

## “He died a lot”: The Gothic Gameplay of *What Remains of Edith Finch*

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This chapter is an exploration of Giant Sparrow’s acclaimed ‘walking simulator’ *What Remains of Edith Finch*, drawing on a combination of videogame scholarship and Gothic studies. In an appropriate play on the game’s title, Shane Snyder considers *Edit Finch*, alongside *Dear Esther* and *Everybody’s Gone to the Rapture*, a videogame unfolding within an abandoned space entailing ‘an exploration of what has been left behind’ (Snyder 2018, 9-10). The game tells of a young woman’s return to her abandoned family home following the death of her mother. Narrated by the eponymous protagonist, it is structured as a journal, a testimony, a last will and testament left by its central character to her unborn child, detailing the family curse which has claimed the lives of every Finch before her. Every sealed room contains a shrine-like space displaying a painting of a family member, objects reflecting their lives, and a document of some form. Interacting with this manuscript produces a brief interactive sequence, teleological structured to end in the demise of its respective family member. Play involves investigating the dynastic mansion, learning how generations of Finches were variously poisoned, crushed, drowned or decapitated. This chapter will follow Edith’s path through the mansion and the twisted chronology she encounters, illustrating how this game reproduces themes of Gothic fiction, while translating narrative tropes and traditions according to the conventions and affordances of the videogame medium.

### Gaming the Gothic

‘Ultimately,’ Charles L. Crow writes, ‘all Gothic stories are family stories’ (Crow 2009, 15), and the centrality of the family tree to *Edith Finch*’s structure roots the game in this Gothic framework. As play progresses the protagonist’s notebook fills with images of Finch member. Continuing, or more likely establishing this tradition, Edith’s great grandmother Edie senior painted family portraits on wood cross sections, commemorating their birth and death dates, which were ritualistically placed in their room following their demise. Clive Bloom identifies death as an obsession of the Gothic (Bloom 2010, 64), and death pervades *Edith Finch*, from the foxglove surrounding the family estate, to the empty bird cages in Edie senior’s room, to taxidermy pets and hunting trophies, to the house’s back yard cemetery. The game’s title plays on various morbid dualities. ‘Remains’ refers to both what is left behind and the dead body itself, while the moniker might signify either Edie senior or Edith junior, the old woman’s sprawling mansion or the young woman’s notebook. Twin Gothic preoccupations of death and the family intersect in the dynastic curse, a theme evident in the earliest Gothic novel (Punter and Byron 2010, 29). The supernatural might enjoy an ambivalent presence in *Edith Finch*, and Gothic media, but the Finch family home is nevertheless haunted by the remains of its departed inhabitancy. The past saturates this game, in the nostalgic, regretful narration of its protagonist, in the objects arranged in each dead character’s room, and in the architectural organisation of the building, testimony to the Finch family’s peculiar form of mourning.

Complementing such Gothic preoccupations is a gameplay structure which entails a more ludic, spatial translation of generic tropes. Within Gothic literature Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s identifies a ‘spatial model’ wherein the self is ‘massively

blocked off from something to which it ought normally to have access.’ This ‘something’ may take various forms, including ‘its own past’ and ‘the details of its family history’ (Sedgwick 1986, 12). Such a description neatly fits the situation of *Edith Finch*’s protagonist. Having entered the house, a chore in itself, Edith encounters a succession of sealed doors, crudely gummed shut, with peep holes offering tantalising glimpses into the elaborate spaces within. Exploring proximities between horror fiction and videogames, Laurie N. Taylor (2009) coins the term ‘ludo-Gothic’ to describe the transformation of literary tropes into gameplay, echoing Sedgwick’s ‘spatial model’ in emphasising the theme of boundary crossing within Gothic videogames. The structuring principle of *Edith Finch* involves gaining progressive access to those rooms, and by extension the strange histories they contain. This narrative is pieced together, patchwork style, through a series of discovered manuscripts, another trope of Gothic fiction (Mighall 2007, 113), each activating an interactive micronarrative depicting the death of a Finch family member. Sedgwick considers such ‘tales within tales, changes of narrator, and such framing devices as found manuscripts or interpolated histories’ as characterising the Gothic novel (Sedgwick 1986, 9). Consistent with Gothic literature’s tendency to combine different forms of narration, these ‘nested’ stories involve a range of media, including a diary, a comic book, a letter and an animated flick book.

