

Introduction: disrupting the critical genealogy of the Gothic



Dreadful was the whole! truly dreadful! A story of so much horror, from atrocious and voluntary guilt never did I hear! Mrs. Smelt and myself heartily regretted that it had come in our way, and mutually agreed that we felt ourselves ill-used in ever having heard it.

Frances Burney (1786)¹

We do not pretend to give this novel as one of the first order, or even of the second; it has, however, sufficient interest to be read with pleasure. The terrible prevails, and the characters of the two heroes in crime, are *too* darkly tintured ... There is no fine writing in these volumes ... but in point of moral tendency they are unexceptionable.

Review (1794) of Eliza Parsons, *Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793)²

Frances Burney's assessment of Horace Walpole's play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) reflects a strong discomfort with its depiction of mother-son incest that offers revealing insights into the nature of the play's reception. Almost universally condemned or criticised, Walpole's play was unperformed in his lifetime and was read by a narrow audience as a consequence of its limited print run from Walpole's Strawberry Hill Press. Burney's own experience of the play was itself suggestive of the illicit atmosphere that surrounded the work. Though long eager to read Walpole's work, Burney found that the play's restricted availability made this impossible until she received a copy from the Queen. After Burney's friends learned that the play was in her possession, they requested a

reading. However, 'the loan being private, and the book having been lent to her Majesty by Lord Harcourt' subject to 'restrictions' of which Burney was not fully aware, she requested permission from the Queen before reading it aloud with Mr and Mrs Smelt, Mr de Luc and the Rev. Charles de Guiffardière at a private gathering.³ Burney's description of her reaction is characterised by horror, regret and ill-use at having been witness to, and participant in, the reading of the play. While Burney's belief that the play had forever prejudiced her against Walpole did not persist – on seeing him some months later she 'forget[s] the spleen I had conceived against him upon reading his tragedy' – her reaction illuminates the play's content as highly troubling.⁴ Her pointing towards the 'voluntary' nature of maternal guilt alludes to the agency of the mother's instigation of incest by posing as a servant and having sex with her unwitting son. In the play the mother reveals her incestuous capacity to her son in a scene that disrupts the gender ideologies informing conventional representations of incest in which men are the active abusers of women. Burney's discomfort with the 'dreadful' and 'atrocious' work, typical of reactions to the play, indicates a sense of how deeply it troubles ideologies of gender and sexuality that implicitly inform readings of mother–son incest as the most disturbing of all incestuous relationships.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was even more repulsed by the play than Frances Burney, calling it 'the most disgusting, vile, detestable composition that ever came from the hand of man. No one with a spark of true manliness, of which Horace Walpole had none, could have written it.'⁵ Coleridge's detestation of the play and his sense that it was 'vile' inform his disparagement of the author's 'manliness'; he believed that only an aberrant man could have imagined scenes of a passive and victimised son. His assertion that a man could not have written the play underscores the extent to which Coleridge identified the victimisation and passivity of the son as the conception of a non-normative male author. Coleridge's disgust is explicated by George E. Haggerty, who argues that 'abject, passive masculinity challenges the status quo with the "disgusting" proposition that some men are victims too.'⁶ And to an even greater extent than the passive masculinity that is repulsive to Coleridge, it is the simultaneous agency of the mother that so upsets the dominant ideologies.

Conversely, the anonymous reviewer of Eliza Parsons's *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), a Gothic novel that, like Walpole's play, centres on incestuous desire, reads the work 'with pleasure.' This is quite a departure from Burney's and Coleridge's reactions to reading the incestuous

plot in Walpole's play. In fact, although the villains in Parsons's novel are described as 'too darkly tintured' and the quality of writing is not praised, the reviewer summarises the narrative as morally 'unexceptionable'. The difference between the responses to these Gothic works lies in the type of incestuous relationship depicted. Parsons's novel depicts the growing romantic love of an uncle, Mr Weimar, for his niece, Matilda, who recounts: "[my uncle] was for ever seeking opportunities to caress me, his language was expressive of the utmost fondness, he praised my person in such glowing colours ... I began to be extremely uneasy at freedoms I scarce knew how to repulse."⁷ The uncle's incestuous designs turn violent and culminate with him stabbing Matilda, who survives. Parsons's novel is praised (though faintly) by the reviewer because the form of incest appears to conform to conventional sexual and gender ideologies. An uncle's sexually violent pursuit of his niece positions the female as passive victim to an aggressive male sexuality that, while condemned for its violation of the incest taboo, nonetheless adheres to a familiar structure of power and sexuality. The reactions to these different configurations of incest in *The Mysterious Mother* and *The Castle of Wolfenbach* reveal a marked discomfort with incestuous behaviour that subverts heteronormative ideologies of gender and sexuality.⁸

What becomes clear in these examples is that incest is employed by male and female authors of the Gothic in a variety of familial relationships that vary as much in their formulations as they do in their functions. In this book I intervene in the scholarly accounts of incest that, much like the Gothic's contemporary readings, rely on gendered divisions of the genre that, I will argue, limit ways of reading incestuous relationships. By questioning the gender logic according to which the genre has been read, I argue that it is possible to see how incest functions in a number of paradoxical ways, acting as a consequence of patriarchy's control of female bodies and property, as an escape from this patriarchal control and as an exposure of the inadequacy of heteronormative models of sexuality.⁹ In so doing, I demonstrate that incest was representative of a range of interests crucial to writers of the Gothic – often women or homosexual men who adopted a critical stance in relation to the heteronormative patriarchal world. In repositioning the Gothic, representations of incest are revealed as synonymous with the Gothic as a whole: complex, multifaceted and consciously resistant to the dominant social and sexual hegemonies in their models of alternative agencies, sexualities, forms of desire and family structures.

Whether defined in anthropological, biosocial, or psychoanalytic terms the incest taboo is viewed generally as an essential prohibition without which society would not function. The prohibition of incest was defined by Claude Lévi-Strauss as 'the fundamental step' in forming society, the transgression of which causes atavistic endogamy.¹⁰ Joseph Shepher located the incest taboo as being rooted in biology as well as social rules and customs and argued that violations against it are genetically and socially damaging.¹¹ The Freudian understanding of the incest taboo positions it as a necessary part of psychosexual development for adolescents that allows them to distance themselves from their sexual desires for their parents and form non-familial attachments.¹² In these understandings the incest taboo serves to prohibit sexual acts between biologically related family members, yet psychiatrist Judith Herman argues that incest should be viewed as a sexually motivated act that violates the relationship between a child and adult in a position of familial power, regardless of blood kinship.¹³ In this book I widen Herman's definition to include any sexual behaviour (suggested or explicit) between people of any age involved in a familial relationship, regardless of a blood tie. My deployment of the term 'incest taboo' indicates established definitions of incest as a natural, universal proscription, a prohibition against violating positions of familial power and understandings of it as law instituted by society.

