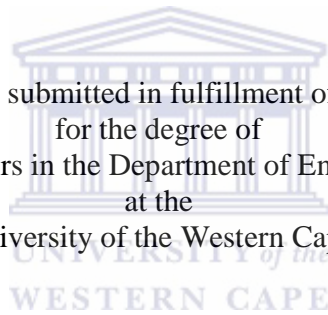


# Female Identity and Landscape in Ann Radcliffe's Gothic Novels

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## Keywords

- Gothic literature
- Ann Radcliffe
- *The Mysteries of Udolpho*
- Female identity
- Romanticism
- Domestic space
- Surveillance
- Sensibility
- The Sublime
- Landscape

## Abstract

“Female Identity and Landscape in Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic Novels”

The purpose of this dissertation is to chart the development of an ambivalent female identity in the Gothic genre, as exemplified by Ann Radcliffe’s late eighteenth century fictions. The thesis examines the social and literary context of the emergence of the Gothic in English literature and argues that it is intimately tied up with changes in social, political and gender relations in the period. The thesis argues against a superficial reading of the Gothic genre that sees it merely as a counterpoint to eighteenth century values of order, structure, rationality and reason in its depiction of excess, instability and the transgression of conventional hierarchies. In her representation of Gothic castles and ruins, Radcliffe destabilizes domestic space and constructs highly artificial landscapes in which an emergent Enlightenment female subjecthood is allowed to emerge. Radcliffe’s Gothic fictions, especially *Mysteries of Udolpho* – the focus of this thesis – envision new gender roles, upsetting late eighteenth century notions of male power and female subordination. The novels thus challenge and rework late eighteenth century perceptions of marriage, love and desire, refashioning the novel as a literary form accessible to female authorship.

## Declaration

I declare that “FEMALE IDENTITY AND LANDSCAPE IN ANN RADCLIFFE’S NOVELS” is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have utilized or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

COURTNEY LAUREY DAVIDS

November 2008

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



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## **Dedication**

To my best friend and husband, Gary Carl Davids: your unending love, support, understanding and belief built a mountain of strength for me to stand on. This is especially for you.

To our three treasures, Jordaen, Riven and Yael: your laughter, patience and love encouraged me to cross the finish line.

In memory of my dad, Patrick Campbell who told me this day would come: through all this I felt your heart, a fountain of belief, your spirit an ocean of hope.

And to my mom, Freda Campbell: you are the finest woman I know. I am deeply grateful that you are here to see this dream realized.



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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

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### 1. Overview

The purpose of this thesis is to chart the development of a “modern” female identity in Ann Radcliffe’s gothic novels. The Gothic, and especially Radcliffe’s novels, are a rich and complex field of fiction that rewards contemporary re-readings. In this thesis I will argue that Radcliffe transgresses older notions of gender difference by shaping a female identity that does not conform to late eighteenth century definition of females being inferior and subservient to the male-dominated society. Instead, a female identity emerges within her novels that deviates from and challenges eighteenth century ideology of the female as object, to be domesticated in the home, providing pleasure for the male gaze. Diane Long Hoeveler, feminist critic (1998) writes,

And whereas the ideology of the Eternal Feminine that dominated the writing of the male canonical poets demanded female submission, economic disenfranchisement of women, and social conformity to their prescribed domestic roles, the female gothic depicted its young female heroines as anything but entrapped, passive and docile (1998:5-6).

Already in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), Radcliffe’s protagonist, Adeline, responds to the invasive entreaty of the malevolent antagonist, who offers her his fortune if she only marries him:

I am sensible of the generosity of your conduct, and also flattered by the distinction you offer me. I will, therefore, say something more than is necessary to a bare expression of the denial which I must continue to give. *I can not* bestow my heart. *You can not* obtain more than my esteem, to which, indeed, nothing can so much contribute as a forbearance from any similar offers in future (1986:122).

Radcliffe’s heroines are an enticing combination of sensibility and decisiveness, defiant in the face of male tyranny but in control of the situation on their own terms. The lines between female submissiveness and patriarchal control are clearly drawn, “*I can not*” and “*You can not*” (1986:122). Here we see Radcliffe juxtaposing patriarchal authority and abuse of male power with the sense of inherent natural freedom (liberty of choice) that resounds in the heroine’s words.

In the course of this thesis I will pay particular attention to the ambiguity at play in the fashioning of female identity within her texts. In one manner, the ambiguity in Radcliffe's texts reveals the struggles female writers encountered in that period, having to conform to society's expectations of their literature as being merely fantasy literature while wrestling with their desires for reform, and utilizing their texts as revolutionary vehicles. In another and far more arresting manner, her Gothic fictions reveal Radcliffe's skill in fashioning a female identity that is not overtly transgressive, but is also paradoxically, reaffirming of enlightenment values like rationality, sensibility and prudence. While her heroines embody an identity that is negotiated by them on their own terms, it also embodies attributes and an observance of tenets that portray them as transcending the romantic stereotype where liberty equals wild abandon and lack of decorum. In Radcliffe's Gothic romances, the figure of the female heroine becomes the contested terrain in which the Enlightenment values of liberty, freedom of choice and rational decision making come into conflict with the older patriarchal values that seek to put women in their place. To use Nancy Armstrong's words, "The female was the figure, above all else, on whom depended the outcome of the struggle among competing ideologies" (1987:5). A close study of Radcliffe's novels shows that her appropriation of the initially male-authored Gothic genre gives her an avenue for challenging and reworking late eighteenth century perceptions of female identity, marriage, love and desire as well as contributing to burgeoning debates around politics and societal norms.

While these conflicts play themselves out on the level of character interaction, I will also argue that gendered identities are staged and performed within highly artificial, constructed fantastical landscapes. Gothic castles and ruins, vaults and labyrinthine passages, which function as stages for the actions of villains and heroines, abbots and abbesses, can be understood as allegorical representations that map out the relationships between female characters and a sexualized landscape. Gothic space, I will argue, is invariably gendered. Radcliffe's specific representation of her heroines within these landscapes is significant for the way in which her Gothic novels envision new gender roles.

The Gothic was a popular literary genre that emerged in the late eighteenth century, particularly in England. The late eighteenth century was a period of momentous social and political upheaval. In France the Revolution (1789-1799) was proclaiming the rights of man



and in England, Dissenters were challenging the old aristocratic order. It is within this social context that the late eighteenth century witnessed an emergence and influence of the Gothic. The Gothic genre provided a vehicle by which writers could shock, terrorize, chill and thrill the reading public. Stock Gothic ingredients that loosely define this genre are hauntings and ghosts, gloom and eerie noises, phantom lights and bloody armour, open graves, ruins and tormented whisperings. Frank Botting (1996) adds to this Gothic formula “dark subterranean vaults, decaying abbeys, gloomy forests, jagged mountains and wild scenery inhabited by bandits, persecuted heroines, orphans, and malevolent aristocrats” (1996:45). In Chapter 2, I will expand on this brief account of the Gothic, but at this point it is useful to provide a general overview.

The Gothic has always been considered a minor genre in English Literature from its origins in 1764 with the publication of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* to its hypothetical demise in 1820. One reason for its inferior status is attributed to the parallel emergence of Romanticism (1780-1848) as a more main-stream literary movement associated with the prestigious names of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, Shelley and Blake. Romanticism is conventionally thought of as a cultural counterpoint to the Enlightenment, and the Gothic can be understood as an extreme form of this reaction against reason, order and rationality. Margaret Drabble defines Romanticism as a

literary movement, and profound shift in sensibility, which took place in Britain and throughout Europe roughly between 1770 and 1848. Intellectually it marked a violent reaction to the Enlightenment. Politically it was inspired by the revolutions in France and America... Emotionally it expresses an extreme assertion of the self and the value of individual experience...The stylistic keynote of Romanticism is intensity, and its watchword is ‘Imagination’ (cited by Aidan Day, *Romanticism*, (1996: xx)).

I suggest that this definition is relevant to the Gothic sub-genre as well. It has attracted considerable attention in English Studies not because it necessarily produced works of great artistic merit, but because it is an extreme form of literature that reflects the major social and political shifts of the period. In a major theoretical work, *The Gothic* (2004) David Punter and Glynnis Byron claim that, “The Gothic is frequently considered to be a genre that re-emerges with particular force during times of cultural crisis and which serves to negotiate the anxieties of the age by working through them in a displaced form” (2004:39). James Watt, in

his work, *Contesting The Gothic-Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*(1999), confirms Punter and Byron's assertion of social and political crisis serving as a catalyst for the generation of the Gothic genre, but suggests that readers of Radcliffe sought a "legitimate form of withdrawal from the troubles of the present" (1999:103). Although Watt's, and Punter's and Byron's idea largely conform to the predominant view of Radcliffe's novels as escapist, their views only confirm a fraction of Drabble's definition that can be applied to the Gothic sub-genre. It is a narrowed one; ignoring the fundamental idea that Radcliffe's work also positively helps to construct a new form of gender identity and social relations. Most significantly, although the Gothic has traditionally been dismissed as a popular, lower form of fantasy literature, recent revisionist criticism has read the Gothic as a transgressive genre where "anything might happen and where its excessive emotional experiences of desire, terror, and pleasure become reading-experiences of female liberation" (Becker 1999:1-2). The idea of female liberation is then central to the Gothic and this idea will be expanded upon in later chapters.

The Gothic was a severe reaction against Enlightenment because it defied neo-classical beliefs of order and symmetry that marked this period's aesthetics as well as societal beliefs in restraint, rationality and reason that effaced the imagination. As Punter puts it in his earlier work, *The Literature of Terror-A History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the present* the "Gothic was chaotic...where the classics offered a set of cultural models to be followed, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and uncivilized" (1980:6). It was inspired by the revolutions of France and America because of its concentration on freedom and liberty. Gothic novels often critiqued the arbitrariness and terror of aristocratic rule, thereby promoting equality between classes. Watt (1999) proffers a historically grounded reading of Gothic fiction. He argues that a historical perspective of the Gothic must acknowledge that the genre itself is a "relatively modern construct because interest in it as a "descriptive" category emerged within twentieth century literary criticism (1999:1). Watt peruses the works of other twentieth century literary critics like David Punter (1980) and Robert Miles (1995), distinguishing their criticism as being groundbreaking in their focus on the Gothic as a literature of "self-analysis" (1999:2). By this, it seems, Watt classifies the genre as facilitating a kind of self-examination of the nation, of national culture,

becoming at once a criticism of the nation as well as a reflection of the anxieties produced by this criticism. As clarification of this assertion, Watt states that the Gothic offers, “privileged access to repressed material” (1999:2). This reading is particularly applicable to Radcliffe’s work, and I will suggest her works need to be read as metaphors for the repressed within late eighteenth century society. I expand upon this idea later in Chapter 2, in my focus on the function of labyrinths and vaults within Radcliffe’s works as being exemplary of the return of the repressed as a significant theme within her works.

The Gothic is thus a fascinating genre in English literature because it provided a deviation from set ways of thinking in and viewing in the late eighteenth century society. According to Fred Botting, the “Gothic signified an overabundance of imaginative frenzy, untamed by reason and unrestrained by conventional eighteenth century demands for simplicity or realism...” (1996:3). The unrestrained qualities that Botting speaks of connect with the excessive outpouring of feeling associated with the genre of Romanticism. More notably, the idea of the uninhibited correlates with the idea of transgressive behaviour and a passion for liberation, sentiments that also fuelled the revolutions. But just as the terror of the unknown lurks in the Gothic, the revolutions sweeping continental Europe were also accompanied by Jacobin terror, as the quest for individual freedom and political and social transformation revealed its darker side.

Punter and Byron (2004) provide a more contemporary view in their later work that confirms Botting’s view of the Gothic as transgressing the conventional ideals of eighteenth century enlightenment. Punter states that it is apparent that the ‘archaic’ in the Gothic “resisted the establishment of civilized values and a well-regulated society” (2004:8). Most noteworthy is Punter and Byron’s argument that the Gothic helped to uncover,

whole areas of English cultural history which had been ignored in conventional reconstructions of the past, and that the way to breathe life into the culture was by re-establishing relations with this forgotten, ‘Gothic’ history (2004:8).

This view is striking because it facilitates the idea that, in terms of trajectory, Gothic novels appear to reach back into the past in order to re-fashion the present as a way forward. The past, in which unfettered aristocratic power is the true source of terror, is interrogated and

repudiated, opening up space for a future society in which human relations are conducted in terms of equality.

The Gothic in particular also allowed for the cultivation of 'individual experience' in its focus on the female self as an emergent subject within the late eighteenth century patriarchal society. Not only was individual experience cultivated, but value was attached to it, which revolutionized the female identity shaped within the Gothic novel to one where, for example, female interiority and sensibility became at least in literature, a distinct, separate and esteemed experience. The Gothic genre thus allowed for a shift in literary convention where the imagination was no longer a male preserve. The imagination became the Gothic heroine's playground, for her to negotiate aesthetically and creatively. The imaginations of Gothic heroines become more than just fancy but became manifestations of minds that connect and interrelate with the world outside of domestic spaces. They wrestle with and re-define it – their imagination – as integral to the development of the female subject. Radcliffe's works thus exemplify the shaping of an emergent female subject that deviates from the Romantic ideal within the late eighteenth century. Her works form a curious synergy between the writer critiquing the social and political context of her time, and also reveal much about her life as writer and at times, as woman within the society she inhabited. It is then noteworthy to look at Radcliffe's life now not only as a window through which to view her Gothic texts but also as a kind of map, however vague sometimes, to understanding the source of the themes and Gothic landscapes that are inscribed in her texts.

## 2. A brief biography of Ann Radcliffe

Where'er th' Enchantress points her wand,  
Forth from the deep of darkness crowd  
Pale glimmering shapes, and silent stand  
As waked from Death's unfolding shroud.  
(from Radcliffe's *Posthumous Works* (1826), cited by Norton (1999: 232)).

Despite being one of the most popular and widely read writers of the late eighteenth century, Ann Radcliffe's biography has remained a contested area in literary history because of her reclusive nature and the dearth of contemporary sources. The air of mystery that surrounds Ann Radcliffe's life largely frustrates any ambition to obtain a tangible picture of her. Instead, an indirect picture of her is created through those who associated with her, and those that shaped who she became as writer and as woman. Critics of the Gothic genre have attributed this lack of biographical data to a woman who seemed to value anonymity and privacy so that neither her contemporaries nor potential biographers knew much about her life. Critics trace this dearth of material concerning Radcliffe's life to Christina Rossetti's biographical attempt in 1883, where she abandoned her efforts because information on Radcliffe was too paltry to render such a task possible. Until Robert Miles' *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (1995) and Rictor Norton's *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (1999), Gothic scholars tended to gravitate towards better-known Gothic writers like Matthew Lewis (*The Monk* (1796)), Clara Reeve (*The Old English Baron* (1775)) and Horace Walpole (*The Castle of Otranto* (1764)). Rictor Norton's (1999) biographical account of Radcliffe's life provides "first-hand biographical research" that, unlike Miles' concentration on the political and social premises of her work, expands the reader's knowledge of Radcliffe's background (1999:ix). Also, Norton provides not only a comprehensive study of Ann Radcliffe and her works, but also offers, in his words, "a cultural history of a writing woman" (1999:xi).

Ann Radcliffe was one of the most recognized and widely read female Gothic writers of her time. Norton's words, "she was the creator of the female Gothic, best-paid novelist of her generation and the most highly praised woman writer of her age" illuminates the unprecedented degree of Radcliffe's popularity (1999:x). Norton notes that Radcliffe's works illustrate "the internal struggles of many women writers during the late eighteenth century:

patterns of anxiety and guilt, repression, frustration, a sense of imprisonment, curiosity, doubt and rebelliousness clearly link such literature with the status of women in society” (1999:9). Most significantly, Norton offers a contemporary reading of Radcliffe’s works in his suggestion that they represent a “proto-feminist protest and claim for equality” (1999:x). This reading, although at times not fully explored by Norton, is central to the direction and perspective of this thesis as well as to the understanding of Radcliffe as a female writer in the context of her times.

She was born on the 9 July 1764 as Ann Ward, the only child of Ann Oates and William Ward of Holborn, London’s legal district. Rictor Norton notes that her parents were “persons of great respectability, who, though engaged in trade, were allied to families of independent fortune and high character” (1999:13). What is striking about Radcliffe’s middle class background, are the many influences that she encountered, influences that seem to have had direct impact upon her choice of writing genre and the themes she chose to weave within the fabric of her works; themes like gender equality and argument for equality across class hierarchies. Most significantly, her texts reveal the inferior position of women within the societies and the literary arena they occupied.

Norton attempts to trace the transgressive focus of Radcliffe’s writings to, amongst others, influential family members such as her uncle Thomas Bentley, who married the sister of Ann’s mother and another uncle, Dr. John Jebb. Thomas Bentley was the co-partner in the famous and lucrative Wedgwood China company, and for the latter years of the eighteenth century, the mark of “ ‘Wedgwood and Bentley’ ” was stamped on the black basalts, busts of white jasper and terracotta for which the firm became celebrated” (1999:27). Thomas Bentley was a friend of Joseph Priestly, the radical Dissenter who later befriended and supported Mary Wollstonecraft, who was considered to be one of Radcliffe’s contemporaries in her argument for gender equality. Ann Radcliffe resided with both uncles for a period of time in her life, and it is the social circles they occupied that seem to have had most bearing upon Radcliffe as a writer. Norton notes earlier that Radcliffe’s parents met with financial difficulty when Ann was seven. Her father approached Thomas Bentley for assistance in procuring a vocation.

Thomas Bentley assisted Ann's parents by obtaining a position for her father as manager of the new showroom for Wedgwood china in Bath. Before her parents made the transition from central London to Bath, they sent Ann to stay with her uncle. Norton notes that Ann was only "occasionally visited by her father, but never returned to Bath or saw her mother during that period" (1999:25). This stay with her uncle lasted well into Ann Radcliffe's teenage years. Norton states "The Ward family's removal from London to Bath in pursuit of commercial success is a classical example of family disruption..." (1999:25). In short, Ann Radcliffe's childhood was a dislocated one, hardly ever seeing her parents, and moving from one uncle to another. Norton notes that there "are many clues, in biographical facts as well as in the novels, that the relationship between Ann's parents were uneasy and that her relationship with them was painful" (1999:38). Norton argues later in the biography that one can trace the effects of Ann Radcliffe's separation from her parents in the portrayal of her heroine's lives in the texts, where they too are separated through death or circumstance from their parents. Norton elaborates upon this by looking at Ann's relationship with her father, noting that it was one fraught with tension in that it was clear that Ann Radcliffe was an "unwanted child" (1999:38). Norton traces how Radcliffe's feelings of rejection are mirrored in the lives of her heroines, most specifically in Adeline's life, the heroine of *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). I will expand upon this later in this chapter in my discussion of her texts.

Thomas Bentley's influence on her choice of writing genre can be linked to his social circles, his homes and their landscapes as well as his personal tastes in art. Bentley was "indefatigable in his endeavours... to oppose the slave trade. He was just as actively interested in poetry and fine arts, and he contributed essays to political journals...also writing a pamphlet on [the necessity] of female education" (1999:33). Bentley's interest in Gothic architecture and the picturesque manifested itself in his design for Catherine the Great's dinner service. The principle subjects were "the ruins, the most remarkable buildings, parks, gardens, and other natural curiosities, purposefully omitting to represent the most modern (neoclassical) buildings, considering them unpicturesque"(1999:34). Bentley's aesthetic register rejects Neo-classical tenets of order, structure and symmetry that is associated with this period, making Bentley's choice decidedly Gothic. Radcliffe's texts use Gothic landscape markers such as ruins, as can be seen in the opening scene of *A Sicilian Romance*



(1790) that describes, “ the magnificent remains of a castle” that “have an air of ancient grandeur...”(1993:1). Similarly in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), part of the action takes place in “ the Gothic remains of an abbey...” that “seemed to be sinking into ruins,... shewed the remaining features of the fabric more awful in decay” (1968:15). Other sketches and paintings done by or purchased by Bentley all portray similar features of Gothic landscapes. Norton notes, ‘He (Bentley) and his niece would have been surrounded by countless images of castles, abbeys, ruined towers and sublime and picturesque scenery” (1999:34). Implicit in Norton’s statement is the idea that Radcliffe’s imagination was saturated with these signifiers of Gothic landscapes.

Even the architectural design of Bentley’s villa seems to have fuelled Radcliffe’s imagination. The external walls of Bentley’s villa were ornamented with “bas-reliefs” (1999:34). Bentley’s reproduction of classical Etruscan vases that populated the interiors of his homes, also found their way into the Gothic scenes of her novels. A scene from *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) manifests Radcliffe’s first forays into the Gothic realm finding hold in her surroundings, “The walls were painted in fresco, representing scenes from Ovid, and hung above with silk drawn up in festoons and richly fringed... From the centre of the ceiling...descended a silver lamp of Etruscan form, it diffused a blaze of light... stands of flowers, placed in Etruscan vases, breathed the most delicious perfume. The whole seemed the works of enchantment, and rather resembled the palace of a fairy...” (1986:156).

Magic and enchantment are, most significantly, some of the aspects that mark the unfolding of Radcliffe’s imagination and as seen here, the spaces she occupied invigorated these. More significantly, the description of Montalt’s villa signifies excessive opulence and dissolution. The Latin poet Ovid had a reputation for decadence. Chloe Chard in her introduction to *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) states that this representation of scenes from his poetry “particularly suited the chateau of the libidinous Marquis de Montalt” (1986:378). Radcliffe focuses on aesthetic excess in her texts to critique it and warn against it. This is evident in Radcliffe’s device of ascribing the penchant for excess to her iniquitous and malicious characters. Chard affirms “Gothic fiction provides an extravagant dramatization of various forms of excess and transgression, which are defined as sources of intense fascination



precisely by virtue of the expressions of horror and censure that is directed at them...” (1986: ix-x). There is no space here to explore Chard’s ideas but I will explore this in Chapters 2 and 3.

Radcliffe’s other uncle and font of influence was Dr. John Jebb. He was a distinguished physician and notorious political writer in the late eighteenth century. In the period from 1775 onwards, Jebb wrote and published numerous tracts advocating academic reform, “liberty for the American Colonies, abolition of the slave trade...and [he] was a zealot in support of civil and religious liberty” (1999:15). In short, Jebb intensely detested what England nationalism represented at the time, and was known for being a firm supporter of the Dissenter cause. His belief in egalitarian principles and political freedom would have influenced Radcliffe and he may have first ignited her interest in the theories of Rousseau. According to Norton, Radcliffe would have read her uncles published letters and pamphlets, containing such stirring sentiments as this: “Everything should be now done, which can contribute to spread the sacred flame of freedom through the country” (1999:16). As we shall see, the idea of freedom is central to Radcliffe’s Gothic fiction, and her texts associate the idea of freedom with the emergence of a new liberated female identity. Freedom is thus re-defined as an idea not only associated with a patriarchal nationalism (“Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood”) but one that Radcliffe claims for an emancipated female subject.

Jebb’s influence as radical and rebellious in the face of staunch English nationalism and patriarchy appears to have extended to Ann Radcliffe, whom Norton asserts, resided for a period of time with her “activist granduncle at his residences in Bungay, Craven Street and Parliament Street during various periods from 1771-1786” (1999:16). Taking this into consideration, Norton is careful to note that Radcliffe’s works do not exemplify what has become a stock-feminist view of Radcliffe’s novels, one that states that Radcliffe, and any other female writer of the Gothic romance, produced their literary works because of the debilitating effects of patriarchy. Instead, it is apparent that Norton argues for recognition that Radcliffe emerged at once because of the male defined society she occupied and also despite of it. This is a crucial marker to understanding Radcliffe’s works, one that I refer to and expand upon in Chapter 2.

Ann Ward married her husband William Radcliffe in 1787. William was a graduate from Oriel, a prestigious Oxford college. He had intended to pursue a career in law but instead was drawn to journalism, becoming the owner and editor of the English Chronicle (Norton, 1999:54). What is interesting about her marriage is that Radcliffe appears to have married 'above her station'. Norton writes, "we must seriously doubt that this daughter of a ceramic tradesman – a dealer in *ware* – was of sufficient social standing to have been welcomed into this polite academy" (1999:47). Strikingly, then, Radcliffe pursues this as theme in her novels. *The Italian* (1797) comes to mind, as Ellena is portrayed earlier in the novel as someone who is "inferior in rank" to the Vivaldi family, aristocratic as they are, would "be averse to an union" such as that between Ellena and Vivaldi because "a full sense of the value of birth is a marking feature in the characters of the Marchese and Marchesa di Vivaldi" (1968:24).

Implied in the above, is Radcliffe's inferiority not only in social standing but also in terms of education. Norton alludes to Radcliffe's seemingly superior education as being nothing but a veneer. It seems that Radcliffe sustained the illusion of being well educated throughout her years; something that Norton notes was really an "indication of how successfully she managed to create the impression through the cultural allusions in her novels" (1999: 48). Norton cites Bridget MacCarthy (1947), who opines that Radcliffe is

the extreme example of genuine literary power misdirected for want of education. Any one of her novels contains a thousand testimonies to this fact. Her style is the style of the poet gone astray. (1999:48).

Norton continues MacCarthy's argument by stating that "the cultural attributes with which the novelist invests her characters suggest that she herself had to strive for culture, that it had not been part of her education" (1999:48) I find this take on Radcliffe important to viewing her as Gothic writer. Not only is it a contradictory and alternate view to Radcliffe as cultural icon or as having "codified the contract between reader and writer of the Gothic novel" (1999:ix). Instead of depriving Radcliffe's works of import, this view serves to illuminate her works as extraordinary (1999:ix). She did not need high levels of education to have her works set as the markers by which all other Gothic novels were measured. E.J. Clery (2004)

cites more than one review extolling Radcliffe as “the Queen of the tremendous, the ‘Shakespeare of Romance Writers’” (2004:51).

Despite her popularity and celebrity status Radcliffe remained a recluse and she retired from publishing in 1797. Norton states that by far the greatest mystery that surrounds Radcliffe’s life is the question “what-or-who-compelled her to abandon her muse?” (1999:136). This question is not answered by Norton but he does offer an explanation of her sudden retraction from the writing world, especially since her novels had achieved critical fame. Norton proposes that “the often-repeated features of the novels may illuminate the author’s otherwise unknown life. Ann Radcliffe seems to have planted clues about her own life in her fiction, as in her very specific references to dates and ages” (1999:137). For example, Adeline, in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) first meets her suitor Louis La Motte when he “was now in his twenty-third year” (1986:68). William Radcliffe was twenty-three years old when he married Ann and although Adeline does not marry La Motte in the novel, the character description of La Motte seems like a “portrait of William – an imperfect figure rather than an idealized hero” (1999:137). Norton also warns that this biographical criticism in this vein has its limitations but it is nevertheless interesting to think that her last novel might reveal reasons why her writing ceased.

Regardless of the paucity of biographical data on Radcliffe and her seclusion, what is clear is her enormous impact on her contemporaries. Mary Wollstonecraft, a novelist herself, attacked Radcliffe’s style of writing. In *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), Wollstonecraft writes,

Abodes of horror have frequently been described, and castles, filled with specters and chimeras, conjured up by the magic spell of genius to harrow the soul, and absorb the wondering mind. But, formed of such stuff as dreams are made of, what were they to the mansion of despair, in one corner of which Maria sat, endeavouring to recall her scattered thoughts!... the terrific inhabitants [of the madhouse where she was imprisoned]...whose groans and shrieks were no insubstantial sounds of whistling winds, or startled birds, modulated by a romantic fancy, which amuse while they affright; but such tones of misery as carry a dreadful certainty to the heart (1798:1-2).

Wollstonecraft had no need to mention Radcliffe’s name for the critique is clear; Radcliffe’s works were mere fantasy constructions of subservient females experiencing the horrors of the

patriarchal spaces they inhabit as “sounds of whistling winds”, hardly harmful, never damaging (1987:1) The fact that Radcliffe became known as well for the ‘supernatural explained’ aspect of her novels is also critiqued in Wollstonecraft’s narration. The haunting of Radcliffe’s heroines were never real, not as real as the situation of Maria, imprisoned in a mad-house by her husband who discards her at a whim. Despite Wollstonecraft’s seeming dismissal of the fanciful in Radcliffe’s fictions, *A Sicilian Romance* (1789) introduces this theme of wrongful female imprisonment at the hands of the husband. Louisa Mazzini is banished to a far-off tower by her husband. He tells everyone that she is dead so that he can marry his mistress. This theme is echoed in other novels produced in the nineteenth century, in particular, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847). Bertha, the wife of Rochester, is imprisoned in the attic of his mansion, and is, to use Gilbert and Gubar’s words, “the mad-woman in the attic” (1979:1).

To sum up then, two aspects of Radcliffe’s life are significant: she avoided private society and kept herself distant like the “sweet bird that sings its solitary notes” and Radcliffe as writer who was the “Great Enchantress” (cited by Norton (1999:204 and viii). As seen in the works of Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe’s romances became the dominant model for imagining and frightening experience. Conversely, the idea of Radcliffe as ‘Enchantress’ is fittingly captured in Keat’s letter to a friend,

I am going among Scenery whence I intend to tip you the Damosel Radcliffe - I’ll cavern you, and grotto you, and waterfall you, and wood you, and water you, and immense-rock you, and tremendous-sound you, and solitude you (cited by Clery (2004:51)).

The marked references to nature like “waterfall”, “wood” and “water” in Keat’s words allude to Radcliffe’s abundant landscape description in her fictions and is emphasized by the capitalized “Scenery” (cited by Clery (2004:51)). The use of the sublime in her novels is aptly captured in the words, “immense-rock” and “tremendous-sound” invoking the way the sublime is portrayed for its overwhelming and excessive qualities in her fictions (cited by Clery (2004:51)). We, like Keats, appreciate the fantastical and mysterious features of Radcliffe’s works that enchant us but as this thesis will argue, Radcliffe’s fictions are more

than just horrid stories read for their thrilling entertainment value. Her works transcend conventional modes of writing, facilitating the emergence of new gender roles that ambiguously defy and exemplify the dominant culture.

### 3. Summary of Radcliffe's Novels

As a female writer of the Gothic Radcliffe was, in E. J. Clery's words, a

hell-raiser in more than one sense, not only did she specialize in evoking scenes of horror, cruelty and supernaturalism, but in doing so she exploded the literary conventions of the day and laid claim to the realms of the imagination hitherto reserved for men (2004:169).

Her first attempts in the genre of Gothic romance, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), were published anonymously. Then followed *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). Radcliffe's works were translated into many languages. Her penchant for travel produced a work titled, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany...To Which Are Added Observations of a Tour to the Lakes* (1795) based on her travels to the Continent. Chard notes that the "tours of southern Europe undertaken in Radcliffe's novels were more exotic, based on travel books, fashionable landscape paintings, and a vivid imagination; the scene-painting sometimes heightened by verse" (1986: Preface). Radcliffe's final novel, *Gaston de Blondville* was published in 1826, together with a narrative poem, *St Alban's Abbey*.

*The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) marked the arrival of a unique talent. It was Ann Radcliffe's first attempt at fiction, and its feuds, cases of mistaken identity, and background of castles and the sublime landscape pointed the way forward to the Gothic novels of her later years. Set in the Middle Ages against the beauty of mountains and rugged coasts of the Scottish Highlands, the novel describes the internecine feuds of the warring clan chieftains of Athlin and Dunbayne. The novel weaves that which becomes stock ingredients for Radcliffe's later novels; fear-ridden pursuits alternate with scenes of passionate feeling that coincide with the character's experience of landscape. The Castle of Athlin itself appears synonymous

with romantic sublimity, becoming the focal point of the novel, much like the Castle of Udolpho does in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).

*Castles* has been compared to Clara Reeves' *The Old English Baron* (1789) because of its similar format of the Bildungsroman: the development of its heroine, Mary, is foregrounded by the calamities that befall her. Her attempts to overcome conflicted situations of an arranged marriage to Count de Santinorin and imprisonment by the novel's villain, Malcolm of Dunbayne, is meant to illustrate her emergent agency. But, as James Watt puts it, the novel "does little either to exploit the dramatic potential of its heroines' confinement or to foreground the character of its villain" (1999:103). Therefore, as a first novel, *Castles*, reads as a tentative beginning in terms of its Gothic themes and its foray into aesthetic terror that distinctly characterized Radcliffe's later novels. Although it shares with *The Old English Baron* the idea of property restoration, it is a theme, together with aesthetic terror, that Radcliffe revisits more strongly in her later novels like *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).

*Castles* is also about the contestation of land embodied in the conflict between aristocratic greed for land ownership and rightful ownership that is female. Radcliffe extends this idea of female ownership into her other novels in a far more pronounced way: the restoration of land into female hands reads as the climax of her triumph over the villain. In *Castles* Malcolm becomes a passive, vanquished character towards the novel's end, rendering a full confession on his death-bed that sees the contested land restored to its rightful owner. As in *Castles*, Radcliffe continues to remove the villains of her novels through death that ranges from poisoning to natural death because of imprisonment. The villain's confession and death assumes symbolic meaning in Radcliffe's novels: an end to secrecy and deception and an end to patriarchal oppression.

The heroine's ownership of land at the novel's end also reads as a reward for her intact virtue, another theme that is further developed in Radcliffe's later novels. *Castles* tells the theme, amongst others, that virtue may temporarily suffer under vice's triumphs but that Providence will eventually reward virtue even on earth. Other themes include the negotiation

of marriage by the heroine, where Mary, faced with the possibility of wealth and marrying according to her station in life, rejects this and is 'rewarded' in marriage to Alleyn. This narrative framework differs distinctly from Radcliffe's novels that follow, in that one can trace a more pertinent shaping of female identity, one that negotiates being female outside of the patriarchal society. Mary's choice to marry is not really a choice, as it is her family that must agree before she can marry Alleyn, and it is Alleyn who must first acquire a title and become a Baron. *Castles* (1789) then stands as a tentative step towards a progressive female identity that Radcliffe actively pursues in her later novels.

The text of *Sicilian Romance* (1790) differs from the frameworks of *The Italian* (1797), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) in that Julia, its heroine is not dislocated from her family in the stock way that Radcliffe employs in her other novels. Instead, she is immersed in a nuclear family, where her father has re-married following the death of her mother. She also has a brother, Ferdinand and a sister, Emilia, unlike the heroines of Radcliffe's other novels. The step-mother is a woman of "infinite art, devoted to pleasure, and of an unconquerable spirit" (1993:3). This, coupled with the father being "dead to paternal tenderness" paints a family life, though representative of a unit, as actually devoid of the accord that is so palpable in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). More succinctly, the marital relationship between the Marquis and his wife is described as, "she had the address to bend them (his passions) to her own purpose; and so well to conceal her influence, that he thought himself most independent when he was most enslaved" (1993:3). Although haunting and terror do occur within the novel to disturb the heroine, the haunting occur for the first time in the domestic space that the heroine occupies and not as in *Mysteries* (1794) where Emily is 'haunted' predominantly in the Castle of Udolpho, a place not her home and where she is held prisoner and in *The Italian* (1797), where Ellena is 'haunted' in the dilapidated house where she is kept prisoner by Schedoni.

The tale of love unfolds at a rapid pace similarly to that in *The Italian* (1797), where Julia meets Hippolitus at a ball hosted by her father. The step-mother desires Hippolitus for herself. When he selects Julia for a dance, "her bosom, which before glowed only with love, was now torn by the agitations of other passions more violent and destructive" (1993:18).



This entanglement of emotions, improper on her part, sets the tone of deceit and avarice that unfolds as the story progresses.

