

'To live the life of hopeless recollection'

Mourning and Melancholia in Female Gothic, 1780–1800¹

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Amongst other delights guaranteed to produce a *frisson* in the voracious consumers of the Gothic novel, the anonymously-penned 'Terrorist Novel Writing' of 1798 prescribed a recipe which included 'An old castle', 'A long gallery', and 'Three murdered bodies, quite fresh'. The writer stated that he never 'complain[ed] of fashion, when it is confined to externals'. Nevertheless, he inveighed against the 'dresses and decorations of a modern novel'.² A concern with fashion, an anxiety about the security of the domestic space, an attempt to regulate the circulation of new literary tropes: what the writer here marks is an emergent concern with elements of what must surely constitute (in Ellen Moers' tempting phrase) 'the Female Gothic'.³ There is a danger of anachronism in porting Moers' phrase back into the discourses of the 1790s. The phrase should not be understood as implicit within the novels of this period.⁴ Rather I wish to treat of the troublesome conjunction of adjective and noun as an emergent discourse in relation to certain Gothic tropes deployed at that time, a half-acknowledged standard of the criticism of the time (suggested by this particular article's emphasis on 'dresses and decorations') and a straightforward truth in matters of authorial attribution.

'Terrorist Novel Writing' was only one of several such articles to appear in the journals of the late 1790s. Similarly entitled, 'The Terrorist System of Novel-Writing', signed by 'A Jacobin Novelist', appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* in August 1797. This latter article, less frequently cited, contained a particularly interesting emphasis on forgotten portraits:

The principal rooms must be hung with pictures, of which the damps have very nearly effaced the colours; only you must preserve such a degree of likeness in one or two of them, as to incline your heroine to be very much affected by the sight of them, and to imagine that she has seen a face, or faces, very like them, or very like something else, but where, or when, she cannot *just now* remember. It will be necessary, also, that one of those very old portraits shall seem to frown most cruelly, while another seems to smile most lovingly.⁵

The writer's insistence on this particular aspect of décor would have struck a particular chord with Gothic enthusiasts and satirists alike in the 1790s. There did indeed appear to be a trend in women's Gothic writing of the 1780s and 1790s towards the production of uncanny resemblances of the heroine. Why did these portraits become such a marked literary trope? One answer lies in the fact that, as Emily Jane Cohen has argued, the 'Gothic is a genre that valorizes the image and the ornament.'⁶ A second related response lies in the suggestion implicit in these satirical articles (and behind many of the contemporary reviews) that many of these novels were pale imitations of the earlier and more original examples of the genre by Sophia Lee and Ann Radcliffe, and thus mirrored tropes such as the obsession with portraits.⁷ However, the charge of plagiarism often conceals other thematic agendas which link the targeted novels together.

In the excerpt above, the heroine 'cannot *just now* remember' the exact time and place where she has encountered the faces in the portraits before. The writer could easily have added that by the conclusion of the Gothic tale, the heroine will have been bitterly punished for this lapse of memory. In female Gothic writing of this period, the heroine's trajectory of experience is plotted from ignorance of context through to 'living the life of hopeless recollection'. This trajectory evolves through the maddeningly frequent use of resemblances, which threaten to render the heroine and the reader alike insane.

Loss and mourning

Like the satirical excerpt I have quoted above, the texts which I will use are frequently bypassed in discussions of the genre for a variety of reasons. Sophia Lee's *The Recess* of 1785 has recently been reprinted, and is now receiving more critical attention.⁸ Her novel, described as both the 'first fully developed English Gothic novel' and one of the first 'recognizable historical novels' has been neglected because of its hybrid nature.⁹ It was, however, an important source of inspiration for subsequent novelists. It is held that Ann Radcliffe was a warm admirer of *The Recess* despite the fact the Lee's heroines suffer a more dismal fate than Radcliffe's.¹⁰ Whereas Radcliffe's heroines (after temporary misfortune) emerge triumphant and happy, Lee's two heroines in *The Recess* both die of grief. *The Recess* tells the tales of Matilda and Ellinor, two imagined legitimate, but unrecognized daughters of the Duke of Norfolk and the imprisoned Mary, Queen of Scots. Due to the threat that they pose to the legitimacy of Queen Elizabeth I, Matilda and Ellinor are raised in an underground dwelling, 'the recess', by Mrs Marlowe, a guardian whom they initially accept as their mother. As the sisters become restless within their enclosed environment, Mrs Marlowe informs them of their parentage. It is when Matilda and Ellinor come across the portraits of their parents, then unknown to them, that Mrs Marlowe must tell the truth. The portraits are the key to the mystery of their parentage, and the subsequent cause of their misery. Matilda, the narrator of the first volume of the novel, recounts the moment when they first view the portraits:

An awe that I could not conquer made me unable to form any tale on that subject, and I turned my attention towards the next. It represented a lady in the flower of youth, dressed in mourning, and seeming in every feature to be marked by sorrow; a black veil half shaded a coronet she wept over. If the last picture awakened veneration, this seemed to call forth a thousand melting sensations; the tears rushed involuntarily to our eyes, and, clasping, we wept upon the bosoms of each other.

Why do our hearts thus throb before inanimate canvas? Surely everything we behold is but part of one great mystery; when will the day come destined to clear it up?¹¹

Their first contact with their parents, then, is through ‘inanimate canvas’ upon which Mary, Queen of Scots is ‘dressed in mourning’ and weeps over her crown.¹² From a description of the portrait Matilda, the narrator, swiftly moves to a series of questions which demonstrate their ignorance of their origins. The scene is marked by mourning and weeping, and this establishes the pattern of the sisters’ tragic lives. Mrs Marlowe thinks that they will be consoled by being assured of their resemblance to their parents. She tells them how Lady Scroope ‘spent many days weeping over you, in tracing in Matilda the . . . beautiful features of her friend, and in Ellinor, the captivating graces of her brother’ (Vol.1, 77). The twins become the living representations of their absent parents to those friends and relatives who mourn the parents’ absence. Here, as elsewhere in *The Recess*, living individuals become evocations of those who are absent.¹³

Matilda and Ellinor are taught by their elders to privilege absence over presence. They are fated never to meet their mother, and although they both find love (Matilda with Lord Leicester, Ellinor with Lord Essex), their loves are enacted through separation and absence rather than through contact. Both Matilda and Ellinor are forced to project love and desire through works of art. They invest their love through the medium of ‘inanimate canvas’, and internalize paintings as the real representations of the objects they have lost. The internalization of these paintings results in a displacement of the individual self that becomes much clearer as the novel progresses. Ellinor, in love with Lord Essex, is blackmailed by Queen Elizabeth into marriage with the selfish and harsh Lord Arlington, in order to save her mother’s life. When Essex is executed by Queen Elizabeth, Ellinor becomes insane through grief. Her grief is so excessive that she refuses to release her love object. Importantly, her obsession for him takes the form of looking upon his portrait. Ellinor’s desire to see Essex’s portrait effectually summarizes her life: ‘I waited for the appointed moment with an impatience those only who live like me whole years upon a look can judge of’ (Vol. II, 244). Her self-displacement is carried through to its natural conclusion when she dies, insane, in front of Essex’s portrait:

The fair spectre, which once was Ellinor, lay prostrate before the picture – one hand had convulsively gathered her disordered garments over her thin chest; the other was still expressively extended towards the inanimate image of him so beloved (Vol. III, 220–1)

Ellinor's death aptly symbolizes her mental effacement. She is lost in the power of the object to which she has surrendered herself. Here, we can recall Freud's essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917) which argued how the melancholic person refuses the loss of the object, and comes to resuscitate that very object through internalization. Freud describes internalization as a means of preserving the lost object. The loved object, in Ellinor's case Essex, is preserved sacrosanct through the painting, at the cost of her own physical and mental demise.