Incest, a sexual act associated with transgression, violations of power and violence, has readily been conflated with sexual violence in Gothic scholarship and consigned to one of two gendered plots. Anne K. Mellor, for example, argues that 'the Gothic novel written by men presents the father's incestuous rape of his daughter as the perverse desire of the older generation to usurp the sexual rights of the younger generation, while the Gothic novel written by women represents incest as a cultural taboo which functions to repress the sexual desires of women.'¹⁴ Mellor's assessment represents what a large proportion of scholarship on the genre argues: that meanings of incest differ based on their presence in works designated as Male or Female Gothic. Such distinctions relegate individual depictions of incest into categories of overt masculine perversion or feminine sexual repression and entrench understandings of the Gothic novel as written by women as departures from or reactions to male-authored texts. This standard view is corroborated by David Punter and Glennis Byron: 'the male Gothic text, both in its subject matter and its

narrative conventions, is usually considered to be particularly transgressive: violence, especially sexual violence, is dealt with openly and often in lingering detail ... In the female Gothic plot, the transgressive male becomes the primary threat to the female protagonist.¹⁵ While Mellor's argument pertains specifically to the author's sex and Punter and Byron focus on gendered plot conventions, both divide representations of sexuality into distinct male or female modes. Yet scholarly understandings of representations of incest in the Gothic as having distinct meanings determined by authorial gender overlook the variety of ways in which writers use incestuous relationships and neglect the complexity of their implications.

Eliza Parsons's and Horace Walpole's Gothic works, like many other Gothic texts, resist the models of incest discerned by modern scholarship. Parsons's novel uses incest to highlight the inequities of primogeniture and the links between financial, sexual and legal constraints and acts of violence against women. It would, however, be difficult to argue that Parsons's representation of incest positions Mr Weimar's violent and sexual attacks on his niece as a cultural taboo repressing her sexual desires. As subsequent chapters will explore, there are examples of Gothic novels written by women in which incest functions in this way. Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798) is, I argue, critical of laws that deny or reject incestuous unions while novels by Ann Radcliffe that position the brother as an ideal but unavailable mate include *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story* (1789) and *A Sicilian Romance* (1790). But to attempt to fit Parsons's novel to the theoretical framework advanced by Mellor would be to distort its purpose. Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* equally defies such paradigms of male- or female-authored representations of incest. The mother's agency in the play reveals, not a desire to usurp her son's sexual rights, but to reassert her own via the closest physical substitute for her husband. The play presents laws repressing female sexual desire outside of wedlock as aberrant, a theme close to what Mellor identifies as presented by the Gothic as written by women. Similarly, Parsons's fictional uncle, in his violent pursuit of his niece, is aligned with Mellor's understanding of male-authored Gothic incest as a perverse desire unjustly to control the younger generation. Such disparities reveal that scholarly accounts of two mutually exclusive modes of Gothic incest ignore the interconnected nature of incestuous representations.

THE FORMATION OF MALE AND FEMALE PARADIGMS
OF INCEST IN THE GOTHIC

Sexuality, questions of ownership, inheritance, women's subjugation to male authority, laws of coverture and primogeniture and issues concerning gender roles pervade Gothic works from the mid-eighteenth century on. Authors of the Gothic explore the non-normative and unconventional sexuality inherent in the genre to expose the limitations and dangers of conventional ideologies through incestuous configurations in importantly divergent ways. My use of the terms ideology and hegemony relies on Antonio Gramsci's deployment of them as well as later evaluations thereof by scholars such as Terry Eagleton and Raymond Williams. Gramsci understood hegemony as the consent of society to be dominated by force; a consent that is engendered partially through the use of ideology as 'an instrument of domination and social hegemony'.¹⁶ Gramsci clarifies that ideologies operate as weapons wielded by the dominant social or political class in order to create a consensually subordinate society. He argues that 'the "normal" exercise of hegemony ... is characterized by a combination of force and consent which balance each other so that force ... appears to be backed by the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion.'¹⁷ Gramsci's belief that the exercise of hegemony cannot rely entirely on the government's 'power and material force'¹⁸ finds articulation in society through the function of ideology. This is expanded on in Eagleton's description of hegemony as 'the ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates'; that hegemony '*includes* ideology, but is not reducible to it'.¹⁹ These understandings of hegemony and ideology contribute to my examination of the Gothic in part through the insights they make available regarding the genre's function and reception within its contemporary social hegemony; how representations of incest within the Gothic depart from or shore up various ideologies; and how scholarship has itself frequently adhered to such ideologies of gender and sexuality in its treatment of incest within the genre.

Heteronormative ideology ensures behaviour abides by seemingly 'natural' social rules and produces the heterosexual/queer binary that demonstrates hegemony's ability to allow for resistance.²⁰ In such a system apparently transgressive behaviour can be tolerated, even though it is ostensibly taboo, if it corresponds to the overriding power structure. This can be seen in the contemporaneous responses to Parsons's *Wolfenbach*

and Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* discussed earlier; Parsons's work was considered unobjectionable as the incest demonstrated a recognisable pattern of male-perpetrated sexual violence while Walpole's depictions of maternal incestuous desire exceeded the tolerated level of nonconformity in its simultaneous confrontations with sexual, gender and power norms. Walpole's work is no more radical than Parsons's; however, Parsons's challenges to inheritance and marriage laws were largely overlooked given their deployment alongside a representation of incest adherent to the gender and sexual ideologies. As the critical genealogy of the Gothic demonstrates, the genre's readings have often been informed by their participation in these ideologies and attempts either to locate Gothic incest within the dominant discourses or to reject them act as what Eagleton describes as a form of institutionalised social control.²¹ Such functions of power are insidious: 'it is preferable ... for power to remain conveniently invisible, disseminated throughout the texture of social life and thus "naturalized" as custom, habit, spontaneous practice.'²² Eagleton's description of power disseminated as customs corresponds to Foucault's understanding of 'mechanisms of power ... irreducible to the representation of the law.'²³ Readings of the genre can thus consent to and act as mechanisms of hegemonic power in their reproductions of 'natural' ideologies.²⁴ This book participates in the work being done by scholars who re-evaluate traditional accounts of the Gothic in order to argue that representations of incest frequently provide truly transgressive and counter-hegemonic models of desire, sexuality, gender and society.²⁵ These Gothic paradigms expose the dangers and effects of complicity to seemingly naturalised practices, rendering visible the invisible function of power to demonstrate that what society propagates as 'natural' practices are in fact highly unnatural constructs.²⁶

