Sex, Violence, and the Fantastic: Mapping Sexual Violence Against Women in Gothic Novels

by

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Class of 2014

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in English

Middletown, Connecticut April, 2014
## Table of Contents

Introduction: The Shifting of the Gothic Genre ..........................................................1

Chapter 1: The Marvelous in the Monk: Repression Realized ..........................................11

Chapter 2: Fellow Feeling: Facilitating Fear and the Formation of Ghosts ......................35

Chapter 3: “Fascination of the Fearful”: Fostering Violence .........................................61

Conclusion: The Escape ...............................................................................................82

Works Cited ..................................................................................................................86
Introduction: The Shifting of the Gothic Genre

The Gothic is a subgenre of the novel that begins with *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, written in 1764, and grows into full force in the 1790s with novels by authors such as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis.¹ In her book, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, Eve Sedgwick characterizes the Gothic genre as one recognizable by its tropes: “an oppressive ruin, a wild landscape, a Catholic or feudal society” (8). The genre begins in England but moves to America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century with authors like Charles Brockden Brown. Patrick O’Malley defines the Gothic as “the thematic or discursive eruption of a traumatic past into the present, distorted into a suggestion of the supernatural. The representation of this eruption acts as the localization simultaneously of repulsion and of desire […] That is, the Gothic is the representation of the terror and fascination produced by the refusal of the past to remain in the past” (12). O’Malley’s definition demonstrates what the Gothic is in relation to the minds of the characters of the novel. My thesis will show the ways in which the Gothic is used to unearth latent desires within the characters and how it uses repression as a theme that incites desire within the novel.

Women in Gothic novels are met with terror and violence, and they must use their wits to escape the horrors the men create for them. Within the novelistic discourse of the Gothic, women are typically reduced to one or two characteristics, related to beauty and feminine virtue. They are admired by the men for these characteristics, but this

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¹ My understanding of the Gothic as a genre has stemmed from readings of Eve Sedgwick’s *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, in particular her account of the tropes present in most Gothic novels, Peter Garrett’s *Gothic Reflections*, specifically his explanation of the historical timing of the Gothic, and Jerrold Hogle’s *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, particularly the introduction, for its situating the Gothic within the world of the novel.
admiration generally reduces the women to the traits found desirable by the men. This reduction is connected to the process of *spectralization*, which Terry Castle defines as the “new obsession with the internalized images of other people,” (“The Spectralization of the Other 125). The real woman ceases to matter, and her false image is considered superior by the men of the novel. This image is created by focusing on one specific aspect of the woman and disregarding the rest of her qualities that make her a whole person. This spectralization occurs on a formal level too, when the novel uses the women as a device to unearth latent desires. The connection between the women and the supernatural on the formal level affects the lives of the women on a thematic level. By linking the use of the women to the use of the supernatural, when the supernatural is revealed to be either natural or unnatural, the fate of the woman is determined.

Tzvetan Todorov is a literary theorist who examines the Gothic genre for patterns. In his book *The Fantastic* he divides all Gothic novels into two main categories: marvelous and uncanny. He defines the fantastic as “an event which cannot be explained by the natural world” (Todorov 25). The fantastic can be described as a preliminary or temporary state rather than a fundamental characteristic of the fictional world because all novels eventually leave the realm of the fantastic. The fantastic is a moment of uncertainty, when the event in question has neither been characterized as supernatural nor natural, but remains undefined. When the event is deemed supernatural and remains so in the novel, the novel enters the realm of the marvelous. When the event is explained in terms of the natural world, then the novel enters the realm of the uncanny. (See figure 1.) An important aspect of this shift is that it requires the same level of understanding from both the reader and the characters within the novel. When residing in the realm of the
fantastic the “hesitation [is] common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from ‘reality’ as it exists in the common opinion” (41). Therefore, the way the reader moves through the novel is just as important in determining the subgenre of the novel as the movement of the characters.

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<th>Figure 1. Todorov’s Scheme</th>
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<td>Marvelous</td>
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<td>Uncanny</td>
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I use these categories to demonstrate that where a novel falls in this scheme determines whether or not the women of the novel will leave with their lives. The two main categories I use are the marvelous and the uncanny. I then divide the uncanny into two subcategories of the explained supernatural and the psychological uncanny. (See figure 2.) In my thesis, the explained supernatural comprises the novels of Ann Radcliffe, in which she “[frames] the role of sensation and suspense in her work by explaining the supernatural, a move which was widely equated with a rejection of ‘delusion’ and a recovery of the rule of law” (Watt 9). Therefore, by the end of the novel any odd occurrences that seemed like they were motivated by supernatural means are explained in a way that allows the characters and the reader to leave the novel without altering their idea of the rules of the natural world. The second category is the psychological uncanny. Marshall Brown explains that, in his view, the Gothic has a “preoccupation with the mental on a general level, transcending specificities of situation and historical location” (xiv). This is what I would like to argue with my second subcategory of the uncanny.
Some uncanny novels do not have supernatural elements but merely uncanny elements that provoke confusion in the minds of the characters, revealing psychological issues.

Figure 2. Todorov’s Scheme, with Subcategories

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<th>Fantastic</th>
<th>Marvelous</th>
<th>Uncanny</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explained Supernatural</td>
<td>Psychological Uncanny</td>
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I have chosen nine Gothic novels to demonstrate that membership to one of the four supernatural categories I have set up determines whether or not the women of the novel will be subject to violence or death. In marvelous novels, the supernatural is never explained and the women of the novel lose their lives. In uncanny novels, the supernatural in the physical world is explained away or the uncanny is merely psychosocial and the heroines of the novels escape with their lives. The category in which a novel is placed depends on how the character and the reader interpret the odd events of the novel, and how these events are explained by the end of the novel. I further categorize the novels by placing them on a spectrum of exciting to fascinating. Marshall Brown argues that “fascination rather than excitement is the hypnotic core of the great gothic novels”(4). Specifically, for Brown, exciting novels show the either frightening or violent moments to the reader, while in fascinating novels the reader merely hears about them. I take issue with Brown’s point and argue that Gothic novels can be placed on a spectrum from very exciting, in which the reader may actually see a character’s brutal
death, to entirely fascinating, where the only odd or potentially supernatural moments occur entirely within the characters minds. Placing the novels on this spectrum furthers the understanding of the relationship between the use of the supernatural and the representation of women. The first three novels I consider are *The Castle of Otranto*, *Vathek*, and, *The Monk*. Each of these falls into the marvelous category because the supernatural components of the novel are never explained by rules of the natural world. Ann Radcliffe’s novels fall into the explained supernatural category because by the end of the novel the supernatural events are explained in a way that allows the reader and the characters to maintain their understanding of reality. Charles Brockden Brown’s novels are psychologically uncanny, in that the odd moments in the novel are not so much supernatural, but they give both the reader and the characters pause, and provoke confusion and uncertainty. Organizing the novels into these categories demonstrates that the use of the supernatural is coordinated with the fates of women in the novels; when the supernatural reigns supreme the women are killed, and when the supernatural is either explained away or is more psychological by nature then the women survive. Each of these novels fits into the categories on a both a thematic and a formal level. (See figure 3.)
These nine novels illustrate what I take to be the range of the Gothic novel.

Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* is considered the first Gothic novel and resides on the far end of the marvelous spectrum. Walpole attempted to blend two different kinds of Romantic writing: ancient and modern, focusing on both supernaturalism and psychological realism (Gamer xiv). His tale, like the other marvelous novels, uses violence and supernatural forces to display psychology. The women of the novels are used to unearth latent desires, but they also become victims of those very desires. Ann Radcliffe’s novels demonstrate a shift in the Gothic genre from the marvelous to the uncanny. She is the founder of her own school of the genre, which I follow Watt in calling the explained supernatural (Watt 9). The seemingly supernatural beings and events are revealed by the end of the novel to have natural causes. However, this is not the only difference between the marvelous and the uncanny. The feeling evoked by the supernatural aspects of Radcliffe’s novels is not unmitigated terror, as it is in the
marvelous novels of Walpole and Lewis. Instead Radcliffe produces the feeling of the uncanny, the “species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar” (Freud 124). Characters feel a combination of fascination and fear when they experience an uncanny moment in the novel. It is this fascination and a desire to unmask the uncanny that leads the heroines of the novels to success and safety. Brown’s novels are the only American Gothic novels I examine, and the transatlantic shift also alters the genre itself. The uncanny in Brown focuses even more intensely on character psychology. The separation of the supernatural from the physical world parallels the separation of the violence from the physical being of women.

As the central case studies of my three chapters, I have chosen *The Monk*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *Wieland; or, The Transformation* because of their prominence in the genre and their ability to represent the spectrum of the fantastic while also illustrating the difference between marvelous and uncanny novels. The fantastic elements in *The Monk* are more exciting and immediate, allowing the reader to see physical threats and violence. Therefore, “instead of offering the reader the tantalizing suggestion of ‘terror,’ as Radcliffe was praised for doing, Lewis provided scenes of ‘naked horror’” (Watt 90). *The Monk* is marvelous in that the supernatural events are never explained by the laws of the natural world. The physical presence of the devil and the transportation to an alternate universe wasteland result in Ambrosio’s demise. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is less exciting, and more psychological, in that many of the seemingly supernatural events are merely shadows just missed by the eyes of the characters, and the reader is for the most part shielded from any violence that occurs. Therefore the novel falls into the uncanny category because the supernatural does not remain the driving force of the novel.
*Wieland* is the least exciting and the most fascinating of the three due to the fact that the supposed supernatural events occur entirely in the minds of the characters, and it is therefore uncanny when the seemingly supernatural voice is revealed to be that of a ventriloquist. However, the violence in the novel is of such a stark and brutal nature that it highlights the entirely mental and internal nature of the supernatural. The intensity of the physical violence on the fringes of the narrative serves to emphasize the mental violence that assaults the heroine.

These novels in particular are useful in looking at what Michel Foucault characterized as the “relationship between sex and power in terms of repression” (Foucault 6). Repression is a theme in the novels, but repression also works to incite characters with desire. Ambrosio, of *The Monk*, believes that his natural drive has been repressed by his practices as a monk. Through the thematization of negative repression the novels positively work to incite desire in the characters and the reader. Foucault explains that there is an “institutional incitement to speak about [sex]” (18), and this discussion leads people to believe that they have been repressed. And in the case of these novels, when considering the treatment of women, what are often repressed, positively and negatively, are desires that either directly or indirectly involve the women of the novel. The management of illicit desires demonstrates the issue of self-governance that concerned eighteenth century Europe. Thomas Laqueur characterizes this time as “the age that invented the notion of morality as self-governance; it insisted that all humans shared a common moral capacity and the specific psychological capacities that we needed to exercise our freedom” (19). This concept caused much anxiety over whether or not people truly had this ability to govern themselves. Many Gothic novels feature
individuals who are cut off from society, and this isolation allows their latent vices to become manifest, away from the gaze of society. In the novels I have chosen, these desires erupt from the characters in an outpouring of violence. Women become the objects and the outlets for these desires, resulting in violence against them. I am illustrating the point that what Laqueur presents as a general problem, the Gothic demonstrates as a problem with male desire in relation to subordinated women.

The violence against women in Gothic novels is prompted on both a thematic and a formal level. The men of the novels frequently reduce women to their physical selves. Most often, this reduction has a sexual connotation that Foucault calls “the hystericization” of women’s bodies (104). This means that the men see the woman’s body as saturated with sex, reducing her from a character to one characteristic. Seeing a woman as solely a sexual being results in the men disregarding any possible alternative desires on the part of the woman, leading to sexual violence against her. Women are also dehumanized through a process of spectralization. A character will create an image of another character, that is different than the real version. Spectralization results in the other being “reduced to a phantom—a purely mental effect, or image, as it were, on the screen of consciousness itself. The corporeality of the other—his or her actual life in the world—became strangely insubstantial and indistinct: what mattered was the mental picture, the ghost, the haunting image” (Castle, “The Spectralization of the Other” 125). The real person ceases to matter, and the mental image becomes more desirable. When a woman does not conform to the spectralized image and is unwillingly spectralized, this opens the door for violence and rape. The direction of spectralization is typically from men towards women in Gothic novels.
At the formal level women are associated with the fantastic in the Gothic. The supernatural and women are utilized as devices. According to the logic of the genre, women are used to precipitate the manifestation of latent vices within men. Through the realization of vices women become objects of desire, resulting in them becoming objects of violence. The actualization of that vice is typically connected with the revelation about the supernatural, either a discovery that the supernatural is merely a trick that can be understood by natural laws, or is in fact a real supernatural event. The climactic violence against women typically occurs at this moment. Following this logic the novel establishes a hierarchy of feminine virtue. Only the women who resist spectralization, resist erasure at the hands of men, and resist their own reduction to an object of desire, survive.
Chapter 1: The Marvelous in The Monk: Repression Realized

Chaste, and gentle, you and fair,
perfect mind and form possessing,
you would be some good Man’s blessing:
but Alas! This line discovers,
that destruction o’er you hovers;
lustful Man and crafty Devil
Will combine to work your evil;
and from earth by sorrow drive,
soon your Should must speed to heaven.

- Matthew Lewis, The Monk

Scholars agree that the Gothic genre generally creates “metaphors to represent a model of the human self” (Sedgwick 11), which demonstrates that there are depths of the human psyche that reside below the social façade. The split of the self creates a barrier that allows for the internal self to formulate a separate identity without regulation from the social or institutional world. This doubleness is the crux of many other Gothic tropes and the issues the characters deal with throughout the novels.

Patrick O’Malley considers the relationship between the two selves in the Gothic as a matter of a Catholic past haunting a Protestant present. He explains that the English Gothic novel is a Protestant genre that “provides a rhetoric for increasing anxiety around Catholicism and sexual transgression in England itself” (O’Malley 32). The past that is haunting the present is characterized as the Protestant interpretation of Catholic practices, including celibacy in the monastic order. O’Malley explains that Matthew Lewis, author of The Monk, “recirculates precisely the trope of sexual excess hiding under the façade of sexual deficiency that had structured the most scathing Protestant attacks on Roman Catholicism since the Reformation” (O’Malley 39). Therefore, the subject of anti-Catholicism is also concerned with the self, but more specifically the internal self that is produced by Catholic practices. The self is made up of the external self that is dominated
by actions, and the internal self that houses the individual’s desires. The extent to which the desires are present in the actions demonstrates the degree to which the self is spilt. An understanding and recognition of both sides of the self would result in the conception of a personal identity. Thomas Laqueur is interested in the internal self, and how that self can become plagued by lascivious, sexual desire. In his account of how the discourse of solitary sex changed in the eighteenth century he explains that masturbation became horrifying because “it was secret in a world in which transparency was of a premium; it was prone to excess as no other kind of venery was, the crack cocaine of sexuality; and it had no bounds in reality, because it was a creature of imagination” (Laqueur 21). The Gothic genre expresses these cultural themes and anxieties in the eighteenth century, depicting problems that arise from a duality of self. In what Todorov would call the marvelous version of the Gothic, it is only through supernatural events and violence that the barrier between the façade of the outer self and the desires of the internal self can be broken, unleashing the internal self (Sedgwick 14). I will argue that the unleashing of the internal self does indeed beget violence, but specifically, violence against women. In Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, the use of the unexplained supernatural events parallels the use of women as sex objects, resulting in a dehumanization of the women characters, permitting violence against them.