However, even during her insanity, Ellinor, who narrates Volume II, possesses a significant degree of clarity:

O love! exquisite delusion! captivating error! from the moment the lips find pleasure in that word till they lose the power of pronouncing it, the charm, the inconceivable charm, remains. Whether cherished by the sunbeams of hope or chilled by the dews of disappointment – whether the chosen object is faithful or unfaithful – glowing with animation before our eyes or sealed up in the dark and silent grave – the passion, the powerful passion asserts its eternal influence, and decides the character where once it has reigned. (Vol. II, 167)

Ellinor herself recognizes that love represents a 'delusion', an 'error' in which the self is engulfed by the charms of its chosen object. There is no distinction between whether that object is alive or dead, simply that the 'passion' '*decides the character*' (my italics). The character of a Gothic heroine is seemingly a *tabula rasa* which exists to be over-written by emotions and overwhelming memories. Ellinor's further acknowledgement that love is unaffected by infidelity or disappointment also bears witness to the fact that the orientation of her love actually has little basis in any living object. Indeed, it is significant that she admits at the beginning of her narrative that she fell in love with Lord Essex before she had met him. It was his portrait and reputation, his representation, which convinced her that she loved him. Her love, therefore, is invested more in an image than in a human being, and is predicated upon absence from the very beginning.

Elisabeth Bronfen has suggested that 'representation renders present what is absent, fashions itself out of an absence, which at the same time it specifically confirms.'¹⁴ If we follow Bronfen's suggestion, any work of art, by the very inanimacy of its nature, is subject to our projections of loss, mourning and desire. Desire and love, within the textual space of *The Recess*, become intimately connected with loss; loss in its turn becomes irretrievably linked with objects and representation. Indeed, loss *precedes* acquaintance with the loved ones because they only come to be known through their portraits.

The importance of the model established in *The Recess* to subsequent Female Gothic texts cannot be over-emphasised. In 1790, Rossetta Ballin wrote a remarkably similar story to *The Recess* called *The Statue Room* which focused on Queen Elizabeth I as a tyrannical persecutor.¹⁵ Like Lee's characters, Ballin's persecuted heroine, Romelia, has an obsession with the eponymous gallery of its title. Romelia's descent into insanity is marked by the reanimation of a statue which indicates to her where her imprisoned husband is hidden.

The coupling of insanity and galleries was both modified and enlarged upon in Eliza Fenwick's 1795 epistolary novel *Secresy*. Fenwick's principal tragic character Sibella Valmont, imprisoned in her uncle's castle, haunts a neglected gallery in the west tower of the castle which contains 'unoccupied pedestals' and 'mouldering walls' which are remarkably similar to Ballin's *Statue Room*. Besides these objects, Sibella fixates upon a portrait of herself, painted by her lover Clement. Her reasoning for doing so is that, 'As the work of Clement, it is rather his image than my own. There I can vent the swelling of my heart, and find an auditor more interested than the dispersing of the winds.'¹⁶ In another letter, she further justifies her obsession with the portrait by evoking her solitude: ' . . . what do I do now when I have only for companion the faithful, the exquisite, but torturing representation of memory? Can I do more than gaze, and sigh, and weep? . . . That picture of me was painted by himself: therefore do I gaze on it' (56–7). Through the medium of this portrait, memory is invoked by Sibella to supplant the absence of the beloved figure, using inanimate canvas as an *aide-memoire*. Sibella's love is quite literally the death of her. Having been imprisoned for so long, she comes to over-idealize her lover Clement. To the eyes of the mercenary Lord Filmar who attempts to abduct her, Sibella appears as mad:

Ha! Then it may be true, that this frightful place has deranged her intellects! – Certainly that is the case. She looked a lovely lunatic, wrapped up in a loose gown, her hair streaming at its length; and arisen, in the dead of night, to apostrophize to her own picture! (229)

Lord Filmar's description of Sibella bears direct lineage to Sophia Lee's portrayal of Ellinor in *The Recess*. There Ellinor is described in front of Essex's portrait, as 'the fair spectre' who 'lay prostrate before the picture' (Vol. III, 220). *The Recess* provides an important context for Fenwick's later portrayal of Sibella Valmont. Both Ellinor and Sibella supplant the absence of their lovers with the memory of them through the medium of a portrait, privileging 'time, place and memory' over the present.¹⁷ Sarah Elmsley's comments that, in *Secresy*, 'Both Sibella and Clement love images rather than each other', also holds true of *The Recess*, where, as I have argued, Matilda and Ellinor are taught by their elders to love portraits before they love people.¹⁸