The Gothic is still frequently understood, as it was by its contemporary readership, along apparently natural gender lines, in spite of its reclamation as a genre worthy of literary study in the 1970s by feminist scholars and later by queer theorists.²⁷ While Ellen Moers's first introduction of the term Female Gothic in the 1970s was not intended to position female-written novels as a deviation from a male ordinary genre, this was a consequence of its usage.²⁸ The term, though newly coined, echoed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criticism in which female writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Eliza Parsons were set up as delicate and timid counters to the aggressive sexuality depicted in the works of male writers such as Matthew Lewis and William Beckford. As E. J.

Clery explains: 'Novels where spirits are not rationalised, the most famous example in the 1790s being *The Monk* ... are "real" Gothic, while the class of the "explained supernatural", largely authored by women, is a diminished, self-censoring version of the first.'²⁹ Sir Walter Scott certainly subscribed to such a view when he described Radcliffe's works as hesitant and tremulous in comparison to the bold and aggressive writings of Lewis early on in the Gothic's history by suggesting that Radcliffe's use of superstition was underpinned by 'anxiety' as opposed to Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), which was written 'as if he believed'.³⁰ Attempts to reposition the Female Gothic, such as Kate Ferguson Ellis's argument that the 'masculine Gothic' reacted to a female genus, risk reiterating a conformity to gendered ideologies that is, as I will argue, at odds with the content of the novels to be examined.³¹

The terms Male and Female Gothic are used in more recent scholarship as a means of describing narrative technique or of characterising the use of the supernatural and representations of violence. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith identify the 1990s as a period in which 'critics came to distinguish between Female Gothic and Male Gothic, initially identified with the gender of the writer. The Female Gothic plot, exemplified by Radcliffe ... [and] the Male Gothic plot, exemplified by Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*'.³² The distinction reproduces the gendered structure underlying critical accounts of the supernatural that Clery points to as a means by which critics could dismiss Gothic novels by women as less valid than their male-authored counterparts. A similar division emerges in discussions surrounding depictions of incest in the Gothic. With the exception of Mellor's conclusion that the functions of incest are determined by authorial gender, scholarly accounts of incest do not usually articulate an adherence to the earlier critical convention of gendering incest. However, readings of incest are invariably predetermined by this gendered framework. Violent, consummated, male-perpetrated acts of incest allow texts to be considered masculine or 'real' Gothic, while incest that is averted, non-violent or implied is considered part of the Female Gothic tradition. Such a view is apparent in James Watt's argument that Lewis's deployment of sexuality 'amplified the suggestion of impropriety that was only implicit in the work of a writer such as Ann Radcliffe'.³³ Similarly, Vartan P. Messier's description of Radcliffe's use of incest as 'restrained' in comparison to the 'truly transgressive' Lewis shows how conceptions of incest and sexuality continue to be read as part of a male or female tradition.³⁴

In this book, I will employ the term Female Gothic as it applies to the extant scholarship and in my own analyses I will use the ungendered designation Gothic regardless of the supposedly gendered plot or author's gender. The term Male Gothic will be used in reference to scholarly examinations of texts typically referred to as Gothic and understood as part of the male tradition. With these terminological distinctions I hope to reveal the gendered division of the genre as a restrictive manoeuvre that has contributed to reductive gendered readings of incestuous relationships. My desire to trouble the ongoing use of the term Female Gothic is not without precedent. Recent scholarly works such as *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (2009) question the term, though the study ultimately argues for its continued use.³⁵ Subdividing the genre into families born of Radcliffean or Walpolian parents imposes boundaries within the Gothic's literary genealogy that is, like the families in the novels themselves, a large and unwieldy one that defies such neat categorisation. Though the clues may seem to point in one direction – a touch of the explained supernatural indicating 'Mother Radcliffe', much like Ellena's miniature necklace points to Schedoni as her father in *The Italian* (1797) – characteristics can betray the imprint of more than one parent.³⁶ Gothic novels do not belong to one of two distinct, gendered approaches, but to one genre that uses representations of incest to demonstrate a range of violent behaviour, unjust legal positions, ideal egalitarian relationships and the demands and dangers of the heteronormative culture from which they deviate.

MODES OF READING INCEST IN THE GOTHIC

If incest in the Gothic has been viewed by scholars through restrictive gendered lenses, modern literary analyses of the genre have equally been constrained by feminist perspectives on incest derived from sociological and psychological theories. The understanding of incest as a typically violent or non-consensual act reflective of male power is typified by psychologists and sociologists such as Lena Dominelli and Julie Brickman, who view incest almost exclusively as the rape of girls by older male family members.³⁷ That such formations of this incest paradigm coincided with feminist criticism's reclamation of the Female Gothic in the 1970s undoubtedly determined literary scholarship to read incest in the Gothic as representative of violent sexual aggression.³⁸

Seminal works on the Female Gothic by scholars such as Ellen Moers's *Literary Women* and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) were written alongside works such as Juliet Mitchell's influential *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974) and Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977). Mitchell retrieved Freudian theory from feminist abandonment to explain that the Oedipus complex 'is *not* about the nuclear family, but about the institution of culture within the kinship structure and the exchange relationship of exogamy ... It is specific to nothing but patriarchy.'³⁹ Mitchell's work examines how psychoanalysis can be used to understand patriarchal and capitalist adherence to the incest taboo while Irigaray's work troubles theories of the exchange of women as essential to the maintenance of patriarchal structures. The positions may seem diametrically opposed, but both Irigaray and Mitchell use Lévi-Strauss's argument that the incest taboo is essential to society to analyse what feminist scholar Gayle Rubin calls 'the traffic in women.'⁴⁰ In contrast, Dominelli and Brickman contended that the taboo is constantly violated by the very men who should desire to uphold it. However, all these feminist scholars expose patriarchy's control of female sexuality through abuses of power that are encoded within the social structure. In a sense, the exchange of women that demands the incest taboo concurrently creates a system of control over female bodies that lends itself to incestuous sexual abuse. These scholars have revealed through the intersections of psychoanalytic, cultural and sociological discourses on incest the ways coercive or forced incestuous assaults reflect the wider structures of patriarchy's control of women.