*The Monk* is a tale that falls into the marvelous category because, in the final moments of the novel, the demonic reigns supreme and the reader is exposed to a world with unfamiliar rules. The shift from internal and unrealized desires to the discovery of sexual appetites for objects outside the self demonstrates that Ambrosio’s life is close to the pure form of the uncertainty present in the fantastic. However, when the seduction is
attributed to a test administered by the devil, the novel begins to leave the fantastic and move towards the marvelous. In the marvelous, “supernatural elements provoke no particular reaction either in the characters or in the implicit reader” (Todorov 54). The supernatural elements are in no way surprising to Ambrosio, in particular because they represent that which he has feared throughout the novel: retribution for his sins. When we view *The Monk* as a marvelous novel, the intervention of the devil can be interpreted as an unsurprising, and almost expected, revelation from the point of view of the characters. Both women and the supernatural catalyze Ambrosio’s release from repression, which unearths his vanity, lust, and most importantly, a willingness to transgress from internal fantasies to outward realization. The novel uses supernatural events to indicate latent villainy in the same way that women are used to incite desire and sin, and the implicit link between an event and the sexualized female body reduces women to mere tools. This dehumanization results in violence against the women of the novel. Sedgwick explains that the level to which the internal and the external self are separated requires extreme force to breakdown the barrier between the two. The implementation of women to break down these walls results in violence akin to collateral damage, demonstrating not only that women are hurt in service to the novel, but also that this sacrifice is merely part of the thematic process, indicating a lack of concern for their fates.

Ambrosio’s insistence for his asceticism and purity as well as his fear of temptation demonstrate both pride and awareness of latent desires and the possibility that they could be realized:

“Who but myself has passed the ordeal of Youth, yet sees no stain upon his conscience? Who else has subdued the violence of strong passion and an impetuous temperament, and submitted even from the dawn of life to voluntary retirement?... May I not be tempted from those paths, which till
Ambrosio knows of temptation but has not yet been in a position where he could be tempted. He says that he knows of no other man who has “subdued the violence of a strong passion,” which indicates that he is prone to intense desire, but that he has not allowed himself to be in a position in which he could desire another person. He has been on a specific “path” his entire life, and is concerned about the possibility of something leading him astray, on a separate path. The distinction of the path demonstrates Ambrosio’s inability to live a life of moderation, and that he follows a lifestyle to its extreme. He takes pride in his ability to embody the qualities of an ascetic monk. He has chosen a life of celibacy, and entered into a life of almost complete solitude. Ambrosio is concerned that temptation will cause him to completely change his life’s direction, revealing a susceptibility to his “strong passions.” He seems to think that the way to quell his intense emotion is to allow himself what he would consider a smaller indulgence—lusting over his portrait of the Virgin Mary. Sedgwick’s characterization of the Gothic trope in which a character should be joined with something outside itself but is prohibited from doing so, is displayed in this moment (Sedgwick 14). Ambrosio’s practices as a monk are a thematization of Sedgwick’s trope of “restriction from what one should have” because being a monk keeps Ambrosio from relationships with women. This interpretation allows for an anti-Catholicism reading of the text because Ambrosio’s chosen path requires celibacy, an aspect of Catholicism that seemed unnatural to eighteenth-century Protestant readers. Because of these restrictions, he feels forced into another taboo practice, masturbation. Laqueur explains, “The Enlightenment project of
liberation—the coming into adulthood of humanity—made the most secret, private, seemingly harmless, and most difficult to detect of sexual acts the centerpiece of a program for policing the imagination, desire, and the self that modernity itself had unleashed” (19). The concerns with Catholicism are very similar to the concerns with masturbation: they focus too much on the physical and the self. Ambrosio’s internal desires are a problem because they have not been regulated by society due to his practices as a monk. He furthers these unregulated desires through solitary sex. The anxieties surrounding Catholic practices and masturbation in the eighteenth century are present in the problems Ambrosio experiences when he attempts to quell his strong passions as he leaves his solitary life and begins the process of entering a more properly social world.

Ambrosio’s desires for the painting in his room display a tendency to form an idealized picture of a sexual object that is restricted from him. Prior to his relationship with Matilda, Ambrosio’s only feelings of desire were roused by this painting of the Virgin Mary:

“What Beauty in that countenance!” He continued after a silence of some minutes; “How graceful is that turn of that head! What sweetness, yet what majesty in her divine eyes! How softly her cheek reclines upon her hand! Can the Rose vie with the blush of that cheek? Can the Lily rival the whiteness of that hand? Oh if such a Creature existed, and existed but for me! Were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom! Gracious God, should I then resist the temptation?” (40)

Ambrosio characterizes the woman in the painting with heavenly language, noting her “majesty” and “divine eyes.” The depiction of the Virgin Mary as a heavenly figure demonstrates Ambrosio’s tendency to worship the physical, and that idolatry for him is a lustful practice. He continues in this vein when he compares her to a rose, and questions if even a rose could “vie with the blush of that cheek.” The use of the competitive words
“vie” and “rival” give the image an element of strength and power over earthly things.

Finally, the emphasis on a desire to be “permitted” to touch this woman demonstrates that he does not possess her in any meaningful way. The language indicating superiority situates the woman in the painting high above the earthly plane where Ambrosio resides. Ambrosio’s sexual desire for the image of the Virgin Mary demonstrates an extreme level of idolatry that is reminiscent of eighteenth-century English fears that both Catholicism and masturbation lead to “the wrong kind of pleasure, the wrong kind of imagination, the wrong kind of engagement with their inner selves” (Laqueur 22). Because these appetites are not regulated by the social world, they manifest in seemingly unnatural ways. It is the private nature of these desires that allows them to reach idolatrous levels. “Catholic theology threatens to equate the created order with the sacred,” which is exactly what Ambrosio’s worship of the image of the Virgin Mary does (O’Malley 41). Ambrosio’s idolatry of the painting has led to the formation of an idealized woman. The idolatry has allowed Ambrosio to form appetites while maintaining the distance necessary for the true extent of those appetites to remain unrealized.

The physical embodiment of the image of the Virgin Mary in Matilda is used as a tool for the supernatural force in the novel to make Ambrosio’s latent desires manifest. Before his affair with Matilda, Ambrosio’s appetites were restricted to a painting of the Virgin Mary in his bedchambers. However, once Matilda exposes herself to Ambrosio and expresses her feelings for him, he learns that the painting is a rendering of Matilda as the Virgin Mary. His once private and solitary lustings become something potentially problematic when the painting he once admired transforms into a living woman. Prior to Matilda, Ambrosio’s musings over the painting allowed him to explore his appetites
without fear of social stigma. The presence of Matilda forces him to confront what these desires mean in a social setting. This becomes a problem for Ambrosio because he has fostered the “wrong kind of desire,” for the painting, therefore he will now engage in the wrong kind of relationship with Matilda. Patrick O’Malley points out that “Ambrosio’s relationship with Matilda parallels his relationship with the Virgin Mary, the mark of idolatrous Catholicism” (40). He satisfied his solitary desires through his idolatrous masturbation, but with the introduction of Matilda he feels repression due to the presence of a desire more susceptible to social stigma. It is clear that Ambrosio is aware of his latent desires as evidenced by his vanity for having “subdued violence of strong passion.” Therefore, when his masturbatory image is transformed into a live woman, his reaction is to believe that he has been repressed since he is presented with social desires that are unknown to him. The presence of a woman who seems to be the embodiment of a painting forces Ambrosio to no longer be satisfied with his masturbatory image, and to now negotiate his solitary sex in the social sphere. The use of the woman to break through the boundary between Ambrosio’s internal desires and external façade reduces her to a tool for the furthering of the theme in the novel.

Ambrosio feels a sexual attraction to both Antonia and Matilda, and the way he presents his attraction reveals the different ways he characterizes the possible sexual acts with each woman. After learning of Matilda’s affection for him, Ambrosio is plagued by visions of her. In these dreams she is instigating sexual acts and promising that she will love him forever. In their actual interactions, however, she does profess her love for him, but asks for no physical acts that would require him to leave the monastery. However, in the dreams her love is manifested through physical acts. “Matilda stood before him in his
dreams and his eyes again dwelt upon her naked breast. She repeated her protestations of eternal love, threw her arms round his neck, and loaded him with kisses: He returned them; He clasped her passionately to his bosom, and…the vision was dissolved” (67). Ambrosio’s dreams not only focus on Matilda’s body, but also her actions in the scene. He admires her, which is not unlike his interactions with her and other women in real life, but his focus in the dream is how she is physically interacting with him. He describes how she “threw her arms around his neck,” indicating that Ambrosio perceived aggression in her instigation of the sexual act. However, when he attempts to return the advances, the dream ends. Ambrosio continues to experience these lust-filled dreams in which Matilda features as the seductress:

The same lust-exciting visions floated before his eyes: Matilda, in all the pomp of beauty, warm, tender, and luxurious, clasped him to her bosom and lavished upon him the most ardent caresses. He returned them as eagerly, and already was on the point of satisfying his desires, when the faithless form disappeared, and left him to all the horrors of shame and disappointment. (84)

The use of the terms “clasped” and “lavished upon him” characterizes Matilda as the seducer while Ambrosio simply “returns” in kind. In both of Ambrosio’s fantasies of a sexual encounter with Matilda he plays a passive role, in which he simply mimics what Matilda does to him. In this way, Ambrosio in his dreams seems to relinquish culpability for his desires, and Matilda is the only one to blame. Understanding that this is the way in which Ambrosio fantasizes about her is integral to examining the rest of his relationship with Matilda. Because he takes the passive role in his fantasies, he is projecting onto Matilda a desiring agency independent of her actual feelings for him.

Unlike Matilda, Antonia makes Ambrosio feel like the dominant aggressor and these feelings do not provoke dream-like images. When Ambrosio meets Antonia, he is
taken aback by her beauty, “and her affliction seemed to him as new luster to her charms” (241). She comes to Ambrosio for help and he is very intrigued by this interaction. His most recent relationship with a woman was one dominated by sex, in which he was more the seduced than the seducer. Antonia arouses some very different feelings in him, and though he does not dream of her, he thinks intensely about how she affects him:

He felt not the provocation of lust; No voluptuous desires rioted in his bosom; Nor did a burning imagination picture to him the charms which Modesty had veiled from his eyes. On the contrary, what He now felt was a mingled sentiment of tenderness, admiration and respect. A soft and delicious melancholy infused itself into his soul, and He would not have exchanged it for the most lively transports of joy. (242)

Antonia does not awaken false images in Ambrosio’s mind; instead, he is careful to describe her physical attributes as “charms” rather than entering into specific descriptions. The reason he cannot see her body is because “Modesty” has obscured it. Attributing “Modesty” with the responsibility of veiling Antonia and pointing out that she herself is not active in the veiling illuminates how Ambrosio characterizes Antonia’s role in her sexuality as much more passive than Matilda’s. Unlike his feelings for Matilda, his desire for Antonia does not manifest itself in a dream world. His feelings are described as a “mingled sentiment,” indicating a level of uncertainty that he did not feel in the dreams in which he played the more subordinate role as the responder to Matilda’s advances. By seeing Antonia as more passive, Ambrosio feels a different kind of admiration. He enjoys the pain provoked by Antonia’s unattainable nature and the fact that he must hold himself back from pursuing Antonia.

The development in Antonia’s passivity is furthered by Ambrosio’s characterization of himself as a seducer and the separation he creates between her as a person and her desirable qualities. He exclaims, “And to seduce such innocence, to use the
confidence reposed in me to work her ruin… Oh! It would be a crime, blacker than the world ever witnessed! Fear not, lovely Girl! Your virtue runs no risqué from me. Not for Indies would I make that gentle bosom know the tortures of remorse.” (243) Ambrosio promises that he will not seduce Antonia’s “innocence” and not ruin her “virtue.” Ambrosio here only describes acts that he thinks he should not do; he does not address any action on the part of Antonia. Similar to his use of the term “Modesty,” the ideas of “virtue” and “innocence” are treated as Antonia’s identity, and he does not speak about her directly. He is attempting to distance his idea of Antonia from sex as much as possible. Ambrosio is trying to create an image of Antonia that serves his needs, an image of her that allows him to keep his sexual desires at bay.

Ambrosio demonstrates the idea of a latent internal self with his use of the phrase “confidence reposed in me”. Ambrosio is focusing on Antonia’s less sexual qualities to keep him from inciting his desires. Therefore, Ambrosio is operating on two different levels, and splitting up Antonia’s characteristics to serve the needs of each level. Any idea of her sexuality is being overlooked by the external self, leaving only her virtuous qualities. Sedgwick describes another Gothic trope as “live burial,” which can be applied to the idea of both an internal and external self, but places more emphasis on the fact that the internal self is indeed alive (Sedgwick 22). The horror of the live burial is that the internal self is aware that there is another, external world happening simultaneously. Ambrosio calling his confidence “reposed” denotes a kind of resting state, indicating that this internal self is present, just asleep. The being in the “live burial” trope is in a way aware of the external world. This furthers the connection to Ambrosio because his internal self had been affected by his external practices as a monk. Therefore, the internal
self has been repressed, and asleep, but can be awakened and brought to the surface. His external self is attempting to look at Antonia in a way that will not rouse his internal desires. By enumerating Antonia’s virtuous qualities, he is ignoring her whole person, and focusing on the aspects of her person that allow his internal and external self to remain separate.

During the first stages of attraction, Ambrosio responds differently when he believes a woman is a more aggressive and active sexual object than when he thinks a woman is passive. Ambrosio is much more explicit in his descriptions of Matilda, and he does not shy away from describing physical characteristics when indicating how he would respond to Matilda in a sexual act. With Antonia, however, he uses vague terms such as “modesty,” “charms,” and “virtue” when explaining what he will not do to Antonia, which creates a distance between these aspects of womanly innocence the sexual act would affect and Antonia as a whole woman. Ambrosio does not want to mar Antonia’s virtue with his desire for her. Additionally, his tendency to dream of Matilda depicts a desire to link Matilda to his conceptions of sex as much as possible, which forces her into the role of a provider of sexual pleasure of which he is the recipient. Conversely, Ambrosio avoids creating false images of Antonia and tries not to link Antonia to sex. In this situation he views himself as the party who would introduce sex to Antonia. Unlike in his relationship with Matilda, here he sees his possible relationship with Antonia as one in which he has the power to set the terms. In this way, the concept of repression becomes less present in his desires as they shift towards Antonia. Initially repression was part of Ambrosio’s structure of desire, and it incited desire for Matilda. With Antonia he is actually attempting to repress desires that are incited by her presence.
Matilda, with her protestations of love, reveals her inner self to him, actualizing his desire. Now that the familiar has moved to unfamiliar and back to familiar again, uncertainty is no longer present, and Ambrosio wishes to provoke the same feelings in Antonia that Matilda did for him.

Ambrosio’s feelings for Matilda and Antonia change greatly during and around the time when he is feeling the effects of his appetites. Ambrosio’s attraction for Matilda intensifies after he learns that Matilda has fallen ill as a result of her attempts to save him from the same infection. That evening “Ambrosio rioted in delights till then unknown to him: Swift fled the night, and the Morning blushed to behold him still clasped in the embraces of Matilda” (224). The narrator is careful to emphasize that Ambrosio does not pause or feel remorse in this moment of physical pleasure; the “Morning” is the only being to feel embarrassed by the act. The narrator’s personification of “Morning” withholds any information about how Ambrosio feels after satisfying his appetite, and allows the placing of blame to be suspended during the scene. However, the use of the phrase “riot in delights” demonstrates Ambrosio’s feelings of lack of control, which places more agency on his desire and Matilda’s actions and less on any concept of rational thought. Ambrosio’s feelings of rioting and being clasped by Matilda illustrate his feelings of powerlessness. Whether it is to Matilda or his own appetites, Ambrosio has relinquished control.