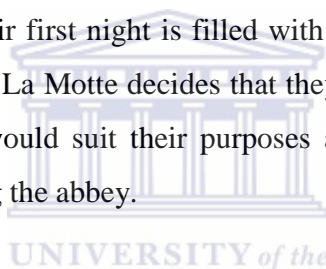
Unlike *Castles* seemingly reluctant foray into the Gothic themes of haunting and terror, *A Sicilian Romance* can be read as an allegory for the “recess of horror” to be found within the Castle of Mazzini (1993:176). The themes of haunting and mystery assume fantastical proportions in *Sicilian* in the form of mysterious lights that appear in a far-off tower of the castle. Added to this, strange and woeful lamentations issue from a hidden apartment seemingly below their step-mother’s chamber, terrorizing the imaginations of Julia and Emilia, causing them to faint continuously. But it is also here where Radcliffe can first be seen to offer a grounding for her heroine’s apparent hysteria and fear that extends into her well-known device of the ‘explained supernatural’ that is a common thread in the rest of her novels. Julia’s heightened emotional state and propensity for fainting is attributed to “her spirits already weakened by sorrow” (1993:61). Similarly, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) Emily only yields to ‘imaginary’ terrors because of “her spirits” that were “more than usually depressed” (1966:367). In *Sicilian* the ‘haunting’ in the Castle of Mazzini in the form of mysterious lights is explained by the revelation that Julia’s mother was still alive, roaming the castle corridors at night with a candle.

As in all of Radcliffe’s novels, the heroine is told she is to marry and not given the choice. Radcliffe utilizes marriage and the negation of this institution to reflect the liberty and value of individuality when her heroine’s reject the proposals, as does Julia. Her words to her father, “forbear to enforce authority upon a point where to obey you would be worse than death; if indeed, to obey you were possible” finds resonances in Adeline’s rejection of Montalt’s suit in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) (1993:55). In short, Julia escapes her father’s tyranny, only to find her mother in the forest she escaped to. The novel ends with Julia marrying Hippolitus and her and her siblings restored to their mother.

*The Romance of the Forest* (1791), discontinues with *A Sicilian Romance*’s (1790) focus on its heroine as part of a family unit (albeit dysfunctional) and introduces the theme of a heroine dislocated from her family and the safety of domestic life through circumstance of



birth or through the death of her parents. In this instance, Adeline, who, abandoned by her father, is placed by him in the 'care' of banditti-type men who are meant to dispose of her as they please. The men 'kidnap' a passer-by in the dark of night, who happens to be La Motte, a Parisian man who is pursued by the law because of his unpaid debt and who had approached the old house where the banditti lived to seek shelter for him and his wife from the coming storm. The ruffians compel La Motte to take Adeline with him, or his life would not be spared. La Motte complies, in fear of his life as well as the possibility that the banditti would discover his wife in the carriage not far from the house. Once in the carriage, La Motte explains to his wife the circumstances and she immediately takes pity on Adeline. They travel, La Motte seeking concealment in the neighbourhood of Lyons. They come upon a desolate road that leads them into a forest "wild and solitary" (1986:14). Here, they come upon the ruins of an abbey. They decide to stay here, as the wheel on their carriage breaks, and night is fast-approaching. Their first night is filled with imaginary terrors in the Gothic edifice that is gloomy and forlorn. La Motte decides that they should stay there permanently, as the abbey's solitary location would suit their purposes as well the fact that game was abundant in the forests surrounding the abbey.



The Gothic villain is, much like Walpole's villain in *The Castle of Otranto* (1757) a lustful tyrant who pursues the heroine to appease his appetites. De Montalt covets Adeline despite being married. He prevents her from being with Theodore the man she loves by kidnapping her, attempting to seduce her. In accordance with the pattern of reunion and losing each other in *The Italian* (1797), Adeline is separated from Theodore when de Montalt, cruel and vengeful, captures Theodore as though he is a common criminal, imprisoning him under false charges. de Montalt tempts Adeline with everything she does not possess: title, wealth and stability. When she continues to reject him, he resorts to having her murdered and demands that she be killed by her pseudo-father La Motte with whom he has formed a devious and twisted relationship. The villainy of de Montalt appears unprecedented in comparison with the rogues of Radcliffe's other texts (except Montoni in *Mysteries*), for even when the evil monk Schedoni had the opportunity to murder Ellena in *The Italian* (1797), he could not accomplish it. As an aside, it is interesting that Norton (1999) suggests that Adeline and her experiences closely mirror Radcliffe's feelings towards the 'villain' in her life, her father.

The narrative ends in Adeline being re-united with Theodore, having overcome, like Ellena and Vivaldi, insurmountable obstacles. Similarly, like Ellena, Adeline discovers her true lineage, that her father had been murdered by de Montalt, who was his brother, Henry de Montalt. His wife died giving birth to Adeline. Adeline and Theodore marry after, like Emily, she rightfully inherits her title and wealth as daughter of a Marquis and Marchioness.

In a similar framework in terms of the heroine's orphan status and destitution, *The Italian* (1797) has as its focus, the heroine, Ellena di Rosalba, an orphan who lives with her aunt, Signora Bianchi, in Naples, Italy. In the first chapter, Ellena meets Vincentio di Vivaldi, son of wealthy parents and heir to an opulent fortune. His way of life is in complete contradiction to Ellena's, who embroiders silks and sells these to nuns at a neighbouring convent, living "thus innocent and happy in the silent performance of her duties and in the veil of retirement" (1968: 9). Vivaldi pursues her despite her initial lack of interest in him.

His pursuits clash with the surveillance of a monk, whom he meets in his nightly forays to the villa Altieri, where Ellena stays. The monk represents a dangerous and mysterious figure at this early point in the novel, having warned Vivaldi to desist in his pursuit of Ellena. In the meantime, Vivaldi's mother becomes suspicious of her son's preoccupation, she being a person whose character was inclined to "craft, duplicity or vindictive thirst of revenge" (1968:8). But it is the Marchese, Vivaldi's father who finds out that he is in love with Ellena. He immediately demands that Vivaldi desists in his interest in her. Vivaldi refuses. His mother also confronts him but Vivaldi quits her chamber, "unconvinced by her arguments, unsubdued by her prophecies, and unmoved in his designs" (1968:33). She enlists the help of a monk, Schedoni, of the convent of the Black Penitents who had for some time been her confessor and secret adviser. She implores Schedoni to arrive at a solution for her son could not marry someone that could not enrich the Vivaldi lineage or add to the wealth of the Vivaldi house.

Signora Bianchi grants Vivaldi permission to meet with Ellena. Their relationship blooms. Signora Bianchi entreats Vivaldi to care for Ellena, committing Ellena to his charge. They

agree to marry the following week. Signora Bianchi dies a mysterious death that is attributed to her being poisoned. Ellena is left with little choice but to enter a convent for propriety and prudence sake for she no longer had a guardian at her home. Before she can do this, she is kidnapped by two men. She is taken to a distant convent, the San Stefano that is ruled by an Abbess who is “unaccustomed to have her power opposed” (1966:68). The Abbess believes that Ellena has wronged the Vivaldi family by brazenly pursuing their son. The Abbess is connected with the Marchesa, who funds the Abbey. Ellena’s denial of this accusation ensures that she is treated like a prisoner, as just punishment for ever thinking that she could cross the boundaries of class.

In the interim, Vivaldi pursues Ellena, wandering from village to village. Instinctively, he travels to the convent of San Stefano, hoping that Ellena is there. He disguises himself as a monk and sees her during vespers. In short, they escape the confines of the convent. They are separated again following this brief reunion, when Vivaldi is accused by priests of kidnapping a nun (Ellena escaped the convent camouflaged as one). He is hurt and is taken prisoner and sent to the Inquisition. Ellena is seized by two men posing as law-makers. But in fact, they worked for Schedoni, whose plan it was, together with the Marchesa, to separate Ellena from Vivaldi. Schedoni is meant to kill her but finds instead, that she could be his daughter. He frees her and Ellena travels to the convent of the Santa della Pieta. Ellena is told that the Marchesa has died. Vivaldi escapes the portent Inquisition and meets once again with Ellena. The Marchese ceases to object to Vivaldi’s love for Ellena. Ellena, like Emily, marries on her own terms, despite class difference, having overcome numerous obstacles. Added to this, she finds that her mother is the nun whom she befriended during her imprisonment in San Stefano and they are re-united.

*The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) unfolds the tale of Emily St. Aubert who lives in relative harmony and luxury with her parents at *La Vallee*. There is a traditional family unit; Monsieur Aubert is the patriarchal figure that imparts words of caution to his daughter concerning the proper behaviour of a young lady. Emily’s mother dies early in the novel. Soon after her death, Emily’s father becomes ill. He decides to take a journey that would facilitate his return to good health. Father and daughter journey through Languedoc and the

Pyrenees. This journey is filled with landscape description and while other important events develop in the course of their wanderings, Emily meets Valancourt, with whom she falls in love.

Theirs is a love that seems to flourish in their shared appreciation for the beauty of landscape. Their 'courtship' develops under the watchful eye of St. Aubert, who seems justly fond of Valancourt. Valancourt is unable to travel further with them and they separate. Emily and her father reside at a village where a peasant called La Viosin gives them shelter. Her father's health declines. It is also within this time that the novel hints at its 'first'<sup>1</sup> tangible mystery; Emily and her father hear melancholic music played in the forest that surrounds La Viosin's house. No one knows the source. Also, St. Aubert tells Emily of the letters and papers he has hidden for years under a floorboard at La Vallée. He extricates a promise from her that she will destroy it without reading it. St. Aubert dies and Emily returns to her home in Gascony. Valancourt visits her here and shares in her grief. Their connection is short-lived because Madame Cheron, Emily's aunt, arrives at La Vallée to claim Emily as her charge. Madame Cheron is portrayed as a cold and callous woman: "Madame Cheron looked on her niece's diffidence with a feeling very near to contempt" (1966:118). She was never close to her brother and her treatment of Emily is removed and distant. She immediately assumes that Emily is willful and lacking in decorum so she sets out to correct this behaviour by removing Emily from La Vallée to her own home at Thoulouse.

From here follows Emily's continuous displacement as she moves from one home to another, one country to another. In the meantime, Emily is allowed to resume her courtship with Valancourt only because he is related to one of the most powerful women in Madame Cheron's social circle. Madame Cheron marries Signor Montoni, the novel's villain who is introduced as having "an air of superiority" and "spirit and vigour of soul", the latter eliciting Emily's admiration, the former her fear (1966:122). We are soon told that he is a compulsive gambler, wasting his fortune. He courts Madame Cheron solely for her wealth and estates. They marry in an underhanded and sly manner. She and her husband forbid Emily's relationship with Valancourt because she no longer requires his powerful familial connections but mainly because Montoni begins to assert his dominion over her and Emily.

Emily and Valancourt are forced to separate again. It is clear to Emily that Montoni does not love her aunt and perhaps has only married her for her property and financial gain. Montoni removes them all to Venice where Montoni's diabolical and ambitious character becomes more pronounced. He attempts to trick and force Emily into marrying a business partner of his, Count Morano, but Emily refuses. Montoni's anger is ferocious in the face of Emily's defiance. He is also in financial trouble so to escape his creditors he takes the entire party to his castle Udolpho in the Appenines.

What has read as a thwarted romance till now shifts into the concentration on the Gothic, with haunting noises, strange 'paintings', bloody bodies, the tyrannical villain in the form of Montoni, and Emily as the tormented heroine whose virtue and character are continuously under attack. The castle holds unsolved mysteries. Servants believe the previous owner's ghost, Signora Laurentini, haunts it. There is also a 'painting' that remains covered by a veil. Emily sees it only once and it horrifies her. We are not told what the 'painting' contains until the novel reaches its conclusion. Meanwhile, the castle becomes riddled with Montoni's bandits as he becomes involved in robbing travellers and inhabitants of other chateaus. Emily and Madame Montoni are constantly harassed by the overwhelming male presence in the castle. Someone attempts to poison Montoni and he accuses his wife. He locks her in a turret and forgets about her. Madame Montoni suffers and it is only when Emily begs Montoni that he allows her to see her aunt. But Montoni does not relent in his persecution of his wife. He demands that she release her property and money to him. She refuses and dies a cruel and lonely death due to her husband's neglect.

Emily is then the only female left (besides Annette, her personal maid) within the walls of Udolpho. Still in love with Valancourt, Emily again fights the advances of Count Morano, who has followed her to the castle. She is in almost constant threat of violation from the bandits that populate the castle. Montoni's men are boorish and wicked. Each night brings the sounds of their coarse revelry and "the wild uproar of riot" (1966:383). Added to this, Montoni threatens Emily's life in his edacity for his wife's estates that Emily now owns. In the meantime, we are told that Valancourt is enjoying the city life of Paris; indulging in pleasures while Emily fends for herself. Emily also discovers that Montoni keeps a prisoner

who sings each night. Emily is convinced that it is Valancourt because the person sings songs from her native country Gascony and one of them was the same song that she had heard sung in the fishing-house near her home. Also, Valancourt had once told her that the fishing-house was his favourite haunt even before he knew her.

In a sudden twist that has left many critics baffled, Montoni orchestrates Emily's 'escape' from the castle that has come under attack from *condottieri* who mean to seize Montoni and his men for plundering and stealing. Two of his men are her guides. They lead her to a cottage in Tuscany, a far way from Udolpho. Emily remains here with a family for a few weeks but after Montoni conquers the soldiers, he demands her return. This return to Udolpho serves to heighten Emily's terror and fear to where "she shrunk, as from a new picture of terror" (1966:435). Annette informs her that Montoni was still intent on forcing her to relinquish the estate to him. Emily begs Annette's lover, Ludovico, to assist her in escaping Udolpho. Amidst their plans, Emily finally meets with the mysterious prisoner she believes to be Valancourt. It is not he but another gentleman called Du Pont. In a daring escape, Du Pont, Annette, Emily and Ludovico leave Udolpho.

The boat on which Emily and her companions travel capsizes in a storm and they are flung onto a shore that is not far from the Chateau-le-Blanc, the same chateau that Emily and her father first spied amongst the trees on their journey through Languedoc. The chateau's owner, Count de Villefort and his two children rescue Emily and her companions. Du Pont is in love with Emily. He leaves the chateau and Emily leaves to stay in the nearby convent. In the meantime, Emily writes to Valancourt but receives no answer from him. She also forms a close friendship with de Villefort's daughter, Blanche, as well as with the Count, who begins to view himself as her protector. He assists her in the legal matters concerning her reclaiming of her father and aunt's estates.

It is at a harvest celebration held in the village where St. Aubert passed away, that Valancourt and Emily meet again. Their reunion is a joyful one but it is not long into their time together that Emily notices something different about Valancourt. His manner is agitated and at times pensive. He also tells her that he is not worthy of her. The following day, Count de Villefort

informs Emily that he has reason to believe that Valancourt is not suitable for her. He tells her that he had met Valancourt at an officer's house in Paris and had invited him to his house. He had not known then that Valancourt had become involved "with a set of men, a disgrace to their species, who live by plunder and pass their lives in continual debauchery" (1966:505). Addicted to gambling, Valancourt began losing his money. To pay his debts and to continue gambling, these men managed to persuade Valancourt to join them in their vile living, in exchange for a share in their trade that would feed his predilection. Emily's reaction on hearing this about Valancourt is one of disbelief and her "heart was overwhelmed with anguish at the mere suspicion of his guilt" (1966:506).

But the worst was yet to come. The Count de Villefort informs Emily that not only was Valancourt addicted to "gaming" but also to other corruptive pleasures. Valancourt was imprisoned twice and the last time saw him extricated by his lover, a well-known Parisian Countess. The Count advises Emily to break all ties with Valancourt. Although it causes her immeasurable pain, Emily tells Valancourt that they can no longer be together. Meanwhile, a mystery unfolds in the chateau that intrigues Emily. Blanche, Count De Villefort's daughter and close friend to Emily, accidentally discovers passageways that have been closed off from the rest of the house. Emily, on hearing this from Blanche, endeavours to question the servant that had always resided at the chateau. The servant called Dorothee explains that the former mistress of the chateau had died in one of the chambers. She also tells Emily that she once, years ago, saw the Marchioness' ghost sitting on her bed. Whilst relating the story of how the Marchioness came to die, the same mysterious music that played before St. Aubert died is heard outside the chateau at midnight. Dorothee is convinced that it is the late Marchioness de Villeroi who sings in the forest that surrounds the chateau.

In the last one hundred and forty five pages, more mystery is added to the plot. Servants attest to seeing apparitions gliding up and down stairs. The nuns at the convent where Emily at times resides tell her that it has long been known that the chateau was haunted. Ludovico endeavours to set everyone at ease and spends the night in the chamber to refute the rumours of it being haunted. He mysteriously disappears. Emily receives news that Montoni has died, having been arrested by the soldiers who had first laid siege at Udolpho. His death was



mysterious. Some believed he was poisoned. His death clears the path for Emily to resume ownership of La Vallée as well as her aunt's estate. Also, Emily becomes acquainted with the tragic story of the Marchioness de Villeroi and finds a parallel to the story of Sister Agnes, a nun in the convent who appears both deranged and lucid at times and who often speaks mysterious and terrible things whenever she sees Emily. She also tells Emily that she has seen her face before.

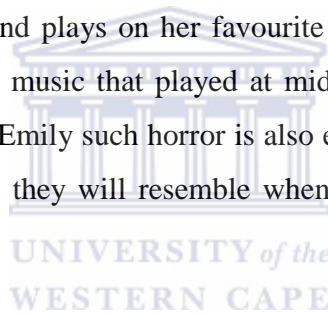
Eventually, Emily leaves the convent and first travels to Thoulouse where she resumes her position as heiress and governs the affairs of the estate. Having set things in order, she returns to her beloved La Vallée. Here, memories assail her of Valancourt and her once idyllic life. It becomes apparent that she is still in love with him. Emily learns that her father's trusted servant, Theresa, was removed from the chateau and was no longer cared for by her father's estate. She immediately visits Theresa who informs her that someone had cared for her and her family all the time Emily had been away. She at first refuses to tell Emily who this person could be but when Emily admonishes her on her incessant talk of Valancourt, she tells Emily that it was him who cared for her in her distress. Theresa also tells her that she had not heard from Valancourt in weeks. Emily immediately sends someone to enquire about his whereabouts from his brother. Word comes back that Valancourt is missing. Emily is devastated.

Yet, when he does return, Emily spurns him. He gives her his ring but she does not want it. Valancourt leaves Gascony. Meanwhile, Ludovico returns to tell Emily about his disappearance that explains the mystery of the chateau's 'haunted' room. Blanche was to be married and Emily was invited to stay at the chateau for the wedding. Once at Languedoc, Emily and Blanche hear that Sister Agnes is dying. They visit the convent. Sister Agnes relates a surprising and shocking tale on her deathbed that questions Emily's parentage. Emily also discovers that Sister Agnes is really Signora Laurentini, the 'ghost' of Udolpho. Signora Laurentini's story cultivates confusion and horror. In a rare lucid state, Sister Agnes shows Emily the same picture that her father had grieved over and tells her that Emily looks just like the lady in the picture, the Marchioness de Villeroi. She tells Emily that there is no mistake, "you surely are her daughter: such striking resemblance is never found but among



near relations” (1966: 645). Following this startling declaration, she lapses into a delirious state screaming “Come from the grave! Blood – blood too!” (1966: 648). Emily immediately assumes that the horrific ‘painting’ that she had seen in Udolpho was really a shriveled corpse of someone that had been murdered by the Signora.

When Sister Agnes dies, all is revealed. She was the lover of the Marquis de Villeroi. He left her and married Monsieur Aubert’s sister. Signora Laurentini was livid with jealousy and followed him to France. She resumed her power over him and he took her as his lover again. She convinced him that his wife was being unfaithful to him. They schemed to have her murdered. Laurentini poisons the Marchioness. After his wife’s death, the Marquis discovers that she was never unfaithful to him. In disgust, he turns against Laurentini and commands her to enter a convent, as a way of sparing her life. He also dies later. Laurentini, now Sister Agnes, walks the forest at night and plays on her favourite instrument, sometimes singing. This is of course the ‘mysterious’ music that played at midnight. Also, the painting in the castle of Udolpho that had caused Emily such horror is also explained. It was a waxen figure created to remind sinners of what they will resemble when they die, not, as Emily earlier believed.



In short, Laurentini’s only living relative Mons. Bonnac tells Du Pont the story of his life that reveals that Valancourt had been misrepresented in character. He had fallen into gambling debt but had not become a smuggler or plunderer. Neither had he formed liaisons with other women for Emily had constantly being in his heart. His second arrest occurred because he gambled for one last time to secure the release of his fellow prisoner, Mons. Bonnac and to reunite him with his family. Valancourt’s brother finally came to his aid and paid for him to be released. The Count de Villefort realizes his error in judgement in having listened to scandal. Before he can personally set the matter right, Valancourt finds Emily and tells her how he’d been misunderstood. Emily decides to believe him and the Count’s apology is a mere affirmation of her decision. She marries Valancourt despite him being penniless. It is their marriage that releases his brother’s benevolence. He gives Valancourt a share in his property. The novel ends with Emily as heiress who disposes of property as she wishes and who bestows the castle of Udolpho to a woman, the wife of Mons. Bonnac.

#### 4. Thesis Outline

Having explored the life of Radcliffe and looked at her writing in a brief way, one can propose that Radcliffe's specific utilization of the Gothic genre is not only an exercise of a particular expressive imagination, but also reflects the manifold social and political shifts in the fabric of society. In this thesis I will examine her work as sites of contest in which older patriarchal notions of gender roles are disputed and transformed in the form of heroines who, in James Watt's words, "despite their popular reputations for shrinking passivity, are made to stand up to the impositions of male tyrants, and, in particular, to resist arranged marriages" (1999:104).

Central to this thesis is then the way in which Radcliffe's works shape female identity as a site of contest in the late eighteenth century. As several critics such as Nancy Armstrong (1987) and Yael Shapira (2006) have shown, the idea of 'female identity' was synonymous with that of female subjugation in the predominantly patriarchal society. Being female meant being restricted by societal conventions to a domestic space as a form of social control. This restricted social role epitomized being female, and directly affected their sense of identity. Identity for women was not a connection to, and fashioning of the self, but rather a negation of self in being defined and created by the male subject. E. J. Clery writes: "The common picture we have of women in the Romantic period is one of concealment, restraint, fear of criticism, self-censorship" (2004:1).

For Radcliffe, the Gothic genre afforded an avenue for reworking ideas about love, desire, marriage and female identity as well as contributing to burgeoning debates around political freedom that dominated European thinking in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Landscape is also a site of contest in that it becomes an equalizer across gendered lines. Landscape, as I will further elaborate in Chapter 3, is portrayed in Radcliffe's novels not merely as physical scenery or background to action, but is also a social and political space that Radcliffe rewrites in her project of challenging these male dominions. I suggest that, in placing a female within these landscapes, as Radcliffe does with her heroines, she allows her heroines to master these spaces both practically and aesthetically. In this way, Radcliffe

transgresses gender boundaries by generating a female experience of landscape that is outside of the conventional domesticated experience.

Furthermore, I will argue that Radcliffe's response to this contestation is complex and contradictory. On the one hand her works reveal a reaffirmation of older eighteenth century values as they pertain to the woman's proper place. On the other hand, her works rewrite the seemingly stable category of the domestic as a space of Gothic depth and turbulence. As we will see in Chapter 2, Radcliffe destabilizes the domestic space through the removal of the patriarch or by showing the domestic home to be a space of violence and turmoil. I will argue that Radcliffe destabilizes the domestic in order to rewrite this space as a female domain. Ultimately, it will be shown that Radcliffe's heroines assume command of both the domestic and outside spaces that exemplifies their independent identities.



## Chapter 2

# Gothic Theory and Radcliffe's Novels

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### 1. The Rise of Female Authorship

The buried reality that lies not very far below the surface of the female gothic is the sense that middle-class women can only experience the male-identified patriarchal home as either a prison or an asylum. (Hoeveler, 1998:19).

One of the reasons why the Gothic, a relatively minor literary fad from the late eighteenth century, still attracts attention of scholars today is that it can be read as a transgressive genre throwing light on major social and cultural change, instead of merely light escapist fantasy literature. I will in this chapter explore more carefully how the Gothic, in particular as it manifests itself in Radcliffe's novels, can be understood as articulating a powerful, yet veiled critique of dominant structures of gendered power. The power of the Gothic to shock, to destabilize -- in other words, its revolutionary potential -- is evident in Dobree's remark that Radcliffe's Gothic romances were composed according to the "Terrorist System of Novel Writing" (1998:1) The word 'terrorist' is a highly inflammatory word in our contemporary context today because of its associations with fear, chaos, pain and terror as well as excessive power. In the literary and social context of the Radcliffe's times, the Gothic destabilized the neo-classical tenets of order, stability and hierarchy that characterized this period. Radcliffe's work can be viewed in one way as having 'terrorized' the fabric of eighteenth century life by challenging conventional power relations, especially as they pertain to gender. At times, it also appears that Radcliffe's novels challenge the hierarchical system of late eighteenth century society by criticizing class difference.

Radcliffe's novels should however not only be read simplistically as subversive cultural documents. There are marked instances in her novels where Radcliffe appears to exemplify the patriarchal status quo. This ambivalence threads itself throughout her works and forces a fluid reading of her novels that defies set binaries of being either conventional or radical.

Rather, Radcliffe appears to shift between the conventional and the radical. For example unfettered aristocratic power is frequently the target of Radcliffe's pen, yet her heroines assume aristocratic privileges when they assume their property. This ambivalence, which is so central to Radcliffe's works, will be explored in more depth way in the following chapters.

As I have illustrated in my introductory chapter, Radcliffe, in her appropriation of the Gothic genre, defies not only the ideologies concerning herself as a female writer, but most crucially, transgresses eighteenth century conventions concerning gender inequality. Writing at once outside of and inside the patriarchal world, Radcliffe fashions a female identity that is challenging in its demand for reform. In other words, Radcliffe crafts female identity as a site of contest within her novels. In a related argument I will also show that Radcliffe subversively breaks from the male-authored representation of landscape within late eighteenth century Romantic poetry by placing her heroines within these spaces to author their own pastoral experiences and in doing so, they generate a female voice of landscape description. Instead of locating women primarily in domestic spaces, as seen in the earlier novelistic tradition (for example *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Pamela* (1740)), Radcliffe allows her female heroines to traverse out-door spaces conventionally reserved for men. During the course of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), the female protagonist is habitually confined to the interior spaces of inns and boarding houses even though she transgresses conventional female roles in other ways. Ironically, one of the only times she roams the city is when she is disguised as a man and becomes a thief, courting danger. In this episode Moll Flanders is in double danger because she is not only a criminal facing the threat of arrest, but is also an independent woman trespassing on the male territory of outdoor spaces.

In Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), the female heroine's movement is restricted to two spaces, the house of the lady for whom she works and the Lincolnshire Estate of the squire where she is literally under arrest. Pamela, in desperation to escape the constant threats to her virtue, plans to escape through the garden gate. She reaches it, only to find that Mrs. Jewkes, the squire's servant, had changed the lock, effectively shutting her in. Pamela attempts to climb the wall but it crumbles and a brick falls on her head. She sustains injuries that can be read as punishment for attempting to escape the domestic confines of the house for the freedom of

the outside. This idea is intensified when, robbed of her only chance of freedom, she is tempted to commit suicide in the pond. Her thwarted escape and attempted suicide in the pond of the garden is emblematic of the idea that women did not belong in outdoor spaces. In both novels, the spaces that are occupied by the female protagonists reflect a particular kind of spatially circumscribed female identity.

Although one can read these early novels in more complex ways than this brief account allows, *Moll Flanders* appears to be punished for traversing the landscapes conventionally reserved for men, and she is imprisoned in Newgate Prison. But she is also set free and is wealthy towards the end of the novel. In *Pamela*, the heroine is a servant who is inferior because of her class as well as her gender. The male antagonist is an aristocrat who wields almost limitless power. The interior space the heroine occupies is indeed her “prison”, a space allegorically reflecting the subservient female identity prescribed by the male antagonist as well as the greater society. But Pamela marries above her station in eventually becoming Mr. B’s wife and achieves, by means of her virtue, a life that transcends social conventions. The “prison” interior spaces of the houses she occupies do become reconfigured spaces for a ‘newly’ empowered female identity. But this liberation is nonetheless confined to these domestic spaces, questioning then the kind of female liberation presented. We remember the famous scene where Mr. B. gives Pamela a list of rules and conditions for her future conduct as his wife. All forty-eight rules are directed at ensuring his happiness, with hers as an after-thought. Pamela’s words, “you’ll see I have not the easiest Task in the World. But I know my own intentions, that I shall not wilfully err; and so fear the less” affirm the inequalities that characterize their relationship (1971:372). She also calls her husband, “my Master” till the novel’s end (1971:408).

What is all the more striking with Radcliffe’s fictions is the emergence of a female identity that negotiates and challenges this stifling patriarchal world: not only are her heroines able to venture outside of domestic spaces, but the category of the domestic is itself grotesquely transformed. Radcliffe re-fashions the domestic interior as well as the wider landscape, within the conventions of the Gothic genre, and this becomes a mechanism for destabilizing the patriarchal order in each. It will also be argued that the mobility of Radcliffe’s heroines in

moving between interior and exterior spaces exemplifies the shift from a conventionally restrictive role to a more modern identity. These shifts become fluid at times and produce the ambivalence that I referred to earlier in this chapter.

The feminist critics, Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (1989), focus on the historical development of the novel as a central facet in the emergence of an independent female identity in the late eighteenth century. Most notably, they look at the role of language in facilitating gender division within the novel and thus contributing to the maintenance of the status quo. According to Belsey and Moore, “Language does not merely name male superiority: it produces it” (1989:4). This idea of language becomes paradoxical in Radcliffe’s fictions. With Radcliffe’s emergence as a female writer, it is apparent that her appropriation of the Gothic genre allowed for her to subvert the discursive production of male superiority, firstly to transgress this gendered domain of language, hereby deconstructing the novel as a male construct, and secondly by fashioning a new sense of female identity through the Gothic romance. As stated by Belsey and Moore: “the practice of reading” is “one of the sites in the struggle for change” (1989:1).

Belsey and Moore comment on Ellen Moers’ (1976) seminal feminist study, *Literary Women* as breaking, “most radically with conventional criticism” (1989:8). They propose that Moers’ analysis of female writing in the late eighteenth century renders these texts as “not simply a lonely struggle against patriarchy, [but] appears in *Literary Women* as one of patriarchy’s unintended consequences” (1989:8). In other words, women’s entrance into the writing world was not merely a reaction from a weak position against male dominance but rather, it was a doubly powerful entrance seeing that patriarchal order could not foresee what its very dominance created: that women writers would become the most popular writers in the late eighteenth century. The dominant order could also not predict that women novelists would utilize the novel to challenge and critique the society they occupied. Belsey claims that “a whole gallery of women: women from different backgrounds, different regions, and with different concerns, all published well-acclaimed novels by the end of the 1700s” (1989:23).



More traditional studies of the rise of the novel show that the novel reached its height of popularity during the late eighteenth century. In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt claims that

The annual production of works of fiction, which had averaged only about seven in the years between 1700 to 1740, rose to an average of about twenty in the three decades following 1740 and this output was doubled in the period from 1770 to 1800 (1957:290).

Of course Watt, like many other critics who focused on the development of the novel in this period, also assumed that the writers who produced novels in this period were predominantly male. In fact, Watt goes as far as to state that men, like Defoe and Richardson, birthed the novel. One is aware that for Watt, the novel in the eighteenth century is identified by its “formal realism” that portrays a variety of human experience, which the novels of Defoe and Richardson have in abundance (1957:32). Watt also sees the novel as distinguished by its realism that “does not reside in the kind of life it represents, but the way it presents it” (1957:11). Gothic novels do not, if one considers Watt’s definition of the novel, fit the realist form of the novel because although these novels portray “varieties of human experience”, they depart from being “realistic” or reflective of an empirical understanding in the way their plots concentrate on the supernatural (1957:11). Also, the Gothic, if seen as a novel, should rely on to use Ellis’ words, “a contemporary setting” but it is often located in the distant past and its locations are markedly foreign (2000:21). For Watt then, Gothic terror “had little intrinsic merit” and the publication of these novels reflected the pressures booksellers and “circulating library operators” faced to meet the demands of the increasing reading public (1957:290).

The supernatural element to Gothic fiction makes the novel’s stipulation of realism problematic because it exposes what realist novels are incapable of: describing the marvelous, fantastical and supernatural. Although Watt does acknowledge the “technical genius” of Jane Austen (and ignores an entire history of women writers like Clara Reeve, Fanny Burney, Charlotte Smith, Mrs. Roche and Ann Radcliffe) his acknowledgment of Austen is that her works successfully, in terms of the novel’s form, reconcile the different directions of the earlier novelistic forms (like the epistolary), which the Gothic novel does not (1957:296). But as some eighteenth century critical writing stated, “the novel in its



Gothic mode effected the reconciliation of certain romance conventions with those of the novel” (Ellis, 2000:20).

Perhaps it is this deviation from the conventional novelistic form that saw women Gothic writers doubly dismissed as serious writers. Rosalind Miles, author of *The Female Form -- Women Writers and the Conquest of the Novel* (1987) interestingly observes that for

the last hundred years or so the awareness of a woman writer’s sex has been so important as to form the basis of any committed critical observation. This tension originated with the origins of the novel in the eighteenth century, and was an entrenched practice by the nineteenth, when many women had to deny or disguise their female identity in the struggle to secure a fair hearing for their writings (1987:5).

The list of female novelists who wrote under pseudonyms is long, and includes Mary Ann Evans, who wrote under the pseudonym George Eliot and produced what is considered by most to be a masterpiece of English fiction, *Middlemarch* (1871). Closer to home, Olive Schreiner published her classic South African novel *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) under the pseudonym Ralph Iron. Radcliff’s first two novels were published anonymously and only after receiving complimentary attention from the reviewers, did she add her name to her novels. Despite the fact that they were at times forced to write under male pseudonyms, women’s writing emerged at once outside of patriarchal control and because of it. In other words, it was male dominance that gave women writers the impetus to write. Their writing was also a response to the restrictions placed on their lives. For example, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Maria* (1798) tells the story of a woman imprisoned by her husband: his accusation is that she is mad and an unfit mother. The fact that Mary Wollstonecraft could publish a work that addressed the social injustice and iniquities of a marriage is exemplary of women’s writings emerging outside of patriarchal control.

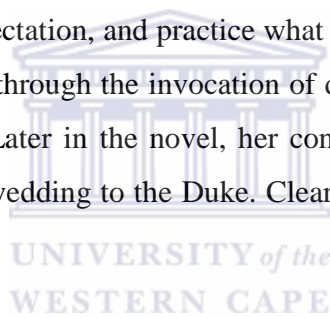
This argument is made more pertinent by the fact that authorship was still considered a male domain in the eighteenth century. Edward Said proposes in his work, *Beginnings -- Intention and Method* (1975) a working definition of the word ‘authority’ that is useful in understanding the idea of authorship. Said writes: “*Authority* suggests to me a constellation of linked meanings: not only, as the OED tells us, ‘a power to enforce obedience,’ or ‘a derived or delegated power’...not only those, but a connection as well with *author* - that is, a

person who originates or gives existence to something, a begetter, beginner, father, ancestor, a person also who sets forth written statements” (1975:83). Clearly, the idea of authorship, as Said explicates, was a deeply gendered concept and near synonymous with male power. Also, the idea of ‘beginning’ or origin inherent in the concept of authorship was associated solely with male procreative power. Gilbert and Gubar note in their work, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), that Said’s critique is underpinned by “imagery of succession, of paternity, or hierarchy” (1979:5). In other words, Said’s exploration of the word ‘authority’ reveals the writing world as gendered and stratified, especially since his exploration discloses an elision in meaning between ‘authorship’ and ‘authority’. Gilbert and Gubar establish, following Said (1975), that the words ‘authority’ and ‘authorship’ are hardly dissimilar in meaning. The word ‘author’ contains the metaphor with which “writer, deity and *pater familias* are identified” (1979:4). They assert that literary power is invariably gendered: “the poet’s [or writer’s] pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis” (1979:4). Gilbert and Gubar explain that the idea of the literary text as having being ‘fathered’ by the writer just as “God fathered the world” has been a definitive marker in Western literary arenas, an idea J.M. Coetzee would explore in his meta-novel *Foe* (1986) (1979:4).

