READING THE RUPTURED WORD: DETECTING TRAUMA IN GOTHIC FICTION FROM 1764-1853

Jeanette Ann Laredo

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APPROVED:

Deborah Needleman Armintor, Committee Chair
Dahlia Porter, Committee Member
Nora Gilbert, Committee Member
Robert Upchurch, Chair of the Department of English
David Holdeman, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
Victor Prybutok, Vice Provost of the Toulouse Graduate School

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Using trauma theory, I analyze the disjointed narrative structure of gothic works from 1764-1853 as symptomatic of the traumatic experience. Gothic novels contain multiple structural anomalies, including gaps in experience that indicate psychological wounding, use of the supernatural to violate rational thought, and the inability of witnesses to testify to the traumatic event. These structural abnormalities are the result of trauma that characters within these texts then seek to prevent or repair via detection.

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INTRODUCTION

The term “detective fiction” inspires visions of flickering gaslight feebly illuminating a foggy London night at the turn of the century. The clip clop of horse hooves echoes on the cobblestones as hansom cabs weave through the darkened, narrow streets. Amidst these shadows is the figure of the detective, perhaps wearing that iconic deerstalker cap, his high collar pulled tight against the chill. He pursues his quarry, a notorious footpad or clever blackmailer, and plunges into the murky abyss to probe its mysteries. This singular image of the detective seems to emerge from the foggy streets of Victorian London without any historical or literary antecedents, but the Victorian detective actually has roots going back to gothic fiction. Long before Sherlock Holmes stalked the streets of Victorian London, eighteenth-century gothic novels enacted a nascent version of the detective tale. According to E.F. Bleiler, “the gothic is a primitive detective story in which God or fate is the detective.”[1] This holds true for Horace Walpole’s seminal gothic texts *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), where supernatural agents expose the crime at the heart of each narrative. In *Otranto* giant pieces of armor intrude on the narrative and eventually reveal Manfred is the false heir of the castle. Count Narbonne’s ghost intervenes in *The Mysterious Mother* to expose the cause of his son Edmund’s exile: he unknowingly engaged in incest with his mother on the night of his father’s death.

Despite this, few critics have explored the relationship between the gothic and detective genres. Britta Martens posits “the gothic novel is arguably the “missing link” between the old epistemology of earlier crime narratives and the new epistemology of detective fiction.”[2] If the gothic novel is such a missing link, it explains why gothic narratives would exhibit aspects of detection. For example, Bran Nicol's argues the protagonist of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," who many critics consider an "embryonic detective," is more of a "deluded gothic protagonist."[3] Nils Clausson examines the quintessential Sherlock Holmes tale *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as both a "*fin-de-siècle* gothic tale… [and] a detective story" representing the competing powers of science and degeneration at the end of the nineteenth century.[4] I argue that the relationship between the gothic and detective genres is far more complex. Using trauma theory, I analyze the disjointed narrative structure of gothic novels as symptomatic of the traumatic experience. Gothic novels contain multiple structural anomalies, including gaps in experience that indicate psychological wounding, use of the supernatural to violate rational thought, and the inability of witnesses to testify to the traumatic event. These structural abnormalities are the result of trauma that characters within these texts then seek to prevent or repair via detection.

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[1] Everett Franklin Bleiler, ed., “Introduction,” in *Three Gothic Novels* (Dover Publications, 1966), xv.
[2] Britta Martens, “Dramatic Monologue, Detective Fiction, and the Search for Meaning,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 66, no. 2 (September 2011): 214.

Plotting the prevalence of the terms "trauma" and "gothic" from 1760-1960 reveals some interesting trends.[5] The term "gothic" explodes soon after 1764, the same year Horace Walpole published the first gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto*. As we might expect, the term spikes as the gothic genre rises in popularity, in 1794 following the publication of Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and again in 1796 corresponding with the release of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*. In his review of *The Monk*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge recognizes that the authors of the gothic genre were interested in representing the phenomenon of trauma by inflicting psychological wounds on their characters and readers. Coleridge writes how "the sufferings which [Lewis] describes are so frightful and intolerable, that we break with abruptness from the delusion, and indignantly suspect the man of a species of brutality."[6] Despite Coleridge's psychological angst at reading *The Monk* he praises Lewis's ability to conjure "situations of torment, and images of naked horror," comparing it to real life trauma.[7] Coleridge says the author "deserves our gratitude almost equally with him who should drag us by way of sport

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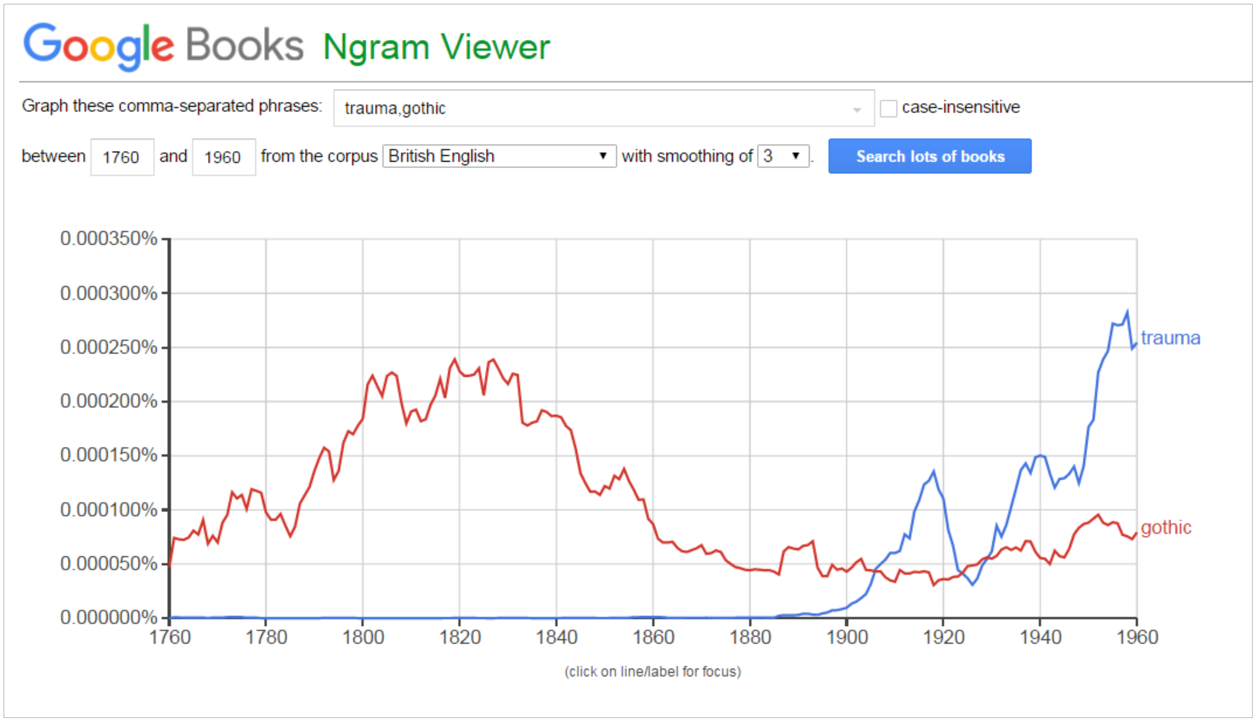
[3] Bran Nicol, "Reading and Not Reading 'The Man of the Crowd': Poe, the City, and the Gothic Text," *Philological Quarterly* 91, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 467.
[4] Nils Clausson, "Degeneration, Fin-de-Siècle Gothic, and the Science of Detection: Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and the Emergence of the Modern Detective Story," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 63.
[5] "Google Ngram Viewer: '[trauma]', '[gothic]', 1760-1960 in British English.," accessed March 6, 2016, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=trauma%2Cgothic&year_start=1760&year_end=1960&corpus=18&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Ctrauma%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2Cgothic%3B%2Cc0.



Graph these comma-separated phrases: trauma,gothic ☐ case-insensitive

between 1760 and 1960 from the corpus British English with smoothing of 3.

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[6] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Review of Matthew G. Lewis, *The Monk* in *The Critical Review* (February 1797)," *University of Pennsylvania, Department of English*, accessed March 6, 2016, http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/coleridge.reviews.

[7] Ibid.

through a military hospital, or force us to sit at the dissecting-table of a natural philosopher."[8] Fueled by such representations of psychological trauma, the term gothic approaches its zenith in 1816 with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and 1818 saw the publication of Jane Austen's parody *Northanger Abbey*. The publication of *Frankenstein* and *Northanger Abbey* mark both the gothic genre's highest point and also the start of its long decline. Although the gothic genre would continue to be popular throughout the Victorian period—for instance, John Ruskin argued in *The Stones of Venice* (1851) that the gothic architectural style represented a more moral society and means of production than that of Victorian England—at the same time the word "trauma" is becoming part of the English vernacular.

The term "trauma" was used in surgical contexts during the 1800s, referring to a physical wound or injury inflicted on the body. Starting in the 1860s and 1870s, neurological and psychiatric practitioners adopted the term to define what American psychiatrist and philosopher William James described as "certain reminiscences of the shock [that] fall into the subliminal consciousness...[and] act as permanent 'psychic *traumata*', thorns in the spirit, so to speak."[9] The term trauma inclines steadily in 1918 just as the First World War ends, sending home thousands of soldiers suffering from shell shock whose psychological wounds didn't heal as readily as their physical ones. It crests again in 1930 as Freud struggles to describe this phenomenon as a product of the "death drive" in his book *Civilization and its Discontents*. Tracking these terms underscores one of the fundamental claims of my dissertation, that long before the term trauma became associated with psychological wounding, gothic authors like Walpole were using the disjointed narrative structure of the gothic genre to represent trauma before there was a vocabulary to describe the phenomenon.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] William James, "Review of 'On the Psychological Mechanism of Historical Phenomena' (1893) by Sigmund Freud and Janet Breuer," *Psychological Review*, 1894, 199.

In this dissertation, I examine the fractured narrative structure of gothic tales as representations of the traumatic experience, and how characters in these tales attempt to mend these narrative wounds using detection. My dissertation intervenes in the current scholarship on gothic literature, which tends to read this genre psychoanalytically to explain the gothic as narratives of repressed sexuality. The beginning of gothic literature in English is conventionally lodged with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). Patterned on Walpole's seminal text, gothic narratives are marked by supernatural occurrences and are filled with eerie portraits and decrepit castles that entomb their victims in threatening architectural spaces, creating psychological turmoil in both characters and readers. Critics have struggled to reconcile the supernatural eruptions of the gothic with the narrative conditions that characterize it as a hodge-podge of styles and genres.

For example, contemporary interpretations of gothic literature often read the supernatural occurrences and cloistered spaces of these texts psychoanalytically as Freudian and Lacanian signifiers of repressed sexual desire. The disembodied pieces of armor that appear in *Otranto* are read as uncanny representations of the fear of castration and the return of the repressed that haunts Manfred, the false heir of the castle. For example, Frederick S. Frank reads the helmet in *Otranto* as the "portent of some savage and meaningless power," interpreting the fragmented pieces of armor as omens or phallic signifiers for Manfred.[10] These perspectives, though helpful, are reductive in scope since they are inattentive to the narrative structure of gothic tales. My study of narrative structure reveals that the fractured storylines of gothic tales are actually textual representations of trauma. I extend the theoretical implications of trauma theory to fiction of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, specifically Horace Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Charles Dickens’ *Bleak House* (1853). By interpreting these narratives through the lens of trauma theory, I hope to show that the often bemoaned narrative defects of this genre are actually sophisticated representations of the traumatic experience long before modern psychology theorized this occurrence.

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[10] Frederick S. Frank, "Introduction," in *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story; And, the Mysterious Mother: A Tragedy*, ed. Frederick S. Frank (Orchard Park, New York: Broadview Press, 2003), 18.

Modern trauma theorists often identify the discourse of psychological trauma as a modern phenomenon that occurs shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century and runs through the 1960s. Psychological trauma causes a rupture in existence and a break in consciousness for the modern subject, causing ruptured narratives that reflect the fragmentary effect trauma has on linear experience. To illustrate this point, Cathy Caruth begins her study of trauma with Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1930) and goes on to examine narratives of trauma on both sides of the atomic bomb explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[11] Similarly Shoshanna Felman and Dori Laub use the narratives of Holocaust survivors to discover “the theoretical and methodological innovations that might be derived from [trauma] and applied more generally to film and literature studies.”[12] Overlooking the origins of the term in the early nineteenth century, these modern trauma theorists prefer to locate the origins of the discourse of trauma in twentieth-century psychoanalysis, and often apply trauma theory to modern narratives of trauma, like those of Holocaust survivors and World War II veterans.

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[11] Jill L. Matus, *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20.

[12] Susannah Radstone, “Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics,” *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory* 30, no. 1 (March 2007): 11.

Despite its seemingly modern origins, trauma and its effect on narrative appear in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century texts that struggled to accurately portray the traumatic experience. Trauma frustrates the coherent witnessing of the event to others via narrative. This crisis of witnessing recalls the Enlightenment crisis of the senses which stressed the importance of empiricism in verifying human experience. This led to a schism between the genres of romance and history. History was considered more reliable in representing reality, while romance narratives, and specifically gothic narratives, were criticized for not accurately portraying experience. By interpreting gothic narratives through the lens of trauma theory, I argue that the undervalued and disparaged narrative defects of this genre actually anticipate contemporary formulations of trauma.

Caruth conceptualizes trauma "as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind," describing trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena."[13] Though modern trauma theory has moved beyond Freud, it still originates in Freudian psychoanalysis that interprets these narrative gaps as the result of repressed desire rather than repressed trauma. While Freud does acknowledge the role of trauma in psychological disorders, he ultimately concludes that sexual repression is the cause of his patients' neuroses. For example, in his case study of the Wolfman entitled "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918), Freud concludes the Wolfman witnessed the primal scene of his parents engaged in sexual intercourse. While Freud acknowledges this event is traumatic—he calls it a "fantasized trauma"— Freud posits it was also sexually arousing for the

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[13] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3-11.

Wolfman who repressed his sexual desire “to be copulated with by his father”.[14] Freud’s focus on desire has led gothic theorists to overlook repressed trauma in favor of repressed sexual urges. Moving away from the subject of desire and sexual repression, I hope to develop a pre-disciplinary trauma theory before Freudian psychology based on eighteenth-and nineteenth-century fictional representations of trauma. Ultimately, I argue that the narrative ruptures and structural defects of gothic literature best reproduce the fragmenting experience of trauma as one of terror and confusion.

In this section, I will explain the terminology of modern trauma theory that I will later use to investigate the effect trauma has on gothic narrative, following an assessment of current scholarship on narrative disruption in gothic novels. According to Shoshana Felman’s and Dori Laub’s *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992) and Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), trauma results in a split between the conscious self and the traumatized Other. This split does not allow trauma to be accessed by the conscious self, but returns in the form of unconscious repetition and becomes an event that “in effect, does not end.”[15] Trauma is thus a double wounding, psychological and physical. The word trauma comes from the Greek “ραῦμα” meaning a physical wound, but psychoanalysis expands the term to include “psychic injury” caused by “emotional shock” where “the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed.”[16] Locating the source of trauma fails to “uncover the lost truth of some ideal past” by missing “both the abyssal logic and the paradoxical temporality of the experience.”[17]

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[14] Sigmund Freud, *The “Wolfman” and Other Cases*, ed. Louise Adey Huish (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 258.

[15] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 67.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Linda Belau, “Trauma and the Material Signifier,” *Postmodern Culture: An Electronic Journal of Interdisciplinary Criticism* 11, no. 2 (January 2001): 5; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

Because trauma is something that happens "too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" or understood by the person experiencing it, trauma returns in the form of repetition. Cathy Caruth illustrates this principle with her reading of Tasso's epic poem *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581) which features the tale of Tacred and Clorinda. The knight Tacred mistakenly kills his lover Clorinda while she is dressed in the armor of an opposing knight. Tacred buries Clorinda and journeys into an enchanted forest. Lashing out, Tacred slashes his sword at a tree and instead of sap, blood flows from the gash in the bark. With the blood also comes the voice of Clorinda, Tacred's slain beloved, bemoaning this second wounding. In the case of Holocaust survivors, Felman and Laub call this phenomenon a second Holocaust. They detail how Holocaust survivor Martin Gray watched his entire family burn in the crematoriums of Treblinka and Warsaw. After the war, Gray moved to France where he remarried and rebuilt his family, only to lose it again in the flames of a forest fire. Gray recounts that this second loss of his family was "just like Warsaw" with "the crackling of the fire" and "for the second time [he] remained alone with nothing but [his] life."[18]

The double wounding of trauma results in a doubling of the self, as trauma creates a split between the conscious self and what Caruth calls the traumatized Other.[19] The concept of the Other was formalized by the Jewish philosopher and naturalized French citizen Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas' experience as the ultimate Other—a Jewish prisoner of war during World War II—provided the basis for his definition of the term. In *Time and the Other* (1948), Levinas defines "the Other [as] what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other's character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other's very alterity. The Other is, for example, the weak, the poor, 'the orphan and the widow,' whereas I am the rich or the powerful."[20] Defining the other as opposite, Edward Said uses Levinas' term to describe the relationship between Europe and the Orient. In *Orientalism* (1978), Said identifies the Orient as the source of "one of [Europe's] deepest and most recurring images of the Other," that represents all that is alien and inferior to the West.[21] Departing from Said and Levinas, Caruth conceives the traumatic Other as an internal rather than an external other. In *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Caruth defines the traumatic Other as "the other within the self that retains the memory of the 'unwitting' traumatic events of one's past."[22] This second self is fundamentally changed by trauma and is no longer recognizable by the conscious self. Caruth uses the examples of a French woman who saw her German lover die in the war and a Japanese man who lost his family in the Hiroshima bombing in the film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1960). While these characters represent to each other a foreign, external Other, they also represent each other's internal, traumatized Other. Because of this, they can identify with each other "across the distance of their cultures and through the impact of their very different traumas."[23]

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[18] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 66.
[19] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 8.

Despite the victim's inability to process the traumatic event, the voice of the Other still cries out to the conscious mind. Caruth uses an example from Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) where a father waits at the bedside of his sick son until the child passes away. The father leaves an old man to watch over the body of his child, and then moves into an adjoining room to sleep. While sleeping, the father has a dream in which his child catches "him by the arm and [whispers] to him reproachfully: 'Father, don't you see I am burning?'"[24] The voice of the dead child awakens the father to a bright flash of light coming from the room where his son's body rests. The old man set to keep watch had nodded into sleep, and a lighted candle had fallen on the boy's death shroud, setting him aflame. Here the voice of the child that "addresses the father from within" is calling out to the conscious mind to awaken the victim to an unconscious trauma.[25] Caruth uses this scenario to illustrate the need for an external party (the son) to bear witness to trauma when the traumatic split prevents the victim of trauma (the father) from accessing his experience.

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[20] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Time and the Other and Additional Essays* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 83.
[21] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Books India, 2006), 1
[22] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 8.
[23] Ibid., 9.
[24] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. Joyce Crick and Ritchie Robertson (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1999), 509.

A crisis of witnessing occurs when an involuntary witness fails to testify to the trauma of the Other. The involuntary witness is one who witnesses a traumatic event "whose effects explode any capacity for explanation or rationalization"[26] This leads to a failure of the witness who experiences a trauma, but refuses to testify for the traumatized self. Laub calls the Holocaust an event without a witness. As the Nazis tried to wipe out all the physical witnesses to their crimes, they also created an "incomprehensible and deceptive psychological structure of the event [which] precluded its witnessing, even by its very victims."[27] Despite the appointment of external witnesses like the Allies, "potential witness[es] failed one-by-one to occupy their position as a witness," and the Holocaust lacked either an internal or external witness. [28]

Moving from 20th century traumas to the turn of the eighteenth century, the gothic genre emerges as a reaction to the Enlightenment's emphasis on empiricism. Eighteenth-century empiricism highly regarded knowledge gained through one's experience of the senses. Ian Watt underscores the importance of empiricism in the realist novel, explaining what is most important is “the adaptation of prose style to give an air of complete authenticity…to contribute to the furthering of an aim which the novelist shares with the philosopher—the production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals.”[29] While Enlightenment novels reflected this desire for realism by striving to depict the probabilities of actual experience, gothic novels landed on the far side of the literary spectrum in romance. Marked by supernatural occurrences and unseen horrors, gothic romance plots are filled with lustful guardians, eerie portraits and decrepit castles that entomb their naïve victims in threatening narratives. The gothic genre’s unrealistic depiction of events might seem at odds with the Enlightenment’s goals of reason and probability, but I submit that the gothic novel’s improbable supernatural occurrences are not an attack on Enlightenment ideals, only a different interpretation of them. James Carson argues that “far from representing a return of supernaturalism following the repression of the numinous by Enlightenment rationalism, the gothic novel shares an Enlightenment preoccupation with exploring phenomena at the margins of scientific knowledge.”[30] The gothic novel is simply the reverse side of the Enlightenment coin, with realist novels on the obverse side, representing a “less [cheerful]” answer to the “philosophical questions that dominated the period.”[31] As I will argue later in this dissertation, unlike realist novels which aim to depict the everyday experiences of individuals, the gothic genre uses the supernatural to fragment narrative and represent the experiences of trauma victims.

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[25] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 99.
[26] Ibid., 4.
[27] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 80.
[28] Ibid., 81.

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[29] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel; Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 27.

[30] James P. Carson, “Enlightenment, Popular Culture, and Gothic Fiction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 268.

[31] Emily R. Anderson, “‘I Will Unfold a Tale-!’: Narrative, Epistemology, and *Caleb Williams*,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 22, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 99–114.

As a result, gothic fiction has been a fragmented genre since its inception with *Otranto* (1764). Walpole's fragmented novel "sets the pattern for later writers, who work with techniques of interruption, deferral, ellipsis, framing, to splice stories into bits and pieces and disrupt superficial narrative unity or linearity," to produce texts that are "fragmented, interrupted, unreadable, or presented through multiple framings and narrators."[32] For example, Frederick S. Frank describes the narrative of Eugenia Acton's gothic novel *The Nuns of the Desert* (1805) as one that is "disjointed, chaotic, and pulsates with irrational and violent transitions that confound the reader at every turn."[33] Gothic scholars have addressed the narrative fragmentation of the gothic genre in a variety of ways. Frederick S. Frank, considered by many the founder of gothic studies, argues that Walpole's novel "dramatize[s] to the full the mandatory conditions of gothic conflict and crisis, as signified by the narrative's collapsing structures, evil enclosures, supernatural hyperactivity, strangely pleasing disorder, and attractively packaged anxieties of genealogy, fate, and identity."[34] Anthony Johnson examines how the breaches and gapped structures of gothic fiction "impart a colour to our imaginative response which extends beyond the locality of the verbal surface."[35]

Stephen Bernstein interprets the "convoluted or labyrinthine," structure of gothic narratives as "aris[ing] chiefly from the concern gothic novels have with the revelation and setting right of hidden wrongs from the past, and the slow way in which these wrongs are exposed over time through coincidence and a providential fatalism."[36] Along these lines, Jerrold Hogle attributes the genre's confusing narrative structure to the gothic's "uneasy conflation of genres, styles and conflicted cultural concerns."[37] Maggie Kilgour sums up recent scholarship that reads "the gothic's fragmentation as a response to bourgeois models of personal, sexual, and textual identity, seeing it as a Frankenstein deconstruction of modern ideology." [38] Allen Grove goes further to argue that gothic fragmentation draws "attention to those voices that have been oppressed or silenced by the writers of the precursory literary forms."[39]

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[32] Maggie Kilgour and Molson Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (Routledge, 2013), 18; Allen W. Grove, "To Make a Long Story Short: Gothic Fragments and the Gender Politics of Incompleteness," *Studies in Short Fiction* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 2.

[33] Frederick S. Frank, *The First Gothics: A Critical Guide to the English Gothic Novel*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 710 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 3.

[34] Frederick S. Frank, "Horace Walpole (1717–1797)," in *Gothic Writers: A Critical and Bibliographical Guide,* ed. Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G. Voller, and Frederick S. Frank (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 440.

[35] Anthony Johnson, "Gaps and Gothic Sensibility: Walpole, Lewis, Mary Shelley, and Maturin," in *Exhibited by Candlelight: Sources and Developments in the Gothic Tradition*, ed. Valeria Tinkler-Villani, Peter Davidson, and Jane Stevenson (Rodopi, 1995), 11.

In addition to gothic fiction at large, critics have addressed narrative disruption more specifically in the gothic works of Anne Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and William Godwin. Peter Beidler compares the narrative fragmentation caused by Anne Radcliffe inserting poetry into her novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to Edgar Allan Poe's literary insertions in "Fall of the House of Usher" (1839). He concludes "Radcliffe inserts into her novel poems and a tale largely for their own sake, [while] Poe asserts his artistic independence of her by inserting them into his story as highly functional narrative elements."[40] Leah Price and Ingrid Horrocks interpret these narrative breaks as Radcliffe dabbling in varying discourses or the author creating a safe haven for her terror-wracked heroine, respectively. Wendy Jones reads the "primary and secondary narratives that repeatedly interrupt each other" in *The Monk* as symptomatic of the novel's preoccupation with desire. The secondary narrative frequently interrupts Ambrosio's narrative, "as if the text itself were in love with narrative…[digressing] for the sheer pleasure and variety of new narrative lines" that signal the fulfillment of Ambrosio's dark desires.[41] Emily R. Anderson argues "*Caleb Williams* is a deeply fraught text—one that struggles with the practical ramifications of Enlightenment philosophy," attributing the novel's confusing narrative structure to Godwin's "suspicion of enlightenment empiricism."[42] Kenneth W. Graham argues these narrative anomalies are the result of a novel that struggles to meet the competing needs of justice and therapy, and therefore "cannot respond both to Caleb's needs and to the logic of the narrative, at least not at the same time or in the same way."[43]

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[36] Stephen Bernstein, "Form and Ideology in the Gothic Novel," *Essays in Literature* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 151.
[37] Jerrold E. Hogle, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14.
[38] Kilgour and Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, 6.
[39] Grove, "To Make a Long Story Short," 2.
[40] Peter G. Beidler, "Literary Insertions in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 23.

However, these perspectives overlook trauma as the potential source of narrative disruption in gothic texts. The conventions of the genre mirror the characteristics of trauma, including traumatic repetition, fractured storylines, unexplained gaps in time, the voice of the traumatized Other, and incomplete characterizations. Trauma creates rifts in consciousness that fragment narrative, preventing witnessing, and Walpole creates similar gaps in his text using the supernatural as a reverse *deus ex machina*. Walpole attempted to combine the "two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern," mixing elements of the supernatural and the realistic.[44] As a result, supernatural forces often violently challenge Walpole's realistic characters, as when Manfred's son Conrad is crushed by a giant helmet that appears out of nowhere on the day of his nuptials. Walpole's text is full of gigantic pieces of disembodied armor and other supernatural events that continually rupture the narrative. Contemporary interpretations of Walpole's work read the supernatural occurrences and narrative disruptions like the giant helmet of *Otranto* as symbolic of repressed sexual desire. Instead, I posit that Manfred's encounter with the giant helmet is a scene of trauma. Manfred's confrontation with the helmet contains both the fragmentation of experience and the inability to witness trauma. When Manfred sees the aftermath of his son crushed by the helmet, the horror of the scene deprives him of speech and the servants surrounding the helmet cannot witness the trauma of Conrad's death.

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[41] Wendy Jones, "Stories of Desire in *The Monk*," *ELH* 57, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 135.
[42] Anderson, "'I Will Unfold a Tale-!': Narrative, Epistemology, and *Caleb Williams*," 100.
[43] Kenneth W. Graham, "Narrative and Ideology in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 2, no. 3 (April 1990): 221.
[44] Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story; And, the Mysterious Mother: A Tragedy*, ed. Frederick S. Frank (Orchard Park, New York: Broadview Press, 2003), 65.

By reading this narrative fragmentation of *Otranto* as repressed desire, critics overlook a fragmented narrative structure that represents trauma. The episode of the helmet is both supernatural and traumatic as Manfred "beheld his child dashed to pieces."[45] Like trauma, the "miracle of the helmet" defies rational explanation through language as it takes "away the prince's speech," and Manfred's silence lasts "longer than even grief could occasion."[46]

The narrative fragmentation of gothic tales may at first resemble many other eighteenth-century novels that are not gothic, like Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* (1771) and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759). The narrative disruptions in these texts differ significantly from those in gothic fiction in two important ways. First, the supernatural is not the source of disruption in these eighteenth-century novels, and second, they produce very different emotions than their gothic counterparts. For example, the fragmented narrative of poor Uncle Toby in Sterne's novel evokes humor and mild frustration with the twists and turns of Tristram's narrative. This is an example of narrative digression, rather than the narrative gaps that plague most gothic novels. In this digression, the author willfully detours the reader in *Tristram Shandy* and the narrative resembles the knots of the green baize bag that hold captive Dr. Slop's surgical instruments. Like Dr. Slop, the reader is tempted to cut through the Gordian knot of Tristram's narrative digressions to the point of the narrative, only to find that digression is the point of the narrative. Unlike these narrative digressions in *Otranto*, the helmet does not produce a digression, but a gap in speech and witnessing that signals the psychological trauma of Manfred, who is more concerned with the "fatal casque" than with the "bleeding mangled remains" of his son.[47]

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[45] Ibid. 74.
[46] Ibid., 19.

As I discussed previously, the gothic novel is invested in the Enlightenment's investigation of knowledge on the fringe of realistic experience. It should come as no surprise then that the gothic novel is steeped in detection long before the formal detective emerges at the turn of the nineteenth century. The analytical detective has roots in the Enlightenment philosophy of science, and Paula Geyh has noted "the subjectivity of the hard-boiled detective might be best understood as a 20th-century culmination of Enlightenment subjectivity."[48] It's curious then that this figure does not emerge until a century later, but gothic novels will anticipate many structural elements that become commonplace in the detective genre. Emily Anderson has argued that, while they are scary, "gothic narratives are still unified and self-contained; that is, by the end of the tale, questions are answered and problems solved"[49] Expanding on this point, Stephen Bernstein likens the confused narratives of gothic tales and their eventual resolution to the "double narrative" structure of detective novels. Todorov observes that detective fiction "contains not one but two stories [or *fabula*]: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation."[50] According to Bernstein:

> The gothic novel, concurring with Todorov's formulation, contains a double *fabula,* two distinct stories separated by temporal rupture and reconciled by the *sjuzet,* or authorial arrangement of events, of the novel. The genre's insistence on positioning hidden crimes at the core of its narratives, then, creates the double *fabula,* with that of the

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[47] Ibid., 19.
[48] Paula Geyh, "Enlightenment Noir: Hammett's Detectives and the Geneaology of the Modern (Private) 'I,'" *Paradoxa: Studies in World Literary Genres* 16 (2001): 26.
[49] Anderson, "'I Will Unfold a Tale-!': Narrative, Epistemology, and *Caleb Williams,*" 102.
[50] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 44.

> hidden crime slowly established and articulated by that of the present action until both may be combined in the encompassing *sjuzet* that is the novel. In gothic novels this structure differs from the detective novel with which Todorov is concerned by virtue of the second, investigatory, *fabula's* status as usually far less rigorous, and far more coincidental, than that of the more modern detective novel.[51]

Bernstein is right to point out that the investigative *fabula* of gothic novels is far less rigorous than that of detective fiction. I posit the reasons for this are the absences trauma creates in experience. The story of the crime is what Todorov calls "the story of an absence" and it is by its very nature a story of trauma.[52] These absences in experience frustrate the gothic victim's ability to solve the crime or trauma at the heart of their texts via detection. Because trauma is absent, the narrative of the trauma "cannot be immediately present" in the gothic story, and the narrative of the present action must take primacy.[53] Readers cannot access the second *fabula* and can only glimpse the absent narrative of the crime and the trauma it represents in the testimony of intermediary characters. This is why in seminal gothic fiction like Walpole's *Otranto* or *Mysterious Mother* the secret seems to unfold by fate rather than human action.

Despite the importance of the absent narrative of crime that represents trauma, analysis of both gothic and detective fiction tends to focus on the complete and coherent narrative of the investigation, the *fabula* of the present. To illustrate this, I will undertake a reading of one of Poe's seminal detective stories "The Purloined Letter" (1844). Lacan establishes the often reiterated misreading of Poe's short story as a coherent narrative of investigation rather than a disjointed narrative of trauma. Lacan uses Poe's short story to explain Freud's repetitious automatism or the tendency to engage in repetitive and self-destructive behavior. This behavior was a conundrum for Freud, who theorized all human behavior comes from the pleasure principle and dubbed this contrary impulse the death drive. Instead of blaming this behavior on unconscious drives, Lacan argues that the unconscious contains symbolic strings that motivate human actions. According to Lacan, the different characters of Poe's story take on different roles in the symbolic order in reaction to the letter being used to blackmail the Queen. Because the contents of the letter are never revealed to the reader, it is a pure signifier, one that Lacan argues puts characters in a state of vulnerability whenever they come into possession of it, creating the cycle of repetition automatism. For Lacan the initial filching of the letter from the Queen represents a primal scene with the letter symbolizing the constituted lack of the maternal penis, "the place of castration."[54] This scene repeats when Dupin recovers the letter from Minister D—, as Lacan says, "ravish[ing the letter] from him" by plucking it from the soiled card rack hanging suggestively between the "legs" of the fireplace.[55] Based on this interpretation, Lacan ultimately argues that the "letter always arrives at its destination," and consistently determines the subject's place in the symbolic order.[56]

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[51] Bernstein, "Form and Ideology in the Gothic Novel," 52.
[52] Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose,* 46.
[53] Ibid., 46.

