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The Road to a Daughter's Independence: Examining Matrophobia in *The Recess* and *A Sicilian Romance*

Scholars across a variety of academic fields, from sociology, to psychology, to mythology, and more recently women's studies, have examined familial relationships to better understand interactions between parents and their children and how those relationships affect each member's sociocultural development. Not every relationship in this mother-father-son-daughter matrix receives equal scholarly attention, however; historically, sons tend to be at the center of that attention. Look no further, for example, than our continued usage of patrilineal naming conventions for surnames, with sons carrying on the father's last name. Look no further than the importance of sons in the monarchy or in academic theories like psychoanalysis. Likewise, the son's relationships with their fathers and mothers also overshadow those between daughters and their parents; Adrienne Rich suggests that, "Whether in theological doctrine or art or sociology or psychoanalytic theory, it is the mother and son who appear as the eternal, determinative dyad" (226). As such, I examine mother-daughter relationships to shed light on an otherwise obscured pairing in the hopes of helping develop understanding between daughters and their mothers while providing men a more nuanced view of women and woman-to-woman relationships, particularly in how daughters seek to establish independence from their mothers in such a way that does not isolate them from their families and communities entirely.

My study focuses on the concept of "matrophobia," and its application in early gothic texts like Sophia Lee's *The Recess* and Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*. I argue that the mother-daughter relationships in these texts portray each novel's daughter characters as fearful of becoming like their mothers due to the circumstances their mothers were subject to. In an attempt to avoid the same suffering their mothers went through, the daughters in *The Recess* and *A Sicilian Romance* take action to distance themselves physically from their mothers' actions, mirroring present-day responses to trauma and navigating the difficulties of a culture which devalues mother-daughter bonds. In the process of distancing themselves from their mothers, these daughters also attempt to locate some measure of independence so as to not need to entirely rely on those around them, though each daughter is met with varying success. Although gothic fiction and its tropes as a whole are worth examining in more detail, particularly in their emphasis on women, I examine *The Recess* and *A Sicilian Romance* specifically because of their unique portrayals of mother-daughter relationships. After defining matrophobia, I look at scenes from *The Recess* and *A Sicilian Romance* respectively though the lens of matrophobia to better understand the nature of the mother-daughter relationships and the establishment of independence in both novels.

Rich defines matrophobia in her novel *Of Woman Born* (1976), as "the fear not of one's mother or of motherhood but of becoming one's mother" (235). This concept differs from theories like the Electra complex, the female counterpart to the Oedipal complex, in that the Electra complex posits daughters want to dispose of their mothers to have their fathers to themselves; as Judith Kegan Gardiner explains it, "In the Oedipus myth, the son murders his father in order to replace him. Contrastingly, in the new woman's myth, the daughter "kills" her mother in order not to have to take her place" (146). Matrophobia focuses solely on the mother-

daughter relationship, positing a struggle for control over the daughter's development; it is worth noting, of course, that "mother" is a flexible term which can refer to motherly figures distinct from one's birth mother. Foster mothers and stepmothers, for example, frequently appear in gothic texts like *The Recess* and *A Sicilian Romance*. Rich goes on to explain how "Thousands of daughters see their mothers as having taught a compromise and self-hatred they are struggling to win free of, the one through whom the restrictions and degradations of a female existence were perforce transmitted" (235). In other words, matrophobia sees daughters blaming their mothers for the trauma they receive growing up in a patriarchal society. Consider, for example, how fathers and mothers alike, instead of showing compassion, might condemn their daughters for getting pregnant outside of wedlock. This perspective views mothers, by choice or otherwise, as complacent, and complicit with a culture which treats daughters as worth less than sons while also holding them to greater scrutiny.

Rich also adds "where a mother is hated to the point of matrophobia there may also be a deep underlying pull toward her, a dread that if one relaxes one's guard one will identify with her completely" (235). Here, Rich suggests that the fear in matrophobia comes not merely from disparaging a mother's complacency, but from the fear that the daughter will likewise grow up to become complacent, thereby perpetuating the cycle of trauma. The fear of becoming like one's mother places daughters on the defensive, constantly checking themselves against their mothers to make sure they remain distinct beings without overlap lest they repeat their mothers' mistakes. As a result, Rich remarks, "Matrophobia can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr" (236). In an effort to avoid the same fate as one's mother, the daughter cuts her off, sacrificing her out of

necessity as a kind of bait which gives the daughter time to escape into the world. Some texts like *The Recess* suggest ironically, however, that even after the daughter gains some distance from the mother, the daughter is doomed to repeat her mistakes nonetheless.