‘Interpolated histories’ seems a remarkably appropriate description of players’ experience of re-enacting, re-living and re-animating the dead Finches through assuming the protagonist of their stories. Sue Morris, drawing on Althusser, employs the term ‘interpolation’ to describe digital games’ employment of first person perspective to effectively suture players into particular subjective positions (Morris 2002, 93). A highly reflexive game, *Edith Finch* plays with different subjectivities in a manner consistent with Gothic media, unsettling traditional boundaries between self and other, challenging concepts of a fixed and unified identity, and allowing players to experience different physical and psychological conditions. The first manuscript players find belongs to Molly Finch, a young girl who apparently died from eating poison berries while locked in her room without supper. The consumption-themed fever dream which unfolds sees the player, as the reader of Edith’s journal, as Edith reading Molly’s journal, as Molly dreaming, transform from cat to owl to shark to sea creature. Across the sequence the player crawls, leaps, flies, swims and slithers from the optical perspective of each animal, consuming a bird, rabbits, fish and eventually human beings along the way. The final section involves directing an eel-like creature up a sewage pipe into Molly’s bedroom where, in the dream she continues to narrate, the girl imagines being eaten alive in her bed.

There is an ambiguous complexity to this consuming force, characteristic of the ambivalent monster in Gothic fiction. The sea creature is at once an imaginary projection of the character Molly, a surrogate for the player directing the beast into the room of the sleeping child in order to complete the sequence, and a symbolic representation of the deadly curse which haunts the Finches. Other subjective positions offered across the game include a man sealed in an underground bunker, a father and daughter on a hunting trip, and a boy flying a kite, all played from the first person perspective. Adapting psychoanalytic film criticism, with some qualifications, Morris draws parallels between videogame play and the immersive dream-like state of cinema spectatorship (Morris 2002, 89). Such a position seems appropriate for Molly’s fevered fantasy which establishes the title’s phantasmagorical tone early in

the game experience. A sense of the dream-like corresponding with the unreal qualities of Gothic fiction, persists in many more fanciful sequences which narrate each Finch member's death, including a baby with apparent telepathic powers, a young artist disappearing into his own creation, and a teenage boy suffering from hallucinations,

### **Gothic Interpolation**

In their discussion of militaristic first person shooters, Morris argues one significant compromise to the comparative dream-like qualities of cinema is the level of control players exercise over on-screen action (Morris 2002, 89). Despite adopting a similar interface, *Edith Finch* is far removed from the traditional shooters Morris considers. The player has no weaponry, confronts no adversaries, and has minimal impact upon their environment. Beyond walking, slowly, around the Finch estate, interactions are heavily prescribed and limited to environmentally-specific actions such as opening a door, turning the key in a music box, investigating a document in a dead relative's bedroom. Such player agency is central to Tanya Krzywinska's discussion of horror videogames, generically situating the ludic structures informing *Edith Finch's* mediation on history, death, fate and the family curse narrative. Across horror games, Krzywinska argues, oscillation between player action and inaction, agency and its withdrawal, maps onto horror themes whereby 'supernatural forces act on, and regularly threaten, the sphere of human agency.' A 'moral occult', analogous to the infrastructure of the game's coded design works as a 'predetermined transcendent force', leading the player through the ludic labyrinth, variously restricting and facilitating progression, often producing 'an experience of being subject to a pre-determined, extrinsic, and thereby, Othered force' (Krzywinska 2002, 207-8).

