni in *The Italian*, or by voyeuristic pleasure, as with Ambrosio in *The Monk*, but he similarly hesitates in protracted observation of his intended victim. And as with Ellena and Antonia, Adeline's unconsciousness emphasizes her innocence and passivity. Adeline's beauty and vulnerability captivate La Mott, and his gaze lingers long enough for the light to awaken Adeline to her danger. Once again, the villain's hesitation signifies a moment of recognition of the heroine's subjectivity, staying his hand and saving the heroine from violence. Radcliffe and Lewis use sleep to achieve the same narrative ends, and their similar representations of the sleeping subject enlarges the discursive scope of passive agency in the gothic mode.

Prophetic Sleep: Gothic Dreams and Nightmares

Each of these bedchamber scenes demonstrate the strategic functions of sleep in the gothic novel, as it not only renders the heroines impenetrable, but generates an opportunity for narrative intervention and exegesis, particularly in the form of prophetic dreams and nightmares. Radcliffe's attention to sleep in *The Romance of the Forest* underscores the significance of its recurrence in her later novels. The narrator in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) describes the sublimity of the landscape as "beauty sleeping in the lap of horror" — a phrase that could also describe the sleeping heroines themselves (*Udolpho* 55). In Radcliffe's novels, sleep is rarely peaceful or restorative, and either gives way to solicitous dreams, or is disrupted by more conscious terrors. In *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), for example, nearly all references to sleep involve the characters' failures to do so. They are tormented by disturbing thoughts, sudden or unfamiliar sounds, portentous dreams, and pernicious nightmares — recurrent tropes in Radcliffe's subsequent novels, and in the gothic mode more generally. Moreover, as both Radcliffe and Lewis establish, sleep in the gothic novel can be natural or induced, with little to distinguish one state from the other. Though Richardson previously elucidated the tragic potential of opiate-induced unconsciousness in *Clarissa*, in the gothic proper, drugged heroines are no more or less susceptible to danger than those who sleep under natural circumstances. In the first chapter of Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest*, for example, the feverish Adeline, "after drinking profusely of some mild liquids, fell asleep [...] and so profound was her

repose, that her breath alone gave sign of existence" (*Romance* 13). Like Richardson's Clarissa and Antonia in *The Monk*, Adeline experiences a death-like slumber induced by the consumption of some variety of anodyne. Her repose is later fitful and dream-filled; she suffers "harrassed slumbers" and dreams of struggling to disengage from the grasp of the corpse-like hands of a dying man (108). Adeline unconsciously conceives of her own imminent peril, imagining herself physically harmed and restrained by an oppressive masculine force.

As Adeline's dreams demonstrate, in the gothic mode, sleep not only saves the heroine from the violent intentions of the male villains, but also functions as an expository narrative device to foreshadow imminent or potential danger. Dreams and nightmares figure prominently in gothic texts as a means of generating apprehension and suspense in characters and readers alike. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline experiences a "sort of waking dream" in which she sees herself "wounded, and bleeding profusely. Then I thought myself in the house again; and suddenly heard these words [...] 'Depart this house, destruction hovers here'" (*Romance* 41).⁴⁵ The metatronic interjection of the paternal *vox dei* in Adeline's daydream warns her of the danger that awaits her, and engenders a more general sense of terror and foreboding in the text. In an analogous scene in *The Italian*, Vivaldi suffers an horrible presentiment in which Ellena is "wounded, and bleeding to death; [he] saw her ashy countenance, and her wasting eyes, from which the spirit of life was fast departing, turned

⁴⁵ Pamela's mother similarly warns her daughter to "flee this evil Great House and Man" (Richardson, *Pamela* 23).

piteously on himself, as if imploring him to save her from the fate that was dragging her to the grave" (*Italian* 41). In this scene, the hero, rather than the heroine, dreams of the danger she will face, and of his own inability to save her. Vivaldi's premonition portends of Ellena's persecution, but also underscores the very limited role he plays in Ellena's eventual escape and emancipation. In *The Monk*, Lorenzo similarly imagines himself unable to save his beloved. After meeting Antonia, Lorenzo falls asleep at the church and dreams of their union. A demonic creature interrupts the ceremony and the church begins to crumble. Lorenzo tries to save the angelic and ethereal Antonia from the creature attempting to drag her into the pits of hell, but Antonia escapes both the monster and Lorenzo, and ascends to heaven, leaving Lorenzo holding only her white robe (Lewis 28).⁴⁶ The dream foretells Antonia's rape and murder, and of Lorenzo's inability to save her from the monstrous Monk.

In each case, sleep provides an opportunity for strategic plot development and narrative intervention in the form of a dream. The nightmarish dream sequences in Radcliffe's and Lewis's novels are reminiscent of Henry Fuseli's gothic painting "The Nightmare" (above), exhibited in 1781 — a decade before the literary gothic profligacy of the 1790s.⁴⁷ The painting depicts a sleeping

46 Lewis's notes in the fourth edition of *The Monk* cite Richardson's *Clarissa* as a literary source for Lorenzo's dream (cf. *Clarissa* 1218). See D L Macdonald's article "A Dreadful Dreadful Dream" (2004) for a thorough comparison of *The Monk* with *Clarissa*.

47 "The Nightmare" received immediate public attention, and its popularity prompted Fuseli to paint subsequent versions of the image. The original painting continues to fascinate, and was used as the catalogue cover and principal advertising image for the Tate Museum's 2006 exhibition *Gothic Nightmares*. For an in-depth account of the painting's reception and interpretation, see the *Gothic Nightmares* catalogue (Myrone 45).

woman in near-death-like repose, bathed in a light that exposes her face, neck, arm, and the contours of her body to both the viewer and the demonic creatures who watch over her as she dreams. The dark shadows that obscure the imp perched on her torso and the black horse, whose head thrusts out from between the bedchamber's curtains, stand in contrast to the ethereal light surrounding the sleeping woman. On the bedside table lay a book, a mirror, and an empty phial. "The Nightmare" portrays both the image of a dreaming woman and the subject of her dream, in which she is vulnerable to the sexual predation of masculinised monsters.⁴⁸ The imp surmounts the woman erotically splayed across the bed, while the black horse ogles her sleeping form. The empty phial on the bedside table suggests that the woman's sleep may have been induced, or that perhaps she is not asleep at all, and is rather in the paroxysm of death.⁴⁹ Fuseli's painting represents the sleeping female subject as a victim of immediate violence, though it is unclear whether this violence is imminent or has just occurred. In either interpretation, the woman in "The Nightmare" appears prey to the demons of her dream in much the same way Ellena and Antonia are vulnerable to their attackers while they sleep. Furthermore, the bedchamber scenes in the novels emphasize the innocence of both women, just as the light in Fuseli's painting

48 Compare Fuseli's monsters with Pamela's misapprehension of cows as angry bulls (Richardson, *Pamela* 153) and of Richardson's representation of Mrs Sinclair as monstrously masculine in *Clarissa* (*Clarissa* 883, 1388).

49 See also Fuseli's "The Italian Court" (1780), which depicts the body of a woman extended at the feet of a Count, seated at his desk in a position of contemplative regret, his sword leaning against the wall beside him. The extended title of the painting — "Ezzelin musing over the body of Meduna, slain by him, for disloyalty, during his absence in the Holy Land" — explains how the woman came to be in her present supine position ("The Italian Court" is held by the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, London).

casts an angelic glow over the sleeper. Schedoni and Ambrosio, conversely, creep through the shadows and poise menacingly above their intended victims, like the black horse disrupting the privacy of the curtained bedchamber while the imp perches upon the woman's breast.

The eroticism with which the women are delineated contrasts the innocence and vulnerability of their passive state, and the texts titillate as they terrify. The threat of penetration is very real in each instance: Ambrosio intends to rape Antonia, Schedoni plans to stab Ellena, and one can easily interpret the violent sexual implications of the horse's head thrust through the folds of the bed curtains, and the position of the demon atop the sleeping woman. Fuseli's painting anticipates the narrative potential of literary representations of the sleeping heroine, which reproduce the eroticised violence of the gaze. The literary influence of Fuseli's "The Nightmare" is not limited to Radcliffe and Lewis, or even to the gothic novels of the 1790s. Edgar Allan Poe's narrator in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), for example, compares Usher's paintings to "the reveries of Fuseli" (Poe 98); Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of Plants* (1789) makes reference to "Fuseli's poetic eye" and includes an extensive description of the painting (Darwin 64-65); and Maryanne Ward cites the painting as the inspiration for Elizabeth's death scene in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), conflating gothic representations of sleep and death. Ward's conflation mirrors Victor's own account of Elizabeth's death in the novel:

She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her

head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair. Every where I turn I see the same figure — her bloodless arms and relaxed form flung by the murderer on its bridal bier [...] as she lay, her head upon her arm, and a handkerchief thrown across her face and neck, I might have supposed her asleep. (Shelley 218)

Despite the violence of Elizabeth's death, to Victor, she appears to be sleeping — an inversion of Antonia and Adeline's death-like slumber. Shelley's representation of Elizabeth's dead body shares similar visual properties with Radcliffe's and Lewis's descriptions of their sleeping heroines. While sleeping, Ellena and Antonia are as still, pale, and lovely as Elizabeth's corpse, but the impending violence against Ellena and Antonia has already happened to Elizabeth. The conflation of sleep and death in the gothic mode suggests a form of narrative uncertainty: the difference between life and death in these scenes is contingent upon narrative intervention and verification. The woman in Fuseli's painting embodies this moment of narrative uncertainty; she occupies a liminal representational space between these states, simultaneously alive and dead, as the Schrödinger's cat of gothic heroines.⁵⁰ This liminality extends to representations of the sleeping woman more generally, as she inhabits a state

50 The Schrödinger's cat paradox is a thought experiment in quantum mechanics. The paradox proposes a scenario in which a cat is placed in a sealed box with an unstable atom and a flask of poison, which is designed to shatter if the atom disintegrates, thereby killing the cat. Quantum mechanics interprets the cat as a superposition of both states: the cat is *both* alive *and* dead until the box is opened and determined to be *either* alive *or* dead.

suspended between active and passive, subject and object, life and death.

These representations are reminiscent of the “Sleeping Beauty” fairytale, in which a young princess falls into a mystical sleep from which she can only be awakened by the kiss of a prince. The “Sleeping Beauty” story (at least the version popularised by Charles Perrault) predates the Fuseli, Radcliffe, and Lewis by a full century, but proved popular not only in late-eighteenth-century gothic, but in the fin-de-siècle gothic revival of the late-nineteenth century as well.⁵¹ In her analysis of visual representations of the “sleeping beauty” in later-Victorian painting (1860-1895), Adeline Tinter describes the passivity, torpor, inertness, and general lack of activity in these images as the reduction of woman “to her organic form,” as a representation of “still-life that is paradoxically alive” (Tinter 12-13). The persistent representation of the sleeping woman in both written and visual texts points towards the narrative and interpretative potential of an embodied state of suspended animation. However, while the “sleeping beauty” trope connotes sexual vulnerability and victimization in each of these texts, the significant difference between the representation of the passive female body in Fuseli’s painting and in *The Monk* and *The Italian* is the narrative context of the woman’s condition. Specifically, the sleeping heroines in the novels are literally unconscious of the very real threat that hovers over them, while the

51 Perrault’s *La Belle au bois dormant* (“The Beauty in the Sleeping Wood”) is the first story in his 1697 collection of Mother Goose tales. It was later popularised by the Brothers Grimm as the story “Briar Rose,” published in 1812. For more on the proliferation of the “sleeping beauty” as an aesthetic theme, see the chapter on “Dead Ladies and the Fetish of Sleep” in Bram Dijkstra’s *Idols of Perversity* (1986). It is interesting that Dijkstra, too, conflates representations of sleep and death.

woman in "The Nightmare" is apparently dreaming. Fuseli depicts both the dreamer and the dream; in the novels, the nightmare is the reality of the text. As Margaret Anne Doody states, "the 'real world' for the characters in a Gothic novel is one of nightmare [...] There is no ordinary world to wake up in" (Doody 553). The masculine monsters in "The Nightmare" take the form of actual men in the gothic novel, and the sleeping woman's dream is the waking nightmare from which the gothic heroine constantly flees. Similarly, though the gothic hero can perhaps stand in as the handsome prince in these texts, no simple kiss can awaken the heroine to an happily ever after. Instead, sleep affords the gothic heroine a passive agency with which to disarm her attackers, and the narrative opportunity for editorial or divine intervention.

Subjectivity and Visibility

Like Fuseli, Lewis and Radcliffe engage the "sleeping beauty" trope as a means to represent the passive female body as a site of rich narrative possibility. In both bedchamber scenes, the sight of the sleeping woman immobilises the villain and suspends the immediate violence of his plot, which saves the heroine from harm and allows for further narrative exposition. Moreover, these scenes are significant for their development of the female characters' subjectivity, as, somewhat paradoxically, it is when the heroines are asleep that they most actively, affectively, and effectively intervene in the novels. Ellena's sleepy smile, for example, disarms Schedoni far more effectively than her previous "supplications and her efforts for

liberty" (*Italian* 222). He ignores Ellena's verbal pleas, but trembles before her silent, unconscious expressions. Antonia is similarly expressive in her sleep: "A smile inexpressibly sweet played round her ripe and coral lips, from which every now and then escaped a gentle sigh or an half-pronounced sentence [...] Her mouth, half-opened seemed to solicit a kiss" (Lewis 300). In both cases, the villain interprets the heroine's expressiveness as directed towards him: Schedoni imagines Ellena smiles in the face of her murderer, while Ambrosio supposes Antonia unconsciously solicits him to kiss her. Though in both scenes sleep disengages the heroine from active confrontation with the villain, both men perceive the women's unconscious expressions in relation to themselves.

Several modern feminist critics reproduce the villains' presumption, and argue that the gothic heroine signifies only in relation to male characters. Claudia Johnson, for example, suggests that Ellena's "behavior, her subjectivity, and her suffering are peripheral. Cast as the object rather than the subject of *their* plots of harm and rescue, Ellena bears significance only for how other characters respond to her" (Johnson 134, original emphasis). Johnson's emphatic "*their*" suggests it is the male characters, Schedoni and Vivaldi in particular, who drive the narrative. For Johnson, the moment of hesitation and delay of narrative action is significant only for Schedoni's character development. Similarly, while Gary Kelly asserts that "the heroine's subjectivity is the central signifying and structural principle in Radcliffe's novels" (Kelly 51), Kate Ferguson Ellis argues that what makes *The Italian* an "unusual Radcliffean Gothic is that its center of developing

consciousness is not the heroine but the villain" (Ellis 124). Both Johnson and Ellis shift their critical focus from Ellena to Schedoni, eliding the significance of sleep and unconsciousness to Ellena's subject development. The sleep scenes signify a shift in the subject/object relation between villain and heroine, and the villain's consciousness develops only in recognition of the heroine's subjectivity. However, the heroine is not hailed as a subject because the villain recognises her as such; rather, it is the heroine's passive agency that enables the assertion of her subjectivity within a narrative mode contingent upon virtue in distress. Sleep enables a passive assertion of the heroine's subjectivity that does not signify when she is conscious, because when she actively engages the villain through verbal or physical resistance, she signifies only as an object to be overpowered or subdued. While active resistance reinforces the villain's subjectivity through his mastery of her person, the heroine's passive condition destabilises this relation and affirms her own subject position.

While Ellena's subjectivity is not as fully articulated as that of other female literary characters — as with Pamela or Clarissa in Richardson's novels, for example — it is important to note that female subjectivity in the gothic novel of the 1790s develops within a semi-omniscient third-person (rather than first-person) narrative structure. Gothic writers like Radcliffe, Lewis, Dacre, and Smith (among others) construct a third-person narrative framework within which their heroines develop from a distanced, external perspective. This perspective emphasizes appearance, visibility, and interaction over internal, personal

reflection; the heroine is created from without rather than within. For example, both *The Monk* and *The Italian* begin with a physical description of the veiled heroine and the hero who struggles to discern her features: the female object of the gaze, and the male subject by whom she is observed. In both novels, the veil only momentarily obscures the heroine from view.⁵² In *The Monk*, the bustle of the crowd inside the Capuchin Church deranges Antonia's veil "sufficiently to discover a neck which for symmetry and beauty might have vied with the Medicean Venus" (Lewis 9); in *The Italian*, Ellena's veil is caught by a breeze, disclosing "a countenance more touchingly beautiful" than Vivaldi "had dared to imagine" (*Italian* 6). The initial descriptions of the heroines are modestly erotic, both titillating and tender. Lorenzo compares Antonia to the Roman statue of Venus, goddess of love, held by the Medici family in the fifteenth-century (Lewis 444 n9). The statue stands naked with one hand covering her genitalia. Antonia is dressed in white accented with blue, recalling the colours of modesty and divinity associated with the Virgin Mary. She is fair-haired, light-skinned, and of slight, nymph-like proportions; her bosom, though also veiled, is worthy of note. Ellena, by contrast, is of a darker, "Grecian outline," but similarly delicate and graceful (*Italian* 6). The sweetness of her voice, like a syren's, compels Vivaldi to follow her. Ellena's features betray the "intelligence" of "an elegant mind" (6), while Antonia's countenance could suggest "pride, discretion, timidity, or

52 For more on the significance of the gothic veil, see Eve Sedgwick's influential article "The Character of the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel" (1981), as well as Susan Greenfield's "Veiled Desire: Mother-Daughter Love and Sexual Imagery in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*" (1992).

idiotism" (Lewis 11). Though Radcliffe's heroine appears in greater possession of intellect and subjectivity than Lewis's, both women are observed and described from an external point of view, and subject to the hero's prurient gaze.

In both novels, the hero catches sight of the heroine's face by chance, when an authorial hand draws aside the veil. The villains, however, possess a more penetrative gaze that appears to see through those subjected to it. Both Radcliffe and Lewis pay particular attention to their villain's eyes, which they describe in nearly identical terms. Ambrosio has "a certain severity in his look and manner that inspired universal awe, and few could sustain the glance of his eye at once fiery and penetrating" (Lewis 18). Similarly, Schedoni's eyes are "so piercing that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance, into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice" (*Italian* 35). In both cases, villain's gaze is penetrating and insupportable, rendering its objects unable to return the gaze or shield themselves from it. The commanding austerity of the villain's gaze is further compounded by his "foreign," Mediterranean appearance. Ambrosio possesses an aquiline nose, large black eyes, and a deep brown complexion; Schedoni is the Italian of the novel's title.⁵³ Lewis describes the Monk as "uncommonly handsome" and "irresistibly attract[ive]" (Lewis 18), such that even the modest Antonia confesses "such affection for him, that I am myself

53 Interestingly, there never seems any doubt, historical or contemporary, as to who is the novel's titular Italian, though this ethnicity is shared by all of the main characters in the text. Both Lewis and Radcliffe centralise the villain in the titles of their novels, unlike the eponymous heroines of Richardson's texts.

astonished at the acuteness of my feelings" (20). But while Ambrosio's manner and countenance are initially compelling, his eyes betray his fall from grace; Antonia eventually finds that his "flaming eyes terrify me!" (381), and she "trembled, whenever She met their gaze" (386). Schedoni, on the other hand, is repulsive from the beginning: "there was something terrible in [his] air, something almost super-human. His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face, encreased its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror" (*Italian* 34-35). In both cases, the villain's eyes reveal the malevolence of their character, and intimidate those upon whom they cast their gaze.

Whilst asleep, Ellena and Antonia are fully exposed to the villain's penetrative eye, but their unconscious conditions immobilise their attackers mid-gaze. When they are awake, however, both heroines are very conscious of being observed, and make a concerted effort to limit or avoid visibility. For example, in *The Italian*, Ellena prefers "to remain in her solitary turret, to the being exposed to the eyes of strangers," and only reluctantly leaves her chamber to join the other members of the convent (*Italian* 93). She is also exceedingly mindful of the placement of her veil, and adjusts it on numerous occasions to ensure her face is appropriately shielded from public view. She even hesitates to reveal herself to Vivaldi when he comes to assist in her escape from the convent because "she had not courage indecorously to withdraw her veil before so many strangers" (130). When Ellena mistakenly reveals her face to a stranger instead of Vivaldi, she is

“Shocked at the interpretation, which might be given to a conduct apparently so improper” (130). Ellena’s mortification suggests she is keenly aware of the sexual implications of visibility and observation. By revealing her face to a strange man, she has opened herself to a form of sexual indiscretion as the object of his gaze. Antonia shares Ellena’s conscientious modesty, and is similarly hesitant to expose herself in the presence of strangers. In the opening scene of *The Monk*, Antonia expresses her reluctance to remove her veil, as is the fashion in Madrid; it is only at her Aunt’s insistence that she shows her face in the crowd. Even in solitude, Antonia is mindful of how she reveals herself. When Ambrosio observes Antonia bathing through Matilda’s magic mirror, she instinctively shields herself from view: “The amorous Monk had full opportunity to observe the voluptuous contours and admirable symmetry of her person [...] Though unconscious of being observed, an in-bred sense of modesty induced her to veil her charms; and She stood hesitating upon the brink, in the attitude of the Venus de Medicis” (Lewis 271). Here, Antonia is again compared with the Medicean Venus, whose hand is sculpted in a position of strategic modesty. Both Antonia and Ellena behave as though they are under constant surveillance, self-conscious of their visibility even when they are unconscious of being observed.

While the heroines in both texts are preoccupied with avoiding and evading observation, the male characters endeavour to observe them when and wherever possible. Heroes and villains alike watch the heroines from the shadows, from behind enchanted mirrors or garden hedges or curtained corners

of the bedchamber. In each instance, the male observer hesitates in observation of the heroine. When the gaze is malevolent, as when Schedoni and Ambrosio observe Ellena and Antonia while they sleep, the villain is momentarily paralysed by the sight of the passive, vulnerable heroine. In other instances, when voyeurism takes on the guise of romance, the heroine does not have to be asleep for her vulnerability to interrupt the male gaze. For example, when Vivaldi tries to catch a glimpse of his beloved while serenading her from the garden, the impropriety of his actions gives him pause. Though he spies on Ellena out of love, rather than lust or malice, Ellena's vulnerability causes him to falter. Vivaldi pauses to consider "whether it was honorable thus to steal upon her retirement, and become an unsuspected observer of her secret thoughts. But the temptation was too powerful for this honorable hesitation [...] he placed himself near an open lattice, so as to be shrouded from observation [...] while he obtained a full view of the apartment" (*Italian* 26). Vivaldi hesitates because, by observing her in secret, he dishonours both Ellena and himself. This act of observation is a violation to which Radcliffe calls attention by giving her hero pause to reconsider. The exposure of the heroine to the unimpeded gaze renders her vulnerable, and Vivaldi's hesitation and appeal to honour acknowledges the threat he poses to Ellena as a specifically sexual violation. Just as Ellena fears the stranger's interpretation of her actions when she mistakenly exposes her face to him, Vivaldi understands that, by watching Ellena, he compromises her virtue. Though Vivaldi's desire eventually overcomes his sense of honour, the pause is

significant in that it disrupts the subject/object relation by emphasizing the virtue and subjectivity of the object of his gaze.

Vivaldi's observation of Ellena and his temporary hesitation recall a similar scene in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which both Radcliffe and Lewis cite as a significant influence on their own work. In Book 9, Satan observes Eve, who has momentarily separated herself from Adam, alone in the Garden. The sight temporarily disarms him, and gives him pause to reconsider his attempt to seduce her:

Her graceful Innocence, her every Aire
 Of gesture or lest action overawed
 His Malice, and with rapine sweet bereav'd
 His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
 That space the Evil one abstracted stood
 From his own evil, and for the time remain'd
 Stupidly good, of enmitie disarm'd,
 Of guile, of hate, of envie, of revenge. (9.459-66)

Satan is momentarily rendered "stupidly good," which connotes not only a momentary lapse of intellectual and emotional strength, but also of physical capacity, in the sense of stupor or torpor. In these moments of hesitation, the male observer suffers a form of impotence, as Satan's "bereav'd rapine" suggests. Satan is disarmed in the sense that he is castrated, just as Schedoni and Ambrosio are unable to perform their intended assaults on Ellena and Antonia. The difference

here, and the scene in which Vivaldi observes Ellena from the garden, is that the woman is not asleep or unconscious, but merely unaware that she is being watched. This difference is imperative to maintaining the honour and virtue of the heroine, and limiting any implications of temptation or seduction. Sleep, like fainting, protects the gothic heroine from dishonour as well as violence; she cannot replicate Eve's fall if she is sleeping. Even though sleep physically reveals the heroines to their male attackers, their lack of consciousness means they cannot be implicated or complicit in their visibility, and thus enables them to maintain the innocence forfeited by Eve. In order to preserve this innocence, female characters must consciously conceal themselves from view, and from the omnipresence of the masculine gaze.

Agency and Accountability

For Radcliffe and Lewis, and in the gothic mode more generally, female virtue is precarious, and its trial and preservation drive the plot. The gothic heroine's chastity and steadfast preservation of her honour is contrasted with representations of female avarice and desire, which not only threaten the heroine, but also encourage and enable the villain's fall. The sinister female characters in both texts starkly contrast the heroines, who are persecuted by the men under their influence. In *The Italian*, Schedoni orchestrates his plot against Ellena in the service of the Marchesa, who sees Ellena as a threat to her own wealth and title. The Marchesa later imprisons Ellena in a convent, where she is persecuted by a

similarly malevolent Abbess.⁵⁴ The machinations of feminine evil are even more apparent in *The Monk*. Antonia is also tormented by a female religious figure, the Prioress of the convent of St Clare. More significantly, Ambrosio is first seduced by Matilda, an enchantress in the employ of the devil. Matilda disguises herself as a young man in order to gain access to the monastery, and introduces herself to the Monk as the novice Rosario. Her seduction plot is particularly transgressive, as she adopts not only the guise of a man, but also that of the Madonna. Matilda commissions a painting of herself in the image of the Virgin Mary, which she delivers to the Monk in order to transform his religious devotion into sexual desire. The painting kindles Ambrosio's voyeurism as an "Object of his increasing wonder and adoration. He paused, and gazed upon it with delight" (Lewis 40). This voyeuristic pleasure increases when Matilda later threatens to stab herself in the heart. Ambrosio is so enraptured with her exposed bosom that he almost forgets the damage she intends to do to it: "The weapon's point rested upon her left breast: And Oh! that was such a breast! The Moon-beams darting full upon it, enabled the Monk to observe its dazzling whiteness. His eye dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beautiful Orb" (Lewis 65).⁵⁵ Just as he pauses to gaze at the painting of the Virgin, Ambrosio is mesmerised by the sight of Matilda's naked breast, and he falls prey to his own desires. Ambrosio

54 For more on the dangers these sinister female characters pose to Ellena, see Elizabeth Harlan's "Sexual or Supernatural: Threats in Radcliffe's *The Italian*" (2007).

55 Compare with Coleridge's poem "Christabel" (1797): "Her silken robe, and inner vest / Dropt to her feet, and in full view, / Behold! Her bosom and half her side— / A sight to dream of, not to tell!" (250-253).

later regrets breaking his religious vows, and blames Matilda for the guilt and shame that torments his conscience. He accuses her of plunging him into “an abyss of misery” (Lewis 223), and refers to her as “Wanton,” “Syren,” and “Concubine” — terms which suggest that Matilda is not only complicit in, but responsible for Ambrosio’s fall (224-225).⁵⁶

Ambrosio eschews any accountability for his behaviour by shifting the blame from himself onto the text’s female characters; he holds not only Matilda responsible for his actions, but Antonia as well. After imprisoning her in the catacombs beneath the church, Ambrosio creeps into the vault where the beleaguered Antonia lies sleeping on a funeral bier, surrounded by desiccated corpses.⁵⁷ The sight of the “sleeping Beauty” lying amidst the “putrid half-corrupted Bodies” reminds Ambrosio of Elvira, whose murder during the bedchamber scene quells his rapacious desire. This time, however, the memory of his crime “served but to strengthen his resolution to destroy Antonia’s honour” (Lewis 379). Ambrosio’s necrophilic impulse derives not only from his desire to possess Antonia sexually, but from a desire to punish her as well. Ambrosio condemns Antonia for his own fall, and holds her responsible for the crimes he commits in her name. He blames Antonia for Elvira’s death, and claims that it is “For your sake, Fatal Beauty [...] have I committed this murder, and sold myself

⁵⁶ The abyss of misery into which Ambrosio plunges foreshadows Ambrosio’s protracted death scene at the bottom of a cliff at the end of the novel. Compare with the abyss into which Catherine’s death plunges Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* (E Brontë 155).

⁵⁷ “For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes / This vault a feasting presence full of light” (*Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.85-86ff).

to eternal tortures" (379). He also attempts to justify raping Antonia by accusing her of seducing him and inciting his passion. After the rape, Ambrosio asks:

What seduced me into crimes, whose bare remembrance makes
me shudder? Fatal Witch! was it not thy beauty? Have you not
plundered my soul into infamy? Have you not made me a
perjured Hypocrite, a Ravisher, an Assassin! [...] You will tell my
Judge, that you were happy, till *I* saw you; that you were innocent,
till *I* polluted you [...] 'Tis you, you will cause my eternal anguish!
You, wretched Girl! You! You! (385)

Ambrosio vehemently insists that he has been beguiled by Antonia's beauty, and that Antonia, despite her innocence, has seduced him.⁵⁸ Though Ambrosio acknowledges his commission of these crimes, he denies any culpability for them; rather than assume accountability for his actions, he instead claims he has been acted upon. The repetition of "You! You!" points an accusatory finger at the female subject who has usurped the agency of Ambrosio's emphatic "*I*."

Ambrosio can only regain the mastery of the authoritative *I* by overpowering and subduing the other.

Ambrosio imagines that, as an apparent "victim" of temptation and seduction, he is not responsible for his actions, and the blame thus falls on the women who have tempted and seduced him. While his claims are, of course, as

⁵⁸ Ambrosio's accusations recall Mr B's interpretation of the rape of Lucretia in *Pamela*. In his attempt to convince Pamela that she would not be held responsible for her dishonour if she is taken by force, Mr B asks: "whoever blamed Lucretia, but the Ravisher only?" (*Pamela* 32).

ludicrous as they are misogynistic, they gesture towards an interesting inversion of agency in the text. Earlier in the novel, Ambrosio plans to take advantage of Antonia's insensibility in order to rape her while she sleeps, but his hesitation costs him the opportunity. Later, once he has imprisoned Antonia in the catacombs and at last secured her for his own enjoyment, Ambrosio is frenzied with desire, but hesitates when confronted with Antonia's unconscious form. Instead of availing himself of her vulnerability, Ambrosio waits "impatiently for the symptoms of returning animation. Scarcely could He command his passions sufficiently, to restrain himself from enjoying her while yet insensible" (Lewis 379). Ambrosio intends to take Antonia by force, and that force can only be exerted if she is conscious and able to resist; his action requires an equal and opposite reaction.⁵⁹ Antonia must participate in her own dishonour in order for Ambrosio to avoid the crisis of masculinity that plagues Lovelace following his rape of Clarissa: her consciousness serves as confirmation and consummation of the act. For Lovelace and Ambrosio, rape without physical struggle or resistance is merely solipsistic onanism. Thus, while the sight of the sleeping Antonia arouses Ambrosio to "the full vigour of manhood," the thought of "the resistance which He expected from her, seemed to give a fresh edge to his fierce and unbridled desires" (380). When she does regain consciousness, Antonia's "alarm, her evident disgust, and incessant opposition, seemed only to inflame the Monk's

⁵⁹ Whereas Ambrosio's previous intentions recall Lovelace's rape of the unconscious Clarissa, here his actions echo those of Mr B, who is aroused by Pamela's resistance but unable to act when she falls faint.

desires, and supply his brutality with additional strength" (383). Antonia's resistance increases Ambrosio's desire and paradoxically renders her more vulnerable than when she is asleep, because it signifies a form of active engagement or participation in the act. Antonia's immobility and insensibility are her best defences against the Monk. Her unconsciousness distracts Ambrosio from the task at hand, and he cannot perform unless she bears conscious witness to her violation. Once she awakens and is able to resist, Ambrosio is "Heedless of her tears, cries, and entreaties [...] and desisted not from his prey, till He had accomplished his crime and the dishonour of Antonia" (383-384). The Monk is able to become "Master of her person" only when Antonia is cognisant of his mastery (384).

Following the rape, Ambrosio is again consumed with guilt and torment, and unable to rouse himself to further action. Though he has successfully subdued and ruined Antonia, "Of the desires which had urged him to the crime, no trace was left in his bosom: The wealth of India would not have tempted him to a second enjoyment of her person. His nature seemed to revolt at the very idea" (Lewis 386). After the rape, Antonia becomes a walking ghost of her mother, and the sight of her defiled body fills Ambrosio with the same abject disgust as Elvira's murdered corpse. This time, however, he finds himself almost unable to look upon his victim. While the sight of the passive female momentarily unmans him, Antonia's active resistance and repentance forces Ambrosio to avert his gaze. He "turned away from her; or if his eyes rested upon

her figure involuntarily, it was only to dart upon her looks of hate" (384). Where she had previously inspired desire and adoration, Antonia "now raised no other sentiment in his heart than aversion and rage" (384). Antonia's bruised, bloodied, and violated body is a source of abjection — so recently possessed and made his own, now cast off as a dreary reminder of what Ambrosio once was, and has become. As a living *memento mori*, she shows him what he must "thrust aside in order to live" (Kristeva 3). When Matilda arrives to bring Ambrosio news of their imminent discovery by the Inquisition, Ambrosio must literally cast Antonia aside in order to escape from the catacombs. In contrast to scenes of previous hesitation, here Ambrosio is quick to act. Matilda's dagger in hand, he pursues the fleeing heroine, and "Without allowing himself a moment's reflection, He raised it, and plunged it twice in the bosom of Antonia" (Lewis 391). Ambrosio endeavours to carry the dying Antonia with him, but she continues to resist him and clutches a pillar, such that Ambrosio is forced to abandon his victim in order to save himself.