The sociological understanding of incest as a violent abuse of male power inherent in the family structure is relied upon by much modern scholarship on the Gothic that thus reads incest in the Female Gothic as a violent expression of the dangers of patriarchy. This understanding of incest has focused scholarship most intently on instances of father-daughter incest to the exclusion of other configurations of incestuous desire. As Fred Botting writes: 'Familial and sexual relations, power and suppression, turn on the roles and figures of father and daughter.'⁴¹ Similarly, the reliance of Gothic scholarship on Freudian models of desire that require the child's sexual desire for and rejection of the parent has contributed to the emphasis on readings of incestuous fathers and daughters.⁴² Robert Miles, for example, observes the Freudian model of desire at work in Radcliffe's novels, noting that: 'the daughter is frequently in flight from the "father", or his substitutes, often with incestuous entanglements

and overtones.⁴³ The sociologically informed mode of understanding incest also focuses on the social implications of patriarchy, and scholars of the Gothic who work within this framework often examine the legal implications of coverture, primogeniture, divorce and issues of gender, sexuality and family to demonstrate how incest is united with these themes under the rubric of abusive male power.⁴⁴

Perhaps best exemplified by Ellis's groundbreaking and influential *The Contested Castle* (1989), this important body of work exposes fundamental dangers in the assumed safe haven of the home, establishing the correlation between Gothic representations of the family, domesticity and terror.⁴⁵ Building on such work, Ruth Perry describes incest as 'the meaning of the gothic novel' that represents through its repeated depictions of 'a girl singled out, against her will, in her own domestic space, for the sexual attentions of a father, an uncle, or a brother' the dangers of male tyranny.⁴⁶ Underscoring connections between family and fear, sexuality and imprisonment, feminist scholars equate patriarchal institutions with violence and terror, locating incest as an extension of these dangers.⁴⁷ In this vein Angela Wright argues that: 'the Gothic genre's treatment of violence, murder and incest is linked symbiotically with issues of sexuality and gender within the fiction'.⁴⁸ Wright's partnering of incest with violence is connected to Perry's description of a girl singled out in what should be a safe space. Relating sexual violation within the home to male tyranny, this model shows that incest is understood as a culmination of public and private abuses.⁴⁹ When Maggie Kilgour argues that 'Incest ... suggests an abnormal and extreme desire (a violation of natural familial ties)', she similarly picks up on the notion of incest as an aberrant violation of the bonds of family.⁵⁰ In locating incest as an unwanted and forceful transgression of 'natural familial ties', these desires are identified as synonymous with the equally unnatural abuses of power committed by male family members.⁵¹

When Gothic scholars privilege Freudian over sociological understandings of incest in their readings, the father–daughter relationship – while still emphasised – is read not only as an abuse of male power, but also as a threat existing sometimes solely in the heroine's mind. Relying on Freud's psychoanalytic framework that female sexuality develops in response to the father before being transferred to another man causes literary scholarship to position the Gothic heroine in flight from threats that are more fantasy than fact. Such arguments underpin Diane Long Hoeveler's claim that Female Gothic heroines imagine incestuous threats

because they have ‘an infantile desire to remain in the paternal and protective domicile of childhood’ and can only reconcile leaving this sphere to marry an outsider if they ‘fancy’ their fathers are evil.⁵² In using psychoanalytic theory to examine the Female Gothic’s subversive nature, scholars point to the heroine’s fantasy of paternal threats as reflective of a passive resistance to patriarchy.⁵³ This assessment of the Female Gothic identifies a combination of personal, psychological, social and economic anxieties expressed through the heroines’ fears of malevolent parents and locates these fears as the genre’s ‘originating fantasy’.⁵⁴ Scholars such as Eugenia C. DeLamotte and Ellis likewise read incest portrayals as representative of the distinctly unique experience of women and women writers in the long eighteenth century, serving to foreground their subjugation to patriarchal power, the trap of domesticity and anxieties relating to the changing structure of the family and their shifting role therein as daughter and/or wife.⁵⁵ Incest, in this body of scholarship, is viewed as imagined by heroines who are shaped by their desires for their fathers or as a hyperbolisation of their psychological anxieties and disempowered legal status and these scholars have offered nuanced and important insights into the genre.

Yet the sociological and psychological understandings of incest that influence modern scholarship on the Gothic contribute to overlapping paradigms of incest that are inadequate to account for incestuous configurations that do not posit real or imagined threats from a father or father figure. The view of incest in the Gothic that arises from Freudian understandings of incest asserts heroines must invent incestuous threats in order to flee from their fathers and form attachments to non-kin lovers who will replace their fathers as their protectors.⁵⁶ The second model relies on feminist sociologists’ definition of incest as a violent literalisation of the unequal power relations in the patriarchal family. The psychological understanding of incest as integral to female development is, Haggerty reveals in his analysis of *The Italian*, also underpinned by the sociological understanding of the inherent violence in this incestuous configuration. Haggerty concludes: ‘this midnight encounter of incestuous violation always already suggests the paternal ... Paternal violence shapes the heroine just as the terms of her very existence seem to depend on his whim, or rather his pleasure.’⁵⁷ Haggerty’s reading demonstrates that these two models are not oppositional accounts of incest, but provide in their intersections of violence, sexuality, power and family a means of theorising incest as a potential threat inherent within the power structures of male–female relationships.