Much of *Edith Finch*, from its past tense temporality to the foreshadowing clues scattered across the family home, enhances this sense of pre-determination. Fate controls Edith's sequential investigation of the family house, and more profoundly, the death scenes players replay at regular intervals. Here interaction is extremely limited. Molly's story, the first players encounter, is one of the more elaborate, offering many actions to perform, bodies to inhabit, and spaces beyond the claustrophobic Finch estate. The next story of Odin Finch takes the form of a non-participatory viewing slide. Reproducing a common trope David Punter observes in American Gothic fiction (Punter 2014, 24), it tells of Edith's descendants' departure from Europe, intent on escaping the family curse, only to bring it with them. The Scandinavian house which the eccentric Odin sailed across the Atlantic sank just within reach of the shore, taking the patriarch with it. Calvin's story follows. With characteristic dryness the narrator previously observed, peering through Calvin's bedroom door's peephole, how for seven years Sam shared a bedroom with his dead twin. Their room is a divided space, bisected by a red rope resembling those used to mark off inaccessible areas in a museum. Unclipping the barrier, players are guided by the narrator's words to climb a low flight of stairs ending in a shrine similar to Molly's, containing a short essay hidden inside a toy space helmet.

Death, duality, divided spaces, secret manuscripts, preserved rooms, shrines and monuments to departed relatives. These are common features across Gothic painting, literature, film and television. Where *Edith Finch* develops, translates and

transforms these themes is through the interactive possibilities and limitations of the videogame medium. Players are transported into the position of a boy on a tree swing overlooking a cliff edge. Interactive opportunities are slight. Players can inspect the coastal landscape, the sky, the sea and the other boy stood gazing into the distance. But they cannot leave the swing itself. Experimenting with the analogue sticks results in the child's feet pivoting back and forth, until the swing starts to oscillate in time with this movement. Many indications suggest this sequence will not end well, but the 'pull' established by the game, Jesper Juul's (2010) term for the intuitive input digital games elicit, is to continue swinging Calvin, up and down, higher and higher. Player may even experience the sensation Morris identifies, unconsciously reproduce the actions of on-screen avatars (Morris 2002, 87), rocking in synchronisation with the boy's body. Perhaps the adult player will recall, as Edith confesses to remembering, swinging as a child and being teased by the belief that it was physically possible to rotate a full three hundred and sixty degrees. Eventually, this is precisely what happens. The swing chain wraps round and round the tree branch, until the player, along with Calvin, is flung high into the air and the world fades to white.

All Finch family members are fated to die, are indeed already dead, and the game refuses players any option but to perform their last moments. Interactive affordances are perversely circumscribed to make players complicit in the occulted influences controlling the Finch family's fate. To this extent, paraphrasing Krzywinska, players themselves become the ambivalent supernatural force which threatens human life and agency (Krzywinska 2002, 207). A painful fit exists between videogame scholar Krzywinska's moral occult and what Gothic literary critic Mighell calls 'the deterministic structure associated with the theme of the ancestral curse' (Mighell 2007, 124). The game also capitalises on the first person interface's ability to position players in the physicality of fictional protagonists. It exploits the medium's capacity, discussed by Jon Dovey and Helen Kennedy, to 're-embodiment' players through a sense of virtual presence (Dovey and Kennedy 2006, 106). Molly's story extends the Gothic preoccupations with exploring different, non-human, potentially monstrous, subjectivities. Calvin's more physically grounded scene appears designed to elicit a clearer, consistent physical relationship between player and playable protagonist. With its intuitive controls and synchronistic movement, the line dividing player and screen is blurred in a manner consistent with the Gothic theme of boundary erosion, dissolution and penetration. In adopting the 'preferred performance' (Dovey and Kennedy 2006, 115-6) demanded by the game, moving Calvin's legs so they cause his body to rise and fall, players might feel increasingly one with the boy on the swing. This close proximity between player and Calvin has sinister implications for the nature of the Finch family curse. For the knowing, active, wilful player inhabiting the body of the doomed child, deliberately bringing about the boy's death, suggests a similar knowing, active wilfulness to Calvin himself, almost as though he, like the player, understands that they are fated to die, but find himself helpless to resist the pull.

