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CONCEPTUALISING THE NONCHILD:

REREADING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE FORMATION OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERARY CHILD

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DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted to the University of Edinburgh for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. An earlier version of Chapter Three, "Hardy and Heredity: Rethinking the Family Curse in *Jude the Obscure*", appears in the Autumn 2023 issue of *The Thomas Hardy Journal* (Vol. XXXIX).

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines childhood as a culturally contingent construct, shaped by 'ever-changing' societal perceptions, and explores how this notion informs the relationship between parental responsibility and the literary child in the nineteenth-century novel (Frijhoff 11). During this period, new understandings of childhood as both a developmental stage and a social construct, encouraged by the eighteenth-century "discovery of childhood", prompted a reconfiguration of parental roles and expectations. Consequently, literary depictions of children became increasingly varied, as authors sought to navigate the bounds of past and present views. As such, this thesis integrates critical frameworks from James Kincaid's *Erotic Innocence* and Susan Honeyman's *Elusive Childhood*, which argue that childhood is imposed based on adult nostalgia and desire rather than objective reality, alongside contemporary developmental theories, including Rousseau's theory of parental reciprocity and emerging heredity science.

Rather than analysing the 'default-value' idealised nineteenth-century child, who meets 'the imaginative and nostalgic demands' of their caregivers, this thesis focuses on literary representations of the nonconforming child, or "nonchild" (Morris 9, *Erotic Innocence* 144). The creation of this nonchild disrupts the anticipated reciprocal duties between parents and children, initiating a cycle wherein the failure of the child to embody the characteristics of a 'real child' culminates in parental refusal to fulfil the role of 'real' parent (*Émile* 18). These mismatched expectations shape the parent-child relationships in the three nineteenth-century novels examined in this thesis: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1802), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831), and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Each novel places parenthood at the narrative forefront and interrogates different aspects of nineteenth-century parental responsibility, including evolving societal views of female children, the consequences of erroneous creation and parental neglect, and the intersection of heredity, mental illness, and genetic parental responsibility. While the novels address parental responsibility from distinct perspectives, they converge in their treatment of reciprocal duty and love as requisites to healthy child development: '[t]he child ought to love his mother before he knows that it is his duty to love her' yet he may only do so if the prerequisites of parental responsibility have been met (Worthington 18).

The primary intention of this thesis is to evaluate how mismatched reciprocity in parent-child relationships shapes the depiction of children in the nineteenth-century novel and ultimately results in the creation of the literary nonchild.

LAY SUMMARY

This thesis examines childhood as a cultural construct, shaped by evolving societal perceptions, and explores how this notion informs the relationship between parental responsibility and the literary child in the nineteenth-century novel. During this period, new understandings of childhood prompted a reassessment of parental roles and expectations. This thesis takes novels from the beginning, middle, and end of the nineteenth century that illustrate this increased attention towards parent-child relationships but, rather than analysing the idealised nineteenth-century child, this thesis focuses on literary representations of the nonconforming child, or "nonchild". The creation of this nonchild disrupts the anticipated reciprocal duties between parents and children, leading to a cycle wherein the failure of the child to meet the requirements of a 'real child' results in parental refusal to fulfil the role of 'real' parent (*Émile* 18). This thesis examines three nineteenth-century novels that illustrate this pattern of failure: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1802), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831), and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Each novel places parenthood at the forefront of the narrative and explores distinct aspects of nineteenth-century parental responsibility, including evolving societal views of female children, the consequences of erroneous creation and parental neglect, and the intersection of heredity, mental illness, and genetic parental responsibility. Ultimately, this thesis aims to evaluate how the mismatched expectations between children and parents in these novels result in the creation of the literary nonchild.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TEXTS:

B	*Belinda* by Maria Edgeworth (1802)
E	*Émile* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1763)
F	*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (1831)
GM	*The Geneva Manuscript* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*c.*1756)
HHD	"Heredity in Health and Disease" by Henry Maudsley (1886)
HU	*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by John Locke (1689)
J	*Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy (1895)
PD	"Psychical Diseases of Early Life" by James Crichton-Browne (1860)
LN I	*The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy Vol. 1* (1984)
LN II	*The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy Vol. 2* (1984)
M I	*Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Vol 1* (1820).
M II	*Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Vol 2* (1820).
RMD	*Responsibility in Mental Disease* by Henry Maudsley (1874)
SC	*The Social Contract* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762)
SD	*Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind, or Second Discourse* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1755)
TE	*Some Thoughts on Education* by John Locke (1693)

NAMES:

PBS	Percy Bysshe Shelley
RLE	Richard Lovell Edgeworth

INTRODUCTION: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CHILD

> No longer just a stage to be passed through before being launched into life, childhood became the key to understanding the adult form, a crucial time which laid the foundations for the future.
>
> Sally Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child* (2010)

To propose that the concept of a child, and by extension the stage of childhood, are contentious topics might initially appear odd to those who consider these terms exclusively through a biological lens, wherein age is the sole determinant. Indeed, as Willem Frijhoff points out, in his 2012 lecture "Historian's Discovery of Childhood",

> …childhood is as much a *fact* of a biological and psychological nature as it is a cultural *notion* that through the centuries has been the object of ever-changing perceptions and definitions, images, approaches, and emotions. (11)

This thesis is principally concerned with the second definition, which regards childhood as an 'ever-changing' 'cultural notion' (11).[1] While this perspective complicates purely biological interpretations of childhood, it simultaneously reveals the mutability of the construct and its dependence on external factors such as parental obligation and shifting historical expectations. As such, this introduction will explore the "discovery" of childhood as a construct, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, alongside the growing significance of parental responsibility in child development. This necessitates an examination of how conceptual perceptions of childhood evolved during this period–from predetermined and 'an inferior mode of existence' to mutable and the integral 'key to understanding the adult form' (Grylls 36, *Mind of the Child* 2). This change is also reflected in a corresponding shift in the expectations and responsibilities assigned to parental figures.

[1] This thesis is predominantly focused on Western constructions of childhood and acknowledges that these conceptions deviate and diverge in cultural and societal consciousnesses that lie beyond the scope of this study.

Building on this historical groundwork, this introduction will integrate two key critical frameworks, James Kincaid's *Erotic Innocence* (1998) and Susan Honeyman's *Elusive Childhood* (2005), in order to examine the child on an individual level, as a figure 'invented' to 'meet the imaginative and nostalgic demands' of the adults around them (*Erotic Innocence* 53, 144). Kincaid and Honeyman both contend that '[t]here is no irrefutable or universal meaning of "child", rather, 'we impose "childhood" on those we define as children according to biased standards of adult nostalgia and desire' (Honeyman 3, 2). This theoretical lens will facilitate an investigation into how these enforced characteristics distort both representations of childhood as a construct and the parent-child relationship, resulting in a dynamic characterised by reciprocal exchange in place of filial love.

This thesis does not intend to conduct a traditional analysis of the 'default-value' nineteenth-century literary child —the idealised child who meets 'the imaginative and nostalgic demands' of their caregivers (Morris 9, *Erotic Innocence* 144). Instead, it will focus on the figure of the nonconforming child in the nineteenth-century novel, or the "nonchild". By initially examining traditional portrayals of childhood to discern its negative, this introduction will illustrate how nonconforming representations of children challenge and resist desire-fuelled expectations imposed by adult figures, thereby disrupting the anticipated reciprocal duties between parents and children. This, in turn, creates a cycle wherein the failure of the child to embody the characteristics of a 'real child' culminates in parental refusal to fulfil the role of "real parent" (*Émile* 18).

These mismatched reciprocal expectations define the parent-child relationships depicted in the three nineteenth-century novels selected for exploration in this thesis: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1802), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831), and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Each of these novels places parenthood at its narrative forefront and interrogates different aspects of nineteenth-century parental responsibility, including evolving

societal views of female children, the consequences of erroneous creation and parental neglect, and the intersection of heredity, mental illness, and genetic parental responsibility.

By employing a multifaceted methodological approach that integrates historical context with theoretical analysis, this introduction aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the evolution of childhood as a concept in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Specifically, the way in which this is shaped by adult desire rather than the lived experience of the child. This groundwork will support a detailed close analysis of the nineteenth-century novels I have selected in the ensuing chapters, ensuring that the discussion of an irresolute term such as childhood is thoroughly grounded in its historical and theoretical contexts.

THE "DISCOVERY" OF CHILDHOOD AS A CONSTRUCT

Philippe Ariès was the first to identify the discrepancy between biological criteria and social history in his 1960 monograph, *Centuries of Childhood,* within which he controversially claimed that 'in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist' (125). Ariès specifically differentiates between childhood and 'affection for children' and notes that the former refers to 'an awareness of the particular nature of childhood […] which distinguishes the child from the adult' and prevents their subsequent premature envelopment into 'adult society' (125).[2] Ariès borrows from Molière to explain that the 'infant who was too fragile as yet to take part in the life of adults simply "did not count"' (*Centuries* 125). Unsurprisingly, Ariès's study was deemed simultaneously seminal and divisive, assuming a 'commanding place in the historiography of the family' *and* widespread criticism from scholars of family history for its '"present-minded" point of view' (Wilson 132, 136).[3] Critiques such as this suggest that Ariès's study is more

[2] Ariès does not specify whether 'infant' refers to a baby or simply a person below the "age of majority", the threshold of adulthood in terms of legal and contractual authority, but both are similarly precluded from 'the life of adults' (125). In England and Wales, the "age of majority" was reduced to eighteen in 1969 as part of the Family Law Reform Act but, prior to this legislation, it sat at twenty-one.

[3] "Present-minded" is used here to refer to presentism, a view of the past that is considered through the present, mainly regarding comparative judgements.

usefully viewed as indicative of a continuously changing view of childhood throughout history (more particularly the increasingly definite separation of childhood and adulthood during the eighteenth century) rather than one which defines childhood as an invention of the eighteenth century.

Frijhoff likewise concludes that the "discovery" of childhood can be understood in two ways: 'either as a discovery of the child as a young human being in its historical conditions or as a narrative construction of the child and childhood in our scholarly work' (11). In both definitions "discovery" and "invention" remain the common characteristics. In other words, the child cannot self-define, they 'are virtually mute in the sources of history' and yet 'too fragile to take part in the life of adults' (Frijhoff 11, Ariès 125). Therefore, they must be "discovered" and defined by outward sources, both biologically *and* as cultural objects. Childhood, then, comes to be characterised by silence and the imposition of desired characteristics by adult "discoverers". As Frijhoff notes, 'no child has ever discovered itself as a child' (12). This act of discovery, however, is not and has never been static. Nor is the "discovery of childhood" necessarily specific to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wherein Ariès, among others, have commonly claimed it to have occurred.[4] Childhood has been "discovered" again and again throughout history and each time that which is considered necessary to this stage of life is determined by the current requisites that the child must fulfil in the lives of the determining adults around them in that particular historical moment.

Indeed, in Western society, childhood 'was acknowledged to exist' and 'be a feature of the natural order of things' by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Postman 37). However, it did not take on a readily recognisable, and differentiable, form until the eighteenth century

[4] David Grylls takes Ariès's theory further in his argument that '[c]hildhood was not noticed before the eighteenth century because it did not exist', thereby either significantly postdating its invention or neglecting the gradual development from the fifteenth century that Ariès's study establishes (197).

and even thereafter it continued to change conceptually. Frijhoff suggests that 'until the modern era, children would have been a historical fact neglected on purpose':

> Medieval and early-modern parents were reluctant to attach themselves to children who, in those difficult times, passed away in huge numbers by sickness, plague, or accident before attaining adulthood and even adolescence. Protecting themselves from a life of grief, parents could and would care for their children but without emotional involvement. (23)

Ariès exemplifies this in his claim that '[n]obody thought, as we ordinarily think today, that every child already contained a man's personality. Too many of them died' (39). Thus, 'the gulf which separates [Western European concepts] of childhood from that which existed before the demographic revolution or its preceding stages' may be demonstrated by the 'callousness' or indifference with which parents regarded the death of their children:

> …the child that had died too soon in life was buried almost anywhere, much as we today bury a domestic pet, a cat or a dog. He was such an unimportant little thing, so inadequately involved in life, that nobody had any fears that he might return after death to pester the living. (*Centuries* 39)

While Frijhoff and Ariès' claims may certainly be accused of generalisation and present-mindedness, and indeed they have been by numerous critics including Adrian Wilson and Hugh Cunningham, the latter of whom observing that medievalists 'never seem to tire of proving Ariès wrong', their arguments nonetheless highlight a significant transformation in the eighteenth century (*Children and Childhood* 27). This era marked a period where conceptions of childhood began to more closely align with contemporary understandings. Although, as Ariès points out, 'demographic conditions did not greatly change between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries' and 'child mortality remained at a very high level', 'a new sensibility granted these fragile, threatened creatures a characteristic which the world had hitherto failed to recognize in them' (43). Ariès attributes this newfound interest to 'the growing influence of Christianity on life and manners' and, indeed, the centuries preceding the eighteenth were

significant in terms of the formation of theories of the static, predestined, child in Western Europe, but less so in terms of research into child development (43). The Puritan doctrine of innate depravity and original sin, for example, prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, entailed a more active parenting role, as the responsibility for the child's salvation from sin and spiritual education fell to their parents, but coincided with representations of children as innately sinful.[5] Mid-seventeenth-century Evangelicalism promoted a more sympathetic view of children, as redeemable through Christian didactics and moral education, and although this notion went some way towards highlighting the importance of parental responsibility in child-rearing, it promoted a similarly reductive view of childhood as defined by religious morality (Bebblington).

Frijhoff offers a different explanation for the changing views of children toward the seventeenth century:

> The child was discovered by the nobility and the bourgeoisie, who attached a growing importance to an education that fitted the format of what was now more and more known as "the child", and scholarship followed with the discovery of the child as an object of philosophical reasoning (Rousseau), pedagogical intervention (Campe, Pestalozzi), and social concern (Francke at Halle). (23)

Thus, the early modern child became associated not only with static purity or corruption but with development. More recent scholarship, such as Andrew O'Malley's *Literary Cultures and Eighteenth-Century Childhoods* (2018), adheres to this modified version of Ariès's theory of the "discovery" of childhood, viewing the eighteenth century 'as a watershed period in the history' of childhood rather than its inception (1). Certainly, the eighteenth century saw an increased emphasis on the importance of childhood in formative development that was not

[5] A more thorough analysis of Puritan attitudes towards children may be found in Roger Cox's chapter on "The Child of Puritanism" in *Shaping Childhood: Themes of Uncertainty in the History of Adult-Child Relationships* (1996).

present in the centuries before. As Sally Shuttleworth indicates in her influential monograph, *The Mind of the Child* (2010), childhood was '[n]o longer just a stage to be passed through' but the 'key to understanding the adult form' (2). Thus, instead of viewing childhood as an inconvenient transitionary period, or 'an inferior mode of existence', it became vital to constructive adult development (Grylls 36). Shuttleworth claims that to 'understand why the child mind became an object of such fascination in the nineteenth century, it is necessary to turn first to the eighteenth' and, accordingly, it was in the eighteenth century that notions of predestined childhood and original sin were joined by discourses of child development and education (2).

Enlightenment philosophers John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau popularised these concepts, emphasising the crucial influence of parenting on child development. Locke and Rousseau's discourses differ significantly in various regards, but they unite in their rejection of original sin and emphasis on parental responsibility. As Neil Postman argues, '[n]either Locke nor Rousseau ever doubted that childhood could exist without the future-oriented guidance of adults' (60). Locke's most well-known treatise, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), introduces his seminal thesis that there are 'no innate speculative principles' in the mind; it originates as a *tabula rasa* (*HU:*36).[6] Lockean theory claims that the child is born with a mind like 'white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas' that must be 'furnished' by education and environment and the responsibility for the fulfilment of this belongs to the parents (*HU*:121).

> Locke's *tabula rasa* created a sense of guilt in the parents about their children's development, and provided the psychological and epistemological grounds for making the careful nurturing of children a national priority. (Postman 57)

[6] Locke discusses this idea in more depth in his 1693 treatise *Some Thoughts on Education*, usefully expanding on ideas of social responsibility in the nation.

Rousseau similarly argues against the notion of innate human principles but, while Locke views child-rearing as a 'national priority' engineered towards the creation of socially 'useful' citizens who may increase the 'prosperity of the nation', Rousseau views society as a corruptive force that children should be shielded from *by* their parents (Postman 57, *TE*:5).

Rousseau's most famous work, *The Social Contract* (1762), usefully touches on the corruptions of contemporary society and situates the family as the 'most ancient of all societies' (*SC*:47). This idea is expounded more comprehensively, however, in his exploration of the development of the human race, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind*, *or Second Discourse* (1755), and his pedagogical discussion of child development and education, *Émile* (1763), both of which are central to this thesis.[7] Rousseau's *Second Discourse* identifies that which he defines as the 'two species of inequality among men': the 'natural' and the 'moral' (*SD:*175). The first of these classifications refers to the behaviours of man before he becomes a social animal, 'abandoned by nature to pure instinct' instead of a participant in rational collective behaviour (*SD:*188). The second emerges afterwards and is 'established, or at least authorized by the common consent of mankind' (*SD:*175). This thesis is predominantly interested in the former category, principally how this 'natural' state of man mirrors, and is used to comprehend, emerging conceptions of childhood. This is established further in *Émile*, wherein Rousseau outlines a naturalistic method of child-rearing that allows men to attain a freedom that society would usually hinder: 'God makes all things good; man meddles with them, and they become evil' (*E:*5). Rather than presenting the child as a citizen-in-the-making, as Locke does, Rousseau underlines the importance of 'considering what he is before he becomes a man' (*E:*1).

[7] Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind* is more commonly referred to as his *Second Discourse* and, for ease, this thesis will follow that convention hereafter.

Rousseau's "natural man" and "natural child" each reflect a version of humanity that may only exist prior to submersion in society. Although both are destined to be eventually assimilated when man becomes a citizen, Rousseau's Émile is engineered to retain the 'pure instinct' that was lost when natural man transitioned into social man (*SD:*188). Mark Cladis, in *Public Vision, Private Lives: Rousseau, Religion, and 21st-Century Democracy* (2003), argues that Rousseau found himself at the crossroads of 'two opposing traditions, Augustinian pessimism and humanist Enlightenment optimism' and his 'proximity to both traditions probably blocked his entanglement with them' (103, 108). Rousseau's mediation of these traditions is paradoxical as he simultaneously defines the 'doctrine of original sin [as] both fatalistic and antisocial' and engages with the idea of the social man's 'natural proclivity for evil' (Cladis 104, 106). I do not interpret this discrepancy as indicative of a hidden belief in original sin insomuch as an acknowledgement that there is a conflict between natural and social modes of humanity. Although Rousseau argues that humanity is not naturally imbued with original sin, he admits that our proximity to damaging societal institutions and constructs heightens our proclivity for evil: we 'see the good' in nature and 'do the bad' that social life invites (Cladis 106). This multifaceted view mirrors the amalgamation of Augustinian pessimism and humanist Enlightenment in ensuing societal attitudes towards childhood. Through *Émile*, Rousseau presents a utopian and moralistic concept of the "social man", achieved by merging these roles and emphasising the significance of early education in mitigating society's inevitable "evil" (*E:*5).

Despite its apparent flaws, Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood* nevertheless traces the 'slow and profound' development of childhood as a defined concept from the fifteenth century to its height in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and provokes a reassessment of childhood as a concept generally (369). More significantly to this thesis, the study details the increasingly significant role of adult intervention, such as parenting, in the formation of useful (Locke) or

morally good (Rousseau) children. This alteration is certainly observable on a historical level. However, a complete study requires one to turn to the literary outputs of the centuries and trace the increased literary prominence of parents and children as they evolved in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century societal consciousness. Towards the nineteenth century, in particular, literary parents were depicted as more active participants in the lives of their offspring as their children transitioned from diminutive adults into developing dependents. The "discovery" of childhood as a concept continued in the wake of Enlightenment thinkers. Although notions of original sin still persevered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they did so alongside Rousseau's influential rejection of the doctrine and alternative treatise of naturally imbued essential innocence that may be corrupted by adult society, thereby presenting a questioning cultural consciousness. This mutable outlook towards children manifests in the nineteenth century through the establishment of the cult of childhood.

THE CULT OF CHILDHOOD AND THE LITERARY CHILD

In his 1978 monograph, *Guardian's and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature,* David Grylls states that it is 'possible to study the history of the family without consulting literature at all' and, indeed, this is true insofar as Grylls' definition of 'study' allows for incompleteness (44). Just as literary texts must be authenticated against objective sources, historical accounts should also be held up against the literary outputs of their time to prevent myopic conclusions. Alan H. Pasco takes up this argument in his 2004 essay, "Literature as a Historical Archive", and argues that, although literature should not be considered as an exact 'cultural artefact', it does 'serve particularly well for insight into common opinions and attitudes' (373). This is pertinent to discussions of contentious or irresolute topics, such as that which this thesis is predominantly interested in: the polemical discovery of *modern* childhood in the eighteenth century and, particularly, its subsequent development as a concept in the nineteenth.

As such, this thesis is situated at perhaps the most tumultuous historical moment in the theoretical study of childhood, the nineteenth century. At this time, conceptual changes regarding the formation of childhood as a construct began to influence filial relations and the nineteenth-century public started to consider their children as individual developing entities instead of predetermined proto-adults, perhaps for the first time. Indeed, in *The Child and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in England* (1993), Penny Brown suggests that 'it is generally agreed that it was only after the end of the eighteenth century that children became at all significant in literature' and the concept then 'took root in the national consciousness and flowered throughout the century in imaginative fiction' (1). These literary children were not inherently good or evil, as they had been typically presented in imaginative literature, nor were they always diminutive adults or helpless beings waiting to be imbued with purpose upon reaching maturity. Instead, they were often individuals whose growth was dependent on external development *and* internal biology rather than innate morality. The emergence of this variety of child character in literature was uneven, and depictions of children as innately predetermined remained prominent alongside them. David Grylls underlines this discrepancy in his discussion of the perennial ways that children were considered, in literature *and* society, prior to and throughout the nineteenth century owing to the paradoxical theological views of children as imbued with 'original sin' and 'primal innocence': 'one tends to stress their incapacity for evil, the other their incapacity for good' (24). Yet, while Grylls views this dichotomy as 'sharpened' in the nineteenth century, I would contend that the emergence of more realist, multifaceted, literary children alongside the innately predetermined child undercuts this view (24).

Several compelling studies of the nineteenth-century literary child already underpin this discussion within the critical sphere, including Peter Coveney's *The Image of Childhood* (1967) and Marah Gubar's *Artful Dodgers* (2009). However, there remains space for further

exploration, particularly in terms of investigations into parental responsibility. Coveney's monograph, for example, serves as a useful starting point for literary examinations of the child and provides a comprehensive historical overview of its formation as a concept. Nevertheless, it primarily concentrates on conventional portrayals of children and does not explore versions of childhood that do not adhere to convention, nor does it dwell significantly on representations of parental responsibility. Likewise, Gubar's more recent study valuably expands on conceived notions of the cult of childhood, yet her sole focus on children's literature leaves further space to develop and extrapolate these findings to depictions of children in adult literature. It is imperative to recognise that within these evolving narratives of childhood parents (or parental figures) were no longer characterised as passive bystanders forced to observe the inexorable advancement (or devolution) of their children without their intervention. Instead, they became active participants in their children's physical, moral, and emotional development. It is these literary explorations of child development and parental responsibility that form the primary focus of this thesis.

In 1841 a crowd of New Yorkers allegedly waited on the pier for the final instalment of *The Old Curiosity Shop* to be delivered, desperately calling out to the approaching ship, 'Is Little Nell dead?' This claim, as highlighted by Nathan Murray in "A Possible Source for the Apocryphal Anecdote Concerning the Reception of Little Nell's Death", cannot be verified and is in all likelihood fictitious; however, its probable invention highlights the intense preoccupation with, and idolisation of, the angelic child that became prevalent in the eighteenth century and continued to thrive throughout the nineteenth, commonly recognised as the cult of the child (375). George Boas' aptly named monograph *The Cult of Childhood* (1966) is generally cited as the origin point of the aforementioned eponymic phrase but, as Marah Gubar points out, the 'Victorians themselves coined the term' and expanded upon its tendency

towards child-adoration in articles such as '"Babyolatry" (1846), "The Worship of Children" (1869), […] and "The Literary Cult of the Child" (1901)' (10).

Indeed, the nineteenth century's self-conscious fixation with children and childhood reflected the height of the cult, but, as Boas indicates, the seeds were sown significantly earlier alongside the changing perceptions of childhood. While Boas' study is certainly an origin point for critical studies of the cult of the child, it does not significantly develop ideas surrounding the concept, nor does it comprehensively define the term further than child adoration. Rather, Boas conducts a chronological study of the cult of childhood, primarily conceived through literary sources, that dwells on *hints* of its upcoming prevalence throughout history, tracing the cult from near obscurity in classical antiquity ('the Ancients had a low opinion of children if they appraised them at all') to its height in the nineteenth century, where 'the child becomes a redeemer simply because of its childlike nature' (10, 58). Boas identifies 'the earliest' active engagement with the cult of childhood in John Earle's seventeenth-century text, *Microcosmographie* (1628), wherein the child is depicted as:

> …the best copy of *Adam* before he tasted of Eve or the apple; and he is happy whose small practice in the world can only write this Character. He is nature's fresh picture newly drawn in oil, which time, and much handling dims and defaces. His Soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with observations of the world, wherewith, at length, it becomes a blurred notebook. He is purely happy, because he knows no evil, nor hath made means by sin to be acquainted with misery… The older he grows, he is a stair lower from God; and, like his first father, much worse in his breeches… (42–3)

This rendition of childhood not only combats notions of original sin but encompasses the central thesis of the cult of childhood: 'growing up is degeneration, at least morally' (43). Earle's depiction of the child's soul 'yet a white paper unscribbled' anticipates Locke's *tabula rasa* while his perception of the degeneration of ageing anticipates Rousseau's preoccupation with societal corruption (42). Combined Earle, Locke, and Rousseau recontextualise childhood

as a time *before* sin. This idealised view of childhood was amplified into the eighteenth century as representations of the Romantic child began to merge with the cult of childhood.

The cult of the child reflected a cultural shift in the social construction of childhood wherein children were deemed valued members of society and celebrated in art, theatre, and literature. This was often accompanied by a more romanticised, sentimental view of children as pinnacles of purity and representative of untainted human nature. Nicola Bown, in "Crying Over Little Nell" (2007), discusses the contentious nature of Victorian sentimentality:

> The taste for Victorian culture's sentimentality, like the taste for Victorian culture more generally, has waxed and waned, yet whereas a fascination for kitsch or a delight in melodrama's excesses can sit happily with serious scholarly interests, it has rarely been respectable to stand up for sentimentality. Sentimentality is excessive feeling evoked by unworthy objects; it is falsely idealising; it simplifies and sanitises; it is vulgar; it leads to cynicism; it is feeling on the cheap; it's predictable; it's meretricious. (1)

This exploration of sentimentality as 'excessive' and 'falsely idealising' mirrors the cult of childhood's tendency to compensate for the previously malignant depictions of children as innately evil with similarly reductive representations of their excessive benevolence and essential goodness (1). Although the cult of childhood is most commonly associated with Victorian sentimentality, it is necessary to acknowledge that the form in which it is most recognisable, as a movement of child adoration, originated in the works of Romantic writers. According to Peter Coveney, the 'literary climate in which the Romantic child developed was prepared in the half-century from Rousseau's *Émile* to Wordsworth's *Prelude*' (37). Indeed, there is a direct link between Rousseau's romanticised rendition of youthful innocence and noble savagery and the rapidly transforming societal view of childhood in the eighteenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century, children were increasingly recognised as distinct individuals belonging to their own stage of human existence and development rather than 'little adults' or inferior versions of their parents (*Invention of Childhood* 28).

To present the literary child as the innocent other, or a redemptive force engineered to reinforce the morality of the adult characters around them, became commonplace in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the cult of the child rose in popularity, but it also presented a problem. What happened when a child outgrew the primitive innocence that had secured the cultist's adoration? For some writers, this question was rendered obsolete by their readiness to kill their child characters once corruption began to threaten their inherent purity. Franco Ferrucci engages with this notion of sustained innocence via premature death in his essay "The Dead Child: A Romantic Myth", going so far as to brand Wordsworth 'a child executioner' in his endeavour to preserve childhood purity in his art (120). Naomi Wood, in "Angelic, Atavistic, Human: The Child of the Victorian Period" also exemplifies the salvatory powers that a premature death held in literature:

> In the nineteenth century, the pathetic yet inspirational spectacle of the angelic child's death became a staple of adult poetry and fiction. Felicia Hemans's popular poems typified this trope, depicting the infant's angelic nature and simultaneously lamenting and celebrating infants' deaths because death preserved those angelic qualities. (117)

The aforementioned death of Dickens's Little Nell encapsulates the cult's paradoxical relationship towards children. Their deaths were concurrently heartrending and necessary to the preservation of their image: had Nell not died she would have been corrupted. The convenient death of the innocent child, thus, became a requisite for many writers who did not want to depict their characters outside their idealised representations. Several authors, however, deviated from this prescribed format and allowed their literary children to outgrow the youthful primitivism that enabled their innocent portrayals. Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838), for example, reflects both idealised children *and* those who have been corrupted by their exposure to adult society, while Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) illustrates the rapid deterioration of childlike innocence when faced with adult responsibility. Nineteenth-century writers were consciously engaging with notions of childhood purity through their interrogations of

childhood as a construct, but they also began to breach these established tropes. To recognise children as distinct beings would be the first step, but viewing them *outside* imposed classifications of purity and sin would be the next.

The cult of childhood is not well, or easily, defined as a concept. Gubar, for instance, expresses surprise at the lack of space Boas devotes to the Victorians and Edwardians in his seminal study, 'fewer than three pages', despite those periods marking the height of its prevalence (viii). She goes on to hypothesise that perhaps Boas

> does not linger on this period because he treats the cult not as a social trend that originated in a historical moment but as a doctrinal group to which anyone at any time in any place can belong, as long as they subscribe to a form of cultural primitivism whereby the child replaces the noble savage as a paradigm of the human ideal. (viii)

Indeed, this is a compelling argument and may explain Boas' inattention to the nineteenth century, yet I would suggest a different interpretation: the nineteenth century was simultaneously the pinnacle of the cult of childhood and its end. Although childhood as a construct still fascinated the nineteenth-century public, the reductive view of children as savage or innately innocent was again beginning to shift and more multifaceted depictions of child characters emerged as a result. Towards the end of the century, this was amplified by scientific advances in studies of children, child development, and heredity. These heredity-focused scientists introduced a new framework for understanding child development, which rejected the notion of nature as predetermined by religion or fate. Instead, they emphasised genetic inheritance and redefined nature as equally significant to nurture in the context of parental responsibility. This thesis will accordingly trace the evolution of conceptions of childhood and active parenting, as depicted in three nineteenth-century novels, from Rousseau's rendition of the Romantic child, corrupted not by inherent evil but by adult society, to late-century scientific discourses regarding genetic inheritance, predispositions for aberrant behaviour, and ethical considerations regarding procreation and passive parental responsibility.

DEFINING THE CHILD

Hitherto, this introduction has explored the concept of childhood as a construct–a stage of life shaped by the shifting expectations of its respective historical moment–rather than the child as an individual entity. This is largely because the child was not considered an individual; instead, they were principally viewed in relation to their utility to the adults around them. Indeed, James Kincaid exemplifies this notion in his 1998 monograph *Erotic Innocence* wherein he argues that

> We have, according to the needs of history and our own whim, made children savages and sinners, but we have also maintained their innocence, a quality we seem to need much more than they do. (53)

The 'we' to which Kincaid refers are the adults who defined and to some degree 'invented' childhood as a developmental stage (53). These adults bent the concept of childhood to their own 'needs' and 'whim[s]' and the result is an irresolute and ambiguous term that does little to define the child itself and even less to elucidate the parent-child dynamic that emerged in the eighteenth century when parental responsibility was drawn to the forefront of educational discussions (53). Kincaid goes on to define the resultant child as 'functional', 'a malleable part of our discourse rather than a fixed stage', situationally adaptable, on a historical and individual level, 'a product of ways of perceiving, not something that is there' (19). Following this line of argument, we *might* take Grylls' claim that childhood 'did not exist' prior to the eighteenth century further and suggest that perhaps the child does not exist at all, but to do so would be to equate the undefinable with the inexistent (197). Rather, I would posit, that the child exists but any definitions or imaginative representations of it are inherently flawed by nostalgic, desire-driven, and ignorance-driven biases. Kincaid's 'invented' child is manufactured to 'meet the imaginative and nostalgic demands' of the adults around them, usually parental figures and, as such, represents outward expectations of childhood more than innate manifestations of it (53,

144). In her 2005 monograph, *Elusive Childhood*, Susan Honeyman extends Kincaid's notion of "invented" childhoods to literary representations of the child by examining the 'spot where the literary and the social intersect' and 'reading literature on the same level as social and scientific discourse' (18). The notion that the real-life child and the literary child are both outwardly determined constructs narrows the perceived gap between them and allows for both to be examined concurrently. Like Kincaid, Honeyman argues that '[t]here is no irrefutable or universal meaning of "child"', and suggests that 'we impose "childhood" on those we define as children according to biased standards of adult nostalgia and desire' (3, 2). This, she asserts, applies on both a historical and imaginative level:

> If we recognize that we cannot access children's minds but only the constructions we have created around the young persons who seem to fit those ever-changing definitions, an investigation of childhood demands that we look more closely at adult desire for the reasons behind these constructions. (45)

Honeyman identifies an 'inherent inaccessibility between the concept of "child" and the adult minds that create it' that 'poses a representational challenge' *and* enables 'unlimited signification' to representations of childhood (4). While this 'challenge' hinders accurate representation, placing the child 'linguistically and discursively beyond reach', it simultaneously allows 'adult minds' to present childhood in any manner that suits their aims in literature *and* on a sociohistorical level (4, 22). This is exemplified by the assumed 'language gap' between the child and defining adults that accompanies the view of childhood as 'relatively preverbal, outside empowered discourse, unsophisticated, unknowing, irrational' (4). If the child cannot be accurately defined, and cannot self-define, then we are left, as Honeyman puts it, 'with the realization that our discourse defines children from adult points of view without authorizing our representations through those represented' (5). This reliance on outward perception recalls my discussion of Frijhoff and his notion that 'no child has ever

discovered itself as a child'–the child is 'defined by adult discourse as that which cannot engage in adult discourse' (12, Honeyman 4).

Thus, 'the voices of those we label children' are simultaneously those that 'have been excluded from empowered discourse (or heavily mediated within it)' (Honeyman 5). Yet this inaccessibility does not impede the conceptual formation of childhood; rather, its intrinsic unknowability benefits the construction of the idealised, nostalgic, "invented" child. Honeyman and Kincaid illustrate this notion in their shared belief that '[w]hat the child is matters less than what we think it is and just why we think that way' (*Child-Loving* 62). According to both, 'what we think [the child] is' is markedly different from the adult and 'we think that way' because we are trying to placate 'our imaginative and nostalgic demands' and identify the desirable qualities that are lost in the transition into adulthood (*Child-Loving* 62, *Erotic Innocence* 144).

> Childhood, to a large extent, came to be in our culture a coordinate set of have nots, of negations: the child was the one who did not have. Its liberty was a negative attribute, however much prized, as was its innocence and purity. (*Erotic Innocence* 15)

Despite Kincaid's labelling of these 'have nots' as 'negative attribute[s]', these "lacks" were not generally framed as failings of childhood (15). Rather, the term 'negative' is utilised here in a literal rather than descriptive sense: the child lacks responsibility so they possess liberty as a direct result, they lack sexuality, so they possess innocence and purity. Honeyman builds on this idea in her discussion of childhood as 'innocent (or ignorant in the Puritan tradition), pre-sexual, irrational, and unschooled' in opposition to adulthood which is 'experienced, sexual, rational, and schooled' (3). Thus, childhood "lacks" are 'cast in a positive light' because they embody that which defining adults perceive as lost in the process of "growing up" and are, therefore, rendered inaccessible to them (17). Childhood, consequently, becomes 'whatever adults have lost and maybe never had' and their desire to retrospectively regain these qualities by casting them into childhood validates their nostalgic desires (4).

Using Henry James' *What Maisie Knew* (1897) as a case study, Honeyman applies the concept of desirable childhood "lacks" to the literary child, whom she defines as 'technically and fictively an empty glass–practically invisible to those who construct her, thus limitless in what she can reflect' (22). This illustration of the literary child as an 'empty glass' encapsulates its paradoxical status as 'flatly knowable' and 'complexly inaccessible' from an adult perspective (49). Within fictional narratives, particularly those that consciously place child characters in relation to overtly defining adults, a dual construction of childhood emerges. Initially, through the author's presentation of their literary children, and subsequently, through their interactions with adult "definers". These literary children act as mirrors for the desires of the adult minds that seek to define them, 'absorb[ing] and respond[ing] to their expectations in whatever manner [they] can make sense of them', but they do not represent realist depictions of childhood (41). In reality, the child cannot consistently conform to these idealised expectations, but within the realm of literature, they can. Thus, the constructed child, with its endearing "lacks", as represented in literature, becomes the idealised representation of childhood and is utilised to define childhood more broadly. Yet its existence fuels disappointment more than desire. This adult disappointment is most commonly found in the primary adult "definers", parents, and plays an integral part in this thesis.

While Kincaid argues that the parental role is manufactured in relation to the child, I would adjust this statement to reflect my earlier discussion on the emergence of active parenthood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Just as children were not inventions of the eighteenth century, neither were parents. However, as Ariès suggests, the aforementioned centuries witnessed a rise in parental interest and affection, leading to greater regard for the parental role. Indeed, as M.O. Grenby argues in "Delightful Instruction? Assessing Children's Use of Educational Books in the Long Eighteenth Century" (2009), this heightened interest is

evident in the greater emphasis placed on children's literature and educational manuals during the eighteenth century.

> Most cultural historians agree that the eighteenth century witnessed the birth in Britain of a separate literature especially for children. Not only were the first recognizably modern children's titles published, but, by the end of the century, children's literature had become securely established as a profitable and sustainable branch of print culture. (181)

While Grenby admits that one should not 'take Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) as an indication of how education was actually conducted in eighteenth-century France; nor should one see the various treatises written by British schoolmasters, or educational theorists, as representations of reality', I would argue that their increased existence generally reflects a greater emphasis on education than had been observed prior to the eighteenth century and, consequently, a greater emphasis on active parenting (181). These manuals typically emphasised the malleability of children alongside the pivotal role that parents possessed in actively shaping their development. As Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth's *Practical Education* (1798) put it: 'The character of children is *to be* formed, we should never speak of it as positively fixed' (238). While the parental figures were still cast in a determining role and the child's autonomy was restricted, this effort towards education indicated a growing recognition of the child's individuality and societal value. Ariès extends this concept of societal value to *sentimental value* in his exploration of the growing fascination with child portraits, including those of deceased children, in the eighteenth century and the way in which this is indicative of greater parental love alongside their perceived parental obligation.

This increased affection recalls Rebekka Habermas' concept of 'disinterested parenting', as introduced in "Parent-Child Relationships in the Nineteenth Century" (1998). This was a 'new concept of parent-child relations […] emerging in the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century' that saw 'the emergence of parental love' *without* the required relational reciprocity (43, 45). Habermas argues that, prior to the eighteenth century,

relationships between parents and children were always based on mutuality, 'shaped by two sides, by both the parents and children' and parents brought 'needs into the relationship just as much as children did' (46). This reciprocal dynamic, Habermas claims, "disappeared" in the eighteenth century and was replaced by a new 'selfless' parental love that saw parents 'devoid of any need of their own' (47). What Habermas is, perhaps, overlooking in this claim is the implicit reciprocity that the parental figure demands in their definition and subsequent expectations of childhood. Thus the reciprocal dynamic does not 'disappear', rather it shifts into something less conscious albeit less achievable (47). Kincaid engages with this notion of unattainable reciprocity in his claim that 'no child can ever live up to our imaginative and nostalgic demands', the 'child can never fulfil our desire' because the ideal is based on the 'invented child' rather than the realist (*Erotic Innocence* 144). Thus, the literary children that *do* fulfil this reciprocal duty simultaneously reinforce the parental fantasy of possessing a child that might appease 'our desire for it': 'Children offer not appeasement but fuel, ways to keep our double-edged dreaming going' (144). The child, whether literary or real, who does not function as 'fuel' for this desire, fails to provide the passive reciprocation required by this newly modified parent-child dynamic (144). As a result, the relationship deteriorates. This thesis aims to examine the repercussions of this breakdown in filial ties within the medium of the nineteenth-century novel.

DEFINING THE NONCHILD

In her examination of Reinhard Kuhn's analysis of *Lord of the Flies* in *Corruption in Paradise* (1982), Honeyman asserts that '[b]ecause Golding's representation of children's violent potential violates his own definitions, Kuhn redefines the child-characters as nonchildren' (84). While Kuhn never specifically uses the term 'nonchildren', the concept of a character who 'challenges the security of adults who insist on oversimplified constructions of child innocence', and is consequently stripped of their classification as a child, aligns with

Honeyman and Kincaid's conceptualisation of the child as a construct contingent upon adult 'needs' and 'whim[s]' (Honeyman 84, *Erotic Innocence* 53). Thus, while these characters remain children in essence, they are redefined as nonchildren within their literary context by the parental figures who, in turn, reassess their own reciprocal responsibilities. Kincaid explores this notion further by arguing that 'there's something about the way we have idealised "the child" that makes us indifferent to most children' who do not conform to these ideals, 'even those whose misery and devastation strike our eyes' (54). The nonchild that fails to 'absorb and respond to' parental expectation and desire simultaneously fails to fulfil the requisites of constructed childhood (Honeyman 41). Honeyman also engages with this concept in her discussion of the relation between 'irreconcilable critical responses [to] novels' that feature 'complex, nonconforming constructions of children' in place of the idealised invented child (83). These 'nonconforming constructions of children', or nonchildren, resist the idealised expectations of defining adult figures and, as a result, do not live up to their perceived reciprocal duty and inspire 'fear and denial' in place of desire (83).

In his 2000 examination of children's literature and film, *You're Only Young Twice*, Tim Morris captures a sentiment concerning childhood that encapsulates this idea. He writes:

> Childhood is a form of Otherness, possibly its archetypal form. Children are always insufficient, always wrong, always in need of guidance and correction. In this they parallel many who are Other to the central default-value individual of Western culture: the heterosexual, cultured, white adult male human. Like the animal, the "savage", the woman, the person of colour, and the queer person, "the child" helps define the default value by offering its negative. (9–10)

If the child is inherently Other, then the nonchild is doubly-Othered. They are still 'insufficient' and 'in need of guidance', but they are simultaneously unchildlike because they do not serve a desirable or nostalgic purpose for their adult "creators" (9–10). Likewise, if the child 'helps define the default value [of Western adulthood] by offering its negative', then the doubly-Othered child 'helps define the default value' of the desirable child 'by offering its negative'

(10). This thesis will utilise Kuhn's unsaid term to characterise the child who challenges 'the default value' classification of childhood by failing to conform to adult 'needs' and 'whim[s]', and is thus positioned as a nonchild. The examination of the doubly-Othered literary child encourages explorations of the boundaries of childhood, parenthood, and the reciprocal relationship contained between them in a way that studies of the traditional literary child could not. As Honeyman points out, '[w]riters representing childhood must contend with developmental presuppositions' in their presentations of the literary child (25). However, this constraint is less applicable when dealing with children whose caregivers have already dismissed them as 'not real' (25, Worthington 18). As such, this dismissal grants an unusual freedom to explore these characters outside the standard developmental expectations and to examine 'developmental presuppositions' without being intrinsically tied to them (Honeyman 25).

The literary children examined in this thesis meet the criteria of childhood in terms of their developmental stage and inherent "lacks", but they fail to sustain their caregivers' 'imaginative and nostalgic demands' (*Erotic Innocence* 144). As a result, they fail to fulfil their *perceived* reciprocal duty. This is not to imply that nonconforming children provide no reciprocal value; rather, their form of reciprocation does not align with the revised expectations of their 'disinterested' parental figures (Habermas 43). In typical models of parent-child reciprocal relationships, such as that which Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos outlines in her 2000 essay, "Reciprocal Bonding", active reciprocation is given priority over passive. Consequently, the nonconforming child owes their parent, not nostalgic fulfilment, but reciprocal love, which is also anticipated in return. Paradoxically, by not recognising this divergence in reciprocal expectations, the parental figures simultaneously fail to fulfil their caregiving roles, thereby rendering their children increasingly nonconforming. To reference a more historically specific view on reciprocity, Rousseau writes:

> If mothers are not real mothers, children are not real children toward them. Their duties to one another are reciprocal, and if these be badly fulfilled on the one side, they will be neglected on the other side. The child ought to love his mother before he knows that it is his duty to love her. (*Émile*, Worthington 18)[8]

Indeed, although the literary children this thesis focuses on are initially nonconforming, they are not rendered 'not real', or nonchildren, until their parental figures begin to neglect their own reciprocal duties (18). The child's primary responsibility towards their caregiver is 'to love [them] before he knows that it is his duty', it is innate (18). The love of the literary parental figures, however, is conditional–entirely determined by the child's ability to 'absorb and respond to' their desires and expectations (Honeyman 41).

These mismatched expectations shape the parent-child relationships in the three nineteenth-century novels examined in this thesis: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1802), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831), and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895). While the novels address parental responsibility from distinct perspectives, they converge in their treatment of reciprocal duty and love as requisites to healthy child development. These novels explore, negotiate, and eventually push the tenuous boundaries of childhood and, more significantly, they all present parental responsibility at the forefront of their narratives. Their literary parental figures, whether consciously or unconsciously, define the lives of their children through their refusal to fulfil their reciprocal parental duties, ultimately resulting in the formation of nonchildren.

Appropriately, Chapter One focuses on a transitionary novel on the boundary of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries *and* the rapidly evolving understandings of childhood and child development that took place during that time. Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801/2)

[8] This quotation derives from Eleanor Worthington's translation of Jules Steeg's abridged version of *Émile* (*Émile: Extracts*) rather than Foxley's translation of the complete text. I have chosen to include Worthington's translation because it expresses Rousseau's sentiment in a clearer, more condensed manner and will continue to refer to it throughout this thesis.

is a novel that has fallen into relative obscurity within the current sphere of literary criticism and is primarily regarded as a romantic comedy, playing on themes of theatre and marriage markets.[9] However, beneath the main plot resides another. The Virginia St. Pierre subplot, situated in the middle of the novel, has achieved even less critical recognition than the primary plotline and is commonly reduced to a footnote in comparison to the central love story of the novel. Yet it is deserving of a concentrated critical focus. Virginia's characterisation functions as a mediation between past and present societal views of children, particularly female children, and explores the limits of parental authority and the threat that embedded sexual intention in creation, confirmed in the eroticisation of the child *by* the parent, can pose to child development.

Although Virginia is certainly a conventional child by modern standards, her treatment within the novel, as a permeable sexually available young woman, reveals the discrepancy between technical definitions of children and those that are forgone or obstructed for the convenience of the parental pursuer. The subplot interrogates childhood as a concept by juxtaposing the paternal male protagonist's sexually charged denials of his charge's youth with his paradoxical insistence on her re-creation and development under his care. The inherent threat of sexuality within this subplot acts as an explicit illustration of Kincaid and Honeyman's discussions of children as projections of adult desire rather than autonomous beings. Kincaid, in particular, concentrates primarily on the relationship between 'notions of sexual attraction' and the 'idea of the child' in his discussion of determining adult desire:

> I'm not the first to announce that both the child and modern sexuality came into being only about two hundred years ago, but it isn't often noted that, in the excitement of getting these two

[9] The exception to this critical neglect is consideration of *Belinda*'s colonial undertones, engagement with racial discourse, and gender subversion. For an example that engages with all of the above see Susan Greenfield's "'Abroad and at Home': Sexual Ambiguity, Miscegenation, and Colonial Boundaries in Edgeworth's *Belinda*" (1997). For broader discussions, see Sharon Smith's "Juba's 'Black Face' / Lady Delacour's 'Mask'" (2013), Andrew McCann's "Conjugal Love and the Enlightenment Subject" (1996), and Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick's "'Gentlemen Have Horrors Upon This Subject'" (1993).

> new products on the market, they got mixed together. One somehow got implanted in the other, and it shouldn't have happened. (*Erotic Innocence* 52)

Belinda plays with contemporary tropes of "parental" care transitioning into romantic love, popular in the literature of the time, but, in omitting the transition and presenting both concurrently, exposes the hypocritical and potentially exploitative nature of these relationships. This chapter will demonstrate how, rather than sublimating the erotic in her Virginia subplot, Edgeworth presents a courtship that very consciously 'borders on the incestuous' and manipulates the boundary of paternal love and active parenting until it is unrecognisable and both child and parental figure are rendered 'not real' (Wikborg 13, Worthington 18). This chapter will also prioritise the perspective of the child and discuss the impact that the perversion of active parenthood in the novel has on Virginia's developing psyche, principally in terms of self-perception. While traditionally childlike, Edgeworth portrays Virginia as a child forced across the cusp of adulthood too quickly, representative of a boundary that is only just beginning to form in the societal consciousness.

In direct contrast, Chapter Two discusses a more explicitly unconventional literary child. This chapter utilises Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831) to explore eighteenth-century notions of child development and parenthood within the context of an aesthetically nonconforming and artificial child. Instead of bridging the gap between old and new understandings of childhood, as *Belinda* attempts to do, Shelley's novel stretches and challenges the definitions of both child and parent by imagining the monstrous consequences that result from erroneous creation and subsequent absent parental intervention. Although, like Edgeworth's, this novel envisions forms of artificial creation, Shelley removes the subtlety that the former employed and precisely examines Victor's position as a parent, the creature's development as a child, and their reciprocal relationships towards one another. Consequently,

this chapter will read *Frankenstein* as both a failed bildungsroman, wherein the progress required for sufficient child development is never reached, *and* a tale of parental failure.

Since the publication of Ellen Moers's "Female Gothic" in 1976, readings of *Frankenstein* as a novel preoccupied with birth have become more common. This has extended to discussions of the creature as a child and Victor as a parent but few, if any, investigate the forgotten parent of the novel: Nature.[10] Several scholarly discussions of *Frankenstein* reference the exploitation and violation of Nature by Victor in the creation process yet Nature's resultant role as an involuntary, active, parent to the ensuing child has largely gone unnoticed. The second half of this chapter aims to challenge commonly held perceptions of Shelley's creature as the child of a single absent parent and install Nature as the parent to which he continually returns when shunned by a reductive society and a nonreciprocal primary parent. I will go on to argue that the creature's parentage and child development are split in a manner akin to Rousseau's definitions of primitive and social man, with Victor representing the social elements of the creature's being and Nature presenting the possibility for a return to primitive life. Thus, in *Frankenstein*, Shelley challenges contemporary societal perceptions of childhood and parentage through the distancing medium of a scientific realist novel.

When this thesis was first formulated, the novel that Chapter Three explores was initially placed in Chapter One and intended as a baseline by which to compare the more abstract arguments and examples of faulty parenthood. This objective only functioned under the assumption that Hardy's final novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), was an unambiguous tale of parental failure. In opposition to this intention, Hardy's consideration of genetic inheritance and misplaced moral intentions, alongside discussions of parental negligence, negates such a reductive reading. Instead, Hardy's deliberate characterisation of Father Time as an 'other-

[10] Notable analyses of *Frankenstein* as a tale of parenthood include Laura Claridge's "Parent-Child Tensions in *Frankenstein*" (1985) and Marshall Brown's "*Frankenstein:* A Child's Tale" (2003).

worldly creature', inherently 'separated from the rest of mankind' and destined to suffer, positions him as nonconforming in a manner that surpasses the other child characters examined in this thesis (Kuhn 32). This is compounded by his status as an unwanted child and his precocity, both of which conflict with Honeyman and Kincaid's argument that childhood as a construct is markedly different from the adult and predominantly shaped by adult 'needs' and 'whim[s]' (*Erotic Innocence* 53). Father Time, therefore, emerges as both the most conventional child and the clearest example of a nonchild within this thesis. Hardy's presentation of this discord illustrates the liminal position occupied by the nonchild, residing in a state that resists complete assimilation into either childhood or adulthood and deviates from traditionally defined early conceptions of childhood. This departure, attributed to passive parental responsibility and the growing infiltration of scientific discourse into literary portrayals of children towards the end of the nineteenth century, effectively renders him a nonchild from the outset. Consequently, the children in *Jude* reflect not only the evolving attitudes toward childhood as a construct but also the broader shifts in scientific and genetic perceptions.

Like Edgeworth, Hardy bridges the gap between past and present attitudes towards children and childhood; however, he does so more subtly, by framing his exploration of mental illness and heredity through the folkloric lens of the family, or ancestral, curse. Thus, in transposing the family curse into a realist context, Hardy reformulates this Gothic motif into an extension of contemporary scientific discourses surrounding heredity. Although his "curses" still find their origin in ancestry, they are not revenge-driven or mystical but the natural outcome of an inherited trait or neurosis. As such, the final section of this chapter examines Father Time's characterisation as a device through which to end his family's generational "curse". Father Time's murder/suicide not only ends the cycle of suffering that has plagued the Fawley lineage but also embodies Hardy's exploration of *fin de siècle* anxieties surrounding

eugenics, degeneration, and the role of heredity in mental illness. In this way, Hardy presents a bleak resolution to the Fawley family curse in which heredity, rather than nurture or moral failing, dictates the tragic trajectory of his characters. Far from conveying a simple tale of nurture, *Jude the Obscure* draws the idea of a *biologically* cursed family lineage to the forefront of the narrative, reflecting a contemporary climate in which these discussions gained prominence over formulaic depictions of children as inherently angelic or sinful.

Chapter Three draws elements from the previous chapters to present a cumulative view of childhood that encompasses both intentional active parenting and that which is determined by previously unrealised scientific factors. As in Chapters One and Two, my analysis of parental reciprocity in *Jude* still finds its origins in Rousseau's theories, particularly the recurrent notion that the 'neglect' of parental duties will result in 'bitter tears over this fault' and that children are rendered 'not real' by their caregivers rather than inherent aberration (Worthington 23, 18). However, my emphasis on the influence of nature over nurture, coupled with the increasing significance of scientific perspectives by the 1890s, diminishes Rousseau's centrality in my discussion. Although his fundamental principle of parental reciprocity remains integral, the transition from discussions of active to passive parental responsibility relegates his influence to a more peripheral role.

The novels I have selected for this thesis reinterpret conventional perceptions of children and childhood through evolving contemporary perspectives, pushing the boundaries of established childhood norms to reflect the mutability of the construct in line with rapidly developing social and scientific frameworks alongside adult desires. Through the study of nonconforming literary portrayals of childhood in place of traditional depictions, this thesis may examine parental responsibility and culpability alongside a distinguishable outcome in the relationship between parents and children. The primary intention of this thesis is to evaluate how these relationships, defined by their mismatched reciprocity, influence the depiction of the

literary child in three nineteenth-century novels, both as a conceptual construct and on an individual level, ultimately resulting in the creation of the literary nonchild.