Ambrosio thrice penetrates Antonia before abandoning her in the sepulchre, leaving her dishonoured and dying, but not yet dead. Lorenzo discovers her and shares in her final moments, during which she confesses that, "had She still been undefiled She might have lamented the loss of life; But that deprived of honour and branded with shame, Death was to her a blessing" (Lewis 392). Antonia's confession mirrors Pamela's and Clarissa's assertions that

they would prefer death to dishonour.⁶⁰ While heroines who escape persecution and penetrative violence, such as Ellena and Pamela, live to become wives, those who are violated, like Clarissa and Antonia, instead become corpses, literalising the gothic sexual imperative of marriage or death. Richardson and Lewis rewrite the story of the rape of Lucretia, whose suicide earns her absolution. The death of the violated heroine restores her lost honour, as a reward for virtue conquered only by force. For these characters, death is redemptive, while women like Agnes, whose virtue is compromised but who demonstrates appropriate penitence, must live with the consequences of their actions. Agnes is punished for her indiscretion with Raymond when their illegitimate child dies only a few hours after she gives birth, but the sacrifice enables her to be released from her holy orders and marry Raymond. Malevolent female characters, including *The Italian's* Marchesa and the evil Prioress in *The Monk*, meet with untimely ends, as a means of punishing them for their misdeeds and affirming the prevalence of justice and moral order in the texts. The heroic male characters like Vivaldi and Raymond are rewarded with marriage to the women they love; Lorenzo, bereaved by Antonia's murder, eventually finds romantic and financial solace with the daughter of a Marquis, whom he marries at the end of the novel. The male villains, like their female counterparts, are punished with violent deaths, but without any hint of redemption. Though Ambrosio and Schedoni express sentiments of shame and

⁶⁰ Pamela avers that she would "die a thousand Deaths, rather than be dishonest in any way" (*Pamela* 15), while Clarissa contends that "my honour is dearer to me than my life" (*Clarissa* 724).

regret when they are given pause to consider the depravity of their crimes, neither undergoes moral development or reformation. Unlike *Pamela*, these texts do not endeavour to reconcile the relation between villain and victim, but rather find resolution to the virtue in distress narrative by further dividing them.

Confession, Crime, and Punishment

Both villains are eventually apprehended by agents of the Inquisition and forced to confess their crimes before they are condemned to death. These confessions make explicit the villain's guilt and accountability, redeem the innocent and wrongly accused, and draw the necessary connections between characters and events to resolve and conclude the narratives. Confession thus functions as a form of delayed narration, which recasts earlier plot devices and development, and corrects and confirms any lingering narrative uncertainties. The larger theme of confession figures prominently in both texts. *The Italian* is subtitled "The Confessional of the Black Penitents," which refers to the confession chamber of the Santa Maria del Pianto church. Its sacred compartments and the secrets confessed therein are the subject of intrigue in the novel's frame narrative, and form the basis of the entire plot. Moreover, Schedoni is repeatedly referred to as the Marchesa's "confessor," though their meetings and conversational style are hardly that of formal confession. Rather, they give the Marchesa an opportunity to conspire with Schedoni and devise their various plots against Ellena and others who stand in the way of their ambitions. In *The*

Monk, confessions imbue the main story as well as its sub-plot. Once Ambrosio is apprehended and put to the question by the Inquisition, he confesses to rape and murder, as well as numerous other crimes of which he is innocent. His weakness and fear prompt him to make a full, albeit coerced confession, forcing him at last to assume the accountability he repeatedly denies. Similarly, Agnes is punished not only for violating her sacred vows, but for failing to confess her transgression formally and seek forgiveness through the avenues provided by the Church. The sacrament of confession is a significant feature of the characters' Catholicism in both texts, distinguishing them from the novels' predominantly Protestant English readership.⁶¹ The Mediterranean setting and ethnicity of the characters enable readers to sympathise with the virtuous heroes and heroines, while distancing them from the foreign, irreligious, and uncivilised villains.

Both texts ritualise the act of Confession not only as a sacrament of the Catholic church, but also as testimony before the ominous and seemingly omniscient Holy Office of the Inquisition. The Inquisition plays a similar role in both novels, first posing as a foreign (to an English audience) theo-juridical threat, but ultimately proving itself a valuable institutional moral register. Vivaldi, the hero of *The Italian*, is tried and found innocent; Schedoni is convicted and poisons himself while incarcerated, adding suicide to his sins. Ambrosio, similarly condemned, bargains his soul to the devil in exchange for escaping

61 For a more in-depth analysis of "Confessional Discourse" in these texts, see Joseph Bartolomeo's *Matched Pairs: Gender and Intertextual Dialogue in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (2002). Bartolomeo uses Foucault's analysis of confession to explore discursive similarities between *The Monk* and *The Italian*.

execution, and suffers an even more torturous death as a result. The Inquisition thus formalises and enforces the confession ritual in both texts, serving not only as a legal apparatus in the arbitration and administration of justice, but also as a narrative device for unravelling and uncovering crucial plot points to the reader. The confessions and testimonies prompted by the Inquisition trials reveal identities as well as crimes: the reader learns that Ellena is Olivia's daughter, but not Schedoni's, and that Elvira is Ambrosio's mother, and Antonia is thus his sister. This discovery of identities and familial relations enables the various alliances that restabilise the texts' socio-economic framework, such as Ellena's marriage to Vivaldi and Agnes's reunion with Raymond. But the revelations also exacerbate the villains' transgressions, and make Ambrosio and Schedoni guilty of analogous sins: namely, incestuous desire and familial murder. Ambrosio kills his mother before raping and killing his sister; Schedoni kills his brother in order to claim his fortune and his wife for himself, and later conspires to murder his own niece.⁶² In both *The Monk* and *The Italian*, the villains are figures of religious authority who engage in acts of penetrative violence against female family members. Their crimes transgress sacred orders and familial bonds as well as common moral imperatives, rendering them irredeemable according to both divine and human law. After confessing their crimes and acknowledging the

62 Though easily inferred, the text does not explicitly state that Schedoni rapes Olivia. Schedoni only confesses that "she had not yet forgotten my brother, and she rejected me. My passion would no longer be trifled with. I caused her to be carried from her house, and she was afterwards willing to retrieve her honour by the marriage vow" (*Italian* 340). Olivia's dishonour in this context could refer to rape, or to her elopement with a man not (yet) her husband, just as the Latin root of "rape" (*rapere*) can mean to seize, carry off or away, or to violate (OED II: 1).

enormity of their transgressions, Schedoni and Antonio must die, and their deaths reestablish the moral framework of the texts.

The villains' violent deaths not only provide closure and cohesion to the gothic plot, but also symbolically redress the violence of their actions. Specifically, the visceral descriptions of the villain's death in both novels reinforce the symbolic castration they experience in observation of the sleeping heroines by exploiting the site/sight of their weakness: their eyes.⁶³ In this sense, the villains' death scenes invoke a form of Hammurabi's law.⁶⁴ When Schedoni dies at the hands of the Inquisition, "the gleam of spirit and of character that had returned to his eyes, was departed, and left them haggard and fixed" (*Italian* 404). The fixity of Schedoni's gaze recalls his momentary paralysis when he attempts to attack Ellena in her bedchamber, and his inability to take advantage of her unconscious state during their encounter on the beach. At the moment of his death, Schedoni's gaze is similarly immobilised, rendered impotent and inactive. Lewis's horrific description of Ambrosio's protracted death calls similar attention to the villain's eyes. After the *dæmon* Matilda tosses him from a precipice, Ambrosio lies battered and broken on a riverbank, where the "Eagles of the rock

63 For early psychoanalytic associations of blindness with castration, see Freud's interpretation of E T A Hoffman's *The Sandman* (1816) in "The Uncanny" (1919). The association also invokes the myth of the gorgon Medusa, upon whom men could not look without turning to stone. The Medusa effect disrupts the primacy of the male gaze, and of the observing subject over the observed object. Because phallogocentrism is contingent upon visibility, in that the *logos* is specifically centred around/upon what is most (visibly) apparent in the act of generation, the Medusa effect — the paralysis of the man in observation of the woman — serves as an instantiation of the moment at which the phallus disappears inside the vaginal abyss, cutting it off (castrating it) from view.

64 The ancient Babylonian legal code popularly known as Hammurabi's law exercises *lex talionis*, or the law of exact reciprocity, the most common example of which is "an eye for an eye."

tore his flesh piecemeal, and dug out his eye-balls with their crooked beaks” (Lewis 442). The eagles puncture and destroy Ambrosio’s eyes — mimicking Ambrosio’s own acts of penetrative violence against Antonia and Elvira — and render him “blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing” a full six days before he finally expires (442). The death scenes in both texts emphasize the impotence of the villains’ gaze, while reinstating a sense of justice and moral order by re-enacting the violence of their crimes upon the villains themselves.

Conclusion

Both Radcliffe and Lewis sentence their villains to death as a means of restoring order to the narrative framework of their texts. Following the dénouement of the various marriages in the novel, *The Monk* concludes with a harrowing description of Ambrosio’s violent death. Radcliffe’s novel, conversely, continues after Schedoni’s death, and concludes with Ellena and Vivaldi’s marriage. Lewis re-establishes a sense of formal morality with the happy nuptials of the virtuous characters, but also continues to horrify his readers with the protracted punishment of the villain. *The Italian’s* more conservative ending, on the other hand, reaffirms the primacy of reason over superstition, the familiar over the foreign, and — for both the female and male characters — domesticity over adventure. For some readers, such an ending is frustratingly limiting. Caroline Helstone, the heroine of Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Shirley* (1849), confesses to her young companion, who is reading *The Italian*, that she fears “a

wanderer's life, for me at least, would end like that tale you are reading — in disappointment, vanity, and vexation of spirit" (C Brontë, *Shirley* 336). Caroline not only echoes critics who lamented Radcliffe's summary explanations of the complex mysteries her novels wrought, but also anticipates the reluctance of later feminist critics to affirm the circular adventure narrative of the female gothic, which invariably leads the heroine back home to a life of conservative domesticity. In the gothic and the realist novel alike, the heroine who finds herself married at the end of the story in some sense has reached the end of her own narrative, as her story collapses into that of her husband, in which she can only signify as wife and potential mother. The "disappointment, vanity, and vexation of spirit" with which *The Italian* apparently concludes suggests not only dissatisfaction with Radcliffe's "delicate" gothic, which never realises the potential dangers it portends, but also with the limitations of femininity and domesticity more generally. But when these dangers are realised outside of the limits of polite convention, as they are in *The Monk*, the heroine's fate is considerably more dire.

Many critics, with varying degrees of approval, suggest that Radcliffe's conservatism subdues the gothic plot Lewis spins out of control. Affirmative readings of *The Italian* propose that Radcliffe "corrects" the liberties Lewis takes with the genre, as the title of Syndy Conger's article "Sensibility Restored" (1989) would suggest. Critics like Conger argue that Radcliffe's final novel reclaims the genre which she, in many ways, helped to create, while Lewis's single

contribution prompted only the proliferation of the penny-dreadful in the following century. Other critics deride *The Italian* as derivative, not only of Lewis, but of Radcliffe's own work as well. According to a review attributed to Coleridge, *The Italian* "falls short" of Radcliffe's previous novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, "by reminding us of the same characters and the same scenes" (Coleridge, "The Italian" 166). Literary characters as well as critics engage in the Radcliffe/Lewis debate. In Jane Austen's gothic parody *Northanger Abbey*, for example, the exuberant heroine Catherine Morland reads *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and gushes very early on that she is "delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it" (Austen, *Northanger* 61).⁶⁵ But when Catherine attempts to discuss Radcliffe with John Thorpe, he claims he "never read[s] novels" because "there has not been a tolerably decent one come out since Tom Jones, except *The Monk*" (71).⁶⁶ It is interesting that Mr Thorpe makes an exception for *The Monk* in his otherwise derisive opinion of the novel form, given its reputation for licentiousness among polite literary circles. His interest in

65 *Northanger Abbey* (completed c1799) was Austen's first novel prepared for publication, but was withheld until its posthumous publication in December 1818.

66 Mr Thorpe is referring to Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749). The conversation between Catherine and Mr Thorpe is particularly amusing because Catherine has suggested he read *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, to which he replies: "No, if I read any, it shall be Mrs Radcliffe's; her novels are amusing enough; they are worth reading; some fun and nature in them" (71). *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is, of course, by Ann Radcliffe. Following the conversation with Mr Thorpe, Catherine assumes that all young men "despised novels amazingly," and attempts to engage Henry Tilney on the subject. He endeavours to correct her assumption with specific reference to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and argues that "[men] read nearly as many as women. I myself have read hundreds and hundreds. Do not imagine that you can cope with me on the particulars, and engage me in the never-ceasing inquiry of 'Have you read this?' and 'Have you read that?' I shall soon leave you as far behind me as — what shall I say? — as far as your friend Emily herself left poor Valancourt when she went with her aunt into Italy" (121). Emily St Aubert is the heroine of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; Valancourt is her beloved.

Lewis speaks to the text's influence and popularity, whether in spite or because of its sensationalism. Despite his mistake, Tilney's approval of Radcliffe affirms Catherine's enthusiasm, and gives an editorial nod to the subject of Austen's gothic parody.

What is significant about these criticisms is that they all endeavour to distinguish discreet differences between texts that emerged from a basic gothic formula of similarity and simultaneity. The privileging of Radcliffe over Lewis, Lewis over Radcliffe, or one of Radcliffe's texts over another both assumes and elides the generic conventions that define gothic literature in the 1790s. When read in the context of a larger gothic system of representation, however, both writers engage a mode in which passivity functions as a form of agency for the gothic heroine. Radcliffe and Lewis employ the gothic trope of the sleeping woman to the same ends, as both a passive form of agency and an expository narrative device. The bedchamber scenes not only provide an editorial or authoritative opportunity for narrative exegesis, but also an occasion for character subject development. In these scenes, the heroines appear vulnerable to rape and murder, but their passive conditions occasion in their attackers a moment of visual paralysis, and save them from penetrative masculine violence. The sleeping heroine embodies a subject position that usurps the authority of the observing subject over the observed object. Just as the sleeping heroine's passive agency disrupts the subject/object relation, the gothic mode in which it signifies as such destabilises the gendered terror/horror distinction. Feminine terror

emerges from narrative obscurity as affect without cause, while masculine horror derives from narrative effluence as cause without affect. However, the representations of the sleeping heroine in the bedchamber scenes in both texts collapse these distinctions by interrupting villain's gaze and breaking down the subject/object relation, thereby producing simultaneously both cause and affect: a hesitant interiorised villain and an agential female subject. Both texts contribute to the development of a gothic mode in which embodied conditions of passivity are crucial to the assertion of subjectivity. Richardson foregrounds this mode in *Pamela* and *Clarissa* half a century before the gothic heyday of the 1790s, and writers like Emily Brontë continue to engage it fifty years later. As the following chapter will demonstrate, illness, like fainting and sleep, functions a form of passive female agency in the context of the gothic mode.

Chapter 3

“I’ll cry myself sick!”:
Willful Illness and the Gothic Mode in Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*

She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

~ Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market” (1862)



Eugène Lami - “Convalescence” (1843)⁶⁷

Following the popularisation of the gothic novel by writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis at the end of the eighteenth-century, the gothic mode underwent significant transformation. Far from receding in the popular literary imagination, the Romantic gothic moved away from the conventional narrative of virtue in distress, and instead centralised the existential plight of a tragic hero. Writers who continued to engage with the genre, including William Wordsworth

⁶⁷ Eugène Lami’s “Convalescence” was originally printed as a supplemental illustration in Jules Janin’s *The American in Paris During the Summer: Being a Companion to the “Winter in Paris”* (1844). Charles Rolls later reproduced a steel engraving of the image, which is held by the British Museum.

(*The Borderers*, 1797), Percy Bysshe Shelley (*Zastrozzi*, 1810), Lord Byron (*Manfred*, 1817), Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*, 1818), John William Polidori (*The Vampyre*, 1819), and Robert Maturin (*Melmoth the Wanderer*, 1820), to name only the most prominent, focused on the development of an individualised, specifically masculine subject. The Byronic hero — as typified by Byron’s titular protagonists Manfred and Childe Harold, as well as the characters he inspired, including Glenarvon and Lord Ruthven (and by extension, Byron himself) — is more fully actualised than the gothic villains who predate him.⁶⁸ The Byronic hero is conflicted, passionate, and self-destructive, critical of both himself and of his place in society. Female characters in Romantic gothic literature, on the other hand, range from incidental to non-existent. It was not until the publication of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* in 1847 that female subjectivity and the representation of passive agency was reintroduced back into the gothic mode.

By the mid-nineteenth century, gothic literature had largely fallen out of British literary fashion.⁶⁹ Though many scholars contend that the high Gothic canon ends with the publication of Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* in 1820, and devolves into penny dreadfuls like the anonymous *Varney, the Vampire* (1847) until the fin-de-siècle gothic resurgence, others maintain that mid-century writers such

68 Byron’s semi-autobiographical narrative poem *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812-18) is considered the first example of the Byronic hero. Both Polidori and Lady Caroline Lamb acknowledged Byron as the inspiration for Lord Ruthven in *The Vampyre*, and the “mad, bad, and dangerous to know” anti-hero in *Glenarvon* (1816), respectively.

69 American gothic, however, was in its heyday at this time. Writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Washington Irving all published major gothic works between 1820 and 1860.

as Dickens and the Brontës reinvigorated the gothic mode.⁷⁰ H P Lovecraft, for example, argues that Emily Brontë's "eerie terror is no mere Gothic echo, but a tense expression of man's shuddering reaction to the unknown. In this respect, *Wuthering Heights* becomes the symbol of a literary transition, and marks the growth of a new and sounder school" (Lovecraft 44). This new school dispenses not only with the traditional gothic trappings of castles and catacombs, but also the somewhat solipsistic narratives of Romanticised masculine subjectivity. While Heathcliff is often read as an iconic Byronic hero, Brontë represents the gothic heroine as equally conflicted and self-aware. Just as Heathcliff and his fellow anti-heroes are more fully realised characters than their predecessors, Catherine Earnshaw is more richly and complexly developed than the prototypical gothic heroine. Moreover, she is not limited by the conventions of the mode that characterised the gothic novel of the 1790s, particularly in the sense that she is not an idealised paragon of feminine virtue. As Syndy Conger suggests, "Catherine is a gothic heroine quite free from the social and literary proscriptions of her forerunners" because she is liberated "from the worst of the tyrannies" inflicted on the gothic heroine: "the ideal of moral perfection" (Conger, "Reconstruction" 92-103). Like the anti-hero popularised by the Romantic gothic, Catherine is impassioned, impulsive, and ultimately self-destructive; she shares little of the earlier heroines' pious prudence. However, while Conger argues that Brontë liberates the gothic heroine from the fetters of feminine virtue and

⁷⁰ The authorship of *Varney, the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood*, though inconclusive, is typically attributed to James Malcolm Rymer or Thomas Peckett Prest.

“reorders the Gothic experience in order to speak to women about themselves in a new way” (93), the way in which Brontë’s heroine articulates herself as subject engages a similar form of passive agency as that of her predecessors: rather than submit to the oppressive conditions of sexual relation, she becomes ill.

Brontë expands the eighteenth-century conditions of the gothic mode by reformulating the model of virtue in distress. Unlike earlier gothic heroines, Catherine’s identity and sense of self are not predicated on her virginity, nor is she tormented by threats of rape or murder. However, the heroine’s crisis in Brontë’s novel derives from a similar threat to female subjectivity by systems of enforced sexual relation. Brontë’s gothic plot follows the canonical heroine’s flight from persecution and sexual threat, but destabilises its traditional resolution: marriage or death. Catherine both marries and dies over the course of the novel, but neither event provides a resolution or conclusion to the narrative. Unlike the Radcliffean gothic heroine, for example, whose well-appointed marriage to the hero is celebrated in the final pages of the novel, Catherine’s marriage to Edgar Linton occurs early in the text, and complicates rather than reconciles the plot. Rather than restoring Catherine to economic stability and uniting the gothic hero with his beloved, their marriage is fraught with romantic ambivalence and sexual tension. Though Catherine is pleased enough that Linton is “handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves [her],” she is convinced that her acceptance of his proposal is wrong because of her feelings for Heathcliff (Brontë 84). She acknowledges that Linton’s wealth will make her “the greatest

woman of the neighbourhood" (84) while marrying Heathcliff would "degrade" her (86), but Catherine is also motivated by the prospect that Linton's financial stability will benefit Heathcliff as well as herself. As she explains her choice to Nelly: "if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars [...] whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise" (87). Catherine's economically-motivated marriage to Linton is equally motivated by her love for Heathcliff; she is torn between her desire for the stability and prestige afforded by marriage, and her passionate insistence on her indissoluble connection with Heathcliff.

While the gothic heroine is typically the object of desire between competing or opposing male characters, hero and villain, for Catherine this opposition manifests itself within as well as without. As Conger notes, Catherine "is not simply placed between two lovers; she feels divided between two lovers" (Conger, "Restoration" 100). When confronted with this annihilation of the self through divisive sexual relation, Catherine threatens: "I'll cry myself sick" (Brontë 79). This verbal assertion of her will — represented as the ability, desire, and resolve to exert her will over her body through language — engages a form of passive agency, as she wills herself towards a state of stillness and debility. As Eve Sedgwick argues, the "aspect of reality that Catherine has the most comprehensive power over is her own health, [...] she is *invoking* her sickness, making herself sick [...], willing the identity of her language with her body" (Sedgwick, *Coherence* 101-103, original emphasis). Catherine exerts her language, effectually inarticulate, over her body, bending it to her will, embodying the

subjectivity that is discursively constrained. This representation of willfulness is enabled by Brontë's reformulation of the gothic heroine beyond the conventional limitations of virtue and propriety, as a character more complexly developed than many of her gothic predecessors. Catherine's willfulness distinguishes her from earlier gothic heroines, as she consciously and discursively invokes her illness in an effort to disengage from the oppressive conditions of sexual relation. While Pamela Andrews and other heroines are willful in other aspects of their characters, they are not represented as actively or intentionally willing the passive states of stillness and immobility that afford them their agency. Catherine, on the other hand, wills herself towards incapacity as a means of garnering agency where it is otherwise unavailable.

Catherine's willful illness furthers the development of passivity within the gothic mode, as it similarly engages a condition of stillness and debility as a form of agency. In moments of extreme emotional duress, Catherine wills herself sick, which, like sleep and fainting, disengages her from the oppressive situation. For Catherine, sickness is a way to express the irreconcilability of her subject position within the normative structures that govern her relationships with Linton and Heathcliff, and her connection with Heathcliff as a fundamental part of her conception of her self. Catherine's physical illness thus emerges as an embodied expression of subjectivity inscribed with the frustration and emotional conflict she experiences trying to reconcile her own identity in relation to Linton and Heathcliff, and her transition from Catherine Earnshaw of *Wuthering Heights* to

Catherine Linton of Thrushmore Grange. This chapter will explore how illness engages an alternative form of agency and enables an embodied assertion of subjectivity in the gothic novel. While Sedgwick ultimately suggests that Catherine's invocation of illness is ineffectual, that it "does not *work*" (Sedgwick 104, original emphasis), this chapter will argue instead that sickness *does* work, in the sense that it is what enables Catherine to assert herself as subject outside of the contingencies of sexual relation.

Illness and Subjectivity

In *Wuthering Heights*, and in the gothic mode more generally, illness signifies as a physical embodiment of a character's psychological reality, and enables a passive expression of subjectivity. As Conger suggests, "there is a touch of the pathological about Catherine in other attitudes she shares with her prototypes: she is not simply the occasional victim of whim or imagined terror but her passions' willing slave" (Conger, "Reconstruction" 98). The heroine's apparent pathology, in this sense, is a representation of the physical manifestation of psychological turmoil and trauma, and her invocation of illness is more legible than any other articulation of individual identity or emotional experience. Catherine's repeated bouts of illness throughout the text suggest that, as much as the novel was influenced by Brontë's Romantic predecessors, Brontë also borrows from an earlier mode of the gothic in which female subjectivity manifests itself in conditions of stillness and physical debility. Though medical

opinion at the time tended to associate sick women with a weakness of both constitution and will to live, in the gothic mode (and *Wuthering Heights* in particular), it is the exertion of will, and not an absence of it, that generates illness in female characters. While representations of sick women in nineteenth-century domestic fiction tend to accentuate their passive acquiescence to both illness and recovery in contexts of courtship, for female characters in the gothic mode, such as Lucy Ashton, Anne Catherick, and Maud Vernon, as well as those who predate them — most notably, Clarissa Harlowe — illness is a means to disengage from the oppressive conditions of sexual relation.⁷¹ When Catherine is forced to confront these conditions, she wills herself sick.

The concept of will was integral to nineteenth-century constructions and interpretations of both illness and agency. Contrary to Victorian medical practice, which held that illness indicated a lapse of the will, Brontë represents illness rather as a manifestation of the will, not as “a collapse, but rather an exertion of the will’s strength” (Krishnan 32).⁷² According to medical and philosophical doctrines of the period, the will, suspended between the mind and the body, maintained balance between passion and reason, emotion and rationality. The

71 The female characters in Walter Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *The Rose and the Key* (1871), and Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1748), respectively, all suffer from debilitating illnesses that are, to varying degrees, psychosomatic, and develop in response to oppressive conditions of masculine authority and enforced relation.

72 Compare with more modern, psychoanalytic theories, according to which “Psychogenic illnesses are [...] produced for a very definite purpose, but this purpose is quite outside conscious awareness, and their production is involuntary and not under conscious control” (Stephen 28). See Karin Stephen’s *The Wish to Fall Ill: A Study of Psychoanalysis and Medicine* (1960).

popularisation of the Lockean notion of the human mind as a *tabula rasa* following the publication of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and the rise of the culture of sensibility in the eighteenth century engendered debates concerning the inhibition of the female will and women's capacity for reason by their purportedly inherent sensibility and propensity for "natural feeling." While sensibility was associated with both genders and indicative of an emotional sensitivity ranging from the virtuous to the hysterical, natural feeling was consistent with rationality in men but at odds with reason in women.⁷³ According to Barker-Benfield, sensibility "on the one hand was associated with the powers of intellect, imagination, the pursuit of pleasure, the exercise of moral superiority [...] On the other, it betokened physical and mental inferiority, sickness, and inevitable victimization, circumstances throwing severe doubt on the effectiveness of the female will" (Barker-Benfield 35-36). For a woman to be "willful" meant to act both within and against the model of femininity that associated women with sensibility, in her submission and resistance to her "bodily passions." Willfulness connotes both active and passive expressions of one's will, in terms of "Asserting or [being] disposed to assert one's own will against persuasion, instruction, or command; governed by will without regard to reason" (OED 1a), or, by contrast, being "In good sense: strong-willed, strongly persistent" (1b). Catherine's passionate assertion that she'll cry herself sick thus

⁷³ In the second half of the eighteenth century, the culture of sensibility that revered natural feeling fell out of fashion, and a man governed by his passions and emotions became the subject of humour and ridicule, as with Henry Mackenzie's dubious hero in the sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771).

engages both senses of the word, as a stubborn, petulant, and self-destructive expression of her will, and an embodied assertion of subjectivity.

Sickness and sexuality are inextricably enmeshed in both literary and historical constructions of femininity and subject development, and contemporary studies of illness and gender have made much of the pathologisation of the female body. Gilbert and Gubar famously assert that, at least in the context of Victorian literature, “to be a woman is to be diseased” (Gilbert and Gubar 268). This conflation of illness and identity suggests that, for women, pathology is symptomatic not only of gender, but of individuality and subjectivity as well. According to Miriam Bailin, “disease in the nineteenth century becomes a means of bodily manifesting or disclosing one’s individuality [...] of the hope that the material world (the body in this case) could provide a fully expressive, unmediated language of our inner nature” (Bailin 51). In this sense, illness produces not only a model of feminine subjectivity, but is also a means of expressing that subjectivity, as “somatic disorder becomes the primary form of self-assertion” (48-49). Illness thus constitutes a form of discourse, both through the acceptance and affirmation of its normative structures, and as a potential means of rejecting them. Diane Price Herndl, for example, proposes that “the nineteenth-century woman would have found that becoming ‘sick’ was a way to reconcile and affirm the cultural discourse. As she did so, she came to *embody* that discourse” (Herndl 39, original emphasis). Catherine Belsey, on the other hand, suggests that an “attempt to locate a single and coherent subject-

position within these contradictory discourses, and in consequence to find a non-contradictory pattern of behaviour, can create intolerable pressures. One way of responding to this situation is to retreat from the contradictions and from discourse itself, to become 'sick'" (Belsey 662). Though Herndl interprets illness as an embodiment of discourse, and Belsey views it as a means to retreat from discourse, both critics describe the process of "becoming sick" as a discursive act — a reconciliation or rejection of the discursive conditions of feminine subjectivity as contingent upon sexual relation. Catherine's invocation of illness is thus an assertion of her will over her body, an embodied form of agency inscribed with refusal.

Catherine's illness functions as a retreat from and rejection of the limits of discursive determination, and as a means to assert and preserve her subjectivity. Her invocation of sickness is an expression of what Robin DeRosa describes as the "desire to attain a kind of fullness outside of the range of discursive signification" (DeRosa 32). When Catherine takes ill, her condition halts the narrative action of the text, producing a form of narrative arrest in the novel. Like Pamela's fainting fits, Catherine's illness registers in the text as moments of "structural aporia" that are "expressed as symbolic lapses in the narrative" (Geerken 388). Moreover, just as Pamela must reconstruct these lapses in consciousness, and in the text she produces, Catherine's absence from the narrative similarly prompts editorial intervention; however, rather than make up for this lost time and re-form a subject position according to the text's external

discursive framework, Brontë's characters linger on the precipice of the textual abyss Catherine's illness creates, as a "hole" in the text's signifying economy. When Catherine takes ill, the narrative pauses, creating a gap in the story that is not accounted for within the text's discursive framework, and only resumes upon her recovery, and after her death. Herndl suggests that though illness in itself "is not discursive; it is not a story or narrative," we have access to that illness "through its narrative, through the discourse on illness" (Herndl 8). However, in *Wuthering Heights*, and the gothic mode more generally, illness is significantly non-discursive: we do not have access to Catherine's illness through language or narrative because it is represented as a gap or absence in the text. Her sickness is discursively invoked, but phenomenologically inarticulate; Catherine's illness cannot be experienced because it creates a textual abyss in the narrative, and the narrative does not recover until Catherine does. Rather than signify as a delicacy and weakness of character that must be treated with marriage, illness in the gothic mode exposes the discursive limitations of sexual relation, and disengages the heroine from this contingency.

The Sickroom Idyll: Literary and Historical Constructions of Illness

Illness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been variously romanticised, in both historical and literary representations of sick women. Margaret Forster suggests that "nobody in nineteenth-century correspondence ever seems to have been absolutely well" (Forster 21), and literary and other

textual representations of women tend to emphasize both physical and emotional manifestations of feminine illness. From the consumptive heroine to the “madwoman in the attic,” female characters often suffer from some form of “Brontitis” — the affected weakness, fashionable pallor, and delicate fragility particular to the period’s literary and social cultivation of an idealised, hyperbolised model of femininity.⁷⁴ Mysterious fevers and wasting diseases such as consumption affect an overwhelming number of female characters in novels of the period, whose unearthly beauty and feverish passions emphasize to the point of parody their fragile constitutions. The exaggerated femininity of the convalescent heroine meant that not only were her symptoms simultaneously pathologised and eroticised, but that the eroticisation of pathology informed social constructions of femininity. As a result, expressions of female sexuality frequently entailed being, or at least appearing, ill. The conflation of illness and femininity, however, has contradictory implications. On the one hand, sickness is symptomatic of femaleness, as falling ill accentuates traits already attached to femininity, reproducing an idealised model of delicacy, weakness, and passivity; on the other, sickness is symptomatic of the culture that constructs this femininity and enforces these traits as normative.

Numerous nineteenth-century medical conditions — including chlorosis,

⁷⁴ “Brontitis” is the title of Maria Dahvana Headley’s short story featured in *The Best American Erotica* (2005). I use it here to draw attention to the literary mythologisation of illness, particularly in the nineteenth century, wherein the accoutrements of the consumptive heroine apply both to the fictional character and to the female writer who creates her. For an historical and medical anthropological analysis of illness and the Brontë family, see Beth Torgerson’s *Reading the Brontë Body: Disease, Desire, and the Constraints of Culture* (2005).

consumption, fevers, headaches, hysteria, and neurasthenia — were attributed to both physical and mental complications. Consumption is prominently represented in narratives of illness in the nineteenth century, particularly in the context of the conflation of illness with identity. Prior to its identification as tuberculosis, medical practice held that consumption was an hereditary affliction with a particular typology of predisposition in the victim. Like Foucault's articulation of the emergence of the homosexual as an individual rather than a behaviour, the consumptive was a type rather than a disease; as Susan Sontag notes, "It is with TB that the idea of individual illness was articulated" (Sontag 30).⁷⁵ The consumptive individual, irrespective of confirmed medical diagnosis, was characterised by fair complexion, angular figure, long limbs, narrow waist, and prominent bone structure. Those of passionate, sensitive, or sanguine dispositions were thought prone to the disease, the onset of which could be precipitated by excited emotions, depression, sexual activity, extended periods of study, or nervous imbalance. Consumption could also be caused by physical disruptions to the body's normal equilibrium, such as exposure to excessive heat or moisture, fever, colds, coughing fits, and other respiratory difficulties. Predisposed individuals were generally considered weak, and of delicate sensibilities, and were socialised accordingly even without confirmation of actual illness (Meyer 289-290). While consumption was a legitimate disease in

⁷⁵ In Foucault's formulation of the repression hypothesis in *The History of Sexuality*, while the "sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (Foucault 43). Analogously, according to Victorian medical practice, the consumptive was a designated identity determined by a specific typology.

nineteenth-century medical practice, in the popular imagination it was also a psychological diagnosis for a particular disposition, and “provided a metaphoric equivalent for delicacy, sensitivity, sadness, and powerlessness” (Summers 138). While the consumptive was not an exclusively female typology, the diagnosis tended to feminise both symptoms and sufferers. Consumption enabled the pathologisation of the conditions of femininity, and paradoxically idealised those conditions such that “woman” and “health” became mutually exclusive. Thus the female invalid became a romanticised subject — a passionate, sensitive, and emotionally fragile individual who lacked the constitution to participate in the mundane corporeality of everyday life.