I argue that Lacan ultimately misreads "The Purloined Letter," rewriting Poe's short story as a coherent narrative of investigation and ignoring the tale's disjointed narrative structure. Lacan smooths over the fragmented narrative of Poe's story to create what appears to be a complete and coherent text that supports his theory. According to Lacan's rewriting, the Queen is reading the letter in question when the King and then the Minister enter the royal boudoir. Lacan goes on to describe the first theft of the letter as follows:

> At that moment, in fact, the Queen can do no better than to play on the King's inattentiveness by leaving the letter on the table 'face down, address uppermost.' It does not, however, escape the Minister's lynx eye, nor does he fail to notice the Queen's

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[54] Jacques Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*, ed. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 182.
[55] Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading,* ed. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 31.
[56] Ibid., 30.

> distress and fathom her secret. From then on everything transpires like clockwork. After dealing in his customary manner with the business of the day, the Minister draws from his pocket a letter similar in appearance to the one in his view, and, having pretended to read it, he places it next to the other. A bit more conversation to amuse the royal company, whereupon, without flinching once, he seizes the embarrassing letter, making off with it, as the Queen, on whom none of his maneuver has been lost, remains unable to intervene for fear of attracting the attention of her royal spouse, close at her side at that very moment.[57]

Lacan presents this scene as though an omniscient narrator delivers a single coherent narrative of events, when the opposite is true. As the story of the crime, the Queen's narrative is "the story of an absence."[58] It cannot exist in the short story's present because the crime occurs before the narrative of Dupin's investigation begins. Since the narrator "cannot transmit directly the conversations of the characters who are implicated, nor describe their actions," the Queen's narrative is necessarily fragmented as it passes through a series of intermediary narratives.[59] The Queen narrates her story of the crime to the Prefect G—, who narrates his account of her story to Dupin and the nameless narrator. This narrator then recounts his version of the Prefect's account of the Queen's tale to the reader in the form of the short story. Thus, instead of a coherent whole, Lacan bases his theory on a narrative that is actually fragmented and absent. This is perhaps why Lacan adds an element to the scene of the stolen letter that does not exist, envisioning "the letter, abandoned by the Minister, and which the Queen's hand is now free to roll into a ball."[60] He is imagining parts of the narrative that are not in Poe's story in order to create a sense of order and coherence.

My analysis of Lacan's reconstruction of "The Purloined Letter" aligns closely with Derrida's own critique of Lacan in his essay "The Purveyor of Truth" (1975). Derrida argues

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, 46.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" 30.

Lacan's reading, and subsequent readings in the same vein, are explanations "fascinated by a content."[61] Lacan focuses on the content of Poe's story instead of its form, excluding "the textual fiction from within which he has extracted the so-called general narration."[62] By extracting the content of the story and ignoring its textual form, Lacan undermines his entire argument about the letter as a pure signifier. For Lacan, the letter as a pure signifier is devoid of meaning which allows characters and readers to supply their own meaning. In the same way, Lacan evacuates the meaning, or signified, of Poe's short story and substitutes his own signified, ignoring the signifier of the tales' narrative structure. He achieves this by displacing the signifier of Poe's tale, "its writing…and its narrating form" and analyzing it as a signified, as "the recounted object of a short story."[63]

Lacan's structuralist approach to "The Purloined Letter" stands in direct opposition to Derrida's deconstructionist interpretation. Lacan argues for a stable, consistent meaning in language in Poe's story while Derrida argues such meaning is constantly deferred, never landing in one place and becoming stable. Their differing viewpoints lead critics to observe correctly that Lacan and Derrida are "engaged in a fight reminiscent of Dupin's rivalry with the Minister D—."[64] Initially, it seems that Derrida takes after the Minister D— who wants "desperately to keep [the] story fragmented and illegible," while Lacan appears to adopt the role of the detective Dupin who is "working just as hard to put the pieces back together into a coherent narrative."[65] Instead I posit the opposite is true: Lacan fails in his investigation because he is purely resolvent while Derrida's creative analysis makes him a more successful interpreter of Poe's short story.

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[61] Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," 179.
[62] Ibid., 180.
[63] Ibid., 179.
[64] Servanne Woodward, "Lacan and Derrida on 'The Purloined Letter,'" *Comparative Literature Studies* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 1989): 39.
[65] Catherine Ross Nickerson, "Women Writers before 1960," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Crime Fiction*, ed. Catherine Ross Nickerson (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 29–41. 30.

In this dissertation, I analyze the narrative structures that represent trauma in Walpole's gothic texts, tracing the importation of these structures of gothic trauma into the proto-detective novel *Caleb Williams* and other novels that feature detectives attempting to counteract traumatic absences by solving the crimes that caused them. Chapter 1, "Narrative Fragmentation and the Trauma of Incest in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother,*" establishes the gothic as a victim-identified genre that uses a fragmented narrative to represent the trauma of gothic victims. Walpole creates gaps in his text using the supernatural as a reverse *deus ex machina*. Instead of appearing to resolve the narrative, these events act instead as a *diabolous ex machina*, rupturing the text and causing trauma for its characters. As I noted previously, critics have decided to examine the supernatural objects that create the gaps in narrative rather than the gaps themselves as indicators of trauma. Contemporary interpretations of Walpole's work interpret the supernatural occurrences in these texts as signifiers of the repressed desire of the gothic villain, overlooking the gaps in narrative that represent the trauma of gothic victims. I argue that the fractured narrative structure of Walpole's gothic fiction accurately represents the traumatic experience of gothic victims like the women in *The Castle of Otranto* and Edmund in *The Mysterious Mother* at the level of sentence and narrative structure.

Chapter 2, "'Half-told and Mangled': Trauma and the Fragmented Body of the Servant Abuse Narrative in *Caleb Williams*," explores the fragmented structure of Godwin's novel as representative of the trauma of servant abuse. Godwin's novel details the history of the unfortunate Caleb Williams, the servant of the imperious Ferdinando Falkland. Soon after entering his master's service, Caleb determines Falkland is responsible for the murder of the tyrannical Barnabas Tyrrel. In order to silence Caleb, Falkland accuses him of theft and persecutes him endlessly. Godwin's novel is an intermediary text that signals the transition of the gothic victim from simple protagonist to author of his or her own narrative. By casting Caleb as the titular protagonist of his own novel, Godwin gives the gothic victim subjectivity. Because Caleb has subjectivity as a victim of trauma, he attempts and fails to create a coherent narrative of the events that have transpired between himself and Falkland. Godwin's novel is riddled with structural and stylistic defects that include hijacked narratives, embedded narratives and dropped narrators. These narrative slippages of Caleb's story have caused critics to read the novel as ether a political experiment or a psychological case study. I argue instead that the fragmented body of Godwin's text borrows elements from the gothic genre to accurately represent Caleb's traumatic experience. I read *Caleb Williams* against previously unexamined nonfiction narratives of servant abuse and murder during the eighteenth century to illustrate how Godwin's novel gives victims of servant trauma subjectivity in fiction. Unlike Godwin's novel, these nonfiction narratives fail to adequately represent the trauma of domestic abuse. Without the testimony of the servant protagonist, these nonfiction narratives replace the fragmented servant narrative with the fragmented servant body.

Chapter 3, "'Horror Occupied Her Mind': Misinformation, Misperception, and Detecting the Trauma of Gothic Heroines," explores how trauma frustrates the gothic heroine's ability to detect in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), *Northanger Abbey* (1818), and *Jane Eyre* (1847). The heroines of these novels employ detection to free themselves from restrictive, supernatural, and threatening environments that represent fears of female confinement in the home. Despite being an antecedent to the female detective, these gothic heroines are rarely successful when it comes to solving the mysteries of their narrative. Lisa M. Dresner locates the failure of the gothic heroine's detection in bodily desire, arguing the gothic heroine fails to detect once she attempts to “investigate the male object of [her] desire.”[66] By contrast, I posit that the cause of this failure are gaps in narrative caused by trauma. Gothic heroines fail as investigators because these gaps in knowledge cause misperception, limiting their ability to detect.

In Chapter 4, “Haunting the Ghost’s Walk: Gothic Trauma and Female Detection in Dickens’ *Bleak House,*” I examine how Dickens brings together the gothic and detective modes to critique the inability of traditional masculine detection to solve or repair female trauma. According to Lisa Jadwin, Dickens disapproved of Jane Eyre’s unfettered female curiosity and attempted to reestablish the primacy of the male detective in *Bleak House*. Though Dickens does have a male investigator working to solve two female crimes, he underscores the inability of the male detective to resolve female trauma by juxtaposing Bucket with the character of Esther Summerson. Esther is the presumed dead child of Lady Dedlock born out of wedlock, and her experience of trauma makes her more effective than Bucket at spotting and addressing the trauma of others. For instance, Esther’s profound narrative point of view helps her see through the façade of both Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby. Both women ostensibly dedicate their lives to charity, yet they cannot see or address the needs of the people who really need their help. Mrs. Jellyby is too focused on Africa to acknowledge the suffering of her poor bedraggled children, while Mrs. Pardiggle lectures a household of brick-makers about spiritual nourishment when they are physically starving.

> “ ‘He's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool.’
>
> ‘True,’ said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, ‘although I have been guilty of a certain doggerel myself.’ ”[67]
>
> –Edgar Allen Poe, “The Purloined Letter” (1844)

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[66] Lisa M. Dresner, *The Female Investigator in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Publishers, 2006), 9.

[67] Edgar Allan Poe, “The Purloined Letter,” in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*, ed. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 10.

In this scene with the prefect of the Parisian police, Poe's fictional detective C. Auguste Dupin touches on something vital to detection: identification. Dupin comments that the Minister who filched the Queen's letter is no fool, but the Prefect challenges Dupin's observation with his own: that the Minister is a poet, something he regards as "only one remove from a fool." Dupin counters the Prefect's criticism of poetry by confessing that he is also a poet and "guilty of a certain doggerel [him]self." Dupin's philosophy of detection demands that the detective put him or herself in the place of someone else to solve the crime. As a fellow poet, Dupin can identify with the Minister and think like him in order to locate the letter hiding in plain sight. The importance of identification in detection also extends to trauma, and what I will call empathetic detection. Just as Dupin puts himself in the place of the criminal minister to solve the crime, later detectives must empathize with the victim in order to detect trauma. Those who have experienced trauma are far better at spotting it than those who have not. Female detectives are especially successful in this regard, because women in a patriarchal society are more often the victims of trauma and can thereby identify trauma in others. By empathetically identifying with the victim of trauma instead of the perpetrator, female investigators illustrate how eighteenth-century gothic victims, trapped in narratives fractured by trauma, developed into empowered investigators in the nineteenth century who reconstruct their stories to gain control of their own experience.

CHAPTER 1

NARRATIVE FRAGMENTATION AND THE TRAUMA OF INCEST IN WALPOLE'S *THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO* AND *THE MYSTERIOUS MOTHER*

Critics consider Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) "the first gothic novel," and tend to read the narrative disruptions of *Otranto* and Walpole's gothic play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) through the lens of psychoanalysis.[68] Peter Otto explains that other scholars have interpreted Walpole's work "by referring, with varying emphases and degrees of approbation and disapprobation, to Walpole's father and mother, his own sexuality and psychology, and the cultural codes and historical events that frame his work and its reception."[69] This tendency to read *Otranto* in psychological terms stems from the gothic genre's preoccupation with the past that continues erupting into the present to enact an almost Freudian return of the repressed. As Valdine Clemens asserts "this 'return of the repressed' or emergence of whatever has been previously rejected by consciousness, is a fundamental dynamism of gothic narratives."[70] *Otranto*'s obsession with the past has led many critics to read Walpole's novel as a psychobiography.[71] In Patrick Brantlinger's autobiographical reading of *Otranto,* the powerful gothic villain Manfred stands in for Walpole's father, Sir Robert Walpole. Brantlinger surmises the supernatural elements of *Otranto* allowed Horace Walpole to "distance himself from the unhappiness of his relationship with his famous, powerful, law-making and executing father," interpreting the giant helmet and armor of Walpole's novel as "phallic marvels," that represent the castrating "wrath of the…Father" that haunts Manfred, the false heir of the castle.[72] Ed Cameron similarly cites daddy issues in his analysis of *Otranto*, though he attributes the gothic supernatural of the novel to the Enlightenment's problem with a patriarch-at-large instead of Walpole's fraught relationship with his father. Accordingly, Cameron reads Walpole's novel as a testimonial "to the fear of the return of [the] primal father" that prompts "the uncanny [to emerge] in the eighteenth-century gothic as a new class of the frightening."[73]

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[68] E. J. Clery, "The Genesis of 'Gothic' Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction,* ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

[69] Peter Otto, "Disoriented, Twice Removed from the Real, Racked by Passion in Walpole's Protean Theatres of Sensation," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 27, no. 3–4 (2015 Spring-Summer 2015): 682.

[70] Valdine Clemens, *Return of the Repressed: The Gothic Horror from The Castle of Otranto to Alien* (SUNY Press, 1999), 3-4.

[71] Paul Baines, "'This Theatre of Monstrous Guilt': Horace Walpole and the Drama of Incest," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 28 (1999): 288.

This psychological framework has also shaped interpretations of *The Mysterious Mother*. Paul Baines summarizes past scholarly discourse on the play, explaining how Betsy Harfst interprets the play as a "punishment dream" for Walpole's parricidal desires in *Otranto,* and Martin Kallich reads it as "a fascinating psychological palimpsest wherein the outlines of the author's life at a time of crisis may be deciphered."[74] Harfst and Kallich's interpretations are part of a wider trend that includes Walpole biographer Timothy Mowl who "'outs' [Walpole] as an unambiguous homosexual, and straightforwardly anchors the tragedy to a fear of heterosexual pressure.[75] Baines explains these psychoanalytic readings are the result of Walpole's **"**portrayal of a family in ruins that has always had the potential to lead readers back to Walpole's family life" and there is "ample material for melodrama in the illegitimacies, divorces, and sexual disasters of [Walpole's] own immediate family circle."[76]

While many of these interpretations favor the repressed desire of the author or his characters, I suggest that the narrative complexities of Walpole's seminal gothic works are not purely about repressed desire but also trauma. Jeffrey Cox argues "the exploration of the power of repressed sexual desire does not seem to be the focus of [Walpole's] play."[77] Instead Cox explores how incest in *The Mysterious Mother* is "the result of a shattered world."[78] Max Fincher argues *The Castle of Otranto* "arouses fear… of [Walpole's] homoerotic identity…being 'outed.'"[79] Fincher's argument that Walpole's novel evokes both fear and arousal underscores how the two seemingly disparate emotions of fear and desire can become bound up in trauma. Fincher illustrates this with Manfred's inability to speak about his grandfather Ricardo, the usurper of Otranto: "[Manfred] never completes what he was going to say; the meaning is left unsignified and open to interpretation. He cannot 'out' his true identity by revealing himself as the grandson of a corrupt murderer."[80] Manfred's inability to speak about his lineage rehearses Walpole's own fear that "his homoeroticism [will] be exposed."[81] Fincher connects the narrative stoppages of Walpole's work to the potential trauma of his ruin and exposure, and Peter Otto describes these gaps as temporal experiences that have strong parallels with trauma. Otto calls the moment when Conrad is crushed to death by a giant helmet an example of a failed sublime, because it does not rapidly transport the reader into an experience of awe. Instead the incident of the helmet suspends the characters of *Otranto* "in a moment of standstill, in a time and space where impossible objects become tangible, persist in time, and proliferate, as if we were witnessing the multiplication of infinities."[82] Otto's description of infinite time in a single moment is less an example of a failed sublime, than an accurate depiction of trauma as an event outside time that multiplies and repeats. This proliferation of time recalls Lawrence Langer's concept of durational time. In *Admitting the Holocaust* (1995), Langer describes how survivors relive their deeply traumatic experiences in durational time, a time:

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[72] Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 37-38.

[73] Ed Cameron, "Psychopathology and the Gothic Supernatural," *Gothic Studies* 5, no. 1 (May 2003): 12.

[74] Betsy Perteit Harfst, *Horace Walpole and the Unconscious: An Experiment in Freudian Analysis* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 108-195; Martin Kallich, *Horace Walpole* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 117.

[75] Tim Mowl, *Horace Walpole: The Great Outsider* (London: Faber Finds, 2010), 218-22.

[76] Baines, "'This Theatre of Monstrous Guilt': Horace Walpole and the Drama of Incest," 288.

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[77] Jeffrey N. Cox, "First Gothics: Walpole, Evans, Frank," *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 46, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 126.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Max Fincher, "Guessing the Mould: Homosocial Sins and Identity in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*," *Gothic Studies* 3, no. 3 (December 2001): 233.
[80] Ibid., 234
[81] Ibid.
[82] Otto, "Disoriented, Twice Removed from the Real, Racked by Passion in Walpole's Protean Theatres of Sensation," 693.

> Which exists this side of the forgotten, not to be dredged from memory because it is always, has always been there—an always present past that in testimony becomes presented past…The duration of Holocaust time, which is constantly re-experienced time, threatens the chronology of experienced time. It leaps out of the chronology, establishing its own momentum, or fixation. Testimony may appear chronological to the auditor or the audience, but the narrator who is a mental witness rather than a temporal one is "out of time" as she tells her story.[83]

The gothic genre—filled with pasts that will not die, multiple presents that can never be resolved, and infinite futures that can never be realized— embraces this kind of temporal excess that allows it to represent the experience of trauma as one "out of time" for traumatized individuals. Along these lines, I argue that the fractured narrative structure of Walpole's gothic fiction accurately represents the traumatic experience of gothic victims like Isabella, Matilda, and Hippolita in *The Castle of Otranto* and Edmund in *The Mysterious Mother* at the level of narrative structure. Further, I explore how the gothic victims of these texts attempt to resolve their trauma via detection.

Repressed Trauma and *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)

Most gothic critics read the supernatural events in *Otranto* as signifiers of Manfred's repressed sexual desire. *Otranto* chronicles the downfall of the villainous Manfred, the false lord of the novel's eponymous castle. When his son and heir dies suddenly, Manfred resolves to divorce his current wife Hippolita and marry his son's fiancé Isabella to ensure the survival of his line. Horrified by the incestuous intentions of her would-be father-in-law, Isabella flees from the castle to the safety of a nearby church. Manfred's pursuit of Isabella and his desire for an heir drive a novel fractured by the supernatural—giant pieces of armor, a ghostly portrait and eerie happenings—until the rightful heir of Alfonso, Theodore, returns and restores peace to the castle.

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[83] Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 15.

The previous critics' tendency to read *Otranto* through the lens of Freudian repressed sexual desire stems from the biographical origins of the novel**.** In a letter to Reverend William Cole, Walpole writes how *Otranto* originated in a dream where "on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase [he] saw a gigantic hand in armor."[84] Walpole's description of the dream lends itself to a Freudian interpretation where the huge piece of armor represents the return of some repressed phallic sexual desire the dreamer wishes were fulfilled. According to Ed Cameron, "the dream origin of *Otranto* invites the psychoanalytically-inclined reader to" interpret the novel's "latent psychological dimension" and "connect the gothic in general to the seamy underbelly of the unconscious."[85] Cameron bases his argument on Walpole's description of his writing process as a subconscious one, which has encouraged autobiographical interpretations of the dream.[86] Walpole told Cole and the Reverend William Mason he began to write "without knowing in the least what [he] intended to say or relate," and he began "without any plan at all" until he finished the novel less than two months later.[87]

Walpole's dream inspiration and unconscious writing process might seem an obvious parable for the unconscious sexual urges that many critics believe drive *Otranto*, but post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory reveals not all manifestations of the unconscious involve the dreamer's sexual desire. In *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (1918), Freud's patient, the Wolfman, dreams of a tree filled with white wolves intent on eating him. Freud interprets the dream as a result of the Wolfman having witnessed the primal scene of his parents copulating, and the hungry wolves reflect the dreamer's desire to copulate with his father. Freud mistakes the Wolfman's dream as wish fulfillment driven by his repressed desire. In doing so, he overlooks the dream's function as an imprint of the traumatizing experience of the Wolfman witnessing his parent's copulating. Like Freud, critics of *Otranto* favor repressed sexual desire as the meaning of Walpole's novel, overlooking how it represents the fragmenting effect of trauma on linear experience.

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[84] Hogle, "Introduction," 14.
[85] Ed Cameron, *The Psychopathology of the Gothic Romance : Perversion, Neuroses and Psychosis in Early Works of the Genre* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Publishers, 2010), 50-51.
[86] Ibid., 51.
[87] Hogle, "Introduction," 14; Steven Bruhm, "The Contemporary Gothic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 261.

Walpole successfully conveys this fragmenting experience of trauma by combining what he called in his preface to the second edition of *Otranto*, "the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern," introducing supernatural elements into an otherwise realist novel.[88] Ian Watt famously defines realism as "the narrative method whereby the novel embodies [a] circumstantial view of life" with an "air of complete authenticity."[89] *Otranto*'s supernatural forces violently challenge Watt's definition of novelistic realism when Manfred's son Conrad is crushed by a giant helmet that falls out of the sky on the day of his nuptials. The helmet evokes the ancient trope of the *deus ex machina,* or god from the machine, where an author introduces a fictional device, or a literal god in Greek tragedy, which suddenly and unexpectedly provides a contrived resolution to the plot. With *Otranto*'s helmet, Walpole inverts the *deus ex machina* of Greek tragedy into a *diabolus ex machina* or demon from the machine that, instead of providing a happy ending, inflicts trauma on his characters and fractures the narrative. Walpole's *diabolous ex machina* is a radical departure from Fielding's mandate to realist authors in *Tom Jones* (1749) to "introduce supernatural agents as seldom as possible."[90] Because the goal of the realist novel is to represent the common life of individuals, probability and coincidence become the *deus ex machina* of the realist novel. For example, Fielding urges authors to stay within the bounds of probability, and he models this by using coincidence to gather an unlikely cast of characters— Tom, Partridge, and Mrs. Waters— at the same inn at Upton in his novel. For realist authors, the *diabolus ex machina* of gothic texts like *Otranto* compromises the authenticity of realistic experience. But if realist novels aim to create "an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals," then, using the supernatural, Walpole's gothic texts aim to give an authentic account of the actual experiences of traumatized individuals.[91]

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[88] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 170.
[89] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel; Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*, 32.
[90] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones: The Authoritative Text, Contemporary Reactions, Criticism*, ed. Sheridan Warner Baker (New York: Norton, 1995), 257.

The traumatized individuals in Walpole's novel are the women of *Otranto*. Separately, these women are one dimensional characters who revolve around Manfred: Isabella is the object of Manfred's desire; Matilda is his dutiful daughter; and Hippolita his obedient wife. But together they form a composite female character who echoes and amplifies their shared trauma. To achieve this, the narrative consistently yokes these characters together. For example, when Manfred instructs his domestics to "take care of the Lady Isabella," the servants, "guided by their affection to their mistress," fly to Hippolita's aid instead, indicating they see little difference between the two women.[92] Without narratives of their own, these women soon become interchangeable. Manfred fatally stabs his daughter Matilda, who he mistakes for Isabella, and Theodore marries Isabella to "indulge his melancholy" for his lost love Matilda.[93] In the following pages, I will explore how these women experience the trauma of Conrad's death and Manfred's incestuous pursuit of Isabella. I will examine how Walpole uses the supernatural armor to convey their trauma, and how, without a witness, the servants of *Otranto* must testify to their trauma. Finally, I will analyze how Matilda tries to resolve her trauma via detection.

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[91] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel; Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*, 27.
[92] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 75.
[93] Ibid., 165.

All three women experience the trauma of Conrad's death by helmet to varying degrees. Because trauma overwhelms the victim, causing gaps in experience, none of the women directly witness the death of Conrad. Without access to their trauma, servants must bear witness to their experience. The servants witness Conrad "almost buried under an enormous helmet, an [sic] hundred times more large than any casque" with "a mountain of sable plumes."[94] The helmet itself, a "headless void in armor," parallels the gaps in experience that fragment linear experience, and frustrate attempts to explain the traumatic event through language. [95] Immediately following this traumatic event, a speechless servant finds the women in the chapel. Unable to testify to the trauma of Hippolita's son's death, he "[foams] at the mouth" and can only point to the scene of Conrad's demise.[96] Hippolita immediately swoons "without knowing what was the matter, but anxious for her son," and when the servants finally inform her of her son's death she is "more dead than alive."[97]

Matilda is less affected than her mother, only because she "smother[s] her own grief and amazement," to "[assist] and [comfort] her afflicted parent."[98] Walpole reveals the depth of Matilda's trauma when Manfred rebuffs Matilda's inquiries. Recovering from the "shock of so bitter a reception, she wipe[s] away her tears," and suppresses her emotions once again "to prevent the additional stab that the knowledge of it would give to Hippolita."[99] Isabella experiences Conrad's death differently than either Matilda or Hippolita. Isabella admits:

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[94] Ibid., 74.
[95] Frank, "Introduction," 18.
[96] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 74.
[97] Ibid., 74-75.
[98] Ibid., 75.

> She felt no concern for the death of young Conrad, except commiseration; and she was not sorry to be delivered from a marriage which had promised her little felicity, either from her destined bridegroom, or from the severe temper of Manfred, who, though he had distinguished her by great indulgence, had imprinted her mind with terror, from his causeless rigour to such amiable princesses as Hippolita and Matilda.[100]

It is Manfred, a man whose "severe temper" has "imprinted her mind with terror," rather than Conrad's death that instills fear in Isabella. Conrad's death is not initially traumatic for Isabella, but it does set the stage for the novel's secondary trauma: Manfred's attempted sexual violation of her. Conrad's death means the end of Manfred's line and he plans to marry Isabella to continue his family's dominion over Otranto. Manfred's proposal to marry Isabella is traumatic because she considers Manfred her parent, making his desire for her incestuous. When he offers himself in place of Conrad, Isabella exclaims, "My father in law! the father of Conrad! the husband of the virtuous and tender Hippolita!..." evoking their family ties in the hopes that he will not pursue his intended violation. Jill Campbell acknowledges "the threat of parent-child incest pervades the narrative action" of *Otranto,* and it is incest—specifically Isabella's trauma at her impending sexual violation—that fragments the narrative action of Walpole's novel.[101]

Just as the helmet intrudes on the narrative, causing the death of Conrad and traumatizing Matilda and Hippolita, Walpole uses the supernatural helmet to convey Isabella's trauma:

> [Manfred] seized the cold hand of Isabella, who was half- dead with fright and horror. She shrieked, and started from him. Manfred rose to pursue her; when the moon, which was now up, and gleamed in at the opposite casement, presented to his sight the plumes of the fatal helmet, which rose to the height of the windows, waving backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner, and accompanied with a hollow and rustling sound.

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[99] Ibid., 78.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Jill Campbell, "'I Am No Giant': Horace Walpole, Heterosexual Incest, and Love among Men," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 39, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 238.

> Isabella, who gathered courage from her situation, and who dreaded nothing so much as Manfred's pursuit of his declaration, cried, Look, my lord! See heaven itself declares against your impious intentions![102]

Isabella is "half-dead with fright and horror" when the helmet intrudes on the narrative, creating a break in experience that corresponds with her own trauma. Isabella fails to read the helmet's fragmenting effect on the narrative as symptomatic of her trauma and instead sees it as a censure of Manfred's incestuous desire, crying out: "Look my lord! See heaven itself declares against your impious intentions!"[103] Even so, the helmet's intrusion on the narrative here precipitates Isabella's trauma inflicted by Manfred, interrupting a "particularly intense [episode] in Manfred's [incestuous] pursuit…[of] Isabella."[104]

In addition to the intrusion of the helmet, Walpole conveys Isabella's trauma to the reader by focusing on her point of view, creating a victim-identified narrative. Fleeing Manfred, Isabella descends into the subterranean passages beneath the castle. Instead of providing refuge, the dank labyrinth becomes an echo chamber that magnifies her trauma at the hands of Manfred: "Every murmur struck her with new terror…She shuddered, and recoiled a few paces. In a moment she thought she heard the step of some person. Her blood curdled; she concluded it was Manfred."[105] At this point Isabella's trauma defies language, and Walpole admits "words cannot paint the horror of the princess's situation."[106] Like the subterranean passages that echo Isabella's trauma, Isabella's connection to Matilda and Hippolita amplifies her individual trauma, creating a shared trauma amongst the three women. When Isabella tells Hippolita and Matilda about Manfred's incestuous intentions towards her, Walpole fragments the narrative to represent the chaos and confusion of the traumatic aftermath. Walpole does not employ traditional breaks in dialogue throughout his novel, employing a structure that falls somewhere between a novel and a play, which makes it difficult to determine who is speaking. Walpole compounds this already confusing narrative structure by having these women's voices overlap and converge, giving the impression that they are experiencing this trauma as one entity rather than separate individuals. When Isabella tells Hippolita Manfred plans to divorce her, mother and daughter cry out as one: "To — to divorce me! To divorce my mother!"[107] This proliferation of voices is suddenly cut short by the defeat of language to articulate trauma. Matilda tells Isabella "I cannot speak it!" and "Hippolita was silent," as "grief choked her speech."[108]

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[102] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 81.
[103] Ibid. 81.
[104] According to Frederick S. Frank, the Latin phrase *disjecta membra* is an alteration of Horace's *disjecti membra poetæ* meaning the limbs of a dismembered poet; Campbell, "'I Am No Giant': Horace Walpole, Heterosexual Incest, and Love among Men," 254.
[105] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 83.
[106] Ibid.

The body parts of Walpole's novel represent the fragmentary effect Matilda, Isabella and Hippolita's trauma has on the linear reality of *Otranto*. Conversely, Frederick S. Frank interprets the helmet as a "portent of some savage and meaningless power" for Manfred.[109] By focusing on the helmet's symbolism for Manfred rather than the narrative it fragments, Frank favors content over form and overlooks a fragmented narrative structure that represents the trauma of these gothic victims. In *Bodies in Pieces,* Deborah Harter reads the fragmented bodies of fantastic texts as "reproducing reality in its 'pieces,' where even the human body succumbs to morselization."[110] Harter argues this fragmentation is in contrast to the realist novel that, according to D.A. Miller, "continually promises totality."[111] For example, Manfred sends servants Jaquez and Diego to find Isabella, and they confront the physical apparition of a

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[107] Ibid., 141.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Frank, "Introduction," 18.
[110] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 2.
[111] D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 279.

"gigantic leg and foot" clad in armor.[112] By portraying the armor as a physical force that tears at the narrative, *Otranto* emphasizes the power of these women's trauma to disrupt linear experience. The servants are prepared to confront the immaterial ghost of Manfred's departed son Conrad, and "had rather have seen ten whole ghosts" than a supernatural giant's armor.[113] The physical power of the armor to disrupt narrative is contrasted with other supernatural events in the novel, including the "apparition of the portrait, and the sudden closing of the door at the end of the gallery."[114] These insubstantial events have far less impact on *Otranto*'s plot, reinforcing the armor's physical power to fragment the narrative. What erupts into the narrative is no insubstantial apparition, but a corporeal force that physically diverts the narrative, causing confusion and narrative fragmentation. The fragmented armor and fragmented narrative of Walpole's novel therefore rightfully belong to the women of *Otranto* and by extension the servants. Just as Manfred is inhabiting a castle that is not rightfully his, he is masquerading as the protagonist of a narrative that is not really his own. Armor is a defensive covering used in battle and has closer associations with the victims of trauma than the perpetrator. Armor sheaths and protects the body just as the armor in *Otranto* protects and represses the women's counter narrative of trauma.

Unable to testify to the horrors they have experienced, the women of *Otranto* must depend on the servants to witness their trauma. Trauma creates a traumatic split for victims that prevents them from testifying to their experience and requires an external party to bear witness. The servants take up the role of witness and testify to their trauma in a way these women cannot. Because of this, the servants act as an extension of Isabella, Matilda and Hippolita. Despite acting as witnesses to their trauma, the servants and their testimony are plagued by the fragmenting effect of trauma. The servant voices that can testify to the traumatic event are disjointed and splintered, mirroring the effect of trauma on linear experience. The group of servants confronted with the spectacle of the helmet cry out “the prince! the prince! the helmet! the helmet!”[115] These sentences have subjects (the helmet) and objects (the prince), but without verbs to create a causal relationship, the servants are unable to communicate Conrad’s fate. Bianca’s speech is similarly fragmented, as she cries out “Oh! The hand! The giant! The hand!” after encountering a piece of armor on the landing.[116] The multiple servant voices attempting to testify to trauma in *Otranto* only further fragment the narrative. After Jaquez and Diego confront giant pieces of armor in the gallery, their voices overlap until Manfred commands them to “speak one of you at a time.”[117] Likewise a “volley of [servant] voices” responds after the helmet crushes Conrad.[118] Instead of coherent speech, only the multiple “confused noise of shrieks, [and] horror” are able to testify to the trauma of Conrad’s death.[119]

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[112] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* 93.
[113] Ibid., 88.
[114] Ibid., 89.

The fragmented testimony of servants in *Otranto* creates a counter narrative of Isabella, Matilda and Hippolita’s trauma that directly challenges Manfred’s master narrative of legitimacy. In narratology master narratives are official narratives while counter narratives are “the little stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledge and histories have been marginalized...or forgotten in the telling of official narratives.”[120] As the literal master of the castle, Manfred tries to create a master narrative of historical legitimacy by marrying Conrad to

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[115] Ibid., 74.
[116] Ibid., 152-153.
[117] Ibid., 74.
[118] Ibid., 88.
[119] Ibid., 74.
[120] Colin Lankshear and Michael Peters, “Postmodern Counter narratives,” in *Counter narratives: Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogies in Postmodern Spaces*, ed. Henry A Giroux (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.

Isabella. Confronted with the spectacle of his crushed heir, Manfred "touched, he examined the fatal casque; nor could even the bleeding mangled remains of the young prince divert the eyes of Manfred from the portent before him."[121] Manfred's inability to look at Conrad's fragmented and mangled body represents his refusal to acknowledge the fractured narrative of his own legitimacy, one that he has tried to make whole with Conrad's marriage to Isabella. When this marriage fails to take place, Manfred puts himself in Conrad's place to create a coherent narrative of lineage, but he only produces a narrative consistently fragmented by the threat of incest.