The Recess is deeply bound up in conversations centering on mother-daughter relationships, as daughters Matilda and Ellinor encounter strife mostly because of their relationship to their ill-fated mother, Mary Queen of Scots. Megan Lynn Isaac states that, "like many gothic novels, *The Recess* is filled with motherless women, and despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that Lee was herself left motherless at an early age, the relationship between mothers and daughters is important to the novel" (213). *The Recess* examines how daughters who desperately seek their birth mother but ultimately contribute to her demise maintain their relationships with each other, their mother-like figures, and their birth mother's legacy under the rule of a woman akin to a wicked stepmother. Lee begins establishing these connections at the beginning of the text, as Lee lays out the setting which Matilda and Ellinor return to throughout the novel. The titular Recess "could not be called a cave, because it was composed of various rooms… yet every room was distinct, and divided from the rest by a vaulted passage with many stairs, while our light proceeded from small casements of painted glass, so infinitely above our reach that we could never see a world beyond" (Lee 8). Matilda describes the Recess here as a secure, sublime space, and in the company of other women like her sister and mother-mentor, she feels safe. The Recess is often interpreted, despite its sublimity, as a secure and therefore domestic space which provides the women living there relative freedom within its confines. Given its associations with security and femininity, the Recess stands in as the womb which the young Matilda and Ellinor do not leave until after the passing of their mentor-mother Marlow.

Although Marlow only appears briefly in *The Recess*, her time with Matilda and Ellinor is valuable, as she provides the girls with an education and informs them of life outside the Recess.

Marlow tells Matilda and Ellinor about their parentage, which they were previously unaware of, as she lays on her deathbed. She reveals that the girls are the daughters of Mary Stuart, who, at the time of Marlow's exposition, is alive but imprisoned under the order of her cousin Queen Elizabeth. Marlow's phrasing here is important, as she states "I would describe the Queen of Scots to you, my dear children, had not nature drawn a truer picture of her than I can give. Look in the glass, Matilda, and you will see her perfect image" (Lee 27). In these two brief sentences, Marlow has, whether Matilda likes it or not, inextricably linked her to her mother by noting the similarities in their appearances. Despite this connection, however, Marlow notes their separation as well, telling the girls, "She lives, but not for you!" (Lee 12). This contradiction places Matilda's relationship with her mother in a state of flux; although she closely resembles her, her mother, knowingly or not, does not acknowledge Matilda's existence. Matilda remarks she would seek out her mother, gladly joining her in prison, but she cannot bear leaving Madam Marlow and eventually decides "she to whom I owed the best part of that being, the formation of my mind, the instilling those sentiments which alone make us valuable to ourselves and society, had a claim beyond all others" (Lee 36). Here, Matilda momentarily rejects one mother for another for fear of betraying her foster mother Marlow even as she feels compelled to seek out her birth mother.

Matrophobia therefore plays a dual role in this scene, drawing Matilda to unwittingly imitate one mother (she does not choose to look like her, after all) while simultaneously fleeing her, ironically out of a sense of daughterly obligation. Matilda expresses a preference, valuing lived experience over familial connections; Maria Dolores Martinez Reventós notes that this