Consumption, fevers, and other illnesses required a certain reclusivity that enabled a retreat from the obligations of society, rendering it a leisured, if not luxurious state, while simultaneously removing actual suffering from public visibility and limiting the invalid’s social engagement to the sickroom. Eugène Lami’s representation of a sick woman’s “Convalescence” (1843, pictured above) illustrates both the luxury and limitations of invalidism in the mid-nineteenth century. The illustration depicts a young woman reclining on a chaise in a drawing room, attended by three women, three men, and a young servant. The woman’s posture (as well as the title of the image) indicates that she is recovering from a debilitating illness, while the social setting and attitudes of the attendants suggest that any contagion has passed and she is preparing, or being prepared, for reintroduction to domestic and social spheres. To the woman’s immediate

right sits an older man — presumably her doctor — with his top hat in hand, while another man stands over her. Both men are gazing down at the woman with expressions of concern. A woman seated at her feet and another kneeling at her left side are both touching the invalid in gestures of affection. The third man and woman are engaged in separate conversation some distance from the patient, while the young servant tends to a floral arrangement. The convalescent woman is fashionably attired in a white dress, which brightly contrasts the muted pastels of the other women's clothing. She appears to hold a mirror in her right hand, balanced on her torso, and has tilted her head to examine the incline of her chest, neck, and chin, as if assessing the effects of her illness on her complexion. The woman's apparent concern with her physical appearance, emphasized by the gaze of the onlooking guests, draws attention to the aesthetics of illness that inform constructions and representations of femininity as affectedly superficial, but gestures toward the further narrative possibilities of her convalescence.

Lami's illustration accompanies Janin's account of his visit with a woman who has lately been "seized with fever" (Janin 145). His description of the woman focuses on the fragile beauty with which the illness has left her: "so delicate a being! Wavering health, languishing beauty, large eyes full of fire, but the fire of which suddenly disappears and is effaced, beautiful pale cheeks, a soft, melancholy smile" (145-146).⁷⁶ Both Lami's illustration and Janin's description aestheticise the woman's illness, and seem to trivialise the conditions of her

⁷⁶ As Rossetti illustrates in the above epigraph from "Goblin Market," illness and "swift decay" burn the dwindling woman's "fire away" (Rossetti 278-280).

ailment. Though the woman is represented sympathetically in both the image and the text, these representations diminish her health and well-being, and instead accentuate the physical beauty her illness occasions. Janin even remarks that she “had suffered much; not so much however, but that she had found strength enough to dress herself, time to make herself beautiful” (146). The elision of the woman’s actual condition and emphasis on the delicacy of her appearance suggest that her illness signifies metaphorically rather than medically. As Sontag argues, in the nineteenth century illness and suffering “became romantic in a stylized account of the disease’s preliminary symptoms (for example, debility is transformed into languor) and the actual agony was simply suppressed” (Sontag 29). The female invalid is the subject of a cultural diagnosis that retains the referents of illness but suppresses its symptoms.

Representations of illness like Lami’s and Janin’s typify domestic rather than gothic literature of the period. The nineteenth-century domestic novel is rife with “descriptions of almost symptomless, unfrightened, beatific deaths” from numerous afflictions (Sontag 16). The quiet resignation with which female characters succumb to illness, disease, and death not only conflates femininity with sickness, but also reproduces the long-standing conflation of suffering with virtue. While this representation is not absent from the gothic mode, it juxtaposes more intense, impassioned delineations of illness. To use the obvious example of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), Helen Burns, the young consumptive, endures her deterioration with pious complacency, contrasting Bertha Mason, the

eponymous “madwoman in the attic” whose violent illness is associated with conditions of oppressive sexual relation and patriarchal domestic authority. Helen Burns tells Jane: “I am very happy [...] We all must die one day, and the illness which is removing me is not painful; it is gentle and gradual [...] By dying young I shall escape great sufferings” (C Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 146). For Helen Burns and others like her, disease and death serve as testament to the character’s virtue, and the willingness to die signifies a form of martyrdom to femininity; the sick woman wastes away in spirit as well as body. As Sontag notes, consumption was “celebrated as the disease of born victims, of sensitive, passive people who are not quite life-loving enough to survive” (Sontag 25). In her submission to illness (one did not fight consumption as one battles cancer today), the female consumptive signified submissiveness more generally, in a form of feminised stoicism. Illness subdues the heroine; she accepts her fate with pious resignation, wilting in the face of earthly obligation like a delicate flower in the sun.

The consumptive woman, as the image of Victorian illness *par excellence*, was also an instantiation of the period’s cultural constructions of femininity. As Bram Dijkstra suggests, in the nineteenth century sickness and suffering was “a sign of passive compliance with the cultural image of extreme virtue. What better guarantee of purity, after all, than a woman’s pale, consumptive face, fading, in a paroxysm [*sic*] of self-negation, into nothingness?” (Dijkstra 23). Though the woman’s declining health heightens her beauty, it also strengthens her virtue by diminishing her sexual agency. But while in this context the invalid is a paragon

of innocence, illness was also associated with heightened sexuality in the nineteenth-century imagination. Sick women were presumed susceptible to euphoric states and increased sexual desire, and consumption was even considered an aphrodisiac of sorts (Sontag 13). Sickness and disease were thus not only measures of health, but also expressions of sexuality. Just as fainting could be strategically employed as an artful means of garnering attention in the guise of feminine delicacy and sensibility, the appearance of illness — whether physically manifested by disease, or adopted through the manipulation of fashion or countenance — could similarly work towards the construction of sexual subjectivity.⁷⁷ As Leigh Summers suggests, debility and invalidism constituted an accepted, and even revered, form of embodied femininity in the nineteenth century, because, for a culture in which ill health was “normative to femininity, and where death and dying lent women a particular if morbid prestige, and, where feminine ill health, death and sexuality were collapsed, it was an easy, if not inevitable step for middle-class women to construct or derive a femininity, indeed a particular sexual subjectivity, from those influential and celebrated cultural givens” (Summers 125). As such, illness could be feigned or

⁷⁷ The practice of tight-lacing and increased popularity of the corset, for example, are evidence of the period’s conflation of illness and sexuality. Corsetry encouraged an eroticisation of the real physical debility it caused its wearers, as the corset’s augmentation of the body served both to embellish the dimensions of the female form by diminishing the waist and accentuating the hips and breasts, and to distort normal circulation and respiratory functions by compressing and inhibiting their regulatory organs. The body’s response to this circumscription mimicked the symptoms of consumption: shortness of breath, flushed or pallid complexion, a propensity to faint, and depleted physical energy and mobility. The corseted woman embodies the erotic debility imposed on the consumptive, as an induced or fabricated version of the sick subject; she is the victim of fashion rather than disease.

manipulated as a means of expressing sexuality.

Historical interpretations of female illness in the nineteenth century share the ambivalence of earlier literary representations of passivity and incapacity, as examined in the preceding and following chapters. According to some interpretations, the female invalid is pious, docile, and quietly resigned to her illness, patiently waiting for death to relieve her from earthly suffering. In others, she is manipulative and deceitful, fabricating or exploiting her illness to garner special attention or avoid social obligation, just as Mr B (and the anti-Pamelists) accuse Richardson's Pamela of feinting rather than fainting. As such, while the idealised consumptive woman affirmed normative femininity in her quiet submission to disease, illness has also been read as a mode of resistance to otherwise rigid gender constructions. Elaine Showalter notes that households would be "reorganized around the patient, who had to be constantly nursed, indulged with special delicacies, and excused from ordinary duties" (Showalter 133). Because women suffering from mysterious or manufactured maladies were no longer bound by the domestic duties of a wife, illness was "often self-consciously embraced as a response to marriage or as an alternative to it" (Cohen 136). Just as the woman who fainted from a too tightly-laced corset garnered sympathy and attention similar to that associated with actual disease, those who feigned or manipulated the symptoms of their illness could disengage from normative domestic roles and relationships, and adopt the more privileged role of the invalid. Whether as the strategic manipulation of social codes or the

inevitable result of social oppression, women took to their beds in retreat from culturally-imposed expectations and limitations of femininity. As Herndl summarises, feminist critics interpret women's illness "as a result of the oppressive use of male power, as the resistance to oppressive power, or as the means to a kind of power of its own" (Herndl 5). In these contexts, it is perhaps difficult to determine whether illness is subversive or collusive, or whether or not this resistance was successful; there is no consensus among feminist historians and literary critics as to whether it was better for women to be mad, maladed, or married. This conception of "better," however, depends on the interpretive framework: as this chapter will argue, in the representational contexts of *Wuthering Heights* and the gothic mode, illness is the heroine's most legible form of self-assertion.

Willful Invalidism and the Invocation of Illness

In literary representations of illness, somatic affliction and debility are indicative of the psychological state of the sufferer, as physical symptoms or manifestations of emotional distress. Illness can thus function as an expression of internal agitation in contexts that inhibit or prevent other means of assertion, and physical health is typically reinstated when the distress and conflict are resolved. For example, in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Fanny suffers an acute headache when she feels neglected by her cousin Edmund and exploited by her indolent aunt. She acknowledges that "the state of her spirits probably had its

share in her indisposition," as "the pain of her mind had been much beyond that in her head" (Austen, *Mansfield Park* 100). Fanny's headache is physically symptomatic of the heartache she cannot otherwise express. The repression of her emotional conflict causes it to manifest physically, and the pain in her head becomes the primary expression of her internal turmoil. Fanny's delicacy is what garners her the attention she desires throughout the novel, as it is primarily in moments of physical weakness that Edmund displays the tenderness and consideration she silently covets. Her headaches disappear and her strength returns when her desire for care is satisfied, just as Pamela's fainting fits subside following her marriage to Mr B, when the tone of the novel shifts from gothic to domestic realism. However, Fanny's debility is occasioned by her unrequited feelings and Edmund's emotional neglect, rather than the psychological tyranny and sexual threat Mr B imposes on Pamela. Christiane Zschirnt notes that although "Fanny's exemplary virtuousness, her modest timidity and physical delicacy, and her notorious passiveness at first glance make her appear like Pamela's double, she never faints. Instead she is tormented by a consciousness exemplified in a headache" (Zschirnt 57). Fanny's emotional distress perhaps seems trivial when compared with Pamela's fear of sexual violation, but nonetheless draws attention to the connection between physical illness and emotional distress, and to the narrative function of illness in the novel.

While Austen's Regency novel falls outside the scope of the gothic mode that Brontë's fiction resurrects, it forms a link between earlier instances of somatic

disorders and Catherine's illness in *Wuthering Heights*, and distinguishes a contrast in representations of illness between gothic and domestic fiction. Illness in the gothic mode signifies differently than in the domestic literary tradition, as it is neither treated nor cured with marriage. In Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), for example, marriage is precisely what occasions the heroine's illness. Lucy Ashton is engaged to her beloved, Edgar, but in an effort to prevent their nuptials, her mother forces her to marry another man against her will. Lucy's opposition and protestations go unheeded, and her health dwindles as the wedding approaches. Her weakened state prohibits her from dancing at the reception, and she swiftly declines following the ceremony, disappearing from the party. In "a sudden fit of insanity," Lucy stabs her husband before the marriage can be consummated, and she quickly descends into madness and delirium (Scott 339). When her parents discover her, Lucy is

couched like a hare upon its form — her head-gear dishevelled,
her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood, — her eyes glazed,
and her features convulsed into a wild paroxysm of insanity.

When she saw herself discovered, she gibbered, made mouths,
and pointed at them with her bloody fingers, with the frantic
gestures of an exulting demoniac. (337-338)

Lucy's physical and mental illness culminate in the attempted murder of the man she is forced to marry, as a violent rejection of sexual relation she could not otherwise oppose. In Scott's gothic narrative, marriage does not cure Lucy's

declining health, but drastically hastens her illness, descent into madness, and eventual death.

The differences between Austen and Scott's representations of illness are prefigured in Samuel Richardson's final novel, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1754), which anticipates both gothic and domestic representations of sick women, and the conditions that prompt them to fall ill. In Richardson's text, both Harriet Byron and Clementina della Porretta suffer from similarly affective disorders. Overcome with unrequited love for Sir Charles Grandison, both women become ill. Harriet "visibly falls away," growing weak with an "inward malady, that has approached the best of hearts; and they know that the cure cannot be within the art of the physician" (Richardson, *Grandison* 5.516). Harriet's heartache mimics consumption, and she dwindles and fades into a deep melancholia, from which she eventually recovers upon marrying Grandison. The marriage restores Harriet's spirits and reinstates emotional balance, which enables the return of her physical health. As Vrettos explains, "Emotional distress constituted a medical complication, and the doctor could recognize emotional distress by its similarity to fictional paradigms. This same interpretive correlation could, in turn, be applied to acts of emotional control. If distress could disrupt the healing process, the containment or rechanneling of distress could facilitate recovery" (Vrettos 26). Harriet's caretakers recognise the psychological basis of her physical complaint, and can do little to treat her affliction but express their sympathies for her condition and encourage Grandison to "cure" her. Once

Grandison returns to England after fulfilling his obligations to Clementina and her family, he proposes to Harriet, which proves restorative to her physical and mental health. Like Fanny, Harriet recovers from her illness because the marriage resolves her emotional conflict and removes the source of her distress.

Clementina, on the other hand, develops a more acute psychological affliction and eventually goes mad. Like Catherine, she grows delirious with fever; she is “wild” and “half-raving” (Richardson, *Grandison* 3.239), and her family worries she will succumb to a “consumptive malady” (3.257). Following Grandison’s refusal to renounce his faith and the Anglican church in order to marry Clementina, who is an Italian Roman Catholic, she becomes so melancholic that the doctors determine it necessary to bleed her with leeches. But Clementina is adverse to being bled, and gives “no more than two or three drops” before fleeing the doctors and seeking refuge from the procedure (3.190). When Grandison beseeches her to allow the surgeons to continue, she is seized with passion, and demands: “Do *you* wish to see me wounded? — To see my heart bleeding at my arm [...] I *will* bleed [...] You grudge not your tears; And as I cannot give you tears for tears, from my eyes, Shall not my arm weep! [...] It will bleed at this arm, I warrant — I will *bid* it flow” (3.193, original emphasis). In this scene, Clementina attempts to exert her will over her body by emphatically insisting that she *will* bleed for Grandison, despite the doctors having only been able to extract a few drops. Clementina is good to her word, and she bleeds freely when the surgeons recommence the procedure, but she faints before it can be

completed, simultaneously asserting both the delicacy of her constitution and the strength of her will. In contrast to Harriet's more domestic or realist narrative, where illness is cured with marriage, Clementina's narrative follows a more gothic trajectory, which is accentuated not only by her Mediterranean ethnicity and Catholicism, but by her refusal of Grandison's and her family's marriage terms.⁷⁸ Even when Grandison agrees to honour his proposal, she refuses him on the grounds of their irreconcilable religious differences, and later refuses another marriage proposal from the Count of Belvidere. Unwilling to yield to the conditions of sexual relation, Clementina vows to take the veil and enter a convent, and never quite recovers from her illness.

Richardson's representation of Clementina's persistent affliction and refusal of marriage foregrounds the strategic narrative function of illness the gothic mode. In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Earnshaw invokes her illness with the same vehemence Clementina bids her blood to flow. Her wish to fall ill similarly echoes that of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, who effectively wills herself into a fatal melancholia. Both Catherine and *Clarissa* suffer from affective illnesses occasioned not only by emotional distress and psychological trauma, but that are, at least according to Lovelace, "owing rather to willfulness, to downright *female* willfulness, than to any other cause" (*Clarissa* 1346, original emphasis). Lovelace's gendering of willfulness emphasizes the strength of the apparent connection between women's emotions and their bodies. Because

⁷⁸ For more on the gothic aspects of *Sir Charles Grandison*, see Judith Broome's article "'Her lovely arm a little bloody': Richardson's Gothic Bodies" (2006).

women's physical ailments were considered especially vulnerable to an apparently natural emotional volatility, emotional distress could manifest itself in physical symptoms and somatic illnesses could engender mental disorders.

While Lovelace's claim is largely dismissive of the actual state of Clarissa's health and well-being, it draws attention to the strategic potential of illness for women who are subject to oppressive or undesirable circumstances. Like Pamela, who recognises that "Health is a blessing hardly to be coveted in my Circumstances, since that fits me for the Calamity I am in continual Apprehensions of; whereas a weak and sickly State might possibly move Compassion for me" (*Pamela* 178-179), Clarissa endeavours to turn her declining health and spirits to her advantage. When her family threatens to hasten the date of her marriage to Solmes, she resolves to "begin to be very ill. Nor need I feign much; for indeed I am extremely low, weak and faint" (*Clarissa* 341). She later admits: "I am far from being well: yet must I make myself worse than I am, preparative to the suspension I hope to obtain of the menaced evil" (346). Faced with her immanent marriage to a man she abhors, Clarissa hopes that the onset of illness will garner her family's sympathies and delay the ceremony, perhaps indefinitely. There is a degree of deceit in her plan — though she need not "feign much," she intends to become worse than she is — but like Catherine, Clarissa subjects her body to her will. After she is raped by Lovelace, Clarissa's emotional trauma manifests more severely, as the mysterious, undiagnosed, and incurable wasting disease she wills upon herself and to which she ultimately succumbs.

Richardson's novels establish illness as a form of passive agency in the gothic mode for female characters who are otherwise constrained by their physical, psychological, or social conditions. Richardson and Brontë similarly represent Clementina, Clarissa, and Catherine as insistent upon the body's submission to the will by invoking their debility as means of self-assertion. They do not "lapse into illness" because they have "no meaningful choices," as Gilbert and Gubar suggest (Gilbert and Gubar 277-278); rather, illness *is* the meaningful choice when confronted with limited or undesirable alternatives. Catherine invokes her illness as an alternative to the impossible reconciliation of her relationships with Linton and Heathcliff. This is not to suggest, however, that Catherine is merely lovesick, or that her marriage to Linton and the intensity of her feelings for Heathcliff cause her illness, as some critics claim. Susan Gorsky, for example, argues that Catherine falls victim to her emotions, which are not appropriately directed within the socio-economic structures of which she must be a part. She contends that Brontë connects health with happiness, and "suggests that both, along with an appropriate kind of love, are necessary for the well-being of society and the individual" (Gorsky 174). But Catherine's individuality, or her perception of herself as subject, whole and complete, is what is at stake: her division between two lovers, as Conger describes it, suggests she can and must identify only in relation to Linton or Heathcliff. By becoming sick, she rejects this imperative and retreats from the conditions of sexual relation to which Linton demands she submit. Catherine's illness thus becomes her measure

of health, at least in terms of the assertion and preservation of herself as subject.

Cause and Affect: Becoming Ill

On the surface, Catherine's avowal to cry herself sick sounds petulant and melodramatic. She issues the threat in response to Edgar Linton's promise not to visit the Heights again after she strikes him during a tantrum. During her disagreement with Linton and the housekeeper Nelly, whom she has also accosted, Catherine behaves like a stubborn, spoilt child intent upon having her own way. The scene is rife with foot-stamping and name-calling, but the threat stands out amidst her other exclamations because Nelly takes her at her word. Evidently Nelly knows her mistress better than to dismiss her threat as idle, and she advises Linton to leave because "Miss is dreadfully wayward, sir! [...] you'd better be riding home, or else she will be sick, only to grieve us" (Brontë 79). Nelly interprets Catherine's threat as spiteful, acknowledging the extent of her willfulness and its potential consequences. Nelly is suspicious of the validity and authenticity of Catherine's illnesses throughout the text, and admits she cannot "get rid of the notion that she acted a part of her disorder" (119); however, she is also mindful of Catherine's determination. Thus, when Catherine does fall ill after wandering out in the cold rain in search of Heathcliff, despite Nelly "having vainly begged the willful girl to rise and remove her wet things" (91), her ensuing fever seems as much an act of will as a consequence of the weather. Heathcliff's disappearance torments Catherine, and her subsequent illness is engendered by

her initial threat: it is an exertion of her will over her body, and a physical response to her mental state. Rather than simply pouting, Catherine threatens to embody the anger, fear, and frustration that are unheeded or ignored when asserted verbally, and becomes ill in response to the passionate emotional distress she experiences in a situation she finds untenable. Unable to suffer Heathcliff's disappearance or the consequences of her row with Linton and Nelly, Catherine wills herself sick.

Brontë represents Catherine's illness as a narrative lacuna in the text. It is not clear from Nelly's account of the event how long her fever lasts or what transpires while she is bedridden. Though her convalescence lasts "for several months," Catherine's illness is textually represented in less than a paragraph, and the deaths of the master and mistress of Thrushmore Grange from the fever contracted from Catherine are afforded little more than a sentence (Brontë 93). The specifics of Catherine's illness and the period of her convalescence are not discursively represented in the text's editorial framework, producing an arrest in the narrative. As with Pamela's fainting fits, while Catherine is ill, the narrative pauses, and does not resume until she is well enough to return to the Heights. Pamela's lapses in consciousness necessarily create a gap in the text she produces, as fainting both physically and narratively interrupts her first-person account of her experiences. In *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, Brontë's editorial framework, which consists of the layering of narrative voices, recreates Catherine's illness as a textual abyss from an external rather than interior

perspective. The gaps in the narrative occasioned by Catherine's illness reinforce (rather than produce) her retreat from discursive signification. As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, as the circumstances of Catherine's relationships with Linton and Heathcliff grow increasingly dire, her invocations of illness intensify and her fevers become more severe, and the narrative gaps they incur develop proportionately.

These textual lapses sharply contrast the details of Catherine's return and recovery. Following her first bout of illness, Catherine returns to the Heights "saucier, and more passionate, and haughtier than ever" (Brontë 93). Catherine's persistent willfulness indicates that she in no way "lapses," as Gilbert and Gubar suggest, and her initial fever intensifies, rather than diminishes, the strength of her will.⁷⁹ Moreover, Catherine believes that "her recent illness gave her a claim to be treated with consideration. Then the doctor had said that she would not bear crossing much, she ought to have her own way; and it was nothing less than murder, in her eyes, for any one to presume to stand up and contradict her" (93). Catherine discovers a sense of privilege in illness, and receives medical licence to act out her passions without interruption or intervention. The doctor's advice, in effect, legitimises her illness by acknowledging a delicacy in her temperament on which her physical well-being is contingent. Catherine's subjection of her body to her will subjects everyone else to it as well. But despite Nelly's conviction that

⁷⁹ Lapse: to "glide or pass effortlessly; descend gradually" (OED 1b); to "Fall (*away* or *back*) into an inferior or previous state; fail to maintain a position or state, esp. through absence of effort or influence" (OED 2b). Catherine does not go gentle into that good night, or anywhere else.

Catherine exaggerates her symptoms and “acted a part of her disorder” (119), Catherine does not merely exploit this delicacy in order to have her own way. Rather, Brontë represents Catherine’s repeated invocations of illness as a means to disengage from the ways in which she is treated by others: specifically, by Edgar Linton.

Linton’s intolerance of Heathcliff — or, more specifically, of his relationship with Catherine — culminates in a physical altercation after he attempts to prohibit Heathcliff from visiting Catherine at Thrushmore Grange. The men’s behaviour towards one another drives Catherine to distraction, and she asks Nelly to inform Linton that she is “in danger of being seriously ill — I wish it may prove true. He has startled and distressed me shockingly! [...] remind him of my passionate temper, verging, when kindled, on frenzy” (Brontë 115-116). Catherine’s reminder strategically recalls the doctor’s warning not to cross her, and though doing so falls short of “murder,” Linton’s disregard for her emotional volatility only exacerbates her distress. At first, Nelly is reticent to indulge Catherine’s wish, as she “believes a person who could plan the turning of her fits of passion to account, beforehand, might, by exerting her will, manage to control herself tolerably even while under their influence” (116), but Catherine cannot be placated and her fit grows more violent. When Linton attempts to force Catherine to choose between Heathcliff and himself, she becomes livid. Linton insists that “It is impossible for you to be *my* friend, and *his* at the same time; and I absolutely *require* to know which you choose,” but rather than entertain this

impossible ultimatum, Catherine responds with a requirement of her own: "I require to be let alone! [...] I demand it! Don't you see I can scarcely stand? Edgar, you — you leave me!" (117). Catherine desires to disengage from Linton and be left alone, but this desire is coupled with debility. Unwilling and unable to tolerate Linton's persistent demand, Catherine collapses on the sofa, weak with rage. Linton attempts to force Catherine's hand, but she refuses to play, and instead, she invokes illness as an alternative to the choice he tries to impose.

Catherine seizes at Linton's ultimatum, and becomes self-destructive in a fit of passion and rage. She begins "dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, so that you might fancy she would crash them to splinters," and then moments later, "stretched herself out stiff, and turned up her eyes, while her cheeks, at once blanched and livid, assumed the aspect of death" (Brontë 117). The initially violent paroxysm immobilises her, and she appears dead. As the rage and frustration that incite the fit of passion subside, she slips into a state of dissociative passivity, insensible and unresponsive. Geerken describes Catherine's fit as an act of "corpsing," in which "an agent imagines his or her death while still retaining the lifelike capacities of feeling, sensing, and even, at times, speaking" (Geerken 380).⁸⁰ While in this condition, Catherine appears to occupy a liminal state, suspended between life and death. Unlike the

⁸⁰ Geerken argues that literary instances of "corpsing" are represented "as deliberate acts of will," and that Catherine's behaviour "is portrayed as an act of self-assertion" (Geerken 381). She also notes that "Fainting is mimetic of *corpsing* because it involves a loss of consciousness [...] Just as a fainting fit simulates a miniature death [...] *Corpsing* is also simulated in sleep" (328). Geerken similarly demonstrates the representational analogies that can be drawn between fainting, sleep, illness, and death.

consumptive, whose fragile, pallid form reflects the sufferer's peaceful resignation, Catherine's "aspect of death" betrays an impassioned animation. Her "blanched and livid" cheeks, though ashen and bloodless, evoke the anger and frustration that incite the seizure. This juxtaposition of passion and passivity is repeated later, when Catherine's countenance has "a wild vindictiveness in its white cheek, and a bloodless lip, and scintillating eye" (Brontë 149). These seemingly contradictory or conflicting physical symptoms and emotive expressions reflect Catherine's internal conflict, making it visibly apparent in her countenance and behaviour. Catherine's emotions, like her will, are expressed physically, her illness an embodied assertion of subjectivity.

Catherine's feverish paroxysm abruptly disengages her from the argument with Linton, and is followed by a period of self-imposed fasting and isolation. Upon recovering consciousness, Catherine locks herself in her room and, for three days, abstains from food. The three days she remains confined to her chamber constitute the novel's second textual gap. After she retreats to her room, the narrative pauses until Catherine, "on the third day, unbarred her door," at which point the narrative resumes (Brontë 118). Nelly's brief description of her mistress's absence notes only that Catherine "fasted perniciously" while she attended her domestic duties and Linton busied himself with his books (118). This gap in the narrative is experienced by readers and characters alike. When Catherine emerges, she is confused and asks Nelly: "How long is it since I shut myself in here?" (122). Catherine's own inability to quantify the duration of her

confinement draws attention to the lapse in narrative flow and the textual aporia it creates. When she unbolts her door and the narrative resumes, Catherine's health has noticeably waned. Linton is shocked by how swiftly Catherine declines during her absence, and admonishes Nelly for not giving him "one hint of how she has been these three days! It was heartless! months of sickness could not cause such a change!" (125). The text contains no hints of Catherine's deterioration, and readers, like Linton, are left to wonder at the effects of this lost time. Catherine's illness thus functions not only as a rejection of the discursive limitations of Linton's ultimatum, according to which she can only identify in relation to Linton or Heathcliff, but as a retreat from the discursive framework of the text as well. Illness removes Catherine from signification, such that she deteriorates behind a door closed to narrative representation. Her refusal to eat is a physical expression of her refusal to internalise Linton's ultimatum and the conditions of relational identity it imposes. Catherine's confinement and self-starvation produces the illness she invokes in order to retreat from the terms of this identity.

Rather than submit to Linton's ultimatum and choose between him and Heathcliff, Catherine rejects his terms and instead proposes her own: "I'll choose between these two — either to starve, [...] or to recover and leave the country" (Brontë 119). Catherine once again subjects her body to her will by adopting what Leslie Heywood and Anna Silver call an "anorexic logic," internalising the

impossibility of her choices and her refusal of their circumstances.⁸¹ Self-starvation conflates affliction with agency as a mode of passive resistance or protest. However, Catherine is not merely on hunger strike: her refusal to eat is not only a pattern of behaviour, but also an assertion of subjectivity. Catherine's abstention from food, like the invocation of illness, engages a form of resistance that complicates not only the distinction between physical and mental disorders, but also between illness and identity, and between symptom and disease. As Kelly Stephens notes, according to feminist theories of anorexia, "the bodily condition is interpreted as symptomatic of a more general, familial and social malaise" (Stephens 100). Rather than submit to Linton's masculine authority or Nelly's maternal discipline, Catherine disengages from the domestic circle that constrains her. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that Catherine's isolation occasions "madness, solipsism, paralysis," and her refusal to eat "leads to weakness, immobility, death," in what they describe as the "grim stages of mental and physical decay" (Gilbert and Gubar 279).⁸² But for Catherine, the conditions for

81 Heywood introduces the term "anorexic logic" to refer to the anorectic's internalisation and perversion of the modern socio-cultural assumptions that privilege the dominant half of a binary opposition, including "mind over body, thin over fat, white over black, masculine over feminine" (Heywood xii). Silver uses Heywood's phrase to trace a narrative aetiology of anorexia through its representations in nineteenth century literature (Silver 3 #13). While I am hesitant to (anachronistically) diagnose or pathologise Catherine's behaviour as anorexic, it is a useful interpretive model for understanding the ways in which self-starvation disrupts normative constructions of femininity. For a rigorous feminist theorisation of anorexia, see Susan Bordo's article in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (1988).

82 Gilbert and Gubar read Catherine's self-starvation as a form of protest against the limitations of femininity and domesticity, and more specifically, the maternal female body. Catherine is pregnant at this point in the text, and her isolation doubles as "confinement," in the sense of being in child-bed (OED 4). They suggest that "the distorted body that the anorexic imagines for herself is analogous to the distorted body that the pregnant woman really must confront" (Gilbert and Gubar 285).

health and well-being are just as bleak. By locking herself in her room and refusing to eat, Catherine willfully creates the conditions of her illness, and plunges herself into a feverish delirium.

Catherine's self-starvation is an act of willful self-control. Like the anorectic, Catherine is not a victim of a "wasting disease" because she is in full control of her body's consumption, and acts according to her will. However, the anorectic's renunciation of physical health also embodies the regulation and control of the body demanded by normative standards of femininity to its absolute limit, and manipulates the conditions of hunger and desire that do not often signify for the nineteenth-century heroine. Silver points out that although "women in Victorian literature seldom express their loathing of food [...] they are nonetheless rarely seen eating" (Silver 50), and some critics argue that the anorectic is in fact the quintessential embodiment of the nineteenth-century feminine ideal. Elaine Showalter, for example, suggests that the "portrait of the anorexic painted by Darwinian psychiatry is paradoxically that of the self-sacrificing Victorian heroine. Refusing to eat, she acted out the most extreme manifestation of the feminine role, flaunting her martyrdom, literally turning herself into a 'little' woman" (Showalter 128). The invisibility of food intake in nineteenth-century literature is analogous to the strict social regulation of other behaviours. For women, eating and hunger are closely associated with sexuality, where voraciousness suggests an unhealthy sexual appetite, while restraint connotes delicacy, modesty, and virtue.

Nineteenth-century domestic fiction reproduces the reverence of abstinence in relation to women's food consumption and sexuality. In a moving scene in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), for example, Hetty, who is "hungry and faint" from travelling, realises that she has only a shilling in her possession and is torn between taking tea and tipping the coachman: "She put her hand in her pocket and took out the shilling, but the tears came with the sense of exhaustion and the thought that she was giving away her last means of getting food, which she really required [...] she lifted up her dark tear-filled eyes to the coachman's face and said, 'Can you give me back sixpence?'" (Eliot 375). Hetty's humility is characteristic of the diminutive Victorian heroine, but the scene draws uncharacteristic attention to hunger and the body. Hetty is self-conscious of the basic physical aspects of her predicament, unlike the angelic Nell Trent in Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), who is similarly weary from travelling but has "no thought of hunger or cold, or thirst, or suffering" (Dickens 101). Self-starvation is conspicuous because hunger is a flagrantly physical manifestation of desire. By willfully delaying or denying its gratification, the texts represent these characters as exaggerating precisely that which they deny, and affirm this denial as evidence of their innocence and virtue. In the gothic mode, however, the heroine's inability or refusal to eat signifies not as merely an ascetic confirmation of virtue or chastity, but as a more concrete means of asserting her subjectivity. For Catherine, hunger is less a measure of the presence or absence of desire than the means by which she expresses her refusal of the terms she is given. Though

Gorsky suggests that Catherine's self-starvation is merely a "doomed attempt to prove her power," her efforts are "doomed" only insofar as they are read as an unsuccessful attempt to retain power in a situation in which she is otherwise powerless (Gorsky 182-183). As a means of rejecting the situation and removing herself from it, however, Catherine is in fact successful. Her self-starvation exerts her will over her body, and produces the conditions of the illness she invokes.