The reanimation of the dead

In the examples that I have invoked so far, the heroine's obsession with inanimate representation becomes threatening. Their obsession replaces their participation in societal structures. The novels conclude with the death of the heroine. The unhappy fates of these characters were not shared by those of the most popular writers of Gothic in the same era, Ann Radcliffe and Maria Regina Roche. Undoubtedly the happy endings that Radcliffe's and Roche's heroines enjoyed secured their creators' greater popularity. However, this is not to deny a striking preoccupation with loss and absence in the work of both authors. Terry Castle's

important essay upon haunted consciousness in Radcliffe entitled 'The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*' argues that 'Even more than Radcliffe and her contemporaries, we seek to deny our own corporeality and the corporeality of others; even more deeply than they, we have come to cherish the life of the mind over life itself.'¹⁹ What led her to this summation were the prevalent themes of absence and mourning in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Compelling and attractive as Castle's arguments are, we can read her arguments on haunted consciousness in a more positive light if we supplant Castle's use of 'haunted consciousness' with 'haunted conscience' and consider the wider use of absence and mourning across these and other Female Gothic texts.

As in *The Recess*, Emily St Aubert of Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is compared to a portrait of her deceased aunt the Marchioness de Villeroi. The Marchioness's aged servant Dorothee shows Emily around the house of her deceased mistress, stating:

'Many things, that have passed of late years, are gone quite from my memory, while those so long ago, I can see as if in a glass.' She paused, but afterwards, as they walked up the gallery, added of Emily, 'This young lady sometimes brings the late Marchioness to my mind; I can remember, when she looked just as blooming, and very like her, when she smiles.'²⁰

The glass that reveals the past to Dorothee proves to distort the present to such an extent that the Marchioness's portrait becomes the living embodiment of her, with Dorothee protesting that 'these are her own blue eyes . . . and there is her very look!' (497) Similarly, Sister Agnes, (the nun who, we later discover, is in fact Signora Laurentini from the Castle of Udolpho) looks upon Emily and sees the living embodiment of her past sins, due to Emily's striking resemblance to her aunt:

'My head burns, I believe I am not well. O! could I strike from my memory all former scenes – the figures, that rise up, like furies, to torment me! – I see them, when I sleep, and when I am awake, they are still before my eyes! I see them now – now!' (575)

To Sister Agnes, Emily literally resurrects the past and her past crimes. The resemblance between Emily and her dead aunt becomes the literal moral arbiter in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and provokes Sister Agnes to confess her crimes. Emily's striking resemblance becomes the site of the confessional for various characters in this novel. For many characters, she is the catalyst for the reanimation of the past, but not necessarily in a negative sense.

The heroine of Maria Regina Roche's 1796 immensely popular *The Children of the Abbey* serves a conscious-awakening purpose similar to Emily St Aubert.²¹ Amanda Fitzalan, orphaned and disowned by her mother's younger sister, revisits her ancestral home, Dunreath Abbey, in an attempt to view her mother's portrait. She finds her mother's portrait in a disused chapel of the Abbey, in a type of 'lumber room' similar to Rosetta Ballin's *Statue Room*. Finding her mother's portrait propped, significantly, against a disused altar, Amanda weeps 'before the shade of her mother' to 'assuage the bitterness of those feelings.'²² Unbeknownst to her,

she is observed by the now imprisoned and spectral elderly Lady Dunreath, her mother's sister. Lady Dunreath presents Amanda with a hitherto suppressed will, which names her as heir. She accounts for the reanimation of her conscience through the resemblance she has observed between Amanda and her mother's portrait, stating that 'the gleam of moonlight, which displayed me to you, gave you full to my view, and I beheld the very form and face of Lady Malvina' (328). Again, this reference to 'the *very* form and face' (my italics) indicates to the reader that the reanimation of conscience in these Gothic villains occurs through the reanimation of their past victims in the forms of the heroines. The past is reawakened in order to rectify such wrongs. Roche's villain, Lady Dunreath, makes the purpose of this reanimation explicit:

Adoring the Power who has given me means of making restitution for my injustice I take up my pen, to disclose to your view, oh! lovely orphan of the injured Malvina, the frailties of a heart which has long been tortured with the retrospect of past and the pressure of present evil. Convinced, as I have already said, that if your mind, as well as form, resembles your mother's, you will, while you condemn the sinner, commiserate the penitent. (320)