Trauma creates a split between the conscious self that has no knowledge of trauma and the traumatized Other that has access to the traumatic experience. Bianca represents both Matilda and Isabella's traumatized Other. Her status as traumatized Other allows her to deliver their counter narrative of trauma to Frederic, Isabella's long-lost father. Her access to their trauma and her liminal status as a servant allows her to disrupt Manfred's master narrative. Domestic servants were a vital part of the household and privy to the secrets of the family without being part of it. Bianca's proximity to Manfred allows her to read her master's secrets and disrupt his master narrative with Isabella and Matilda's counter narrative of trauma. Manfred reinforces this connection between Isabella, Matilda and Bianca when he bribes Bianca with a ring for information, knowing her to be "in the confidence of both the young ladies." [122] Manfred's attempt to buy Bianca's loyalty—he tells her "that ring has a companion"— reminds Bianca of her financial dependence upon him as her master, and it is also meant to subvert Isabella and Matilda's counter narrative.[123] He reminds her of his gift in an effort to stifle her later account of the armor to Frederic, but her counter narrative of the disembodied armor that represents Isabella and Matilda's trauma continually disrupts his efforts. Ultimately, Manfred's bribe backfires as another abortive effort to master the narrative.

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[121] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 75.
[122] Ibid., 151.
[123] Ibid., 152.

The clash between Manfred's master narrative and the women's counter narrative delivered via the servant Bianca reveals a crisis of witnessing in eighteenth-century culture. Because trauma is an event outside linear experience, it frustrates the coherent witnessing and reporting of trauma to others. This phenomenon parallels the crisis of the senses during the Enlightenment that stemmed from the need to empirically verify experience based on what Francis Bacon called "the evidence of the sense[s]."[124] According to Michael McKeon, Bacon's theory of empiricism created an "antitheses between" two types of narrative: "[the genres of] romance and true history."[125] History narratives were valued as verifiable fact while romance narratives were speculative. Manfred's master narrative and Isabella's counter narrative delivered via Bianca represent the struggle between these two types of narrative.

Manfred tries to present his master narrative as a historical narrative when it is actually a romance narrative. He uses this master narrative to convince Frederic to marry Manfred's daughter Matilda and to allow Manfred to marry Isabella. A marriage to Isabella will cement his claim on the castle and stabilize the fragmented narrative of his legitimacy. He fails when Fredric discovers Manfred's master narrative is a romance. According to Defoe, a romance is "a formal made Story in Print, raised out of the Invention of the Author, and put upon the World to cheat the Readers, in the Shape or Appearance of Historical Truth."[126] To convince Frederic, Manfred constructs a narrative with the “Appearance of Historical Truth” that is actually a romance narrative, meant to “cheat the Readers,” or in this case Frederic, into joining Manfred’s family.[127]

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[124] Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 65.

[125] Ibid., 69.

[126] Ibid., 88.

Bianca’s counter narrative reveals Manfred’s master narrative is a romance. Manfred is at the point of suggesting to Frederic that he marry Isabella when Bianca bursts into the room to deliver her fragmented narrative of a giant hand in armor, crying out: “It is come again! It is come again!—[…]Oh! The hand! The giant! The hand!”[128] Bianca’s fractured narrative of a disembodied hand and an ancient prophecy reads like romance but is actually truth. Her testimony reveals Manfred’s fragmented lineage and Frederic decides the “judgments already fallen on [Manfred’s] house forbid [him from] matching into it.”[129] Frederic’s decision to believe Bianca’s fantastic testimony resembles the strange-therefore-true empiricism of Enlightenment thinkers like English clergyman Joseph Glanvill. Writing on the Salem witch trials, Glanvill concluded:

> The more absurd and unaccountable these actions [of witches] seem, the greater confirmations are they to me of the truth of those Relations[…] these circumstances being exceedingly unlikely, judging by the measures of common belief, ’tis the greater probability that they are not fictitious.[130]

Frederic, like Glanville, finds the exceeding unlikelihood of Bianca’s narrative convincing, commenting that “her terror is too natural and too strongly impressed to be the work of imagination.”[131] Frederic’s belief in Bianca’s counter narrative testifies to the power of romance narrative, specifically the gothic romance, to accurately represent the traumatic experience.

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[127] Ibid., 89.

[128] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 152-153.

[129] Ibid., 155.

[130] Joseph Glanvill, Henry More, and Anthony Horneck, *Saducismus Triumphatus, Or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions in Two Parts: The First Treating of Their Possibility, the Second of Their Real Existence* (London: Printed for J. Collins and S. Lownds, 1681), 10.

[131] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 153.

Servant testimony of trauma ultimately leads to the breakdown of Manfred's master narrative. Initially Manfred enlists the help of his servants to construct his master narrative. He orders them to find Isabella and cement the legitimacy of his master narrative. However, as witnesses of trauma, servants in *Otranto* are able to read the narrative signs of Manfred's fragmented lineage and ultimately dismantle his master narrative. Servants are the first and often the only people to witness the dismembered pieces of armor in *Otranto*. As witnesses to the trauma of *Otranto*, their trauma narratives continually rupture Manfred's master narrative. Diego and Jaquez refuse to pursue Isabella after encountering the armor, and Bianca still tells Frederic about the prophecy after Manfred has given her a ring to ensure her loyalty. Fincher argues that this kind of servant witnessing in *Otranto* reveals "the fear of the power differential between the classes being dislodged in favor of the servant class."[132] I add the source of this power is the servants' fragmented testimony of trauma that destroys Manfred's master narrative.

In addition to the servant witnessing of trauma to break down Manfred's master narrative, Matilda employs rudimentary detection in an effort to resolve the trauma of Walpole′s novel. As I mentioned earlier, E.F. Bleiler conceives of the gothic novel as a primitive detective story where fate or the Divine acts as the detective. Theodore, the true heir of Alfonso, likewise attributes Otranto's revelations to fate, declaring "it was not my purpose the secret should have been divulged so soon; but fate presses onward to its work."[133] While it might seem inevitable in *Otranto* that murder will out, Matilda contributes to the unfolding of the mystery in her limited role as an investigator. When Matilda's servant Bianca questions why Hippolita has Matilda pray at the tomb of Alfonso, Matilda responds. "I am sure there is some fatal secret at bottom," citing how her mother "in her agony of grief for my brother's death she dropped some words that intimated as much."[134] Matilda's insight parallels Father Benedict's investigation of the Countess in *The Mysterious Mother*. Benedict guesses the Countess' "fatal secret…From hints long treasur'd up, from broken phrase/ In frenzy dropp'd, but vibrating from truth."[135] Unlike Father Benedict, who uses his knowledge of the Countess's secret to destroy her, Matilda closely guards her mother's words. Her role as an obedient daughter creates gaps in her knowledge, as she tells Bianca "a child ought to have no ears or eyes but as a parent directs."[136] These gaps in information undermine her ability to successfully discover the secrets of Otranto.

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[132] Fincher, "Guessing the Mould: Homosocial Sins and Identity in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*," 251.
[133] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 161.

Despite these limitations, Matilda uses the evidence of her senses in her search for the truth. When Manfred imprisons Theodore in a garret beneath Matilda's room, Bianca hears his rustlings and thinks it must be the ghosts of Conrad and his dead tutor who committed suicide by drowning. Instead of balking at the mention of spirits, Matilda forges ahead to question these "supernatural entities," telling Bianca, "if they are spirits in pain, we may ease their sufferings by questioning them."[137] The idea of questioning a ghost might seem at odds with Enlightenment beliefs—indeed Bianca tells her mistress she "would not speak to a ghost for the world," which parallels the reaction of Emily St. Aubert's servant Annette in *The Mysteries of Udulpho* (1794) who cries "Holy Mother! Speak to [a] spirit!?"[138] However, Matilda's drive to question the "ghosts" recalls the Enlightenment period's complicated relationship with the spirit world. In his original preface, Walpole presented his gothic novel as a manuscript found in the library of an

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[134] Ibid., 96.

[135] Ibid., 222.

[136] Ibid., 96.

[137] Ibid., 97

[138] Ann Ward Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* ed. Bonamy Dobrée and Terry Castle (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1998), 238.

English Catholic family and dated 1529. Walpole sets his novel in the middle of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, which classified the belief in spirits as a Catholic superstition, but never fully eradicated the "notion of another world of spirits that would, on occasion, commune with the living."[139] The Protestant Reformation failed to eliminate this belief in spirits even during the Enlightenment, and studies like Daniel Defoe's *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions* (1727) tested "ghostly [manifestations]…with some empirical rigor in an attempt to account for spirit activity as an occult aspect of the natural world."[140] Matilda's desire to "ease [the ghosts'] suffering by questioning them" indicates she wishes to use her empirical knowledge to resolve the trauma that has caused them to haunt the castle, in this case Conrad's violent death by helmet and his tutor's suicidal drowning.

While Matilda's investigation does not reveal ghosts as Bianca fears, Matilda uses her empirical vein of thinking to sift the intentions of Theodore, the true heir of Otranto. She perceives that Theodore belongs to a higher social class because his "words were tinctured with an uncommon infusion of piety. It was no ruffian's speech: his phrases were becoming a man of gentle birth."[141] While Bianca takes Theodore for an evil sorcerer, Matilda explains that "a man who has any intercourse with infernal spirits does not dare to make use of those tremendous and holy words which he uttered," referring to Theodore's mentioning he would fervently remember Matilda in his prayers.[142]

She extends this analytical turn of thought to examine the reasons behind Isabella's flight. When Bianca suggests Isabella is romantically involved with Theodore, Matilda steadfastly refuses to believe this based on first-hand knowledge of her friend. Matilda rebukes Bianca, telling her "my lady Isabella is of another guess-mould than you take her for."[143] Matilda cites Isabella's desire for Matilda to marry happily—even though Matilda's dower would have cost Conrad and Isabella's future children—as proof that her friend "is no hypocrite: she has a due sense of devotion," and for Isabella's sake she decides to trust Theodore.[144] While Matilda's activities are an early example of detection in this seminal gothic novel, her limited role as obedient daughter and her own trauma creates gaps in experience that prevent her from unravelling the dark secrets of Otranto. Ultimately she cannot detect or repair the original trauma at the heart of the novel—her grandfather Ricardo's murder of the true ruler of the castle and Manfred's continued usurpation of the title—and the sins of the father are eventually visited on the unfortunate daughter when Manfred mistakenly stabs her to death.

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[139] Andrew Smith, "Introduction," in *The Ghost Story 1840 -1920: A Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* 96.

[142] Ibid.

Crisis of Witnessing in *The Mysterious Mother* (1791)

Critics have consistently assigned the protagonist role to the perpetrator rather than the victim in Walpole's gothic works, interpreting his play *The Mysterious Mother* (1971) through the lens of the repressed desire of the powerful instead of the repressed trauma of the powerless. Accordingly, criticism of Walpole's notorious play tends to revolve around the Countess of Narbonne who seduces her own son Edmund disguised as the maid Beatrice. Edmund is unaware of the incestuous encounter, and the Countess exiles him for sleeping with "Beatrice." She rules Narbonne in her son's stead, defying the power-hungry machinations of Father Benedict and his accomplice Friar Martin. After sixteen years of fighting abroad, Edmund returns home determined to take his place as count. Walpole's fragmented play represents the shattering effect of Edmund's trauma on the narrative even as Edmund tries to resolve the trauma of his exile via detection. He interrogates the unknown trauma of his exile in an attempt to construct a counter narrative of his legitimacy. Edmund's efforts to repair his narrative only creates more narrative confusion as he marries his mother's ward Adeliza, unaware that she is his sister-daughter, the offspring of his incestuous union with the Countess.

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[143] Ibid., 100.

[144] Ibid., 101.

The Mysterious Mother caused a crisis of witnessing in contemporary readers and makes a powerful statement about the performativity of trauma. Because of the subject matter, Walpole circulated few copies of the play, and it was only performed privately as a closet drama or "a play intended to be read rather than performed."[145] Walpole's play coveys the experience of trauma—with the mysterious mother as the perpetrator and the son as the victim—with its fragmented narrative structure. Despite this, critics like E.J. Clery have focused on the intentional incestuous desire of the Countess. Clery argues the play is frustrated by the mysterious mother's "sexual desire, displaced onto the unknowing son," battling against the assumption that "because the play concerns mother-son incest, it must in some way correlate with Freudian theory and figure the unconscious desire of the son for the mother and his murderous rivalry with the father."[146] While Clery is right to resist a Freudian reading of Edmund as the desiring son, her efforts to reclaim the narrative for the mysterious mother as a "story of female desire" privileges the viewpoint of the perpetrator and overlooks the trauma of the victim: Edmund. [147] Read from the point of view of the victim, *The Mysterious Mother* doesn't glorify the desire of the perpetrator but directly represents the victim's traumatic experience of incest and rape.

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[145] "Closet, N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed February 19, 2015, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/34625.

[146] E. J. Clery, "Horace Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* and the Impossibility of Female Desire," in *The Gothic*, ed. Fred Botting, 184 pp. vols. (Cambridge, England: Brewer, 2001), 23–46. 54, 24 and 44.

[147] Ibid., 44.

The Mysterious Mother challenges Freud's assumption that incest is the byproduct of the son's desire for his mother. Instead the novel evokes incest as a hierarchical trauma with Edmund as the victim and his mother as the desiring abuser. In *Totem and Taboo* (1950) Freud theorizes "totem prohibitions" in tribal cultures "were principally directed against the incestuous desires of the son."[148] Within the tribe there were smaller clans with their own animal totem, and there were laws "against persons of the same totem having sexual relations with one another."[149] For example, if the totem descended from the female line and a Kangaroo man married an Emu woman then all their children would be of the Emu clan. Totemic descent through the female line prevents a son of this marriage from committing incest with his mother or sisters who are Emus like him. Freud argues that the incest taboo persists similarly in western culture to thwart the desire of the son, since the son's "earliest choice of objects for his love are incestuous and…forbidden ones—his mother and his sister."[150] To overcome the taboo of incest the son must transfer his desire to a socially acceptable love object—another woman outside his family.

Walplole's *Mysterious Mother* inverts Freud's model by transferring desire from the son to the mother. Edmund has already chosen a socially acceptable love object—Beatrice— when his mother takes her place. Freud's model of the incest taboo never directly addresses the desire of the mother and only briefly mentions that a mother-in-law, through "sympathetic identification with her daughter," might fall in love with her son-in-law.[151] In this example the mother's desire is channeled through the sympathetic proxy of her daughter before reaching her son-in-law. This model does not apply to the Countess who blatantly and directly seduces her own son. Contrary to the Countess's desire, Edmund cannot have any desire for his mother, even subconsciously; because he is unaware he has broken the incest taboo. Edmund's only desire in *The Mysterious Mother* is to discover the mystery behind his hidden trauma and the cause of his exile. By inverting the Freudian model of incest, *Mysterious Mother* more accurately portrays incest as a hierarchical trauma with the mysterious mother as the desiring perpetrator and Edmund as the traumatized victim.

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[148] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo; Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics.* (New York: Norton, 1952), 6.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., 18.

By emphasizing the incest victim's trauma instead of the perpetrator's desire as the source of the repressed, Wapole's victim-identified play acts as a critique of the cult of the desiring individual that features as a protagonist in many Enlightenment works. Walpole's critique marks a significant break with Walpole's Restoration predecessors. For example, Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* (1679), a popular a rewriting of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (c. 429 BC), freely expresses the "erotic incestuous desire" between Jocasta and her son-husband.[152] While the play still ends tragically—Oedipus throws himself from a window and Jocasta stabs herself to death—Jocasta and Oedipus still desire each other after discovering their incestuous relationship. Jocasta tells Oedipus "you are still my husband" and Oedipus expresses his wish to "renew endearments" between them.[153] Their desire to stay in a forbidden relationship points to the "nascent formation of a modern, self-consciously desiring individual" during a period that saw the rise of the middle class.[154] The "self-consciously desiring individual" of Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus* was the result of Enlightenment individualism, a social theory that valued the actions and desires of individuals over the state or collective. French sociologist and philosopher

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[152] Pat Gill, "Pathetic Passions: Incestuous Desire in Plays by Otway and Lee," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 39, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 192.

[153] John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee, *Oedipus a Tragedy, as It Is Acted at His Royal Highness, the Duke's Theatre / the Authors, Mr. Dryden and Mr. Lee.* (London: Printed for R. Bentley and M. Magnes, 1679), 83.

[154] Gill, "Pathetic Passions: Incestuous Desire in Plays by Otway and Lee," 192.

Émile Durkheim called this “moral individualism” “the cult of the individual” that society “instituted…and made of man the god whose servant it is.”[155] While individualism is the epitome of the Enlightenment’s core values of reason and skepticism, contemporary critics recognized the darker implications of such a theory. Philosopher and diplomat Joseph de Maistre called individualism “a deep and frightening division of minds” contributing to the “infinite fragmentation of all doctrines.”[156] Maistre and his contemporaries feared replacing the collective with the individual as the center of society would decrease the importance of religion and moral solidarity. Without the authority of institutions like the church and the monarchy dictating behavior, there would be a “triumph of self-interest over the public welfare.”[157]

Gothic plays and novels manifest this nightmare of moral subjectivity with villains like the mysterious mother, who fulfill their individualistic desires at the expense of their victims.[158] The Countess rejects the traditional authority of the church that Father Benedict represents in favor of her individual reason and understanding. When Father Benedict suggests she see a holy man, the Countess scorns the idea that such a man can teach her what she already knows: that “guilt is woe…innocence alone is happiness...joys are momentary; and remorse/Eternal.”[159] Like other Enlightenment individualists, the Countess renounces the superstitious beliefs of church doctrine, refusing the “charms and spells” of the holy man that would only serve to make her

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[155] Emile Durkheim, “The Determination of Moral Facts,” in *Sociology and Philosophy* (New York, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2009), 59.

[156] Rudolph de Maistre, *Considerations sur la France: Fragments sur la France ; Essai sur le Principe générateur des Constitutions politiques ; Etude sur la Souveraineté* (Lyon: Librairie générale catholique et classique, 1884), 326.

[157] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1945), 105.

[158] Like the Countess of Narbonne, Ambrosio’s transgressive transformation from trusted family member to gothic abuser in *The Monk* is the product of Enlightenment individualism. Using this theory of the individual over the collective, Enlightenment thinkers replaced traditional patriarchal society with a group where the leader is an exceptional individual among equals. The ascendancy of the exceptional Ambrosio in Lewis’ novel leads to a similar breakdown of the family as his protagonist murders his mother and rapes his sister.

[159] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 190.

"sense believe against [her] sense."[160] She also rejects Father Benedict's offers of prayer and confession so as not to "load her sinking soul/With incantations."[161] The countess's individual reason inoculates her against the schemes of Father Benedict, who employs superstition to manipulate her. He tries to intimidate the Countess with tales of the supernatural to "nurse her in new horrors" and flush out her secret.[162] Benedict also lies about having an ominous dream portending Edmund's death.

Despite the Countess's ability to rebuff Father Benedict using her individual reason, Walpole takes the consequences of her individual desire to its dark conclusion. Expecting a passionate reunion with her husband after eighteen months apart, the Countess learns of his death in a hunting accident. The Countess describes a "storm of disappointed passions [that]/Assail'd [her] reason, fever'd all [her] blood," leading her to seduce Edmund.[163] While the Countess suggests that her desire overtook her reason, her act of incest is deliberate and calculated. She tells Edmund "thou canst not harbour a foreboding thought/More dire, than I *conceiv'd,* I *executed*."[164] The Countess' moral subjectivity allows her to put her own desire before her son's by replacing herself with her son's chosen lover Beatrice. Her disappointed passions are not for Edmund himself, and she only seduces him because he resembles her husband, confessing "my fancy saw thee/Thy father's image—"[165] She objectifies Edmund, making him a double for her husband to satisfy her own desire and rob Edmund of his. The Countess's crime exemplifies the dangers of extreme individualism and reflects a wider trend in gothic plays and novels which focuses on the victims of trauma at the hands of such perpetrators.

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[160] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[161] Ibid., 184.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid., 246.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

In addition to traumatizing Edmund with her individualist desire, the Countess further victimizes Edmund with her master narrative, which blocks Edmund's attempts to construct a counter narrative of his trauma via detection. In this way *The Mysterious Mother* parallels the narrative structure of Walpole's novel *Castle of Otranto.* The Countess, like the false heir Manfred, constructs a master narrative of legitimacy to ensure her power over the castle of Narbonne and Edmund. The Countess's master narrative casts herself as a pious widow and Edmund as her debauched son in exile. Edmund recognizes that the Countess's master narrative gives her power at the expense of his own, accusing the Countess of "mock[ing] our credulity," while she rules as the master "of our wealth, our states, and wives."[166] Edmund tries to craft his own counter narrative of legitimacy to reclaim that power. Invoking his title, he challenges the Countess's claim to rule, asking "am I not Narbonne's prince? who shall rule here/But Narbonne?"[167] In response the Countess only reaffirms her power over him, telling Edmund "I'm thy sovereign too. This state is mine. Learn to command, by learning to obey."[168]

Unfortunately, Edmund cannot directly investigate his trauma because it creates gaps in linear experience that challenge his attempt to create a coherent narrative. These gaps are the result of a split between the conscious self and traumatized Other that deny Edmund access to knowledge of his own trauma. The rift of his past trauma frustrates Edmund's efforts to create a counter narrative of legitimacy in the present. Unable to access his trauma, Edmund sends his companion Florian to interrogate the servant witness to his trauma: the porter. Florian acts as an extension of Edmund because Edmund is unable to interrogate his own trauma directly because of the trauma of his exile. As a result, Walpole delivers the fragmented counter narrative of Edmund's trauma through the testimony of a servant witness: the porter.

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[166] Ibid., 219.
[167] Ibid., 218.
[168] Ibid.

The porter's narrative opens the second scene of the first act and contains the counter narrative of Edmund's trauma. Walpole's servants are not simply the subaltern characters of incidental subplots; instead they are vital to understanding the trauma of major characters. Like the maid Bianca in *Otranto* who testifies to Isabella's trauma, the porter has access to Edmund's trauma in a way Edmund himself does not. The porter is the literal gatekeeper of the castle at Narbonne, but he is also the figurative gatekeeper of Edmund's trauma. As the gatekeeper he is able to testify to Edmund's trauma, but his fragmented testimony anticipates a play fragmented by trauma and the supernatural. He begins to explain to Florian why Edmund was banished, but he constantly interrupts himself and his narrative is broken up by no less than twenty one long dashes. He apologizes to Florian for his age as he struggles to "come to th' point."[169] That "point" is Beatrice, the woman Edmund believes he slept with on the night of his father's death. The porter tells Florian "mark you me well? … This Beatrice–."[170] On the very cusp of discovering the cause of Edmund's exile, the Countess enters, cutting off the porter's narrative. The Countess's ability to silence the porter recalls Manfred's efforts to subvert Bianca's counter narrative in *Otranto*. The presence of the countess reminds the porter that he is dependent upon her as his mistress as he tells Florian "twere forfeit of my badge to hold a parley/With one of near thy years."[171] This rift in the narrative also points to the Countess' actions as the source of trauma and narrative fragmentation. By interrupting the narrative when the porter mentions

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[169] Ibid., 180.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

Beatrice, the Countess is replacing Beatrice with herself just as she did on the night she slept with her son.

Despite the fragmented nature of the porter's tale, the true reason for Edmund's exile is still embedded in his narrative. The porter draws a parallel between Edmund and his father, calling Edmund "a lusty youth, his father's very image," and remarks how "Count Edmund's mainly like" his father.[172] This doubling of Edmund and the Count of Narbonne points to incest as the source of trauma in the play and mirrors the doubling of Beatrice and the Countess. Once the Countess has passed on, a frustrated Florian implores the porter "You will not leave your tale unfinished?"[173] The porter recognizes the danger in betraying his mistress' secrets, telling Florian "a tale will pay no stipend…And I will not lose my porridge for my prating."[174] Though the porter gives Florian a future time and place to meet, the presence of his mistress silences him again. As a result, the porter is unable to ultimately complete Edmund's counter narrative of trauma.

Just as the countess—the source of Edmund's trauma—interrupts the porter's narrative causing narrative absences, the supernatural in Walpole's play fragments Edmund's efforts to investigate and create a coherent counter narrative of his experience. The supernatural appears in Walpole's play as the ghost of the late Count of Narbonne. The ghost fragments the narrative immediately after Edmund proposes to marry his mother's ward. Edmund plans to marry Adeliza to create an intelligible counter narrative that will restore his legitimacy as the heir of Narbonne. He tells Florian a "union with that favored maiden/ Might reconcile my mother," and later hopes to "make but the blooming Adeliza mine" in order to attain "unquestioned, Narbonne's scepter."[175] By marrying Adeliza, Edmund hopes to create a counter narrative of legitimacy to challenge his mother's master narrative that gives her control over his estate. Instead of repairing his narrative of trauma, Edmund's plans to espouse Adeliza only further fragment Edmund's narrative because she is the physical embodiment of his trauma at the hands of the Countess. Because it is a play, the Count's ghost does not appear on stage for practical reasons, but Walpole portrays the ghost as a physical force that splinters the text. Unlike the immaterial specter that descends from the portrait in *Otranto*, the Count's ghost is a solid entity "with clotted locks, and eyes like burning stars" and its ability to physically fragment the text recalls the giant armor of *Otranto*. [176]

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[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid., 181.
[174] Ibid., 197.

The Count's ghost fragments the text through a storm that allows it to physically act on the narrative even though it never appears on stage. The storm erupts after Edmund and Florian encounter Father Benedict's accomplice Friar Martin sending a chorus of orphans offstage to pray at the late Count's monument. The children rush back on the scene to confirm the storm originates from the Count's ghost, one orphan crying that it is "some demon [that] rides in th' air" while another says "the pray'r [Friar Martin] taught [him] against specters."[177] The storm interrupts Florian's criticism of Friar Martin for encouraging the children's belief in the supernatural, and both characters quarrel over the meaning of the storm. By trying to read the storm symbolically, Florian and Martin overlook the fragmenting effect of the storm on the narrative and are unable to recognize it as a symptom of Edmund's trauma. Martin reads the storm as a heavenly sign of God's displeasure with Florian's blasphemy. Florian reads it as a condemnation of Martin's hypocrisy, challenging him to "interpret th' inarticulate and quarreling elements."[178] The Count's ghostly storm acts as a diabolus ex machina that inflicts trauma on the characters of *Mysterious Mother* and fractures the narrative.

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[175] Ibid., 219.
[176] Ibid., 199.
[177] Ibid., 201.

Like the servants of *Otranto*, the orphans of *Mysterious Mother* are witnesses to trauma. They inhabit a social position similar to that of servants because they are technically employed by the Countess since they offer prayers for her husband's soul in return for her financial support. They occupy the same liminal space as the exiled Edmund—neither part of nor apart from the Narbonne family—and are able to bear witness to Edmund's trauma. Accordingly, the orphans are the only ones to observe the supernatural, and they witness the destruction of the Count's monument as lightning "burst [upon it]. The shield of arms/ Shiver'd to splinters" and "down with hideous crash/The cross came tumbling." [179] The splintering of the shield of arms symbolizes the effect of Edmund's trauma on the narrative. The shield of arms or coat of arms was a surcoat or cloth tunic worn by medieval knights over their armor to protect it from the elements. The shield of arms covered, protected, and identified the familial descent of the wearer in battle. The function of the shield of arms as a protective covering closely associates it with Edmund as a victim of trauma and recalls Isabella's connection to the armor as a survivor of trauma in *Otranto*. The Narbonne shield of arms represents a coherent narrative of familial integrity that should have protected Edmund from his mother's seduction. Instead of protecting him, the shield and the narrative it represents splinters to reenact the supreme violence incest inflicts on family ties.

If the splintering of the shield of arms by the Count's ghost represents the fragmenting effect of trauma on narrative, then the disembodied voice of the ghost that follows represents the voice of the traumatized Other that cries out with the knowledge of unconscious trauma. The double wounding of trauma results in a doubling of the self, as trauma creates a split between the conscious self and the traumatized Other. When Father Benedict discovers the cause of Edmund's trauma the narrative once again begins to fracture as a disembodied voice rings out "Forbear!"[180] This "deep-toned" voice of the Other belongs to the Count, prompting Father Benedict to question: "Comes it from heav'n or hell?" as it cries out with the knowledge of Edmund's hidden trauma.[181] Proof that the voice belongs to the Count is in the meaning of its message. The word forbear is used as a verb to warn someone to cease or desist from a certain action. The voice here is warning Father Benedict who tells Friar Martin to marry Edmund and Adeliza. The voice cries out with the knowledge that Adeliza is the progeny of Edmund's trauma, and marrying them will only repeat Edmund's trauma of incest. In addition to this warning, forbear as a noun means "an ancestor, forefather." [182] This definition of forebear refers to the immediate progenitor of Edmund, the now deceased Count of Narbonne. The voice of the traumatized Other belongs primarily to the Count's ghost, but the product of Edmund's trauma Adeliza borrows the voice of the Other with a similar purpose: to cry out against Edmund's intention to marry her. When Edmund proposes to his sister-daughter, Adeliza cries out "Forbear? It must not be—."[183] Instead of an exclamation like the count's previous warning, Adeliza's use of forbear is interrogative. While Adeliza does not possess the hidden knowledge of Edmund's trauma like the Count's ghost, the fact that she uses the voice of the Other suggests she may intuitively sense the taboo of her and Edmund's relationship. The multiple voices of Adeliza and the Count's ghost testifying to Edmund's trauma resembles the volley of servant voices that testify to the women's trauma in *Otranto.* By borrowing the voice of the traumatized Other, Adeliza covertly reveals the circumstances of her birth and cries out with the knowledge of Edmund's trauma.

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[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.

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[180] Ibid., 223.
[181] Ibid.
[182] "Forbear | Forebear, N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/72800?redirectedFrom=forebear.
[183] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* 232.

The ghost of Edmund's father represents the originary lack trauma creates. Trauma is an event that creates gaps in linear experience that frustrate the survivor's ability to construct a coherent narrative of their trauma. The spectre of Edmund's father embodies these gaps because as a ghost he is present yet absent, evoking Derrida's concept of the trace. Drawing on Levinas's idea of the Other, Derrida defines the trace as "a sign (signifier and signified) that derives its meaning from its difference from other signs (e.g. black is not white, up is not down). Thus a sign always contains a trace of "what it absolutely is not."[184] The trace as a "mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present" that resembles absences left by trauma.[185] The Count's ghost is a specter of Edmund's traumatic past, an "already absent present" that haunts him. This ghost haunts both Edmund and the reader since he never appears on stage, but it is a powerful force that fragments the narrative. By representing the gaps left by trauma, the ghost of Edmund's father exemplifies the "paradoxical temporality of the traumatic experience" that frustrates the survivor's ability to coherently understand his or her trauma. [186] In trying to investigate this absence, his father's ghost, and the source of his trauma, Edmund can only ever detect what it is not as he confronts the originary lack of Derrida's trace in the Count's ghost.

Instead of reading Walpole's play through the lens of trauma, Fanny Burney's reaction to *The Mysterious Mother* establishes the trend of reading Walpole's play as a tale of repressed desire.[187] Burney's quest for Walpole's play is motivated by desire and the expectation of pleasure. A fan of Walpole's work, Burney borrows a copy of *The Mysterious Mother* from the Queen, recalling how "I expressed, by looks, I suppose, my wishes, for she most graciously offered to lend it to me. I had long *desired* to read it."[188] Burney's desire for the play is repressed, and she expresses it with a look of longing rather than words. Burney's expectation of desire is not unreasonable and parallels Barthes' erotics of reading. In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), Roland Barthes describes the sexually charged relationship between author, text and reader:

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[184] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 394.
[185] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xvii.
[186] Belau, "Trauma and the Material Signifier," 5; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

> Does writing in pleasure guarantee…my reader's pleasure? Not at all. I must seek out this reader (must "cruise" him) without knowing where he is. A site of bliss is then created…[a site of] the possibility of a dialectics of desire, of an unpredictability of bliss.[189]

Ideally, the text creates a site of bliss where the author can give pleasure and the reader can receive pleasure, but this pleasure is not guaranteed. This unpredictability of bliss plagues Burney's interaction with *The Mysterious Mother*. Because bliss is the product of a "dialectics [or conversation] of desire" between the author and the reader, a rift between what the reader desires and what the author delivers causes an unpredictability of bliss. Burney expects the author to give her pleasure when she assembles Mr. and Mrs. Smelt, Mr. De Guiffardiere, and Mr. De Luc to read Walpole's closet drama aloud, but instead receives horror. While Burney and her guests do receive initial pleasure at the beginning of Walpole's play, they are ultimately traumatized by the play's treatment of incest. Burney's readerly desires are further frustrated by Walpole himself. Instead of

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[187] The misreading of Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* by Fanny Burney demonstrates a wider misunderstanding of incest in gothic novels like Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). Most critics read the novel through the lens of the perpetrator's repressed desire rather than the victim's traumatization. Like *The Mysterious Mother*, *The Monk* presents the horror of gothic incest as a hierarchical violations that inspire terror out of sympathy for the traumatized victim rather than erotic desire out of sympathy for the perpetrator.

[188] Fanny Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett, vol. 3 (London: Henry Colburn, 1842). Emphasis added.

[189] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 4. Barthes' emphasis.