After many encounters, sex becomes more commonplace for Ambrosio, and this shift alters both his feelings for Matilda and his feelings of culpability. Initially Ambrosio acknowledges some kind of moral responsibility for the sexual acts. However, his desire to continue the physical encounters overrides any idea of responsibility he may feel. The
narrator notes his mental state and explains, “Shame and remorse no longer tormented him. Frequent repetitions made him familiar with sin, and his bosom became proof against the stings of Conscience” (235). Prior to his relationship with Matilda, Ambrosio had latent sexual desires, but they were never realized until Matilda told Ambrosio she loved him. Once he becomes familiar with sex he begins to separate the act from the person with whom he “sins.” The familiarity with the act allows Ambrosio to no longer feel remorse for the sin, but instead to feel desire for alternative partners. Before he had sex with Matilda, his image of sex was wrapped up in his mental picture of her; now he no longer equates Matilda with sex. Matilda incites in Ambrosio the desire for something outside of himself. This production of appetite gives Ambrosio the ability to blame Matilda for the sin and the possibility of the fulfillment of desire with other objects.

The narrator notes the difference between sex and love, which further emphasizes Ambrosio’s tendency to conflate the physical act with emotional devotion. Ambrosio’s reaction to Matilda telling him she loved him was to create fantasies of Matilda instigating sexual acts. After having sex with Matilda many times, “he was led to her arms, not by love, but the cravings of brutal appetite” (236). Ambrosio responded to love with sex and equated the two concepts. Additionally, the description of the brutality of Ambrosio’s appetite emphasizes its intensity and focus on the body as such rather than the person as a whole. He can now separate the two, which leads him to the discovery that he no longer sees Matilda as the embodiment of sex, but merely an outlet for his desires. Sex did not increase his yearning for Matilda and he “gazed on every other female with more desire “ (236). The use of the term female here demonstrates Ambrosio’s emphasis on the physical sex of the individual, rather than recognition of the
woman as more than a body. As Ambrosio becomes more confident with the employment of his appetites, he no longer needs Matilda to incite desire, and is prepared to look for other objects to desire. With this shift comes the end of the repression and Ambrosio now aims to provoke desire in another.

Ambrosio’s decision to discontinue sex with Matilda and pursue Antonia opens up new problems when he faces desire for an unwilling object. Once Ambrosio decides that he wants to have sex with Antonia, he makes two attempts to seduce her. His first attempt begins with a belief that Antonia does indeed want to please him physically. However, when Ambrosio attempted physical advances on Antonia she “prayed, wept, and struggled: Terrified to the extreme, though at what She knew not, She exerted all her strength to repulse the Friar, and was on the point of shrieking for assistance when the chamber-door was suddenly thrown open” (262). Though Antonia does not understand the physical process of sex, she has enough understanding to attempt to defend herself from Ambrosio. Here Ambrosio takes the desire he discovered with Matilda and now attempts to project that desire onto Antonia, albeit forcibly. Ambrosio tries to incite desire in Antonia and is searching for signs of that desire, but all she tries to do is physically repel him. However, his appetites have grown too rampant to allow him to pause and consider whether or not this desire he perceives is truly inside Antonia. He instead forms his own understanding of her desires. His neglect to search for a common feeling in Antonia demonstrates how his relationship with Antonia will not involve an understanding of Antonia beyond her physicality.

The use of words like “power,” and “devouring” to describe Ambrosio’s desires, in addition to the narrator’s use of the terms “ill-regulated” and “frantic” demonstrate
how Ambrosio’s appetite strips women of any personhood beyond the physical. After failing in his attempts to “gratify his lust” with Antonia, Ambrosio is eager to the point of madness which augments the depiction of sex, creating a more developed interchange of power. Ambrosio has turned to a magical potion to allow him to have sex with Antonia while she is unconscious:

No sooner was the enchantment performed, than He considered her to be absolutely in his power, and his eyes flamed with lust and impatience…He remained for some moments devouring those charms with his eyes, which soon were to be subjected to his ill-regulated passions… His desires were raised to that frantic height, by which Brutes are agitated. He resolved not to delay for one instant longer the accomplishment of his wishes, and hastily proceeded to tear off those garments, which impeded the gratification of his lust. (300-1)

The moment the potion takes affect Antonia is incapable of making her own sexual decisions, and Ambrosio believes her to be “absolutely in his power.” This belief facilitates his treatment of an individual as nothing more than an outlet for his desire. This idea is furthered when Ambrosio’s passion is described as “devouring her charms.” Because Ambrosio wants to take her charms, he is transforming her characteristics into objects of desire. He is ignoring the possibility of a self that resides below the surface, and turning her into a fantasy through the act of “devouring.” These all-encompassing terms show the ways in which Ambrosio’s appetite is a force that consumes a whole person, and thereby depicts sex as a stealing of the possibility of an identity. The narrator shows us that these desires are devoid of reason and are purely animalistic by calling Ambrosio a brute who cannot regulate his more base emotions. Ambrosio’s appetites are described as “ill-regulated” because they have not met the scrutiny they would have in a public life, and therefore he has never learned “self-governance” (Laqueur 19). This
moment is important, as it illustrates the way Ambrosio’s internal self is subject to desire. When desire is brought to the surface, his activity is dominated by a search for pleasure. Ambrosio is losing his ability to reason, and therefore his humanity, when his internal lust is present in his external self. Because Ambrosio’s internal desires and external actions have not been in sync, the moment the internal is brought to the surface it erupts with a destructive intensity. The novel demonstrates that a division between the internal and the external leads to incongruous emotions and violence.

Ambrosio’s determination becomes violent after his two attempts at forcing sex with Antonia fail. However, this does not diminish his determination. After the attempts, Ambrosio is at a loss about “what course to pursue. Debarred the presence of Antonia, He had no hopes of satisfying that passion, which has now become a part of his existence… He swore, that cost what it would, He still would possess Antonia” (264). Ambrosio believes that his very existence depends on “possessing” Antonia. This implies a transfer of both power and identity. He continues in this way by demonstrating that he will do whatever it takes to “possess” Antonia. Ambrosio has not found a suitable way to combine his internal self and external self into a holistic identity. Therefore, the idea of possession goes far beyond the satisfaction of a base desire and extends to the use of Antonia to fill a void of identity and humanity. Again, Ambrosio is trying to reunite with something that he would naturally have, which should be consensual relations with a woman, but his inability to avoid extreme actions leads him to rape, displaying the anti-Catholic aversion to celibacy. O’Malley characterizes celibacy in *The Monk* as “a type of polymorphous perversity masquerading as sexual innocence” (39). Therefore, the restriction from sex does not create a void of appetite, but fosters appetites that are
figured as unnatural by eighteenth-century English Protestants. Ambrosio’s practices as a monk restrict him from a Protestant conception of sexual normalcy, and lead him to sexual deviance.

The consistent use of language of domination and the implication that Antonia was made for pleasure indicate how the violence of the sexual act is motivated by a desire that robs Antonia of her personhood. When Ambrosio attempts to coax Antonia into consenting to have sex with him, he notes as evidence that they should have sex together that “every feature, look, and motion declares you formed to bless, and to be blessed yourself!” (382). Calling Antonia “formed to bless,” reduces her existence to pleasure and one purely motivated by the body. This concept is furthered during the sexual act in which, “Heedless of her tears, cries and entreaties, He gradually makes himself Master of her person, and desisted not from his prey, till He had accomplished his crime and the dishonor of Antonia“ (383-4). This moment is significant because Ambrosio is not only dominating Antonia sexually, but he is also deemed “the master of her person.” The rape of Antonia is the most explicit demonstration of Ambrosio seeing Antonia’s body and personhood as one and the same, so that by forcing himself on her physically he has robbed her of the possibility of being in possession of an internal self. This moment exemplifies Sedgwick’s explanation that once the self is separate and part of the self is internalized, “only violence or magic, and both of singularly threatening kind, can ever succeed in joining them” (Sedgwick 14). Ambrosio’s release from repression and combining of the internal and external self from repression requires violence. This violence comes in the form of raping Antonia, thereby separating Antonia’s physical and
external self from her internal self, disregarding her desires, and inflicting the same
doubleness he suffered from onto her.

Ambrosio’s appetites have undergone many transformations since his first
moment of arousal for the painting in his bedchambers. He frequently conflates sex with
the woman, and therefore his appetite for sex results in violence against the woman.
Additionally, by defining sex as a representative part of someone’s identity, Ambrosio is
stealing identity when he engages in sexual violence. In *The History of Sexuality*,
Michael Foucault examines the ways in which sexual encounters are signifiers for
transfers of power. He explains that one of the ways sex has been used as a transfer of
power is through the “hysterization” of the woman’s body. This hysterization results in
the assumption that women’s bodies are “saturated with sexuality” (Foucault 105-6). In
this instance, men impose “sexuality” on women and therefore make assumptions about
women’s desires. These assumptions give men the power to read a woman’s countenance
to fit their needs; Ambrosio does this with both Matilda and Antonia. With Matilda, this
idea allows him to blame Matilda for his appetites: he calls her a harlot who forced him
into sex. He tells Antonia that she was made for sex, which gives him the ability to rape
her and still remain within the mental framework that these violent acts are not wrong.
However, the power inequality as depicted in the sexual encounters between Ambrosio
and Matilda, and Ambrosio and Antonia do not entirely conform to the system set up by
Foucault’s hystericization of the woman’s body. Ambrosio’s appetites demonstrate that
he is not satisfied in a position of power, despite the fact that his actions rob the women
of their power and agency. This idea becomes clearer as Ambrosio attempts to navigate
his appetites when he finds himself unsatisfied. To Ambrosio, Matilda’s allure is lost
when she is no longer presenting him with an unfamiliar concept of sex. Therefore, he must move to the something new. Now that he no longer needs Matilda to incite feelings of desire, he moves on to Antonia. His pursuit of Antonia is an attempt to incite those same, unfamiliar desires in her. The hystericization of the woman’s body present in Ambrosio’s pursuit of Antonia and Matilda depict the ways in which he only cares about the physical self, disregarding the person as a whole.

Ambrosio’s focus on his sin after “rioting in delights” displays appetites that are separate from his relationship with Matilda and therefore an emphasis on the physical pleasure. After many sexual encounters Ambrosio tires of Matilda and no longer sees her as an outlet for his appetite. His lack of interest is evident in his blame of Matilda for causing him to sin, his attempts to detach himself from her, and his attempts at friendship without physical pleasure. Ambrosio immediately blames Matilda for the first realization of his desire:

“Dangerous Woman” said He: “Into what an abyss of misery have you plunged me! Should your sex be discovered, my honour, nay my life, must pay for the pleasure of a few moments! What can now be done? How can my offence be expiated? What atonement can purchase the pardon of my crime? Wretched Matilda, you have destroyed my quiet for ever!” (223)

Ambrosio no longer describes their interactions as “rioting in delights,” but as “the pleasure of a few moments.” This description is much more rooted in reality and does not use euphemism to describe the encounter. The emphasis on the pleasure of the act is wholly physical, and disregards the other participant in the act. Additionally, Ambrosio describes this “crime” as his, and says the he will be the one whose honor and life is on the line. In this way, even though he is chastising Matilda, he is taking responsibility for his actions. This seems to indicate that, though he does not control his desires, the
appetite belongs to him and is not solely a product of Matilda’s seduction. Therefore his concept of sex is returning to the ideas present when he was alone with the painting, with no consideration for the sexual outlet he has objectified.

Ambrosio has begun to take responsibility for his sin, but he now finds the appetites Matilda engendered in him disgusting, which leads both to his own self-loathing and to an incentive to find new objects to desire. As he considers leaving Matilda he thinks, “Matilda gluts me with enjoyment even to loathing, forces me to her arms, apes the Harlot, and glories in her prostitution. Disgusting!” (244) Ambrosio is no longer interested in the sex that Matilda provides him. He is characterizing his appetites as satiable, and because Matilda ”gluts” him, he is implying that Matilda is giving him too much pleasure. He says that she “forces” him to come to her, indicating that he would prefer fewer encounters. He is discovering a separation between his desire for sex and having sex with Matilda. He no longer finds enjoyment in fulfilling his desires entirely, and wants a level of disappointment when attempting to satisfy his appetite. Furthermore, the depictions of Matilda as a “harlot” who “glories in her prostitution” forces her into the role of not just a purely desirable object, but an object whose sexuality indicates a lack of morality. The emphasis on morality here demonstrates Ambrosio’s feelings of superiority. Because Ambrosio feels superior to Matilda, he no longer finds her desirable. Contrasting these feelings to those of reverential awe for the painting of the Virgin Mary depict the necessity for not only an inequality of power, but the necessity of feelings of inferiority for Ambrosio to feel desire. Matilda no longer fulfills Ambrosio’s criteria for a desirable object. For Ambrosio, satiety is not satisfying, he prefers to pursue his appetite, rather than have another fulfill his desires entirely. This moment demonstrates how
Ambrosio both sees women as inherently hysterical and sexualized, believing that sexual desire lies latent in Antonia, as it did in him.

Once Ambrosio is satiated after ravishing Antonia, he responds with the same hatred and blame that he felt for Matilda. He berates Antonia, “Fatal Witch! Was it not thy beauty? Have you not plunged my soul into infamy? Have you not made me a perjured Hypocrite, a Ravisher, an Assassin!” (385). Ambrosio blames Antonia for a more serious crime than he did Matilda. With Matilda he was concerned with his sin and how that fit within the framework of his current identity as a monk. In this situation, he is more concerned with what he has become; he is not breaking the rules of his identity but has taken on a new one. This is reminiscent of Ambrosio’s concerns prior to any interactions with Matilda and Antonia. He worried about the new environment, one in which he would be around people, and questioned, “May I not be tempted from those paths, which till now I have pursued without one moment’s wandering?” (40). When he has the opportunity to explore his appetites, he takes them to a violent extreme. The state of his appetites dictates Ambrosio’s understanding of his identity. Once he allows his desires to run free, he becomes a “Hypocrite, a Ravisher, an Assassin.” Ambrosio does not take responsibility of his actions and blames women for unearthing his hidden desires.

The supernatural aspects of the novel are isolated to Ambrosio’s attempts to overpower Antonia and his final moments of retribution for his sins. Matilda provides Ambrosio with “constellated Myrtle” that when a spell is administered will produce “a death-like slumber” in the victim (278). She further explains that “In this state you may satisfy your desires without danger of being discovered; since when day-light shall dispel
that effects of the enchantment, Antonia will perceive her dishonor, but be ignorant of the Ravisher” (278). The specific use of the term “death-like slumber” links the implementation of the supernatural to the characterization of women as objects. When this spell is administered, the woman is reduced to a semi-living state, something between life and death. This suspension furthers the link between women and the supernatural. The use of the myrtle in the spell is the thematization of the suspended nature of the fantastic. The spell is not immediately explained in a way that would place the event in the category of the uncanny or the marvelous. The situation of the spell in the space of the fantastic without the resolution of either the uncanny or the marvelous parallels the result of the spell: the woman’s suspension between life and death.

Additionally, the supernatural—the implementation of the myrtle—acts as a vehicle for Ambrosio to satisfy his violent desires. Therefore, women and the supernatural are linked on both the thematic level and a formal level in the text.