Absence and mourning are supplanted by a stronger moral imperative in these examples of female Gothic writing. The living embodiments of wronged mothers and aunts return, effectively, to haunt those who have wronged them.²³ We can trace the heritage of this 'conscience reanimation' back to *The Recess*. Ellinor, the sister who falls insane after the death of her lover Essex, pays a vengeful visit to Queen Elizabeth, who believes her dead. Queen Elizabeth, upon this visitation, significantly assumes Ellinor to be a spectre, and faints. The description of Ellinor offered by the narrator, Lady Pembroke, is highly reminiscent of the descriptions we are given of her mother, Mary, Queen of Scots:

The door flew suddenly open – a form so fair – so fragile – so calamitous appeared there, that hardly durst my beating heart call it Ellinor. The Queen started up with a feeble quickness, but had only power to falter a convulsive ejaculation. I instantly remembered Elizabeth believed her dead, and imagined this her spectre. The beautiful phantom (for never surely mortal looked so like an inhabitant of another world) sunk on one knee, and while her long garments of black flowed gracefully over the floor, she lifted up her eyes toward Heaven, with that nameless sweetness, that wild ineffable benignity, madness alone can give. . . . (Vol. III, 180–1)

The characterization of Queen Elizabeth, described by Bette B. Roberts elsewhere as 'masculine' is feminized with this haunting scene; her conscience is reanimated as her crimes are resurrected before her eyes.²⁴ In Ballin's rewriting of Lee's themes in *The Statue Room*, her wronged heroine Romelia commits suicide in front of her Queen Elizabeth I. In both of these early versions, the female villain is punished by the living embodiment of her crimes. In Radcliffe's and Roche's later reprises, her crimes are resurrected by the striking resemblances that the heroines carry to their relatives.

If the satirical article with which I began neatly satirizes the Gothic heroine's initial ignorance of the purpose of their own uncanny resemblances, it ignores the

broader moral aim of the writers' deployment of this unrealistic and over-exploited trope.²⁵ The tension between moral projects, on one hand, and their blatantly unrealistic mode of representation on the other, is very self-consciously enacted by the heroine's obsession with portraits and objets d'art in the novels of the 1780s and 1790s. This can be witnessed by noting how the heroines exact justice from those who have wronged their parents.

Portraits, parents and the critique of luxury in Female Gothic

In *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter situates the rise of the Gothic in the late eighteenth century in relation to the rise of the middle-classes as consumers who are suspended between the tried and trusted hierarchies of the past and the confused hierarchies of contemporary consumerist and capitalist society.²⁶ It is perhaps ironic, therefore, that within such easily 'consumable' and replaceable Gothic texts, we can perceive a growing critique of consumerism and luxury. This is particularly evident in women's Gothic writing of the 1790s, and is crystallised by the very presence of family portraits. *The Recess* provided an important context for subsequent portraiture tropes in Gothic novels of the 1790s. Lee's specifically historical framework, however, was discarded by many of the 1790s Gothic practitioners. In place of Lee's historical framework arose a more specific moral concern with the contemporaneous emphasis on fashion, consumerism and material wealth in the late eighteenth century.²⁷ A significant number of Gothic novels of the 1790s contain female villains in the form of aunts, guardians and gaolers who are portrayed as having an unhealthy obsession with fashion and opulence. Such concerns are perhaps most clearly evinced in the work of Ann Radcliffe. One of the most prominent critiques of this obsession in Radcliffe's fiction occurs in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* when, after the death of Emily St Aubert's father, Madame Cheron, Emily's aunt, is appointed as her guardian. Emily is, of course, aware of her aunt's materialist nature. She observes that her aunt's 'inclinations led her into a life of dissipation, which her ample fortune encouraged' (98) and that her Aunt's guests have 'a desire to display the appearance of that prosperity, which they know will command submission and attention to themselves' (123). In Fenwick's *Secresy* (written only a year after Radcliffe's *Udolpho*), the heroine Sibella's closest correspondent, Caroline Ashburn, describes Sibella's aunt as a 'votary of dissipation' (52) and later denigrates her own mother's devotion to pleasure. She complains to Arthur Murden that 'our house is the palace of luxury' where 'eastern magnificence and eastern voluptuousness' 'hold their court', plunging her mother 'deeper in the vortex of vanity' (287). Such descriptions by Caroline are powerfully contrasted with Clement's portrait of Sibella as a child of nature, and Caroline Ashburn's initial confusion of Sibella with 'Wood Nymph, Dryad and Hymadriad' (54). These images of Sibella so inspire Caroline that she resolves to discard her own ornaments and dress simply.