"writing in pleasure"—something that helps, but does not guarantee the "reader's pleasure"—Walpole does not take pleasure in creating *The Mysterious Mother*.[190] He wrote to George Montagu that he was "not yet intoxicated enough with" his play, and his correspondence with Madame du Deffand suggests that the play was not meant to be pleasurable.[191] Walpole writes to her, "you would assuredly not like it; beautiful feelings and emotions are nowhere to be found. There is nothing but unveiled passions, crimes, repentance, and horrors."[192] The purpose of Walpole's play then is not the transmission of erotic pleasure but the expression of sexual trauma. Walpole's admission in a letter to Montagu indicates he was conscious of this effect. Like Burney, Walpole also arranged a private reading of his closet drama with "Mr. Conway, Lady Ailsbury, Lady Lyttleton and Miss Rich," but expects pain rather than pleasure, bemoaning "I have not the strength to go through it alone."[193]

The form of *The Mysterious Mother* as a closet drama enhances the transmission of trauma rather than desire. Walpole initially intended *The Mysterious Mother* for public performance, but he feared the English stage would not be able to understand his tragedy. As a result, *The Mysterious Mother* was exiled to private theatricals where it was read aloud instead of performed. The form of the closet drama reproduces the experience of trauma more intimately than a stage play. In a traditional play the parts are performed by actors, but Walpole's closet drama makes the readers active participants in the play as they perform the trauma of its characters. This intimacy forces the readers to experience Edmund's ordeal as he works to uncover his hidden trauma of incest. This unwanted intimacy explains Burney's forceful reaction to the play as her expected pleasure fast turns to horror: "All of the entertainment and pleasure I had received from Mr. Walpole seemed extinguished."[194] Burney's reaction resembles the vicarious trauma of 20th century readers of Holocaust narratives. Students in Shoshana Felman's class experienced secondary trauma through reading accounts of Holocaust survivors. This parallels the experience of Burney and her guests who are forced to experience Edmund's trauma and identify with him as the victim.

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[190] Ibid.
[191] Peter Sabor, *Horace Walpole: The Critical Heritage* (London; New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 130.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Marcie Frank, "Horace Walpole's Family Romances," *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature* 100, no. 3 (February 2003): 427.

The closet drama of Walpole's play also reveals the public and private dynamics of trauma. Trauma is intimate and personal, but the victim of trauma must share it so others can bear witness. These public and private aspects of trauma may explain why it was difficult for Walpole to allow others to read *The Mysterious Mother*. George Montagu hosted a private performance of the play, but Walpole begged him to "keep it under lock and key; it is not at all food for the public."[195] Walpole's need to control access to the play extended to the illustrations of Lady Diana Beauclerk that depict key scenes from Walpole's infamous play. Walpole had a "closet built on purpose," to house the drawings "which he only open[ed] for his most particular friends."[196] Critics may be tempted to read the "closeted" nature of the play and the drawings as another metaphor for Walpole's closeted homoeroticism, but doing so privileges desire over trauma as the source of the repressed.

The reactions of Burney and her guests to *The Mysterious Mother* mirror the symptoms of repressed trauma, and the failed witness. A failed witness is one who experiences a trauma but refuses to testify for the traumatized Other. Burney and her guests experience an event that disturbs their "expectations and ordering strategies," and they fail to witness the trauma of Edmund.[197] They achieve this through avoidance, forgetting or becoming passive. Of Burney's guests, Mrs. Smelt hopes never to "acknowledge she had suffered hearing so wicked a tale, and declared she would drive it from her thoughts as she would the recollection of whatever was most baneful to them."[198] Mr. De Luc avoids the play entirely as he "saw what was coming, and would not stay to hear it out."[199] Burney rejects her role as a witness by becoming almost grammatically passive when describing her reaction to the play: "Mrs. Smelt and myself heartily regretted *it had come our way*, and mutually agreed that we felt ourselves *ill-used in having ever heard it*." [200] Burney and Mrs. Smelt are the subjects of this sentence, but they become passive objects when confronted with Walpole's play. They regret the play "had come in [their] way," portraying the play as an actor with an independent will instead of the object of curiosity Burney initially seeks out.[201] They also feel "ill-used in having ever heard" the play when they were active participants in reading it.[202] By refusing to acknowledge an active role in their experience of the play, both Mrs. Smelt and Fanny Burney remove themselves as active witnesses to Edmund's trauma. Burney fails to witness Edmund's trauma to others, and this leads to a crisis of witnessing. This failure to witness manifests in Burney's refusal to look and allow others to look at Walpole's play. Burney implores the Queen to "never deign to cast her eye upon [the play]," blocking the gaze of the Queen as a potential witness to Edmund's trauma.[203] Burney's refusal to look at trauma and become a witness is in direct contrast to her look of desire when she expressed her wish to read *The Mysterious Mother*, initially

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[194] Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, 235.
[195] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 272.
[196] Ibid., 276.
[197] Frank, "Horace Walpole's Family Romances," 428.

Walpole's seminal novel *The Castle of Otranto* establishes the genre as a collection of fragmented, victim- identified narratives. In Walpole's gothic works, trauma manifests itself as a supernatural force that rends the text to reproduce the experience of trauma for the reader as one of horror and confusion. Far from representing the psychological angst of gothic villains, the fragmented bodies of Walpole's texts represent the trauma of gothic victims like Edmund in *Mysterious Mother*, the women of *Otranto*. Three decades after the publication of Walpole's *Otranto*, political philosopher and novelist William Godwin would adopt tropes of the gothic genre to represent the trauma of his titular character in *Caleb Williams* (1794). Caleb Williams is a servant who discovers his master Falkland is guilty of murder and must flee from his persistent tyranny. Godwin meant for his work to be a psychological novel dealing with "the private and internal operations of the mind" and he uses the almost preternatural persecution of Falkland and the fragmented narrative structure of Caleb's narrative to convey the psychological experience of trauma to the reader. [204] In addition to using the gothic to represent Caleb's trauma, Godwin also sets up *Caleb Williams* as a proto-detective novel, exploring how Caleb's role as a victim problematizes his effectiveness as an investigator.

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[198] Sabor, *Horace Walpole: The Critical Heritage*, 139-41.
[199] Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, 235.
[200] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Alan Richardson, "The Dangers of Sympathy: Sibling Incest in English Romantic Poetry," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 25, no. 4 (Autumn 1985): 739.

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[204] William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, ed. Gary J Handwerk and A. A Markley (Orchard Park, New York: Broadview Press, 2000), 448.

CHAPTER 2

“HALF-TOLD AND MANGLED”: TRAUMA AND THE FRAGMENTED BODY OF THE SERVANT ABUSE NARRATIVE IN *CALEB WILLIAMS*

Critics tend to read gothic works from the point of view of the perpetrator such as Ambrosio in *The Monk* (1796) or Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). This is in spite of the gothic’s reputation as a victim-identified genre focused on the trauma of gothic victims. The titles of gothic works reveal this focus on the perpetrator rather than the victim of trauma. Clara Reeve’s *Old English Baron* (1777) is not named for the novel’s foundling protagonist Edmund, and Anne Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) references the gloomy castle of the villain Montoni instead of his victim Emily St. Aubert. It is not until William Godwin’s *Things as They Are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) that the title of a gothic novel acknowledges the central role of the victim to the narrative. By casting Caleb as the titular protagonist of his own novel, Godwin gives the gothic victim subjectivity, uniting the figures of the servant witness and the gothic victim that Walpole introduces in his gothic works. Caleb Williams is both the gothic victim of the machinations of his imperious master, and a servant witness to his own trauma.

Caleb’s role as a victim problematizes his effectiveness as an investigator. As a result. Godwin’s novel is an interesting mix of gothic terror and proto-detective novel. According to Julian Symons in *Mortal Consequences: A History From the Detective Story to the Crime Nove*l, “the characteristic note of crime literature is first struck in Caleb Williams” since the novel “is about a murder, its detection, and the unrelenting pursuit by the murderer of the person who has discovered his guilt.”[205] Ian Ousby goes further to regard *Caleb Williams* as the first detective novel that "demonstrated for the first time that the detective could become the focus of serious literary interest."[206] Despite having these elements of detection, Godwin's novel is ultimately an antitype of detective fiction since Godwin problematizes Caleb's effectiveness as an investigator by making him a victim of trauma. Caleb may have solved the narrative mystery of Godwin's novel, but this in no way protects him from Falkland's abuse or illuminates his own trauma. The gaps in Caleb's experience frustrate his ability to construct a coherent narrative and accurately detect what is happening. In the following chapter I will explore how Caleb's trauma fragments his narrative, and how he attempts to counteract this by appropriating Falkland's narrative. I will then focus on Caleb as a victim of servant abuse, which makes his attempts to pen a coherent narrative futile, comparing it to other narratives of servant abuse during this period that substitute the servant narrative with the fragmented servant body that denies the victim of abuse subjectivity and voice.

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[205] Julian Symons, *Mortal Consequences: A History from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 19.

Caleb Williams' Trauma Narrative

Critics have tried to explain the confounding structure of Godwin's novel as either a political experiment or a psychological case study. Godwin's novel details the difficult life of Caleb Williams, an orphaned young man who becomes the servant of the wealthy and powerful Ferdinando Falkland. Soon after entering his master's service, Caleb determines Falkland is responsible for the murder of the tyrannical Barnabas Tyrrel. Caleb discovers the contents of a locked trunk and confronts Falkland, who confesses to the crime. In order to silence Caleb, Falkland accuses him of theft. This leads to a lifetime of persecution and abuse by Falkland that causes Caleb's incarceration, his short residence with a band of thieves after his escape, and his flight to London to evade capture. John Rodden interprets the dream-like quality of Caleb's narrative and the supernatural tyranny of Falkland as "a story of omnipotence and impotence in the language of psychoanalytic theory," while Andrew Scheiber reads the novel as a reflection of Caleb's fragmented consciousness as he struggles to reconcile the "Oedipal father and son rivalry" between him and Falkland.[207] Other critics like Robert Uphaus blame the novel's unintelligibility on Godwin's political philosophy, citing the author's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). Uphaus reads Godwin's novel as a "fictional embodiment of [the author's] own political interests" though it is ultimately an "incomplete attempt to instantiate the philosophy."[208] I argue instead that the fragmented body of Godwin's text borrows elements from the gothic genre to accurately represent Caleb's traumatic experience. In the following section I will examine the source of Caleb's trauma and how it leads to his failure as a detective.

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[206] Ian Ousby, *Bloodhounds of Heaven: The Detective in English Fiction from Godwin to Doyle* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 44.

The source of Caleb's trauma is the hierarchical inequalities of the master-servant relationship that lead to abuse. In *Of the Social Contract* (1762), Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously looks to the family for the natural model of government. In such a family, children owe obedience to their father for the care he takes of them, and once this debt is paid, the family loses the natural bonds of fealty and "maintains itself only by convention."[209] That is to say, the members of the family, much like the citizens of a state, "alienate their freedom only for the sake of their utility."[210] While the family metaphor drives home Rousseau's argument about the social contract, it does not address the issue of domestic servants who may not be subject to the sentimental bonds of family, and enter into such a contract for financial gain. These competing ideas of the domestic servant as a loyal, loving part of the family or as an independent contractor selling his or her services to the highest bidder, strained the relationship between masters and domestic servants in late eighteenth-century Britain.[211]

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[207] John Rodden, "Godwin's *Caleb Williams*: 'A Half-Told and Mangled Tale,'" *College Literature* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 120; Andrew J. Scheiber, "Falkland's Story: Caleb Williams' Other Voice," *Studies in the Novel* 17, no. 3 (Fall 1985): 262.

[208] Robert W. Uphaus, "*Caleb Williams*: Godwin's Epoch of Mind," *Studies in the Novel* 9 (1977): 279–96. 279; Penny Fielding, "'No Such Thing as Action': William Godwin, the Decision, and the Secret," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 382.

[209] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 42.

[210] Ibid.

Previous scholarship on domestic servants has identified them as a subaltern class: a separate subordinate group outside the hegemonic power structure occupied by their masters and the families they served.[212] Kristina Straub has challenged scholars to rethink the relationship between masters and domestic servants as one of overlapping domestic and business interests. Far from being a separate sub-class, domestic servants during the eighteenth century were an integral, though not always comfortable, part of the family, and the fear of economically mobile domestic servants appears in the wealth of how-to literature on domestic service intended for both masters and servants. Richardson's maxim in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* (1734) that a servant must "keep inviolably his Master's secrets," points to the deep anxiety masters had about trusting their privacy to servants of an inferior social class.[213] Despite their intimacy with their master's secrets, ultimately domestic servants were still employees. This was a mercenary view George Kearsley emphasized, writing "to expect attachment from a servant is idle and betrays an ignorance of the world."[214] In this economic model, masters are "to expect nothing from [servants] but a performance of their duty, keep them whilst they do it, and discharge them when they neglect it."[215]

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[211] Kristina Straub, *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism, and Violence between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 2.

[212] Gayatrai Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Columbia University Press, 1994), 66–111.

[213] Samuel Richardson, *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* (London, 1734), 2.

[214] George Kearsley, *Kearsley's Table of Trades for the Assistance of Parents and Guardians and for the Benefit of Those Young Men Who Wish to Prosper in the World and Become Respectable Members of Society...* (London: Printed for G. Kearsley, 1977), 95-96**.**

[215] Ibid.

These master-servant relationships create a surrogate family, demanding an unnatural intimacy that leads to an abusive relationship between Falkland and Caleb. In *Emile* (1762), Rousseau's treatise on education, the author outlines a surrogate relationship between himself and his fictional student Emile that has strong parallels to the dysfunctional master-servant relationship between Caleb and Falkland. Rousseau takes Emile from his parents and replaces them as a father-tutor figure. Though Rousseau concedes Emile "ought to honor his parents…he ought to obey only me."[216] Similarly, Caleb reports "I was then eighteen years of age" when his father died and, having lost "[his] mother some years before," Falkland takes him into his service.[217] Falkland mimics Rousseau as a father-tutor figure, instructing Caleb on Alexander the Great, and Caleb worships Falkland for his intellect. In supplanting the role of Emile's parents, Rousseau demands an unnatural intimacy from their surrogate relationship. He and Emile must "never be taken from one another without our consent" and consider themselves "inseparable that the lot of each in life is always a common object."[218] Rousseau's motivation for this precept is similar to Richardson's instructions to servants to "become a part of [the family]," they serve by tending "to the Reputation or Profit thereof."[219] Like Richardson, Rousseau's answer to overcoming the artificiality of such a relationship is prolonged intimacy between the two parties. Like servant and master, master and pupil must "spend their lives together," and it is important for each to "make himself loved by the other."[220] For Caleb and Falkland the opposite is true, and their relationship exposes the dangers of Richardson and Rousseau's guidelines for this kind of relationship. Far from welcoming Caleb's interest in his personal affairs, Falkland rebuffs

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[216] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile: Or, Treatise on Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1909), 179.
[217] Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 4.
[218] Rousseau, *Émile*, 179.
[219] Richardson, *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*, 3.
[220] Rousseau, *Émile,*179.

Caleb's curiosity. When Caleb finally becomes aware of Falkland's secret, Falkland rejects this unwanted intimacy, telling Caleb "you have extorted from me a confidence which I had no inclination to confer."[221] Rousseau's model of unnatural intimacy, far from cementing master-servant relationships, opens up possibilities for abuse in Caleb's relationship with Falkland.

As an investigator Caleb fails because he is a victim of servant abuse. Convinced his master murdered Barnabas Tyrrel, he sets "a watch upon" Falkland.[222] Though Caleb never asks outright if Falkland is the murderer, he assumes the role of investigator, dissecting Falkland's every move and utterance, watching "him without remission…[to] trace all the mazes of his thought."[223] As part of this investigation, Caleb watches secretly as Falkland oversees a murder trial. In a scene reminiscent of Hamlet watching Claudius while a troop of players enact his uncle's treachery, Caleb takes a position "most favorable to the object upon which [his] mind was intent" and watches as events similar to Falkland's past trauma unfold.[224] The man on trial is a peasant who, while visiting a neighborhood fair with his sweetheart encountered a man who had "had upon all occasions sought to mortify him, and do him an ill turn" in the past.[225] The peasant had avoided a physical confrontation until the night of the murder, but after being taunted repeatedly, challenged the brute and "unfortunately the first blow [the peasant] struck proved fatal."[226] Here Falkland's "secret wound," the source of his "gloomy and unsociable melancholy," is revealed by the repetitive aspects of the case he hears.[227] The two dimensional characters of this scenario are easily replaced with Falkland as the chivalrous peasant, Miss

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[221] Godwin, *Caleb Williams,* 117.
[222] Ibid., 180
[223] Ibid., 203.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid., 205.
[226] Ibid., 206
[227] Ibid., 166.

Emily Melville as the wronged damsel and the tyrannical brute as Tyrrel. Caleb watches as "tears of anguish roll down" Falkland's cheeks and when the peasant expresses his sorrow over the whole affair, Falkland "with every mark of horror and despair, rushed out of the room."[228] This occurrence, combined with the episode of the trunk, and Falkland's later confession confirm his master's guilt in Caleb's eyes. Instead of giving him investigative power over Falkland, Caleb's discovery of his master's guilt only serves to further traumatize Caleb. Rather than occupy the role of detecting subject, Caleb finds himself the object of detection as Falkland begins to surveil him. Falkland constantly monitors Caleb's behavior and Caleb recalls that "all [his] actions [are] observed; all [his] gestures marked."[229] He describes how "I could move neither to the right nor the left, but the eye of my keeper was upon me."[230]

Godwin uses gothic elements to more effectively represent the fragmenting experience of Caleb's trauma at the hands of Falkland. Since Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the gothic genre has used a *diabolus ex machina* to inflict trauma on its characters and fracture the narrative. Godwin's novel is more realist than its gothic predecessors. There is no giant helmet or ghostly portrait, only Falkland's almost supernatural persecution of Caleb. For example, after fleeing a band of robbers in disguise, Caleb encounters Falkland's coach and several men question him about the fugitive "Kit Williams" before he manages to get away. Once safely in London, Caleb sells stories to a newspaper where the brother of Gines, Falkland's merciless henchman, works. This leads to his exposure and flight from the city. As one reviewer commented on Godwin's novel, "the narrative in this instance may be considered as exceeding all the bounds of probability."[231] Falkland is a more restrained version of Walpole's *diabolus ex machina* that continually fragments Caleb's efforts to construct a coherent narrative of his trauma.

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[228] Ibid., 207.
[229] Ibid., 224
[230] Ibid., 225

Godwin portrays Falkland as a supernatural oppressor to accurately represent the fragmenting impact of Caleb's abuse on the narrative. When Caleb is seized in disguise trying to sail to Ireland he takes for "granted that [he] was once more in the power of Mr. Falkland," asking "did his power reach through all space, and his eye penetrate every concealment? Was he like that mysterious being, to protect us from whose fierce revenge mountains and hills, we are told, might fall on us in vain?"[232] Falkland also reminds Caleb of:

> Those invisible personages who are supposed from time to time interfere in human affairs, ride in the whirlwind, shroud himself in clouds and impenetrable darkness, and scatter destruction upon the earth from his secret habitation. [233]

While Falkland's persecution of Caleb may feel supernatural, Godwin provides Falkland with the realistic means to carry out his oppression. Godwin says of Falkland "it was necessary that [Caleb's] pursuer should be invested with every advantage of fortune, with a resolution that nothing could defeat or baffle, and with extraordinary resources of intellect."[234] Like Caleb, Godwin's readers "should feel prompted almost to worship [Falkland] for his high qualities" and fear the reach of his preternatural wrath.[235] Falkland's unrelenting persecution and his omnipotence are meant to feel supernatural to the reader, as Godwin represents the feelings of a victim of trauma.

Godwin' strategy differs from how other late eighteenth-century novels like Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759) have trauma victims cope with their experience through reason. Enlightenment philosophy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe used reason to interrogate and understand a world previously ruled by traditional knowledge. However rational the Enlightenment period appeared, it was also a deeply violent time, rife with social and political trauma. Events like the French Revolution (1789) and the Glorious Revolution (1688) which overthrew King James II of England, produced a range of traumatic experiences that writers like Laurence Sterne struggled to portray. *Tristram Shandy* is the archetype of narrative digression as the titular narrator struggles to stay on the subject, interrupting the story of his birth with a tale of his Uncle Toby's injury, and cutting off Toby's story with an account of Aunt Dinah's marriage to the coachman. Sterne's novel is about physical injury and psychological trauma, but the effect of Sterne's digressions are comedic, indicating they are the not the same as the gaps in narrative caused by trauma. These digressions are coping mechanisms for trauma rather than the gaps in speech and experience that trauma creates. In Sterne's novel, physical injury creates both a desire and inability to tell the story of trauma. Narrative digression and fracturing occurs when a character cannot relate the experience of their injury. Most of the male characters in Sterne's novel are physically injured and psychologically traumatized: Uncle Toby by a ball to the groin in the battle of Namur, and Tristram himself by the catastrophic circumstances of his birth.

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[231] "Review of *Caleb Williams*," *The British Critic* 5 (April 1795).
[232] Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 335-336.
[233] Ibid., 400.
[234] Ibid., 446.
[235] Ibid., 446.

These characters cope with their trauma by adopting hobby-horses or obsessive interests. Tristram's hobby-horse is writing, and as the narrator of Sterne's novel, he writes to reconcile the traumas of his birth and childhood. The many digressions Tristram takes from the story of his birth are further proof of the function of the hobby-horse as a coping mechanism. This is apparent as the hobby-horse runs roughshod over the reader, distracting them from the narrative thread of Tristram's birth. Uncle Toby's hobby-horse is the obsessive study of military battles and fortifications, starting with the battle of Namur. Toby's injury and how he copes with it reveal how Enlightenment thinkers regarded psychological trauma and its cure. Toby recounts the history of his injury to scores of visitors in order to "beguile the pain of it."[236] These conversations ultimately fail to enact a cure, either physically or psychologically. Sterne actually unites the two wounds, as the "unforeseen perplexities" of Toby's psychological trauma stymy his physical recovery "for three months together."[237] Discussing his trauma makes Toby's condition worse because it forces him to relive his experience without understanding it. Like many survivors of trauma, Uncle Toby's narrative is confounded by the "almost insurmountable difficulties he found in telling his story intelligibly."[238] Toby's recollection of the battleground at Namur becomes a metaphor for the fragmentation trauma inflicts on experience:

> The ground was cut and cross cut with such a multitude of dykes, drains, rivulets, and sluices, on all sides,—and he would get so sadly bewildered, and set fast amongst them, that frequently he could neither get backwards or forwards to save his life; and was oft-times obliged to give up the attack upon that very account only. [239]

Here Toby is literally reliving the attack at Namur, reinforcing trauma as an event outside the bounds of linear time that repeats itself every time Toby tells the story. The "dykes, drains, rivulets, and sluices" that obscure the battlefield represent the tangled inroads of Toby's mind caused by his wounding that do not allow him to make sense of his traumatic experience. Enlightenment philosophy provides rational understanding as the key to curing Toby's trauma. Toby needs his hobby-horse—the study of military fortifications and projectiles— in order to "be able to talk upon it without emotion."[240] If Toby is able to understand his trauma rationally he can overcome its devastating emotional effects.

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[236] Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy: An Authoritative Text, the Author on the Novel, Criticism*, ed. Howard Peter Anderson (New York: Norton, 1980), 56.
[237] Ibid., 56-57.
[238] Ibid., 58.
[239] Ibid., 59.
[240] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel; Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding*, 62.

Unlike Toby who copes with his trauma through reason, Caleb's victimization results in his failure to effectively investigate, which prevents him from producing a coherent narrative of his experiences. Trauma is an event that overloads the victim's psyche, creating a break in conscious experience that leaves a gap in memory. These gaps make it especially hard for victims like Caleb to craft a complete narrative of their trauma. Caleb's inability to definitively tell his story has led to a debate over the reliability of Godwin's narrator. Rudolph Storch has blamed this unreliability on Caleb's neurotic obsession while others suggest the novel questions the veracity of "literary forms based on the absolute authority of self."[241] These interpretations do not take into account the destabilizing power of trauma on a survivor's narrative. Caleb, as a victim of trauma, is a contradiction as the novel's narrator. He desires consistency, but is unable to deliver a consistent narrative; and he writes authoritatively, but cannot guarantee that his statements are correct. His desire for stability is undermined by trauma which denies survivors like Caleb access to a coherent narrative of the traumatizing event. Despite this, Caleb wishes to create a linear and coherent narrative "given with the same simplicity and accuracy that [he] would observe towards a court" and he only hopes his story will at "least appear to have that consistency which is seldom attendant but upon truth." [242] Unfortunately the opposite is true, and *Caleb Williams* is riddled with confusing narrative moves. This includes when Caleb questions Mr. Collins, the administrator of Falkland's estate, about his new master's past. Instead of delivering this narrative from the point of view of Collins, Caleb decides to drop Collins altogether and tell Falkland's history from his own point of view. There is also the narrative absence of the chest whose contents Caleb witnesses but cannot recall. The chest represents the source of his trauma as he tries to fill it with a coherent narrative of his own experience.

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[241] Gay Clifford, "*Caleb Williams* and *Frankenstein*: First-Person Narrative and 'Things as They Are,'" *Genre* 10 (1977): 606.
[242] Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 59, 179.

Caleb's failed investigation culminates in his discovery of Falkland's chest. The narrative absence of Falkland's chest represents the source of Caleb's trauma that fragments his narrative. Soon after entering Falkland's employment, Caleb encounters his master in a room off of the library. Just as Caleb is about to enter the room, he hears the "lid of a chest hastily shut, and the noise as of fastening a lock."[243] Falkland calls Caleb out from behind the door and violently berates him for "spy[ing] upon [his] actions."[244] This chest becomes the focus of Caleb's investigation and he believes it contains evidence that Falkland is the murderer of Barnabas Tyrrel. During a house fire, Caleb wrenches open the chest when Falkland appears and banishes him from the room. This moment of discovery is the cause of Caleb's trauma and subsequent downfall. Despite being such a central set piece of the plot, Godwin never reveals what is inside the chest, and Caleb confesses he does not recall its contents. He describes that he "was in the act of lifting the lid when Mr. Falkland entered…[and] at the moment of his appearance the lid dropt down from [his] hand."[245] Caleb sees but does not see what is inside the chest, and the narrative absence of the chest represents the absence in conscious experience caused by trauma, which leaves gaps in memory. Because of the chest's absence, it becomes an empty signifier for Caleb's trauma, one that he attempts to fill by crafting his own narrative of trauma.

In this narrative, Caleb proposes the chest contains "some murderous instrument or relic connected with the fate of the unhappy Tyrrel" only later to conclude that it must contain "a faithful narrative of that and its concomitant transactions, written by Mr. Falkland, and reserved in case of the worst…to redeem the wreck of his reputation."[246] Here Godwin uses the gothic convention of the found manuscript that goes back to the seminal gothic text *Castle of Otranto*. Horace Walpole initially claimed his novel "was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England… printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529."[247] In this case, Caleb believes the chest contains Falkland's master narrative while Caleb's own narrative is a counter narrative of trauma. Counter narratives are marginalized narratives that have been forgotten in favor of master narratives.[248] Caleb's ambivalence about whether the chest contains a relic or Falkland's narrative reveals his thwarted desire for concrete fact in his own shifting narrative. A relic is "a physical reminder or surviving trace of some occurrence, period, people, etc" while an instrument is an object "used by an agent in or for the performance of an action."[249] Caleb's first instinct is to place a piece of physical evidence connected to the death of Tyrrel in the trunk—the smoking gun or bloodstained knife that will incriminate Falkland and satisfy the mystery of the novel. This is in fact what Caleb, as the novel's detective, has hoped to find all along. But this definitive physical evidence is denied both Caleb and the reader when he places a narrative in the trunk instead. Objects like a relic or instrument are static and for the most part unchanging. One can hold the weight of it in one's hand, comforted that it represents the weight of physical fact. Conversely, a narrative is far less tangible, and as the product of memory, a narrative is constantly changing and open to interpretation.

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[243] Ibid., 6.
[244] Ibid., 7.
[245] Ibid., 128-129.

By placing a faithful narrative into the trunk, Caleb's version of the trunk represents the imaginary source of Caleb's trauma that he cannot access. The source of his trauma can never be recovered, which is why his trauma can never truly be resolved and continues to return. Caleb's hope that the trunk contains the faithful master narrative of Tyrrel's murder written by Falkland represents the source of Caleb's own trauma that he imagines to be complete, coherent and understandable**.** This imaginary narrative has the power to redeem Falkland's reputation should his crime ever be discovered, symbolically restoring order to chaos in the wake of the traumatic experience. But the coherent narrative that Caleb imagines is just that, imaginative. It cannot exist because trauma destabilizes and frustrates linear narrative as an event that exists outside chronological time. This is why the "truth or falsehood of this conjecture is of little moment" because it only represents a wish on Caleb's part for a stable and coherent understanding of his own trauma.[250] Even though Caleb imagines the trunk to contain the stable source of his trauma, Caleb realizes that it cannot come to light. "In that case" he offers, "this story of mine may amply, severely perhaps, supply its place."[251] Caleb's counter narrative of trauma becomes a fragmented substitute for the imaginary, stable and coherent narrative of his master Falkland.

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[246] Ibid., 42. Emphasis added.

[247] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* 59.

[248] Lankshear and Peters, "Postmodern Counter narratives," 2.

[249] "Relic, N.," *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press), accessed August 17, 2011, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/161910; "Instrument, N.," *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press), accessed August 17, 2011, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/97158.

Unable to craft an intelligible narrative of his trauma, Caleb appropriates Falkland's narrative, but this only further disrupts his own narrative. Mr. Collins explains to Caleb that Falkland's sudden rages are the result of a past trauma: his tempestuous dealings with the infamous Barnabas Tyrrel. Mr. Collins narrates Falkland's history to Caleb, from his young years in Italy to the dispute with and eventual murder of Tyrrel. Instead of telling Falkland's history from the point of view of Collins, Caleb decides "to avoid confusion in my narrative, I shall drop the person of Collins, and assume to be myself the historian of our patron."[252] Far from avoiding confusion, Caleb's rhetorical move only causes more ambiguity. This has puzzled scholars who conclude that, by telling Falkland's story in the first person, "Caleb wishes to reenact and thereby appropriate Falkland's story into his own consciousness."[253]

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[250] Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 423.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid., 66.

Caleb appropriates Falkland's narrative to combat the dissociative effects of his own trauma. Because trauma happens too suddenly, it cannot be experienced or integrated into memory. What results is a dissociation of the trauma from the victim's memory and control. Dissociation is a common response to the traumatic experience which "produces an overwhelming need to escape what is, in reality, inescapable."[254] Because of his trauma, Caleb experiences dissociation, and in an effort to understand his own traumatic experience he decides to tell Falkland's story as though he had experienced it firsthand. He confesses to the reader that "it may appear at first sight as if this detail of the preceding life of Mr. Falkland were foreign to my history," but reveals his "heart bleeds at the recollection of [Falkland's] misfortunes, as if they were [his] own."[255] For Caleb, Falkland's narrative and his own are inexorably linked. The parallel Caleb draws between Falkland and himself allows Caleb to make sense of his trauma vicariously. Many of the details Caleb gives about Falkland he echoes in his own biography. Both men are "small and by appearance un-athletic" and Caleb gives similar sketches of their interests and childhoods.[256] For Caleb, they are both men of high principle brought low by a tenacious tormentor. Caleb's appropriation of Falkland's narrative is similar to Binjamin Wilkomirski's appropriation of the Shoah in the Holocaust memoir *Fragments* (1995). Wilkomirski recounts his fragmented childhood in Latvia, how he survived two concentration camps and the death of his parents. A journalist later discovered that Binjamin Wilkomirski was not a Holocaust survivor. Instead his real name was Bruno Grosjean and he was the illegitimate child of an unwed mother from Switzerland. In Stefan Maechler's *The Wilkomirski Affair: A Study in Biographical Truth* (2001) the author found that false events in *Fragments* closely paralleled experiences from Wilkomirski's childhood. Unable to understand his trauma, Wilkomirski used the Holocaust to make sense of the horrors of his own abusive childhood. Like Wilkomirski, Caleb uses the lens of Falkland's persecution by Barnabas Tyrrel to understand his own trauma inflicted by the merciless Falkland.

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[253] Uphaus, "*Caleb Williams*: Godwin's Epoch of Mind," 291.

[254] Elizabeth A Waites, *Trauma and Survival: Post-Traumatic and Dissociative Disorders in Women* (New York: Norton, 1993), 14.

[255] Godwin, *Caleb Williams,* 66.

[256] Scheiber, "Falkland's Story: Caleb Williams' Other Voice," 256.

Contemporary reviews of the novel confirm that *Caleb Williams* effectively represented the fragmenting experience of trauma. Reviews of Godwin's novel tend to either praise *Caleb Williams* as a masterpiece of philosophical and political ideas or to complain about the novel's lack of coherent plot and confusing style. According to William Enfield, "the powers of genius and philosophy are strongly united" in *Caleb Williams*, but the experience of reading the novel is "not gratifying to the feelings and the passions," because it is "written in a style of labored dignity rather than of easy familiarity."[257] Godwin's writing style is further bemoaned in a piece by the *Analytical Review* which complains that the reader is led "forward at the will of the writer, while an almost total want or disregard of the rules of composition have betrayed him into faults of the first magnitude."[258] These faults of composition are the result of the fragmented and rambling structure of the novel that, while it faithfully reproduces the traumatic experience, foils the reader's attempt to decipher it using a conventional understanding of plot and character. Lacking a coherent linear structure, *Caleb Williams* leads one reviewer to observe "it appears that the author is not sufficiently aware of the necessity of drawing a general outline of the plot of any work of imagination, before the narrative is entered upon."[259] What these contemporary critics are searching for in *Caleb Williams* is a single coherent meaning, a simple moral that can elucidate this almost incomprehensible work. These critics desire the novel to accurately reflect a rational reality with characters that act in a reasonable way. As one critic puts it "we will not enter more minutely into the discussion of a plot so imperfect; or inquire into the degree of probability, that such characters should act as they are made to do."[260] It is this confusion over the motives of Godwin's characters that leads critics to conclude that the novel lacks "too little of anything within the ordinary course of observation, to afford any general moral."[261] *Caleb Williams*, as a representation of trauma, is too experiential to offer a single definitive meaning to the constantly shifting experience of trauma.

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[257] "Review of *Caleb Williams*," *Monthly Review*, September 15, 1794, 145–49.
[258] "Review of *Caleb Williams*," *Analytical Review*, January 21, 1795, 166–75.