### **Compulsions to Repeat**

Ambiguity is a recurring feature of Gothic fiction, and Barbara's story remains one of the most ambiguous of *Edith Finch*. Characterising a tendency of Gothic fiction towards irony, pastiche and parody, Barbara's interactive flashback assumes a *Tales*

of the *Crypt*-styled comic book story, complete with cel-shaded panels, speech bubbles, sound splashes and a hammy commentary provided by pumpkin-headed host. Its tall tale recreates the quintessential camp fire creepy pasta, featuring a babysitter and her boyfriend being terrorised by a hook handed killer. Further emphasising its slasher cliché credentials the scene borrows music from John Carpenter's *Halloween*. Such gestures reflexively illustrate the extent death remains a source of much storytelling, popular culture and entertainment. Additional self-awareness is provided by Barbara's characterisation as a faded horror film child star. Her bizarre story begins with adult Barbara's invitation to a horror film convention, and ends with the actor surrounded by movie monsters who descend upon her in a peculiarly violent act of adulation. What appears as a fictional take on the film star's mysterious death gives no clear explanation of what happened to Barbara, how her fate relates to the Finch curse, why the story should be the subject of a commercially-available comic book, or how her death relates to the traumatising of Walter, the brother she was babysitting.

Yet some corroboration of the story is evident in the preserved room where the comic book lies. Barbara evidently surrounded herself with generic Hollywood iconography, merchandise and advertising material promoting her hit horror film. Throughout her adult life Barbara appears preoccupied with her short-lived career, surrounded by relics of her former stardom, trapped in a mausoleum of memorabilia, even before her room was sealed shut. The debilitating consequences of being trapped in the past, fated to repeat the mistakes of older generations, is another Gothic theme of the family curse narrative. As Eric Savoy writes, such stories feature children plagued by the 'sins of the father' who, despite the 'illusions of liberty' find themselves ironically caught in 'an intergenerational compulsion to repeat the past' (Savoy, 2010 172). Edith Finch, compelled by the player, appears similarly fated to repeat the final moments of her relatives' lives. Exploratory interludes often entail retracing the movements of previous Finches, following Molly's pawprints, or replaying Barbara's suspenseful descent into the basement. This leads to the story of Walter, in which the theme of repetition is central. Traumatized by whatever killed his sister, and by the historical forces plaguing his family, Walter hid himself in a bunker built beneath the Finch house. Players experience this monotonous existence through his eyes, enacting the same experience day after day until, in an inadvisable moment of optimism, Walter emerges from his self-imposed prison, only to be killed by a train.

As Dovey and Kennedy observe, repetition is uniquely fundamental to videogame play (Dovey and Kennedy 2006, 116), an experience often preceded by death. Play often entails repeatedly watching death sequences played over and over again, until the vanquishing of a particularly tricky adversary is achieved. Reflecting Krzywinska's discussion of its ambivalent presence in horror games (Krzywinska 2009, 219), death in *Edith Finch* is not a sign of failure. Quite the contrary. Successful play involves leading each successive family member to their doom. After Walter's story Edith follows the mole man's path out into the open. This leads to a brief excursion around the family's beachside cemetery, which Edith notes with a characteristic mixture of disdain and resignation, the Finch's built before the house itself. Here players are offered the chance to view the old family home, protruding from the sea, marked by a red beacon and clanging bell, beside a monument to the building sinking and taking Odin Finch with it. Next players enter the room occupied

by Calvin's now-adult twin brother following his retirement from the armed forces as a military photographer. The space is filled with medals and trophies, pictures of hunting and military activity, weapons and photographic equipment, stuffed animals and preserved images.