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In *Foe*, female story telling and male authorship remain separate, incompatible domains. The antagonistic relationship between author and female narrator is encapsulated in the novel’s fitting title. Susan Barton can tell the story of an island but lacks the power of the pen to become the author of her own life narrative. Although she is a female narrator, she is a frustrated and ultimately submerged voice in the novel. Because she needs Mr. Foe to publish her book, the idea of female authorship is to be perpetually deferred throughout the novel. Susan Barton’s words: “The Muse is both goddess and begetter. I was intended not to be the mother of my story, but to beget it” is a striking inversion of the idea of the “literary text as been ‘fathered’ by the writer just as God fathered the world” (1986:126) and (1979:4). Gilbert and Gubar’s feminist reading of female writers allows us to see that women were only admitted to the domain of literature in less prestigious genres where they could write unthreatening plots of fancy and provide modes of escapism for the middle-class female confined to the domestic space.

The narratives of eighteenth century female writers reflect a history of gendered subjugation visible in the insistent ways in which the heroines of these novels engage with male autocracy. In all of Radcliffe's novels, the heroines are subjected to the tyranny of male antagonists who thwart their desire to love and marry whom they choose. Male figures, ranging from sympathetic fathers to tyrannical villains, also discourage Radcliffe's heroines from possessing independent thought and generating independent action. One sees this illustrated in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790). Julia and Emilia, daughters of the Marquis Mazzini are described as having "never passed the boundaries of their father's domains" as well as being "veiled in obscurity" (1993:6-7). These words serve to situate the heroines as being physically under the control of their father but also suggest that by his command of their movement, he also possesses the power to control their thoughts and actions. The latter notion is demonstrated in the Marquis's reaction to Julia refusing to marry the Duke de Luovo. His words, "Cease this affectation, and practice what becomes you," seek to establish control over her person, asserting through the invocation of duty the hold he has over her as the patriarchal figure (1993:55). Later in the novel, her continued refusal provokes him to imprison her until the day of her wedding to the Duke. Clearly, Julia's character embodies a history of subjugation.



Another scholarly study of Radcliffe is feminist critic E.J. Clery who, in her work, *Women's Gothic from Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (2000), offers a view of Radcliffe as a writer and the way in which her novels represent, what Clery terms the "Female Gothic" (2000:2). Clery argues that there is a distinctive women's tradition of writing, one that is set apart from the Romantic tradition of the prominent poets like Blake, Shelley and Keats. She notes that, "Radcliffe's heroines are women of imagination ... they are effectively the co-authors of their own stories" (2000:51). In other words, Radcliffean heroines wrestle their destiny from the hands of the patriarchal figures that dominate the texts, fashioning their own definitions of being female. For example, Radcliffe's heroines typically struggle to assert their own freedom and independence from dominant and powerful male figures. As mentioned before, their freedom is often expressed in the form of asserting their right of choice of marriage partner.

Clery also argues that Radcliffe is in a sense a colonizer of the literary text, having assumed control over an area of influence that was traditionally male-dominated. By way of example, Clery illuminates Radcliffe's specific utilization of poetry within her novels as "kidnapped texts from poetic greats like Shakespeare, Milton and company" (2000:54). This, Clery argues, was not just a literary device aimed at "bolstering the credentials as a writer to be taken seriously", but transgressed dominant norms of her time, claiming the poetic genius of Shakespeare and others for a female audience and female writing world (2000:57). In *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), for example, Radcliffe starts off the novel with a preface taken from *Hamlet* (1, v, 15). The words in the preface, "I could a tale unfold", function here not only to signal Radcliffe's learnedness and deference to literary authority, but also appropriate patriarchal discourse to her own narrative ends: Hamlet's father's ghost's words now refer to a story of female suffering and dispossession. Allison Milbank (1993) provides an illuminating perspective on Radcliffe's choice of epigraph for her novel. Milbank explains,

The short epigraph, 'I could a tale unfold', thus signals two things about the following tale. First, it indicates its intention of arousing suspense and terror in its readers, of disarranging them physically. Secondly, the message of the ghost is for his son, revealing that he has been murdered, and his place as king and husband usurped by his murderer, Claudius. There is a hint to the truth of the mystery of the haunted tower in *A Sicilian Romance*, to which the reference to 'prison-house' provides a further clue. Radcliffe's plot is a non-supernatural version of *Hamlet*.... (1993: 200).

To elucidate, the words 'prison-house' that Milbank refers to are mentioned in the line that precedes the one that Radcliffe utilizes in her epigraph, namely, "To tell the secrets of my prison-house" (*Hamlet*, 1, v, 14). Milbank argues that the epigraph provides a clue as to plot of the novel because Julia's mother, believed to be dead by her daughters, is actually kept a prisoner in the North Tower of the Castle Mazzini. Shakespeare's newly feminized words can thus be read as the voice of the imprisoned mother whose rightful place (as mother and wife) had been usurped through the illicit marriage of her husband. I suggest that Radcliffe ingeniously reversed Shakespeare's gendered plot structure, setting the tone for a new sense of female identity to emerge within the text. Clery further asserts that the key concerns of Radcliffe's works are the "legitimation of visionary imagination in women writers, methods of representing the passions, the issue of arousing the reader or audience...." (2000:23). Clery

places Radcliffe's novels at the centre of a larger cultural shift claiming the imagination as a female realm, thereby deviating from the Romantic conventions in which male authors and poets have sole access to "visionary imagination" (2000:23). Clery's transgressive view of female Gothic writers allows her to note that, "Gothic literature sees women writers at their most pushy and argumentative" (2000:3).

In exploration of this notion, Clery analyzes Radcliffe's essay called 'On the Use of the Supernatural in Poetry', which was first published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1826. In this essay, Radcliffe stages a dialogue on aesthetics between two gentlemen of opposite characteristics. One, Mr. Simpson, is portrayed as a crude boor, and the other, Mr. Willoughton, is presented as a man of fine sensibilities. Clery notes that Radcliffe makes Willoughton her mouthpiece as they discuss Shakespeare's genius and the "sublime of visible Nature" (2000:4).

Although Radcliffe sets up this discussion as gender-neutral at the outset, Clery notes that Radcliffe utilizes Willoughton as a champion of Sarah Siddons who is regarded as "the only living exponent of the 'undying spirit' of transformative poetry" (2000:4). Sarah Siddons was a famous tragic actress in the late eighteenth century, who was considered worthy of reciting the poetical genius of Shakespeare. Willoughton states that, "she (Siddons) would be the finest Hamlet that ever appeared" (2000:5). That Radcliffe extols a woman within the space of literature through a male character becomes, according to Clery, an opportunity for "an assertion of women's capacity for sublimity, and beyond Siddons, lies the unassailable 'cultural capital' of the national genius, Shakespeare" (2000:5). In doing this, does Radcliffe not attempt to rewrite history? We have already seen that Radcliffe claims this 'cultural capital' of Shakespeare's genius in her own Gothic texts.

Apart from the prologue of *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), she inserts Shakespeare's poetry as opening lines to her chapters. In this way Radcliffe uses Shakespeare's literary capital as a way to bolster her own claims to authorship. These function as literary devices that in turn reflect the skill of Radcliffe in utilizing Shakespeare's poetry to situate the reader and to create anticipation for what is to follow. Another apt example of this is in Chapter VI of

*Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), where Radcliffe simultaneously shapes and to an extent prescribes the idea of terror in her utilization of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* at the beginning of the chapter, "I think it is the weakness of mine eyes/ That shapes this monstrous apparition./ It comes upon me!" (1966:241). Emily, having just been transported to the Castle of Udolpho, wakes with apprehension, discovering that the door to her chamber, that only fastens from the outside, was now locked. The horrifying implication is that during the night, someone had crept to the door while she was sleeping. The terror that this supposition invokes leaves Emily as "if she had seen an apparition" (1966:242).

By invoking Shakespeare who represents an uncontested literary authority, Radcliffe attempts to transform these Gothic texts from mere light-weight fantasy to literature that demands to be taken seriously. Most strikingly, it is apparent that by aligning herself with Shakespeare, Radcliffe claims the poetic space occupied by male writing genius of the Romantic era. Norton writes, "It is manifest from this essay that she [Radcliffe] regarded herself as one of the "great masters of imagination" along with Shakespeare and Milton" (1999:198). Norton also refers to Radcliffe's 'On the Use of the Supernatural in Poetry' where poets like Milton, Shakespeare and Beattie are exalted as having the "soul of poetry" (cited by Norton (1999:198)). Radcliffe thus appropriates Shakespeare for a female audience and female literary arena. As Clery puts it, "What a study of women's Gothic reveals is that incursions were not one-way, and that women writers of Gothic were likewise engaged in polemical revision of literary practice, involving the transgression of gender expectations" (2000:7).

Diane Long Hoeveler, author of *Gothic Feminism -- The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (1998) argues for a similarly revisionist view of Gothic literature, claiming that Gothic texts written by women exemplify what she terms, 'Gothic Feminism'. For Hoeveler, 'Gothic Feminism' is female-created ideology. The female Gothic novelists

were not trying to reshape their worlds subversively or benignly through their writings. They were instead constructing a series of ideologies — a set of literary



masquerades and poses — that would allow their female characters and by extension, their female readers a fictitious mastery over what they considered an oppressive social and political system through the pose of what I am calling “professional femininity” (1998:xii).

Hoeveler’s perspective deviates from the conventional approaches to female Gothic writing that I have explored earlier.

Hoeveler appears to counter Naomi Wolf’s critique that the female Gothic novel “projects aggression, competitiveness, and violence onto men or patriarchy while its devotees are blind to these qualities in themselves” (cited by Hoeveler,xii). To simplify, it seems that Wolf views the male and female characters in female Gothic writing as being constructed in such a way as to facilitate the demonizing of the patriarch. Female characters ‘play’ at being victims, creating their own ideologies of maleness and ultimately, femaleness. For Wolf, the Gothic indulges in “victim feminism”, a concept that Hoeveler transforms into the less pejorative idea of “professional femininity” (1998:xii). Hoeveler defines “professional femininity” as “a set of literary masquerades and poses” that afforded their female heroines as well as their female readers “fictitious mastery” over the patriarchal system of oppression (198:xii). In other words, Gothic fiction allows for, through “poses” and “play”, a critique of social hierarchies but in a displaced form (1998:xxi).

For Hoeveler this,

message of the female gothic... accounts for the work’s popularity among women readers who covertly wanted to believe that they could challenge or in some way passively subvert their newly inscribed and institutionalized “spaces” while maintaining their identities and roles as the wives and mothers of the bourgeoisie (1998:7).

Hoeveler’s assertion that the female at ‘play’ formed the message of the female Gothic represented in Radcliffe’s texts is a persuasive reading. She proposes that the Gothic functioned ideologically as a safety valve: female readers could imagine being transgressive, safely contained in the realm of literature, but still remain publicly passive, or at least give that appearance. Radcliffe’s fictions thus provided modes of being female that remained safely contained in the pages of books, creating internal worlds for its female readers that could remain outside the grasp of male surveillance.

Despite the depiction of excessive and ubiquitous male inscribed power (both 'real' and supernatural), Radcliffe's novels offered female eighteenth century readers models of individual choice and female agency. Therefore, as I argue later in this chapter in my perusal of Markman Ellis' critique of Gothic writings, the point is not whether Radcliffe's novels achieved liberation of women in the late eighteenth century. If one had to look at history, the answer would be no. What is important rather is that one looks at what Radcliffe accomplishes in her novels that transcends what Gothic writers before and after her could achieve: her heroines finally gain their freedom and independence in the face of almost insurmountable odds, achieving a transformation within a literary text that, because it is read, facilitates transformation elsewhere.

Anne K. Mellor (1993) builds on this notion by looking at writing as a tool for cultural change. Mellor suggests that female authors in the late eighteenth century "promoted a politics of gradual rather than violent social change that extends the values of domesticity into the public realm" (1993:3). Mellor focuses on what she calls the "feminine Romanticism" of writers like Anne Letitia Barbauld, Frances Burney and Amelia Opie. Although Mellor does highlight that any female writing generated in the late eighteenth century has been relegated to the "margins of Romanticism", she includes Radcliffe under this category and fails to make the important distinction of Radcliffe's works being more Gothic than Romantic (1993:4).

Mellor, I would argue, does not give sufficient credit to the transgressive quality of Radcliffe's works. Yet, Mellor also notes that under the broad umbrella of 'Romanticism', women novelists purposefully employed the novel as a "site of ideological contestation and subversion...and a sustained interrogation of existing social codes" (1993:9). Here, Mellor's perspective appears to compliment Hoeveler's revisionist idea that,

the female gothic writer attempted nothing less than a redefinition of sexuality and power in a gendered, patriarchal society; she fictively reshaped the family, deconstructing both patrimonialism (inheritance through the male) and patrilineality (naming practices) in the process. In short, she invented her own peculiar form of feminism (1998:19).



I show later in this chapter how Radcliffean heroines deconstruct patrimonialism by becoming inheritors of their own estates, that is propertied women. Both Mellor's and Hoeveler's notion is relevant to Ann Radcliffe's work because property is the primary terrain of contest in Radcliffe's novels. Property as a form of economic power is coveted by the aristocratic villain and is finally ceded to the heroine at the end of the novel marking her triumph in the "real" world, beyond the narrow confines of the domestic sphere. Prior to her accession to landed property, landscape is the category in Radcliffe's work (and at the novels beginning) that can be understood to compensate for the heroine not having property. When she does assume ownership of property, she becomes, the 'new kind of woman' who can define herself in her own space because she is propertied. This re-writes not only the domestic space as female, but reconfigures the entire social field, for a propertied woman is a woman with agency. The 'new kind of woman' is able to experience landscapes and habitation other than her home, on her own terms, and negotiates conventions around marriage, love and desire, finally marrying. Of course, these accomplishments are not without pitfalls that the heroine has to overcome as she wrestles tyrannical patriarchal figures and malevolent aunts, abbesses or guardians. Not all of the obstacles are external, most significantly they lie within her. Radcliffe's heroines can only triumph once they have learned to grapple with excesses in sensibility and imagination. I elaborate upon this in my focus on 'Sensibility' later in the third chapter.

Hoeveler states that female Gothic novelists "did not so much create "masculine" characters as "masculine" spaces; that is, they constructed spaces they saw as defined, codified, and institutionalized as "masculine" which they then attempted to rewrite into literature more benignly as "feminine"" (1998:xii). I question the use of the word 'benignly' in Hoeveler's assertion because it is contradictory to her earlier assertion that female Gothic writers were "not trying to reshape their worlds benignly" (1998:xii). Also, there is little evidence in Radcliffe's texts of these masculine spaces being rewritten in a manner that was without implications for the existing order. Instead, her fictions offend the social and gender context that defined the late eighteenth century. In traversing unwelcome landscapes, and enduring the terrors of Gothic interiors, Radcliffe's heroines redefine these spaces and suggest an idea of being female that undoubtedly reflects a "sustained interrogation of existing social codes"

(1993:9). In *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), Adeline is kidnapped by the Marquis de Montalt, who places her in his chateau with the sole intent to seduce her and marry her (the Marquis' offer of marriage is merely a ruse to get her in bed – and he is already married). He entraps her in an opulent, elegant world, where, in his words, “every luxury is at her command, and where every person shall be obedient to her wishes” (1986:160). Despite her fear of him, Adeline is seduced by her sensuous surroundings and the Marquis pounces on her and declares his love. But she resists with words that slice through the deception and speak against the social codes that demand that a woman, with no fortune and no family, submit to an aristocrat. She says, “I do not wish to be rude, but allow me to say, that no misery can exceed that I shall feel in remaining here, or, indeed, in being anywhere pursued by the offers you make me” (1986:160).

With Adeline's display of autonomy, Hoeverler's idea that female Gothic novelists challenging the status quo in a “benign” manner diminishes the impact of Radcliffe's novels. But she does suggest that the Gothic is problematic, “as both subverting and at the same time reifying postures of complaisance and acquiescence on the part of women” (1998, xvi). In other words, more conservative critics like Mellor (1993) ignore the ambivalence that is threaded throughout Radcliffe's works, an ambivalence that is characterized by the fact that her works are predisposed to reaffirming older eighteenth century values as they pertain to women, while simultaneously rewriting these values. It is Radcliffe's ambivalence (neither unambiguously progressive, nor conservative) that makes her so interesting, and subject to so much debate. I earlier argued that Radcliffe's narratives are at times subversive of patriarchal norms and at other times, her narratives reinforce the social order, by providing compensatory release in the non-threatening cultural sphere of her novels. I reiterate: Radcliffe's novels are ambivalent, eluding any attempt to pinpoint a fixed strategy. Rather, this ambivalence, in its fluidity, adds to the complexity of her texts and is best illustrated when rendering an analysis of her novels.

## 2. Gothic and Domestic Space

While it is easy to read Radcliffe's novels as representing a gendered conflict between women and repressive patriarchal power, more nuanced readings are possible. Nancy Armstrong (1987) contests this dominant idea of history as produced by male institutions, even as she acknowledges that such a history exists. She argues against Gilbert and Gubar's (1979) perspective that history, especially the history of writing, took place in institutions where men held power. Instead, Armstrong argues for a different view of the history of writing and the history of women's writing in particular. She declares that we must see the possibility that "history took place in and through those areas of culture over which women may have held sway" (1987:8). In other words, to solely consider the rise of the novel as having occurred in a gendered world, thereby making the history of writing gendered, is to exclude the consideration of how "such a world came into being and what part the novel played in its formation" (1987:8). Armstrong critiques Gilbert and Gubar's (1979) implicit notion that women were passive victims of patriarchal hegemony. If one applies this notion to Radcliffe, then Armstrong's argument asks for a dual view of her novels: that we do not only consider Radcliffe's writing as part of a gendered world and writing against that world, but also that Radcliffe as author played a role in shaping the writing history of women and the present world we inhabit.

Armstrong's perspective unfolds from an exploration of the role of domestic fiction in the latter part of the eighteenth century. She suggests that new power relations emerged in British culture in the late eighteenth century, power relations that were crafted through domestic fiction. What, then, is domestic fiction? Domestic fictions are narratives that focused on a new kind of woman, a protagonist that challenged the conventional perception of the role of women in the domestic sphere. Where before, men controlled both the outside world as well as the domestic household, domestic fiction both reflected and wrote into being a paradigm shift in societal convention. Armstrong claims that domestic fiction showcases a division of power: females rule over the domestic, males rule in public spaces. She provides a table that clarifies this idea:

**Husband**

Get goods  
Travel, seek a living  
Get money and provisions  
Deal with many men  
Be “entertaining”  
Be skillful in talk  
Be a giver

**Wife**

Gather them together and save them  
Keep the house  
Do not vainly spend it  
Talk with few  
Be solitary and withdrawn  
Boast of silence  
Be a saver (Armstrong, 1987:18).

Although this is a significant shift in power relations in the eighteenth century and accords power to the middle-class woman, it is also a limited and tentative one as the above list reflects. Women “keep the house” but in turn have to be “solitary and withdrawn” (1987:18). Armstrong notes: “The female did not offer a competing form of political thinking” a perspective, as we shall see, renounced in Radcliffe’s fictions (1987:18-19).

Domestic fiction had at its centre the emergence of what Armstrong calls “the new kind of woman” (1987:3). This new woman, the middle-class woman, was shown to possess power over the household, giving her a certain say. This new woman was portrayed in fiction as having dominion over the “household, leisure time, courtship procedures, and kinship relations, and under her jurisdiction the most basic qualities of human identity were supposed to develop” (1987:3). The novel, and this is Armstrong’s key argument, was the cardinal discursive vehicle in which this shift was imagined and brought into being.

The domestic woman’s emergence into British literature profoundly affected the public idea of the woman and her social role. This portrayal of a new kind of middle-class woman in fiction served to “unify the interests of these groups who were neither extremely powerful nor very poor” (1987:3). Armstrong’s words are an argument about the middle-classes’ emergence: what is political is that the middle-class idea of womanhood becomes universalized, displacing the older aristocratic ideas. Radcliffe’s novels present a new kind of woman as well, one that is still vestigially aristocratic but is decisively framed by emerging middle-class values like virtue and decorum and a degree of learnedness.

Radcliffe's villains like Mazzini of *A Sicilian Romance* (1789), Montoni of *Mysteries* (1794) and Schedoni of *The Italian* (1797) seek to control the lives of the heroines by either imprisoning them within the domestic sphere or scheming to end their lives. Radcliffean heroines are an elaborated form of being female that is exemplary of middle-class culture: where the value of a woman is not dependent on her rank and fortune but on the cultivation of her mind and the interiority of feeling. In *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) Madame de Menon trained Julia and her sister Emilia for years in "the Latin tongue, and geography" (1993:6). Julia is also described as being daily occupied with "Books, music, and painting" (1993:7). Similarly, Emily's sensibility is cultivated and trained in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) in a way that constitutes the new female ideal. Her father also teaches her botany, music, and drawing, showing Emily to occupy the world of literature and music.

Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) is a very early, though yet limited model of this new ideal. Pamela has been taught to write by her Lady as well as to "cast Accompts" and be "a little expert at my needle, and other Qualifications above my Degree" (1971:25). Later, Jane Austen's heroines extend this model. Her heroines are shown to privilege the world of books and music, giving them a form of cultural value that elevates them above even those of rank. In *Sense and Sensibility* (1818) we see this model of female refinement and education emphasized early on by, ironically, a critique of what constitutes a gentleman of taste. Marianne judges Edward Ferrars as deficient because he has "no taste for drawing" (1976:11). Later in the novel, Edward's choice of Elinor and his folly in first preferring Lucy Steele is allegorically represented when he, with mortification, shows Elinor Lucy's letter. Edward does not feel that he can ask Elinor her opinion of the composition and style of Lucy's writing because of its obvious inferior quality that he has "blushed over" countless times in the past (1976:177). When Edward says, "in a sister it is bad enough, but in a wife!" this reads as an acknowledgment that the ideal wife and woman of the household should be educationally and culturally accomplished, and that Elinor, who represents the middle-class woman here, embodies Armstrong's new ideal woman. It is this in part that makes her a desirable wife for the aristocratic Edward, much in the same way that Pamela is found desirable by Mr. B. Radcliffe's heroines embody these middle-class values from the beginning and are desired by the man of their choice for these values and not for their fortune

and their estates that are mostly not yet in their possession. Conversely, it is the patriarchal villain who ignores the heroines' rich cultural and intellectual accomplishments and pursues their physical bodies and their promise of wealth. At the end of the narrative, the heroine has vanquished male power and assumes control over the domestic space cleared of occult, patriarchal forces.

Radcliffe's new woman becomes a political figure as she transcends gender boundaries as well as, in some instances, class boundaries. This occurs through marriage aimed at equality because the heroine is always propertied before she marries. In short, she assumes "authority over the household" before the legal and political conventions of marriage threaten to undermine her emergent identity (Armstrong, 1987:3). It is precisely this power over the household that rejects the conventional ideas of marriage; the older idea of marriage was informed by economical and political considerations, establishing dynasties that perpetuated male power. In the eighteenth century, the idea of marriage was gradually wrested out of male control and was placed and controlled in a feminized domestic sphere, accessed by people of sensitivity and feeling – women. It is this in part, that facilitates the reading of Radcliffe's novels as seedbeds of an emerging modern world.

Secondly, as Armstrong argues, domestic fiction strove to divide marriage, a component of "the language of sexual relations" from the "language of politics" (1987:3). This is a decidedly modern female domestic sphere, especially when one thinks of examples of marriage that earlier literature perpetuated. The older model of patriarchal gender relations is most obviously exemplified in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), where Juliet's father, Capulet, forces his daughter into an arranged marriage without her consent. Capulet's words in reference to Juliet, "I think she will be ruled/ In all respects by me" attest to the archaic idea of marriage as the realm of the male and in this particular example, in the power of the patriarch (1997:91). This example is pertinent, because Radcliffe makes strong allusions to this theme in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790). Julia's father arranges her marriage to the Duke de Luovo without consulting her. Radcliffe's novel shows a shift from this older ideal of patriarchal power through Julia's escape from the marriage and her father's tyranny. Julia, like Juliet, chooses the man she wants, which in both works is reflective of the modern

female idea of love and marriage. As Armstrong argues, the modern woman assumes control over areas of courtship and then the domestic.

However, it must be noted that Radcliffe goes beyond the idea of the modern domestic woman. Her works are doubly transgressive of this domestic model, both politically and economically in her appropriation of the Gothic. Politically, the Gothic seeks to put women in their place and reaffirm the superior place of the patriarch. The Gothic is a symptom of the older patriarchal model of gender relations and its nightly hauntings can be read as the manifestations of residual autocracy that is under threat from revolutionary changes sweeping continental Europe. Economically we think for example, of the male aristocrat who wants the estates owned by the heroine. Montoni in *Mysteries* (1794) is literally bankrupt and needs to prey on women's fortunes to sustain a lifestyle that is increasingly unsustainable. His crumbling castle is an allegory of his waning political power. This is further demonstrated when the older aristocratic culture appears as an antithesis to the values of the polite middle-class society. Montoni eats and carouses with his *banditti* around the table night after night until they are stupefied with liquor. By association, Radcliffe thus criminalizes the archetypal figure of the aristocrat. Montoni's men run wild in the castle, threatening the virtue of the heroine with their dangerous excess and lack of rationality.

Radcliffe's Gothic fictions also at once transcend and parallel Armstrong's argument about the domestic space as a political model for an emergent female power. Radcliffe's heroine is propertied, but the man she finally chooses is not. This reversal of property relations presents the possibility that the new model of marriage is one where the woman holds authority over the household. More strikingly, Radcliffe's novels present her heroines to be mistresses of both domestic spaces and the outdoors, leaving one with the distinct impression that the role of the male figure, traditionally so unambiguous powerful, becomes, at the conclusion of the novel, almost effaced and vague. One thing is most probable: the male figure is remembered only for his becoming the husband of the propertied, wealthy heroine and ensuring her felicity. Also, at the novel's end, marriage and the domestic household is imbued with middle-class values in which Gothic demons are fully exorcised. The emergence of female



power is thus encapsulated in the propertied woman who assumes full control over her own life and the domestic sphere.

Armstrong also argues that domestic fiction “actively sought to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics, and in so doing, to introduce a new form of political power” (1987:3). This “new form of political power” can be understood as being firstly, an emergent literary power in the form of female writing that sought to challenge dominant ideology and gender hierarchy by presenting a different domestic space where women held power (1987:3). Domestic fiction is crucial to the rise of the novel because it spoke for an emergent middle-class. In the Gothic variant of the novel, this domestic space is severely disrupted. Heroines are placed in Gothic spaces where they have to rely on their innate strengths to retain their physical integrity and develop a newly strengthened sense of self. This new female subject that emerges out of the harrowing proving ground of the Gothic is primarily discursively constituted through the power of language that the heroine wields in the face of terror. As we will see, young women are cast out of safe domestic environments to depend solely on themselves. In this sense, the Gothic is a counterpoint to the domestic space as per Armstrong, showing that the path to domestic containment is not easy.

We must also be aware that the domestic space within Gothic fiction is anything but domesticated and subdued: it is a chaotic, disordered Gothic space that reads as a pre-domesticated space or an undomesticable space which is also male. The Gothic house / castle is the antithesis to domesticated space. The Gothic castle is a space where male desires run rampant. Heroines are lustily pursued by deranged fathers or would-be violators down passages that seem to offer no escape. Chambers are easily penetrated through doors that cannot lock or only locks from the outside while the heroine sleeps. It is a space that seethes with anger and jealousy, devious plots, and vice, where rape and murder seems imminent. It is not the locus of serenity and order. In Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), the heroine Isabella flees down “a subterranean passage which led from the castle” to escape the incestuous lust of Manfred (1968:61). Manfred later murders his own daughter, Matilda, mistaking her for Isabella in his jealous rage. Emily in *Mysteries* (1794) is pursued down the passages of the castle by Montoni’s drunken *banditti* whose intentions of raping her is

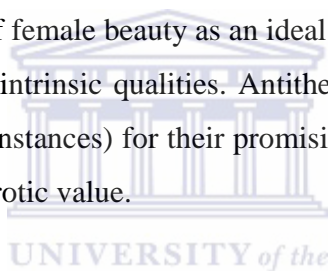


emblematic in each of them invidiously racing to find her first. The horror of the pursuit is heightened by Emily's frantic searches for an opened door or hiding place in the stark darkness of the passage. When she does find a hiding place it is just in time, for Verrezzi, one of the *banditti*, passes by so close that his "low voice" seemed "close to her ear" (1966:432).

The supernatural in the form of haunted armour, apparitions, bloody corpses and eerie noises also make these spaces unstable and undomesticated. The supernatural is a disruptive force within the Gothic house or castle, typifying the poisonous relationships and exaggerated emotions that permeate its spaces. In *Otranto*, the supernatural appears as an ominous and revealing warning against the devious intent of Manfred. When he callously denounces his wife and proposes to Isabella in the wake of his son's death (to whom Isabella was betrothed), the helmet that had fallen and crushed his son, rises up at the window, "waving backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner, and accompanied with a hollow rustling sound" (1968:59). Even though the supernatural is eventually explained in Radcliffe's fictions, it is utilized similarly throughout her novels. In *Mysteries* Montoni believes 'someone' is trying to poison him. When he demands that Emily sign her estates over to him or experience punishment more horrific than she could imagine, he is interrupted by an eerie voice that echoes his words. Unearthly groans fill the chamber as Montoni continues his tirade. As we will see, these unruly spaces in Radcliffe's novels become domesticated through (predominantly) the patriarch's demise. Secondly, Radcliffe replaces the patriarchal figure with her new aristocratic woman. Both these ideas involve a process of displacement that Radcliffe generates to transform the pre-domesticated Gothic space. Hence, the estates and chateaus finally owned by the heroines at the novels end embody domestic spaces devoid of the supernatural, just as these spaces are devoid of the male tyrant.

By assuming a similar stance to Armstrong, I am able to ask a question important to this section: how does this transition in power occur? Armstrong explains this transition in terms of desire, a new form of desire that "changed the criteria for what was most important in a female" (1987:3). In other words, domestic fiction portrayed a new kind of woman to be desired. For example, women were portrayed as being desirable for their virtue instead of their social class or their outer attractions. One thinks again of Richardson's *Pamela* (1740)

that saw a servant girl desired initially for her body. She is later desired for her words, which is ultimately the value of her mind. It is well-known that Richardson declared that he was not actually writing a novel when writing *Pamela* but he was utilizing fiction “for redefining the desirable woman” (cited by Armstrong, 1987:97). As Armstrong puts it “we may observe the transfer of erotic desire from Pamela’s body to her words” (1987:6). Likewise, Radcliffean heroines are desired by their ‘worthy’ lovers for their moral worth, aesthetic sense and virtuous dispositions rather than solely for their beauty or material value. Interestingly, we never get a sense of what Radcliffe’s heroines look like, except for Adeline, in *Romance of the Forest* (1791) who La Motte finds “impossible to contemplate the beauty and distress of with indifference” (1986:5). Ellena in *The Italian* is veiled in the first page of the novel; Emily in *Mysteries* (1794) is described solely in terms of her accomplishments. As we will see, Emily in particular represents a discursive power, which cannot be subdued by Montoni. Radcliffe thus discredits the idea of female beauty as an ideal replacing it with an ideal where women are valued more for their intrinsic qualities. Antithetically, the novels’ antagonists, the villains, desire them (in some instances) for their promising material wealth but typically and lustily, only in terms of their erotic value.



Radcliffe’s novels thus exemplify in part Armstrong’s argument that domestic fiction introduced a distinct division of power: females possessed control over the domestic (only after Gothic hauntings are vanquished), males dominated the public spaces. But Radcliffe, in her appropriation of the Gothic genre, also destabilizes Armstrong’s argument concerning this distinct gendered demarcation of social space. This destabilization occurs by Radcliffe initially bringing about a double displacement in the representation of domestic space and then, remarkably, by placing her heroines outside of the domestic space to master public space. One can also say that Radcliffe’s novels subvert the idea of a division between domestic and public spaces. Radcliffe accomplishes this subversion and destabilization by placing her heroines outside of the domestic space, to experience outside spaces and landscapes hitherto traditionally viewed as the domain of the powerful male figure (I explore this idea in greater detail in my focus on landscape and gender in the following chapter). Once outside of the home, the heroine has to command this new space with a blend of ‘old’ and new aspects: the ‘old’ being propriety, the ‘new’ being her exercise of reason, autonomy

and ability to adapt to the unknown. Therefore, one can say that Radcliffe introduces a new desired female figure by playing between the conventional and unconventional. Having inscribed the outdoors with female experience, Radcliffe returns her heroines, transformed, to the domestic space at the end of the novel. They return to re-inscribe this domestic space with what they represent: a new highly desirable female identity.

Radcliffe brings about displacement in the domestic space by firstly presenting the domestic family as a threatened and collapsible institution. Radcliffe causes her heroines to be torn from stable family homes through sudden deaths of parents. Emily, in *Mysteries* (1794) is introduced as the child of Madame and Monsieur Aubert. The first two chapters create a scene of domestic harmony and filial happiness that is disrupted firstly by the death of her mother, then her father. Following this, Emily's chance of peace and happiness in the promise of young love is negated by the guardianship of a malevolent aunt, Madame Cheron who incorporates "The love of sway" as her "ruling passion" and who exercises "petty tyranny" (1966:112-113). Furthermore, Radcliffe introduces her heroines as orphans in the care of malevolent uncles and aunts or supposed guardians. Adeline in *Romance* (1791) is completely destitute, abandoned by her 'father' by the mercy of strangers. We are told that Ellena in *The Italian* (1797) is an orphan, "living under the care of her aunt, Signora Bianchi; that her family, which had never been illustrious, was decayed in fortune, and that her only dependence was upon this aunt" (1968:8-9). Ellena's aunt dies, leaving her alone and impoverished, having to enter a convent for protection.

Radcliffe also subverts the idea of a secure domestic sphere by introducing the family as dysfunctional. Unlike the gradual unraveling of domestic stability in *The Italian* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) portrays its heroine as inhabiting a domestic space that is far removed from happiness and stability from the outset. Julia, Emilia and Frederick are exposed to the jealousy and machinations of their Mephistophelian stepmother and the neglect of their distant father who treats his children as commodities, to be 'sold' to the bidder with the highest offer. This constant disruption of the domestic indicates Radcliffe's attempt at destabilizing the idea that the domestic sphere is an arena in

which women can be safely contained. Radcliffe's Gothic thus undercuts Armstrong's more stable and unproblematised notion of the domestic.

Radcliffe's disruption of the domestic arena serves as a catalyst for fashioning her heroines' female identity: she undoes the conventions associated with the domestic space as representative of stable, ordered families in order to transgress the gender hierarchies promulgated by these conventions. Women in Radcliffe's novels cannot be contained in prescribed spaces and cannot be ruled. In short, domestic disruption in her novels anticipates the surfacing of female power but not before male power erupts with barely contained malevolence. Radcliffe allows for the identity of her heroines to emerge outside the confines of patriarchal rule by removing patriarchal figures from the domestic space or presenting her heroines as orphaned (to establish that her heroines cannot only survive without patriarchal influence but triumph in a world without them). By disturbing the idea of intact family units, it is apparent that Radcliffe challenges all that is associated with the meaning of English nationality: challenging the institution of patriarchy, female and male identity, marriage, love and desire. To achieve this, Radcliffe usurps the role of the patriarch to make way for her new desired female: one who becomes, at the end of the novel, the owner of her own estate and hereby ruler of the newly re-domesticated space in which she can pursue the marriage with a man of her choice. I suggest that this is the second displacement of the domestic space: Radcliffe's heroine's become the owners of their own estates but they are also elevated in social standing, becoming the new aristocratic woman. I must note here that Radcliffe does not necessarily validate conventional aristocratic values but that to a significant degree, her heroines' aristocratic status simply gives them power and independence. Radcliffe's heroines are new aristocratic women at the novels end because of, amongst others, their negotiation of conflict and their preserved virtue.