Interestingly, towards the end of the novel, Heathcliff also stops eating. However, Heathcliff's abstention lacks the willfulness of Catherine's hunger strike; he does not so much reject food as forget to eat. As he tells Nelly, "I take so little interest in my daily life, that I hardly remember to eat, and drink [...] I have to remind myself to breathe — almost to remind my heart to beat!" (Brontë 276-277). Heathcliff's protracted self-starvation is more wistful than willful, a symptom of his larger withdrawal from the world. He suffers rather from an absence of will, and gradually loses his taste for food, for retribution, and ultimately, for life itself. It is Heathcliff, not Catherine, who wastes away, and he does so with the quiet resignation that characterises the consumptive. He is, in effect, consumed with anticipation for death, which he describes as his "single wish." He confesses to Nelly that his "whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it *will* be reached — and *soon* — because it has devoured my existence — I am swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfillment" (Brontë 277). The language with which Heathcliff expresses this wish plays on the multiple

connotations of consumption, and shifts from active to passive voice. Heathcliff yearns for death, and this all-consuming wish by which he is devoured displaces the physical hunger he no longer feels; he does not swallow, but is swallowed. For Heathcliff, self-starvation is a symptom of a broader affliction and attends a larger turn away from society; for Catherine, it is form of passive agency, and a means of exerting her will over her body.

Depression, Delirium, Death

Catherine's sickness and self-starvation culminate in a complicated diagnosis of "brain fever," a particular instantiation of the conflation of mental and physical illness, with the brain as the physical seat of the affliction. The condition developed from the classical disorder "phrensy," an acute and impassioned inflammation of the brain (Peterson 445). According to the *Dictionary of Practical Medicine* (1858), the physical symptoms of brain fever include "acute pain in the head, with intolerance of light and sound; watchfulness, delirium; flushed countenance, and redness of the conjunctiva, or a heavy suffused state of the eyes; quick pulse; frequently spasmodic twitchings or convulsions, passing into somnolency, coma, and complete relaxation of the limbs" (Copeland 447). Over the course of novel, Catherine experiences most of these symptoms, but the progression of her illness and increasing severity of its symptoms do little to diminish her willfulness. She is "saucier, and more passionate, and haughtier than ever," and despite suffering from bouts of

depression and malaise in the months following her initial fever, her spirits recover more fully than her physical health. Catherine's "seasons of gloom" are observed with "sympathising silence by her husband, who ascribed them to an alteration in her constitution, produced by her perilous illness, as she was never subject to depression of spirits before" (Brontë 96). But Heathcliff's return rouses Catherine's sleeping spirits, as well as Linton's prejudices against him, and the ensuing conflict prompts the reassertion of Catherine's will in opposition to Linton's reinvigorated sense of masculine authority. During Catherine's convalescence, Linton takes care to maintain Catherine's emotional equilibrium by limiting any visible opposition to her desires from himself, Nelly, or anyone else. His "deep-rooted fear of ruffling her humour" and reticence to see "his lady vexed" give the marriage the appearance of a "deep and growing happiness" (95-96). Heathcliff's return disrupts this equilibrium not only because it brings Catherine to herself, but because it unsettles Linton's willingness to compromise.

The re-establishment of Catherine's relationship with Heathcliff occasions a renegotiation of her marriage to Linton, whereby he attempts to assert the authority of a husband by limiting and controlling his wife. Catherine will not stand for it, and her subsequent self-starvation occasions a fit of passion and delirium that rekindles her illness and transports her from "feverish bewilderment to madness" (Brontë 120). Catherine grows increasingly incoherent and violent while Nelly struggles to restore her to reason. During the fit, Catherine tears apart her pillows and pulls the feathers from them, which she

then proceeds to catalogue according to their species: “That’s a turkey’s [...]; and this is a wild duck’s; and this is a pigeon’s. Ah, they put pigeons’ feathers in the pillows — no wonder I couldn’t die! Let me take care to throw it on the floor when I lie down. And here’s a moor-cock’s; and this — I should know it among a thousand — it’s a lapwing’s” (120). Like Shakespeare’s Ophelia, who is driven mad by the masculine struggle for authority over her person, Catherine experiences delirium in the form of an obsessive drive for control, which manifests in her compulsive ordering of the feathers.⁸³ Catherine engages in a violent dismantling of the domestic trappings of her illness and confinement, literally destroying her sickbed, but then sets to restructuring their contents according to her own understanding of their origin and purpose. In this sense, the cataloguing of the pillow feathers is a microcosmic reassertion of control over the structures and conditions that determine Catherine’s subjectivity. When she recovers herself, however, and tries to explain her behaviour to Nelly, Catherine resubmits to those normative structures and suggests that “Because I am weak, my brain got confused” (121). This explanation again links physical debility with mental disorder: Catherine’s refusal to eat has depleted both her physical and mental energies, such that her mind becomes subject to confusion and disorder. However, this conflation of physical illness with emotional disturbance also

83 Catherine’s catalogue of feathers is reminiscent of Ophelia’s distribution of flowers shortly before her death: “There’s rosemary, that’s for remem- / brance. Pray, love, remember. And there is pansies, / that’s for thoughts. [...] There’s fennel for you, and columbines. There’s / rue for you; [...] There’s a daisy: I would give you some violets, / but they withered all when my father died” (*Hamlet* 4.5.176-185).

recalls the conditions that prompted her willful confinement and self-starvation in the first place.

The onset of Catherine's brain fever coincides with Heathcliff's second disappearance, occasioned by his row with Catherine, and his subsequent elopement with Isabella Linton. The diagnosis reflects the enmeshing of mental and physical health, as Catherine's physical symptoms cannot be distinguished or separated from her mental agitation. In Victorian medical practice, the physical onset of brain fever was closely associated with mental disturbance, such that it could both cause and be caused by emotional distress. *The Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine* (1833) notes that brain fever could be triggered by anything posing "a severe shock to the nervous system. The various kinds of mental emotion — fear, anxiety, disappointments, long continued watching on a sick bed, intense study, [and] want of sleep may individually be ranked among the predisposing causes of fever" (Forbes 189-190). Catherine's physician, Dr Kenneth, thus prompts Nelly to connect the onset of Catherine's fever with emotional conflict, stating that a "stout, hearty lass like Catherine does not fall ill for a trifle," and Nelly admits that her illness "commenced with a quarrel. She was struck down during a tempest of passion with a kind of fit [...] she flew off in the height of it, and locked herself up. Afterwards, she refused to eat, and now she alternately raves, and remains in a half-dream, knowing those about her, but having her mind filled with all sorts of strange ideas and illusions" (Brontë 126). Catherine's delirium and hallucinations transform her familiar surroundings into

agents and objects of malevolent terror. She accuses Nelly of “gathering elf-bolts to hurt our heifers,” imagines objects and holds conversations with people who are not present, and hides herself under the covers when the clock strikes twelve (120-121). Catherine’s distressed psyche associates even the comforting and mundane aspects of her everyday life with the oppressive conditions of her domestic world.

In her delirious state, Catherine transposes objects and experiences from *Wuthering Heights* to her current residence at Thrushmore Grange. In the midst of her confusion, Catherine reverts to her childhood self, and identifies as Catherine Earnshaw rather than Catherine Linton; as she admits when she regains her senses, “I thought I was lying in my chamber at *Wuthering Heights*” (Brontë 121). Catherine imagines she sees the black clothes press from her childhood bedroom against the wall in her sickroom, and an unfamiliar face reflected on its surface. She is frightened by the reflection, and exclaims to Nelly: “It *does* appear odd — I see a face in it! [...] Don’t *you* see that face? [...] Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone!” (121). The clothes press Catherine imagines she sees is in fact a mirror, and the face reflected in it her own, but Nelly, both frightened and exasperated, is “incapable of making her comprehend” that it is her own image she does not recognise. She insists: “It was *yourself*, Mrs Linton,” which causes Catherine to gasp “Myself!” in disbelief (121). Catherine’s misrecognition of the reflection and inability to identify herself mirrors her more willful retreat from discursive signification. In her delirium,

Catherine resists reflexive signification in that she cannot identify (with) her own reflection. Catherine does not see herself, or more specifically, Catherine Earnshaw does not identify (with or as) Catherine Linton. Moreover, even when her delirium subsides, Catherine still identifies Wuthering Heights as home. Once the horror of her confusion passes and she realises who and where she is, Catherine explains: "Oh, dear. I thought I was at home" (121). Catherine's confusion over her own sense of self and home highlights the crux of her emotional conflict: her situation has destabilised her sense of self, such that she no longer knows who she is or where she belongs.

Catherine specifically addresses this confusion later on, when she tries to explain to Nelly where and how she has been while locked inside her room. Just as Pamela struggles to reconstruct the periods of unconsciousness occasioned by her fainting fits, Catherine, too, attempts to account for her lost time. However, while Pamela is able to reconstruct the narrative from an external perspective based on the accounts of others, Catherine's self-imposed isolation and confinement preclude any recourse to third-party explanations, and she accounts for her experience in terms of absence and vacuity: "As soon as ever I had barred the door, utter blackness overwhelmed me, and I fell on the floor [...] I had no command of tongue, or brain [...] the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank! I did not recall that they had been at all [...] my late anguish was swallowed in a paroxysm of despair [...] You may fancy a glimpse of the abyss where I grovelled!" (Brontë 122). Both Catherine and the reader experience her

illness as an abyss, as a space of non-signification and absence of representation. Catherine's abyss is black, blank, bleak, without form, and void — she is swallowed up and lost within a wide Miltonic womb of uncreated night, devoid of sense and motion.⁸⁴ Brontë represents Catherine's experience of illness as a discursive vacancy; Catherine can only later describe it in terms of silence, absence, and vacuity. When Heathcliff returns and demands "to hear from herself how she is, and why she has been ill," he can "guess, by her silence, as much as anything, what she feels" (144-145). Silence, like the abyss, stands in place of discursive representation of Catherine's illness. Heathcliff later appropriates these terms as Catherine is dying, when he begs her: "*do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh God! it is unutterable!*" (155). Heathcliff literally cannot articulate the negative discursive space Catherine's illness and death create, and this is perhaps the point: to carve out a space over which there can be no other authority, no final word, no word at all.

The text's third narrative break occurs immediately after Catherine's delirium develops into brain fever. While Catherine endures the worst of the fever and Heathcliff disappears with Isabella, two months pass in the space of a paragraph, during which Linton attends to his wife's sickbed while little else happens (Brontë 129). The narrative resumes once Catherine is well enough to leave her chamber, and she emerges significantly weakened. She is nervous as well as melancholic, which intensifies the fragility of her constitution. When

84 Milton, *Paradise Lost* (2.149-151).

Heathcliff returns once more, Nelly tries to prevent him from visiting, because even the “commonest occurrence startles her painfully [...] She’s all nerves, and she couldn’t bear the surprise” (144). But Catherine’s nervous fragility does not subdue her will, and she demands to see Heathcliff. Just as before, Heathcliff’s presence rouses Catherine’s spirits, and she rallies “with straining eagerness” for his visit (148). Despite her efforts, Catherine’s weakness is so apparent that Heathcliff can hardly bear to look at her. Nelly observes that the “same conviction had stricken him as me, from the instant he beheld her, that there was no prospect of ultimate recovery there — she was fated, sure to die” (148). Catherine’s nervousness and recurrent fever alter her appearance, and she takes on an ethereal aspect similar to the consumptive; as Nelly notes, “there seemed unearthly beauty in the change” (146). Her eyes, suffused with the “watchfulness” that is symptomatic of her illness, “no longer gave the impression of looking at the objects around her; they appeared always to gaze beyond, and far beyond — you would have said out of this world” (147). Catherine’s gaze appears to portend of her immanent death, and she hovers between this world and the next. Though not yet a corpse, Catherine’s “cadaverous presence simultaneously occupies two places, the here and the nowhere” (Bronfen 104). Like the dead female body Elisabeth Bronfen describes, Catherine is neither “Neither of this world nor entirely absent from it,” and her condition “stages a relation between these two incompatible positions” (104). This simultaneity of place and displacement mirrors the two similarly incompatible positions — the

contingent relation to either Linton or Heathcliff — that first prompted Catherine's wish to fall ill.

The internal conflict and psychological distress Catherine suffers when Linton further attempts to restrict and enforce her relational identity manifest themselves physically, which ultimately leads to her death. Doctor Kenneth initially identifies Catherine's affliction as a deep depression, and warns Nelly to "take care she did not throw herself down stairs, or out of the window" (Brontë 96). But health is Catherine's preoccupation, not mortality, and it is only in moments of extreme conflict and frustration that she speaks of taking her own life. For example, when she is exasperated with Linton and Heathcliff for their disregard for her feelings and behaviour towards one another, she threatens to revenge herself on her persecutors and "break their hearts by breaking my own" (116). When they are not sufficiently moved by her admonishments or entreaties, Catherine threatens to exert her will over herself instead. After Linton's ultimatum, she confesses to Nelly that "If I were only sure it would kill him [...] I'd kill myself directly" (119). She then threatens Linton directly when he forces the issue: "Hush, this moment! You mention that name [Heathcliff] and I end the matter, instantly, by a spring from the window! What you touch at present, you may have; but my soul will be on that hill-top before you lay hands on me again. I don't want you, Edgar" (124). Catherine emphatically resists Edgar's claims upon her person; she threatens to kill herself rather than submit to his conditions, expressing not only a vehement rejection of Linton and the choice he demands

she make, but also a impassioned disregard for her body and her life. She makes a clear distinction between her physical person — that which Linton can touch, and may have — and her soul, which is forever beyond his reach, and can be neither contained nor controlled, except by her own will.

Catherine's emphatic rejection of both Linton and his ultimatum and her threats of suicide suggest that, like Clarissa, she would rather die than exist only in relation to and for another. Catherine rejects Linton not merely because she loves Heathcliff, but because she will not choose between the two and thus divide herself; she refuses to be either/or. She refuses to stand in relation, even to Heathcliff. Catherine maintains that she and Heathcliff are of one mind and one spirit, and declares that he is "more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (Brontë 86). Catherine cannot choose between Linton and Heathcliff because she insists: "I *am* Heathcliff — he's always, always in my mind — not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself — but, as my own being [...] If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it" (88). Her insistence on their collapsed identities renders any relational identification or worldly contingencies obsolete. Their indissoluble connection signifies not as a hierarchised contingency of one upon the other, but of a mutual conflation of the selves as an Irigarayan simultaneity of "being-two." Heathcliff is so much a part of Catherine's conception of her self that she denies even a

proximate, physical insinuation of relation. Though Heathcliff stands before her in the flesh, she declares, "That is not *my* Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet; and take him with me — he's in my soul" (150). Catherine imagines that when she dies, she will take Heathcliff with her, as death cannot divide her from her self, or from the soul into which their identities are collapsed. Heathcliff, too, interprets Catherine's death as a form of mutual murder, an annihilation of himself through Catherine. He chastises Catherine for having married Linton, which has, in effect, caused her death, and implies that Catherine has thus killed them both: "You have killed yourself [...] I have not broken your heart — you have broken it—and in breaking it, you have broken mine. [...] I love *my* murderer — but *yours!* How can I?" (150-151). Heathcliff mourns her death as if his own, and insists: "I cannot live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul" (155). Neither Heathcliff nor Catherine can endure the separation that would divide them from themselves.

In her final moments of consciousness, Catherine fears Heathcliff will leave her, and begs him to stay, crying: "I shall die! I shall die!" (Brontë 151). Catherine's cry not only implies that any separation from Heathcliff will result in her immediate death, but also expresses a recognition of her imminent demise and, like her invocations of illness, almost bids it forth. Unlike Richardson's Clarissa, who expresses a wish to die throughout the text, Catherine does not repeatedly invoke her death as she does her sickness. Clarissa eagerly anticipates the peace she will at last enjoy in heaven, whereas Catherine dreads an afterlife among the angels, where she imagines she "should be extremely miserable" (86).

As Nelly acknowledges, “Well might Catherine deem that heaven would be a land of exile to her, unless, with her mortal body, she cast away her mortal character also” (Brontë 149). Though Nelly is critical of Catherine’s stubborn behaviour, her remark draws attention to the mind/body connection exemplified by Catherine’s brain fever, as a physical embodiment of her will. The angels’ control over her soul mirrors Linton’s attempts to assert marital authority over her person, and just as Catherine would cease to feel at home on earth without Heathcliff as a part of herself, so too would she feel a stranger among the angels in heaven, where she would be similarly divided.

Unlike the consumptive heroines in domestic fiction, Catherine is too willful to be angelic, and does not look forward to counting herself among heaven’s inhabitants. When Catherine tells Nelly of the heaven she has visited in her dreams, she confesses that it “did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy” (86). In this dream, Catherine imagines herself a fallen angel — a sort of Lucifer, or, as Gilbert and Gubar describe, a “Satanic Eve whose artistry of death is a testimonial to her fall from grace and her revolt against the tyranny of heaven as well as her revenge against the fall” (Gilbert and Gubar 423). More significantly, the dream is emblematic of her struggle to inhabit a space in which she is not subject to the authority or will of others; in heaven her spirit can be flung out by the angels, but on the earth of which she dreams, only

she is able to determine and control herself, even if only by flinging herself through a window, as she threatens Linton. Though Catherine imagines that death will free her soul from the fetters of the domestic confines by which it is currently bound, as a light-bearer or lapsarian Eve, she is also unwilling to submit herself to an afterlife that she imagines will resemble her current reality, in which she cannot feel herself or at home.

Rather than endeavour to end her life in search of an eternal afterlife, Catherine imagines for herself an alternative life — not of divine creation, but of her own. She yearns for a parallel or possible world in which she is the same Catherine of Wuthering Heights, but where “home” and “self” signify differently. This world is drawn from an idealised, nostalgic past for which she wishes as earnestly as she does her illness. Catherine’s current conditions are claustrophobic, not just in the dualist sense of the bodily confinement that the mind or spirit struggles to overcome, but in the scope of her domestic reality as well. As she tells Nelly, “the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I’m tired, tired of being enclosed here. I’m weary to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there; not seeing it dimly through tears” (Brontë 150). The glorious world she imagines is not a biblical Heaven, but the world just beyond Thrushmore Grange: her own childhood paradise of Wuthering Heights. She cannot sleep but for imaging herself “in my own bed in the old house! [...] And that wind sounding in the first by the lattice. Do let me feel it — it comes straight down the moor — do let me have one breath!” (121). Catherine wishes to

breathe familiar air once more, rather than feel stifled by her enclosure at Thrushmore Grange. Her confinement is suffocating, and she longs to be home, and young, and free. In a coherent moment in the midst of her delirium, Catherine tells Nelly: "I wish I were out of doors — I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free ... and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed? why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather of those hills" (123). The self to which she longs to return is the Catherine Earnshaw of her youth, and emphatically not the current self she identifies as Catherine Linton. The "shattered prison" in which Catherine is enclosed is the life belonging to "Mrs Linton, the lady of Thrushmore Grange, and the wife of a stranger; an exile, an outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world" (122). Catherine Linton is exiled from Wuthering Heights as Catherine Earnshaw is from heaven, but has no home to which she can return.

Catherine's death does not restore her to the home or identity for which she yearns, though it does seem to grant her a sense of unity and wholeness. No longer divided between Linton and Heathcliff, between Wuthering Heights and Thrushmore Grange, or between this world and the next, Catherine's countenance acquires in death an aspect of serenity she never wore in life. During her final semi-delirious hours she delivers a daughter, then loses consciousness for the last time. While Nelly watches Linton sleep next to Catherine's corpse, she observes:

His young and fair features were almost as deathlike as those of the form beside him, and almost as fixed; but *his* was the hush of exhausted anguish, and *hers* of perfect peace. Her brow smooth, her lids closed, her lips wearing the expression of a smile. No angel in heaven could be more beautiful than she appeared; and I partook of the infinite calm in which she lay. My mind was never in a holier frame than while I gazed on that untroubled image of Divine rest [...] To be sure one might have doubted, after the wayward and impatient existence she had led, whether she merited a haven of peace at last. One might doubt in seasons of cold reflection, but not then, in the presence of her corpse. It asserted its own tranquillity, which seemed a pledge of equal quiet to its former inhabitant. (Brontë 153)⁸⁵

The calm, untroubled tranquillity of Catherine's corpse is reminiscent of the consumptive heroine who gently passes from this world to the next, and emphatically contrasts the animated passion and consternation of Catherine's usual expression. Without the sanguine lividity of willfulness, Catherine appears angelic — an inhabitant of the heaven she imagined would make her miserable. But while Catherine's death seems at last to subdue her, it is perhaps too soon for Nelly to take such comfort in Catherine's "Divine rest," as her spirit does not

85 Catherine's smile recalls those worn by the sleeping heroines in Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Lewis's *The Monk*. But while Ellena and Antonia smile in the face of their persecutors in the midst of immanent peril, Catherine smiles with the "charming serenity" that characterises Clarissa's corpse (Richardson, *Clarissa* 1367).

seem to share the peacefulness of her corpse.

Catherine's spirit — her will manifest, flung beyond the reach of the angels in heaven — haunts the moors after her death, just as she wished it could while she was alive and infirm. One night, shortly after his arrival, Lockwood is overcome with the "intense horror of nightmare," in which Catherine's ghost returns home to Wuthering Heights, and appears at the window of her childhood bedroom after wandering on the moors since her death. He hears a knocking at his chamber window, through which he imagines he sees a child's face, and grasps "the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand." The spectre identifies herself as "Catherine Linton," and plaintively cries, "Let me in — let me in! [...] I'm come home, I'd lost my way on the moor! [...] I've been a waif for twenty years!" (42-43). Catherine's waifishness is twofold, both in the sense of a homeless or forgotten child, and in the spectral sense of being "borne or driven by the wind" (OED I: 2b, III). The ghostly Catherine of Lockwood's gothic nightmare is not confined to heaven, imprisoned among the angels as she feared during her life, but lost among the heather, wayward and alone. Following Heathcliff's death, however, Catherine's spectral presence appears to find the idyllic afterlife for which she yearned, and together they roam the moors as they did when they were children. According to the townsfolk, Heathcliff "*walks,*" and Joseph too claims to have "seen two on 'em looking out of his chamber window" (286). Lockwood also encounters a young shepherd boy, frightened and crying, who swears he saw "Heathcliff, and a woman, yonder, under t' Nab" (286). While

Catherine's internal conflict is not reconciled during her lifetime with the happy marriage characteristic of so many gothic texts, the novel concludes with her spectral reunion with Heathcliff in the earthly paradise of her home at Wuthering Heights. Their union is reified with marriage of the younger Catherine — the daughter to whom Catherine gives birth mere hours before her death — and Hareton, Heathcliff's son, producing their collapsed (rather than relational) identity: Catherine Heathcliff.

Conclusion

The gothic framework of the novel allows for the persistent assertion of Catherine's spectral subjectivity, and her ghost haunts the narrative as well as the moors. In the broader scope of the novel, Catherine is largely silent, as the text's narrative apparatus is comprised of the dialogue between Nelly and Lockwood. But Catherine speaks through this dialogue from outside, interrupting the narrative. Her presence is insistent, both through Nelly's oral history of Wuthering Heights, and Catherine's residual haunting of the text: her name engraved in books and woodwork, and her spectral voice audible through open windows. When exploring his chamber, Lockwood discovers a name scratched into the paint of an old oak case, "repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small — *Catherine Earnshaw*, here and there varied to *Catherine Heathcliff*, and then again to *Catherine Linton*" (Brontë 38). As if hypnotised by the writing, Lockwood drifts into a "vapid listlessness," and the letters appear behind his closed eyes as

“vivid as spectres,” the “air swarm[ing] with Catherines” (38). The text, too, swarms with Catherines: the Catherine Earnshaw who becomes Catherine Linton, and the Catherine Linton who becomes Catherine Heathcliff. The proliferation of Catherines leads Lockwood to her library, where he finds a Testament bearing the inscription “Catherine Earnshaw, her book” and several other volumes, the pages of each riddled “with pen and ink commentary [...] Some were detached sentences; other parts took the form of a regular diary, scrawled in an unformed, childish hand” (38). Catherine’s script, in the books and on the woodwork, linger after her death, as a palimpsest bleeding through the text’s dominant discursive framework. Catherine’s writing, like her ghost, haunts the narrative, defying its confines.

While Catherine’s verbal assertions of subjectivity — her angry outbursts, persistent demands, and doleful whinging — do not succeed in bending others to her will, when turned back on herself, her emphatic use of language imposes her will upon her body, and she becomes sick. In domestic fiction, illness can be read as a form of narrative convalescence, in which a fragile or sickly woman is nursed into the healthy role of a wife, as with Richardson’s Harriet in *Sir Charles Grandison*. According to Paula Cohen, illness “performed a necessary role both in the novels, and, by extension, in the culture. In other words, the heroines’ symptoms must be seen as functional with respect to the effective resolution of the narrative, the stabilization of the family ideal which the novel generally depicted in its conclusion, and the facilitation of the heroine’s own happiness”

(Cohen 128). In this sense, protracted illness functions as a form of feminine *Bildungsroman*, as the heroine — rather than journey through self-discovery to arrive at a sense of agency and self-actualisation, as in its male counterpart — “comes to” the realisation and acceptance of the limits of her place within a patriarchal system. The heroine who finds herself the subject of a well-appointed marriage at the end of the novel in some sense has reached the end of her own narrative. However, as I will further examine in the following chapter on Richardson’s *Clarissa*, in texts that do not end in recovery and marriage, and particularly in the gothic mode, illness signifies as a rejection of this narrative path, and a refusal of sexual relation. Catherine’s illness disengages her from the conditions of relational identity; she haunts the narrative, and does not inhabit any single locatable or locutable subject position in the text. By becoming ill, Catherine persistently reissues her challenge: “What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here?” (88).

Chapter 4

“I will die first!”:
The Will Towards Death in Richardson’s *Clarissa*

The death, then, of a beautiful woman is,
unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world
~ Edgar Allan Poe, “The Philosophy of
Composition” (1846)

The woman is perfected.
Her dead
Body wears the smile of accomplishment
~ Sylvia Plath, “Edge” (1963)



Thomas Stothard - “Clarissa on her Death Bed” (1784)⁸⁶

Thus far, this study has traced a trajectory of representations of passivity as a form of agency alongside an history of the gothic mode, following a linear chronology from Samuel Richardson to Emily Brontë. Rather than continue this

⁸⁶ “Clarissa; Or, the History of a Young Lady.” Fig. 31. *The Novelist’s Magazine*. Vols. 14-15. London: J Harrison, 1784.

trajectory to the gothic revival in fin-de-siècle literature, this chapter will instead make a recursive return to Richardson, and to *Clarissa*, as a logical end to the larger thematic narrative: fainting, sleeping, illness, death. While literary representations of the dead female body proliferate during the late-nineteenth-century gothic revival, they draw from earlier examples already established in the gothic mode. *Clarissa* remains the principal literary representation of the death of the heroine, forming a “line of development between *Clarissa* [...] and the Gothic,” in which Richardson’s text “plays not a marginal but a central role in opening up new possibilities for the novel” (Ellis 31). As Frederick Frank observes, “without Richardson’s exploratory Gothicizing in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, the whole development of the Gothic [...] might have been hampered and delayed” (Frank 49). Richardson’s novels bookend a thematic trajectory in the gothic mode that is enlarged and embellished in later gothic texts. Specifically, *Pamela* and *Clarissa* exemplify a narrative tradition villain and victim are “brought face to face in a ritual combat destined to end in marriage or death” (Fiedler 62). This Hegelian “ritual combat” produces a double-bind for the gothic heroine, as she must engage her opponent in a battle for selfhood, and either submit herself as (sexual) object to the masculine subject in marriage, or die. The ways in which the heroines negotiate this imperative is what “gothicises” Richardson’s texts. As with the first chapter on fainting, as exemplified in Richardson’s *Pamela*, this chapter will explore *Clarissa* in terms of its proto-gothic representation of the heroine’s will towards death as a form of passive agency.

The critical divide in Richardson scholarship between *Pamela* and *Clarissa* reproduces the double-bind of the gothic heroine. The overwhelming body of Richardson criticism begins and ends with the “truism” that these two novels “represent opposite views of the condition of eighteenth-century English femininity,” marking the differences between Richardson’s centralisation of socio-economic materialism in *Pamela*, and of language and discursivity in *Clarissa* (Sussman 88). For example, Nancy Armstrong and Michael McKeon explore historical constructions of subjectivity and ideology in *Pamela*, while William Warner, Terry Castle, and Terry Eagleton examine language, interpretation, and epistemological discovery in *Clarissa*.⁸⁷ Many critics, like Eagleton, read *Pamela* as a comedic draft of the *Clarissa* tragedy, “a kind of fairy-tale pre-run of *Clarissa*, a fantasy wish fulfilment in which abduction and imprisonment turn out miraculously well” (Eagleton 37). Castle reads *Pamela* less affirmatively and suggests that, despite the miraculously happy ending, Pamela “remains a prisoner within her own text” (Castle, “P/B” 489). Both agree, however, that “*Clarissa* is the greater text because it analyzes, rather than simply exhibits, the controlling mythology. Its heroine achieves through death only a problematic liberation, but it is a liberation nonetheless” (489). However, this critical division between “the married and the unmarried, the empowered and the dead, [and] the material and the imaginative” elides the narrative overlap between the novels

87 See Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), McKeon’s *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987), Warner’s *Reading Clarissa* (1979), Castle’s *Clarissa’s Ciphers* (1982), and Eagleton’s *The Rape of Clarissa* (1982).

(Sussman 90). *Clarissa* can be similarly read as a “fantasy wish fulfilment,” though to obviously different ends. But just because Pamela’s narrative ends “miraculously well” while Clarissa’s ends with her death does not mean that one heroine succeeds where the other fails. Rather, both texts engage similar tropes that expose the instability of their representational apparatus and enable the heroine to meet these ends. Pamela, Clarissa, and the host of gothic heroines who faint, sleep, become ill, and die share a similar form of passive agency, forming a tradition of female subject development characteristic of the gothic mode.

Clarissa is exemplary of English literature’s long-standing preoccupation with the execution of its heroines. Edgar Allan Poe’s suggestion that the death of a beautiful woman is “the most poetical topic in the world” belies a literary tradition of the protracted, attenuated representation of women dying by degrees, enduring the “painful, lingering, and dispiriting decay” suffered by virtuous heroines long since the eighteenth-century’s birth of the novel (*Clarissa* 1332). Clarissa’s “long time a-dying” is unparalleled not for its “poetical topic,” but for the strength of the heroine’s dedication to the cause: Clarissa’s narrative spans fifteen-hundred pages of letters over the course of a single year, in which she declares her sincere wish to die no less than sixty times.⁸⁸ Prior to the rape, Clarissa’s declarations are nearly always expressed as a preference for death over marriage and sexual relation — that she would rather die than marry Mr Solmes, or “any man on earth” (514). After the rape enforces sexual relation, she

⁸⁸ See Appendix.

expresses her preference for death unconditionally, and insists she would not “choose to live” (1356). Richardson reasserts Clarissa’s rejection of sexual relation throughout the text, and rather than submit to its conditions, Clarissa wills herself dead. Despite his contemporary readers’ pleas for a happy ending, Richardson insisted on Clarissa’s death as vehemently as the heroine herself. In his Conclusion to the novel, Richardson, like Poe, argues:

Terror and commiseration leave a *pleasing anguish* in the mind, and fix the audience in such a serious composure of thought as is much more lasting and delightful, than any little transient starts of joy and satisfaction. Accordingly we find that more of our English tragedies have succeeded, in which the favourites of the audience sink under their calamities, than those in which they recover themselves out of them. (Conclusion, *Clarissa* 1497)

While the fates of Ophelia, Juliet, and Desdemona (to name but a few) anticipate the conclusion of Richardson’s tragic novel, the succession of similarly unfortunately heroines are notably “the unhappy daughters of the ill-starred Clarissa” (Praz 113).⁸⁹

⁸⁹ In addition to Shakespeare, Richardson cites Thomas Otway’s *The Orphan* (1680) and *Venice Preserved* (1682), John Dryden’s *All for Love* (1678) and *Oedipus* (1678), Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1688), and several classical texts in order to justify Clarissa’s death to his readership (Conclusion, *Clarissa* 1497). As Richardson asks in the Conclusion: “who that are in earnest in their profession of Christianity but will rather envy than regret the triumphant death of CLARISSA, whose piety from her early childhood; whose diffusive charity; whose steady virtue; whose Christian humility; whose forgiving spirit; whose meekness, whose resignation, HEAVEN *only* could reward?” (1498). Elsewhere, he asks: “If Clarissa think not an early Death an Evil, but on the contrary, after an exemplary Preparation, looks upon it as her consummating Perfection, who shall grudge it her? — Who shall punish her with Life?” (*Selected Letters* 95-96).