It is easy to see why scholars of the Gothic often subscribe to psychological and sociological paradigms of incest that readily accord with the notion of the Gothic as a subversive genre, but they nonetheless restrict incest to a 'bad daddy' model that claims older men as father-substitutes and positions both fathers and father-substitutes as inhabiting the same paternal role. The limitations become clear when the instances of father–daughter incest arising as a natural consequence of sympathetic minds and physical attraction, as sought by the daughter, or as unknowingly committed or sought are analysed closely to reveal how they trouble notions of incest as imagined, violent or representative of male power.⁵⁸ Reading uncles as father-substitutes is typical of scholarship on Radcliffe's novels in which uncles in paternal roles are common; Hoeveler positions Schedoni in *The Italian* as Ellena's father rather than as her uncle, arguing that Ellena 'fancies that ... her father has tried to kill her'.⁵⁹ Similarly, Frances A. Chiu refers to Schedoni as Ellena's 'nominal father and church father' and describes Emily's uncle-by-marriage in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) as 'the father and his friends [who] are made to appear especially threatening to the child'.⁶⁰ However, as I argue in Chapter 3, that these men are not fathers but the heroines' uncles by blood or marriage is an important part of how Radcliffe models usurpations of power, property and bodies as caused by attempts to rearticulate the available power structure informed by laws of coverture and primogeniture.⁶¹ In locating most older men as father-substitutes, the unique positions and important implications for non-paternal male relationships in which power and attraction are figured differently are overlooked. Accounts of the Gothic that suggest 'a father, an uncle, or a brother' represent the same types of abuses and threats are ultimately too narrow to encompass the various types and functions of incest in the genre.⁶² Scholars have used non-paternal relationships to corroborate an understanding of father–daughter incest that is not as monolithic as those following the psychological and sociological lines make out. While such approaches are fruitful they fail to account for the profound differences between configurations of incest featuring older male figures.

DEFINING FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND THE GOTHIC

In my analyses of incestuous relationships in the Gothic I borrow the insights of social historians who have widened understandings of the

family in the eighteenth century to include equally conjugal, affinal and consanguineal relations as kin. The changing structure and understanding of family and kinship in eighteenth-century England is the subject of important recent work by Naomi Tadmor and Joanne Bailey, each of whom examines the shifts in configurations of kinship, sexuality, marriage and laws.⁶³ Lawrence Stone's narrative of the family as evolving linearly with the economic move towards capitalism into nuclear families grounded in companionate marriage has been largely displaced by the work of these more recent social historians, particularly by Tadmor's *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England* (2001) and Bailey's *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660–1800* (2003).⁶⁴ Their accounts delineate the legal and social shifts in definitions of family to reveal that the historical narrative of family as moving away from an emphasis on consanguineal bonds to the conjugal tie is too simplistic. Rather, in the long eighteenth century, conjugal, affinal and consanguineal relatives were all considered kin and integral to the family structure, which was, Bailey argues, much more adaptable than traditional evolutionary models suggest.⁶⁵ The familial bond existed regardless of actual kinship status and allowed for broader definitions of family than traditional narratives previously asserted. Drawing on these multiple models of family for analyses of incest is particularly productive for reading the Gothic, wherein multiple representations of family comprised of non-blood individuals, foster, adopted and blood kin overlap and blur. Historical accounts of kinship provide a social context for the sometimes elusive nature of family bonds underpinning representations of incest and not only allow for a greater range of relationships to be understood as incestuous, but also reveal that the Gothic engaged with wider understandings of marriage and family than previously thought.

Scholarship on the Gothic that relies on Stone's teleological narrative of family rather than the new insights provided by more recent social historians locates increased representations of incestuous desires as occurring alongside the development of a nuclear family that had less consanguineal loyalty and thus abided less by the incest taboo. This contextualisation focuses scholarship on violent depictions of incest and leaves out the potential for female sexual desires and agency by positioning women as victims without offering an alternative narrative to their role within the family and home. In reading incestuous threats as created by a shift towards companionate marriage and a concurrent weakening of the incest taboo, Perry argues: 'both fathers and brothers began to see

their female relatives ... as possessions in their power and hence possible sex objects.⁶⁶ In a similar vein, Margot Gayle Backus's account of the weakening of the incest taboo concludes that 'with the nuclearisation of the family, the incest taboo ... came to depend on the contingent goodwill, integrity, value and self-discipline of individual fathers and brothers.'⁶⁷ These accounts of a new, eroticised nuclear family quite correctly focus on the restraint required by fathers and brothers and importantly illuminate the threat of masculine desire within the patriarchal family yet they also ignore female incestuous desires.⁶⁸ Perry maintains that the incest thematic in eighteenth-century literature, particularly the Gothic, is a consequence of the decreased emphasis on consanguineal bonds that enabled men 'to see their female relatives as sexual prey rather than co-inheritors of family traditions.'⁶⁹ Part of my investment in social historians' work on the family structure is that their insights into the coexisting nature of various family bonds open incest in the Gothic up to being read as not solely a threat to women in the nuclear family by their blood kin but as a form of desire existing within the multiple definitions of family.

The concept of non-kin becoming like kin is a common thread in the eighteenth-century novel, particularly in the Gothic, where non-kin are often co-reared. Sociologist Edward Westermarck argued that non-kin raised together during childhood form aversions to each other due to reverse sexual imprinting that makes marriages between non-blood-related siblings impractical and undesirable.⁷⁰ Such an effect is seen in novels like Sarah Sheriffe's *Correlia, or The Mystic Tomb* (1802), Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine* or the anonymously written *Adeline or The Orphan* (1790), where family groups are composed of a variety of members who may eventually be revealed as sharing consanguineal ties. The co-reared foster/adopted/blood siblings in these novels are assumed by their foster/adopted/blood parents to be capable of seeing each other only as siblings. However, this belief is frequently undermined by one or both offspring falling in love with their 'siblings'. It is not the specific kinship tie that is emphasised in these Gothic texts, but rather the coexistence of feelings that make it possible for some people to locate an individual as both family and erotic choice. That in novels like *Correlia* we see different characters subscribe to each of these models – Correlia's foster-brother loves her passionately and proposes marriage before discovering she is in fact his half-sister, while Correlia only ever loves him as a sibling – highlights the ambivalence with which incestuous desires are depicted. Representations of incestuous love occurring simultaneously

with family feeling resist the theory that relaxed consanguineal bonds led to a heightening of male sexual threats and support the idea that multiple concepts of family coexisted in the long eighteenth century.⁷¹ Alternatively, depictions of family members who meet and fall in love as adults before discovering a blood kinship and conforming to a familial relationship privilege the blood tie as fundamental to family and incest as antithetical to this structure.⁷² Kinship can be consanguineal or created from a shared childhood and incestuous desires are capable of forming in both of these models of families, the recognition of which fact highlights the fluidity of conceptions of family, sexuality and desire. The feelings of those in the consanguineal family towards their non-kin relatives are crucial in establishing whether or not an individual is regarded as family and thus if erotic desires constitute incestuous desires.⁷³