In rewriting the traditional idea of femaleness embodied in the aristocratic woman, Radcliffe achieves a new female identity, a woman that is 'truly female' because her heroines already embody and in all instances, come to exemplify intellectual depth, moral worth and constant vigilance (I explore this as 'internal surveillance' later in this chapter) *before* they become aristocratic women. This, I suggest, is the new ideal female. Radcliffe's heroines are

individual subjects who are endowed with morality, insight and sensibility. Their altered status and financial value, although significant, occurrences towards the end of the novel, have no bearing upon the hero's desire to be with her, especially since most of the heroines had nothing of value in the beginning, besides their selves. Rather, Radcliffe appears to rewrite the aristocratic woman as part of the greater aim of her novels. What remains clear and what is common to all the novels is the notion that Radcliffe first upsets the domestic in order to place her modern desirable female figure in that space, whose new female identity re-fashions the conventional precepts of marriage and the home as a domestic space of patriarchal rule.

### 3. History, Nation and the Gothic Imagination

The meek shall inherit the gothic earth; evil is always destroyed because it deserves to be (Hoeveler (1998:19)).

This chapter so far has examined how Radcliffe's appropriation of the Gothic genre has allowed her novels to be transgressive of eighteenth century ideals as these pertain to established conventions of female identity. But we have not asked in what sense and to what extent Radcliffe's work represents and exemplifies the Gothic genre. As seen in the introductory chapter, stock Gothic ingredients that loosely define this genre are hauntings and ghosts, gloom and eerie noises, phantom lights and bloody armour, open graves and tormented whisperings. Frank Botting, in his work *Gothic* (1996) adds to this Gothic formula "dark subterranean vaults, decaying abbeys, gloomy forests, jagged mountains and wild scenery inhabited by bandits, persecuted heroines, orphans, and malevolent aristocrats" (1996:45). Radcliffe's novels mainly utilize this Gothic recipe, but I argue that Botting's definition (though crucial to the identification and the understanding of the Gothic genre in Radcliffe's novels) is nonetheless a superficial representation of the Gothic. In this section I will attempt to explore more carefully how the Gothic functions within her works.

James Watt, author of *Contesting the Gothic — Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (1999), offers a historically grounded reading of Gothic fiction. He argues that a historical perspective of the Gothic must acknowledge that the genre itself is a "relatively

modern construct” because interest in it is a “descriptive” category only emerged within twentieth century literary criticism (1999:1). Watt surveys the works of other twentieth century literary critics like David Punter (1980) and Robert Miles (1995), distinguishing their criticism as being groundbreaking in their focus on the Gothic as a literature of “self-analysis” (1999:2). For them, the genre facilitates a kind of self-examination of national culture, becoming at once a criticism of the nation as well as a reflection of the anxieties produced by this criticism. Watt argues that the Gothic offers, “privileged access to repressed material” (1999:2). This analysis is particularly applicable to Radcliffe’s work, as her works have been read as metaphors for the repressed woman within late eighteenth century society. The labyrinths and vaults within Radcliffe’s works can be understood to function as spaces of the repressed, a significant theme within her works that provides rich ground for Freudian readings.

The caves and labyrinths that mark Radcliffe’s texts can be argued to represent female spaces. These spaces become female because they are hidden and submerged, outside of the system of patriarchal surveillance, and become conduits to the heroines’ liberation. In *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) the imprisoned Louisa Mazzini (“the topos of the imprisoned woman deprived of her property rights”) escapes with her daughter Julia from her cave of incarceration, through the passage of underground caverns beneath the castle to freedom (Milbank, 1993:x). Similarly, Ellena in *The Italian* (1797) flees from the cruel Abbess and Abate of the San Stefano Abbey through the underground vaults and “deep recesses of the convent” (1968:137). What must be noted is that these labyrinths and caves are also constantly threatened with male invasion because as the heroines’ seek refuge and often flee through them; it is the male patriarchal figure that pursues them.

These subterranean spaces represent an obviously sexually coded geography representing the womb. Their infiltration would represent male penetration or rape or, as it is often presented in Radcliffe’s novels, the threat of rape. Such a reading owes much to Freudian psychoanalysis, in particular his theory of repression. As Michael Jacobs (1992) puts it, the Freudian concept of repression is, “a term used to describe a phenomenon whereby feelings which are unacceptable are repressed” (1992:36). Radcliffe allegorically explores the theme

of repression by depicting the caves and labyrinths, through which the heroines and at times their mothers travel, as spaces for the “return of the repressed” (1992:37). Reading the female figures in Radcliffe’s novels as repressed figures, their emergence from the caves and labyrinths signal their return to a world of liberty after being imprisoned. They re-emerge, as figures of un-repression, to once again attempt to conquer the hostile environment. Their return is meant to denote a warning to their oppressors, that they could not be subdued by male power. Their return is also meant to show the fallibility of male authority and suggests that whatever is secret or suppressed will be revealed. These secrets threaten the dominance of patriarchal power and when released, force the disintegration of that power. This is well illustrated in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) where Julia’s mother is imprisoned by her husband in an underground “recess of horror” deep in the bowels of the castle for many years. At the novel’s close she dramatically emerges from the underground cavern and returns to her life as Marchioness (1993:176).

The Marchioness literally represents the “return of the repressed”, being the figure in the novel that ceases to be a silent, powerless presence. She reclaims her identity as mother and aristocratic woman, titles she was deprived of through male tyranny. Her re-emergence from the depths to which she had been banished, demolishes the patriarchal control of her husband. The Marquis Mazzini dies. His last words are, “Heaven has made that woman the instrument of its justice, whom I made the instrument of my crimes” (1993:191). Mazzini’s words acknowledge both the injustice of his patriarchal dominance and the existence of ‘that woman’ (1993:191). His acknowledgement of her and his death doubly reinforces the ‘new’ female identity for the Marchioness Mazzini, as well as Julia, who is not only reunited with her mother but is also liberated from tyranny. Radcliffe utilizes a similar approach within the other texts as well and this will be explored in depth in chapter’s two and three.

Moreover, the heroines of Radcliffe’s novels resist the oppressive hierarchy, facilitating the shaping of a new sense of independent womanhood. In *The Italian* (1797), Ellena’s escape from the monastery of San Stefano where she was kept a prisoner by the Abbess, occurs through caves and labyrinths that run beneath the shrine of “our Lady of Mount Carmel” (1968:136). Ellena and Vivaldi (who rescues her), follow their guide into a cave that leads “to the extremity of a vault, sunk deep within which appeared a small door” (1968:136).



Beyond the door are labyrinths, dark winding passages that Ellena must navigate before she can obtain her freedom from oppression. These labyrinths are surrounded with walls that are beset with “pilgrims, and lay brothers” that upon discovery, would re-capture Ellena (1968:137). Ellena questions these labyrinths, fearing a trap, which is of course the ever-present threat of patriarchal control. A reassertion of male dominance would lead to, as in the case of Ellena, an ultimate separation from her lover, Vivaldi, but more importantly, an annihilation of her individual freedom.

Markman Ellis, author of *The History of Gothic Fiction* (2000), does not attempt to provide a comprehensive history of the Gothic novel, but rather, “offers a series of readings of the use of history in the gothic novel” (2000:11). Ellis provides a different view for considering the Gothic and its development as a literary genre by looking at how history is implemented and “recycled” in the Gothic novel (2000: 11). He “considers how the gothic is itself a theory of history: a mode for the apprehension and consumption of history” (2000:11). Ellis’ argument touches on the way the Gothic deals with historical past and present: it is situated in the medieval past, yet speaking to the present. This is an interesting tension that marks Radcliffe’s novels, for it allows Radcliffe to almost paradoxically ‘critique’ the present through the past. For example, in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), Radcliffe reflects on “ancient superstition” following the preamble of a ruined abbey. E.J. Clery states “it is a telling indication of the conventionality of this motif, that although the story is set in the Middle Ages, the abbey is *already a ruin*” (1968:xviii). The ruined abbey reads as a present critique against oppressive patriarchy and arranged marriages, which were sanctioned by these monastic institutions. Its insertion, right at the beginning of *Castles* (1789) foretells the demise of patriarchal rule as well as arranged marriages.

As we have read, the female heroine of *Castles* (1789), Mary, refuses to marry the unruly Malcolm, Earl of Dunbayne, even though she is his prisoner. Later, she also rejects the idea of marrying Count de Santinorin in keeping with her class. In *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), the dual role of monastic rule is sketched: not only were abbeys complicit in patriarchal dominance, “providing a dumping-ground for ‘surplus’ women” or ‘disobedient’ daughters, but they also provided sanctuary against male tyranny” (1968:xix). Julia flees from her

imminent arranged marriage to the Abbey. She is protected by the Abate and for a while, she tastes a form of freedom. But when her father appears demanding her release, the Abate concedes to his patriarchal authority. Julia is faced with a choice of becoming a nun (and remaining at the Abbey) or marrying the Duke. She flees both 'institutions', her escape symbolic of the destruction of patriarchal rule symbolized at the novel's beginning by the Gothic ruins of the castle Mazzini.

In a related argument on the use of history in Gothic novels, Michael Gamer, in *Romanticism and the Gothic — Genre, Reception and Canon Formation* (2000) explores; albeit differently to Ellis (2000) what constituted the rise of Radcliffe's works as part of the Gothic genre. He looks at Radcliffe herself as author and takes into consideration the readers of the Gothic. Significant in Gamer's perusal is the emphasis placed on Radcliffe's choice to enter the Gothic writing world, not as a follower of writing "sired by an appropriately masculine and aristocratic originator" but rather as "Reeve's direct descendant" (2000:70). Gamer highlights what other critics like Elizabeth Napier, *The Failure of Gothic* (1987) and K. Hurley, *The Gothic Body* (1996) ignore. Radcliffe's meticulous choice in writing style and appropriation of the genre transgresses the social rule of the day. She chose to style herself as a descendant of a female writer (Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* (1777)) and not that of the Gothic's more conventionally believed progenitor, namely Horace Walpole (*The Castle of Otranto* (1764)). Her choice stands as a double rejection of male authorship because not only does she transgress the idea that the writing world was not a female one, but she also rejects the idea that the Gothic could only be a male genre.

Despite its apparent historical dislocation, the Gothic genre created a space in which every facet of late eighteenth century way of life was illuminated and questioned. It is important to note here that Romanticism accomplished this as well, hence the fact that the Gothic was viewed as a sub-genre of Romanticism as argued in my introductory chapter. Despite the overlapping similarities between the two genres, there are marked dissimilarities. Gamer notes the cultural tension that existed when the Gothic genre emerged as a counter to Romanticism as follows: "Gothic's unprecedented popularity and almost unanimous critical vilification ... produce a cultural predicament of romantic ideologies of genre" (2000:23).

Poetry and writings produced in this period constructed an idealized femininity through the male imagination. Women functioned as objects and backdrops to the poet's imagination, as the poet's muse or as his fancy, to be worshipped as an object but seldom to be understood in terms of a female self. Wordsworth's celebrated poem, *Tintern Abbey* (1798) provides a useful example to explore this argument [Dorothy (Wordsworth's sister who features in the poem as the 'dear friend') is viewed as timorous and docile]. I will follow Jacqueline Labbe's analysis of Wordsworth's poem in terms of its gendered approach to landscape:

In a poem like 'Tintern Abbey', his generalizing impulse and successful universalizing signals Wordsworth's completed maturation, and although he might feel a twinge of regret at leaving behind his youthful, but immature feminized, eye, he insists that 'other gifts' have given him 'abundant recompense'. Meanwhile, the feminine eye that he outgrows finds its correlating body in Dorothy Wordsworth, uniting with the landscape around Tintern Abbey and personifying Wordsworth's 'former pleasures'. Wordsworth locates the landscape-bound body in his sister, mapping onto the feminine a visuality he associates with immaturity (1998:xvi-xvii).

For Wordsworth, the "time is past" when he first experienced the landscape surrounding Tintern Abbey as a poignant "appetite; a feeling and a love" (1984: l. 83 and 80). The word "past" emphasizes that Tintern Abbey is a ruin, a symbol of the end to the world of "feeling" that Wordsworth occupied, a world he now views as "youthful, but immature" (l. 80 and 1998:xvi). Reference to the past in connection to ruins also carries distinct, perhaps unintended Gothic overtones, emphasized in the words "the sounding cataract/ Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock, /The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood" (l.76, 77, 78). Gothic heroines as well experience these kinds of landscape features like "the deep and gloomy wood" as haunting and terrifying experiences (l.78). But these also become "past" experiences as they overcome their own perceived weaknesses. One can infer that these references to nature as "haunting" hints at the initial Gothic female experience of nature as overwhelming and self-diminishing. Also inferred is the idea that a matured communion with nature is a male one, hence the fact that Wordsworth's sister is described as having "wild eyes" and "wild ecstasies" that require maturation into a "sober pleasure" (l.119,138 and 139). It is apparent that Wordsworth's construction of an idealized femininity sees his sister Dorothy as being worthy only to be a receptacle of that which he rejects within himself, a childlike adoration of nature, an "immature eye" that is associated with the feminine, so that

he can attain a higher aesthetic experience of the landscape before him (Labbe, 1998: xvi). Dorothy's function within the poem is that of object and although one can say that Wordsworth, in giving her a function, is acknowledging her as important on some level in his life, it is none-the-less a position of inferiority. As Mellor writes, "the female figures in Wordsworth's poems do not exist as independent, self-conscious human beings with minds as capable as the poet's. Dorothy remains a silenced auditor in *Tintern Abbey*, a less conscious being whose function is to mirror and thus to guarantee the truth of the poet's development and perceptions" (1993:19). She also has to still attain what Wordsworth has already accomplished, leaving her as an incomplete self within the poem, lacking the ability for "elevated thoughts" (1.95). As confirmation of this view, Meena Alexander writes in *Women in Romanticism: Mary Wollstonecraft, Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Shelley* that,

While it is difficult to doubt the acute, pained love the poet bears for his sister, it is equally difficult from a feminist perspective not to acknowledge the sister's symbolic presence as subservient to both genius and desire gaining power insofar as she is gathered into his vision (1989:570).

The important point for this thesis is that female Gothic writing defies this ideology of woman as object, subjected to the male's gaze of desire and power to define *her*. Put simply, Gothic texts shape a female identity that sees woman emerge as subject, not as a Romanticized object.

Other critics have conceptualized the emergence of Radcliffe's works in a way that conflicts with that of Gamer. Cannon Schmitt, in his work 'Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*' (1994) views Radcliffe's works, in particular *The Italian* (1797), as "a nationalist sentimentalist" novel (1994:858). The 'nationalist' mentioned here is the English in particular. Although the text in its entirety "should be taken as emblematic of Italianness, Catholicism, a mysterious and un-English way of life", Schmitt also states that Radcliffe's heroine "either incarnates English virtue or oscillates between that virtue and the specious attractions of foreign polish" (1994:853 and 859).

The contradiction between these two statements can be explained only by elaboration that might appear contradictory in itself. The 'foreign polish' that Schmitt refers to are the foreign

settings as well as characters that embody that which is 'foreign' in their demeanours. As the title suggests, *The Italian's* (1797) setting is Italy, Naples. *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) is set in the no less exotic and wild highlands of Scotland. The setting for *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) is Sicily. *The Romance of the Forest* is set in France, as is *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) although the settings here shift from France to Venice, the Appenines and back to France again. Radcliffe uses foreign settings for her novels but her heroines come across as English women and not as the foreign women they are supposed to be. In short, Radcliffean heroines do not fit their foreign settings. This mismatch could be seen as a product of Radcliffe's ignorance of continental Europe. She only began to travel extensively after terminating her career as novelist, and her fantastical Mediterranean landscapes are just as non-realist as her "French" and "Italian" characters. But Radcliffe may have also utilized foreign settings to accentuate the English virtue of her heroines. Because of the sheer 'otherness' of places like Venice and France, the kind of English womanhood that Radcliffe promotes in her novels could be more strongly emphasized. Alternately, it is possible that Radcliffe places her heroines in foreign settings as a disguised critique of English society, a kind of 'safe' spatial displacement to comment on the society's shortcomings – thereby facilitating a space to fashion a new sense of female identity.

Schmitt's argument reveals a perspective that appears to contradict the linkage between the promotion of an ideal English nationality and Radcliffe's novels. Schmitt's perspective reveals the underlying political landscapes in Radcliffe's novels where foreign settings and alien landscapes contrast with the 'English ideal' (1994:862). The political, in this context, extends to that of the connection between patriarchal power in the family and the king's position in the country – one would reinforce the other in the shared connection of power. In other words, Radcliffe's critique of patriarchal familial power can also be read as an oblique critique of political power in England that was centred on the uncontested authority of the king. Markman Ellis (2000) identifies this as the "patriarchal model" (2000:52). Put simply, late eighteenth century English society was based on the idea that the domestic familial realm would be a reflection of the aristocratic rule in the country. Ellis views this as being exemplary of the "political congruencies between the authority of the father over the household and that of the king over society" (2000:2). Radcliffe, in utilizing foreign settings

for her novels, delivers a critique of English politics. But also, her utilization of foreign settings in turn highlights the political shortcomings in that foreign country by her reinforcement of English virtue through her heroines.

Ellis also looks at the function of the foreign settings in Radcliffe's novels as these pertain to the position of women. He proposes that

rather than mere entertainments, her novels direct her readers to consider one of the central issues of the 1790s: the status of women. Radcliffe pursues this contemporary and particular question in her signature manner, by locating the story in a distant society (2000:50).

If we look at Radcliffe's novels as a whole we can see Ellis's point: *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) is set in medieval Sicily where the heroine manages to assert her choice in marriage. It also shows how a 'kept' imprisoned wife is liberated and a cruel husband punished. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), set predominantly in France but shifting to exotic Venice, Emily battles for her own definition of marriage and for the ownership of her own property, her childhood home *La Vallée* that is continuously under threat of being sold by avaricious and uncaring guardians, as well as for her independence in a world that increasingly removes it from her. She regains her freedom after being imprisoned in the Castle of Udolpho and marries, on her own terms the man she loves but not before she re-claims her position as heiress of *La Vallée*. Count Montoni, her cruel tormentor dies in a battle with other banditti. In *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), set initially in Nice, France but mainly in a remote area of Lyon, we witness the heroine, Adeline, an orphan, who marries Theodore La Luc, son of an aristocrat, but not before she finds that she too is a descendant of an aristocratic family and becomes heiress of her parent's fortune. In *The Italian* (1797), set in Naples, Italy, Ellena has to circumvent the pitfalls set in place by her lover's jealous and possessive aristocratic mother as a way of maintaining her independence and individuality. She accomplishes this without the assistance of the novel's hero and becomes an heiress on finding her mother.

Both Schmitt's and Ellis' view on the role of foreign settings in Radcliffe's novels argue clearly that the use of foreign settings produces ambivalence within Radcliffe's texts. The



ambivalence can be summarized as follows: Radcliffe utilizes foreign settings to disguise her critique of English social and political conditions, particularly the issue of gender inequality. In one sense, it is possible to read the vice of the wealthy and aristocratic foreign characters, as a displaced critique of English aristocratic power. As Hoeveler puts it, the genre “with its own distinctive and recurrent aesthetic and political strategies” are both “designed to dramatize the horrors of English patriarchal life safely displaced onto a remote setting” (1998:xiv). In *Castles* (1789) set closest to home, Malcolm’s lust for wealth and his oppression of women (besides Mary, Malcolm also imprisons a Baroness and her daughter), reads as a critique of English aristocracy and the landed gentry’s pursuit of estates, and the aristocratic houses that imprisoned women within its walls. Therefore not only does Radcliffe critique the ‘foreign’ but she also critiques the English aristocratic class through her critique of the foreign.

This displaced critique of English aristocracy is apparent not only in the manifest character description of the male aristocratic figures in her novels but also in their deaths that read as punishment for their vice and cruelty. In *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), the Marquis de Mazzini is described as a man “of a voluptuous and imperious character” and composed “naturally of a haughty and overbearing disposition” (1993:3). His illegitimate new wife poisons him at the novel’s end. The couples’ lives, the novel tells us, “exhibited a boundless indulgence of violent and luxurious passions, and their deaths marked the consequences of such indulgence, and held forth to mankind a singular instance of divine vengeance” (1993:194). Likewise, the Marquis de Montalt in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) has a “passion for magnificence and dissipation” that makes him the “votary of vice” (1986:163 and 343). Like Mazzini, de Montalt also dies by poisoning but he administers it himself, hours before he was to stand trial for murdering his brother. Radcliffe’s villains do not engender pity. They are recurrently represented as embodying the forms of transgressions that Gothic novels highlight: the usual demonstrations of prurience and malice within the aristocratic family.

What is interesting to note here, is that Radcliffe does not distinguish along gender lines when critiquing aristocratic power and privilege. Instead, she delivers a critique of the



aristocratic woman that aims at destabilizing her position in society to replace her with the 'new' refined woman: her Gothic heroine. As Armstrong (1987) has noted,

the aristocratic woman represented surface instead of depth, embodies material instead of moral value, and displayed idle sensuality instead of constant vigilance and tireless concern for the well being of others. Such a woman was not truly female (1987:20).

Radcliffe's heroines distinguish themselves sharply from the aristocratic model, and forge a new female identity as subjects valued for their depth of character, and an aesthetic and moral engagement with the world – not for their outer appearance as mere physical adornment to be appreciated by the male gaze. They are the antithesis of the traditional aristocratic woman that Radcliffe criticizes. Radcliffe presents the aristocratic woman as vain, selfish and material. Already, in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), one sees Radcliffe being particular about the character description of Madame de la Motte who is at first portrayed as a woman of compassion and sympathy in the way she receives Adeline, a stranger. Adeline had just been 'rescued' by her husband, Pierre de la Motte, from the bandits who had held her captive in a "small and ancient house" which stood on a desolate heath (1986: 3). It is not long though before the vice of Madame de la Motte surfaces, in the form of insane jealousy commanded by her excessive passion. Her excessive passion overrides her ability to reason. The narrator relays, "so much did passion win upon her judgement" that she believes her husband is in love with Adeline and that Adeline has betrayed the love and kindness she displayed towards her (1986:47). Adeline sees her as a person "whose character now appeared less amiable than her imagination represented, and seemed strongly tinged with caprice" (1986:97).

In Radcliffe's later novels, the decadent figure of the aristocratic female is fully formed. In *The Italian* (1797), the mother of Vincentio, the Marchesa di Vivaldi is introduced as a person whose character is completely in the grip of vice, and Radcliffe's treatment of her is scathing. She is described as being descended from an ancient family, making her "jealous of her importance" possessing pride that was "that of birth and distinction" (1968:7). She is a person "of violent passions, haughty, vindictive, yet crafty and deceitful; patient in stratagem, and indefatigable in pursuit of vengeance, on the unhappy objects who provoked her

resentment” (1968:7). Whereas Madame de la Motte lives in happiness and peace with her husband towards the end of the novel having realized her mistakes, the Marchesa di Vivaldi dies towards the end of the novel. Her death does not garner any compassion or sympathy from the reader.

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) the female aristocrat, Madame Cheron, seems ideally suited to the base villain in the novel, Monsieur Montoni, and for a large section of the text, the two figures appear as a team in their concentration on that which is evil and repulsive to the nature of the heroine, Emily. Madame Cheron is presented as possessing the “love of sway” which was “her ruling passion” and who practices on her niece, Emily, a “petty tyranny” that increases with fervour throughout the novel (1966:112 -113). Because Emily’s parents die, Madame Cheron becomes Emily’s guardian but she sees Emily as being someone on whom she could “exercise without controul the capricious humour of the moment” (1966:112). It is not much later when she views Emily with “a feeling very near to contempt” (1966:118). It is these features of her character that forbids the love between Valancourt and Emily and that sees her marry Monsieur Montoni in a shocking and clandestine manner. Madame Cheron allows her husband to imprison Emily and she (Madame Cheron) eventually dies in the novel due to the callous neglect and brutality of her husband, Monsieur Montoni who locks her in a tower because she would not cede her estates to him.

Nowhere in the text that follows does it appear that Radcliffe attempts to form a positive construct of French aristocratic women. As I mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, Radcliffe’s works resound with ambivalence and it is no different in this instance in her critique of aristocratic indulgence. The ambivalence rests in the fact that Radcliffe’s heroines do not appear to be French, or Italian, or Scottish but thoroughly English in their character development even though they are supposedly of French or Italian descent. Her “English” heroines appear to critique the aristocratic figures that seek to control their lives. Emily, who is supposed to be French, is for example made sensible through the ‘English’ instruction of her father. In contrast, Montoni and his bandits are the novel’s alien and unsuited characters.

Emily is shown to be self – possessed and aware of her rights when Montoni attempts to deprive her of her estates. Her response to his attack on her freedom is derisive: “I am not so ignorant, Signor, of the laws on this subject, as to misled by the assertion of any person. The law, in the present, gives me the estates in question, and my own hand shall never betray my right.” (1966:381). Emily acts according to rights and law based tenets. Emily embodies throughout and especially towards the end of the novel, a new way of being a ‘French’ woman with the English attributes like sensibility, prudence and propriety firmly in place.

Hence, Radcliffe not only critiques domestic aristocratic privilege through the utilization of foreign settings, but she also critiques it by allowing her heroines to be redeemed by aristocratic blood. Like Adeline, Ellena in *The Italian* (1797) also finds towards the end of the novel that she is not an orphan, but is in fact the daughter of the Countess di Bruno. What must be made clear is that one does not get the sense that Radcliffe redeems her heroines with aristocratic connections to fashion them as ‘marriageable’, worthy of marrying their aristocratic lovers. Rather, it appears that Radcliffe fashions a new sense of female identity through her heroines and places this new desirable female in a position of power, where she has no need of marriage but chooses to do so anyway.

As this chapter has contended, Radcliffe’s ‘new’ aristocratic woman imbues the domestic space with a new kind of power: the power of ownership. The Gothic heroine eventually becomes a property owner, lending her “authority over the household” (Armstrong, 1987:3). As we shall later see in my discussion of landscape in chapter three; not only does she have power over interior spaces at the novel’s close but also she eventually commands the outdoors. This reversal of property relations signals an important shift in the way the domestic space was viewed in the late eighteenth century: men are not property owners at the end of the narrative; they therefore cannot own the domestic space. This argument becomes more profound when the heroine’s eventual possession of property equals her tenure of the pastoral, hereby feminizing the domestic space.

## Chapter 3

# Surveillance, Sensibility and the Sublime in Radcliffe's Novels

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### 1. Watching and Governing

Another significant aspect of Radcliffe's female subjects is their triumph over an eighteenth century norm that rigidly governed the movement and behaviour of women: the practice of surveillance. As we will see, women were believed to be in need of surveillance in both public and private spaces because they could not be depended upon to exercise consistent composure, given their supposed unsteady temperaments. Young women were seen to have susceptible, overactive imaginations that required firm curtailment. Michel Foucault (1975) has famously explored surveillance as "panopticism", "an indefinitely generalizable mechanism" produced by society to maintain the disciplined conduct of the ever-increasing population, the "large demographic thrust of the eighteenth century" due to industrialization (1984: 206). Foucault views panopticism in terms of "discipline and punishment" that is best illustrated in the example of the construction of circular prisons, having at its centre a guard tower (1984:206). Foucault notes that prisoners, even when they could no longer see the guard, still behaved as though they were watched: their movements were controlled by fear of punishment as well as by the constant surveillance that the tower represents. The tower, just like the moderating gaze of the guard, represents power as well: the power to order and socially "quarantine" another's behaviour (1984:206).

Foucault's theory on surveillance has been thoroughly explored but this thesis takes a slightly different, gendered angle of it. The act of watching and the knowledge of being watched seem in the late eighteenth century to be integral to maintain the societal order, and also hush the cries for freedom filtering from the European Continent. Radcliffe's heroines are subjected to "social quarantine" by being watched by others who attempt to control and restrict their conduct and movement (1984:206). Radcliffe's heroines oppose the stereotype

of women as weak and unstable by replacing the idea of external surveillance with their practice of self-government. It is the act of internal surveillance that procures agency for the heroines and shapes their emergent identities. Defiantly rejecting society's intent to control them through the observation and words of others, Radcliffean heroines forge an autonomous self. It will be shown that when the heroines act and behave with self-governed propriety or decorum it is independent of patriarchal or familial guide and censure. This does not occur without effort or paradox, because the heroines do, at the beginning of the novels, appear to lack a degree of self-regulation.

Surveillance in the late eighteenth century was defined differently to our modern understanding of the word. The *OED* defines surveillance as being "the act of carefully watching a person suspected of a crime or a place where a crime may be committed" (2005: 1491). What Foucault perhaps does not sufficiently recognize is that surveillance in the eighteenth century was a gendered practice. It was well established, as Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) will show, that women were believed to require more surveillance, intensive watching and observation than men, because of their supposed unstable natures. Not only was it commanded by societal norms that women be watched by society and their own family members but it was also decreed that women practice an internal surveillance that would ensure the order of society and the order of the family as an institution that was supposed to be representative of the structure of late eighteenth century society. Surveillance can then be viewed as a tool to fashion a female identity that was not an identity at all but more a site of control, a controlled articulation of femaleness. I will argue that the issue of surveillance is a multi-layered notion in the way it is represented in Radcliffe's novels, drawing on Cannon Schmitt's (1994) idea of internal surveillance.

Crucial to Schmitt's evaluation of the female identity represented in Radcliffe's works, is his argument that the "Radcliffean Gothic contributed to the formation of that subject by encouraging the adoption of habitual internal surveillance in heroines and readers alike" (1994: 864). He attributes this collusion between reader and heroine to the fact that Radcliffe destabilizes the security of reader and heroine alike. She accomplishes this through the

suggestion of hauntings and terror that permeate her novels. To elucidate: the heroine, surrounded by possible ghosts, mysterious lights and eerie, lamenting noises, begins to doubt her own judgment each time she has to tell herself that these manifestations are merely the products of her over-active imagination or heightened emotional state. To counteract this doubt, the heroine has to practice an internal surveillance that will guard her against her susceptibility to believe in that which cannot possibly exist. Likewise, the reader is induced to practice an internal surveillance as well, experiencing the hauntings through the heroine's imagination as well as the reader's own. But most importantly, Schmitt asserts that Radcliffe fashioned a particular female identity through "habitual surveillance" (1994:864). In order to evaluate Schmitt's argument, it is necessary to look at his ideas more closely.

Schmitt looks at Hannah More's conduct book, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) that addresses the issue of internal surveillance, or in Schmitt's words, "surveillance of the self" (1994:864). More's stance on surveillance of the self seems analogous with the jurist William Blackstone's assertion that in the institution of marriage women are to be watched by their husbands, having ceased to exist as 'beings'. More's stance stems from a conduct book approach that is conservative and narrow in its focus on the construction of the female subject but is also, most importantly, relevant to the period, hereby granting valuable insight into the concerns surrounding female conduct.

She argues that women require a double-surveillance, surveillance by others and a surveillance of the self. More reasons that women necessitate this method of surveillance because "they are by nature unruly ... subject to continuous internal rebellion fomented by the imagination" (cited by Schmitt, 1994:864). More also believes that it is impossible to completely conquer the imagination. By this she means that external surveillance is never sufficient as women would still be led astray by their excessive imaginations if they "are not themselves constantly engaged in struggle with, enabled by surveillance of, the self" (1994: 865). Restraint, then, is the key to More's internal surveillance and is also one of the key standards of neo-classical belief. It is interesting that More's view portrays the imagination as that which exacerbates female 'rebellion', especially since female Gothic writers claim on the imagination.

The issue of surveillance is a multi-layered one in Radcliffe's novels so it does not exclusively fit Armstrong's idea of internal surveillance as an empowering device. She argues that, "the domestic woman exercised a form of power...the power of domestic surveillance" (1987:19). Neither does it fit More's stance that women need to be surveyed because of their unpredictable natures. Rather, Radcliffe employs the issue of surveillance by others in instances where it seems that the heroines require it and where it seems like an unfair judgement of the heroine's sense of propriety and decorum. An example where both appear applicable is in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) in the scene where Emily, newly bereaved because of the loss of both her parents is visited by her would-be lover, Valancourt. She is alone at La Vallée, without chaperones. Emily and Valancourt both confess their love for each other but are interrupted by the arrival of Emily's aunt, Madame Cheron, who immediately measures the scene before her with suspicion. Valancourt hastily departs and Madame Cheron accuses Emily of impropriety, saying "I believed niece you had a greater sense of propriety, than to have received the visits of any young man in your present unfriended situation" (1966:110). Madame Cheron's words are emblematic of external surveillance and the censure that comes with it. Also, her words seem to define a female identity that encompasses respectability and chastity.

I suggest that Emily's conduct is surveyed according to More's perspective and is found wanting because her behaviour does not obey conventional norms. In this instance, it appears that More's idea has merit. But Radcliffe attempts to give a reason for Emily's impropriety by stating in the novel that had Madame Cheron not delayed so long in assuming her guardianship of her niece, then Emily would not have acquiesced to this instance of impropriety. Emily questions her aunt's accusation and Madame Cheron claims that she received the attentions of a lover "unknown to her family" (1966:111). But the narrator inserts that Madame Cheron does not consider the "impropriety of which she had herself been guilty, in exposing her niece to the possibility of conduct so erroneous" (1966:111). The narrator's words clearly hold Madame Cheron accountable for the impropriety of her actions in leaving her niece on her own for weeks, hereby suggesting that the accusation directed at Emily is unfair. Does Radcliffe, through the narrator's verdict on Madame Cheron, fully employ More's decree that a young woman must be surveyed because she is not capable of



practicing decorum? In turn, does Radcliffe, through Emily's lack of 'correct' action in that circumstance, suggest that a woman practice internal surveillance? Emily admits to herself "appearances did, in some degree, justify her aunt's suspicions" (1966:111). More's idea of internal surveillance seems to be incorporated by Radcliffe as imperative to the conduct of young women.

However, I suggest that Radcliffe makes a distinction that extends More's idea and adds a different dimension to the issue of external surveillance. The distinction is this: people who are themselves cognizant and practiced in propriety and decorum should only practice external surveillance. Emily's aunt, as I have mentioned before, is a woman who is brash, unfeeling and callous. She cannot practice external surveillance when she herself has no internal self-regulation.

Armstrong's view of surveillance in the late eighteenth century intimates that Radcliffean heroines became empowered women because they exercised a form of self-regulation that was not dependant on the derisive words of others. In adopting their own internal surveillance, Radcliffean heroines transcend a subjection of their behaviour to others' opinions and restrictions. According to Armstrong, the evidence of female supremacy shows itself in the heroine's achievement of a desired marriage and elevated status. Armstrong relegates this female empowerment to the heroine's "mastery of the lessons of feminine conduct" (1987:91). Their empowerment transpires firstly, when the female heroines execution of self-regulation and "the surveillance of the self" occurs without the censure of others and without requiring the external surveillance of others. Secondly, as the novels unfold, the heroines face adversity and overcome it. They battle with tyrants and triumph over their schemes, and they surmount their own shortcomings. Prevailing over their own inner struggles empowers them and reveals the heroines' abilities to apply reason and to act with decorum in testing situations, hereby mastering "the lessons of female conduct" (1987:91).