While in prison for Antonia’s murder, Ambrosio is visited by a ghost-like image of Matilda who shows him how to give his soul to the devil in order to escape the prison. However, when the devil arrives, he takes Ambrosio to a desolate cliff and reveals that Matilda was sent to him by the devil after observing how Ambrosio lusted after the picture of the Virgin Mary. He also explains that Antonia was Ambrosio’s sister:

Tremble, abandoned Hypocrite! Inhuman Parricide! Incestuous Ravisher! Tremble at the extent of your offences! And you it was who thought yourself proof against temptation, absolved from human frailties, and free from error and vice! Is pride then a virtue? Is inhumanity no fault? Know, vain Man! That I long have marked you for pretty: I watched the movements of your heart; I saw that you were virtuous from vanity, not principle, and I seized the fit moment of seduction. I observed your blind idolatry of the Madonna’s picture. I bade a subordinate but craggy spirit assume a similar form, and you eagerly yielded to the blandishments of Matilda. Your pride was gratified by her flattery; Your lust only needed an
opportunity to break forth; You ran into the snare blindly, and scrupled not to commit a crime, which you blamed another with unfeeling severity. (439-440)

The devil reveals to Ambrosio how his sins did not begin when he first discovered his appetites with Matilda, but were present long before he had an outlet for his desires. It is because of his vanity that Ambrosio had subdued his appetites, not because of any true belief in virtue. Ambrosio considered his idolatry of the painting to be a sufficient means of both managing his lust and maintaining his pride. The devil perceived these solitary indiscretions and decided to put Ambrosio’s appetites to the test. By tapping into his pride, Matilda unleashed his lust, uncovering the fact that Ambrosio’s sins were never far below the surface.

The ways in which typical Gothic tropes, as defined by Sedgwick, work in the novel demonstrate the particular arguments that are emphasized on a thematic level. The differences between the internal and external selves of Ambrosio and the attempt to have these two lives proceed in tandem encapsulates Sedgwick’s concept of the “live burial” trope. Additionally, the trope that considers the separation of a character from that which he seeks is evident in Ambrosio’s separation from women by the institution of Catholicism. These separations can only be unified through the use of supernatural forces and violence. It is here that we enter into the world of anti-Catholicism in eighteenth-century Protestant England. O’Malley explains that “Catholicism [makes] sexualization of religion possible, by its synthesis of the mortal and the divine” (41). Ambrosio’s worship of his painting of the Virgin Mary awakens his lustful internal self. Ambrosio’s celibacy and the violence that ensues due to the necessity of a formation of two selves can be interpreted as “sexlessness as a problem that Protestant heterosexuality can fix”
(O’Malley 39). The excessive and violent ways in which Ambrosio departs from his celibacy point to feelings of fear and disgust associated with Protestant conceptions of Catholic practices. The anti-Catholic interpretations of celibacy lead to the formation of an internal self. Laqueur enumerates how the eighteenth-century anxieties about the cultivation of the self resulted in a view of masturbation as too self-explorative and dangerous in its creation of a self that is not regulated by society. This internal self is formed as a result of Ambrosio’s inability to pursue his appetites in the social world. Therefore, when Ambrosio enters the social world, the release of his internal desires begets pain and violence.

These tropes and anxieties are apparent in Ambrosio’s actions in the novel, which are impossible without the dehumanization of women. Ambrosio sees women as merely sexualized objects, and women are used to display Ambrosio’s obsession with physical pleasure, illustrating Foucault’s argument about the hystericization of the female body on both the thematic and the formal level of the novel. Ambrosio’s fixation with the physical manifests itself in his intense sexual desire. However, his pride, idolatry, and sexual desires would have gone unnoticed if supernatural forces did not intercede. Ambrosio’s use of women as sexual outlets and the novel’s use of women as a tool to reveal Ambrosio’s sin dehumanizes women, and reduces them to nothing more than devices. The moment the supernatural elements are revealed to be true, Antonia is killed. The lives of the women only continue during the fantastic times in the novel, the times when the nature of the supernatural events remains uncertain. Realization of the supernatural results in realized violence against women.
Chapter 2: Fellow Feeling: Facilitating Fear and the Formation of Ghosts

You speak like a heroine, [...] we shall see whether you can suffer like one.
- Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

Moving from *The Monk*, the Gothic genre shifts—from the use of sensational effects to incite fear to the use of imagination and sentiment both to create ghostly images and to unearth emotional strength in characters (Garrett 55). We can situate *The Monk* at the far end of the fantastic spectrum, while Ann Radcliffe’s novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, moves into the realm of the uncanny. The novel tells the tale of a young, empathetic girl, Emily, who falls victim to the desire and greed of men. However, she outwits her aggressors and escapes their clutches to lead a life of her own. During the course of the novel, Emily is kidnapped, almost forced into a marriage, and terrorized by the frightening aspects of the Castle of Udolpho. Emily faces many real dangers, but the ones that occupy her imagination most powerfully are those of strange voices in the night, myths based on old paintings, and the superstitions of those around her. This paradox is present throughout the novel. It takes characters a long time to understand the extent of the real threats and disregard the false ones. By the end of the novel, Emily finds explanations for all of the strange goings-on in the castle.

Once the characters come to terms with the real dangers and recognize the false nature of the supernatural, the concept of the explained supernatural is revealed. Todorov characterizes the explained supernatural as uncanny, “uniquely linked to the sentiments of the characters and not to a material event defying reason” (Todorov 47). The supernatural is, therefore, created in and manipulated by the minds of the characters, which gives them agency over their fates, a power the characters realize they possess at the end of the novel. I will argue that the explained supernatural prevents the realization
of physical violence against women. By unearthing the truth beneath the mystical façade of the supernatural, Emily exhibits a strength of mind that allows her to protect herself from harm and outwit her aggressors. In the Radcliffean Gothic, women build up their courage from the terror around them, “coming into some power and property by their own and other feminine agency” (Hogle 10). *The Mysteries of Udolpho* resides in the uncanny realm, but the novel lies slightly towards the more exciting rather than fascinating zone because of its representation of the real threat of violence. Emily navigates her way through this terrifying world with the only instrument she has: her sentiment. Emily has the ability to sympathize with others and truly understand them. Much of the novel’s violence is due to other characters’ inability to sympathize with one another.

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith expounds his concept of sentiment and the rules of sympathy between the sufferer and the spectator. He explains, “we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation” (Smith 1). The only way for someone to sympathize with a sufferer, and for the sufferer to reap the benefit of that sympathy, is for the spectator to perceive the sufferer’s emotions and then to imagine how he or she would feel in that situation. This places responsibility on both the sufferer and the spectator to exhibit analogous emotions for fellow feeling to emerge between the two. Examining the disconnect between the self and the other was an important part of eighteenth century scholarship and literature. Ideas of sympathy and fellow feeling allowed for the creation of a mental conception of the other person. Terry Castle finds the idea of sympathy to be an integral
part of the Gothic nature of *Udolpho* in the creation of a mental conception of another person. Castle calls this the “spectralization of the other,” which she described as a “new obsession with the internalized images of other people” (“Spectralization of the Other” 125). Spectralization produces feelings and images of the other when the other is not physically present, forming a ghostly presence. This process can occur with the living, as well as with the dead. As a result, the distinction between the world of the living and the world of the dead becomes blurry. The desperate desire to feel emotionally close to and sympathize with others creates a false image of the other that, though sometimes good intentioned, can also be violently reductive. Castle explains, “The terrible irony—indeed the pathology—of the romantic vision is that even as other people come to hold a new and fascination eminence in the mind, they cease to matter as individuals in the flesh” (Castle 136). Therefore, the attempt to create a mental image of someone can be dangerous for the actual person.

The world of the Gothic facilitates the physical consequences of spectralization. When a subject does not empathize with another character, a new, false version of the character is born. The same creation occurs during the formation of a terrifying plot after spotting a shadow behind a curtain. In this way, the supernatural serves as a tool to unearth the powers of the internal self. Marshall Brown describes Walpole’s project in the Gothic as a demonstration of “the genuinely human way in which his characters react to even the most inhuman of events. What really haunts them is what drives them from the inside” (31). By juxtaposing how the characters react to seemingly supernatural events and how they interpret the minds of other characters, we can see the power of imagination. The creation of false realities and false personas take away any importance
or agency from the physical world, favoring the world of ghosts. The lack of concern for the physical, through the creation of the ghostly, results in violence against characters in the novel. Tracking the application of sympathy throughout the novel unearths the way spectralization of events and people is in itself symbolic violence against the women and begets physical violence. The spectralization of the novel is generally catalyzed by the men’s perception of the women. Montoni, the villain and owner of Udolpho, in particular, creates false images of his wife and Emily, resulting in both attempted and realized violence against them. However, it is due to the spectralization and the formation of a ghostly image that the violence is led away from the real character, Emily, allowing the heroine’s heightened sympathy to overcome the tendency to spectralize the natural world and escape the novel with her life.

*The Mysteries of Udolpho* is depicts in the ways in which the internal self seeks out sympathy from the external world. Sympathy is sought in physical surroundings as well as in other characters. The spectralization of the wind demonstrates how sympathy begets more sympathy and a desire for the comfort of fellow feeling. Emily feels an intense level of fellow feeling with those she loves, which gives her the ability to know their minds almost completely:

“O my dear father,” said Emily, while a sudden tear started to her eye, “how exactly you describe what I have felt so often, and which I though nobody had ever felt by myself! But hark! Here comes the sweeping sound over the wood-tops;— now it dies away;— how solemn the stillness that succeeds! Now the breeze swells again. It is like the voice of some supernatural being— that voice of the spirit of the woods, that watches over them by night.” (19)

Here Emily emphasizes “how exactly” her father is demonstrating the feelings that she herself experiences. The father’s emotions are so intense that Emily has no problem
reading their origin. The perfect mirroring of these emotions demonstrates the model of fellow feeling that Smith describes. The completeness of their understanding is almost eerie, and as they both listen to the winds, their perception of the noise moves past eerie and becomes supernatural. However, in this moment the supernatural element demonstrates a level of intense closeness, rather than producing fear in the characters. Their fellow feeling produces a higher level of sympathy that finds a voice in the wind, creating a ghostlike being. Furthermore, the fact that the spectre of the ghost “watches over them” demonstrates Castle’s idea of how the formation of the ghostliness of another is an attempt to keep the other close to us.

The ability for Emily to understand Valancourt’s inner emotion is the paradigm of sentiment as illustrated by the use of the expressions “could not avoid” and “spoke.” As Emily, St. Aubert, and Valancourt trek around expansive landscapes, the three become very close. Emily notices that “Valancourt often dropped suddenly from the most animating vivacity into fits of deep musing, and there was, sometimes, an unaffected melancholy in his smile, which Emily could not avoid understanding, for her heart was interested in the sentiment it spoke” (51). As they wander, the beauty of the mountains enthralls each character. Emily perceives Valancourt’s feelings of enthrallment because she has felt them herself. But Emily feels something beyond fellow feeling, because sentiment only produces “analogous emotions” whereas Emily does not simply feel a similar emotion, she “cannot avoid” hearing his emotions as they “spoke.” For Emily, emotion is something she can perceive fully, indicating that her emotional range is so expansive, that she does not simply need to search within her emotional repertoire to find a similar feeling; instead, she immediately possesses a perfect mirror copy. Additionally,
the specific use of the term “spoke” demonstrates the ways in which feelings are concrete for Emily. This level of fellow feeling is possible because Emily sees what Valancourt sees in the landscape. Smith explains, “To approve of the passions of another, therefore, is suitable to their objects, is the same thing as to observe that we entirely sympathize with them” (Smith 8). Emily can fully understand what Valancourt is feeling because she herself sees the same beauty in the world. JoEllen DeLucia explains that moments like these show how “Emily seems […] distant from the world of refined feeling embodied by her father, St. Aubert, and her lover, Valancourt, whose emotions lack the measured restraint exhibited by the less demonstrative and more stoic Emily” (105). However, I believe that Emily feels a deep connection her father and Valancourt’s because if this level of similarity is not present between two people, then full fellow feeling is not possible.

The ghostlike images that characters create of others through sympathy can reappear when the right circumstances conjure them, resulting in the feelings of a supernatural presence. When Emily is away from Valancourt, many senses and images in her environment make her think of him:

They now distinguished a female voice, accompanied by a few instruments, singing a soft and mournful air; and its fine expression, as sometimes it seemed pleasing with the impassioned tenderness of love, and then languishing into the cadence of hopeless grief, declared, that it flowed them no feigned sensibility. Ah! Thought Emily, as she sighed and remembered Valancourt, those trains from the heart! (167)

When Emily hears the music she perceives in it the emotions that have already been consuming her. To her, the song is “mournful” and “impassioned,” and it possesses “the cadence of hopeless grief.” But most importantly, the song does not feign sensibility and seems to be the product of real emotions. The emotions she senses in the song are
analogous to the feelings produced by her missing Valancourt. Emily believes the song is not simply presenting emotions analogous to hers, but that the emotions are the same. Castle explains that these supernatural qualities “are the products of refined sentiment, the characteristic projections of a feeling heart” ("Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho" 69). It is because of Emily’s fellow feeling and sentiment that the song reaches supernatural levels.

Conversely, the varied reactions to the young woman flitting about a party demonstrates that fellow feeling does not always result in the full and complete understanding of another person:

Though she replied but little, the gentleness and sweetness of her manners encourage him to talk, and she felt relieved when a young lady of the party, who spoke incessantly, obtruded herself on his notice. This lady, who possessed all the sprightliness of a Frenchwoman, with all her coquetry, affected to understand every subject, or rather there was no affectation in the case; for, never looking beyond the limits of her own ignorance, she believed she had nothing to learn. She attracted notice from all; amused some, disgusted others for a moment, and was then forgotten.

(117)

This young woman’s actions at the party incite varied reactions from the other partygoers. The narrator explains that her attempts to understand others were not only failures, but also obvious in their feigned seriousness. She does not truly care about the minds or feelings of those she is talking to. However, these fake attempts at fellow feeling are obvious to the narrator, and evidently obvious to others in the room. Some of the people found the woman amusing, indicating that they truly believe her attempts to have meaningful conversations that incite sympathy, or that they are aware of her falsity. Others are disgusted, implying that they see through the woman’s fake interest and therefore do not want to interact with her. These different reactions to the woman imply
that there are various possible interpretations of the young woman’s actions, her manner of speaking, and her “coquetry.” Understanding a person based on her countenance or the interactions of a moment can result in various readings, demonstrating that fellow feeling is fallible and harms the other being examined.