In the Gothic the incest taboo acts as a vehicle through which to literalise arbitrary laws and regulations as it is itself an arbitrary legal limitation on desire, behaviour and marriage that is flexible only insofar as it benefits the dominant hegemony's financial and political control.⁷⁴ The repeated use of incest and differing kinship bonds exposes the paradoxical crack in the social contract that forbade whilst encouraging incestuous relationships and behaviour, and thus created multiple demands and restrictions across a multitude of incestuous configurations. These contradictory requirements can be seen in Anna Maria Bennett's *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794), in which the heroine is discouraged from a financially imprudent marriage with her co-reared (presumed) cousin but encouraged to marry her wealthy father-substitute. That the heroine's family views the threat of incest as an obstruction to the former marriage and not the latter focuses attention on the financial motive and reveals the hypocrisy of overlooking incest restrictions to benefit the patriarchal structure of the family.⁷⁵ Making use of the variety of conceptions of kinship established by social historians when analysing incest in the Gothic illuminates that Gothic authors' representations of different familial bonds as incestuous – or not – expose as arbitrary the laws governing desire and how readily they are transgressed.

As we saw in the previous section, incest is not always subsumed into a model of abusive patriarchal/familial threats and violence, but has frequently been described in terms of its transgressive and subversive nature. The incest thematic as employed by women writers in the early modern period is shown to be transgressively endogamic in Maureen Quilligan's excellent work on incest in Elizabethan England.⁷⁶ Pat Gill's study of

Restoration drama describes incest as ‘a metaphor for a fundamental disorder in the condition of the state,’ pointing towards its use as a social critique of a lack of control or order.⁷⁷ Such interpretations of incest are readily applicable to the breadth of relationships and depictions of incest in the Gothic as well as the variety of earlier time periods used as Gothic settings.⁷⁸ As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, incest, an act that paradoxically demonstrates the control the law has over family and sexuality, can equally stand for the extreme imposition of the hypocritical upholders of the law, an active renunciation of these unfair laws, or the rejection of society and its laws.⁷⁹ Sought after or forced, idealised or horrifying, incestuous desires and acts emblemise the intersection of the individual with the controlling bodies of family and heteronormative society. Relocating and identifying family becomes a transformative act in which the legal and social constraints of society are avoided within a newly constructed and ideally egalitarian circle of kinship, as exemplified by the endings of *The Italian* and Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847).⁸⁰ Family – previously lost through acts of violence or usurpation required by a society with arbitrary laws governing inheritance and sexuality – is re-established as beyond the influence of such regulatory forces.

DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO INCEST IN THE GOTHIC

My use of a broad methodological framework within which to analyse representations of incest in literature has precedents in the work of scholars such as Ellen Pollak and Adam Kuper. Pollak’s important and comprehensive *Incest and the English Novel, 1684–1814* (2003) troubles existing accounts of incest using a variety of historical, legal and anthropological approaches to contextualise her literary analyses.⁸¹ Kuper similarly supports an anthropological approach with social history and literary analysis in *Incest and Influence* (2009).⁸² Other scholars, such as Hoeveler and DeLamotte, combine psychoanalytic frameworks with literary analysis to interpret incest and the Gothic.⁸³ In addition to these approaches, a yet more inclusive methodology that incorporates modern sociological and scientific research can reveal the complexities of different incestuous configurations.⁸⁴ The various disciplinary approaches available for reading the Gothic provide important and useful accounts of incest that I have relied on, combined, and expanded on in my analyses, arguing that specific incestuous configurations lend themselves to different methodological approaches. A disciplinary flexibility is required in order to

accommodate the various incestuous configurations within and beyond literature and fully to account for the complexity of these representations in the Gothic. By understanding incest in the Gothic using a broader methodology, the genre is revealed as even more politically charged than previously thought.

One of the frameworks that has dominated scholarly accounts of incest in the Gothic is the psychoanalytic approach, upon which I have already touched. Freudian theory underpins the works of Gilbert and Gubar, DeLamotte, Hoeveler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michelle A. Masse and Pamela Kaufman.⁸⁵ Psychoanalysis is also the theoretical framework for Anne Williams's *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995), in which she argues that Male and Female Gothic narrative strategies are underpinned by different Greek mythologies.⁸⁶ Such strategies offer important readings of Gothic texts, but make it difficult to move away from a gender-divided model of the Gothic through the use of a psychoanalytic lens that is predicated on such differences. The limitations of Freudian analysis are evaluated by Nancy Chodorow, who argues that Freudian psychoanalysts 'in the case of rape and incest ... have found it hard to give up the view that unconscious desires on the part of the female victim are involved'.⁸⁷ Such feminist critiques help to demonstrate that Freud's theories are grounded in a heteronormative ideology that positions women as victims with rape fantasies. Freudian analysis also risks relying on an ill-fitting model of desire as many representations of incest refuse classification within its requisite structure of an opposite sex-/dual-parent childhood to form incestuous desires. There is a further, important argument that Freudian theory itself stems from Gothic literature: 'Prefiguring Freud as much Gothic writing does, moreover, there is a case to be made for reversing the direction of influence so that psychoanalysis becomes an effect of 150 years of monster-making'.⁸⁸ Botting reveals a sense that the application of psychoanalysis to the genre that informed it is potentially anachronistic. In spite of the insights it has yielded to literary scholars of the Gothic, I argue that Freudian theories are of less use in understanding incestuous desires and models of sexuality than recent developments in the scientific and sociological fields.

Examinations of the development of the Gothic genre and its critical reception undertaken by scholars such as James Watt are particularly helpful to my argument that Gothic scholarship's ongoing adherence to gendered paradigms is grounded in its contemporary reception. Watt uses critical receptions of the Gothic and its changing conventions to argue

that the genre is far from cohesive and displaces Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) as 'an empowering fictional manifesto' that birthed Gothic spawn, examining the genre as 'an assimilative literary hybrid'.⁸⁹ Watt and I make related arguments that nevertheless diverge at a crucial point: Watt believes literary criticism understands the Gothic genre as homogeneous and argues that it requires a variety of labels including feminine (exemplified by Radcliffe) and canonical (as in Lewis's *The Monk*), while I argue that these labels rearticulate the same limited critical traditions.⁹⁰ However, Watt's methodology, with its incorporation of literary analysis and contemporary critical reception, is one that shows, in its displacement of *Otranto*, the potential for such analyses to yield new insights into longstanding scholarly understandings of the genre. I employ a similar methodology in my treatment of the critical reception of Radcliffe and Lewis to undo critical genealogies locating specific Gothic texts as male or female works that represent incest functioning in oppositional ways.