response is not uncommon, as she states, “Adolescent daughters often achieve identification with their same gender by idealizing not their own mother but another woman” (228). In this scene, both Matilda and Ellinor have idealized Marlow as their chief caretaker and therefore the one worthy of their love and attention, explicitly rejecting their birth mother due to her physical and emotional distance. Implicitly, however, the girls cling onto the idea of seeing her again, replacing their thoughts of Marlow with Mary; Jayne Elizabeth Lewis writes “The more the twins learn about Mary, the more they desire to be known by her. As an unattainable and yet ubiquitous object of longing, Mary supplies the matrix of her daughters' cognitive, emotional, and moral universe” (178). Isaac adds “Implicitly… the novel embraces Mary as the true mother. Matilda discusses her relationship to Mrs. Marlow in terms of "duty," "gratitude," and "esteem"—not love. Furthermore, she limits the term of even these sentiments to the life span of Mrs. Marlow” (213). In choosing to value their birth mother over their foster mother, who raised and cared for the twins, Matilda and Ellinor cut Marlow out of their lives, which becomes apparent as the novel progresses since Marlow’s presence in *The Recess* all but vanishes once the twins leave the Recess, which one could interpret as symbolic of the birthing process. Marlow, insofar as she oversees the girls’ growth and forbids them from leaving before they are ready to experience the harsh world outside the Recess-as-womb, “births” Matilda and Ellinor. Once they leave the Recess, thereby severing their umbilical connections to the place, they also leave all thoughts and feelings of Marlow behind to find their idealized mother, Mary.

After leaving the Recess and by extension their surrogate mother, Matilda and Ellinor find that, as Matthew J. Rigilano states, “The world, to begin with, is a fearful place rife with deception” (213). Though it takes place long after the twins leave the Recess, their brief encounter with their mother and her subsequent execution marks another matrilineal severance,

this time at the hands of both Matilda and Ellinor. Each sister blames the other for her death, as Matilda exclaims “Lovely, ill-fated sister, it was you then who accelerated our hapless mother’s death!” (Lee 120). Meanwhile, Ellinor, feeling abandoned and left to Elizabeth’s hatred, states she was “Betrayed, delivered up by Lord Leicester,—neglected, forgotten by my sister—the pair for whom alone I seemed hither to have lived” (Lee 171). In considering these differing perspectives, Diana Wallace writes “Lee’s narrative suggests both sisters are what Irigaray calls ‘accomplices in the murder of the mother’… Their failure to support each other repeats Elizabeth’s failure to support the ‘sister sovereign’ whose blood stains her hands” (51). Although they are coerced into doing so, Matilda and Ellinor inadvertently sacrifice their mother to, at least temporarily, attain a greater degree of independence, as she can no longer be held hostage and keep Matilda and Ellinor in her immediate sphere of influence.

As Wallace notes, Matilda and Ellinor’s interactions concerning their mother’s death mirrors the negative relationship Mary had with Elizabeth, pointing back to daughters’ matrophobic tendencies to imitate their mother figures despite their efforts to the contrary. Matilda and Ellinor, unlike Mary and Elizabeth, however, do not remain in this state of bitter rivalry; as Isaac writes, “the two younger women are able to maintain a supportive relationship because they continue to communicate and compromise with each other” (212). In this way, the sisters do break free from their mother’s legacy, choosing cooperation instead of conflict. They also build positive relationships with other women, including Rose Cecil, Lady Pembroke, and Lady Southampton, which is less apparent in the few relationships Elizabeth and Mary seem to carry in *The Recess*, suggesting Matilda and Ellinor take more care to recognize the value of genuine female friendships. More pointedly, Wallace describes these friendships as “the seeking of refuge in other women as surrogate mothers,” supporting the idea that, as part of their

unconscious efforts to distance themselves from their mother, Matilda and Ellinor find mothers in other women who can support them (52). Curiously, Lee reverses this dynamic when Matilda later has a daughter of her own, rendering her both a daughter and mother still caught within Mary Queen of Scott's legacy to such an extent that Matilda names her daughter after mother, symbolically bringing mother Mary back into the fold alongside Matilda. In the interim, Ellinor's own journey, though it represents a less substantial portion of *The Recess* than Matilda's, brings Ellinor to her mother's nation of birth, Scotland, though instead of being welcomed to her site of heritage, she is imprisoned in it, unintentionally mirroring Mary Queen of Scots's plight in England.