Clarissa's tragedy is two-fold: she is raped, and she dies. As the first half of the narrative asymptotically approaches the rape, Lovelace's plot spirals increasingly toward the act without ever seeming to reach it. The centrality of the rape, both as plot-point and in terms of its division of the text in two, functions somewhat paradoxically as a discursive absence or "hole" in the middle of the novel, a narrative abyss into which both Clarissa and the reader fall. Clarissa's rape creates a gap in the narrative that is only later discursively accounted for, much like Pamela's fainting fits and Catherine's illness produce in *Pamela* and *Wuthering Heights*. This account, however, is significantly brief. Clarissa abridges her report of the rape to Miss Howe, and silences herself on the subject: "Let me cut short the rest [...] I will say no more" (*Clarissa* 1011). Similarly, Lovelace's letter to Belford following the rape is infamous in its brevity: "And now, Belford, I can go no farther. The affair is over. Clarissa lives" (883).⁹⁰ To read the rape as narrative climax is to ignore the irony of Lovelace's statement. Clarissa does *not* live, and the majority of the novel is dedicated to her dying. Twentieth-century criticism, however, shifts attention away from Clarissa's death, and focuses instead on the "other" pivotal plot-point in the text: Clarissa's rape. Macpherson

90 It is important to note here the distinction between what Clarissa and Pamela do not (or cannot) express, and what the texts do not represent. The famous absence of the rape scene in *Clarissa* and the marriage consummation in *Pamela* is what D A Miller calls "nonnarratable." In *Narrative and its Discontents*, Miller describes sexual fulfillment as nonnarratable not because it is unspeakable or unrepresentable, but rather because it is unproductive in its narrative capacity: it cannot "generate a story" (D A Miller 4-5). The first half of *Pamela* is consumed with Mr B's attempts to violate Pamela, the second half with Pamela's efforts to be the dutiful wife of her lord and master; in *Clarissa*, the first half of the novel delineates Lovelace's rape-plot, while the second half depicts Clarissa's demise. In both cases, the consummation/rape divides these sections, ending one story and beginning another, while the actual consummation/rape itself is limited in its narrative scope.

notes that the critical “preoccupation with the rape of Clarissa has meant that the novel’s obsessive return to the specter [*sic*] of murder has been almost entirely overlooked” (Macpherson, *Harm* 60). This oversight creates its own narrative of Clarissa’s death as incidental to the rape, which suggests that her death is a consequence or effect of the rape, rather than itself the subject of the text. *Clarissa* has become a story “about” rape. The narrative of Clarissa’s death, whether the result of her rape by Lovelace, the hand of a merciful God, or the authorial stroke of Richardson’s pen, is, in modern readings, eclipsed by a narrative of sexual violence. This chapter will redirect critical focus from Clarissa’s rape to her will to die, and argue that, in the representational context of the gothic mode, Clarissa’s will towards death is a form of passive agency, and her death itself an embodied assertion of her subjectivity. It is less Clarissa’s dead body, and rather her will towards stillness and immobility — towards death as a state of radical passivity — that engages this agency, and the ultimate expression of a subjectivity that cannot be subdued into sexual relation.

Summaries of the novel treat Clarissa’s rape and death with varying stances on culpability and causality. Critics like Donaldson rather cavalierly describe *Clarissa* as “a novel about a woman who is abducted, drugged, and raped by a man with whom she is more than half in love; who afterwards resolutely declares that she will not marry her seducer, and that in all essential ways she is untouched and unchanged by what has happened to her; but who lapses none the less into an illness from which she eventually dies” (Donaldson

57). Others, such as Eagleton, provide more affirmative readings of *Clarissa* as “the story of a young woman of outstanding kindness, virtue and intelligence who is made to suffer under a violently oppressive family, is tricked away from home by a notorious sexual predator, deceived, imprisoned, persecuted, drugged and raped, and finally impelled to her death” (Eagleton 63-64). While the attitudes and tones of the critics differ, they provide similar narrative trajectories: Clarissa is mistreated, persecuted, and violated; subsequently, she dies. Clarissa “lapses” into illness and is “impelled to her death,” as if she is merely an object of narrative manipulation. But this trajectory is perhaps too linear. It confines Clarissa within a narrative of violence, with death as its inevitable conclusion. Instead, this chapter will argue that *Clarissa* is the story of a young woman who would rather die than marry, or otherwise stand in sexual relation, and is good to her word. Clarissa’s repeated wish to die begins as preference to an unwanted suitor, strengthens in her aversion to marriage itself, becomes desperate as the threat of sexual violation increases, and then joyous as her end draws nigh. Throughout the *entire* novel, Clarissa rejects the conditions of sexual relation, and insists on an independence that proves inconsistent with the social and familial structures that struggle to contain her. The second half of the novel, if read as crescendo rather than diminuendo, de-emphasizes the rape and continues Clarissa’s navigation away from sexual relation towards death. Her declarations are willful, rather than prescient: *Clarissa/Clarissa* does not end with a whimper. Instead, she steadfastly maintains her preference for death throughout the text,

and will not be subdued into sexual objectivity by marriage or rape. Unlike her tragic predecessors, Clarissa is not sacrificed to the exigencies of the narrative, but rather wills her death from its outset. Her death is not incidental to the plot: it is the plot.

Clarissa and the Gothic Mode

Richardson's novel is an extended swan-song echoed by future (and particularly, gothic) heroines whose test of virtue is trial by death. Once again, he foregrounds the gothic formula of virtue in distress in his representation of the heroine's struggle between marriage and death, and her attempt to negotiate the irreconcilability of female subjectivity with the violent imperative of sexual relation. Clarissa repeatedly claims throughout the text that she would prefer death to both marriage and dishonour. Like Pamela, who avers that "to rob a Person of her Virtue, is worse than cutting her Throat" (*Pamela* 110), Clarissa declares that "my honour is dearer to me than my life" (*Clarissa* 725). For Clarissa, however, death is preferable not only to dishonour, but to any sexual relation, including marriage.⁹¹ Clarissa is vehement in her opposition to marriage, and contends that she cannot abide the idea of "living *with*, and living *for*, a man," particularly one whom she despises (190, original emphasis). Clarissa's prepositional emphases draw attention to the subjugation of the woman in

⁹¹ Both Clarissa and Lovelace envision the prospect of marriage as the Sword of Damocles suspended above them, representing an ever-present threat to their independence. Clarissa remarks, "What an uneasy state of suspense! — when a naked sword, too, seems hanging over one's head!" (244), while Lovelace tells Belford that, "at present, by a single hair, hangs over my head the matrimonial sword" (1040).

conditions of sexual relation, where her life and identity are contingent upon and subordinate to the man. She rejects these conditions, and insists: "I had rather not marry at all" (94). While she often expresses her preference in relation to Mr Solmes, a man she detests but her family insists she marry, she also opposes the idea of marriage itself. Solmes's is not the first proposal she refuses, and she insists that she would "choose to be wedded to my shroud than to any man on earth" (561).⁹² For Clarissa, death is the desired alternative to the lifelong misery of the marital state, and she vows to cut short that life should she be subject to its conditions.

As the marriage imperative strengthens and the date of her forced nuptials draws closer, Clarissa expresses her refusal in increasingly dire terms. She insists, for example, that she would prefer "the cruellest death" (*Clarissa* 305, 992), would rather "be buried alive" (101, 142), and "will even consent to enter into the awful vault of my ancestors, and to have that bricked up upon me, than consent to be miserable for life" (305).⁹³ When Arabella later writes to inform Clarissa of her father's curse, she indicates that he has erased all memory of her by banishing both her person and her likeness from sight. She tells Clarissa:

"Your drawings and your pieces are all taken down, as is also your own whole-

92 Clarissa also rejects marriage offers from Mr Symmes and Mr Mullins, as well as Mr Wyerley (56), who renews his addresses following the rape, after Clarissa escapes from Lovelace (1267).

93 Clarissa's references to live burial and premature interment recall archaic forms of punishment of women who surrendered their virginity before marriage. As Scott notes, "burying alive as a specific method of execution seems to have been frequently practised. According to Plutarch, the loss of her virginity by a maid was punished in this way" (Scott 217). Agnes and Antonia are similarly tortured in *The Monk*. After becoming pregnant by Raymond, Agnes is imprisoned by the evil Prioress in the Sepulchre of St Clare, where she gives birth to a stillborn child. Ambrosio imprisons Antonia in the catacombs beneath the monastery, where he rapes and kills her.

length picture in the Vandyke taste [...] they are taken down and thrown into your closet, which will be nailed up as if it were not a part of the house; there to perish together: for who can bear to see them?" (509).⁹⁴ Clarissa's portrait and artworks become relics, secreted within a chamber closet and removed from view, as if in realisation or literalisation of Clarissa's preference for live burial and entombment within the vault of her ancestors, or in anticipation of her death and enclosure within her own coffin.

Clarissa's contention that live burial and death are preferable to marriage is similarly made manifest in her dreams. She writes to Anna of a nightmare in which she is seized by Lovelace, who "carried me into a churchyard; and there, notwithstanding all my prayers and tears, and protestations of innocence, stabbed me to the heart, and then tumbled me into a deep grave ready dug, among two or three half-dissolved carcasses; throwing in the dirt and earth upon me with his hands, and trampling it down with his feet" (*Clarissa* 342-343). The penetrative violence and live burial Clarissa suffers in this dream recall her preference for entombment over dishonour, but also foreshadow her eventual fate. Instead of being carried to a church for a forced marriage ceremony, Lovelace carries Clarissa from her family home to a brothel, where he rapes her in the company of other women he has ruined, the "half-dissolved carcasses" of feminine virtue. Lovelace continues to persecute or "trample on" Clarissa despite

⁹⁴ Richardson's textual gloss and personal correspondences attribute this portrait to Joseph Highmore, whose "own imagination was his principal guide; and he has given it great intelligence, sweetness and dignity" (*Clarissa* 509a, *Correspondence* 4.255). If this painting did exist, it has since been lost.

her weakening constitution, until death “awakens” her from the nightmare.

Lovelace re-envisioned the violence of Clarissa’s nightmare and the open grave into which she falls in a hunting metaphor. He tells Belford: “I love, when I dig a pit, to have my prey tumble in with secure feet and open eyes; then a man can look down upon her, with an O-ho, charmer, how came you there?” (*Clarissa* 465). Lovelace’s metaphor specularises the woman he entraps, and offers her up as an eroticised object of his gaze. As Laura Hinton notes, “at the bottom of Lovelace’s ‘pit’ is a subjugated female body,” which is subject to objectification, exploitation, and violation (Hinton 293). Lovelace’s gaze and his fetishisation of the helpless, doomed woman at the bottom of his pit recalls his tendency to conceive of Clarissa in deathly terms. He describes to Belford the ghostly translucence of Clarissa’s “wax-like flesh (for, after all, flesh and blood I think she is!) [...] I never in my life beheld a skin so *illustriously* fair [...] this lady is alive, all glowing, all charming flesh and blood, yet so clear, that every meandering vein is to be seen in all the lovely parts of her which custom permits to be visible” (399). Clarissa’s complexion, even in the bloom of life, takes on the inanimate perfection of a wax figure, and the spectral aspect of death. However, Clarissa later undermines Lovelace’s efforts to ensnare her and subject her to his violent gaze by asserting herself as subject precisely in terms of life and death. As Lovelace again relates to Belford, Clarissa resists his predatory grasp, and demands: “Why (struggling) need you hold me down thus? [...] *Why do you gaze upon me so?* [...] Let me go, said she: I am but a woman — but a weak woman —

but my life is in my own power, though my person is not — I will not be thus constrained” (938, original emphasis). Clarissa challenges the authority of Lovelace’s gaze, and contradicts his assumption that he can subdue her by asserting control over her body. Clarissa reminds him, and the reader, that she retains willful control over her life and death, and will not be subdued.

Lovelace’s vision of Clarissa as his prey caught in a pit not only literalises his plot to entrap her, but also foreshadows his own demise and fall from social grace. As if in anticipation of his fate, Lovelace later dreams of being plunged into a pit of his own. In this dream, Lovelace attempts to embrace Clarissa, but an angel descends from the ceiling and takes hold of her. The ceiling opens to reveal a choir of angels, exulting:

Welcome, welcome, welcome! and, encircling my charmer,
 ascended with her to the region of seraphims; and instantly, the
 opening ceiling closing, I lost sight of *her*, and of the *bright form*
 together, and found wrapped in my arms her azure robe (all stuck
 with with stars of embossed silver), which I had caught hold of in
 hopes of detaining her; but was all that was left me of my beloved
 Miss Harlowe. (1218)⁹⁵

Lovelace then finds himself suffering the opposite fate, when, “the floor sinking

95 Lovelace’s dream is the source of Lorenzo’s in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (see Chapter 2 n46). After his introduction to Antonia, Lorenzo falls asleep at the church and dreams of their union. The ceremony is interrupted by a demonic figure, and as the church starts to crumble, Lorenzo tries to save Antonia from the creature attempting to drag her into the pits of hell. Bathed in a heavenly light, the ethereal Antonia manages to escape the grasps of both the monster and Lorenzo, and ascends to heaven, leaving Lorenzo holding only her robe (Lewis 28).

under *me*, as the ceiling had opened for *her*, I dropped into a hole more frightful than that of Elden and tumbling over and over down it, without view of a bottom, I awakened in a panic" (1218).⁹⁶ Lovelace's nightmare inverts Clarissa's and plunges him into a black abyss, from which he awakens in torment.

The prophetic nature and gothic dimensions of these dreamscapes anticipate the claustrophobic tropes of entombment and live burial popularised in later gothic fiction. In the gothic mode, this nightmarish claustrophobia is often the reality of the text, and the heroine must struggle to maintain a lucid subjectivity as this reality encloses upon her, destabilising any sense or measure of time and space and self. The increasingly restricted space through which Clarissa moves anticipates the more literal gothic enclosures of later novels. As Ellis suggests, the gothic "landscape of imprisoning spaces" and the "idea that confinement is the lot of fallen creatures and that escape can lead only to a more intense confinement goes back to *Clarissa*" (Ellis 68). As Lovelace's plots thicken and Clarissa's mobility grows steadily more limited, Clarissa's narrative journey transports her "from the realm of the anxiety dream to the realm of nightmare," and the novel's topography spirals inwards (Castle, *Ciphers* 83). Clarissa moves from Harlowe Place to the Widow Sorling's house to Sinclair's apparent "boarding house" on the fictional Dover Street; she escapes briefly to Mrs Moore's at Hampstead, only to return to Sinclair's "vile house," which she comes to realise is a brothel; after the rape, she escapes to the Smith residence, only to be

⁹⁶ The "Elden Hole" to which Lovelace refers is a deep pit in the Peak District of northern Derbyshire, reputed to be fathomless (Brewer).

arrested and imprisoned in a holding chamber, from which she returns to Smith's only to die. This journey through increasingly confined and contrived locations disrupts what Castle calls the novel's "cartographic code of meaning: [Lovelace's] artifices rob the map of its conventional signifying function," rendering Clarissa lost in a gothic labyrinth of misidentified and misleading places (101).

Richardson's gothic tropes introduce to the narrative an uncertainty principle: Clarissa's location and sense of self are at constant odds, as she is never simultaneously sure of who or where she is at any given time.⁹⁷

As Clarissa attempts to navigate this uncertainty, she grows suspicious not only of Lovelace's explanations, but of her own interpretative map. She writes to Anna that she "must rely so much upon my own knowledge of the right path! — little apprehending that an *ignis fatuus* with its false fires (and I had heard enough of such) would arise to mislead me! — And now, in the midst of fens and quagmires, it plays around me and around me, throwing me back again, whenever I think myself on the right track" (*Clarissa* 566). Clarissa feels both lost and trapped, caught in a swampy maze, uncertain of where she is or how to find her way out again. Lovelace's contrivances defamiliarise Clarissa's surroundings, such that she knows not where she is or where to go, who to trust, or even who is whom. Like Mr B in *Pamela*, Lovelace effectively traps Clarissa in a world of his own creation, where he is not only the maker of false maps, but, according to his

⁹⁷ According to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle in quantum mechanics, the exact location and momentum of a particle cannot be simultaneously known. The more precisely the particle's position can be determined, the less precisely its momentum can be measured, and vice versa.

own Adamic law, the “great name-father” as well (569). He drives Clarissa through a city of his own design, peopled with fictional and falsely-named characters. The “boarding house” madam Mrs Sinclair “has no other” name than that which Lovelace gives her (473); Lovelace’s accomplice Patrick MacDonald is introduced to Clarissa as “Captain Tomlinson,” who assures Lovelace that he is “dough in your hands, to be moulded into what shape you please” (838); Mrs Fretchville, whose house Lovelace promises to let for Clarissa, does not exist; and the Lady Betty and Miss Montague he introduces as his relations are in fact Johanetta Golding and Bab Wallis, women under Lovelace’s influence and of questionable virtue. Lovelace so thoroughly entrenches Clarissa within the confines of this world that she cannot trust her own eyes or ears or sense of direction. The entire city transforms under Lovelace’s direction into a gothic fun-house, full of false doors, circular hallways, stairwells to nowhere, and grotesque figures masquerading as gentlefolk.

The world Lovelace creates is a gothic microcosm of the community to which Clarissa once belonged, but from which she was exiled by her family and withheld by Lovelace’s contrivances. The darkness, surprise, and terror Lovelace tells Belford “*must* be necessary to the ultimate trial of this charming creature” cast long shadows over an uncanny world of which Clarissa is wary (*Clarissa* 642). Though Lovelace’s deception is, for a time, successful, Clarissa is conscious of the dangers of the gothic stronghold. While still confined to her chamber at her family home, for example, Clarissa resists being sent to her Uncle Harlowe’s

estate because “his moat, with his bridge threatened to be drawn up, and perhaps the chapel terrify me beyond expression” (227). The estate bears striking resemblance to the crumbling castles and isolated mansions in which heroines are imprisoned in later gothic texts, and Clarissa’s fear of being enclosed therein helps incite her desire to escape. Clarissa’s subsequent removal to Sinclair’s brothel further encroaches upon her limited mobility, narrowing the confines of the gothic mansion to a London townhouse. Both estates function as architectural reifications of Clarissa’s psychological trauma: as Lovelace tells Belford, “I was all her fear, I found; and this house her terror” (882). Clarissa repeatedly demands to be released from “this hated house,” as if the brothel itself, and not merely its inhabitants, was responsible for her confinement. Sinclair’s response literalises this implication, as she pointedly asks: “And what, pray, madam, has *this house* done to you?” (882, original emphasis). Sinclair’s emphasis suggests that, from Clarissa’s perspective, Lovelace, Sinclair, and the brothel are all culpable. Lovelace’s rape of Clarissa is possible precisely because of the collusion between the house’s occupants and their efforts to imprison Clarissa within it. Lovelace coerces the rest of the household to help him effect his rape-plot, and together they contrive to rob Clarissa of her virginity.

The conspiracy between Lovelace and Sinclair imbues the text with an overwhelming sense of impending sexual violence, generating the terror and threat characteristic of later gothic novels. Clarissa’s subsequent recollection of the rape scene is similarly gothic in its invocation of poisons and potions,

mysterious accomplices, darkness and disorientation, lapses in and out of consciousness, and a malevolent villain orchestrating the crime. She recalls:

I grew worse and worse in my head; now stupid, now raving, now senseless. The vilest of vile women was brought to frighten me. Never was there so horrible a creature as she [...] I was tricked and deluded by blacker hearts of my own sex [...] I was so senseless that I dare not aver that the horrid creatures of the house were personally aiding and abetting: but some visionary remembrances I have of female figures flitting, as I may say, before my sight; the wretched woman's particularly. (1011)⁹⁸

There are almost supernatural elements to Clarissa's memory of the experience.

As she later writes to Anna, though she "never had any faith in the stories that go current among country girls, of spectres, familiars, and demons [...] I see not any other way to account for this wretch's successful villainy, and for his means of working up his specious delusions, but by supposing (if he be not the devil himself), that he has a familiar constantly at his elbow" (1014). The diabolical

⁹⁸ The gothic tropes in this scene extend well into the genre's revival at the end of the nineteenth century. In Stoker's *Dracula* (1898), for example, Jonathan Harker, in a dream-like state, is preyed upon by the Count's female accessories: "I thought at the time that I must be dreaming when I saw them [...] There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear" (Stoker 68-69). As the women kiss and feed upon Harker, the Count enters and interrupts them, a masculine presence disrupting the feminine, after which "The women closed round, whilst I was aghast with horror: but as I looked they disappeared [...] I could see outside the dim, shadowy forms for a moment before they entirely faded away" (71). In his diary, Harker laments being alone in the castle with "those awful women," then corrects himself: "Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the Pit" (85). Not only does Harker's rejection of the demon women's femininity mirror Clarissa's doubt as to Mrs Sinclair's gender (*Clarissa* 894), the reference to the Pit recalls the pit into which Clarissa dreams she falls among half-decayed carcasses (242-243), and the pit in which Lovelace imagines he traps his prey (465).

nature of Clarissa's recollection anticipates the supernatural aspects of the gothic canon. But unlike Radcliffe's heroines, who are terrified of the ghosts their imaginations manufacture when fuelled by the very real threat of masculine violence, the spectres Clarissa remembers are in fact "Mother" Sinclair and her "daughters," who are responsible for her disorientation. In Clarissa's waking nightmare, Sinclair becomes a demonic mother who poisons her with opiate-infused "London milk" in an effort to aid Lovelace (1008). The opiates disable Clarissa's capacity for reason and physical resistance, just as the enchanted myrtle Matilda gives Ambrosio in *The Monk* plunges Antonia into a death-like slumber so he can rape her while she sleeps (Lewis 278). Sinclair's collusion with Lovelace is all the more terrifying for its pitting of woman against woman in a context of patriarchal oppression, as it elides any potential for a united front against the oppressors.

Clarissa remains incredulous that a woman could so willingly sacrifice a member of her own sex, prompting Judith Wilt to suggest that the lesson Clarissa must ultimately learn is that "the real enemy of woman is woman" (Wilt 27). Sinclair's complicity in the rape recalls Lovelace's earlier assertion to Belford that "there have been more girls ruined [...] by their own sex [...] than *directly* by the attempts and delusions of men" (*Clarissa* 865).⁹⁹ Lovelace calls attention to the precariousness of feminine virtue, and the social conventions that condemn

⁹⁹ Pamela is similarly tormented at Lincolnshire by the odious housekeeper Mrs Jewkes, who, upon their first meeting, "terrify'd" Pamela "out of my Wits" (*Pamela* 107). Like Sinclair, Mrs Jewkes encourages and enables Mr B's advances; the "vile Procuress" goes so far as to hold Pamela's arm to keep her from defending herself from one of Mr B's attempts to rape her (203).

women as guilty by association, should they be closely acquainted with women whose reputations are tarnished. Sinclair's treachery amounts to a betrayal of femininity, not just in aiding Lovelace's violation of Clarissa, but by engaging in behaviour deemed uncharacteristic and unbecoming of her gender. Belford is particularly appalled by Sinclair, and laments "the power of that villainess [...] whose *trade* it is to break the resisting spirit, and utterly to ruin the heart unpractised in evil" (714, original emphasis). According to Alison Conway, "Even worse than the libertine, the narrative repeatedly suggests, is the bawd, whose violence expands upon the rake's by turning into a 'trade' men's propensity to act violently towards women" (Conway 142). However, while Conway contends that these descriptions belie Richardson's puritanical prejudice against prostitution, they also work within the discursive framework of the text to masculinise further the violence against Clarissa. Clarissa explicitly calls Sinclair's gender into question, begging Lovelace not to allow Sinclair to "bluster up with her worse than mannish airs to me again! Oh, she is a frightful woman! If she be a woman!" (*Clarissa* 894). By destabilising Sinclair's gender, Clarissa distances herself and other women from Sinclair's immorality and depravity, which she associates with Lovelace, and with a masculine capacity for sexual violence more generally.

Moreover, just as Clarissa's opiate-induced delirium transforms Sinclair into Lovelace's demonic familiar, Lovelace zoomorphises the madam as monstrous livestock. As Lovelace recounts to Belford:

The old dragon straddled up to her, with her arms kemboed

again, her eyebrows erect, like the bristles upon a hog's back, and, scowling over her shortened nose, more than half hid her ferret eyes. Her mouth was distorted. She pouted her blubber-lips, as if to bellow up wind and sputter into her horse-nostrils; and her chin was curdled, and more than usually prominent with passion.

(*Clarissa* 883)¹⁰⁰

Sinclair is gothic in her monstrosity; her humanity and femininity are consistently undercut with references to grotesque animals, fictional monsters, and tyrannical masculinity.¹⁰¹ The representation of Sinclair as demonic, animalistic, and masculine recalls Pamela's hysterical misrecognition of three cows as angry bulls symbolising her persecutors (*Pamela* 153); in both cases, the heroine's terror of sexual violation transforms bovine femininity into predatory masculinity. Richardson represents the heroines as apprehending any threat to their person as sexual and the perpetrators as masculine, distancing even malevolent female characters from a capacity for violence, and redirecting

100 Compare Lovelace's description of Sinclair with Belford's account of her death: "Behold her then, spreading the whole tumbled bed with her huge quaggy carcase: her mill-post arms held up, her broad hands clenched with violence; her big eyes goggling and flaming-red as we may suppose those of a salamander; her matted grizzly hair made irreverend by her wickedness (her clouted head-dress being half off) spread about her fat ears and brawny neck; her livid lips parched, and working violently; her broad chin in convulsive motion; her wide mouth by reason of the contraction of her forehead (which seemed to be half-lost in its own frightful furrows) splitting her face, as it were, into two parts; and her huge tongue hideously rolling in it; heaving, puffing as if for breath, her bellows-shaped and various-coloured breasts ascending by turns to her chin and descending out of sight with the violence of her gaspings" (1388).

101 The various descriptions of Sinclair make reference to other classical and contemporary incarnations of monstrous femininity, including Virgil's Harpies and Ursula the pig-woman in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). There are also numerous allusions in these descriptions to Jonathan Swift, such as the Yahoos and giant Maids of Honour in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and the scatological misogyny of "The Lady's Dressing Room" (1732). For further comparisons, see Jocelyn Harris's article "Grotesque, Classical and Pornographic Bodies in *Clarissa*" (1996).

narrative accountability back onto the male characters.

As Anna Howe reminds both Clarissa and the reader, the women who collude with Lovelace to dishonour her were themselves “ruined” by masculine arts — though Eve did eat the apple, ’twas a he-creature who tempted her. Anna assures Clarissa that though the deeds of a “wicked man” reveal “there are still wickeder women [...] see what a guilty commerce with the devils of your sex will bring those to, whose morals ye have ruined! — for these women were once innocent: it was *man* that made them otherwise” (*Clarissa* 1454). Specifically, that man was Lovelace. Richardson critics have made much of Lovelace the Seducer, not only in his diabolical treatment of Clarissa, but in his Satanic (Miltonic) seduction of the reader. There is some critical tendency to read Lovelace as Richardson’s protagonist, and to sympathize with his efforts to seduce Clarissa.¹⁰² Distinguishing between rape and representation in literary criticism and feminist theory is fundamentally problematic, and the critical canon has been as historically divided between “camp Lovelace” and “camp Clarissa” as the Richardson canon is between *Clarissa* and *Pamela*. Fiedler, for example, calls Lovelace “a Machiavelli of the boudoir [...] aristocrat[ic], handsome, courageous,” and so “endowed with all the charms of a disappearing class” that Richardson’s “hero-villain won the hearts of lady readers more completely than

¹⁰²Contemporary critic James Beattie warned that “when a character like Richardson’s Lovelace, whom the reader ought to abominate for his crimes, is adorned with youth, beauty, eloquence, wit, and every other intellectual and bodily accomplishment, it is to be feared, that thoughtless young men may be tempted to imitate, even while they disapprove, him. Nor is it sufficient apology to say, that he is punished in the end” (Beattie 569).

he could ever win Clarissa's" (Fiedler 63). Fiedler's interpretation of the novel's reception by female readers is reproduced by William Warner, who is similarly infatuated. Warner's *Reading Clarissa* is alarmingly sympathetic with the rapist. He contends that rape is "the most cogent response to Clarissa's fictional projection of herself as a whole unified body," and the "next logical step in the conflict between Clarissa and Lovelace," as if the narrative trajectory is necessarily, violently linear (Warner, *Reading* 49). Warner assumes that, by raping Clarissa, Lovelace disrupts Clarissa's projection of her self as whole — that he insinuates himself into a "hole" in Clarissa's subjectivity, and in filling it, satisfies the conditions of the narrative. But this presupposes a rape-narrative from the outset, and elides the larger narrative frame: Clarissa's death.

Will and Consent

Lovelace's rape of Clarissa is often read as the climax of the text, which problematically casts the rape not only as narrative apex, but also as interpretive assuagement and exegesis. Warner, for example, perceives rape as epistemological confirmation, a "moment of knowing" in which Clarissa will finally be "undressed, seen, penetrated, and known. These are activities which engage every reader, like Lovelace, who wishes to win authority for his interpretation. He 'lays bare' the text, 'sees' its significance, 'penetrates' to its real meaning, and thus 'knows' it" (Warner, *Reading* 50). In this affirmative identification with Lovelace, Warner seems to interpolate every reader as

masculine, and also as rapist. However, this disturbingly violent treatment of Clarissa/*Clarissa* reveals the limits of his interpretation, because Clarissa's rape does not solve Lovelace's epistemological crisis. Lovelace categorically does not, and *cannot* "know" Clarissa, save in the biblical sense of the word. Her consent, her will, and her self are refused to him, and to any reader who presumes to know *Clarissa* in these terms. In order for Lovelace to know Clarissa and subjugate her through sexual relation, he must subdue her will or obtain her consent. It is Clarissa's conscious self, her subjectivity, that Lovelace desires to subdue, rather than merely her body. Following the rape, he immediately regrets that he does not, and ultimately discovers that, in fact, he cannot conquer her will. Like Pamela, who comforts herself with the knowledge that, in the event Mr B succeeds in his attempts to rape her, "my Will bore no part in my violation," Clarissa's will remains steadfast and inviolate (*Pamela* 191). Clarissa's subjectivity proves inviolable, and Lovelace is, in effect, impotent. The rape thus proves no victory at all, for though Lovelace succeeds in penetrating her body, Clarissa's mind — her will — is untouched. Without her active participation in the event, even as the resisting victim, Lovelace cannot claim mastery over Clarissa; he cannot "know" her.

The vigilance of Clarissa's chastity, and her repeated insistence that she would rather die than sacrifice it to either husband or rake, drives Lovelace to seemingly absurd lengths in his plots to entrap her. Lovelace thinks Clarissa "a *vixen* in her virtue," and seeks to subdue her by any means necessary (*Clarissa*

1382). Though he begins with minor deceptions and forgeries, Lovelace must eventually resort to counterfeiting documents, impersonation, and other increasingly complex stratagems in his trial of her virtue, including inducing her unconsciousness with opiates. Clarissa's will remains so unmoved that she must be sedated in order for Lovelace to perform the rape. Lovelace acknowledges that, without making use of "his somniferous wand" and the opiates provided by Mrs Sinclair, "All the princes of the air, or beneath it, joining with me, could never have subdued her while she had her senses" (899).¹⁰³ Lovelace's admission is testament to Clarissa's inviolable will, as that which differentiates what Toni Bowers describes as the distinction between courtship, seduction, and rape, and the conditions of consent, complicity, and resistance that distinguish them (Bowers, "Representing" 141). While Clarissa is conscious and sensible, Lovelace cannot hope to obtain the consent he desires, nor can he succeed in seducing her, which would imply her consent by collusion or capitulation. Lovelace imagines that by drugging Clarissa, silencing any verbal assertion of her will, and raping her while she is unconscious, he can later force her consciously to acquiesce to him and his conditions of sexual relation, annihilating her subjectivity by subjugating it to his own, and thereby becoming master of her person.

Unlike Pamela, Ellena, and Antonia, whose unconscious states disengage them from masculine violence, Clarissa's unconsciousness is the only way

¹⁰³The opiates were, as previously mentioned, implemented by Sinclair: a "contrivance I never had occasion for before, and had not thought of now if Mrs Sinclair had not proposed it to me: to whom I left the management of it: and I have done nothing but curse her ever since" (887).

Lovelace can enforce his “victory.” The passive conditions explored in the preceding chapters do not work for Clarissa because, within Richardson’s representative framework, Lovelace is already aware of the strategic potential of these devices. Fainting protects Pamela from rape because it provides evidence of her virtue, affirming her subjectivity. When Mr B apprehends this subjectivity, he is unwilling and unable to perform. As Lovelace warns Clarissa early on, “fainting will not save you” (*Clarissa* 378); it cannot, because Lovelace already apprehends Clarissa’s subjectivity, which is what he ultimately seeks to subdue. Similarly, sleep does not afford Clarissa refuge because Lovelace already conceives of sleep as an opportunity for men to prey upon women’s unconscious vulnerability. He suggests to Mr Hickman that “ladies are very shy of trusting themselves with the modestest of our sex, when they are disposed to sleep; and why so, if they did not *expect* that advantages would be taken of them at such times” (1094). Sickness is similarly ineffectual; as Clarissa’s cousin Dolly Horton points out in an early letter, “illness can be no pretence to save you” (365), and Lovelace is suspicious of the authenticity of Clarissa’s illness almost until the moment of her death. Moreover, as this chapter will later demonstrate, when Clarissa becomes sick, it signifies less as an invocation of illness, as with Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, than as a means of hastening her death, as she wills from the beginning. Clarissa’s unconsciousness thus does not protect her from the physical rape itself, but by compromising her capacity for verbal and physical resistance, Lovelace finds his efforts to subdue her unsuccessful.

In the gothic mode, for the villain to rape the heroine “successfully,” she must be awake and fully conscious, actively resisting and thereby participating in her violation. This is why Ambrosio does not rape Antonia while she is asleep, and why Lovelace is convinced he has failed to subdue Clarissa. Lovelace becomes obsessed with Clarissa’s unconscious state having compromised the act itself, rendering it unacted or incomplete, and thereby negating his apparent victory. After the rape, Lovelace wonders “why say I, *completed?* when the *will*, the *consent*, is wanting” — though “the affair is over,” without Clarissa’s consent, it remains incomplete (*Clarissa* 888). Lovelace confesses to Belford he has “nothing to boast of as to her will,” and admits that “I had rather, methinks, she should have retained all her active powers, though I had suffered by her nails and her teeth, than that she should be sunk into such a state of absolute — insensibility (shall I call it?)” (886). Lovelace laments that Clarissa’s “insensibility has made me but a thief to my own joys,” which would derive not only from Clarissa’s physical resistance and opposition, but from Lovelace’s own pleasure and satisfaction in subduing her (887).¹⁰⁴ The absence of Clarissa’s “active powers” suggests an absence of the self, as if Lovelace does not rape the complete or “whole unified body” that Warner describes, but rather an uninhabited frame (Warner, *Reading* 49). By removing Clarissa’s capacity to resist, Lovelace renders her body lifeless, and discovers that mastery over this body does not amount to

¹⁰⁴In Lewis’s *The Monk*, Ambrosio refrains from raping Antonia while she is unconscious because of the pleasure he derives from her “alarm, her evident disgust, and incessant opposition,” which serve to “inflame the Monk’s desires” (Lewis 383).

overpowering she who inhabits it.