The legal lens is frequently taken up by Gothic scholars who locate within the texts criticisms and representations of specific laws and legal institutions. Historical legal contexts, such as that provided by William Blackstone's works, and current literary scholarship that uses legal frameworks with which to discuss the Gothic are integral to readings of incest. Some of the scholars whose works have provided essential analyses of the Gothic and law upon which I draw include Sue Chaplin, Ruth Bienstock Anolik, Leslie J. Moran, Pollak, Punter and Wallace.⁹¹ Moran writes that 'the Gothic and law are intimately connected institutions', viewing the genre as a philosophy rich in meaning used in legal scholarship.⁹² The legal framework can at times limit literary analysis: Chiu's use of legal history to analyse the father figure is built on her assumption that authors such as Radcliffe used 'wildly tyrannical' and 'indistinguishable' fathers, causing her to struggle to make her literary examples conform to the historical models she provides.⁹³ But other scholarly works – such as Punter's book, which argues that the intersections between the Gothic and law are productive of transgression – show just how profitable the legal lens can be.⁹⁴ In taking up Blackstone's legal descriptions of civilly dead women in marriage, Wallace reveals how these metaphors haunt Gothic writing and inform feminist criticism on it.⁹⁵ Anolik examines the laws of coverture and primogeniture to argue that the effacement of the mother in Gothic works is a literalisation of her legal status, an argument that informs my chapter on mothers.⁹⁶ Pollak's account of the changes in law under Henry

VIII that allowed cousin marriage and altered the criteria for a relationship to be declared incestuous is particularly insightful.⁹⁷ Her discussion provides important background for my chapter on cousins, just as laws of inheritance and primogeniture underpin my arguments on younger brothers and sexual violence in my chapter on uncles.⁹⁸ By focusing on legal and ecclesiastical laws as well as their intersections with philosophical understandings of natural law in eighteenth-century debates, Pollak provides context for her discussion of incest's potential for transgression in the literature of this time and demonstrates the advantages of combining disciplinary methodologies.

The history of sexuality is also essential to my analyses of Gothic texts: Michel Foucault's and Leo Bersani's understandings of power and sexuality inform my discussion of incest as politically conservative or radical.⁹⁹ Bersani's argument that reproductions of power are non-disruptive of the status quo if they simply reverse power structures provokes a re-evaluation of the understanding of incest as inherently disruptive.¹⁰⁰ As such, instances of incestuous desires where power structures are reversed or rearticulated without being disrupted, questioned or redefined are not necessarily subversive of heteronormative ideologies or patriarchal structures. Thus, rather than locating incest as always radical, what Foucault describes as an 'object of obsession and attraction' may at times be presented as a rather prosaic marriage option.¹⁰¹ Novels such as Elizabeth Thomas's *Purity of Heart, or The Ancient Costume* (1816) and Regina Maria Roche's *Clermont* (1798), both of which conclude with incestuous unions, are not necessarily subversive.¹⁰² The representation of incest as a normative choice in Thomas's portrayal of cousin marriage is revealed as an unexpectedly conservative marriage option that shores up patriarchal structures. Novels in which incestuous relationships are rejected in favour of exogamy are not necessarily conservative, as in the case of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).¹⁰³ Bersani's argument that representations of non-normative sexuality are not guaranteed to be subversive requires representations of incest to be analysed within their literary and historical contexts and within the larger framework of desire, power and sexuality. Foucault's understandings of sexuality place sexual desires within a socio-historical framework of power relations and Bersani's theories require each act to be scrutinised in terms of adherence to the power structures that inform potentially subversive acts.

Anthropological insights into the incest taboo are equally vital to my approach here. I argue that twentieth-century theories on incest aversion

can be seen in readings of eighteenth-century Gothic works, demonstrating that modern understandings of incest have long been part of the cultural discourse of desire. The Westermarck effect, as already outlined, though not taken up until the twentieth century, can nonetheless be identified as present in eighteenth-century depictions of those raised as siblings resisting or forming erotic desires for one another. Similarly, theories of women as gifts and objects of exchange advanced by Marcel Mauss and Lévi-Strauss are anticipated in eighteenth-century understandings of marriage, society and incest.¹⁰⁴ Recent scholarship on gift exchange by scholars such as Cynthia Klekar and Linda Zionkowski demonstrates the relevance of these theories to the literature of the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵ Ideas of gifts, exchange and endogamy permeate *The Sons of the Viscount and the Daughters of the Earl*, in which an uncle's incestuous desire for his niece is portrayed as greed to keep beauty and wealth within the closed circuit of the family, thus illustrating authorial awareness of the balance between exchange and the incest taboo.¹⁰⁶ Representations of incest in the eighteenth-century Gothic are rooted in shifting economic and social systems and weighted with differing consanguineal, conjugal and affinal notions of kinship.¹⁰⁷ These representations demonstrate Gothic authors were alert to the inconsistent and coexisting ideas of kinship, exogamy and endogamy, although they use a different vocabulary with which to discuss these tensions.

This different vocabulary is perhaps most readily apparent when we turn to the framework of genetics and attraction, which sheds further light on how and why incestuous desires are represented in such seemingly inconsistent ways in the Gothic. Advances in research pointing towards the influence of shared genetic material, which causes attraction between family members, give us a modern, scientifically based lexicon through which to discuss the mechanics of incest.¹⁰⁸ Borrowing this vocabulary to explore the implications of incest representations enables us to see how Gothic writers expanded on or departed from eighteenth-century understandings of blood recognition. The scientific lens allows for some of the physiological and biological aspects of incestuous desires to be presented in the language that these writers were unable to access but nonetheless understood as the pull of blood. Maurice Greenberg (a psychotherapist), David Livingstone Smith (a cognitive psychologist) and Lynn Åkesson (an ethnologist) are researchers who investigate the relationships between shared genetic material, attraction and the social consequences thereof. Smith writes: '[Genetic Sexual Attraction]

suggests that inhibitions against incest must operate against an especially potent prior attraction: sexual feelings experienced by reunited relatives are often especially intense.¹⁰⁹ Greenberg's, Smith's and Åkesson's theories beg us to reconsider the notion of narcissism that so dominates discussions of sibling incest as more than a literary convention and to understand it as a biological phenomenon.¹¹⁰ Using scientific examinations of this 'especially potent' attraction reveals how Gothic writers explained the allure of incest and how their representations differ from other non-Gothic depictions in ways often overlooked.¹¹¹ While there is a tradition of viewing Gothic incest as encompassing 'less ideal themes of violence, incest, passion and agony' than are figured in the canonical texts of Romanticism, I argue that Gothic sibling incest prefigures narcissistic Romantic sibling attraction as a mutually sought and ideal relationship.¹¹² Gothic writers frequently used the language of desire, attraction, recognition and kinship to explain what scientists now understand as genetic sexual attraction.