Despite the strong impulse to denounce *Caleb Williams* for its lack of probability or poor writing style, there are some contemporary critics who understood Godwin's novel was meant to be experienced rather than understood rationally. William Hazlett, in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) praises Godwin's book for its philosophical genius, but also offers praise for the experience of reading it. He writes, "we conceive no one ever began *Caleb Williams* that did not read it through: no one that ever read it could possibly forget it, or speak of it after any length of time but with an impression as if the events and feelings had been personal to himself."[262] What Hazlett is describing is a process in which the reader is forced to experience the trauma of Caleb and to identify with him as the victim. It is similar to the experience of Shoshana Felman's class in Holocaust narratives. Students read Holocaust narratives and tried to discuss them in a detached, academic environment. Instead they were swept up in a vicarious experience of the survivors' trauma and became traumatized themselves. Hazlett's description of the experience of reading *Caleb Williams* is similar and represents an experience of traumatic possession. Once started the reader cannot stop, and once read it cannot be forgotten or escape discussion. Felman's students felt possessed by the trauma narratives of Holocaust survivors and "could only talk about the session and could focus on no other subject" just as Hazlett cannot speak of Godwin's novel without a sense of personal impact.[263]

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[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] William Hazlitt, "William Godwin," in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt: A Reply to Malthus. The Spirit of the Age, Etc*, ed. P.P. Howe (J.M. Dent & Company, 1902), 208.

Fragmented Bodies and Caleb's Servant Abuse

Caleb is a victim of servant abuse, a condition that frustrates his ability to create a coherent narrative of that abuse. His inability to create a coherent narrative of servant trauma is reflected in nonfiction accounts of servant abuse from this period. Unable to adequately express the trauma of domestic abuse, these nonfiction narratives replace the fragmented servant narrative with the fragmented servant body, ultimately denying abused servants a voice. This is the case in the nonfiction narrative of Mrs. Elizabeth Branch in the true crime chapbook *An Appeal to Humanity*: *In an Account of the Life and Cruel Actions of Elizabeth Brownrigg. Who was tried […]for curelly [sic] Beating and Starving Mary Clifford, a Parish Girl, her apprentice […] To which is added the Trial of Elizabeth Branch and her Daughter, for the Murder of their Servant Maid* (1767). Sold for a penny or half-penny, chapbooks were a popular and cheap alternative to expensive bound books. In the Branch trial, the court subverts the trauma narratives of servant victims by focusing on the fragmented servant body.

In the Branch trial, the court subverts the trauma narratives of the Branches' living servant victims by focusing solely on the abused body of the deceased servant Anne Butterworth.

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[263] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 48.

Elizabeth Branch and her daughter Mary were tried and hanged for the brutal murder of their servant maid Anne Butterworth in 1740. The Branch women claimed Butterworth died after falling down in a violent fit, while the prosecution successfully proved they beat the unfortunate girl to death. In opening statements, the prosecution declares "the truth and circumstances of this fact must come from the evidence."[264] That evidence is the body of Butterworth, the tangible proof of murder that is central to the prosecution's case. Since Anne Butterworth is dead, her body must stand in place of her narrative and the court conjures up her abused servant body in grisly detail. The Branches' dairy maid Anne Somers testifies, and the court is chiefly concerned with her description of Butterworth's body. Somers recounts how the Branch women threw Butterworth face down on the ground, raised her petticoats and whipped her until "she run with blood."[265] She goes on to describe how the Branch women beat Butterworth with broomsticks and rubbed salt in her bleeding wounds until she lay dead on the floor of the parlor. Without a trauma narrative from Butterworth's point of view, her body becomes a series of disconnected parts. The court representative pushes Somers to describe the parts of Butterworth's body the Branch women whipped, repeatedly asking "what part that was?" until she reluctantly replies the "breech" or the "arse."[266] There are also "the head and shoulders" beaten with broomsticks, the thighs wet with blood, and "the breech and hips" struck with shoes.[267] The court objectifies her fragmented body, turning her into an object of horror rather than the subject of abuse. Surgeon Robert Salmon further objectifies Butterworth, describing how the arms, legs and thighs of the deceased "were greatly bruised" and "the fingers of one hand had the flesh beat off."[268] In morselizing the servant body before and after death, the court denies Butterworth subjectivity as a victim of abuse.

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[264] *An Appeal to Humanity* (London: Harrison and Ward, 1767), 40.

[265] Ibid., 45.

[266] Ibid., 46.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Ibid., 51.

By reducing the servant body to fragmented parts, the court undermines the trauma narratives of the Branches' living servant victims: Anne Somers and Henry Butler. Somers recalls how, after Mary and Elizabeth beat Butterworth to death, they forced Somers to sleep with the corpse. While this episode of abuse is clearly traumatic for Somers, the court ignores the psychological implications of her abuse to focus on the body of Butterworth. The court raises Somers' confinement with Butterworth's body to confirm her death. A juryman asks Somers "did you lie with [Butterworth] all that night?… Did you hear the deceased breathe?" to which Somers replies "I was ordered to lye [sic] with her, but I did not touch her, knowing her to be dead."[269] Anne confirms the death of Butterworth at the hands of her mistresses, but the court overlooks her own trauma at having to spend the night with a corpse. This form of coercive abuse actually combines three methods of psychological torture: degradation, isolation and threats.[270] By forcing Somers to sleep with the corpse of Butterworth, the Branch women implicitly threaten her life, degrade her by putting her in contact with the abject and impose a terrible isolation that continues for three days after Butterworth's burial as Somers is "not suffered to go abroad."[271] Their abuse is effective, and Anne testifies that she did not report the murder for fear that Mary and Elizabeth Branch "should have used [her] in the same barbarous manner."[272] By focusing on the body of Butterworth instead of Somers' abuse, the court supplants one servant's narrative with another servant's body. This act invalidates Somers' abuse and denies her a voice in her own narrative.

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[269] Ibid., 48.

[270] Almerindo E Ojeda, *The Trauma of Psychological Torture* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2008), 5.

[271] *An Appeal to Humanity*, 50.

[272] Ibid.

The court similarly favors the abused servant's body over the servant's narrative of abuse in the case of Henry Butler. Henry testifies that the Branch women often beat him when he did not serve them properly, and once attacked him when he dropped a plate, throwing forks and knives. The result, he testifies, was "I beshit myself, and then the prisoners, took up my turd, thrust it into my mouth, and made me eat it."[273] The abuse Henry suffers is psychologically damaging. The Branch women use this ultimate degradation, putting the victim in contact with his own excrement, to silence Henry who does not testify to his own trauma until after Anne Butterworth's murder. The Branch women literally and figuratively silence Henry by "cramming…excrement down [his] throat."[274] Instead of acknowledging Henry's subjectivity as a victim of abuse, the court is only interested in the abuse the Branch women enact on Henry's servant body. The court representative asks "which of the prisoners threw the forks and knives at you?"[275] By giving primacy to the abused servant body, the court likewise silences Henry by turning him into an object of abuse.

Similarly, Caleb's testimony as the victim of servant abuse is repeatedly suppressed. Others are thwarted from witnessing or legitimizing his trauma, even in a court of law. After Caleb attempts to flee the abuse of his master, Falkland puts him on trial for theft. This trial consists of "Mr. Forester and three or four of the servants already assembled, in expectation of [Caleb] and [Falkland, his] accuser."[276] Falkland provides a witness and physical evidence to support his accusation. Robert, the valet, testifies that he encountered Caleb on the same day as the fire in the library in a perturbed state. After several attempts to engage Caleb in conversation,

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[273] Ibid., 54.
[274] Ibid., 252
[275] *An Appeal to Humanity*, 55.
[276] Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 246.

Robert recounts how Caleb would only say he "was the most miserable creature alive."[277] Later that evening, Falkland called Robert to witness the damaged chest. After Robert gives his testimony, the servants search Caleb's luggage where they find a watch and jewels belonging to Falkland. Robert's testimony combined with Falkland's property found in Caleb's possession make Caleb appear guilty in the eyes of the law. Those assembled cannot recognize that Caleb's shocked reaction in the library is the result of his trauma rather than his guilt. Unlike Falkland, Caleb has no physical evidence to prove his master's mistreatment. He lacks a body of evidence that this court and the court putting the Branch women on trial demands. Instead he has only the truth of his experience, but it is not enough to impugn Falkland. Caleb is adamant that Falkland "knows I am innocent," and he cannot "refrain from repeatedly attempting to interrupt" the trial.[278] Despite Caleb's vocal efforts to prove his innocence, he is ultimately silenced because he cannot reveal his master's secret or his discovery of it which caused his original trauma. Because Caleb cannot back up his testimony with evidence, Mr. Forester dismisses it, much like the court dismisses the testimony of the Branch servants' trauma.

Without a body of evidence, Caleb lacks a witness to validate his trauma. The servants are shocked by what they perceive as Caleb's villainy. An "involuntary cry of indignation burst from every person in the room" and they look at Caleb with "furious glances, as if they could have torn [him] to pieces."[279] The servant's desire to turn Caleb into a collection of fragmented body parts recalls the court's morselization of the servant body in the Branch trial. Instead of a servant who speaks against his master, they prefer a domestic who suffers in silence. This goes back to Richardson's advice in his *Vade Mecum* to any servant in an abusive situation. Servants must bear their ill-treatment for the time of the indenture in the hope that "severity may perhaps be of far greater service to [them] than a milder sort of usage."[280] Caleb appeals to his "fellow-servants… [that] *if you believe—if you see—if you know*, that I am innocent, *speak for me*."[281] Following Richardson's maxim, these servants are deaf and dumb to Caleb's entreaties. They desire a silent servant who does not reveal his master's abuse, the alternative is to turn Caleb into a fragmented servant body that cannot testify to the wrongs done it. The servants' refusal to witness Caleb's trauma is echoed in the figure of Mr. Forester. In addition to the servants, Caleb appeals to Mr. Forester "not to violate [justice] in my person" and to witness the injustice of his situation.[282] But Forester is likewise aghast at Caleb's insolence towards his master and berates Caleb as a "vile calumniator!" calling him the "abhorrence of nature, the opprobrium of the human species."[283] Because Caleb dares to speak against his master, the servants and Mr. Forester silence him and turn him into an fragmented body like that of Anne Butterworth.

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[277] Ibid., 250.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid., 254.

Forester and servants' refusal to witness Caleb trauma leads to an episode of failed witnessing. A failed witness is one who witnesses a traumatic event but refuses to testify for the Other. This is true in the case of the Holocaust, which Dori Laub calls an event without a witness. In addition to erasing the physical evidence of their atrocities, the Nazis also created a damaging psychological structure that prevented the possibility of "a fully lucid, unaffected witness" who could remove him or herself from the "contaminating event."[284] This would have involved a removal of oneself from the inside role of victim and a projection into the role of an outsider. Such an action was made impossible by the "coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference" constructed by the Nazis.[285] Falkland creates such a framework for Caleb by portraying him as a liar, thief and ungrateful servant, thus denying him a witness to his traumatic experience. This contaminating framework turns Caleb's fragmented servant body into an abject spectacle. Kristeva builds on Freud's idea of the uncanny and theorizes the abject as the ultimate other that must be cast off in order to define the self. The abject is represented by bodily fluids like blood and feces and includes the corpse which is the ultimate abjection, a body without a soul. The abject is what is "in-between…ambiguous…[and] composite" that which we cast off to redefine stable boundaries of self and other.[286] Caleb acknowledges this transformative framework in his conversation with Thomas, calling himself a "miserable creature."[287] Instead of witnessing Caleb's trauma, Thomas dehumanizes him further. He calls Caleb a toad "that spit[s] venom all round you…leav[ing] the very ground upon which you crawl infected with …slime."[288] Instead of an active agent able to testify to his trauma, Caleb becomes an object of abject horror. In this dehumanizing frame of reference Caleb is neither able to receive witness to his trauma or act as a credible witness to his own trauma.

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[280] Richardson, *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*, 50.
[281] Godwin, *Caleb Williams*. Emphasis added.
[282] Ibid., 255.
[283] Ibid., 258.
[284] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 81.

Thomas portrays a world that refuses to witness Caleb's trauma from the level of the individual to the world community. This includes Caleb's father who Thomas confesses "I am glad to my heart that [he] is dead; your villainy would else have made him curse the day that ever he was born."[289] Thomas's individual rejection of Caleb widens into a communal rejection. Thomas tells Caleb "I would not lie a night under the same roof with you for all the world!" and widening the circle of rejection mentions "the people you talk to will tear you to pieces," once again referencing the fragmented servant body, unable to testify to trauma or have its trauma witnessed by others. [290] Eliminating any form of witness to Caleb's trauma, Thomas extends this prosecutorial framework to include inanimate objects: "I should expect the house to fall and crush such wickedness! I admire that the earth does not open and swallow you alive!"[291] Without an earthly witness to validate his trauma, Caleb "call[s] to God to witness," but his plea is fruitless and he falls silent in the face of Thomas' virulent attacks.[292]

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[285] Ibid.
[286] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.
[287] Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 261.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid., 260.

Caleb becomes aware of the "totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference" Falkland has created after his conversation with Thomas. Detained in the same prison as the Hawkinses, Caleb muses "they too had been the victims of Mr. Falkland" and that Falkland "exhibited, upon a contracted scale indeed…a copy of what monarchs are, who reckon among the instruments of their power prisons of state."[293] The "they" of the first sentence refers grammatically to the Hawkinses, but can also extend to bystanders like Thomas, Mr. Forester and the house servants. They are victims of Falkland in that they accept the theoretical prison Falkland has created for Caleb by depriving him of the "unencumbered, unviolated and thus sane point of reference."[294] That Caleb compares the power of Falkland to that of a monarch points to the "grandiose coercive pressure" and "delusional ideology" Falkland is able to exert on Caleb as a victim of trauma.[295]

Falkland further silences Caleb's attempts to voice his abuse and trauma by creating a master narrative in the form of a broadsheet. Falkland's master narrative gives Falkland power over Caleb and turns him into an object of detection instead of a subject of abuse. Caleb has fled to London when he hears a hawker in the street advertise the sale of his own “official” biography:

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[290] Ibid., 261
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 81.
[295] Ibid.

> Here you have the MOST WONDERFUL AND SURPRISING HISTORY AND MIRACULOUS ADVENTURES OF CALEB WILLIAMS: you are informed how he first robbed, and then brought false accusations against his master; as also of his attempting divers times to break out of prison, till at last he effected his escape in the most wonderful and incredible manner; as also of his travelling the kingdom in various disguises, and the robberies he committed with a most desperate and daring gang of thieves; and of his coming up to London, where it is supposed he now lies concealed; with *a true and faithful copy* of the hue and cry printed and published by one of his Majesty’s most principal secretaries of state, offering a reward of one hundred guineas for apprehending him. All for the price of one halfpenny.[296]

Falkland’s master narrative uses the broadsheet genre to cement his narrative authority and undermine the fragmented counter narrative of Caleb’s trauma that Godwin’s novel represents. Broadsheets were long sheets of paper with stories of true crime and adventure printed on one side, making it a perfect vehicle for Falkland’s master narrative of Caleb as an escaped convict and cutthroat bandit. The broadsheet masquerades as the official narrative of Caleb’s life, claiming to be a true and faithful copy of events, suggesting to the reader that Falkand’s narrative is more reliable and authoritative than Caleb’s fractured counter narrative of trauma. Furthering its authority as a master narrative, the broadsheet is also a clear and coherent representation of Caleb’s experiences. This broadsheet allows the reader to trace Caleb’s incarceration, his escape from prison and his flight to London, serving as an abridged version of the novel itself. Caleb’s trauma narrative may find coherent expression in the broadsheet, but the broadsheet fails to give a full account of Caleb’s traumatic experience. It cannot contain the psychological implications of his trauma— it is simply a list of the facts. The broadsheet, though rationally pleasing to the reader as a description of facts, does not accurately portray Caleb's traumatic experience.

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[296] Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 368. Emphasis added.

The broadsheet defeats Caleb's attempts to create a narrative worthy of "a court which was to decide in the last resort upon everything dear to [him]."[297] It is also a reminder of Caleb's failure to create a coherent narrative of his trauma at this point in the novel. Though he makes a living as a writer he is unable to write his own story. Reminded of his trauma he "often threw down [his] pen in an ecstasy of despair. Sometimes for whole days together [he] was incapable of action, and sunk into a sort of partial stupor, too wretched to be described."[298] What he does write for publication has strong parallels to his own experiences before arriving in London when he was part of a band of robbers. He explains that "by a fatality, for which I did not exactly know how to account, my thoughts frequently led me to the histories of celebrated robbers."[299] It is significant that Caleb feels drawn to tell the stories of these worthy highwaymen who met memorable deaths on the gallows. Just as he tells the story of Falkland to understand his own trauma, he is reliving his experience as a robber and fugitive via the stories of these men.

The broadsheet re-traumatizes Caleb because it denies him witnesses to his traumatic experience. Painted as a criminal, Caleb realizes "it was no longer Bow-street [or the police], it was a million of men in arms against me."[300] The narrative and Caleb's emotional reaction to it are also evocative of trauma as a never-ending event. Horrified at the thought of being apprehended he bemoans: "There is no end then…to my persecutors! My unwearied and long-continued labours lead to no termination! Termination! No; the lapse of time, that cures all other things, makes my case more desperate!"[301] Because trauma is an event that lies outside temporal experience, it cannot be integrated and processed by the victim. As a result, Caleb's trauma becomes an event that has no termination.

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[297] Ibid.,179.
[298] Ibid., 357.
[299] Ibid., 357.
[300] Ibid., 370.

Caleb Williams may begin as a kind of proto-detective story, where the servant Caleb discovers his master's guilt in the murder of Barnabas Tyrrel, but it quickly devolves into the story of a man desperate for a witness to validate his trauma at the hands of his unforgiving master. Trauma fragments Caleb's narrative and his status as a survivor of servant abuse defeats his ability to pen a coherent narrative, much like other victims of servant abuse during this period. Caleb's experience as both traumatized servant and amateur detective echoes how other victims of trauma, specifically gothic heroines like Jane Eyre, will struggle with gaps in knowledge as they investigate their own narrative trauma.

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[301] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

“HORROR OCCUPIED HER MIND”: MISINFORMATION, MISPERCEPTION, AND DETECTING THE TRAUMA OF GOTHIC HEROINES

Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* continues this legacy of detection in gothic fiction and serves as a transitional text between gothic novels and the female detective. We can trace the trajectory of the female detective from gothic novels like *Jane Eyre* to Charles Dickens’ social problem novel *Bleak House,* which features the orphan investigator Esther. Brontë’s novel is an example of what Ellen Moers called the “Female Gothic” in Literary Women (1976). She defines the female gothic as “the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called “the gothic.”’[302] The Female Gothic includes tropes such as the supernatural and threatening environments that represent fears of “female incarceration within domestic spaces.”[303] Brontë follows this pattern in her novel with the setting of Thornfield Hall that resembles a gothic haunt more than a nobleman’s manor and conceals the secret of Rochester’s first wife Bertha. Jane investigates when she hears the mysterious and ghastly laughter of a woman at Rochester’s estate. While Jane is unconvinced by Mrs. Fairfax and Rochester’s explanation that the laughter belongs to Grace Poole, she is ultimately unable to detect the source of the laughter herself.

Jane’s failure to detect is caused by gaps in her experience created by trauma. These gaps contain missed information that lead Jane to misperceive what she is seeing. For example, when Jane loses consciousness after Bertha confronts her, it creates a rift in Jane’s understanding. Without this information she is unable to recall exactly what she has seen. Instead she uses the language of the preternatural to explain it, calling Bertha a vampire. This misperception allows Rochester to manipulate Jane into thinking she has seen Grace Poole instead of his monstrous spouse. These types of gaps in information plague most gothic heroines and cause them to misperceive the world around them, nullifying their detection. Like Jane Eyre, gothic heroines Emily St. Aubert and Catherine Moorland also experience missed information and missed seeing that causes misperception and frustrates their ability to detect anything. By tracing Brontës' debt to these earlier gothic novels and experimenting with detection in her gothic novel, I will show how Brontë interrogates the narrative impossibilities of female detection in a genre that represents the fragmenting experience of trauma.

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[302] Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976), 90.
[303] Andrew Smith, *Gothic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 32.

Gothic Heroines, Failed Detectives?

Gothic heroines are an antecedent to the female detective because they actively investigate the mysteries at the core of their narratives. In Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily St. Aubert searches the dark corridors of the castle of Udolpho for her aunt who has been secreted away by the gothic villain Montoni. Catherine Moorland, in Jane Austen's gothic parody novel, scours the decidedly un-gothic Northanger Abbey for evidence that Captain Tilney imprisoned and murdered his wife. However, unlike the female detective, the gothic heroine's attempts at detection are resoundingly unsuccessful and someone else usually solves the mystery. In *The Female Investigator in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture* Lisa M. Dresner defines this trend of the gothic heroine as an "almost detective."[304] These women attempt to uncover the secrets haunting their texts but are "only moderately successful" or outright failures.[305] Dresner argues that the gothic heroine fails to detect once she attempts to "investigate the male object of

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[304] Dresner, *The Female Investigator in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture*, 9.
[305] Ibid.

[her] desire."[306] While Dresner locates the failure of the gothic heroine's detection in bodily desire, I argue that the cause of this failure is trauma and its ability to fragment narrative. Emily St. Aubert of *The Mysteries of Udulpho* and Catherine Moorland of *Northanger Abbey* fail as investigators because the gaps trauma creates undercut their investigative abilities.

Critics have already examined the literal gaps that occur in Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* where the author interjects poems into her prose. Mary Favret reads these poems as "chaotic" interruptions in Radcliffe's text that disrupt the plot. [307] Anna Laetitia Barbauld particularly bemoaned the scant attention readers paid the poems since they were "always impatient to get on with the story."[308] Leah Price and Ingrid Horrocks have since interpreted these narrative gaps as either meditative spaces for the gothic heroine or Radcliffe offering her reader a variety of discourses. Leah Price argues that Radcliffe's "verse points outward from the gothic novel, breaking and braking the narrative," to provide the reader with the "self-control needed to resist 'impatient' greed for the plot."[309] According to Horrocks, Radcliffe's quotations "work as a form of sympathetic expansiveness and appropriation…releasing [Emily's] mind from the trauma the gothic plot inflicts on it."[310] Rather than serve as a safe harbor from gothic trauma, the gaps I examine in Udolpho are breaches in knowledge that create terror and confusion for the protagonist Emily St. Aubert. Trauma creates these gaps because it happens too suddenly for the victim to fully understand what has occurred.

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[306] Ibid., 9.

[307] Mary A. Favret, "Telling Tales about Genre: Poetry in the Romantic Novel," *Studies in the Novel* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 162.

[308] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, "Anne Radcliffe," in *The British Novelists: With An Essay and Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, vol. Vol. 43.1 (London: Rivington, 1810), viii.

[309] Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 94-97.

[310] Ingrid Horrocks, "'Her Ideas Arranged Themselves': Re-Membering Poetry in Radcliffe," *Studies in Romanticism* 47, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 517.

These absences in experience frustrate Emily's efforts to create a coherent narrative of her experience and foil the detection of her and her fellow gothic heroines.

Emily St. Aubert is initially an effective investigator. She is forced to live with her unaffectionate aunt, Madame Cheron who marries the unscrupulous Italian nobleman Count Montoni. Montoni transports Madam Cheron and Emily to the gloomy Castle of Udolpho where he tries to force Emily into a marriage with Count Morano. Instead of passively accepting her fate, Emily actively investigates the gothic villain Montoni, hoping to uncover the truth of his past and escape from the castle with her imprisoned aunt. She is adept at getting information from servants and is able to navigate the threatening gothic spaces of Montoni's castle. However, her experiences of trauma limit the effectiveness of her investigations. The death of Emily's mother and father, the loss of her home, and the threat of sexual violation in a marriage to Count Morano are traumatic events that cause gaps in her experience and frustrate her ability to detect anything.

Emily's original traumatic events are the death of her mother, followed soon after by the death of her father. Emily responds to these events by turning away or fainting at the moment she is about to discover key information, a response to trauma that she will repeat throughout Radcliffe's novel. Emily's repeated lapses into unconsciousness tie her trauma to her inability to access information. After the death of her mother, Emily enters her father's room to find him in his closet, "seated at a small table, with papers before him, some of which he was reading with deep attention and interest, during which he often wept and sobbed aloud."[311] In addition to these mysterious papers, Emily's father also looks upon a portrait of a woman who Emily recognizes is not her mother. Emily is anxious to know what these papers contain and who the portrait represents, but instead of questioning her father she turns away out of respect for his grief: "recollecting that she was intruding upon his private sorrows, [she] softly withdrew from the chamber."[312] Emily's turning away from questioning her father foreshadows how she will react to his death and other traumas she will experience. Fainting is a form of turning away from the overwhelming traumatic event, a defense mechanism that absents oneself from the site of trauma. Emily's father reinforces this response to trauma when he warns his daughter "we become the victims of our feelings, unless we can in some degree command them."[313] Unable to command her emotions, Emily has no choice but to withdraw completely in the form of unconsciousness. For example, upon learning that her father is dying, Emily is seized by "a slight convulsion" and then sinks "senseless in her chair."[314] While Emily is able to maintain her composure at the moment of her father's death—she only forgets "her fortitude for a moment, [to let] her tears [mingle] with" her father's—she is later found "lying senseless across the foot of [his] bed, near which stood the coffin."[315]

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[311] Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

Emily's trauma is bound up in her inability to access information. As he is dying, Emily's father commands her to destroy the papers she found him perusing earlier. He enjoins her: "these papers you must burn—and, solemnly I command you, WITHOUT EXAMINING THEM."[316] Later, Emily is carrying out her father's wishes when, in the fancy of her grief, she thinks she sees his countenance in the room. Predictably, "she rushe[s] forward into the chamber, and

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[312] Ibid.
[313] Ibid.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid.

[sinks] almost senseless into a chair."[317] After this attack of unconsciousness, she looks at the papers her father has expressly forbidden her to read:

> Her eyes involuntarily settled on the writing of some loose sheets, which lay open; and she was unconscious, that she was transgressing her father's strict injunction, till a sentence of dreadful import awakened her attention and her memory together. She hastily put the papers from her; but the words, which had roused equally her curiosity and terror, she could not dismiss from her thoughts.[318]

Even though Emily is reading these documents she is still in an "unconscious" state as her eyes skim the page. It is only at the very moment of conscious recognition— "a sentence of dreadful import" that "awakened her attention and her memory together"–that the memory of her father's dying wish denies her and the reader a full account of the paper's contents. Even after she consigns the papers to the flames of the hearth "she shuddered at the recollection of the sentence she had just seen, and at the certainty, that the only opportunity of explaining it was then passing away forever."[319] This sentence describes how Emily and the reader only get a fragmentary view of the paper's contents that impresses both with feelings of confusion and misgiving.

These papers and their mysterious contents form one of the core mysteries of *Udolpho,* one that Emily cannot solve because she does not have access to the information they contain. Initially, Emily thinks they might be letters from her mother to her father. As the narrative progresses, she discovers the portrait is of the Marchioness de Villeroi and she surmises they must be love letters from this woman to her father. Based on her resemblance to the Marchioness, Emily thinks that she could be the illegitimate offspring of an affair between her father and this woman. It is only toward the novel's end that Radcliffe reveals the Marchioness was Monsieur St. Aubert's sister, making her Emily's aunt, and the papers contain details surrounding her sudden death.

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[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.

Emily's trauma repeatedly denies her access to information, and as a result, Emily's narrative is riddled with gaps in knowledge that frustrate her ability to solve the mysteries of the castle of Udolpho. As I discussed previously, Emily is often *about* to discover some vital part of the mystery when she falls down in a faint. Emily swoons no less than ten times over the course of the novel and the reader experiences these gaps in real time because Radcliffe tells the story in third person, limited to Emily's point of view. For example, Emily investigates what she thinks is a veiled portrait in a room of the castle and "with a timid hand, lifted the veil; but instantly let it fall—perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture, and, before she could leave the chamber, she dropped senseless on the floor."[320] Emily sees, but also does not see, what is behind the veil because trauma creates gaps in her experience and ours. At this point, neither Emily nor the reader are sure what the veiled object of horror is, only that it is "no picture" like Emily thought. When Emily regains consciousness, instead of investigating the veil again she returns to her room. She then joins her aunt and Montoni for dinner, leaving the discovery of what the veil hides to another point in the narrative. These gaps in Emily's knowledge frustrate her ability to accurately detect what has happened. In a review of Radcliffe's novel, Samuel Taylor Coleridge complained about how these gaps also frustrate the reader, commenting "curiosity is raised in [Udolpho] oftener than it is gratified; or rather, it is raised so high that no adequate gratification can be given it."[321] Radcliffe refuses to gratify this curiosity until the final volume of the novel, leaving both Emily and the reader to misperceive what is behind the veil.

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[320] Ibid., 248-249.

[321] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Review of Anne Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in *The Critical Review* (August 1794)," *University of Pennsylvania, Department of English*, accessed March 6, 2016, http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/coleridge.reviews.

Emily visits the chamber with the veiled object a second time, but missing information leads her to misperceive what she actually sees. Searching for her aunt, Emily investigates a dark chamber in the castle where she notices a recess in the wall hidden by a heavy drape. She pulls back the curtain to reveal "a corpse, stretched on a kind of low couch, which was crimsoned with human blood, as was the floor beneath. The features, deformed by death, were ghastly and horrible, and more than one livid wound appeared in the face."[322] Emily promptly faints and this absence in the text frustrates the reader's ability to make sense of what she has seen. Upon waking Emily never returns to investigate the "corpse" that Radcliffe much later reveals is a grotesque wax figure. Critics have interpreted this scene as just one of Radcliff's many "attack[s] on the cult of sensibility" throughout the novel. [323] The cult of sensibility emerged in the eighteenth-century sentimental novel and valorized emotions instead of a rational plot. Emily takes this sensibility to the extreme when her terrified imagination causes her to misinterpret reality. Seeing a corpse instead of its simulacra, Emily succumbs to the excess of emotion that Radcliffe warns against.

More than a simple critique of sensibility, this scene exemplifies the power of trauma to cause gaps in experience that lead to misperception and foil detection. Emily's misperception of the "corpse" leads her to incorrectly piece together the mysteries of Udolpho. Considering Montoni's ill temperament, his missing wife and his current mistreatment of her aunt, Emily concludes that Montoni is a murderer. With only an incomplete glimpse of what is behind the veil, Emily misperceives this wax model as the body of one of the two missing women in the narrative: either Signora Laurentini, Montoni's first wife or her aunt Madame Montoni. Neither is correct. Montoni has secretly imprisoned his wife until she decides to sign away her estates to him. Meanwhile, Signora Laurentini has assumed the identity of Sister Agnes and is living in a convent. Once Emily confirms that Madam Montoni is still alive, she thinks the body of Signora Laurentini must be behind the veil. This misperception taps into Emily's own fears of being absented in marriage to Count Morano. Emily's jittery maidservant Annette tells her the story of how Signora Laurentini went walking in the woods one night and was never seen again. Annette then contradictorily observes that Lady Laurentini has been seen by vassals in the castle at night. Emily rebukes Annette: "You say nothing has been since known of her, and yet she has been seen!" querying whether anyone spoke to Signora Laurentini when she was in the castle.[324] Annette is horrified at the concept and exclaims "Holy Mother! Speak to the spirit!?"[325]

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[322] Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 348.

[323] Nelson C. Smith, "Sense, Sensibility and Ann Radcliffe," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 13, no. 4 (1973): 577.

As a potential ghost and missing mistress of Udolopho, Signora Laurentini resembles the gaps left by trauma that are simultaneously present and absent. As a present absence she haunts the text of *Udolpho* and represents Emily's fears of becoming one of the living dead through marriage. The "strange history of Signora Laurentini" recalls Emily's "own strange situation…in the power of a man…who had already exercised an usurped authority over her," and pressures Emily to accept a marriage to Count Morano.[326] Emily fears that, like Signora Laurentini's husband Count Montoni, her new husband will imprison or absent her in marriage. Emily's fear about the missing Signora Laurentini also speaks to fears of the female reader of Radcliffe's gothic novels. Like Emily, these young women fear what will become of them once they enter the institution of marriage. Will they too be locked up or done away with by their husband once he possesses them?

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[324] Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 238.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid., 240.

Emily's encounter with the wax model exemplifies the disintegration of her narrative. Pulling aside the veil, Emily sees a body "partly decayed and disfigured" that mirrors the fractured body of her own narrative.[327] The original purpose of the wax figure was penance for an ancestor of Udolpho who would contemplate "during certain hours of the day, a waxen image, made to resemble a human body in the state, to which it is reduced after death."[328] The use of the mangled body as penance to "reprove the pride of the Marquis of Udolpho" is an inversion of Manfred's refusal to look at his son Conrad's fragmented body after he is crushed by a helmet in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.[329] While Manfred refuses to acknowledge the fractured narrative of his legitimacy that his son's body represents, it seems the Marquis of Udulpho embraces the decayed body as "a memento of the condition at which he must himself arrive."[330] Confronted with the fragmented body, Emily acts like Manfred: she cannot "endure to look twice…[and] after the first glance, let the veil drop."[331] Emily's inability to look at the body behind the curtain represents her own inability to grasp the trauma that has fractured her narrative up until this point. The servant Annette has failed to witness Emily's trauma which is caused by gaps in information that inhibit Emily's ability to detect what is actually going on. As a result, the narrative mysteries of Udolpho are solved by Radcliffe instead of her protagonist.

In *Northanger Abbey* (1817), Jane Austen pens a satire of the gothic genre made popular by Radcliffe, with some important distinctions. While Radcliffe's novel contains all manner of trauma—imprisoned wives, dead fathers, and amorous rogues—there is no apparent trauma for Catherine Moorland to investigate in Austen's novel. Instead, Catherine's obsession with gothic novels causes her to misperceive trauma where there is none, and she often mistakes the mundane for the horrible because of the gothic novels she reads. Upon meeting the imperious General Tilney, Catherine reads his cold insensitivity to his wife's death as proof of gothic depravity, concluding that he must have imprisoned or even murdered her. This premise leads her to investigate the abbey, searching for some clue of Mrs. Tilney's unhappy imprisonment or demise. Despite the lack of any direct trauma—Mrs. Tilney died from a sudden fever and not her husband's villainy—gothic novels and the trauma they represent have skewed Catherine Moorland's sensibilities and undercut her effectiveness as an investigator.