Clarissa's unconsciousness not only confirms her innocence by ensuring that she lacks any capacity for submission or consent, but also thwarts Lovelace's attempt to "awaken the *woman* in her" (*Clarissa* 431), and thereby prove that "every woman is a rake in her heart" (441).¹⁰⁵ As Wilt notes, his motive is not seduction but revenge: "not generalized revenge against 'the sex' only, but revenge upon Clarissa for refusing to be one of the sex" (Wilt 25). Lovelace's entire plot to subdue Clarissa (rather than merely dishonour her) is predicated on his deep-seated misogyny, and the rape of Clarissa is, in part, an act of vengeance against "this cursed partial sex (I hate 'em all — by my soul, I hate 'em all!)" (1302). Lovelace rapes Clarissa to sacrifice the virtue that sets her apart from other women; by proving Clarissa is just a(nother) woman, Lovelace will reduce her from subject to object, one of the "cursed partial sex" who exist only to arouse his pleasure and disdain.¹⁰⁶ Lovelace fails to achieve his ends, however, because the rape does not subdue Clarissa's will, which renders her "absolutely invincible" (907) — impenetrable, unappropriable, and utterly resistant to possession and subjugation through sexual relation.

Lovelace becomes increasingly preoccupied with his failure to subdue

¹⁰⁵Lovelace makes reference to Alexander Pope's "Epistle to a Lady" (1743), in which the speaker asserts that "every woman is at heart a rake" (Pope 216).

¹⁰⁶Similarly, the Vicomte de Valmont in Choderlos de Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* (1782) deems the pious and faithful Mme de Tourvel the only "enemy worthy of" his seduction, and he endeavours to "sacrifice" her to her virtue (Laclos 22). Valmont, like Lovelace, imagines he can persuade Mme de Tourvel willingly to compromise the virtue for which she is famous: "let her give herself to me, but let her struggle with herself; may she, without having the strength to conquer, have the strength to resist; may she savour at leisure the feeling of her weakness and be obliged to admit her defeat [...] This project is sublime, is it not?" (Laclos 54).

Clarissa. He cannot claim victory because, as he emphatically laments, "*There's no triumph over the will in force!*" (*Clarissa* 879). Clarissa herself points out his inefficacy, his failed masculinity, by suggesting that he "had not the heart to attempt it, till my senses were made the previous sacrifice" (899). After the rape, Lovelace struggles to gather evidence, proof, testimony of the affair — any form of consent that would indicate a weakness of will and thereby compensate for Clarissa's absence from the event. Frances Ferguson describes Lovelace's obsession with consent as a need to "belie Clarissa's resistance and establish she was there," and argues that this is why Lovelace continually conflates the rape with other events in which Clarissa consciously (though unwillingly) participated, such as their elopement and cohabitation (Ferguson 105). Lovelace's crisis also prompts him to convince Clarissa they are, in fact, married. Immediately following the rape, Lovelace "would at first have persuaded her, and offered to call witnesses to the truth of it, that we were actually married," and he later persists in his efforts to marry Clarissa for real (*Clarissa* 889, cf: 896). Lovelace imagines that marriage after the fact would redress his previous crimes, and in effect, absolve him of them, as legal marriage would retroactively grant Clarissa's consent (or rather, Lovelace's "right" to her body) and essentially undo the rape. Marriage would not only exonerate Lovelace, but grant him victory, as Clarissa's irrevocable consent would make her "*if once subdued be always subdued*" (430, original emphasis). By failing to subdue Clarissa's will through rape, however, Lovelace realises he has failed to subdue her at all.

Lovelace's dissatisfaction with Clarissa's insensibility and his obsessive compulsion to provide evidence of her participation speaks to the strength of her will, both before and after she is raped. Clarissa's will, as both testament and intention, are born of the larger narrative drive towards her death. Donaldson notes that *will* "is a word of the greatest lexical complexity in the novel, ranging widely in its senses to include volition, consent, power of choice, intellectual sturdiness, willfulness, and lust [...] The word operates throughout as a central, complex pun, drawing together many of the novel's diverse yet related moral preoccupations" (Donaldson 68). Most significantly, the word signifies simultaneously as Clarissa's intention (her words and actions, and its exertion over her body) and as testament (the legal document, as well as the text she engages Belford to assemble). In the first sense, it enables Clarissa to assure herself (and by extension, enables Richardson to assure the reader) that she is and was in no way complicit in Lovelace's designs. The second sense confirms the first, and ensures the triumph of her death through the triumph of her will. Richardson and the text are clear that, at least in the first sense, Clarissa's will is inviolate and inviolable: Lovelace tells Belford that Clarissa's "will is unviolated [...] That her will is not to be corrupted, that her mind is not to be debased, she has hitherto unquestionably proved" (*Clarissa* 916); Clarissa too insists that "I have never been faulty in my will" (1371), and her "fault was not that of a culpable will" (1375); and Richardson himself confirms in an "Unpublished Pamphlet" that "Clarissa was not drawn absolutely perfect, but as having

something to blame herself for, tho' not in Intention" (Richardson, qtd in Eaves and Kimpel 402). Lovelace, Clarissa, and Richardson all declare that Clarissa is faultless in her will, but also suggest that she is imperfect, and to blame for something other than her intentions.

Though Clarissa's will is, by all narrative accounts, unimpeachable, there remains some contention over whether Clarissa somehow invites her violation — in colloquial terms, whether she was asking for it. Critics like Warner are quick to exaggerate Richardson's acknowledgement of fault in his heroine, and suggest that Clarissa is somehow to blame for the rape. Richardson even gives Clarissa editorial pause to consider whether her predicament is of her own making:

I am, in my own opinion, a poor lost creature: and yet cannot charge myself with one criminal or faulty inclination. Do you know, my dear, how this can be? [...] One devious step at setting out! — That must be it, which pursued, has led me so far out of my path that I am in a wilderness of doubt and error; and never, never shall find my way out of it: for, although but one pace awry at first, it has led me hundreds and hundreds of miles out of my path. (*Clarissa* 565-566)

Clarissa's meditation on her own culpability has prompted some critics to suggest that Clarissa gets *carried away with*, rather than *carried off by* Lovelace.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷The origins of the word "rape" contain this ambiguity. In addition to its modern connotation of sexual violation (II: 3), rape can mean to hasten or hurry (I: 1); to take or seize by force (II: 1a); to carry (a person) off, away, or from, particularly in the sense of abducting a woman for the purpose of sexual violation (II: 2a); and to enrapture, or "transport with delight" (II: 2b).

Lovelace's scheme is successful in that it makes it appear not only to the Harlowes, but to some readers as well, as though Clarissa willingly eloped with him "by her own consent" when in fact she has been deceived, "tricked out of herself" (869). Clarissa meets Lovelace not to elope with him, but rather to explain that she is *not* going away with him. But Lovelace has previously arranged for the Harlowe's servant, Joseph Leman, to interrupt their meeting and alarm and misdirect the household in order to frighten Clarissa into fleeing. Clarissa emphatically does *not* consent to Lovelace's plot: she believes they are pursued by "armed servants [...] an enraged sister screaming and a father armed with terror in his countenance, more dreadful than even the drawn sword which I saw or those I apprehended" (380). Breathless with terror and apprehension, Clarissa runs "as fast as he [...] my voice, however, contradicting my action; crying, No, no, no, all the while" (380). Thus the "devious step" of which Clarissa repeatedly accuses herself is not the move away from her father's house and into Lovelace's power, but of meeting Lovelace to tell him "no" in the first place. The misstep is having met with him at all, regardless of her intention for doing so. In this Richardson suggests she is not culpable, only misguided.¹⁰⁸

Despite Clarissa's apparent misstep, and the blame the Harlowes and the community are only too willing to place on women for their "dishonour," Anna

¹⁰⁸For the purposes of this argument, it is important to establish that, within the representative framework of the text, Clarissa is *not* complicit, either in her abduction from Harlowe place, in the rape, or in any of Lovelace's designs against her. This chapter distances its argument both from critical tendencies to interpolate Clarissa's consent, and from feminist theories of the gothic that connect passivity with masochism, which necessitates the heroine's complicity in desiring the conditions of her subjugation.

and Mrs Norton remind Clarissa and the reader that the blame and dishonour belong solely to Lovelace. Just as Anna reiterates that the violence against Clarissa is masculine at its origin, Mrs Norton insists that Clarissa has “fallen by the brutal force of a barbarous ravisher, and not by the vile arts of a seducing lover” (*Clarissa* 990). Mrs Norton makes a distinction between weakness of virtue and the woman who succumbs to temptation, and weakness of body and the woman overpowered by physical force: that is, between seduction and rape. She contends that Clarissa must be pitied and forgiven, rather than blamed for her dishonour. However, both Mrs Norton and Anna draw attention to the patriarchal social structures that predispose characters and critics alike to read Clarissa (and women in general) as complicit in the sexual violence enacted against her. According to Anna:

These sort of reflections are enough to make a woman who has at heart her own honour and the honour of her sex, to look about her and consider what she is doing when she enters into an intimacy with these wretches; since it is plain that whenever she throws herself into the power of a man, and leaves for him her parents or guardians, everybody will believe it to be owing more to her good luck than to her discretion if there be not an end of her virtue: and let the man be ever such a villain to her, she must take into her own bosom a share of his guilty baseness. (1314)

Here and elsewhere, Anna laments the social conditions that predicate a woman's

identity and reputation on the company she keeps, such that her virtue is always in peril. These same conventions also excuse the masculine violence enacted against women as “natural,” and displaces the stigma and culpability of rape from the rapist to the victim. Anna, Mrs Norton, and Clarissa are all too aware of how Clarissa’s behaviour looks, even though they know she is not to blame. Because the circumstances of Lovelace’s violence against Clarissa has the appearance of indiscretion, Clarissa is presumed guilty in the eyes of her family and their supporters, until her will — as written testament, as well as its embodied articulation in death — proves her innocent.

Language and Subjectivity

Prior to her death, Clarissa’s language and her means of expression and articulation are either misappropriated or ignored. Lovelace and the Harlowe family use Clarissa’s apparent indiscretion to justify their refusal of her written and verbal protestations of innocence and pleas for clemency. Clarissa writes volumes of letters to what seems like very little purpose: she produces a narrative of frustrated text. From the beginning of the novel, Clarissa is conscious of the inefficacy of her language use. While sequestered at Harlowe Place and confined to her chamber, Clarissa suffers from a form of writer’s block. She becomes frustrated with her own debilitated expression, and finds: “my sentences drag; my style creeps; my imagination is sunk; my spirit serves me not” (*Clarissa* 187). Her inability to express herself adequately derives from the utter inefficacy of her

text. Over the course of the narrative, Clarissa's facility with the written word is dismissed as art, her family refuses or returns her notes, her pleas and petitions go unanswered, her consent is fabricated, her handwriting forged, her letters intercepted, her language appropriated, and her speech — at least temporarily — silenced. After having several letters ignored and returned by her family, Clarissa tells her brother: "you may report what you please of me, and I can no more defend myself, than if I were dead" (121). Exasperated, Clarissa surrenders her voice to her brother, who already presumes to speak for her in the interests of their family. The Harlowes' refusal to hear Clarissa speak for herself effectively silences her.

Throughout the text, the men who claim authority over Clarissa — her father, her brother, her uncles, and her rapist — attempt to silence or speak for her. Lovelace even attempts to appropriate this silence, and tells Belford: "when she is silent, I will endeavour to tell thee her thoughts, either what they are, or what I'd have them to be" (*Clarissa* 1023). Lovelace, like the Harlowe men, presumes to speak for Clarissa — to "know" her thoughts, or to determine them for her. Immediately before the rape, Lovelace imagines that her dishonour will force her to surrender her language as well as her body, thus authorising him to speak on Clarissa's behalf. He claims that "the haughty beauty will not refuse me, when her pride of being corporeally inviolate is brought down; when she can tell no tales, but when (be her resistance what it will) even her own sex will suspect a yielding in resistance; and when that modesty, which may fill her bosom with

resentment, will lock up her speech" (879). Whether Clarissa speaks, writes, or remains silent, she is either ignored or her expression is subject to appropriation, (mis)interpretation, or authentication, both within the narrative and by contemporary and modern critics. Though a sympathetic reader of Richardson's novel, Samuel Johnson remarked of Clarissa that "there is always something which she prefers to truth" (Johnson, qtd in Piozzi 221). Leslie Fiedler is similarly suspicious that "for all her undoubted goodness, [Clarissa] somehow never *quite* manages to tell the *exact* truth" (Fiedler 64). Fiedler's italics seem to suggest an instability in Clarissa's prose that could be read as complicity or culpability, as if Clarissa's "fault" is that she is an unreliable narrator, and that the veracity of her narrative must be subject to third-party evaluation. Lovelace's absurd attempts to prove Clarissa's complicity are mirrored by critics like Fiedler, who drag the lake of text Clarissa produces for evidence of her culpability. No one seems to take Clarissa at her word. However, the apparent instability of Clarissa's narrative points towards the inadequacy of the text's larger discursive framework in which her words (fail to) signify, in that both "truth" and the means to "tell" it are categorically denied to her.

Clarissa's language is subject to (mis)interpretation and verification both within the text's narrative framework and the larger, external context of Richardson criticism. Paper III of Clarissa's collection, for example, is often read as testament to her at least partial collusion with Lovelace in the abduction, if not the rape as well. The Paper tells the parable of the lady and the lion, in which the

lady enters into a friendship with a lion cub, encouraging its companionship and affection only to have it devour her upon reaching maturity. For critics like Warner and Watt, the parable functions as a confession of Clarissa's complicity in a seduction plot, as it concludes that the lady is more to blame than the lion, "For what *she* did, was *out* of nature, *out* of character at least: what *it* did, was *in* its own nature" (*Clarissa* 891). But this parable is more accurately a representation of the public view of Clarissa's dishonour, rather than a private meditation on her own culpability.¹⁰⁹ It reflects the attitude of the Harlowe family in their interpretation of events, as well as the plot of the seduction narrative Lovelace attempts to construct in his manipulation of events. Anna Howe's lamentation of the popular acceptance of man's "natural" baseness echoes this parable: Lovelace and the lion are both absolved of their actions because they act according to their nature, while Clarissa and the lady are blamed for having encouraged an intimacy with the "beasts." The parable also reflects the reception of Clarissa's text by characters and critics alike, who tear her words to pieces in their effort to prove her culpability.

In the midst of her delirium following the rape, Clarissa follows suit. She produces a record of her psychological trauma as fragmented series of "mad papers," including the above parable, only to destroy the records almost as soon

109 Paper IV betrays a similar attitude to Paper III, and gives a gloating, third-person account of Clarissa's undoing. Paper VIII perhaps comes closer to an admission of fault, as in it Clarissa admits an attraction to Lovelace. She confesses that Lovelace "displeased me not" and that his "frankness and generosity ever attracted me," and believes she was not "unworthy of being the niece of Lord M and of his two noble sisters" (892). Still, this confession hardly betrays any collusion with Lovelace, nevermind consent to the rape.

as she writes them. With Sisyphean dedication, she writes furiously, then just as furiously tears the papers to shreds, only once more to resume her pen: “what she writes she tears, and throws the paper in fragments under the table, either as not knowing what she does, or disliking it: then gets up, wrings her hands, weeps, and shifts her seat all round the room: then returns to her table, sits down, and writes again” (*Clarissa* 889).¹¹⁰ According to Castle, “Clarissa’s mutilation of her own discourse suggests not only an impulse toward self-destruction, but also a massive, indeed traumatic loss of faith in articulation [...] and an overriding sense of the failure of language” (Castle, *Ciphers* 121). In this sense, by destroying her own writing, Clarissa re-enacts the failure of signification and her futile attempts to articulate herself through language. Clarissa’s language is misinterpreted and appropriated throughout the novel, and her text is subject to violation. Lovelace eroticises this textual violation, and imagines that, if in his possession, Clarissa’s letters, like her unconscious body, “would have yielded to the touch of my warm finger [...] and the folds, as other plications have done, opened of themselves to oblige my curiosity” (*Clarissa* 1085). Just as the rape is a form of attempted epistemological confirmation, whereby Lovelace would satiate his desire to “know” Clarissa, his eroticisation of the letters subdues Clarissa’s language to his penetrative textual gaze. Following

¹¹⁰In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1898), Lucy Westenra behaves similarly during her slow demise. After writing her last “Memorandum,” Lucy, while half-asleep, “took the paper from her breast and tore it in two. Van Helsing stepped over and took the pieces from her. All the same, however, she went on with the action of tearing, as though the material were still in her hands; finally she lifted her hands and opened them as though scattering the fragments” (Stoker 189).

from Castle's conflation of discourse with subjectivity, by destroying her papers, Clarissa engages in an act of self-destruction that functions simultaneously as self-preservation. She protects her papers, and by extension herself, from further violation.

Clarissa's cycle of producing and destroying her papers indicates a temporary fragmentation of subjectivity. Like the fragmented papers she produces, Clarissa's sense of self becomes scattered, dispersed between first, second, and third person constructions of her identity and experience. In the wake of the rape, Clarissa suffers a moment of existential crisis; she no longer recognises herself, just as Pamela cannot remember who or what she is following her fainting fits, and Catherine Earnshaw cannot identify her reflection in the mirror during her own fit of feverish delirium. In the first paper, Clarissa writes: "whatever they have done to me, I cannot tell; but I am no longer what I was in any one thing" (*Clarissa* 890). The ontological shift signifies more than dishonour and loss of virginity; Clarissa believes she is no longer what she was "in any one thing," suggesting that her entire sense of self has been altered. Like Pamela, Clarissa's conception of self-hood is largely predicated on her virtue; the loss of virginity and violation of her chastity thus destabilizes this self, which Clarissa must later recover and reconstruct. The second paper similarly indicates a loss of identity: "my name is — I don't know what my name is!" (890). The rape alters Clarissa's relationship to her own name and identity. She laments: "my name *was* Clarissa Harlowe — but it is now *Wretchedness!*" (1052). However, the instability

of Clarissa's name precedes the rape, as well. Her father's curse has redacted her right to the Harlowe family name: he insists that she shall not hear from him again "till you have changed your name to my liking" (191); Clarissa's aunt Hervey presses her to "consent to acknowledge your change of name" (348); and her sister declares she knows "not what name you are *permitted* or *choose* to go by" (509). Lovelace, by contrast, has attempted to imposed his name upon her, and asserts: "my beloved has no name but mine" (538). While Clarissa's family revokes her claim to her birth-name, and she is vehemently opposed to the imposition of a marital name, or any other name entailed by sexual relation, Clarissa also adopts various pseudonyms for the purposes of concealing her correspondence and evading Lovelace and her family. Clarissa's delirium exacerbates the instability of her name, and suggests that she is unsure of who she is because her self-identification is so often contradicted.

The series of mad papers Clarissa produces immediately following the rape suggest that she grows progressively more uncertain of her identity. The famed Paper X records the climax of this uncertainty, but also indicates a movement towards restoring her sense of self. Written in verse, typeset askew, at angles, seemingly random, in a metatextual affectation of handwriting, the representation of the words on the page visually disrupts narrative linearity and legibility, textually representing Clarissa's psychological disorder and frustrated signification. Paper X also shifts the terms of Clarissa's self-expression: her narrative voice inhabits the text from both within and without, first and third

person, but also as neither. She assumes the voice of a ghost: "I could a tale unfold—/ Would harrow up thy soul!" (*Clarissa* 893).¹¹¹ From this disembodied position, Clarissa recasts her unconscious state during the rape as a form of death, which she later repeats in her will. She writes: "Then I laid down my head, / Down on cold earth, and for a while was dead; / And my freed soul to a strange somewhere fled!" (893). For Clarissa, this temporary death functions simultaneously as liberation and incarceration. Her unconsciousness frees her soul from the confines of her body, leaving it uninhabited. Clarissa's "death" reaffirms that her soul/self, and by extension her will and consent, are absent from the event. Upon regaining consciousness, her perspective shifts, and she imagines watching her soul return to her body: "back to its cage again I saw it fly, / Fool! to resume her broken chain, [...] Fool! to that body to return, / Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to *mourn*" (893). Clarissa refers to her body as a cage, a broken chain or mortal coil, to which her souls returns only to mourn its imprisonment. However, she also envisions her body in its capacity for signification, and returns to a conception of death as a form of agency.

The rape destabilises Clarissa's sense of self, but also strengthens and revitalises the wish she expresses throughout the text, and restores her will towards death. In her delirious state, Clarissa imagines herself "tott'ring on the brink / Of peace," closer to a more permanent death that would free her from the shackles of sexual relation and put her tormented soul to rest (*Clarissa* 893).

111 "I could a tale unfold whose lightest word / Would harrow up thy soul" (*Hamlet* 1.5.15-16, spoken by the Ghost).

Clarissa welcomes death in the wake of the rape, as, like Pamela, she believes that “When honour’s lost, ’tis a relief to die / Death’s but a sure retreat from infamy” (893). She internalises a sense of shame and dishonour, and laments even after her escape from Sinclair’s that “I, my *best self*, have not escaped! [...] no more of myself! my *lost self* [...] But still upon *self*, this vile, this hated *self!* — I will shake it off, if possible” (974).¹¹² The rape alters Clarissa’s relationship to her body and her self. She mourns the loss of her innocence and expresses disdain for the body Lovelace violates, frustrated by its physical ties to the world she intends to renounce: “how this *body* clings! — How it encumbers!” (1265). However, the rape also reaffirms her long-standing conviction that “life can never itself be blest. / Heaven punishes the *Bad*, and proves the *Best*” (893). As a devout Christian, Clarissa believes death should only be feared by those undeserving of its reward, and she welcomes its “hoped-for happy consequences” (1306). Clarissa’s rape does not result in a loss of selfhood, but rather strengthens Clarissa’s affirmation of her subjectivity and the narrative conditions established at the beginning of the text: Clarissa would rather die than submit to the imperative of sexual relation.

Clarissa’s Will Towards Death

From the outset of the novel, beginning with her parents’ efforts to force her to marry Solmes, Clarissa maintains: “I would rather die than —” (*Clarissa*

¹¹²“For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, / When we have shuffled off this mortal coil” (*Hamlet* 3.1.67-68).

94). She is emphatic that, “if the consent of heart, and assent of voice, be necessary to a marriage, I am sure I never can nor ever will be married to Mr Solmes” (322), and she vows “I will say nothing but No, as long as I shall be able to speak” (365). But Clarissa’s verbal *Nos* go largely unheeded and unheard, until Lovelace silences them entirely. The rape robs her not only of her virginity, but of her verbal capacity for refusal. While she is unconscious, Clarissa cannot say no. After the rape, Clarissa becomes determined to embody rather than articulate her refusal. As Macpherson suggests, the inefficacy of her verbal refusals “motivates her not towards a more subtle definition of consent, but to forgo the language of consent” (Macpherson, “Lovelace” 108). Rather than signify as any form of consent or continue her struggle for verbal self-assertion, Clarissa internalises her refusals, and wills her body to speak for her. It is not that Lovelace or the rape “locks up” Clarissa’s speech, but rather that she transforms her body into text, and dying into discursivity. As Elisabeth Bronfen suggests, Clarissa’s “self-disintegration also becomes an act of self-construction,” as she consciously applies herself to dying as a means of restoring “certainty, authority and realness to this attempt at self-textualisation” (Bronfen 141). The repeated failure of Clarissa’s language prompts her to redirect her articulations of subjectivity from her voice to her body. Rather than continue her struggle for verbal self-assertion, Clarissa instead transforms her body into a wasting sign of refusal and negation. By turning her will inwards, Clarissa reclaims authority over her body and restabilises her sense of self. She invokes her death as an embodied assertion of

subjectivity that cannot be silenced or ignored.

There is a critical tendency to read Clarissa's death as a direct result of the rape. Specific diagnoses differ, but most critics contend that Clarissa never recovers from her violation, and ultimately dies from it. Despite this contention, however, there is ample speculation as to the nature of Clarissa's illness. While Warner is frustrated by the "absence of any pointed natural cause for Clarissa's death" (Warner, *Reading* 113), and Kinkead-Weekes suggests that "purely physical explanations do not account for her death" (Kinkead-Weekes 267), Doody surmises that the illness to which Clarissa succumbs is "probably galloping consumption" (Doody 171), Frega contends that she "starve[s] herself to death" (Frega 88), and Eagleton asserts that "it is less Lovelace's rape, than the melancholy into which she is plunged by her father's curse, which causes her to die. Clinically speaking, Clarissa dies of depression" (Eagleton 90). Castle believes that Clarissa's "wasting disease" is "indeterminate in origin, and possibly alienated from organic causes" (Castle 106), while Donaldson maintains that Richardson deliberately obscures "the exact nature of Clarissa's illness [...] it emerges mysteriously, imprecisely, as something not quite diagnosable in physiological terms" (Donaldson 67). Although the diagnostic efforts are interesting, there is perhaps little purpose in formulating anachronistic pathology reports. Given, of course, that Clarissa's illness is representational (literary rather than literal), it is nonetheless congruent with theories of sensibility contemporary with the novel, according to which the states of one's physical and mental health

are nervously entwined. Stephenson cuts to the historical heart of the matter in recognising that “Richardson’s first readers were not in the least bit puzzled or uncertain; they knew perfectly well what caused Clarissa’s death, and there was nothing mysterious, indeterminate, or un-diagnosable about it” (Stephenson 267-268). Thus Lovelace’s claim that she is suffering from a “broken heart” (*Clarissa* 1084), and Clarissa’s own assertion that she is dying of grief (1341) are not merely narrative conceits, but consistent with mid-eighteenth-century conceptions of health. Clarissa’s illness signifies as a form of embodied subjectivity, an inscription on her body of her emotional and psychological state.

Despite the “obvious” nature of Clarissa’s illness, Lovelace and the Harlowe family are suspicious of her ailments, and take turns suggesting that her indispositions are the result of stratagem and affectation rather than actual or “legitimate” disorders.¹¹³ After her death, Clarissa’s friends and family lament dismissing the severity of her claims, but even as she declines, they are quick to suggest that she, like Catherine Earnshaw, acts a part of her disorder. Lovelace’s scepticism is perhaps born of his own propensity for connivance; his “Ipecac-trick,” in which he feigns illness by deliberately inducing it, engages precisely the deception of which he accuses Clarissa (*Clarissa* 673ff) . However, Clarissa is not unaware of the strategic potential of illness. Out of fear that her family will set an earlier date for her marriage to Solmes, she plans to become “very ill. Nor need I feign much; for indeed I am extremely low, weak and faint” (341). Clarissa

¹¹³In *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly is similarly sceptical of Catherine’s illness, and cannot “get rid of the notion that she acted a part of her disorder” (E Brontë 79).

confesses to the advantages of illness, just as Pamela acknowledges that “Health is a blessing hardly to be coveted in my Circumstances, since that fits me for the Calamity I am in continual Apprehensions of; whereas a weak and sickly State might possibly move Compassion for me” (*Pamela* 178-179). But while Pamela’s fainting fits stir Mr B’s sympathies, Lovelace and the Harlowes dismiss Clarissa’s declining health with sceptical disdain.

Refusing to acknowledge Clarissa’s obvious physical deterioration, Lovelace thinks it is “nonsense [...] to suppose that such a mere notional violation as she has suffered should be able to cut asunder the strings of life” (*Clarissa* 916). He attempts to absolve himself of any responsibility for Clarissa’s illness by diminishing the severity of the violence he has enacted against her. Lovelace recasts the rape as a “mere notional violation” that Clarissa has blown out of proportion, and claims that her debility is similarly contrived. But Lovelace is perhaps not entirely misguided in his claim. While the rape causes Clarissa significant emotional distress, it is she, not he, who invokes her illness. Ultimately, Clarissa wills herself to die. As Lovelace suggests, her “*departure* will be owing rather to willfulness, to downright *female* willfulness, than to any other cause” (1346). The doctor and apothecary seem to share his opinion, and contend “that she would recover if she herself desired to recover, and would use the means” (1027). But Clarissa has no desire to recover, and her illness and death are physical, embodied functions of her will. She does not simply contract and succumb to a mysterious sickness of unknown nature or origin, but emphatically

exerts her will over her body. Clarissa insists that her “countenance [...] is indeed an honest picture of my heart [...] the mind will run away with the body at any time” (1127). Clarissa’s ailment is a conflation of mental and physical illness; her emotional distress and cognitive will manifest as debility and death.

Clarissa uses self-starvation to encourage and perhaps hasten her physical deterioration. Like her wish to die, Clarissa’s abstention of food is present from the novel’s start, and throughout the text she often refuses or is unable to eat and drink. While sequestered at Harlowe Place, for example, Clarissa declines her meals out of grief and frustration with her family. Letter 17 indicates that she misses all three meals that day: Clarissa’s mother tells her that she will “excuse your attendance at afternoon tea, as I did to dinner,” and Clarissa later notes that she “kindly undertook to excuse my attendance at supper” (*Clarissa* 97, 101). By refusing to eat, Clarissa also refuses to subject herself to her family’s relentless insistence that she marry a man whom she abhors. In this context, self-starvation is also a form of self-assertion: Clarissa’s refusal to eat also signifies her refusal of sexual relation. While in Lovelace’s power, Clarissa informs Lovelace and his staff that she prefers to eat little and dine alone as means to avoid his company. Because their primary meeting place is the dining room, fasting enables her to remain in her chamber, and refusing meals also becomes a way of refusing Lovelace. Clarissa resents Lovelace’s demands that she dine with him, and insists: “I won’t, if I can help it [...] I was resolved to carry this one small point; and so denied to dine myself” (640). Clarissa’s refusal to eat anticipates Catherine’s self-

starvation in *Wuthering Heights*, as both heroines engage in what Frega describes as “seemingly passive self-denial” as a form of “activism” (Frega 95). Clarissa and Catherine abstain from food as a means to retain agency and control within situations that limit their expression and mobility, and to produce the conditions of illness they will upon themselves.

Clarissa’s refusal to eat is an effect of her larger rejection of her circumstances, and is similarly symptomatic of her reinvigorated wish to die. Prior to the rape, Clarissa’s self-starvation functions as a means to refuse Lovelace’s company and familial pressure for her to marry Solmes; afterwards, it signifies her rejection of sexual relation and of life entirely. Immediately following the rape, Clarissa asks Dorcas, “For what purpose should I eat? For what end should I wish to live? — I tell thee, Dorcas, I will neither eat nor drink” (*Clarissa* 895). Clarissa has no desire to nourish the body she is determined to cast aside. Over the second half of the novel, Clarissa’s rhetorical terms of refusal shift from obstinacy to inability: *will not* becomes *cannot*. Once she is safely out of Lovelace’s reach and secured among friends at the Smith residence, Clarissa realises can no longer politely refuse to eat. Instead, she insists that she cannot. Throughout her fast, Clarissa’s will is taken to task. Captors, friends, and servants alike reprimand her abstention from food and drink. Sally Horton, for example, warns Clarissa that “religion, I think, should teach you that starving yourself is self-murder” (1054). She challenges Clarissa’s piousness, and upon consideration, Clarissa does “think it equally criminal, were I now *wilfully* to neglect myself;

were I *purposely* to run into the arms of death" (1117). She promises Anna that she "will do everything I can to prolong my life, till God in mercy to me shall be pleased to call for it" (1117). Clarissa vows that she will leave the matter to a merciful God, whom she trusts to administer her life and death.

As a devout Christian, Clarissa cannot, in good conscience, willfully starve herself to death. Instead, she compromises by promising to do only what she is able, and rather than willfully refusing to eat, she contends: "I have no appetite. I do what I can" (*Clarissa* 1129). Clarissa's promise to do what she can contains an implicit caveat that enables her to refrain from eating: she cannot eat if she is not hungry. In this sense, Clarissa is not denying herself food so much as her body is denying physical need or desire: it is as if she simply ceases to experience hunger. Clarissa promises only that she "will do everything I can do, to convince all my friends, who hereafter may think it worth their while to enquire after my last behaviour, that I possessed my soul with tolerable patience; and endeavoured to bear with a lot of my own drawing: For thus, in humble imitation of the sublimest Exemplar, I often say: — Lord, it is thy will; and it shall be mine" (1118). Once again, Clarissa trusts the matter of her life and death to God. Clarissa justifies her actions by appealing to the will of a higher power, but her submission to God's will also implies that she is beyond reproach, as if she has assumed an omnipotent authority over the conditions of her life and death, and that God's will is in fact her own.