That fallibility has high stakes for Emily. Because Emily has superior fellow-feeling skills and believes that feelings should be as intelligible as speech, she is confused when people do not understand her. When Emily is trying to explain to Count Morano that she is not interested in running away with him, he will not believe that her: “Emily was astonished and highly disgusted at his perseverance, after she had explained her sentiments with a frankness that would not allow him to misunderstand.” (183) Emily has made her feelings clear to Count Morano, but yet he continues to pursue her. This baffles her when she compares her interactions with Valancourt to those with Morano. Emily could look at Valancourt and understand his thoughts because his emotions were completely unrestrained, but even direct speech will not bring Count Morano and Emily into agreement (DeLucia 105). Count Morano does not want what Emily wants, and therefore does not feel or sympathize with what Emily feels. Emily makes her protestations, and Count Morano “does not to approve of them as such, [which] is the same thing as to […] not entirely sympathize with them” (Smith 8). Fellow feeling only works when people not only understand each other, but also agree that the emotions, when applied to the situation, are valid. Therefore, even Emily, who seems to possess superior skills in the realm of sympathy, cannot understand someone when they are not of a like mind.
The supernatural in this novel incites the same reactions in the characters as the feelings of fellow characters and threats of violence: an intense desire to understand to the point of imaginative invention. Brown explains that the supernatural elements in Gothic novels merely act as symbols for the deeper issues at hand and they become a tool to test human reason (12). According to Brown, the supernatural allows for the possibility of examining human reason and imagination in various scenarios. Radcliffe is deeply concerned with how the characters in her novel react to external stimuli, not only how the external worlds alters the internal self, but also how the internal affects the actions of the subject in the public world. Through the use of the explained supernatural, she takes this a step further, giving the internal self power to create ghosts in the natural world. Radcliffe’s use of the supernatural demonstrates the awesome and dangerous power of the mind. The supernatural elements in *Mysteries of Udolpho* are unlike those in *The Monk* in that they do not reveal themselves entirely; they are merely a suggestion that the character interprets. The uncanny uses the character’s interpretation of the events to determine their level scariness, which points to the internal longing of the characters. Freud writes that the uncanny “applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open” (132). An uncanny moment requires a certain level of familiarity with the object, enough to know that it was once familiar but has become unfamiliar. The uncanny is therefore not universally terrifying to all characters but causes the specific character to consider unearthed aspects of himself. The supernatural moments are only supernatural because the characters interpret them as such. Therefore interpretation, the creation of a mental image, is what gives these
supernatural moments life, and the human mind becomes a “supernatural entity” (Castle, "Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho" 69).

Emily’s meditations on why she feels fear in a moment of uncertainty displays the ability to create mental images of events to come, in addition to her superior skill not only for perception, but also for self reflection:

As she mused she saw the door slowly open, and a rustling sound in a remote part of the room startled her. Through the dusk she thought she perceived something move. The subject she had been considering, and the present tone of her spirits, which made her imagination respond to every impression of her senses, gave her a sudden terror of something supernatural. She sat for a moment motionless, and then, her dissipated reason returning, “What should I fear?” said she. “If the spirits of those we love ever return to us, it is in kindness.” (92)

As Emily imagines the possible fate of her deceased parents, she believes she perceives some odd movement in the room, but no figure that could have caused them. This moment epitomizes the distinction between terror and horror, in which Emily must form interpretations based on suggestions of a presence rather experience the threat of a figure attacking her (Hogle 3). However, soon her “reason” returns and she realizes that if a spirit of her father or mother is trying to contact her, she need not fear it. This moment atomizes the creation of a supernatural event. Emily has the ability to understand the source of feelings, which allows the reader to see her mental process in coming to the conclusion that something supernatural has occurred. The event begins with musings of the other world where she believes her parents reside. This desire to sympathize with their condition is what Castle calls “an obsessional concentration on nostalgic images of the dead” (“Spectralization of the Other” 133). This concentration on the dead almost calls them into being. Therefore, the bump in the night in the middle of Emily’s musings is a desperate attempt to bring her parents back into corporeal being. Emily has enough
self reflective abilities to understand the root of her interpretations of the moment, recognizing her creation of a supernatural feeling due to her mental state of longing and mourning. Again, Emily sets the example for a good, kind sentiment, one that allows for the creation of a supernatural image that brings comfort rather than fear. When a character is inspired by love “like Emily, Valancourt, or St. Aubert, [they] are possessed—quite literally—by the spirit of the other” (Castle, "Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho" 69). This moment illuminates the various ways characters create false images of realities, with the possibility of positive and negative results.

The use of the term “convinced” to describe Emily’s interpretation of a mysterious figure illustrates the ways in which environment can affect one’s ability to reason. As situations worsen for Emily, her ability to understand the world around her weakens, and the tendency to rely on supernatural interpretation of events increases. While her previous supernatural interactions were the product of longing and love, and therefore resulted in little fear, her interactions in the castle are caused by hopelessness and apprehension and result in an onslaught of fear and terror in Emily’s mind. While trapped in Montoni’s castle, she perceives a figure which “advanced along the rampart, towards her window, and she then distinguished something like a human form, but the silence, with which it moved, convinced her it was no sentinel” (336). She sees someone walk by, but does not hear him, which alarms her and begins her process of speculation. However, she does not take the multiple steps to consider how her surroundings and mental state could influence her senses, as she did when she believed she saw a specter of her parents. Instead, she moves quickly from seeing something to being convinced of its identity as a threatening one. Furthermore, Emily believes she sees a ghost even after
carefully assessing the situation, illustrating the extent to which the Gothic setting has affected her mindset. The spaces in which the story resides are important aspects of the Gothic because within them, “are hidden some secrets from that past…that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically or otherwise” (Hogle 3). Therefore, the situation in which a character perceives dictates the extent to which that character creates a false image, and also the amount of power the image has over the character in the natural world. The Udolpho Castle, where Emily’s ability to understand the world is altered, is what Bakhtin calls a chronotope, which is a place that represents the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84). This castle is entirely made up of the past wrongs that it once housed. It is this energy that is maintained in the future, and alters the minds of the inhabitants. In this case, fear causes Emily to try to protect herself, in contrast to the kind, warm feelings she felt by the possible presence of her ghostly parents that incited no action in her in the physical world.

After hearing the sad singing in the night and seeing many shadowy figures throughout the castle, Emily considers how these frightful moments have affected her mental state. She wonders, “Who, or what, it could be that haunted this lonely hour, complaining in such doleful accents and in such sweet music […] she had no means of ascertaining; and imagination again assumed her empire, and roused the mysteries of superstition” (337). As Emily searches for a rational explanation for the seemingly unnatural events, she finds that she can only imagine that supernatural forces are at work. Emily’s extended stay in the castle has robbed her of her ability to interpret rationally, and her supernatural interpretations have begun to build onto one another, weaving a full
narrative of her terror. The castle itself is characterized as the paradigm of Gothic settings, “glowering, savage, and immense” (Castle, "Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho" 56). Emily’s current fear is prompted by the loneliness of the evening due to her terrifying surroundings. The confusing event produces the fantastic present in Gothic novels, but an interest and fascination for the event means the novel enters the uncanny rather than the marvelous. Here, however, Emily is too wrought with emotion and fear to assess the situation and feel the pull of intrigue towards truly examining the unknown. Instead, she resorts to imagined explanation and superstition. The world of the novel creates an atmosphere for these kinds of perplexing moments, and it is these experiences that allow Emily’s reaction to the seemingly supernatural to eventually shift from terror to fascination. When the fear of violence is unrealized, Emily is given time to suppress her terror and finally examine past the supernatural façade.

Emily does not feel terror for any substantial intervals, and time allows her reason to quell any fleeting beliefs in the supernatural, but what remains is a lingering feeling of uncertainty. After a particularly terrifying evening, Emily feels relieved, waking up with her fears alleviated; “Daylight dispelled from Emily’s mind the glooms of superstition, but not those of apprehension” (229). At night Emily is lonely, but as the sun rises, her fears dissipate like a bad dream, and she can look at the events more objectively. She is fascinated and confused, hoping to find an explanation for the odd occurrences in the castle, but she does not attempt to create an imaginary explanation of her own. Therefore, the interpretation of events as supernatural and the creation of a fanciful narrative is dependent on the circumstances in which the character perceives the events and results in a shift from the fantastic to the uncanny, where events are fascinating and not terrifying.
Familiarity, expectation, and distinguishing between seeing and observing are the necessary factors in creating a ghostly image, as evidenced by Emily’s newfound interpretation of the ghostly music. The mental state of the character not only influences the interpretation of the event, but also the basic perception, demonstrating the extent to which these ghostly images seem real to these characters. Emily is no longer a prisoner in a castle, but lonely and musing over her love for Valancourt:

As she sat meditating, sounds stole by her on the air, which she immediately knew to be the music and the voice she had formerly heard at midnight, and the emotion of awe, which she felt, was not unmixed with terror, when she considered her remote and lonely situation. The sounds drew nearer. She would have risen to leave the place, but they seemed to come from the way she must have taken towards the chateau, and she awaited the event in trembling expectation. The sounds continued to approach for some time, and then ceased. Emily sat listening, gazing and unable to move, when she saw a figure emerge from the shade of the woods and pass along the bank, at some little distance before her. It went swiftly, and her spirits were so overcome with awe, that, though she saw, she did not much observe it. (510-511)

Emily has moved past the feelings of terror in the castle, and has returned to desperate feelings of longing. However, her ability to call up images and fill in perceptual blanks with imagination seems to be stronger since her time in the castle. When Emily hears the eerie music, it no longer simply incites feelings of longing, but reminds her of the voice she heard at night in the castle that added to the terror of her situation. This moment encapsulates Freud’s idea of the uncanny in that one has a difficult time separating the fear and the longing one feels for the uncanny presence. This song that incites fear comes at the moment she is remembering her love, demonstrating the almost supernatural power of missing another and its connection with the uncanny. Additionally, the use of the term “expectation” illustrates the combination of fear and fascination produced by these images. As Castle states, this ghost haunting Emily is familiar, one that she knows well
and whose return she expects (“Spectralization of the Other” 125). Even though Emily wants her idea of the figure to emerge, she fears what it will be when she is forced to face the real form. Spectralization thins the line between fearing and hoping for the ghostly image to come to life. Therefore, these moments of longing are almost pleasing in that they allow Emily to fantasize about the presence of Valancourt (Castle, “Spectralization of the Other” 128, 134-5). However, Emily does not rest in this undefined mental state and concludes by attempting to distinguish between seeing and observing the figure. She believes she sees something, indicating that she perceives it on a pretty simple level, but she does not observe it, meaning that she does not have the time to really study the physical form. The idea of seeing is more vague and subject to imagination, whereas observation is rooted in physical reality. Emily’s perception is greatly affected by her loneliness and memories from Udolpho. Castle explains that “the mysterious power of loved ones is to arrive at the very moment one thinks of them or else to ‘appear’ when one contemplates the objects with which they are associated” (“Spectralization of the Other” 127-128). The combination of both the uncanny supernatural voice and longing for Valancourt has the power to alter Emily’s perception, creating false identities for figures in the night. This combination produces the fascination that keeps the novel suspended between the natural and the supernatural.

Brown characterizes the Gothic as “a world of inarticulate expression, of voices seeking recognition, stories seeking utterance, thoughts seeking substance” (165). Most Gothic plots stem from an ancient unearthed secret that has power over characters in the present. It is only through the discovery of what lies beneath that the plot ends and the characters understand why they have been subjected to confusion and fear. This kind of
hidden nature embedded in the plot extends to the individual characters as well. Each character, intentionally or not, hides a part of him or herself from the world, and all the others can do is assess the external signs to interpret the internal. However, Brown argues that though the “faces reveal character, [they are] not very interesting characters” (165). He argues that the attempt and failure at penetration reveals more about the narrator than the characters. Brown in fact seems to spectralize the characters, seeing nothing but the surface aspects and arguing that therefore there is no depth to be reached. I argue that depth can be reached by perceptive characters, and it simply takes a more understanding mind that does more than reflect the character’s own desires. Brown’s argument emphasizes how merely focusing on the external robs the individual or his or her personhood. The characters who realize this are more adept at reading one another and are therefore happy and at peace in the novel, while those who are not are constantly trying to fill the void of human friendship, Montoni with money and Morano with a forced marriage, cause harm for others. Therefore, there is something to be gained from deep understanding, which implies that these characters do possess a certain level of substance. Radcliffe demonstrates this through her use of violence against characters whose personalities are misinterpreted, and valorizing the character who interprets correctly and with sympathy, Emily.

Brown explains that in Radcliffe’s novels, “background becomes the foreground, so as to sketch out a transformed pictures of psychic mechanisms of self-projection and defense” (xv). Radcliffe uses the form of the novel to display characters’ particular personality traits. However, Brown argues that the Gothic is much more focused on the public life, and it is merely a character’s external actions that are important to
understanding the character as a whole. I argue that the ragings of the internal self are produced by external conventions. The intensity of the internal self that is kept bottled up gives the characters a supernatural level of power over the world around them. These moments of the internal becoming present in the external demonstrate Castle’s idea of spectralization, which creates a false realities and ghostlike figure of a character, robbing an individual of his or her personhood. This kind of intense understanding of another demonstrates how poor fellow feeling can result in the reduction of the other, in favor of the subject’s idea of the other. This reduction not only leads to a lack of concern for the real character, but anger and violence against the character for not living up to the expectations of the ghostlike image.

The violence against Madame Cheron, Montoni’s wife, is preceded by Montoni’s belief that she betrayed him, depicting the importance of a subject’s perception of another being in permitting violence against characters:

His consciousness of the hatred he deserved it was natural enough should at first lead him to attribute to her the attempt that had been made upon his life and, though there was no other reason to believe that she was concerned in that atrocious design, his suspicions remained; he continued to confine her in the turret, under a strict guard; and, without pity or remorse, had suffered her to lie, forlorn and neglected, under a raging fever, till it had reduced to the present state. (345)

Montoni believes that his wife, Madame Cheron, orchestrated the attempt on his life. Though there is no evidence to support his claim, Montoni will not alter his interpretation of the events. Montoni’s presence in the castle is unstable, and he needs Cheron to solidify his holding of the land. Her thwarting these plans demonstrates how “uncertain or incomplete development” in this case Montoni’s ownership of the castle is “threatened by the return of a repressed past,” the truth of the property ownership (Garrett 49). The
specific confinement of Madame Cheron to a turret under strict guard mirrors Montoni’s placement of her in a mental framework, which she will never escape. Montoni is stuck on the idea that Madame Cheron is guilty and therefore, she becomes physically stuck in a turret. The real person ceases to matter and is treated as if she is the ghostlike image that resides in the mind of the subject. Furthermore, the nature of the violence against Madame Cheron illustrates the way in which spectralization allows for a violence that is predicated on a lack of care for the real person and a focus on the ghostlike image of the person. Montoni put her away in a turret where he would not be subjected to seeing her tortured face; instead she is “forlorn and neglected, under a raging fever." The violence against Madame Cheron is one of neglect, treating her as if she does not exist. She will die alone far from Montoni, allowing him to keep his image of her as a lying murderer alive. Castle explains that spectralization occurs because "absence is preferable to presence," which is the case for Montoni (“Spectralization of the Other” 136). It is easier for him to pursue his paranoia when the real object of his obsession is away; leaving nothing but his perception of Madame Cheron that confirms his outlandish suspicions. Therefore, the favoring of the spectral image over reality leads to the dehumanizing of the real characters, resulting in symbolic violence, which leads to physical violence against them.