For example, Emily's empowerment begins when she refuses the easy solution of marrying Valancourt in haste even when she knows she might never see him again and even though

she is under the guardianship of a wicked man, Monsieur Montoni. Later, Emily's practice of internal surveillance is marked when the Count De Villefort tells her of Valancourt succumbing to corruption in Paris. Suffering with great emotional agitation at the news, Emily faints. She recovers, only to find Valancourt hovering over her. Emily exerts "her resolution to appear recovered" and rises, leaving the garden "without noticing Valancourt" (1966: 508). Here, surveillance functions in a paradoxical manner: on the one level social norms about proper female conduct are internalized by Emily perhaps in a 'proper' manner without being told by others – on the other hand, this mode of behaviour also validates her independence as a self-authored individual, indicating a shift in authority from male powerful others to herself. Emily practices self-regulation in order to maintain control over an extremely tense situation that would surely have raised the censure of the Count if she had reacted emotionally to Valancourt at such a time. Her practice of internal surveillance in appearing calm and not acknowledging her lover resonates with an assertion of her will to not have her feelings, and in extension her self, bared to the surveillance of the patriarchal figure that the Count, her temporary guardian, represents. In remaining deliberately reproachless, he cannot regulate her. Emily also safeguards herself from the improper connection with Valancourt, preserving her reputation and her sense of propriety. Most crucially, Radcliffe's female protagonist's gain power over the male figures in the novel through their self-regulation. For example, Adeline, in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), immediately "arose to depart" when her lover, Theodore enters the glade (1968:101). Despite his attempts to delay her with questions concerning her well being, she questions him in return, "Rather, Sir, let me ask, why these questions should be necessary?" (1968:102). Theodore is forced to admit that his "conduct has deserved this reproof", reflecting favourably on her behaviour (1968:102).

Radcliffe also incorporates the concept of veiling in her novels that can be understood in terms of it being an extension of the internal surveillance practiced by women. For to veil oneself is to cover and in the act of covering, to protect oneself from the gaze of others, particularly the male gaze. Veiling is emblematic of propriety, restraint and decorum, early eighteenth century norms of female behaviour. Broadwell (1975) utilizes this idea of the veil as being symbolic of the internal surveillance performed by women but extends this idea by

interpreting the veil, i.e. the veil as a social veil. Yael Shapira (2006) attempts to lend a contemporary view to the function of the veil in Gothic novels. She argues that the veil functions as an ambivalent barrier, concealing the sexuality of the female figure while allowing her to appear virtuous in the public eye. Both Broadwell and Shapira offer interesting perspectives on the function of the veil in Radcliffe's novels.

E. P. Broadwell's discussion of 'The veil image in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*' (1975) seems a contemporary extension of More's 'surveillance of the self' (1994:864). It is apparent that Broadwell identifies the veil that Radcliffian heroines wear as being an external reflection and symbolism of the internal surveillance that these heroines ought to possess. Yet, Broadwell not only extends Schmitt's employment of the idea of surveillance but also applies diverse meaning to the significance of the veil in Radcliffe's novels, in particular *The Italian*. For example, Broadwell states that,

One form of the veil image is that of a "social veil", that is, the adoption of manners of a "social self". Also, the image appears in a religious context: to "take the veil" is to become a nun, or simply, "the veil" is the life of a nun. Most significant of all, as one of the major developed themes in the novel, the 'veil' appears as the "sublime veil" and is interfused with the notion of sensibility (1957:77).

Broadwell's reference to the 'social self' seems to resonate with Schmitt's (1994) inclination to understand Radcliffe's works as promoting the idea of monitoring of the self (there is of course a wealth of ambivalence attached to this notion of 'internal surveillance' which I have explored in part).

However, in a decidedly concentrated focus on Gothic femininity, Yael Shapira, author of 'Where the Bodies Are Hidden: Ann Radcliffe's "Delicate" Gothic' (2006) suggests a different and more contemporary slant to the function of the veil in Radcliffe's novels. Shapira suggests that,

Like the conduct manuals, the novel minimizes its references to the virtuous heroine's body by replacing it with a sartorial metonymy, in this case the veil. The significance of veils in the construction of Gothic femininity has been widely discussed: as a barrier between a concealed sexuality and a "modest" exterior, the veil is an ambivalent symbol of both erotic appeal and its chaste public denial (2006:468).

Shapira's argument for the veil functioning as a "barrier between a concealed sexuality and a "modest" exterior" is striking in that one can certainly see evidence of this in Radcliffe's novels (2006:468). *The Italian* (1797) is renowned for its concentration on veiling in various forms but the role of the veil is interesting in connection with female identity. From the very beginning of the novel, the veil is an "ambivalent symbol of both erotic appeal and chaste public denial" to use Shapira's words (2006:468). Vivaldi first sees Ellena in church. Her face "was concealed in her veil" (1968:5). He is attracted to her voice. But the irony is that her voice fascinates him to such a degree that "a most painful curiosity was excited as to her countenance" and "her voice attracted his attention to her figure" (1968:5). The function of the veil is to conceal Ellena's sexuality, yet it underscores it. It therefore symbolizes, ambivalently, both 'erotic appeal' and "chaste public denial" (2006:468). Interestingly, Vivaldi guesses at the character of Ellena and attributes "sensibility" to her character based on the "modulation of her tones" (1968:5). I suggest that Vivaldi's male gaze attempts to define a prescribed female identity from the start, one that encompasses "sensibility" (1968:5). Furthermore, it is Shapira's reference to the function of the veil in *The Italian* that seems at once to deviate from and clarifies Schmitt's 'internal surveillance'. Shapira argues, "In *The Italian*, the veil is a symbol of the body's scrupulous effacement by women themselves" (2006:468). Not only do the heroines in Radcliffe's novels practice 'internal surveillance' by donning the veil, but they also remove what is inherently female, that which can be presented as female identity. This idea is of course debatable if one examines Radcliffe's utilization of the veil in her other novels.

I extend Shapira's idea to Radcliffe's other novels for the veil that Shapira speaks of is not only a physical veil but also becomes an internal veil, which the heroines don in times where their conduct is tested or tempted with excessive emotion or feeling that would undermine their reason. For instance, in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), Julia's veil is an internal one, which she chooses to conceal her heart's desire, namely, the reciprocation of love from Hippolitus. On Hippolitus' approach, Julia experiences a "thousand sweet and mingled emotions" (1790:44). Hippolitus' words are direct and meant to answer to Julia's desire: "Suffer me...to disclose to you the sentiments which you have inspired, and to offer you the effusions of a heart filled only with love and admiration" (1993:44). Julia reacts to his words of love in a

manner that surprises the reader, for at first glance her words appear callous and removed but deeper perusal suggests her actions as prudent. Julia says, “Rise, my lord...that attitude is neither becoming you to use or me to suffer...” (1993:44).

Even though she is overwhelmed with her love for him she rebuffs his advances and practices an internal surveillance that speaks for a female identity that is not dependent on the surveillance of others like the patriarchal figure of her father or the aggressive self-serving one of her step-mother. Julia’s donning of her internal veil procures agency for her, a way of dealing with her relationship on her own terms. She avoids, with her words, the objectification of her female identity presented in Hippolitus’ confession that in turn represents a danger to her reason, propriety and sensibility. Hence, Shapira’s argument that Radcliffe’s heroines who don their veils, efface their female identities, is not sustainable. Rather, Radcliffe pushes the boundaries of conventional norms of surveillance.

Again, in *Mysteries* (1794), one sees Emily championing the need for individual self-regulation and not the surveillance from others, in this case, her aunt Madame Cheron who represents the maternal figure in this scene. This scene is quite early in the novel but I insert it here to convey the pertinent argument made that self-respect would command the respect from others and hence, one would not require external surveillance if one was able to monitor the self. Madame Cheron accuses Emily of practicing imprudence in connection with Valancourt’s intention. Emily attempts to assure her aunt that she would not do anything untoward. Her aunt replies, “there is no knowing how young women will act. It is difficult to place any confidence in them, for they have seldom sense enough to wish for the respect of the world” (1966:126). Emily’s reply speaks for an individual self that is not defined by the collective opinion on what constitutes proper female conduct. Her words, “I am anxious for my own respect. If I deserved my own esteem that of the world would follow of course” (1966:126) is quintessential of a female self asserting its individuality. Emily’s words also speak for a female identity that demands recognition in its assertion of a modern worldview that privileges self-regulation.

The idea of self- control and self-monitoring clearly lends the new female power. But we are also aware of the paradoxical nature of her empowerment: in practicing internal surveillance, the Gothic heroine adheres to the conduct book injunction of others while she simultaneously assumes control over her self. In attaining self-governance, she rejects the power of others to completely encode her behaviour. Radcliffe's heroines fight for self-definition in social spaces that demand conformity. They deny, in part, the regulatory force of conduct books and maternal figures aimed at producing conventional subjectivities.

## **2. Proper management: sensibility and the triumph of reason**

Sensibility was a distinctly feminine field of knowledge, which although available to both men and women, was particularly associated with the behaviour and experience of women and often apostrophized as a feminine figure (Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility -- Race, Gender in the Sentimental Novel* (1996:25)).

We have seen in the previous section that surveillance was deemed necessary to restrain the inclination of young women for excessive feeling and flighty imaginations: surveillance was then a practice primarily associated with the female figure. As Ellis suggests, the concept of sensibility mirrored surveillance in the eighteenth century because it to was "often apostrophized as a feminine figure" (1996:25). But the irony was that sensibility was a concept at first generated by moral philosophers and historians of the early eighteenth century concerning male behaviour, and was intertwined in meaning with the word sentiment. Although this thesis cannot provide an in-depth survey into the imprecise and at times complicated history of the ideas surrounding sentiment and sensibility, it will briefly review the earlier understanding of these words. It is important to note that 'sentiment' and 'sensibility' shifted from being chiefly a male preserve to being a female one.

Ellis argues that this 'shift' occurred when the novel began to participate in "a wide-ranging transformation of society" (1996:8). Radcliffe's novels only incorporate the concept of sensibility in her fashioning of a female identity, and her male characters are largely bereft of inner feeling. Critics such as Nelson C. Smith (1973) have suggested that the Gothic novel "was a perfect vehicle by which to show the extreme effects of sensibility" (1973:577). In other words, Radcliffe presents a female form of identity that incorporates sensibility. But

this is a sensibility ultimately framed by an Enlightenment reason, and not sensibility in a hyperbolic form. I will give greater attention to this important notion later in this section. I will also look at revisionist perspectives, such as proposed by Mary Jacobus (1986) and the later work of Ellis (2000) that discuss Radcliffe's work in this light. Jacobus critiques sensibility as a patriarchal creation to imprison women.

Ellis provides valuable insight into the history of the words, 'sentiment' and 'sensibility' and the following section will follow his argument. These concepts were at first associated with the male gender in their meditation on reason and morality, inducing a higher level of feeling for those men who possessed it. Reason and morality, two pertinent eighteenth century concepts, were most notably considered a male preserve. Sentiment was defined as being "a refinement of moral feeling, which animates us in performing the dictates of Reason, and introduces many graces and decorum to the great duties of Morality" (cited by Ellis, 1996:5). Similarly, sensibility was described as "a lively and delicate feeling, a quick sense of the right and wrong, in all actions, and other objects considered in every view of morality and taste" (cited by Ellis, 1996:5). According to an (anonymous) essayist, sensibility added

greatly to the benevolence of mankind, by diffusing an universal benevolence. It teaches men to feel for others as for themselves...It excites a pleasing sensation in our own breast which...may be placed among the highest gratification of sense" (*The Universal Magazine* (1778) cited by Ellis, 1996:5-6).

Ellis observes that one such novelist, Henry Mackenzie, who wrote *The Man of Feeling* (1769), was determined to fashion the hero of his novel as a "man of sensibility where his feelings might be seen in their effects, and his sentiments occasionally delivered without the stiffness of regular deduction" (1996:16). Later, Romantic poets, like Wordsworth, championed sensibility through their poetry, proclaiming that without it, "feelings are coarse and life brutish" (1996:7). Correspondingly, Mr. B, in Richardson's great sentimental novel, *Pamela*, becomes a man deserving of the reader's approval, once he discovers his feelings and displays a moral behaviour.



If we look at the titles of a range of books published in the mid-eighteenth century, ranging from Laurence Sterne's celebrated 1768 novel, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* to Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), sensibility was mostly viewed as a male ideal. It would be difficult to show when it shifted to become a concept that was almost entirely associated with femaleness. This has not been my aim here. Ellis proposes that "The central problem is that the history of ideas account of sensibility is blind to gender: it does not adequately account for the significant and specific transformation of gender inherent in the sentimental novel" (1996:23). It seems that around the late eighteenth century, women writers began to associate the concept of sensibility as being the cause of both a woman's downfall and her source of pleasure. Ellis cites a correspondent to *The Lady's Magazine* who wrote, "Sensibility is the cause of either the greatest happiness or misery attending the female sex" (1996:23). Ellis notes that this account relays how sensibility was "not only especially significant for women, it was in some sense a feminine attribute" (1996:23).

I suggest that just as sensibility was established as a male preserve through the writings and poetry generated by men, so did it become, through the writings of women, connected with femininity. Hannah More, a conduct book writer, argued that sensibility was "one of the "proper excellencies" of women," because "in all that captivates by imagery or warms by just and affecting sentiment, women are excellent" (cited by Ellis, 1996:24). It seems that female writers were beginning to claim, towards the end of the eighteenth century, a male view for a female audience and for a female gender. Women, then, were also capable of attaining a higher level of feeling through their interaction with the world they inhabited. They were also capable of connection.

These kinds of ideas, generated through the writings of women, seemed to bring women from the peripheries and their inferior places in society, into positions where the expression of elevated feeling allowed them to become socially constituted subjects. But More, like many other female writers of the late eighteenth century, cautioned against "affected sensibility" that would overwhelm the ability to reason and render the female foolish and not in control of her self (cited by Ellis, 1996:24). Radcliffe, as it is clear in her novels, espoused this view

as well. I suggest that underlying this cautionary stance was the knowledge of the constant male threat of derision that would suggest that females were incapable of employing reason. Radcliffe makes this evident in her novels through the derogatory opinions of female weakness expressed by male antagonists.

James Watt analyzes *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) looking at narratorial warnings against a specific way of being female. This is evident concerning the issues of the imagination, and its excess, and the issue of sensibility, and its excess. Watt suggests that, “Radcliffe’s works are rhetorically governed by the need to curb excesses of imagination and sentiment” (1999:106). In other words, Radcliffe’s heroines appear charged with the proper management of sensibility and the imagination. I extend Watt’s argument concerning sensibility and the imagination by suggesting, that although Radcliffe does guard her heroines against excess in both the imagination and sensibility, she also wrestles these terms away from male critique that portrayed women as been particularly susceptible to excess, rendering them weak, foolish and stereotypical. Yet, to possess sensibility also means possessing the potential to become so overwhelmed with powerful feelings, that reason and moral judgment is clouded, negating in turn that “inner surveillance” that Canon Schmitt argues for as being the key marker of femaleness in Radcliffe’s novels (1994:864). Radcliffe appears to guard her heroines against this excess, and when they do appear to be in danger of excessive affect, Radcliffe attributes this weakness to the unfavourable circumstances the heroines are in, like the death of a parent.

It should also be highlighted that E. P. Broadwell (1975) explores the concept of sensibility as an avenue connected to the subject of veiling. Broadwell postulates that Radcliffe focuses on the importance of a balance between “the feelings and the rational mind” and that Radcliffe’s heroes and heroines “are all characters whose actions are guided by their sensibility, yet they never lose sight of the rational” (1975:82). Although I agree with Broadwell’s idea that Radcliffe’s characters exercise sensibility balanced with reason, I disagree with her assertion that Radcliffe’s heroines “never lose sight of the rational” (1975:82). This is erroneous; for it is in the texts’ Gothic moments that Radcliffean heroines

are shown to be temporarily susceptible to spectral figures, uncanny noises, ghost stories, in short, the supernatural. In this way it is precisely the Gothicism of the novels that marks the interplay between sensibility and reason.

It is this oscillation between excessive sensibility and reason that has made Radcliffe's heroines and her novels open to criticism. For instance, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) Emily is shown to have been "rendered at times sensible to the 'thick-coming fancies' of a mind greatly enervated" so that she became predisposed to the "reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination, which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness" (1966:102). It appears that Emily's heightened sense of grief causes her to see "the countenance of her dead father" not once but twice and causes her to sink "almost senseless into a chair" (1966:103). However, "returning reason soon overcame the dreadful but pitiable attack of the imagination" (1966:103).

Watt (1999) and Punter (1980) explore the issue of sensibility in a manner that reflects a conflict of ideas. Watt suggests that Radcliffe's works are "outwardly concerned with the education of their heroines (and readers), and with the proper management of sensibility" (1999:106). Punter (1980) views the perception of sensibility in binary terms, attributing both a negative and a positive way of viewing Radcliffe's appropriation of sensibility. Punter suggests that the "good side of sensibility, on which Radcliffe dwells, is represented by its visionary quality ... sensibility allows and encourages this (inner life) to expand at the expense of communicative contact" (1980:75). This idea is evident in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) where Adeline, having just been rescued by La Motte from the captivity of bandits, is shown to become animated in spirits "by the fresh breeze of the morning" (1986:8). She is described, in this moment, as a person "whose mind was delicately sensible to the beauties of nature" (1986:9). It is this sensibility to the beauty of her surroundings that expands "her heart in momentary joy" and allows her mind "not lost by long oppression" to resist the calamity of her situation (1986:9). In this scene Adeline is shown to have an 'inner life' that serves to elevate her above her dire circumstances of being an orphan as well as destitute.

Yet, Punter also points to Smit's idea of 'excesses of sensibility' by stating that, "Emily, Antonia and Vivaldi are all people endowed with an undue amount of it [sensibility], and to this fact their griefs and sufferings are directly related to it" (1980:74). Punter's relation of 'too much' sensibility with "griefs and sufferings" is aptly reflected in Emily continually imagining her fellow prisoner in Udolpho to be Valancourt. When she finds that the prisoner is in fact Du Pont, she "fainted away" and later "instantly bursts into tears" (1966: 446-447). Radcliffe's novels can thus be read as educational tools for both the heroines and readers alike on the proper management of female sensibility.

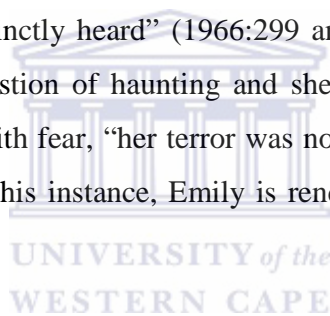
Ellis (2000) offers a broader and more current view of the issue of sensibility in Radcliffe's novels, highlighting at once its magnitude in the shaping of female identity as well as its positive and negative effects in the way Radcliffe portrays it within her novels. Looking specifically at Emily's character in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Ellis notes,

Emily's sensibility then, restricts her ability to take action in her life, leaves her defenseless, against aggressive masculine predators and renders her listless and enervated. At the same time it provides her with a powerful new emotional life, an arena of feeling action (2000:55).

Ellis' statement is persuasive to a certain extent. There are many instances within the novel where Emily's sensibility renders her incapable of defending herself against the accusatory and abrasive treatment from her aunt, Madame Montoni. Neither does she seem capable, at most times, of making a decision for herself.

Mary Jacobus (1986) gives a more radical critique, arguing that, "The prison of sensibility is created by patriarchy to contain women" (1986:33). She interprets the 'sensibility' scene with St. Aubert and Emily as an exercise in patriarchal control. Jacobus' argument goes beyond Watt's (1999) "proper management of sensibility" in suggesting that sensibility is a patriarchal mode of control. Jacobus asserts that Gothic heroines are marginal because they are made to be wary of the 'emotional susceptibility' to fanciful imaginings and elevated feeling that would cause excessive sensibility. Jacobus, like Ellis (2000), criticizes Radcliffe's heroines as being merely subservient and inactive in the face of male dominance in their inability to harness their sensibility.

But Jacobus perhaps ignores the way in which the heroine's sensibility opens up a powerful world of feeling. Instead, Jacobus argues that the Gothic heroine "wields language without power" (1986:33). Her assertion is somewhat paradoxical in meaning because 'wielding' implies power, making her claim less straightforward than she would seem to suggest. Implicit in her declaration is the fact that Radcliffe's heroines possess language, a discursive power that is not power as such. This 'power' is marked with paradox: the heroines' discursive power triumphs over physical power (embodied in aristocratic power) but we also see a failure in language (through gaps, silences and syntactic lapses) when the heroine faces the Gothic specter. For example, Emily is overcome with dread when "a strange and loud knocking" occurs at her chamber door in the middle of the night. She edges towards the door, "listening, in fearful silence, for a return of the noise" (1966:299). Standing close to the door, she at first hears "a faint breathing" on the other side of the door and then, as her terror increases, "the breathing was distinctly heard" (1966:299 and 300). Emily cannot call out: language deserts her at the suggestion of haunting and she is trapped in "fearful silence" (1966:299). She is immobilized with fear, "her terror was not soothed" and made her "worn out with anxiety" (1966:300). In this instance, Emily is rendered powerless by the spectral figure.



But one could also argue, against Jacobus, that the powerful world of feeling gives the Gothic heroine real power, at least within the ambit of the novel's fictional world. We recall Emily's triumph over Montoni when she defies his command for her estates. Montoni saying: "You speak like a heroine" typifies her "wielding language" with power because Montoni's physical threat is diminished (1966:381 and 1986:33). He is forced to leave the room in the face of Emily's adamancy: "Emily was silent, and he left the room" (1966:381). Her silence can be interpreted as a suppressed one because according to Jacobus, the heroine's sensibility offers a "radical challenge to patriarchy; a challenge which it must repress" (1986:33). But Emily's silence is ultimately a discursive power because even though she does not utter a word, Montoni is cowed. He in turn is 'silenced' both discursively and physically: he cannot counter her defiance nor intimidate her with his male superiority. Also, the villain is made to leave the room in defeat while the heroine remains standing (instead of in typical Gothic fashion, the heroine fainting or falling to the floor and begging the villain for compassion).

On other occasions, Emily, despite and because of her sensibility, defies the aggressive masculine predators like Count Morano and displays an agency that is far removed from a passive female self. To use Moers' (1976) words the "strength of sensibility is in fact what Mrs. Radcliffe's heroinism is all about" (1976:135). Emily's sensibility as well as that of the other heroines, is the discursive terrain that allows her to define herself and defy male authority. Her and her fellow heroines' lives culminate in marriages where they are valued for their ability to reason and gain self-command that is not dependant on a patriarchal tyrant.

### **3. The Sublime and the Transcendence of the Female Subject**

If Radcliffe's heroines are presented as figures that have learned to govern their sensibility, the excessive and contradictory experience of the sublime becomes a particularly crucial site of subject formation. In *Mysteries*, the sublime is either a revelatory moment of pastoral transcendence or a Gothic nightmare of abject terror. The doubled, paradoxical manifestation of the Radcliffean sublime aptly reflects the famous Burkean concept of "delightful horror" (1958: 67). Any examination of the sublime needs to look at Edmund Burke's highly influential and widely read *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), but equally important for my argument will be Immanuel Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764). I also look at Kant's main work, *Critique of Judgement* (1790) that offers, in its focus on the "analytic of the sublime" a detailed philosophy of the sublime as an Enlightenment aesthetic. Vijay Mishra's *The Gothic Sublime* (1994) provides valuable insight into the Gothic sublime, arguing against the idea that Gothic heroines achieve self-transcendence in their experience of the sublime.

The sublime is a concept that pervades late eighteenth century literature as well as art. It is a concept that evades at times being easily defined and understood. Eighteenth century literature and art associates the sublime chiefly with the experience of nature and this has hardly altered throughout the literary periods and genres that have followed. In simple terms, the sublime is the experience of overwhelming power, such as a wild storm, an erupting volcano or the experience of crossing high mountain passes. The sublime induces a kind of

sensory overload: one is awed by it. As Burke puts it, “the sublime is the strongest emotion that the mind is capable of feeling” (1958:39). But it is also an excessive power that has the potential to invoke terror at what cannot be contained, understood or explained by the human mind. In explanation of the connection between the sublime and terror, Burke states that, “whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror be endued with greatness of dimensions or not” (1958:57). For Burke, “terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime” (1958:57 & 58). Burke’s perspective of the sublime is decidedly Gothic in its concentration on that which is dark, terrible and obscure.

Everyone will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night aids to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings. The policy has been the same in religion. Almost all the heathen temples were dark (1958:59).

Burke’s identification of the sublime with darkness and obscurity are relevant to this thesis. Obscure objects (Burke’s example are darkness, night, gloomy forests) threaten ones self-control like specters, haunted rooms and ghostly noises. Correspondingly, Kant says: “Night is sublime” (1973:47). Radcliffe shows that her heroines experience heightened feelings and awe when they encounter ghosts and haunted castles, dark and murky forests, dank, deserted closed-off rooms believed to hold some terrible secret. It is precisely in these moments of encountering the overwhelmingly terrible, that they become themselves, in other words, emerge with a more powerful sense of self. The extreme Gothic experiences that Radcliffe lets her heroine Emily undergo in the Castle of Udolpho are already prepared for in the pastoral sections of the novel. While Emily is shown early on to derive pleasure from rambling “among the scenes of nature” (1966:6), her true delight is not for “soft and glowing landscapes” but for

the wild wood-walks that skirted the mountain; and still more the mountain’s stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart (1966:6).

In this particular scene, Radcliffe shows Emily to delight in that, which contains the element of obscurity but later exposes her heroine to the obscure and its terrors that are truly transformative.



As we shall see as this section unfolds, Radcliffe appears to oscillate between Kantian and Burkean ideas of the sublime in ways that produce ambivalence within her novels. It is an ambivalence that demands a fluid reading of her incorporation of the sublime in her texts. The problem posed by the sublime (and its Gothic variant) is how terror and awe can at the same time be uplifting and pleasurable. This paradox, encapsulated in Burke's famous formulation, "delightful horror" poses the question how life-threatening experiences can at the same time become productive and generative of a new, powerful form of subjectivity.

Burke argues that terror can become pleasurable, if safely viewed from a distance; much like the reader is distanced from the text, vicariously delighting in the heroine's trials and tribulations. Similarly, Kant associates the sublime with enjoyment: "the description of a raging storm...arouse enjoyment but with horror" (1973:47). The pleasure of the sublime is thus dependent on a literal and metaphorical distance, especially when he links this idea of distance with the idea of self-preservation. As Burke puts it: "When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distance...they are delight as we every day experience", hence, the self is preserved because the threat of danger is not immediate (1958:40). Burke also links the idea of horror with the need for self-preservation, stating, "passions which concern self-preservation, turn mostly on pain and danger" (1958:38). Therefore the ideas of death, pain and sickness, which threaten our self-preservation elicit horror in our minds. For Radcliffe, terror, which is "reliant upon obscurity and suggestion, expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a higher degree of life" (cited by Watt, 1999:119). Terror is thus a vital ingredient in the sublime. On the other hand, according to Radcliffe, "Horror, in its naked appeal to the gigantic, contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates the same faculties, generating a feeling of chaotic disorientation" (cited by Watt (1999:119)). The key distinction between uplifting, awe-inspiring terror and destructive horror is exemplified when Adeline, in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), travels further into the landscapes of the Savoy: "Her spirits, thus weakened, the gloomy grandeur of the scenes which had so lately awakened emotions of delightful sublimity, now awed her into terror" (1986:240). In moments of such scenes of heightened sensory play, Adeline's sense of

self is enhanced. Pure horror, on the other hand, annihilates the subject, typically leading to a bout of fainting.

Radcliffe's argument is that the terrible can be sublime, in other words the "supernatural sublime" or the "Gothic sublime" that occurs within the castle (Mishra 1994:19; Gamer 2000:70). Therefore, even though the characters in Radcliffe's novels do primarily experience the sublime when surveying pastoral landscapes, they also experience a more extreme form of the sublime within the walls of the castles, convents or ruins. Radcliffe moves the sublime from the outer spaces that Burke (and Kant's natural sublime) concentrate on, to the inner spaces of the Gothic, upsetting domestic spaces conventionally thought of as safe havens for females. It will be shown that Radcliffe needed to upset these spaces in order to have her heroines experience the transformative effects of the sublime. The evil castle and its underground caverns and passages thus form the epicenter of the Gothic narrative. Eerie noises, heightened by tortured screams in closed off parts of castles, fuelled by lights that appear and move in distant turrets and just as quickly disappear, are productive of Gothic horror that immobilize the heroine, or, as we can see in *Mysteries*, generate a productive force field of sublime terror through which Emily finally emerges triumphant.

Most theories about the sublime, including those of Burke and Kant, define the sublime in contradistinction to the beautiful. Although Kant associates the sublime and the beautiful with "finer feeling", the sublime is a pleasure framed by feelings of horror whereas the beautiful turns on pleasure alone (1973:47). As Kant puts it: "the description of a raging storm or the sight of a mountain whose snow-covered peak rises above the clouds" evokes sublime feelings with horror whereas "the sight of flower-strewn meadows, valleys with winding brooks" elicit enjoyment at what is visually pleasing (1973:47). For both Kant and Burke the idea of the sublime thus involves a repudiation of the beautiful. It is a higher pleasure, involving thrilling sensations of danger. As I will show in the following section, the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful is thus also gendered: the sublime is associated with manly outdoors adventure, whereas the beautiful is connected with the orderly and feminized domestic domain. Radcliffe's sublime, whether as a pastoral or Gothic threshold experience, claims a male aesthetic for her female subjects. In *Mysteries* (1794) St.

Aubert and Emily initially experience “the beautiful” while “enjoying their simple repast” among the “green recesses which so beautifully adorn the bosom of the mountains, made sweeter by the waters of the cool stream” (1966:3). Later, on the road to Languedoc,

Emily could not restrain her transport as she looked over the pine forests of the mountains upon the vast plains, that, enriched with woods, towns, blushing vines, and plantations of almonds, palms and olives, stretched along, till their various colours melted in distance into one harmonious hue. (1966:28).

This early moment of aesthetic pleasure owes more to the picturesque than the sublime.

Later, when crossing the Alps, the Radcliffean female sublime emerges fully formed:

The solitary grandeur of the objects that immediately surrounded her, the mountain-region towering above, the deep precipices that fell beneath, the waving blackness of the forests of pine and oak, which skirted their feet, or hung with their recesses, the headlong torrents that, dashing among their cliffs, sometimes appeared like a cloud of mist, at others like a sheet of ice – these were features which received a higher character of sublimity from the reposing Italian landscape below. Madame Montoni only shuddered as she looked down precipices near whose edge the chairmen trotted lightly and swiftly, and from which Emily too recoiled; but with her fears were mingled such various emotions of delight, such admiration, astonishment, and awe, as she had never experienced before. (1966:166)

Madame Montoni “only shuddered” as she experiences the “deep precipices” of the Alps with horror, but in Emily’s experience horror is transmuted into delight (mirroring the Burkean paradox “delightful horror”) as her “fears mingled with astonishment, and awe” (1966:166).

Ultimately, Emily’s experience of Gothic terror is moderated by her reason. Overall, as we have already seen in Radcliffe’s oeuvre as a whole, the supernatural is explained, and its excesses finally subdued by rational explanation. In its invocation of reason, Radcliffe’s Gothic is thus remarkably Kantian. Kant’s theory of the sublime, as explicated in his later work, *Critique of Judgement* (1790), focuses absolutely on the dominance of reason which brings excessive feeling under rational control. Kant stipulates that the sublime experience is one in which the mind or reason (“*Vernunft*”) is capable of detaching itself from participating in the world of understanding (“*Verstand*”). For Kant, the sublime is a purely mental or intellectual phenomenon, and its effects are primarily those of the mind:

The object lends itself to the presentation of sublimity discoverable in the mind. For the sublime, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be contained in any sensuous form, but rather concerns ideas of reason, which, although no adequate presentation of them is possible, may be excited and called into the mind by that very inadequacy itself (1952:92).

This act causes transcendence within the self, where the subject is capable of deep self-analysis and meditation. It is this that allows man to attain “intellectual mastery over the power of nature” (Mellor, 1993:87). According to Kant, reason allows man to assume control over nature. When we realize our insignificance before the grandeur and immensity of nature, we transcend it because we are not merely awed but cognitively see ourselves in relation to for example, the endless ocean. It is this moment of rationalization that is sublime hence, “any sense object in nature that is large for us” is small “when compared with ideas of reason” (1952:115).

It is therefore not the object that we see that is sublime, but our mind. To use Kant’s words, “the disposition of the soul evoked by a particular representation engaging the attention of the reflective judgment, is to be called sublime” (1952:98). Kant’s argument about the sublime as an effect of the rational mind is particularly clear in his discussion of the “mathematical sublime”, a category of feeling that he distinguishes from the natural or “dynamic sublime”. An example of the mathematical sublime is the idea of an infinite progression of numbers, which induces in the mind “a feeling of displeasure” (1952:106) owing from a realization of one’s incapacity to comprehend the magnitude of an ever-increasing series of figures stretching into infinity. This displeasure arises from a feeling of failure that is itself constituted by the incapability of the imagination to come to grips with magnitude or vastness, hence, reason temporarily deserts the mind. But it is precisely in this moment of the mind’s failure to comprehend the magnitude or infinity of the object, that the sublime arises: “Reason consequently desires comprehension in *one* intuition, and so the [joint] *presentation* of all these members of a progressively increasing series” (1952:93). The mind, as it grapples with its failure to comprehend the immensity of the mathematical series, comprehends in a single moment the fact that it cannot comprehend the object in its infinity, and thereby brings it under rational control: “the pure intellectual estimation of magnitude, can be completely comprehended under one concept, although in the mathematical

estimation of magnitude by means of concepts of number it can never be completely thought (1952:93).

Radcliffe, as I will show later, presents her heroines as cognitively engaging with the magnitude of the object before them in a way that privileges the Kantian emphasis on reason. They master the object, and are not subjected by it. Hence, a self-transcendence is achieved. Radcliffe demonstrates this Kantian precept throughout her novels when her heroines are shown to transcend the idea of nature as fear provoking and overwhelming. In short: Radcliffe's heroines experience a Kantian transformation through their application of reason. Looking at the Appenines, Ellena in *The Italian* (1797), experiences these mountain ranges in a transcendent manner that stems from her recognition of self in relation to the magnitude of the mountains. Her sublime experience here in turn reads as an elevation of her self "above the "vulgar commonplace" of say, excessive fear and irrationality (1952:111). Ellena notes how "sweetly the banks and undulating plains repose at the feet of the mountains" (1968:158). She also exclaims on the gracefulness of "the lofty palms bent over the higher cliffs" (1968:159). Clearly, Ellena's experience of the Appenines is an acknowledgment of its magnitude as the words, "higher cliffs" and "lofty palms" suggest, but she also transcends the "seeming omnipotence of nature" by inscribing her own rational view on it ((1968: 158,159) and (1952:111)). Paradoxically, Radcliffe transgresses the Kantian idea of rationality being a male preserve with Ellena's own rationalization of the sublime.

Vijay Mishra's *Gothic Sublime* (1994) is a psychoanalytic rereading of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790). In an intriguing related argument concerning the sublime as a transcendental experience, Vijay Mishra explores the sublime as "an overglutted sign, an excess / an abscess, that produces an atmosphere of toxic breathlessness" (1994:19). For Mishra, the sublime is also Kant's sublime, where the mind grapples with an idea or sight that defies representation, but in acknowledgement of this, the mind experiences this idea as sublime because it has realized, through reason, its own inadequacy and therefore transcends that which is non-presentable. This definition applies both to the sublime as an aesthetic experience as well as the sublime as the supernatural experience of ghosts and peculiar noises within the walls of the castles and deserted rooms of the chateaus. The sublime is indeed "an

overglutted sign” in the Gothic novel, with its concentration of gloomy, obscure forests, its colossal, towering mountains, its castles in which disorder and violence and haunting threatens to throttle the sensibility of the heroine and leave her gasping and grasping for control and reason. It “produces an atmosphere of toxic breathlessness” manifested in the almost constant fainting of the heroines at the beginning of the novels as they are overcome by the excess of the sublime that also reads as a poisoning of their ability to surmount and transcend it (1994:19). This “toxic breathlessness” manifests within the narrative as discursive excess that causes language breakdown, gaps and syntactic lapses. Heroines are “chilled into a silence” with “deadly ideas” that “crowd upon their imaginations” inspiring terror that scarcely allows “them to breathe” (from *A Sicilian Romance* (1993:35)).