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[327] Ibid., 348.
[328] Ibid., 662.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Ibid.
[331] Ibid.

Catherine's fascination with gothic novels has warped her perception, and in the absence of trauma she creates gaps in the narrative that actually end up causing her own trauma. Catherine discovers a stack of papers in the black and yellow Japan cabinet in her room and is about to read them when her candle goes out. Unable to read the papers, Catherine is literally and figuratively in the dark about their contents. Like Emily St. Aubert's incomplete encounter with her father's papers before she destroys them, the papers represent a gap in Catherine Moorland's knowledge that then leads Catherine to misperceive their contents. Referencing the gothic trope of the found manuscript: "a lost or hidden document that reveals dreadful secrets concerning the fate of its author, before crumbling away before the crucial point is made," Catherine must think this "precious manuscript" details the suffering and death of Miss Tilney in her own hand. [332] After her light is extinguished, Catherine's misperception of what the papers contain actually causes her to experience trauma. Struck with terror, Catherine drops the papers and takes shelter in her bed. A violent storm ensues and to Catherine "every blast seemed fraught with awful intelligence."[333] Possessed by gothic fancy, Catherine thinks she hears "the lock of her door…agitated, as if by the attempt of somebody to enter. Hollow murmurs [that] seemed to creep along the gallery, and more than once her blood was chilled by the sound of distant moans."[334] By the light of day, Catherine discovers that the papers are a collection of meaningless jottings—a laundry list and farrier's bill—that relates a narrative of household duties instead of gothic terror. Catherine's misperception of Northanger's mysteries show how gothic novels can warp their reader's perception and cause trauma.

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[332] Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 38.

Catherine's investigation of the "gothic manuscript" illustrates how her investigation fails to find the proof of gothic wrongdoing she seeks. Catherine's point of view—that is, seeing herself as the detective heroine of the gothic novel—prevents her from constructing a coherent narrative of the "crime" she suspects at Northanger Abbey because no such transgression exists. In her dressing room, Catherine encounters a large chest place into the corner of the room next to the fireplace. Instead of dismissing the extraordinary piece of furniture, Catherine's training as a gothic heroine takes over. She wonders "What can it hold? Why should it be placed here? Pushed back too, as if meant to be out of sight!"[335] The heavy chest is a literal absence in the text, and Catherine is barely able to wrench open the lid before Miss Tilney's maid interrupts her. Faced with the absence of the chest, Catherine proceeds to misperceive what it contains. Using her gothic education, Catherine believes the chest holds the key to the mysteries of Northanger Abbey. To this end, she examines the chest, interpreting that the "imperfect remains of handles also of silver" must have been "broken…prematurely by some strange violence."[336]

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[333] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174.
[334] Ibid., 175.
[335] Ibid., 167.
[336] Ibid., 168.

The fact that Catherine reads violence in the appearance of this everyday domestic object suggests that she fears the gothic criminality that must lurk beneath the façade of General Tilney's respectable marriage. Following this vein of thought, Catherine may expect the chest to contain some evidence of General Tilney's wrongdoing. Far from satisfying her curiosity, Catherine's investigation of the chest only makes it more obscure. In addition to broken handles, the chest has "on the centre of the lid…a mysterious cipher" that she cannot read.[337] Her inability to read the chest drives her to new heights of anxiety. Catherine's "fearful curiosity was every moment growing greater" until she decides she must wrench open the chest a second time to reveal its contents.[338]

Catherine's investigation of the chest recalls Caleb Williams' encounter with his master's trunk in Godwin's gothic novel *Caleb Williams*, with one difference. Caleb is convinced that the trunk contains proof of his master's guilt, and in a frenzy, he heaves open the lid. Caleb's master Falkland intervenes to prevent him from viewing its contents, and unable to see the contents of the trunk, Caleb imagines it contains a manuscript implicating Falkland. While both Caleb and Catherine struggle to see what is inside their trunks, Caleb's chest probably does contain some evidence of his master's wrongdoings. It is his revelation of the chest's contents that spur Falkland to pursue Caleb and destroy him. While Caleb's encounter with the trunk confirms his belief in his master's guilt, Catherine's examination of her trunk only reveals the absence of General Tillney's gothic wrongdoing. Resolutely Catherine "threw back the lid, and gave to her astonished eyes the view of a white cotton counterpane, properly folded, reposing at one end of the chest in undisputed possession!"[339]

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[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Ibid., 169.

Instead of discovering evidence confirming General Tilney's crimes, Catherine only reveals frightfully dull evidence of domesticity in the form of the counterpane, as Austen redirects the investigative energies of the female detective towards the more appropriate domestic sphere. Miss Tilney drives this point home when she intrudes on Catherine opening the chest, explaining she keeps the chest for "holding hats and bonnets."[340] However, the white counterpane also has symbolic implications for Catherine herself. A counterpane is a quilted bedspread that recalls the marriage bed. White and spotless, the counterpane signals the absence of marital trauma at Northanger Abbey, murderous or otherwise. The counterpane's place on the marriage bed symbolizes what Catherine seeks in a good marriage to Henry Tilney, with an important catch. Counterpanes were usually stitched with intricate designs for the happy couple. The fact that this counterpane is unornamented and made of a plain material like cotton suggests that it is a blank slate, representing the potential of Catherine marrying Henry. It is this potential marriage that Catherine has put at risk with her gothic fancy. Thus the counterpane symbolizes the potential of a good marriage and the true horror at the heart of Northanger Abbey: the trauma of Catherine being denied a good marriage to Henry Tilney.

In keeping with these insistent reminders of her appropriate feminine sphere, Catherine's skewed perspective as gothic heroine prevents her from interpreting the narrative of courtship and social codes that define her world, particularly when it comes to General Tilney and her friend Isabella Thorpe. Catherine regards Isabella as a fellow gothic heroine in training and the two form an intimate friendship while they are in Bath. Catherine is thrilled that Isabella is interested in her brother John, but in looking outward for gothic dangers she has completely miscalculated Isabella's intentions. After Henry disabuses Catherine of her gothic notions,

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[340] Ibid.

Catherine receives a letter from John describing how Isabella has thrown him off for a chance at marrying Henry Tilney's brother Captain Tilney. A letter soon follows from Isabella asking Catherine to write to John and clear up any misunderstanding. Without the veil of gothic expectations, Catherine is finally able to see Isabella for who she is: "a vain coquette…[whose] tricks have not answered."[341]

Just as Catherine's gothic education prevents her from seeing Isabella as anything but a gothic heroine, Catherine's initial reading of General Tilney as a gothic villain obscures any understanding of his motives. When General Tilney abruptly sends Catherine home after a month's stay at Northanger Abbey she cannot decipher the reasoning behind it. She puzzles at "why he should say one thing so positively, and mean another all the while" wondering "how were people, at that rate, to be understood?"[342] Her initial reading of him as a gothic villain has obscured any understanding of his motives—specifically that he does not want her to marry his son due to her lack of fortune.

Catherine Moorland's failed detection is the site of trauma in Austen's novel. By anticipating gothic trauma Catherine creates trauma for herself, especially when it comes to a potential marriage to Henry Tilney. Catherine investigates the "crime" of Mrs. Tilney's death, but instead of finding a mad woman in the attic, she jeopardizes her own chances of a happy union with Henry. Miss Eleanor Tilney tells Catherine that her mother, Mrs. Tilney, died suddenly while no one but her husband was at home. According to Miss Tilney's narrative, the circumstances surrounding Mrs. Tilney's death are a blank that Catherine proceeds to fill with all manner of gothic horrors. Catherine overlooks the fact that Miss Tilney's narrative may not tell the whole story, and this missed information causes her to misperceive Mrs. Tilney's sudden death as proof of murder. Catherine sets out to discover Mrs. Tilney's room, expecting perhaps to find a gothic cell where the poor woman was imprisoned or mistreated until she died. Instead she finds a well-appointed room with a comfortable bed, painted chairs and sunlight streaming in through the windows. Catherine feels a wave of shock and shame that is only compounded when Henry Tilney catches her on the landing as she tries to rush back to her room. Mocking Catherine's gothic suspicions, Henry explains that what Catherine thought was the absence of details concerning Mrs. Tilney's death were fully known to many, including himself. While Miss Tilney did not arrive in time to see her mother alive, Henry and his brother were at home and could "bear witness to [their mother] having received every possible attention which could spring from the affection of those about her, or which her situation in life could command," including the attention of three physicians after she fell ill.[343] Henry even goes on to explain the behavior of his father who, despite his temper, was much afflicted by his wife's passing.

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[341] Ibid., 221.
[342] Ibid., 218.

This confrontation with Henry turns Catherine into an object of investigation instead of the investigating subject of Northanger Abbey's mysteries, traumatizing her. This prefigures the future pattern of detective fiction where women are the objects of investigation most often by men. Catherine tries to gain power in her investigation through looking, but here she becomes the one who is looked at. When Henry interrupts Catherine while she investigates his mother's room it diffuses her investigative power. This turns the moment from one of empowerment to one of humiliation as Henry admonishes Catherine to realize that in England "murder was not tolerated, servants were not slaves, and neither poison nor sleeping potions [were] to be procured, like rhubarb, from every druggist."[344] By filling in the gaps Catherine has misperceived as gothic indicators of trauma, Henry Tilney exposes the foolishness of her fanciful thinking and creates real trauma for Catherine. She runs away with “tears of shame” streaming from her eyes at the prospect of having lost Henry’s regard.[345]

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[343] Ibid., 202.
[344] Ibid., 203.

Despite Catherine’s failure to ferret out gothic horror, Austen perfects the figure of the gothic heroine as female detective by allowing Catherine to have her own enlightenment. Many critics read Northanger Abbey as a parody of the gothic that “aligned with the numerous satirical essays deriding ‘terror fiction’ that proliferated in the last years of the eighteenth century."[346] More of a satire than a parody, Austen’s novel critiques the supernatural horrors of gothic fiction. For some this places *Northanger Abbey* firmly in the realm of the Enlightenment novels that champion reason over emotion. Instead of rejecting the gothic in favor of the Enlightenment tradition, Austen creates a more perfect version of the gothic heroine as female detective—just as Dickens will improve upon Brontë’s detective Jane Eyre with the character of Esther Summerson—who is able to understand the reality of her situation. This is not the case with Emily St. Aubert, the gothic heroine Catherine patterns herself on. Emily is never allowed to fully understand what lurks behind the black veil. Radcliffe denies Emily such an enlightenment. Radcliffe explains that had Emily looked a second time at what was behind the curtain she could have easily determined it was a wax model instead of a real corpse. Unlike Radcliffe, Austen allows her female detective to see beyond the veil. Gothic novels may have predisposed Catherine to see murder and the supernatural at every turn, but Austen reveals that Catherine’s gothic prejudices are only exaggerated versions of real character flaws. This underscores Paul Morrison’s argument that Jane Austen’s “realm of manners is already and always structured as a through-the-looking-glass form of the gothic."[347] For example, Catherine wrongly suspects General Tilney of “either murdering or shutting up his wife,” but after Henry informs Catherine why his father sent her home—she was not as rich as he first supposed and therefore unfit to marry his son— she realizes “she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty.”[348] In allowing Catherine this awakening, Austen legitimizes the “gothic as a…mode of comprehending, contemporary sociopolitical reality.”[349]

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[345] Ibid.

[346] Claudia L Johnson, “Introduction,” in *Northanger Abbey ; Lady Susan ; The Watsons ; Sanditon*, ed. James Kinsley and John Davie (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2003), ix.

Jane Eyre and the Impossibility of Female Detection

Like Emily St. Aubert and Catherine Moorland, Charlotte Brontë’s protagonist Jane Eyre also fails to solve the mysteries of her text because gaps in her experience cause misperception. Despite this, *Jane Eyre* serves as an intermediary text between gothic novels and female detectives in later fiction like Esther in Dickens’ *Bleak House*. Lisa Jadwin has speculated that Dickens wrote *Bleak House* in part to reaffirm the authority of the male detective in response to Brontë's independent female protagonist. Though Dickens’ does portray a male detective solving two female crimes, I posit that Dickens actually improves upon Brontë’s female detective with the character of Esther Summerson by giving her an investigative depth that Jane lacks. Both women tell their narratives in the first person, giving the reader a much more intimate experience of events, but in Jane’s case this limits the reader's perspective to what Jane experiences as the events of the novel unfold in real time. Esther tells her narrative from a future perspective, giving the reader a more coherent account of what events mean and how they are connected. Where Jane’s narrative and thus the reader’s perspective is limited, Esther’s is not. Both women also occupy liminal spaces in Victorian society: Jane is an orphan governess while Esther is an orphaned ward and almost-wife. However, Jane's in-between social status as a governess limits her detection since she is not in a position of authority to interrogate others above her social standing. Esther as a female detective uses her dubious social status to her advantage since it gives her access to a wide variety of information and experience, unlike the long-suffering governess Jane.

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[347] Paul Morrison, “Enclosed in Openness: Northanger Abbey and the Domestic Carceral,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 12.
[348] Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 256.
[349] Morrison, “Enclosed in Openness: Northanger Abbey and the Domestic Carceral,” 10.

Because of its distinction as a gothic novel, only a few critics have read *Jane Eyre* (1847) through the lens of detective fiction. Among them are Elizabeth Nollen who argues that Jane Eyre and other female protagonists of the gothic romance genre become detectives to explore the mystery of their own female identities and overcome the double threat of madness and imprisonment.[350] Along these same lines, Sandro Jung argues that Jane Eyre becomes a detective to investigate the crime of her selfhood. This crime is her development throughout the novel into an independent and successful woman who challenges the patriarchy. While Jane's detective work allows her to widen the limits of her traditionally female role—her questioning of the servants and Mr. Rochester puts her on terms of equality with her master—she is ultimately unsuccessful in solving the mysteries of Thornfield Hall. Jung mitigates Jane's failed investigation, arguing "ultimately, her failure in her detective work is responsible for her happiness," because it allows her to fall in love with Rochester.[351] Jane's failure as a detective ensures her connubial happiness in a way that anticipates the fate of later female detectives who will lay their investigative talents at the marriage altar. Like Dresner who argues that Jane's "ability to see clearly is inversely proportional to her sexual desire," Jung locates the cause of

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[350] Elizabeth Mahn Nollen, "Female Detective Figures in British Fiction: Coping with Madness and Imprisonment," *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 15, no. 2 (1994 Fall-Winter 1994): 39–49.
[351] Sandro Jung, "Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the Female Detective and the 'Crime' of Female Selfhood," *Brontë Studies: The Journal of the Brontë Society* 32, no. 1 (March 2007): 28.

Jane's failed detection in her desire for Rochester.[352] Jane's failed attempts at detection are not the product of desire, but trauma that creates gaps in her experience and causes her to misperceive events. This misperception makes her vulnerable to manipulation by Rochester and ultimately prevents her from reading the trauma of the postcolonial subject Bertha.

Jane's own experience of trauma causes gaps in her experience that later frustrate her ability to successfully detect. Charlotte Brontë uses the preternatural to represent Jane's trauma in her novel and show the disintegrating effect of her trauma on the narrative. As I have shown in earlier chapters, the gothic genre often employs a supernatural *diabolus ex machina* to inflict trauma on its characters and fracture the narrative. Unlike the supernatural pieces of armor that appear to fracture the narrative in *The Castle of Otranto*, Brontë's entities are more preternatural than supernatural. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, preternatural refers to something that is "outside the ordinary course of nature; differing from or surpassing what is natural."[353] While a preternatural occurrence may be beyond the scope of what is natural, it usually has a real world explanation. This differs from the supernatural which is attributed to "some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature."[354] By employing supernatural beings—ghosts, goblins, fairies and vampires— as preternatural metaphors, Brontë avoids violating the realism of her novel while still invoking these gothic creatures to disrupt her realist narrative with the experience of trauma.

Charlotte Brontë uses Jane's preternatural experience with her reflection in the red-room to represent her traumatized Other. Mrs. Reed instructs the servants to lock Jane in the red-room as punishment for attacking her son. The altercation between young John Reed and Jane is both physically and psychologically damaging, illustrating the phenomenon of trauma as a double wounding. John singles out Jane for abuse, pointing out her inferior status as a dependent in the Reed family who has no right to read his books. He then hurls a book at Jane who falls and strikes her head against a door, causing it to bleed. This violent confrontation sets the stage for Jane's experience in the red-room where Mr. Reed died soon after he took Jane in upon the death of her own parents from typhus fever. Alone in the darkened room, Jane catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror:

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[352] Dresner, *The Female Investigator in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture*, 17.

[353] "Preternatural, Adj. and N.," *OED Online.* (Oxford University Press), accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/150991?redirectedFrom=preternatural.

[354] "Supernatural, Adj. and N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/194422?redirectedFrom=supernatural.

> All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travelers.[355]

In her examination of Jane Eyre and monstrosity, Chih-Ping Chen reads this moment as Jane "[defining] the energy she can rely on to assert herself" because her contradicting characterization of herself as imp and fairy "embraces the unruly energy [of the freak]."[356] To the contrary, instead of finding power in her reflection Jane returns to her stool and allows a "mood of humiliation, self-doubt, and forlorn depression" to wash over her.[357] This is because the entity Jane glimpses in the mirror is her traumatized Other. The death of Jane's parents and Mr. Reed represent a traumatic split for Jane that does not allow her trauma to be accessed by her conscious self. This initial trauma is only made worse by the abuse and indifference of the Reed children, the hatred of Mrs. Reed, and the unfair treatment Jane receives from the household servants. Split off from her conscious self, this Other Jane is “colder and darker in that visionary hollow.” The dual meaning of the word “visionary” as something that will come to pass as well as something that can never be realized reveals the liminal status of the traumatized Other as an entity that understands trauma, but cannot share that knowledge with the conscious self. Jane also reinforces the in-between nature of the traumatized Other when she describes her reflection as a phantom. Jane’s phantom self, something that appears but has no material substance, appropriately reflects the nature of the traumatized Other that embodies the gaps left by trauma. Jane’s phantom also evokes Derrida’s concept of the trace. The trace is a “mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present” that recalls absences left by trauma.[358] Jane’s phantom self is a vestige of her traumatic past, an “already absent present” that haunts her.

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[355] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre: An Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism* (New York, New York: Norton, 2001), 15.

[356] Chih-Ping Chen, "'Am I a Monster?': Jane Eyre among the Shadows of Freaks," *Studies in the Novel* 34, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 373.

[357] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 13.

Jane’s traumatic split into self and traumatized other results in a dual sense of self. This split causes Jane to vacillate between a good and bad self that she describes as “half fairy, half imp.” The fairy represent Jane’s good self since fairies are a mythical a race of beings who interfere in human affairs and are for the most part benign. The imp symbolizes Jane bad self as imps, though closely related to fairies, are mischievous creatures who delight in playing tricks on humans. Thus, Jane’s self vacillates between the good fairy and the bad imp that represent her split self.

Jane's traumatic split requires an external party that must bear witness to the trauma. Without one, Jane seeks witness in the preternatural that will validate her traumatic experience. Jane describes how she searches for elves:

> In vain among foxglove leaves and bells, under mushrooms and beneath the ground-ivy mantling old wall-nooks, I had at length made up my mind to the sad truth, that they were

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[358] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, xvii.

> all gone out of England to some savage country where the woods were wilder and thicker, and the population more scant."[359]

Elves are "sometimes distinguished from a 'fairy'…as an inferior or subject species" closer to an imp, and can be "tricksy, mischievous, sometimes spiteful and malicious creatures."[360] This definition aligns closely with the dark side of Jane's dual traumatized self. Jane seeks these elves among the "foxglove leaves and bells" of nature, looking for a preternatural witness outside the failed witnesses that occupy the Reed household. Jane does not find such a witness and the fairies abandonment of the English countryside mirrors Uncle Reed's abandonment of Jane upon his death. Uncle Reed is Jane's last connection to her original family and both traumas, the loss of her parents and uncle, make her an interloper in the Reed family unit.

Jane's failure to find a witness to her trauma signals a shift in her perception of herself as Other from the good fairy self to the bad imp with her re-reading of *Gulliver's Travels*. Previous readings of this book have brought Jane joy because she finds kinship with the "the monster cats [and] the tower-like men and women, of the other" and looks forward to meeting them one day in the lands of "Lilliput and Brobdignag."[361] But Jane's darker reading becomes a reversal of the fairy motif with the monsters no longer delighting Jane with their resemblance to her, but representing the family that refuses to accept her traumatic difference. Jane has become the traveler Gulliver, beset by monsters on every side "in [the] most dread and dangerous regions."[362] John Reed with his "dingy and unwholesome skin; thick lineaments… dim and bleared eye and flabby cheeks" resembles the "fearful imps" of the tale while Mrs. Reed's "robust frame…large face [and solid jaw]" calls to mind the "giants [that have become] gaunt goblins."[363]

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[359] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 13.

[360] "Elf, n.1," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed March 1, 2016, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/60431?rskey=DehW75&result=2&isAdvanced=false.

[361] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 21.

[362] Ibid., 17.

Brontë portrays Jane as a preternatural being through the novel to represent her traumatic Otherness. After meeting her on Hay Lane near Thornfield Hall, Rochester comments that Jane has the "look of another world" and confesses to thinking "unaccountably of fairy tales."[364] Rochester regularly describes Jane in preternatural terms, calling her an elf, a sprite, a salamander, and "fairy-born and human-bred."[365] These pet names indicate that he recognizes the imprint trauma has left on her. Brontë ties Jane's preternatural quality directly to the trauma of the loss of her parents. Rochester asks if she has any kin and Jane replies in the negative. Without a people of her own, Rochester concludes that Jane has been "waiting for [her] people… for the men in green…when [she] sat on that stile."[366] The little green men Rochester refers to are elves and Brontë uses Jane's association with the preternatural to represent how trauma has pushed Jane outside the boundaries of normal experience. A stile is a structure that allows people to go over a fence without having an opening for a gate in the enclosure. In Jane's case, the stile she occupies is most likely steps that lead up and over into the adjoining field. Jane's occupation of such a gateway represents how trauma has trapped her between her conscious self and the traumatized Other.

Rochester's question to Jane: "Did I break through one of your rings, that you spread that damned ice on the causeway?" also illustrates this point.[367] Fairy rings are rings of dead grass or mushrooms that folklore signifies as the site of fairy revels. Legend warns against entering a fairy ring to join the elf-folk's celebrations for fear that one would become elf-struck and pine away for the land of fairy. As portals between the realms of human and fairy, we can read the fairy ring as a preternatural illustration of the split between trauma and conscious experience. Like those who cross the fairy ring, Jane has experienced the Otherness of trauma that tinges her with the preternatural. This is perhaps why, in a mournful echo of her failed childhood search for witnesses to her trauma, she is forlorn when she answers Rochester: "the men in green all forsook England a hundred years ago…I don't think either summer or harvest, or winter moon, will ever shine on their revels more."[368]

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[363] Ibid., 10, 37.
[364] Ibid., 17.
[365] Ibid., 373.
[366] Ibid., 104.
[367] Ibid.

Brontë follows up Jane's interaction with her traumatized Other with a preternatural encounter with Mr. Reed's "ghost" in the red-room to invoke the disrupting effect of her trauma on the narrative. Jane is meditating on the wrongs done to her by the Reed family and servants despite Mrs. Reed's promise to her husband to care for Jane as if she were her natural child. Fearful that her suffering might call up Mr. Reed's spirit from his grave to avenge his wife's violation of his final wishes, she stifles her cries "lest any sign of violent grief might waken [Mr. Reed's] preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face, bending over me with strange pity."[369] Jane's imaginary encounter with Mr. Reed's ghost represents her need to have her trauma witnessed by someone else. Because the traumatic split prevents the victim of trauma from accessing his or her experience, an external party must bear witness to the trauma. Jane seeks a witness in Mr. Reed's spirit that will validate her trauma at the hands of the Reed family. However, the impossibility of Mr. Reed rising from his tomb to witness Jane's trauma leads to a crisis of witnessing where neither the Reeds nor the servants step into the role of witness to Jane's emotional trauma. Faced with this crisis of witnessing, Jane resolves to "stifle" her trauma and "to be firm."[370] At that moment Jane sees a streak of light moving along the wall and ceiling of the room. Shaken by " agitation" and "prepared…for horror," Jane thinks the "swift darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world."[371] Despite an adult Jane's efforts to explain away the light—she conjectures "readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern carried by someone across the lawn"— Brontë uses this harbinger of the preternatural and the terror it causes to represent the experience of Jane's trauma as one of horror for the reader.[372]

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[368] Ibid.

[369] Ibid., 13.

Jane's preternatural experiences in the red-room leads to a breakdown of her story, reflecting the fragmentary effect of Jane's trauma on her narrative. Overcome with terror, Jane writes:

> My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort. Steps came running along the outer passage; the key turned, Bessie and Abbot entered.[373]

Jane's language becomes passive here to reflect how her trauma has become a physical force that acts on her. Instead of actively hearing the noise "a sound [fills her] ears" and she is "oppressed, suffocated" by some unknown force. The sound that Jane thinks is the "rushing of wings" could be her screams which prompt Bessie and Abbot to release her from the red-room, but Brontë chooses to leave what happened to Jane's younger self ambiguous.

Jane's passive responses to her childhood trauma carry over into her traumatic experiences at Thornfield, stymying her detection. Jane's shoddy detective work cannot be attributed to her attraction to Rochester alone, as Dresner has suggested. As I will show, Jane's inability to detect also stems from her status as a trauma survivor. The gothic events at Thornfield Hall, namely Jane's encounter with Richard Mason and later with Bertha the night before her wedding, recall the trauma of her youth and induce a kind of paralysis that allows Rochester to manipulate her. In this first instance, Rochester calls upon Jane for help when ghastly screams awaken the entire household. He easily explains the cries to his guests as those of a servant in the throes of a nightmare, but reveals to Jane their true source: the wounded Richard Mason. Rochester instructs Jane to care for the injured and bleeding man while he goes to fetch a physician. Before he leaves, he forbids them to speak to each other. Rochester's demand that Jane and Richard not speak creates a gap in her knowledge, one that frustrates her ability to piece together what is happening. Jane incorrectly assigns blame to Grace Poole for Richard Mason's injuries based on her incomplete and fragmentary observations. Prior to his departure, Jane sees Rochester go into a room whose door has been concealed by a tapestry. From within the chamber Jane hears the horrible laughter that both Rochester and Mrs. Fairfax have ascribed to Grace Poole. Jane's inability to see the source of the laughter hidden behind the tapestry, recalls Emily St Aubert's inability to see what lies behind the black veil of Radcliffe's novel. Like Emily, Jane's lack of knowledge heightens her terror, and a gothic grisliness overtakes the scene as she surveys her surroundings:

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[370] Ibid.
[371] Ibid.
[372] Ibid.
[373] Ibid.

> Here then I was in the third storey[sic], fastened into one of its mystic cells; night around me; a pale and bloody spectacle under my eyes and hands; a murderess hardly separated from me by a single door: yes—that was appalling—the rest I could bear; but I shuddered at the thought of Grace Poole bursting out upon me.[374]

Jane is isolated, in the dark, ministering to a dying man whose attacker is in the next room and who might make her the next victim. Bronte uses semicolons to give the impression of Jane's thoughts running together in a single terrifying stream. Jane is paralyzed by her thoughts and the terror that lies in front of her:

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[374] Ibid., 179

> *I must* keep to my post, however. *I must* watch this ghastly countenance—these blue, still lips forbidden to unclose—these eyes now shut, now opening, now wandering through the room, now fixing on me, and ever glazed with the dulness of horror. *I must* dip my hand again and again in the basin of blood and water, and wipe away the trickling gore. *I must* see the light of the unsnuffed candle wane on my employment.[375]

Richard Mason's inability to speak parallel's Jane inability to look away or leave her post. The repetition of "I must" in this passage suggests that Jane is in a dissociative state. Victims of trauma often dissociate when faced with an overwhelming experience. In response to this trauma she blindly follows Rochester's orders, turning her into the very automaton she claims not to be later in the novel.

Jane's passivity in the face of trauma reoccurs when she encounter's Bertha on the night before her wedding to Rochester. Bertha enters Jane's room, rents her veil in two and then leers above Jane, extinguishing her candle before leaving. The experience is horrifying for Jane who tells Rochester "I lost consciousness: for the second time in my life—only the second time—I became insensible from terror."[376] Jane is referring to her experience in the red-room with the "ghost" of her uncle. This new trauma triggers Jane's past trauma and she is only able to see Bertha in terms of the preternatural. Jane's description of Bertha is contradictory and incomplete. Jane tells Rochester that the figure that entered her room "seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell[…]"[377] In Jane's traumatized perspective, Bertha becomes something monstrous, abhuman and the figure reminds Jane "of the foul German spectre—the Vampyre."[378] Jane's inability to recognize whether the garment Bertha wears is a "gown, sheet or shroud" speaks to Bertha's shifting identity in this passage as a woman, a savage and one of the undead. The word "gown" suggests a feminine garment while the "sheet" indicates an unformed piece of clothing. Jane's further description of Bertha's garment as a "shroud" prepares the reader for Jane's later reference to her as a vampire, as the garment she wears resembles the kind of winding sheet that was used to dress a corpse.

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[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Ibid., 296.

The gaps in Jane's experience skew her perception and allow Rochester to manipulate her. He calls Jane's experience a "mental terror" as unsubstantial as her nightmares, and the nighttime visitor "the creature of an over-stimulated brain."[379] It is only after Jane confronts him with evidence of the encounter, the rent veil trampled to bits, that Rochester amends his explanation. He tells Jane the encounter "was half dream, half reality," the woman was Grace Poole and Jane "ascribed to her a goblin appearance different from her own: the long dishevelled hair, the swelled black face, [and] the exaggerated stature, were figments of imagination."[380] Rochester promises to explain to Jane why he would keep such a woman in his employ a year and one day after they are married, and implores his future bride: "Are you satisfied, Jane? Do you accept my solution of the mystery?"[381] Jane does accept Rochester's solution to the mystery and this willful failure to detect Bertha's trauma stems from what she represents to Jane. If Jane marries Rochester she will become like Bertha: one of the walking dead entombed in her husband's home and the institution of marriage. Instead Jane chooses to believe her husband to be, and fails to heed Bertha's warning or detect her trauma.

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[378] Ibid., 297.
[379] Ibid., 242.
[380] Ibid., 243.
[381] Ibid.

Jane inability to detect Bertha's trauma also stems from the fact that her narrative is a literal absence in the text. What we get of her story is filtered through Rochester's narrative. Rochester casts his wife as the mad, licentious Creole whose very existence has polluted his life. The absence of Bertha's independent narrative has led seminal critics like Gilbert and Gubar to read Jane and Bertha as embodiments of the angel/demon dichotomy that limited women's roles in the nineteenth century. Gayatri Spivak's essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" takes issue with Gilbert and Gubar's argument and attacks Brontë's novel as a pro-colonial text that figures Bertha Mason as the colonial Other and double for Jane who must be destroyed in order to establish white dominance. Casting Bertha Mason as a metaphor or colonial subject is caused by the absence of her story, something Jean Rhys, author of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) has tried to correct with a novel from Bertha's perspective. Rhys's novel complicates the agency of the white female writer by giving the colonial subject a voice through her own narrative. By telling Bertha's story, *Wide Sargasso Sea* questions the ramifications of one woman's freedom that comes at the expense of another woman's life and voice. Without a narrative, the only thing the reader hears of Bertha is her laughter, which is mediated through the figure of the servant Grace Poole.

The absence of Bertha's narrative prevents her from testifying to her own trauma and this requires the servants to take up the role of witness and testify to her trauma in a way she cannot. Just as the servants in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* testify to the trauma of Isabella, Hippolita, and Matilda, the servants in *Jane Eyre,* specifically Grace Poole, testify to the trauma of Bertha's imprisonment. When Jane hears a mysterious laugh at Thornfield Hall, Mrs. Fairfax explains that it belongs to the servant Grace Poole. The laughter actually belongs to Bertha, but Rochester and Mrs. Fairfax use Grace as a screen to conceal the secret of Rochester's marriage.

By acting as the source of Bertha's laughter, Grace is able to "testify" to Bertha's trauma. She achieves this because she occupies a similarly liminal space at Thornfield Hall. Just as Bertha is an in-between figure as Rochester's mad, unacknowledged wife, Grace Poole is a servant who is intimate with the family she serves without being part of it. As such, Grace Poole acts as an extension of Bertha Mason, "the sane façade—of Mr. Rochester's wife."[382] Because Grace serves as a witness in testifying to Bertha's trauma, her "voice" is inarticulate and broken, mirroring the effect of trauma on linear experience.

Instead of coherent words, Bertha's testimony intrudes upon the narrative in the form of fractured, disembodied laughter. Jane explains that when she is alone she "not unfrequently heard Grace Poole's laugh..."[383] Critics have interpreted Bertha's laughter as either "[mocking] Jane's aspirations" of marriage to Rochester or as a sign of Charlotte Brontë's repressed rage.[384] In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf comments that the intrusion of Bertha's laughter in this scene is "an awkward break," and blames these narrative disturbances on "anger" which was "the result of [Charlotte Brontë's] oppression" as a woman writer that is "tampering with the integrity of Charlotte Brontë the novelist."[385] The source of this narrative disturbance is not rage, but trauma, as Bertha's laughter represents a crying out to Jane to witness the trauma of her imprisonment. As Jung argues, Bertha's laugh speaks in a "language [Jane] cannot explain or comprehend."[386] Because this is the inarticulate non-language of trauma, it defies conventional modes of understanding. Trauma creates a split between the self and traumatized Other where the victim cannot access or coherently describe the reality of the traumatic experience through language. Jane describes the laughter as "curious," "distinct, formal, mirthless," "low," "tragic," and "as preternatural a laugh as any [she] ever heard."[387] The disturbing qualities of the laugh that repeats in a "low, syllabic tone, and terminated in an odd murmur" suggests that Bertha's laughter begins where trauma has eradicated the victim's self, denying her agency and humanity.[388] Her laughter represents the end of language where meaning and self-collapse in the face of her traumatic experience.