Similarly, Roche's *The Children of the Abbey*, published only a year after *Secresy*, opens with a brief account of the love and subsequent separation of Amanda Fitzalan's parents. The character of Amanda's wronged mother Malvina, disinherited by

her family because she marries the poor Fitzalan, is most powerfully resurrected for the reader through the representation of her portrait. Significantly, this portrait is contrasted to a description of her sister's (Lady Augusta):

Lady Augusta appeared negligently reclined upon a sofa, in a verdant alcove; the flowing drapery of the loose robe in which she was habited, set off her fine figure; little Cupids were seen fanning aside her dark-brown hair, and strewing roses on her pillow.

Lady Malvina was represented in the simple attire of a peasant girl, leaning on a grassy hillock, whose foot was washed by a clear stream while her flock browsed around, and her dog rested beneath the shade of an old tree. . . . (13)

Later in their courtship, Malvina assures Fitzalan that, 'The glare, the ostentation of wealth, a soul of sensibility would willingly resign for privacy and plainness if they were to be attended with real friendship and sympathy' (14). Malvina's distaste for the privileging of material luxury and consumption is unsurprisingly handed down to her daughter Amanda, who, throughout the text, frequently evinces her distaste for the 'luxury and ostentation' of other people's domestic arrangements (106).

The connections between portraiture and resemblances in Sophia Lee's *The Recess* in particular often focus upon an irretrievable sense of loss which the heroines experience. They become lost in the permanency of an image, and unable to escape from the past. However, Lee's literary example provided a vital springboard for the more nuanced critique of power and consumerism which emerged in women's Gothic writing of the 1790s. Ellinor's spectral reproach of the power-hungry Elizabeth I informs in turn the accusations that Gothic heroines can make by becoming the 'living embodiments' of mothers, fathers and aunts. Small consolation, perhaps; but they are able to reclaim what is rightfully theirs, and avenge the wrongs of their family.

The second connected moral project is that of the critique of consumerism. 'The Terrorist System of Novel Writing' was signed by a 'Jacobin Novelist', ostensibly worried about the corrupting effect of such literature on the female members of his household. And yet, had he been able to reconcile the frustratingly recurrent use of portraits with an emerging and at times clumsily reproduced morality about luxury and consumerism, he may have felt more easy about the free circulation of such literature in his household.

Notes

- 1 The opening part of my article's title is taken from Eliza Fenwick's *Secresy* (1795), ed. Isobel Grundy (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1996), p. 101.
- 2 'Terrorist Novel Writing' (1798) in *Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797*, Vol. 1 (London, 1798), pp. 223–5.
- 3 Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: W.H. Allen, 1977), Chapter 5.
- 4 For a more detailed and thought-provoking discussion of this issue, see E. J. Clery, 'Ann Radcliffe and D. A. F. de Sade: thoughts on heroinism', and Robert Miles's Introduction to the special issue 'Female Gothic' in *Women's Writing*, 1/2, (1994), 203–14.