Mishra states that it is this “toxic breathlessness” that causes the Gothic heroines to “retreat to the misplaced security of the pastoral sublime” (1994:19). This is a curious statement, as Radcliffe does show her heroines to yearn for the pastoral landscapes and domesticity when they are ‘imprisoned’ within the walls of the Gothic castle as well as when they travel through the dense, threatening forests. But this statement also becomes debatable in Radcliffe’s novels, because her heroines are shown to eventually triumph over the supernatural sublime or Gothic sublime having, to use Mishra’s words, engaged with the Gothic sublime where “reason struggles with imagination for ascendancy” (1994:20). Their return to the pastoral sublime at the novels end is therefore not a “retreat” but a triumphal re-establishment of their connection with the aesthetic sublime. Gothic heroines are enriched with their ability to reason that is also emblematic of their victory over male suppression. The restoration of the pastoral also signifies that the heroines’ have gained ownership over the literal ground.

But for Mishra, the sublime is also connected with death, as death is the “abyss” of the sublime (1994:19). Death is, according to Mishra, the void of the sublime because one is too overwhelmed by it to fully comprehend it. Death threatens our subjectivity because it cannot be fathomed or grasped, threatening in its sense of “boundlessness and indeterminacy” the classification of the subject (1994:19). According to Mishra, the Gothic sublime equals an

annihilation of the self, but does perhaps not sufficiently give credit to Radcliffe's use of gothic terrifying episodes that are productive of transformative and empowering subject effects. Mishra departs from the Kantian idea of self-transcendence because his emphasis on the abyss of the sublime reads it as a scene of figurative death of the ego or the self. The subject is therefore incapable of transcendence. Radcliffe's sublime follows more closely the Kantian idea of self-transcendence.

#### 4. Sublime and Gender

The concept of the sublime in Radcliffe's novels becomes more problematic when viewed through the lens of gender difference. Radcliffe's works transgress the eighteenth century view of the sublime in terms of the gendered underpinnings of Burke's and Kant's theories. Radcliffe asserts a female-authored sublime that affirms a transgressive female identity. As we will see, this is not without paradox: Radcliffe's assertion of a female-authored sublime is nevertheless dependant on ideas about the sublime that have been theorized by Kant and Burke, a dependence that also reads as a validation of these theories even as Radcliffe attempts to transgress them. When Burke states: "how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings" we are aware that the minds which "give credit to the popular tales of ghosts and goblins" belong to Gothic heroines (1958:59). It is therefore interesting that Radcliffe shows her heroines as at first fitting the implied stereotype in Burke's words but discounts it as well by explaining away these possible hauntings and ghosts, showing her heroines at times regretting their errant belief in the supernatural or experiencing differently that which first produced terror. In *The Italian* (1797), Ellena's experience of the sublime is an example of the latter and is rooted in the obscure. She says: "The sun is already set. I tremble at what may be the perils of this place at such an obscure hour...." (1968:266). Later, Ellena is shown to find solace after sunset in a "terrace among the rocks" because it afforded her relief "from all the ceremonial restraints of the society" and where "her very thoughts seemed more at liberty" (1968:369). Also, instead of fearing the darkness, Ellena, now appreciatively "watches the rays retiring and the fading imagery of the lower scene, till, the sun having sunk into the waves" (1986:369).



As indicated before, Burke differentiates between the beautiful and the sublime in a way that is distinctly gendered. Burke, like Kant, explores the concept of the sublime and the beautiful as distinctively separate. In Burke's view, the beautiful is "an aesthetic based in symmetry's softness, intricacy, attractiveness, fecundity and most significantly, powerlessness" (1958:113). Inferred in the words, "attractiveness" and "softness" is the idea that Burke associates the beautiful solely with the feminine in juxtaposition to the clearly masculine sublime (1958:113). The masculine sublime is most associated with power and not "powerlessness". The word "powerlessness" also implies that beauty is vulnerability, eliciting the need to protect it. It is also apparent that Burke sexualizes the beautiful by linking the idea of attractiveness to symmetry and fine detail. He assumes the idea that a masculine viewer possesses significant power: "we love what submits to us...the smoothness, the softnesses, the easy and insensible swell; the variety of surface; the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eyes slides giddily" (1958:113-115 ). One can easily conjecture, from the words "the smoothness, the softnesses" that Burke is defining the beautiful as having the same qualities as a woman's physical form. Also, "we love what submits to us..." correlates with the idea of female passivity being appealing to the male eye much like nature is beautiful because the commanding male viewer is able to tame it by his gaze (1958:113).

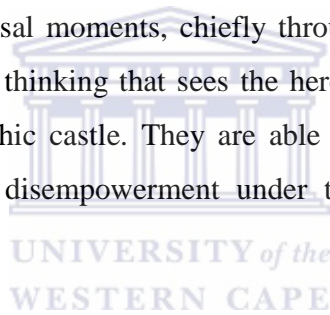
Kant's *Observations* (1764) reads as an even more marked sexualization of sublime experience. Its aphorisms significantly correlate with that of Burke's *Enquiry* (1757). Kant associates the beautiful with feminine attributes of adornment, charm and attractiveness, with feminine interest in decoration and "dressing up"; while the sublime is that which "moves" one (1973:77,47). The sublime for Kant is also associated with depth, with understanding, with reason, whereas the beautiful is merely associated with wit, with that which is at the surface, lacking import. This idea is evident in Kant's proposal that the "fair sex has just as much understanding as the male, but it is a *beautiful understanding*, whereas ours should be a *deep understanding*, an expression that signifies identity with the sublime" (1973:78) The sublime for Kant is thus a male preserve because it is only the male gender that is capable of "deep understanding" that is also in turn a distinguisher of the Enlightenment subject (1973:78). Kant's words contain the idea that a female experience of the sublime is one that only recognizes beauty of the outer kind, that which delights the eye but does not ask for any

profound cognitive connection with the sublime. Put simply, according to Kant the female sex is incapable of experiencing the sublime in a significant manner because she is a creature that privileges the senses and the stimulation of these and not reason.

This gendering of the sublime is further elaborated in Kant's dismissal of female education as "laborious learning" that does not benefit women because it "destroys the merits that are proper to her sex" (1973:78). Hence, Kant viewed women like the Marquise de Châtelet, a mathematician and Mme Dacier, a philosopher, as having trespassed the gendered boundary that distinguishes reason and understanding as constituents of a male world. He writes: "A woman who carries on fundamental controversies about mechanics, like the Marquis de Châtelet...might as well even have a beard; for perhaps that would express more obviously the mien of profundity for which she strives" (1973:78). Implicit in Kant's words is the dismissal of the idea that women possess the ability to deeply understand the world: the Marquis de Châtelet's gender is denied and replaced; she cannot be a woman and possess the "profundity for which she strives" but must have a beard (1973:78). Linked to Kant's earlier mentioned perspective concerning the sublime and the beautiful in connection with understanding, it becomes clear that even educated women cannot access the sublime experience.

As we have seen, most markedly in *Mysteries* (1794) Radcliffe's heroines are educated and their experience of the sublime reads as a double transgression of Kant's *Observations* (1764). Radcliffe shows her heroines to be capable of transcending those stereotypes affixed to the female gender: that women are only capable of "merry talkativeness" and are incapable of cognitively engaging with a deeper understanding, the world they inhabit (1973:81). Whereas Kant's later "critical" philosophy of the sublime reads as an "effort to establish a triumphant transcendental ego" that entails "detachment of this ego from the body, from the emotions, from physical nature — all realms traditionally associated with the feminine" (Mellor, 1993:88), Radcliffe writes against Kant's gendered sublime by allowing her heroines to experience transcendental experience that affirms their subjecthood.

Where Kant conceives of the sublime as a transcendental, uplifting aesthetic moment, emblematic of Enlightenment subjectivity, Mishra argues that in the Gothic there is “no hope of self-transcendence” as the subject “simply dissolves into the pleasure principle and, finally, death” (1994:38). According to Mishra, the collapse of the subject within the Gothic narrative occurs when the heroine, faced with the overwhelming Gothic spectacle, realizes that she is her own “abyss, and is faced with the horrifying image of its [her] own lack of totality” (1994:38). If one interprets Mishra’s ‘death’ as the death of the subject or identity, then it can be argued that Radcliffe’s heroines do face their own “lack of totality” (signified by their fainting which is a pseudo-death). These abyssal moments are marked by a failure of language as they become overwhelmed by the Gothic sublime (1994:38). But as we have seen, most markedly in *Sicilian* (1790), Radcliffean heroines do not continuously indulge in fainting. Radcliffe’s heroines are not principally and at all times, overwhelmed by the Gothic horror. They transcend these abyssal moments, chiefly through their application of reason. Order is restored through rational thinking that sees the heroines assume control over their perilous situations within the Gothic castle. They are able to negate an experience of the Gothic sublime as a “collective disempowerment under the sign of patriarchal power” (Mishra, 1994:40).



## 5. Landscape and Gender – the gaze and the propertied female

“the female voices inhabiting the landscape shake it” (Labbe, 1998: xxi).

As we have explored in the previous section, landscape and the sublime are indelibly linked in three fundamental ways: firstly, Radcliffe situates her heroines in landscapes to generate a female experience of the sublime. Their excessive sensibility can however also cause them to experience landscape in a way that destabilizes their sense of self. Secondly, the landscapes in Radcliffe’s fictions become more than just scenery or aesthetic experience: they become sites of political contestation as her heroines traverse these spaces conventionally reserved for men. Thirdly, their landscape experience does not occur without difficulty because they need to overcome their own weaknesses. These spaces are ‘other’ because they are not meant for female occupation, presenting dangers to their physical bodies and their imaginations. They are also ‘other’, because Radcliffean heroines, at the novels’ beginning, have to be chaperoned while travelling, making their experience of landscape male directed. It is by negotiating these spaces and their own shortcomings, that Radcliffe’s heroines inscribe these landscapes with their experience, finally making these spaces female.

Landscape in the eighteenth century was viewed as a national possession. Those who could experience the English landscape as an aesthetic experience by being landowners or could view the landscape through paintings and drawings, or poetry had a claim on England “as their national aesthetic property” as Elizabeth Helsinger, in *Landscape and Power* has put it (1994:105). Landowners were almost always the aristocratic gentlemen, and those who could view the landscape through paintings – and as property framed by the windows of the country mansions – were predominantly from the upper classes or the emergent middle-classes in the late eighteenth century. Hence, landscape in the late eighteenth century was ideologically constructed according to cultural practice and embodied in the words of Ann Bermingham, “not only an aesthetic point of view but a social and gendered one as well” (1994:84). This section draws from W.J.T. Mitchell’s *Landscape and Power* (1994), a revisionist approach to landscape where he calls for a view of a landscape not as an object to

be surveyed, but as a “process by which social and subjective identities are formed” (1994:1). In a similar vein, Jacqueline Labbe’s *Romantic Visualities* (1998) explores the ideas and meanings of the prospect view in eighteenth century society and how this contributed to landscape as a distinctly gendered construction. As we shall see (and as we have seen in part in the section on the sublime), Radcliffe’s works defy landscape as associated solely with the aristocratic class and male gender by interpolating the landscapes in her novels with female experience.

By assuming a similar stance to Helsinger, Mitchell, Bermingham and Labbe, I am able to ask a question fundamental to this section on landscape: what defines Radcliffe’s landscapes as masculine to the female bodies that traverse them? Any answer to this must recognize that landscape not only signifies the stratification of English society in terms of power, but is perhaps, to use W.J.T. Mitchell’s words, “even an agent of power” (1994:2). This idea is firstly cogent in relation to the idea of land ownership in this period. In the late eighteenth century, the aristocratic gentleman was the property owner who occupied the elevated position of surveying and traversing the land that is his. Males were in powerful social positions, especially when they viewed the landscape from a height that enlarged their scope of the land they were surveying. According to a landscape theorist, John Barrell, “this superior position also reflects a superior social position” (Barrell, cited Labbe, 1998:xi). The landscapes in Radcliffe’s novels are male-owned: the patriarchal figure of the aristocrat dominates the castle, the chateau, and the surrounding land. This ownership of land is emblematic of the superior position of the male figures in Radcliffe’s novels. Mitchell’s words are fitting: “landscape is a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity” (1994:2). The “visual appropriation” (as Labbe also argues) is gendered, facilitating the idea that landscape experience in the eighteenth century contributes to the formation of a male identity. Radcliffe, as we will see, destabilizes this conventional association between male power and the ownership of property by showing her heroines as propertied heiresses at the novels end.

Secondly, as my exploration of domestic spaces in the previous chapter revealed, outside space is conventionally the domain of men, making landscape in the eighteenth century a gendered construction. The outside also represented adventure and the promise of novelty, spaces of openness and liberty: possibilities hitherto closed to women. As Gilbert and Gubar argue: “almost all (eighteenth) and nineteenth century women were in some sense imprisoned in men’s houses” (1979:83). According to Ellen Moers (1976) it was quite impossible for the “Emily’s of early women’s fiction” to participate in the “moderately adventurous outdoor activities which, say, a Tom Jones could establish himself as a hero...for heroines, the mere walking was suspect” (1976:129-130). Of course, we remember that Jane Austen emphasizes the idea of walking as a liberatory female experience in all of her novels, associating walking with the portrayal of female liberty and abandonment. As Moers puts it: “Country walking is Jane Austen’s principle symbol for the joys of independent womanhood” (1976:130). As Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) says to her sister, “Is there a felicity in the world superior to this? Margaret, we will walk here at least two hours” (1976:22). Marianne’s words demonstrate a Radcliffean delight in the subversive act of walking, travelling and surveying, claiming these spaces as female and inscribing landscape with female experience.

Therefore Radcliffe’s fictions do not only dismiss the conventional division between domestic-female / outside-male by destabilizing domestic spaces, but also place women on the outside, letting them negotiate male domains. The landscapes are primarily coded as male because they are also inundated with *banditti*. The *banditti*, who are predominantly “the anonymous rabble of lowlife villains” pose a threat to life, especially the possible rape of the heroine (Clery, 2000: 54). In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the *banditti* take on a dual role within the text, as inhabitants of both the domestic space within the castle and the wider landscape outside its wall, extending the heroine’s imprisonment. As Emily stands by the castle window, she observes “figures so well suited to the wildness of the surrounding objects” that she sketches them as *banditti* in her drawing of the untamed landscape. Here, the *banditti* reflects the wilderness as a physical landscape that Emily finds herself in. Threatening male unruliness is synonymous with landscapes in Gothic novels. Montoni also moves his wild band of soldiers or *banditti* into the Castle of Udolpho, causing Emily’s imprisonment to assume a double augury of imminent rape and violence.

Thirdly, landscapes are also masculine because of the feudal power that inscribes these spaces. In *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), feudal male power is presented as the propertied man, where spaces are representative of male dominance and tyranny. Malcolm is the neighbouring chief to the Castle of Athlin and he is described as being, “proud, oppressive, revengeful, and still residing in all the pomp of feudal greatness within a few miles of the Castle of Athlin” (1995:1). His presence and position as feudal heir threatens the heroine’s existence and her claim to a female definition of property, marriage and love that would in turn procure a ‘new’ female identity. Along similar lines, the presence of the church as religious power also defines these landscapes as masculine. One can think of no other apt example of the exertion of religious power on the heroine’s life than in the life of Julia Mazzini in *The Sicilian Romance* (1790). Julia flees the castle of Mazzini on the eve of her arranged wedding to the Duke de Luovo. After much seeking, she and Madame de Menon (Julia’s governess) manage to obtain protection from the monastery of St Augustin, “where she would find a secure retreat; because, even if her place of refuge should be discovered, the superior authority of the church would protect her” (1993:109). But this protection does not endure, as the *Abate*, on hearing Julia’s reason for needed his sanctuary, judges her and sides with the authority of the patriarch, claiming that, “in thus concealing a child from her parent, I encourage her in disobedience, and consequently sacrifice my sense of duty, to what may justly be called a weak humanity” (1993:127). Later, he offers her protection only if she renounces her life as she knows it and becomes a nun.

In order to achieve an overview of the subject at hand, I turn to Jacqueline Labbe’s *Romantic Visualities -- Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (1998) that provides insight into how landscape was perceived in the later eighteenth century, in particular Romantic writers and poets. Focusing on what she calls the “prospect view”, Labbe’s theory incorporates landscape as both an aesthetic as well as a political domain that parallels Mitchell’s views on landscape (1998: xi). I will also look at Elizabeth A. Bohls’ analysis of landscape in *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1716-1818* (1995) that compliments Labbe’s argument and reinforces the idea that landscape was connected with gendered inequality in eighteenth century society. Most specifically, landscape as portrayed in Radcliffe’s novels is not merely physical scenery or background to action, but is also, a social and political



landscape that Radcliffe navigates in terms of challenging and rewriting these male spaces. I suggest that, in placing females within these landscapes and allowing them to master these spaces both practically and aesthetically, Radcliffe transgresses gender boundaries by generating a female experience of landscape. I argue that Radcliffe wrote against the tradition of the Romantic landscape and against the “prospect view” (1998: xi). Radcliffe, most markedly in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and *The Italian* (1797) pits dungeons, caves, cellars and ruins (low underground spaces) against the Romantic prospect view because, as I have mentioned elsewhere, these spaces are female: they are outside the system of patriarchal surveillance. Also, it is these underground spaces that become the conduits for the female heroines’ liberation as they escape from their male pursuers. In *Sicilian*, Julia escapes from the imprisonment of both her father and the Abate by passing through the underground caves of “wild and lofty mountains” on her way to freedom (1993:151).

Labbe examines the way the “prospect view” was fundamental to the Romantic perception of landscape. The prospect view can be understood as follows: firstly, it is the elevated view of landscape that is unrestrained and unconfined by walls or hedged in by mountains on every side. According to eighteenth century English essayist, Joseph Addison, the ‘prospect view’ was “wide and undetermined”, where the mind of man was not “pent up in a narrow Compass, and shortened on every side by the Neighbourhood of Walls or Mountains” (cited by Labbe, 1998:ix). It is a view that signifies liberty. Young women, occupying houses as “either a prison or an asylum” had a controlled view of the landscape “so too that confinement is deemed necessary to keep her under control and convince her of her need of confinement” (Hoeveler, 1998:19; Labbe, 1998:ix). Even if they walked outside, their experience was a controlled one because they were under the surveillance of others. Labbe affirms that in the later eighteenth century it was believed that a man “should resent such confinement, but the body, and vision, of a woman should welcome it as her natural environment” (1998:ix).

Imbedded in Labbe’s argument is the idea that vision is power, according one, through ones gaze, power over that which one sees. Labbe writes:

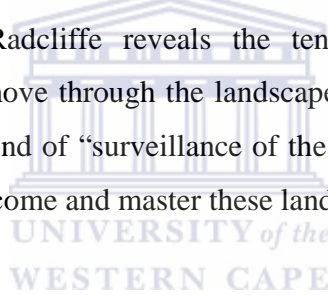
visuality – the way one looks – is a power ineluctably linked both to the *physical* body whose eyes broadly survey, or minutely detail, the surrounding prospect, and to the *social* body, and the representations thereof, that provide the individual gendered body with its distinctions and privileges (1998: xxi and xxii).

Strikingly, Radcliffe claims privilege and power for the female body in both a physical and social sense. Radcliffe's novels also contest both the Romantic ideal of landscape as well as the social ideology attached to the idea of landscape. I suggest that by placing her heroines in landscapes, Radcliffe procures a "right to govern" for her female figures (Labbe, 1998:xi). Ultimately, Radcliffe procures the "prospect view" for her heroines. I propose that Radcliffe accomplishes this by showing that her heroines have the right to experience and master these spaces because they possess self-government: they are able to govern their feelings and emotions and therefore themselves.

For instance in *The Italian* (1797), Ellena "sent forth many an anxious look beneath the deep shade" when she, Vivaldi and Paulo descend into a wood where she thinks the Carmelites (the suspicious religious men they had met earlier on the road) could be "lurking within its gloom" to capture her and take her back to San Stefano where she had been kept prisoner (1968:157-158). The menace of capture is counterbalanced by Vivaldi's proposal for a speedy marriage. Ellena is "too sensible of the difficulties of her present situation" but nonetheless decides not to concede to marrying Vivaldi even though he was "her beloved and protector" (1968:160). Their marriage would certainly prevent her from being taken prisoner again. As they enter another wood, Ellena does not react in fear as before but instead cognitively connects with the landscape and inscribes her own experience upon it. Her words, "this cool and balmy air revives me" and "what a soothing shade prevails over the scene" reflects the transition she has made from having her perception dictated to by the traditional dark and gloomy landscape that is meant to frighten the female figure, to where she masters that same landscape (1968:161). Her decision to resume control of her situation (by deciding not to marry Vivaldi in haste) facilitates her different experience of the landscape. I argue that firstly, the "prospect view" becomes female as Ellena triumphs over a space that is outside of the domestic, a space with no walls. Radcliffe deconstructs the gendered construction of landscape and creates a female identity that has the right to experience and

survey landscape and because she practices self-government, she has the right to govern that landscape as Ellena so visibly does.

Prevalent in this idea of mastery is also the notion of movement, where Radcliffe appropriates the Gothic novel as a “device”, to use Ellen Moers’s term, where her heroines possess the freedom to move out of set and traditional spaces into spaces that they had never occupied before. Moers (1976) asserts that Radcliffe’s focus was centred on the “travelling woman: the woman who moves, who acts, who copes with vicissitude and adventure.” (1976:126). Embedded in Moers’ idea, is the idea of agency. Radcliffe attributes this to her heroines through movement that in turn signifies progression. This agency also sabotages the abyssal dangers inherent in the Gothic sublime. The Gothic is all about stasis and entrapment, yet Radcliffe’s novels balance this with movement. This progression is not one that is entirely revolutionary because Radcliffe reveals the tendency of her heroines to be sidetracked by fancy when they move through the landscape. Radcliffe tempers this danger with sensibility, prudence and a kind of “surveillance of the self” (to return to Schmitt) that show her heroines eventually overcome and master these landscapes.



An example of Radcliffe’s heroines indulging in fancy when travelling is evident when Emily imagines she “perceived the gleam of arms, the glitter of spears and helmets, and the banners floating dimly on the twilight” of Hannibal’s army as she and Madame Montoni travel over the Alps (1966:166). Emily is shown to yield to “the terrors of fancy” as she further pictures bodies falling over the cliffs of the mountain and “elephants tumbling headlong down the lower precipices” (1966:166). Later, Emily sees the Castle of Udolpho for the first time and she experiences “even more terrors than her reason could justify” at the sight of its “gloomy court” (1966:228). But Emily is also shown to regret her initial reaction to the landscape of Udolpho and her lack of reason at the time: “remembering the superstitious presentiment which had seized her, she could now smile at the impression it had made on her mind” (1966:400). The reflection signals a return to reason and is indicative of Radcliffe showing that her heroines do triumph over their weakness and gain self-command.

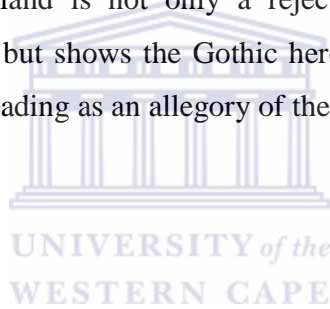
Moers (1976) also suggests that Radcliffe's landscapes provide the means by which female readers of the Gothic could "cross over into a new kind of experience...through an exotic, impossible landscape, ever changing, ever delightful to the senses" (1976: 128). Even though Moers does utilize the word 'impossible' in connection with landscape, her notion suggests that Radcliffe's novels are predominantly escapist, given less credence to the novels' transgression of eighteenth century norms.

In a similar vein Elizabeth A. Bohls, undertakes an analysis of landscape and its function in late eighteenth century novels. Bohls notes that a hierarchy existed between male and female writers of landscape, where the aesthetic focus on landscape "reinforced inequality"; meaning that male writers that included landscape in their novels would be considered "highbrow" and women writers that focused on landscape in their writings would occupy a "grey area" (1995:5 and 12). Bohls remarks that, "Women writing the language of landscape work through their exclusion from the political, social, and cultural privileges of the gentleman" (1995:18). But Bohls also looks at landscape gardens and argues that Radcliffe "was immersed in aesthetic theory and was extraordinarily sensitive to its ideological dimension" (1995:89). Similar to Labbe (1998) and Bermingham (1994), Bohls argues that the "aesthetics of land" in eighteenth century ideology was "inflected by gender as well" (1998:85). Bohls notes that the picturesque landscape garden reflected a powerful return to Nature but this was a return that reflected a gendered power.

The male surveyor of a landscape garden was the "masculine aesthetic subject" and the female was "a passive feminine object, the "Goddess" Nature" (1995:85). According to Bohls, Radcliffe incorporates this idea into her novels, as can be seen in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). The Marquis takes Adeline prisoner. She attempts to flee and jumps through the window of his chateau into the garden below that "resembles more an English pleasure ground, than a series of French parterres" (1986:164). She wanders the grounds first with "hope playing around her heart" and then, as time passes without her been able to exit from the garden; she walks "with the footsteps of despair" (1986:164 and 165). Even when she appears to find an opening that promises escape, the path leads her back to the Marquis, who

is “flushed with drinking” (1986:165). Adeline is “fixed to the spot by terror” (1986:165). Bohls sees Adeline’s negation of liberty as exemplary of the “English landscape garden that traps her more effectively” than the Marquis does and reinforces the powerful position of the patriarch with the denial of female liberation (1995:89).

Agency and reason however ultimately inform the female experience of landscape in Radcliffe’s fictions. It is through their traversal of these ‘other’ spaces that they overcome their own propensity for exaggerated emotions and powerlessness. Far from appearing colourless and diminished by tempering their emotions with reason, Radcliffean heroines exemplify the idea of individual power and independence. It is this negotiation of alien landscapes that sees them ‘ready’ to be heiresses at the novels’ end, having mastered themselves. Their ownership of land is not only a rejection of the eighteenth century gendered ideal of land ownership but shows the Gothic heroine to be in command of both domestic spaces and the outside, reading as an allegory of their self-mastery.



## Chapter 4

# Through the Gothic Lens: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

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Radcliffe found her true voice in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; she found the female gothic when she freed herself from the conventions of the sentimental novel and listened to the self-haunting and haunted cries of the gothic. She heard Emily. (Hoeveler, 1998:86)

### 1. Inside *Mysteries*: Terror and Transgression

In its time, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) was hailed as one of the most popular works of European literature. Ann Radcliffe was paid £1,000 for it, an amount that was considered “so unusually large a sum for a work of imagination” that one aristocrat wagered £10 that it was not true (Norton, 1999:95). Radcliffe’s fourth Gothic novel is a book of extraordinary proportions. Its four volumes are filled with rich landscape description, family drama interspersed with poetry and scenes of dark horror. It is no coincidence that the novel was adapted for the stage three times by 1808, and that two of these musical adaptations were named “operas” (Hoeveler, 1998:85). It is also a novel that is, typically for the Gothic genre, set in a Gothic castle with secrets that hint at a prior terrible domestic crime. The plot features gloomy forests, forbidden lust, a persecuted heroine, tormented love, seething violence and the ubiquitous villainous count. Yet despite its canonical status, some readers will only know Radcliffe’s novel as that “delightfully ‘horrid’ book” urged upon Catherine Morland, the naive heroine of Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1817), by her friend Isabella Thorpe (1976:868).

Austen points in *Northanger Abbey* to the Gothic as Catherine’s self-conscious conception. She is shown to self-consciously appropriate the Gothic elements of *Mysteries* and begins to view her world as a fantastic Gothic novel – seeing mystery in every circumstance. In one exemplary scene, Catherine tremulously approaches the cupboard in her room at Northanger Abbey, expecting to find manuscripts hidden behind its secret compartment that would

disclose a horrible family secret. Instead, Austen creates an anti-climax that mocks Gothic convention when she only finds an inventory list left behind by a servant. Also, on another occasion, Catherine, like Emily in *Mysteries*, glimpses rooms that have been closed off from the rest of the Abbey. After having been told by Eleanor Tilney that these rooms belonged to her dead mother, Catherine imagines that they would yield gruesome evidence that her husband, the formidable General Tilney, had murdered Eleanor's mother. On exploring it on her own, she finds an ordinary-looking room devoid of a bloody knife or a funereal veil spread across the bed. Her excessive imagination and preoccupation with life as a Gothic novel sees her mortified by her love interest, Henry Tilney, who guesses what she had been thinking about his father and their family history. It is through Henry Tilney's rational outlook that Catherine Morland is finally made to recollect her common sense and realization that life is not a Gothic novel.

But Radcliffe's novel is far more than just a "delightfully horrid book" satirized by Austen. It is a novel that at times does not appear to be wholly Gothic, set in a pastoral environment unlike the earlier *A Sicilian Romance* where the Gothic castle dominates the narrative framework from the beginning. *Mysteries* reads at first as a romance novel. In the first hundred pages, the heroine exists in a tranquil world of happiness and beauty, until Radcliffe inserts the first mystery into the novel. Terry Castle confirms this notion when she states that, "the novel seems hypnotized by the possibility of not becoming a gothic novel – of remaining instead in a world of beautiful, unfolding description" (1996:ix). Large parts of the novel, especially the first two hundred pages, are devoted to the movements of the characters as they journey through foreign landscapes, change homes, form new relationships in almost surreal settings. The heroine only enters the repertoire Gothic castle, Udolpho, two-thirds into the novel. What is Gothic about *Mysteries* is striking in distinction from what we have come to expect from a typical Gothic novel, as exemplified by Radcliffe's earlier fictions as well as Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1785) and Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline: The Orphan of the Castle* (1788).

My argument will be that Radcliffe utilizes the Gothic genre to envision a female identity liberated from a restrictive patriarchal ideology. This liberation is accomplished through the



heroine surmounting her own inner weaknesses as well as eventually triumphing over the tyranny of both the aristocratic male and female antagonists. But before her independence can be achieved, she must face the turmoil of her mind and the threats to her body in the form of multiple terrors. This is an ordeal that she must go through independently, and therefore she must be separated from the man she loves to be relentlessly pursued by lust-ridden aristocrats. Once in the Gothic castle, she becomes the persecuted body, the object to be tortured by the villain's despotism and haunted by the strange and unearthly secrets of the castle. She becomes a prisoner to male desire that is not solely erotic but rooted in the lust for property. She also becomes a prisoner to her own fears and shortcomings, wrestling with these inner frailties as she attempts to achieve self-command through the exercise of reason. As we shall see, the heroine's passage from an immobilization in the face of acute Gothic terror towards a rational Enlightenment self is not without its paradoxes or ambivalences, making the idea of woman at the novel's end one that is neither conventional nor liberated.

Radcliffe's plot is daunting in its complexity and in the way new and unexpected characters and events emerge in the narrative. The plot becomes particularly convoluted towards the end: an entanglement of the supernatural and its explanations that seems aimed at restoring an un-Gothic environment within the novel. Characters merge into each other as Sister Agnes is revealed to be Signora Laurentini, and the miniature in Emily's possession is St. Aubert's sister whom Laurentini poisoned. Once Montoni dies, the novel's Gothic elements seem to fizzle out. His off-stage death thus reads as a deflation of patriarchal power (his death is not given much scope as only a few lines are devoted to it). On the other hand, in not dramatizing the villain's death, the narrative is robbed of a climax and Emily's triumph over the evil aristocrat seems muted. Emily's move to Count De Villefort's chateau and the added mystery of its closed-off rooms seems an attempt to prolong the Gothic plot and themes long after it properly ended with Montoni's death and Emily's escape from Udolpho.

The narrative does in part redeem itself with Ludovico's chilling escapade in the chamber where the chateau's previous mistress died. The Count De Villefort reads as a possible Gothic villain when he dissuades Emily from resuming her relationship with Valancourt and endeavours to force an attachment between Emily and his close friend, Du Pont. But of

course De Villefort relents, becoming the compassionate patriarch, a St. Aubert, at the novel's end. In the novel's last hundred pages, Valancourt is shown to be Montoni's alter ego. Like Montoni, he gambles and is also overcome by the temptations and vice that the city embodies. His domestication at the novel's end (that begins with Emily's acceptance of him as her husband) symbolizes the reformation of the figure of the selfish and unruly male aristocrat, as though the last vestiges of aristocratic 'evil' die out in Valancourt in much the same way as Mr. Rochester becomes "ritualistically tamed and shorn of his aristocratic lust and pride" at the end of *Jane Eyre* (1847) (Hoeveler, 1998:203). As Armstrong puts it, "Rochester loses his aristocratic bearing to assume a role within a purely emotional network of relationships overseen by a woman" (1987:4). Valancourt becomes the "modern man of fine feeling", the ideal domesticated man (Ellis, 2000:62).

On a meta-narrative level *Mysteries'* complicated and overwrought plot can be read as representing Gothic chaos and excess. The plot becomes less fanciful and reverts to its earlier romance form when the mysteries have been explained and the heroine has gained her property and independence. It has served its purpose, which is to immerse and "lure readers into a world of heightened aesthetic experience and keep them there" (Clery, 2000:74). It cannot be ignored that Radcliffe attempted to extend the relatively new novel form with poetry, an attempt not to be found in Richardson, Fielding or Defoe. But one is also reminded that parts of *Mysteries* integrate realistic facets along similar lines as Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747) – particularly concerning the contested economic relationship between Emily and the Montonis. Emily is abused and threatened by the Montonis for refusing to marry Count Morano in their attempt to 'sell' her to the highest bidder because of their monetary greed, much like Clarissa is tormented by her parents, the Harlowes for rejecting a union with a rich yet repulsive suitor. Castle states: "One of Radcliffe's darkest and most Richardsonian insights is that kinship does not guarantee loving feeling: the same family may breed both saints and monsters" (1995:xviii). This is most pertinent in Madame Montoni, who is St. Aubert's sister but (apart from her husband) is Emily's cruel tormentor for most of the narrative.

But *Mysteries* is Radcliffe's primary artistic achievement because apart from the clumsy

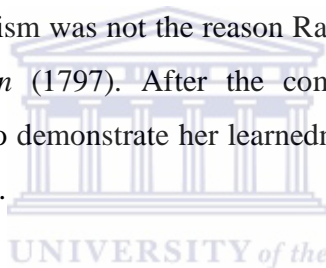
device of the ‘explained supernatural’ and the erratic unfolding of its plot, there is too much that is interesting in its narrative to dismiss it as a flawed fictional fantasy. Radcliffe aims at granting the reader “imaginative retrospection” appealingly facilitated by the novel’s phantasmagorical landscape scenes and portentous ‘mysteries’ that cause the reader to be “lost in a cloud of unknowing” (Castle, 1995:xxvi and xxi). The workings of the imagination are irrepressible in *Mysteries* both to an eighteenth century reader as well as a contemporary one, awakening in the reader a far deeper connection with the narrative that surpasses mere curious response. We are made aware of a world hidden or outside from the rational one we daily occupy (J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series is a contemporary evocation of this idea) much like the readers of the eighteenth century were awakened to a world that was not over-rationalized through science and Enlightenment philosophy. This then, is Radcliffe’s success in *Mysteries*: her representations of the human mind as a “supernatural entity”, the imagination in itself a great new mystery (1966:xxvi).

## 2. The Reception of *Mysteries*

*Mysteries* was initially received with mixed reviews before it rapidly reached best-selling status and “remained on the top shelf in the canon of literature for three generations” (Norton, 1999:8). The general reception of Radcliffe’s novels was to define them as mere “sofa companions” for ladies who were particularly lovesick and prone to daydreaming (1999:8). *Mysteries* was received no differently at first. The novel’s convoluted romantic plot had reviewers and other well-established male novelists exclaim that *Mysteries* possessed a “fascination ... that those who feel in youth will likely remember in old age” (Allan Cunningham (1834) cited by Norton, 1999:8). As referred to already earlier in the introduction, Thomas De Quincey called Radcliffe “the great enchantress of this generation” after reading the novel (cited by Norton, 1999:8).