Ellinor's role in *The Recess* is unique insofar as she does not seem so drawn toward her mother as Matilda, even in appearance, as Matilda is described as looking like their mother and Ellinor more like their father. It is curious, then, that it is Ellinor who, after attempting to escape from Ireland and reunite with her lover in England, lands on the shores of Scotland, and, as Laura J. Rosenthal explains, "she does so as a fugitive and then a prisoner rather than a monarch—a point that the heroine herself reflects upon" (22). Because Ellinor cannot risk her captors knowing of her nobility, lest she be delivered back to Queen Elizabeth, she must hide her connection to her mother and therefore be received as "a youth employed till lately as a page in the train of the Earl of Essex" (Lee 237). During this time, Ellinor emulates her mother's own lack of familiarity with Scotland's people and their customs, as Rosenthal notes how "[Ellinor], like Matilda, depends on local kindness… In these Scotland scenes, Ellinor recapitulates one popular image of Mary, Queen of Scots, as a delicate creature raised in the luxury of the French court and unable to negotiate the primitive culture of Scotland" (22). Perhaps because Ellinor does not have as strong of an inherent connection to her mother as Matilda, she emulates her less

through appearance and more so through her actions, as she too lacks the experiential knowledge needed to navigate the local politics. This unknowing imitation could hint at a genealogical bond transcending experience. If this is the case, then blood, according to Lee, poses a stronger tie than experience, which is reinforced through Matilda and Ellinor's rapid prioritization of their thoughts on their mother over Marlow, who taught and raised the sisters. Such a perspective would contribute to Lee's overall thesis in *The Recess*, which seems to argue that lineage plays an important role in determining one's identity, as generations of women inherit their mothers' identities over time. This perspective also appears valid in Matilda's relationship with her daughter, Mary.

Lee's decision to end *The Recess* after Matilda has a child of her own is unusual, given that many other gothic novels before and after the text's publication, such as *A Sicilian Romance*, end in marriage. Extending Mary Queen of Scots's lineage an additional generation adds several layers of complexity: firstly, this advancement through time places Matilda in the multifaceted role of both mother and daughter, thus challenging many of Matilda's previous efforts to distance herself from her own mother. Secondly, establishing another mother-daughter relationship gives readers the ability to see what Matilda learned from the various mother figures she interacts with throughout the novel, which thereby informs what her daughter learns and comes to value. Lastly, the addition of another daughter figure produces an extra layer of matrophobia, as Mary comes to fear becoming like Matilda in taking the lover she believes suits her best; despite her best efforts, however, Mary's clandestine methods of joining with the lover of her choice results in further suffering, inadvertently emulating her mother. Matilda's past experiences and education, which has also become the reader's past at this stage in *The Recess*, briefly moves forward in Mary; as Carol Margaret Davison explains in the context of the Female Gothic, the

"mother embodies and emblematizes the past in the Female Gothic and… the daughter's past… it also incorporates the idea of the mother's legacy to the daughter in terms of certain culturally defined roles and behaviours. Thus may the past, in the form of a legacy, be carried forth into the future" (95). The roles and behaviors Davison notes here, in the context of *The Recess*, are behaviors which, above all else, value the secrecy Matilda, Ellinor, Marlow, Mary Queen of Scots, and many other women in *The Recess* practice in order to attempt to avoid persecution. These behaviors must be taught, however, which Matilda realizes her own mother did not prepare her for.

As a mother, Matilda is reminded how unprepared she is to raise a daughter of her own, given the limited worldly knowledge she attained when growing up in the secluded Recess. Because her own mother(s) could not teach Matilda what she needed to know to survive outside a safe feminine space, Matilda is likewise unable to teach Mary while locked in a prison in Jamaica. "Consequently," Issac argues, "Matilda's daughter is doomed to make many of the same mistakes as her mother and live a life afflicted with secrecy and ignorance" (207). She continues, stating "Throughout *The Recess*, Lee strives to illustrate the dangers of secrecy and the intricate means by which one secret can contaminate choices and behaviors in many other realms of action" (207). This adherence to secrecy is part of Mary Queen of Scots's legacy, which was passed over to Marlow, down to Matilda, and finally down to daughter Mary, resulting in her death.