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[382] Jung, "Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the Female Detective and the 'Crime' of Female Selfhood," 23.
[383] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*., 93.
[384] Karen Stein, "Monsters and Madwomen: Changing Female Gothic," in *The Female Gothic*, ed. Juliann E. Fleenor (Montréal, Canada: Eden Press, 1983), 128.
[385] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ed. Susan Gubar (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, 2005), 72.
[386] Jung, "Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the Female Detective and the 'Crime' of Female Selfhood," 24.

Like other gothic heroines, Jane's detection is frustrated by gaps in knowledge caused by trauma. Without the information contained in these gaps, she is unable to solve the mystery of Thornfield and free Bertha. Despite her failure as a detective, Jane is an important intermediary figure between gothic novels and detective fiction. Detective fiction evolved as a conservative response to the gothic genre's lurid presentation of the traumatized, fragmented body of the text. The eruptive frames of gothic texts confront the reader with incomplete and fragmented manuscripts meant to inspire terror, while detective fictions worked to counteract traumatic absences by solving the crimes that caused them. Jane's struggle to detect is the result of the trauma her gothic narrative represents and she is the precursor to Dickens' more successful female investigator Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*. Like Jane, Esther Summerson also experiences trauma. Instead of frustrating her detection, trauma gives her investigation a depth of understanding that allows her to address the trauma of others. While Jane is trapped in a gothic narrative that limits her ability to detect, Esther operates in a novel where Dickens brings together the gothic and detective modes to underscore the effectiveness of female detection in understanding trauma.

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[387] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 91.

[388] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

HAUNTING THE GHOST'S WALK: GOTHIC TRAUMA AND FEMALE DETECTION IN DICKENS' *BLEAK HOUSE*

Dickens presents a revisionist version of Charlotte Brontë's flawed detective Jane Eyre with his character Esther Summerson. Lisa Jadwin has suggested that Dickens objected to Brontë's "rewarding of [Jane's] female curiosity and independence" and he responded in *Bleak House* (1853) with Inspector Bucket's masculine style of detection—which Raymond Carver would later articulate in *The Simple Art Murder,* where he argues the protagonist of the detective story "must be…a man," a hero, "a complete man and a common man, yet an unusual man,"—to reaffirm the role of the male detective. [389] Dickens pits Bucket's male authority against female criminality as the detective investigates the transgressions of Mademoiselle Hortense and Lady Dedlock. While it appears Dickens is reaffirming the primacy of the male detective, I argue that he actually presents a more effective female investigator with Esther Summerson.

To illustrate this point, Dickens makes Lady Dedlock's story the center of the gothic and detective modes in *Bleak House*. Dickens uses the gothic to represent Lady Dedlock's trauma at the loss of her lover and the resulting child born out of wedlock. Lady Dedlock's gothic trauma becomes the site of both male and female detection. Inspector Bucket of the Metropolitan Police begins investigating the murder of Lady Dedlock's lawyer Mr. Tulkinghorn and he employs the help of Esther Summerson to recover her once she flees Chesney Wold. Bucket's masculine detection relies on precise rationality that limits his scope and prevents him from finding Lady Dedlock. Esther's success as a detective is due to the narrative form of Dickens' novel. *Bleak*

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[389] Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," in *Pearls Are a Nuisance* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 198; Lisa Jadwin, "'Caricatured, Not Faithfully Rendered': *Bleak House* as a Revision of *Jane Eyre*," *Modern Language Studies* 26, no. 2–3 (1996 Spring-Summer 1996): 120.

House features two narrators: an omniscient male narrator and the first person narrator of Esther. The omniscient male narrator traps Lady Dedlock in a gothic mode she cannot escape from, leading to her trauma and ruin. This resembles the narrative dilemmas of gothic heroines like Jane Eyre, whose trauma causes gaps in information, leads to misperception, and makes them incapable of controlling thier own narrative. Unlike Jane Eyre or her mother, Esther is able to get outside of the "dead lock" of a traumatizing gothic narrative by empathizing with the trauma of others.

Gothic Trauma and the Haunting of Lady Dedlock

Dickens' social problem novels provided contemporary readers with visceral images of crowded tenements and grubby street urchins to raise awareness of problems ranging from poverty to exploitation. In *Bleak House,* Dickens concentrates on the corruption of the legal system, in particular the incompetence of the Court of Chancery that fails to resolve the Jarndyce and Jarndyce law suit until court costs use up all the funds of the contested inheritance. Inquiries into Dickens' use of the gothic are widespread and varied. Robert Mighall regards Dickens' gritty descriptions of foggy London slums as "objects of gothic horror" that contribute to the formation of an "Urban Gothic" aesthetic. [390] Meanwhile Alison Milbank reads Dickens' female protagonists as gothic instead of realist heroines. Finally, Gill Ballinger argues that Dickens uses "the gothic to criticize the inability of law to provide justice in numerous ways."[391] In *Bleak House* specifically, the lawyer Vholes represents a "vampiric figure of the law" who, just as the Court of Chancery uses up the funds of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, bleeds the Jarndyce heir Richard Carstone dry.[392] These interpretations do not acknowledge the relationship between the gothic genre and the phenomenon of trauma. As I have demonstrated in preceding chapters, the gothic genre often uses a supernatural *diabolus ex machina* to inflict trauma on its characters and fracture the narrative. Rather than manifesting as a spectral presence, Dickens gestures to the gothic in *Bleak House* to represent Lady Dedlock's trauma and reproduce the fragmenting experience of trauma for the reader via its narrative structure.

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[390] Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 69.
[391] Gill Ballinger, "Haunting the Law: Aspects of Gothic in Dickens' Fiction," *Gothic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): 36.
[392] Ibid., 42.

Lady Dedlock's story becomes the nexus of the gothic and detective modes in *Bleak House*. The gothic emerges in the haunted footsteps on the Ghost's Walk that drive Lady Dedlock from her home at Chesney Wold and lingers at the edge of a decrepit graveyard where she goes to die. Her downfall begins when Inspector Bucket of the Metropolitan Police starts investigating the mystery of Mr. Tulkinghorn's murder. Mr. Tulkinghorn is the family lawyer of Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock who begins investigating Lady Dedlock's past after she recognizes the handwriting of a copyist on some legal documents. Tulkinghorn discovers that the identity of the copyist is Captain Hawdon, the now deceased father of Lady Dedlock's child out of wedlock. Bucket soon unravels Lady Dedlock's secret, and the discovery provides Lady Dedlock with ample motive for killing Tulkinghorn to keep the lawyer quiet. Though Inspector Bucket determines Lady Dedlock is innocent of Tulkinghorn's murder, Bucket's detection and articulation of her innocence fails to repair the trauma of her exposure and indirectly leads to her death. Bucket implicates Lady Dedlock in Tulkinghorn's murder in a conversation with her husband Sir Leicester Dedlock. This seems to build towards the arrest of Lady Dedlock, as Bucket tells Sir Leicester the "party to be apprehended is now in this house" and he intends to "take *her* into custody in [his] presence."[393] Instead Bucket apprehends the true murderess: Lady Dedlock's ex-maid Mademoiselle Hortense, revealing the spiteful Frenchwoman intended to frame her former mistress for the murder. Bucket's attempts to repair the narrative rift left by Tulkinghorn's murder only causes more damage to Lady Dedlock. His disclosure of Lady Dedlock's secret to Sir Leicester Dedlock fragments her façade of respectability, doing irreparable harm to her reputation. Upon learning that her husband knows her secret, she flees Chesney Wold and meets her death in London despite Bucket's efforts to recover her. Bucket and Lady Dedlock's illegitimate daughter Esther find her lifeless body at the gate of the graveyard where Captain Hawdon rests. Bringing the gothic and detective modes together at the moment of Lady Dedlock's death, Dickens comments on the ultimate failure of conventional male detection to repair the narrative trauma of female characters.

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[393] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. Nicola Bradbury and Hablot Knight Browne (London: Penguin, 1996), 829.

The source of Lady Dedlock's trauma is the loss of her beloved Captain Hawdon and the apparent death of their child, born out of wedlock. While the child Esther did not die—she was secreted away by Lady Dedlock's sister—she is the gap in experience that represents Lady Dedlock's trauma. Lady Dedlock's trauma creates gaps in experience that frustrate her efforts to create a coherent narrative of events. Because of this, Alex Zwerdling observes that Dickens "could not write" Lady Dedlock's "inner history…for a Victorian audience," and her own narrative point of view is absent from the novel.[394] The absence of Lady Dedlock's first person narrative indicates the limits of realist fiction to represent trauma. Without a narrative of her own, Lady Dedlock is trapped in a gothic narrative that leads to her ruin and death in a decrepit graveyard. Appropriately, her story is fragmented and filtered through the intermediary narratives of Esther and the third person narrator. Dickens enhances this narrative fragmentation by using gothic tropes to represent the disintegrating effect of Lady Dedlock's trauma on the narrative of *Bleak House*.

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[394] Alex Zwerdling, "Esther Summerson Rehabilitated," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 88, no. 3 (1973): 433.

As he will do later in Esther's first person narrative, Dickens figuratively portrays Lady Dedlock as the ghost that haunts Chesney Wold in his third person narration. Dickens parallels Lady Dedlock's story of trauma with Lady Morbory's—the woman whose spirit is said to haunt the Ghost's Walk at the Dedlock estate—to symbolize Lady Dedlock's trauma that has turned her into the literal and figurative absence haunting *Bleak House*. The tale of Lady Morbury's ghost finds gothic parallels in Lady Dedlock's own story. Lady Morbury's "haughty temper" mirrors Lady Dedlock's own "haughty and indifferent" manner and both women have "no children to moderate between them" and their husbands.[395] Upon learning that her husband's kinsman had killed her brother in a civil war, Lady Morbury attempted to take revenge on her husband by laming his horse. Her attempts to lame the animal left herself "lamed in the hip" and she haunted the walk until her death, cursing: "I will walk here until the pride of this house is humbled. And when calamity or when disgrace is coming to it, let the Dedlocks listen for my step!'"[396] Lady Morbory's lamed hip is a physical representation of her emotional trauma at the loss of her "favorite brother," a loss that mirrors Lady Dedlock's devastation at the presumed death of her child Esther Summerson.[397] But unlike Lady Morbory, whose physical deterioration turns her into a literal ghost, Lady Dedlcok's trauma transforms her into a living ghost of her former self as the cold, indifferent wife of the much older Sir Leicester. She haunts Chesney Wold as its mistress and, like Lady Morbory's steps that echo upon the walk foreshadowing the "calamity" and "disgrace" of the Dedlock house, it is her secret that portends the ruin of the Dedlock family name.

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[395] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 113.
[396] Ibid.
[397] Ibid.

Dickens' characterization of Lady Dedlock as the living ghost that haunts the text of *Bleak House* also represents the dissociative effects of her trauma on the narrative. Dissociation is a coping mechanism where survivors detach from reality in an effort to escape the inescapable experience of trauma. Dissociation, "on an experiential level…feels like a partial death" and "people facing extreme traumatic situations may feel they are about to die or are dying." [398] Dickens represents the dissociative effects of Lady Dedlock's trauma by portraying her as one dead among the living in a way that continually fractures the narrative. Lady Dedlock reverts to a death-like state whenever someone is on the cusp of discovering her secret trauma. When Mr. Guppy inadvertently reveals to Lady Dedlock that her lost child Esther Summerson is alive, her reaction halts the narrative altogether. Mr. Guppy stands transfixed, watching as Lady Dedlock sits in the "in the same attitude" as before "but for the moment dead," and then witnesses the "dead condition…[pass] away like the features of those long-preserved dead bodies sometimes opened up in tombs, which, struck by the air like lightning, vanish in a breath."[399]Lady Dedlock's undead demeanor likewise fractures Esther's narrative when she reveals she is her mother. Esther is dazed by the "pale face" and "deadly coldness" of Lady Dedlock's hand "so at variance with the enforced composure of her features."[400] The cognitive dissonance of seeing Lady Dedlock as both alive (the "composure of her features") and dead (the "deadly coldness" of her hands) "overpower" Esther and fracture her narrative until she "cannot say what was in [her] whirling thoughts."[401]

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[398] Jay Frankel, "Identification and 'Traumatic Aloneness': Reply to Commentaries by Berman and Bonomi," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 12, no. 1 (2002): 167.
[399] Dickens, *Bleak House,* 466.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Ibid., 578.

Dickens' living dead metaphor extends to Lady Dedlock's abortive relationship with Esther. Although they are reunited, Lady Dedlock's joy is short-lived as she instructs Esther to "evermore consider her as dead."[402] In the space of a few paragraphs Esther's mother has gone from being presumed dead, to being alive, and then back to being figuratively dead. Dickens manifests this change in his descriptions of Lady Dedlock during her meeting with Esther that vacillate between life and death. Her pale face contrasts starkly with what Esther notices is a "great change in her manner and the absence of her haughty self-restraint."[403] Lady Dedlock's revelation traumatizes Esther and she undergoes a similar transformation to that of her mother. Esther transforms from the infant who "had been laid aside as dead" to Lady Dedlock's living child and back to figurative death.[404] Though Lady Dedlock tells Esther to consider her dead, this means Esther must be dead to her also since they "never could associate, never could communicate, never probably from that time forth could interchange another word on earth."[405]

Inspector Bucket and the Consequences of Shallow Detection

Dickens uses the gothic to represent narrative fractures caused by trauma and ultimately to critique the failure of male detection to resolve the trauma of Lady Dedlock. In *Bleak House* trauma violates the "normality" of the novelistic universe that D.A. Miller argues the police must repair by "solving the crime."[406] Bucket engages in this practice by donning a disguise to track the street urchin Jo and occupying a position of omnipresence throughout the novel. Just as he polices the inhabitants of his London beat, Bucket polices the narrative of Dickens' novel by assuming the role of author to solve Tulkinghorn's murder. Bucket attempts to repair the narrative rift caused by Tulkinghorn's murder by writing the story of the crime. Despite his role as an author, Bucket overlooks Lady Dedlock's fragmented narrative of trauma which is inexorably tied to the murder. [407] He calls Tulkinghorn's murder "a beautiful case," a statement that Peter Thoms correctly points out suggests "forgetfulness of individual suffering and enthusiasm for the story he has constructed."[408] Bucket's inability to understand Lady Dedlock's "individual suffering" as he constructs the larger narrative of Tulkinghorn's murder is the product of his surface perspective. Bucket is a shallow instrument for detection and, like his namesake, can only hold so much information before finding himself out of his depth. As a result, Bucket's narrative portrays "events disconnectedly, unfolding and uncontrollably being connected before his very eyes."[409]

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[402] Ibid., 580.

[403] Ibid., 578.

[404] Ibid., 580.

[405] Ibid.

[406] D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 3.

Dickens contrasts the failure of Bucket's seemingly omniscient narrative detection with the success of Esther's first person limited narrative which is informed by trauma. Her trauma makes her narrative more effective at detecting and understanding trauma, making Esther an early prototype of the female detective, an argument I will return to at the end of this chapter.

Jane Griffith examines how the dual narratives of *Bleak House* create "two distinct…and gendered understandings of urban space."[410] These include the male point of view characterized by the omniscient third person narrator and the female point of view of Esther's limited first person narrative. The third person narrator represents a male perspective because his ability to transcend time and space parallels the mobility of the novel's male investigators Tulkinghorn and Bucket.[411] Tulkinghorn can preternaturally transport himself between locations, walking "into Chesney Wold as if it were next door to his chambers and return[ing] to his chambers as if he had never been out of Lincoln's Inn Fields."[412] Similarly "time and place cannot bind Mr. Bucket. Like man in the abstract, he is here to-day and gone to-morrow—but, very unlike man indeed, he is here again the next day."[413] The ability of Tulkinghorn and Bucket to be anywhere and everywhere lends a ubiquitous quality to their movements. Tulkinghorn haunts Lady Dedlock by being "always at hand" and Bucket pursues Jo, who "in his ignorance…believes [him] to [be] everywhere and cognizant of everything."[414] Jo is indeed mistaken and Bucket's omnipresence does not entirely equal omniscience. Dora Delispinasse notes that while the third person narrator of *Bleak House* "can move anywhere in space," he "has only a surface view of events," and the same is true of Bucket.[415] While Bucket can move anywhere and see anything, he lacks the narrative depth necessary to recognize and understand trauma.

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[407] Peter Thoms, "'The Narrow Track of Blood': Detection and Storytelling in *Bleak House*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 50, no. 2 (1995): 148.

[408] Ibid., 149.

[409] Doris Stringham Delespinasse, "The Significance of Dual Point of View in *Bleak House*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 23, no. 3 (1968): 258.

[410] Jane Griffith, "Such a Labyrinth of Streets: Serialization and the Gendered View of Urban Space in *Bleak House*," *English: The Journal of the English Association* 61, no. 234 (Autumn 2012): 250.

Bucket's investigative methods reflect his superficial narrative point of view and cause him to overlook the significance of Lady Dedlock's trauma. Linda Strahan observes that, while Bucket is intimately familiar with the habits and appearances of those on his London beat, he can only solve crimes by spotting what is out of the ordinary.[416] Using this technique, Bucket readily recognizes Lady Dedlock as being out of place in the slums of London. Though she has donned her maid Hortense's plain dress and veiled her face, her "white and small" hands that glitter with "sparkling rings" are "exceedingly inconsistent" with the urban poverty of her surroundings.[417]

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[411] Delespinasse, "The Significance of Dual Point of View in *Bleak House*," 256.
[412] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 661.
[413] Ibid., 803.
[414] Ibid., 722.
[415] Ibid., 256.
[416] Linda Strahan, "There's a Hole in the (Inspector) Bucket: The Victorian Police in Fact and Fiction," *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 23, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 59.
[417] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 264.

But Bucket's method fails to spot anything other than shallow differences. The child Jo easily employs the same level of cunning as Bucket and "has got at the suspicion of [Lady Dedlock] being a lady" based on her appearance.[418] Bucket "possesses enough intelligence to piece together the obvious," but "lacks the imagination to penetrate the complex."[419] Bucket's mode of detection leads to a catastrophic outcome for Lady Dedlock. Instead of saving her from trauma and ruin, Bucket reveals Lady Dedlock's secret, causing her downfall and death.

Bucket's narrow investigative methods prevent him from reading the narrative signs that signify trauma in Lady Dedlock's story. Bucket cannot read the explosive potential of Lady Dedlock's secret trauma. Narratively he regards it as only one secret among many, assuring Sir. Leicester he knows "so much about so many characters, high and low, that a piece of information more or less don't signify a straw."[420] Lady Dedlock's secret does "signify" a great deal, but Bucket can only read it as part of the story he is composing of Tulkinghorn's murder. In this narrative, Lady Dedlock's secret and Tulkinghorn's knowledge of it motivate Mademoiselle Hortense to frame her former mistress for murder. Bucket cannot think beyond the narrative he has created to imagine the shattering effect revealing her secret will have on Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock's narratives respectively.

In writing the story of Tulkinghorn's murder, Bucket effectively disassembles Lady Dedlock's story of legitimacy with the master narrative of her transgressive past. Master narratives are official narratives while counter narratives are stories that challenge them.[421] Lady Dedlock has constructed a counter narrative of virtue and legitimacy in order to secure a good marriage to Sir Leicester Dedlock. In his efforts to construct a coherent narrative of

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[418] Ibid., 261.

[419] Strahan, "There's a Hole in the (Inspector) Bucket: The Victorian Police in Fact and Fiction," 59.

[420] Dickens, *Bleak House,* 818.

[421] Ibid.

Tulkinghorn’s murder, Bucket fragments Lady Dedlock’s counter narrative with the master narrative of her hidden past, revealing her illicit relationship with Captain Hawdon and the illegitimate child she gave birth to out of wedlock. Lady Dedlock’s counter narrative “is broken down” and she indirectly implicates Bucket as the cause of her narrative ruin.[422] Tulkinghorn’s death and Bucket’s subsequent investigation are the “key-stone of a gloomy arch removed” that rends her narrative into “a thousand fragments, each crushing and mangling piecemeal.”[423] The trauma of Lady Dedlock’s exposure creates absences in linear experience that frustrate the coherent witnessing and reporting of her trauma to others. Instead of coherent speech, Lady Dedlock “rocks and moans,” unable to speak of “the [unutterable] horror that is upon her.” [424]

Bucket’s fragmentation of Lady Dedlock’s counter narrative permits Mademoiselle Hortense’s own counter narrative to successfully masquerade as a master narrative of Lady Dedlock’s guilt in the death of Tulkinghorn. Mademoiselle Hortense achieves this by borrowing the narrative authority of a printed account of Tulkinghorn’s death and distributing letters implicating her former mistress. Lady Dedlock opens one of these letters to find “a printed account of the discovery of the body [of Tulkinghorn] as it lay face downward on the floor, shot through the heart; and underneath is written her own name, with the word “murderess” attached.”[425] The printed description of Tulkinghorn’s death, most likely a newspaper or broadsheet account, is incomplete because it does not identify the perpetrator of the crime. By completing this narrative, Mademoiselle Hortense utilizes the narrative legitimacy of the printed account to authenticate her own written claim that Lady Dedlock is indeed a “murderess.”

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[422] Ibid., 854.
[423] Ibid., 855.
[424] Ibid., 854.
[425] Ibid., 851. Emphasis added.

Because counter narratives have the potential to become master narrates if they are widely accepted by a community, Mademoiselle Hortense disseminates her counter narrative in a series of identical letters that Bucket describes as "falling about like a shower of lady-birds."[426] Lady Dedlock bemoans that "her shame will be *published*—may be spreading while she thinks about it" as Mademoiselle Hortense's counter narrative successfully supplants Lady Dedlock's counter narrative of respectability via its widespread publication.[427]

Bucket's revelation also traumatizes Sir Leicester because it leads to the loss of his beloved lady. When Bucket reveals Lady Dedlock's secret to Sir Leicester, it fractures his narrative at the level of dialogue. He lets out "a single groan," bemoaning "*this* painful, *this* distressing, *this* unlooked for, *this* overwhelming intelligence."[428] The repetition of *this* instead of a proper noun to describe what he is experiencing illustrates the failure of Sir Leicester's language in the face of trauma. *This* stands in for the thing that he cannot describe, the overwhelming trauma that defies description and eventually robs him of speech. Instead of intelligible dialogue, only "inarticulate sounds" are able to testify to Sir Leicester's trauma and he is plagued by an "unusual slowness in his speech, with now and then a curious trouble in beginning."[429] This failure of language to accurately describe trauma extends to Bucket who witnesses Leicester's breakdown, but is unable to describe it. Bucket notices "*something* frozen and fixed is upon his manner, over and above its usual shell of haughtiness."[430] Even the great police detective Inspector Bucket cannot accurately define what is wrong with Sir Leicester, only that *something* has reduced this great man to a shell of himself.

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[426] Ibid., 835.
[427] Ibid., 854. Emphasis added.
[428] Ibid., 821.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Ibid.

The loss of his wife throws Sir Leicester into a dissociative death-like state that mirrors his wife's response to trauma. He seems frozen and "remains in the same attitude, as though he were still listening and his attention were still occupied."[431] Sir Leicester's fractured narrative is the result of Lady Dedlock's flight from Chesney Wold, creating a traumatic absence that defies the construction of a coherent narrative. Before Lady Dedlock's absence, Sir Leicester's "voice was rich and mellow," but after Lady Dedlock flees "he can only whisper…mere jumble and jargon."[432] Despite the devastating effects of his trauma on the narrative, Sir Leicester is still able empathetically identify with Lady Dedlock's trauma because their traumas mirror each other. They have both lost their beloved, for Lady Dedlock it is Captain Hawdon and for Sir Leicester it is his wife. This is why, amidst "those intrusive sounds" that represent his own trauma, Sir Leicester "can yet pronounce [Lady Dedlock's] name with something like distinctness…in a tone of mourning and compassion rather than reproach."[433]

In addition to triggering Sir Leicester's trauma, Bucket's depthless method of detection causes a blindness that precludes him from either preventing or repairing the trauma of Lady Dedlock's exposure. Bucket's short-sightedness culminates in total blindness when he can no longer see Lady Dedlock once she has fled Chesney Wold. Charged by Sir Leister with recovering Lady Dedlock, Bucket:

> Mounts a high tower in his mind and looks out far and wide. Many solitary figures he perceives creeping through the streets; many solitary figures out on heaths, and roads, and lying under haystacks. But the figure that he seeks is not among them."[434]

Bucket's narrative sight moves great distances in place and time to discover multiple "solitary figures" inhabiting a variety of urban and rural environments: "streets," "heaths,"

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[431] Ibid., 838.
[432] Ibid., 821.
[433] Ibid., 838.
[434] Ibid., 864.

"roads," and "haystacks." Despite the astonishing reach of Bucket's point of view, it lacks the depth necessary to espy the "figure that he seeks" in the form of Lady Dedlock. Desperate to spot his quarry, Bucket tries to amplify his narrative sight using almost preternatural means. Having found Esther Summerson's handkerchief in Lady Dedlock's boudoir, he folds it in front of him as if "it were able with an enchanted power to bring before him the place where she found it and the night-landscape near the cottage where it covered the little child, would he descry her there?"[435] The term "descry" means to catch sight of, but it is also the longer version of the word "scry" which refers to telling the future using a reflective surface like a mirror or crystal ball. Bucket's attempt to "descry" Lady Dedlock using the "enchanted" handkerchief is ironic since it is his inability to see beyond the surface that prevents him from divining Lady Dedlock's location or preventing her ghastly end.

Bucket's focus on surface appearances fails to recover Lady Dedlock in time to save her. During his search for Lady Dedlock, Bucket asks several people if they have seen her based on her distinctive dress. Confident in his pursuit, Bucket tells Esther "it's certainly true that [Lady Dedlock] came on here…There's not a doubt of the *dress* by this time, and the *dress* has been seen here."[436] What Bucket fails to realize is that a sighting of the dress does not necessarily mean a sighting of Lady Dedlock herself. By this time in the narrative Lady Dedlock has stopped at the brick maker's cottage and switched clothes with Jenny, a brick maker's wife, in order to make her way to London undetected. Bucket thinks he is chasing Lady Dedlock, but he is actually tracking Jenny dressed in Lady Dedlock's fine clothes. With only a surface view of events Bucket easily mistakes the dress for the woman he seeks. This is why Bucket loses track of the dress, telling Esther "he had lost the track of the dress so long that he began to be surprised," and he never recovers it again.[437] While Bucket is eventually able to backtrack and find his way to London, he is too late to save Lady Dedlock from her fate. His failure to redeem Lady Dedlock is the result of his myopic investigative point of view that fails to recognize or resolve narrative trauma.

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[435] Ibid.

[436] Ibid., 881. Emphasis added.

Esther Summerson: Girl Detective

Dickens' presents Esther's narrative as a counter narrative to Lady Dedlock's doomed gothic romance. Unlike her mother, Esther crafts a counter narrative of legitimacy to escape the gothic narrative of her origins. Michelle Williams calls this counter narrative "a vision of the familial that opposes the legal narrative of legitimacy" that denies Esther a place as the bastard child of Lady Dedlock.[438] But crafting such a narrative is not easy, and Chiara Briganti has pointed out, Esther "is faced with the impossible task of articulating her discourse within the boundaries of a structure which denies her very existence."[439] In penning her origin narrative as an illegitimate child, Esther risks "being reduced from textual producer to textual product," from the writing subject to the object of the narrative.[440] The conflict inherent in Esther's narrative has vexed critics like Padmini Mongia who argues, "the problem with Esther's voice lies in her reticence."[441] Although Esther claims she is not clever "her narrative reveals that she has more than a noticing way…she is intuitive and sees beyond the surface significance of events."[442]

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[437] Ibid., 882.
[438] Michelle L. Wilson, "Esther Summerson's Narrative Relations: Re-Inscribing Inheritance in *Bleak House*," *Dickens Studies Annual: Essays on Victorian Fiction* 46 (2015): 210.
[439] Chiara Briganti, "The Monstrous Actress: Esther Summerson's Spectral Name," *Dickens Studies Annual: Essays on Victorian Fiction* 19 (1990): 206.
[440] Ibid., 208.
[441] Padmini Mongia, "The Problem of the Female Voice in *Bleak House*," *West Virginia University Philological Papers* 34 (1988): 33.
[442] Ibid.

More recent scholars have also commented on Esther's unique predicament as narrator. Benjamin Bishop reads Esther Summerson's narrative as "a model for navigating the novel's dense cosmos, paying particular attention to how Esther attempts to secure her place in that cosmos through a rigorous practice of metonymy."[443] Elana Gomel finds a "structural similarity between Dickens's own ambiguous attitude toward London, composed as it is of the reformer's indignation and the flâneur's pleasure, and the trajectory of Esther's urban perambulations," though Esther, "bound by the Victorian rules of feminine propriety," never achieves the status of "flâneur."[444] Matthew Beaumont explores how Dickens uses Esther's narrative to think through the narrative problem of beginnings and endings, following the example of Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759). Beaumont attributes Esther's difficulty in beginning her narrative to "the act of beginning itself…because beginning a narrative implies that the sequence of events that it narrates has ended."[445] Similarly, Beaumont reads Esther's ending the novel in mid-sentence as a mimicry of the end of "Sterne's satirical novel of sentiment, [that] revels in its artificiality" thereby enacting a literal self-effacement of Esther.[446] Michal Ginsburg takes the opposite tack regarding plot and Esther's self-effacement. Ginsburg argues that the plot of *Bleak House* "[emphasizes] classification or restoration," hence in the novel the "plot can be erased, effaced, forgotten; [and] if Esther has indeed regained her beauty, as the conclusion at least suggests, then even the material traces of time and plot are effaced."[447]

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[443] Benjamin Joseph Bishop, "Metonymy and the Dense Cosmos of *Bleak House*," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 54, no. 4 (Autumn 2014): 793.
[444] Elana Gomel, "'Part of the Dreadful Thing': The Urban Chronotope of *Bleak House*," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 9, no. 2 (June 2011): 306.
[445] Matthew Beaumont, "Beginnings, Endings, Births, Deaths: Sterne, Dickens, and *Bleak House*," *Textual Practice* 26, no. 5 (October 2012): 821.
[446] Ibid., 823.
[447] Michal Peled Ginsburg, "The Case against Plot in *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*," *ELH* 59, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 185-186.

Despite these later critical efforts to redeem Esther, critics have disparaged Dickens' choice of Esther as the first person female narrator of *Bleak House* since its publication. Fred Boege observes that Esther Summerson "is not a commanding figure in the center of a novel," blaming her "positive bad qualities, such as the simpering affectation of innocence."[448] Dickens' close friend and biographer John Forster likewise criticized Esther's role as a principal narrator, calling it "full of hazard…and certainly not successful."[449] The irregularities of Esther's narrative are in part what led English novelist and critic E. M. Forster to conclude that "logically, Bleak House is all to pieces."[450] These critiques suggest that the fractured subjectivity of Esther's first person narrative somehow compromises the omniscient objectivity of the third person male narrator. To the contrary, it is these qualities that make Esther a more effective investigator than her male detective counterparts. In the following section, I will examine how Esther's narrative initially mirrors the fragmenting experience of her childhood trauma, and explore how she becomes a more sophisticated narrator who is able to see past her trauma by empathizing with others.

Esther's fractured narrative reflects her experience as a survivor of trauma. The inconsistencies that trauma causes in Esther's narrative have drawn criticism from many scholars. For instance, some read Esther's "insistence on disclaiming the compliments heaped upon her while faithfully recording them" as a sign of narrative "coyness." [451] But I argue her tendency to record details then dismiss her own statements is symptomatic of a trauma survivor questioning the reliability of her own perception. Trauma creates absences in linear experience that frustrate the survivor's ability to create a coherent narrative of events. Esther's resulting narrative is an uneven, patchwork account of events told by a seemingly unreliable narrator. These narrative inconsistencies are not the result of poor writing or Dickens' use of Esther as a mouthpiece, as some critics claim; instead they are the by-products of the trauma Esther experiences as an adult and in her childhood.[452] For Alex Zwerdling, Esther's narrative "records both the long-range effects of this childhood trauma and the stages of an attempt to triumph over it."[453] While Zwerdling readily identifies trauma as the cause for Esther's narrative trauma, he focuses on the content of Esther's narrative over its form, overlooking the fragmented narrative structure that represents Esther's trauma.

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[448] Fred W. Boege, "Point of View in Dickens," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 65, no. 2 (1950): 197.
[449] John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (New York: J.M. Dent & Sons: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1927), 114.
[450] E. M Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927), 108.
[451] Zwerdling, "Esther Summerson Rehabilitated," 429.

Esther herself represents a traumatic absence in Dickens' text, one that frustrates and fragments the composition of her narrative. Trauma causes gaps in experience since it happens too suddenly to be fully understood by the conscious mind. Esther is one such gap since, as the illegitimate child of Lady Dedlock and Captain Hawdon, she should never have existed outside the legal bonds of wedlock. Enforcing the social dictates that ban her existence, Esther's godmother Miss Barbary works to figuratively and literally absent Esther from the narrative. A newborn Esther is laid aside as dead, but her "godmother" Miss Barbary, Lady Dedlock's sister and Esther's aunt, discovers she is alive and resolves to raise her in secret. From then on Esther, the "dead" absent child, becomes a void that fragments her narrative and that of Lady Dedlock. Before meeting her mother as an adult, Esther "had never, to [Lady Dedlock's] knowledge, breathed—had been buried—had never been endowed with life—had never borne a name."[454] This holds true even before she reintroduces her mother's trauma: Esther's status as the illegitimate “dead” child fragments her own text as she writes herself into being in a narrative where she is not supposed to exist.