Montoni’s inability to believe that Emily does not fit into his framework of her personality and his angered response demonstrates how the spectralization of the other results in violence against the other. Montoni attempts to negotiate with Emily to coerce her into signing over the Udolpho Castle to him. Emily refuses and Montoni responds with disbelief and threats against her.
“Judging as I do,” resumed Montoni, “I cannot believe you will oppose where you know you cannot conquer, or, indeed, that you would wish to conquer, or be avaricious of any property, when you have not justice on your side. I think it proper, however, to acquaint you with the alternative. If you have a just opinion of the subject in question, you shall be allowed a safe conveyance to France, within a short period; but, if you are so unhappy as to be misled by the later assertion of the Signora, you shall remain my prisoner till you are convinced of your error.” (359)

Montoni perceives the situation as one in which Emily cannot possibly win. He believes he holds all the power and that any intelligent person would recognize this. Events in the past have led Montoni to feel that he is entitled to the castle. This past narrative has power over Montoni’s present mental state, so when Emily does not react in the way he expects, he is left baffled (Sedgwick 21). He perceives Emily as someone who puts her physical well being above her pride and sense of honor. However, instead of taking in this new information and adapting his mental picture of Emily, he maintains his beliefs about Emily’s character, and removes the inconsistencies in his framework by simply locking her up and ignoring her. He characterizes Emily’s action as an “error,” indicating a belief that this is not the correct way for Emily to act, rather than using her actions to understand her. In the same way that Emily becomes confused when people do not understand her mind, despite her very clear demonstration of her feelings, Montoni does not understand when an individual differs from the identity he has imagined for them. Because there cannot be two Emilys, one who defies him and one who does not, Montoni sends away the Emily who refuses to sign away the castle, until she becomes the Emily who will sign away the castle. Therefore, Montoni’s disbelief in Emily’s actions encapsulates the ways in which having a separate mental image of a character permits the refusal to accept the character as she exists in reality.
The secret that lurks behind the castle walls is founded on spectralization. After escaping the castle and Montoni’s clutches, Emily learns of the horrible murder of her aunt, which occurred many years before in the Castle of Udolpho. The Marquis’ mistress, Laurentini, convinced him of his wife’s infidelity and “a slow poison was administered, and she fell a victim to the jealousy and subtlety of Laurentini and to the guilty weakness of her husband” (618-619). Despite the Marquis’ own actions, he expected his wife to be faithful, and never love another man. He is shocked when she did not act in a way that he expected, so he decides to poison her, put her away, and eliminate her from his presence. Despite the fact that the accusations against the Marchioness were indeed false, the Marquis’ response to the information demonstrates the impossibility for a subject’s spectral image of the other and the real other to live in harmony.

The violence in uncanny novels is of a different form than the violence in marvelous novels: it is indirect and is never fully realized against the heroine. Fellow feeling allows for a deep understanding of other characters, but when the desperate attempt to feel close to or possess another character in one's mind is combined with the Gothic setting, spectralization occurs. The Udolpho Castle “is saturated through and through with a time that is historical in the narrow sense of the word, that is, the time of the historical past” (Bakhtin 246). The horrible events that once occurred in the castle have left a trace that alters the way the characters in the present think and act within the castle. The women of the novel are the ones mainly subjected to spectralization by the men, while Emily exemplifies the right kind of fellow feeling, despite the fact that it leads to occasional misinterpretations of natural events as supernatural events. Furthermore, the direction of the spectralization in the novels is dictated by gender. The
men use their power to maintain their spectralized images of the women, while the women are forced to strengthen their sympathetic and interpretive abilities due to extended time suspended between uncertainty and understanding of their horrific surroundings. The Gothic world in which the villains reside allows their minds to be “absorbed in the self-enclosure of madness, the excess of passion, or the transgression of crime” (Garrett 3-4). The Gothic realm of Montoni’s castle contaminates his mind, and because he never leaves the castle for any extended period of time, his anger and greed are permitted to fester and grow, “unregulated by women” (DeLucia 105). Emily is successful because her mind, though influenced by the Gothic, is tempered by her experiences in the natural world. One important aspect of sympathy for Smith is “mediocrity:” there must be a balance between emotion and reason (Smith 18). Emily has found that balance, spending time in nature with her family where she honed her ability to feel the emotions of those around her, and spending time in the castle where there is no emotion and people simply act in their best interest. The superior sympathy for the world as it is allows the women to outwit their male oppressors and obtain freedom in the novel.

The world of the Gothic alters the mind, allowing for misinterpretations. However, once the characters exit the Gothic realm, they are better at understanding the world as it is. Emily’s building strength as she shifts from the Gothic realm to that of the real world demonstrates the effect of the external world on the internal self. Her superior ability to interpret the world in comparison to those who wished her harm in the castle led to her success at the end of the novel.

Emily’s mental ability shifting from imagination to perception indicates that she is beginning to leave the Gothic world and reenter reality. Emily starts to believe that she
can outwit Montoni. The first moment when she refuses to be Montoni’s spectralized image of her solidifies her departure from the Gothic realm. As she ponders her most recent negotiations with Montoni she realizes that “his power did not appear so terrible to her imagination, as it was wont to do: a sacred pride was in her heart, that taught it to swell against the pressure of injustice, and almost to glory in the quiet sufferance of ills, in a cause, which has also the interest of Valancourt for its object. For the first time, she felt the full extent of her own superiority to Montoni, and despised the authority, which till now, she had only feared” (360). Emily realizes that though her situation is dire, Montoni is not strong and needs to keep her alive. Emily must sign the documents, forcing Montoni to act more as “protector than ravisher” (Castle, "Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho" 58). She is seeing past the external illusions of power to the real Montoni. Emily no longer fears who Montoni could be, but now feels superior to the man Montoni is. This ability to cling to reality in the face of terror illustrates that strength of mind and perception allows a character to leave the Gothic and triumph in the novel.

The peacefulness in Emily’s mind after escaping the castle illustrates the immense power of the Gothic setting on the psyche. By leaving the castle, she escapes the chronotope of the combined time and place the castle represents. After many trials, Emily escapes the castle with the help of an admirer named DuPont. Once her party has reached the forest, Emily has a moment to reflect on the horrors she has left behind: “Emily’s mind, especially, was sunk, after the various emotions it had suffered, into a kind of musing stillness, which the reposing beauty of the surrounding scene and the creeping murmur of the night-breeze among the foliage above contributed to prolong” (426). Emily is emotionally spent after leaving the castle. The shift from hypersensitive terror to
reasonable calm demonstrates that Emily’s misinterpretations in the castle were a function of her surroundings and not any fault of hers. Emily’s mind has the ability to regulate itself, when she is not placed in extenuating circumstances. Emily’s exhaustion yet sense of calm after leaving the castle illustrates not only the power of the Gothic to alter perception, but also her superior skills for understanding the world around her, and that leaving Udolpho allows her powers to return to their full force.

Emily’s revelation that the events in the castle were natural and not supernatural displays how escaping the Gothic, both physically and mentally, leads to the overall success of the character in the novel. Emily has learned that all of the seemingly supernatural events have natural explanations: “‘I perceive,’ said Emily, smiling, ‘that all old mansions are haunted; I am lately from a palace of wonders; but unluckily, since I left it, I have hear almost all of them explained’” (461). Emily’s supernatural explanations for the frightening images masked the true horrors of what was going on in the castle. She was in real danger at the hands of a greedy man who would stop at nothing to acquire the deed to the castle, but she could not escape these real dangers until she conquered the false ones. She specifically calls this new understanding unlucky, illustrating that, just as Freud might tell us about the uncanny, the true causes of the terrifying events are even more awful than she imagined. By refusing to see what was really happening in the castle, she left herself vulnerable to the real dangers. Recognizing that the supernatural events had natural explanations armed Emily with the mental ability to escape the Gothic and the impending violence against her, a characteristic shift in the Gothic of “women coming into some power and property by their own and other female agency” (Hogle 10).
Spectralization begets both a lack of concern for a real person and violence against the real person. However, the violence brought on by spectralization is a violence of distance that is generally unrealized. In the same way that the supernatural façade dissipates and reveals a natural world in the resolution of the novel, the violence against women begins with horrifying threats and dangerous situations but results in the triumph of the heroine. The unrealized violence follows the logic of spectralization, which separates the real character from the imagined image of the character, providing a level of distance between the evil plots and the physical reality of the character. Furthermore, the violence remains unrealized because Emily escapes the Gothic and the danger that lingers there with abilities to read and understand other characters. When she leaves the world that permits spectralization, she is safe from the violence of others.

Montoni’s greed and violence against the physical world are rooted in past dealings that are haunting the present. A murdered marchioness and the inheritance of a castle are the real factors causing the real problems in Emily’s life, but the ways in which the truth of the events has been hidden allows these events to have a phantasmagoric presence throughout the novel. As Sedgwick characterizes the almost formulaic aspects of the Gothic, “an oppressive ruin, a wild landscape, a Catholic or feudal society,” and The Mysteries of Udolpho certainly conforms to her description of the Gothic (8). The Gothic tropes that make up the novel alter the psyches of the characters by inducing fear, but also reflect the secrets within the plot and the characters themselves. These secrets have created the world of the Gothic, “the thematic or discursive eruption of a traumatic past into the preset, distorted into a suggestion of the supernatural” (O’Malley 12). Udolpho therefore acts as a locus for fear and misinterpretation because of the presence of the
uncanny, “everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden way, and has come into
the open” (Freud 132). The aura of the uncanny puts each character’s interpretive ability
to the test. Those who have spent most of their time in the natural world have keen
abilities to sympathize with others, understanding not only the emotions beneath other
characters’ actions, but also how best to react to these characters to put them at ease. The
ability to sympathize with others extends to a realistic understanding of the world,
without reaching outlandish conclusions based on little evidence. The ability to
sympathize in the novel is generally split between men and women. Montoni, whose life
and goals for the future reside in the castle, only sees people as he wants to see them and
does not know how to sympathize. Whereas Emily, who loves everything outside the
castle—her family, nature—sympathizes with others with ease, and only misinterprets
situations when her judgment is clouded by the supernatural façade of Udolpho. The
Gothic surroundings incite spectralization, resulting in the characters creating false
worlds that they can believe in with various levels of certainty. Montoni will not dispel
his beliefs about characters or the world around him, so when something occurs that does
not fit into his framework he must eradicate it. This intense desire to maintain one’s
spectral image of the other results in both the symbolic and the physical violence against
the female characters. However, Emily’s ability to overcome the pull towards
spectralization despite her Gothic surroundings drives her to escape any danger. Because
the supernatural elements of the novels are no more than the characters’ spectralized
images of reality, once the characters overcome the tendency to spectralize, they escape
the terror and move into the realm of inquisitive fascination. It is fascination that leads
Emily to uncover the truth behind the supernatural, unearthing the hidden secrets of
Udolpho. Todorov characterizes this novel as uncanny due to its explained supernatural events. It is the nature of the explained supernatural, based on the internal fears of the characters rather than the physical world, that allows the heroine to succeed in the novel and keep the real violence at bay.
Chapter 3: “Fascination of the Fearful”: Fostering Violence

I believe the agency to be external and real, but not supernatural.

- Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland in Wieland; or, The Transformation*

The realm of the American Gothic is one of uncertainty, fascination, and a level of strangeness that, though usually not a complete departure from the norm, causes the characters to question their perceptive abilities. The American Gothic differs from the British Gothic in that it does not utilize the traditional Gothic tropes—such as castles, damsels, ghosts—but rather the psychological representations of the uncanny. The genre moves from frightful images in the physical world to an examination of the uncanny in the mind. Charles Brockden Brown explains that his purpose in writing *Wieland; or, The Transformation* is to illustrate “some important branches of the moral constitution of man” (4). In his novels, Charles Brockden Brown sees himself as a “moral painter,” exposing and presenting the intricacies of human nature (*Edgar Huntly* 642). *Wieland*, one of the first American Gothic novels, tells the tale of two brother-and-sister pairs whose lives are intricately entwined. Theodore and Clara Wieland lost their parents at a young age and have essentially educated themselves by exploring various Enlightenment ideals with the second pair, Henry and Catherine Pleyel. This rather idealistic foursome is haunted by the tragic and seemingly supernatural death of the Wieland children’s father, who combusted after believing he heard the voice of God in a temple he built to foster his spiritual practices. The various sexual and social issues that fester below the surface within this close-knit group are unleashed by the sudden presence of a man named Carwin which demonstrates what Brown calls in his Preface, the “latent springs and occasional perversions of the human mind” (4). Using ventriloquism as a kind of
childish prank, Carwin invades the minds of the characters, provoking—almost accidentally—horrific violence.

A common trope in the American Gothic is use of the literary device prosopopoeia: “personification, by which abstract ideas (such as the burden of historical cause) are given a ‘body’ in the spectral figure of the ghost” (Savoy 168). This device is similar to that of spectralization, in which one’s idea of the other takes physical form. However, spectralization goes a step further in that it exhibits violence against the object. As I have shown in the previous chapters, this image starts to be more important and more real than the actual person being spectralized. The imaginary coming to life in the physical world can be alarming and can alter the subject’s perceptive abilities. All uncanny Gothic novels are rife with instances of the terrifying elements of the mind taking physical form. However, Wieland diverges from the British Gothic and the American Gothic in that the primary uncanny presence in the novel, the voice of Carwin, is not given a false body but in fact is disembodied. The voice of Carwin becomes separate from his person, which takes away any agency he has over its influence. Each character hears the voice differently, which alters its meaning. The nature of this uncanny presence lends itself to even more uncertainty than the specters of Udolpho. In Wieland “‘saying’ and ‘hearing’” are distinct, and therefore “evidence based on sensory perception—on auditory phenomena in particular—is almost always mistaken” (Stern 20). The different experiences with the voice results in alienation from other characters and uncertainty over where the person ends and the alien voice begins. Because each character has a different interpretation of the meaning of the voice, they cannot come
together in mutual understanding and must deal with the confusion produced by the voice on their own.

In his novel, Brown is very much altering the form of the uncanny in the Gothic. He “views the psychology of human behavior as the real realm of ultimate mysteries,” rather than simply demonstrating a supernatural world that can be explained by natural means. While other forms of the Gothic “sought to mystify the world, Brown sought to remystify it” (Fliegelman x). In Wieland, the remystification is the disembodiment of Carwin’s voice, and something that is natural becomes supernatural. Voice in itself resists embodiment and can be interpreted in many ways, but Carwin highlights the issues that can occur due to disembodiment. Carwin’s voice cannot be grounded in any motive or purpose; it simply catalyzes the transformation of each character that hears it. The particular traits it unearths are typically of the violent and sexual nature. Carwin seems to “[rouse] sexual tensions in Clara and Pleyel, and an insane and murderous religious enthusiasm in Wieland” (Samuels 49). Carwin exposes problems with a family life that is left unregulated by society. Therefore, the supernatural element of the novel is explained away as having human origin, which defines the novel as uncanny in Todorov’s typology of the Gothic. However, because all of the seemingly supernatural events are psychological, this novel tends even closer toward the fascination side of the spectrum, and departs from the exciting. There are very few instances of uncanny events that occur in the physical world; rather, they happen in the minds of the characters, based on their interpretation of Carwin’s voice.
Carwin’s entrance into the novel catalyzes the manifestation of the latent psychological issues of the characters.\(^2\) He both demonstrates the structure of gender and furthers the use of women to suit the needs of men. The men feel a level of fascination toward women who present themselves as virtuous. It is with this virtue that men categorize women, which splits the idea of feminine virtue. Catherine is presented as virtuous due to her innocence. This is a virtue that is malleable and lends itself to the possibility of corruption. Clara’s virtue is due to her knowledge and cleverness; she knows enough about the world to have formed a moral compass that is not easily altered.

Carwin is fascinated by Clara, which leads to the threat of violence against her. The supernatural events and violence test the virtue and mental abilities of the characters. Catherine is killed, while Clara’s cleverness and fascination enable her to escape the threat of violence and arm herself against the evils of others.