1 **MAKING A WIFE:** THE ASSIMILATION OF FATHER AND HUSBAND IN MARIA EDGEWORTH'S *BELINDA*

> Mr. Day resolved to breed up two girls, as equally as possible, under his own eye; hoping that they might be companions to each other while they were children, and that, before they grew up to be women, he might be able to decide, which of them would be most agreeable to himself for a wife.
>
> *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq: Volume 1* (1820)

1.1 THE TRANSFER OF PATRIARCHAL AUTHORITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

The objective of this thesis is to interrogate nineteenth-century literary representations of unconventional, destructive, and developmentally stunting relationships between parental figures and their dependants; therefore, it is appropriate to commence this discussion with a novel that encompasses all of these criteria simultaneously. Intentionally or not, the authors that I will discuss in this thesis convey the immense suffering that results from parental breaches of integral boundaries, "laws of nature", and principles of morality in different ways. However, this chapter specifically focuses on the sexual violation of parental relationships. Namely, assuming a parental role in order to assimilate the roles of "father" and "husband" at a later stage and, thus, undermining both positions. This chapter will take the convoluted notion of embedded sexual intention in creation and apply it to a text that allows for a more discernible answer. Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801/2)[11] presents a version of the aforementioned

[11] Although first published in 1801, *Belinda* was reprinted in 1802 and then again in 1810. Edgeworth herself referred to the second edition of the novel as 'Corrected and Improved' having made only small revisions beyond the correction of misprints. The only relevant revision to this thesis was explained by Edgeworth in a letter to her sister: 'We have explained that the picture with which Virginia fell in love with was some *time* in her possessions' (xxvi). As Katheryn Kirkpatrick points out in her introductory notes, '[i]n making these slight revisions, Edgeworth better supported elements of her narrative already in place' including making 'Virginia's love … more credible' (xxvi). The revisions to the 1810 edition were much more extensive, significantly altering the controversial portrayal of 'romantic relationships between English women and West Indian men' (xxviii).

scenario wherein the young dependant's beauty, 'like innocence itself', elicits an immediately nurturing response in her prospective caregiver that quickly transitions into sexual desire (*B:*191).[12] The resultant relationship subverts parental norms as the father figure endeavours to manipulate boundaries of paternal responsibility to encompass something that should have remained distinct (*F:*34).

Eleanor Wikborg's seminal monograph, *The Lover as Father Figure in Eighteenth-Century Women's Fiction* (2002) takes the notion of transgressive sexual expectation between a male caregiver and his assumed daughter and presents it as an expression of 'the ideologies of its time': 'the living embodiment of the patriarchy—the right of men to rule over women' (2). Despite the prevalence of tales depicting the 'love relations between powerful men and dependant women' throughout history, very few studies exist that interrogate literary representations of incest (Wikborg ix). Wikborg's monograph exists as one of the few studies to identify and address this gap in the scholarship. Indeed, the idea of paternal care transitioning into romantic love, or marriage, appears significantly less outlandish when discussed alongside notions of coverture and the transference of women's legal authority in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. Within the aforesaid historical moment, the power dynamic between a father and daughter was akin to that of a husband and wife. In both, the female counterpart was regarded as an extension of her primary patriarch rather than a solo being. The institution of marriage perpetuated the dependence that a female child would experience in childhood by ensuring that women continued to live without an autonomous legal identity. It required the transfer of ownership from one male figure to another in a fashion more comparable to the sale of property instead of a human union.[13]

However, these changes do not affect the elements of the novel central to this thesis and are therefore not relevant to my discussion.

[12] Any reference to 'Edgeworth' from this point onward will refer to the primary Edgeworth in this study, Maria.

[13] See Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (2016).

Wikborg discusses the 'fascination with incest to be found in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature' that was specifically represented by 'the sexual violations threatened by the villain in the Gothic novel' (13). Evidently, to pose incestuous behaviour as a villainous 'violation' is to condemn the act but, as James Twitchell points out in *Forbidden Partners*, 'there are approximately three times as many instances of sibling incest' in early Gothic texts that use this device 'as there are of father/uncle/daughter/niece variety' (156). Wikborg interprets this divergence as indicative of a discrepancy in public opinion, claiming that '[d]espite the importance of the father-daughter relation in Gothic fiction':

> These proportions suggest that father-daughter incest, because of its alignment with patriarchal gender relations, may at some level have been regarded as less sensational, or more "natural". (13)

The notion that father-daughter incest might be deemed more acceptable because it aligns 'with patriarchal gender relations' supports the similarities between the legal identities of wives and daughters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (13). Joan Perkin, in *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England*, extends this similarity to the nineteenth century via her identification of the married woman's vulnerable position and assertion that once a woman married, she relinquished her right to a 'legal existence': a 'man and wife were one person in law; her existence was, as it were, absorbed into that of her husband' (13). Although the father/daughter and husband/wife relationships entailed different expectations, this similarity united both under the same umbrella of *coverture*. Just as the nineteenth-century daughter lived under the 'protection or cover' of her father, a nineteenth-century wife was obliged to live under the coverture of her husband (Perkin 13).[14] Judith Herman expands on the similarity between the roles of daughter and wife in her monograph, *Father-Daughter Incest* (1981),

[14] Although Perkin's analysis focuses on common laws established in the mid-nineteenth century, the patriarchal structures that led to its implementation had been in place for years before. Coverture may only have been specifically referenced in the 1854 Common Law, but that did not mean it was a nineteenth-century invention. On the contrary, the phrase dates back to at least the thirteenth century when 'it was accepted by the common law of England that, on marriage, man and woman became one flesh': 'the wife took on her husband's name and was no longer a legal entity' (Barron 361).

within which she posits that father-daughter incest is 'the most easily overlooked' owing to its roots in social order:

> In patriarchal societies, including Western society, the rights of ownership and exchange of women within the family are vested primarily in the father [….] the daughter belongs to the father alone. Though incest taboo forbids him to make sexual use of his daughter, no particular men's rights are offended, should the father choose to disregard this rule. (60)

Herman notes that it 'is no doubt for this reason that the biblical injunction against incest omits any specific reference to sexual relations between father and daughter' (60).

In 1738, the anonymous author of *Baron and Feme: a Treatise of Law and Equity Concerning Husbands and Wives* illustrated the resemblance between the 'infant' and the wife in terms of authority in law:

> [a] Feme Covert in our Books is often compared to an Infant, both being persons disabled in the Law, but they differ much; an Infant is capable of doing any Act for his own Advantage; so is not a Feme Covert. (8)

This eighteenth-century text, although somewhat dated by *Belinda*'s publication in 1801, collated the roles of the infant, a person under the age of twenty-one, and the *Feme Covert,* a woman living under the coverture of her husband, to illustrate the similitude of their helplessness in their individual environments. This similarity recalls Ariès's discussion of how the 'infant who was too fragile as yet to take part in the life of adults simply did not count' but elucidates on the increased limitations for women (*Centuries* 125). Just as the infant was forced to live within the means allocated to them by their parent or caregiver, 'disabled in the Law', and unable to take on contractual obligations (such as marriage) without parental permission, the *Feme Covert* experienced the same restrictions only hers were enforced by a husband and, subsequently, could not be outgrown (8). Instead of needing parental permission, she now required spousal consent. However, the above passage demonstrates that the essential difference between the infant and the *Feme Covert*, as established in *Baron and Feme*, is the

former's capability 'of doing any Act for his own Advantage' within the constraints of English Common Law (8). This, I would suggest, can only be applied generally to sons rather than daughters; the latter being expected, from childhood, to embody those selfless traits necessitated by life in coverture; first to serve her family's 'Advantage' and then her husband's (8). The combination of these roles, therefore, forces a woman directly from daughter to wife without any of the allowances allotted to the male 'Infant'. She must shed any individuality that she may have possessed as a daughter to fulfil the role of wife.

In 1905, two hundred years after the publication of *Baron and Feme*, Joseph Long published *A Treatise on the Law of Domestic Relations*. This text reaffirms many of the same 'disabilities' associated with the *Feme Covert* and thereby illustrates the stasis of marital authority during this period despite the introduction of the Married Woman's Property Acts in 1870/82 (8).[15] Long's text takes this initial idea of the *Feme Covert* and expands on her 'disability to contract' in relation to the infant (228). While the male infant's disability 'grows out of his inexperience', hers is 'the consequence of the paramount authority of the husband' rather than any 'personal incapacity on her part' (228). Long goes on to discuss how the wife's disability is 'far more complete than that of the infant': 'her contracts, even for necessaries, are, except in a few circumstances […] absolutely void' whereas the infants' are simply void*able* (229). Like in *Baron and Feme*, Long establishes the clear differentiation between the infant and the *Feme Covert* and its perpetuation two hundred years later, but he expands upon this notion to demonstrate the exclusion of the female infant:

[15] The Married Woman's Property Act of 1870 aimed to allow women to retain their property and earnings as if she were a *Feme Solo* rather than a *Feme Covert*, but it still allowed property to be transferred to the husband upon marriage. The 1882 Act improved this by granting women some rights to property acquired during marriage, yet, as Long's text shows, legal disabilities persisted. Susan Staves, in *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833,* argues that the mid-eighteenth century marks a moment in time wherein 'the older conception of marriage as a status […] crumbled when challenged by contract ideas and contract ideology' and the subsequent result of this was a "retreat" back into and reimposition of 'deeper patriarchal structures' (4). Specifically, the ideology that viewed women simply as 'procreators' and 'transmitters of inheritance from male to male' (4).

> …a woman may, at the same time, labor under the double disability of infancy and coverture, as where the married woman is also an infant.[16] In such case she is not *sue juris* until both disabilities are removed,—infancy by the lapse of time, and coverture by statute or discoverture. (229)

In *Belinda*, we see a representation of a woman with a 'double disability of infancy and coverture' through the characterisation of Virginia (229). She is simultaneously an infant, dependent on a caregiver without any of the autonomy of the male infant, and a *Feme Covert*, at the mercy of a predatory husband-to-be. In Virginia's case, however, the two male roles are fulfilled by the same man, Clarence Hervey, and while she suffers under a 'double disability', he benefits from a double authority (229).

Wikborg's interrelation of paternal and sexual love with overarching patriarchal authority forms a useful starting point for understanding this 'double disability' (229). While this chapter will discuss the dual role of father/lover as stemming from the harmful exploitation of this vulnerability, Wikborg's primary hypothesis suggests that 'a significant number of women writers […] were seeking to transform the powerful father figure from a frightening oppressor into an ideal suitor and future husband who would use his power to authorize a woman's being rather than to destroy it' (11). Appropriately, predominant space is dedicated by Wikborg to 'patriarchal confirmation of female personhood' and the reinterpretation of the father/husband role by female writers in more realist modes of fiction, as depicted in the works of Austen, Inchbald, and West. Wikborg's monograph considers several literary examples wherein the notion of exploitation features more specifically, including *Belinda*, but primarily focuses on scandal chronicles, such as Manley's *The New Atlantis*, amatory narratives, and the Gothic novel. *Belinda*'s genre-based incompatibility with the novels with which it was grouped

[16] The 1753 Marriage Act intended to regulate marriage by requiring that they occur in a church and necessitating parental permission for those under twenty-one to align with the legal definition of a child. Despite this, individuals could marry as young as twelve (women) or fourteen (men) with parental consent. The minimum marriage age was not set at sixteen until 1929.

exemplifies the unusual stance that Edgeworth was taking in comparison to her contemporary realist authors. She does not verify her female character's identities through 'patriarchal confirmation', rather, she insists upon the sexual terror of exploitation and mastery from authoritative figures (Wikborg 11).

Notwithstanding these problematic connotations, the notion of the father-figure-turned-lover was not an uncommon literary plotline at the time of *Belinda*'s publication and, thus, its inclusion within Edgeworth's novel would not have immediately triggered shock among contemporary readers. There is a further difference between those texts that engage with this trope in a more favourable light to allow for the 'patriarchal confirmation of female personhood' and the depiction of this trope in *Belinda.* The former avoids intimations of incest by ensuring its quasi-familial relationships are firmly relegated to authoritative positions instead of purposefully assumed paternal responsibility. Examples of this 'patriarchal confirmation' include Jane Austen's *Emma* and Dickens's *Bleak House*, both of which implement the father-figure-turned-lover trope to authorise their heroine's 'female personhood' while avoiding intimations of incest by retaining sexually distanced and mentor-like language until after the relationship has transitioned (Wikborg 11). These authors do not attempt to portray the father figure and lover at once, as Edgeworth does. Wikborg's perspective corresponds with my representation of the differentiation between incestuous and authoritative relationships. She writes:

> One of the striking features of these stories is the way in which they include scenes that all but obliterate the distinction between the love shared by a father and his daughter and that which develops between a young woman and her lover. In some cases, this obliteration is achieved by a sublimination of the erotic; in others the erotic borders on the incestuous. (13)

This chapter will demonstrate how, rather than sublimating the erotic in her Virginia subplot, Edgeworth presents a courtship that deliberately 'borders on the incestuous' and manipulates the boundary of paternal love until it is unrecognisable (13). The novels that sublimate this

eroticism often present light-hearted interactions with the trope, largely devoid of implications of forced sexuality or compliance, particularly when the pursued love interest is still considered an 'infant' under the law. The desire exuded between partners, in these cases, is either enthusiastically reciprocated or sublimated in another direction. These authors create clear boundaries to guarantee minimal interference in their love stories from lurking sinister implications, but Edgeworth was less preoccupied with this. She casts Clarence Hervey firmly in the role of father by having him intentionally select, rename, and raise his "wife-to-be" from childhood, all while maintaining the illusion that she is nothing more than a daughter to him. Virginia's ignorance expedites the development of platonic, familial, feelings for her guardian, ensuring that his later romantic ventures are utterly unwanted, unreciprocated, and rendered incestuous in her juvenile mind.

Although the references to incestuous behaviour in *Belinda* do not refer to biological incest, between a biological father and daughter, this chapter will prioritise the pseudo-legal guardianship and resultant paternal power dynamic that ensues and how it is used to pressure the child into expressions of gratitude that revolve around sexual behaviours. Edgeworth ensures that her readers understand that Virginia views Hervey only as a father figure and, as a result, all sexual advances are rendered incestuous because there is no emotional difference. From there, I will analyse how this magnified power dynamic transforms the daughter's role from a chaste and sexless dependant into a being imbued with sexual potential through the eyes of her paternal figure. This chapter will focus on the perspective of the child and examine her confounded and disordered point of view as the direct result of her inability to reciprocate her caregiver's transgressive feelings towards her. Alongside this, I will examine how Edgeworth's own biographical experiences with this manner of child exploitation influence her portrayals in a way that has been previously overlooked in scholarly research.

1.2 THOMAS DAY'S "MARRIAGE PLOT"

The Virginia St. Pierre subplot within *Belinda* has received two predominant responses from literary critics: ridicule and neglect. The majority of Edgeworth scholars choose to exclude Virginia completely from their analyses, focusing their attention instead on the 'insipid' eponymous Belinda,[17] the effervescent Mrs Delacour, the marginalised Harriet Freke, or the novel's explicit references to race and colonisation (Kowaleski-Wallace 242).[18] Jeanne M. Britton's assertion that 'criticism has not yet sufficiently addressed' the importance of Virginia's place in the novel, or acknowledged how her characterisation 'informs *Belinda*'s main plot' epitomises the research gap occupied by Edgeworth's neglected heroine (438). Britton concentrates on Virginia's subplot as an instrument through which to analyse the female reading practices demonstrated in the novel, and provides a compelling argument to support Virginia's function as a manifestation of the eighteenth-century woman reader, but there is still much to be said of Edgeworth's scorned secondary plotline. I would propose that another specific aspect that 'criticism has not sufficiently addressed' is the way in which Edgeworth takes the genuine example of Thomas Day's experiment in marriage and transposes it into her novel, thereby allowing space to analyse and critique his forced assimilation of "father" and "husband" within a fictitious framework (438).

As a 'pioneering juvenile author, writer of sternly reformist political tracts, and [an] antislavery propagandist', Thomas Day was considered a progressive figure within eighteenth-century society (Myers 105).[19] This illustration of Day's public character explains his close

[17] Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, in "Home Economics: Domestic Ideology in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*" (1988), recalls the public hatred for *Belinda*'s heroine and how it was echoed by Edgeworth herself who 'was so provoked with the cold tameness of that stick or stone Belinda, that [she] would have torn the pages to pieces' (242).

[18] See footnote 8.

[19] Day and RLE were also members of The Lunar Society of Birmingham, an exclusive learned society whose members were made up of pioneers in science, industrialism, trade, and intellectualism. Original members of the group included: John Whitehurst (1713-88), Matthew Boulton (1728-1809), Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), Josiah Wedgwood (1730-95), Joseph Priestly, (1733-1804), William Small (1734-75), James Keir (1735-1820), James Watt (1736-1819), William Withering (1741-99), Robert Augustus Johnson (1745-99), Richard Lovell Edgeworth

friendship with fellow innovator Richard Lovell Edgeworth, an 'experimental philosopher', inventor, and 'enlightened Irish patriot […] who could embrace humanist culture as well as the most up-to-date science' (Bour 27).[20] Both men were content to diverge from popular political sentiments if their intellectual facilities gave them a reason to do so, and they held a shared interest in the new ideas concerning education that the Age of Enlightenment had stimulated. Indeed, the eighteenth century saw a burgeoning interest in innovations regarding modernised child-rearing and edification techniques and this was only intensified by the emergence of persuasive treatises on education, the most notable being Jean Jacques Rousseau's 1762 *Émile, or On Education.* It was this text that impelled both men to conduct their own educational experiments in the style of their mentor. The first of these, devised by RLE upon the birth of his first child, Richard, in 1765, revolved around the new father's 'desire to educate [his] son according to the system of Rousseau' (*M I:*177). Although this was a venture that Day strongly supported, and enthusiastically contributed his expertise towards, RLE endured embarrassment and 'ridicule' from friends and family who disapproved of his scheme (*M I:*178). In the eight years that followed, RLE attempted to leave 'the body and mind' of his son 'as much as possible to the education of nature' (*M I:*178). During this process, his son obtained 'great vivacity', 'considerable abilities, uncommon strengths and hardiness of body' alongside a wilfulness that no one but his father could manage, presumably owing to the lack of discipline incorporated in Rousseau's purely theoretical system (*M I:*273). After years devoted to this educational enterprise, RLE not only acknowledged his 'deep regret' that he had been 'dazzled by the eloquence of Rousseau' and based his son's instruction upon 'mistaken principles', but also warned 'other parents against the errors' that he had perpetuated (*M I:*273–4).[21] This failure

(1744-1817), Thomas Day (1748-89), Samuel Galton Jr (1753-1832), and Jonathan Stokes (1755-1830) (Schofield 144).

[20] Henceforth Richard Lovell Edgeworth will be shortened to RLE as is standard in scholarship.

[21] This warning against relying on a theoretical system of education is particularly apt given the title of RLE and his daughter's 1798 educational treatise, *Practical Education.*

was elucidated further when RLE took his son to meet Rousseau in Paris and asked the philosopher to tell him 'any thing that struck him in the child's manners or conversation' as a method by which to measure his success in raising a "natural child". Rousseau, however, ascertained a 'party prejudice' in the boy which simultaneously denoted a 'great blemish in his character' and signified a deviation from the requirements outlined in *Émile* which should have ensured Richard Jr's ignorance in such matters (*M I:*258). Four years after the commencement of RLE's educational experiment, Day proceeded to repeat and modify it with a wholly different end goal in mind: Day did not aspire to raise a son but a wife.

Although Day and RLE mainly found themselves on the same side of moral debates, there was one significant topic upon which their attitudes differed: women. RLE often and openly lauded his friend for being 'the most virtuous human being' who never 'swerve[d] from the strictest morality in words or actions', but even he admitted that Day was in possession of a couple of *peculiarities* (*M I:*181). Most notably, his 'fear' of women:

> Mr. Day was not a man of strong passions,—I was—Mr. Day was suspicious of the female sex, and averse to risking his happiness for their charms or their society.—To a contrary extreme I was fond of all the happiness, which they can bestow. (*M I:*181)

While both men were considered politically progressive in their contemporary circles, principally in terms of their views on class and race equality, Day struggled to extend this liberality to women. Jenny Uglow builds on this discrepancy in her monograph, *The Lunar Men* (2002), claiming that '[i]n many ways Day was Edgeworth's opposite—depressive rather than excitable, misogynist rather than womanizing, politically idealistic and totally lacking in any social graces. He was tall and stooping and dishevelled' (183). Wendy Moore develops this characterisation in her comprehensive 2014 biography of Day, explaining that 'with his forward-thinking views on liberty and human rights, Thomas Day might have been expected

to march in the vanguard of female emancipation' but his 'ludicrously old fashioned' views and 'horror at the idea of female seduction' prevented this from being the case (18).[22]

Day's prejudices towards women did not initially prevent him from expecting that 'he should win some female wiser than the rest of her sex […] a paragon, who should forget the follies and vanities of her sex for him' (*M I*:181). Indeed, Anna Seward, an on-and-off friend of Day's, and the source of much of our knowledge about him, confirmed that above all things 'he expelled an aversion to modern plans of female education' and attributed the female 'fickleness' he had experienced in his previous romantic endeavours to their faulty education (35).[23] The above sentiment exemplifies one of the more paradoxical elements of Day's character and one that Edgeworth satirises in her fictional treatment of him, his concurrent 'contempt' for the 'fickle' women of polished society and perceived 'duty' to marry one from that group to 'produce future virtue' (Seward 35). Day's attempts to claim his 'paragon' primarily revolved around attempts to mould ladies he already knew into his idealised version of feminine virtue, both prior to and during his educational experiment. His 'dishevelled' appearance combined with recurrent endeavours to persuade lovers to leave their lives and aspirations for a reclusive life of simplicity and deprivation, did not, however, recommend him as a suitable husband for any of these women (Uglow 183). The result of these failures was a realisation: '[t]here was no finding such a creature ready-made; philosophical romance could not hope it. He must mould some infant into the being his fancy had imagined' (Seward 35). The only way that Day could envision securing a wife to fulfil his strict requirements, one yet

[22] Wendy Moore's *How to Create the Perfect Wife* has proved an invaluable resource for my research, particularly regarding Thomas Day's biographical background. However, my thesis extends Moore's work by applying this to Edgeworth's literary adaptation of Day's life and examining sources not addressed in Moore's monograph.

[23] Seward was well-placed to report on Day's personal life and educational scheme given her position as a close confidant of Day's *and* one of several women who rejected his marital advances. Seward documented her encounters with Day in the *Memoirs of the Life of Dr Darwin* (1804). Seward confirmed that Day expected his wife to 'have a taste for literature and science, for moral and patriotic philosophy' and yet also be as 'simple as a mountain girl, in her dress, her diet, and her manners; fearless and intrepid as the Spartan wives and Roman heroines' (35).

untainted by 'the follies and vanities of her sex', would be to create her (*M I:*181). And thus, he devised a scheme of Rousseauian female education with the express intent of grooming a young girl into an unblemished candidate for marriage.

According to Uglow, amongst Day's friends in the Lunar Society, '[n]obody regarded Day's act as one of personal gratification: it was seen as noble, principled, philanthropic—like adopting an orphan from a war-torn country' (187). In spite of this, several of Day's contemporaries attempted to publicly moralise this marriage experiment, particularly after his death, by redirecting the focus away from possible accusations of corruption and emphasising the elements of educational research. James Keir, for example, claimed in his *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Day* (1791) that Day's primary motivation was 'an experiment on female education' in the hopes of universal reform and, while he did acknowledge that 'it is not improbable' that Day might have entertained 'some expectation of marrying one of them', he maintained that this functioned as a secondary incentive (28). Others did not see the necessity for such deception. RLE readily confirmed that his friend was expressly incentivised by the creation of his own Rousseauian 'Sophy':

> Mr. Day resolved to breed up two girls, as equally as possible, under his own eye; hoping that they might be companions to each other while they were children, and that, before they grew up to be women, he might be able to decide, which of them would be most agreeable to himself for a wife. (*M I*:214)

Rousseau's Sophy is introduced near the end of *Émile,* and she exists only as a perfect companion for the eponymous hero: she is his female counterpart in all ways except agency. Moore posits that, although 'Rousseau has no hesitation in asserting that women are born equal to men', that does not mean that he intended for them to stay that way (41). Sophy is thus 'shaped from infancy to fulfil [her] subservient role' and her education exists only as a device by which to make her a more amusing wife and teach her to 'submit […] entirely to male figures of authority' (41). Day viewed modern education for women as an impediment to these

uncompromising expectations and, thus, decided to take a more active role in his future wife's education. It was with this aspiration in mind that Day procured two orphan girls and began to mould them in line with his idealistic expectations.

Given the morally ambiguous nature of Day's project, the actual procurement of the girls took considerable planning. First, he secured his friend John Bicknell, a lawyer, to protect him from any legal ramifications, and then he required a married man to agree to "apprentice" his chosen foundlings. The Foundling Hospitals strictly precluded 'single men from taking on apprentices', likely as a measure designed to safeguard the foundlings, and thus neither Day nor Bicknell could obtain an orphan unaided (Moore 72). This stipulation, they bypassed, by signing RLE's name in place of their own and apprenticing the first child, Ann Kingston, to their married friend.[24] Although RLE had not consented to this responsibility, confirming in his memoir that the child had been 'bound to [him] without [his] knowledge', he had such 'well merited confidence in Mr. Day that [he] felt no repugnance against his being entrusted with [her] care' (*M I:*214). He demonstrated this a few months later by allowing Day to apprentice another young foundling to him, Dorcas Car. The ages of the girls differ from account to account, but most agree that they were both between the ages of eleven and twelve when they were indentured to Day via RLE. As domestic apprentices, the girls should have directly entered into and retained professional relationships with their new overseer as they, and the committees that approved their removal, had expected. Of course, this did not happen and Day immediately, and somewhat inadvertently, appropriated a paternal role in their lives.

[24] The apprenticeship of Ann Kingston to an absent married man may never have happened had the Shrewsbury Foundling Hospital not been under such strain after a scandal concerning mass apprenticeships to a physically and sexually abusive screw maker. Day had refused the usual £4 payment for Ann and acted at a time of distraction (Moore 276). This does not mean that her unusual adoption went unnoticed. Rather, the London Office that received the apprenticeship indenture wrote back to ask, 'Pray was any thing remarkable in the Girl Ann Kingston no 4579' (50). Day also donated a great sum to the Foundling Hospital's general committee and had himself elected as a governor (53).

A significant feature of Day's experiment was the immediate supplantation of his foundlings' previous identities, so that he may begin to shape them afresh. This, he achieved, by instantly removing the girls from their familiar surroundings and renaming them, thus, as quickly as Sabrina Sidney and Lucretia were "created" they were moved to France. This decision was initially viewed as strange by Day's friends but, as RLE notes, it formed a 'considerable advantage' to his scheme:

> From their total ignorance of the French language, an ignorance, which he took no pains to remove, his pupils were not exposed to any impertinent interference; and as that knowledge of the world, from which he wished to preserve them, was at one entrance quite shut out, he had their minds entirely open to such ideas and sentiments, and such only, as he desired to implant. (*M I:*217)

Very little is conclusively known about the year that Day and his charges spent in France as the majority of our insight comes from contrasting contemporary accounts. The most emphatic of these came from Seward, who depicted the first year of Day's experiment as equally unpleasant and unsuccessful, all while thoroughly emphasising his unwitting residency in a paternal role:

> They teized [*sic*] and perplexed him; they quarrelled, and fought incessantly; they sickened of the small-pox; they chained him to their bed-side by crying, and screaming if they were ever left a moment with any person who could not speak to them in English. He was obliged to sit up with them many nights; to perform for them the lowest offices of assistance (37–8).

Years later, Moore challenged Seward's interpretation of events, suggesting that while there may have been times that the girls fought, they were likely 'too well trained' by the Foundling Hospital to 'rebel quite so forcefully' (Moore 93). Similarly, Seward's depiction of their 'sickening' conflicts with records showing their inoculations against it earlier in their lives (93). Uglow, however, agrees with Seward's account of the girls' constant squabbling and dangerous illness, reinforcing the illustration of Day as a reluctant caregiver (186–7). If

Seward's account *is* to be trusted, Day's expectations of adopting a righteous and respectable position as the girls' virtuous Rousseauian tutor rapidly dissolved into the duties expected of a natural parent: sitting by their sickbeds, breaking up quarrels, and performing 'the lowest duties of assistance' (38).[25] Day had never intended to become a father to his foundlings and, yet Seward's comical presentation of him 'chained' to their bedsides suggests just that (38). Although RLE did not seek to cast his friend in a nurturing role, he nevertheless portrayed him as a parental figure, albeit a stricter one, who employed 'ridicule' rather than affection in his efforts to influence the minds of his protégés (*M I*:217). Other contemporary sources took this a step further, reporting physical force as Day's more common disciplinary recourse: contrasting Seward's reluctantly nurturing father with a more tyrannical depiction, particularly after Lucretia was discarded and Sabrina stood as the lone contender for the position of wife.[26]

After Lucretia's dismissal, Day continued to experiment on his remaining, oblivious, student and put her through unconventional challenges. She had already been taught to read and write, she knew 'how to make a circle and an equilateral triangle' and 'the cause of night and day, winter and summer', but Day sought to test her resilience and craft her into that hardy 'Spartan virgin' that he had conjured in his head (*M I:*225, Keir 27). Rousseau had encouraged parents to harden their children, believing that 'man is born to suffer' pain and should do so without fear, but he did not extend this stipulation to female children (*E:*15). Day deviates from his mentor in this respect: his attempts to harden Sabrina were well documented, numerous, and ruthless. During his "training", Day would allegedly 'stick pins into Sabrina's flesh and command her not to move or cry', fire his pistol 'directly at her skirts' and expect her to 'react

[25] While Seward was one of Day's closest confidants, she had a reputation for embellishing her narratives. For example, in her biography of Erasmus Darwin, she was compelled to issue a retraction for her portrayal of Darwin's aloof response to his son's suicide, among other misrepresentations.

[26] Seward claims that Day was 'heartily glad to separate the little squabblers' upon his return to England and wasted no time in apprenticing Lucretia to a chamber milliner (38). RLE also emphasises Day's eagerness to be rid of Lucretia, whom he apparently deemed 'invincibly stupid' (*M I:*218).

with perfect calmness', and drop 'globules of molten wax onto her bare back and arms' (Moore 112). The latter of these "trials" is concurrently the most substantiated, recounted by several of Day's contemporaries, and the largest source of contention: most agreed that it had occurred, yet they could not decide upon its level of success. Seward, for example, saw Day's endeavours as a failure and claimed that he could not prevail upon Sabrina to arm herself 'against the dread of pain, and the appearance of danger', citing the aforementioned episode, wherein 'he dropped sealing-wax upon her arms', and maintaining 'she did not endure it heroically' (39). Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, on the other hand, depicted Sabrina's attitude entirely differently and represented a version of the scenario wherein she 'bore melted sealing-wax being dropped on her back and arms' without complaint, and 'stood unmoved when, every morning, [Day] fired a pistol close to her ear' (12).[27] Whether these differing accounts denote a lack of clarity amongst reports or derive information from different moments in Sabrina's training is simultaneously ambiguous and inconsequential because both allow us to reach the same conclusion. Even if Day had previously depicted nurturing impulses, he primarily ruled by fear.

RLE claims that Day 'was never more loved by any woman, than he was by Sabrina' and exemplifies this with the inclusion of a letter, said to have been written by Sabrina, wherein she insists that she loves 'Mr. Day best in the world, Mr. Bicknell next, and [RLE] next' (*M I:*339, 225). These childish sentiments starkly contrast with Sabrina's later attitude, as evidenced by an 1818 letter in which Edgeworth recounted a visit during which Sabrina denounced Day 'as having made her miserable—a slave!' (*Letters from England* 122). Whether their relationship dynamic had shifted or had always largely resembled that of the oppressor and the oppressed is unclear, but, regardless, any affection from Sabrina towards her paternal figure gave way to a kind of terror. Seward compellingly exemplifies this dynamic in her

[27] Schimmelpenninck cites an interaction with a visitor, Miss de Luc, who had stayed in the same boarding house as Day and his 'élève' as the origin of her information (Schimmelpenninck 12).

portrayal of Sabrina's 'desire of pleasing her protector, though she knew not how, or why he had become such' (40). Her relationship with her 'protector' is one bound in obscurity and deception from the very beginning and, accordingly, her desire to 'please' is tainted by the confusion brought about by a misappropriated parental role (40). Thus, 'fear [for Sabrina] had greatly the ascendant of affection' and this seemingly paradoxical notion is paramount to Edgeworth's subsequent depiction of Virginia (41).

1.2.1 LETTERS FOR LITERARY LADIES AND "FORESTER"

The parallels between Day's eccentric history and Edgeworth's Virginia subplot in *Belinda* are immediately apparent to readers familiar with both. However, before exploration of this can be conducted, it is vital to examine *why* Edgeworth may have chosen to engage with one man's life so emphatically in her literary works. A good starting place is her strained relationship with Day himself. Although, as discussed, Day did not abhor female education generally, he did not believe women were being educated correctly, and he extended this disavowal of female educational practices to Edgeworth. While RLE encouraged his daughter's literary pursuits and urged her to finish his memoirs, Day conversely 'had a horror of female authorship' and was 'alarmed and shocked' that his friend had allowed his daughter first to translate and then to publish her own works (*M II:*341). This disagreement was compounded in 1783 when Edgeworth's translation of *Adele and Theodore* was beaten to publication by a rival piece and 'Mr. Day wrote a congratulatory letter to [her] father' containing 'an eloquent philippic against female authorship' (*M II:*342). Although RLE defended his daughter's literary pursuits, 'deference for his friend's judgement prevailed […] and made him dread for his daughter the name of authoress' (*M II:*343). From then on, Edgeworth wrote for 'private amusement' and did not attempt to publish again for many years after Day's death in 1789 (*M II:*343).

Edgeworth's first solo publication in 1795, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, was fittingly a humorous defence of female education and authorship and a clear reaction to Day's hindering

of her literary career. It is no coincidence, therefore, that it contained a thinly veiled parody of Day's imperative letter to her father. The actual letter had been destroyed soon after it was received, but Edgeworth recounts enough of it in her father's memoirs to allow her reader space for comparison. The first letter within Edgeworth's *Letters for Literary Ladies* is a note of congratulations 'from a gentleman to his friend, upon the birth of a daughter' (1). The fictionalised letter begins unremarkably expressing best wishes but quickly dissolves into a rant about female education, satirising Day's own sentiments. The unnamed gentleman initially wishes 'health, wit, and beauty' upon the new child before reconsidering his penultimate wish: 'wit', he re-evaluates, is a dangerous aspiration for women because it is achieved 'at the expence [*sic*] of the rest' of their mind *(*1–4). Women, he continues, cannot be considered men's 'equals in knowledge' and should be 'conducted quietly to their own good' (4). Day's views on 'literary ladies' are explicitly exposed and his detestation for female authorship is parodied in the gentlemen's tirade against popular fiction: 'the scandalous chronicles of modern times […] where female influences, and female depravity are synonymous terms' (11). Day's caricature reduces female authorship to the creation of 'secret histories', a popular but largely criticised branch of amatory fiction, and thus conflates female authorship with disgrace just as Day had (11).

The parody culminates in a subversion of Day's educational scheme, wherein the gentleman, rather than advocating for educational experiments, denounces 'projects in education' as 'the most hazardous' (22). Edgeworth's gentleman goes on to question whether it is wise to attempt such 'hazardous' experimentation, particularly when so many before him with 'motives as strong for care and for exertion' had already failed, apparently referring directly to Day's own educational project alongside her father's (22). By engaging openly with the notion of educational experimentation and reflecting on Day's failure through a critical

lens, Edgeworth's speaker simultaneously satirises and condemns her source material.[28] Furthermore, by placing Day's destructive views on female education alongside his 'imprudent' and ruinous experiment, Edgeworth exposes his ignorance in terms of both and gives more eminence to her station of authoress despite his interventions (44).[29]

This is exemplified by Edgeworth's successful publication of *Practical Education* and resultant authority on the subject of education. The book contains 'no peculiar system to support' and consequently has no motive to 'attack the theories of others' (vii). Rather, the Edgeworths' rely on and combine the theories of contemporary philosophers and educational writers including Rousseau and Locke, in order to produce a discourse on 'practice[d] and experience[d]' education and present, in *Practical Education,* their results (vii). While Day is included in the introduction as an influence on the manual, Edgeworth makes it clear that influence does not equal authority in her preface:

> Our opinions concerning the female character and understanding, have been fully detailed in a former publication [Letters for Literary Ladies]; and, unwilling to fatigue by repetition, we have touched but slightly upon these subjects in our chapters on Temper, Female Accomplishments, Prudence, and Economy. (ix)

This note, alongside the explicit references to Day in *Letters for Literary Ladies*, illustrates a system of education that evaluates and considers preceding theories and discards those that cannot be realistically achieved in practice, such as those of Rousseau and Day.

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[28] In a 1789 letter to Day, RLE expressed interest in taking a child from the lower classes to educate and elevate to the higher class. Day's response emulates Edgeworth's gentleman and renounces the scheme:

> There is a very strong reason against it […] it appears to me so serious a thing, that were it any indifferent person, I should suspect, that they had never considered the subject. (*M II*:95)

[29] The second letter in the collection takes the form of a retort to the first. The father to whom Edgeworth's gentleman wrote, based upon RLE, responds with a more explicit condemnation of educational experiments:

> I am sensible that we have no right to try new experiments and fanciful theories at the expence [*sic*] of our fellow-creatures, especially on those who are helpless, and immediately under our protection. Who can estimate the anguish which a parent must feel from the ruin of his child, when joined to the idea that it may have been caused by imprudent education… (44–5)

The above passage mirrors the self-reflective regret that RLE conveyed in his *Memoirs* concerning his negligence in applying a destructive educational theory to his first son's education but conveys it here as a warning.

In 1801, the same year that *Belinda* was published, Edgeworth released a collection of short stories, *Moral Tales.* The first story of the collection, "Forester", also contains a thinly veiled caricature of Day, only this time, Edgeworth focused on his individual character instead of his experimentation. The eponymous Forester, like Day, believed education to be the tool to create 'a difference between individuals more than riches' but also sequestered that view wholly onto male education, with female education being too wrapped up in 'female vanity' (7, 46). While Day's faulty notions concerning female education often went unchallenged amongst his contemporaries, Forester's added to his alienation when the women around him would 'speak at once in their vindication' (46). The caricature's redemption arc begins only when his misguided beliefs prove detrimental to his comfort and, thus, must be altered. It is not a seamless redemption, yet it enables Edgeworth to construct a narrative emphasising that real change and benevolence cannot be achieved by one who isolates himself from societal convention or impedes one group from sharing in what should be for all, including education.

Clearly, by this point in her career, Edgeworth had experimented with the unification of fact and fiction. Nevertheless, her most biographical, and pointed, rendition of Day's appropriation of a paternal role for his marital advantage does not surface until *Belinda*. Heretofore, Edgeworth had indirectly exposed Day's contentious principles; however, she had not fully divulged the immoral and incestuous ramifications of his educational endeavour. This is what she does in her brazen characterisation of Clarence Hervey.

1.2.2 THE "CHARACTER" AND THE CARICATURE

Edgeworth used her portion of her father's memoirs to discuss more than just RLE's life: her attention would intermittently be diverted to her own affairs, particularly when it came to discussions of her suppressed literary aspirations. Edgeworth's resentment towards Day's intervention in her early career is palpable throughout and endures even after his death in 1789

with the pivotal letter 'remainin[ing] for years in [her] mind' (*M II:*349). Yet, in Edgeworth's estimations, her 'attempt to join truth and fiction [in *Belinda]* did not succeed':

> … Mr. Day's educating Sabrina for his wife suggested the story of Virginia and Clarence Hervey in *Belinda*. But to avoid representing the real character of Mr. Day, which I did not think it right to draw, I used the incident, with the fictitious characters, which I made as unlike the real persons as I possibly could. (*M II:*349)

Edgeworth had stumbled across a paradoxical issue: she wanted to write the real without wholly impugning her father's late friend. Her self-proclaimed 'anxiety to avoid drawing the characters, that were to be blameable or ridiculous, from any individuals in real life' simultaneously reflects her condemnation of Day *as* 'blameable' and her attempt to shield his character beneath fictional representation for her father's sake (*M II:*349). This contradictory attitude suggests that rather than 'not succeed[ing]' in joining truth and fiction in *Belinda*, Edgeworth simply failed to make sufficient alterations to protect Day's character (*M II:*349).[30] Hervey's replication of Day's experiment in *Belinda* reads as fiction but, as RLE 'observed', 'the very circumstances, that were taken from real life, are those that have been objected to as improbable or impossible' (*M II:*349). Although Edgeworth had made changes to distance her characters from their real-world stimuli, the 'truth' had proved 'too strong for the fiction' and pulled it 'asunder' (*M II:*350). The next section of this chapter will seek out the similarities between Day and Hervey to expose how the incestuous undertones present in the former's experiments lay latent in his caricature.

One of the more interesting ways that Edgeworth attempted to 'avoid representing the real character of Mr. Day' was to make him more palatable on an aesthetic and superficial level (*M II:*349). Clarence Hervey is characterised as a man *in possession of* acquired tastes, whereas

[30] An example of this attempt to obscure blame through fiction is Edgeworth's decision to "age-up" Virginia in *Belinda*. Instead of portraying her as a twelve-year-old child, like Sabrina, Edgeworth chose to depict a marginally older girl at sixteen. She is still a child, and certainly characterised as such, but the taboo is somewhat lessened.

Day was continually portrayed as a man *whom others deemed* an acquired taste. Both men fit the former descriptor, evident in their meticulous requirements for a wife who reinforces their Rousseauian beliefs, but Day's aversion to fashion and hygiene inhibited his ability to retain a romantic admirer despite his social standing. Moore, for example, discusses Day's 'unorthodox approach to personal hygiene' and the way in which his fondness 'of washing in the stream' did not go unnoticed amongst his contemporaries (2). Alternatively, Hervey is depicted as perfectly palatable superficially; 'an uncommonly pleasant young man' of 'wit and gallantry'; the perfect candidate to 'bring a new face into fashion' (*B:*8). Edgeworth's outward presentation of Hervey could not be more dissimilar from her father's friend; one was an intentional social recluse who ventured into society begrudgingly, the other was a 'connoisseur in female grace and beauty' (*B:*8).[31] Edgeworth's aim to make her 'fictitious characters […] as unlike the real persons as [she] possibly could' is unmistakable (*M II:*349). Yet, the level to which this is achieved is immediately undercut by the narrator's parenthetical remark regarding Hervey's 'chameleon character' wherein he would mould his persona 'according to the different situations in which he happened to be placed' (*B:*14).

Edgeworth's hero is 'smitten with the desire of being thought superior in every thing and being the most admired person in all companies' and, as a result, the artificiality of his persona renders him unreliable (*B:*14). In the company of the intelligent, he 'affected singularity, in order to establish his claims to genius' while the presence of the 'idle' prompted him to pretend 'to disdain every species of knowledge' (*B:*14). This mutable portrayal should distance Hervey further from Day, a man who would not stoop to fit societal expectations, but

[31] According to Moore, Day displayed 'violent' reactions to his repeated romantic rebuffs. She references an instance wherein a youthful Day recounted an early rejection in a furious letter to John Bicknell: 'I think I never saw so damn'd conceited a bitch as Lenora' (19).

I would argue that his 'chameleon' characterisation has the opposite effect (*B:*14).[32] The action of *Belinda* takes place at a moment in which Hervey was "trialling" a new persona, one inspired by his readings of Rousseau, that imitated Day's ideological convictions. The two men are nothing alike, yet while Hervey wears this persona, they are easily comparable. He does not lose his manners or desirability, but they are indoctrinated by the same dubious philosophical material. Hervey 'could be all things to all men—and to all women', and at the novel's commencement, he was Thomas Day (*B:*14). The inclusion of 'women' in this declaration demonstrates a discrepancy between Hervey and Day in that Edgeworth's caricature is seemingly unafflicted by Day's uneasy relations with women. Nevertheless, both share a strong aversion towards 'Parisian belles' (*B:*362). Day's contradictory description of French women as 'the most fantastic Mixture of Slovenliness and Finery' is recalled by Hervey's criticism of them as full of 'vanity, affection, and artifice' with 'perverted' and 'depraved' tastes (Moore 77, *B:*362). Both men come to the same conclusion, the women around them were 'incapable of conferring or enjoying real happiness' and would not make appropriate wives (*B:*362).

Thus, the reader is brought naturally to their most prominent similarity: their fixation with Rousseau. Moore's depiction of Day's enthusiastic interest in Rousseau provides a helpful starting point for an understanding of this fascination, but it verges on the extreme as she goes on to claim that Day viewed himself as 'the incarnation of Émile' (Moore 42). Although there is not adequate evidence to substantiate this claim being further than a colloquial observation,

[32] There is one exception to this general rule. Moore recounts the way in which Day, enamoured with Elizabeth Sneyd, agreed to 'dedicate himself for the next year or so to learning the requisite talents of a polite gentleman' at her prompting (141). This he did only to be rebuffed by Sneyd before returning to his previous ways.

Day's fascination with *Émile* was undeniable. In 1770, RLE commissioned a painting of Day by Joseph Wright, within which it is generally agreed he is holding a copy of Rousseau's *Émile*:

Thomas Day by Joseph Wright (1770)

Throughout his life, Day was unfaltering in his devotion to Rousseau and continued to preach the merits of the philosopher to his contemporaries, as illustrated in his 1779 letter to RLE, wherein he deemed 'Rousseau's Emilius' second only to the bible and exhorted the writer to a status 'more than mortal':

> Excellent Rousseau!" first of humankind! Behold a system, which, preserving to man all the faculties, and the excellences, and the liberty of his nature, preserves a medium between the brutality and ignorance of a savage, and the corruptions of society! (*M I*:226).

Hervey, similarly, internalises Rousseau's teachings immediately: the 'eloquent writer's sense made its full impression upon his imagination' (*B:*362). Edgeworth's parody of Day is persuaded by the idea of 'preserving a medium between the brutality and ignorance of a savage, and the corruptions of society' and this sentiment evokes in him the image of an artless woman imbued with the eloquence of society but lacking its 'corruptions' (*M I*:226). Hervey is first enchanted with the articulacy of Rousseau's treatise and subsequently 'charmed with the picture of Sophia, when contrasted with the characters of the women of the world with whom

he had been disgusted' (*B:*362).[33] Fuelled by erroneous confidence in an idealistic method of education, Hervey too decides to *create* his perfect wife; the recipe for whom was just as paradoxical as Day's virtuous and impressionable 'Spartan virgin' (Keir 27).

Hervey's 'Sophia' had several strict requirements to fulfil before she may be chosen as the 'object of his purpose' (*B:*362). Although he easily located 'beauty in distress, and ignorance in poverty', he also necessitated that his 'object' possessed 'simplicity without vulgarity, ingenuity without cunning, […] ignorance without prejudice' (*B:*362). Edgeworth's narrator exposes the absurdity of Hervey's, and by extension Day's, requisites by framing each as contradictory: '…a heart wholly unpractised, yet full of sensibility, capable of all the enthusiasm of passion, the delicacy of sentiment, and the firmness of rational consistency' (*B:*362). The irony is palpable, albeit unbeknown to the speaker, as 'enthusiasm of passion' forms a direct contrast to 'delicacy' and 'firmness', while the expectation of 'sensibility' within a 'heart wholly unpractised' edges on the ridiculous (*B:*362). The reader is aware from the outset that the woman Hervey wants is altogether fantastical and that his disappointment is imminent. His fundamental desired qualities are formulated in clear dialogue with Rousseau's ideal of the natural child, but they are not qualities achievable in society, nor can Hervey imbue them from infancy, as the former suggests. The idealistic nature of his endeavour allows him to convince himself that he can find 'an object formed expressly for his purpose' in nature (*B:*363). As the tale is presented in retrospect, however, it is imbued with futility from the beginning and the reader is not encouraged to anticipate a love story.

[33] Different translations of *Émile* give different spellings for the name of his protagonist's female counterpart. Sophy appears to be the original, but she has also appeared as Sophie and Sophia. I refer to her as Sophy when discussing *Émile* but otherwise revert to the source's preference.

1.3 CLARENCE HERVEY'S "MARRIAGE PLOT"

The fundamental difference between the marriage plots of Thomas Day and the fictionalised Clarence Hervey can be exposed by a single word: 'romantic' (*B:*362). Day's endeavour had been framed in clinical, almost scientific terms, with him refusing even to select the girls he would go on to educate.[34] This was a project that his contemporaries made no attempt to romanticise. Even RLE's accounts, often prone to a positive spin, outlined his friend's actions in a disinterested tone: 'he resolved to breed up two girls, as equally as possible, under his own eye' (*M I:*214). This attempt to distance Day's actions from any intimations of romance, whether deliberate or subconscious, simultaneously distanced him from allegations of incestuous behaviour. It enabled his contemporaries to split his experiment into two (more appropriate) halves: platonically raising a young girl and improving upon the education she would usually have acquired, *and then* choosing her as a wife. Edgeworth's fictionalisation of the scheme does not attempt to make this distinction, rather Hervey articulates his project as 'romantic' from the outset (*B:*362).

Even the format through which Hervey's tale is conveyed, a written 'packet', is engineered by Edgeworth to imitate the romantic tendency to frame a novel through an epistolary format (*B:*362).[35] The sensuality attached to Hervey's endeavour is exemplified by the intimate label Edgeworth attaches to his tale: a 'history of his connexion with Virginia St. Pierre' (*B:*362). While Edgeworth's decision to have the novel's intermittently obtrusive narrator render the 'packet' into the third person to 'save our hero from the charge of egotism' arguably complicates a discussion of Hervey's intentional romanticising of his scheme, I would

[34] Whether this was an intentional method by which to combat allegations of impropriety which may have emerged had he based his selection on aesthetics is likely but unconfirmed.

[35] The epistolary form was popularised as an appropriate format for romantic plots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by writers such as Aphra Behn and Samuel Richardson. Edgeworth's implementation of the format, paired with ensuing comic scenes, reads like a parody of the trope. In *Belinda* Edgeworth manipulates the epistolary form in order to participate in the romantic genre rather than demonstrate candid thought.

suggest that this narrative choice actually facilitates the reader's dual engagement with Hervey's romantic perspective *and* the satirical lens provided by the third-person narrator. It does not technically matter whether this rendition of Hervey's letter is accurate to the original; what matters is that we are *intended to* interpret it as romantic and futile from the outset and Edgeworth utilises her third person narrator to this purpose. Nevertheless I would argue that the romantic elements in the third-person narration *are* intended to derive from Hervey's original packet, as it is precisely these romanticised notions, and Hervey's inclination toward romanticisation, that the narrator frequently critiques. This discord between narrator and subject is demonstrated consistently throughout the chapters dedicated to Hervey's packet, but it principally emerges at times when Hervey's romantic interpretations of locations and episodes surpass realism or result in fundamental misunderstandings. An illustrative example of Hervey's romance-driven bias occurs early in the subplot wherein he "tests" Virginia by presenting her with a choice between diamond earrings and a 'moss rosebud' (*B*:362). Hervey interprets her preference towards the latter as evidence of the 'simplicity of her taste' and 'the purity of her mind', contrary to the narrator's assertion that it reflects 'ignorance and timidity' (*B*:362). The section that immediately follows reinforces the discrepancy between narrator and subject by taking the form of an intrusive narrative aside that reinforces the irony of Hervey's misapprehension:

> And yet there was more of ignorance and timidity, perhaps, than of sound sense or philosophy in Virginia's indifference to diamonds; she did not consider them as ornaments that would confer distinction upon their possessor, because she was ignorant of the value affixed to them by society. (*B*:371–2)

That which Hervey interprets as 'sound sense' in his charge is the result of her perception of his gift as 'useless' (*B*:371). As the narrator indicates, it 'could not justly be said that she was free from avarice' and '[t]hese reflections could not possibly have escaped a man of Clarence Hervey's abilities […] if his pupil had not been quite so handsome' (*B*:372). Day had perceived

his experiment as a practical method by which to procure a wife, apparently detached from emotional stimuli, and this is a perspective echoed in contemporary discussions. In contrast, Hervey's approach is marked by an inherent infusion of romance and sexuality from the outset, and this is reinforced by Edgeworth's third-person narrative style. Hervey is, thus, cast by Edgeworth as a romantic 'hero' on a mission to rescue a 'beauty in distress' who would conveniently fulfil the role of his wife, and manifest as 'an object formed expressly for his purpose' (*B:*362–3).

In the next chapter I will discuss the way in which *Frankenstein*'s ill-fated "birth scene" is prefigured by an unexceptional description of 'rain patter[ing] dismally against the panes', suggesting the anti-climatic entrance into the world for Victor's progeny that is to follow, but in *Belinda* we see this inverted (*F:*58). Everything leading up to the moment where Hervey spies his 'object' in the glade suggests an unrealistic beauty and felicity as Edgeworth's third-person narrator imbues his search with a fairy tale quality:

> One fine evening in autumn, as he was riding through the New Forest, charmed with the picturesque beauties of the place, he turned out of the beaten road, and struck into a fresh track, which he pursued with increasing delight, till the setting sun reminded him that it was necessary to postpone his farther reflections on forest scenery, and that it was time to think of finding his way out of the wood. (*B:*363)

As discussed, Edgeworth designs this portion of the narrative to be read through Hervey's romanticised and idealised lens. He sees the natural world around him, not as it is, but in accordance with his existing fantasy of discovering his Rousseauian 'beauty in distress' (*B:*362). Hervey's packet contains musings on a scene that he might have initially viewed as mundane but has been retroactively imbued with romantic potentiality because he knows what happens next. As a hero contentedly lost in a 'picturesque' forest, about to stumble onto the object of his desires, Hervey has all of the makings of a traditional romantic protagonist, and

his ‘romantic project’ takes on a “fated” property (*B:*363).[36] Edgeworth engineers this passage to expose and criticise Hervey’s unwavering belief in the inevitability of his success. He moves through the forest in apparent harmony with nature, reinterpreting its natural occurrences (such as the setting sun) as personal signs for himself and, subsequently, confirmation of his suitability for the role of romantic hero.

Yet, as I have alluded to, Edgeworth subtly suggests discord from the beginning as Hervey quickly ‘turned out of the beaten road, and struck into a fresh track’, therefore disturbing the existing landscape to carve out his own road (*B:*363). His decision to take a ‘fresh’ route shifts the trajectory of the scene (*B:*363). Now, instead of postponing ‘farther reflections’, he continues into the unknown, ignoring the dissuading ‘setting sun’ that had briefly convinced him to retreat (*B:*363). Unbeknownst to Hervey, the moment he begins to ignore the natural signs that he had previously interpreted as personal, he destabilises his formerly harmonious setting. The passage takes on a comic tone when the reader realises that Hervey’s interpretation of the events around him is the direct result of his desire to be the “hero” of his story. Edgeworth appropriates a fairy tale atmosphere to present her oblivious “prince” searching for a “princess” who does not need saving. The scarcely concealed irony of Hervey’s claim that he was ‘delayed’ in his experimentation ‘by the difficulty of finding a proper object for his purpose’ *immediately* transitioning into the tale of how he found his ‘proper object’, exemplifies this satirical tone (*B:*362). Hervey’s lengthy scheme is reduced to a mere page as the narrative jumps straight from his ‘difficulty’ to the discovery of this fittingly mystical forest (*B:*362). Viewing this passage as the product of Hervey’s romanticised ideals complicates the rest of his subplot, as the reader quickly learns not to trust his fanciful perceptions, but this is rebalanced by Edgeworth’s use of a third-person narrator as a device by

[36] The ‘increasing delight’ with which Hervey pursues his project reminds mutual readers of Victor’s ‘delight and rapture’ at nearing the consummation of his toils in *Frankenstein:* the culmination of both characters’ desires would be comparably disappointing (*B:363, F:*53).

which to encourage her readers to view his character through the layers of irony and satire that have been planted from the beginning, especially through the parallels she constructs with Day.