Clarissa's willful decline occasions a form of narrative arrest similar to

Catherine Earnshaw's in *Wuthering Heights*. Katherine Cummings notes in parentheses that Clarissa's protracted deterioration has the "effect of arresting the narrative's action since her dying covers such large portion of the [...] book" (Cummings 126). Clarissa's persistent drive towards death grows stronger throughout the text, dominating the second half of the novel, and eclipsing almost all other aspects of the narrative. But Clarissa's illness also manifests as another form of narrative gap: her own silence. Clarissa declines to elaborate on the experience of the rape, and writes to Anna: "Let me cut short the rest [...] I will say no more" (*Clarissa* 1011). Her silence on the subject is repeated on other occasions that would require her to describe the experience. On these occasions, Clarissa refuses to speak, and instead determines that her dying body will do so for her. For example, when Clarissa's family members busy themselves about the possibility that she is pregnant, she maintains silence on the subject. After some less-than-subtle speculation, Uncle (John) Harlowe finally states point-blank: "Your mother can't ask, and your sister knows not in modesty how to ask; and so I ask you, if you have any reason to think yourself with child by this villain" (1192). Lovelace and the Harlowe family are preoccupied with the potential for pregnancy, not because it confirms the rape itself — that Clarissa is "ruined" is a given — but because it suggests a form of physical complicity, if not with her voice, then with her body. There is some indication that Lovelace and the Harlowes adhere to an archaic understanding of conception, which depended on a woman's consent to sexual intercourse. Accordingly, a woman who was raped

could not conceive, and if she did, she cannot have been raped. Pregnancy would thus provide physical “proof” of Clarissa’s participation, and evidence of the consent Lovelace seeks to obtain. Clarissa refuses to deny the pregnancy absolutely, and instead insists that she “deserved not [...] to be wounded by a cruel question, put by him in a very shocking manner; and which a little, a very little time, will better answer than I can” (1193). The suggestion here is not that she *is* pregnant, but that her body, wasting away breeding death rather than life, speaks for her. Just as Cordelia says “nothing” in *King Lear*, Clarissa’s silence speaks for itself.¹¹⁴

Clarissa similarly chooses to remain silent rather than submit her testimony before a court of law. Even after proclaiming during the penknife scene that “The LAW shall be my only refuge” (*Clarissa* 950), Clarissa vehemently opposes her family’s demands that she prosecute Lovelace for his crimes. She declines legal recourse because she knows what little “advantage *in a court* (perhaps bandied about, and jested profligately with) would some of those pleas in my favour have been [...] It would no doubt have been a ready retort from *every* mouth, that I ought not to have thrown myself into the power of such a man” (1253). Not only is Clarissa all too familiar with the appeal to nature that excuses Lovelace’s behaviour and condemns hers, she also knows that the testimony of a woman is but the subject of ridicule and disbelief within the

114When Lear demands Cordelia to “speak” and quantify her love for him, she replies with “Nothing” (*King Lear* 1.1.80). As an aside, she asks: “What shall Cordelia do? Love and be silent” (1.1.56). Cordelia’s silence speaks of her love, her loyalty, and her honesty, while her sisters’ gratuitous and ingratiating responses reveal their deception and self-interest.

courtroom context of institutionalised patriarchy. Clarissa assumes that the courts are no more likely to take her at her word than her family or community, and that her testimony would fall on similarly deaf ears. Moreover, even if the prosecution was successful, she imagines that it would be only too easy for Lovelace to secure a pardon “for a crime thought too lightly of, though one of the greatest that can be committed” (1253). While the Harlowes try to convince her to press charges in order to restore the reputation of their family name, Clarissa reminds them that nothing can be done to restore the personal dishonour and indignity she has suffered, or undo the violence that was enacted against her. Clarissa refuses to submit the story of her rape to any form of juridical evaluation, interpretation, or verification because, in short, there would be very little point.

Given Lovelace’s predatory history, Clarissa’s lack of faith in the justice system is by no means unreasonable. According to the various records and letters that allude to several of Lovelace’s previous victims, Rosebud (*Clarissa* 162), Miss Betterton (494), Miss Lockyer (576), and Lucy Villars (863), as well as Sinclair’s “daughters” Polly Horton and Sally Martin, and perhaps his pretended “relations” Johanetta Golding and Bab Wallis, have all fallen by Lovelace’s hand. Anna writes to Clarissa that she has heard “some well-attested stories of him that show him to be one of the worst men as to our Sex [...] had he a dozen lives, if all I have heard be true, he might have forfeited them all, and been dead *twenty*

crimes ago" (576).¹¹⁵ But of course, Lovelace has never been successfully prosecuted. Instead, he dismisses the accusations of rape and murder, and styles himself as a petty criminal, guilty only of "a common theft, a private larceny" (1439). Lovelace's terms belittle the severity of the crime he commits by comparing rape with minor property theft rather than personal violation. Clarissa appropriates these terms in her posthumous letter to Lovelace, stating that he has "only robbed me of what once were my favourite expectations in the transient life I shall have quitted when you receive this" (1426). Clarissa once again refers to her traumatic journey between the various houses in which she was sequestered, so different from the stationary, independent existence she imagined for herself at her grandfather's estate. Lovelace has robbed Clarissa not only of her honour, but of her capacity for consent and refusal, and of her resistance to sexual relation. Death and dying thus become a way for Clarissa to reclaim her body from Lovelace, and to convict him of his crime against her by irrevocably embodying her refusal to consent.

To this end, *Clarissa* has been read as a modern Lucretia, who stabs herself in the heart after being raped in order to avenge herself and her family, confirm her innocence, and absolve herself of the dishonour. As discussed previously in Chapter 1, Lucretia's suicide mitigates the stigma of rape, recuperating her lost

115 Anna later appeals to the custom of the Isle of Man, according to which: "'If a single woman there prosecutes a single man for rape, the ecclesiastical judges impanel a jury; and, if this jury finds him guilty, he is returned *guilty* to the temporal courts: where, if he be convicted, the deemster, or judge, delivers to the woman a rope, a sword, and a ring; and she has it in her choice to have him hanged, beheaded, or to marry him.' One of the two former, I think, should always be her option" (1017).

honour and transferring her shame back onto the rapist. But Clarissa's wish to die precedes the rape, and the violation strengthens, rather than incites, her will towards death. Clarissa's *History* has also been interpreted as a revision of the story of the Levite of Ephraim, in which the Levite surrenders his concubine (or wife, in some versions) to an angry mob, who rape her throughout the night. In the morning he takes up her near-lifeless body and travels home, where he cuts her into twelve sections and sends the pieces to different areas of Israel.

According to Scripture: "it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds" (Judges 19:22-30). In this case, the body of the woman, so divided, dismembered, and dispersed, speaks of the violence she suffered, apparently without need for further explanation or articulation, as all who saw it understood the nature and severity of the crime. There are also references in *Clarissa* to the rape of Philomela, who threatens to declare her dishonour publicly, and expose King Tereus as her rapist. To prevent her from telling her story, Tereus cuts out Philomela's tongue and imprisons her in a cabin. She then weaves a tapestry that reveals the crime and sends it to Tereus's wife Procne, who kills their son and serves him to Tereus for dinner.¹¹⁶ Like Philomela, Clarissa produces a record of the rape, implicating her rapist but also exposing her own dishonour. In each of

¹¹⁶This story is reimagined by Shakespeare in *Titus Andronicus*, in which Titus avenges his daughter Lavinia, raped by Tamora's sons who then cut out her tongue so she cannot speak and sever her hands at the wrist so she cannot write, by killing the sons and serving them to Tamora for dinner.

these stories, the women's bodies similarly reveal the violence enacted against them.¹¹⁷ In cases of rape, the (female) body functions as textual evidence: Lucretia's suicide, the concubine's dismemberment, Philomela's tongueless silence, and Clarissa's physical decline bespeak the crimes committed against them. However, Clarissa's dying body serves also as testament to her inviolable will. Her death is not merely evidence of the rape, but an embodied assertion of her long-standing preference for death over any form of sexual relation.

The Death of Clarissa

Clarissa's will towards death spans the entire length of the text, but is given particular editorial attention in the second half of the novel. The almost excruciating detail with which Richardson delineates her demise is rich with vivid descriptions of Clarissa's appearance and the beauty in her decay, such that *Clarissa* is often described as a textual "portrait of the dying heroine" (Storme 199). Jolene Zigarovich, for example, argues that Richardson's text "is ultimately devoted to painting a protracted portrait of Clarissa's beautiful demise," drawing attention to the spectacular nature of her illness and death (Zigarovich 112). Belford's account to Lovelace of Clarissa on her deathbed emphasizes the singular beauty of the dying heroine:

though emaciated, [...] her features are so regular and exact, her proportion so fine, and her manner so inimitably graceful, that

¹¹⁷Ferguson defines rape, in its historical representation, as "a crime committed by a man upon the person of a woman" (Ferguson 88). The wording is intriguing, as if the "person" of a woman is distinguished from the woman herself.

were she only skin and bone, she must be a beauty [...] he would not have disturbed her; and should be glad to contemplate her sweet features [...] We beheld the lady in a charming attitude. Dressed, as I told you before, in her virgin white, [...] one faded cheek rested upon the good woman's bosom, the kindly warmth of which had overspread it with a faint, but charming flush; the other paler, and hollow, as if already iced over by death. Her hands, white as the lily, with her meandering veins more transparently blue than ever I had seen even hers [...] hanging lifelessly [...] Her aspect was sweetly calm and serene: and though she started now and then, yet her sleep seemed easy. (*Clarissa* 1351)

Belford's description gives Clarissa an ethereal, almost translucent aspect, as if she is already beyond this world and a part of the next. He and Colonel Morden gaze upon Clarissa's dying body while she sleeps peacefully, perhaps never again to wake. Their contemplation of her features, proportion, attitude, dress, complexion, countenance, and circulation betrays a fixation with the appearance of Clarissa's death. After she dies, Belford reveals that he and Clarissa's caretakers "could not help taking a view of the lovely corpse, and admiring the charming serenity of her noble aspect. The women declared they never saw death so lovely before" (1367). Similarly, when Colonel Morden orders Clarissa's coffin uncovered so fresh flowers and aromatics can be added to it, the Harlowe family

insists upon viewing Clarissa's corpse (1400).¹¹⁸ Even Anna impatiently pushes the coffin lid aside so she may once more look upon her dearest friend and kiss her goodbye (1402). Seemingly everyone with whom Clarissa is acquainted is eager to look at her beautiful corpse. This beauty animates her dead body, giving it a liminal aspect similar to that which she possessed as she was dying. Both before and after her death, Clarissa hovers between worlds, while her beauty remains constant.

Illustrated versions of *Clarissa* similarly emphasize the heroine's beautiful demise. While the illustrated history of *Clarissa* is, perplexingly, all but absent from the critical canon, according to Axel Stähler, the death of Clarissa is one of the most popularly rendered motifs of the novel, with at least seven known depictions (Stähler 38, M80).¹¹⁹ Unlike *Pamela*, which received extensive illustrative popularity, *Clarissa* illustrations did not circulate until largely after the fact. The first illustrated edition of *Clarissa* was the German translation published in 1749; an illustrated English edition was not published until 1768, twenty years after the novel's initial publication and seven years after Richardson's death. The

118 At Clarissa's funeral, the Harlowes' various maidservants continue to adorn Clarissa's corpse and coffin with flowers: "The maids who brought the flowers were ambitious of strewing them about: they poured forth fresh lamentations over her; each wishing she had been so happy to have been allowed to attend her in London" (1400). Their behaviour recalls Lovelace's earlier references to *Taylor's Holy Living and Dying* and the practices of "an ordinary country funeral, when the young women, in honour of a defunct companion, especially if she were a virgin, or passed for such, make a flower-bed of her coffin" (1002, original emphasis). Bestrewing Clarissa's corpse with flowers symbolically restores the honour and innocence associated with virginity.

119 For an exhaustive history of the illustrated *Clarissa*, see Stähler's "Embryonic Creatures and Wonders of Psychology (I): Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* as Iconotext" (2008). Stähler notes that Clarissa's death is not part of every illustration series, possibly due to its controversial reception by readers who insisted their heroine should meet with a "happy ending" (Stähler 21).

illustrated Rivington of London edition featured eight engravings by Isaac Taylor and Charles Grignion after Samuel Wale's paintings, which were fixed as frontispieces to the edition's eight volumes. The first fully illustrated edition of *Clarissa* depicting a condensed, visual narrative of the text was published in James Harrison's 1784 edition of the novel in *The Novelist's Magazine* (volumes 14-15), which included thirty-four etchings by Thomas Stothard (figure 31 is pictured above).¹²⁰ Stothard's representation of Clarissa on her death-bed, surrounded by a grieving adopted family, is quite faithful to Richardson's description. Mrs Smith, "with clasped fingers and uplifted eyes," kneels at the foot of the bed, and the nurse kneels "with arms extended" between her and Mrs Lovick. The maid of the house stands in the corner leaning against the wainscot "with her face folded up in her arms," while Colonel Morden struggles to support himself and Mr Belford sadly bears witness (*Clarissa* 1361). Stothard's characters are positioned almost exactly according to Richardson's description, with Clarissa, bathed in light, at the centre of the scene. The bed-curtains are drawn back to reveal her almost angelic repose. Fully clothed in "virgin white," Clarissa's chin is inclined, giving her the appearance of looking to heaven, "as if

120Of the more well-known *Clarissa* illustrations are Francis Hayman's "Robert Lovelace Preparing to Abduct Clarissa Harlowe" (1753) and Joseph Highmore's "The Harlowe Family" (c1747). Highmore's depiction of the Harlowe family was mis-attributed to Hogarth as "The Green Room, Drury Lane." Hilariously, Austin Dobson's 1902 biography of Hogarth even suggested that the apparent "Drury Lane" painting depicted Henry Fielding in place of Uncle Harlowe (Eaves, "Harlowe" 93). "The Harlowe Family" remained Hogarth's "Green Room" until 1924, when C H Collins Baker recognised the style as distinctly Highmore's, and T C Duncan Eaves first reproduced the painting as Highmore's "The Harlowe Family" in 1943 (95). These paintings, along with several drawings of the Harlowes (currently held by the Tate Collection), suggest that Highmore may have been working towards a larger illustrated project similar to that of *Pamela*, but never completed it.

in a thankful rapture, sweetly smiling" (1362). The angle and attitude of her face recall medieval depictions of saints, and her head upon the pillow casts a halo-like shadow. One gets the impression she could ascend at any moment.

Stothard's illustration captures the spirit, so to speak, of the religious fervour with which Clarissa approaches death. As she deteriorates, Clarissa's funerary preparations assume devotional aspects similar to the sacramental rituals of saints and nuns. Just as taking the veil symbolises a marriage or union with Christ, Clarissa prepares for death as a betrothed maid would her upcoming nuptials. Though adamantly against the marital state, as death approaches, Clarissa instead imagines herself "wedded to her shroud" (*Clarissa* 514). She tells Anna: "never bride was so ready as I am. My wedding garments are bought [...] will they be the easiest, the *happiest* suit, that ever bridal maiden wore" (1339). While nuns become the metaphorical brides of Christ, Clarissa prepares herself to become the bride of Death. Lovelace, too, personifies Death as Clarissa's paramour, and laments her imminent demise with the jealousy of romantic rival. He suggests that Clarissa is "*more* determined against me, because she thinks (in revenge to me, I verily believe that!) of encouraging another lover" (1096). Lovelace gives Mr Hickman an extensive description of Death in human form, using Satanic, anti-Semitic, and other derogatory stereotypes to characterise Death as a balding, deformed, and covetous villain. He accuses Clarissa of redirecting her attentions to a greater devourer than he, and declares: "none of us care to be intimate with him — except this lady — and that, as I told you, in spite

to me — His name, in short, is DEATH!" (1097).¹²¹ Lovelace finds Clarissa's intimacy with death uncommonly perverse, and suspects that she is dying only to spite him, forever to deny him the consent he insists he is owed.

Though Lovelace seems dismissive of the severity of Clarissa's ailment, he acknowledges the strength of her will, and appears fearful of her resolution. As Clarissa increases her application to dying and its attending rituals, Lovelace asks Belford to "Set before her the sin of preparation, as if she thought she could depart when she pleased. She'll persuade herself at this rate, that she has nothing to do when all is ready, but to lie down and go to sleep: and such a lively fancy as hers will make a reality of a jest at any time" (*Clarissa* 1308). Clarissa's friends at the Smith residence are similarly uncomfortable with Clarissa's cheerful resignation of her life. They are concerned by her attachment and proximity to her coffin, which she keeps next to the bed and sometimes uses as a writing desk. Clarissa refers to the coffin as her "house" — the "last house" she will occupy in this world before arriving at her "father's house" in heaven. She looks forward to the stability and finality her coffin-house signifies, which belies the trauma of the journey that has brought her to it. Over the course of the narrative, Clarissa has moved from Harlowe Place to Mrs Sorling's to Sinclair's "vile house," momentarily escaped to Mrs Moore's only to return to Sinclair's brothel, escaped to the Smith residence but then arrested and detained at the prisoner's holding chamber, and finally returned to Smith's in order to die. Everywhere Clarissa

¹²¹ "Shall I believe / That unsubstantial Death is amorous, / And that the lean abhorred monster keeps / Thee here in dark to be his paramour?" (*Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.102-105)

goes (or, more accurately, is taken) is rendered uninhabitable. Lovelace gains access to every chamber, including her body.

Immediately following the rape, Clarissa describes the ordeal in architectural terms. She accuses Lovelace of breaking in upon her, “when all my doors are fast, and nothing but the key-hole open, and the key of late put into that, to be where you are, in a manner without opening any of them” (*Clarissa* 894). Clarissa’s metaphor is apt not only for its connotations of penetrative violence, but in recalling the numerous occasions on which Lovelace actually does spy on Clarissa through the keyhole of her chamber door. Following his attempts upon her person during the fire scene, he observes Clarissa’s distress: “I looked through the keyhole, and saw her on her knees, her face, though not towards me, lifted up, as well as hands, and these folded, deprecating I suppose that gloomy tyrant’s curse” (729). Later, he sees her once again “on her knees at her bed’s feet, her head and bosom on the bed, her arms extended [...] and in an agony she seemed to be, sobbing” (733). After the rape, when Clarissa is in the midst of her delirium, Lovelace “looked through the keyhole of my beloved’s door [...] There I beheld her in a sweet slumber, which I hope will prove refreshing to her disturbed senses; sitting in her elbow-chair, her apron over her head, and that supported by one sweet hand, the other hanging down upon her side, in a sleepy lifelessness; half of one pretty foot only visible” (904).¹²² Clarissa envisions her coffin as a means to enclose herself, and close herself off from

¹²² Compare also with the keyhole scene in *Pamela* (32).

further violation. As her last house, the coffin marks an end to this nightmarish transience, placelessness, and invasion; Clarissa finally finds her way home.

The date Clarissa has inscribed on the coffin similarly indicates an end to this transient state of uncertainty. The inscription conflates the date of her death (actually September 7) with the day she left her family home (April 10), collapsing the “liminal” five-month period “between fixed positions in society, between life and death” (Bronfen 151). Like the coffin itself, the date signifies an erasure of the unfixed, unstable period, and returns her to a place of permanence. However, the coffin’s inscriptions simultaneously work to disrupt the legibility of this permanence. Specifically, the date inscribed is April X (*Clarissa* 1305). The X indicates not only the Roman numeral 10, but also suggests a variety of interpretative possibilities: X marks her final resting place (X marks the spot), provides a signature (signs an X on the line), indicates her religion (the cross symbolising Christ and the crucifixion), suggests insignificance (crossed-out, negated), and renders itself infinitely variable (as in mathematics). It also recalls Paper X of Clarissa’s mad papers, wherein she marks her rededication to death and dying. The X thus inscribes both Clarissa and the coffin with a radical indeterminacy, forestalling any fixity of meaning or interpretation. As Bronfen suggests, the coffin “simulates the re-closing of her body, incised by rape and death, as the nails of the coffin obliterate all gaps; it signifies a rigid and composed outer body that occults the decomposition of the corpse inside; it stands for a whole, univocal text that effaces the semantic indeterminacies her

story may contain" (Bronfen 149). Critical work dedicated to the interpretation of the coffin's symbols and inscriptions, both within the novel and without, suggest that Clarissa's "ciphers" are precisely that. They conceal and encode the occupant and the text she produces, but also reduce both to the "nothing" Clarissa becomes. A cipher is not only a means to encrypt or encode meaning (OED 5a), but also a nonentity or person of no importance (2a): a zero-point (1b), or mathematical symbol with no inherent value, but which "increases or decreases the value of other figures according to its position" (1a).¹²³ The critic/spectator is left only with superficial ciphers that encode the *History* Clarissa leaves behind.

The uroboros inscription surrounding the date is similarly ambiguous. The symbol of a serpent eating its tail suggests wholeness, infinite or eternal return, cyclicity, self-reflexivity and self-consumption. The symbol is somewhat androgynous or hermaphroditic, with the (masculine) serpent encircling itself in a (feminine) round, representing simultaneously both whole and hole. The uroboros image, already complex in its signification, reifies the recurrent serpent imagery in the text. Arabella, for example, accuses Clarissa of "bewitching" her family, "curling, like a serpent, about your mama" (*Clarissa* 195), but the reference is usually associated with phallic masculinity, and with Lovelace as Seducer. Anna exasperatedly refers to all men as "Insolent creepers, or encroachers" (1415), and after the rape, in Paper VII Clarissa refers to Lovelace as "pernicious caterpillar, that preyest upon the fair leaf of virgin fame," and an

¹²³Clarissa laments that she is "but a *cipher*, to give *him* significance, and *myself* pain" (567).

“eating canker-worm that preyest upon the opening bud” (892).¹²⁴ Clarissa later tells Anna that she is “glad this violent spirit [Lovelace] *can* thus creep; that, like a poisonous serpent, he can thus coil himself and hide his head in his own narrow circlets,” in what is perhaps an onanistic suggestion that Lovelace can go fuck himself (1320). Clarissa’s final (posthumous) letter to Lovelace returns to the serpent imagery, where she warns him that the “meat” of wicked men “is the gall of asps within him,” and that the “worm shall feed sweetly on him” (1427). The associations of the serpent with both masculinity and decay inscribe the coffin with rather visceral references to the *History* of its occupant, and function as a warning to those who read it: “See what thou thyself must quickly be — and REPENT!” (1413). The text and images that adorn the decorative coffin lid forestall further penetration and gaze, and stand in contrast to the various *mementos mori* Lovelace and the Harlowes want commissioned in commemoration of her death. These relics — Clarissa’s hair set in crystal and Lovelace’s desire for her heart to be bottled and preserved in spirits — are reminiscent of Snow White’s glass coffin, wherein the female body becomes spectacular object to an eternal penetrative gaze. Clarissa’s coffin, however, does the opposite: once the lid is finally closed, it prevents any further penetration or textualisation of Clarissa’s body. The coffin’s containment of Clarissa and substitution of the indeterminate coffin-text for the body enclosed within render it a reflective surface, turning the gaze back on itself and shielding her from further (mis)interpretation.

¹²⁴Compare with William Blake’s poem “The Sick Rose” (1794): “O Rose thou art sick. / The invisible worm [...] Has found out thy bed” (Blake 1-5).

In death, Clarissa becomes the “nothing” about which there is “So much written” (*Clarissa* 1413). Lovelace, however, refuses to accept the finality of Clarissa’s death, and insists that Clarissa is his — that she is “somebody’s” rather than the “nobody’s” or “nothing” her death signifies. Just as he previously struggles to provide evidence of her consent, after her death, Lovelace becomes obsessed with seizing control of both Clarissa’s funerary rituals and her corpse because he cannot bear to lose any remaining opportunity to subdue Clarissa. Despite his frustration with Clarissa’s unconsciousness during the rape, Lovelace still believes that he can “know” Clarissa by possessing her body. In an effort to penetrate her once again, Lovelace demands that the “ever-dear and beloved lady should be opened and embalmed” (*Clarissa* 1383). Lovelace’s desire to open Clarissa’s body re-enacts the rape, again in direct opposition to her *will* — both the legal document that anticipates the violation, and the specific clause therein, which states: “I will not on any account that it be opened” (*Clarissa* 1413).¹²⁵ He

¹²⁵In the eighteenth-century popular imagination, the dissection of a corpse was considered an act of gross desecration rather than a standard medical procedure. Willing anatomisation was rare, as it was more often used as a method of further punishment for criminals sentenced to execution. Four years after Richardson’s publication of *Clarissa*, British parliament passed the “Act for Better Preventing the Horrid Crime of Murder” (1752: 25 Geo II c37), which stipulated that convicted murderers would be subject to dissection after execution, in an effort to discourage murder with the threat of further punitive action against the body of an executed criminal. Dissection was considered a mark of infamy and criminal designation — hardly acceptable to any person of rank, fortune, and sensibility. Richardson instead reserves this indignity for Mrs Sinclair. The lengthy description of Sinclair’s death, which Castle calls “one of Richardson’s more tumid Gothic spectacles,” dismembers Sinclair in a form of textual dissection (Castle, *Ciphers* 32). The description anatomizes Sinclair by listing separately the various parts and pieces of her body, and the doctors rather barbarically offer to “whip off her leg in a moment” should she consent to amputation: “And so the poor wretch was to be lanced and quartered, as I may say, for an experiment only! And, without any hope of benefit from the operation, was to pay the surgeons for tormenting her!” (*Clarissa* 1391). Compare with George Cruikshank’s illustration of the “Doctor Indulged with his Favourite Scene” (c1790), in which the doctor is depicted as butcher.

attempts to counter Clarissa's will with his own, and demands: "her heart, to which I have such unquestionable pretensions, in which once I kept so large a share, and which I will prize above my own, I *will* have. I will keep it in spirits. It shall never be out of my sight. All of the charges of sepulchre too shall be mine" (1384). Lovelace aims to possess Clarissa by appropriating her corpse, preserving her body from decay and interring all but her heart in his family vault, thereby finally imposing his name upon her. By keeping her heart in glass, Lovelace imagines he can subject it to his eternal scrutiny, such that he could at last "know" Clarissa by discerning its contents. As Madeleine Kahn points out, "To the last he mistakes the body for the whole woman" (Kahn 148). Lovelace's plans for Clarissa's corpse mirror those he had for her in life: he will abduct, penetrate, and imprison her in a world entirely of his design, subduing her at last.

Clarissa anticipates Lovelace's every move, however, and her testament includes several pre-emptive clauses to prevent Lovelace from realising this goal. Clarissa's will forestalls his, and she counters Lovelace's desires with her own. As her testament specifies: "I desire that my body may lie unburied three days after my decease [...] and it is my desire that it shall not be touched but by those of my own sex [...] it is my desire that I may not be unnecessarily exposed to the view of anybody" (*Clarissa* 1413). Clarissa expresses her desire in terms of refusal: her written will continues to assert her cognitive will and deny her consent even after her death. Clarissa desires not to be opened, touched, or gazed upon — she wills (in both senses) that her body not be subjected to any further form of rape. She

specifically requests that Lovelace “not be permitted to see my corpse. But if [...] he insist[s] upon viewing *her dead* whom he ONCE before saw in a manner dead, let his gay curiosity be gratified. Let him behold and triumph over the wretched remains of one who has been made a victim to his barbarous perfidy” (1413).

Here, Clarissa again conflates death with the unconscious state during which she was raped, reaffirming the singular significance of the absence of her conscious will or consent. During the act that was, for Lovelace, *la petite mort*, Clarissa was dead-to-the-world.

Lovelace cannot reconcile himself to Clarissa’s absence, either during the rape or in fact of her death. He attempts to procure executorship over Clarissa, as if by controlling her legal will and the terms of her death, he can retroactively subdue the cognitive will which proved “absolutely invincible” in life (*Clarissa* 907). Lovelace imagines that he can assume this control by imposing his own will, in both senses, upon hers. He contends: “Although her will may in some respects cross mine, yet I expect to be observed. I will be the interpreter of hers” (1385). Lovelace presumes to be granted executorship of Clarissa’s will as a right of ownership. He claims: “Surely nobody will dispute my right to her. Whose was she living? Whose is she dead, but mine? [...] Whose then can she be but mine? [...] she is mine [...] nor could she dispose of herself but as I pleased [...] For is she not mine? Whose else can she be?” (1384-1385). Clarissa’s response is: “I am nobody’s” (1413). She resists the ownership, alterity, and contingency associated with sexual relation even as she laments her potential exclusion from

her family and ancestral vault. Instead, she grants executorship to Belford, Lovelace's best friend and principal correspondent. She entrusts Belford with both her will and her letters, and, on his assurance, believes that Lovelace's letters will provide a generous and accurate representation of characters and events. According to some critics, the text *Clarissa* produces and assembles gains authority through masculine editorial interpretation. Kahn, for example, describes the text as triply enshrouded in a "casket of male interpretation: Lovelace's evil appropriations and forgeries, Belford's benign posthumous collection, and Richardson's omniscient editorial apparatus" (Kahn 136). In this sense, Belford acts simultaneously as executor and executioner: in (re)producing *Clarissa's* text, he co-opts and kills her voice. But *Clarissa* does not sacrifice herself to her text any more than she martyrs herself to her virtue. Though both men presume to act as *Clarissa's* "interpreters," neither Lovelace's violation of her body and attempt to appropriate will/will, nor Belford's executorship and editorial control of *Clarissa's* texts, can subdue her. Whereas Pamela surrenders her narrative authority to Mr B in exchange for marriage, and reconstructs herself from his third-person perspective, *Clarissa* denies any masculine authority of or over her text, and posthumously continues to insist upon her own will, in and on her own terms.

Conclusion

The will towards death often proves problematic to reconcile within feminist theories of agency and subjectivity, and Clarissa's death is perhaps a catalyst for the critical conflict between what Jennifer Henderson describes as "the necrophilic fantasy of a lifeless female body and the fantasy, motivated by the fear of male violence, of pre-emptive self-annihilation" (Henderson 10). However, the interpretive context of the gothic mode allows for an affirmative reading of *Clarissa* as an epic narrative of the triumph of the will. This reading aligns itself with critical interpretations of death as a form of passive agency, and evidence of Clarissa's "ability to take matters into her own hands," which propose that her "death itself is a triumph, not a defeat" (MacAndrew and Gorsky 735). Within the representative framework of the novel, death is a direct means of resisting subjugation and rejecting the conditions of violent and enforced sexual relation. Significantly, the rape does not cause this response, as Clarissa insists from the beginning of the text that she would prefer death to any sexual relation, including both rape and marriage. Death becomes Clarissa's unconditional response to increasing insistence upon this relational imperative. Clarissa's will towards death enables an assertion of embodied subjectivity, as she inscribes upon her body her refusal of the conditions by which it is determined; as Downing suggests, death renders Clarissa "radically indeterminate" (Downing 168). As Lovelace seeks to subdue Clarissa as subject (rather than merely "master" her unconscious body through rape), Clarissa's willful demise

resists subjugation through an eternal confirmation and preservation of that subjectivity; death disengages Clarissa from imposed sexual relation, and removes her from external authority or determination. Death thus becomes the means by which Clarissa engages Irigaray's "being-with" the self, as opposed to to or for another in sexual relation. As Clarissa declares to Lovelace: "I will, now that I have escaped from you, and that I am out of the reach of your mysterious devices, wrap myself up in my own innocence (and then she passionately folded her arms about herself)" (797).¹²⁶ Clarissa's death fixes this self-embrace, signifying a unity or wholeness in herself that can be neither penetrated nor subdued.

Clarissa's death serves not only to disengage her permanently from the conditions of sexual relation, which both Lovelace and her family violently attempt to impose upon her, but also enables her to embody a rejection of those conditions through her will towards a state of radical passivity. Death literalises the stillness, immobility, and debility experienced by other gothic heroines in varying states of passivity, including fainting, sleep, and illness. Clarissa's death thus finalizes the interpretive trajectory of this dissertation, as the limit case study of passive agency. While Richardson's novel predates the emergence of the Gothic canon, his representative framework foregrounds the formula of the gothic mode, and not only does he illustrate the narrative potential of passive agency within this mode, but realises them completely in the death of Clarissa.

¹²⁶"'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity: / She that has that, is clad in complete steel" (Milton, *Comus* 2.420-421).

Clarissa's resistance to subjugation through sexual relation prefigures the plight of the gothic heroine, whose later negotiations of rape, murder, and marriage draw from the formula Richardson establishes. Clarissa's death, like the other forms of passive agency gothic heroines engage, exposes the instability of the oppressive systems that attempt to subjugate her through the violent imposition of sexual relation. William Warner suggests that the "bar or slash mark" separating heroine/villain, male/female, and subject/object in binaries of relational opposition can signify "love, reconciliation, and orientation toward the other" in a Hegelian dialectic, indicating the possibility of union amidst struggle (Warner, *Reading* 85). This project, however, proposes a disengagement from this relational contingency; rather than reproduce interpretations of subjectivity that rely on this contingency, the forms of passive agency this dissertation explores enable the assertion of embodied subjectivities that are not predicated on a hierarchised model of relation.

The discursive apparatus of hysteria perhaps enables an articulation of this rejection, and the proposal of alternative, embodied subjectivities articulated through passive agency. In his investigation of the *Invention of Hysteria* in Charcot's *Salpêtrière*, Georges Didi-Huberman suggests that hysteria "exists in an always stupefying temporality, composed of intermissions" (Didi-Huberman 74). He notes that the Greek root *hystérikē* "can be translated by 'she who is always late, she who is intermittent'" (110). The hysterical subject "perhaps experiences something like a *beside-oneself* in her relation to time, a *beside-oneself* that leaves

a wake, traces, and symptoms in the visible" (111). This experience of beside-oneself recalls Irigaray's vaginal metaphor of "being-two" as a form of being with the self, rather than to or for another. Didi-Huberman sees in hysteria the resistance to and refusal of relational identity I read as passive agency. He isolates within an hysterical monologue the word *no*, and suggests that "This *no* is the crux of the drama. And it is less the acme of the fiction underway, than a moment of the *rupture of the fiction*, the interruption of the spectacle itself" (257, original emphasis). For the gothic heroine, passivity is a means to assert and embody the "no" that is the crux of the gothic drama of virtue in distress. It signifies, as Eagleton describes, a "resolute turning of her face to the wall," and a refusal of the violent or oppressive conditions of subjectivity determined by sexual relation (Eagleton 90). When Clarissa asks, "Why, Mr Lovelace, must I be determined by your motions? — Think you that I will voluntarily give a sanction to the imprisonment of my person?," she anticipates the physical and psychological crises of future gothic heroines, and provides an example of how passive agency works to disrupt and resist this determination (*Clarissa* 942).¹²⁷

Negative or reductive interpretations of passivity that insist upon the heroine's weakness and debility fail to envision the constructive possibilities of passivity as it informs subjectivity, and dismiss the potential of passivity as a form of agency.