What does it mean, then, for Matilda to have distanced herself from her mother by way of facilitating her execution if she, intentionally or otherwise, imitates her mother so thoroughly that she repeats her fate within her own daughter? When observed through Rich's framework for matrophobia, which posits women strive to break off from their mothers to attain an identity of

their own, Matilda's actions appear futile. This futility, Wallace argues, was likely an important component of *The Recess* for Lee: "For women, Lee's novel suggests, history has been cycles of violence and loss, repeated through the generations. The fictional Matilda, Ellinor and Mary remain illegitimate, spectral and for ever excluded from history" (56). Because *The Recess* is as much a historical novel as it is a gothic one, Lee portrays the history of women realistically, recognizing that history has rarely treated women fairly. Gardiner states that, in a patriarchal society, "The positive side of the mother-daughter relationship, its inter-dependent nurturance and warm attachment, also creates problems. The daughter must pattern herself after her mother, acquire her gender identity, learn her roles, and at the same time differentiate herself as a person" (147). This analysis suggests Matilda is locked in a kind of gender paradox, as she relies on her mother and mother-figures to grow and learn, yet she must also detach herself from those figures if she is to become her own person. Because Matilda is forcibly removed from her mothers, she lacks the time and space necessary to properly establish her own identity and therefore yearns for the security of familiarity, yet she cannot find it in anyone but her daughter. Gardiner likewise notes that, "Without a firm individual identity, mother or daughter may react to the other's self, body, habits, or life-style as though they were her own" (148). Matilda and Mary's lack of other female kinships tragically stultifies them both, and therefore they must retreat to their maternal imitations or lose their identities altogether.

Though it engages in many of the same images and concepts as *The Recess,* Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* alters the mother-daughter dynamics insofar as the birth mother, Louisa de Bernini, does not die in the novel, nor does she play as explicit of a role as Mary Queen of Scots. Despite Louisa's ostensibly diminished presence, she and the novel's foster mother character, Madame de Menon, still contribute much to daughters Julia and Emilia's

development. Louisa, for example, figuratively and literally haunts daughters Julia and Emilia throughout much of the story. Like *The Recess*, the foster mother character informs the girls about what their mother's life was like prior to her passing. Because Julia and Emilia believe their mother to be dead, they weep for her passing, but the sentiment soon passes as topics of discussion change (Radcliffe 34). As they continue to speak, however, de Menon is "interrupted by a low hollow sound, which arose from beneath the apartment, and seemed like the closing of a door" (35). Although they do not know it, Louisa is with them even then, unintentionally striking fear into her daughters. Matrophobia in this scene plays out more literally, as Julia and Emilia are afraid of becoming like their mother, which is to say, dead at the hands of an authoritarian husband. For Julia, this fear becomes embodied within the Duke de Luovo, who "delighted in simple undisguised tyranny. He had been twice married, and the unfortunate women subjected to his power, had fallen victims to the slow but corroding hand of sorrow" (Radcliffe 57). Most importantly, "The Duke de Luovo was of a character very similar to the marquis" (Radcliffe 56). Here, readers can recognize Julia's peril as a mirror to her mother's and, in an attempt to diverge from the path which led to her mother's apparent death, Julia flees the duke instead of going along with the marriage. Louisa is, in essence, Julia's "martyr," undergoing traumatic experiences which Julia later recognizes and rejects for herself. Louisa compromised, which is a mistake Julia chooses not to repeat.

There is also a symbolic component to Louisa's hauntings, as Ruth Beinstock Anolik reads those "low hollow sounds," which readers understand by the end of the novel to be Louisa's moans of distress, as an "evocation of childbirth" (31). Anolik supports this reading in explaining that "[Louisa's] imprisonment is also described in terms of childbirth. Julia… refers… to her mother's "confinement" (195). The OED confirms the validity of the double

definition of this word; as early as 1774 "confinement" means "the being in child-bed; childbirth, delivery, accouchment," in addition to meaning imprisonment" (31). From this perspective, Julia's flight from the castle suggests an escape from unwanted childbirth, which would again be the result of marrying the duke. Many of Julia's experiences, including her flight, are photo negatives of her mother's, establishing a mother-daughter relationship founded on matrophobia insofar as Julia does what she can to avoid emulating her mother, instead following de Menon's example where she can. Whereas Louisa often passively accepts her circumstances, Julia actively does what she can to attain the future she desires, usually by escaping the future she fears.