There is, however, one aspect that Hervey had not been mistaken in: the setting sun had been a sign that he should leave the unfamiliar forest, even if it had not been designed to personally inform his endeavour. But his romantic reveries are not so easily thwarted, and the forest's fairy tale quality invites a sense of security for the self-defined hero. Even the jarring interruption of a dog 'barking furiously at his horse', presumably warning Hervey to leave, is wilfully misinterpreted (*B:*363). As a domestic pet, the dog represents a disruption to the natural environment akin to Hervey's own presence: it is an animal, but its domesticity suggests a pocket of human society dwells within this forest. The dog is tasked to defend his territory, 'bark[ing] himself hoarse', yet once more Hervey romanticises his encounter with the furious creature and opts to follow his animal 'guide' to the territory he protects (*B:*363). Aside from exposing Hervey's impulse towards sentimental reinterpretation, this scene also informs the next by providing a contrasting version of nature:

> … he came into a beautiful glade, in the midst of which was a neat but very small cottage, with numerous beehives in the garden, surrounded by a profusion of rose-trees which were in full blow. This cultivated spot was strikingly contrasted with the wildness of the surrounding scenery. As he came nearer, Mr. Hervey saw a young girl watering the rose-trees, which grew round the cottage, and an old woman beside her filling a basket with the flowers. (*B:*363)

Even Hervey's skewed perceptions cannot preserve the impression of accord with the natural world around him upon the discovery of the 'beautiful glade' (*B:*363). It is a subtle disruption, but it is palpable. The glade is beautiful; however, it lacks the wildness of the previous passage, especially through the inclusion of the cottage, which shifts the focus away from the natural and towards the human (*B:*363). It is an artificial imitation of nature claimed by the people inhabiting it with the practical 'beehives' and the manicured 'rose-trees' suggesting the cultivation of nature rather than its expansion (*B:*363). The cottage, too, adheres to the

presentation of the glade as a liminal space bridging the gap between nature and society; it is an unnatural habitation purpose-built for humanity but also presumably created and furnished with the natural materials offered by the forest. The cottage, and by extension the glade, acts as a human refuge from the wildness of nature outside while the forest paradoxically acts as a natural refuge from human civilisation, a double barrier from the corruptions of society for the glade's inhabitants. This abrupt change of scenery is not designed to be imperceptible; Edgeworth explicitly asserts that the 'cultivated spot was strikingly contrasted with the wildness of the surrounding scenery' (*B:*363). It is, therefore, only the "hero" who fails to understand the importance of the distinction. The glade, as aesthetically pleasing as it appears, functions as a depiction of the corruption that is to follow if Hervey removes his 'mistress of the wood' from her natural setting and places her into the stifling world of polite society (*B:*149). While Thomas Day aspired to create a "natural child", taking the girls from the urbanity of the city to the remote French countryside, Hervey inadvertently does the opposite.

1.3.1 CLARENCE HERVEY'S "SABRINA"

Edgeworth's portrayal of Hervey as a "romantic hero" within a narrative featuring a child reflects Kincaid and Honeyman's analysis of children as projections of adult desires rather than autonomous individuals. This dynamic is demonstrated when Hervey first encounters the 'young girl' by the cottage and perceives her as the embodiment of his 'imaginative and nostalgic demands' (*B*:363, *Erotic Innocence* 144). At this moment, Rachel, the 'young girl', functions as a 'technically and fictively an empty glass'; the reader gains no insight into her character beyond that which Hervey projects onto her, rendering her 'flatly unknowable' and 'thus limitless in what she can reflect' (Honeyman 22). Initially, Hervey's gaze feels innocuous; he notes her actions and then quickly shifts his focus to the 'remarkably benevolent' old woman beside her (*B:*363). His immediate reference to Rachel's youth, in combination with this, suggests that his attention is purely observational and devoid of sexual desire. This

lulls the reader into a false sense of the mundane and heightens the destabilising effect of the next line wherein Hervey takes a second glance at the 'young girl' and the tone of the passage jarringly shifts as his interest takes on an entirely different dynamic (*B:*363). Hervey is 'powerfully struck' by the girl's appearance (*B:*363). She 'did not appear to Clarence like any other young girl that he had ever seen':

> The setting sun shone upon her countenance, the wind blew aside the ringlets of her light hair, and the blush of modesty overspread her cheeks, when she looked up at the stranger. In her large blue eyes, there was an expression of artless sensibility with which Mr. Hervey was so powerfully struck, that he remained for some moments silent, totally forgetting that he came to ask his way out of the forest… (*B:*363–4)

There is nothing in the above description that suggests anything more than childlike simplicity, but the narrator adopts Hervey's subjective preconceived romantic lens: to him, the girl is the physical manifestation of the natural child that Rousseau detailed. Hervey's inability to distinguish between the wild nature of the forest and the tamed nature of the grove resurfaces here as he views the young girl's beauty as illuminated by nature itself. She exists in harmony with her backdrop: her countenance is brightened by the 'setting sun', and the wind blows 'aside the ringlets of her light hair' to expose her face to her newfound would-be lover (*B:*363). Again, Hervey interprets these naturally occurring elements as specific to *his* "love story", extraneous intervention from the outside world to demonstrate her suitability to him as a wife.

The narrative tone, however, retains its satirical nature and Edgeworth's persistent emphasis on the phrase 'young' casts a shadow over Hervey's perfect moment. She *cannot* be like 'any other young girl' because that would invite paedophilic implications, and his desire must be justified (*B:*363). Although the young girl's youth is reinforced, Edgeworth does not reveal her age until later in the novel when she turns seventeen, thereby delaying the reader's comprehension of her youth until after she has been sexualised. In his first description of the young girl, Hervey takes the features that reflect her youth, such as her 'blush' and 'large blue

eyes', and reinterprets them to "expose" an inherent sexuality (*B:*363). By refiguring the childlike 'blush' that 'overspread her cheeks when she looked up at' him as a 'blush of modesty', Hervey not only ensures the reader of his 'packet' can sense latent sexuality in the child but suggests that she too innately recognises a need for 'modesty' in this situation (*B:*363). Pamela K. Gilbert's discussion of the literary blush is particularly useful in analyses of this scene:

> The virtuous heroine of literature depends particularly on readers' attention to her blushes, caught as she is between emerging notions of romantic love and traditional understandings of female purity and innocence. [...] Of course, readers and writers alike well knew this was an exaggerated scenario, but narrative repeatedly has recourse to the young woman who has no idea she has feelings for a male character, but helpfully blushes so that we may be in on her secret before she is. (95)

Here, it is Hervey who is 'in on the secret before she is' as the 'purity and innocence' of Gilbert's heroine is recast into the body of a child (95). Her complicated feelings towards her male benefactor become clear later in the novel when she is forced to reconcile the idea of paternal love and sexual implication but, for now, the reader has only Hervey and the narrator's perspectives. Edgeworth emphasises Hervey's attempt to recast this meeting as a sexualised encounter and, therefore, diminish his culpability in her corruption; however, by allowing the reader to view the young girl first through an impartial lens and *then* through Hervey's romanticised lens, the narrator undercuts this goal and allows the reader to partake in her dual-interpretation. Hervey's paradoxical notions add to this effect as he frames himself as 'the stranger', admitting to his interruption of the idyllic scene and reinforcing the "strangeness" of the situation, while concurrently interpreting his interruption as welcome precisely *because* he construes the girl's 'blush of modesty' as a sign of instant adoration (*B:*363). Hervey situates himself in a position of power over the young girl from the outset, both in terms of maturity and physical proximity, as she looks 'up' at him, and this positioning continues to dominate

his subplot as he finds himself spellbound by a *child* (*B:*363). In the meantime, the narrator allows the reader to preserve their own interpretations through the use of satirical depictions and double-takes. Honeyman conceptualises the literary child as a mirror for the desires of the adult minds that seek to define them, 'absorb[ing] and respond[ing] to their expectations in whatever manner [they] can make sense of them' (41). This reflective process occurs on two levels: initially through the author's portrayal of literary children and subsequently through the child's interactions with their literary adult "definers". Edgeworth's use of a satirical narrator to deconstruct Hervey's idealised projections exemplifies this dual-construction, allowing the reader to simultaneously consider both perspectives.

These paradoxical depictions continue when the sexualised girl is cast in a childlike role once more as she leans towards Hervey unprompted and offers him a rose with a 'sweet innocent smile' (*B:*364). The young girl's gift to the 'stranger' in her glade, a homegrown rose, easily recognisable as a symbol of love, only accentuates her suitability in Hervey's mind. It is significant to note, however, that roses do not have one static interpretation (*B:*363). Michael Ferber, in his *Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, acknowledges that 'the rose in poetry has always been red (or "rose") in color, unless otherwise described' but '[i]f red and white roses are distinguished, the red stands for charity or Christian love, the white for virginity' (183). Thus, we reach the crux of their relation to one another; that which Hervey interprets as romantic through his sentimentalised lens is rendered innocent through the girl's youthful eyes. From the girl's 'innocent' perspective the rose may be considered a white emblem of kindness, as established later when her ignorance of Hervey's intentions is made explicit, while Hervey eagerly interprets it as if it were red: indicative of romantic love *and* her status as his "natural" wife (*B:*364). The irony of this scene is epitomised by the 'cultivated' rose trees that feature so heavily in a scene considered wholly natural by our idealistic protagonist (*B:*363). Regardless of colour, most roses contain one similitude: they are accompanied by thorns. Ferber outlines

the ‘connection between girls as flowers and their being plucked, raped, or snatched away’ as dating back to the earliest Greek poems, the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* and the Hesiodic *Catalogues of Women,* and this association of danger remained as a popular literary symbol: ‘[t]he word “deflower”‘ for “deprive of virginity” has been in English since the Middle Ages’ (80). Ferber’s depiction of Persephone gathering flowers prior to her abduction by Hades runs in parallel to Edgeworth’s portrayal of a young girl interrupted by a predatory male. Thus, the roses in this scene may be interpreted to simultaneously reflect the bliss that Hervey expects *and* the risk his love poses to the object of his desire.

1.3.2 AN EXPERIMENT TAINTED BY DEATH

Hervey’s entrance into the glade, and subsequent discovery of his desired ‘object’, is depicted as the gratification of his ‘imaginative and nostalgic demands’ and a moment of triumph, but only when viewed from his perspective (*B:*362, *Erotic Innocence* 144). So caught up in the notion that the idyllic scene that he stumbled into could facilitate his romantic plotline, he fails to notice the way in which his arrival formed an unwelcome interruption and corruption of that which he admired. Edgeworth openly casts her male protagonist as a voyeur who gains erotic pleasure from watching the girl silently and unperceived ‘for some moments’ before he is spotted by her grandmother (*B:*363). At that instant, the pastoral dreamscape transitions into an urgent commotion. The old woman does not view Hervey through a romanticised lens. She sees him as he is—an outsider othered by the female-centric setting that he has inadvertently found himself in—and his presence intimates a threat to their isolated livelihood. When she reacts, it is with a frantic compulsion to remove her charge from a situation she interprets as dire: ‘“Go in, Rachel!—go in, child,” said the old woman, in so loud and severe a tone, that both Rachel and Mr Hervey started’ (*B:*364). The ‘severe’ tone frightens Rachel because she recognises the exigency of the situation in her grandmother’s voice, but it frightens Hervey because it interrupts the fantasy he has been fashioning until that point (*B:*364). When the child

stops to ‘collect her flowers’, the spilt symbols of his love and her innocence, Hervey can temporarily resume his role as voyeur ‘admiring her finely shaped hands and arms […] and natural grace of her motions’ (*B:*364). He views her behaviour as performative, designed to entice him and showcase her natural beauty, but the old woman’s repeated emphasis on the word ‘child’ and her appropriation of the fetishized actions, ‘leave the roses there—I can pick them up as well as you, child’, undercuts this (*B:*364). Both the old woman *and* the reader immediately comprehend Hervey’s intentions, and he is only able to ‘recollect’ himself enough to request directions once his desired object, the child, has exited the scene, the ‘door closed after her’ (*B:*364).

The old woman’s attitude changes when she learns Hervey is actively trying to leave her domain and happily gives him directions to ensure his departure. Unfortunately, these also have the inadvertent result of presenting him with the easiest way *back* and a mere line after his exit, he enters again, but the glade is much changed:

> As he descended into the valley, he heard the humming of bees, but saw no smoke rising from the cottage chimney—no dog barked—no living creature was to be seen—the house-door was shut—the window shutters closed—all was still. The place looked as if it had been deserted by its inhabitants—the roses had not been watered, many of them had shed their leaves; and a basket, half full of dead flowers, was left in the middle of action. (*B:*364)

The glade is no longer a ‘terrestrial paradise’; it is an abandoned mark of civilisation (*B:*364). The dreamlike quality that overwhelmed Edgeworth’s previous illustration of the glade is replaced by a starkly contrasting presentation of decay, jarringly punctuated by constant hyphenation and evasive language. The vivacity of the original scene remains only in the ‘humming of bees’ that reminds the reader that, although nature is still very much alive in the forest, the human element has been removed (*B:*364). The cottage is shut up, the dog is quiet, and even the smoke of the chimney no longer penetrates the natural world around it. The ‘cultivated spot’ no longer forms any contrast with ‘the wildness’ around it: they have become

one (*B:*364). The greatest deterioration is reflected in the roses that had so effortlessly captured Hervey's imagination lines before. Those that remain on the rosebush, delicately dependent on the attention of their cultivators, 'had not been watered' and the child's basket 'of dead flowers' is left discarded in the background of the scene like an omen of corruption, or death, of innocence (*B:*364). That the basket is strewn to the side, 'left in the middle of action', confirms that which this passage has previously only suggested: this had happened immediately after Hervey's "visit" (*B:*364). His discovery of their isolated home had expedited a rapid decline in their idyllic life and indirectly exposed the sanctity of their refuge to real-life.

Inside, the cottage is no different: the aspect of death and decay that had so exhaustively penetrated the glade did not end at the threshold of their home. Yet, because Hervey does not interpret the calamity around him as the direct result of his intrusion, he decides to perpetuate it and reprise his role of voyeur more literally by 'peeping' into the windows and watching undetected (*B:*364). Within the cottage, Edgeworth depicts a painfully intimate moment wherein the young girl desperately attempts to recall her dying grandmother to consciousness, but this is tainted by the reader's knowledge that Hervey, too, is watching. His attention dwells on the pathetic scene only briefly before shifting, once more, to the young girl's aesthetic appearance: 'he saw the beautiful young girl, with her hair all dishevelled, and the strongest expression of grief in her countenance' (*B:*365). The elements that reflect her youth and vulnerability are eroticised by a much older male figure who proceeds to climb through the window of her childhood home under the guise of heroism. This predatory action facilitates a resurgence of the grandmother's previous fury at the male presence in her feminine realm that prevents Hervey's perspective from dominating the scene:

> As Clarence went close to the bed, she opened her eyes, and fixing them upon him, she stretched out her withered hand, caught fast hold of her granddaughter, and then raising herself, with a

> violent effort, she pronounced the word, 'Begone!' Her face grew black, her features convulsed, and she sunk down again in her bed, without the power of utterance. (*B:*365) [37]

Where Rachel's hand is 'finely shaped' and stretched towards Hervey, her grandmother's is 'withered' and attempting to pull her granddaughter *away* from Hervey (*B:*364–5). The old woman's self-proclaimed purpose, to protect her granddaughter from men after her mother's death 'from a broken heart', runs in direct opposition to Hervey's goal to claim the young girl and the effort drains her remaining lifeforce and '[h]er face grew black [and] her features convulsed' (*B:*365–6). Thus, her death becomes a requisite of Hervey's endeavour, and his refusal to stay away eventually results in the culmination of this: 'she fell back exhausted—never spoke no more—and an hour later she expired in the arms of her grand-daughter' (*B*:366). The old woman's death is an essential component of Hervey's usurpation of her role as primary caregiver to the child he desires and his subsequent recreation of her identity: her death premeditates the premature "death" of her granddaughter's childhood at this moment.

1.4 THE (RE)CREATION OF VIRGINIA ST. PIERRE

The reader could be forgiven for viewing Hervey's intentions towards Rachel as driven entirely by sexual desire. Indeed, the text suggests this by allowing his active aesthetic sexualisation of her to overwhelm the plot points of the narrative. However, mere moments after her grandmother's death, he finds himself faced with recognition of her extreme youth, perhaps for the first time:

> "And so *you* are going away from me too?" said she; and she burst into tears. At the sight of these tears Clarence turned away, and hurried from her. He sent the woman from the village, but returned no more that night. (*B:*367)

[37] This scene is reminiscent of the dream sequence in Shelley's *Frankenstein* which I will explore more thoroughly in the next chapter (*F:*59).

Confronted with 'these tears' Hervey can no longer sexualise the girl's youth and his first instinct is to flee, not only the situation but the object of his previous desire: he 'hurried away from *her*' (emp. added, *B:*367).[38] Edgeworth forces Hervey to look up from his romanticised lens to the 'difficulties' that Rachel's youth present to his marriage plot by ensuring that this scene does not fit his previous romantic vision (*B:*367). This chapter so far has focused on the "parent" of this pair, yet it is Rachel's words that force Hervey to reconcile his conception of her as a sexual being with the childlike figure in front of him. The grandmother is no longer around to emphasise Rachel's youth; thus, she must assert it herself. Her childlike plea to Hervey not to leave, 'And so *you* are going away from me too', highlights the way in which she views Hervey as a substitute caregiver rather than a potential lover (*B:*367). With the italicised *you*, Edgeworth makes it clear that Rachel feels abandoned by her aspirant protector while the insertion of 'too' at the end of her dialogue reminds the reader that her feelings are platonic, she has grouped him with her grandmother (*B:*367). The sexuality that Hervey's characterisation imposed on her is nullified by this moment, but this is fleeting and evaporates as soon as he devises a plan to reconcile Rachel's youth with his previous desire:

> Her simplicity, sensibility, and, perhaps more than he was aware, her beauty, had pleased and touched him extremely. The idea of attaching a perfectly pure, disinterested, unpractised heart, was delightful to his imagination: the cultivation of her understanding, he thought, would be an easy and a pleasing task: all difficulties vanished before his sanguine hopes. (*B:*367)

In a very short space of time, Hervey is able to recover his mislaid desire for the young girl, apparently 'more [so] than he was aware', while simultaneously and *consciously* accepting the task of cultivating 'her understanding' (*B:*367). In this way, Hervey acknowledges his role as a parent to Rachel and takes responsibility for her upbringing, but he views it as temporary: 'I

[38] In the context of this thesis, this moment recalls the abandonment scene in *Frankenstein* wherein Victor, faced with similar simultaneous disappointment and fear, refuses his self-imposed responsibility: the "trauma of the afterbirth" proves too much and he 'escape[s]' his charge (*F:*59).

will deserve before I claim my reward' (*B:*368). He will act as "father" for as long as it takes to 'deserve' his reward and claim her as a lover (*B:*368). He is once again able to interpret signs of her youth, her 'simplicity' and 'sensibility', as qualities befitting a wife because they allow him to mould her into his ideal 'object' without preconceived notions (*B:*362). The reader is made explicitly aware from this moment onward that Hervey's romanticised lens would not be so easily deterred; when he met with something that did not fit, he cultivated it until it did and 'all difficulties vanished' (*B:*367–8).

1.4.1 THE (RE)NAMING

The naming process is an integral aspect of both parental responsibility and the formation of identity, providing the child with a denomination around which to form personal identifications and reinforce their introspective self. The matrimonial renaming process, on the other hand, is a notion intrinsically bound with patriarchal values, the transfer of a woman from her father to her husband. To *change* someone's first name, however, forms a collation of the two processes and indicates a rechristening, a new identity to be shaped by a new parental figure, leaving the reader with a notion of double-possession. The authority of father *and* husband concurrently. The act of renaming is, therefore, essential to the act of recreation.

As I have discussed elsewhere, for Thomas Day the act of renaming was a fundamental component of his "educational experiment", a necessary step to maintain distance from the Foundling Hospital and render the girls 'impossible […] to trace', but it is naïve to not also consider the ramifications that such a parental act would have had on both Day and his wards (Moore 69). Indeed, renaming Ann and Dorcas allowed Day to supersede their previous identities and replace them with those of his choosing; they *became* Sabrina Sidney and Lucretia. Day may not have selected the girls themselves, but he certainly selected their names and, according to RLE, this process was not as scientifically detached as the rest of his experiment. Sabrina's name in particular reflects an unexpected level of intimacy, stemming

'from the river Severn' alongside 'Sidney from [Day's] favourite, Algernon Sidney' (*M I:*214).[39] In this way, Day's impulse to rename had a dual function—it allowed him to rewrite the girls' identities while placing himself in an authoritative paternal position.

In *Belinda,* this situation is repeated and amplified. Unlike Day, Hervey *had* specifically selected Rachel for her beauty and sensibility; however, there was one 'circumstance' that 'stopped the current of [his] imagination' (*B:*369). Her name 'was excessively disagreeable to him' (*B:*369). Rachel's name interrupts the fantasy that Hervey had first formed as a voyeur, unaware of anything about her outside of her aesthetic beauty and the majesty of nature (*B:*369). Rachel, with its biblical connotations, is a name suited to the young girl's previous virginal, female-centric, life, and entirely 'unsuited' to the romantic heroine that she had transformed into in his 'imagination'; she was 'Virginia' from the 'first time he beheld her' (*B:*369–70).[40] While Hervey never directly refers to the girl as Rachel, except internally to criticise the name's unsuitability, her grandmother had constantly called her by it and, thus, Hervey removes an overt connection to both her previous life and her previous caregiver. When he changes her name, he stakes his parental claim in opposition to her grandmother's: she becomes 'his' Virginia in a way that she could never have been 'his' Rachel (*B:*370). Virginia's renaming ensures that she now belongs entirely to Hervey and illustrates his double-possession of his dependent bride.[41]

Virginia's new name generally forms a barrier between her present and her past that allows Hervey to embed her more completely in her *new life,* but his choice of name takes this

[39] Moore contends that Sabrina's name was more likely a nod to his 'childhood hero' Sir Phillip Sidney and, although I am more inclined to agree with Day's friend over his modern biographer, both denote a level of intimacy (69).

[40] The significance of names in *Belinda* should not be underestimated: Edgeworth commonly used names as indicators of status and characterisation within her writing. Lady Delacour's reputation, for example, is conveyed through her title and her name, with De la Cour translating directly to "of the court", while the irony of naming the "villainous" crossdresser Harriet Freke would not have been lost on the reader.

[41] Henceforth I will refer to Rachel as Virginia in order to reinforce her name change and as an attempt not to overcomplicate quotations that refer to her as such.

a step further and reflects an attempt to imbue in her a *new persona* more resonant of his quixotic intentions; that of Jacques-Henri Bernardin de St. Pierre's Virginie, from his novel *Paul et Virginie* (1849).

> The first time that he beheld her, he was struck with the idea that she resembled the description of Virginia in M. de St. Pierre's celebrated romance; and by this name he always called her, from the hour that she quitted her cottage. (*B:*370)

Virginia's removal from her grandmother's cottage denotes the beginning of her romantic plotline; she is given an unfamiliar name, displaced to an unfamiliar location, and put under the control of an unfamiliar caregiver. The combination of 'beauty' and 'ignorance' that Hervey had claimed as a requisite of the 'object of his purpose' ensures that even her imposed identity is unfamiliar to her, not being literate or aware of popular literature (*B:*362). Hervey's decision to rename his lover after St. Pierre's heroine is appropriate for two primary reasons. On a superficial level, he seeks out a suitable romantic participant and then names her based purely on his first voyeuristic impression of her, characterising himself as Paul, her destined lover. On a more intertextual level, however, the early lives of the two heroines across both books are remarkably comparable: Virginie and Virginia both experience separation from their paternal figures early on and this results in their atypical upbringings in natural, and female-centric, zones. That both Virginia and Virgie were initially raised in female-centric environments aligns with Rousseau's depiction of the 'earliest education' as 'the most important' and 'undoubtedly […] woman's work' (*E*:5). Later education, he continued, should be undertaken by the father: 'The real nurse is the mother and the real teacher is the father' (*E*:16). Indeed, for much of their youth both characters typify Rousseau's "natural" child, left as 'nature made' them and shielded 'from the crushing force of social conventions' by their matriarchal caregivers (*E:*5).[42] The one interloper in St. Pierre's feminine landscape, Paul, is

[42] Sarah Jones, in the "Memoir of Bernardin de St. Pierre" insists that, although St. Pierre came from the 'same school' of thought as natural thinkers such as Rousseau and Buffon, 'he was in no degree their imitator, but

raised in the same way as Virginie, away from societal constructs. St. Pierre's natural children, like Edgeworth's Virginia, are wholly entrenched in their natural landscapes, 'they could neither read nor write', their 'minds had never been wearied by lessons of morality', and they 'believed the world ended at the shore of their own island and all their affections were confined within its limits' (St. Pierre 63).

Evidently, Hervey's chosen name aligns with his desire to cultivate a natural child yet contemporary readers of both texts would identify Virginie, not simply as St. Pierre's romantic heroine, but as his *tragic heroine* and, therefore, recognise the more disturbing implications of compelling Virginia to live out her namesake's life trajectory. In modelling his wife-to-be on St. Pierre's Virginie, Hervey ignores the warnings explicit in St. Pierre's tale, about removing a "natural" child from her innate habitat, and consequently replicates the mistake. The disruption of both young women's early lives, prompted by their forced insertion into society, destroys the parts of their characterisations that had initially aligned with Rousseau's notion of the natural child and, instead, embodies one of his less optimistic principles: 'God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil' (*E:*5). 'Evil' is perhaps hyperbolic in this context, but it conveys the deprecation of both heroines when 'man meddles with them' and they are removed from their rightful locations (*E:*5). St. Pierre's heroine loses her natural sensibility when she is sent to live with a rich aunt in France and told she must 'forget that land of savages' and entrench herself in upper-class society (St. Pierre 193). This, in turn, leads to her death when her learned modesty prevents her from being rescued from a shipwreck because it would require the removal of her clothing. In this way, St. Pierre reflects the corruptive force of society and life outside of nature, contrasting his protagonist's previous willing natural nakedness with a shame that evokes Milton's depiction of sinful modesty in *Paradise Lost*.

perfectly original and new' (St Pierre 10). Nevertheless, both share the sentiment that education should take place in nature and that society has the power to corrupt.

Virginie leaves her version of Eden, and her character is too degraded to return. The intertextual link that Edgeworth makes by having the two heroines share a name imbues in the reader a sense of foreboding for the plot to come and the impression of inevitable repetition. Indeed, Virginia's original unconscious Rousseauian upbringing in the glade inadvertently facilitates her later, intentional, immersion in Hervey's more exploitative version of it. Her grandmother's failure to provide her with adequate tools to navigate life beyond her female-centric natural environment leaves Virginia unable to understand adult emotions and relationships or recognise the sexual threat posed by the 'stranger' in the glade (*B:*363). Notwithstanding the implicit incestuous undertones arising from Edgeworth's conflation of the Virginia subplot with St. Pierre's narrative, Virginia's relationship with Hervey is presented as incestuous from the outset, largely because filial relationships are the only form of connection she has been socialised to recognise and reciprocate. Like Virginie, it is not until Virginia is forcibly removed from her "Eden" that her childhood assumes a darker tone.

The intertextual connections between the two texts are not limited to the portrayals of Virginie/Virginia but also become apparent in Hervey's identification with Paul. While the intimations of incestuous desire in *Belinda* are subtle, and dependent upon one's view of Hervey as a parental figure, those depicted in St. Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* are long-established. Renata R. Mautner Wasserman, for example, writes about the 'presence of a perpetually deferred sexuality tinged with incest' prompted by St. Pierre's introduction of his titular characters as 'like brother and sister' (101). Julie Shaffer, in "Familial Love, Incest, and Female Desire in Late Eighteenth-and Early Nineteenth-Century British Women's Novels" expands on this idea and explores how the literary trend of 'parents who raise unrelated children together [in the] hope that they will move from sibling to marital love and wed' is complicated in *Paul et Virginie* because the titular characters develop at different rates (79). Shaffer notes that the children are separated before maturity 'so that the shift in [the] kind of bond' they possess may

be less 'troublesome', but by then it is too late: Virginie enters puberty and begins to confound their sibling 'bond' with sexual desire rather than transition from one to the other (97). The incestuous connotations in *Paul et Virginie* are stressed from the beginning, the 'first name they learned to give each other were those of brother and sister' and they nursed from both mothers interchangeably (St. Pierre 59). As a consequence, Virginie's youthful mind conflates her past and present feelings, and her impression of Paul is modified from natural to shameful. Virginie's inability to accept the incestuous implications that her relationship with Paul encompasses is replicated in Edgeworth's retelling as the conflation of filial roles, again, prompts incestuous shame. Hinrich Hudde draws attention to the relationship between St. Pierre's popularity and his contemporary readers' willing disregard of the 'clear erotic representation of sexuality wrapped in the garments of a love between children' (Qtd. In Wasserman 110). In contrast, Edgeworth's parody of Virginie's characterisation demonstrates a willing *engagement* with intimations of incest.

1.4.2 TESTING VIRGINIA

As I have discussed, under the guise of his educational experiment, Day had required his foundlings, particularly Sabrina, to undergo rigorous, and often hazardous, testing. These tests ranged from ordinary schooling in mathematics and science to violent trials of resilience. Although Edgeworth's fictionalised educational experiment retains its distance from Day's more extreme methods, there is one documented trial that she convincingly replicates in *Belinda*. Moore posits that Day 'invented ingenious methods and went to ludicrous lengths to measure his future bride against his ideals' and a notable example of these 'ideals' was his 'unconquerable horror of the empire of fashion over the minds of women' (Moore 113, *M I:*217).[43] Through 'reasoning' and 'ridicule' Day had attempted to instil in Sabrina and Lucretia

[43] Heidi Thomson, in her essay on "Fashion and Moral Authority in Edgeworth's Tales', agrees with this depiction of Day as 'manically opposed to anything fashionable' but frames his attempt to create a wife as a 'grotesque

'a deep hatred for dress, and luxury' and, by the time Lucretia had been discarded, this forcibly imposed disdain for fashion had transitioned into more literal "tests" of vanity (*M I* 217). Moore details one of these tests wherein Day commanded Sabrina to throw a box of 'beautiful handmade clothes' onto a fire in a demonstration of her 'resistance to luxury' (Moore 113). This test was well known amongst Day's contemporaries; therefore, it is unsurprising that we see it parodied in *Belinda*.[44] In lieu of a 'box of finery', Hervey presents Virginia with a challenge to 'prove the simplicity of her taste, and the purity of her mind': he offers her 'a pair of diamond earrings and a moss rosebud', and asks her to take 'whichever she liked best' (Moore 10, *B:*71):

> She eagerly snatched the rose, crying, "Oh! it puts me in mind of the cottage:—how sweet it smells!" She placed it in her bosom, and then, looking at the diamonds, said, "They are pretty, sparkling things—what are they? of what use are they?" and she looked with more curiosity and admiration at the manner in which the earring shut and opened than at the diamonds. (*B:*371)

Day used his trial of vanity to reinforce his perception of Sabrina as one of Rousseau's "natural children", unaffected by 'beautiful hand-made clothes', and content with the 'plain gowns of Day's preference' (Moore 113). However, when Hervey replicates the test, he is unaware that Virginia's confirmation as a natural child simultaneously demonstrates her rejection of her new identity, she is not yet 'his Virginia'; in her mind, she remains Rachel (*B:*370). The way she views the diamonds, in terms of functionality, 'what are they? of what use are they?', reinforces how her answers are grounded in the logic necessary to her previous life of frugality: she looks with 'more curiosity and admiration *at the manner in which the earring shut and opened* than at the diamonds' (emp. added, *B:*371).

Pygmalion-like anti-fashion experiment' (173). While I agree that his experiment had an 'anti-fashion' element to it and that this is something Edgeworth parodies in *Belinda*, I would not assert that as the predominant element.

[44] This was corroborated in Schimmelpenninck's autobiography: they 'were told of her throwing a box of finery into the fire at his request' (10).

Hervey is ‘charmed’ by Virginia's rejection of the diamonds, yet, as discussed in the previous section, the narrator clarifies that she passes the test not due to her ‘simplicity of tastes’, as Hervey assumes, but because of her ignorance of fashion and her strong desire to return to ‘the cottage’ (*B*:371). Thus, Virginia’s success in Hervey’s “test” is not attributed to any inherent qualities she possesses, but rather to what she lacks, aligning with Kincaid’s concept of desirable ‘negative attribute[s]’ in children:

> Childhood, to a large extent, came to be in our culture a coordinate set of have nots, of negations: the child was the one who did not have. Its liberty was a negative attribute, however much prized, as was its innocence and purity. (*Erotic Innocence* 15)

Virginia’s childhood “lacks” are thus ‘cast in a positive light’ because they align with Hervey’s ideal of innocence and purity and contrast with ‘experienced, sexual, rational, and schooled’ adulthood (Honeyman 17, 3). Hervey’s reflection, ‘What a difference, thought he, between this child of nature and the frivolous sophisticated slaves of art!’, inadvertently underscores this conflation of desirable sexual traits with childhood’s ‘have nots’ (*B*:371).

The precarious nature of the boundary between caregiver and lover that Hervey had believed himself to be seamlessly navigating is tested at various points during his experiment, but most apparently when his sexual desire for Virginia surpasses his enthusiasm to ‘cultivate’ his bride (*B:*367). This presents itself when Virginia’s submissive nature, ‘the artless familiarity of her manner’, prompts in Hervey a recognition of her ‘double charm’: ‘the secret sense of his penetration, in having discovered and appreciated the treasure’ (*B:*371). Although he does not explicitly define Virginia’s ‘double charm’, it is evident to the reader that he is referring to her dual role as his ‘discovered’ charge and his ‘appreciated’ lover (*B:*371). It is because of the perilous nature of this dual role that Hervey must constantly remind himself, and his reader, of his ‘oath’ to resist the ‘temptation’ of Virginia’s beauty and maintain his role as tutor until his ‘reward’ could be claimed (*B:*372, 368). Yet it is the intimations of her youth, her naivety and desperation to please, that test his resolve most clearly:

> Mrs. Ormond told her that holes could easily be made in her ears, by running a steel pin through them. She shrunk back, defending her ear with one hand, and pushing the diamonds from her with the other, exclaiming, "Oh, no, no!—unless," added she, changing her tone, and turning to Clarence, "unless you wish it:—if you bid me, I will." (*B:*371)

Again, this recalls Kincaid's interrelation of 'notions of sexual attraction' and the 'idea of the child':

> I'm not the first to announce that both the child and modern sexuality came into being only about two hundred years ago, but it isn't often noted that, in the excitement of getting these two new products on the market, they got mixed together. One somehow got implanted in the other, and it shouldn't have happened. (*Erotic Innocence* 52)

That Hervey's inability to retain 'master[y] of himself' manifests upon depictions of Virginia's daughter-like submission, 'if you bid me, I will', illustrates this conflation (*B:*371). Virginia's extreme obedience reoccurs regularly throughout the early parts of this subplot as her desires conflict with Hervey's expectations of her so she relinquishes them: 'I would rather stay here with you than live there without you' (*B:*371). This resonates with Honeyman's depiction of the literary child that 'absorbs and responds to their [parental figure's] expectations in whatever manner she can make sense of them'. (41) Virginia is not in love with Hervey, but she deems him, as her caregiver, essential to her survival just like her grandmother had been and filial deference is all that she knows.

This is exemplified mere lines later when Hervey, faced with barely mastered sexual desire, 'indulged […] his increasing attachment to Virginia' and allowed the precariously balanced scales to incline towards "wife" (*B:*372). Until this moment, Hervey had considered 'his views honourable' but his combative response to learning her age conflicts with this:

> "Seventeen!—is she only seventeen?" cried Clarence, with a mixture of surprise and disappointment in his countenance—"Only seventeen! Why she is but a child still" (*B:*372).

The concurrent nature of Hervey's acknowledgement of 'the rapid progress of [his] passion' and the revelation of Virginia's age does not seem incidental and the 'surprise' he feels at her youth is corrupted by his 'disappointment' at finding himself precluded from acting on his desires (*B:*372). The reader had presumably inferred Virginia's status as a child from textual intimations, her grandmother's insistence upon her youth for example, yet it is not until this passage that Hervey's explicit acknowledgement is established. His weak argument that 'she must be eighteen at least' is dispelled by Mrs Ormond's presumably spontaneous outburst of 'God forbid!' (*B:*373). Such a surge of emotion, particularly from an employee to her employer, denotes panic and her insistence that 'we have a year more before us' underlines this (*B:*373). She does not want Hervey to overstep into his role as a lover until her charge is adequately mature enough to comprehend his advances: at present, 'she is too young and too childish' to understand (*B:*377). Mrs Ormond's panicked insistence upon that 'year more before us' divulges her fear that, perhaps, Hervey may not wait and poses a threat to the child in her care (*B:*377). Thus, she redirects his attention to Virginia's youth-driven faults and their divergence from his notion of the ideal wife:

> "But you would choose, would not you," said Mrs. Ormond, hesitating with an air of great deference, "that your wife should know how to write?"
>
> "To be sure," replied Clarence, colouring. "Does not Virginia know how to write?"
>
> "How should she?" said Mrs. Ormond: "it is no fault of hers, poor girl—she was never taught. You know it was her grandmother's notion that she should not learn to write, lest she should write love-letters." (*B:*374)

The humorous nature of this exchange masks the risk that Mrs Ormond takes in bringing Virginia's youth to the forefront of their discussion to alleviate Hervey's passions. Her deferential hesitation combined with Hervey's humbled blush implicitly reveals the paedophilic implication her insistence upon Virginia's age has when considered alongside her employer's evident sexual desire. Her intention is not to prevent their eventual marriage, but

to remind Hervey of his responsibility to act as her tutor and caregiver first and *then* claim her as a wife, rather than exercising both roles concurrently. When Mrs Ormond discusses the difficulty of training one of Virginia's age, she reminds her employer not only of the girl's current age but that which she was when he "found" her: 'when a person comes to be sixteen or seventeen, it is all up-hill work' (*B:*374).

Although Mrs Ormond prevails upon Hervey, and he agrees to take on the role of tutor *solely,* while dispelling any thoughts of matrimony until the girl is adequately prepared, she 'could not help observing that' it may be too late and the marriage plot 'had already been betrayed […] by Mr. Hervey himself' (*B:*374). The misunderstanding that follows this revelation perforates the remainder of the novel: just as Hervey cannot separate his double-possession of Virginia, Mrs. Ormond insists that Virginia cannot differentiate between indicators of paternal and sexual love:

> Clarence in vain endeavoured to exculpate himself from this charge: Mrs. Ormond brought to his recollection so many instances of his indiscretion, that it was substantiated even in his own judgment, and he was amazed to find that all the time he had put so much constraint upon his inclinations, he had, nevertheless, so obviously betrayed them. (*B:*375)

Hervey leaves the interaction 'persuaded that [Mrs Ormond] was mistaken, and that his pupil's heart and imagination were yet untouched', nevertheless doubt pervades the scene (*B:*375). That this notion of confused love is introduced prior to Edgeworth's inclusion of Virginia's perspective indicates that *all* of the characters encased in the subplot exhibit signs of uncertainty concerning the blurring of sexual and paternal love and, consequently, none may be considered adequate emotional role-models.

1.5 BECOMING VIRGINIA

From Thomas Day to Clarence Hervey, this chapter has principally focused on the notion of authoritative men assimilating the incompatible roles of parent and lover in order to pursue

their dependent charges. The delay in reaching Virginia's perspective is appropriate given that the novel, too, prefers to view her through the lens of her benefactor. There are only a few moments during the first half of the subplot when the reader may regard Virginia as a distinct presence, detached from Hervey's individual perspective but still tainted by her situation. An alteration occurs when, to 'dissipate his own mind, and to give time for the development of hers', Hervey 'left his pupil to the care of Mrs Ormond, and mixed as much as possible in gay and fashionable company' (*B:*377–8). When Hervey returns to society (and begins to explore his romantic options within it) the perspective of the novel shifts its focus to Virginia. As with much of the novel's trajectory, this sudden change finds its grounding in Edgeworth's real-life case study. When Sabrina was fourteen years old, Day found himself tiring of his foundling bride-to-be and deemed the whole enterprise a failure. According to Seward, he had 'renounced all hope of moulding Sabrina into the being his imagination had formed' during his two years of training: she did not pass his tests, so he sent her away (41). The lack of documentation left behind, outside of contemporary accounts, precludes modern critics from discerning whether Day's experiment was, indeed, a failure or whether, as Moore suggests, 'he had begun to focus his expectations elsewhere' (124).

Nevertheless, Day went on to pursue other women and left Sabrina behind. From then on, Sabrina heard from Day just frequently enough that he could retain mastery over his pupil; 'she continued to believe Day's story that she was articled to him—even though she was legally still bound to' Edgeworth's father (Moore 161). Day returned to this experiment once more in 1775, six years after Sabrina's initial indenture, warning that he 'would make no further experiments upon [her], or even see [her] again' if she disappointed him (Moore 177). Sabrina did not know that she was competing to be his wife, only that she would gain a place amongst his household staff as she had assumed she was intended. Sabrina pleased Day with her improvement and progressed once more to wife-to-be but, as Moore rightly asserts, 'Day had

yet to inform Sabrina of the forthcoming happy event': she did not know she was engaged (181). This major oversight highlights the moral ramifications that underlined the whole project: Day's educational experiment ensured Sabrina was a constant non-consensual participant in his individual whims, preferences, and temper. We see this replicated in *Belinda* as Virginia is required to reconcile her newly imposed identity with her previous life and embody characteristics at the command of her benefactor. Once the novel shifts to prioritise Virginia's perspective, the episodes referred to earlier, wherein Hervey interprets her eagerness to please him as depictions of her 'artless' and 'unprejudiced mind', can be reinterpreted through the eyes of a frightened, displaced, child who, like Sabrina, does not understand her role (*B:*371). The 'language gap' inherent in adult representations of children persists even after the narrative shift, as the 'representational challenge' of depicting inaccessible childhood remains for Edgeworth (Honeyman 4). However, the removal of Hervey's sexualised perspective enables a more unified portrayal of Virginia.

1.5.1 The Fine Line Between Love and Fear

In *Émile*, Rousseau describes the first 'epoch' of childhood as one that combines physical and emotional development:

> The first developments of childhood occur almost all at once. The child learns to speak, to eat, to walk, nearly at the same time. This is, properly, the first epoch of his life. Before then he is nothing more than he was before he was born; he has not a sentiment, not an idea; he scarcely has sensations; he does not feel even his own existence. (*E:*40)

When Hervey encounters Virginia in the glade, she has already advanced through the sensory impressions of childhood, she knows how to 'speak', 'eat', and 'walk' but, in terms of emotional development she has fallen behind (*E:*40). Her child-development under her new caregiver, therefore, takes the form of emotional growth and efforts to distinguish between emotions that she had not previously encountered or understood. Rousseau's depiction of the young child as without 'sentiment' would not usually apply to a child of Virginia's age, and

indeed does not wholly (*E:*40). However, her secluded childhood in combination with her grandmother's implicitly Rousseauian efforts to shield her from society ensured that she had a very minimal experience of extreme emotion. This is not to say that Virginia had not experienced juvenile emotion, but that she had not been given adequate tools to readily interpret and communicate her thoughts and feelings, nor had she learned through experience. Indeed, as a result of their isolated lives, Virginia's grandmother protected her from most examples of extreme emotion with the exception of that which was triggered by her own death.[45] Thus, Edgeworth allows her reader to view the entirety of Virginia's emotional development within the scope of the novel and the image of her 'with her hair all dishevelled, and the strongest expression of grief in her countenance' remains as her introduction to intense emotion (*B:*365). In this way, Virginia resides halfway through Rousseau's 'first epoch' of life, her emotionally stunted childhood laying the foundation for the confusion that is to follow, particularly in terms of crises of identity and obligation (*E:*40). As far as the reader is informed, Virginia never witnesses a rational response to extremes of emotion from her caregivers during childhood, and, therefore, cannot replicate one. This goes some way to explain her difficulty in processing emotion in relation to Hervey: he is wholly unfamiliar to her, as a stranger and a man, and as his experiment progressed, so did her fear of disappointing him.

This fear is reflected most clearly in the dichotomy drawn between versions of love that Virginia is familiar with, platonic and familial, and those which are expected of her from Hervey, romantic and sexual. The former is easily recognisable, but the latter denotes the unknown. This is verified by the clear parallels Virginia makes between her love for her nurse, Mrs Ormond, and that which she holds for Hervey:

> "My dear," said she, one day to Virginia, who was feeding her bullfinch, "I do believe you are fonder of that bird than of any thing in the world—fonder of it, I am sure, than of me."

[45] The earlier loss of her mother is not dwelt on by Edgeworth and occurred when Virginia was 'between three and four' so, although it may have elicited an emotional reaction, her youth protected her from it (*B*:366).

> "Oh! you cannot think so," said Virginia, with an affectionate smile.
>
> "Well! fonder than you are of Mr. Hervey, you will allow, at least?"
>
> "No, indeed!" cried she, eagerly: "how can you think me so foolish, so childish, so ungrateful, as to prefer a little worthless bird to him—" (*B:*376)

Virginia's apparently irrational behaviour, as depicted in the above passage, is prompted by extreme confusion concerning her role in Hervey's life and household. Mrs Ormond is familiar, with her role being reminiscent of Virginia's departed grandmother, and therefore the joke that Virginia is 'fonder of that bird' than of her is met with 'an affectionate smile' and a quick retort to reinforce her fondness (*B:*376). In contrast, the extension of the joke to include Hervey is met with an 'enthusiastic speech' intended to counteract implications of her selfishness: 'How can you think me so foolish, so childish, so ungrateful, as to prefer a little worthless bird to him?' (*B*:376). The sudden tonal change in their otherwise innocuous conversation is not only jarring structurally but also in terms of Virginia's characterisation. Virginia's bullfinch was not 'worthless' (*B:*369). It had been the only thing that she 'was anxious to carry away with her' from the cottage and functions as the sole reminder of her previous life as Rachel (*B:*369). Nevertheless, she is willing to demonstrate her gratefulness by sacrificing her final indicator of home:

> "My pretty bird," said she, as it perched upon her hand, "I love you very much, but if Mr. Hervey were to ask it, to wish it, I would open that window, and let you fly; yes, and bid you fly away far from me for ever. Perhaps he does wish it?—Does he?—Did he tell you so?" cried she, looking earnestly in Mrs. Ormond's face, as she moved towards the window. (*B:*376)

This scene mirrors a number of those which the reader had previously viewed through Hervey's perspective. Significant examples include Virginia's 'innocently' expressed wish to return to the cottage *only* if he returned with her and her refusal to pierce her ears unless he wished it: 'if you bid me, I will' (*B:*371). Hervey interpreted Virginia's submission to his will, even in contrast to her own desires, as an indication of her 'magnanimity' and 'unprejudiced mind',

but viewing similar instances from *her* perspective allows the reader to interpret them differently (*B:*371). When Virginia offers to 'open that window' and 'bid [the bullfinch] fly away' to prove her love for Hervey she is not driven by 'magnanimity', but anxiety, and Hervey is not there to romantically reinterpret her panic as artlessness (*B:*371).

This action shifts from the hypothetical when Virginia worries that Hervey *does* want her to release her bird, and consequently relinquish her past. Her frenzied questions, '"Perhaps he does wish it?—Does he?—Did he tell you so?"', reflect a perceived instability in her new role (*B:*371). Like Sabrina, Virginia believes herself to be bound to her primary caregiver, and, although she may not understand why, she knows that to be cast out would entail a different kind of danger as a young single woman. Edgeworth's decision to centre this scene around Virginia's bullfinch reads like an intentional attempt to create parallels between the two 'charming creature[s]' (*B:*391). Like the caged bird, Virginia is entrapped in a life that she did not select and one in which she is forced to abide by the decisions of others. She perceives that to release her bullfinch ('to let [it] fly') may resemble freedom of a kind, but the danger the bird would face deems it superficial; her pet is no more equipped to live outside its cage than she would be equipped to live alone (*B:*376). This is illustrated later in the novel when the bullfinch is released by mistake and found 'almost dead' and 'entangled in a net' (*B:*325). Virginia and her bird risk escaping one form of generally benevolent captivity to land in another far more treacherous ensnarement. Confining a woman to ensure that she becomes one's wife is not dissimilar from keeping a mistress when it comes to outward appearances: 'her reputation' was already 'injured—fatally injured' (*B:*391). Virginia, therefore, must accept the role assigned to her to avoid a potentially worse fate.

But what is this role? Like Sabrina, she does not know. Virginia recognises only that her affection for Hervey does not align with his designs for her and any attempt by Virginia to contextualise her confused feelings results in a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of

her caregivers. While Edgeworth constantly reminds the reader of the nonsexual nature of Virginia's feelings for Hervey, Mrs Ormond interprets her submission to Hervey's will as a confused comprehension of sexual love and 'tenderness [that] might go too far' (*B:*377). Virginia's dialogue regularly establishes Hervey and Mrs Ormond as her mutually platonic caregivers and the confusion only occurs when those around her counterintuitively insist upon differentiation:

> "…can I love you and Mr. Hervey too much?"
>
> "Not me."
>
> "Nor him, I'm sure—he is so good, so very good! I am afraid that I do not love him enough," said she, sighing. (*B:*377)

Virginia does not differentiate between the two primary adults in her life because, to her, both relationships are aromantic and asexual. Mrs Ormond mistakes Virginia's inward emotional conflict for longing; she does not want to love him *more*; she only feels that she does not love him *enough* to reflect her gratitude. In forcing Virginia to create differentiations between her behaviour towards Hervey and herself, Mrs Ormond facilitates the unease that Virginia feels towards Hervey as their relationship dynamic shifts into something unfamiliar (*B:*377). The reason that Virginia loves Hervey 'enough when he is absent, but not when he is present' is because, alone, she can actualise their relationship within the bounds of filial love and appreciation, as a father-daughter bond (*B:*377). His physical presence, however, reminds her of the insufficiency of this love, and she begins to feel 'a sort of fear mixed with [her] love' (*B:*377).

This fear may be interpreted in numerous ways; a fear of seeming ungrateful, a fear of not fulfilling Hervey's romantic and sexual expectations, or, perhaps, a fear of fulfilling them against her will. Her next expressed "fear" suggests it is the latter she has in mind: 'I should not quite like that he should show his love for me as you do—as you did just now' (*B:*377). Mrs Ormond's reassurance that it would 'not be proper' for Hervey to show his 'love' for

Virginia as she does, through kisses and physical affection, when read in combination with her knowledge of his marriage plot, appears to contain an unsaid "yet" (*B:*377). The language chosen in this passage anticipates that which would be chosen by Seward to illustrate Sabrina's feelings towards Day three years after the publication of *Belinda*:

> The only inducement, therefore, which this lovely artless girl could have to combat and subdue the natural preference, in youth to blossoming, of ease to pain, of vacant sport to the labour of thinking, was desire of pleasing her protector, though she knew not how, or why he became such. In that desire, fear had greatly the ascendant of affection, and fear is a cold and indolent feeling. (Seward 40–41)

Neither Sabrina, nor Edgeworth's fictionalised rendering of her, knew 'how, or why' their 'protectors' had come to claim them, but the exploitative nature of their relationships ensured that 'fear had greatly the ascendant of affection' (Seward 41). Edgeworth may not have portrayed Hervey as physically abusive, as Day had been, but his expectations of their relationship and insistence upon the amalgamation of the roles of father figure and lover entail a different kind of fear: one filled with sexual expectation. Virginia's admission of fear is written off as juvenile naivety; however, it continues to resurface throughout the novel, particularly in moments that threaten the fragile child-caregiver dynamic with intrusively sexual undertones that seem to require reciprocation. Seward's statement underlines the complicated interplay of roles present in Edgeworth's fiction *and* her real-life case study.

1.5.2 DISCOVERING VIRGINIE

In his 1971 monograph, *The Double*, Otto Rank claims that there 'is nothing more uncanny than seeing one's face accidentally in a mirror by moonlight' and that is precisely the effect that Edgeworth conjures in *Belinda* by having Virginia confront multiple distorted versions of herself (43). The uncanny effect elicits a terror in Virginia that would not typically feature in the types of Gothic novels that Rank goes on to discuss. Rather than being faced with ghostly manifestations of repression, she struggles to reconcile her inner impression of selfhood with

that which was explicitly projected onto her. Virginia's own existence becomes uncanny and unfamiliar as she is forced to repress *herself*. The novel introduces three primary versions of Virginia in a very short space of time: the literary double (St. Pierre's Virginie), her painted double (as depicted in Hervey's commissioned portrait), and, perhaps the most sinister of them all, the dream double.

The first of these discovered "doubles" comprises the source material for Virginia's name and enforced characterisation. As I have discussed, her namesake would have been immediately obvious to the literate public at the time of *Belinda*'s publication, but Edgeworth ensures her reader is explicitly aware that Virginia is illiterate when the subplot begins: 'it was her grandmother's notion that she should not learn to write, lest she should write love-letters' (*B:*373). Virginia could not read *or* write about love and, thus, when she does learn to do so her mind is immediately 'exalted by romantic views':

> As she had never seen any thing of society, all her notions were drawn from books; the severe restrictions which her grandmother had early laid upon the choice of these seemed to have awakened her curiosity, and to have increased her appetite for books—it was insatiable. (*B:*379–80)

Virginia's 'insatiable' appetite for novels, combined with her societal inexperience, ensures that she internalises that which she read far more than one who had been reading from childhood. All 'of her notions were drawn from books' with no real-world experience to challenge or negate that which she read (*B:*379–80).[46] And so, when she stumbles upon 'a volume of St. Pierre's *Paul and Virginia*', a novel familiar to her only through the associations presented by her new identity, 'these circumstances strongly excited her curiosity to read the book' (*B:*380). Hitherto, she knew only that 'her own name had been taken from this romance' and that 'Mr. Hervey had her picture painted in this character'; she understood nothing of its

[46] For a more in-depth discussion of Virginia's reading habits see Jeanne M. Britton's "Theorizing Character in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*" (2013).

content or the characterisation of the heroine with whom she would feel compelled to identify (*B:*380). It is when she picks up the novel, and Virginia and Virginie find themselves in the same imaginative space, that the former comprehends Hervey's designs towards her alongside her own guilt-ridden reluctance against said designs. When Virginia reads *Paul et Virginie,* she not only realises that her name was taken from a romance, but she begins to suspect that she will be expected to play the romantic heroine. The fear that she had previously explained in combination with her feelings towards Hervey expands to encompass a different kind of fear: 'I am not afraid of you—but—of myself' (*B:*381). When Mrs Ormond interrupts Virginia reading the novel, she is not dreaming of Hervey in the role of Paul, as the nurse supposes, nor was it 'pleasure that [she] felt' but the burden of sexual expectation in direct opposition to her own desires (*B:*380). Mrs Ormond indirectly confirms Virginia's imposed identification with St. Pierre's heroine by casting herself into a role in the novel alongside her. The passage that Virginia had been reading, wherein Virginie seeks comfort from her confusion in her mother's embrace, is thus replicated in *Belinda*:

> "And am I not a mother to you, my beloved Virginia?" said Mrs. Ormond. "Though I cannot express my affection in such charming language as this, yet, believe me, no mother was ever fonder of a child."
>
> Virginia threw her arms round Mrs. Ormond, and laid her head upon her friend's bosom, as if she wished to realize the illusion, and to be the Virginia of whom she had been reading (*B:*381).