- 5 'The Terrorist System of Novel Writing', *The Monthly Magazine*, August 1797, 102–04.
- 6 Emily Jane Cohen, 'Museums of the Mind', *ELH*, 62 (1995), 883.
- 7 E. J. Clery notes that 'The hothouse productivity of the 1790s meant that the initial reading of a Gothic novel was not unlikely to be the equivalent of rereading half a dozen others.' (E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762–1800* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], p.142).
- 8 Sophia Lee, *The Recess* (1785), ed. April Alliston (Kentucky: Kentuck University Press, 2000).
- 9 Margaret Anne Doody, 'Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel', *Genre*, 10 (1977), 559.
- 10 See April Alliston's introduction to her recent edition of *The Recess*, p. xx.
- 11 Sophia Lee, *The Recess, Or A Tale Of Other Times* (London, 1785), Vol. 1, pp. 8–9.
- 12 Sarah Lansdell's 1798 novel *The Tower; or the Romance of Ruthyne* was also strikingly similar to Lee's *The Recess* both in terms of plot and thematics, and was undoubtedly one of the later examples of veiled plagiarism which were satirized in the periodical press. Lansdell's novel also has two sisters as heroines who are virtually imprisoned in the eponymous tower, and spend their time looking at the portraits which surround them. The remarkable similarity of theme and tone in their discovery of their mother's portrait to that of Lee's earlier work, is striking:
- Matilda smiled to see Augusta shudder at the fierce countenances of the warriors who frowned in mail, but her attention was soon engrossed by the portrait of a beautiful young woman, whose delicate features were half shaded by a black veil, and still more, by a touching melancholy, that rendered her countenance more interesting than the most animated grace could possibly have done.
- Augusta fancied she saw in it a slight resemblance to Matilda; but both hesitated to call it their mother, . . .
- Not far from this, hung the picture of an elderly man, whose countenance partook of the sensibility depicted in the other, but it was tempered with apparent firmness, and mixed with some little degree of haughtiness.
- These two portraits excited such an interest in the bosoms of Matilda and Augusta, that the rest were passed almost unnoticed; . . . (Sarah Lansdell, *The Tower; Or The Romance of Ruthyne* [London, 1798], 3 vols pp. 33–4).
- 13 Terry Castle's essay 'The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*', while it discusses resemblances specifically in relation to Ann Radcliffe's novel, also makes an excellent general point concerning them: 'When everyone looks like everyone else, the limit between mind and world is again profoundly undermined, for such obsessive replication can only occur, we assume, in a universe dominated by phantasmatic imperatives' (Castle, 'The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*' in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, eds. Nussbaum and Brown (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 240.
- 14 Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and The Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 30.
- 15 Rosetta Ballin, *The Statue Room; An Historical Tale*, by Miss Ballin (London: H. D. Symonds, 1790), 2 vols.
- 16 Fenwick, *Secresy*, p. 253.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 253.
- 18 Sarah Elmsley, 'Radical Marriage', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 11 (July 1999), 492. Elmsley's article discusses the wider contexts of the marriage contract in Fenwick's *Secresy*.

- 19 Castle, 'The Spectralization of the Other', p. 250.
- 20 Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), ed. Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 533. Subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page references will appear in parentheses in the text.
- 21 As Natalie Schroeder has recorded, the sale of *The Children of the Abbey*, which was Roche's third novel, nearly eclipsed that of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Although it received hardly any reviews, it went to eleven editions by 1832, and remained in print for the whole of the nineteenth century (Schroeder, 'Regina Maria Roche, Popular Novelist, 1789–1834: The Rochean Canon' in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 73[1979], 462).
- 22 Maria Regina Roche, *The Children of the Abbey* (1796) (London: Milner and Co), p. 313. Subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page references will appear in parentheses in the text.
- 23 Similarly, in Roche's 1798 novel *Clermont*, the portrait of the hero himself, supposedly the chevalier de Sevignie, but later revealed as Lord Philippe, alerts the heroine Madeline to the past injustices committed against him, which she promptly sets about rectifying: Maria Regina Roche, *Clermont: A Tale* (London: Lane, 1798).
- 24 Bette B. Roberts, in 'Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1785): The Ambivalence of Female Gothicism', *Massachusetts Studies in English*, 6 (1979), 68–82, states that 'Even the major villain of the novel, Queen Elizabeth, is given the male traits of domination and rational policy be virtue of her royal position. Throughout, the reader gets the impression of Queen Mary as a naturally feminine figure, endowed with sensibility and beauty, pitted against Elizabeth as an unnaturally masculine character, with reason and power her attributes' (79).
- 25 Fred Botting has also noted how satirical articles complained about the lack of moral message present in Gothic novels. However, as he later emphasizes, 'many Gothic novels set out to vindicate morality, virtue and reason. They were thus caught between their avowedly moral projects and the unacceptably unrealistic mode of representation they employed.' Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 46.
- 26 David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (1980), Second Edition (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 2 vols.
- 27 For an excellent discussion of luxury and the sublime, see E. J. Clery's section 'The Strange Luxury of Artificial Terror' in *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762–1800*, p. 93.

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