Comparison with Radcliffe’s earlier novels was inevitable and some critics like Coleridge, in *The Critical Review* argued that Radcliffe’s earlier novel, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) was far finer: “while we acknowledge the extraordinary powers of Mrs Radcliffe, some readers will be inclined to doubt whether they have been exerted in the present work with

equal effect as in *The Romance of the Forest*” (cited by Ellis, 2000:51). Apart from being criticized for its lack of quality, critics considered the numerous interludes of poetry in the novel as unnecessary and exaggerated. It seems that many saw this practice as Radcliffe trying to establish her “own creative genius” by utilizing her heroine-poet as her “alter ego” (Clery, 2000:80). Also, Radcliffe’s standard use of poetry by greats like Shakespeare and Thomson to head each chapter in *Mysteries* generated scathing criticism from the likes of William Wordsworth. Wordsworth denigrated Radcliffe’s efforts by accusing her of devaluing the works of Shakespeare and Milton: “The invaluable Shakespeare and Milton are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse” (cited by Punter, 1980:9). But despite these detractors, *Mysteries* was popularly hailed as the “classic example of the gothic genre”, and Radcliffe now had nothing to prove, especially after being paid an extravagantly high advance for it. It seems likely though that this criticism was not the reason Radcliffe toned down her poetry in the subsequent novel *The Italian* (1797). After the commercial success of *Mysteries*, Radcliffe possibly no longer had to demonstrate her learnedness and prove that she was well versed in classical literary tradition.



*Mysteries* was also criticized for its extended landscape description (sometimes an entire chapter) exacerbated by the fact that Ann Radcliffe had never visited these places herself. With the artificiality of the picturesque tableaux of valleys and wooded rocky precipices of towns like Beaujeu, the descriptions assume an even more fanciful air when Valancourt joins Emily and St. Aubert in their travels. In its entirety, the picturesqueness of the landscape description becomes over-exaggerated and formulaic. One feels almost compelled to skip over large passages of it except where the scenery appears to contribute to the unfolding love between Valancourt and Emily. With Radcliffe having never visited these places before, landscape description was then never true to the places described. Despite aiming at realist topographical description, these passages ironically accentuate the theme of fancy and imagination. One anonymous critical reviewer (thought to be Coleridge) complained that, “the nature descriptions and poetry, however good individually, pall through over-abundance” (from the *Critical Review* (late 1794) cited by Norton, 1999:104). It was only

after receiving the royalties for *Mysteries* that Radcliffe was able to explore the scenery that she had previously only imagined.

Coleridge's opinion highlighted the discrepancy between the popular masses (who like it) and elite literary reviewers (who found fault). One offended reader criticized the periodical for completely ignoring that *Mysteries* was "The most interesting novel in the English novel language" (cited by Norton, 1999:105). This objection must have had a serious import because the correspondent of the *Critical Review* responded in a way that elevated Radcliffe's reputation and exemplified her status as "the mysterious author of the sensational gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*" (Norton, 1999:1). The correspondent stated:

It could never be our intention to depreciate the genius of Mrs Radcliffe; for if our Correspondent will re-examine the introductory sentences of the Review in question, he will find such a compliment paid to the powers of her imagination as we seldom condescend to pay to any writer whatever. It does not at all destroy the merit of Udolpho to say that it is not perfect (from 'Correspondence. Mysteries of Udolpho', *Critical Review* (November 1794) cited by Norton, 1999:105).

Negative reviews of her extensive landscape description found their counter in those reviews that struggled to capture the essence of her unique style:

We think her *Mysteries of Udolpho* a model of pure English, animated by the finest inspirations of the muse of romance. Her landscapes are, indeed, sometimes gorgeous, sometimes hazy, but we would refer to her Venetian scenes for some of the most finished pictures that are to be found in any language (from *Analytical Review* (June 1794), cited by Norton, 1999:107).

But perhaps the main criticism of Radcliffe turned on her device of explaining the supernatural in all her novels most notably in *Mysteries*. Terry Castle (1995) notes that it was Sir Walter Scott, the one time ardent supporter of Radcliffe, who was the first to censure her for providing explanations for the supernatural occurrences in *Mysteries*. It appears that Scott viewed these explanations as anti-climaxes to the plot in the novel. Castle writes: "Scott, in *Lives of Eminent Novelists* (1824) chastised Radcliffe for not 'boldly avowing the use of supernatural machinery' in her greatest fiction" (1995:120). Even modern critics like Montague Summers seemed to view Radcliffe's explanations as invading the text with unnecessary rationalizations. "A stupid convention", says Montague Summers (cited by Castle, 1995:120). Castle also notes that another reviewer, attempting to preserve Radcliffe's

reputation but merely complicating matters wrote: “the poor lady’s romances would have been excluded from families, if she had not provided normal explanations of her groans, moans, voices, lights, and wandering figures” (1995:120).

Contemporary feminist critics also diverge in opinions in the matter of Radcliffe’s device of the ‘explained supernatural’. Some, like Castle, would say that Radcliffe utilized the supernatural to have her heroines overcome their tendencies for excessive sensibility. In overcoming her susceptibility to a runaway imagination, Emily, the heroine of *Mysteries* who is particularly associated with a penchant for ‘fine feeling’ cultivates a self that is able to reason and rationalize in the onslaught of ‘terror’ that the supernatural generates. Castle notes that the assertion that “Emily develops and learns to control her ‘hysteria’ in the course of her ordeal ... has reappeared in revisionist readings of the novel recently offered by feminist critics” (1995:122). Most interestingly, Castle notes that even though Radcliffe explains the sources of fear-invoking events that occur in the novel, the ending of the novel is a haunted one. Emily’s return to La Vallée reconfigures the idea of home as she and Valancourt sit under her dead father’s favourite plane tree. Emily and Valancourt think of her father and vow to imitate his munificence. Castle notes: “home itself has become uncanny, a realm of *apophrades*. To be “at home” is to be possessed by memory, to dwell with spirits of the dead” (1995:123). Castle’s idea of “home” hints at what underlines Emily’s unfolding sense of self: we question whether Emily at the novel’s end is completely free from patriarchal influence as her father still seems to haunt her. He is a paradoxical figure in the novel that causes Emily’s emergent identity to be problematically ambivalent.

Despite the criticism directed at *Mysteries*, it remains a novel that identified Radcliffe’s style as “surpassing all of her contemporaries in its fertility of invention, power of suggestion and descriptive brilliance” (Norton, 1999:107). Radcliffe’s works possess the power to transcend the critique directed at her in her time. The renewed focus on Radcliffe’s works attests to their attraction for contemporary scholars who have most recently focused upon class, gender and social relations in her Gothic fiction, as well as the implicit political direction in her novels. The latter has served to pose her novels as “democratic” texts that “only lightly disguise the



rebellion necessary for a new order free of the tyrants of the *ancien régime*” (Norton, 1999: 9).

### **3. “Sense and Sensibility” in *The Mysteries of Udolpho***

The female identity that emerges in *Mysteries* is one that oscillates between the conventional and the modern. As indicated already in the previous chapters, Radcliffe endows her heroines with reason and propriety, while showing her heroines to be defiant of other eighteenth century values like patriarchal obeisance. The novel’s heroine, Emily, at times clings to her father’s injunctions concerning proper female behavior, while at other times a female self emerges that transcends a narrow gendered ideology. As Emily struggles through exotic landscapes and has to manage conflicts with male and female villains, it becomes apparent that Radcliffe paradoxically utilized the Gothic genre to situate her heroine in an environment that would facilitate the beginning of a female identity that defied patriarchal control but also answered to it. I argue that despite seeming to capitulate to male authority, Emily does, in a struggle to overcome perceived female weaknesses, begin to act on her own injunctions that are independent from those of her father’s. Her choices and her ability to reason are exemplary of the kind of female subject espoused by Radcliffe; one that possesses agency and is self-defining.

Feminist studies have largely concentrated on the emergence of a female subjecthood in *Mysteries* that appears constituted by the patriarch, St. Aubert. He warns the heroine against the dangers of excessive sensibility as he attempts to control and shape her experiences of the world. Most studies tend to gloss over the character description of St. Aubert at the novel’s beginning. Instead, they focus on the way female behaviour is fashioned by the patriarch in the well-known ‘sensibility’ scene. I propose that it is integral to begin any chapter that examines the way the female subject is formed and informed in *Mysteries* by looking closely at the dominant patriarchal figure; at the way in which the character of St. Aubert seems to principally inform his daughter’s disposition from the outset as well as at certain times throughout the novel. This idea is made more interesting by the fact that St. Aubert’s character appears equivocal and it is this ambiguity that seems to pattern his daughter’s disposition.



The character of St. Aubert appears ambiguous because it shuttles between an authoritarian and benign presentation of the patriarchal figure. We are shown that St. Aubert is sensible to fine feeling. He enjoys reading and listening to the “music that floated on the waves” of the Garonne river near the family home (1966:1). He is also a man who loves to sit under his favourite plane-tree “in the fine evenings of summer, with his wife and children. Watching, beneath its foliage, the setting-sun, the mild splendour of its light fading from the distant landscape” (1966:4). Already, at the outset St. Aubert does not occupy the role of the traditional tyrannical figure that is expected of the paternal figure of the home, one that is disconnected from the world of feeling, such as Manfred, the villain of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) and the Marquis Mazzini, the tyrant of *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) is. Mazzini, we are told, is a man “of a voluptuous and imperious character” (1993:3).

We are also told that St. Aubert, contrary to the villains of Gothic novels, chooses to marry for love, instead of marrying a woman for the fortune that she could bring to the dwindling family coffers. Theirs is a marriage that also seems to favour equality as the following words indicate: “After the death of his father he married a very amiable woman, his equal in birth, and not his superior in fortune” (1966:2). We are also told that St. Aubert and his wife live in “conjugal felicity on their small estate in Gascony” (1966:2). The word “equal” is a provocative one here because it suggests a more modern idea of marriage and love that was still unusual in the late eighteenth century. It is also provocative because Radcliffe appears to be presenting St. Aubert and his choice of marriage as a model for the novel’s heroine to emulate. This idea seems valid, especially since the heroine does eventually marry a man who is her equal in birth, though not in fortune. Valancourt only receives a portion of his inheritance after he marries Emily:

the brother of Valancourt came to congratulate him on his marriage, and to pay his respects to Emily, with whom he was so much pleased, as well as with the prospect of rational happiness, which these nuptials offered to Valancourt, that he immediately resigned to him a part of the rich domain (1966: 671– 672).

The words “rational happiness” is a key phrase because it suggests that the modern idea of marriage turns on felicity that is not excessive but “rational” (1966:672). More importantly,

that the word “rational” accompanies the word “happiness” enforces the idea that conjugal felicity depends on persons of sense (1966:672). Austen suggests much the same idea at the end of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) where Edward and Colonel Brandon resemble each other in “good principles and good sense” and their affectionate marriages to the sisters epitomize this model of sense (1976:179). “Rational” also bolsters Emily’s rational female self and her succession into Enlightenment values predicated by Kant. Valancourt’s marriage to Emily therefore makes him a rational being. This is an astounding assertion, as Radcliffe unseats the idea that reason is a male preserve and inverts it by showing Valancourt to have access to rationality through and because of Emily.

As we can see, the opening pages of *Mysteries* indicate a different approach to the conventional patriarchal figure as an unfeeling, domineering man. But this promising beginning is not sustained for soon we are shown that St. Aubert, reverts to the role of a traditional male who seeks to shape the female mind and person according to his own requirements. He is the one who instructs her behaviour and, who “while he watched the unfolding of her infant character ... he endeavoured, with unremitting effort, to counteract those traits in her disposition, which might hereafter lead her from happiness” (1966:5). The idea of ‘watching’ is an interesting one here as it brings to mind Canon Schmitt’s (1994) idea of surveillance discussed in Chapter 3. St. Aubert’s ‘watching’ of Emily suggests behaviour in keeping with the conduct book approach which stipulates that women require external and internal surveillance. I suggest that St. Aubert surveillance of Emily is motivated by his assessment of her innate female character as deficient. To ensure her felicity, he aims to correct it, as well as to instill in Emily a “monitoring of the self” (Schmitt, 1994:856). We read further that St. Aubert notices that Emily possessed a “degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace” (1966:5). To eradicate this feminine weakness, St. Aubert

endeavoured therefore to strengthen her mind; to enure her to habits of self-command, to teach her to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool examination, upon the disappointments he threw in her way (1966:5).

It is ironic that St. Aubert is shown to champion the facets of Emily’s character that, as I argue elsewhere in Chapter 3, are the very facets regarded by Radcliffe as being essential to an independent female self. That Radcliffe utilizes the paternal authority of St. Aubert to

foster these aspects in Emily compounds the irony, because a conventional patriarch would not desire a female to cultivate the “habits of self-command” for her own happiness (1966:5). St. Aubert also inspires agency in Emily that fits more the position of the benevolent and protective father. But at the same time that Radcliffe appears to deviate from conventional gender stereotypes, she also appears to be employing the conventional by portraying St. Aubert to be the authority on his daughter’s shortcomings.

We are thus given a picture of Emily through St. Aubert’s eyes even before the novel introduces her. This male point of view portrays Emily’s character as lacking in strength and judgement. Deficient in self-control and perhaps that which comes with it, like propriety, it is her father’s role to shape her. I suggest that this is the female self-regulated by the male gaze of her father who watches her, places her under surveillance and finds her wanting. We as the reader are first made to view Emily through the male gaze. As we recall in Chapter 2, I discussed the role of the male gaze in Romantic ideology by looking at Meena Alexander’s (1989) perspective that a woman was viewed as object, treasured only for her artistic potential to elevate the fancy or imagination of a man. St Aubert’s gaze at Emily might not be for her artistic appeal, but his gaze is none-the-less conditional, seeking to shape Emily’s self according to his perspective, and therefore his approval of what constitutes a proper woman. This finds resonance, albeit a bit differently, in *The Italian* (1797) where it is also the male gaze that attempts to ideologically construct the feminine. In the opening scene, Vivaldi’s gaze at Ellena appears to fashion a female figure that is male desired. Ellena is veiled and Vivaldi cannot see her face. Yet, he forms his opinion of her by the “modulation” of her voice and “fancies” that her face must “express all the sensibility of character” that her voice implies (1968:5). Vivaldi, like St. Aubert, prescribes a female identity that is wholly dependant on male opinion and directive.

St. Aubert informs Emily by warning her against her propensity for excessive feeling. In a similar vein Radcliffe also shows St. Aubert to direct Emily’s experience of the sublime. St. Aubert’s Kantian precept is that only a cultivated rational mind can experience the sublime. This is evident when he says, “Store it [the mind] with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking...Thought and pleasure... are necessary to afford a sublime pleasure in the taste they

create for the beautiful, and the grand” (1966:6). As we recall, Kant, in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790) argues along similar lines that a mind that has been “stored in advance with a rich stock of ideas” facilitates the ability to experience the sublime because a cultivated mind is a mind that is capable of rational thought (1952:92).

The fact that St. Aubert “cultivated her understanding with the most scrupulous care” and gave her “a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature” does not escape ambivalence (1966:6). By instructing her mind, St. Aubert appears to privilege the conventional eighteenth century belief that the sublime is a male preserve. As we recall, Kant argues in *Observations* that the female mind is incapable of rational thought and reason because women do not possess the “principle of sufficient reason” (1973:89). Emily’s mind seems to be portrayed as a tabular rasa in this scene because her mind is instructed by her father and made to conform to a male view of the world. In other words, Emily’s mind has to become ‘male’ in order to appreciate higher aesthetic feeling such as the sublime because her female mind is viewed as untutored, a blank slate. But also, one can suggest that by teaching his daughter and cultivating her mind, St. Aubert appears to empower her. This seems exemplary of Radcliffe’s argument for an equal, un-gendered experience of the sublime that she presents when Valancourt and Emily are shown to equally experience sublimity in the landscapes that they travel through. On another occasion, Emily views the “cliffs of the Pyreneès” and the “shades of twilight that had stolen over the landscape” (1966:123) She thinks that Valancourt would share in her sublime experience because “before she saw Valancourt she had never met a mind and taste so accordant with her own” (1966:123). The word, “accordant” suggests that Valancourt is Emily’s equal. It also highlights their like-mindedness and that elevated aesthetic feeling is equally experienced between them.

As the rest of this chapter progresses, the suggestions made here will become more apparent in their relation to the female identity that Radcliffe fashions. St. Aubert’s role does not diminish even at his death, but at marked instances his influence and control lessen as Emily diverges from a conduct commanded by others to one that she commands. Importantly, Radcliffe’s play with ambivalence concerning the father figure has a ripple effect throughout

the novel that at times produces instability and contradiction within the text. Also, and perhaps strikingly, it must be noted that Radcliffe upsets the patriarchal home of the St. Aubert's, collapsing it through the death of both of Emily's parents and bankruptcy of the estate. As we recall in my discussion of the domestic in Chapter 2, this collapse of the patriarchal home epitomizes Radcliffe's critique of male power within the home that can be seen to persist in latent, malevolent form through Gothic effects (the Gothic is, in effect, always the displaced power of the patriarch). Even though the character of St. Aubert seems to embody enlightenment philosophy, he finally has no place in the emergence of the heroine's identity. And even though St. Aubert is not the villain that we have come to expect from the paternal figure in Radcliffe's Gothic novels, his 'villainy' lies in his almost total control that he exercises over his daughter. Radcliffe removes his patriarchal dominance, making St. Aubert still representative of the ruling ideology that marked the late eighteenth century.

St. Aubert instructed Emily's mind so that she could be inured against suspicion and dread that accompanies the unknown. Faced with the novel's first hint at mystery, Emily visits the fishing house and finds penciled lines of a sonnet written on the wainscot that seems addressed to her. The words, "and the incident was dismissed from her thoughts amid her books" attest to the idea that her mind was conditioned against suspicion (1966:8). Emily chooses not to dwell on the occurrence. Nor does she have the time to dwell on the strange occurrence because the occupation of her mind with books and study prevents this: "She had no leisure to suffer this circumstance, trifling at first, to swell into importance by frequent remembrance" (1966:7-8). There is also the suggestion here that excessive attention given to something would eventually inflate or exaggerate it, as the words "swell into importance by frequent remembrance" implies (1966:7-8). This is an interesting aspect that Radcliffe revisits later in the novel concerning Emily's ability to practice discernment and is one that I will later duly elaborate upon.

Another instance of Emily asserting self-control over an occurrence that would in Gothic convention result in the heroine fainting is when, shortly after the 'sonnet' mystery, she hears music played in the fishing-house. She listens at first and is moved by the beauty of the

music. At first undecided as to what she should do, she then decides to confront the person and advances into the fishing-house, only to find it empty. She also discovers that the person had been playing on her favourite instrument, the lute, but had shifted it from the spot where she had last left it. The sense of invasion is doubled when her eyes again meet the pencil lines on the wainscot and she “perceived herself grow faint” (1966:9). Despite this strange occurrence and the gloom of the evening that added to her “heightened apprehensions”, she endeavours to “conquer the tremor of her spirits” (1966:9). The conquering of or overcoming a situation that threatens the balanced sensibility and ultimately the selfhood of the heroine is a theme that recurs throughout the novel. Similarly, Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) can be argued to extol at the novel’s end a balance between sense and sensibility: Marianne’s character is seen to learn that an excessive sensibility courts loss of propriety and reputation, hence sense is needed to balance it. It appears that Austen replaced Radcliffe’s focus on reason as necessary to temper excessive sensibility with her own focus on sense as being necessary to her heroine’s sensibility. Radcliffe makes this point: reason and sensibility are necessary in equal measures for her heroine’s development. Analogously, the attributes of sense and sensibility in Austen’s novel do not at the close of the novel (as the title of the novel as well as the dispositions of Eleanor and Marianne suggest) juxtapose each other. In this sense, Austen’s novel departs from satirizing *Mysteries* and rather shares in its important themes of reason rather than exaggerated sensibility.

The fact that sensibility is an important theme in *Mysteries* can be seen when Emily’s mother is on her deathbed. St. Aubert is overwhelmed with grief to such a degree that he is “obliged to leave the room” on witnessing his wife’s efforts to “conceal her sorrow” (1966:19). Here, St. Aubert is shown to struggle with excessive sensibility, for even when he endeavoured to “return to the chamber with a countenance composed”; this effort only “increased his grief” (1966:19). This scene is an important one because it serves to undercut St. Aubert’s words of caution against excessive sensibility that he later delivers to Emily after the funeral of his wife, as well as when he is on his deathbed. He tells her: “All excess is vicious; even that sorrow becomes a selfish and unjust passion...Your sorrow is useless...let reason therefore restrain sorrow” (1966:20). It is important to note that it is the patriarch that warns against excess. As I have mentioned elsewhere, Radcliffe, in the character of St. Aubert partly undoes

the Gothic convention of the father as villain and as one that embodies excess that produces vice. St. Aubert's words also resound with the connection to the novel's central theme of female identity – sensibility balanced with reason. I suggest that Radcliffe critiques the patriarchal privilege to advise the ignorant female by showing him to fail in adhering to his own injunctions. This is made palpable by the fact that St. Aubert's health declines because "sorrow had seized upon his nerves" (1966:25). Also, this episode interestingly shows a male figure struggling with exaggerated sensibility, qualities that women were solely thought to be prone to. By painting St. Aubert as being susceptible to excessive feeling, Radcliffe thus indirectly critiques the idea that sensibility is gendered.

This scene also serves to highlight Emily's 'victory' over exaggerated emotion as she comes to grips with her own grief over her mother's passing. The words, "Never had Emily felt the importance of the lessons, which had taught her to restrain her sensibility, so much as in these moments, and never has she practiced them with a triumph so complete" attest to this idea (1966:19). Most significantly, Emily's "triumph" is contrasted with St. Aubert's failure. Even though it still seems like a triumph that could only have occurred because she was taught the "importance of the lessons" by her father, one recognizes that it is Emily who chooses to put these "lessons" into practice (1966:19). This, together with St. Aubert's inability to adhere to his own teaching, serves to doubly accentuate her overcoming her susceptibility for excessive emotion in this scene.

But the opening scenes of the novel not only warn against being predisposed to sensory overload, but also against being insensible to feeling. Radcliffe utilizes St. Aubert, again, to warn Emily against an "insensible" heart, that produces ill effects: "all vice, by which the deformity is not softened, or the effect consoled for, by any semblance or possibility of good" (1966:20). In other words, a heart that does not feel at all is one that is capable of callousness and evil. This is an important point in the novel because it prefaces the villainous characters in the novel, both male and female. It seems that Radcliffe makes the argument that they are villains because they lack sensibility.



This argument is evident in the characters of Madame Cheron, M. Quesnel (St. Aubert's brother-in-law) and of course, Montoni, the novel's archetypal villain. M. Quesnel, we are told, "had neither the humanity to feel, nor discernment to perceive, what is just" (1966:12). M. Quesnel's lack of finer feeling is evident when he tells St. Aubert that he planned to cut down the chestnut tree that has stood for centuries on the family estate. M. Quesnel replies, "your enthusiasm will scarcely contend that there can be either use, or beauty, in such a sapless old tree" in answer to St. Aubert's disbelief at such callousness (1966:13). It is because he lacks feeling that he dispossesses Emily of La Vallée later in the novel, even while knowing its significance in her life. He is also the one who sides with Montoni concerning the arranged marriage of Emily to Count Morano. When Emily beseeches him to convince Montoni of his error, he acts with "the air of a man, who is conscious of possessing absolute power" (1966:213). He accuses Emily of "capricious conduct" because of her ungratefulness towards Montoni's and his own 'guidance' of her life (1966:214).

Likewise, Madame Cheron's insensibility is clarified when she first sees her brother, St. Aubert, after the death of his wife. She castigates him for mourning so much that his appearance appears altered to her. Her words, "Dear Brother, I am concerned to see you so very ill; do, pray, have advice!" shocks Emily because these are the first words she greets him with without acknowledging the death of her sister-in-law (1966:23). Later, on perceiving Emily with Valancourt for the first time after the death of St. Aubert, she greets Emily with an accusation of dissimulation, saying: "so niece, how do you do? But I need not ask; your looks tell me you have already recovered your loss" (1966:109). Madame Cheron's demeanour is a removed and coldhearted one and Emily's reply fortifies this perception of her: "My looks do me injustice, then, Madame, my loss I know can never be recovered" (1966:109). Rather than commiserate, Madame Cheron disparagingly remarks that Emily has "exactly your father's disposition" and that he would have been happier had his character been different (1966:109). Taking the above into consideration, one can suggest that Radcliffe argues for not only sensibility but also for a balanced sensibility, tempered by reason. As Radcliffe shows, excess, in either direction, is a source of instability.

It is therefore an unstable disposition (that translates in the eighteenth century as madness, lack of sense or propriety) that Emily has to guard against. Perhaps the most important scene where Emily is portrayed as being prone to impropriety is the one where Valancourt visits with her, soon after her return to La Vallée, following her father's death. Critics have noted that the censure of Emily's character that Madame Cheron delivers here is warranted. Emily is unchaperoned and receives Valancourt's visit. They confess their love for each other and it is in this moment of tenderness that Madame Cheron comes upon them. Surveying them with suspicion, Madame Cheron accuses Emily of impropriety, saying: "I believed niece, that you had a greater sense of propriety, than to have received the visits of any young man in your present unfriended situation" (1966:110). Madame Cheron subjects Emily to surveillance and finds her behaviour wanting the sense of the conduct book decorum that a lady should possess. As we recall the discussion concerning surveillance in Chapter 3, Madame Cheron's words are emblematic of external surveillance and the censure that comes with it.

The above scene threatens to cast Emily as a character whose sense of decorum is destabilized by her feelings. But Radcliffe appears to develop an argument that seems directed at explaining away Emily's loss of propriety. One can say that Radcliffe attempts to redeem her heroine's character here; something that Radcliffe repeats in *Mysteries* as well as her other novels. Following her declaration of her feelings for Valancourt, Emily asks that he "excuse this weakness" because her spirits "have not yet recovered from the shock they lately received" (1966:108). The "shock" that Emily refers to is of course the loss of both her parents. Also, Radcliffe appears to lay some of the blame at Madame Cheron's feet, by implying that Emily would not have been alone at La Vallée had she arrived earlier as promised, to assume her guardianship of Emily. The words, "the impropriety of which she had herself been guilty, in exposing her niece to the possibility of conduct so erroneous" confirms this idea (1966:111). Yet despite this apparent reasoning of Emily's misconduct, it must be noted that Madame Cheron's words seem to define a female identity that encompasses self-respect and the respect of others.

Yet Radcliffe shows, in this particular representation of Emily and contrary to the genre of the conduct book, that societal law does not fashion the female self but rather that females

inherently possess the capacity for self-regulation. Emily is portrayed as “fearing the error of her own judgement, not that of Madame Cheron” and she questions the propriety of her conduct at La Vallée (1966:125). She censures herself, admitting “that she had not conducted herself with sufficient reserve...in her former conversation with him at La Vallée” (1966:125). This idea of inherent self-regulation is captured in Emily’s answer to Madame Cheron, who believes that “there is no knowing how young women will act. It is difficult to place any confidence in them, for they have seldom sense enough to wish for the respect of the world” (1966:126). To her universal condemnation against female behaviour, Emily answers: “Alas, madam! I am anxious for my own respect...if I deserved my own esteem, that of the world would follow of course” (1966:126). Emily’s words are thus emblematic of the idea of self-monitoring, discussed in Chapter 3. Emily’s anxiety for her own respect lends her power in this scene. Emily’s words replace the negative image of women with a strikingly dissimilar one.

One can say that it is through the language that Emily speaks, that a new self is constructed here. This brings to mind Robbins’ (2005) notion of what constitutes a subject, that the making of the self “takes place in language” (2005:3). This scene is illustrative of Emily recognizing her self as subject, as the words “I” and “own” suggest (1966:126). That the word “own” is repeated underpins the idea of an emerging subject that is not shaped by the surveillance of others but assumes ownership of her self. The new female that Emily begins to embody here knows she has the power to affect the way the world views her and not that the world has power to affect the way she is viewed. Her words also symbolize the new female power that Armstrong (1987) speaks of, where the practice of internal surveillance serves as an empowering tool for women.

But as already indicated in the earlier chapters, the heroine of Radcliffe’s novels faces continuous adversity in dire situations and has to overcome not only the persecutions from male tyrants and vindictive females, but also overcome her own shortcomings as her independent and assertive subjecthood materializes in the text. But I note here that even though the role of the Gothic villain is to antagonize and terrorize the heroine, one cannot ignore the fact that without the foil of the Gothic villain, the heroine, as subject would not

emerge. Emily, as I have already illustrated, finds a female tyrant in her aunt, Madame Cheron. But a significant shift in the novel occurs when Madame Cheron marries Montoni. Montoni immediately usurps this role of villain and the pair constitutes an evil alliance. His character appears as an extreme extension of Madame Cheron's creed: "I am her guardian, and I expect, in every instance, that my will is hers" (1966:138). The words, "that my will is hers" announce an effacement of Emily's identity; she is supposed to possess no will of her own (1966:138). The words also serve to alter the meaning of the word 'guardian' to jailer, which is exactly what Montoni becomes as he comes to regard Emily as his possession. Emily becomes, at least for a while, Montoni's prisoner in both the literal and figurative sense in the novel. It is against this context of confinement and her propensity for excessive feeling that Emily's self emerges.

Soon after Madame Cheron gives her blessing for Emily's marriage to Valancourt, she withdraws it. She marries Montoni in haste and because she no longer requires Valancourt's social connections, she tells Emily that she cannot marry him. She also tells Emily that she "now leaves the affair entirely to the Signor" (1966:144). Montoni immediately attempts to assert his power over Emily when he ignores her choice not to marry Count Morano and informs her that he had arranged for the ceremony to take place in a few days time. Emily asks him "by what right he exerted this unlimited authority over her?" (1966:216). He answers: "By what right! by the right of my will...you know the means; if you compel me to become your enemy—the punishment shall exceed your expectation. You may know *I* am not to be trifled with" (1966: 217). Conforming to the traditional norms of obedience to male dominance, Madame Cheron's actions seek to compel Emily to conform as well. This is evident when she tells Emily that she should "submit to those, who know how to guide you better than yourself— I am determined, that you shall be conformable" (1966:144). Madame Cheron's words are an example of the stereotype directed at young women; that they possessed no agency; others knew "how to guide them" better than they knew themselves (1966:144). By the assertion of male authority, an autonomous female self is deferred. But it is curiously not only the self of Emily that is deferred but also that of Madame Cheron. This begins a curious empathetic link between the two female characters that thread latently throughout the latter part of the novel. Radcliffe plays with the idea of there being two

victims of Montoni's tyranny but I note that she is careful to have Emily appear more sympathetic. Even when Madame Cheron dies because of her husband's neglect, Emily's own persecution soon overshadows this horrific occurrence. Madame Cheron's death, as I have argued elsewhere, reads as a critique against the aristocratic woman who embodies vice in almost all of Radcliffe's novels. Maria de Vellorno of *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) comes to mind as well as the Marchesa di Vivaldi of *The Italian* (1797). Both aristocratic women die horrible or lonely deaths: the Marchesa dies without her husband or her son knowing she is one her deathbed. Maria de Vellorno kills herself with a poignard.

It is in this continuous deferment of her selfhood that Emily struggles to assert herself. This is evident when Montoni, having tricked Emily into writing a letter to M. Quesnel wherein she appears to agree to marry Count Morano of Venice, guides her to a boat where she would be alone with her 'suitor'. We read that "Emily was not silent; she entreated Montoni to consider the impropriety of these circumstances" (1966:196). This scene connects and contrasts markedly with the one where Emily was alone with Valancourt. Even though Emily abhors the Count, it is still worth noting that Emily's conduct rejects impropriety. It is also significant that "Emily was not silent" (1966:196). These words show that she is exercising her opinion in the face of male control. I equate Emily's voice with her will because she utilizes her voice, her instrument of power, to challenge male control. Emily, like Pamela, becomes, "a creature of words" (Armstrong, 1987:6). In this instance as well, the heroine's discursive power is not merely "wielding language without power" but is her tool of power (Jacobus, 1986:33) Emily is also shown to value her own opinion when she adds "indignation to the disgust" that she already feels towards Count Morano because he demonstrates that "her opinion of him was of no consequence" (1966:197). The latter is a significant marker in Emily's developing identity especially since, shown earlier, her will was not considered to be her own, but the possession of others. Also, this passage again highlights the ambiguity of Emily's subjectivity that oscillates between the conventional and the modern. Emily, in castigating Montoni for placing her in a situation that compromises her propriety, appropriates the conventional notion of propriety as a marker of her identity. But her castigation of Montoni also expresses her defiance of the patriarch that in turn defies the conventional.

In a scene that further and strikingly demonstrates Emily's unfolding sense of self, Emily refutes both Count Morano and Montoni's claim to her person. Montoni, representative of the traditional view of marriage in this scene declares: "Here is the offer of an alliance, which would do honour to any family; yours, you will recollect, is not noble... my honour shall not be trifled with.— You shall adhere to the declaration" (1966:198). Her reply seems a mockery of Montoni's "declaration": "I never can accept the honour he [Count Morano] offers me, and now I repeat the declaration" (1966:199). Not only does Emily refute Montoni's demand for her submission but she also refuses the oppression of an arranged marriage. Her words, "I repeat the declaration" are emphatic in tone and appears to overshadow Montoni's "declaration" because she 'repeats' her own. I suggest that Emily's identity, still unfolding here, already appears to resist Montoni's, so much so that Montoni accuses Emily of caprice. Her answer is striking and memorable: "you will recollect yourself, and be sorry that you have asked it" (1966:199). Not only does the word "will" in turn demand an action from Montoni but the words, "be sorry that you have asked it" carries an implied threat as well as an injunction that Montoni's vehement behaviour alters to one of remorse (1966:199).

#### **4. Terrorized body, haunted mind: the heroine in Gothic spaces**

Every development that I have mapped so far concerning Emily's identity comes into question within the walls of Udolpho. If the tyrannical Montoni largely contributes to the unsettling of Emily's sense of self, so does the castle itself, with its Gothic accoutrements of haunting noises, mystery, horror and blood. The Gothic castle is a construction of excess. As we remember in Chapter 3, my discussion of sensibility and the Gothic novel followed Nelson C. Smith's argument that the Gothic novel "was a perfect vehicle by which to show the extreme effects of sensibility" (1973:577). Therefore it is no surprise that nowhere else in the novel is Emily's sensibility tempted with exaggeration and excess as in these scenes.

This is noticeable from the very second that Emily first sets eyes on Udolpho. Looking at the "gateway of gigantic size" and the "massy walls of the ramparts...vast, ancient and dreary",

Emily's heart sunk, and she seemed, as if she was going into her prison, the gloomy court, into which she passed, served to confirm the idea, and her imagination, ever

awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify (1966:227-228).

The word “prison” brings to mind Hoeveler’s idea that the Gothic heroine can only experience the “male-identified patriarchal home as either a prison or an asylum” (1998:19). As mentioned earlier, Emily does become Montoni’s prisoner for a while in both the literal and figurative sense. Even though she became his ‘prisoner’ when her aunt handed her over to his guardianship, her entry of the castle reinforces the idea. Udolpho is Emily’s prison because Montoni rules over it and so also appears to rule over her. In this incident we already witness instances where Emily’s reason appears to desert her and an excessive sensibility takes over. That she is racked by “even more terrors” is emblematic of her exaggerated emotion that exceeds what “reason could justify” (1966:228).