The intentional selection of 'as if' reveals the forced nature of this action (*B:*381). Virginia does not wish 'to realize the illusion' of the novel and become 'the Virginia of whom she had been reading' but she recognises the expectation that she should (*B:*381).

Although Virginia momentarily complies with her enforced characterisation, she is unable to entirely reconcile herself with the imposed identity it necessitates in terms of her "Paul". Mrs Ormond's assertion that she knows 'the name that is on [her] lips' prompts 'surprise and timidity' in Virginia because, while realistically Mrs Ormond 'cannot' know her

thoughts, there is a small part of her juvenile mind that is unsure whether this is still the case (*B:*381). Virginia's literary discovery triggers doubt as to whether she still contains enough individuality to *have* autonomous thoughts or whether the consolidation of her inner self and the character she is supposed to embody are becoming too entangled (*B:*381). Virginia's guilt is at the forefront of her confused reflections on her emotions:

> "…how could you possibly know all my thoughts and feelings? I never told them to you; for, indeed, I have only confused ideas floating in my imagination from the books I have been reading. I do not distinctly know my own feelings." (*B:*381)

The 'confused ideas' that Virginia confesses to are explained away as indicators of 'perfect innocence and simplicity', but they did not occur before her extraction from the cottage (*B:*381). The reader may instead assume that her confusion is not driven by innocence but by the corruption of the paternal role in her life and her enforced identification with a character who also struggled with imposed incestuous advances. As far as the reader is aware, Virginia does not read *Paul et Virginie* to its end and, therefore, she does not reach the portion of the narrative that transforms her namesake from a *romantic* heroine to a *tragic* heroine. Just as Hervey appeared not to consider the ending of the novel in his choice of name, Virginia does not witness Virginie escape her incestuous pursuer through death, rather she is left to assume that she will have a happy ending if she can prevail upon herself to accept her "Paul".

The second double of the novel, the portrait of Virginia commissioned in the style of St. Pierre's Virginie, ensures that this forced identification is both internal *and* external. Not only is Virginia's character now inextricably intertwined with Virginie's, but the association is used to confirm her status as 'Clarence's mistress' to onlookers who view the portrait before her retrospective insertion into the novel:

> "Virginia St. Pierre! ma'am," cried Mr. Rochfort, winking at Sir Philip. "No, no, damme! there you are wrong, Rochfort; say Hervey's Virginia, and then you have it, damme! or, may be, Virginia Hervey—who knows?" (*B:*191)

Virginia's identity is treated fluidly in this passage because of the mystery surrounding it and she receives a new name once more: 'Virginia Hervey' (*B:*191). Thus, we see the patriarchal naming process to completion as Hervey is assumed to have changed her forename *and* given her his surname. The placement of this scene, before Virginia is physically encountered by the reader in the novel, allows this version of her identity to perpetuate for another hundred pages as we meet the double before we meet the subject. Her association with St. Pierre's Virginie enables Lady Delacour to label her as a 'foreign beauty', judging 'by her air, her dress, and the scenery about her—cocoa-trees, plantains' and consequently adds an element of otherness to her portrayal (*B:*191).

The significance of portraits in general within *Belinda* brings this discussion, again, back to Rousseau and *his* depiction of the perfect wife: Sophy. Virginia and Sophy are not identical, but neither are their similarities incidental. They both lack experience in society and are deemed innocent as a result; both are expected to 'submit to man and to endure even injustice at his hands'; both reside on the boundary of youth as 'neither child nor woman'; and both fall in love with an imagined lover (*E:*358). For Sophy, that lover is Telemachus, the fictional hero of *The Adventures of Telemachus*, whom she 'loved […] with a passion which nothing could cure' because he embodied the man of virtue that her mother had instilled in her to desire (*E:*365). This love, of course, mirrors that which Hervey has for Virginia, in imagining her as a manifestation of St. Pierre's heroine, but it also recalls Virginia's fixation on the portrait of a young man that she viewed in childhood. Although the young man *does exist*, like Sophy's Telemachus he exists only as a 'figment of the imagination' for *her*, an amalgamation of the character of Paul and the portrait that she stumbled upon as a child (*E:*367). As Britton puts it, the 'pattern of identification between fictional character and human subject that she rejects for herself' is replicated in her identification between Paul and the "miniature" (441). Britton refers to Virginia's 'deluded imagination' in making these identifications, but it is

imperative to recognise that these delusions mirror that of her caregiver and, therefore, suggest internalisation through example rather than an innate predisposition towards fantasy (441).

1.5.3 THE DARKEST DOUBLE

The double can be many things but, according to Carl Keppler in his seminal 1972 monograph on the literary double, they are always 'the possessor of secrets' that the primary self either 'cannot fathom' or tries to repress (28). This definition provides an appropriate starting place for my discussion of Virginia's final double, the 'possessor' of her secrets, the dream-self with the ability to enact her darkest desires (Keppler 28). Virginia's dreams begin as innocuous extensions of her confused romantic ideas, combining the 'charming heroes' of her novels with the portrait that she had discovered as a child to create a romantic protagonist who 'speaks' to her like a 'mistress' (*B:*383). Hervey appears in some of these dreams; however, he is characterised entirely differently from the man in the picture: 'he does not speak to me; he does not look at me with the same sort of tenderness, and he does not throw himself at my feet' (*B:*384). The dream-version of Hervey that Virginia's psyche conjures is not imbued with any form of romantic potential, just as in reality her thoughts regarding him are wholly platonic. For the majority of the novel, Virginia senses a discrepancy in her relationship with Hervey that is not present in her relationship with Mrs Ormond, but she does not have the experience to conclusively define it. Instead, she is left with confused sentiments and the feeling that she is not reciprocating enough: 'I only blame myself for not loving him *enough*' (*B:*382). Again, this does not mean Virginia acknowledges the sexual nature of his love for her, only that she perceives the inconsistency in her feelings for him and the debt she owes him as a caregiver.

The dreams change abruptly when Virginia learns of Hervey's true intentions through a quasi-comedic "break-in" scene wherein two minor characters 'scale the garden wall, to obtain a sight of Clarence Hervey's mistress' (*B:*384). The comic nature of this episode is revealed in Virginia's horrified response to the two men, she is 'astonished and disgusted' by

their outward appearances: 'they seemed to her a species of animals, for which she had no name […] they were clearly not *Clarence Hervey*' (*B:*384). Once again, Edgeworth utilises humour as a mechanism to lighten the tone of an episode and detract from the disturbing nature of the men's intrusion and revelation. Virginia's exaggerated gratitude towards Hervey prevents her from agreeing with the men's characterisation of him as a 'tyrant' but the episode does trigger uncertainty.

> "Damme! good actress! Put her on the stage when he is tired of her. So you won't come with us?—Good bye, till we see you again. You're right, my girl, to be upon your good behaviour; may be you may get him to marry you, child!" (384)

Not only do the men reveal Hervey's intention to marry Virginia, but they are the first to vocalise the fact that Virginia is effectively imprisoned. In retaining a humorous tone, Edgeworth can present this scene as a commentary on Thomas Day's experiment at a distance and criticise without *directly* criticising. Regardless, the 'forcible impression' that this event has on Virginia emphasises the magnitude of the situation notwithstanding the comic tone, and although she attempts to suppress her anxiety and 'repugnance' for fear of being deemed ungrateful, she cannot prevent it from resurfacing in her dreams (*B:*386).

The realist nature of *Belinda* ensures that uncanny elements, when they occur, are jarring, and so Edgeworth mitigates their effect by embedding them within plausible scenarios. A dream, for example, allows for the inclusion of the uncanny double within the novel without disrupting the novel's realist genre. Virginia's dream self re-emerges for a second time after the break-in scene, but this time she appears to be malevolent, able to enact urges that reality would not allow. When Virginia awakens with an abrupt cry, "He's dead!—Mr. Hervey!", mere lines after her startling comprehension of Hervey's scheme, we see the return of the repressed 'repugnance' as her dream-self wills Hervey to die on their wedding day (*B:*386–7). Within the dream, Virginia and Virginie's identities are finally merged; she is not herself but

'the Virginia that we were reading of the other night' (*B:*387). Paul is played by 'another figure' who 'spoke to [her] so kindly, so tenderly', while Hervey is recast as the antagonist:

> … Mr. Hervey appeared, and I started terribly, for I was afraid he would be displeased, and that he would think me *ungrateful*; and he was displeased, and he called me ungrateful Virginia [….] Mr. Hervey was putting a ring on my finger; but there came suddenly from the crowd that strange man, who was here the other day, and he dragged me along with him, I don't know how or where, swiftly down precipices, whilst I struggled, and at last fell. Then all changed again, and I was in a magnificent field, covered with cloth of gold, and there were beautiful ladies seated under canopies; and I thought it was a tournament, such as I have read of, only more splendid; and two knights, clad in complete armour, and mounted on fiery steeds, were engaged in single combat; and they fought furiously, and I thought they were fighting for me. One of the knights wore black plumes in his helmet, and the other white; and, as he was passing by me, the vizor of the knight of the white plumes was raised, and I saw it was—" (*B:*388)

Hervey misreads *Paul et Virginie* as a mutual romance, yet, as I have established, the assumed feelings of reciprocity that Paul had derived from Virginie are negated by her confusion and rejection of incestuous desire. Virginia's version of the tale, as revealed in her dream, depicts two Pauls; one with Hervey's physical appearance and another that lacks his 'face' but speaks 'with his voice' (*B:*388). Thus, she separates Hervey into two people: lover and father. To physically split the conflicting elements of his identity, and her relation to him, is the only way for Virginia to understand his dual role in her life. However, it is not the lover-version of Hervey that she marries, rather, she is forced to marry her "father".

This marriage acts as the first "option" that the dream presents; she may allow her father figure, Hervey, to put 'a ring on [her] finger', but it will result in the final death of her previous self (*B:*388). Rachel may 'struggle', but she will eventually fall (*B:*388).[47] The other "option"

[47] This dream sequence also explicitly denotes Mrs Ormond's part in Virginia's "fall" as she imagines herself 'pulled' to the altar by her nurse (*B:*388).

follows immediately: she could reject Hervey's proposal and allow another to be 'victorious' in her affection, one in the form of the portrait she had been fascinated with since early childhood (*B:*388). This version sees Hervey and the unnamed 'figure' placed in direct opposition to one another as 'black' and 'white' knights, respectively (*B:*388). Their identifying colours offer an insight into Virginia's psyche and betray her allegiance before she speaks her decision: 'the same figure that knelt to me; and I wished him to be victorious' (*B:*388). Rather than conceding to the death of her inner selfhood, this version of the dream allows Virginia to retain mastery of her fate and choose to love another, but her juvenile mind actively associates this rejection of Hervey's love with his death:

> …then I saw that the knight in the black plumes was Mr. Hervey, and I ran to save him, but I could not. I saw him weltering in his blood, and I heard him say,
>
> 'Perfidious, *ungrateful* Virginia! you are the cause of my death!'—and I screamed, I believe, and that awakened me." (*B:*388)

Virginia's newfound knowledge that Hervey wishes to marry her furnishes her constant notion of inadequacy in terms of affection with an explanation; it was not that she did not love Hervey 'enough' but that she did not love him in the *way* he desired (*B:*377). Within the dream, to force herself to reciprocate Hervey's love would be to ensure her previous self "fell", whereas to reject it and wish his opponent 'to be victorious' would be to murder her caregiver (*B:*388). Virginia's dual dream identities illustrate Kincaid's concept of the child as a construct manufactured to meet adult 'imaginative and nostalgic demands' (*Erotic Innocence* 144). The first dream self, who succumbs to the incestuous marriage, embodies the idealised "invented child", designed to 'absorb and respond to' parental expectations and desires (Honeyman 83). This version of childhood emphasises compliance but results in the destruction of innocence. The second dream self preserves her innocence by avoiding an incestuous relationship but fails to fulfil the requirements of constructed childhood and is thus positioned as a nonchild (83). The insight into Virginia's psyche that Edgeworth provides reveals the inner conflict imposed

upon a child who is forced to accept an incestuous marriage while craving only paternal support.

From the moment that Hervey's true intentions are revealed, Virginia's anxieties continue to build until they culminate in this dream. Edgeworth's regular italicisation of '*ungrateful'* in the abovementioned passage reflects Virginia's fixation on repaying Hervey for his care even if it conflicts with her own desires or selfhood (*B:*388). In Virginia's understanding, her moral character is directly contingent on her treatment of the man 'who has given [her] every thing' and to refuse his advances would be to relinquish her inner goodness and inwardly condemn herself to monstrosity: 'I should be a monster indeed!' (*B:*388). This equation of rejection with monstrosity demonstrates her realisation that her status as Hervey's ward is directly contingent on her ability to reciprocate his romantic advances alongside her previous filial reciprocation. Virginia is, thus, 'awakened' to her options and her subsequent behaviour towards Hervey alters in an attempt to "save" him and acquire his forgiveness for loving another (*B:*388). Virginia's realisation pushes her over the boundary of childhood and her 'open, childish, affectionate familiarity' towards Hervey is replaced with 'reserved, timid embarrassment' (*B:*390). She could 'neither meet his eyes, nor speak to him' because their relationship dynamic was irrevocably altered, and she could not reconcile his dual role as caregiver and lover without also considering the incestuous implications that it entailed (*B:*390). Mrs Ormond determines this behaviour as reflexive of love and unconquerable passions, but Edgeworth ensures her reader understands Virginia's 'tremble[s]' and 'tears' as fear and self-denial (*B:*390). Virginia equates any efforts Hervey makes towards her, platonic or tender, with romantic love and her efforts to prove reciprocation, and "save" him from a fate akin to that which occurs in her dream, result in conflicting behaviourisms. When Hervey 'accidentally cast his eyes upon [her portrait], and then upon Virginia' she 'turned away' and 'sighed deeply' because this action of literal comparison reinforces her belief that she must

continue to emulate the romantic heroine (*B:*391). The "sigh" could equally be an indicator of exhaustion in constantly modifying herself or acknowledgement that she is struggling to measure up to his assumed expectations: 'her existence [had become] a burden to her' (*B:*391).

It is only when Hervey begins to lose interest in his foundling bride that he recognises that 'his own imprudence had been the cause of all of this misery' yet, as with the rest of the novel, he misunderstands the extent, believing that he has 'excited false hopes' in the girl rather than forced her to emulate a 'false' persona (*B:*391). The emphasis on theatrical devices in *Belinda* is exemplified by the misapprehension that follows as Hervey, too, views Virginia's life and 'happiness' as dependent upon his reciprocation of 'her affections' (*B:*391). Once more, the plotline that ensues takes on a comic tone as the reader is aware of both characters' situational misreadings, but the darker implication that this situation could have on Virginia's virtue is never overlooked. Even her name acts as a constant reminder to the reader of the threat to her virginity. Hervey does not entirely agree with Mrs Ormond, that 'Virginia would not survive the day of [his] marriage with another' but he recognises the stain his scheme may have had on *his* reputation and, thus, resolved 'not to abandon this unfortunate girl' until he may find someone to replace his double-role in her life (*B:*391).

1.6 Exchanging One Father Figure for Another

Edgeworth ensures that Hervey's desire to leave Virginia behind without consigning her to death or ruin is complicated by his established dual function as caregiver and lover. His struggle 'betwixt love and honour' underlines this opposition and exemplifies his obligation to find *two* figures to replace those which he had solely occupied: a replacement father *and* a replacement lover (*B:*391). Hervey, however, rarely explicitly acknowledges this obligation and sets out to replace only one role, that of father. This, I would argue, acts as a reinforcement of that which I have claimed Edgeworth emphasised throughout: he knowingly set out to pervert paternal influence into sexual love. Hervey argues that finding Virginia's biological father would free

him to marry another because ‘her partiality for him might become less exclusive’ if she had another to focus on (*B:*395). He looks to purify the paternal role once more by distancing it from the sexuality that he initially attempted to impose. Even the fact that he is prepared to retain the role of lover ‘if he found the change of situation made no alternation in Virginia’s sentiments’ reveals a deeper understanding of his sexually paternal role than had been demonstrated previously (*B:*395). His primary aim, now, is to separate the two positions. His new inability to straddle paternal and sexual love may be partially owing to his new inability to view Virginia as more than an ‘insipid, though innocent child’ (*B:*379). He finally perceives her as the ‘child’ that Edgeworth had portrayed all along. The nurturing role that he is forced to undertake due to her ‘insipid’ innocence is, hereafter, more firmly formulated as paternal rather than sensual and he implicitly recognises the damage his attempt to occupy both roles has had on her reputation (*B:*379).

This dichotomy is exemplified in Hervey’s subsequent search for Virginia’s father. Having given up on ‘proper advertisements’ to secure the attention of her father, Hervey arranges for the portrait he had affectionately commissioned of Virginia to be publicly hung ‘in hopes that the gentleman might go there and ask some questions about it, which might lead to a discovery’ (*B:*393). In “Bad Plots and Objectivity in Maria Edgeworth”, Yoon Sun Lee argues that this painting ‘was made as a test to discover Virginia’s father’ but I would contend that although it was repurposed as such, it was initially designed as an evident declaration of love and an illustration of the characterisation Hervey wished to impose upon his wife-to-be (51). This painting, as I have discussed, was stylistically based on ‘a scene from Paul and Virginia’, with Virginia assigned the role of St. Pierre’s romantic heroine, thus when Hervey repurposes it to catch the attention of Virginia’s real father he once more subverts the paternal role by forcing Virginia’s biological father to situate his parental recognition in a romantic setting (*B:*191). Edgeworth deliberately avoids this scenario by employing a proxy character,

a local framer, to recognise the depiction of Virginia from a 'miniature' left with him to be 'set' by her father, Mr Hartley (*B:*394). This intervention preserves the virtue to be found in her new paternal relationship and Virginia's father may find her without the romanticised lens that the portrait depicted.

To Virginia, the reappearance of her biological father provides the opportunity to repay her debt to Hervey through financial rather than sexual means. Her wish that her father 'may be very rich' is not indicative of a covertly superficial nature, as Mrs Ormond initially supposes, but desperation for a viable way to show 'gratitude to Mr Hervey' without compromising her virtue (*B:*409–10). Virginia is overjoyed at the prospect of a "father" who is able to protect her from sexual repayment and imbued with no sexual potential of his own:

> "My father!—How delightful that word father sounds!—My father—May I say my father?—And will he own me, and will he love me, and will he give me his blessing, and will he fold me in his arms, and call me his daughter, his dear daughter?—Oh, how I shall love him! I will make it the whole business of my life to please him!" (*B:*409)

Virginia feels comfortable dedicating 'the whole business of [her] life' to his pleasure because she knows he will not exploit her affection *if* he owns her as 'his daughter' (*B:*409). Again, this calls to mind Virginia's fearful wish that Hervey may 'show his love for' her as Mrs Ormond did, in a physical manner (*B:*377). This fear is not extended to her biological father, in fact, she actively longs for physical contact with him precisely because he lacks the sexual potential towards her that she had sensed in Hervey long before she understood it. Her continual emphasis on the word '*daughter*' in relation to her father mirrors her previous emphasis on '*ungrateful*' with Hervey: the repetitions define her relationships with each man. This stress on the former phrase acts as a buffer against the transgression of paternal love, inviting explicit intimations of incest if violated, while the latter gives reasoning behind potential transgression. Yet Virginia's hesitancy to call him 'father' demonstrates a persisting confusion concerning paternal relationship dynamics. It is integral to remember that although Hervey consciously

acts in the capacity of a father, as his attempt to replace himself *with* her father demonstrates, he never calls her "daughter" and, thus, does not overtly admit to intimations of incestual behaviour until the very end of the novel. She needs her real father to "buy" her freedom from her faux-father and release her from the sexual expectation that she was trapped within; she wishes Hervey 'were poor' so that she 'might make him rich' and escape his exploitation (*B:*410). Virginia's assumed debt is further elucidated through her established understanding of familial relations:

> "Hate him!—is it possible to hate a father?" said Virginia.
>
> "He dreads that you should never forgive him."
>
> "Forgive him!—I have read of parents forgiving their children, but I never remember to have read of a daughter forgiving her father. Forgive! you should not have used that word. I cannot forgive my father: but I can love him…" (*B:*410)

This passage explains Virginia's unwavering dedication to Hervey. In her mind it is not possible to hate a father, nor should you need to forgive them, you must simply 'love' him (*B:*410). Although she recognises that her biological father initially 'deserted' her, this reflection prompts the possibility that he may 'disown' her again rather than suggesting that forgiveness may be a requisite of their relationship (*B:*410). Virginia's repeatedly expressed worry that she did not love Hervey enough now becomes clear: she could not resent him because he occupied a paternal role in her life, but she also could not 'love him enough' because he subverted that role by enforcing a sexual element (*B:*377). Hervey's possession of either role was individually unstable; however, his attempt to occupy them simultaneously forces Virginia outside the bounds of traditional childhood.

Virginia is explicitly referred to as a 'monster' twice within the novel. The first instance, tellingly, comes from her father, who tells Hervey that he would 'look upon [his daughter] as a monster if she did not love' Hervey after all he had done for her (*B:*407). This offhand comment follows Hervey's romanticised rendition of 'his own connexion with

Virginia', devoid of any intimations of paternal attention, and thereby allows Virginia's father to view their 'history' as a love story instead of a subversion of, *his*, parental power (*B:*407). The second instance stems from Virginia herself and replicates her father's sentiments:

> "Refuse him! do you think that I could refuse him any thing; who has given me every thing?—I should be a monster indeed! There is no sacrifice I would not make, no exertion of which I am not capable, for Mr Hervey's sake." (414)

Although she still views Hervey as a purely paternal figure, he 'who has given [her] everything', she has not yet paid her "debt" (*B:*414). Virginia embodies Hervey's idealised criteria of childhood through her inherent and desirable "lacks", but her inability to sustain his "imaginative and nostalgic demands" ultimately renders her Other (*Erotic Innocence* 144). Her subsequent belief in her own "monstrosity" arises from this failure to meet her perceived obligation to reciprocate Hervey's sexually charged "parental" expectations and repay her debt. Mr Hartley is willing to 'refuse' Hervey Virginia's hand at her insistence but both characters' previous declarations of monstrosity ensure that this will not occur (414). This is exemplified by Virginia's realisation that her real father has subsumed Hervey's previous role in her life. Initially, Virginia's fear of 'liking [her] father better than *any body else*' is dismissed as another example of juvenile ignorance but, her subsequent expansion, that 'it would be wrong and *ungrateful*, to like any thing in this world so well as Mr Hervey' reveals her true anxiety (*B:*411). Virginia is only able to view Hervey through a platonic lens, as her caregiver, because her biological father was absent, yet his return signifies that her gratitude requires redirection. The moment that Virginia and her father reunite, he immediately owns her as his 'child' and 'daughter', and she is overcome by the realisation of this anxiety:

> "…I can think of nothing but of him."
>
> "Of him and Mr Hervey," said Mrs Ormond.
>
> "I was not thinking of Mr. Hervey at that moment," said Virginia, blushing. (*B:*411–12)

Virginia's blush is, again, not indicative of love or desire but embarrassment that she had instantly failed in her aspiration to hold Hervey higher than '*any body else*' (*B:*411). Thus, Edgeworth portrays Hervey's aspiration to replace his paternal role and ensure that 'her partiality for him might become less exclusive' as successful; however, his romantic role remains vacant (*B:*395).

The novel's insistence upon Virginia's sexual maturity prevents her reunion with her biological father from existing as an adequate ending. She must also marry. The solution to this problem comes from an unexpected source: Lady Delacour, whose perusal of Hervey's "packet" allowed the reader to observe Virginia St. Pierre's backstory. Lady Delacour shares an aim with Hervey. She wishes to disentangle him from his child bride so that he may marry her protegee and the titular character, Belinda, but unlike Hervey, she recognises the need to replace him in *both* capacities. Thus, once Virginia has reunited with her father, Lady Delacour seeks out her actual love interest, the young man from the portrait that frequented her dreams, and presents him to Virginia, appropriately, in the form of another portrait:

> '"I thought, my dear Clarence," resumed Lady Delacour, "that no present could be more agreeable to you, than a companion for your Virginia. Does this figure," continued she, drawing back the curtain, "does this figure give you the idea of Paul?"'
>
> At these words Virginia turned her eyes upon the picture—uttered a piercing shriek, and fell senseless upon the floor. (*B:*464)

Edgeworth inserts the phrase 'companion' into this speech as a conscious double entendre (*B:*464). The painting acts as a 'companion' piece to the aforementioned portrait of Virginia, both painted in the style of St. Pierre's tragic couple *and* resembling Virginia's desired companion, a man revealed to be an acquaintance of her father (*B:*464). When the portrait of St. Pierre's Paul is revealed, Virginia transitions from the subject to the onlooker herself. The fear of herself to which Virginia had previously admitted resurfaces as her involuntary reaction

betrays a desire for one who she still deems as forbidden, one who does not conform to Hervey's 'romantic project' (*B:*362).

Thus, both roles that Hervey previously occupied are filled with other men. Virginia's biological father is returned, and Lady Delacour presents her with the real-life "Paul" and 'her vivid dreams, the fond wishes of her waking fancy, were at once accomplished' (*B:*476). Edgeworth rewrites St. Pierre's romance and allows her heroine to avoid an incestuous arrangement via more palatable terms than her death. Her hero, too, learns a moral lesson:

> Nothing could be more absurd than my scheme of educating a woman in solitude, to make her fit for society. I might have foreseen what must happen, that Virginia would consider me as her tutor, her father, not as her lover, or her husband; that, with the most affectionate of hearts, she could for me feel nothing but *gratitude*. (*B:*472)

That Hervey only admits to occupying the role of 'father' *after* the culmination of his ruinous scheme reflects not only his previous knowledge of this role but also his realisation of its incestuous implications. Virginia's ending is not entirely dissimilar to Sabrina's, both women marry men other than those for whom they had been designed, but while the latter represented her "trials" 'as having made her miserable—a slave', the former forgives her captor and allows for a "happy ending" of sorts (*Letters from England*, 122).[48]

1.7 A HAPPY ENDING?

Judith Shklar, in her influential monograph *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory*, boldly claims that the 'happy ending of *Émile* is false', and that the real ending should

[48] In 1783, John Bicknell 'revealed the full truth' of Day's marriage experiment to a 'horrified' Sabrina and proposed marriage to her himself:

> Furious and humiliated, she wrote to Day announcing her plan to marry Bicknell and demanding a full, candid and speedy explanation of his past conduct. (Moore 221–2)

The resultant letter included an explanation of Day's 'extraordinary scheme' and Sabrina's 'repeated failings' but no apology. Sabrina married Bicknell in 1784 and signed her name 'Anna Sabrina Sidney', thus reuniting her past and present identities before adding 'Bicknell' to the end (Moore 224).

be found in its unfinished sequel, *Émile et Sophie ou les Solitaires* (235).[49] Within the two completed chapters, presented in the form of letters from Émile to his tutor, the reader observes the breakdown of the "perfect" partnership that Rousseau had previously established at the conclusion of *Émile*. According to Shklar's account of the text, '[a]s soon as the tutor leaves Émile and Sophie […] everything begins to go wrong':

> In spite of the tutor's warnings, Émile is gradually moved to emulate the ways of the Parisians and a frivolous life soon kills all real passions in his heart. He soon ceases to love anyone. Sophie, in turn, also enters society and falls into bad company. She finally admits to Émile that she is pregnant by another man. (234)

At the end of *Émile,* the tutor assigns Sophy the role of 'guardian' over her husband, not as a reflection of her superiority but her *responsibility* (*E:*444). As a result, the onus for their subsequent failure may be comfortably placed upon her and viewed as the direct result of Émile's deviation from his tutor's teachings at the bequest of his wife. Émile, on the other hand, is afforded leniency and the opportunity to return to individual happiness. Although the conclusion of *Émile* suggests that the pair had been imbued with adequate "training" to form a cohesive family unit, *Émile et Sophie ou les Solitaires* takes this emphasis on the collective and turns back to the individual. Natasha Gill posits that, in the incomplete sequel, the 'two become each other's possessions, "wife" and "husband" but no longer individuals', thus Émile's decision to abandon his family may be viewed as a concurrent decision to reclaim his individuality (219). This may still be read as an overall success of the Rousseauian educational system as, in leaving society, the student returns to his tutor's teachings but he must embrace the alienation of individuality to do so: 'you must make your choice between the man and the citizen' (*E:*7). Gill hypothesises that *Émile et Sophie ou les Solitaires* can be read as a test of

[49] For a more thorough treatment of Rousseau's unfinished text, *Émile et Sophie ou les Solitaires*, and its alleged planned ending see Shklar's *Men and Citizens* and Gill's *Educational Philosophy in the French Enlightenment* (1969).

the teachings put in place by the tutor in *Émile*: 'it appears he did not trust his pupils unless they broke free from their master's teachings, experiencing a fall from their Eden, and chose virtue freely' (218). In rejecting his family, Émile chooses 'the man' and demonstrates the incompatible nature of Rousseau's teachings and romantic relationships because the focus shifts from the individual. Rousseau's unfinished sequel highlights the impracticality of his original text with social reality, and it appears that Edgeworth's hero comes to this same conclusion when he admits that '[n]othing could have been more absurd than my scheme of educating a woman in solitude' (*B:*472). Rousseau had never intended for his educational system to be used in this way, he did not design his system for women at all, and to treat Sophy as Émile's female counterpart in terms of education would be to deviate from a text that claims, 'woman [are] made to please and to be in subjection to man' (*E:*322).

Just as *Émile et Sophie ou les Solitaires* exposes the happy ending that is assumed to follow the conclusion of *Émile* to be false, the Virginia St. Pierre subplot likewise casts doubt upon the happy ending that follows the completion of *Belinda*'s primary plotline. *Émile*'s educational system does not endure in the real world and thus the final pages of *Belinda* must create an artificial "happy ending" to rewrite Hervey's attempted erroneous romance. The end of the novel reflects an uncommon self-awareness of form as Lady Delacour declares that she shall 'finish the novel' by uniting 'the happy couples' despite Belinda's protests that 'there is nothing in which novelists are so apt to err, as in hurrying things to a conclusion' (*B:*477). But the novel does not 'hurry' to the conclusion that Lady Delacour presents. Rather, Virginia's "inconsequential" subplot is revealed to have been the primary plotline throughout when its focus shifts from the young girl to the eponymous protagonist. Belinda's warning against 'not allowing *time* enough for that change of feeling, which change of situation cannot instantly produce' illustrates her own realisation that a replication of Hervey's experiment is about to

occur with *her* as its subject (*B:*478). Indeed, Lady Delacour physically moves each character in order to "set the scene" of the novel's imposed happy ending:

> …let me place you all in proper attitudes for stage effect. What signifies being happy, unless we appear so? Captain Sunderland—kneeling with Virginia, if you please sir, at her father's feet. You in the act of giving them your blessing, Mr Hartley […] Clarence, you have a right to Belinda's hand, and may kiss it too. Nay, miss Portman it is the rule of the stage. (*B:*478)

The primary characters are paired up, yet the 'happy' scene is entirely simulated (*B:*478). Virginia's new love interest, Captain Sunderland, is placed in a subservient position to her father, reflecting the rebalance of order with the roles of lover and father by different men. Hervey's pairing, too, restores the natural order as the 'rule of the stage' dictates that his happy ending be displaced onto another, more suitable, woman (*B:*478). Belinda's protest at her forced coupling is dismissed with a 'Nay' within the novel, but, for the reader, her non-complicity evokes Virginia once more (*B:*478). Hervey's sexualised lens is transferred to a subject that does not invite paedophilic or incestuous intimations but *does* allow for a recreation of a kind as he gains the 'right to Belinda's hand' and she is recast as his wife without her consent (*B:*478). On a surface level, the exploited child is contained within the Virginia St. Pierre subplot and the main plotline is innocuously resolved. But, beneath this, Edgeworth makes the cycle of abuse evident through the infantilisation of Belinda in this final scene.

The "happy ending" of *Belinda* is false for another, more pertinent, reason: the conflict of the novel's subplot, its sexualisation and displacement of childhood, has not been rectified. Virginia is not allowed to revert back to childhood once her amalgamated lover/father figure turns his attention elsewhere, her corruption is displaced onto another, albeit more desirable, figure. Instead of allowing Virginia to repossess her previous identity as Rachel, she must move forward, having been denied the 'crucial time which laid the foundations for the future' (Shuttleworth 2). Edgeworth's comedic happy ending is dependent on the reader's disregard of those factors that should render it unhappy. Virginia's primary parental figure refuses to

allow her to be a child before she is a woman, and this is perpetuated in her disallowance to return to the formative stages of life. As a caregiver, Hervey failed to live up to his reciprocal duty towards Virginia and, as a result, she cannot return to true childhood even after his removal from her life. Her biological father's reappearance in the novel held the potential to return her to childhood but instead, his role is limited to 'the act of giving [Virginia and her husband-to-be his] blessing' rather than exercising any nurturing or developmental behaviours (*B:* 478). By the novel's conclusion, Virginia remains confined within the liminal space she has occupied since her removal from her grandmother's cottage, suspended between the stages of childhood and adulthood. Despite being perceived by those around her as ready for marriage and the role of "wife"—with Lady Delacour physically positioning her in this role—her psychological and emotional development remains stunted. Her emotions are frozen at the maturity level she exhibited when she was first rendered a sexual object by Hervey. Virginia's inability to transition into conventional adulthood reflects her continued entrapment within the expectations and desires of the adults around her, as suggested by Kincaid and Honeyman's definition of childhood. Simultaneously, the refusal of these adult characters to acknowledge her *as a child* precludes any possibility of regression into healthy childhood. Virginia is caught in a state of developmental stasis, unable to fully embody either stage, and deprived of the autonomy to form an independent identity. Thus, she concludes the novel as a nonchild, having been denied the opportunity to become a 'real child' by both her surrogate and biological fathers (Worthington 18).

Lady Delacour's final message to the 'audience' reinforces the irony that has tinged the novel as a whole and explicitly reinforces the insincerity contained in its happy ending:

> Our *tale* contains a *moral*, and, no doubt,
>
> You all have wit enough to find it out. (*B:*478)

The italicisation of '*tale*' and *'moral'* draws attention to both words and suggests that which this chapter has argued from the start (*B:*478). *Belinda* acts primarily as a critique, veiled behind humour and extravagant extraneous plotlines, of the true 'tale' of Day's aberrant parental experiment alongside contemporary discourse regarding the 'double disability' of the contemporary female child (*Baron and Feme* 229). Edgeworth invites the reader to participate in finding this '*moral*' from beginning to end (*B:*478). As RLE claimed, Virginia St. Pierre's subplot appears 'improbable or impossible' but it is precisely the truth contained within it that allows Edgeworth to interact in contemporary debates regarding children, childhood, and the culpability of parental figures: 'the truth [was] too strong for the fiction' and pulled it 'asunder' (*M II:*349–50).

As a whole, *Belinda* represents the fragile boundary between the treatment of girls and women at the turn of the century in the context of a society attempting to reconcile new knowledge about child development with preconceived expectations of female marital potential. Day's marriage experiment formed the origin point for the Virginia St. Pierre subplot and Edgeworth's parody of it allows her to engage directly with this contemporary change. Like Sabrina, Virginia is a desirable wife precisely because of the childlike qualities she embodies, namely her innocence, and the nineteenth-century move towards recognising childhood as a step *prior* to sexual maturity complicates this long-held dynamic. Both *Émile* and *Belinda* contain false happy endings, but, while Rousseau explores the possibility of a different happy ending wherein the pupil returns to his tutor's base teachings, the characters of *Belinda* appear content to continue to replicate their mistakes all while searching for an inevitable '*moral*' that has been evident to the reader all along (*B:*478).

2 A MONSTROUS BILDUNGSROMAN: REWRITING MOTHERHOOD IN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

> Everything must have a beginning. […] And that beginning must be linked to something that went before […] Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of a void, but out of chaos…
>
> Mary Shelley, "Author Introduction", *Frankenstein* (1831)

2.1 POSSESSING PARENTHOOD

In Chapter One, I identified the relatively small pool of literary scholarship surrounding Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*, particularly regarding the Virginia St. Pierre subplot, and the way in which this left a straightforward gap for my research to fill. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* resides at the opposite end of the scholarship spectrum, having seen a surge in popularity amongst literary scholars in the 1960s who have since produced an 'impressive output of scholarship' (Hogle 829).[50] Therefore, ensuring originality in my analysis of Shelley's renascent novel entails combing through a vast wealth of existing research: 'Invention […] does not consist in creating out of a void' (*F:*8). While the previous chapter focused specifically on late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century notions of fatherhood, and addressed the societal struggle to understand the concept of childhood in a society that had only recently begun differentiating children from 'little adults', Chapter Two reflects a new difficulty: the competition for mastery over birth and child-rearing, explored through the themes of motherhood and gender-neutral parenthood in *Frankenstein* (*Invention of Childhood* 28).

Ellen Moers' 1976 monograph *Literary Women* contains a chapter, "The Female Gothic", that is largely regarded as the original and most influential reading of *Frankenstein* as a birth myth, convincingly aligning Victor Frankenstein's mode of creation with birth and

[50] Any reference to 'Shelley' will refer to Mary Shelley. Percy Bysshe Shelley will be shortened to PBS.

motherhood. Moers' formative depiction of Victor as a 'different' kind of overreacher, a figure who 'defies mortality not by living forever, but by giving birth', allows her to collate the novel with Shelley's own maternity and conclude that '[d]eath and birth were thus as hideously intermixed in the life of Shelley as in Victor's "workshop of filthy creation"' (95–6). A limitation of Moers' study, however, derives from her reliance on biographical material, often in place of the text itself, thereby leaving plenty of space for the expansion and further exploration of her birth myth. Moers' depiction, for example, ends abruptly and moves on to other literary examples without tracing the 'newborn' creature further than his initial creation. Similarly, Paul Cantor's 1984 *Creature and Creator* expands on the creature's subsequent development, identifying the Rousseauian parallel that I will develop, but, again, never entirely considers Victor's role as a parent and the creature's childlike position, viewing them simply as creator and creature: 'God' and 'monster' (131). Even Amber Bird's more recent article, "The Madness of Motherhood" (2017), while effectively focusing on Victor's position as a mother and his emotional reaction before and after the 'birth', does not follow the creature far into childhood and actively distances itself from ideas of 'bad parenting' (116). These texts overlap and borrow from one another, but still leave gaps to fill. Rather than simply discussing Victor as a bad parent, this chapter will expand on Moers' birth myth briefly before moving on to a more comprehensive discussion of Victor's active possession and paradoxical rejection of his role as mother. Significantly, this chapter will introduce an additional, antithetical, primary parental figure: Nature.[51]

Within *Frankenstein*, Victor forcibly takes his role as mother under the guise of asexual scientific reproduction and attempts to create a child that corresponds with his fantasy of total creative command. Yet his reproduction is not asexual, it requires the exploitation of the second

[51] A primary argument in this chapter is Shelley's anthropomorphised presentation of Nature as an individual, autonomous, character and, as a result, I will use its capitalised form to refer to Nature (the character) and lowercase form to refer to natural environments/phenomena.

parental figure. His co-parent, therefore, acts as his inverse. Forced into non-consensual procreation, Shelley's anthropomorphised version of Nature accepts the Creature as he is—albeit inorganically made—and cares for him after his initial maternal rejection. Thus, this chapter will read *Frankenstein* as a tale of failed co-parenting and a creator's refusal to accept incomplete mastery over creation. The first section of this chapter will follow the scholarly tendency to interrelate the author and literary output by discussing the "birth" of *Frankenstein* as a novel while resisting the impulse to repeat traditional approaches by reading Shelley and her husband as reluctant co-parents of the monstrous novel. From there, I will move on to discuss Victor's 'fortunate' childhood, particularly in terms of his parental models, and question the implications associated with Victor's characterisation as a single parent, a "male-mother" (*F:*39). This chapter will argue that, alongside being a tale of forced scientific usurpation of motherhood through the characterisation of Victor, *Frankenstein* also acts as an overall reassessment of motherhood as a concept; one that encompasses all who fulfil the reciprocal 'duties' of motherhood while rejecting those who 'neglect' these in favour of their own desires (*E:*14). Victor Frankenstein is not excluded from motherhood and creation because of his maleness, but his maleness *does* enable his patriarchally driven effort to exclude women from creation: he does not want to be a mother, he wants to "master" creation.

By examining Victor's precarious position between the roles of mother and father, and the way he refuses to relinquish either to his co-parent, my argument will shift its focus onto the development of the affected child and his struggle for a stable identity. Although the primary "child" of *Frankenstein* has long been identified through leading labels such as Frankenstein's Monster, Frankenstein's Creature, or mislabelled simply as "Frankenstein", the second half of this chapter will re-evaluate these epithets in light of the creature's other parent, Nature, and reread his characterisation, not simply as an extension of Victor's psyche as several critics have argued, but as an autonomous entity who shares innate and acquired attributes with

both of his parents, just as any child would.[52] This reconsideration of the creature's childhood, and subsequent analysis of Nature's position as a parent,[53] will be achieved through the utilisation of a Rousseauian lens, drawing principally on *Émile* (1763) and *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind* (1755),[54] both of which Shelley read before the conception of *Frankenstein.*[55] This consideration leads into my discussion of the creature as suspended between Rousseau's definitions of primitive and social man, with Victor representing the social aspect of the creature's being and Nature presenting the possibility of a return to primitive life.

At its heart, *Frankenstein* is a failed *bildungsroman*. Doubly failed, in fact, as the reader views two attempts at formative tales, Victor's and his creature's, neither of whom develop into successful adults in their own (or the reader's) estimations. Childhood is rewritten in *Frankenstein* to encompass both Victor's retrospective origin story and the creature's less conventional upbringing. Despite Victor's attempts to distance the creature from the label of "child", the parallels between them reinforce their similarities. This overt mirroring distances both children equally from the Romantic child expected in a *bildungsroman*. As such, although this chapter initially steps back from the text's explicit notions of the fantastic to read *Frankenstein* as a realist tale of child development and abandonment, the second half will re-

[52] The frequent doubling motif in *Frankenstein* has resulted in a significant portion of the scholarship on the novel questioning the creature's autonomy, reading him instead as an extension of his creator's psyche, a "dark double". Mary K. Thornburg goes a step further and argues that it 'seems indeed probable that Mary deliberately left open the possibility of reading *Frankenstein*'s narrative as exactly what Victor insists it is not—"the visions of a madman"', thereby questioning the creature's physical existence in the novel (91).

[53] Nature has no sex, although it is colloquially coded as female in the novel and mythology. Rather, it is Shelley's situation of its parental proficiencies in direct opposition to Victor's failings that elevates it to the position of second mother.

[54] Although perhaps more obscure in modern criticism than Rousseau's *Émile* or *Social Contract*, the *Second Discourse* discusses the origins of social inequality throughout human history and traces human development from pre-social primitivity to socialised society. This is particularly useful to my discussion of *Frankenstein*'s creature's development in nature, much of which echoes that which Rousseau recounted in his treatise.

[55] Anne Mellor, Shelley's best-known biographer, confirms Shelley's knowledge of Rousseau, stating that she had read Rousseau's *Émile* in 1816 and 'her reading of Rousseau's *Second Discourse* had given her insight into the limitations of the natural man as well as the potential evils of civilization' (47).

embrace the supernatural elements to examine representations of Nature as an involuntary parent, silenced by Victor but never repressed into passivity. Shelley can, therefore, challenge perceptions of childhood and parental responsibility from the distancing vehicle of a scientific realist novel.

2.1.1 A NOTE ON THE TEXT: 1818 VS 1831

In 1974, James Rieger made the editorial decision to reprint Shelley's original version of *Frankenstein* rather than her revised 1831 edition. Although this 'violates the editorial convention that an author's final emendations have final authority', Rieger maintained that the originally published text 'has independent value' and the 1831 revisions 'were slightly for the worse' (Rieger xliii). This "violation" of convention quickly became the standard as literary scholarship continued to promote the original edition of the novel over the version that incorporated Shelley's revisions. Using more precise reasoning than Rieger, Mellor too argues in favour of the 1818 version of the text, suggesting that it is more representative of Shelley's 'original conception' and 'historical context': 'the revised 1831 *Frankenstein* […] cannot do justice to Mary Shelley's powerful originating vision' (205, 211). In Mellor's view, the 1831 revision reflected Shelley's 'radically' changed philosophical views and newfound 'pessimism generated by the' deaths and betrayals she had suffered in the interim (209). Indeed, Shelley expresses a similar sentiment to the reader when she describes the original novel as 'the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words' (*F:*9).

While I agree that the transition between the 1818 and 1831 versions of the novel entailed larger alterations than Shelley implied when she argued that 'I have changed no portion of the story, nor introduced any new ideas or circumstances', I disagree with those that claim the text revises representations of free will and the natural world (*F:*10). Mellor, in particular, believes that Shelley's representation of Victor is radically changed in the 1831 revision, and he shifts from a character who 'possessed free will' to a 'pawn of forces beyond his knowledge'

(209). This, I would argue, is a misreading of Victor's infantile tendency to blame his own failings on extraneous factors: the world, his father, and the creature. I would argue that while Victor's free will is unchanged by the 1831 edits, Shelley presents his inability to accept personal blame as more blatant in the revised edition. Mellor goes on to claim that Shelley 'replaces her earlier organic construction of nature with a mechanistic one' (210). This is an argument that my positioning of Nature in an anthropomorphised maternal role actively rebels against. I do not believe that Nature was made more "tyrannical" in the 1831 *Frankenstein,* but I would agree that its role within this version of the novel becomes more explicit (210).

Shelley's claim that her edits left 'the core and substance' of the novel 'untouched' may be understood literally because her revisions serve to expose the 'core and substance' of the novel more explicitly rather than replace and appraise her previous aspirations in writing (*F:*10). Mellor's arguments regarding Shelley's 'remarkable shifts in both diction and philosophical conception' may have merit in studies of other aspects of the novel, but for my study of childhood, maternity, and parental responsibility, the 1831 revision is more useful as it expands on representations of Victor's family life and depictions of Nature. It is also essential to recognise that Shelley's frequently referenced introduction, her first direct authorial address given that it was PBS that wrote the 1818 preface, appears as part of the 1831 *Frankenstein*. Although the truth behind the events leading up to the conception of the novel, as narrated in Shelley's introduction, has been questioned by literary scholars (particularly Rieger, who labelled it as 'disingenuous' in his introduction to the text and a 'total fabrication' in a 1963 paper) it should still be treated as part of the text (xiii, 461). Even if the "ghost story" competition were a 'total fabrication', likely designed to render Shelley's 'hideous' idea into acceptability, the introduction can be read as an explanatory extension of the novel and used to elucidate the ideas this chapter will discuss (461, *F:*5). Thus, I have chosen to deviate from

critical convention and discuss the second edition of the novel, although I will reference the original 1818 text when applicable.

2.2 THE CONCEPTION OF *FRANKENSTEIN* AND COLLABORATIVE PARENTING

The conception of *Frankenstein* as a novel came with its own questions concerning authorship, authority, and collaboration. The 'independent value' that Rieger alludes to in his defence of the 1818 text derives principally from his identification of PBS's definitive role as 'more than an editor':

> In accepting final revisions as binding, an editor must also assume that there is a single author. What happens when there are two? Percy Bysshe Shelley worked on *Frankenstein* at every stage, from the earliest drafts through to the printer's proofs, with Mary's final "carte blanche to make what alterations you please." He understated the matter when he wrote to the publishers. [….] Should we grant him the status of minor collaborator? Do we or do we not owe him a measure of "final authority"? (xliii–xliv)

Predictably, the extent of PBS's involvement in the formation of *Frankenstein* has been a polemic debate within literary criticism, but it is imperative to recognise that this question of authorship did not originate with manuscripts and documentation. Shelley's contemporaries were forced to speculate on the novel's authorship, prompted first by its anonymous nature, and then in response to the notion that a 'young girl' could create 'so very hideous an idea' (*F:*5). In both cases, PBS's name emerged at the forefront of discussions. This is demonstrated in Walter Scott's 1818 review of the novel in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* within which he claimed *Frankenstein* was 'said to be written by Mr Percy Bysshe Shelley' (614). He cited the dedication to PBS's father-in-law, William Godwin, as confirmation. As the phrase 'said to be' implies, this was not an independent theory posited by Scott. Rather, it was a frequently discussed assumption amongst contemporaries that continued to persevere even after Shelley

stepped forward as the author (614). This supposition directly disregarded PBS's note to Scott that accompanied the review copy of *Frankenstein* which reiterated his denial of authorship:

> My own share in them [*Frankenstein]* consists simply in having superintended them through the press during the Author's absence. (*PBS Letters, I*, 590)

In 1824, an anonymous author took this speculation further in his comparison of *Frankenstein* with Shelley's 1823 novel *Valperga* and subsequent determination that 'there is not the slightest trace of the same hand' in the novels (*Knight's Quarterly Review* 195). The reviewer went on to suggest that while he had not initially doubted Shelley's authorship, his disappointment in her later work obliged him to reconsider: 'I had the very highest expectations of the maturing of the genius which could produce such a work as *Frankenstein*' (195). The reviewer's inability to reconcile the two novels as the product of one author resulted in a new hypothesis, that PBS 'wrote the first, though it was attributed to his wife,—and that she really wrote the last', thereby only allowing Shelley possession over the inferior novel (199). It is useful to note that the anonymous reviewer does backtrack somewhat, noting that he did not base this supposition on 'internal evidence' because, although *Frankenstein* shows indications of PBS's 'poetry and vigour', it is 'wholly free from those philosophical opinions from which scarcely any of his works *are* free' (199). While it is evident that his first conviction of PBS's authorship is predominant, he does assent that '[i]t may be, that Mrs. Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*' and then altered her writing style in her subsequent novels, over-correcting the 'fault [of] extravagance' that critics had identified in her first (199).

While this review appears contradictory, and it is, it simultaneously reveals how Shelley and her husband's authorial identities emerged and coalesced in *Frankenstein*. This unique collation of authorial identities begins with PBS's preface, which, unlike Shelley's introduction, was published alongside the original 1818 text. Within the preface, PBS underlines his temporary possession of the novel by utilising the authorial 'I' and implementing

possessive language throughout. Despite this, his intention, to justify the 'supernatural terrors' of the novel by comparing it to other great literary works that use comparable devices, such as '*The Iliad'* and *'Paradise Lost'*, and ground it in scientific research, primarily the works of 'Dr Darwin', convey a discomfort with the subject that is diametrically opposed to Shelley's conscious ownership of this material in her later introduction (*F:*11). In *Critical Discourses of the Fantastic,* David Sandner similarly recognises this discomfort and suggests that PBS's 'defensive introduction […] indicates a nervousness about the reception of a new work not yet secure in its fame' while simultaneously registering 'an anxiety concerning the legitimacy of the genre of the work' (72). This is further supported by an examination of PBS's review of *Frankenstein*, published in *The Athenæum Journal of Literature* in 1832 but written in 1817, which functions as proactive praise of the novel, stressing its 'original' merits despite it being 'the author's first attempt':

> The general character of the tale indeed resembles nothing that ever preceded it [….] an exhibition of intellectual and imaginative power, which we think the reader will acknowledge has seldom been surpassed. (213–215)

While PBS discards the authorial 'I' in this review, he does not completely surrender the text. Instead, he allows it to be framed as collaborative through the use of 'we' (215). PBS's decision to write *Frankenstein*'s preface *as* the author required that he defend the novel from derision and attempt to instil it with literary merit through comparison. In contrast, his decision to demote the authorial 'I' to the collaborative 'we' in the aforementioned review allows him to discuss the text more specifically and less defensively, praising its 'intellectual and imaginative power' instead of justifying its supernatural subject matter (215). The question that naturally arises is why PBS would write the novel's preface if he foresaw the need to defend the piece and presumably defend himself from accusations of its authorship. Charles Robinson, in *The Frankenstein Notebooks I*, claims that it was likely that 'MWS herself wrote a preface after she transcribed her novel', but this was 'discarded in favour of the published Preface written by

PBS' (ixxxvi). This he assumes from a note in Shelley's journal from 1817 that read: 'S. reads Hist of Fr. Rev. and corrects F. write Preface—Finis' (ixxxvi). This annotation reveals a clear plan for the completion of *Frankenstein*: PBS would read and correct the novel, and Shelley would write the preface. Whether this planned preface ever took shape is unknown but, as Robinson reiterates, hers was 'discarded in favour' of her husband's nevertheless (ixxxvi). There is no evidence that PBS forced his preface onto Shelley's novel, and it is indeed likelier that it was a collaborative decision to lend *Frankenstein* more literary standing (and presumably increased sales). But it did ensure that his contribution was ingrained into the text's literary history *before* its actual author.

Robinson expands significantly on PBS's role in the writing of *Frankenstein*, conceding that although *Frankenstein* was 'conceived and mainly written by Mary Shelley', PBS wrote 'at least' 4,000 words of the 72,000-word novel himself (lxviii). Taken alone, this statement paints a picture 'extensive' enough to justify Rieger's classification of PBS as a 'minor collaborator' with a 'measure of "final authority"' (xliv). Yet it is equally important to consider the context of these additions. The majority of PBS's amendments took the form of spelling and grammatical corrections or superficial changes to elevate the language of the novel. Although these edits added words to the novel's total, they rarely changed the content of the narrative. In chapter six, for example, Shelley's simple 'create a creature' is changed to 'prepare a frame', and a few lines later, 'I did not despair' becomes 'I doubted not that I should ultimately succeed' (Robinson 83). Both of these examples reflect a move towards more elaborate language but neither depict a change in sentiment. This may explain the discrepancy between *Frankenstein* and *Valperga* identified by the 1824 reviewer; the latter was edited by Shelley's father, William Godwin, so likely lacked PBS's 'poetry and vigour' (Curran 103, Anon 199).

Robinson and Mellor agree that Rieger 'overstated' PBS's involvement in the formation of *Frankenstein* and devalued Shelley's achievements, but neither denies that PBS played a collaborative part (lxvii). However, Rieger's most compelling argument regarding PBS's authority over the novel—his claim that PBS suggested one of the primary plotlines (Victor's journey to England to create the female monster)—is refuted by Robinson. Robinson argues instead that PBS only suggested that the journey be *Victor's idea* rather than his father's, and that 'PBS wrote this only *after* MWS had plotted the journey for the creating of the female' (lxvii). Minor collaborator may then be an accurate designation for PBS, if not for Rieger's equation of it with the title of "second author". As Robinson indicates, 'collaboration means "to work with" not to "equally divide the labour"' (lxviii). Thus PBS may be called a minor collaborator *without* Rieger's notion of subsequent "final authority". Indeed, Mellor and Anna Mercer both identify PBS's use of pet names throughout his annotations on the manuscript of *Frankenstein*, particularly 'Pecksie' and 'elf' (301). While they differ in their interpretations of these endearments, whether patronising or affectionate, I would argue that these terms suggest a more comfortable and collaborative relationship, rather than the dictatorial "final authority" that Rieger suggests (301). It is undeniable that PBS's 'correct[ions]' affected the subsequent shape of the novel, but certainly to a lesser extent than Rieger implies (ixxxvi).