Julia and Emilia's relationship with de Menon has many similarities to Matilda and Ellinor's relationship with Marlow, though de Menon plays a significantly more important role in her relationship with the sisters and in the plot in general. Outside of her position as educator and caretaker, de Menon becomes most involved with Julia in particular when she guides her to the monastery of St Augustin to keep her out of reach of the duke and her father the marquis Mazzini. De Menon uses her connection to the head of the monastery, the *Padre Abate*, to gain access, which initially eases Julia into trusting the *Abate*; in this moment, Julia recognizes and imitates de Menon, as her faith in her as a mother figure overrides her uncertainty within the otherwise sublime and intimidating space. Their relative peace is soon disturbed, however, when the *Abate* discovers Julia is hiding from her father, which he claims is an "insult upon our sacred order" and a "bold and impious defiance of our high prerogative" (Radcliffe 132). Julia, momentarily breaking away from de Menon's faith in the *Abate*, vehemently rejects his "false aspersions" which convinces the *Abate* to continue harboring Julia, though after some time, he places a condition on this protection: if she "renounce the world, and dedicate [her] days to God," then she will be allowed to stay (Radcliffe 132; 141). Although de Menon is willing to

accept this offer if it means evading capture, Julia is not; as Jessica A. Volz argues, “In contrast to Madame de Menon, who envisions convent life as preferable to the menaces behind castle walls, Julia ultimately perceives St. Augustin as a place where religious and secular abuses collide” (110). It is at the monastery that Julia figuratively and literally splits off from de Menon, as she rejects her dedication to the convent and escapes with the aid of her brother, thus coming one step closer to attaining an identity independent of de Menon’s and her mother’s.

One of the most complex instances of matrophobia in *A Sicilian Romance* occurs in the scene where Julia rescues her mother from the dungeons of Castle Mazzini. Similarly to the Recess in *The Recess*, the castle serves a dual function in *A Sicilian Romance*. Initially, the castle is a secure domestic space for the women there, again offering the safety of the womb. Being held prisoner in these spaces, however, ironically turns that security against their prisoners, particularly for women, as Marie Mulvey-Roberts notes, “heroines confined within castles represent the containment of women within patriarchal social… structures” (109). After Julia leaves to escape the duke, which has disturbed that safe space, the castle is no longer safe for Julia to return to, yet she does so inadvertently, and soon finds herself, as Sue Chaplin states, “descend[ing] into this cryptic, feminine space in order to find her mother and set right the abuse of power perpetrated by her tyrannical father” (141). Reading the dungeon as womb-like, Julia’s act of rescuing her mother provokes imagery of a reversal of roles, as the daughter takes her mother out of the womb; Anolik similarly states that “Julia assures her mother that she has come to "deliver...you" (181); "Let me lead you to light and life... [and be] the deliverer of my mother" (181-2). Julia's words unfold a strange inconsistency in this birth narrative, an inversion of the biological process whereby the child is freed of the maternal body” (31). Given the symbolic complexity of this moment, it is possible to read Julia’s matrophobia as either absent or complete

here. Can it be said, for example, that Julia fears becoming like her mother if, by delivering her from the castle, she becomes a mother herself? Simultaneously, does delivering her mother interchange Julia and Louisa's roles, as Julia becomes the caring, watchful matron while Louisa finds shelter and guidance in her, thereby changing Julia's identity and making her distinct from her mother?

The symbolic density here, I argue, necessitates that readers recall that every mother is also a daughter, and that occupying both subject positions is not only possible, but also an inherent part of being a mother. As such, Julia can occupy the role of mother here while remaining distinct from her own mother, though this position is a delicate one, as Tamar Heller states "Even as Radcliffe imagines the possibility of the daughter's saving the mother, she describes a world in which the daughter's fate is perpetually on the verge of reproducing the mother's in oppressiveness" (18). The independence of identity gained through matrophobia, in other words, is always tenuous in a patriarchal society, and thereby demands daughters maintain close relationships with their mothers or mother figures if they are to maintain individuality. Paradoxically, this close proximity can increase the likelihood of losing one's identity; Gardiner notes, for example, that, for a daughter, "separating her sense of herself from "the old sense of continuity with the mother" is a harder, more frightening enterprise for the daughter than for the son because "she is apt to have remained passively identified" with her mother. Her struggle for personal autonomy is "fought against a parent of her own-gender," "fought against herself"" (147-8). Although Julia's position as both mother and daughter in this scene is a precarious one for her identity, as she risks falling back into the role of the undifferentiated daughter once she has her mother back in close proximity, in delivering her mother from Castle Mazzini, she makes

herself distinct from her mother and therefore attains a measure of individuality through taking on the role of caretaker, guiding her mother as she would a daughter.