Sam's room, and the photograph-based flashback it tells, represents a mediation on the deadly proximities between the camera and the gun. Susan Sontag famously argued all photographs constitute '*memento mori*'. Photographic portraits cannot avoid ironically reflecting upon their subject's mortality, producing an image which will withstand the ravages of time in contrast to their aging sitter (Sontag 1979, 15). Furthermore, Sontag observes how popular photography has always enjoyed an intimate relationship within familial structures, being integrated into festivals and rites of passages, even as the institution it memorialised became increasingly under threat from historical forces. 'A family's photograph album is generally about the extended family,' Sontag writes, 'and often, is all that remains of it' (Sontag 1979, 8-9). Photographs feature throughout the Finch family home. The first players encounter, as if to underline the medium's inherent morbidity, appears on the kitchen fridge beside a notice for Lewis Finch's funeral. Many Finches appear preoccupied with collecting images of their fleeting family, as home videos, hand prints, paintings, and the sketches which progressively fill the family tree of Edith's journal. Connections between shooting guns and shooting photographs, also considered in Sontag's essay, are evident in the subsequent flashback, composed of still images captured on a hunting trip taken by Sam and Edith's mother, Dawn. Depicted entirely through the camera's lens, this sequence involves the player, as Dawn, photographing various wildlife, and then, as Sam, photographing his daughter's first kill. Reproducing the sense of the camera as 'sublimation of the gun' (Sontag 1979, 14-5), Sam assumes a position directly behind Dawn's shoulder, taking the photograph the moment she pulls the trigger, capturing the point the bullet strikes its target. Ironically, the final image records the moment where Dawn's wounded kill unexpectedly bucked, sending a startled Sam tumbling to his death.

### **Mourning and Melancholy**

The disposition of *Edith Finch*'s titular character parallels that of the archetypal Gothic heroine, described by Bloom, as one defined by melancholy (Bloom 2010, 69). Sigmund Freud wrote on the qualities of mourning and melancholy, noting their common features. Mourning, defined as 'the reaction to the loss of a loved person' justifiably fits Edith's frame of mind, having recently lost her mother. However, Freud claimed the same circumstances produce in some the 'pathological disposition' of melancholy, characterised by 'a profoundly painful dejection', 'a lowering of self-regard' and 'a delusional expectation of punishment' (Freud 1984, 251-2). This might explain Edith's morbid preoccupation with Finch family history, her masochistic repetition of often-fantastical death sequences, and her irrational belief that her investigation might be reawakening the family curse. A lack of self-regard is inherent in the animalistic status Edith adopts towards the house itself. She enters through the dog flap, investigates the house by crawling through littered passageways, climbing cat-like across the roof, breaking into the house's sealed rooms as an abject outsider. The discovery that she is pregnant, destined to perpetuate the Finch's troubled family line, combined with her mother's death, might be the cause of

Edith's melancholia, and is strangely expressed in the two flashbacks which follow this revelation.

The next Finch family death appears through the eyes of infant Gregory, who drowns while unattended in the bathtub. This unsettling story involves players controlling the baby's hand, conducting a collection of bathtub accessories, including a wind-up frog, a flock of toy ducks and a family of plastic dolls, in an enchanted procession around the bathroom. The magical yet disturbingly surreal sequence has to conclude with players knocking the tap until water fills the bath. Gregory then transforms into a green-skinned reptile, swimming through reedy waters, before sinking towards the light-filled plug hole. No indication of this fantastical narrative is evident in the document lying in Gregory's crib shrine. Despite its cheery colours and lively sound effects, what players perform might constitute a dark infanticidal fantasy directed at Edith's unborn child. Gregory's death is followed by the equally unsubstantiated story of Gus, killed while flying a kite in stubborn refusal to attend his father's wedding. As before, an uncanny omnipotence of thought informs the boy's command of the elements, using the kite to whip up a storm, gathering the furniture surrounding the wedding marquis to violent effect. If Gregory's story reflects Edith's unconsciously murderous disposition towards her unborn child, this fantasy imagining of a young boy exacting revenge on his distant father's remarriage might be an expression of Edith's hostility towards her mother for deserting her. The poem accompanying the story, notably written by Dawn herself, ends on a tone of regretful sadness for leaving her brother alone that day.