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[452] Ibid.
[453] Ibid., 430.
[454] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 583.

Miss Barbary’s efforts to absent Esther from the narrative causes a traumatic split for Esther. This splitting results in Esther’s dual sense of self that vacillates between the “good” self and the “bad” self emerges in reaction to Miss Barbary’s accusation that Esther is her mother’s disgrace. Esther’s schizophrenic view of herself leads her to feel “guilty and yet innocent” of the “fault [she] had been born with” as she strives all the same to be “industrious, contented, and kind-hearted” to compensate for the unconscious sins of her “bad” self.[455] This “bad” self represents Esther’s traumatized Other that routinely cries out and ruptures her narrative with the unconscious knowledge of her childhood trauma.

From the very beginning of her narrative, this second voice of the traumatized Other bursts forth. Esther confesses: “I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning to write my portion of these pages for I know I am not clever. I always knew that.”[456] The voice of Esther’s traumatized Other appears in the past tense phrase “I always *knew* that” and interrupts her present tense narration of “I *have a* great deal of difficulty” and “I *know* I am not clever.[457] Including “always” with the past tense of the verb “know” suggests that even though this state is past, Esther continues to believe she is not clever. Paired with Esther’s present tense statement of “I *know* I am not clever,” this shows how Esther’s traumatized Other continues to negatively influence the way she sees her own intelligence. Dickens could have used the past perfect construction of “I had always known” but this would indicate that Esther’s knowledge that she was not clever ended sometime in the past when it continues to erupt and damage her self-perception in the present. [458]

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[455] Ibid., 31.
[456] Ibid., 27.
[457] Ibid. Emphasis added.

Miss Barbary's erasure of Esther anticipates Esther's efforts to absent herself from her own narrative. Unlike other children, Esther never receives a birthday celebration. Miss Barbary's refusal to celebrate Esther's birthday denies Esther a stable sense of self, turning her into a void as the child who should have died but now persists in living. When Esther is invited to another child's birthday party, Miss Barbary writes a stiff refusal. This prevents Esther from seeking any validation of self from others outside the home, turning her into an absence both inside and outside of it. Miss Barbary's erasure of Esther climaxes when she tells the child on her birthday: "It would have been far better, little Esther, that you had had no birthday that you had never been born!"[459] In a monstrous inversion of the traditional fairy tale, Esther's "godmother" Miss Barbary refuses to validate the child Esther's sense of self. This forces Esther to seek validation of her self from Dolly, her replacement mother figure, telling the inert plaything: "Now, Dolly, I am not clever, you know very well, and you must be patient with me, like a dear!"[460] But Esther has internalized Miss Barbary's abuse, evidenced by her statement "I am not clever," and the substitute mother is deaf and blind to her entreaty: "sitting propped up in a great arm-chair, with her beautiful complexion and rosy lips, staring at me—or not so much at me, I think, as at nothing."[461] The fact that Dolly doesn't look at Esther but at "nothing" annuls the validation of self that Esther is seeking in Dolly's gaze. This reaffirms for Esther the truth of her "godmother's" statement that she should never have existed in the first place.

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[458] Ibid.
[459] Ibid., 30.
[460] Ibid., 21.
[461] Ibid., 27-28.

As a result, Esther initially pens a disjointed narrative where she engages in a simultaneous nullification and validation of herself. In writing her own narrative Esther is frustrated that she "seem[s] to be always writing about [her]self" when she "[tries] to write about [her]self as little as possible."[462] Writing a personal narrative without the narrator is a contradiction and Esther's tormented narrative reflects this struggle. Despite Esther's efforts to "write about other people" she always "find[s] [her]self coming into the story again."[463] Esther apologizes for the self-centeredness of her own narrative, hoping "anyone who may read what I write will understand that if these pages contain a great deal about me, I can only suppose it must be because I have really something to do with them and can't be kept out."[464] This protracted apology reveals how the "absent" child Esther strives to fall into the background of her own story, but by her very existence fails to do so. Esther's efforts to absent herself from her own narrative parallel those of Miss Barbary. Just as the child Esther felt "so sensible of filling a place in [Miss Barbary's] house which ought to have been empty," an adult Esther feels uncomfortable filling a narrative with a life she believes ought not to exist.[465]

Esther's fragmented narrative may at first resemble those of other traumatized heroes and heroines I've discussed in previous chapters, but it and she are different. While the other characters I've examined find it difficult to escape their trauma. Esther is able to see *past* her trauma for two important reasons. To better explain these reasons it is vital to distinguish Esther the character from Esther the narrator. As a character Esther is indeed traumatized, but instead of becoming mired in her own suffering, she empathizes with the trauma of others to get outside her own trauma. Second, as a narrator, Esther writes her narrative from a future perspective, several years after the events of *Bleak House* have ended and she has married Woodcourt. This is different from either Jane Eyre or Caleb Williams' narratives which are first person narratives that limit their readers' perspectives to a series of seemingly disconnected events unfolding in real time. Instead, Esther pens a "personal, past-tense narrative [that] is better able to suggest temporal and causal connections, leading to a more ordered worldview."[466] According to Joseph Sawicki, "Esther's passivity as a character has succeeded in masking the fact that she becomes more expert and confident as a narrator of her own story; Esther develops a narrative skill and authority that is not discernible at the beginning of her "autobiography." [467] Esther's future perspective as a narrator and her empathy as a character are what make her a more effective rather than stymied detective.

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[462] Ibid., 137.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid., 31.

In his chapter on *Bleak House* in *The Novel and the Police,* D. A. Miller examines how Dickens' novel reflects the role of detection in Victorian culture. According to Miller, Dickens attempts to keep the private sphere of the home separate from the public sphere of the Court of Chancery. But as the title of his chapter—"Discipline in Different Voices"—indicates, this separation of spheres fails as the "police and family" are "blurred into one another."[468] Miller quotes Mr. Bagnet's saying that "discipline must be maintained" to which Miller adds "within the domestic circle as well as outside of it."[469] If Miller is correct and the separate spheres of police and family are constantly intersecting each other, it becomes that much easier to read Esther as a domestic detective. As the Dame Durden of Jarndyce's home, she holds the literal and figurative keys to the secrets within the bleak houses of the novel. But instead of using this power to police others by revealing their crimes like Bucket, Esther uses her narrative prowess to conceal them. In doing so, she protects the family and home that the gothic narrative of *Bleak House* threatens to tear asunder.

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[466] Delespinasse, "The Significance of Dual Point of View in *Bleak House*," 258.
[467] Joseph Sawicki, "'The Mere Truth Won't Do': Esther as Narrator in *Bleak House*," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 211.
[468] Miller, *The Novel and the Police,* 32.
[469] Ibid., 105.

Ten years after the publication of *Bleak House*, the female detective would open "a number of narrative possibilities that were unavailable to male heroes" in Victorian fiction.[470] Because a woman's proper sphere, according to Victorian ideology, was the private realm of domestic life, female detectives had access to intimate spaces that were otherwise closed to their male counterparts. Without access to this private sphere, the male investigators of *Bleak House* depend heavily on the testimony of female characters. Tulkinghorn must rely on Lady Dedlock's maid, Mademoiselle Hortense, for information on Lady Dedlock. In turn, Mrs. Bucket reports Mademoiselle Hortense's movements to her husband. Likewise, Esther has access to intimate spaces and the information they contain. Before accepting John Jarndyce's proposal of marriage, Esther is already de facto mistress of Bleak House and this gives her an intimate view of Richard and Ada's doomed romance. Outside Bleak House, Esther is privy to the intimate lives of other characters. Through her narrative the reader glimpses the plight of the orphan Charley who struggles to support her siblings, the suffering of a dying Jo, and the mistreatment that Jenny and Liz endure as the wives of two abusive brick makers. But unlike Mademoiselle Hortense and Mrs. Bucket, who act as simple informants, Esther comes closest to being a female detective because she has her own narrative point of view informed by trauma and empathy.

Esther's trauma allows her to detect and empathize with the trauma of others who inhabit the intimate spaces of Dickens' novel. Esther herself admits she "had always rather a noticing way—not a quick way, oh, no!—a silent way of noticing what passed before [her.]"[471] Esther is the first to detect Ada and Richard's clandestine courtship. Esther notices that when she kisses her friend Ada goodnight that she "lay with one hand under her pillow so that it was hidden."[472] This small detail is nothing on its own, but then Esther notices when they go to visit Richard Ada seems to know her way to Richard's lodgings even though it is supposed to be the first time she has visited him in London. Ada's familiarity with Richard's home suggests she has been there before. Combined with the hand she hides under the pillow, Esther deduces it conceals a wedding ring, indicating the two have been secretly married.

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[470] Michael Sims, "Introduction," in *The Penguin Book of Victorian Women in Crime : Forgotten Cops and Private Eyes from the Time of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), xiii.

Esther's keen detection also extends to her mother, though in telling her mother's story she exhibits much more narrative control. This is one area where we can see the separation between Esther the character and Esther the narrator. While the two seem identical during large portions of her narrative, Esther "separates herself from her character on occasion as she ceases solely to be a representational mirror and begins to control her narrative."[473] Esther achieves this "through irony, the controlled release of information, reader manipulation, overt evaluation, and the use of omniscient perspective and authorial choice."[474]

For example, Esther portrays her mother Lady Dedlock as the traumatic absence that fragments her own narrative. During her first encounter with Lady Dedlock in church, Esther is struck by how familiar she finds Lady Dedlock's face, commenting she "knew the beautiful face quite well in that short space of time…although [she] had never seen this lady's face before in all [her] life."[475] At first it seems Lady Dedlock's face is familiar to Esther because they are mother and daughter, but Esther is able to look beyond the surface to recognize the trauma they share. The sight of Lady Dedlock's face fractures Esther's narrative, allowing her past trauma to erupt in the present. While listening to the preacher's sermon, Esther hears the words "very strangely…not in the reader's voice, but in the well-remembered voice of her godmother."[476] Unable to account for the strange intimacy she feels towards Lady Dedlock, Esther considers whether "Lady Dedlock's face accidentally resemble[s] [that of her godmother]" Miss Barbary.[477] Esther concludes that Lady Dedlock bears no physical resemblance to either Miss Barbary or herself. Instead of observing similarities in appearance, Esther recognizes in Lady Dedlock a trauma that mirrors her own. This is why Lady Dedlock reminds Esther of herself as a child, evoking "out of the past" the image of "little Esther Summerson, the child who lived a life apart and on whose birthday there was no rejoicing."[478] Traumatized by the loss of her child, Lady Dedlock is also the traumatic absence, the missing mother that caused Esther's childhood trauma.

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[471] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 28.
[472] Ibid., 778
[473] Sawicki, "'The Mere Truth Won't Do'," 212.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Dickens, *Bleak House*., 290.

Esther recognizes Lady Dedlock as the absence that has caused her trauma, seeing a splintered reflection of herself in Lady Dedlock's gaze. Lady Dedlock's eyes "spring out of their languor…to hold [Esther's,]" reminding Esther of "the lonely days at [her] godmother's; yes, away even to the days when [she] had stood on tiptoe to dress [her]self at [her] little glass after dressing [her] doll."[479] The child Esther is using the reflection of herself in the mirror to create a stable sense of self, something that happens during the mirror stage when the child's reflection gives rise to a mental representation of self or "I." In this case, the child Esther dresses her doll—the replacement mother—to mirror herself and create the reflection of a stable self in the glass of her dressing table. As Dolly's vacant stare indicates, trauma ruptures Esther's identity, preventing her from forming a whole and integrated self. When Esther sees Lady Dedlock in church, she glimpses a splintered reflection of herself. Lady Dedlock's face looks "in a confused way, like a broken glass…in which [Esther sees] scraps of old remembrances."[480] It is important to note however that "Esther is, herself, creating this experience, not living it" as "Esther creates Lady Dedlock as a broken mirror for herself."[481] Here Esther identifies the original absence that has splintered her narrative. Lady Dedlock is the missing mother Esther was unable to find in Miss Barbary while Esther is the missing child Lady Dedlock thought she lost forever. This is why Lady Dedlock's voice raises "innumerable pictures" of Esther's self in her mind's eye, illustrating how the traumatic absence of Esther's mother has fractured her child self. [482]

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[476] Ibid., 292.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid.
[479] Ibid., 290.

Esther further shows her control of the narrative when she creates an unsettling feeling in the reader about her connection to Lady Dedlock that evokes the experience of trauma. Esther and Ada take shelter in a lodge when a sudden storm strikes:

> The lodge was so dark within, now the sky was overcast, that we only clearly saw the man who came to the door when we took shelter there and put two chairs for Ada and me. The lattice-windows were all thrown open, and we sat just within the doorway watching the storm. It was grand to see how the wind awoke, and bent the trees, and drove the rain before it like a cloud of smoke; and to hear the solemn thunder and to see the lightning; and while thinking with awe of the tremendous powers by which our little lives are encompassed, to consider how beneficent they are and how upon the smallest flower and leaf there was already a freshness poured from all this seeming rage which seemed to make creation new again.
> "Is it not dangerous to sit in so exposed a place?"
> "Oh, no, Esther dear!" said Ada quietly.
> Ada said it to me, but I had not spoken.[483]

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[480] Ibid., 292.
[481] Wilson, "Esther Summerson's Narrative Relations," 223.
[482] Dickens, *Bleak House*., 296.
[483] Ibid.

The speaker is Lady Dedlock and Ada has mistaken her voice for Esther's. Writing from a future perspective, Esther has full knowledge of who the speaker is, but she chooses to hide it from us to create confusion and an uncanny sensation of repetition associated with trauma. Esther keeps the reader in the dark, literally and figuratively, about who says: "Is it not dangerous to sit in so exposed a place?" since she does not attribute the statement to anybody. By doing so she limits the reader's perspective, putting the reader in the position of Ada, and tricking us into crediting the statement to Esther herself. It is not until Ada responds with "Oh, no, Esther dear!" that we start to question the source of this statement. Esther finally gives a delayed correction to Ada's error and ours after she says "Ada said it to me, but I had not spoken." The scene creates an uncanny sensation for the reader who is "forced to go backward in the text to understand what has just happened, putting the first moment that Esther's mother speaks to her on a kind of repeat." [484] Esther could have easily described the scene in a straightforward manner, but by making the readers go back over the text to fully understand its meaning she forces them to enact a repetitive phenomenon similar to her trauma.

Esther uses her control of the narrative to keep her mother's secret, delaying the trauma of her exposure. As I mentioned in my analysis of D.A. Miller and *Bleak House*, Esther is a domestic detective who uses her narrative prowess to conceal rather than reveal the crimes of her mother. In doing so, she protects the family and home that Lady Dedlock's gothic narrative threatens to destroy. Exposing Lady Dedlock's secret would bring "dishonour and disgrace upon" herself and her family.[485] Esther keeps Lady Dedlock's secret because she has also experienced the trauma of shaming her family. Miss Barbary makes this clear when she tells Esther, "your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers. The time will come, and soon enough, when you will understand this better, and will feel it too, as no one save a woman can."[486] Victorian society valued a woman's sexual purity and Lady Dedlock's sexual misconduct with Captain Hawdon threatens to bring shame to both her and her husband. Esther, her illegitimate child born out of wedlock, is the tangible proof of that sexual transgression. Miss Barbary's warning to Esther as a child that she will understand her mother's disgrace "as no one save a woman can" prefigures how an adult Esther will identify with her mother's trauma in several ways. In addition to being the evidence of her mother's sexual indiscretion and the source of her shame, Esther is a woman who has the potential to suffer the same gendered shame Victorian society will inflict on her mother.

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[484] Wilson, "Esther Summerson's Narrative Relations," 223.
[485] Dickens, *Bleak House*., 30.

Because Esther understands the devastation the discovery of her mother's secret will cause, she works to obscure all evidence of her mother's shame, including herself. Esther destroys her mother's letter to preserve her honor and circumvent the trauma of her ruin. It may appear that Esther adopts the methodology of a criminal as she strives desperately to keep her mother's "story fragmented and illegible," but Esther's efforts to destroy the evidence of her mother's "crime" are the actions of an investigator trying to prevent trauma.[487] The letter details the circumstances of Esther's birth and Esther reveals to the reader that she was not abandoned by her mother, but presumed dead and raised by Lady Dedlock's sister in secret. Instead of printing the entirety of her mother's letter, Esther is careful to reveal only a fraction of the letter's contents. Esther maintains strict narrative control over her mother's letter and the secrets it reveals, telling the reader "what more the letter told me needs not to be repeated here. It has its own times and places in my story."[488] To ensure no one, not even the reader, will have access to her mother's narrative of shame, Esther "burn[s] what [her] mother had written and to consume even its ashes."[489]

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[486] Ibid., 580.
[487] Nickerson, "Women Writers before 1960," 30.
[488] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 583.

In burning the letter, Esther ensures her mother's safety by eliminating the physical evidence of her mother's guilt, but another key piece of evidence is not so easily dispatched—Esther herself. Fearful of "the danger of discovery, or even of the remotest suspicion" against Lady Dedlock, Esther schools her emotions to "restrain the bursts of grief" she feels at having found and lost her mother in a single afternoon.[490] She conceals her tears from her maid Charlie and lies to her, telling the girl she is "over-tired" from her walk so she can closet herself with her mother's missive.[491] Esther does an admirable job of concealing her emotions and destroying the textual evidence of her mother's misconduct, but she cannot ultimately erase herself. She bemoans her own existence, thinking "it would have been better and happier for many people if indeed [she] had never breathed," only to survive and cause the downfall of her mother "against whom [she] was a witness."[492] Esther's only consolation is that no one can recognize the tie between Lady Dedlock and herself because of Esther's recent disfigurement. After recovering from her illness she is thankful her face is "so changed as that [she] never could disgrace her [mother] by any trace of likeness."[493]

Esther's narrative control here is contrasted with Dicken's third person narrator who attempts to write Esther into the same gothic narrative as her mother. The narrator does so by introducing Lady Dedlock as the ghost that haunts Chesney Wold, using the supernatural to fracture Esther's narrative. Esther is imagining the figure that is said to haunt the Ghost's Walk when, Lady Dedlock suddenly emerges from the woods. Dickens "ghosts" Lady Dedlock because she represents the absence that has caused Esther's trauma and continues to haunt Esther's fragmented narrative. Dickens achieves this by introducing the figure of the "ghost" and Lady Dedlock in identical ways. Esther sees the Ghost's Walk "lying in a deep shade of masonry afar off and picturing to [herself] the female shape that was said to haunt" when she becomes "aware of a figure approaching through the wood."[494] Just as Esther imagines the female figure of the Ghost's Walk in shadow, this unknown figure similarly emerges from darkness. Esther's point of view is "darkened by leaves" with the "shadows of the branches on the ground" making it difficult for her to "discern what figure it was."[495] Esther's confused perspective makes it easy for both her and the reader to mistake Lady Dedlock for the spectral figure that haunts Chesney Wold.

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[489] Ibid.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Ibid., 584.
[493] Ibid., 579.

Esther's gothic encounter with the ghostly image of her mother, the embodiment of Esther's traumatic absence, fragments her narrative at the level of dialogue. When Lady Dedlock reveals to Esther that she is her mother it fragments Esther's speech. She responds to her mother in "broken, incoherent words" as she tells her –"or [tries] to tell her"— she forgives her.[496] She is also "fluttered by [Lady Dedlock] being unexpectedly so near" and even though she tries to rise, Esther is "rendered motionless" by a "dread and faintness" that comes over her.[497]

The omniscient narrator writes the remainder of Esther's narrative in this chapter as a gothic romance. She returns to Chesney Wold in the shadow of a "gloomy…overcast and sad" evening.[498] Instead of the house that "seemed to... be [at] such complete repose" earlier in the day, Esther's description of Chesney Wold is tinged with the gothic.[499] She notices that "the old stone balustrades and parapets…were seamed by time and weather" and how "grotesque [stone] monsters bristled outside dens of shadow and snarled at the evening gloom over the escutcheons they held in their grip."[500] Esther's labyrinthine wanderings through Chesney Wold recall the twisted path Isabella follows in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. Esther follows a path that winds "underneath a gateway, and through a court-yard where the principal entrance was" and turns to the "south front, and there above [her] were the balustrades of the Ghost's Walk and one lighted window that might be [her] mother's."[501]The narrator figuratively transforms Esther into the ghost that haunts Chesney Wold. She hears her own "echoing footsteps" and comprehends "the dreadful truth in the legend of the Ghost's Walk, that it was [her]who was to bring calamity upon the stately house and that [her] warning feet were haunting it even then."[502] Just as Lady Dedlock's trauma causes her to double for the female spirt haunting Chesney Wold, Esther likewise returns to haunt the Ghost's Walk with her steps and portend the trauma of her mother's ruin.

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[494] Ibid., 576.
[495] Ibid.
[496] Ibid., 579.
[497] Ibid., 578.
[498] Ibid., 584.

Despite the omniscient narrator's attempts to pigeon-hole Esther in a gothic narrative, her empathy as a character, combined with her powers as a narrator allows her to get outside of the gothic plot she is scripted into by the circumstances of her birth. Instead of simply describing things as they are, Esther the narrator sees the world with a critical eye. She confesses "I write down these opinions, not because I believe that this or any other thing was so, because I thought so; but only because I did think so, and I want to be quite candid about all I thought and did."[503]

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[499] Ibid.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Ibid., 586.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Ibid., 204.

Even though "it has become a critical commonplace to dismiss Esther as simply a narrative reporter," Esther is able to satirize other characters and address the pain of those who suffer because of their behavior, taking an "ironic tone in describing the cynical, deluded and hypocritical statements and actions of characters."[504] Instead of concealing their crimes, like she does for her mother, Esther reveals the hypocrisy of these characters with biting wit. For example, Mr. Kenge and Mr. Jarndyce comment that Mrs. Jellyby is "a lady of very remarkable strength of character" devoted to helping the African natives of Borrioboola-Gha, but Esther recognizes the hypocrisy of a woman who practices philanthropy abroad but not at home.[505] Mrs. Jellyby's "telescopic philanthropy" is the result of her farsighted perspective and she only sees the plight of those in a far off country instead of the suffering of her bedraggled family.[506] Focused on Africa, Mrs. Jellyby ignores the household and her children. Esther notices the house is "not only very untidy but very dirty," and the daughter Ms. Jellyby "seemed to have no article of dress upon her, from a pin upwards, that was in its proper condition or its right place."[507] Mrs. Jellyby also overlooks the pain of her neglected, "self-named" child Peepy who gets his head stuck in a railing and falls down the stairs when Esther and Ada first arrive at the Jellyby residence.[508] Instead of comforting Peepy, Mrs. Jellyby admonishes him for his scraped knees and dirty appearance, shouting "go along, you naughty Peepy!" before "fixing] her fine eyes on Africa again." [509]

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[504] Sawicki, "'The Mere Truth Won't Do'," 213.
[505] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 49.
[506] Ibid.
[507] Ibid., 53.
[508] Ibid., 54.
[509] Ibid.

Unlike Mrs. Jellyby's broad point of view, Esther's intimate perspective allows her to witness and respond to the more immediate suffering of the Jellyby children. Esther takes the injured Peepy in her arms, soothing the child until he falls asleep while his mother continues to dictate letters about Africa. Esther recalls:

> I was so occupied with Peepy that I lost the letter in detail, though I derived such a general impression from it of the momentous importance of Africa, and the utter insignificance of all other places and things, that I felt quite ashamed to have thought so little about it.[510]

Despite the efficacy of her perspective, Esther disparages her point of view here with tongue firmly in cheek. It is precisely Esther's attention to those seemingly insignificant "places and things" that allow her to detect suffering and work some immediate good for Peepy and later for the younger Ms. Jellyby. Esther's outlook is the opposite of Mrs. Jellyby's telescopic philanthropy which is far reaching, but ultimately useless in addressing the needs of her children.

Esther also exposes the charitable ineptitude of the neighborhood do-gooder Mrs. Pardiggle whose limited perspective prevents her from recognizing the needs of the brick makers. Mrs. Easther can see right away that Mrs. Pardiggle is one of those charitable people "who did a little and made a great deal of noise."[511] Upon forming this opinion, Esther is stunned when Mrs. Pardiggle accuses her of "[having] found [her] out."[512] Initially Esther thinks Mrs. Pardiggle is referring to her deduction and "the guilty nature of [her] own consciousness" that "must have been expressed in the colour of [her] cheeks."[513] Instead Mrs. Pardiggle thinks Esther has noticed the "prominent point in [her own] character" or her love of hard work in the service of her charitable mission that she believes is "so prominent as to be discoverable immediately."[514] Mrs.

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[510] Ibid., 55.
[511] Ibid., 124.
[512] Ibid., 127.
[513] Ibid.
[514] Ibid.

Pardiggle makes a show of laying herself “open to detection,” with these statements, but something that is “discoverable immediately” does not require detection. Mrs. Pardiggle only raises the “prominent point” of her character as a red herring to trick Esther into believing her charitable façade. Mrs. Pardiggle may think she has successfully fooled Esther, but Esther really has found her out.

As Esther observes at the brick makers’ cottage, Mrs. Pardiggle fails to “do good” because her narrative perspective is too narrow. Esther characterizes Mrs. Pardiggle’s limited point of view by depicting her as out of place in the cottage. Mrs. Pardiggle seats “herself on one stool and knock[s] down another,” and her disruptive physical presence indicates she is out of touch with the very people she is trying to help.[515] Overlooking the brick maker’s poverty, she doggedly pursues their moral betterment, pulling out her bible “as if it were a constable’s staff and [taking] the whole family into [religious] custody…as if she were an inexorable moral policeman carrying them all off to a station-house.”[516] Esther’s characterization of Mrs. Pardiggle as a “moral policeman” likens her to Inspector Bucket whose similarly limited perspective prevents him from recognizing the trauma of others. Instead of helping the brick makers, Mrs. Pardiggle’s focus on morality erects an “iron barrier” between them and both Esther and Ada feel “intrusive and out of place.”[517]

Unlike Mrs. Pardiggle, Esther’s intimate perspective is informed by trauma and it allows her to see and address the suffering of the cottagers, specifically Jenny and her baby. Esther claims to lack this narrative perspective, poking fun at Mrs. Pardiggle who really does lack all following qualities needed to help people. Esther tells Mrs. Pardiggle she is “inexperienced in the art of adapting [her] mind to minds very differently situated, and *addressing them from suitable points of view*" when her trauma allows her to empathize intimately with others' perspectives.[518] Her deep compassion for others' suffering also belies her claim that she has "not that *delicate knowledge of the heart* which must be essential to such a work."[519]

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[515] Ibid., 130.
[516] Ibid., 132.
[517] Ibid., 128.

Esther's intimate understanding of trauma leads her to notice keenly the suffering of Jenny, an abused "woman with a black eye," she sees "nursing a poor little gasping baby by the fire."[520] After Mrs. Pardiggle leaves, Esther and Ada approach the child when Esther, seeing "what happened…drew [Ada] back. The child died."[521] Only Esther can witness the moment of the child's death because it mirrors her own hidden trauma. Like the dead infant, Esther is the child Lady Dedlock presumed dead at birth, and the loss of Jenny's child parallels Lady Dedlock's loss of Esther.

In addition to satirizing these characters to reveal their true nature, Esther's empathetic perspective gives her access to information her male counterpart Bucket cannot detect. Despite her ability, their relationship anticipates how male detectives would treat their female counterparts in later fiction. Like future female investigators, Esther "remain[s] silent and [is] carried along by the authoritarian assumptions of" the male detective Bucket, "including [his] belief that she [is] unlikely to be intelligent or brave," and, for the most part, Esther "remain[s] quiet," following Bucket's lead.[522] It might seem that Esther's subordinate role reduces her effectiveness as an investigator, but she notices "different clues" and is "welcomed behind doors closed to her male" counterpart Bucket.[523] At the brick maker's cottage Bucket cedes the inquiries to Esther, telling her the "naturalest way is the best way, and the naturalest way is your own way."[524] This "naturalest way" refers to Esther's perspective, informed by her own trauma, which gleans more information from the brick maker's wife Liz than Bucket's interrogation would have. "Bursting into tears," Esther inquires after the whereabouts of Lady Dedlock which evokes a strong response in Liz.[525] Esther senses Liz "[has] a great desire to answer" her, so much so that Esther thinks she "would have spoken to [her] privately if she had dared."[526] Liz even risks a violent beating from her husband to answer Esther. Liz timidly asks her husband: "If my master would let me speak, and not say a word of harm—" but he breaks off her narrative with threats to "break [her] neck if [she] meddle with wot don't concern" her.[527] Liz's husband silences her testimony, but Esther is able to acquire some of the information that she needs: that Lady Dedlock visited the cottage and left at the same time as the absent Jenny. Esther only regrets that Jenny was not present, confident she "would have resisted no entreaty of [hers]." [528]

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[518] Ibid.
[519] Ibid.
[520] Ibid., 584.
[521] Ibid., 579.
[522] Sims, "Introduction," xiii.

While Esther is able to procure vital information to the investigation, Bucket's surface perspective prevents him from deciphering the evidence of Lady Dedlock's trauma that could lead to her recovery. After losing track of Lady Dedlock, Bucket backtracks to London where Lady Dedlock has left a letter for Esther with Guster, the Snagsby's servant. Bucket fails to read the trauma encoded in Lady Dedlock's letter or successfully interrogate Guster to determine her whereabouts. Guster is "subject to fits" and when Mrs. Snagsby seizes the poor girl from behind it sends her into an emotional shock.[529] Unable to "[bring Guster] to reason," Bucket attempts to decipher Lady Dedlock's letter, but he lacks the interpretive depth necessary to understand the trauma represented in the letter's narrative structure.[530] The letter is a fragmented and almost illegible, "a pencil-writing…folded roughly like a letter," written "on a crushed and torn piece of paper, blotted with wet…written in portions, at different times."[531] Bucket's inability to recognize the trauma of Lady Dedlock's exposure encoded in the letter is what leads to her death. Lady Dedlock writes that her physical symptoms like "cold, wet, and fatigue…are sufficient causes for [her] being found dead," but concludes she "shall die of [other,]" causes, referring to the trauma of her exposure which causes her to die "of terror and [her] conscience."[532]

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[523] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 876.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid.
[526] Ibid., 877.
[527] Ibid., 878.
[528] Ibid., 880.

In addition to representing her trauma, the fragmented narrative structure of Lady Dedlock's letter also works to obscure all evidence of her "crime," recalling Esther's past attempts to destroy any signs of her mother's shame. Just as Esther destroyed her mother's letter to protect her, Lady Dedlock obscures her narrative to protect her husband Sir Leicester. In order to mitigate the damage caused by the loss of her reputation, Lady Dedlock does "all [she can] to be lost" hoping to soon be "forgotten…[and therefore] disgrace [Sir Leicester] least."[533] She engages in a narrative and literal obliteration of self, parting with the paper containing her narrative and removing anything "about [her] by which [she] can be recognized" before she lays down to die, succeeding in erasing herself where Esther fails.[534]

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[529] Ibid., 905.
[530] Ibid.
[531] Ibid., 909.
[532] Ibid., 910.
[533] Ibid.
[534] Ibid.

Unlike Bucket, Esther's narrative point of view is informed by trauma and this gives her access to Guster's testimony which solves the mystery of Lady Dedlock's disappearance. Traumatized by her encounter with Mrs. Snagsby, Guster is impervious to questioning by Bucket. Bucket defers to Esther who coaxes out Guster's testimony by identifying emotionally with her trauma. Esther soothes Guster, putting the servant girl's "poor head upon [her] shoulder, whereupon she drew her arm round [Esther's] neck and burst into tears."[535] Esther then proceeds to share her own pain over her missing mother, just as she did with Liz at the cottage. She lays her face against Guster's forehead, "for indeed [she] was crying too, and trembling."[536] This show of emotion galvanizes Guster to testify, and she tells Esther she gave Lady Dedlock directions to the poor burying ground where Captain Hawdon was laid to rest. This important piece of information leads Bucket and Esther to the gates of the poor graveyard where they find Lady Dedlock's body, as Esther's intimate understanding of trauma solves the case. Curiously, in both the 2005 film and 1985 TV mini-series of *Bleak House*, it is Bucket instead of Esther who successfully locates Lady Dedlock based on clues from her farewell letter. This adaptation may streamline the plot, but it ultimately erases Esther from a key moment in the investigation, contributing to the image of the indefatigable male detective who can solve any case. This overshadows Esther's vital contribution to the investigation into her mother's disappearance and mirrors how critics of Dickens' novel have continued to overlook Esther's investigative potential.

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[535] Ibid., 911.

[536] Ibid.

EPILOGUE

GOTHIC DETECTION

From the start of the gothic genre, detection has existed in the form of fate or a mortal detective to repair the trauma at the core of these narratives. Gothic works convey the fragmenting experience of trauma as one of terror and confusion, while detective fiction works to repair narrative trauma by embracing a conservative frame. Most detective fiction begins with a crime or mystery that, much like the experience of trauma, causes a rift in the narrative. The figure of the detective reads the clues in order to repair this rift, solve the case and reestablish the status qou. The interplay between the gothic and detective genres that I've explored in this dissertation paved the way for the ultimate gothic detective, Sherlock Holmes. As I mentioned in my introduction, Holmes plunges into the urban gothic depths of Victorian London to bring its crimes to light. Instead of being swallowed up by the gothic, he is able to create a coherent narrative of the crime in order to avert or repair trauma. In this way Holmes belongs to the tradition female detectives like Esther from *Bleak House*. He is not rigidly masculine and his profound perspective allows him to solve crimes the police cannot. This empathetic style of detection is actually a perfection of C. Auguste Dupin's principles of investigation. Dupin's philosophy of detection underscores the importance of knowing what it feels like to be someone else. This is what allows him to defeat Minister D—and recover the Queen's stolen missive in "The Purloined Letter." What detectives like Holmes illustrate is that those who have experienced trauma are far better at detecting the source of trauma in others than those who have not. Empathy in detection is vital to the mission of future investigators who embrace the male and female energies of detection.

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