¹²⁷Compare Clarissa's rhetoric with Sibella's in Eliza Fenwick's gothic novel *Secresy* (1795). Echoing Clarissa, Sibella wonders: "Shall my uncle tell me that my actions are confined to the mechanical operations of the body, that I am an imbecile creature, but a reptile of more graceful form, the half finished work of nature, and destitute of the noblest ornament of humanity? [...]. He daringly asserts that I am born to the exercise of no will; to the exercise of no duties but submission" (Fenwick 74).

As this dissertation demonstrates, passivity is not limited to states of vulnerability, objectification, or subjugation, as it can enable the expression and assertion of subjectivities that are otherwise denied.

While the death of Clarissa provides thematic closure for this project's critical inquiry, it does not foreclose further interpretive possibilities or applications. The key critical aims of this dissertation are to expand theories of subject development to include passive agency, and to encourage a critical reinterpretation of passivity in analyses of gothic literature. This study gestures towards further possible readings of passivity both within and outside of the gothic mode. The *fin-de-siècle* gothic literary revival at the end of the nineteenth-century, for example, gave rise to a proliferation of representations of bodies in passive states, including unconscious, sick, dying and dead female characters such as those examined in this study. However, the period's preoccupation with social corruption and degeneration influenced the representation of these bodies, both introducing and popularising alternative modes of embodiment, including supernatural states, monstrous figures, and reanimation of the dead. Depictions of un-dead female characters, such as the titular vampire in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) and the "devils of the Pit" in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1898), for example, shift the representational framework of the gothic to reposition female characters as seductive antagonists, and the characters on whom they prey (both male and female) as victims of supernatural predation. Future studies could examine passive agency as a response to or rejection of alternative models

of sexual relation and hierarchised gender dynamics as enforced or imposed by monstrous female characters. Further analyses of passive agency could similarly inform studies of domestic fiction, and analyses of representations of passive heroines in the sentimental novel. This study could inform new interpretations of the power dynamics of sexual relation in these texts by reformulating conceptions of sensibility in terms of passive agency.

The narrative framework of the gothic mode centralises representations of passive agency in contexts of enforced sexual relation. Future projects, however, might consider how passivity signifies outside of the gothic model of “virtue in distress,” or in other relational contexts. Moreover, the effects of these representations on the narrative framework of the texts, such as the narrative gaps and lapses this dissertation describes, transform with the formal development and evolution of the novel. Narrative arrest in the epistolary context of Richardson’s *Pamela*, for example, signifies differently than in the “terror” and “horror” narrative styles popularised in gothic literature of the 1790s. Such differences could be further explored in relation to the narrative framework of the nineteenth-century gothic revival, or in more contemporary contributions to the development of the gothic mode, including film. Interpretations of visual representations of passivity, including depictions of inert or immobile women such as those included in this project, could be similarly enriched by affirmative readings of passivity. As the brief references in each chapter to texts that fall outside of the critical scope of this project demonstrate,

the wider interpretive implications and possibilities of passive agency are not limited to the gothic mode, or to the development of specifically female subjectivities, nor are they contingent upon gendered, historical, formal, or generic literary conventions. By expanding the critical and discursive possibilities of passivity, this project endeavours to broaden the scope of subject development in both literary theory and analysis, encouraging the emergence of new and alternative subjectivities that have hitherto lain silent, dormant, or undiscovered.

Works Cited

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review, 2001. 85-126.
- Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Atwood, Margaret. *Cat's Eye*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988.
- Austen, Jane. *Minor Works*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1954.
- . *Mansfield Park*. 1814. Ed. June Sturrock. Peterborough: Broadview, 2001.
- . *Emma*. 1816. Ed. Kristin Flieger Samuelian. Peterborough: Broadview, 2004.
- . *Northanger Abbey*. 1818. 2nd edition. Ed. Claire Grogan. Peterborough: Broadview, 2002.
- Bailin, Miriam. *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction: The Art of Being Ill*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Balzac, Honoré. *The Wild Ass's Skin*. 1831. Trans. Helen Constantine. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.
- Barker-Benfield, G J. "Sensibility and the Nervous System." *The Culture of Sensibility*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992.
- Bartolomeo, Joseph F. "Confessional Discourse and the (Un)gendering of the Gothic: *The Monk* and *The Italian*." *Matched Pairs: Gender and Intertextual Dialogue in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*. Newark: Delaware UP, 2002. 151-175.

- Bayer-Berenbaum, Linda. *Gothic Imagination: Expansion in Gothic Literature and Art*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1982.
- Beattie, James. "On Fable and Romance." *Dissertations Moral and Critical*. Strahan and Cadell: London, 1783.
- Belsey, Catherine. "Constructing the Subject, Deconstructing the Text." *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Robyn R Warhol and Diane Price Herndl. New Jersey: Rutgers, 1997. 657-673.
- Bernstein, Stephen. "Form and Ideology in the Gothic Novel." *Essays in Literature* 18.2 (Fall 1991): 151-165.
- Binhammer, Katherine. *The Seduction Novel in Britain: 1747-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.
- Blake, William. *The Complete Poems*. Newly Revised Edition. Ed. David V Erdman. New York: Anchor, 1988.
- Bordo, Susan. "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture." *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*. Ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1988. 87-117.
- Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Bowers, Toni. "Representing Resistance: British Seduction Stories, 1660-1800." *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*. Ed. Paula R Barkscheider and Catherine Ingrassia. Malden: Blackwell, 2005. 140-163.
- . *Force or Fraud: British Seduction Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660-1760*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.

- Brewer, Ebenezer Cobham. "Elden Hole." *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.
Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1898.
- Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic*.
Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992.
- Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Ed. Richard Nemesvari. Peterborough:
Broadview, 1999.
- . *Shirley*. 1849. Ed. Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith. Oxford: Oxford
UP, 2007.
- Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. 1847. 2nd edition. Ed. Linda H Peterson.
Boston: Bedford/St Martin's, 2003.
- Broome, Judith. "'Her lovely arm a little bloody': Richardson's Gothic Bodies."
Gothic Studies 8.1 (May 2006): 9-21.
- Bruhm, Steven. *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction*. Philadelphia:
Pennsylvania UP, 1994.
- Burney, Frances. *Evelina*. 1778. Ed. Edward A Bloom. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982.
- Byron, George Gordon, Lord. *The Major Works*. Ed. Jerome J McGann. Oxford:
Oxford UP, 2008.
- Cameron, Ed. "Matthew Lewis and the Gothic Horror of Obsessional Neurosis."
Studies in the Humanities 32.2 (December 2005): 168-200.
- Castle, Terry. *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's Clarissa*.
Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.
- . "P/B: Pamela as Sexual Fiction." *Studies in English Literature* 22.3 (Summer

1982): 469-489.

Cohen, Paula Marantz. "The Anorexic Syndrome and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel." *Disorderly Eaters: Texts in Self-Empowerment*. Ed. Lilian R Furst and Peter W Graham. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992. 125-139.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. Review of *The Monk*, by Matthew Lewis. *The Critical Review* 2.19 (February 1797): 194-200.

—. *Complete Poems*. Ed. William Keach. New York: Penguin, 1997.

—. Review of *The Italian*, by Ann Radcliffe. *The Critical Review* 2.23 (June 1798): 166-169.

Collins, Wilkie. *The Woman in White*. 1859. Ed. John Sutherland. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

Conger, Syndy McMillen. "The Reconstruction of the Gothic Feminine Ideal in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*." *The Female Gothic*. Ed. Juliann E Fleenor. Montréal: Eden, 1983. 91-106.

—. "Sensibility Restored: Radcliffe's Answer to Lewis's *The Monk*." *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression*. Ed. Kenneth W Graham. New York: AMS, 1989. 113-149.

Conway, Alison. *The Protestant Whore: Courtesan Narrative and Religious Controversy in England, 1680-1750*. Toronto: Toronto UP, 2010.

Copeland, James. *A Dictionary of Practical Medicine*. London: Longman, 1858.

Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa and Pamela. By a Lover of Virtue.

London: J Dowse, 1754.

Cummings, Katherine. *Telling Tales: The Hysteric's Seduction in Fiction and Theory*.

Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991.

Csengei, Ildiko. "'She Fell Senseless on His Corpse': The Woman of Feeling and

the Sentimental Swoon in Eighteenth-Century Fiction." *Romantic Psyche*

and Psychoanalysis. Ed. Joel Faflak. College Park: Maryland UP, 2008. Web.

22 May 2012.

Dacre, Charlotte. *Zofloya*. 1806. Ed. Adriana Craciun. Peterborough: Broadview,

1997.

Darwin, Erasmus. *The Botanic Garden Volume 2: Containing the Loves of the Plants*.

1791. Teddington: Echo, 2007.

DeLamotte, Eugenia C. *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century*

Gothic. Oxford: Oxford, 1990.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and*

Schizophrenia. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1987.

DeRosa, Robin. "'To Save the Life of the Novel': Sadomasochism and

Representation in *Wuthering Heights*." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language*

and Literature 52.1 (1998): 27-43.

Dick, Miriam. "Joseph Highmore's Vision of *Pamela*." *English Language Notes* 24.4

(June 1987): 33-42.

Dickens, Charles. *The Old Curiosity Shop*. 1840. Ed. Norman Page. New York:

Penguin, 2000.

- Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*. Trans. Alisa Hartz. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.
- Dijkstra, Bram. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986.
- Donaldson, Ian. *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.
- Doody, Margaret Anne. *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974.
- Dussinger, John A. "What Pamela Knew: An Interpretation." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69.3 (July 1970): 377-393.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.
- Eaves, T C Duncan. "'The Harlowe Family' by Joseph Highmore: A Note on the Illustration of Richardson's *Clarissa*." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 7.1 (1943): 88-96.
- . "Graphic Illustration of the Novels of Samuel Richardson, 1740-1810." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 14.4 (August 1951): 349-383.
- Eaves, T C Duncan and Ben D Kimpel. "Richardson's Revisions of *Pamela*." *Studies in Bibliography* 20 (1967): 61-88.
- . "An Unpublished Pamphlet by Samuel Richardson." *Philological Quarterly* 63.3 (1984): 401-409.

- Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. 1859. Ed. Valentine Cunningham. Oxford: Oxford, 1996.
- Ellis, Kate Ferguson. *The Contested Castle*. Urbana: Illinois UP, 1989.
- Fenwick, Eliza. *Secresy: or, The Ruin on the Rock*. 1795. 2nd edition. Ed. Isobel Grundy. Peterborough: Broadview, 1998.
- Ferguson, Frances. "Rape and the Rise of the Novel." *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987): 88-112.
- Fiedler, Leslie. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Stein and Day, 1966.
- Fielding, Henry. "An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews." 1741. *Anti-Pamela and Shamela*. Ed. Catherine Ingrassia. Peterborough: Broadview, 2004. 229-276.
- Forbes, John, Alexander Tweedie, and John Conolly, eds. *The Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine*. Vol. II. London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1833.
- Forster, Margaret. *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. London: Flamingo, 1993.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1978.
- Frank, Frederick S. "From Boudoir to Castle Crypt: Richardson and the Gothic Novel." *Revue des Langues Vivantes* 41.1 (1975): 49-59.
- Frega, Donnalee. "Speaking in Hunger: Conditional Consumption as Discourse in *Clarissa*." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 28.1 (Spring 1995): 87-103.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Ed. and Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth, 1919.

- Gamer, Michael. "Genres for the Prosecution: Pornography and the Gothic."
PMLA 114.9 (October 1999): 1043-1054.
- Geerken, Ingrid. "'The Dead Are Not Annihilated': Mortal Regret in *Wuthering Heights*." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 34.3 (Fall 2004): 373-406.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Gordon, Scott Paul. *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Gorsky, Susan Rubinow. "'I'll Cry Myself Sick': Illness in *Wuthering Heights*." *Literature and Medicine* 18.2 (1999): 173-191.
- Greenfield, Susan. "Veiled Desire: Mother-Daughter Love and Sexual Imagery in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*." *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 33.1 (1992): 73-89.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.
- Gwilliam, Tassie. *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.
- Haggerty, George. *Queer Gothic*. Urbana: Illinois UP, 2006.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995.
- Harlan, Elizabeth. "Sexual or Supernatural: Threats in Radcliffe's *The Italian*." *Horri-fying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature*. Ed. Ruth

- Bienstock Anolik. Jefferson: McFarland, 2007. 102-110.
- Harris, Jocelyn. "Grotesque, Classical and Pornographic Bodies in *Clarissa*." *New Essays on Samuel Richardson*. Ed. Albert J Rivero. New York: St Martin's, 1996. 101-116.
- Harol, Corrinne. "Faking It: Female Virginitly and Pamela's Virtue." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16.2 (January 2004): 197-216.
- Haywood, Eliza. *Love in Excess*. 1718. 2nd edition. Ed. David Oakleaf. Peterborough: Broadview, 2000.
- . "Anti-Pamela; or, Feign'd Innocence Detected; in a Series of Syrena's Adventures." 1741. *Anti-Pamela and Shamela*. Ed. Catherine Ingrassia. Peterborough: Broadview, 2004. 51-227.
- Headley, Maria Dahvana. "Brontitis." *The Best American Erotica: 2005*. Ed. Susie Bright. New York: Touchstone, 69-73.
- Hegel, G W F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. 1807. Trans. A V Miller. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.
- Henderson, Jennifer. "In(tro)ducing F/Phantasy." *Tessera* 17 (Winter 1994): 5-11.
- Herndl, Diane Price. *Invalid Women: Figuring Feminine Illness in American Fiction and Culture, 1840-1940*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1993.
- Heywood, Leslie. *Dedication to Hunger: The Anorexic Aesthetic in Modern Culture*. Berkeley: California UP, 1996.
- Hinton, Laura. "The Heroine's Subjection: Clarissa, Sadoomasochism, and Natural Law." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32.3 (1999): 293-308.

- Hoeveler, Diane Long. *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*. University Park: Pennsylvania UP, 1998.
- Inchbald, Elizabeth. *A Simple Story*. 1791. Ed. J M S Thompkins. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. 1974. Trans. Gillian C Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.
- . *This Sex Which Is Not One*. 1977. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.
- . *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*. 1983. Trans. Mary Beth Mader. Austin: Texas UP, 1999.
- . *I Love to You*. 1990. Trans. Alison Martin. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- . *To Be Two*. 1997. Trans. Monique M Rhodes and Marco F Cocito-Monoc. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- . "Why Cultivate Difference? Toward a Culture of Two Subjects." *Paragraph* 25 (November 2002): 79-90.
- James, Robert. *A Medicinal Dictionary: Including Physic, Surgery, Anatomy, Chymistry, and Botany, in All Their Branches Relative to Medicine*. London: T Osborne, 1745.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Magical Narrative: Romance as Genre." *New Literary History* 7 (1975): 135-163.
- Janin, Jules. *The American in Paris During the Summer: Being a Companion to the "Winter in Paris."* Longman: London, 1844.

- Johnson, Claudia. *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1995.
- Kahn, Madeleine. *Narrative Transvestism: Rhetoric and Gender in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991.
- Kelly, Gary. *English Fiction of the Romantic Period: 1789-1830*. London: Longman, 1989.
- Keymer, Thomas and Peter Sabor. *The Pamela Controversy*. 6 vols. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001.
- . *Pamela in the Marketplace*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.
- Kilgour, Maggie. *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Kinkead-Weekes, Mark. *Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1973.
- Krishnan, Lakshmi. "'It has devoured my existence': The Power of the Will and Illness in *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *Wuthering Heights*." *Brontë Studies* 32 (March 2007): 31-40.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon S Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.
- de Laclos, Choderlos. *Dangerous Liaisons*. 1782. Trans. Helen Constantine. New York, Penguin 2007.
- The Lady's Companion; or, Sketches of Life, Manners, and Morals, at the Present Day*. Edited by a Lady. New Illustrated Edition. Philadelphia: H C Peck & Theo, 1854.

- Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. *The Rose and the Key*. 1871. Ed. Frances Chiu. Kansas City: Valancourt, 2007.
- Leiman, Jessica L. "'Booby's fruitless operations': The Crisis of Male Authority in Richardson's *Pamela*." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 22.2 (Winter 2009): 223-248.
- Lewis, Matthew. *The Monk*. 1796. Ed. Howard Anderson. Intro. Emma McEvoy. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. 1690. Ed. Peter H Nidditch. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975.
- Lovecraft, H P. *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. 1927. New York: Dover, 1973.
- MacAndrew, Elizabeth and Susan Gorsky. "Why Do They Faint and Die?: The Birth of the Delicate Heroine." *Journal of Popular Culture* 8 (1974): 735-745.
- Macdonald, D L. "'A Dreadful Dreadful Dream': Transvaluation, Realization, and Literalization of *Clarissa* in *The Monk*." *Gothic Studies* 6.2 (November 2004): 157-171.
- Mackenzie, Henry. *The Man of Feeling*. 1771. Ed. Brian Vickers. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.
- Macpherson, Sandra. "Lovelace, Ltd." *ELH* 65 (1998): 99-121.
- . *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2010.
- Massé, Michelle. *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.

- Maturin, Robert. *Melmoth the Wanderer*. 1820. Ed. Douglas Grant. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- McKeon, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1987.
- Messier, Vartan P. "The Conservative, the Transgressive, and the Reactionary: Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* as a Response to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*." *Atena* 25.2 (December 2005): 37-48.
- Meyer, B. "Till Death Do Us Part: The Consumptive Victorian Heroine in Popular Romantic Fiction." *Journal of Popular Culture* 37.2 (2003): 287-308.
- Miller, D A. *Narrative and Its Discontents*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981.
- Miller, Louise M. "Author, Artist, Reader: 'The Spirit of the Passages' and the Illustrations to *Pamela*." *QWERTY* 4 (October 1994): 121-130.
- Miller, Nancy K. "The Exquisite Cadavers: Women in Eighteenth-Century Fiction." *Diacritics* 5 (Winter 1975): 37-43.
- Milton, John. *The Riverside Milton*. Ed. Roy Flannagan. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.
- Myrone, Martin. *Gothic Nightmares: Fuseli, Blake and the Romantic Imagination*. London: Tate, 2006.
- Nichols, Nina daVinci. "Place and Eros in Radcliffe, Lewis, and Brontë." *The Female Gothic*. Ed. Juliann E Fleenor. Montréal: Eden, 1983. 187-206.

- O'Connell, Lisa. "Vicars and Squires: Religion and the Rise of the English Marriage Plot." *The Eighteenth Century* 52.3-4 (Fall/Winter 2011): 383-402.
- Pamela Censured: In a Letter to the Editor*. London: J Roberts, 1741.
- Peterson, Audrey. "Brain Fever in Nineteenth-Century Literature: Fact and Fiction." *Victorian Studies* 19 (1976): 445-464.
- Piozzi, Hester Lynch. *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. During the Last Twenty Years of His Life*. London: Cadell, 1786.
- Plath, Sylvia. *Ariel*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*. Ed. David Galloway. New York: Penguin, 2003.
- . "The Philosophy of Composition." 1846. *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Leonard Cassuto. New York: Dover, 1999.
- Pope, Alexander. *The Major Works*. Ed. Pat Rogers. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Polidori, John William. *The Vampyre*. 1819. Ed. D L Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf. Peterborough: Broadview, 2007.
- Praz, Mario. *The Romantic Agony*. Trans. Angus Davidson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970.
- Radcliffe, Ann. *The Romance of the Forest*. 1791. Ed. Chloe Chard. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.
- . *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. 1794. Ed. Bonamy Dobrée. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- . *The Italian*. 1797. Ed. Frederick Garber. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- . "On the Supernatural in Poetry." *New Monthly Magazine* 16.1 (1826): 145-152.

- Reeve, Clara. *The Old English Baron*. 1777. Ed. James Trainer. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.
- Richardson, Samuel. *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*. 1740. Ed. Thomas Keymer. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.
- . *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*. 1801. Revised edition. Ed. Peter Sabor. New York: Penguin, 1980.
- . *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady*. 1748. Ed. Angus Ross. New York: Penguin, 2004.
- . *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*. 1753. Ed. Jocelyn Harris. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1972.
- . *Selected Letters*. Ed. John Carroll. Oxford: Clarendon, 1964.
- . *The Correspondence*. Ed. Anna Letitia Barbauld. New York: AMS, 1966.
- Roche, Regina Maria. *Clermont*. 1798. Ed. Natalie Schroeder. Kansas City: Valancourt, 2005.
- Rossetti, Christina. *Complete Poems*. Ed. Betty Flowers. New York: Penguin, 2001.
- Rymer, James Malcolm, or Thomas Peckett Prest. *Varney, the Vampire*. 1847. Ed. Sir Devendra P Varma. New York: Arno, 1970.
- Scott, George Ryley. *The History of Torture Throughout the Ages*. London: Torchstream, 1954.
- Scott, Sir Walter. *The Bride of Lammermoor*. 1819. Ed. Fiona Robertson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. New York: Methuen,

1976.

—. "The Character of the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel."

PMLA 96 (1981): 255-270.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. G R Hibbard. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

—. *King Lear*. Ed. Stanley Wells. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

—. *Romeo and Juliet*. Ed. Jill L Levenson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

—. *Titus Andronicus*. Ed. Eugene M Waith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

Shapira, Yael. "Where the Bodies are Hidden: Ann Radcliffe's 'Delicate' Gothic."

Eighteenth-Century Fiction 18.4 (Summer 2006): 453-476.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. 1818. 2nd edition. Ed. D L Macdonald and Kathleen

Scherf. Peterborough: Broadview, 1999.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *Zastrozzi*. 1810. London: Hesperus, 2002.

Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-*

1980. New York: Penguin, 1984.

Silver, Anna Krugovoy. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge:

Cambridge UP, 2002.

Smith, Charlotte. *Emmeline*. 1788. Ed. Loraine Fletcher. Peterborough: Broadview,

2003.

Soloviova, Natalia. "Radcliffe's Plot of Female Development." *The Crossroads of*

Gender and Century Endings. Ed. Alcinda Pinheiro et al. Lisbon: Edições

Colibri, 2000. 39-47.

Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor*. New York: Vintage, 1978.

- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. "Female Orders of Narrative: *Clarissa* and *The Italian*." *Rhetorics of Order / Ordering Rhetorics in English Neoclassical Literature*. Ed. J Douglas Canfield and J Paul Hunter. Newark: Delaware UP, 1989. 158-172.
- Stähler, Axel. "Embryonic Creatures and Wonders of Psychology (I): Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* as Iconotext." *Anglistik* 19.1 (March 2008): 7-38.
- Stephen, Karin. *The Wish to Fall Ill: A Study of Psychoanalysis and Medicine*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1960.
- Stephens, Kelly. "Declining to Die: Anorexia Nervosa and the Nineteenth-Century Female Poet." *Australasian Victorian Studies Annual* 1 (1995): 97-107.
- Stephenson, Raymond. "Richardson's 'Nerves': The Physiology of Sensibility in *Clarissa*." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49.2 (Spring 1988): 267-285.
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. 1898. Ed. Glynnis Byron. Peterborough: Broadview, 1998.
- Storme, Julie A. "'An Exit so Happy': The Deaths of Julie and Clarissa." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 14.2 (June 1987): 191-210.
- Stothard, Thomas, illus. "Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady." *The Novelist's Magazine*. Vols. 14-15. London: J Harrison, 1784.
- Straub, Kristina. "Reconstructing the Gaze: Voyeurism in Richardson's *Pamela*." *Gender: Literary and Cinematic Representations*. Ed. Jeanne Ruppert. Gainesville: Florida UP, 1994. 66-81.
- Summers, Leigh. *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset*. Oxford: Berg, 2001.

- Sussman, Charlotte. "‘I wonder whether poor Miss Sally Godfrey be living or dead’: The Married Woman and the Rise of the Novel." *Diacritics* 20.1 (Spring 1990): 88-102.
- Swift, Jonathan. *The Writings of Jonathan Swift*. Ed. Robert A Greenberg and William B Piper. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Thompson, Helen. *Ingenuous Subjection: Compliance and Power in the Eighteenth-Century Domestic Novel*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 2005.
- Thorpe, Douglas. "‘I Never Knew My Lady Swoon Before’: Lady Dedlock and the Revival of the Victorian Fainting Woman." *Dickens Studies Annual* 20 (1991): 103-125.
- Tinter, Adeline R. "The Sleeping Woman: A Victorian Fantasy." *Pre-Raphaelite Review* 2.1 (1978): 12-26.
- Torgerson, Beth. *Reading the Brontë Body: Disease, Desire, and the Constraints of Culture*. New York: Palgrave, 2005.
- Turner, James. "Novel Panic: Picture and Performance in the Reception of Richardson’s *Pamela*." *Representations* 48 (Autumn 1994): 70-96.
- Vrettos, Athena. *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.
- Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. 1764. Ed. Frederick S Frank. Peterborough: Broadview, 2003.
- Ward, Maryanne. "A Painting of the Unspeakable: Henry Fuseli’s ‘The Nightmare’ and the Creation of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*." *The Journal*

of the Midwest Modern Language Association 33.1 (Winter 2000): 20-31.

Warner, William. *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

—. *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750*. Berkeley: California UP, 1998.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. London: Pimlico, 1957.

Wilt, Judith. "He Could Go No Farther: A Modest Proposal about Lovelace and Clarissa." *PMLA* 92.1 (January 1977): 19-32.

Winter, Kari J. "Sexual/Textual Politics of Terror: Writing and Rewriting the Gothic Genre in the 1790s." *Misogyny in Literature*. Ed. Katherine Anne Ackley. New York: Garland, 1992. 89-103.

Wordsworth, William. *The Borderers*. 1797. Ed. Robert Osborn. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.

Zigarovich, Jolene. "Courting Death: Necrophilia in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*." *Studies in the Novel* 32.2 (Summer 2000): 112-128.

Zschirnt, Christiane. "Fainting and Latency in the Eighteenth Century's Romantic Novel of Courtship." *Germanic Review* 74.1 (1999): 48-66.

Appendix

This appendix demonstrates the breadth and frequency of Clarissa's will to die over the course of the entire text. Below is a list of quotations in which she asserts her will, as a wish or explicit preference for death, and in hopeful anticipation of its arrival. All references are to the Penguin edition (2004), edited by Angus Ross.

"I have sometimes wished that it had pleased God to have taken me in my last fever" (41)

"Madam, I would rather die than — " (94)

"save me, save me, if you can, from this heavy evil! — I had rather be buried alive, indeed I had, than have that man!" (101)

"I am afraid there will be murder. To avoid that, if there were no other way, I would most willingly be buried alive" (142)

"I would die rather than have Mr Solmes" (167)

"But death will I choose, in any shape, rather than that man" (180)

"Could I have been sure of being struck dead at the altar before the ceremony had given the man I hate a title to my vows, I think I could have submitted to have been led to it. But to think of living *with*, and living *for*, a man one cannot

abide, what a sad thing is that!" (190)

"I will never be that Solmes's wife — I will die first!" (191)

Clarissa's father, Mr Harlowe "would have come up in his wrath, at my refusing to see Mr Solmes: but my brother and sister prevailed upon him to the contrary. I wish he had! — and, were it not for his own sake, that he had killed me" (191)

"How can I promise what I can sooner choose to die than to perform?" (202)

"I am determined against Mr Solmes, were it to cost me my life" (266)

"I would sooner choose death, than Mr Solmes" (269)

"I would sooner die than be that man's wife" (298)

"you shall sooner follow me to the grave *indeed* — I will undergo the cruellest death: I will even consent to enter into the awful vault of my ancestors, and to have that bricked up upon me, than consent to be miserable for life — And, Mr Solmes, (turning to him) take notice of what i say; *this*, or *any* death, I will sooner undergo (that will soon be over) than be yours, and for *ever* unhappy!" (305)

"I will sooner die than go with you!" (374)

"Depend upon it, I will die sooner than be Mr Solmes's" (376)

"I will die rather than have that man" (377)

“Death would have been much more welcome to me than such a sight, on such an occasion, in behalf of a man so very, very disgusting to me!” (506)

“how much rather, I think, should I should choose to be wedded to my shroud than to any man on earth!” (514)

“[My brother] thinks he does well to point out death and despair to me. I wish for the one, and every now and then, am on the brink of the other” (561)

“I cannot bear the life that I live” (567)

“we thought she should have died, rather than have done as she has done!” (585)

“Kill me! kill me! — if I am odious enough in your eyes, to deserve this treatment; and I will thank you! — Too long, much too long, has my life been a burden to me! — or, wildly looking all around her, give me but the means, and I will instantly convince you that my honour is dearer to me than my life!” (725)

“’tis a relief to die” (see Paper X: 893)

“you have killed my head [...] But had it not been better to have put me out of all your ways at once?” (895)

“I *will* go — If you kill me, women, I won’t go up again” (905)

“If I fall, though by my own hand, inquisition will be made for my blood: and be

not out in thy plot, Lovelace, if it *should* be so — Make *sure* work, I charge thee: dig a hole deep enough to cram in and conceal this unhappy body: for, depend upon it, that some of those who will not stir to protect me living, will move heaven and earth to avenge me dead!" (911)

"'Twill be a mercy, said she, the highest act of mercy you can do, to kill me outright upon this spot — This happy spot, as I will in my last moments call it! [...] let thy pointed mercy enter!" (913)

"The lady tells Dorcas that her heart is broken; and that she shall live but a little while" (916)

"Would they but kill me, let them come, and welcome. I will bless the hand that will strike the blow; indeed I will" (929)

"Let me die here! Let me die here! were her words; remaining jointless and immoveable till Sally and Mrs Sinclair hurried in" (935)

"But Oh that it were not a sin, she passionately exclaimed, on making this poor concession, to put an end to her own life" (936)

"I dare to die, Lovelace — and the person that fears not death is not to be intimidated into a meanness unworthy of her heart and principles!" (940)

"Stop where thou art! — Nor, with that determined face, offer to touch me, if

thou wouldst not that I should be a corpse at thy feet" (950)

"she told Mabel she was sure she should not live long" (966)

"I would choose the cruellest death rather than to be his" (992)

"since all my own hopes of worldly happiness are entirely over; let me slide quietly into my grave" (1013)

"Let me repeat that I am quite sick of life; and of an earth in which *innocent* and *benevolent* spirits are sure to be considered as *aliens*, and to be made sufferers by the *genuine sons* and *daughters* of *that earth*" (1020)

"I will rather die at your feet, than be carried to the woman's" (1052)

"The unhappy lady fainted away when she was taken out of the chair at the officer's house [...] Sally, as a favour, offered to carry her to her former lodgings: but she declared they should carry thither a corpse, if they did" (1053)

Sally "could not prevail upon her to taste a morsel, or drink a drop, she said, This is wrong, *Miss Harlowe!* Very wrong! — Your religion, I think, should teach you that starving yourself is self-murder" (1054)

"I had now as live die here in this place, as anywhere [...] I will die with you, and in this very corner" (1066)

“The lady, I really think, would choose death rather than thee” (1080)

Her reason for selling her clothing, “she told them, was that she should never live to wear them” (1083)

“my refuge must be death; the most painful kind of which I would suffer, rather than be the wife of one who could act by me as the man has acted” (1106)

“I can but *once die*; and if life be spared me but till I am discharged from a heavy malediction which my father in his wrath laid upon me, and which is fulfilled literally in every article relating to this world, it is all I have to wish for; and death will be welcomer to me than rest to the most wearied traveller that ever reached his journey’s end” (1106)

“I have much more pleasure in thinking of death, than of such a husband” (1115)

“What then, my dear and only friend, can I wish for but death? — And what, after all *is* death? ’Tis but a cessation from mortal life: ’tis but the finishing of an appointed course: the refreshing inn after a fatiguing journey: the end of a life of cares and troubles; and, if happy, the beginning of a life of immortal happiness” (1117)

“I am persuaded, as much as that I am now alive, that I shall not long live [...] That God will soon *dissolve my substance*; and *bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living*” (1118)

“And, besides, I am upon a better preparation than for an earthly husband”

(1121)

“It would be death immediate for her to see you [...] I then reproached him (with vehemence enough, you may believe) on his baseness, and the evils he had made you suffer: the distress he had reduced you to: all your friends made your enemies: the vile house he had you carried to: hinted at his villainous arts: the dreadful arrest: and told him of your present deplorable illness, and resolution to die rather than have him” (1138)

“were I sure I should live *many years* I would not have Mr Lovelace: much less can I think of him, as it is possible I may not live *one*” (1139)

“she thinks her first and *only* fault cannot be expiated but by death” (1153)

“I have more satisfaction in the hope that in one month there will be an end of all with me, than in the most agreeable things that could happen from an alliance with Mr Lovelace” (1176)

“my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than life” (1192)

“I must say I dwell on, I indulge (and, strictly speaking, I enjoy) the thoughts of death. For believe me [...] that there is such a vast superiority of weight and importance in the thought of death, and its hoped-for happy consequences, that it in a manner annihilates all other considerations and concerns” (1306)

“Oh hasten, good God, if it be thy blessed will, the happy moment that I am to be decked out in this all-quieting garb!” (1339)

“She seemed disappointed when he told her she might yet live two or three days; and said she longed for dismissal! — Life was not so easily extinguished, she saw, as some imagine — *Death from grief* was, she believed, *the slowest of deaths*” (1341)

“[she] refused to lie down, saying she should soon, she hoped, lie down for good” (1350)

“rejoice with me that all my worldly troubles are so near their end. Believe me, sirs, that I would not, if I might, choose to live” (1356)

“What is dying but the common lot? — The mortal frame my *seem* to labour — but that is all! — It is not so hard to die, as I believed it to be! — The preparation is the difficulty” (1361)