Elaborating on Freud, Savoy observes how melancholia typically involves a painful relationship with a 'lost object', typically a parent, which the mourner seeks to resolve through a process of identification with that which they have lost. Consequently, as Savoy explains employing appropriate Gothic imagery, 'the ego altered by such identification becomes a kind of unquiet grave that harbours the living dead' effectively brought back to life by the sufferer's efforts to overcome their own internal turmoil (Savoy 2010, 173). Accordingly, Edith is effectively exhuming the family home of all its ghosts, histories and stories. The Finch mansion is filled with symbolically resonant lost objects, lining the walls as photographs and paintings, populating passageways and crawl spaces, and most explicitly decorating the shrines commemorating each dead Finch family member. Edith's efforts at understanding and reconciliation effectively reanimate the dead, predominantly through identification with their optical perspective. A particularly lost Finch member, Edith's brother Milton does not so much die as disappear. Early in the game, posters advertising the missing child littered the path through the Finch estate, while Milton's painting marks many hidden spaces as his own peculiar signature on the house. His sequence is animated through the most primitive of moving media, a flickbook, more charming than uncanny. It shows the artist painting a door, opening it, stepping through, bowing, before closing the door behind him, at which point the animation ends. A typically Gothic self-reflexive mediation on artistry, artifice, animation, and videogame processes of interaction and absorption, Milton's scene whimsical precedes the game's final major death sequence.

While the Gothic family curse narrative originates in supernatural tales set in quasi-medieval locations, Robert Mighall observes how, across the centuries this literary trope becomes increasingly informed by more rationalist, scientifically-informed

understandings. Drawing on modern medical and psychoanalytic discourse, one strand blames aristocratic inbreeding for inherited illnesses suffered across the generations (Mighall 2007, 90). Another emphasises the debilitating consequences for those unable to overcome unpleasant memories from the past (Mighall, 2007 106). Throughout *Edith Finch* the eponymous narrator frequently considers their family's preoccupation with death to be the source of their malaise. Depression is certainly implicated in the suicide of her older brother Lewis, whose story is one of traumatised withdrawal from reality. In recreating Lewis' death, players enact the young man's repetitive job, guillotining fish heads at the local cannery, while simultaneously guiding a fantasy character around a progressively expansive three dimensional space. Consumed by melancholy, Lewis, and the player, become absorbed in this hallucinatory videogame-like existence until it fills the entire screen. The sequence concludes in first-person mode, with players observing Lewis mechanically working at the cannery, surrounded by blood, guts and dead fish, while his imaginary self ascends a conveyor belt to a floodlit window, opening onto a church-like palace thronging with adoring crowds. But the sense of elation is short lived. A half-completed portrait of Lewis stands at Edie Senior's easel. The young man's funeral announcement hangs in the kitchen. The structure of every flashback, and the game's requirements of the player, have been clearly established. As the narrator, Lewis' psychiatrist, says, "there was only one thing left to do." The player leads King Lewis up the aisle and places his head in the guillotine necessary for his coronation...