The novel opens with a picture of an idyllic life shared by four individuals that is uninterrupted by the outside world. However, it is this isolation that has led to the formation of latent beliefs and desires among Theodore, Clara, Catherine, and Pleyel. These desires have been repressed due to an understanding of right and wrong, but no societal gaze to enforce full conformity.\(^3\) Fliegelman explains that Brown is deeply interested in “an examination of the momentous consequences resulting from the mysterious death of a parent of young children” (xiv). The reader receives an understanding of the group’s upbringing when Clara recounts her happy childhood. She

\(^2\) When I use the term “latent” here, I am referring to desires that are within the characters, that have either been intentionally or unintentionally repressed. These desires are similar to the desires I refer to in Chapter 1.

\(^3\) The repression I am talking about here is Freudian, in that their desires have been repressed due to a belief that only some desires are acceptable.
explains that after the death of her mother and father, “our education was assigned to a maiden aunt who resided in the city, and whose tenderness made us in a short time cease to regret that we had lost our mother” (19). She goes on to say that due to this education they “were saved from the corruption and tyranny of colleges and boarding-schools” (19). Here the reader sees that Clara and the rest of the group have not had any formal education in which they would interact with other students. When describing their teacher, Clara emphasizes her “tenderness,” without much discussion about the level of education she afforded them or her teaching abilities. Furthermore, the belief that she has been “saved” from formal education demonstrates the level to which her unconventional life and education have been engrained in her mind. Therefore, the four children did not receive any kind of regulated education, which has lead to their odd practices as adults.

Wieland illustrates “an anxiety about disorder within the family” and the role of the family as a microcosm of the early American state (Samuels 14). The family’s educational isolation results in social isolation as well for Clara, Theodore, Pleyel, and Catherine. This isolation creates a family unregulated by society. Clara begins by emphasizing their immense freedom in this way of life: “Our social pleasures were subject to no unreasonable restraints,” and, “Our companions were chiefly selected from the children of our neighbors” (19). Clara describes her life in a way that demonstrates the happiness her upbringing, with its few restrictions, has afforded her and her family. However, it is clear from the information Clara’s account reveals that this kind of life is detrimental to the psyche. Fliegelman explains that by, setting up the family life in this way, Brown is showing his rejection of “the Enlightenment’s supreme fiction of an autonomous rational individual making free and thus accountable choice” (xiv-xv). Clara
and her family’s education was very much insular, so as they have grown up, their conversations are dominated by Enlightenment theories based only on the readings and opinions of one another. It is during these mutual musings that the supernatural elements of the novel arise. The novel therefore displays the problem with the idea of self-governance without any input from the outside world of social and educational convention.

The state of affairs at Mettingen—where Clara, Theodore, Pleyel and Catherine reside—hints at the underlying problems among the four. Without these issues Carwin would not have had the same effect on the group, and it is “Carwin’s very abnormalities [that] expose the shaky underpinnings of the family ‘asylum’” (Samuels 56). More specifically, he exposes Theodore’s supernatural religious beliefs and fervor that leads to violence, Clara’s sexual desires, and Pleyel’s jealousy. Theodore Wieland’s conviction that his father’s death was of a supernatural nature demonstrates that the belief in the supernatural is present before Carwin arrives on the scene. When considering the odd occurrences surrounding the death of her father, Clara explains Theodore’s conception of the event, and that “His father’s death was always regarded by him as flowing from a direct and supernatural decree” (30). Theodore not only believes that the supernatural played a role in his father’s untimely demise, but he also believed that it was the driving force behind his immolation. The use of the term “decree” here is significant as it indicates that Theodore believes not only that there is some supernatural element to the death but also that the supernatural both orchestrated and demanded the death of the father. Theodore places a lot of power in the hands of supernatural forces, in particular the power to make judgment and alter actions. The presence of the supernatural in
Theodore’s mind and the amount of authority he gives it displays the level to which he is primed to perceive supernatural forces in the future.

Theodore’s reaction to the disembodied voice of his wife and his creation of a supernatural image demonstrate that Carwin’s voice unearths the latent supernatural tendencies of Theodore’s mind. After walking up to the temple, Theodore hears the voice of his wife telling him not to go inside, and he “thought he saw glimmering between the columns” (28). Once he returned to see his wife sitting in front of him, “his perplexity increased. He quietly seated himself, and fixing his eyes on the floor appeared to be absorbed in meditation” (27). Right after hearing what he thought was his wife’s voice, he believes he sees an odd light passing through the columns of the temple. The specific use of the term “glimmering” evokes a feeling that is not entirely supernatural but that leaves room for the presence of a supernatural force. When Theodore returns and finds his wife in the same place she was before he left, he has to deal with the various odd occurrences he experienced. It would be natural for Theodore to be “perplexed” by the incongruity of hearing his wife’s voice far away and then finding her in different locations; however, this confusion and fear does not promote inquiry, but rather internal musing and the belief in the possibility of supernatural images.⁴

Carwin’s utilization of Catherine’s voice for his first foray into the infiltration of the Mettigen group exhibits the use of both the uncanny and gender in the novel. Shirley Samuels suggests that the colonization culture of America “involves the symbolic

⁴ In *Mysteries of Udolpho* this kind of confusion would have prompted investigation or inquiry, but it does not in *Wieland*. This displays the differences between the uncanny in the physical world and the uncanny of the mind. The explained supernatural requires some level of explanation from inquiry, but the psychological uncanny can merely remain uncanny.
substitution of a woman’s body for the male enterprise” (3). Women are therefore used to further men’s needs with little regard for their personhood. Catherine acts as the tie between the group—an object that brings them all closer together through their mutual desire to “cherish” her (24). In this novel, it is important to examine the particular choice of Catherine over Clara as the force that ties the group together and the object used to further the supernatural and to explore how this choice reflects the distinct characteristics of the two women. When Clara describes her rather unconventional little family, she speaks affectionately of Catherine, saying “She was rich, beautiful, and contrived to blend the most bewitching softness with the most exuberant vivacity” (19). This description of Catherine focuses on her whole being and emphasizes both her looks and manner. Furthermore, Clara demonstrates the multifaceted nature of Catherine’s personality by pointing to her “softness” and her “vivacity.” From Clara the readers get a relatively full picture of Catherine as a character. However, when her brother, Pleyel, speaks of his sister’s manner in relation to her ability to understand the information about the supernatural occurrences, he states “Clara, forgive me; to you this behavior is mysterious. I will explain as well as I am able. But say not a word to Catherine. Her strength of mind is inferior to yours. She will, besides, have more reason to be startled. She is Wieland’s angel” (36). Pleyel believes he should keep potentially disturbing information from Catherine but not from Clara. He characterizes Catherine’s mind as weak and suggests that she does not have the ability to process difficult information. However, the most important aspect of this interaction is the concept of comparison: Catherine is seen as mentally inferior to Clara. It is the juxtaposition of the two women that allows the men of the novel to place them in separate categories that seem to be
mutually exclusive: Catherine is innocent and Clara is clever. Catherine and Clara are set up as two sides of the same coin; they “lived within sight of each other’s abode. [Their] tempers were remarkably congenial, and the superintendants of [their] education not only prescribed to us the same pursuits, but allowed [them] to cultivate them together” (19). Clara and Catherine are remarkably similar, except for the brand of virtue the men attribute to them. The presence of the supernatural event allowed the reader to see the particular ways in which the men in the novel see the women. The supernatural acts as a test for each character’s interpretive abilities and her strength of mind.

The supernatural voice affects each character’s mind in a different way and puts this or her preconceived notions of gender and the possibility of supernatural presences on display. Carwin enters the novel as the embodiment of the latent problems within the characters. Because he is this embodiment, he has the ability to “[rouse] sexual tensions in Clara and Pleyel, and an insane and murderous religious enthusiasm in Wieland” (Samuels 49). In this sense, Carwin is the prosopopoeia in the novel in that he embodies something that inherently has no body. Prosopopoeia is defined as “the speech of an imaginary person,” or “the attribution of human qualities to animals or inanimate objects—to which it is closely allied,” and “consists in staging, as it were, absent, dead, supernatural or even inanimate beings.” Furthermore, “prosopopoeia operates like a mask and is analogous to any adoption of persona” (The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics). Prosopopoeia happens on the formal level of the novel, in that Carwin’s role or persona is the embodiment of the internal characteristics of the characters around him. His entire personhood is the personification of Pleyel’s spectralization of women, Clara’s sexuality, and Wieland’s religious fervor.
However, the novel is dominated by a de-prosopopoeia in a thematic sense. The supernatural element is a voice that is separated from the body, which allows it to be interpreted by the characters. Furthermore, Carwin’s presence pulls the latent desires out of the characters and permits those desires to influence actions. The concept of spectralization is similar to prosopopoeia here in that they both involve the placement of an idea or concept into a body. Therefore, the de-prosopopoeia of Carwin’s voice, in terms of spectralization, is taking the idea of the other and, rather than creating an image or a body for that other, internalizing it. It is the internalization of this voice, and the formation of its intention, that causes the outpour of “irregular sexual desires” and violence (Samuels 54). Because the voice has no clear intention it enables dangerous interpretation and becomes something different for Pleyel, Wieland, and Clara.

Pleyel’s emphasis on Clara’s characteristics as a model for all women and his focus on specific body parts point to Pleyel’s spectralization of Clara. Pleyel recounts the almost obsessive amorous feeling he had for Clara prior to her interactions with Carwin, which illustrates the ways in which Carwin’s voice brings out hidden emotion. He begins his explanation:

“Here, said I, is a being, after whom sages may model their transcendent intelligence, and painters, their ideal beauty. Here is exemplified, that union between intellect and form, which has hitherto existed only in the conceptions of the poet. I have watched your eyes; my attention hung upon your lips. I have questioned whether the enchantment of your voice were more conspicuous in the intricacies of melody, or the emphasis of rhetoric. I have marked the transitions of your discourse, the felicities of your expression, your refined argumentation, and glowing imagery; and been forced to acknowledge, that all delights were meager and contemptible, compared with those connected with the audience and sight of you.” (94)
Pleyel enumerates the ways in which Clara surpasses all others with her intellect and beauty. His use of words like “model,” “exemplified,” and “compared” indicates that much of his admiration for Clara stems from the fact that he deems her better than others. Furthermore, the very specific attention paid to separate body parts and the use of the term “enchantment” displays the way Pleyel is spectralizing Clara. He is not seeing her as a full person and is allowing his infatuation with parts of her to create a false image for himself. Additionally, Pleyel gives many indications that he has been watching Clara’s mannerisms carefully for some time with words like “marked” and “acknowledge.” The almost obsessive nature of his feelings for Clara, in particular his belief that the she represents the paradigm of her sex, is an example of the odd sexual internalities that Carwin’s presence brings to light. Pleyel’s spectralization of Clara, “a separation or fragmentation of her integral self,” provides “an external perspective of Clara” (Ruttenburg 241). If Carwin had not entered the scene, Pleyel would have been able to continue his study of Clara and the formation of his own spectralized image of the perfect women. However, Carwin’s voice forces Pleyel to recognize that his image of Clara does not conform to her true personhood and to admit to his rather odd practice of carefully examining and scrutinizing Clara’s every action. The voice allows Pleyel to form yet another spectralized image of Clara, this one inciting anger due to its replacement of the ideal image.

Pleyel’s reaction to hearing the mysterious voice demonstrates his tendency to spectralize women into his ideal. Pleyel believes he hears a discussion between Carwin and Clara that implicates the two in an affair. He proceeds to chastise Clara for the affair, yelling “‘The matter—O wretch!—thus exquisitely fashioned—on whom nature seemed
to have exhausted all her graces; with charms so awful and so pure! How art thou fallen!
From what height fallen! A ruin so complete—so unheard of!” (81) Pleyel believes that Clara has disgraced herself by having a sexual relationship with Carwin. In this scene we can see Brown “link problems of sympathy with obstacles to perception” (Stern 7). Pleyel did not truly know Clara, which can be seen as a problem of perception, and Pleyel’s belief that Clara and Carwin are having an affair is also prompted by a problem of perception. The emphasis on the “height” from which she has fallen demonstrates that Pleyel previously held Clara in extremely high esteem. Pleyel cannot believe that someone he thought was so above reproach could fall so far. This point is furthered by his enumeration of her “charms” and “graces” and his statement that they surpass those of all others. The belief that Clara was once this infallible person demonstrates Pleyel’s spectralization of Clara. He had an idea of who she was and it took the de-prosopopoeia of Carwin’s voice to undo that spectralization. Fliegelman characterizes Carwin as “less the seducer of women than of opinion,” and by altering Pleyel’s opinion of Clara, Carwin shows what Pleyel’s initial opinion was based on (ix). Therefore, Carwin’s voice unearths Pleyel’s true feelings about Clara and shows that they are dependent on his spectralized image of her. Furthermore the utilization of the disembodied voice to undo Pleyel’s spectralization illustrates Clara’s inability to determine how others perceive her.

The shift from judgment to violent jealousy displays the way Carwin’s voice brings out the worst in individuals by undoing spectralized images, shattering the ideal image a character has created of another, and promoting violence against the real object of spectralization. As Pleyel explains his actions and accounts of Carwin’s stay in Mettingen, he accuses Clara of many illicit acts. He explains that at one point he was so
angry at the prospect of the two alone in a room together that “‘I was governed by an half-formed and tempestuous resolution to break in upon your interview, and strike you dead with my upbraiding’” (103). Pleyel is so full of rage when he hears what he believes to be a conversation between Carwin and Clara in her bedchambers that he considers killing Clara. His jealousy has reached new levels due to Clara’s complete departure from his spectralized image of her. The description of the murderous instinct as “half-formed” shows that it just barely reached the level of his consciousness to move from thought to action. The half-formed thought is consistent with the concept of Carwin merely making latent issues manifest. It is as if the repressed feelings are now primed, and therefore can be explored by the characters. Without Carwin, these murderous feelings would not have been able to reach the surface of Pleyel’s mind.

Carwin’s presence has a similar effect on Clara, and the reader is permitted to see her experience new feelings. Despite the effect of the male gaze in the novel, the reader is given the opportunity to understand Clara’s sexuality based on her own accounts. Carwin makes clear the full picture of Clara’s perceived sexuality and Clara’s actual sexuality. Clara’s confusing passions are prompted by Carwin, and not just his supernatural presence, but also by his person. After seeing a painting of Carwin, Clara is intrigued and feels: “I could not deny my homage to the intelligence expressed in it, but was wholly uncertain, whether he were an object to be dreaded or adored, and whether his powers had been exerted to evil or good” (57). Clara seems very interested in this picture of Carwin, but is not sure what feelings have arisen in her. The description of her being unable to deny her feelings but her being uncertain as to what they mean demonstrates a level of self-awareness that does not seem to be present in the other characters. She
recognizes that there is an unstoppable feeling of admiration for Carwin but that she cannot know the exact origin of it. Rather than falling into the feeling with reckless abandon, she has the presence of mind to question how and why this is happening. She goes further by questioning what her intuitions suggest about Carwin’s character. If someone can provoke this much uncertainty, should he be admired and adored for his intriguing nature, or should he be dreaded and feared for his abilities to produce so much confusion? Here Clara presents herself as sexually and mentally interested in Carwin but also inquisitive and cautious of her feelings.