The following five chapters address representations of incest within different family relationships, each exploring the underlying social, sexual and legal anxieties the texts articulate through a variety of analytic lenses suited to the specific kinship bond. My chronology 1764–1847 encompasses the works of Walpole through those of the Brontës, and covers this wide span in order to engage with the ongoing developments in representations of incest from the emergence of the Gothic genre in the mid-eighteenth century through what I will argue is the culmination of the genre's representations of incest within the Brontës's complex depictions of endogamic conjugality.¹¹³ My range of texts is similar to that specified by Rictor Norton in *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764–1840* (2000), to which I add the Brontës as an essential component given their distinctive treatments of the incest thematic.¹¹⁴ I analyse this wide range of texts to point towards how early forms of the novel, for example, the sentimental and the romance, helped to shape the Gothic, which then influenced movements such as Romanticism, that, in turn, had distinct effects on late Gothic representations of incest. My selections, in this sense, owe a debt to the work of those scholars whom Michael Gamer describes as having 'banished the traditional Walpole-to-Maturin, 1764–1820 account of the gothic, with its well-demarcated origins and endings'.¹¹⁵ I argue that extending the traditional endpoint of the Gothic makes it possible to understand the full range of familial, legal, marital, sexual and class implications associated with the genre's deployment of

incest that, in later interventions in the Gothic, take on more weight and are made possible due to their engagement with the conventions established through Romantic representations of incest.¹¹⁶

Gothic authors deploy the generic convention of incest to reveal as inadequate heteronormative ideologies of sexuality and desire in the patriarchal social structure that render its laws and requirements arbitrary. I examine the various familial ties and incestuous relationships in the Gothic to show how they depict and disrupt contemporary definitions of gender, family and desire. Many of the methodologies adopted in Gothic scholarship and analyses of incest reveal ongoing continuities between their assumptions and those of the very ideologies Gothic authors strove to disrupt through their use of the incest trope. Methodologies such as Freudian psychoanalysis, as Botting argues, can be positioned as a product of Gothic monster-making, showing the effect of Gothic conventions on psychoanalytic theories that are still in wide use today.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Wallace's and Fitzgerald's points about the Gothic's ongoing influence on literary criticism and feminist metaphors usefully signal the reproduction of Gothic plots in the same scholarly accounts that seek to explain them.¹¹⁸ Not only does modern literary scholarship often replicate the eighteenth-century understandings of incest in the Gothic and its division on gendered lines, as I have argued, but modern scholarship across a multitude of disciplines also reveals a similar adherence to heteronormative ideologies pertaining to incest that can be located in the original critical accounts of incest in the Gothic.

An adherence to eighteenth-century understandings of incest is discernible in current laws on incest and marriage and it is particularly dangerous when its complicity with the normative models of sexuality, desire and marriage is overlooked. When Mary Jean Corbett deploys the nineteenth-century debates over the illegality of marrying a dead wife's sister to argue that '[w]e are far removed from a time when some relations by marriage ... did figure by orthodox standards as ... those "consanguines" related to us by blood whom we cannot legally marry,' she asserts that there are fundamental differences between the definition of family then and now.¹¹⁹ Corbett's conclusion ignores modern laws on incest that equally limit marriage to affinal relations. In fact, although it has been legal since the 1907 Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Act to marry a sister- or brother-in-law, it remains illegal to marry a mother- or father-in-law unless all the original spouses are dead or to marry a step-sibling with whom one lived before the age of eighteen or by whose

parents one was raised.¹²⁰ Such laws indicate a continued uneasiness over notions of family and potential incest and are part of an ongoing debate over which relatives by marriage and with which individuals we were raised we may marry.

The conviction that there is a gap between how the family was perceived during the long eighteenth century and current perspectives on family and incest fails to hold up under scrutiny. Modern legal, sociological and scientific analyses help to shed light on the structures of law and ideologies of sexuality that attempted to name and regulate incestuous behaviour in the long eighteenth century and that remain in place in modern society. Using the most current research on incest across the disciplines demonstrates that the works of the Gothic writers are not part of a long-dead past, but are still of significance in today's society, which continues to restrict certain desires while demanding others. These ongoing restrictions of desire and marriage, based partly in shifting definitions of kinship, reveal that we share many similarities with the Gothic world of draconian laws. In disrupting the gendered division of the Gothic and revealing the heteronormative ideologies underpinning scholarly discussions of incest, we can see the Gothic as a genre that operates against these ideologies. Through its representations of incest the Gothic genre offers a non-heteronormative understanding of social and sexual relations, making available alternative models of family, desire and sexuality.

NOTES

- 1 Frances Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, Author of "Evelina," "Cecilia," &c.* Edited by Her Niece, ed. Charlotte Barrett, 7 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), diary entry for 28 November 1786, III, p. 235.
- 2 *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, 10 (1794), 50.
- 3 Burney, pp. 234–6.
- 4 Burney, diary entry for June 1787, p. 371.
- 5 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 20 March 1834. *Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Henry N. Coleridge, 2nd edn (London: John Murray, 1836), p. 293.
- 6 George E. Haggerty, 'Psychodrama: hypertheatricality and sexual excess on the Gothic stage', *Theatre Research International*, 28:1 (2003), 32. Haggerty argues that Coleridge's reaction reveals a sense that 'unmanliness is revealed by means of sexual excess' (21).
- 7 Eliza Parsons, *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, ed. Devendra P. Varma (London: The Folio Press, 1968), pp. 11–12.