James P. Carson, in his paper "Bringing the Author Forward", explores a different aspect of the Shelleys' literary relationship that emerges after PBS's death wherein Shelley is obliged to edit and release her husband's works posthumously. He claims that '[i]n editing her husband's works, Mary Shelley is only returning the assistance that Percy offered her prior to the publication of *Frankenstein'*, but fails to acknowledge the difference between their editorial styles (435). Shelley does not intend to replicate PBS's temporary appropriation of the authorial 'I' in her amendments, and this is underlined in her 1839 letter to a friend of PBS, Leigh Hunt, wherein she expressed her apprehension that she might 'mutilate' her late husband's work:

'Remember *I* do not enter into the question at all. It is *my* duty to publish every thing of Shelley—but I want these two volumes to be popular' (*Selected Letters* 291–2).[56] The idea of textual mutilation, or 'castration' as Carson claims the male equivalent to be, influences Shelley's stance on her own editorial style. One may infer that this also affected the extent to which she would have allowed PBS to alter *Frankenstein*.[57] Shelley had the opportunity to frame PBS's creative works with her own voice but chose not to and Carson uses this decision to frame his discussion of Shelley's 'unwilling[ness]' to bring herself forward as the female creator of *Frankenstein*. This assumption loses its momentum as one considers Shelley's growing willingness to bring herself forward after the novel's first publication and her concurrent rejection of PBS's role in its creation.

This is established first in her response to Scott's 1818 assertion of PBS as 'probable author':

> I am anxious to prevent your continuing in the mistake of supposing Mr Shelley guilty of a juvenile attempt to mine: to which—from its being written at an early age, I abstained from putting my name—and from respect to those persons from whom I bear it. I have therefore kept it concealed except from a few friends. (*Selected Letters* 34)

Although this letter superficially serves to distance PBS's reputation from Shelley's 'juvenile attempt', it primarily acts as a clear assertion of authorship (34). Shelley does not allow her husband to claim her work even via public speculation. This is exemplified further in *Frankenstein*'s 1831 introduction wherein Shelley, again, rejects PBS's involvement, both literally, in her claim that she did not 'owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely one train of feeling, to [her] husband', and implicitly through her immediate implementation of

[56] See James P. Carson's "Bringing the Author Forward: *Frankenstein* Through Mary Shelley's Letters" for a more extensive evaluation of Shelley's editorial role.

[57] Carson draws distinctions between '[f]emale editorial work [which] brings recriminations (perhaps deriving from the dread of castration)' and 'male editorial work [which] elicits praise' (435). This may have had a bearing on Shelley's unwillingness to mutilate PBS's work and her perception of 'duty' (*Selected Letters* 292).

birth imagery to describe the novel's conception (*F:*10). The Shelleys' literary relationship was certainly not combative, but nor was it entirely congruent. This section has challenged Shelley's explicit rejection of PBS's authorship, viewing him as a lesser collaborator. The novel's entrenchment in birth imagery, however, suggests that a lesser co-parent may be a more fitting indicator of his role. Shelley willingly brings herself forward in the introduction; but, in doing so, she confines PBS to the margins. Shelley's struggle for authorship was met with an akin struggle *against* accusations of authorship by her husband, but neither could truly deny their roles as co-parents to the monstrous progeny that ensued in the form of *Frankenstein.*

2.2.1 THE BIRTH OF *FRANKENSTEIN*

Frankenstein's 1831 author introduction comprises the first "birth scene" of the novel, depicting not the birth of a character but the novel itself. In this introduction, Shelley allows her reader to witness the formation of *Frankenstein*, the original 'hideous progeny', framed in terms of birth and female-centric creation (*F:*10). With 'shut eyes', she envisions the scene that would become the fifth chapter of the resultant novel: 'the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together' (*F:*9). It is not a passive dream so much as a spontaneous eruption of imagination that recalls Victor's sudden arrival 'at the summit' of his desires after the 'consummation' of his 'toils' minus the orgasmic implication (*F:*53, 9). While Victor's climax is tainted by his comprehension of the creature's ugliness, Shelley recognises and accepts the 'hideous' nature of her creation, bidding it 'go forth and prosper' (*F:*9–10). Shelley's depiction of childbirth and maternity is not idealised precisely because her personal experiences have made her aware of the terrors and dangers involved. At the time of *Frankenstein*'s initial publication in 1818, Shelley had been pregnant twice despite her young age and had lost her first child weeks after its birth. By its republication in 1831, she had endured three more difficult pregnancies and lost all but one child.

That the idea for the novel originated in a not-quite-dream reinforces this assessment and recalls Shelley's oft-quoted 1815 diary entry, written after the loss of her first child:

> Sunday, March 19.—Dream that my little baby came to life again; that it has only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day. (*The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* 110)

Abundant parallels have already been made between this dream, wherein a child, once dead, is reanimated by fire, and *Frankenstein*'s electricity-based revival. However, a keener parallel can be drawn between this dream and the novel's subtitle: *The Modern Prometheus*. Already the subtitle is rendered ironic by Victor's quest for hidden knowledge, but it is also biographically significant. Just as Prometheus stole fire from the gods to give to humans to aid their survival, Shelley envisions a fire that can bring back her dead infant back to life. Shelley's dream of her dead child reanimated is aspirational, not supernatural, she seeks not to reverse the natural order, as in *Frankenstein*, but to warm her child back from lifelessness. In writing, Shelley is not attempting to find a solution to bring back her child but reasserting death as part of the 'natural laws' and working through her grief (*F*:9).

Both Shelley and her imagined creator are 'haunted' by their creations and undergo periods of "gestation". Yet, while Shelley recognises the immorality of her tale and embraces its hideousness as part of her maternal duty, Victor immediately rejects his duties and his child. By framing *Frankenstein* in such personal terms, as something irrevocably intertwined with notions of birth and death, Shelley stakes a clear claim on authorship. In current criticism, her introduction vastly surpasses PBS's disconnected preface in terms of literary significance and balances so precariously on the boundary of truth and fiction that it might be better considered an extension of the novel. It remains irrefutable that PBS has a lesser claim on the novel, akin to that of a mainly absent, or silenced caregiver. Marie-Hélène Huet likewise recognises PBS as a parental figure in the tale of *Frankenstein*'s conception, but she argues that, to read the novel as 'a text about motherhood and literary procreation' is to 'erase the role of the legitimate'

or ‘silent’ father and, thus, preclude PBS’s participation (159). Indeed, while PBS’s role is easily overlooked in this novel seemingly conjured by maternal imagination, I would not agree that it is erased. Perhaps he did not ‘recognise himself […] in his monstrous progeny’, but he was certainly recognised by those contemporaries who discerned his poetic flourishes and extravagant language in the text (159).

Both Shelley and PBS actively reject the latter’s role as a collaborator in the creation of *Frankenstein,* but it is evident, nonetheless. The conception of the novel thus becomes a tale of unwitting, or unwilling, co-parenting of the ‘hideous progeny’ (10). The term ‘unwilling’ here does not denote forced collaboration but rather Shelley’s refusal to accept that PBS’s (presumably welcome) edits allowed him the title of “co-parent”. Shelley’s revised version of the novel should have distanced her from her co-parent, and Rieger criticised it for that reason. However, I would argue that instead of taking full possession of the novel in the 1831 reissue, Shelley skewed the weighting more in her favour. Like *Frankenstein* itself, the story behind the creation of the novel takes on the shape of a framed narrative, with PBS on either side of his wife’s narration acting as a buffer to her voice and ensuring his presence is felt throughout. Whether consciously or not, this co-parenting dynamic is re-enacted within the novel through Shelley’s characterisation of Victor and the creature’s natural co-parent.

2.3 *FRANKENSTEIN*’S ORIGINAL *BILDUNGSROMAN*

If *Frankenstein* the novel is the first “child” of Shelley’s narrative, the second is its namesake. When Victor Frankenstein, pursuing his creature to the ‘country of eternal light’, finds himself saved by arctic explorers, he is disturbed to see his ‘madness’ reflected back at him from their captain, Robert Walton (*F:*15, 29). Conceding to the futility of his endeavour to destroy his creature, Victor changes course and decides to save Walton from replicating his mistakes: ‘let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!’ (*F:*29) Victor’s subsequent ‘relation of [his] disasters’ comprises the majority of the novel, with the creature’s account

nestled in the middle, but, strangely, he does not begin with the "creation scene", or even his scientific education (*F:*29). Shelley has him begin with his father, more specifically 'the decline of life [when Alphonse] became a husband', tracing the events that led up to Victor's birth (*F:*33). Victor does not tell Walton that he plans to relate *his life leading up to the disaster* but simply his 'disasters' and this differentiation is significant because it necessitates the novel's first *bildungsroman* (*F:*29).

Victor's father's marital story recalls that which I discussed in Chapter One: he takes his young wife from the deathbed of her primary caregiver, places her 'under the protection of a relation' for two years, and then marries her as soon as it is socially acceptable to do so (*F:*34). Just as Day "rescues" Sabrina Sidney from the foundling hospital under the guise of being a benevolent employer, Alphonse Frankenstein, is initially portrayed as a 'protecting spirit to the poor girl' and Caroline 'commit[s] herself to his care' (*F:*34). Their two years apart are not recounted but, as a young woman committed to an older gentleman, one might assume she spent her time preparing for marriage, albeit more knowingly than Sabrina. Nevertheless, after marriage, a shift occurs in their relationship, and, rather than requiring marital obedience, Alphonse ensures '[e]very thing was made to yield to *her* wishes and *her* convenience' (*F:*35, emp. added). According to Victor's admittedly biased rendition of events, his father becomes subordinate to his mother as he 'gradually relinquished all public functions' and sought a 'pleasant climate' for his wife's 'weakened frame' (*F:*35). Alone, this does not stand out, but when viewed in conjunction with Victor's disapproving tone and later disparagement of his father's lack of scientific knowledge, it becomes significant. William Veeder's 1986 monograph*, Mary Shelley and Frankenstein: The Fate of Androgyny,* similarly identifies the importance of Alphonse Frankenstein to the eventual trajectory of the novel. However, he interprets it as an extension of 'oedipal tensions in the Victor-Alphonse relationship': the son is repelled by the father's submission to the mother because it does not suit his oedipal fantasy

(137). This line of argument is common within *Frankenstein* scholarship, and often subverted to encompass the mother, yet I do not agree that oedipal urges are Victor's primary motivation. Veeder is correct when he claims that 'Victor determines to surpass his father, and indeed all men, as progenitor' but this does not stem from same-sex incestuous desire so much as a desire to 'surpass his father['s]' weakness and integrate birth into the "public sphere" of science (137). Victor would not need to relinquish his 'public functions' if fatherhood was a direct product of them (*F:*35).

This chapter is not concerned with Alphonse and Caroline's unconventional beginning, but with their relationship insomuch as it acts as a model of co-parenting for their children, a model that Victor later rejects. This is particularly evident in the 1818 version of *Frankenstein*, wherein both parents are allotted an essential role in the development of their children:

> My father directed our studies, and my mother partook of our enjoyments. Neither of us possessed the slightest preeminence over the other; the voice of command was never heard amongst us… (24–5)

Alphonse and Caroline are characterised as collaborators in parenthood; each taking responsibility for a task to which they were suited. But, just as in the 1831 revision of the text, there is palpable discontent beneath Victor's description and the implication that, had 'the voice of command' existed, perhaps his "disasters" would have been avoided (25). That Victor's childhood is 'harmonious' appears to be part of the problem, his claim that no 'human being could have passed a happier childhood' than he feels disingenuous and clear dissatisfaction bubbles beneath the surface of these apparently cheerful memories (*F:*39). Victor's presentation of a childhood full of 'tender caresses' and 'benevolent smiles' is strained as he identifies his role: first as a 'plaything' and 'idol', something to be used and worshipped, and *then* as their child (*F:*35). This affection bestowed on Victor by his parents is typified by adoration rather than instruction and, thus, recalls Habermas' concept of 'disinterested parenting'; a model in which emotional indulgence replaced active edification leading to a

parental approach that lacked the guidance necessary for the child's moral and intellectual development (43). He is their 'plaything' first and their 'duty' second—they 'yield[ed]' to him but did not satisfactorily educate (*F:*35). This version of filial love, more performative than nurturing, conflicts with the instructive parenting style that Victor expects, and this disparity is highlighted by his growing scepticism and sense of detachment. Moments that convey parental love and responsibility are punctuated with doubt-filled statements: even their 'inexhaustible stores of affection' is prefaced with the phrase 'seemed to' (*F:*35). Likewise, the only moment that conveys parental education, 'a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control', is implicitly undermined by the addendum, 'it may be imagined', and explicitly through the reader's realisation that these are precisely the qualities that Victor *lacks* (*F:*35). Shelley's irony here is subtle to first-time readers but becomes apparent upon Victor's impulsive resolution to forgo regular-sized body parts in creation as 'a great hindrance to [his] speed' or his lack of charity in allowing others to suffer for his actions (*F:*54). Familiar readers, however, would immediately identify this statement as satirical. The only lessons that Victor obtains from his caregivers serve to denote their mutual failures as student and teacher. The 'silken cord' that should have ensured Victor's parents fulfil their duty to him is left slack; it had 'seemed but one train of enjoyment to' him in youth, but in adulthood he regards it as the origin of his later misery (*F:*35).

This manner of juxtaposition, between the aggressively positive and underlying discontent, acquires momentum after Elizabeth's contrasting presence is added to the text. According to Rousseau, the primary requisite of a parent-child relationship is 'reciprocal' duty: '[t]he child ought to love his mother before he knows it is his duty to love her' (*E:*14, Worthington 18). While Victor is an only child and the sole receptacle for his parent's 'inexhaustible stores of affection' he owes them this 'reciprocal' duty of love and his acknowledgement that they 'fulfilled their duties towards' him, contrary to his later claim that

they did not, underlines this compulsion to reciprocate (*F:*35, *E:*14). These dynamics shift when Caroline, driven by 'more than a duty', takes Elizabeth into their family and she becomes their primary 'innocent and helpless creature' to protect (*F:*35–6). This 'more than' duty overrides Victor's filial duty and enables him to transfer the burden of the duty-bound child to Elizabeth (his 'pretty present' in more ways than one) and allows his real self to emerge in the text (*F:*36). Elizabeth fulfils the traditional role of the Romantic child so that Victor may progress beyond it: the two become each other's antitheses.

Elizabeth's function in the novel is encapsulated in Peter Coveney's 1957 depiction of the Romantic child as 'always seen in the context of a falsifyingly benign Nature' (272). Indeed, this is particularly appropriate to my discussion of the faux-siblings' antithetical portrayals because, while Victor engages with Nature's less-than-benign side, Elizabeth becomes a symbol of its 'benevolence and sympathy' (272). While Elizabeth is occupied by the 'sublime shapes of the mountains; the changes of the seasons; tempest and calm; the silence of the winter, and the life and turbulence of our Alpine summers', Victor overlooks these surface pleasures and, instead, 'delighted in investigating their causes' (*F:*38). Victor and Elizabeth are equally shielded from the "corruptions" of society owing to their rural lives but while the former gladly succumbs to this isolation, the latter sees the world as a challenge, 'a secret' that he wishes 'to divine' (*F:*38). Although both children experience largely identical childhoods, only the latter returns the reciprocal duty of love to their parents and embodies the 'love' and 'indulgen[t]' aspects that their upbringing should have conveyed to both (*F:*39). Thus, Shelley utilises Elizabeth as a vector to convey 'the innocence and frailty' of the Romantic child as she harmlessly absorbs the 'education that nature gives us' and embodies Rousseauian detachment from society in her literal removal into the isolation afforded by the

Frankensteins' wealth (Coveney 92, *E:*12).[58] Elizabeth takes the role of "only child", and is allowed to briefly retain her childhood while Victor becomes a 'little adult', a child imbued with adult characteristics and goals (*Invention of Childhood* 28).

Rousseau's warning that '[n]ature intends that children shall be children before they are men' or face degeneration recalls Victor's rejection of childhood innocence in favour of precocity (*E:*52). Victor does not adequately pass through childhood, he becomes one of Rousseau's 'men almost from birth', signifying physical growth without emotional maturation (*E:*69). His resistance to childhood allows infantile whims and mood swings to perpetuate without the opportunity to "grow out" of them, and his juvenile and adult desires become intertwined. Like Edgeworth's Virginia, Victor's emotions never fully regulate. This inconsistency is epitomised through further juxtaposition, only this time Victor is juxtaposed with himself. Shelley dwells on Victor's appreciation of his family briefly, having him recount his 'filial love' and then, after only a paragraph break, launches into a discussion of his temper:

> My temper was sometimes violent, and my passions vehement; but by some law in my temperature they were turned, not towards childish pursuits, but to an eager desire to learn, and not to learn all things indiscriminately. [...] It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things, or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my enquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or, in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world. (*F:*39)

This passage exemplifies the intentional relationship that Shelley crafts between Victor's 'violent' and sexual passions and his precocity; his temper should have been regulated in the process of maturation, but he uses it as a tool to fuel his desires and defy 'childish pursuits'

[58] Franco Ferrucci, in "The Dead Child: A Romantic Myth', discusses the romantic child as 'born in literature with a destiny of death in life', they are doomed to die before they reach adulthood (118). Elizabeth's status as a Romantic child is almost actualised when her life is threatened by scarlet fever, but her recovery ensures a deviation from the prescribed fate Ferrucci alludes to and signals the end of her childhood. This is reinforced by the loss of her mother, a figure who fulfilled her domestic duty and sacrificed her life for her child, and her subsequent obligation to fulfil the vacant role. Thus, Elizabeth transitions from Romantic child to mother.

(*F:*39). The intermingling of childhood tempers and precocious endeavours stunts Victor's mental development, so he never learns the selflessness or self-moderation that his later parental role requires, but it cannot prevent his physical development. Thus, sexual imagery permeates his studies although he lacks adequate emotional maturity to identify and separate them. The intense sexuality with which Victor views his domination of Nature and the natural laws of creation, even during youth, is shown as the direct result of this inadequate emotional maturity.

This is further demonstrated through the rapid devolution of his 'thirst for knowledge' from something intrinsically childlike—a desire to know—into something that he is first 'smitten' with and then requires 'violent' dominance over (*F:*38–9). Victor acquires sexual gratification from the completion of his intellectual pursuits and his studies consequently become entrapped within increasingly violent and sexual imagery as his research methods become more invasive. Those desires that were formulated in childhood translate, in adulthood, into graverobbing, sexual violation and the inversion of laws of nature and religion. Among Victor's 'earliest sensations', he identifies a 'curiosity […] to learn the hidden laws of nature' and a 'gladness akin to rapture' as they began to unfold before him (*F:*38). Shelley's implementation of the word 'rapture', specifically, is multifaceted. First, it has an orgasmic quality that reoccurs throughout the novel, particularly in conjunction with creation and the mastery of natural processes; but it is also deeply entrenched in eschatological Christian mythology and consequently presents Victor's fervid desires as blasphemous from the start (*F:*38). Even his childhood imaginings defy God and recall the 'pale student of unhallowed arts' of Shelley's introductory dream (*F:*9). Victor's desires lie in the destruction, rather than embrace, of Nature and he leaves his childhood behind mere pages into the novel to enact this.

The final 'lesson' that Victor receives from his parents, and the most explicitly ironic, is 'self-control' (*F:*35). The narrative's plot rests upon a series of misunderstandings, but the

first, and perhaps most significant, is Victor's misunderstanding of his locus of control and ensuing compulsion to blame his 'ruin' on external factors instead of his internal drives (*F:*40). And to some extent this interpretation may be justifiable; his precocious passions are allowed to develop unchecked by his parents, 'swelling' as they 'became the torrent which […] swept away all [his] hopes and joys' (*F:*40). The parents that had originally been described as deeply 'conscious of what they owed towards the being to which they had given life' neglect their parental responsibility to the extent that they cannot prevent their son's continuation towards destruction (*F:*35). This blame is extended specifically to his father, who 'carelessly' dismisses Victor's alchemic studies as 'sad trash' rather than taking 'pains to explain' why they should be dismissed (*F:*40). Victor equates his scientific education with child development and, consequently, views his father's lack of interest as a parental failing in leaving him 'to struggle with a child's blindness' (*F:*40). Agrippa and his fellow alchemists take on substitute father roles in Victor's life because their knowledge allows them to foster the interest that his father scorned: 'I took their word for all that they averred, and I became their disciple' (*F:*41). This is replicated in early adulthood through his mentor Doctor Waldman. The culpability for Victor's actions transfers from father to father-figures and the accounts of those who had 'partially unveiled the face of Nature' acquire the responsibility for his unerring "thirst" and the 'regulat[ion]' of his 'fate (*F:*40–41).

Victor does not solely view his 'destruction' as the result of faulty parenting, or the enticing influence of natural philosophy, perhaps because to do so would still require a margin of accountability, something he intrinsically resists (*F:*40). Rather, he further displaces his culpability by identifying it as the direct result of 'destiny' and 'her immutable laws' (*F:*43). This is exemplified when Victor recalls the 'accident [that] changed the current of [his] ideas' (*F:*42). With 'curiosity and delight', Victor witnesses the violent destruction of 'an old and beautiful oak' in a thunderstorm: 'It was not splintered by the shock, but entirely reduced to

thin ribbons of wood. I never beheld anything so utterly destroyed' (*F:*42). This, Victor retrospectively interprets as a last effort made by 'the spirit of preservation to avert the storm' of his future 'destruction', yet his claim that it impelled him to turn from his studies, not because of its violence but because 'nothing would or could ever be known', is unconvincing (*F:*43). Not least because he does not abandon his studies at all, instead he modifies them to include "newer" scientific pursuits such as 'electricity and galvanism' and uses his newfound knowledge to surpass those natural philosophers who had disappointed him (*F:*43).[59] Thus, the contriving 'spirit' is deemed 'ineffectual' (*F:*43).

The impression of inevitability conveyed by the aforementioned scene is often used as an argument against the 1831 version of the text. Mellor's interpretation of Victor rewritten as a 'pawn of forces beyond his knowledge' comes particularly to mind. However, I view this perspective as an oversimplification (209). In Victor, Shelley presents a character so disassociated with the world, and the consequences of his own actions, that he must portray his downfall as inevitable in order to comprehend the trajectory of his own life. In childhood, Victor did not reach emotional maturity, and, as the creature demonstrates, no child instinctively acquires culpability. His father does not force him to create life, but he also does not offer adequate support to foster emotional development, a scenario we, again, see replicated in Victor's later parental pursuits. To disregard and oversimplify the 1831 revision of the novel as deterministic is to ignore Shelley's deepened understanding of child development. Sally Shuttleworth's *The Mind of the Child* (2010) presents the nineteenth century as a turning point in understandings of child psychology wherein childhood was no longer considered 'a stage to be passed through before being launched into life' but 'the key to understanding the adult form, a crucial time which laid the foundations for the future' (2). Indeed, Shelley's repetitive

[59] The 1818 version of the novel does not include Victor's renunciation of his studies after this scene, rather he simply loses interest temporarily and experiments with electricity with his father. The Alphonse of the 1818 *Frankenstein* is significantly more scientifically inclined but still dismisses his son's studies as 'sad trash' (22).

narrative structure serves as an imaginative representation of this notion, illustrating how childhood events, even those that have been repressed or romanticised, shape adult behaviours in Victor *and* his creature. Victor's early experiences with faulty parenting determine his later expressions of parental responsibility and sympathy, or the lack thereof.

2.4 THE CREATURE'S FIRST PARENT

Although Shelley portrays Victor's childhood as happy on a superficial level, it is simultaneously inadequate. His parent's 'indulgence' transforms from something positive, as viewed in childhood, into something retrospectively damaging as Victor blames his transgressions on their inability to prevent the progression of his scientific aspirations through discipline (*F:*39). Victor's parents allow him 'to struggle with a child's blindness' with only his revered alchemists to train his mind, and this is not something that he plans to replicate with his own "children" (*F:*42). It is not unusual to read analyses of *Frankenstein* that interpret Victor's impulse towards creation, and reanimation, as a method by which to revive his dead mother, or as Paul Sherwin puts it, restore her by 'a far more radical rescue', and, indeed, Caroline Frankenstein's death certainly bolsters Victor's association of motherhood and death (885). However, I would pose a different reading. Before his mother's death, Victor is preoccupied with the restoration of the dead, with much of his primary scientific endeavours being geared towards the 'raising of ghosts', *after* her death this changes and he transfers his existing skills to the creation of 'new' life (*F:*42, 55). Victor's mother's death is not the origin of his fixation with resurrection but the end-point. It is correct that Victor's eventual creation has been widely labelled as reanimation, and indeed he does reanimate the dead matter that his creature is composed of, yet the mind of the creature is brand new. Thus, this act of creation is more akin to birth than reanimation; Victor is not trying to revive his mother, but appropriate her role and merge it into a new version of parenthood.

Moers' "Female Gothic" engages with this notion of Victor as a usurper of motherhood by suggesting that he is an overreacher who 'defies mortality not by living forever, but by giving birth', but she does not consider his role any further than this (95). Moers' essay is accurate but not all-encompassing. Victor's study into creation entails a fundamental usurpation of biological processes but motherhood is not the only state he wishes to appropriate: Victor plans to embody the roles of mother, father, *and* divine creator all in one and surpass, not only his parents but all parents indiscriminately. Margaret Homans and Marie-Hélène Huet posit the death of the mother as necessitated by Victor's endeavour to assume her role, yet the father, too, must be "killed" so that the new creator may assume both positions concurrently. Even Victor's faux-fathers, his 'favourite authors', from whom he learned of the 'raising of ghosts or devils', must be transcended for Victor's goal to be actualised (*F:*42). Thus, to conclude that Victor wishes to usurp motherhood is an oversimplification; he does not want to be a mother or a father, he wants to create something entirely new and *be something entirely new*, a superior manifestation of parenthood*:*

> A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. (*F:*55)

The 'new species' to which Victor refers is never designated as human, only 'happy and excellent', likewise he never designates himself as mother or father, only 'creator and source' (*F:*55). His revised version of parenthood leaves behind gendered differentiation because it is inessential to his scientific process. By contrastingly framing them in the same sentence, Shelley draws a parallel between fatherhood and Victor's new role, but she does not equate them: '[n]o father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely' because he will become *more than a father* (*F:*55, emp. added).

The creation of a being via solo parenthood would usually be considered asexual reproduction, and indeed this is how Victor appears to view his endeavour; however, the

language Shelley implements throughout the conception/birth process complicates this interpretation and suggests that Victor's version of creation is neither solo nor asexual. Victor does not eliminate the requirement of sexual intercourse in his version of creation but modifies creation to envelop his abstract version of intercourse. As discussed, from childhood Victor's internal monologue entangles ideas of sexuality and scientific endeavour and this endures into adulthood as his desire to invade the 'citadel of nature' despite her protective 'fortifications' is amplified by sexual maturity (*F:*41). At no point does Shelley convey this "invasion" as consented to or complied with; there should be no doubt that this is an attack rather than a seduction. Any pleasure that Victor may have derived from the act of intercourse is replaced by the 'delight and rapture' that his studies induce as he reaches the 'summit of [his] desires' in the unconventional 'consummation of his toils' and the desecration of anthropomorphised Nature becomes the sexual act that produces his child (*F:*53). Victor stalks the natural process of death to its recesses in the darkness, watching 'how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted' by the 'corruption of death' until, 'from the midst of darkness a sudden light broke in upon' him, illuminating Nature's methodology for him to modify and replicate (*F:*52). Margaret Homans views the situation of Victor's research in 'vaults and charnel-houses' as indicative that the death of Nature is 'require[d]' by his research and, subsequently, views his violation as 'necrophiliac' (135). While I agree that both death and sexuality are fundamental to Victor's creative process, I disagree with the notion that the version of Nature that 'he rapes is dead' (135). Shelley's personification of Nature allows for the possibility of sexual violation, and indeed this is amplified by her constant use of intrinsically erotic language, but Nature cannot be killed because 'the corruption of death' is *part of Nature* (*F:*53). It is the reversal of death that should be deemed unnatural. To steal knowledge from Nature constitutes a voyeuristic violation, and the use of this knowledge to create life is a sexual violation. Victor

does not achieve solo creation through necrophilia, but mutual creation through sexual violation. Nature remains active and "alive" throughout.

Nature does not take a consistent physical form in *Frankenstein* and, therefore, cannot be physically impregnated. Rather, Victor is required to take on another role to bend Nature to his whims and create his 'new species': he must become mother, father, and scientist (*F:*55). This is epitomised by the transmutation of the womb into the laboratory. Victor can utilise and modify natural processes to simulate birth, but he lacks a vessel within which to *grow* his progeny, thus the laboratory becomes an artificial womb. Marc Rubenstein, in his essay "The Search for Mother in *Frankenstein*", establishes a parallel between the architectural design of Victor's laboratory and that of a 'womb' (178). This parallel is implicitly insinuated through Shelley's depiction of the laboratory as 'a solitary chamber, or rather a cell', providing a secluded space for the child's development throughout '[w]inter, spring, and summer' (*F*:55, 57). Although not as aesthetically comparable as Rubenstein suggests, this space serves a womb-like function within the novel.[60] This artificial version of scientific creation necessitates that the 'intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins' must be weaved together by hand and limbs must be pieced together in a grotesque parody of the foetal developmental process (*F:*54–5). Victor's childhood deficiencies re-emerge in the extreme during this process and his ardent desire for knowledge becomes a fervent fixation on creation. The 'lesson of patience […] and of self-control' imbued by his parents is proved futile by his dismissal of 'human' creation as 'a hindrance' to speed (*F:*35, 54). By reformulating the womb as a 'workshop of filthy creation', Shelley not only accentuates the 'filthy' nature of Victor's grave-digging pursuits but deviates from traditional consensual reproduction (*F:*54–5).

[60] Some adaptations of *Frankenstein* have made the womb-like structure of Victor's laboratory significantly more explicit. Kenneth Branagh's 1994 film adaptation, for example, places the creature in an electrified tank that is attached to a pulsating organ-like structure, while Danny Boyle's 2011 National Theatre production features the creature falling nude from an artificial womb.

This notion of scientific creation is furthered by Shelley's apparent engagement with contemporary debates surrounding the male obstetric scientist and 'man-midwife'. In his pursuit of Nature 'to her hiding-places', Victor imposes his unwelcome advances upon 'her', forcing his way into the metaphorical female-dominated birthing chamber in a way that mirrors contemporary anxieties surrounding the presence of male surgeons during childbirth (*F*:55). Lyle Massey elaborates on this anxiety in "Picturing Childbirth in Eighteenth-Century Obstetric Atlases" (2005):

> If a male surgeon attended births before the eighteenth century, it was only when the midwives brought them in to save the mother's life. Because this so often entailed sacrificing the life of the infant, the surgeon's presence understandably signified something abhorrent to the mothers. Women would more commonly have associated midwives with successful live births and surgeons with an infant's death. (73)

Within the temporal context of *Frankenstein*, a discernible shift in obstetrics was underway that saw the 'man-midwife' gain prominence and 'the power of science' challenge the sanctity of 'tradition' (74).[61] However, this shift was not seamless and societal condemnation of the practice as 'amoral and lewd', prompted by the individual lived experiences of mothers, persevered (74).[62] Just as Victor's experiments sought to eradicate the 'bounds' between life and death by creating an artificial child, the "man-midwife" could not shed the apprehensions surrounding his association with the death of an infant (*F:*55). Massey's presentation of the male surgeon as a harbinger of death for the infant is particularly useful to analytical consideration of the novel, given Victor's dual position as both surgeon and life-giver in this

[61] The novel is located at an unspecified point in the eighteenth century, as evidenced by Walton's letters being dated '17–'. Perhaps the most famous literary example of a 'man-midwife' from this period is Lawrence Sterne's Dr Slop from *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1767). His satirical presentation within the novel served to highlight the tension between societal norms and the advancement of science at the time.

[62] Donnison discusses the criticism that the 'man-midwife' faced as a figure who challenged traditional boundaries of propriety, noting the ridicule he would endure from medical peers who dismissed him as a physician who 'has invaded the province of women only because of his inability to succeed in medicine proper' (53).

scene. His 'labours' are not the convulsive pains of childbirth but the surgical precision with which he sewed together his progeny, and this conflation of surgeon and parent allows him to produce a child infused with death from the outset (*F:*55). Thus, Victor is characterised simultaneously as mother, father, and scientist and plays the part of creator, inseminator, and man-midwife.

2.4.1 THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE AFTERBIRTH

Although literary criticism has acknowledged Victor's rape of Nature as a means to achieve creation, this argument is commonly utilised as a segue into discussions of his subsequent displacement of women from the birthing process.[63] While this is a crucial argument, it has been extensively examined, whereas few studies discuss Nature's parental role *post*-creation. Appropriately, Victor, too, neglects to consider his role after creation in detail and lacks adequate preparation for the 'disappointment of the afterbirth' (Moers). Moers prefaces her discussion of *Frankenstein* as a "birth myth" with an epitaph taken from 'the first paediatrician to apply Freud's theories of psychology to children', Benjamin Spock (Maier). Spock's seminal childcare manual, *Baby and Childcare* (1946), served as a catalyst in revitalising fundamental paradigms of parenting in twentieth-century America but, more aptly to this thesis, characterised childbirth as a universally 'disappointing' phenomenon and visually displeasing 'to a parent who hasn't seen [a newborn] before' (Moers 90). Moers allows her epitaph to stand alone and never elucidates its utility to her subsequent argument, but I believe it is worth further clarification.

> His face tends to be puffy and lumpy, and there may be black-and-blue marks. […] The head is misshapen […] Low in the forehead, elongated at the back, and quite lopsided. Occasionally there may be, in addition, a hematoma, a localized hemorrhage under the scalp that sticks out

[63] For useful examples see Marc Rubenstein's "The Search for Mother in *Frankenstein"* (1976), Alan Bewell's "*Frankenstein* and Obstetrics*"* (1988), and Anne Mellor's "Usurping the Female" (1988) and "Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein"* (1988).

> as a distinct bump and takes weeks to go away. A couple of days after birth there may be a touch of jaundice, which is visible for about a week. [….] Some babies have black hair on the scalp at first, which may come far down on the forehead... (90)

Spock's imagined newborn is aesthetically disappointing and his depiction of infantile 'jaundice' and the excess of 'black hair' recall the creature's 'yellow skin' at birth, and 'lustrous black and flowing' hair (Moers 90, *F:*58). The conventional romanticised image of a newborn as perfect and aesthetically pleasing usually entails parental disappointment but, in *Frankenstein*, this is magnified. The creature's physical features will never settle or align with the traditional image of an innocuous infant, he will always possess the ugliness that his creator instilled. This depiction of infancy, devoid of the typical aesthetic innocence of a newborn, does not align with Kincaid's notion of 'have-nots'; the essential "lacks" that establish distance between the child and the adult (*Erotic Innocence* 15). Victor's initial disappointment transcends mere aesthetics; it represents his failure to create a normal child. Moers asserts that '[f]ear and guilt, depression and anxiety are commonplace reactions to the birth of a baby' as the idea of human creation becomes less idealised, and the 'trauma of the afterbirth' sets in (93).

Until this point in the novel, Victor had idealised his position as creator; his endeavour would be 'imperfect', but the creature would be the 'gratifying consummation of [his] toils' (*F:*53). Indeed, the end-result of Victor's creation is 'imperfect' but, more detrimentally, it is perceptibly unnatural (*F:*58). He had 'selected his [creature's] features as beautiful! Beautiful!' but, when the creature's 'dull yellow eye' opens, the impression is not life anew, but life restored to death (*F:*58). The contrast between the features that could be preserved after death and those that could not create an uncanny impression and enhance Victor's overall aesthetic disappointment.[64] The creature's 'lustrous' hair and 'teeth of pearly white' do not lend

[64] In "Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*" Mellor claims that 'Nature prevents Victor from constructing a normal human being' and although I would agree that Victor's 'unnatural method of reproduction'

themselves to Victor's expectation of a man reborn but grotesquely highlight those elements that could not retain their original vigour, such as his 'shrivelled complexion and straight black lips' (*F:*58). To further intensify this impression of the uncanny, the creature appears outwardly adult, lacking any features that would evoke a nurturing instinct in his creator. Thus, even before the creature's consciousness is introduced in the novel, he is already characterised as a nonchild in physical terms. While the reader may readily establish a connection between the creature's uncanny appearance and the act of traversing the boundary between life and death in his creation, to Victor, this outcome is unanticipated. Shelley presents Victor's creation of a 'new species' to 'bless him as its creator and source' as ostensibly successful, yet his postnatal disappointment and inability to bond with his uncanny creature prevent him from surpassing his parents' educational inadequacies (*F:*55).

In childhood, Victor had witnessed his mother select Elizabeth for her beauty: she bore 'a celestial stamp in all her features' that allowed for differentiation from the 'dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants' amongst whom she dwelled (*F:*36). This prioritisation of the aesthetic, ingrained in Victor in his formative years, serves as the foundation of his fixation on visual appearance and explains the 'bitterness of disappointment' that accompanies his comprehension that his creature does not fit into his aesthetic 'dream' of parenthood (*F:*59). This illustrates Kincaid's notion of the 'invented' child and the manner in which childhood is shaped to suit the 'needs' and 'whim[s]' of surrounding adults (*Erotic Innocence* 53). In *Frankenstein*, this is enacted literally through the creature's deliberate and conscious creation, yet the resulting child still fails to meet its creator's 'imaginative and nostalgic demands' (144). Kincaid argues that 'there's something about the way we have idealised "the child" that makes us indifferent' to those who do not conform to these ideals, 'even those whose misery and devastation strike our

precludes him from creating an aesthetically typical human being, I do not agree that Nature intentionally manipulates the creature's formation (282). To argue as such would be to suggest that Nature's role in the creature's conception and creation is active instead of forced.

eyes' (54). This is vividly demonstrated following Shelley's creation scene, where the creature is immediately positioned as doubly-Othered: both 'insufficient' and unchildlike (Postman 9). Consequently, the creature's physical appearance undermines his capacity to meet the perceived reciprocal duties of a child toward his parent, leading to his immediate designation as 'not real' *before* his consciousness enters the novel (Worthington 18). This indifference towards the creature's 'misery and devastation' is further compounded later in the novel by Victor's refusal to create a female companion, thereby explicitly denying his creature the opportunity for fellowship and reciprocal filial love that he himself could not provide (*Erotic Innocence* 54). Shelley's expression, the 'beauty of the dream vanished', should be construed literally in this context; the dreams that had hitherto 'been [Victor's] food and pleasant rest for so long […] were now become a hell' (*F:*60).

Laura Claridge reads Victor's "shock" at his creature's appearance as a 'repression of the truth', citing the moment that he admits to gazing 'on him while unfinished; he was ugly then…', but she does not acknowledge the next part of the quotation, '…but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived' (18, *F:*59). I would contend that Victor's 'repression of the truth' is unconscious until the creature becomes uncannily reanimated; his appearance is non-threatening until imbued with life (Claridge 18). Denise Gigante, in "Facing the Ugly: The Case of *Frankenstein*", discusses the notions of ugliness and the uncanny as fundamentally similar:

> Both the uncanny and the ugly fall under the rubric of the fearful; the crucial distinction between them is that while something may be uncanny for one person and yet not so for another, the ugly is universally offensive. The uncanny finds its being in whatever object serves to trigger an intrusion of repressed childhood complexes into the mind of the subject; hence nothing is intrinsically uncanny. (567)

In *Frankenstein,* Shelley depicts numerous examples of the creature's intrinsic ugliness but the uncanny effect his reanimated figure conjures is magnified for his creator, to whom the creature acts as a 'trigger' of 'repressed childhood complexes' which are centred on parental failings (567).

Victor's painful nerves and 'slow fever' prevent him from comprehending that he is no longer creating a physical child, but an aberrant version of humanity imbued with childlike consciousness *(F:*57). Victor's literal formation of a monstrous being can be viewed as an explicit illustration of Huet's portrayal of the teratogenic scientist, who intentionally modifies the conceptive and/or gestational process, which 'left undisturbed would have produced a normal progeny', to create a malformation, as explored in her 1993 monograph, *Monstrous Imagination* (119).[65] Indeed, Huet characterises Victor as a 'prophetic image of the teratogenist scientist', yet this assumption presupposes that his creative process should be viewed as intentionally teratogenic (Huet 130). I would argue that Victor's creation is more accurately aligned with the concept of teratogenic maternal imagination, reflecting an unintentional rather than deliberate creation of monstrosity.[66] Although Victor knowingly makes 'the being of gigantic stature', his dream of more-than-fatherhood and the future 'gratitude' of a new race counteracts accusations of intentional teratogeny (*F:*55, 57). In Shelley's presentation of Victor, there is a perceptible interplay of these concepts as the creator's maternal imagination

[65] Teratological intervention was justified by several nineteenth-century scientists, including Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, as a means by which to understand monstrosity, a phenomenon hitherto understood as a projection of "maternal imagination", in terms of science: '[o]nce the mother's punishment, the monster had become the scientist's trophy' (Huet 116). Although teratology as a modern science may only be traced back to the 1930s, its principles existed in early iterations throughout history. The nineteenth century, in particular, saw an increased interest in active teratological research, rather than the collection of malformed specimens, or "curiosities". Willem Vrolik, 'an early expert in vertebrate technology', used his collection of specimens to inform one of the original 'atlas[es] of malformations' (Desesso 130).

[66] The theory of maternal imagination, or impression, is the idea that harmful thoughts were conveyed directly from mother and child during pregnancy and could influence foetal development resulting in "monstrous" birth defects and/or death. This notion was prevalent between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Rosemary Betterton discusses the perceived power of the maternal imagination to cause foetal harm 'merely through the act of illicit looking' amongst other 'excess[es] or perversions' (83).

inadvertently influences his scientific process and transforms him into an unwitting teratogenic scientist. Shelley illustrates this notion later in the novel through the creature's collation of his monstrous exterior with his *creator's* internal monstrosity:

> "Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred." (*F:*133)

In creating life, Victor acted as both God and parent, both of whom style their creatures after their 'own image' (*F:*133). As the creature verbalises, his existence is a 'filthy type' of his creator's that is made 'more horrid even from the very resemblance' (*F:*133). Thus, the creature may be understood as a physical representation of Victor's maternal imagination with the 'filthy' thoughts and impulses he experienced during conception and creation imprinting on his child "in utero" (*F:*133). Certainly, Victor's violent reaction to his animated creation supports this; he sees this being as a recrimination of his immoral actions long before the creature begins to enact violence on his creator's family.

The dream sequence that follows immediately after the creature's "birth scene" reinforces this notion. Although commonly regarded as a manifestation of oedipal desire, I would argue that Victor's dream may also be interpreted as a representation of familial destruction.[67] Within the dream, Victor imagines Elizabeth 'livid with the hue of death' as a consequence of his kiss, and then transformed into his 'dead mother' (*F:*59). On the surface, this dream acts as a representation of Victor's displacement of women in the domestic sphere, with his mother and Elizabeth representing the "everywoman" whose maternal roles have been subsumed by Victor's recreation of the role. But it also represents the overall breakdown of the

[67] For further discussion of *Frankenstein* through an oedipal lens see Morton Kaplan and Robert Kloss, *The Unspoken Motive: A Guide to Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism* (1973), particularly chapter eight "Fantasy of Paternity and the Doppelgänger".

family unit. The creature later literally enacts this breakdown but, at this moment in the novel, he interrupts it: Victor 'started' from sleep upon the entrance of 'the miserable monster whom' he had created (*F:*59). This interruption is essential because it conveys that which Victor ignores; there is still a chance to avoid the fate that his dream foretold. As I will discuss in the next section, Shelley's deliberate portrayal of this moment as an overlooked turning point underlines its significance in the trajectory of the novel. Should Victor choose to embrace his parental responsibility, his filial line will continue uninterrupted, and he may claim the 'gratitude' from his child that he had initially craved (*F:*55). Conversely, should he reject it, his progeny will destroy his prospects of conventional fatherhood. Despite Victor's protestations, Shelley reinforces the notion that it is not his creature's ugliness that thwarts the beauty of his dream, nor is it the immutable current of fate: his future is "decided" by his refusal to fulfil his parental 'duties' (*E:*14).

2.4.2 "IT'S ALIVE!": FUNDAMENTAL PARENTAL MISSTEPS

The creature's first active entrance into the novel is not unlike Virginia St. Pierre's introduction in *Belinda*; the fundamental distinction between the two "children" resides in their caregiver's responses to them. The unassuming scene in *Belinda* wherein the young girl that would become Virginia 'held up [a] basket to Clarence, and offered him one of the roses' with a 'sweet innocent smile', finds its mirror image in *Frankenstein* (*B:*364). To return to the aftermath of the aforementioned nightmare scene, interrupting Victor's nightmare with what he perceives as another, the infantile creature reaches 'one hand […] stretched out' towards Victor, the person he has identified as "mother", with a childish 'grin wrinkling his cheeks' (*F:*59). The gesture that in *Belinda* was deemed innocuous is recast in *Frankenstein* as malicious. Both juvenile characters reach, unprompted, towards their creators (or recreators) but, while the creature's actions enable his creator to brand him as 'demonical', the aesthetically pleasing young girl retains her innocence (*F*:58). The primary explanation for this divergence may be

reduced to aesthetics and the suggestion that both characters' inward temperaments are automatically determined by their outward appearances, yet I would argue their functionality also plays a role. Virginia simultaneously fulfils the aesthetic and sexual expectations of her prospective caregiver while embodying the qualities of the 'artless' natural child that he sought (*B*:363). In contrast, the creature fails to 'meet the imaginative and nostalgic demands' of his creator and, consequently, does not correspond with the envisioned 'beauty of the dream' upon which Victor's expectations were based (*Erotic Innocence* 144, *F*:59). The former is appropriate for the role allotted to her by her paternal figure; the latter is not.

Yet Shelley never implies that the creature possesses any intrinsic internal monstrosity. Just as she enables her reader to view Victor's destructive impulses as originating in childhood rather than as inevitable extensions of fate, Shelley's characterisation of the creature reinforces the Lockean belief of innate innocence. While Victor's narrative of his childhood misfortunes and apparent comprehension of how these led to his adult misfortunes indicate his familiarity with Lockean human developmental theory, he does not extend this understanding to his creature. Victor's refusal to acknowledge the youth and humanity of his creature prevents him from regarding their childhoods through a comparative lens despite their shared formative disadvantages. As a result, he misconstrues infantile behaviours as indicative of monstrosity.[68] According to Rousseau, among the first infantile instincts is to stretch 'forth his hand with an effort' to touch or seize an object or person that the child desires with no comprehension of the implications this may have (*E:*30). When Victor interprets the creature's behaviour as an attempt to 'detain' him, he is correct, but he misinterprets the intentions behind the gesture (*F:*59). The creature displays benevolent and infantile ecstasy to see his "mother" with a 'grin

[68] This discrepancy is exemplified later in the novel when the creature states that he was born 'benevolent and good' and 'misery made [him] a fiend', thereby imitating Locke's notion of the *tabula rasa* (*F:*103).

wrinkling his [own] cheeks' and 'one hand […] stretched out' yet the infant's glee is met with immediate rejection and his caregiver 'escape[s]' his fond advances (*F:*59).[69]

Victor's desire to escape signifies his inability to reconcile his new reality with the beauty of his previous dream, and this is epitomised by his refusal to name his progeny. As I considered in Chapter One, the naming process is intrinsically bound with the concept of family, with forenames often being passed down through generations and surnames denoting familial lines. It is ironic, therefore, that *Frankenstein,* a novel that takes its title from its protagonist's surname, is centred around a nameless, deserted child. As the prototype of Victor's 'new species', the creature does not even possess a noun to declinate the type of creature he is, much less an individual moniker (*F:*55). Marshall Brown suggests that the creature has no name 'because it has no one to give him a name' but this is untrue (153). Notwithstanding Victor's parental failings, the creature has a clear origin and is owed a familial patronym. Nevertheless, Victor cannot explicitly name the creature because to name is to acknowledge one's prerogative to name and accept parental responsibility. Instead, he allows his creature to continue believing himself 'united by no link to any other being in existence', and skews his identity further with harmful epithets (*F:*132). While Clarence Hervey renamed Virginia St. Pierre to suit the character he wished her to embody, Victor berates his creature with appellations he believes resemble his innate monstrosity. Shelley presents this as an entirely conscious undertaking on Victor's part; when he recognises the creature, he uses invectives designed to distance him from humanity, 'vile insect', 'devil', and 'filthy daemon', but when he does not the creature is briefly allowed a degree of humanity and labelled 'a man' or 'a spirit of good' (*F:*101–2, 207).

[69] This image of the creature as an infant is explored in Alasdair Gray's 1992 *Frankenstein* retelling, *Poor Things*, wherein a newborn baby's brain is utilised in the creation process. The ensuing creature is entirely infantile and reliant upon her creator as a primary caregiver throughout the first parts of the novel.

Designating the creature as innately monstrous absolves Victor of parental responsibility. Acknowledging the creature's humanity, and thereby recognising him as his child, would force Victor to accept responsibility for his upbringing. Instead, he 'flees' (F:59). Hitherto, the dream of creation had been his 'food' and afterwards he has nothing to sustain him (*F:*59). Victor's psyche is shaken by his painful 'disappointment', and he dissolves into delirium (*F:*59). Fearing 'every turning of the street would present [the creature] to [his] view', Victor regresses into a juvenile state and denies the creature's existence altogether (*F:*60). *Frankenstein* scholars make much of the doubling device implemented in the novel, but it is vital to recognise that the notion of the creature as Victor's retributive double begins in his own mind.[70] Victor's characterisation of the creature as his 'pursuer', demonstrated in the intertextual parallels Shelley draws between his situation and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* further corrupts his view of the creature and represents the deterioration of his mental state (Keppler 28). Clerval's re-entrance into the novel allows Victor's juvenile degeneration to accelerate rapidly as the former assumes an authoritative caregiving role and the latter reverses roles with his abandoned progeny, relapsing into childhood. Initially, Victor's immature behaviour is directly related to the delusion that his creature is pursuing him, he throws his door 'forcibly open, as children are accustomed to do when they expect a spectre to stand in waiting on the other side', but this anxiety does not relent in the creature's absence (*F:*60). Instead, Victor's erratic characterisation simulates the lack of object permanence that characterises early childhood, covering his eyes to erase the memory of his "pursuer", and crying out for help:

[70] As Jeffrey Berman aptly put it in 1990: 'A complete listing of all the books and essays exploring the theme of the double in *Frankenstein* would have to include virtually everything published on the novel in the last fifteen years.' (77) Thirty-three years later, this has not changed and analyses of the concept of the double in *Frankenstein* can be found in most major studies. This chapter will not replicate these findings but will attempt, instead, to disentangle the creature from the creator.

> …I cried, putting my hands before my eyes, for I thought I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room, '*he* can tell.—Oh, save me! save me!' I imagined that the monster seized me: I struggled furiously and fell down into a fit. (*F:*62)

Shelley presents Victor's increasingly unpredictable behaviour as directly related to his refusal to comprehend the creature's existence outside that of a 'spectre' and his subsequent parental role (*F:*62). I choose the word 'comprehend' here because, although Victor somewhat acknowledges his duty towards the creature later in the novel, he never actively fulfils the necessities of it. In this passage, Victor's behaviour, marked by childlike exclamations and detachment from reality, conveys the extent to which his mental state has regressed after the trauma of the afterbirth. Victor, acknowledging his inadequacy in the parental role that he has designed for himself, looks to Clerval to 'save' him from the consequences of his own behaviour and assume the role of *his* caregiver (*F:*62). Victor's 'fit' acts as the first evident manifestation of the doubling motif that Shelley regularly implements to explore the similitude between creator and creation; prone and 'lifeless' he must be 'restored […] to life' like his creature before him (*F:*63). Neither creature nor creator is made anew; both are reanimated, though only one retains their original body. Clerval is consequently cast as an unwitting reanimator, and he effortlessly embodies the nurturing element of the role that his friend could never accept. Clerval does not invade a "fortified" space, he acts within human bounds: he is not a harbinger of death in the birthing chamber but a 'kind and attentive nurse' (*F:*63). His seclusion in the 'sick room' during this time mirrors Victor's 'solitary chamber' yet the outcome is entirely different (*F:*63, 56). Clerval does not flee the scene upon Victor's "reanimation", he awaits his friend's full recovery and then attempts to reintegrate him into the society of his family.

Victor may only recover from his 'nervous fever' when he rejects the 'fatal passion' that instigated it (*F:*63). This statement holds a double meaning when read in conjunction with Victor's earlier exalted language; he must convalesce from his literal 'fatal passion', as

demonstrated in his juvenile delirium, *and* from the 'fatal passion' of his previous studies (*F:*63). Amber Bird, in "The Madness of Motherhood", reads Victor's 'fatal passion' as an indicator of postpartum depression and, indeed, this is supported by the aforementioned discussion of parental disappointment (*F:*63). Bird goes on to assert that 'one of the first indicators of postpartum depression that Victor experiences is in regard to his ability to look forward to experiences with enjoyment' (120). That this is one of the first sensations to return after Victor's restoration to "life" denotes the fleeting nature of this depression in his individual case, rather it is the disappointment that perseveres rather than the depression. Victor's disruption of natural balance through his studies must be rejected for recovery to be possible, and this is illustrated through his heightened reverence for the natural world. The language that had previously been reserved only for his unnatural scientific endeavours is transferred to the adoration of its inverse. Retrospectively recounting his madness to Walton, Victor recalls 'the first time [he] became capable of observing outward objects with pleasure':

> I perceived that the fallen leaves had disappeared and that the young buds were shooting forth from the trees that shaded my window. It was a divine spring; and the seasons contributed greatly to my convalescence. I felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom: my gloom disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was attacked by the fatal passion. (*F:*63)

This passage conveys the final transference of Victor's 'fatal passion' for knowledge into a regulated 'passion' for the natural world: he no longer wishes to destroy but to enjoy, to embrace rather than manipulate (*F:*63). The seasons shift again, as in the conception passages, but, this time, Victor can 'feel sentiments of joy and affection' instead of deprivation of 'rest and health' (*F:*63, 58). The passage prefacing his recovery mirrors a romanticised happy ending. Despite his previous violations, Victor utilises Nature differently; he re-immerses himself in it as if the 'divine spring' was engineered to aid his 'convalescence' and this habit recurs throughout the remainder of the novel as Victor continually calls upon the natural world

to “restore” him back to this state (*F:*63). But Nature does not owe him restoration, nor does it provide it. Nature shifts its focus towards the abandoned creature and attempts to fulfil its putative responsibility towards him as a second parent.

2.5 THE SECOND PARENT

Within this chapter, I have used the term ‘parent’ to denote Victor’s relationship to his creature, as his role necessitates an amalgamation of mother, father, and procreative scientist, but that does not mean he monopolises the entirety of the creature’s parentage. Nature is a parent also and, as easy as it may be to dismiss its role in the novel’s trajectory until the narrative transitions into the creature’s perspective, has been throughout. Shelley’s initial sleepless dream, as illustrated in *Frankenstein*’s 1831 introduction, presents the natural world as seemingly just out of reach, ‘with the moonlight struggling through’ the closed shutters and the vaguest sense that ‘the glassy lake and white high Alps lay beyond’, but this distance is absent in the novel itself: Nature remains at the forefront of the plot (*F:*9). The OED defines pathetic fallacy as ‘the attribution of human feelings and responses to inanimate things or animals’, and indeed, this initially appears apt on a technical level in regards to Shelley’s depiction of Nature in *Frankenstein*. I would contend, however, that Shelley’s characterisation of Nature as a co-parent to Victor’s rejected progeny reflects an anthropomorphism that goes beyond conventional depictions of pathetic fallacy and is, in fact, more akin to the complete humanisation of Nature within this context.