Clara’s affection for Pleyel and confusion over his feelings demonstrates her own sexuality and ability to consider someone else’s feelings without spectralizing them. Clara plans a meeting with Pleyel, but he does not show up to the previously arranged location. Clara is disappointed and thinks, “How fondly did I dream that Pleyel was a lover! If he were, would he have suffered any obstacle to hinder his coming?” (64). Pleyel missing their meeting gives Clara time to reflect on how this disappointment makes her feel. The pain has allowed her to recognize the extent to which Pleyel’s actions affects her desires. However, the nature of these desires demonstrates that Clara is not under any delusions about where she stands with Pleyel. She also does not feel betrayed by Pleyel for not attending their meeting, but instead she considers how this action would make sense in a hypothetical framework of their relationship. Therefore, Carwin merely heightens the frequency of Clara’s feelings, rather than unveiling the spectralization and problems with perception as he did for Pleyel.

Clara identifying herself as a victim shows that she recognizes that her mind has been assaulted by an outside force. However, she is still confused as to how this force has
entered her mind and why it has allowed for the outpouring of certain passions. Clara is considering writing a letter to Pleyel enumerating her feelings for him but then pauses and questions why all of these emotions are wreaking havoc on her peace of mind. She explains, “I cannot ascertain the date when my mind became the victim of this imbecility; perhaps it was coeval with the inroad of a fatal passion; a passion that will never rank me in the number of its eulogists; it was alone sufficient to the extermination of my peace: it was itself a plenteous source of calamity, and needed not the concurrence of other evils to take away the attractions of existence, and dig for me an untimely grave” (66). Clara displays the ways in which these new emotions have altered her mind. By calling herself a victim of her emotions, she is showing that she does not feel fully in control of the situation, as if the emotions are not hers. She thinks that the new passions for Pleyel have resulted in her “imbecility,” which is deeply concerning to her. Clara says that the passion alone was not enough to disturb her peace. But she fears that this combination of being overwrought with emotion and imbecility could result in “an untimely grave.” Clara clearly values her ability to reason, since she believes that losing it will result in her death. Therefore, the fact that these new emotions are diminishing the power of Clara’s mind and ability to reason illustrates the fact that Carwin bringing out these emotions does significant harm to Clara.

Clara and the reader fully understand the violence against Clara’s personhood when Carwin reveals his invasive experiment. Carwin explains, “‘Hence a vague project occurred to me, to put this courage to the test. A woman capable of recollection in danger, of warding off groundless panics, of discerning the true mode of proceeding, and profiting by her best resources, is a prodigy. I was desirous of ascertaining whether you
were such a one’” (151). Carwin wants to determine whether or not Clara conforms to his spectralized image of her as a prodigy. The ways in which he goes about this experiment diminish any real understanding of Clara as a person. He calls his examination a “project,” a very reductive term for the emotional turmoil he causes. He goes on to explain the situations in which he wanted Clara to prove herself, particularly, in scenes of “danger” that could provoke “panics.” Even though Carwin did not plan to physically harm Clara, he wanted her to feel as if she were moments away from physical harm, which allows Clara’s mind to feel the violence even though it was never realized in the physical realm. Carwin continues his assault by stealing Clara’s diary to further his investigation. Ruttenberg explains, “Carwin’s stance, then, was that it was unnecessary to possess her body in order to possess ‘conjugal’ knowledge of her: one had only to possess her textual self-representation” (236). Therefore, the mental violation can have the same effects as a physical one. Therefore this experiment is doubly violent: it begins with spectralization and the reduction of Clara to one idealized characteristic, and it results in the violation of Clara’s mind both through reading her diary and invading her thoughts with his ventriloquism. This experiment is similar to Pleyel’s obsession with Clara and his explanation that “‘I was desirous that others should profit by an example so rare. I therefore noted down, in writing, every particular of your conduct’” (94). Pleyel watched Clara incessantly and wrote down all of his observations. By picking out the observable aspects of her conduct, Pleyel built an image of Clara, just as Carwin did. However, when Clara’s actions do not conform to the image Pleyel created of her from his experiment, he reacted with anger and violence. Through his experiment, “Pleyel here declares that a disembodied copy of herself has superseded her as the authentic Clara to
which she, the original, must conform if she is to be acknowledged and loved as
legitimately herself” (Ruttenburg 238). Pleyel has rendered Clara’s true self inadequate.
Both Carwin and Pleyel exhibit violence against Clara through spectralization.

The violence in this novel is different from that in *The Monk* and *Mysteries of
Udolpho* in that the real violence against the heroine is not realized physical violence but
instead a violence against her identity and her mind. Pleyel and Carwin’s invasive study
and spectralization of Clara violate her personhood. This spectralization is surrounded by
realized physical violence that serves to highlight the mode of violence against Clara. The
threat of physical harm against Clara remains in its unrealized form due to the level of
uncertainty in which the prospect of violence is presented to Clara. Carwin hides in
Clara’s closet and, using a voice she cannot recognize, threatens to rape her. One night
Clara opens the door to find Carwin standing inside. After being discovered in Clara’s
closet, Carwin comes up with an even more elaborate prank in which an alternative voice
has stopped him from raping and killing Clara, which leads her to believe that there are
two voices altering her psyche—one that wishes to hurt her, and one that wishes to help
her. When he emerges from the closet he says, “I was impelled by a sentiment that does
your honor; a sentiment, that would sanctify my deed; but, whatever it be, you are safe.
Be this chimera still worshipped; I will do nothing to pollute it” (71). The promise of
physical safety highlights the mental corruption at play here.

The physically realized violence bookends the events of the novel and acts as a
thematization of the problems within Clara’s narrative. The first inexplicably violent act
that occurs outside the realm of the novel is the spontaneous combustion of the elder
Wieland. Clara explains the components of the confusing situation as, “The preclusive
gleam, the blow upon his arm, the fatal spark, the explosion heard so far, the fiery cloud that environed him, without detriment to the structure, though composed of combustible materials, the sudden vanishing of this cloud at my uncle’s approach” (18). Clara has no explanation for the events and the novel does not provide a definitive way for the reader to understand why or how the elder Wieland spontaneously combusted. The second inexplicably violent act is the brutal murder of a wife and children at the hands of the younger Wieland. Neither of these events can be explained by the implementation of spectralization, but instead they act as symbols for the ways in which communication and miscommunication work within the novel. Clara tells the particulars of the first odd event because she feels that “their resemblance to recent events revived them with new force in my memory and made me more anxious to explain them” (18). She finds the similarity between the two events in the fact that they were both prompted by what was believed to be a message from God, and that they both result in the horrific death of loved ones. However, the means of communication in these two instances does more than link them together; it also reflects the communicative system throughout the novel. Ruttenburg calls the events leading up to the elder Wieland’s death his “legacy of failed communication with the transcendent realm and his subsequent incarceration in a solitary confinement of the mind” (223). She explains that to live in Mettingen is to be trapped within this odd event’s “interpretive framework” (223). Therefore, this moment acts as a symbol for the way interpretation works in the rest of the novel.

This framework can be broken down into a three-part system: the interaction between the God-like voice and elder Wieland, Carwin and the foursome, and the God-like voice and younger Wieland. The lines of communication proceed as follows:
sender → message → receiver. (See figure 4.) The elder Wieland believed that the sender of the message was in fact God. Therefore, he received the information as a divine command. The same process happens with young Wieland. He believes he hears the voice of God tell him to murder his family, and he carries out the act. Both of these communications involve an internal voice that is given an external origin. The Wieland men spectralize their internal voices by giving them a body in the form of a divine being. Therefore, prosopopoeia and spectralization are the two sides of the same coin; both are the externalization of a fantasy, but spectralization hurts another person by ghosting them because of the presence of the false being. This system is altered when it comes to the interactions between Carwin and the Mettingen group. Carwin speaks to Catherine, Wieland, Clara, and Pleyel through ventriloquism. Therefore, the four do not know the sender of the information. Each understands the meaning of the message in different ways, indicating that Carwin is not actually sending a message—but that his voice is being interpreted as such. Carwin is then the literalization of prosopopoeia within the novel because he embodies the same type of internality as false-God voice. Therefore, the “message” that each character receives from the sender is not a message at all, but the internal thoughts, desires, and feelings of the receiver. In this framework, the sender does not matter because he does not affect the message. Therefore, these horribly violent events that are inexplicable in the world of the novel serve as symbols of the power of the latent emotions that plague the inhabitants of Mettingen.
Wieland adapts a true story in which a man kills his entire family because he believes he has received a message from God. This aspect of the tale becomes a symbol for the greater issues at work in the novel. It represents the latent becoming manifest and the issues that go along with unregulated desires and feelings presenting themselves in the outside world. Brown utilizes the uncanny, the presentation of that which has been repressed in a much more psychological way than British Gothic novelists. The internalities of the characters are provoked by the presence of Carwin for two reasons. First, he is the physical embodiment of the strange sexualities and spiritual frenzy that lie beneath the surface for the characters. Second, his disembodied voice enters the minds of the characters and provokes interpretations that unleash the internal selves of the characters. In particular, the voice reveals Pleyel’s spectralization of the women in the novel, Clara’s sexual desires for Pleyel and Carwin, and Wieland’s belief that the voice
of God wishes him to commit unspeakable deeds. The final events of the novel display the ways in which the marvelous aspects of the novel frame the uncanny and how the physical violence thematizes the mental violence at play. When the violence finally reaches Clara in her home, she encounters her first physical threat. Clara’s refusal to allow any more violence against her gives Clara the strength to arm herself against the murderous intents of Wieland. Finally, Carwin utilizes his voice to show Wieland that he was wrong in his initial interpretation of the voice, who calls whom the “man of errors” (170). Wieland kills himself because he learns that there was no true sender of the divine message; it was only his error in interpretation that led him to his horrible actions. The death of young Wieland, with no physical harm to the heroine, bookends the sudden and inexplicable death of the elder Wieland. Both violent events involve what was believed to be a communication from God, when in fact the only author of the message was the Wieland men themselves. This communication is a more extreme version of what happens to the Pleyel, Clara, Catherine, and Wieland early on in the novel. Each hears a voice that he or she believes to come from a specific sender with a specific message. However, Clara recognizes that the voice in her head is not her own and therefore that her emotional responses are subject to change. This recognition keeps Clara away from physical violence by maintaining her fascination and desire to understand the changes in herself and that the voice caused. At the end of the novel, Clara evades violence against her person when Carwin reveals that there is no real authoritative sender of a divine message but that each character’s latent issues provoked the horrible deeds throughout the novel.
Conclusion: The Escape

The women in Gothic novels experience various horrors, both mentally and physically. They are stripped of their identities on both a thematic and a formal level. They are made into devices to unearth latent desires, and they often lose their lives in the process. As the Gothic genre shifts from marvelous to uncanny, the women gain agency over their fates and, even though they are still subject to violence, escape the novels with their lives. This shift is important in understanding the way the genre treats women. The men of the novels commit violence against the women when their internal desires are unleashed. Peter Garrett explains, “Gothic reflects the […] preoccupation with the relation of self and society, which it shares with more realistic fiction, but reflects it in crisis and antagonism, where the self is estranged or abandoned, victimized or victimizing, absorbed in the self-enclosure of madness, the excess of passion, or the transgression of crime” (3-4). The characters of Gothic novels have feelings and desires that would not be accepted by people outside of their isolated state. However, these characters are placed in positions that allow them to foster these desires away from the regulative powers of a collective group. The supernatural aspects of the novels unleash these desires: Ambrosio’s sexuality, Montoni’s greed, Pleyel’s jealousy, and Wieland’s spiritual fervor. Both the unleashing and the manifestation of these vices promote dehumanization and violence against women. The women are used as a device, similar to the use of the supernatural, to coax out these desires from the male characters. Then, when the desires are manifest in the real world, the women are the ones who suffer.

Returning to the typology with which I began this thesis, we can say that The Monk by Matthew Lewis is an exciting, marvelous novel because the reader is permitted
to see all of the violence that is committed in the novel and the supernatural reigns supreme as the guiding force behind the fates of the characters. Ambrosio is plagued by an insatiable longing due to his vow of celibacy as a monk. The presence of a supernatural woman named Matilda sparks Ambrosio’s latent desires and causes them to become manifest, with no way of returning to latency. It is because these desires present themselves in the physical world that Ambrosio rapes and kills Ambrosia. In this novel the use of the supernatural and the women is entirely entwined. This direct connection between Matilda and the supernatural makes *The Monk* a good place to start when examining the reduction of the woman to a device on the formal level of the novel. This dehumanization process continues on the thematic level. Ambrosio sees the women of the novel as merely sexual outlets rather than people. The dehumanization of the women in the novel allows violence to be committed against them.

*The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe is an exciting, uncanny novel. The reader is enticed by many confusing and potentially terrifying images, but the supernatural is revealed to be nothing more than a hoax and misinterpretation. Emily is a kind girl with great sympathetic abilities. She is always aware of how people are feeling and alters her actions accordingly. Emily’s demonstration of the correct way to sympathize with others serves to highlights other characters’ shortcomings in the area of fellow feeling. Montoni demonstrates his intense greed for the ownership of Udolpho when he holds Emily hostage and locks his new wife in a tower. When Emily and his wife do not conform to his spectralized image of them, he punishes them with isolation. This particular brand of violence, though not immediately physical, is detrimental to the psyche. Emily is frequently confused and disturbed by false images in the castle, and she
cannot maintain her superior perceptive skills in the midst of the Gothic scene. The women are forced to undergo mental torments, until Emily outwits her aggressor. Because the supernatural is no more than misinterpreted moments, Emily can utilize her strength of mind to escape the novel with her life.

*Wieland; or, The Transformation* by Charles Brockden Brown is a fascinating, uncanny novel. The reader does not see any physical violence, and the supernatural is entirely attributed to Carwin’s ventriloquism. In the uncanny novels, spectralization continues to be the vehicle by which men commit violence against the women. However, in this novel the violation of personhood is furthered by Carwin’s use of ventriloquism to enter Clara’s mind. The seemingly supernatural voice unearths latent desires in all of the characters. Pleyel reveals his spectralization of Clara and his violent feelings after realizing Clara does not live up to his false image of her. Clara reveals her sexual desires for both Pleyel and Carwin. Wieland reveals his intense spiritual fervor and belief that God tells him to kill his family. The real violence of the novel happens on the fringes of the narrative, which serves to highlight the violence the heroine experiences on the mental level. Carwin’s use of ventriloquism is an assault on Clara’s mind, and Pleyel’s spectralization of her is an assault against her personhood. However, Clara escapes any physical violence because she recognizes that the voice inside her head is not her own, and therefore its message should not be heeded. The unmasking of the supernatural force allows Clara to protect herself from physical violence.

My development of Todorov’s scheme of the Gothic elucidates the way the genre connects the use of women to the use of the supernatural, and that the treatment of women as a thematic devices permits violence against them. *The Monk* and *Wieland* are
particularly connected in the way they handle women, despite the fact that the two novels lie on opposite ends of the fantastic spectrum. Both novels exhibit two women who are presented as possessing two different types of feminine virtue. Matilda of *The Monk* and Clara of *Wieland* represent a kind of intelligence and worldliness. Antonia of *The Monk* and Catherine of *Wieland* represent innocence and sweetness. In both novels, the women who are characterized as intelligent leave the novel with their lives, and the innocent women are killed. Therefore, the Gothic is setting up a hierarchy of virtue in its determination of who deserves to live. Women who are not bested by the supernatural world succeed. The only way for a woman to live in the Gothic is to escape spectralization and prevent her identity from being replaced by a man’s image of her. By insisting upon her presence and resisting becoming a ghost, the woman escapes violence and saves her life.
Works Cited

Novels


Critical Texts