### **Going Home**

As argued throughout this chapter, *What Remains of Edith Finch* draws upon multiple Gothic themes, tropes and traditions. These include the impact of the past upon the present, the layering of nested stories and multiple voices, the sealed preserved room, the hidden manuscript, the penetration and erosion of boundaries, a sense of fated pre-determination, melancholy and mourning, and the ambivalent family curse. These elements are present across the story *Edith Finch* tells, while also being translated into the organisation of gameplay mechanics and the ludic activities participants perform. In requiring players breach the secret entrances to various locked spaces, they become an active participant in unearthing the forbidden knowledge and hidden histories which preoccupy so many Gothic characters. Through frequent shifts of player identification, optical perspective and user interface the game refuses any stable, subjective, consistent or coherent position from which to assess the Finch's fantastical saga. By forcing an enactment of the last moments experienced by each fated family member, players become complicit in the family curse, which retains a typically Gothic ambivalence throughout. *Edith Finch* is also filled with Gothic images of death and metaphors for dying. Flashback sequences end with characters ascending into the air, stepping through a door, moving towards a bright light, going to sleep and going home. Symbols of death pervade the game, the first of which, attentive players might recall, is the garland of lilies held in the hand of the first character whose optical perspective they inhabit. This is the reader of Edith's journal, gradually revealed to be her unborn child, on a ferry journey with the flowers in their hand beside their mother's notebook.

Following Lewis' death, Edith comes to the final resting place on her journey. This involves climbing the staircase to her childhood bedroom, one of the game's more dream-like spaces, decorated with fluorescent stars, childhood toys and origami



birds. Sadly resonant mementoes reflecting previous death scenes are scattered across the room, including the frog from Gregory's bath, Sam's deer, figures resembling King Lewis and his subjects. Edith lies on the bed, her distended belly clearly showing, takes a neo-medieval quill pen from a case, and begins writing her own story. This tells of her last night in the house, when she found a secret entrance into the family library, the only sealed room until this point inaccessible. The library often holds portentous significance in Gothic fiction, a genre frequently engaging with the process of writing, storytelling and the recording of history. Here the child Edith finds a hand-written account, penned by great grandma Edie, of her own return home. This home is the house, sunk at sea, some distance from the shore of the Finch estate, which she claims to have visited the night her great granddaughter was born. An ocean earthquake caused the tide to shrink, allowing the woman to cross the sea bed in a hallucinatory sequence, resonant with psychoanalytic aspects and imagery. Edie recalls encountering a procession of lost, forgotten, yet familiar things along the way, until she reached the building which emerges from the mist like a Gothic mirage. The surreal sequence combines recurring themes of loss, nostalgia, memory, and return to the abandoned family home. Edie's movement as she opens the gate to the sunken mansion recalls that of Edith, at the beginning of the game, entering the family grounds. Only whatever she found in that house appears long lost. Abruptly Dawn interrupts her daughter's reading in the forbidden library, tears the manuscript from Edith's hands, and together they leave the home along with everything it contains, including the elderly matriarch.

Three brief sequences follow, ending with the player placing Edith's hand in Dawn's the moment her mother dies of an unspecified illness. The game's final scene is a perverse combination of morbidity and maternal loss, characteristic of discourses surrounding Freud psychoanalysis, Gothic criticism and the game this chapter's explores. Players participate in the delivery of the latest Finch child, repeating the curse's cycle of birth and death, in a traumatic sequence implicitly resulting in the demise of the game's protagonist. From first person perspective players guide the latest Finch through his mother's birth canal, heading into the light of the delivery room. Given the nesting order of narratives across the game, from the manuscripts located on Finch family shrines, to the recounting of their stories in Edith's journal, to the imagining of her experiences from the perspective of the child reading this account, primacy is given to the last remaining Finch who is effectively the author of everything the player plays. The sense of melancholia which pervades the title may not be that of Edith for Dawn. Instead it might be Edith's child mourning the mother he never met, whose only other legacy is encapsulated in a journal documenting their fantastical family home and history. The final shot sees the child, all that now exists of the Finch lineage, closing the journal detailing Edith's life, while stood by the grave containing their mother's earthly remains, as the scene rises upwards to reveal the Finch family mansion standing defiantly on the cliff face. It is a suitably Gothic end to a highly Gothic game.

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