Within *Frankenstein*, Nature is never reduced to a receptacle to contain Victor’s fervent desires or as a means by which he may achieve solo creation by anyone except Victor. Shelley’s depiction of Nature’s active parenthood towards the creature, alongside its reproductive role in his creation, allows this analysis to proceed beyond traditional pathetic fallacy to examine an augmented version of it. In the early parts of the novel, Shelley obscures the reader’s ability to view Nature as an autonomous character by allowing Victor’s violative and utilitarian

perspective to render it passive. This representation is intentionally misleading in order to mirror Victor's biased narrative buffer. Shelley's true and unobscured portrayal of Nature is obtainable through the dialogue of secondary characters in the novel alongside the creature's perspective. Elizabeth, for example, lauds Nature's 'magnificent appearances', Clerval teaches Victor 'to love the aspect of nature' and is himself 'alive to every new scene', and the creature innately regards Nature as his benevolent refuge from humanity; all but Victor instinctively recognises the necessity to respect the natural environment (*F:*38, 71, 159).

Frankenstein is a novel ultimately preoccupied with Nature and although this is commonly presented through traditional examples of majestically sublime outlooks, extremes of weather, or uninhabited landscapes, it is not limited to these. More often, it is not the excesses of Nature that stand out in Shelley's depictions but its absence. Whether depicted as active or passive, Nature is noticeably present throughout the narrative with one notable exception: the creature's "birth" scene:

> It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. (*F:*58)

This prefatory passage to the creature's animation is objectively disappointing. Mundane language ('dreary night', 'the rain pattered dismally') is used to describe an otherwise extraordinary event and the creature's first breath is dwelt on only briefly (*F:*58). The reader can compare this scene to practically any other in the novel and notice an unsatisfactory contrast. This language, deriving from Victor's retrospective perspective, *may* be read as an extension of his parental disappointment, but I would argue against this. By this moment in the novel Shelley's readers would be familiar with Victor's hyperbolic prose, and indeed

immediately after this paragraph he reverts back to it to illustrate his disappointment, '[h]ow can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe…' (*F:*58). If readers are to continue to personify Nature beyond conventional pathetic fallacy, as Shelley encourages them to do in her humanised portrayal, then we must also assume Nature to possess its own motivations, whims, and autonomy over manifestation within the context of the novel. Supposing this is the case, we may view Nature as intentionally removing itself from the birth scene, disallowing Victor to marvel at its magnificence alongside his violation of it, in a way that recalls Shelley's out-of-reach depiction of the natural world in her introduction. Thus, Nature is present and able to observe, but does not participate in its own desecration. This does not make Nature less of a parent to the creature, rather it underlines the non-consensual quality of its parenthood. Yet, when the creature leaves the laboratory, Nature is the only parent willing to continue its duties.

2.5.1 NATURE = NURTURE

In discussions of literature and philosophy, it is usually necessary to establish the author's familiarity with the fundamental principles of the philosophy in question. In the case of Rousseau, it would not be hyperbolic to suggest that this requirement is rendered unnecessary amongst eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers, owing to his prominence and acclaim. Nevertheless, Shelley's familiarity with his philosophical principles is explicitly demonstratable. The lesser-known two-volume encyclopaedia, *The Lives of The Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France* (1838–9), features biographies of seventeen prominent French thinkers, fifteen of which were written by Shelley, including Rousseau's.[71] Within this biography, Shelley exhibits, not only her understanding of Rousseauian ideas but also her

[71] Although this volume was published years after *Frankenstein*, Shelley's biographer confirms that she had read Rousseau's works prior to writing the novel. This is not surprising given Shelley's own famous parentage. Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, and her father, William Godwin, were both eminent philosophers and political advocates. Wollstonecraft, particularly, dedicated large segments of her most famous treatise *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* to refuting Rousseau's notions concerning female inferiority.

disdain for his decision to send his children to a foundling hospital in opposition to his parental treatises':

> Five of his children were thus sent to a receptacle where few survive; and those who do go through life are brutified by their situation, or depressed by their burden, ever weighing at the heart, that they have not inherited the commonest right of humanity, a parent's care. (*Lives* 131)

That Shelley draws from Rousseau's educational texts for her own presentation of child development feels immediately ironic in light of this perspective, but this sentiment is fleeting when one considers the extent to which *Frankenstein*'s fictionalised "failed" father resembles the "failed" philosopher:

> That a man as full of genius and aspiration after virtue as Rousseau, should have failed in the plainest dictates of nature and conscience, through the force of example and circumstance, shows us how little we can rely on our own judgement. It shows too, that a father is not to be trusted for natural instincts towards his offspring; for the mother wept… (*Lives* 131)

The irony dissolves as the intentionality behind the parallel surfaces. Like Rousseau, Victor is presented as 'a man full of genius and aspiration' yet he too fails 'in the plainest dictates of nature and conscience' concerning motherly love (131). Shelley's decisive statement, 'that a father is not to be trusted for natural instincts towards his offspring', is multifaceted considering the focus of this chapter (131). Shelley rewrites Rousseau's life as much as his philosophical texts, but she does not remedy the father's lack of 'natural instincts', rather she turns to Nature itself (131). If Victor is to be understood as a doubled version of Rousseau, then Nature becomes 'the mother' (131). However, instead of weeping for Victor's failings as a father, Nature assumes exclusive parentage. The creature's subsequent development follows a similar path to that which Rousseau outlines in *Émile*, in that it takes place outside traditional society, and this is amplified by Shelley's integration of ideas from Rousseau's earlier *Second Discourse* (1755).

Since *Frankenstein*'s upsurge in literary reputation in the 1960s, several scholars have endeavoured to read the creature's development through a Rousseauian lens. Those who discuss Rousseau's *Second Discourse* relate the creature's development in the natural world to that of the natural/savage man, the primitive condition of man 'issued from the hands of nature' before we became social animals: 'less strong than some, and less agile than others, but, upon the whole, the most advantageously organized of any' (*SD:*179). Paul Cantor's 1984 monograph *Creature and Creator*, in particular, encourages this reading of *Frankenstein* as 'an imaginative recreation of the *Second Discourse*' (120). Within his analysis, Cantor identifies 'a fairly simple interpretation of the monster story in Rousseauian terms' wherein the creature develops in accordance with the principles stipulated in the *Second Discourse* (mirroring Rousseau's natural man) and is later corrupted by the 'civilised world' (120). Although not strictly erroneous, Cantor is accurate when he labels this interpretation as 'simple' because it fails to consider the creature's explicit presentation as a child and consequent child development *alongside* his primitive condition. Likewise, critics, such as Alan Richardson, who discuss *Frankenstein* in conjunction with *Émile,* often make the opposite mistake and neglect to consider the extent to which the creature's disconnection from society is more akin to Rousseau's natural man than his isolated Émile. Richardson's 1991 paper "From *Émile* to *Frankenstein*: The Education of Monsters" references Rousseau's *Second Discourse* but views the natural man's solitary existence and the creature's desire for fellowship as a 'crucial distinction between the two', rendering the text incompatible with Shelley's novel (150). Few critical studies of *Frankenstein* examine Shelley's use of both Rousseauian texts concurrently and fewer identify how Shelley replaces Émile's mother and tutor with the figure of Nature itself, thereby formulating a precise link that conflates the texts.[72] As a novel, *Frankenstein*

[72] Anne Mellor's 1988 monograph *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* likely comes the closest in terms of producing a discussion of Rousseau's *Second Discourse* and *Émile* in relation to *Frankenstein,* but she dwells on both briefly and separately.

calls for a re-examination of the Rousseauian lens that surpasses previous reductive analyses, and that is something this section intends to provide.

To deem Nature maternal is consistent with the social and cultural inclination to discuss Nature in gendered terms, the personification of "Mother Nature" comes immediately to mind. Throughout Western social history, creation is continually associated with femininity, and, at its simplest level, this is because female biological processes *enable* creation and the female body houses the foetus after conception, seemingly entailing a more significant developmental role than the male gamete requires. Alongside this, however, exists the cultural lens of parenthood that equates the centralisation of women within the domestic sphere as illustrative of their family role. Shelley undoubtedly reinforces this tendency via Victor's continual feminisation of Nature and imposition of gendered language, particularly evident at moments of violation, but also those that see Victor derive restoration from Nature himself, emphasising Nature's feminised reproductive *and* nurturing powers. It is through this feminisation that Victor can transfer nurturing and domestic attributes onto Nature in order to establish his personal restoration.[73] Shelley certainly exemplifies the maternal attributes possessed and depicted by Nature throughout the novel, but it would be reductive to ignore the similarly depicted *paternal* elements to her characterisation of Nature. Therefore, this thesis will continue to resist the gendering of Nature, and the usage of maternal and paternal Nature will refer to Rousseau's separation and presentation of these social roles. Just as Victor occupies multiple roles in his presentation of parenthood without incurring gender doubt, identification of Nature's role, too, involves a consolidation of both parental positions.[74]

[73] According to Barbara Foxley's 1911 translation of *Émile,* Rousseau too utilises feminine pronouns to refer to Nature.

[74] Victor retains his male gender despite his identification as mother because that aligns with his self-characterisation, whereas Nature is only designated female by Victor. As a personified entity it makes more sense to retain Nature's genderless status rather than impose human constructs based on cultural personifications. Motherhood and fatherhood, on the other hand, are social roles designated to those that fulfil them.

In *Émile*, Rousseau emphasises the importance of the maternal role in child development and, although he rejects the notion of equally weighted parenthood, he advocates for a co-parenting balance of sorts. Despite this role imbalance, Rousseau prefaces his discussion of motherhood by decisively stating that, although a child 'may be excused' for disrespecting his father, he would be rendered a 'monstrous wretch' and 'unworthy to live' if this is extended to his mother 'who for so many years devoted herself to his care' (*E:*5). The mother is essential to child development both biologically and morally: she grows the child within her womb and nourishes it from birth, for '[i]f the author of nature had meant to assign [this role] to men he would have given them milk to feed the child', and she instigates his 'earliest education' (*E:*5). In *Frankenstein*, this biological role is shared between the creature's co-parents, demonstrated through Victor's utilisation of Nature to create his child, but the moral role belongs wholly to Nature and is initiated after Victor flees his infantile charge. While the father/tutor figure in *Émile* is predominantly responsible for the child's education, the mother is expected to 'raise a wall round [her] child's soul' and 'shield it from the crushing force of social conventions' (*E:*5–6). This is part of the function that Nature fulfils for the creature in facilitating his development away from social convention and fostering his 'earliest education' (*E:*5). Shelley's revision of Rousseau appears to place a more significant emphasis on the maternal role primarily because the reader witnesses the creature's conception and formation, an element of motherhood that is only depictable because reality is suspended within the novel, but also because the role is rejected and then repeated. Victor does not adequately fulfil his portion of the maternal education, rather his account focuses on the reformation of *his own psyche* after the disappointment of "failed" parenthood and subsequently relegates his progeny to a retrospective tale in the centre of the framed narrative structure. The creature's narrative, void of a corporeal maternal figure, transforms into a story of isolation and abandonment in a conventional sense. However, this perspective is only partially accurate. Nature consistently

permeates the creature's account and immediately assumes the role of a second mother, albeit in an intangible manner.

The creature, naturally, does not remember Nature's presence at his birth, nor does he remember his original rejection by Victor. As a newborn, he cannot recall his origin and can only conjure images of early infancy with 'considerable difficulty', everything being 'confused and indistinct':

> I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew and could distinguish nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept. (*F:*105–6)

At the beginning of *Émile*, Rousseau dwells on the notion of the infant's first cries ('his earliest infancy is spent in crying') because that is all he knows to do, and, indeed, the creature cries because he 'knew and could distinguish nothing' (*E:*21, *F:*105). The infant's cries, Rousseau claims, are a response to the faulty parental inclination to swaddle and restrain their babies: 'having nothing free but the voice, why should they not use it in complaints?' (*E:*16) Although this does not immediately align with Shelley's presentation of the newborn creature, I would suggest that the physical helplessness that Rousseau illustrates in his example of swaddling is easily transferrable to the creature's physical and emotional helplessness. Like Rousseau's imagined example of a child 'born tall and strong', the creature's 'size and strength [are] of no good to him' until he 'learn[s] to use them' (*E:*6). His limbs are unrestrained, but he is still "swaddled" by incapacity; 'left to himself he would die of want before he knew his needs' (*E*:6). A new baby is fully reliant on their caregiver to feed, wash, and sustain them through to childhood and their cries are evolutionarily engineered to remind said caregivers to fulfil these obligations, but the creature's large size suggests self-sufficiency. Like a human child, only his 'voice' is free to indulge in the instinctual juvenile display of vulnerability designed to trigger external assistance (*E:*16). The 'child's first tears are prayers', but the creature's 'prayers' go

unheeded because his external appearance conflicts with his inner childlike comprehension, not only in terms of his size but his ugliness (*E:*33).

> Nature has made children helpless and in need of affection; did she make them to be obeyed and feared? Has she given them an imposing manner, a stern eye, a loud and threatening voice with which to make themselves feared? (*E:*50)

Nature did not, consensually, "make" the creature, he was formed in opposition to natural creation, and, while he is still 'helpless' he does not possess the attributes designed to inspire the nurturing instincts said to be inherent in all beings (*E:*50). In emphasising the importance of infantile attributes for human survival, Rousseau anticipates twentieth-century evolutionary scientific discourse surrounding parental caregiving instigators. The term *Kindchenschema*, coined in 1943 by Konrad Lorenz, refers to the 'innate releasing mechanism for caretaking behaviour' that is triggered by infantile features, 'such as protruding cheeks, a large forehead and large eyes' (Lobmaier et al. 1). These caretaking behaviours are only incited when the child's features fit the aforementioned baby schema and, although research has since extended this innate instinct to animals, particularly pets, the creature's appearance was designed in opposition to this schema. Despite his inner infantility, the creature possesses no infantile "lacks": he is 'gigantic', 'shrivelled' and 'hideous' (*F:*54, 58, 59). Thus his aesthetic appearance becomes prejudicial to his infantile development and his 'imposing manner […] stern eye [and] loud and threatening voice' repels potential caregivers, such as the De Laceys, rather than eliciting caretaking behaviours (*E:*50).

The creature has the physical appearance of a nonchild from birth and, thus, lives without ever having experienced external infancy. According to Rousseau, this should result in his death, but it does not. The assessment expressed in *Émile*, 'that the race would have perished had not man begun by being a child', considers man only as a social animal (*E:*6). If this reading is combined with Rousseau's *Second Discourse,* then a fuller picture emerges to relate natural man's infancy to nature. Although familial relationships feature in Rousseau's

imagining of primitive man's upbringing, they are secondary to man's interaction with nature, becoming central only after man became socialised. Before then 'the child was nothing to his mother [from] the moment he could do without her' (*SD:*212). Rousseau's *Second Discourse* likens the natural man's infancy to that of 'an animal' more dependent on 'gifts from nature' than nurturing parental figures (*SD:*212). The creature, like these infants, is an 'inhabitant of the forest':

> Nature treats them exactly in the same manner that Sparta treated the children of her citizens; those who come well formed into the world she renders strong and robust, and destroys all the rest… (*SD:*180)

Although, aesthetically, the creature is not considered 'well formed' by the humans he interacts with throughout the novel, he is undeniably 'strong', 'robust', and equipped to survive owing to his 'superior' physicality (*SD:*180, *F*:101). Accordingly, although there is no physical caregiver to react to the creature's cries and provide infantile support, he can thrive in a natural environment. Rather than demanding parental support, the childlike creature's cries transition into those of Rousseau's natural man, instinctual cries designed to 'implore assistance in great danger, or relief in great sufferings' with no specific listener intended (*SD:*194). Language may be a social invention, as the creature discovers through his endeavour to learn its 'godlike science', but the voice itself is a product of Nature and provides an evolutionary benefit (*F:*114).

According to Rousseau, 'we are born weak', 'helpless', 'foolish'; 'all that we need when we come to man's estate, is the gift of education' and this education comes from 'nature', 'men', and 'things' (*E:*6). In his view, the 'inner growth of our organs and faculties is the education of nature' and the 'use we learn to make of this growth is the education of men', but for the creature these are conflated (*E:*6). Nature provides the necessities needed for the survival of its inhabitants but does not offer emotional sympathy, it 'makes men by a different process': a wild animal may eat from and be shaded by natural vegetation, but Nature does not

move towards it, it must find this food and shelter itself (*E:*22). Certainly, Shelley presents this version of Nature in relation to Victor, whom Nature benefits aesthetically but not intentionally, but her depiction of the creature's development diverges from this. The general representations of Nature as impersonal and coincidental magnify the maternal and nurturing version of Nature that the creature experiences as his upbringing mediates the line between child and savage. Nature's ability to comfort and nurture the creature is complex, given its lack of physical form. Like Victor, parental Nature does not provide the creature with physical intimacy or a name, but its presence is unremittingly apparent through personified and physical manifestations of natural features and phenomena.[75]

This is principally depicted through the constant presence of the moon, an object already mythologically associated with femininity, that is extended to encompass maternal representations of Nature. Notwithstanding arguments concerning its overall validity, Shelley's introduction establishes the moon's prominence within her prose as a perpetual spectator. Its account of the novel's conception, which sees the moon as the only extension of Nature capable of 'struggling through' the 'closed shutters' to bear witness to *Frankenstein*'s formation, is replicated in the fictionalised creation scene wherein Victor's secretive 'midnight labours' go unnoticed by all but the moon (*F:*9, 55). Immediately after the creature's birth, the moon's role transitions from contained observer to active participant:

> …when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. (*F:*59)

The moonlight that had previously 'struggled' and 'gazed' forces its way into the narrative and illuminates the creature's way to, and later away from, its creator (*F:*9, 55). From within the

[75] Victor's refusal to name his creation may be read as a conscious effort to disentangle himself from his creature, he does not own him as a son or give him a filial link. Nature, on the other hand, cannot give him a name owing to its lack of physical presence, nor does anything in nature have a natural name. To name is a human construct. In this way the creature possesses a liminal role, he exists on a boundary between nature and society. He has no human name, but he does not wholly belong to nature because he is able to comprehend this lack.

"workshop", manifestations of the natural world still appear 'dim' and muted, perhaps as a reminder of Victor's penetration and suppression of Nature in this setting, but the creature's central narrative presents a significantly more dynamic portrayal (*F:*59). As if in answer to the creature's cries, 'a gentle light' appears to give him comfort and 'pleasure':

> I started up and beheld a radiant form rise from among the trees. I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it enlightened my path, and I again went out in search of berries. I was still cold when under one of the trees I found a huge cloak, with which I covered myself, and sat down upon the ground. No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rang in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted me; the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on that with pleasure. (*F:*106)

Within this passage, the moon's protective presence 'enlightened' the creature's path towards sustenance, allowing him to acquire all of the provisions for his survival alongside a degree of clarity and relief from his rapidly emerging senses (*F:*106). The placement of this passage, immediately after the creature 'sat down and wept', frames the natural phenomenon of the rising moon as a direct answer to the creature's 'cry of nature' (*F:*106, *SD:*194). The moon in *Frankenstein* represents Nature's physical figure, ensuring the creature's survival by leading him to the necessities that conventional parental figures would readily provide. When the creature fixes his 'eyes on [the moon] with pleasure' the image recalls the earlier moment when he 'fixed' his eyes on Victor with 'a grin wrinkl[ing] his cheeks', but this time he is embraced, rather than rejected, by a 'gentle' caregiver (*F:*106, 59). Thus, the initial rejection scene is rewritten in the natural world.

When, in *Émile,* Rousseau urges parents to fix their 'eyes on nature' and 'follow the path traced by her' he did not envision Nature as a literal parental figure, nor did he expect the parent to surpass Nature in its creative dominion (*E*:14). Thus, Victor and his incorporeal co-parent find themselves at two extremes. Victor takes the form of an exaggerated version of

Rousseau's everyman, imbued with a desire to disrupt and change the work of Nature for his advantage and to the world's detriment:

> God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil [….] he will have nothing as nature made it, not even man himself… (*E:*5)

In creating a new species of man, Victor 'destroys' and 'defaces' the natural order to fit his own schemes and the result is a creature that would not have survived past infancy had Nature not apparently intervened (*E:*5). The creature is not 'as nature made' him, but his upbringing *in nature* magnifies the other extreme that sees Nature as an active parent (*E:*5). As I have discussed, maternal Nature allows the creature to survive, but it is paternal Nature that expedites his internal child-development. In Rousseauian terms, to reposition Nature in the role of the tutor is to envelop fatherhood into its characterisation as well. The creature would not have survived an immobile infancy and thus his sensory development is accelerated. Within days, the creature can 'distinguish [his] senses from each other' and his mind becomes able to receive 'every day additional ideas' to aid his survival (106). Nature 'hardens' the creature and 'teaches him the meaning of pain and grief' but this 'pain is the means of his preservation' and only physical: it is society that inflicts 'mental suffering' (*E:*14–15). By design, the creature has the physical capability to fulfil his own needs from birth but lacks the mental capacity to realise this. Victor's machinations only formed the basis for him to operate, but did not provide the 'earliest education' that Rousseau deemed essential to child development (*E:*5). Nature is left to complete the creature's sensory education, allowing him to 'wander on at liberty' and utilise his artificially derived advantages (*F:*105).

It may be surmised from the creature's preoccupation with the moon, and ability to thrive after dark, that he should transition into nocturnality. Indeed, that is what Rousseau's natural man would have done had he benefitted from the creature's night-time advantages, considering 'self-preservation' was 'almost his only concern' (*SD:*185). But the creature does

not convert into a nocturnal being because, to do so, would conflict with his desire to become a social being. Despite experiencing hardship during the day owing to the 'barbarity of man', the creature cannot relinquish his inherent human longing for fellowship (*F:*109). Accordingly, he refrains from embracing a purely natural, animalistic existence and persists in treading the line between natural man and social child.

2.5.2 NATURE VS SOCIETY

Rousseau principally highlights the incompatibility of nature and society in his *Second Discourse,* within which he identifies the behaviours of man before he becomes a social animal, 'abandoned by nature to pure instinct' rather than rational collective behaviour (*SD:*188). This is the version of humanity with which Shelley's presentation of the creature originally coincides. His base needs are met by his natural setting, 'the clear stream […] supplied [him] with drink, and the trees […] shaded [him] with their foliage', and he possesses no knowledge of the society outside his 'native wood' (*F:*106, 123). Like Rousseau's natural man, however, the creature soon experiences an urge towards sociability and, with it, a deviation from dependence on Nature. The *Second Discourse* portrays this transition towards citizenship to be gradual but inevitable as the family unit became the original 'little society' before humankind expanded into more diverse communities (*SD:*216). The creature has no discernible family unit, so he seeks fellowship, or indicators of fellowship, elsewhere, first with wild animals and later with humans. The first example of this comes long before the creature can actively comprehend his isolation:

> I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes [...] Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again. (*F:*105)

The delight that had first arisen at the 'radiant form' of the moon is extrapolated to the birds whose song 'saluted' the creature's ears and interrupts the silence of his seclusion (*F:*105). It is his attempts to communicate with and gain fellowship from these birds through imitation of their 'pleasant songs' that indicate his initial step over the boundary into sociality (*F:*105). This scene also marks the first time the creature recognises his difference from the other inhabitants of the wood. While the birdsong is delicate and agreeable, the creature's own voice is 'uncouth and inarticulate', prompting fear instead of pleasure (*F:*105). Shelley establishes the creature's understanding of his individual otherness in his recognition that he possesses his 'own mode' of communication that is incompatible with that of the 'little winged animals' and this is consolidated by their physical disparities (*F*:105). Nature's influence over the creature resultantly wavers as he recognises his inherent difference from the creatures within it and the impediment that its isolation has on his desire to become a social being.

Maternal and paternal Nature are integral elements of the creature's early child development, but they cannot train him to become a citizen. As a result, the creature's understanding of life in the woods begins to be overwritten by his new-found intimations of human society. This first insight into society takes the form of a dwindling campfire left by past travellers that consequently becomes a liminal object within *Frankenstein* and mediates the line between nature and society. Fire is an inherently natural resource, but a campfire is an artificial imitation. The creature's question upon burning himself, as to how 'the same cause should produce such opposite effects', pleasurable heat and pain, is integral to understanding his later relationship with human society (*F:*107). He does not yet have a point of reference to explain how outwardly appealing things, like the 'live embers', can produce pain, but this is something that the next stage of his life replicates (*F:*107). Shelley's repeated emphasis on juxtaposition reiterates this discovery; outward beauty does not always entail inner goodness, just as his desire to master the 'godlike science' of language does not necessarily allow for a

social life (*F:*107, 115). Shelley's decision to frame a campfire as the creature's first encounter with human society is significant in connection to the novel's subtitle, "The Modern Prometheus", inviting an interpretation aligned with the Promethean myth. This scene re-enacts mankind's discovery of fire, yet instead of being divinely bestowed, it is abandoned by 'wandering beggars', thus eliciting the creature's fixation and deification of humanity (*F:*107). His realisation that 'the fire gave light as well as heat' allows it to replace the moon as his primary source of comfort, and his discovery of roasted 'offals that the travellers had left' entails a deviation from his previously vegetarian diet of berries and nuts (*F:*107). In Rousseau's *Second Discourse,* he discusses the prevalent usage of fire as a predominant indicator of the natural man's movement towards sociability and citizenship. Prior to humanity's increased sociability, they felt no impulse to communicate discoveries such as fire and, even if natural man discovered a campfire as the creature did he did not possess 'the art of reproducing it': 'these secrets perished with the discoverer' (*SD:*190). The creature, likewise, 'knew not how to reproduce' the fire despite his attempts to do so and does not come across another until he relocates outside 'native wood' (*F:*123). The comfort that the fire elicited in the creature drives him to discover another source of it.

At the beginning of *Émile,* Rousseau decisively states that '[f]orced to combat either nature or society, you must make your choice between the man and the citizen, you cannot train both' (*E*:7). Although this declaration initially appears inconsistent with Rousseau's intention in *Émile,* to present a system of education that allowed men to preserve their inherent "natural" goodness even after becoming immersed in corruptive society as 'citizens', it is not, because the 'man' and the 'citizen' are not moral positions but social (*E:*7). Rousseau's tutor does not attempt to mould his student into a 'man' *and* 'citizen', he 'cannot train both', rather, he utilises the positive teachings from the former in order to educate Émile into an incorruptible social

animal (*E:*7).[76] Consequently, this training does not occur in true isolation. Rousseau's eponymous case subject is isolated from general society but reliant on a localised filial society. Shelley's replication of this framework in *Frankenstein* sees the creature similarly transition into a citizen with attributes from his natural upbringing. He is, after all, the product of two parents and Nature cannot train the creature to be a citizen any more than Victor could train him to be a natural man. Shelley implements Rousseauian philosophy to seek a mediation between these traits, first by depicting the creature's attempts to train himself to become a citizen, and later by allowing him to return to his first parent to request community.

2.6 THE ARTIFICIAL CITIZEN

Rousseau opens his *Second Discourse* by identifying two 'species of inequality amongst men': 'natural, or physical inequality' and 'moral or political inequality' (*SD:*175). These 'species of inequality' coincide with my earlier discussion of the types of education required for Rousseau's idealised version of citizenship, as outlined in *Émile* (*SD:*175). Man's 'physical inequality', 'the power of the strong over the weak, the fast over the slow, the young over the old', is determined by 'the education of nature', but his moral inequality falls within the dominion of 'men' (*SD:*175, *E:*6). Shelley depicts the creature's natural inequalities, his adjustment to his larger frame and the refinement of his superior instincts, as transcended via his natural education, yet his moral education cannot commence until he ventures out of his 'native wood' (*F:*123). Hitherto, a moral education would pose no benefit to his status as a natural man, nor was it an education that Nature could bestow. There are no conventions or community establishments that would render his lack an 'inequality' (*SD:*175). On a surface level, the creature should be an ideal approximation of Rousseau's natural man. Indeed, during

[76] Retrospective reading informs the reader that this doctrine proves idealised and unsuccessful given its eventual failure, as depicted in its unpublished sequel *Émile et Sophie ou les Solitaires.* As I discussed in Chapter One, this sequel followed Émile and his wife Sophy into society but, rather than utilising their training, they succumb to the temptations of Parisian society.

his early development he 'lives for himself' and allows his actions to be dictated by 'pure instinct', yet his development is tainted by an atypical loneliness (*E:*7, *SD:*188). The creature's desire for fellowship surpasses that which Rousseau's natural man would require. He craves emotional communion as much as potential reproductive acquisition and his instincts towards sociability are not driven by base urges but a complex psychological need for fulfilment. Thus, he sets out to become a citizen without the required education.

The creature holds the potential to become a Rousseauian citizen. He participates without expectation of advantage, allows 'the voice of duty [to] replace physical impulse', 'substitut[es] justice for instinct in his behaviour and giv[es] his actions moral relationships which they did not have before' (*GM:*165). Immediately upon his entrance into human society the creature is attacked for his difference, 'grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons', but he does not respond with violence, his 'instinct' is regulated by his overwhelming desire to integrate (*F:*109, *GM:*165). While this desire prevents the creature from retreating back into 'the bleak forest', his inhuman appearance similarly prevents him from venturing further into society (*F*:109). Thus, Shelley introduces the creature's 'hovel', a locale that mediates the difference between nature and society by existing on the boundary designed for a creature who, similarly, exists on the boundary between social and natural man (*F:*109). Attached to the De Lacey's home, the hovel allows the creature to observe human life without fear of rejection and indirectly participate in their filial society. Although the 'hovel' is 'wretched' in terms of appearance and amenities, it is upgraded to a 'paradise' in terms of the social aspect it has the potential to afford (*F:*109). Shelley, therefore, transforms the creature's hovel into a liminal space within the novel, wherein nature and society can combine, albeit superficially. It forms an 'agreeable asylum' from both the 'inclemency of the season' and the 'barbarity of man', but neither can be wholly kept out: 'the wind entered it by innumerable chinks' and the threat of human discovery is ever-present (*F*:109).

The creature spends the latter part of his childhood watching the De Lacey's filial community from his hiding place and internalises some of their socially evolved traits and principles. The social responsibility that is essential to life as a citizen is not innate, it must be learned, and indeed this period of his life enables him to indirectly acquire a partial moral education through the De Laceys' example. The creature's proximity to human society allows him to experience that which Rousseau calls the 'most ancient of all societies, and the only natural one': the family (*SC*:47). For the natural man, parental bonds were purely relationships of convenience: 'the child was nothing to his mother the moment he could do without her' (*SD:*212). The inception of socialised society, however, enabled these relationships to persevere past convenience until they became the basis for 'a little society' (*SD:*216). In this version of familial society, obedience is only required of children until they no longer require parental assistance, but gratitude is 'a duty which [they] are bound to pay' in order to remain in their 'little society' (*SD*:233, 216). The creature's observation of this family allows him to develop his own version of prescribed gratitude and, rather than viewing the De Laceys as strangers, he develops 'love and reverence' for their familial community and imagines them as his 'protectors' (*F:*124). Therefore, when the creature begins to covertly provide for the family, collecting fuel for the cottage and clearing their pathways, he sees it as his own 'duty' to reciprocate the kindness of those who have unknowingly opened their home to him (*SD:*216).

According to Rousseau, a child is supposed to learn 'to speak, to eat, to walk, nearly at the same time' in the first 'epoch of his life', yet the creature enters the second epoch of his life having never developed any cohesive form of communication (*E:*40). Speech was not part of 'the education of nature', it falls within the education of men; until the creature becomes a social being it is redundant (*E:*6). Although, by this point in the novel, the creature's sensations have 'become distinct', he had no method by which to express them (*F:*106). His first failed attempt to do so, with the birds of the forest, served only to exemplify his difference and incite

in him a desire to articulate his thoughts in his 'own mode', as 'uncouth and inarticulate' as it may be (*F:*106). Thus, when the creature discovers that 'people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feeling to one another by articulate sounds' that produce 'pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness' he recognises an opportunity to complete his own social development (*F:*114). Family life, he learns, is entirely contingent on communication and the cultivation of relationships. Accordingly, his true entrance into the family must be prefaced by the study of language. Nature could not fulfil the role of tutor in this regard, but the De Lacey's can. Shelley's presentation of the creature's eagerness to learn allows for similarities to be drawn between his early education and Victor's; however, while Victor's *bildungsroman* was marred by sexualised and violent language, the creature's is stimulated by childlike curiosity. His intentions are solely directed towards familial integration, aspiring that his 'gentle demeanour and conciliating words' might 'first win their favour, and afterwards their love', rather than seeking amatory satisfaction (*F:*114).

Rousseau defines social man, or the citizen, as an artificial version of man: he is created. The creature is artificially created in physical terms, but he gains no societal benefit from his artificiality. To function as a productive citizen, and be accepted by his chosen society, he requires training, akin to that which Émile received. The De Lacey's consequently become the creature's temporary caregivers, unknowingly fulfilling the final lessons required for his integration into human society. That the creature observes another figure, Safie, marginalised by her origins and inability to communicate with the De Laceys, undergoing similar language-based instruction heightens his optimism. There is, nevertheless, an integral difference between them. The creature's development of language is flawed because he learns artificially, wholly through Safie's lessons instead of via direct conversation. According to Darwinian theory, language is not entirely instinctive, but exhibits instinctive tendencies, as evidenced by the

"babble of our young children" (Descent of Man 108). Steven Pinker, in *The Language Instinct*, expands on this notion, claiming that:

> We think children pick up their mother tongue by imitating their mothers, but when a child says *Don't giggle me!* or *We holded the baby rabbits*, it cannot be an act of imitation. (8)

Although the creature boasts that he 'improved more rapidly' than Safie, who continued to converse in 'broken accents', this demonstrates his lack of instinctual "babble" (*F:*121). Mirroring his experience with the birds, the creature can only imitate and memorise language with no innate instinct or learned logic to support his learning. Pinker uses Chomsky's notion that language must be instinctive because 'virtually every sentence that a person utters or understands is a brand-new combination of words' and claims that language 'cannot be a repertoire of responses; the brain must contain a recipe or program that can build an unlimited set of sentences out of a finite list of words' (9). While the creature's learning process somewhat mirrors that of a human child, as he discovers 'the names that were given to some of the most familiar objects of discourse' while listening to his 'friends' converse and slowly develops the ability 'to pronounce them', he never displays instinctive speech patterns (*F:*114). Rather, his language is stiff, formal, and reminiscent of the grandiose texts, *Paradise Lost* in particular, that he has available to him in the hovel.[77] The creature's speech patterns are also comparable to Victor's own prose and, although this could be explained by the framed narrative of the text allowing Walton/Victor to buffer his narrative, I prefer to view it as indicative of the other seminal text in the creature's development: Victor's scientific journal. If the creature easily internalises the language of epic poets, it follows that the account of his conception within the journal would similarly influence the way he communicated. Shelley withholds access to this text from her reader, yet her portrayals of Victor's scientific passions, coupled

[77] The creature's prose borrows heavily from Milton's *Paradise Lost* in terms of form and theme and this is particularly evident when he evokes the creature/creator dynamic and creates associations between the poem's treatment of Adam and Satan and his own treatment by Victor.

with the creature's exalted language regarding his own "scientific" view of language, suggest similarity. As such, Victor indirectly shapes a crucial phase of his creature's infantile development without having been present.

Equipped with language, understanding, and social responsibility, the creature should be capable of assimilating himself into society, and although he recognises that the deformity of his figure presents an obstacle to this objective, he does not deem it insurmountable. His time with the De Laceys facilitates his transition from a natural man who 'lives for himself' into a citizen 'whose value depends […] on the community' (*E*:7). Certainly, the creature's aspiration to integrate is validated by the blind De Lacey patriarch, who detects sincerity in his words and agrees to help him as he would 'any human creature' (*F:*137). Nonetheless, his "monstrous" appearance remains unobscured by his newfound artificial status as a citizen, and, as a result, he is rejected by human society again following his revelation. Inwardly, the creature adopted the philosophies of a social creature, but outwardly his appearance prevents him from engaging directly with the social world, leaving him trapped between the two states, unable to progress or turn back.

2.6.1 Social Responsibility and Rejection

Rousseau rejects the notion that the natural man can be inherently evil, he is 'not bad, precisely because [he does not] know what it is to be good'; however, the creature *does* understand 'the signification of those terms, relative as they were' (*SD:*201, *F:*132).

> To be a great and virtuous man appeared the highest honour that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation [...] For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased, and I turned away with disgust and loathing. (*F:*122)

Accordingly, the creature's newly developed social responsibility and awareness of right and wrong conflict with the resurgence of his feelings of rejection. His desire to retaliate against

the cottagers' rejection of him, to tear them 'limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope' does not stem from a base animalistic urge but human malignance and rage (*F:*137). He is 'malicious' because he is 'miserable' (*F:*147).

Following this second rejection, the creature retreats to the woods and, although the 'cold stars shone in mockery' as if scolding him for his absence and there was no moon to comfort him, Nature does not appear hostile for long (*F:*138). The 'sweet voice of a bird burst forth' from the silence' and the 'pleasant sunshine, and the pure air of day, restored [him] to some degree of tranquillity' and allowed him to wonder if he had been 'too hasty in [his] conclusions the night before' (*F:*138–9). Nature cannot diminish the appeal that human society holds over one now fully immersed in its potential for sociability. It offers tranquillity, but lacks true fellowship. The creature appreciates the forms of communion available in nature, such as birdsong, they cannot fulfil his desire for sympathy and mutual communication in his 'own mode' (*F:*105). Hence, Shelley depicts the creature as inherently drawn back to his refuge on the threshold of nature and society, yet the hovel he returns to is no longer liminal. The departure of the De Lacey's renders it devoid of social potential and, resultantly, severs 'the only link that held [the creature] to the world' (*F:*140). Without this link, the creature has no connection with society and no opportunity for direct *or* indirect social participation in it. His previous desire 'to tear up the trees' and 'spread havoc and destruction' had the appearance of a child's outburst and was quickly surmounted, but the second time these feelings emerge he does 'not strive to control them' (*F:*138, 140). Unable 'to injure anything human', the creature turns his 'fury towards inanimate objects' and sets out to destroy the symbol of the family he had hoped to join by attacking the cottage that had housed them (*F:*140). The creature's utilisation of fire as an outlet for this rage marks his final transition into a citizen; he may now replicate the previously irreplicable phenomena that marked man's entrance into social behaviour. Pages earlier, the creature could not comprehend 'how one man could go forth to

murder his fellow' but now, as the fire he had ignited caused the cottage to be 'enveloped by the flames', he understands destruction to be an extension of human fury (*F:*122, 141). The corruption that Rousseau aimed to prevent in *Émile*, and later permitted his protagonist to succumb to in *Émile et Sophie ou les Solitaires*, ultimately manifests in the creature. This corruption is not a result of a lack of awareness of social responsibility; it derives from a desire to punish those who disregarded *their* social responsibilities toward him.

The creature regrets leaving his 'native wood', wherein he may never have 'known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat', but once he begins to revel in knowledge he cannot stop, 'it clings to the mind, when it has once seized on it, like a lichen on the rock' (*F:*123). Like Victor, he takes comfort from Nature and allows himself to be 'cheered' by its nurturing influence, yet he cannot regress back into a natural man (*F:*142). This is explicitly revealed in his inability to avoid interfering when he spots a young girl plunge into a 'rapid stream' (*F:*143). The natural man lives for himself and operates via 'purely animal functions', he would not risk his own life for another, yet the creature instinctively rushes from his 'hiding-place' and with 'extreme labour' saves the young girl and fulfils his social responsibility (*SD:*188, *F:*143). That his attempt to 'restore animation' to the senseless girl mirrors his creator's earlier actions reinforces Shelley's constant theme of circularity, as does his 'escape' from harm when the girl's caregiver misunderstands his intentions (*F:*143, 59). The creature's 'sorrow only increased with knowledge' but, like his creator, he is consumed by an unconquerable desire that precludes ignorance (*F:*123). He wishes to belong and be 'one among [his] fellows' and this requires that he find an alternative path to gain community.

2.6.2 Co-Parenting and the Monstrous Citizen

Although Nature does not possess the power to satisfy the creature's wishes for community, it remains active and constant and so, when the creature returns to his first "mother", he does so in the company of his second (*F*:148). By Rousseauian logic, Nature should have left the

creature behind ‘the moment he could do without’ it, yet its presence is magnified (*SD:*212). Although it is unclear whether this divergence is representative of the creature’s continued maternal need or Shelley’s reinforcement of the creature’s status as a social animal and required filial community, this does not detract from the overarching parental presence foregrounding the creature’s return to society. The depictions of inert ‘dreary’ Nature, prior to the birth scene, are consequently replaced with ‘glorious’ demonstrations of ‘imperial Nature’ penetrating even Victor’s personal narration (*F:*58, 99). Shelley allows for a reinterpretation of Nature as simultaneously ‘maternal’ and violently defensive, as the creature’s appearances in the text are continuously prefaced with natural phenomena (*F:*98). The frequently cited scene, wherein Victor misconstrues a violent storm as a ‘dirge’ mourning William’s death, only to realise it serves to prefigure the creature’s reintroduction, is a clear example of this:

> A flash of lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon, to whom I had given life. (*F:*77)

The “struggling” moonlight that illuminated the infantile creature immediately after the birth scene is replaced with an intensified representation of Nature, ‘a flash of lightning’ capable of revealing Victor’s repressed shame (*F:*77). That immediately after this revelation the ‘thunder ceased’ and ‘the scene was enveloped in an impenetrable darkness’, preventing Victor from pursuing the creature, furthers Shelley’s portrayal of a powerfully parental version of Nature, a force no longer limited by human machination (*F:*77). Following this display, Victor regards the creature as an ‘animal’ able to bend Nature to its advantage in order to escape into the wilderness and scale ‘the overhanging sides of Mont Salêve’, but he does not consider that this may be the intrinsic product of his own utilisation of Nature in creation (*F:*79). Indeed, Victor creates a being that is half natural and half human and, as a result, the creature can utilise both halves of his parentage.

It is because of the creature's human half that he is drawn towards society and sociability; he craves a fellowship that cannot exist in the natural world because nothing there can offer him equal companionship. The creature's attempted abduction of William Frankenstein forms a practice-run of his attempt to construct an idealised community that is devoid of those inbuilt societal corruptions and prejudices that obstructed his first attempts to assimilate into the social world. The creature's conviction that 'this little creature' had 'lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity' allows him to temporarily believe that he could be removed from societal corruption and learn to accept his fellowship (*F:*144). This notion aligns with the Rousseauian principle that dictates a father should 'take possession' of his child as 'soon as he comes into the world and keep him till he is a man' in order to ensure his ethics and principles are secure (*E:*16). It is not with malignancy that the creature seizes the child, but hope. He is 'urged by this impulse' to deliver the child from malevolent social structures and fulfil the duties towards him that his own creator neglected (*F*:144). The creature's comprehension that William belongs to his 'enemy', however, shatters this hope and enables him to denounce the child as unredeemable (*F:*44). Just as the creature's aesthetic portrayal as a nonchild fails to satisfy Victor's 'imaginative and nostalgic demands' as a parent, William is incapable of fulfilling the creature's 'needs' and 'whims' (*Erotic Innocence* 144, 53). Indeed, this rationale serves to justify his subsequent murder.

This interaction is replicated twice more: immediately afterwards in the creature's indirect interaction with Caroline Frankenstein, via her portrait, and through his observation of Justine's sleeping form. Caroline consistently recurs in Victor's portion of the narrative as an example of idealised motherhood; therefore, it is appropriate that her portrait incites feelings of 'delight' and 'softens' the otherwise murderous creature (*F:*145). The creature's fixation on Caroline's 'lovely lips' and 'deep lashes' is arguably sexually charged, yet I would contend that the creature views her as a mother figure from the outset. The creature does not necessarily

identify this woman as his creator's mother, his grandmother of sorts, but he may easily assume her to be a relation to the Frankenstein child he murdered given his established knowledge of familial structures. The creature's commiseration that 'no mother had blessed [him] with smiles and caresses' is recalled by his recurrent anger that he 'was forever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow' (*F:*124, 145). Further, the language Shelley implements to describe Caroline's perceived 'divine benignity' is more suited to reverence than to base sexual desire (*F:*145). The creature cannot enjoy the portrait's representation of maternal benevolence because he is aware that, if its subject were faced with his physical deformity, her expression would transition into 'one expressive of disgust and affright' (*F:*145). The creature's interaction with Justine follows the same formula; he enjoys the 'loveliness of [her] youth' yet immediately recognises he shall never benefit from it:

> Here, I thought, is one of those whose joy-imparting smiles are bestowed on all but me. And then I bent over her, and whispered, "Awake, fairest, thy lover is near—he who would give his life but to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes: my beloved, awake!" (*F:*145)

The creature's behaviour towards Justine in this scene contrasts with his previously reverential and maternal representation of Caroline. The creature takes advantage of Justine's unconscious state to derive erotic pleasure from their proximity, roleplaying the "fairy-tale prince" coming to claim his 'beloved' (*F:*145). Although his predatory behaviour and sexualised 'thrill of terror' reveals a base carnal desire, he still yearns for sentimental attachment and a 'joy-imparting smile' or a 'look of affection' (*F:*145). As with William and Caroline, the creature's anger resurfaces because he comprehends that he 'is forever robbed of all that she could give' him and her subsequent 'punishment' is a shared fate: incrimination in his crime to prevent her from finding happiness with another (*F:*145).

Rousseau writes that '[i]f mothers are not real mothers, children are not real children toward them' and the creature's retributive actions towards Victor demonstrate this statement to an extreme degree (Worthington 18). The creature recognises that his creator does not

deserve the accolade of 'real mother', both in terms of his neglected parental responsibility and detrimental construction of a child whose outward appearance acts in contrast to baby schema, and therefore feels no compulsion to conduct himself as a 'real' child should (Worthington 18). Nature likewise cannot claim the label of 'real mother', yet its constant presence accompanies the creature even after he leaves its specific locale and ventures further into human society (Worthington 18). Although the creature takes comfort from Nature throughout *Frankenstein*, he does not understand its relevance in his life until the very end of the novel and, as a result, his notions of parent-child relationships are furnished by other sources, namely literature and observation. Rousseau characterises reading as 'the curse of childhood', asserting that books 'only teach us to talk about things we know nothing about', and it is principally through reading that the creature begins to comprehend his own childhood deficiency and 'accursed origin' (*E:*80, *F:*132). While the creature acknowledges that there should have been a father to oversee 'his infant days' and a mother to bless him 'with smiles and caresses', it is only when he reads *Paradise Lost* and identifies its parallels with his own experience that he fully actualises this disparity (*F:*124). Likewise, Victor's journal renders him as an experiment rather than a child and, although his paternal rejection is not recorded, the creature possesses enough reasoning to infer the events that led to his lone infancy (*F:*132). Like Adam, the creature is 'united by no link to any other being in existence', yet he possesses the potential to be a 'perfect creature, happy and prosperous' *if* he assimilates into a community (*F:*132). Consequently, the creature is impelled to confront his creator and demand that he fulfils his 'duties of a creator towards his creature', in order to render him a 'true' child rather than a nonchild (*F*:114, 148, Worthington 18).

2.6.3 ROUSSEAU'S THIRD STAGE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Through examination of *Frankenstein*, this chapter has considered the two primary stages of human existence that Rousseau outlines in his *Second Discourse*, that of the natural man and

the social citizen, but towards the end of the novel Shelley presents another. Cantor alludes to this additional stage in his claim that although 'Rousseau does not present a third stage in the Second Discourse' he is preoccupied with the question as to 'whether man can ever return to the state of nature' (7–8). This, I would argue, *is* the third stage and, while Rousseau deems it unachievable, Shelley explores its potential through the creature's final request to his creator. The creature's abovementioned interactions with women and children demonstrate the futility of his transition into a social animal in an existing society; the children are already corrupted, and the women are imbued with insurmountable prejudice towards deformity and would never accept him as a mate. The only remaining possibility for sociability is the creation of a new society, his *own* society, wherein he may finally fulfil the role of Adam with his *own* Eve and perform the parental duties that Victor neglected towards his *own* child. The creature's demand for a female monster comprises his final attempt to become a social animal while indirectly mediating and combining his dual heritage in order to reach Rousseau's "third stage" of human development. The human element of his derivation dictates that he requires sociability and fellowship, but his natural parentage allows this to occur in a modified form:

> "… neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us again: I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare. We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food…" (*F*:148)

This version of sociability is a compromise, the 'gratification is small' compared to the domesticity possible in human society, nonetheless, it allows the creature to unwittingly embrace both sides of his being and return to nature *as a* social animal (*F:*148). As Rousseau predicted, the knowledge that a being in his position has gained from observing human sociability prevents him from finding true happiness in his natural environment. He cannot

devolve back into the first stage of human development, but he *can* form his own 'little society' and be 'one among [his] fellows' (*SD:*216, *F:*123).

As discussed, Rousseau rejects the notion of equal weighting between parents and, aptly, the creature only requires Victor to fulfil *one* of his 'duties of a creator' to accomplish his role as co-parent and 'render him happy' (*F:*104). The creature is 'content to reason' with Victor because he would rather be submissive to a benevolent master and feel himself a 'real child' than exert his superior physical power (*F:*147, Worthington 18). His appearance prevents him from gaining pity from his infancy, yet this is what he craves. He wishes to be 'mild and docile', an innocent being who relies fully upon his father for 'justice', 'clemency', and 'affection' (*F:*103). The creature's language is violent and his threats demonstrable, but he would still be 'content' to play the role of Adam to Victor's God if the latter would allow it: Victor is characterised as his 'natural lord and king' who 'drivest [him] from joy for no misdeed' (*F:*103). Their relationship is entirely reciprocal, '[i]f mothers are not real mothers, children are not real children toward them', and thus the creature's behaviour is determined by his creator's (Worthington 18). Shelley parodies this reciprocity in their reversal of power dynamics upon the creature's return:

> Yet it is in your power to recompense me, and deliver them from an evil which it only remains for you to make so great, that not only you and your family, but thousands of others, shall be swallowed up in the whirlwinds of its rage (*F*:103).

The creature's demand that his creator fulfil his duty in order to 'deliver [those he loves] from evil' is an inversion of the lord's prayer (*F:*103). In his plea, he evokes his 'natural lord and king' and begs to be restored to original benevolence (*F:*103). While this singular action may not satisfy the creature's longing for a father to watch his 'infant days', it would enable him to actualise his desired familial aspirations *with his own family* and surpass Victor as creator (*F:*124). Unlike Victor, the creature harbours no intention of becoming a solipsist creator. His aim is not the usurpation of Victor's Promethean power, but the realisation of his unused social

and familial potential. The 'picture' he presents to Victor of his domestic aspirations is 'peaceful and human': he longs for a traditional family and to be a traditional parent, albeit through untraditional means (*F:*149).

Shelley reinforces this notion of traditional family structures by making it evident that the female creature is not designed to fulfil a purely sexual or reproductive role. The creature intends for her to be assimilated into his 'little society' and bless its inhabitants 'with smiles and caresses' (*SD:*216, *F:*124). Marshall Brown argues that the creature's 'emotionally stunted' nature renders his demand for a female 'infantile' rather than sexual and proposes that 'the two monsters would be siblings' (161). While this argument is conceivable in a literal sense, given that both creatures would stem from the same parent, it is unrealistic to assume this would dissuade the creature from procreation, especially given the existing incestuous theme throughout the text. Moreover, Shelley does not justify this reading with any textual evidence. Instead, the creature's request for a female monster is reflective of his desire to fill the vacant familial opening in his life and rectify the abandonment he experienced from Victor. As a result, the female creature is explicitly designated as mother. Victor's assumption that the female he is creating will become a mother further supports this notion:

> …one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. (*F:*170)

Victor regards the formation of the creature's female counterpart as an opportunity to endow his miserable creature with fellowship, to finally do his 'duty' and assure 'his happiness and well-being', but he deems another duty 'paramount to that': his duty towards society (*F:*170). That this duty only surfaces in relation to the female creature's reproductive potential suggests Victor's true apprehension is not the lives of his 'own species' so much as retaining his status as creator (*F:*170). For, if the creature acquired the ability to propagate *his own* species, Victor would no longer be supreme creator. Cantor posits that '[d]eep down, the creator and creature

yearn to exchange roles', and this is true, but not in the way that Victor believes (129). The creature's primary "yearning" is not for his creator's power but for the domestic life that Victor's biological humanity makes possible and the normalcy that he actively rejects. The language Shelley implements to depict this attempt at role-reversal is violent because it is intended to subvert the creature's reasonable request for sociability into a threat from Victor's perspective. The creature's new version of humanity would unite the natural with the social and the resultant creatures could live in fellowship outside the corruptions of society while embodying Rousseau's unspoken third stage of human development and, potentially, forming a superior race.

Marie Mulvey Roberts argues that it is the female monster's 'autonomous female reproductive capacity' that predominantly threatens to displace Victor 'as procreator', leaving him 'no option but to destroy her' (67). This theory is compelling, and I agree that the threat her reproductive capacity poses to Victor's role as creator is partially responsible for her destruction; however, it neglects consideration of the instigator of Victor's decisive action, 'the daemon at the casement' (*F:*117). Once more, 'the light of the moon' reveals that which Victor has continually tried to ignore, his own parental affiliation to the creature he is attempting to exile (*F:*171). The 'ghastly grin [that] wrinkled his lips' once more recalls the 'wrinkled' grin of the infantile creature immediately after his creation (*F:*171, 58). In both cases, the creature is reliant on his father to fulfil his reciprocal duties towards him, and, in both cases, Victor refuses. As Roberts argues, the destruction of the female creature represents Victor's refusal to surrender his role as 'procreator', but it also represents his refusal to live up to his duty as 'procreator' to either of his creatures. He relinquishes his parenthood, *not* his creatorship. This argument would explain why Victor refers to himself as a 'creator and source' but *contrasts*

himself to a 'father' at the beginning of the novel; a father is something he never intended to be (*F*:55).[78]

The creature's revenge-driven actions consequently re-enact Rousseau's prophecy of fatherhood:

> He who cannot fulfil the duties of a father has no right to be a father [...] I prophesy to anyone who has natural feeling and neglects these sacred duties,—that he will long shed bitter tears over this fault, and that for those tears he will find no consolation. (Worthington 23)

Victor's role as father necessitates that he 'fulfil the duties of a father', and in the creature's case, this entails providing the 'support' and education required for assimilation into society, or his compromised version of it (Worthington 23). Victor provides neither. The 'bitter tears' that Rousseau prophesises are thereby enacted, perhaps more literally than intended, and there is 'no consolation' (Worthington 23). Shelley juxtaposes the creature's appeals for parental assistance with Victor's anger until the two begin to overlap and merge, and the creature's initially composed demeanour transforms into desperation. The creature only adopts a characterisation aligned with Victor's condemnation of him as an irredeemably monstrous nonchild when the possibility of societal integration is irreversibly closed to him. He becomes 'fearless' in the face of this loss and, 'therefore powerful' (*F*:173). Victor's punishment for the neglect of his duty unfolds through the actions of the child he failed and his own potential for filial happiness is stripped away through the removal of his existing family and reproductive potential.