The end of *A Sicilian Romance* differs substantially from *The Recess*, as Radcliffe's novel ends with a happy marriage between Julia and her lover and keeps both Louisa and de Menon alive. The dominant force in the novel, Julia's father, dies of poison, resulting in his son's ascension to the head of the family (Radcliffe 198). Despite these differences, both novels venerate female relationships, regarding them as absolute necessities in a male-dominated society which punishes women for forming identities outside of motherhood. Whereas Lee appears to argue that families, including mothers, can be fallible, Radcliffe takes a more conservative approach and finds solace in family, albeit one which might differ from their family by blood. David Durant explains that, for Radcliffe, "The [lost] family is capable of solving all the problems of the world: it gives the heroine an established place in a traditional hierarchy; overcomes her sense of loss of her initial family; provides her with a community which solves her isolation… [and] ends her flights" (525). It is the world around the heroine, Durant suggests, which changes; all that is required of her in response is to maintain the faith in the traditional family structure, which happens in *A Sicilian Romance* when one Mazzini patriarch is replaced by another, and Julia and Emilia's mother is reinstated as the family matriarch. Durant claims that Julia "will never achieve equal status with her parents; instead, she will rediscover them as distant arbiters and absolute authorities. The adolescent will have to sacrifice any hope of adult status, ignore the real world, and live docilely as a child for all of her life," which notably contradicts matrophobia's end goal of identity independence (528). Taking this perspective into consideration, does Julia, like Matilda, fail to attain real, lasting independence at the end of *A Sicilian Romance*? Once more, history complicates this question.

Radcliffe, like Lee, sets her narrative in the sixteenth century, a time in which women needed to remain within the domestic space to survive, as is evinced in *A Sicilian Romance* with its several violent scenes featuring banditti attacking whoever they can. As such, women were limited in what they could do, especially outside of the domestic sphere. Julia's successful escape from and subsequent return to the Castle Mazzini, particularly with the help of women like de Menon, suggests Julia splits off from her mother figures enough that she has the agency to return to the domestic sphere by choice. Though she is drawn back to her mother beneath the castle, she encounters her by accident, and with the help of her lover, delivers her home. Matilda, meanwhile, fails to do the same and does not voluntarily choose to emulate her mother, but instead does so because she lacks the opportunity and community to do otherwise. Both women rely on community for safety, but Matilda's sentimentality and regular adherence to secrecy causes her downfall. In contrast, Wallace argues, because Julia avoids persecution through her honesty, "the final image of *A Sicilian Romance* offers an ideal of harmonious female community: Louisa surrounded by her daughters and grandchildren. The ending thus ratifies the rebellion against the all-powerful father and suggests that 'heaven' is on the side of the women" (63). Neither Julia nor Matilda is ever in a position to outright reject the influence their mother figures have on them, nor does it seem like Radcliffe or Lee see the need to have them do so, as they recognize the need for female community, even at the risk of losing one's identity to do so. Although Julia ultimately succeeds in gaining a distinction from her mother that Matilda does not, Julia is still tightly bound to her family, reaffirming Radcliffe's view on the importance of the traditional family structure as a stabilizing force.

Although neither *The Recess* nor *A Sicilian Romance* perfectly adheres to Rich's definition of matrophobia—the daughters in both novels rarely display feelings of rage against

their birth mothers, for example—the daughters distinguish themselves from their mothers intentionally or otherwise throughout their respective texts. Matilda and Ellinor attempt to live out their lives in spite of their mother's looming shadow while Julia and Emilia strive not to repeat their mother's mistakes. The ties that bind these daughters to their mothers are not always readily apparent, but the connection influences each daughter's actions deeply, so much so that both novels ultimately circle back to mother-daughter relationships, albeit in notably different shapes. As mentioned previously, gothic texts in general often center on women, utilizing many of the same archetypes seen in *The Recess* and *A Sicilian Romance*: the absent birth mother, the evil stepmother, the benevolent foster mother or mentor-mother, and so on. Examining these texts for other instances of matrophobia would better inform our present understanding of mother-daughter relationships, particularly in how mothers influence their daughters' development and how daughters respond in kind: rebelling not for its own sake, but to find better paths than their mothers could.

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