2.7 RETURN TO NATURE

By the conclusion of *Frankenstein,* it becomes apparent that the creature's *bildungsroman* has failed. His potential to infiltrate Rousseau's second stage of human development and become

[78] 'A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs.' (*F:*55)

a valuable citizen is impeded by a solipsist creator who refuses to accept him as a son or allow him his own creative potential to progress to the third stage. Yet, while Victor relinquishes his role as parent, Nature remains stalwart. The creature cannot regress to the initial, ignorance-driven stage of human development, but he may still derive parental solace from Nature. His superior frame and endurance, as cultivated in nature, equip him to navigate 'the wilds' and lure Victor alongside him (*F:*206). In these final scenes, it is again pertinent to consider Nature anthropomorphically, as evidenced in its active rejection of Victor. Despite Victor's fervent plea for 'adjuration' from the 'sacred earth' in his quest to destroy the creature, Nature opts to withhold the solace sought by the creator, and instead extend support to the creature:

> I was answered through the stillness of night by a loud and fiendish laugh. It rang on my ears long and heavily; the mountains re-echoed it, and I felt as if all hell surrounded me with mockery and laughter. (*F:*206)

Nature not only refrains from impeding the creature's 'loud and fiendish laugh' but also allows these sounds to persist and reverberate through its mountains, further facilitating the creature in his pursuit of revenge (*F*:206). Nature, thus, transforms into 'hell' for the creator who had previously utilised its passivity and Victor identifies his survival as abetted only by his creature's desire to extend his misery (*F:*206). It is imperative to consider that this penultimate frame of the narrative derives wholly from Victor's point of view and, therefore; the reader is obliged to read the creature's behaviour through his biased lens. Victor's narration portrays the creature's apparent threat (that even 'the light of day' will prove hateful towards him) become increasingly apt as the treacherous conditions of the North Pole gradually weaken his body (*F:*208).

However, this perspective is complicated by Victor's misreading of the 'guiding spirit' that ensures his survival and provides another lens through which to view the creature and creator's final pursuit (*F:*208). In forcing Victor to chase him into remote landscapes, the creature simulates a strained version of fellowship. The creature's relationship with Victor is

maintained from a distance, through 'marks in writing on the barks of the trees, or cut in stone', but it persists as the most sociable connection he has experienced, or deemed himself capable of receiving, across 'many months' of pursuit (*F:*208). These interactions are paradoxical, ranging from inscribed threats promising an enduring 'reign' to jarringly useful suggestions to 'wrap [up] in furs, and provide food' for the journey ahead (*F:*208–9). Victor interprets the notes that clearly originate from the creature as a means to prolong his suffering, while those less easily attributed are credited to his perceived 'guiding spirit' (*F:*208). Just as the creature can only speak to the blind senior De Lacey without his outward appearance interfering with his perception, he can gain positive affirmation from his creator when his actions are misattributed. When not prejudiced by his creature's ugliness, Victor can appreciate his benevolence and give thanks 'with a full heart' (*F:*209). This favourable acknowledgement is the only gratification the creature expects to receive, and it is contingent on the perpetuation of Victor's revenge-driven pursuit. Shelley presents this pursuit as the closest that the creature gets to parental reciprocity; if Victor were to abandon the pursuit, the creature would again be alone. His pain at Victor's eventual death reinforces this reading.

During their months of pursuit, the creature provides more care and sustenance for Victor than he ever received from the latter. His role as 'guiding spirit' takes on a nurturing tone and, although he is still despised, he is no longer alone (*F:*208). Upon Victor's death, the creature characterises himself as more destitute than the devil himself: 'even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone' (*F*:223). In losing his 'enemy', he simultaneously loses his only connection to human society and familial link and this anguish is only amplified by Walton's entreaty for 'him to stay' (*F:*221). Such a statement would formerly have been enough to satisfy his desire to be accepted, and he pauses 'with wonder' at the unexpected prospect (*F:*221). However, his crimes have rendered him incapable of assimilating into human society: he is no longer an idealised Rousseauian citizen, but a

corrupted "monster" (*F:*221). The wild 'rage' and 'uncontrollable passion' that Walton's statement elicits is, therefore, not an example of malignity so much as regret (*F:*221). Unaware that Walton only intended to fulfil his 'duties' to 'undertake [Victor's] unfinished work' to destroy his creation, the creature perceives his entreaty as an opportunity for sociability that he can no longer accept (*F*:221). This sense of remorse and recognition underscores that despite the creature's assertion that evil 'became [his] good', he retains the ability to differentiate between the two (*F*:222).

At the close of *Frankenstein*, the creature disappears into nature, 'borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance', with the promise that death will come to him 'soon':

> Some years ago, when the images which this world affords first opened upon me, when I felt the cheering warmth of summer, and heard the rustling of the leaves and the warbling of the birds, and these were all to me, I should have wept to die; now it is my only consolation. Polluted by crimes, and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death? (*F:*224–5)

The failure of his first parent serves to heighten the neglected success of the second. That which he exchanged for sociability becomes his 'only consolation' and his desires shift from that of the social animal back into those of the natural man (*F:*225). His 'sorrow' and 'knowledge' prohibit him from truly returning to the first stage of human development, but they do not prevent him from dying within it (*F:*225). In death, the knowledge that made him miserable dissipates and his 'spirit will sleep in peace', granting him the ignorance to revert to his natural state and the superior parent who allowed him to be a child (*F:*225).

> "But soon," he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, "I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell." (*F:*225)

As the creature vanishes into the 'darkness', readers may assume his version of 'soon' is imminent, and he will 'ascend [his] funeral pyre' immediately after his final social interaction (*F:*225). Shelley's use of ambiguous language, however, allows for different interpretations, perhaps even more hopeful ones. Before 'soon' comes to be, the creature might 'find rest' in Nature as a sole parent and, indeed, 'go forth and prosper' (*F:*225, 10).

When PBS adopts the authorial 'I' in his 1818 preface to *Frankenstein*, he identifies the 'chief concern' of the novel to be 'the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue' (*F:*11). While this preoccupation with the domestic initially appears overshadowed by Shelley's ostentatious depictions of sublimity and the fantastic in *Frankenstein*, it is brought to the forefront by the creature's consistent pursuit of domestic bonds and affection in his personal *bildungsroman*. Michelle Levy, in "Discovery and the Domestic Affections in Coleridge and Shelley", argues that Shelley positions the 'pursuit of discovery' as the primary 'threat to domestic affection' (689). Indeed, this conflict is conveyed in her overreaching characterisations of Walton and Victor, but I would contend that it is not the central thesis of the novel. Rather, the greatest threat to domestic affection in *Frankenstein* arises from deviations from reciprocal filial responsibility. Shelley's exploration of non-traditional domesticity does not inherently advocate for or endorse the nuclear family structure; instead, it underscores the critical importance of reciprocity in the formation of constructive domestic relations and emphasises the consequences of neglected parental responsibility.

This chapter sought to challenge prevailing notions of Frankenstein's creature as a motherless child by theorising that he had two multi-faceted parents, each instrumental in reshaping and redefining notions of motherhood and parental responsibility, aspects as pivotal

to understandings of parenthood as the creature's presentation is in redefining childhood.[79] Irrespective of whether Victor ever explicitly concedes to the creature's demand to be regarded as "son" or fulfils his end of their reciprocal relationship, he is a collaborator in his construction and culpable for his resultant moral monstrosity as much as his physical. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this version of creatorship is akin to PBS's reluctant relationship with *Frankenstein* as a novel. Like PBS, Victor is a co-parent to a 'hideous progeny' that he never intended to claim as his own (*F:*10). The creature is not designated as a 'real child' in relation to Victor because the latter has neither fulfilled the requisite to be deemed a 'real mother' *or* a real father (Worthington 18). The reciprocal relationship inherent in their filial relation still exists between them; however, instead of enhancing the actualisation of the creature's *bildungsroman*, it inhibits it. In contrast, while Nature's participation in the creature's physical construction is unwilling, its constant presence thereafter evolves into a form of reciprocal parenthood and theoretically earns it the designation of a "real" parent despite its inability to physically assume the role. It cannot confer normality or community upon its creature, but it is to this parental figure that the child returns at the end of the novel, reflecting Shelley's final prioritisation of reciprocity over functionality in domestic relations.

Had Victor allowed the creature to fulfil his domestic aspirations by providing him with a companion, or had the creature been able to reconcile himself with a pre-social existence, he might have achieved a sense of adulthood and self-actualisation by the novel's conclusion. However, as with Virginia St. Pierre, the creature is denied the opportunity for functional adulthood by his creator. By condemning his creature as a villain and a 'devil' from birth, Victor predetermined his culpability and maturity, yet the creature never attains the level of

[79] For examples of the creature as a "motherless child" see Sandra Gilbert's "Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve" (1978), Anne McWhir's "Teaching the Monster to Read" (1990), and Steven Lehman's "The Motherless Child in Science Fiction: *Frankenstein* and *Moreau*". McWhir, in particular, emphasises the relationship between the creature's faulty education and his lack of mother: for 'education goes wrong when the mother is missing' (85).

adult development that this would require within the narrative (*F:*101). As Frijhoff contends, 'no child has ever discovered itself as a child'; thus, the creature's arrested formative development inhibits him from "discovering" himself or attaining the autonomy necessary to construct an identity independent of Victor's influence (12). By the end of the novel, the creature exists as a nonchild, simultaneously devoid of the protections of childhood and the autonomy anticipated in adulthood, and he expects to remain in this liminal state until his 'ashes [are] swept into the sea by the winds' (*F:*225).

Shelley's exploration of childhood and parental responsibility coincides with escalating contemporary discourse regarding the importance and extent of parental culpability. This conversation is resumed and expanded upon in the concluding case study of this thesis, wherein Thomas Hardy's attempts to negotiate the impact of *biological* parental responsibility in the creation of nonchildren comprise an examination of passive parental culpability.

3 HARDY AND HEREDITY: RETHINKING THE FAMILY CURSE IN *JUDE THE OBSCURE*

> 'No,' said Jude. 'It was in his nature to do it. The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us–boys of a sort unknown in the last generation–the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live.
>
> Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

3.1 BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN OLD AND NEW

When this thesis was initially devised, this final chapter was intended to be its first. The principal function of this chapter was to act as a baseline for the comparative analysis of more abstract parent-child dynamics and instances of faulty parental responsibility that materialise in Chapters One and Two. Indeed, my analyses of *Belinda* and *Frankenstein* necessitate a precursory justification of their suitability to a thesis focused on parents and children that *Jude the Obscure* does not demand.[80] Hardy's final novel centres on a child character whose youth seemingly precludes any debate regarding his status as a child, yet he simultaneously emerges as the most compelling example of a nonchild explored in this thesis.

> From the outset Hardy describes this unwanted offspring as separated from the rest of mankind. […] This other-worldly creature, who knows more than the others and perceives reality in a different fashion from them, is suspicious and constantly on his guard. Not only is he set apart from the adult world, but he is separated from his peers as well, in fact from all of nature. (Kuhn 32)

[80] *Jude the Obscure* was originally published in a serialised format in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1894/5), first as *The Simpletons* and later *Hearts Insurgent* before being printed as a complete novel in 1895. The novelistic version is unquestionably the definitive text, as the serialisation underwent significant edits to accommodate the magazine's "family" audience, thus altering Hardy's intended plot and structure. While the serialised version offers valuable insights into the development of the narrative and characters, this chapter will consider it only in terms of textual variations, with the 1895 edition serving as the primary reference for analysis.

Jude's classification as a baseline is contingent on the assumption that the novel primarily functions as an unequivocal tale of nurture-driven parental failure: a boy badly raised takes the lives of his siblings before his own. However, Hardy's explicit characterisation of Father Time as an 'other-worldly creature', intrinsically 'separated from the rest of mankind' and destined to suffer, positions him as nonconforming in a manner that surpasses the other child characters examined in this thesis (Kuhn 32). Father Time is presented as a nonchild both internally and externally: '[h]e was Age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing it so badly that his real self showed through crevices' (*J:*224). His very identity as Father Time, 'a nickname; because I look so aged, they say', indicates his unsuitability for childhood (*J:*227). This argument is reinforced by Sue's observation that Father Time 'seems to be wanted by nobody' (J:227). Honeyman and Kincaid's argument, that childhood as a construct is predominantly shaped by adult 'needs' and 'whim[s]', is directly challenged by the notion of a wholly unwanted child (*Erotic Innocence* 53). According to both, 'what we think [the child] is' is markedly different from the adult and 'we think that way' because we are trying to placate 'our imaginative and nostalgic demands' through them (*Child-Loving* 62, *Erotic Innocence* 144). Father Time's status as a precocious unwanted child means that he does not serve this placating purpose within the context of the novel, nor is he 'markedly different from the adult' (*Child-Loving* 62). Consequently, Father Time, characterised as 'preternaturally old' from the outset, is not only 'set apart from the adult world' but also 'separated from his peers' (*J:*227, Kuhn 32). Hardy's portrayal of Father Time thus illustrates the liminal position occupied by the nonchild, residing in a state that resists complete assimilation into either childhood or adulthood.

As Rousseau posits, the absence of a reciprocal parental relationship holds the potential to render a child nonconforming because '[i]f mothers are not real mothers, children are not

real children toward them' (Worthington 18).[81] This concept is thoroughly examined in Chapters One and Two; however, in *Jude*, we encounter a different version of this reciprocal relationship, where passive and active parental responsibility must be considered together.[82] Rousseau's assertion that parents who neglect the 'sacred duties' of parenthood 'will long shed bitter tears over this fault, and […] find no consolation' is actualised in *Jude*—perhaps more literally than Rousseau could have anticipated—manifesting as the direct consequence of both active and passive failures in parental responsibility (Worthington 23). Unlike the nonchildren in *Belinda* and *Frankenstein*, whose nonconformity is primarily attributed to inadequate parental care, Father Time's character is determined by both internal factors, such as hereditary predispositions, and external influences. Father Time does not gradually evolve into a nonchild over the course of the novel; he is nonconforming from birth, shaped by prenatal parental decisions, which are then compounded by subsequent active parental choices. Consequently, *Jude* emerges as a negotiation between archaic and contemporary notions of familial inheritance. As the title of this chapter suggests, I will argue that, in *Jude*, Hardy reassesses the notion of the folkloric family curse through the lens of contemporary scientific and heredity-focused discourse and, in doing so, draws the idea of a *biologically* cursed family lineage to the forefront of his realist narrative. Accordingly, this chapter has been repositioned to the end of this thesis. Rather than functioning as a baseline, it addresses a liminal text that synthesises antiquated and contemporary understandings of passive parental responsibility and genetic inheritance.

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[81] As I clarified in my introduction, although Hardy's emphasis on the predominance of nature over nurture and the growing significance of scientific perspectives by the 1890s diminishes Rousseau's prominence in this chapter, his fundamental principle of parental reciprocity remains integral. Consequently, while Rousseau's influence is less pronounced in this chapter compared to the preceding two, my analysis of parental reciprocity in *Jude* continues to be grounded in Rousseau's theories. In particular, his recurrent assertion that the 'neglect' of parental duties will result in 'bitter tears over this fault' and that children are rendered 'not real' by their caregivers rather than by inherent abnormalities (Worthington 23, 18).

[82] In this context, "passive" parental responsibility is used to contrast with the "active" parental responsibility discussed in Chapters One and Two. Genetic inheritance and other elements of nature are categorised as passive, whereas nurture is typically regarded as active.

The notion of a curse powerful enough to permeate an entire lineage has been historically employed in mythological and religious narratives as a device through which to examine the moral repercussions of transgression and explain subsequent deviations in the affected family's generational line. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this motif was extended to and developed in Gothic literature. From the ancient tales of the cursed House of Atreus to narratives of retributive spirits enacting ancestral prophesy in Gothic literature, these narratives require their renderings of existence to go beyond the boundaries of realism into the fantastic and, subsequently, require their readers to temporarily suspend their disbelief. While some of Thomas Hardy's works share this preoccupation with the fantastic, particularly his shorter fiction, his later novels mediate the boundary between science and folklore to convey a new, realist version of the family curse.[83] Within these novels, Hardy does not require his readers to suspend their disbelief because, by transposing the family curse into a realist context, he reformulates the Gothic motif into an extension of contemporary scientific discourses surrounding heredity. Although these "curses" still find their origin in ancestry, they are not revenge-driven or mystical but rather the natural outcome of an inherited trait or neurosis.

Hardy's realist revision of the family curse emerges predominantly in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) to varying degrees. *Tess* contains the most obvious "trial-run" of this device, negotiating the boundary between traditional fantastic representations of the family curse and this new realist form before Hardy commits entirely to it in *Jude*. The d'Urberville curse, for example, seemingly aligns with traditional depictions of ancestral sin, as the descendants of a malevolent ancient d'Urberville are haunted by the spectral image of a ghostly coach, said to foreshadow the repetition of violence and murder that follows the family. Although this cyclical imagery suggests a supernatural and fate-driven

[83] Although several of Hardy's short stories overtly engage with this notion of a supernatural curse, "The Withered Arm" (1888) for instance, this chapter will examine how his later novels deviate from this formula and use the realist family curse as a device to shift focus onto more scientific explanations, such as inherited neurosis.

explanation for Tess's eventual tragedy, nineteenth-century scientific discourse pervades throughout the novel. Thus, rather than being indicative of a folkloric curse, Tess's "murderous" nature is tied to an 'obscure strain in the d'Urberville blood', with Hardy utilising Angel as a mouthpiece to propose that the 'family tradition of the coach and murder might have arisen because the d'Urbervilles had been known to do these things' (408). This integrative approach serves to bridge the gap between old mysticism and emerging contemporary scientific thought.

In *Jude*, these alternate supernatural pretexts are abandoned completely, and Hardy commits to a purely realist interpretation of the generational curse. This transition signals a departure from mystical explanations, attributing shared familial afflictions and behaviourisms to 'sommat in [the Fawley] blood' instead of supernatural intervention (*J*:58). Hardy's subsequent depiction of the enduring compulsion to procreate despite the looming possibility of severe congenital defects, and the ensuing manifestation of self-destructive tendencies that ultimately culminate in Father Time's fratricide and suicide, allows him to engage with broader contemporary debates on reproductive legislation and parental responsibility within a more realist framework than the Gothic, or overtly supernatural, would allow.

3.1.1 THE 'GREAT ENGLISH MALADY'

It is appropriate that Hardy's examination of suicide emerges in a period when occurrences of death by suicide were, reportedly, on the rise and investigations into suicidal motivations were being forced to consider more than just situational factors. Despite the general condemnation of suicide before the eighteenth century, predominantly deriving from religious considerations, the subsequent centuries marked significantly more discussion surrounding "justifiable" suicides. In "The Ethics of Suicide in the Renaissance and Reformation", Gary B. Ferngren argues that,

> By the end of the seventeenth century the 'modern' view of suicide had been formulated: that suicide was not an offence against God but merely a matter of personal choice unencumbered by theological or dogmatic considerations and devoid of blame or disgrace. (155)

The religious connotations that had condemned suicide as immoral still existed, but the 'modern' view considered the individual factors that led up to the act.[84] This attitude is encapsulated in David Hume's *Essays on Suicide* (1777) in which he asserts that 'a man who retires from life does no harm to society' is not obliged to 'do a small good to society at the expense of a great harm' to himself (18–9). This 'modern', sympathetic, view of suicide endured alongside the ever-present religious condemnation in Western Europe and provided another outlook wherein the act could be viewed as a reasonable display of personal choice, provided that it did not harmfully impact anyone outside of the afflicted individual.

A limitation of Hume's sympathetic analysis, however, is that it overlooks the fact that suicide was not solely a personal choice influenced by external factors but could also result from underlying mental illness. This, coupled with the rising number of suicides reported in the press across Europe, shifted the nineteenth-century perception of suicide from a distant concept to a pressing societal concern. Reverend Solomon Piggott, for example, felt compelled to publish a treatise on avoidance of suicide in 1824, noting that it 'would astonish any one who has not examined the subject to trace the number of suicides which each weekly paper details' (11). Henry Morselli's 1881 study corroborated this observation, confirming that 'suicide ha[d] increased from the beginning of the century and [was] continually increasing in almost all the civilised countries' since the beginning of the century, with English suicides

[84] Daniel Gordon, in "The Transformation of Suicide in Western Thought" (2016), clarifies this dual perspective on suicide:

> Two moral shadows darken suicide. One of these is cast by medieval theology, the other by the modern behavioural sciences. For Saint Augustine, who framed the Catholic position on suicide, self-killing is a sin, a form of murder. For psychologists since the nineteenth century, disposing of one's life is a sign of mental illness. For Emile Durkheim, the founder of sociology, suicide is a pathological "social fact" illustrating the failure of modern individualism. (32)

rising from an average of 967 annually between 1836 and 1840 to 1770 in 1876 alone (15, 18). This apparent surge contributed to the perception of England as the 'land of suicide', a reputation that Roland Bartel traces back to the early eighteenth century wherein it 'became proverbial for both foreigners and Englishmen to refer to suicide as the great English malady' (Morselli 15, Bartel 145). This was not, however, entirely statistically accurate. Barbara Gates, in *Victorian Suicide* (2014), points out that until 1858, there was no 'accurate, consistent system of classification for cause of death' in England and even then, it was met with 'widespread scepticism' and suspicions of concealment (18). For this reason, it 'took an Italian' to reliably report on the suicide statistics and 'Morselli gratefully filled the gap left by the British themselves' (18). Indeed, Morselli debunked the misconception that England had the highest Western suicide rates, ranking it below Germany, Prussia, and France, the latter of which reported 5804 cases of suicide in 1876. While Morselli's findings indicated a rise in English suicides, it remains uncertain whether this was due to a genuine increase or more 'consistent' record-keeping as Gates suggests (18). Nevertheless, Bartel notes that the English 'were accused of committing suicide at the slightest provocation and of having the highest suicide rate in the world' and, rather than contesting this, they 'accepted this reputation as a *fait accompli*' and viewed it as indicative of a 'major national problem' (145). Thus, it is fitting that many of Hardy's contemporaries perceived themselves as in the midst of an epidemic and, by 'the close of what we choose to call the Victorian age, suicide was felt to be something of a universal plague' (McDonagh 307, Gates xiv).

This sensationalism was not wholly based on statistics; as Bartel reports, 'the English helped to establish this reputation' themselves through the 'avidity with which they discussed suicide as a peculiar English problem' (145).[85] The enhanced freedom of the press in the

[85] Michelle Faubert builds on this idea in her essay, "Introduction to Suicidal Romanticism: Origins and Influences", noting that:

nineteenth century facilitated a profound permeation of suicide into public discourse, compelling society to adopt a more realistic perspective on the issue that eschewed the romanticised and dramatic portrayals found in literature and mythology. The suicides depicted in nineteenth-century media were not sensationalised tales of heroic self-sacrifice but rather acts of desperation or impulsive compulsion driven by seemingly intrinsic or mundane factors such as poverty, societal pressures, and mental and physical illness. A consequence of this increased freedom was the more graphic reporting of suicides. A notable example of this is the 1838 suicide of Margaret Moyes, whose death was reported in graphic detail, earning her case 'notoriety akin to that of Victorian murder cases' (Gates 38). Moyes had 'mounted the stairs of London's Monument, hoisted herself to the top of the rail, and swiftly dropped to a bloody death', shocking the unsuspecting Londoners below (Gates 38). *The Observer* conveyed every gory detail to its readers, including Moyes' 'violently severed' arm that flew 'several yards' from the rest of her body' ("Margaret Moyes"). Such explicit media portrayals contributed to public fears of imitative behaviour, with George Burrows, a leading contemporary physician and expert on insanity, observing that nothing is 'so attractive as tales of wonder and horror, and every coroner's inquest on an unhappy being who has destroyed himself is read with extraordinary avidity' (448). Indeed, this was illustrated in 1839 when a 'fifteen-year-old boy […] re-enacted Margaret Moyes's suicidal plunge to the Monument Yard', suggesting that the descriptive examples of suicides in the press presented themselves to some as opportunities rather than warnings (Gates 42–3). The suicides that the media was sensationalising were now realistic and replicable. And this is the environment conveyed in Thomas Hardy's *Jude*, a novel that presents suicide without the filter of heroism.

> The subject of suicide was of great official and popular concern to the British, who believed that they were uniquely afflicted with the propensity to kill themselves. (v)

3.1.2 A 'DISPLEASING' AND 'REVOLTING' NOVEL

Hardy's exploration of suicide in *Jude* demonstrably resonated with the nineteenth century's heightened preoccupation with the subject and concurrent discourses surrounding biological inheritance yet the novel elicited significant controversy. Margaret Oliphant, for instance, criticised *Jude* as a 'disgusting' attack 'upon the institutes of marriage' and gender roles (*Blackwood's Magazine* 1896), while the Bishop of Wakefield was allegedly 'so disgusted with its insolence and indecency' that he threw his copy into the fire (*Yorkshire Post* 1896).[86] Even generally favourable reviews, such as that of William Dean Howells, a friend of Hardy's, labelled the events of the novel as 'displeasing' and 'revolting' (*Harper's Weekly* 1895). This vehement response to a novel that appeared in accordance with contemporary interests may be clarified in two primary ways. First, its publication followed closely on the heels of another of Hardy's works, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, which had also faced considerable criticism.[87] The second, and arguably more significant, reason for this critical reception is rooted in the way Hardy's portrayal of suicide in *Jude* markedly diverges from the prevalent literary 'Romantic enthusiasm' that María Losada Friend attributes to the renowned suicide of Thomas Chatterton in 1770:

[86] Hardy recalls this incident in *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892–1928* (1930), an autobiography written by Hardy in the third person and then attributed to his wife Florence Hardy. Hardy, '[k]nowing the difficulty of burning a thick book even in a good fire, and the infrequency of fires of any sort in summer' was 'mildly sceptical of the literal truth of the bishop's story' but good-naturedly deemed it a 'pity to the interests of his own reputation to disturb the Episcopal narrative of adventures with *Jude*' (48).

[87] Merryn Williams labels *Jude* as Hardy's 'most abused novel', but this label also applies to its predecessor, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (180). Rejected three times in its original form, *Tess* was eventually published serially, but this only delayed the 'furious controversy' (Keith 83). Oliphant, for example, objected not to Tess's 'early stain' but to the notion that a 'Pure Woman' could be 'betrayed into fine living and fine clothes as the mistress of her seducer' (*Blackwood's Magazine* 1892). Mowbray Morris criticised Hardy's portrayal of Tess as overly sensual and 'paraded over and over again with a persistence like that of a horse-dealer egging on some wavering customer' (*Quarterly Review* 1892). This feeling of discord between Hardy and his contemporaries served to exacerbate the contention surrounding *Jude*. If *Jude* is, in fact, Hardy's 'most abused' novel, it likely presides over *Tess* in that respect only because reviewers read it with the former controversy in mind (Williams 180).

> The best figures of Romanticism felt compelled to write about Chatterton's suicide, making it part of their works and starting a tradition that lamented and glorified the dramatic death of this youngster. (124)

Nick Groom, in his introduction to *Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture* (1999), elaborates on the Romantic idealisation of Chatterton's death: 'This angelic poet has suffered for his genius—starving and destitute, mad and suicidal, and now dead' (3). This portrayal of the 'poet crucified by his prodigious genius' epitomises the Romantic optimism from which Hardy diverges. Instead of exploring the underlying motivations for suicidal impulses, Romantic writers created an exalted 'image of the Romantic individual', where 'suicide became a symbol of the fearless spirit that triumphed over death and was somehow conceived as a victory of the individual against adversity' (Friend 124). Michelle Faubert expands on the Romantic tendency to label suicide as 'heroic' but contends that, towards the end of the period, 'the legal understanding of suicide was linked almost invariably to victimhood' and 'English courts found suicides to have been insane in over 97% of cases' (vi).[88] It is with this more realist interpretation of suicide that Hardy engages in *Jude* in his refusal to relegate his controversial themes to the periphery; instead, he displays them prominently at the forefront of his novel. Hardy's suicides, both attempted and realised, are starkly removed from the optimistic Romantic ideal: they are neither 'fearless' nor 'victor[ies]' (Friend 124).

Moreover, *Jude* addresses not only suicide but *child suicide*. While Hardy's examination aligns with contemporary interest and the increasing media focus on child suicide, as Shuttleworth notes that the 'problem of child suicide figured strongly in newspaper and periodical discussion of the 1880s and 1890s', his approach diverges from conventional assumptions, particularly regarding the motivations behind child suicide (*The Mind of the Child* 340). William Westcott's 1885 study documents the increasing incidence of juvenile suicide in

[88] Faubert takes this statistic from Ian Marsh's *Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth* (2010).

nineteenth-century England, reporting 81 suicides among children aged ten to fourteen between 1865 and 1874, including 45 males and 36 females, suggesting that child suicide rates were 'increasing in England and almost all continental states' (112).[89] Westcott attributes these suicides to inherent childhood sensitivity and the pressures of education, citing 'several English cases of children killing themselves, because they are unable to perform school tasks' (112).[90] However, *Jude* offers an alternative explanation: heredity. This interpretation controversially redefines suicide from a response to external pressures, as Westcott suggests, to something that can suddenly and unexpectedly affect anyone with a genetic predisposition toward suicidal tendencies, including children.

This chapter will explore the evolving concept of heredity in the nineteenth century from two distinct perspectives: moral and biological inheritance. The first model of heredity I will address is James Crichton-Browne's theory of insanity in utero, as introduced in his seminal work on moral inheritance, "Psychical Diseases of Early Life" (1860). Crichton-Browne posits that inherited diseases result from immoral actions by either parent before or during conception, which 'hurtfully affect their offspring' (291). This early theory of heredity links conditions such as melancholy, addiction, and suicidal tendencies in children to the moral character of their parents. Although Crichton-Browne's theories have been discredited by modern science, they provide valuable context for understanding the scientific perspectives available to Hardy during the period he was writing. As Gates observes, 'the 1850s saw more discussion of suicide and moral insanity than suicide and empirical morality', but Crichton-Browne's theories integrate these concepts under the framework of heredity (16). The second

[89] This statistic is corroborated by Henry Morselli's 1881 study.

[90] For a more comprehensive analysis of motivations for child suicide in the nineteenth-century see Arthur McDonald's "Statistics of Child Suicide" (1907). While this source offers valuable insights, it is limited by its lack of clear differentiation in locational statistics. For instance, MacDonald includes a table outlining the causes of child suicide in 200 cases, including 'fear of punishment–58', 'bite of conscience–28', 'bad treatment–18', 'sickness–12', and 'reading–2', but does not contextualise these figures with specific locations or dates (264).

model of heredity examined in this chapter is the concept of biological inheritance, as pioneered by nineteenth-century theorists such as Henry Maudsley and S. A. K. Strahan. This framework suggests that mental illness and irregularities can be genetically transmitted from parent to child, potentially leading to a hereditary predisposition towards suicidal thoughts and impulses, or a hereditary suicide "taint".

Explorations of these disparate frameworks of heredity are essential to my discussion of Hardy's child suicide plot because, in killing himself and his siblings, Father Time fulfils his moral and biological heredity-driven providences, although Hardy places significantly more emphasis on the latter. Throughout this chapter, I will also examine alternate interpretations of Father Time's suicide plot, including Schopenhauerian and Malthusian readings. This secondary analysis aims to connect these interpretations with contemporary debates on procreation ethics and the emerging advocacy for regulations concerning the reproduction of individuals with inheritable disorders. Within this context, Father Time's final act of destruction can be reconsidered through a more sympathetic lens, portraying his murder/suicide as an attempt to provide an escape from suffering for himself and his siblings. Such a reassessment may recast Father Time as a martyr rather than a monster, bringing an end to the Fawleys' cycle of heredity-driven suffering. Building upon my earlier analyses of *Belinda* and *Frankenstein*, this discussion will culminate in an examination of Rousseauian parental reciprocity, comparing Hardy's depiction of passive parental failure with the active neglect of parental responsibility explored in my previous chapters.

3.2 CONDEMNED, NOT TO DEATH, BUT TO LIFE: HARDY AND SCHOPENHAUER

Before commencing a discussion of the science of heredity, and Hardy's direct engagement with it in *Jude*, it is beneficial to explore an alternate explanation for the novel's intense preoccupation with the inevitability and futility of procreation: the growing prevalence of anti-natalism and Schopenhauerian pessimism in the nineteenth century. Although Arthur

Schopenhauer never explicitly declared himself to be of the anti-natalist school of philosophy, the two modes of thinking are regularly compounded in scholarly discussions. Yet, there is a significant difference: Schopenhauerian philosophy does not necessarily suggest that humans should not procreate, only that doing so *will* bring inevitable suffering to one's offspring. Schopenhauer's works reflect a branch of anti-natalism, commonly labelled "birth-negation", that promotes the belief that '*Als Zweck unseres Daseins ist in der Tat nichts anderes anzugeben als die Erkenntnis, daß wir besser nicht da wären*' (*"*Zur Lehre von der Verneinung des Willens zum Leben*"* 620).[91] Similarly, Hardy rarely directly professed his interest in Schopenhauerian philosophy (with only one specific reference to it throughout his fiction) and resented the general accusations of pessimism that followed him throughout his career.[92] Edmund Gosse reinforced this notion in 1909 when he wrote that Hardy did 'not admit any influence from Schopenhauer on his work' (Qtd. in Millgate 185). However, as early as 1891 Hardy was extensively quoting from and summarising English translations of Schopenhauer's *Studies in Pessimism* in his *Literary Notebooks*.[93]

One quotation stands out as particularly appropriate to discussions of Hardy's realist family curse: 'Children [are] condemned not to death but to life' (*LN II:*28). Another passage that Hardy reproduces into his notes is more immediately relevant to my discussion of *Jude*:

[91] Translated by Judith Norman in *The World as Will and Representation* (2018): 'There is in fact no goal to our existence except the recognition that we would have been better off not existing' (620).

[92] When discussing Mr Clare's 'creed of determinism' in *Tess* Hardy refers to it as almost amounting 'to a vice, and quite amounted, on its negative side, to a renunciative philosophy which had cousinship with that of Schopenhauer and Leopardi.' (175)

[93] According to Lennart Bjork's explanatory notes in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, Hardy's relationship with Schopenhauer's work pre-1891 was reliant on secondary sources. Many 'traces of Schopenhauer's philosophy found in Hardy's works' derive from James Sully's *Pessimism: A History and Criticism* (1877) (*LN I*:389). From 1981 onward, however, Hardy began quoting directly from T. Bailey Saunders' English translation of *Studies in Pessimism* (1891). See *Literary Notebooks II* entries 1782–1800 for more examples.

> ‘In early youth, as we contemplate our coming life, we are like children in a theatre before the curtain is raised, sitting there in high spirits and eagerly waiting for the play to begin.’ (*LN II:*28)

Hardy subtly alludes to this notion in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* when he presents the ‘six helpless creatures’ of the Durbeyfield household ‘who had never been asked if they wished for life’ (30). Here, Hardy introduces a question that will continually arise for the remainder of this novel and his next: is it moral to continue bringing children into the world without their consent, especially when the family to which they are entrusted is ‘shiftless’ and without the motivation or means to change their situation? (30) This line of thought is developed further when Tess is forcibly impregnated and inadvertently applies more pressure onto the household she previously resented for excessive procreation. However, the concept does not reach complete realisation until *Jude*.

Hardy’s final novel engages directly with Schopenhauerian philosophy to the extent that the aforementioned curtain analogy finds its way into the narrative world of the novel. The narrator labels Jude as ‘the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again’ (*J:*15–16). This passage can be treated as a microcosm of the Schopenhauerian ideas that Hardy continues to examine throughout *Jude*: life is perpetual suffering while the ‘curtain is raised’ and this cannot be rectified until the curtain falls and death ensures all is ‘well’ once more (*LN II* 28, *J:*16). Aaron Matz argues in “Hardy and the Vanity of Procreation” that Father Time’s murder/suicide should be read as inevitable, ‘a foreseeable event in Hardy’s fiction’, for it ‘returns to a problem that Hardy had been working through in his earlier novels—the moral dilemma of having children’ (7). Indeed, just as Schopenhauer believed it would be better if we did not exist, Father Time’s characterisation explores this prospect as he attempts to fix his unsought existence by undoing it.

In line with this interpretation, it is appropriate that almost no one in Hardy's final novel appears to possess a want or will to live. As early as the second chapter, a young Jude is already cursing his existence over a minor inconvenience. This diverges from the usual transient lapse of childhood cheerfulness, however, and evolves into a tense reflection on his individual insignificance alongside a desire to 'prevent himself growing up' (*J:*17). This quotation can be interpreted in two distinct ways. On the surface, Jude's aversion to his own growth indicates a reluctance to confront life through an adult lens. Beneath this, it may signify a desire to stop existing altogether, for he 'did not want to be a man' (*J:*17). The initial interpretation is reinforced by Jude's swift change in demeanour following his pessimistic musings—he 'sprang up' and 'forgot his despondency'—and then undercut in his melancholic desire to 'wish himself out of the world' once more by the following chapter (*J:*17*,* 27). This cyclical pattern of introspection echoes Schopenhauer's reflection that '[a]ny incident, however trivial, that rouses disagreeable emotion, leaves an after-effect in our mind', in "Further Psychological Observations" (63). Hardy's characterisation of Jude engages with this notion of recurrent emotion as, with every disappointment, his reluctance to continue living intensifies.[94] The realisation of a small mistake through Jude's juvenile lens transforms into 'the crushing recognition of [a] gigantic error' and the resumed wish 'that he had never been born' (*J:*27). This alignment of Jude's characterisation and Schopenhauer's notion of birth negation appears continues to recur within the novel.

Schopenhauer, despite engaging extensively with the notion that life entails continual suffering, comprehensively examines suicide in only one essay within *Studies in Pessimism*, aptly titled "On Suicide".

> It will generally be found that, as soon as the terrors of life reach the point at which they outweigh the terrors of death, a man will put an end to his life. But the terrors of death offer

[94] The translation of Schopenhauer's *Studies in Pessimism* used in this section is the same one that Hardy quotes in his *Literary Notebooks*, translated by T. Baily Saunders (1891).

> considerable resistance; they stand like a sentinel at the gate leading out of this world. Perhaps there is no man alive who would not have already put an end to his life, if this end had been of a purely negative character, a sudden stoppage of existence. (49)

In his view, life is only preferable to death until the moment that the 'terrors of death' outweigh 'the terrors of life' (49). Beyond this point, 'a man will put an end to his life' (49). This argument presents suicide as the inevitable result of extreme melancholic feeling but simultaneously reinforces the necessary extremity of this emotion through the image of the 'terrors of death' standing like 'sentinel[s] at the gate leading out of this world' (49). While this depiction effectively illustrates the inherent human psychological resistance to death, it diverges from Jude's personal experience, suggesting that individuals' hereditarily predisposed suicidal tendencies may bypass these sentinels and the 'terror' they represent (49). Jude's first active suicide attempt follows a different Schopenhauerian notion wherein the act of suicide is viewed as an 'experiment', 'a question which man puts to Nature, trying to force her to an answer' (50). When Jude, driven by suicidal ideation, positions himself in the middle of the frozen pond, he poses a question to nature: should he live? Nature hesitates and allows a few cracks to form, but eventually, Jude realises the 'cracking had ceased' despite his best efforts to 'force her answer' (*J:*58, "On Suicide" 50). Hardy's presentation of Jude's appeal for the escape of suicide, as Schopenhauerian thought would deem it, is denied on this occasion: '[p]eaceful death abhorred him as a subject and would not take him' (*J:*59). Sue's experience of attempted suicide is similar in that she, too, emerges from her attempt physically unscathed. Both characters pose the same question to nature and are rejected. Hardy integrates Schopenhauer's notion of "birth negation" into his characterisation of Jude and Sue in order to present two individuals burdened with their continued existence and bound to perpetuate this cycle through their proclivity to procreate. As a result, Hardy continues to underline the Schopenhauerian notion of inevitable suffering and 'the recognition that we would have been

better off not existing' in his portrayal of the central child of this chapter, Father Time ("On the Doctrine of the Negation of the Will to Life" 620).

Hardy presents Father Time as a child ready-imbued with Schopenhauerian principles. From the moment he appears in the novel, Father Time is characterised as a precocious child. However, his precocity does not display itself in advanced intelligence or morality, as in other nineteenth-century literary children, but in his extreme pessimism. The precocious child was a common literary archetype in the nineteenth century and featured prominently in the works of popular writers such as Carroll, Dickens, and Eliot. More significant to this thesis, the notion of child precocity became a source of concern in the nineteenth century. Marah Gubar notes that 'British novelists, scientists, and journalists had all begun to pound home the message that "precocious children usually die early"' ("Precocious Children", *Lady's Newspaper*, Qtd in Gubar 36). Indeed, Claudia Nelson, in *Precocious Children and Childish Adults Age Inversion in Victorian Literature* (2012) reiterates this sentiment in her claim that the precocious child 'is often associated with death', either of the parent or the child themselves (13). Accordingly, that which Jude experienced as a child under duress comes naturally to his offspring, as he casts a 'shadow' over every happy moment he witnesses (*J:*234). In an essay published two years before the publication of *Jude*, Frederick Adye details the 'peculiarly susceptible' nature of the precocious child to 'all those influences which make for sorrow in the human heart' (291). According to Adye:

> They do so often die, these old-fashioned children, in real-life as in fiction […] there is somewhat in them which is not of this world… (286)

In Father Time, Hardy illustrates Adye's notion of a precocious, 'old-fashioned', child whose distinctive 'sorrow' impedes him from perceiving the world in the present tense (286, 291). Rather, his intrinsic premature knowledge forces him to comprehend the transience and fragility of the world. Adye's collation of the precocious child with death is particularly apt in

this regard, as Hardy presents a child whose narrative is constantly obscured by his proactive sentiments of death and corruption. Even the beauty of nature, something that commonly has a restorative effect on Hardy's characters, cannot contend with his farsighted morbidity:

> "I am very, very sorry, Father and Mother," he said. "But please don't mind!—I can't help it. I should like the flowers very very much, if I didn't keep on thinking they'd be all withered in a few days!" (*J:*234)

Father Time does not worry about the 'terrors of death' because he sees them all plainly in life already, and therefore there is nothing left to fear ("On Suicide" 49). In this way, Father Time's actions feel inevitable. He had always been an unwanted child, and Sue's misguided choice to speak to him of the misery of over-procreation as she would an adult enables him to generalise that feeling to *all children*. Jude and Sue's children are never named in the novel and are only given identifying features *after* their deaths; therefore, it is easy to see Father Time as an "everyman" or "everychild" type figure. If *he*, the characterised child, is unwanted and a burden, then they must all be.

Geoffrey Thurley, in *The Psychology of Hardy's Novels*, claims that 'Hardy's world is non-procreative; children are an embarrassment, an irrelevancy—worse—a sign of the curse over mankind' (168). This sentiment encapsulates the overarching argument that eventually propels Father Time's actions at the end of the novel. Hardy's pessimistic physician underlines this anti-natalist line of argument in his assertion that Father Time belongs to a new group of children 'unknown in the last generation', that emerged as a result 'of new views of life' (*J:*264). These children are 'not of this world', they 'see all [of life's] terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them', and the result is a 'universal wish not to live' (Adye 286, *J:*264). This representation of existence keenly resembles Schopenhauer's impression 'that we would have been better off not existing', but to suggest that Father Time killed his siblings and himself *solely* due to a 'universal wish not to live' oversimplifies his narrative trajectory and risks generalising his situation rather than recognising it as the direct

result of the Fawley family "curse" (*"*On the Doctrine of the Negation of the Will to Life*"* 620, *J:*264).[95] While Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy is crucial in shaping Hardy's anti-natalist depiction of Father Time, a comprehensive examination necessitates the acknowledgement of the pivotal role played by other factors including genetic inheritance and the ethical considerations of procreation. The synthesis of these factors is integral to my discussion of parental responsibility within *Jude*.

3.3 HARDY AND MORAL INHERITANCE

Sally Shuttleworth notes that the initial 'European discussions of child suicide […] tended to stress parental ill-treatment as the dominating cause', but the first 'specifically English' engagement with the topic 'by the psychiatrist James Crichton-Browne in 1860, emphasised instead the role of heredity' (138). Appropriately, Ellie Cope observes that 'Hardy's interest in the human mind was notably informed by his acquaintance with psychologist James Crichton-Browne', and this is corroborated in *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy* wherein Hardy recounts several of their interactions from 1893 to 1907 (38).[96] Perhaps the most noteworthy meeting occurred on 'a flying visit to London' at the end of July 1893, during which Hardy 'had "an interesting scientific conversation" with Sir James Crichton-Browne':

> A woman's brain, according to him, is as large in proportion to her body as a man's. The most passionate women are not those selected in civilized society to breed from, as in a state of nature, but the colder; the former going on the streets (I am sceptical about this). (*Later Years* 24)

[95] *The Illustrated London News* accused the doctor's comments of transforming a dark scene into a 'ghastly farse' in its implication that Father Time's behaviour was becoming more common among the English youth: 'We all know perfectly well that baby Schopenhauer's are not coming into the world in shoals' ("Mr Hardy's New Novel", 1896).

[96] Likewise, William Greenslade's 1994 monograph, *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel*, claims that '[b]y the time Hardy came to prepare for *Jude* in 1892, there is ample evidence that he was well up in developments in psychiatric Darwinism' and counted among his acquaintances 'significant medical and scientific figures such as Clifford Allbutt, Ray Lankester and Sir James Crichton-Browne' (170–1).

Although this conversation does not pertain to Crichton-Browne's more relevant research on childhood insanity, it is reasonable to infer that their enduring friendship, coupled with Crichton-Browne's prominence in a field that Hardy was demonstrably interested in, would entail an awareness of the former's other notable scientific contributions. This is reinforced by Hardy's account of a 'scientific evening at the *conversazione* of the Royal Society' in May 1893, during which he 'talked on the exhibits' to Crichton-Browne 'without (I flatter myself) betraying excessive ignorance' (*Later Years* 18). Indeed, J. O. Bailey interprets Hardy's self-proclaimed scepticism of Crichton-Browne's theories concerning the female brain as indicative that 'Hardy, from his twenties onward, cultivated an interest in science by reading widely enough to hold his own in discussion with scientists' (666).[97]

Crichton-Browne's theory of insanity in utero, introduced in his foundational 1860 essay "Psychical Diseases of Early Life", marked a pivotal moment in nineteenth-century psychiatry. He became known as 'the first medical theorist to argue unequivocally that children could become insane' (Shuttleworth 139). Crichton-Browne set out to 'demonstrate […] that insanity does occur in utero, in infancy, and childhood, and that it is by no means so uncommon as supposed':

> The mental aberrations of infancy and childhood, excepting idiocy and imbecility, may be said to be yet uninvestigated–undescribed. The field is untrodden! the land unexplored! Here and there, indeed, in the literature of psychology, a stray case of infantile insanity is to be found recorded, but these have never been collected nor arranged. The existence of insanity in early life has even been disputed. Some distinguished authorities have doubted its occurrence previous to puberty. (*PD:*286)

Crichton-Browne cites two 'distinguished authorities' on insanity, George Burrows and Johann Spurzheim, as perpetrators of this misapprehension: 'Burrows says, "As a general maxim

[97]Crichton-Browne was aware of Hardy's works and 'sent [him] a letter praising *Tess*, which "examines the psychologic tissues with a powerful lens free from chromatic aberration"' in 1892 (Shuttleworth 347).

insanity cannot occur before the approach of puberty…"' (286).[98] This oversight in the critical consideration of childhood insanity, he posited, stemmed from a prevailing tendency to attribute the 'incoherent speeches' or 'odd remarks' of children to infantile babble, rather than recognising these as potential indications of 'delusions, illusions, and hallucinations' (*PD*:287). In older children, he continues,

> …those eccentricities and peculiarities of conduct, feeling and temper, those unnatural aversions and desires, which are traced by parents and guardians to wilful perversity, may be but the exposition of morbid changes going on in the brain. (*PD:*287)

Although he acknowledges that childhood 'insanity is still […] comparatively rare', by opening up the possibility that 'infants and children suffer more frequently from psycopathies than [had] hitherto been believed', Crichton-Browne could pioneer research that had not been attempted in this form before (*PD*:287). Crichton-Browne offers three potential explanations for the rarity of infantile insanity:

> …firstly, because infancy is not exposed to many of those predisposing and existing causes which operate at other periods of life, and which go on increasing until maturity is passed; secondly, because fewer faculties of mind being then developed, fewer are liable to be assailed by disease; and, thirdly, because the delicacy of the infant brain is such that it is unable to undergo severe morbid action without perilling life. (*PD:*286)

As Shuttleworth theorises, '[i]t is probably no coincidence that suicide of children under 15 was first added to the English [statistic] tables the year after his article' (139).

Crichton-Browne's primary thesis does not resemble that which we would recognise as heredity in modern times. He deviates from notions concerning biological inheritance by proposing that moral inheritance plays a substantial role in the transmission of characteristics

[98] See: Burrows: *Cursory Remarks on Legislative Regulation of the Insane* (1819), *An Inquiry into certain Errors relative to Insanity and their Consequences, Physical, Moral, and Civil* (1820), *Commentaries on the Causes, Forms, Symptoms, and Treatment, Moral and Medical, of Insanity* (1828) and Spurzheim, *Observations on the Deranged Manifestations of the Mind* (1817).

from a parent to a child. In doing so, Crichton-Browne expands his theory of heredity to encompass external factors that impact parents prior to or during gestation, alongside 'any departure, during the past lives of the parents, from the strict and immutable code of natural laws' (*PD:*291). Thus, Crichton-Browne's research seeks to address the question of how beings produced 'apparently under the same circumstances, from the same material' can exhibit vast differences and distinct characteristics, particularly in terms of mental illness (*PD:*288). In his view, inheritance cannot be solely explained by biological transmission; otherwise each child would 'be precisely similar' (*PD:*288). The 'mere time which elapses between two periods of conception must greatly alter the conditions of the parents' and consequently explain the differentiation between siblings (*PD:*288). To illustrate his point, Crichton-Browne emphasises how often 'we observe the same causes operating upon similar individuals produce marvellously different results' (*PD:*288). For instance, one sibling may be 'strong, robust, and healthy', while another 'has been weak and puny and fragile' from birth (*PD:*288). Crichton-Browne examines three fundamental factors as potential explanations for these variations: 'the respective positions which the parents hold to each other', the 'respective ages of the parents', and the 'past history of the parents' (*PD:*289). It is with the latter two of these principles which Hardy engages in *Jude*.

According to Crichton-Browne, those 'conceived and born in the early life of the parents' are 'distinguished by a predominance of the passions and animal nature', while those 'produced in the prime of life' have superior intellectual facilities (*PD:*289). Although Father Time was conceived when his parents were very young, he cannot be 'distinguished by a predominance of the passions and animal nature' in the *typical* sense (*PD:*289). He is seldom imbued with extremes of ecstasy or anger, but his passions do manifest in his tendency to make irrational, impulsive decisions, especially concerning the lives of others. In this way, his 'animal nature' does not manifest in a savage or licentious countenance like his mother's but

in his merciless capacity to look upon himself and his siblings as a burden to the family and callously rid them of their problem (*PD:*289).[99] In having his child character sacrifice himself and his siblings for the apparent "greater good", Hardy demonstrates a system of logic more congruent with principles observed in the animal kingdom and the Darwinian theory of the "survival of the fittest" than typical human sensibilities. Comparatively, Jude's other children exist as blank figures in Hardy's narrative world, and the reader never learns of any distinguishing features with which they are endowed. Had the narrative allowed for their survival beyond early childhood, Hardy might have employed their incestuous parentage as a means to explore Crichton-Browne's first principle of genetic differentiation: the 'respective positions which the parents hold to each other' (*PD:*289). Instead, the younger children play no part in Hardy's design for the novel except against which to compare Father Time's maladies.

Shuttleworth describes Crichton-Browne's work as 'an unstable mixture of the old and new' (Shuttleworth 37). Hardy's apparent engagement with Crichton-Browne is made even more appropriate through this comparison: while the latter perhaps did not intend to combine the old and new in his research, the former certainly did. This discord is exemplified throughout "Psychical Diseases of Early Life", wherein Crichton-Browne alternates between nineteenth-century scientific advances in heredity and archaic notions of moral inheritance and maternal imagination, treating both with the same credence (*PD:*289). One of Crichton-Browne's most outdated assertions centred around the idea of the maternal imagination, or impression, which suggested that thoughts or fears of the mother during pregnancy could affect their offspring, resulting in defects or specific traits. He recounts a case study of a mother who, throughout five

[99] The notion of being ruled by an 'animal nature' is particularly appropriate to Hardy's presentation of Arabella, a woman who continually gives in to her urges and encourages Jude to do the same. It is no surprise that contemporary reviewers recognised this trait in her, with Margaret Oliphant labelling her a 'human pig' (*Blackwood's Magazine* 1996).

pregnancies, was terrified that each child would be born blind—of the five, two were allegedly born completely blind, while the other three suffered from 'defective' development of the left eye. Although this theory was popular from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, by the nineteenth century, it was viewed sceptically.[100] The lack of distinction between 'old and new' scientific theories is pertinent to Crichton-Browne's third explanation for genetic variation, the 'past history of the parents', and its interrelation to his principal notion of moral inheritance:

> In short [that] any departure, during the past lives of the parents, from the strict and immutable code of natural laws, may at conception, and during utero gestation, hurtfully affect their offspring. (*PD:*291)

The ethical character or actions of the parents are therefore imprinted on their descendants via moral inheritance (*PD:*291). As Shuttleworth aptly claims, this theory encapsulates Crichton-Browne's tendency to reinterpret 'the harsh Old Testament ruling that the "sins of the fathers" will be visited on the sons' through a scientific lens, as he maintains that 'those who have violated natural laws may expect that punishment, proportional to the offence, will inevitably be visited upon them and their descendants' (Shuttleworth 37, *PD:*289–90). More central to this thesis, however, is the concept of children tainted by the sins or 'intemperance' of their parents, which aligns with Rousseau's exploration of reciprocal parenthood. The 'bitter tears' of parental failure in *Émile* echo Crichton-Browne's prophecy of the 'hurtfully affect[ed]' offspring (Worthington 23, *PD:*290). This convergence of eighteenth-century philosophy and nineteenth-century scientific discourse prompts Hardy's reader to recall another archaic notion of familial punishment: the Fawley family curse.

At its most basic level, the family curse that recurs throughout *Jude* mirrors Crichton-Browne's notion that 'all the antecedents of the parents and their progenitors' stamp 'certain

[100] A notable example of alleged maternal imagination occurs in the case of the "Elephant Man", Joseph Carey Merrick, whose facial deformity (likened to an elephant) was correlated with the fact that 'his mother was knocked down by an elephant, in a circus, when bearing him' (*The British Medical Journal,* 1886).

characters upon the embryo' as the Fawley's are continually punished for their ancestral sins (*PD:*290). While I will revisit this concept of familial curses in more detail in the next section, it forms a compelling starting point for the discussion of Crichton-Browne's theory of parental punishment. Although Crichton-Browne's primary explanation for the insane child is parental violations of 'natural laws', his list of actions that comprise these violations is vast and variable:

> Those who have perpetrated self-abuse, who have given themselves up to licentiousness, lust, and passion, to the vice of intemperance, to the pleasures of the table, or to any nervous excitement in excess, must suffer themselves from their want of self control, and must entail upon their progeny numerous and grievous ill—none more numerous and grievous than psychical disorders. (*PD:*290)

At the time Hardy was writing *Jude*, many of these 'violation[s]' were being increasingly interpreted as potential signs of heredity-driven mental illness rather than moral failings. Crichton-Browne, however, does not employ these instances of perceived immorality as indicators of predispositions to mental illness and addiction rooted in biological factors. Instead, he associates a single act of depravity in the parents' 'past lives' with a lasting moral taint on their descendants (*PD*:296). He illustrates this supposition with the case study of a 'drunkard' who attributed his 'moral abandonment' to his mother's consumption of 'a large quantity of brandy' just before his birth, despite her usual abstinence (*PD*:296, 289). Although the mother was not habitually inclined towards excessive alcohol consumption, Crichton-Browne posits that this 'single act' was determinative of her child's future alcoholism. (*PD:*289).[101] As such, Crichton-Browne asserts that those who 'have lived in accordance with, and in obedience to, natural laws, may expect to produce children free from infirmity', but any

[101] In modern science and medicine, the idea that parental sins could be visited upon their offspring would not be suggested in the sense of moral inheritance but there are scientific counterparts, such as foetal alcohol syndrome and neonatal abstinence syndrome.

deviation from these 'natural laws' 'will inevitably be visited upon them and their descendants' (*PD:*290).[102]

In *Jude*, Hardy illustrates several of these deviations from 'natural laws' through his characterisation of Father Time's mother, Arabella. Hardy presents Arabella's most unsettling fabrication, *from Jude's perspective*, as her imitation of beauty through hairpieces and forced facial expressions; but, it is her knowledge of sex, alcohol, and vice that drives the main plot of the novel. His portrayal of Arabella's 'instinct towards artificiality' as a catalyst for her relationship with Jude, coupled with her destructive influence on his previously steadfast morals and commitment to education, directly contributes to the novel's tragic trajectory, even before heredity is considered (*PD*:290).[103] Arabella's lifestyle, characterised by excess, 'licentiousness, lust, and passion', not only contrasts with Crichton-Browne's advocated moderation but also supports his assertion that deviations from 'natural laws' stem from a 'want of self-control' (*PD*:289–91). According to Crichton-Browne's theory of parental punishment, such deviations would consign the offspring to 'grievous ills' and 'psychical disorders', and this is substantiated by the portrayal of Father Time, who appears to be 'hurtfully' affected (*PD*:290). As Jen Baker observes in "Traditions and Anxieties of (Un)Timely Child Death in *Jude the Obscure*" (2017), Father Time's 'development is as tainted and deformed as Jude and Arabella's feelings for each other' (70). It follows that these destructive 'feelings', which drive Jude to suicidal ideation and harmful behaviours, could similarly manifest in his son (70).

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[102] A link may be made between Hardy's eventual rejection of moral inheritance in *Jude*, in favour of biological heredity, and Shelley's engagement with it in *Frankenstein.* Shelley's primary father figure departs from 'the strict and immutable code of natural laws' in his artificial creation, and his creature is 'hurtfully' affected (*PD:*291). In labelling the creature as a 'filthy type' of his creator, 'more horrid even from the very resemblance', Shelley anticipates Crichton-Browne's exploration of moral heredity and expands on it in her own narrative of parental responsibility (*F:*133).

[103] Their first encounter features the infamous scene where Arabella flings a detached boar's member at Jude to capture his attention, then quickly shifts the blame to her companions. While her initial action may be impulsive, the subsequent behaviour—whereby she and her friends 'braced themselves for inspection by putting their lips demurely into shape'–reflects a deliberate instinct to deceive and aligns with Crichton-Browne's discussion of 'licentiousness, lust, and passion' (*J:*34, *PD*:290).

My discussion of Father Time's conception, marked by numerous departures from Crichton-Browne's 'strict and immutable code of natural laws', might have concluded this exploration of parental inheritance had *Jude* been published at the height of Crichton-Browne's authority on heredity (PD:291). However, while Crichton-Browne's examination of moral inheritance mirrors the folkloric beliefs held by some of Hardy's characters regarding the Fawley family curse, it is never presented as the dominant theory of heredity within the novel. By *Jude*'s publication in 1895, ideas concerning heredity were largely advanced. Although some elements of "Psychical Diseases of Early Life" anticipated the research conducted by late nineteenth-century psychiatrists—namely the notion that '[h]ereditary taint is the most frequent predisposing cause of insanity, and may be traced in more than one half of the cases which occur'—moral heredity was quickly displaced by *biological* heredity (*PD:*288).[104] This is a transition that is also reflected in this thesis. As noted, Hardy had previously expressed scepticism towards certain aspects of Crichton-Browne's research, so it is not entirely surprising that *Jude* explores alternative theories of inheritance and aligns more convincingly with these later perspectives (*Later Years* 24).

3.4 HARDY AND GENETIC INHERITANCE

Conversations surrounding the history of heredity typically begin with discussions of Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck's theory of acquired characteristics (1809), commonly recognised as Lamarckism. Lamarck's research serves as the foundational point for most evolutionary frameworks, including Darwin's. However, by the late nineteenth century, when Hardy was writing *Jude*, the scientific dialogue on genetic inheritance had evolved to encompass several additional theories, including those of Henry Maudsley.[105] As an early pioneer in psychiatry,

[104] Crichton-Browne's claim that 'all the antecedents of the parents and their progenitors […] assist in stamping certain characters upon the embryo, and in imparting certain impulses and tendencies to it', for example, aligns with the later theories of Henry Maudsley (*PD:*288).

[105] Lamarck suggested that physical modification in organisms, such as the development of muscle through increased use, could be passed down to their offspring.

principally in studies of degeneration, heredity, and mental responsibility, Maudsley 'was among the first to talk about an inheritance component to mental diseases' (Pantelidou and Demetriades 186). The importance of Maudsley's research in the life and works of Hardy is still a relatively unexplored branch of study. As with Schopenhauer, Hardy's interest is demonstrated largely through his *Literary Notebooks*. In entries labelled 1495–98 and 1501–1520, Hardy quotes extensively from Maudsley's 1886 monograph *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*. Although these entries are not dated, Lennart Björk observes that the 'page references [given alongside these quotations] agree with the first edn [*sic*] of 1886 but not with the second (1887)', indicating that Hardy read Maudsley's work shortly after its initial publication (*LN I:*399). Patricia Gallivan likewise suggests that Hardy's familiarity with Maudsley predates the publication of *Jude* in her claim that *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* gave Hardy 'a great deal more material, for *Jude* and other works, on the operations of the human mind' (129). One section, in particular, appeared to pique Hardy's attention:

> There are certain persons… a peculiar temperament, wh. They are freq. to a distinct neurotic strain—sometimes a strain of madness—in their families … are prone to deviate in thought & feeling from the accustomed tracks… [*sic*] (*LN I:*198)
>
> [This irregularity is often] the individual's evil heritage from a line of ancestral development… (*LN I:*201)[106]

The passages that Hardy chose to transcribe reflect his interest not only in burgeoning psychological research but studies of heredity in particular. In *Jude*, Hardy constructs a narrative that expands on this curiosity and explores the notion that neurosis, or 'madness', may be conveyed down familial lines through genetic inheritance, causing one to 'deviate in thought & feeling from the accustomed tracks' (*LN I:*198). Although Hardy only quotes from Maudsley's *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* in his *Literary Notebooks,* it is logical

[106] I have transcribed these quotes directly from Hardy's *Literary Notebooks* therefore any abbreviations or omissions are attributable to Hardy himself.

to assume that he had also encountered Maudsley's other well-known texts, namely *Responsibility in Mental Disease* (1874) and "Heredity in Health and Disease" (1886). Shuttleworth similarly makes this assumption in her 2002 essay, "Little Father Time and Child Suicide", wherein she claims that Hardy 'probably' read Maudsley's "Heredity in Health and Disease" and drew elements of *Jude* directly from *Responsibility in Mental Disease* (141, 147). Likewise, in her 2010 monograph *The Mind of the Child*, Shuttleworth observes that the dialogue of the physician attending to Father Time's fratricide is taken almost directly from Maudsley's *Responsibility,* wherein he suggests suicide as the 'natural and inevitable termination of morbid sorrows' (272). Suzanne Keen, in her 2014 study of psychology and neurology in Hardy's fiction, more confidently asserts, that not only did Hardy 'kn[ow] the work of Henry Maudsley', but his depictions of 'congenital mental ailments […] nearly match Maudsley's treatment of the topic of pathological development of inherited disease' (5, 49). It is in these other works that Maudsley extensively investigates the concept of genetic inheritance, mental illness, morbidity, and the 'suicidal bent' (*HHD:*654).

As I have stated elsewhere, Hardy's treatment of the Fawley family curse entails a realist rethinking of trope, and a substitution of the supernatural for the scientific to explain filial misfortune. In *Responsibility in Mental Disease,* Maudsley describes the different severities of 'heredity predisposition' in a manner that parallels Hardy's varied depiction of the Fawley family curse:

> …in some persons it is so slight that no one would suspect its existence, while others carry the sure marks of it in their countenance, manner and conversation, presenting peculiarities sufficiently characteristic to justify the description of them under the name of the *insane temperament* or insane neurosis. (*RMD:*46)

In *Jude*, the reader sees this variance manifest in Jude and his great-aunt Drusilla. Aunt Drusilla is characterised as bad-natured, but she never appears to display the melancholic dread or suicidal urges that plagued Jude and Sue throughout their lives. If she does, it is 'so slight that

no one would suspect its existence' (*RMD:*46). In this way, Hardy designates Drusilla as the mouthpiece of the Fawley family curse, introducing and clarifying its characteristics, but he does not imbue her character with any of the 'sure marks of it' herself (*RMD:*46). Whether this is a conscious effort on Hardy's part to ensure his prophesier remains reliable, safeguarding her judgement from inhibiting inherited traits, or he was consciously engaging with contemporary notions concerning dormant neurosis is undeterminable. Nevertheless, this characterisation allows for Drusilla to be conveniently distanced from a curse that, were it indeed supernatural, could not concern her: a marriage curse. Whenever discussions of the Fawley family curse occur, they are always followed by allusions to its marital trigger, reminding the reader that they 'belonged to an odd and peculiar family—the wrong breed for marriage' (*J:*139). Through a supernatural lens, marriage could easily be viewed as a sacramental trigger for an ancestral curse. However, through a scientific lens, it is more likely to be triggered by that which marriage represented in the nineteenth century: procreation. Thus, Drusilla does not avoid the Fawley family curse by never marrying, but she *does* avoid propagating it further by procreating: 'it may still be there latent or dormant, not dead but sleeping, and may appear in a more decided form in the next generation' (*RMD:*46). Maudsley explains that '[n]ot every member of a family in which there is a nervous or mental disease presents the insane temperament' (*RMD*:46). Consequently, it is realistic to contend that, had Hardy chosen to characterise Drusilla as a mother, her descendants might have been susceptible to a similar neurosis observed in the characters of Jude, Sue, and Father Time.

In the narrative scope of *Jude*, Drusilla's lack of explicit symptoms of inherited neurosis could be construed as indicative that Jude's melancholic predisposition originates exclusively from his maternal parentage. This interpretation is accentuated by Hardy's deliberate focus on the suicide of Jude's mother, alongside the notable omission of characterising descriptions regarding Jude's father that might offset this claim. This implication that the Fawley family

curse may not be Fawley in origin, however, is anticipated and counteracted by Hardy, who provides evidence to the contrary. A substantial portion of this evidence is presented through the character of Mrs. Edlin, a kindly widow whose primary function in the novel appears to be to challenge the aforementioned assumption. The Fawleys, she claims, had always been 'good-hearted people', but 'things happened to thwart them' (*J:*221–2). The subsequent story she recounts not only parallels Drusilla's depictions of the Fawley inclination to 'ill-use' their spouses but is conflated with the earliest examples of mental illness that Hardy permits the reader to trace in the Fawley bloodline (*J*:58). According to the widow's account, a Fawley ancestor abandoned her husband with her child in tow and, after the child's death, the husband was hanged for stealing back the child's body, and his 'wife went mad after he was dead' (*J:*222). Hardy does not elaborate on whether this madness resulted in the wife's suicide, but Mrs Edlin strongly suggests this is the case in her non-committal assertion that her husband did not '*exactly'* kill her (*J:*222). This is further substantiated by Hardy's characterisation of Jude's paternal cousin, Sue, who is portrayed as experiencing similar episodes of morbidity and suicidal ideation, mirroring the patterns that the narrative depicts in other members of the Fawley family. Assuming that this confirms that there was indeed a history of mental illness in Jude's paternal bloodline, which was later combined with his mother's established disposition for melancholy and suicide, it is no surprise that Hardy imbues Jude with these traits from a very early age. Maudsley's claim that of 'the direct inheritance of morbid qualities […] suicide yields the most decided examples' is particularly apt to Jude's juvenile characterisation, which sees him actively wishing 'himself out of the world' *before* he learns of his mother's suicide (*HHD:*654, *J:*27).

As I discussed in the second section of this chapter, the 'suicidal bent' that Jude inherits from his mother is so strong that a 'seemingly trivial' trigger, such as a run-in with his aunt, is enough to 'stir it into action' (*HHD:*654). Maudsley interprets this triviality towards one's own

life as indicative of an inherent suicidal 'bent', a view that S.A.K. Strahan supports in his 1890 paper, "The Propagation of Insanity and Allied Neuroses," where he asserts that '[t]here is no form of mental disorder so largely attributable to heredity taint as the suicidal impulse' (*HHD:*654, Strahan 327). Consequently, Jude's re-enactment of his mother's suicide feels unavoidable in the context of the novel. The only information that Hardy imparts to the reader concerning Jude's mother is that she could not 'get on' with his father, so 'they parted on the hill by the Brown House', and she later committed suicide by drowning (*J:*58). But this is perhaps the entire point, as those are the two aspects Jude later emulates: he too cannot 'get on' with his wife and accordingly attempts suicide by drowning (*J:*58). These parallels are accentuated by a seemingly incidental detail that captures Jude's attention in his aunt's account of his mother's death, going so far as to double-check he heard correctly; 'Where did father and mother part–by the Brown House, did you say?' (*J:*58). By this moment in the novel, Hardy assumes that his reader would recognise the tragic significance of this location: atop the Brown House was where Jude initially glimpsed Christminster and commenced his academic aspirations that would never come to fruition. It was also the designated endpoint of his first walk with Arabella, a meeting that resulted in an unlucky marriage and even unluckier offspring. While Jude does not know his mother, he knows they are alike: like his mother, Jude is imbued with suicidal tendencies that appear to be triggered by the termination of their marriages, just as Drusilla had predicted.

Perhaps the "fated" nature of these similarities explains why Jude's suicide attempt is prefigured by eerie composure and nonchalance:

> Jude put one foot on the edge of the ice, and then the other: it cracked under his weight; but this did not deter him. He ploughed his way inward to the centre, the ice making sharp noises as he went. When just about the middle he looked around him and gave a jump. The cracking repeated itself; but he did not go down. He jumped again, but the cracking had ceased. Jude went back to the edge, and stepped upon the ground. (*J:*58–9)

Hardy designs Jude's unsuccessful suicide attempt to have a jarring effect on the reader. Devoid of any sign of his previous melancholic desperation or emotion, Jude simply decides to die. He casually walks into the centre of the lake, jumps twice, and then gives up, pondering how 'curious' it was that '[p]eaceful death abhorred him as a subject, and would not take him' (*J:*59). Jude treats suicide as an inevitable result of his bloodline: his mother died in this way, therefore, he should too. This detachment concerning the notion of his own life might be attributed to youthful experimentation with the concepts of life and death. However, I would contend that Hardy undermines this explanation through the intentionally unsettling tone of this passage and its resonance with Maudsley's portrayal of suicidal detachment in "Heredity":

> It is, indeed, striking and startling to observe how strong the suicidal bent is apt to be in those who have inherited it, and how seemingly trivial a cause will stir it into action. Persons afflicted by it will sometimes put an end to themselves on occasion of a petty contrariety, or when they are a little out of sorts; and with almost as little concern as if they were only taking a short journey. (*HHD:*654)

Maudsley creates a distinction between those who are driven to suicide by a desperate impulse, namely Jude's mother, and those who are born ready-imbued with an inherited disposition for suicidal urges. Jude tries to drown himself on a whim and, when it does not work, he deems himself unfit for the act of 'self-extermination' and moves onto a 'less noble' form of self-destruction, drinking, as if they are interchangeable (*J:*59).

This act of potential self-annihilation constitutes Jude's first and most overt enactment of inherited neurosis. However, a suicidal bent is not the only trait that he inherited from his bloodline.[107] In a seemingly random observation during her tale of Jude's tumultuous family history, Mrs Edlin claims that the Fawleys 'wouldn't kill a fly if they knowed it' (*J:*222). Alone,

[107] Near the end of the novel, Jude visits Sue in a storm and Hardy portrays this event as a catalyst for his demise and, consequently, a successful suicide attempt: 'I have seen her for the last time, and I've finished myself—put an end to a feverish life which ought never to have been begun!' (*J*:308).

this comment exists as a somewhat meaningless remark, but, when the reader's previous knowledge of Jude's excessive compassion for animals is applied, the idiom transforms into another connection between Hardy's protagonist and his ancestors: extreme sensitivity. Jude, like the Fawleys that came before him, 'was a boy that could not bear to hurt anything' (*J:*15).

> He sounded the clacker till his arm ached, and at length his heart grew sympathetic with the birds' thwarted desires. They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them. Why should he frighten them away? They took on more and more the aspect of gentle friends and pensioners – the only friends he could claim as being in the least degree interested in him, for his aunt had often told him that she was not. (*J:*14)

Hardy creates a kinship between Jude and the birds he has been sent to scare. Jude perceives no distinction between the difficult lives of little birds, deemed pests by those around them, and his own: a 'magic thread of fellow-feeling united his own life with theirs. Puny and sorry as those lives were, they much resembled his own' (*J:*14). Jude allows the birds to eat because, in his view, there is 'enough for us all', but in doing so, he allows his individual sensitivity to conflict with the role that was allotted to him (*J:*14). To the farmer, the birds pose a threat to his harvest and, therefore, his livelihood, and to the birds, the farmer's actions threaten to starve them. Much like the birds burden the farmer to ensure their survival, Jude recognises that he, too, might 'be a burden to his great-aunt for life' (*J:*15). This realisation exemplifies the inherent conflict between his innocent notions of 'mutual benefit' and the 'barbarous logic' that he perceives in the world around him (*J:*15).

Jude's realisation that for one group to thrive, another must suffer is followed by increasingly extreme depictions of excessive sensitivity. It is not abnormal for children to be sensitive; they have not yet developed adequate coping mechanisms to deal with elements of the world they deem unfair or upsetting. However, Jude's sensitivity surpasses the typical bounds of childhood emotional responses. Shuttleworth claims that 'such extremes of sensitivity' as those Jude displayed in extending his sympathy 'not merely to the lower reaches

of the animal kingdom, but to the vegetable world as well', would have been 'recognised by late nineteenth-century readers as an explicit marker of the increasingly morbid state of mind developing in the nation's youth' ("Little Father Time" 135). Certainly, Jude feels an equally painful sympathetic response towards the sentient and the inanimate: he 'could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them; and late pruning, when the sap was up and the tree bled profusely, had been a positive grief to him' (*J:*15).[108] Hardy's anthropomorphic treatment of the recipients of Jude's sympathy appears engineered to convey the debilitating extent of Jude's excessive sensitivity to his reader—he sees no notable difference between the suffering of animal or vegetable and cannot watch a tree cut down without envisioning bleeding and pain that exists only in his mind.

The claim from Hardy's narrator, rooted in Schopenhauerian philosophy, that Jude was 'the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal', is recontextualised in light of this excessive sensitivity, as his attempts to 'mutual[ly] benefit' all of nature's creatures are destined to inexorably fail and perpetuate his individual suffering (J:14). Maudsley presents the idea of extreme morbidity as an 'unclean spirit' that can possess one and force an individual 'to a deed of which he has the utmost dread and horror', and indeed this comes to be in the next iteration of the Fawley curse, as characterised in Father Time (*RMD:*133).

3.4.1 THE NEXT GENERATION

Sue's declaration, before Father Time's physical entrance into the narrative, that 'if he isn't' Jude's biological child 'it makes it all the better' initially appears covetous (*J:*223). Indeed, her admission that 'perhaps [she] ought not to feel quite that!' confirms this sentiment (*J:*223).

[108] This violent language concerning the destruction of nature is not limited to *Jude.* Anna Henchman discusses Hardy's 'lifelong preoccupation with the idea that trees' wood and bark are like flesh and skin', citing the storm scene in *The Return of the Native* during which 'wet young beeches were undergoing amputations, bruises, cripplings, and harsh lacerations, from which the wasting sap would bleed' alongside *Jude* (863). According to Michael Millgate, this preoccupation perpetuated in Hardy's real life: 'The garden which surrounded the house on three sides was also Emma's province for the most part, although it was Hardy who supervised its maintenance, paid the gardener, and refused to allow the trees to be cut back for fear of "wounding" them' (244).

However, Hardy's demonstrable interest in heredity suggests an additional motive for Sue's hope. Without the inheritance of Jude's 'suicidal bent', Father Time might have avoided the "Fawley curse", and the tragic events of the novel may not have occurred (*HHD:*654). If excessive sensitivity is to be considered an 'explicit marker' of morbidity, then Father Time exists as an exaggerated expression of his father's genetically imbued characteristics ("Little Father Time" 135). Hardy engineers the parallels between father and son to illustrate this from the outset. Aunt Drusilla's remark that it 'would ha' been a blessing if Goddy-mighty had took [Jude] too, wi' [his] mother and father' is mirrored in Arabella's proclamation that Father Time was too young 'to be of any use': neither Jude nor his son are actively 'wanted', and their existences perpetuate the continuation of a cursed bloodline (*J:*12, 222–3). As I have discussed, this conflicts with Honeyman and Kincaid's argument that childhood is shaped by adult 'needs' and 'whim[s]' because neither child serves an 'imaginative' or 'nostalgic' purpose in the lives of their surrounding caregivers (*Erotic Innocence* 53, 144).

There is, however, a vital difference between the childhood characterisations of Jude and Father Time: they share an inbuilt morbidity, but while this suicidal impulse is elicited in Jude at instances of emotional stress, it is constantly at the surface of Father Time's characterisation. Although Father Time does not explicitly attempt suicide until the end of the novel, he displays a profound indifference to the prospect of his own death from the outset: 'if I died in damnation, 'twould save the expense of a Christian burial' (*J*:227). For Father Time, the 'terrors of death', as discussed by Schopenhauer, are indistinguishable from 'the terrors of life'; the 'sentinel at the gate leading out of this world' offers neither 'considerable resistance' nor an inviting alternative ("On Suicide" 49). This indifference to both life *and* death highlights Father Time's function as a magnified reflection of his father. While Jude's melancholy evolved and abated over time, manifesting in emotional outbursts during his childhood, Father Time's emotional state is characterised by a pervasive apathy and a profound detachment from

the beginning. As previously discussed, Maudsley interpreted this nonchalance towards one's own death as indicative of 'inherited' suicidal detachment: '[p]ersons afflicted by it will sometimes put an end to themselves on occasion of a petty contrariety, or when they are a little out of sorts; and with almost as little concern as if they were only taking a short journey' (*HHD:*654). Hardy's portrayal of Father Time embodies the 'universal wish not to live' from the outset; however, his intense indifference and underlying immaturity, despite his precocity, prevent him from acting on this 'wish' until he is triggered to do so near the novel's conclusion (*J*:264).

As I have considered elsewhere, Honeyman explores the intrinsic unknowability of children but argues that this inaccessibility does not impede the conceptual formation of childhood. Instead, it enables 'unlimited signification' grounded in 'biased standards of adult nostalgia and desire' (4, 2). Hardy's characterisation of Father Time engages with this 'inherent inaccessibility' but resists the potential for signification that it represents, rendering him linguistically and discursively beyond reach' (4). In "Hardy's 'Unmen' And 'Others'", Tracy Hayes supports this perspective, describing Father Time as 'totally unknowable, completely removed from and inaccessible to the other characters' (64). I would argue that this unknowability is reciprocal, reflecting a mutual discord between Father Time and those around him. Just as he is 'inaccessible to the other characters', their lives are equally beyond his comprehension (64). Father Time shares his father's morbidity but lacks his tendency towards emotional excess: he regards everything in the same apathetic manner, 'without animation' or any sign of joy (*J:*224). He cannot share in the happiness of others because he cannot comprehend it: '[a]ll laughing comes from misapprehension. Rightly looked at there is no laughable thing under the sun' (*J:*224). Hardy imbues Father Time with an inbuilt melancholic buffer, rendering it impossible for him to convey normalcy: he 'would try to smile, and fail' because he was 'Age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing it so badly that his real self showed

through the crevices' (*J:*224). Jude, in his youth, pitied the birds because, by preventing them from eating, he was contributing to their deaths. However, Father Time pities all of those around him precisely *because* he is so aware of the fleeting nature of their individual ephemerality. He acts as a 'shadow' upon every episode of happiness because is incapable of deriving pleasure from anything that lives (*J:*242). When Father Time looks at any living organism, he does not see 'their immediate figures' but 'their whole rounded lives' and impermanent mortality: he sees death in everything, and while it does not scare him, it also brings him no joy (*J:*224). He 'should like the flowers very very much' if he 'didn't keep on thinking they'd all be withered in a few days!' (*J:*234) The flowers in their present pleasant form are inseparable from their inevitable decay. Father Time's heredity-driven predisposition towards melancholy precludes him from separating the present from the future; therefore, he cannot view life without the encroaching shadow of death.

This is not to say that Hardy depicts Father Time as *wholly* devoid of childish extremes of emotion. These moments of vulnerability appear fleetingly, especially when he is faced with the possibility of a normal life. A poignant example occurs when he first identifies Sue as his 'real mother at last' and a 'yearning look came over the child and he began to cry' (*J:*226). This uncharacteristic display of emotion in response to the prospect of a new life with a 'real mother' echoes the Rousseauian principle that underpins this thesis: '[i]f mothers are not real mothers, children are not real children toward them' (Worthington 18).

> "He called you mother two or three times before he dropped off," murmured Jude. "Wasn't it odd that he should have wanted to!"
>
> "Well–it was significant," said Sue. (*J:*227)

Father Time's intense and immediate desire for Sue to assume the role that his biological mother neglected is certainly 'significant' in the context of the novel because, to do so, is to unlock the potential to likewise become a 'real child' (*J:*227, Worthington 18). This, as I will discuss in the next section, does not come to fruition and as a result Father Time's melancholic

spirit only intensifies as the narrative progresses until he discards his façade of juvenility entirely. Jude's well-meaning question as to whether it even mattered if 'a child is yours by blood or not?' serves as the primary question that the novel attempts to address (*J:*223). In the case of Father Time, Hardy tragically answers in the affirmative.

3.5 Malthus, Strahan, and the Refusal to Perpetuate Tainted Bloodlines

Thus far, this chapter has focused principally on the inherited factors—biological or moral—that culminate in Father Time's suicide, without consideration of his other, arguably more destructive, act: the murder of his siblings. Jude's sensitivity in youth forced him to feed and nurture the living beings around him, even to his own detriment. In contrast, Father Time's sensitivity prompts the opposite. The image of Father Time pitying the flowers around him because he could not separate their beauty from the idea that 'they'd be all withered in a few days' appears paradoxical when juxtaposed with the subsequent revelation that he would be responsible for his siblings' deaths just a few chapters later (*J*:234). The question arises: how does a child inherently endowed with sensitivity and compassion proceed to commit fratricide? This section contends that Hardy presents two primary explanations: desperation and mercy.

Father Time's act of fratricide is not the first example of a potential mercy killing in *Jude*; it is prefigured in the actions of his father in the notorious "pig-sticking scene". As Caroline Sumpter argues, this episode is a 'pivotal' example of Jude's natural sensitivity and consideration of all creatures as 'fellow-mortals' deserving of sympathy (666–7). Previously, I have discussed Jude's kindness to animals and nature purely in terms of his desire to nurture and spare them from harm. However, the "pig-sticking scene" demonstrates two equally crucial notions. First, that Jude's extreme sensitivity towards non-human beings was not only a childish whim and continues into his adulthood. More notably, it shows that there can be as

much mercy in death as in prolonging life.[109] Hardy emphasises that Jude, like the Fawleys before him, would never harm an animate creature without absolute necessity. When faced with such a situation, he ignores Arabella's plea to lengthen the animal's suffering to ensure the meat is 'well bled', declaring that 'he shall not be half a minute dying if I can help it' (*J:*56). Jude places his grief and the pig's agony above human trivialities such as payment and the quality of meat; the pig must die, and Jude must be the one to do it because only he possesses the respect and compassion necessary. This mentality is akin to that which Father Time exhibits in his final scenes as he attempts to save himself and his siblings from the 'trouble, adversity and suffering' that is life (*J:*270).

Sue's repeated refusal to marry Jude throughout the novel may be read as a superficial attempt to avoid the Fawley family curse. However, Hardy constantly reiterates that his curse is not sacramental but biological; it is not the act of being 'bound' that incites their curse, but the inevitability of children as a result (*J:*58).[110] This procreation-centred explanation for the Fawley family curse is present throughout *Jude,* as I have discussed, yet it is not brought explicitly to the forefront until after Father Time's fratricide-suicide. In light of this, Emily Steinlight asserts that *Jude* 'is overwhelmingly read' as a Malthusian tragedy, with Father Time cast as an instrument of Malthusian doctrine poised to right the wrongs associated with 'the excessive procreation of the lower classes' (224). Certainly, Sue's acknowledgement of the issue of her own over-procreation, without taking steps to prevent its continuation, parallels the philosophies of Rev. Thomas Malthus. Although Malthusian doctrine asserted that 'the root

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[109] This dilemma is mirrored in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles:*

> With the impulse of a soul who could feel for kindred sufferers as much as for herself, Tess's first thought was to put the still living birds out of their torture, and to this end with her own hands she broke the necks of as many as she could find, leaving them to lie where she had found them till the gamekeepers should come—as they probably would come to look for them a second time. (298)

[110] This is not to say that contraception was unheard of in the nineteenth century. As early as the Middle Ages 'coitus interruptus and induced abortion were known methods of fertility control' despite the 'increasing condemnation' they began to receive from religious sects (Potts 2009). By the eighteenth century, contraceptive methods such as these were 'probably known even among the peasants and employed by them in times of stringency when it was important to avoid producing more mouths to be fed' (Langer 671).

cause of pauperism was the excessive procreation of the lower classes', he declared himself 'opposed to all "artificial" means to prevent conception' and labelled 'such methods as immoral' when one could instead practice restraint (Langer 671–2). Sue, a constant advocate of restraint in her first marriage and early in her second relationship, appears to internalise this doctrine and resists the pressure to procreate for a long time. Ultimately, however, she succumbs, and thereafter, the children arrive successively despite their inadequate means to effectively care for them. Sue's Malthusian convictions resurface during times of hardship, and she attributes her 'adversity and suffering' to her excessive procreation, as in her final conversation with Father Time (*J*:271).

In his short life, Father Time encountered multiple examples of suffering caused by the propagation of humanity, but it is only when he recognises *his own existence* as a burden that this suffering infiltrates his calm demeanour. As previously examined, the instances in which Father Time displays childlike behaviour align with his expressed desire for Sue to assume the maternal role that his biological mother left vacant; thereby providing him with the opportunity to become a 'real child' (*J*:227, Worthington 18). Sue, however, does not adequately fulfil this role, as illustrated by her decision to be 'honest and candid' with Father Time and talk to him 'as one should only talk to people of mature age' (*J:*270, 274). By treating him as 'an aged friend', Sue allows for an amalgamation of childish and overly mature notions to form in his mind that refuse to harmoniously interlink (*J:*270). Ironically, Father Time is perhaps at his most childlike at this moment; yet, when he seeks comfort from his mother, he is met only with adult notions of 'trouble, adversity, and suffering', which reinforce his morbid conviction that 'there is no laughable thing under the sun' (*J*:224, 270). His innocent question on the subject, 'I ought not to be born, ought I?', goes unanswered by the primary maternal figure in his life and, as a result, these doubts continue to multiply in his morbid mind (*J:*269). Consequently, in Father Time's final scene we see an inversion of his first:

> And what makes it worse with me is that you are not my real mother, and you needn't have had me unless you liked. I oughtn't to have come to 'ee—that's the real truth! I troubled 'em in Australia, and I trouble folk here. I wish I hadn't been born! (*J:*270)

It is not until Father Time becomes uncharacteristically agitated and 'burst out weeping' that Sue attempts to repossess the maternal role and reassure him. By this point, his usual calm and timeworn demeanour has irrevocably shifted, and his mind becomes a confusing assortment of terror, guilt, anger, and an aspiration to fix his family's problems (*J:*269). The moment that Father Time wholly comprehends that he can never be a 'real child' because he does not have a 'real mother' his previous apathy gives way to panic (Worthington 18). This manifests in his reproach of Sue: '[h]ow *ever* could you, mother, be so wicked and cruel as this' (*J:*270). The juxtaposition of 'mother' with 'wicked and cruel' exemplifies Sue's failure to fulfil her maternal duties, positioning Father Time's final act as a form of reciprocal punishment, a response to her perceived betrayal (*J*:270). Father Time's final line in the novel foreshadows the impending tragedy and articulates his tortured desire to do right by Jude and Sue: 'If we children was gone there'd be no trouble at all' (*J:*271).

While I would not posit that Hardy intended this conversation to be perceived as the *sole* cause for Father Time's subsequent actions, I would argue that it marked his final attempt to embody the qualities of a 'real' child (Worthington 18). Had it succeeded, the events at the end of the novel may have been avoided or deferred, but Father Time's heredity-driven melancholy would still exist. Sue's half-hearted attempt to dissuade him comes too late because Father Time's juvenile view is cemented; life is just a cycle of suffering and the only way to escape that cycle is to break it. Although he does not fully comprehend this anti-natalist discourse of futility, he understands that it presents him with an opportunity to escape *and* to relieve his parents of the burden of the children they could not 'help' (*J:*271). Years before, his father had rescued a pig from a long laborious death, and similarly, Father Time must save his siblings from a lifetime of want and anguish by removing them from existence (*J:*271). Father

Time's act is not murder *per se* but a mercy killing 'done because we are too menny': he must right the wrongs that his parents perpetuated in procreation (*J:*272).

Gillian Beer notably labelled this scene a 'late-Malthusian tragedy' as Father Time's infamous suicide note mirrors Malthus's views exactly and Sue is punished for living beyond her means and forcing her family into destitution (240). While this reading certainly holds merit, especially in light of Sue's lamentation that her pregnancy was 'not quite on purpose' and Father Time's unknowing advocation for abortion when he tells Sue that 'whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly, before their souls come to 'em, and not allowed to grow big and walk about!', it is not the only reading of the Fawley procreation curse (*J:*270–1). Father Time's actions end the Fawley cycle of poverty, but if that were indeed Hardy's intention, I would argue that it is secondary to ending the cycle of morbidity and heredity disease. This is further reinforced by the significant alteration made between the 1894 serialisation and the published novel, wherein Hardy revised Father Time's crime from an act of murder/suicide to a fratricide/suicide.

> At the back of the door were fixed two hooks for hanging garments, and from one of these the form of little Jude was suspended by a piece of box-cord round his neck, while from the other hung the body of the younger child in a similar manner. An overturned chair was near the elder boy, and his glazed eyes were staring into the room; but those of the baby boy were closed. ("Hearts Insurgent" 593).

Jen Baker observes that while 'the outcome of the plot is the same in the initially serialized version as in the final novel form', the 'exchange of an adopted child for [Sue's] biological children' intensifies her ensuing 'hysteria' (78). I would agree with this assessment and further argue that this exchange also facilitates a heredity-driven reading of the novel. In "Hearts Insurgent", the 'baby boy' whom Father Time kills is described merely as 'another little child [...] whose parents died, and left him at the mercy of the world' (426). Although the description of this scene in the final novel remains largely unchanged, the critical difference is that the

younger children are now depicted as sharing the "cursed" Fawley blood. In "Hearts Insurgent", Father Time's decision to kill the adopted child may be interpreted as an act of Malthusian mercy, sparing the child from a life of deprivation; however, extending this interpretation to *Jude* overlooks the novel's central theme of heredity. Hardy's deliberate emphasis on 'sommat in [the Fawley] blood' and therefore nature over nurture, underlines this: while the chance of poverty increases significantly when one is born into it, it is not genetically inherited (*J:*58). Poverty was not in the Fawley 'blood' but the heredity-driven 'strain of madness' to which Maudsley refers to in *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* was (qtd. in *LN I:*198).

Like Malthus, S.A.K Strahan, a central figure in nineteenth-century studies of genetic inheritance, also called for population control. Only his motives were not economic but proto-eugenic, with the primary aim being the eradication of inherited insanity. Strahan popularised the notion of increased marriage legislation to prevent the mentally ill or those with inheritable genetic disorders from being allowed to legally marry. In his 1890 paper on the relationship between suicide, insanity, and heredity, presented five years before *Jude*'s publication, Strahan concluded by posing a question to his audience as to whether those who are fully aware of their genetic predispositions should be allowed to marry and procreate. Maudsley had implied a similar argument in more sympathetic terms when he discussed the tendency for those 'having fallen in love' to persuade themselves that their genetic predispositions are, in fact, something else entirely—'that the insanity was not the outcome of family degeneracy, but an incidental effect of a blow on the head'—so that they can marry and procreate without guilt (*HHD:*653). This is precisely what Jude and Sue do as they convince themselves that the Fawley family curse is not the consequence of faulty genetics and that their family had simply been 'unlucky of late years in choosing mates' (*J:*134).

Maudsley defends marriages of this type to a certain degree by stressing that 'the inheritance of a disease-tenancy, however likely, is not invariable' (*HHD:*653). Just because a parent possesses a predisposition for morbidity and suicidal thoughts does not mean their children will. He advances this defence by positing the rarity 'for all the children of an insane parent to become insane' (*HHD:*653). If one child 'falls victim' to their faulty genetics, it may drain 'off the taint for that generation, like a sort of scapegoat sent out into the wilderness, so that the other children escape' (*HHD:*653). According to this line of argument, Jude and Sue's other children might have 'escape[d]' the generational 'taint' that presented so overtly in their afflicted sibling had they not been quelled before any individuating qualities could develop (*HHD:*653). It would be remiss, however, to ignore the improbability of this notion, given the incestuous parentage of Father Time's siblings. While Father Time only receives "cursed" Fawley genetics from his father, the younger children receive a "double-dose", and that is notwithstanding the standard genetic irregularities that incestuous procreation may result in. Long before the 'tragic sadness' of Father Time's fratricide, Hardy utilises Jude as a mouthpiece through which to engage with the potentially harmful implications of an incestuous cousin marriage:

> It was not well for cousins to fall in love even when circumstances seemed to favour the passion […] in a family like his own where marriage usually meant a tragic sadness, marriage with a blood-relation would duplicate the adverse conditions, and a tragic sadness might be intensified to a tragic horror. (*J:*76)

By having Jude initially acknowledge the potential for a 'duplicat[ion] of the adverse conditions' that had afflicted the previous "curse"-ridden Fawleys, and then discard this information in favour of 'love', Hardy mirrors Maudsley's notion of contrived ignorance (*J:*76, *HHD:*653). Sue's claim that she and Jude's 'perfect union', their 'two-in-oneness', is only 'stained with blood' after Father Time's fratricide is consequently rendered inaccurate: it had been stained by their shared and tainted blood from the beginning (*J:*265). In this way, Father

Time's actions may still be interpreted as a mercy killing; however, instead of saving his siblings from a life of poverty, he acts as an instrument to circumvent the suffering that a 'duplicate' dose of the "cursed" Fawley blood might cause. Thereby ensuring that their family's 'tragic sadness' would not be 'intensified to a tragic horror' via incestuous genetic deformity as Jude initially imagined it might (*J*:76).

Strahan's estimation of the continued procreation of those with genetic disorders is significantly less sympathetic than Maudsley's. In his view, human society is singular in that we nurse those who would naturally 'succumb' to their ailments without intervention:

> How different is this from what obtains in the artificial life which civilized man has created for himself. With him the weakling and the diseased, who in the natural state would at once succumb, are nursed and protected; they are surrounded with an artificial environment designed to render a continuance of life possible; and finally, if they be endowed with the procreative function, they are permitted to beget their like. We make an attempt to hold Nature at bay. We fight and struggle with all our strength against the inexorable law which condemns the unfit to extinction. (331–2)

Strahan does not interpret the medical innovations that prolong the lives of those who would ordinarily have quickly 'succumb[ed]' as positive advancements (331). Rather, he perceives humanity's efforts to 'hold Nature at bay' as counterproductive for the good of the human race because it allows genetic illnesses to continue propagating when, according to Nature's 'inexorable law[s]', they should be quickly rendered extinct (331). Strahan does not object to the existence of those endowed with hereditary diseases; however, he believes that their licence to procreate opposes "Nature's plan" and prevents humanity from becoming a thriving species. In his controversial view, all 'hereditary diseases tend toward extinction of the family, and for this reason, are only to be found in perfection where the laws of Nature are interfered with' (332). Indeed, Hardy engages with this concept in his representation of the Fawley curse, which tends towards 'the extinction of the family' by consigning subsequent generations to inherited

morbidity and suicidal ideation (332). Nevertheless, their insistence on marriage and procreation continues to hold 'Nature at bay' for another short-lived generation (332). These severe principles were not singular to Strahan but constituted a prevalent nineteenth-century scientific debate. Dr Richardson's 1876 monograph, *Diseases of Modern Life*, for example, claimed that:

> If the intermarriage of disease were considered in the same light as the intermarriage of poverty, the hereditary transmission of disease, the basis of so much misery in the world, would be at an end in three, or at most four, generations. (333)

This unsympathetic sentiment called for increased legislation when it came to the marriage of those imbued with damaging genetic dispositions, not for the sake of the individual but for the good of the world. Strahan intensifies this notion in his inquiry as to what 'the world [would] have lost that it could not well have spared had the ancestors of these wretched families been forbidden the right of procreation? […] Nothing' (335). Sue believes that it was 'Nature's intention, Nature's law and *raison d'etre* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us', but it is precisely those instincts towards sexual behaviour and procreation that result in their misfortune (*J:*266). Strahan's version of a "Nature" that condemns 'the unfit to extinction' clashes with Sue's view of Nature as a benevolent and nurturing entity, and the result is a 'stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word!' (*J:*332, 266).

Aaron Matz, in "Hardy and the Vanity of Procreation" (2014), notes that, '[h]uman life, for Hardy, seems too much of a responsibility to be discarded so easily':

> And so if the title figure of the poem "Tess's Lament" (a companion piece to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*) pleads "I'd have my life unbe" (line 44), Hardy's fiction routinely responds that this wish is impossible. The procreative choice has already been made. (28)

But, in *Jude*, this possibility is reopened and explored, and Father Time is recast. He is no longer an instrument of Malthusian logic. Rather, in his aged appearance and persona, he reflects the past mistakes that led up to his birth, not only of his parents but his ancestors. When

Sue laments that 'Arabella's child killing [hers] was a judgment–the right slaying the wrong', her imagining is exact (*J:*275). Father Time still functions as an intensified version of Jude; only, this time, he compensates for his father's weakness by annihilating the Fawley line, including Sue's unborn child, forever ending the cycle of pain and suffering that had eternally haunted his family. He allows his siblings' lives to 'unbe' and undoes the 'procreative choice' that his parents made (Matz 28).

3.6 PASSIVE PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

In his 1998 essay, "The Boy with the Old Face", Peter Arnds asserts that while Jude's narrative trajectory 'qualifies as an *Antibildungsroman*', 'Little Father Time's development is even less than *Antibildung*: his mere existence is presented as a fault' (225, 234). At the beginning of the novel, Jude's 'pursuit of *Bildung*' holds potential, and although this feeling of potential is largely superficial, the *illusion of potential* allows Hardy's readers to follow his story with some semblance of hope (Arnds 225).[111] In contrast, Father Time does not require an illusionary *bildungsroman* plot, as Hardy never intended for him to survive childhood. While Hardy's incorporation of nurture-based elements, such as Sue's misguided conduct towards Father Time, alongside the overarching framework of heredity, precludes his readers from assuming a stance of biological determinism and *complete inevitability*, even this artificial potentiality for hope is largely absent from Hardy's portrayal of Father Time. A year after the publication of *Jude*, Agnes Grove published an essay titled "Our Children: What Children Should be Told" at Hardy's request, informed by 'some remarks of [Agnes's] about Sue's talk with the child in *Jude'* (*Collected Letters V2,* 91). Grove's essay addresses 'Sue's fatal conversation' with Father Time, and positions it as a primary motivator behind his subsequent fratricide/suicide (398). Hardy's commissioning of Grove's essay underscores the necessity for

[111] As discussed, Hardy's narrator betrays the inevitability of Jude's failure at the beginning of the novel in his prophetic assertion that Jude was 'the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again' (*J:*15–16).

a combinative approach to analysing the novel; however, his continued emphasis on blood and heredity skews the balance, placing greater emphasis on passive parental responsibility and the influence of nature over nurture. As a result, nurture-based elements are considered and then relegated to the background.

Crichton-Browne's claim that parents who violate 'natural laws' should expect 'punishment proportional to the offence' finds resonance in Hardy's characterisation of Father Time as the inevitable result of his parent's "cursed" procreation (*PD:*290). Although, as I have discussed, Hardy swiftly moves on from Crichton-Browne's concept of moral inheritance, this sentiment of parental punishment is also consistent with Rousseau's notion of failed reciprocal parenthood. In *Jude*, Hardy does not explicitly frame this failure as intentional, despite the recurring allusions to the Fawley family curse which imply a level of awareness, nevertheless, the novel's conclusion mirrors Rousseau's exploration of the consequences of parental neglect:

> He who cannot fulfil the duties of a father has no right to be a father [...] I prophesy to anyone who has natural feeling and neglects these sacred duties, — that he will long shed bitter tears over this fault, and that for those tears he will find no consolation. (Worthington 23)

Father Time fails to *be* a child as much as his parents fail to *be* parents, and his 'fault' is the direct result of their procreative negligence (Arnds 234). Hardy illustrates Father Time's status as a nonchild, and his inability to conform to the conventional criteria of childhood, as a direct result of his parents' inability to uphold their 'sacred duties' as parents and safeguard him from the Fawley curse (Worthington 18). The role reversal that takes place between Jude and Father Time at the end of the novel is indicative of this damaging parent-child dynamic as the child is forced to take control of his family's reproductive destiny and end the Fawley family curse and, with it, the cycle of deprivation and disease. Angelique Richardson notes that Hardy's 'interest in eugenic discourses has largely been neglected' but his 'ideological position is elusive' (62–3). Indeed, in *Jude,* Hardy explores eugenic discourse through his characterisation of Father Time as the inevitable result of filial aberration. However, his emphasis, elsewhere,

on class and academic disparity complicates this view. In the nineteenth century, discussions surrounding eugenics were inherently intertwined with ideas of social and economic status. Thus, by highlighting the injustice of Jude's inability to rise socially or secure a place in academia, Hardy actively challenges the primary thesis of eugenics, which emphasises the ascendancy of the upper class. Instead, I would suggest that Hardy was not endorsing eugenics but rather examining a prevalent contemporary idea through the exaggerated format of a fratricidal child. In doing so, he emphasised emerging developments in child psychiatry and the centrality of parental responsibility.

Hardy's examination of biological heredity and passive parental responsibility reflects a contemporary consciousness wherein the notion of childhood as a defined concept had come full circle in terms of consideration of nature and nurture. My analyses of *Belinda* and *Frankenstein* were engineered to explore representations of the literary child, where archaic models of predetermined childhood and inbuilt morality were replaced with more in-depth explorations of the role of nurture alongside active parental responsibility. Hardy's exploration of heredity in *Jude* assumes a foundational knowledge of the social element of child-rearing in order to progress beyond these discussions and participate in late-nineteenth-century dialogues concerning biological inheritance and passive parental liability. Biological determinism does not give a whole picture of childhood any more than social determinism does. Consideration of both nature and nurture is essential in the developmental formation of children, non-conforming or otherwise, and the concept of passive and active parental responsibility demonstrates this.

CONCLUSION: CREATING THE NONCHILD

> If mothers are not real mothers, children are not real children toward them. Their duties to one another are reciprocal, and if these be badly fulfilled on the one side, they will be neglected on the other side. The child ought to love his mother before he knows that it is his duty to love her. (*Émile*, Worthington 18)

> He who cannot fulfil the duties of a father has no right to be a father [...] I prophesy to anyone who has natural feeling and neglects these sacred duties, — that he will long shed bitter tears over this fault, and that for those tears he will find no consolation. (*Émile,* Worthington 23)

As I have continuously emphasised, the nineteenth century marked an increased fascination with childhood as a construct and parental responsibility as a consequence and attitudes towards children evolved alongside societal pressure and scientific advancements. However, it is equally imperative to address that which remained constant. Rousseau's concept of essential reciprocity within parent-child relationships continually finds itself at the centre of this thesis as the thread that unites seemingly disparate novels from across the nineteenth century.[112] The eighteenth-century notion that a child could only develop correctly, and exist as a 'real child', if their parental figures fulfil their reciprocal duties towards them underpins this thesis and extends into the nineteenth century and beyond (Worthington 18). A nuclear family unit is not a prerequisite to this notion of 'real' parents and children, provided all of the required roles are fulfilled by a parental figure. Certainly, this is easier if there are two parents to share the responsibility, but, as Hardy demonstrates in *Jude*, a nuclear family unit does not equate to effective parenthood.

[112] The novels that I have utilised as literary case studies in this thesis do not encompass every instance of the nonchild in nineteenth-century literature, nor is the novel the only literary form in which they emerge, rather, examples exist in the gaps between these texts. A larger study may consider the concept of heredity further through an exploration of orphanhood in the nineteenth-century novel, as in *Oliver Twist* (1838) and *Villette* (1853), or discuss the childlike character rendered *intentionally* aberrant, as in *Dracula* (1897) and *Great Expectations* (1861).

Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos's 2000 essay, "Reciprocal Bonding", examines filial relationships in early modern England, concluding that despite the inherent inequality in relationships between parents and children, given 'the limitations placed on the capacity of children to reciprocate', 'reciprocity and negotiation sustained the family bond' (305). In this way, the parent-child relationship may be viewed 'as a form of a negotiated exchange': 'parents give, but they also receive something in return' (305, 291). Although her study centres on the early modern period, this thesis demonstrates the continued relevance of reciprocity across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, notwithstanding the increasing focus on 'sentiment' and the 'cult of domesticity' (305). According to Ben-Amos, the transactional nature of parent/child relationships 'went against contemporaries' tendency to think of the parent-child nexus in terms of obligations, rules, and unconditional giving, hence the suspicion with which they approached any suggestion that family obligations were conditioned, traded, earned' and, by the early eighteenth century, these 'sensibilities would be magnified' (305). However, rather than viewing reciprocity in purely practical or economic terms, these centuries integrated notions of love into this framework of exchange, blending mutually beneficial reciprocity with sentiment.

In my literary case studies, it is the parent characters' perversion, lack, or neglect of reciprocal duties, both emotional and practical, that prevent their children from developing as 'real children' (Worthington 18). In *Belinda*, Edgeworth explores this concept through a child character whose inability to reciprocate the sexually exploitative affection of her dual-positioned caregiver results in feelings of inadequacy and monstrosity. Similarly, in *Frankenstein*, it is the creature's lack of and yearning for reciprocal parental love that forces him into monstrosity, relegating him to the margins of sociability and preventing him from integrating into any filial structure, even one of his own making. At the other end of the century, in *Jude*, Hardy moves somewhat away from notions of reciprocal love but still emphasises the

significance of reciprocal duty through the medium of passive biological responsibility towards one's children. It is appropriate that, just as the child characters of these novels experience suffering directly caused by the distortion or unfulfillment of filial reciprocal duties, so too do the parental characters suffer 'over this fault' and 'for those tears [they] will find no consolation' (Worthington 23).

None of the parental characters that I have discussed in this thesis intentionally set out to create nonchildren, even Victor Frankenstein is shocked by the uncanniness of his creation once his limbs were 'rendered capable of motion', but nor do they fulfil their reciprocal duties towards these children and they each suffer as a result (*F:*59). In *Belinda*, this is presented through Hervey's internal conflict and eventual realisation of his destructive role in Virginia's childhood, alongside his implicitly false happy ending. The more overt examples of parental punishment, however, occur in my other two literary case studies. In *Frankenstein* and *Jude*, Rousseau's prophecy is enacted exactly as the primary parental figures have their lives overturned by their nonchildren and this is presented as the direct result of their refusal to reciprocate their filial duty. In *Frankenstein*, this is depicted literally when Shelley represents the removal of Victor's reproductive potential and his eventual death as the direct consequence of his decision to reject his creature and neglect his 'sacred duties' (Worthington 23). The parental failure in *Jude* is less defined, present in Hardy's depictions of genetic liability and the continual endowment of inherited mental disease, but the parental punishment is overt:

> My babies have been taken from me to show me this! Arabella's child killing mine was a judgment; the right slaying the wrong. What, what shall I do! I am such a vile creature—too worthless to mix with ordinary human beings. (*J:*284)

Indeed, Arabella's child killing Sue's is framed as 'a judgement' but it was not 'the right slaying the wrong', rather the wrong slaying the doubly-wrong (*J:*284). As I have discussed, Jude and Sue's children may have received a "double-dose" of the heredity taint that had afflicted Father Time and, therefore, suffered significantly from their parent's neglect of their

biological responsibility towards them. Thus, Rousseau's prophesy comes to be, and, for Victor and Jude, there is 'no consolation' outside of self-annihilation (Worthington 23). The reciprocal relationships between each set of literary parents and children still exist within these novels; however, rather than aiding child development, they inhibit it. Each destructive parental act, or neglect of the parental role, prompts an equal reaction in their child. In *Belinda* this is primarily emotional, but in *Frankenstein* and *Jude* it also manifests physically. In all, the child at least considers the death of their caregiver, if they do not indirectly enact it, as recompense for the death of their childhoods. Consequently, the child develops into a nonchild and, instead of benefitting from parental reciprocity, they suffer as a result.

This thesis sought to investigate the relationship between parental responsibility and the formation of the nonchild in nineteenth-century literature. While neither Edgeworth, Shelley, nor Hardy explicitly set out to portray their parental figures as willing teratogenesists, their narratives illustrate how the actions of these parental characters are directly responsible for the child characters' stunted development. This destructive depiction of parental characters allows each author to explore contemporary conversations surrounding the bounds of parental responsibility in a society that has only lately accepted childhood as a distinct stage of life from the distance of hyperbolic characters. Examinations of childhood in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries posited a nurture-focused approach, as an effort to move away from deterministic models of innate morality; however, my examination of *Jude* demonstrates a need for a combinative approach that considers nature in line with contemporary scientific thought. All three novels examined in this thesis explore increased parental responsibility from different perspectives; nonetheless, they converge in their consideration of reciprocal duty and love as requisites of healthy child development. As Rousseau argues, '[t]he child ought to love his mother before he *knows* that it is his duty to love her', yet he may only do so if the prerequisites of parental responsibility have been fulfilled (Worthington 18).

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IMAGES:

“Thomas Day” by Joseph Wright, oil on canvas, 1770, *NPG* 2490.