Further evidence of Emily’s unsettled identity is found where she timidly and hesitantly asks Montoni why he removed them all to Udolpho in such haste. Montoni does not answer her and “after a long pause, she recovered sufficient courage to repeat the question” (1966:230). The contrast here is striking between the Emily in Venice who defied Montoni and the subservient Emily here at Udolpho. Montoni is shown to waste no time in resuming his power over her. He says: “It does not suit me to answer enquiries” and orders her to her room with an admonishment: “adopt a more rational conduct, than that of yielding to fancies, and to a sensibility, which, is only a weakness” (1966:230). Montoni’s words that equate sensibility with weakness are indicative of the stereotype that women are weak because they possess sensibility. For him, rationality equals an absence of sensibility, a view that reinforces the stereotype. His words also seem to define the battle lines between them. The conflict between Montoni and Emily revolves around the contested terrain of sensibility. Even though Emily obeys Montoni with an “assumed composure” she is unable to “disguise her emotion” (1966: 230).

A succession of mysterious incidents occurs that serves to challenge Emily’s susceptibility to sensory overload and further erodes the stand she had made against Montoni’s tyranny. The first incident occurs when she and Annette, her servant, attempt to find their way to her room and come upon a black-veiled picture. Emily is curious but Annette warns her against lifting



the veil. Emily asks her the reason but Annette cannot give her one. I suggest that when Annette says, “I don’t know what is the reason, ma’amselle” this signals that reason becomes elusive to those who seek it within the castle (1966:233). More specifically, I suggest that her words indicate the beginning of Emily’s battle to employ reason in the face of sensory overload and heightened emotive circumstances. The second incident occurs once Emily is in her room. She discovers that another door to her apartment can only fasten from the outside. The peculiar situation of the door can be read allegorically: the door symbolizes Emily’s loss of autonomy and self-control within the castle. She cannot, by her own hand, lock it. The door also signifies the constant threat to Emily’s character. Her sensibility is threatened by the suggestion that anyone can enter her room, invade her space, whenever they desire. Even when she places a heavy chair against it, she was “still alarmed at the thought of sleeping” (1966:235).

The door also ultimately symbolizes the threat to Emily as an emerging subject within the text because the potential for invasion and any invasion itself of her person would reduce her to a mere object. She is tempted to ask Annette to sleep with her but is afraid of “betraying what would be thought childish fears” (1966:236). Here, Emily is shown to value the opinion of others where before she valued her own. Already, here Emily appears to be deserting her maxim that as long as she had self-respect, the esteem of others would follow. Also, the haunting story of Signora Laurentini, the former mistress of the castle exacerbates Emily’s already anxious mind. Annette tells her that the ghost of Signora Laurentini haunts the castle. It is rumoured that Montoni murdered her because she refused to marry him. This story causes Emily to now view Montoni “with a degree of terror, apparently justified by the fears of others” (1966:240). At this point we view Emily as being susceptible to terror and the fear invoked by it because she appears to believe in the tales Annette tells her. The words “apparently justified by the fears of others” suggest that Emily views her fears as real because they do not only exist in her mind but in the minds of others as well (1966:240). But Radcliffe undercuts this idea of collective fear and Emily being susceptible to the fear of others by showing Emily to be scornful of Annette’s stories as well. For instance, Annette anxiously asks Emily how she spent her first night in her chamber. Emily tells her that on waking, she found the ‘mysterious’ door fastened from the outside when she knew that she had left it open

during the night. Annette, pale and shaking tells Emily that her room “is haunted, and has been so these many years” (1966:247). Emily replies, “it is by a ghost then, who can draw bolts” (1966: 247). Emily’s tone is a dismissive one that seems to poke fun at Annette’s fears.

Most significantly, she also smiles at the “superstitious terror, which had seized on Annette; for; though she sometimes felt its influence herself, she could smile at it, when apparent in other persons” (1966:247). To the reader, Emily appears in a hypocritical light here especially since her first reaction was immediate terror on finding her door fastened. The words, “She felt, as if she had seen an apparition” confirm this idea (1966:242). But I suggest that Emily choosing to laugh at Annette’s “superstitious terror” reflects her choice as well to laugh at her own fears. On recognizing that Annette’s fears are ridiculous, Emily recognizes the ridiculous nature of her own. This is a crucial development because it appears as an aim to preserve her sensibility balanced with reason. This is a supposition that Radcliffe seems to utilize throughout the novel when Emily is faced with terror even though there are as many marked instances where Emily appears to believe in the horror of what she sees, as well as us the reader. As a counter to this and to seemingly protect the balanced sensibility of her heroine, Radcliffe utilizes her renowned explained supernatural.

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It seems that the fear of Montoni parallels the fear that Emily begins to feel towards the castle as an almost living thing horrific to her senses. Alone in her room, the dampness of the walls “chilled her with more than fear” (1966:234). Udolpho also allegorically represents Montoni’s character: his arrogant, aristocratic demeanour and his pompous disposition. To use Ellis’ words:

the castle is made to figure a kind of outlaw masculinity: patriarchal but illegitimate, an aberration within the proper order. Montoni’s absolute rule exercises unrestrained power over his masculine political domain (2000:57).

Emily views the “gothic magnificence of Udolpho, its proud irregularity, its lofty towers and battlements” and shudders (1966:245). On perceiving Montoni for the first time, she notices his “air of conscious superiority” and his “visage long, and rather narrow” that inspired admiration for him but an admiration “mixed with a degree of fear” (1966:122). Montoni embodies Udolpho’s “gothic magnificence” that causes Emily to admire him just as she in

part admires the “grandeur of the broad ramparts” of Udolpho (1966:245). The “proud irregularity” of Udolpho is mirrored in Montoni’s “air of conscious superiority” (1966:245 and 122). Emily reacts to both Montoni and Udolpho in the same way: with shuddering fear because both embody a “kind of outlaw masculinity” (2000:57). These parallels serve as a double terrorization of Emily’s body and mind and in this sense Udolpho becomes more than a Gothic personification of Montoni. It becomes another character in the novel, a villain that torments the heroine as a ‘living thing of horror’ in her mind.

On entering Udolpho, Emily fits the stereotype of the fainting Gothic heroine. Emily’s susceptibility for heightened emotion begins to dominate her conduct within the castle. The incident that tilts Emily into an oscillating state of fear and seeming composure is the one where her curiosity overwhelms her intent and she lifts the veil off the picture. What she sees causes her to drop “senseless on the floor” (1966:249). The word “senseless”, although referring to her physical state of fainting, also significantly alludes to Emily’s state of mind following this occurrence, one that appears more often to be devoid of sense. We read that even as she recovers her composure, just the fact that she remembers, “nearly deprives her of it a second time” (1966:249). The word “remembers” is noteworthy here because in contrast, we are reminded of Emily’s first mysterious experience in the fishing-house, where she was not affected by the sinister and strange occurrences because “she had no leisure to suffer this circumstance to swell into importance by frequent remembrance” (1966:8). Examining the contrast between these two scenes, it seems that Radcliffe is inadvertently providing reasons for her heroine’s susceptibility to horror. Emily is without her parents in a foreign space that encourages gloomy fantasies just by looking at its edifice. This space is presided over by an oppressor who does not care for the well being of Emily or her aunt. Added to this, we are told that Emily’s books, “her sweet delight in happier days” no longer provides that same comfort: “when the genius, the taste, the enthusiasm of the sublimest writers were felt no longer” (1966:248).

But despite the underlying explanations of Emily’s conduct, we are still invited to look critically at her character. We are told that “Emily’s mind had not sufficiently recovered from its shock” but we are also aware that it is her mind that she chooses to make ‘Gothic’ as

“gloomy and fantastic images” come into it (1966:252 and 253). Even though we are made aware of Emily’s excessive imagination, we do recognize that Emily’s “aptitude for fancy”, to use Clery’s (2000) words, is also productive. As I argued in Chapter 2, the Gothic heroine becomes in the text, a “co-author of her own story” (Clery, 2000:51). When Emily’s imagination is susceptible to “fantastic images”, this refutes the Romantic ideology of the imagination being a male preserve (1966:253). Emily, in her moments of excessive sensibility that produce a fanciful imagination, embodies Clery’s statement that “Radcliffe’s heroines are women of imagination” (2000:51). It is precisely the Gothic castle and foreign landscapes that allows for the heroine’s imagination to become a marker of a female self that is not prescribed by a Romantic ideology in a sense that her imagination has constituted it as an excessive space. Specifically, Gothic horror is discursively produced through the imaginative force field of the heroine:

the solitude and obscurity of her chamber again affected her spirits, the more, because of its nearness to the scene of horror, that she had witnessed in the morning. Gloomy and fantastic images came to her mind (1966:253).

The “scene of horror” that Emily saw was the veiled picture which she imagines to be a decomposed body. As we remember, Emily thinks that the “picture” is Signora Laurentini’s body and on discovering later that Laurentini is the nun, Sister Agnes, she imagines that Laurentini murdered her rival and it is *her* body behind the black veil. It is clear that within *Udolpho*, Emily’s imagination produces “gloomy and fantastic images”, haunted by the “obscurity” of the castle (1966:253). In this sense, the Gothic castle is her castle.

Radcliffe appears aware of the paradox and tension within the novel between the heroine’s imagination appearing to produce Gothic horror and the fact that her desolate situation (with Gothic agitators like the villain and the gloomy castle) is horrific. This paradox and tension is evident in: “the events and her present situation– in a foreign land – in a remote castle – surrounded by violence and vice – seemed more like the visions of a distempered imagination, than the circumstances of truth” (1966:329). Conversely, Ellis states:

it must be said that Emily’s comprehension of *Udolpho*’s terror is more imaginary than real. *Udolpho*’s ruined state and general gloom provide an atmosphere of crepuscular terror to which Emily’s sensibility is finely attuned, further provoked by her perception of threats to her innocence and chastity, portending murder, violent

rape, or at least forced marriage. The threats are obscure, and in their obscurity, they take on strong hues (2000:58).

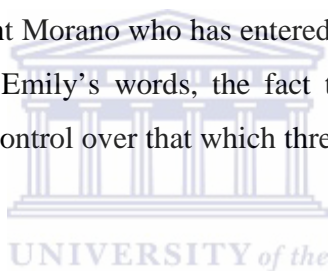
Ellis' words highlight the paradoxical nature of Emily's haunting in Udolpho: her haunting is largely the product of her overactive imagination and sensibility exacerbated by Udolpho's dismal settings in stark contrast to her peaceful family home, La Vallée. La Vallée was Emily's protective cocoon, a space that "kept the troubles of the wider world at bay" (Ellis, 2000:58). Udolpho is "a prison or grave in which Emily is incarcerated or buried alive" (2000:58).

One of the most noted scenes that stress Udolpho been Emily's locus of horror is the one where Count Morano enters Emily's chamber in the middle of the night while she sleeps. This scene is also momentous because it bears witness to Emily's excessive sensibility and her first attempt (inside Udolpho) at tempering her excessive imagination with reason. The control that Emily asserts here serves as a catalyst for her triumph over the situations she faces later in the novel. But first, Emily is portrayed as being in a heightened state of agitation because she still feels the effects of the horror she experienced and because her room, she discovers, is quite close to the chamber that contains the horror. Already, Emily seems haunted by the circumstance as we are shown that she continues to remember it and feels dreadful at every thought. She eventually falls asleep but is later awakened by a noise in her chamber. Her first thoughts are of what Annette had told her, that her chamber is haunted. Even though she had laughingly dismissed Annette's superstition, she now appears disturbed by her words.

This, together with her previous experience of the door to her chamber having been locked from the outside, makes her "heart became faint with terror" (1966:260). She ascertains that the noise she hears comes from the door. But instead of cowering in terror or fainting, she raises herself from the bed and looks towards the door. The fact that Emily *raises* "herself from the bed" signifies movement and action; both of which exemplify the idea of agency (1966:260). Emily's agency here undercuts the potential terror of the situation. Also, she is aware of what is happening around her as opposed to being in a state of oblivion like Julia in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790). Her state of awareness compliments the idea of action, as Emily

would be unable to assert control over a situation of which she was not conscious. The words, “she saw the door move... and perceived something enter the room” (1966:261) indicates her state of awareness and perception. Although it appears that her nightmare of being both haunted and invaded is coming true, Emily, “almost fainting with terror” still had “sufficient command over herself, to check the shriek, that was escaping from her lips, and continued to observe in silence the motions of the mysterious form she saw” (1966:261).

What strikes one is that Emily’s assertion of self-control, evident in the words “sufficient command”, overcomes her passive victimhood and instead, in her observation of the figure, she appears as a threat to the figure in her room (1966:261). Also, one notes that because she “check (s) the shriek” about to emit from her mouth, the silence that ensues appears to fortify the sudden shift in power, from the invading figure to Emily (1966:261). This idea is palpable when Emily, finding that it is Count Morano who has entered her chamber, commands him to “leave me instantly” (1966:262). Emily’s words, the fact that she speaks in this perilous situation, shows that she assumes control over that which threatens to rob her of her voice and ultimately her identity.



In becoming agentive, Emily appears to regain in part her sense of self. This is evident when Count Morano explains that his presence in the castle was due to the fact that he had heard Montoni had a “scheme of stronger interest” in store for Emily than forcing her to marry him (1966:263). The Count vows to be her protector and to remove her from the castle. Underlying his offer of protection is that he wants her for himself. This illuminates the irony that even though she would be escaping her prison, Emily would merely be exchanging one villain for another. This shift in events also highlights the following: that a woman’s choice and movement was limited in the eighteenth century. She could only move from the ‘protection’ of one man to another. But Radcliffe seems to refute this creed through the choice that Emily makes that is not without its irony as well. Emily tells Morano, “Allow me to thank you for the interest you express in my welfare, and to decide my own choice. I shall remain under the protection of Signor Montoni” (1966:263). When Emily decides her own fate this is symbolic of her freedom, even while imprisoned, because a male does not prescribe her choice. However, the words, “I shall remain under the protection of Signor

Montoni” are an ironic assertion of freedom (1966:263). Emily does deal with Count Morano in a manner that affirms her emerging identity when she refutes his self-absorptive remark that she rejects him because she loves another. Her words, “and this conduct [sufficiently proves] that I should not be placed beyond the reach of oppression, so long as I remained in your power” recognizes his desire for her as a need to possess her and conquer Montoni, whom Morano thinks has become Emily’s lover (1966:264).

It needs to be noted here that the way in which Emily deals with Morano is indicative of something else that Radcliffe accomplishes in her Gothic novels: a challenge to male identity. Even as a new female emerges within her texts, the male identities are made to change, to conform to a female view of maleness. Morano is the first example of this idea, but Valancourt is the central identity that is altered much by Emily’s developing self. Morano shows remorse at his actions. Hurt and wounded in a fight that ensues when Montoni finds him in the castle, Morano says, “I have deserved this, but not from Montoni. It is from you, Emily that I have deserved punishment, yet I receive only pity!” (1966:267). His words recognize Emily as a person, as a subject, but also redefine his own identity as subject to Emily’s judgement.

His impudent and rash nature alters when Emily continues to assert her control. This is manifested when Emily tells him to leave after she had cared for his wounds because his persistent presence would further ignite “Montoni’s resentment” (1966:269). Morano appears embarrassed at Emily’s words as well as angry that Montoni had bested him. The words, “Morano’s face was overspread with a momentary crimson” suggests this idea. (1966:269). Despite the temptation to launch into a fit of tempestuous anger, Morano “endeavours to conquer his emotion” and listens to Emily’s caution (1966:269). Emily’s display of independent thought and action demands transformation in the male character it is directed at. In Morano’s case, he ceases to view Emily as an object. Also, under her moderating gaze he exerts a command over his excessive emotion.

Radcliffe explores the transformative power of female morality over male aggressive desire in other novels as well. This transformative power is a discursive power. Adeline’s demeanor in



*The Romance of the Forest* (1791) results in changing the character of the novel's lesser-known villain, Monsieur La Motte. La Motte, once the protector of Adeline, had promised to "give her up" to the Marquis de Montalt whom La Motte knows is still married to his wife, the Marchioness (1986: 146). La Motte is willing to surrender Adeline to him because the Marquis, "whose territory thus afforded him a shelter from the world" possessed the power "to betray him [La Motte] into the hands of his enemies" (1986:210). But not satisfied with possessing her physically, the Marquis orders La Motte to murder Adeline. La Motte is in torment, torn between "being in the power of the Marquis" knowing that "he must either consent to the commission of the deed, from the enormity of which, deprived as he was, he shrunk in horror, or sacrifice fortune, freedom, probably life itself, to the refusal" (1986: 226). Despite all he stands to gain in murdering Adeline, La Motte is struck by the recollection of Adeline's virtue and conduct, "her confidence in his protection" (1986:226). Adeline becomes La Motte's "voice of conscience" and on the night he is meant to murder her, he machinates her escape (1986:227).

That La Motte devises her escape is indicative of agency despite him "being in the power of the Marquis" (1986:226). Although Adeline's self-formation is not as apparent as Emily's, I suggest that Adeline's consistent virtue and sense of propriety demands change in La Motte. His parting words to her are indicative of the transformation that her conduct has induced. Like Morano, La Motte also seeks redemption from the heroine. His words "remember, when you think of me, that I am not quite so bad as I have been tempted to be" (1986:232) symbolize a transferal of power from the Marquis to Adeline because in his choice to release her from a double oppression (Adeline was prisoner of both La Motte's and the Marquis), he elevates her above the Marquis who embodies male dominance. As with Emily and Morano, La Motte recognizes Adeline as a subject and not as a pawn of two men's schemes when he requests that she remember him for his decision to procure her freedom. Adeline's freedom is not only a physical liberation but is symbolic of her liberation, especially since she does not become a prisoner of any man again.

Furthermore, Radcliffe appears to deliver a critique against the aristocratic woman's predilection for excess, and in this particular example, imprudence, while simultaneously

illuminating the value of prudence in her heroines. Radcliffe contrasts the 'old' aristocratic woman with what Emily embodies at this point in the novel, the promise of the 'new' aristocratic woman. As we recall in Chapter 2, I argued that Radcliffe does not distinguish along gender lines when conveying a critique of aristocratic power and privilege. The following altercation between Madame Montoni and Emily affirms this argument but also appears more directed at highlighting the particular aspects of womanhood that Radcliffe presents in the text. Madame Montoni acquaints Emily of her husband's intent, to violently divest her from her estates. She tells Emily that she would not "bear all this tamely" (1966: 281). Madame Montoni was resolute: she was going to "tell him all he deserves, in spite of his threats and cruel treatment" (1966:281). Emily attempts to dissuade her from this rash decision by arguing for prudence.

In short, Emily challenges Madame Montoni's persistence on reproaching Montoni by asking her, "but would it be prudent in you, Madam, to make them [the reproaches]?" (1966:282). Madame Montoni's answer reflects her inability to exercise restraint and wisdom in a situation that would be exacerbated by any further remonstrance on her part. She exclaims, "Prudent! Is this time to talk of prudence, when one is threatened with all sorts of violence?" (1966:283). Emily further advises her to apply prudence not for the sake of Montoni, but for her own sake. Madame Montoni rejects this advice, expostulating that she would not be submissive to a man who has broken "all ties of humanity in his conduct" towards her (1966: 282). Of course, one is reminded that Madame Montoni's bleak situation is a product of her earlier act of imprudence, in hastily marrying Montoni to secure her position in aristocratic society.

One is also reminded of her own 'break with humanity' in her treatment of Emily's relationship with Valancourt. Her rejection of prudence here highlights her lack of development in the text. Emily, on the other hand, in confronting her aunt with the weakness in her character, shows development because she had previously allowed Madame Montoni to subvert her. Madame Montoni's behaviour shocks Emily who observes "the perverted understanding and obstinate temper of her aunt" (1966:287). Madame Montoni's parting words to Emily, "I thought I was opening my heart to a person, who could sympathize in my

distress, but I find, that your people of sensibility can feel for nobody but themselves!” ironically criticizes what Emily has come to embody in the text, a “much-vaunted sensibility” while Madame Montoni seems to be critiqued through Emily’s eyes (Ellis, 1995:283). Choosing excess over reason, Madame Montoni embodies in this scene the self-destructive aristocratic woman that Radcliffe first critiques through the opinion of her heroine and then completely erases from the text through death. Emily embodies the conventional and unconventional aspects of her female self; Radcliffe generates a dissenting voice in Emily while simultaneously promoting an aspect of enlightenment belief in reason and rationality.

Emily’s sensibility is further tested when she labours under the belief that her aunt is dead long before this actually occurs. She assumes that Montoni had murdered her aunt because she has not seen her aunt for days. This occurrence is marked by the fact that it is the first one that Radcliffe provides an explanation for, seeming to at once criticize and discount the horror that Emily’s mind fancies. Emily approaches a servant, Barnadine, for his help and learns that her aunt is alive but is locked in a far turret. He consents to lead her there. Once again, Emily is immersed in underground labyrinths and vaults as Barnadine leads her from one side of the castle to the other. To her horror and what seems like a replay of her previous traversal of the underground, she passes an open grave. We read that “such an object, in such a scene, would, at any time have disturbed her; but now she was shocked by a presentiment that this was the grave of her aunt” (1966:345). Exacerbating her growing sense of horror Barnadine leaves her in a chamber that he locks, on the pretense of first needing to check if her aunt was awake. The chamber is dark and Emily has to hold up the “feeble rays of the lamp” to check the chamber for an escape route (1966:347).

Her eyes fix on a chair that is fastened to the middle of the floor, above which a chain descended from the ceiling, “having an iron ring attached to it” (1966:348). Emily is horrified as she realizes that she is standing in a torture chamber. Her horror is heightened upon realizing “that some poor wretch had once been fastened in this chair” (1966:348). This thought awakens her exaggerated sensibility and she is chilled and then agonized by the thought that “her aunt might have been one of these victims, and that she herself might be next” (1966:348). The unraveling of Emily’s sensibility is further illustrated when she

“unconsciously” seats herself in the iron chair and jumps up “from it in horror” in the next second (1966:348). The correlation between horror and fancy is made here again and highlights Emily’s penchant for excess. Desperate to find a place of comfort, she draws aside a curtain on the one side of the room, only to find “what appeared a corpse on a couch which was crimsoned with human blood” (1966:348). Emily falls “senseless at the foot of the couch” (1966:348).

The above episode needs to be read as a scene interspersed with markings of excess: the couch “crimsoned with human blood” conveys the image of saturation of the couch as well as Emily’s sensibility (1966:348). Emily’s identity is repressed by the recurrent images of death: the open grave, the gloom of the labyrinths, the iron chair (suggesting torture), and the corpse-like figure on the couch. Radcliffe shows Emily’s lapse into terror and fainting, to be a product of the excess visual stimuli that threaten to overwhelm her mind. There is also a divide between sense and sensibility here: the enlightenment idea of rational self-control over excessive feeling. Women are irrational; therefore they need to be ruled. In order to achieve self-rule and independence, women must learn to govern their own feelings. This is exactly what the Radcliffean Gothic is about: testing female imagination with extreme spectacle which they must ultimately subdue – not so much as external phenomena, but in their own imagination. We read the words “the spectacle in the portal-chamber, which afterwards confirmed Emily’s horrible suspicion, was the corpse of a man, who had fallen in the affray (the battle between Montoni and the *condottieri*). This man had lingered under his wounds for days, and soon after his death his body had been removed on the couch” (1966:365). But Emily’s lapse into terror is therefore critiqued: we are shown that Emily would have “been spared much suffering” had she ignored her terror and persisted in knocking on the door of the room where her aunt was held (1966:265). Her aunt had been merely sleeping.

Emily’s triumph over her affinity for exaggerated sensibility is manifest when she, on finding out the truth of the mysterious haunting of the room in the chateau of the Count de Villefort,

could not forbear smiling at this explanation of deception, which had given her so much superstitious terror, and was surprised, that she could have suffered herself to be thus alarmed, till she considered, that when the mind had once begun to yield to the weakness of superstition, trifles impress it with the force of conviction (1966:635).

Emily's reasoning here raises some interesting points: her fancy was deceived on many occasions by situations that appeared to her susceptible mind as horrific. Also, when the Gothic heroine initially succumbs to "superstitious terror", it sets off a chain reaction, almost guaranteeing that she would be unable to apply reason (1966:635). This distorts the heroine's judgement and, like Emily, the heroine becomes vulnerable to "trifles" that suddenly have the power to dominate her sensibility that is a domination of her identity. That Emily is shown to be cognizant of this in hindsight does not efface the striking development of her identity that appears far less likely to be susceptible to excess in this closing scene than in the novel's earlier chapters.

It is fitting, then, that Emily's last encounter with her nemesis Montoni exemplifies the full development of a more autonomous, controlled self. Emily refuses to sign over the deeds to her aunt's estate. Montoni's opinion of her is derisive. His words are intended to undermine her determination to defy his authority. He says, "I cannot believe you will oppose, where you know you cannot conquer," (1966:380). His words also resound with a reminder of the hierarchy in gender politics that separates them: it is a given that Montoni as the male is Emily's conqueror. He threatens her with continued imprisonment till she "is convinced of her error" (1966:380). Emily calmly replies to his show of authority in the following words, "I am not so ignorant, Signor, of the laws on this subject, as to be misled by the assertion of any person. The law, in the present instance, gives me the estates in question, and my own hand shall never betray my right" (1966:380-381). Emily's words deflate Montoni's authority and his words, "You speak like a heroine" reads like an acknowledgement of her autonomous female identity, even if his tone is patterned with sarcasm (1966:381). Emily is hailed as a heroine not by a lesser-known villain or her father, but by the novel's conventional villain. This serves to crystallize her emergence in the novel as a heroine.

Even when Montoni's closing words to her are, "we shall see whether you can suffer like one", Emily's triumph over him cannot be marred (1966:381). This is evident in the palpable change in her perspective of him: her defiant actions alter Montoni from victimizer to vanquished. We witness this transformation when the narrator tells us "his power did not appear so terrible to her imagination, as it was wont to do. For the first time, she felt the full

extent of her own superiority to Montoni, and despised the authority, which, till now, she had only feared” (1966:381-382). Montoni ceases to be a figure of tyranny and patriarchal dominance: when “his power did not appear so terrible to her imagination” (1966:381). The ideology that asserts the inferiority of females in all things related to the male gender is refuted when Emily “felt the full extent of her own superiority” (1966:381- 382). The words, “full extent” conveys the image of her superiority as materialized, towering over Montoni (1966:382). Emily’s superiority inverts the conventional gender relations of the late eighteenth century: it is possible for females to dominate males, even powerful aristocratic figures, through the discursive power rooted in language.

## **5. Mastered selves and mastered landscapes**

This chapter so far has explored the way in which Emily becomes an Enlightenment subject through her exercise of reason. We have also seen how she, through the power of language, achieves emancipation from male dominance. We have also outlined how Radcliffe’s appropriation of the Gothic genre allows her to explore a female identity that is defiant of patriarchal ideology that aimed in the late eighteenth century to subjugate the female self. In the next section we shall peruse how Radcliffe claims a female experience of landscape that alters a male-dominated view of landscape, hereby reshaping the meaning of landscape in the late eighteenth century. As I have argued in Chapter 3, Radcliffe places her heroines in outside spaces, destabilizing the conventional domestic framing of women and contesting the idea that the unchaperoned outdoors is a male preserve. Radcliffe infuses landscapes with female experience and redefines the definition of landscape traditionally equated with male power and adventure. In taking her heroines out of domestic settings and letting them traverse open landscapes, Radcliffe also writes against the dominant Romantic ideology of landscape. Jacqueline Labbe, as we have seen, criticizes the male dominance of the “prospect view” favoured by Romantic painters and poets (1998:xi). She argues that women were excluded from outside settings because their movement needed to be controlled: the four walls of drawing rooms and chambers of houses were deemed apt for female confinement. We are also reminded of Gilbert and Gubar’s assertion that almost all eighteenth and nineteenth century women were “in some sense imprisoned in men’s houses” (1979:83). Conversely, men were expected to rail against such confinement because it was not their “natural



environment.” (1998:ix). Similarly, Ann Bermingham argues that landscape was not only an aesthetic experience but symbolized the social and gendered ideologies of the late eighteenth century. Men were accorded privilege and power because they were landowners, making landscape the domain of men. As we shall see, Radcliffe subverts this dogma and utilizes landscape as “an agent of power” for her female protagonist (Mitchell, 1994:2)

An analysis of the function of landscapes in *Mysteries* supports Bermingham’s argument that landscape representations are more than just aesthetic experience. In the novel, Radcliffe essentially utilizes a tripartite division of space, where these three spaces are the Pastoral, the City and the Gothic. These spaces appear at most times in opposition to each other but sometimes also flow into each other (for example, Venice at first embodies facets of a pastoral landscape but then takes on the description of a city entrenched in profligacy). Radcliffe pits the pastoral against the city: the pastoral is a venerated space because Radcliffe predominantly associates this domain with innocence and simplicity as well as morality. Raymond Williams explains: “On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence and simple virtue” (1975:9). But the pastoral also takes on aspects of the Gothic when the gloomy and wild forests are riddled with *banditti*. In juxtaposition, the city for Radcliffe is racked with profligacy, vice, evil, loose morals and sensual temptations. In addition, the city was perceived as a “place of noise, worldliness and ambition” (Williams, 1975:9). As we shall see, the city and Gothic underground spaces are both testing spaces for Emily. Hence, Radcliffe returns her heroines to pastoral scenes of their native homes or sees them choose to live in the country as opposed to the city after the Gothic tyrant has been vanquished and the home has been purged of patriarchal power. As we recall, this return to pastoral scenes coincides with the heroine’s ownership of property: she reigns over her pastoral landscape and can consequently hold also “authority over the household” (Armstrong, 1987:3). As we shall also see in *Mysteries*, the tension between pastoral and city spaces is most apparent and is allegorical of the contest between the heroine’s virtue (embodied in country way of life) and the villain’s profligacy (embodied in city living).

Many, like Henry James, have read the landscape scenes that populate the earlier parts of *Mysteries* (1794) as purely a picturesque tour “painfully irrelevant to modern experience”,



utilized by Radcliffe as background action to the unfolding narrative (cited by Castle, 1996: xvi). However critics such as Castle have noted how landscape and the shared experience of it seems to facilitate the nascent relationship of Emily and Valancourt at the novel's beginning as well as to reinforce Emily's love for Valancourt in the later scenes. This idea is evident in the scene where Emily and Valancourt walk together through a "pastoral valley, with flocks and herds loitering along the banks of a rivulet" appearing like

two lovers who had never strayed beyond these their native mountains; whose situation excluded them from the frivolities of common life, whose ideas were simple and grand, like the landscapes among which they moved, and who knew no other happiness, than in the union of pure and affectionate hearts (1966:49).

Emily and Valancourt's encounter with landscape frames their relationship. One can also say that the landscape, being "simple and grand" as their conversation, mirrors their growing affiliation for each other as well as their equal communion with nature. Later Emily, separated from Valancourt and unable to sleep, thinks of "the landscapes of her native home, with Valancourt", drawing "pictures of social happiness amidst the grand simplicity of nature" (1966:169). It is here as well, that one is reminded of Radcliffe advocating a shared experience of landscape as a noted element of an equal relationship.

Furthermore, we read that landscape forms an integral part of their courtship but also reveals the temptation of excess that it presents to Emily. Emily and Valancourt "talked of the scenes they had passed among the Pyrenean Alps" after they meet again at La Vallèe following her father's death (1966:105). Their communion with landscape also seems to evoke the memories of her father. This idea is evident in the following words, "this recalled forcibly to Emily the idea of her father whose image appeared in every landscape" (1966:105-106). These words appear to suggest a triangulated connection with landscape: Emily is reminded of her father while she shares in landscape with Valancourt whom she holds in greater esteem. Emily is shown to connect her father's enthusiasm for landscape with Valancourt's reaction to the scenes he views. When he, Valancourt, "admired the grandeur of the plane-tree" Emily remembers "how often she had sat thus with St. Aubert, and heard him express the same admiration" (1966:106). Emily does seem to become more connected with Valancourt because he reminds her of St. Aubert, in the similar way both men react to landscape. She appears to be susceptible to excessive emotion because she seems to indulge

in memory that the landscape evokes. Emily finds her “spirits so much depressed” at the thoughts of her father and appears haunted by her father’s memory because she sees his image in every landscape (1966:106).

But before we begin to view Emily in this scene as being unable to separate her feelings for Valancourt, her father and landscape, we are reminded that Emily’s particular experience of landscape and emotion is still hers to navigate. Radcliffe appears to make a distinction between male and female experience of landscape: whereas Valancourt revels in excessive emotion (he has “tears in his eyes” when Emily connects Valancourt’s reaction to the plane-tree with her father’s love for it), Emily chooses not to (1966:106). This is seen when Emily is shown to be aware and wary of Valancourt’s connection with landscape that reveals his capacity for fine feeling. Even though Valancourt’s reaction to landscape “had been sanctioned by the opinion of her father”, Emily is shown to doubt whether “they [her father’s observations of Valancourt] were sufficient testimonies of his general worth to determine her upon a subject so infinitely important to her future happiness” (1966:107). This patently manifests that Emily applies reason and thinks about the nature of her relationship with Valancourt. Emily is also shown to act with prudence, despite the potential threat of both Valancourt and landscape to overwhelm her feelings. These words also show that Emily is not swayed by her father’s opinion and is cognizant of the fact that whatever decision she makes is “infinitely important to *her* future happiness”, not Valancourt’s (1966:107).

Apart from this analysis there are few scholarly readings that explore Emily’s experience of landscape in the novel as a vehicle to her developing identity. It is therefore striking that the novel’s early scenes depict Emily as experiencing landscapes together and equally with her father, St. Aubert. Bearing in mind that St. Aubert is representative (in a lesser degree) of the dominating patriarch, Emily’s experience of landscape as a shared and equal experience with her father defies the Romantic ideology of landscape as gendered: landscape was to the “aristocratic viewer” a validation of “his own position...the high-born prospect view” (Labbe, 1998:xi). We read that Emily

could not restrain her transport as she looked over the pine forests of the mountains upon the vast plains, that, enriched with woods, towns, blushing vines, and plantations of almonds, palms and olives, stretched along, till their various colours

melted in distance into one harmonious hue, that seemed to unite earth with heaven (1966:28).

The words “harmonious” and “unite” facilitate the equal sharing in the beauty of the pastoral scene that Emily and her father travel through (1966:28). Emily’s first landscape experience outside of the domestic space of La Vallée is encapsulated in the words “blushing vines” (1966:28). Both words refer to her innocence as well as a biblical reading of her and St. Aubert’s relation to each other here: that she is the ‘vine’ and he is the branch, her main source of knowledge and support. This analogy lends paradoxical meaning to this scene: although Emily equally experiences landscape with her father, he is the one directing her experience and validates his “high-born prospect view” (Labbe, 1998:xi). But the fact that the “colours melted in distance into one harmonious hue” invokes the idea of oneness in the landscape that can be a symbolic representation of ‘oneness’ in landscape experience between them. Thematically, Emily is elevated to her own “high-born prospect view” (1998:xi). St. Aubert is similarly “so much struck” with the “effect of the scenery” that he determined that they travel through the mountains to Languedoc to continue the flow of pastoral scenery (1966:28). The continuation of pastoral scenery also facilitates Emily’s continued liberation. Her unrestrained connection with landscape together with the fact that she surveys and looks “over the pine forests of the mountains” undercuts the political and social reality that Gilbert and Gubar (1979) as well as Bermingham (1994) speak of (1966:28). Emily becomes a surveyor of landscape and her elevated position can be read metaphorically: she is outside the boundaries of the domestic home. Emily’s imagination is free to travel over open landscapes that can be associated with a free self.

Radcliffe creates a distinction between the spaces of the city and that of the country, an opposition that seems intertwined with the distinction she makes between female and male identity. The city, both Venice and Paris are represented as attractive, sensuous yet deeply corrupt spaces incorporative of dissolution, lack of morals, sexual looseness and aristocratic degeneracy. Embedded in this illumination of dissimilarity between the city and pastoral, is the critique of city spaces as opposed to pastoral spaces that mirror a critique of male and female identity. City spaces are male, giving opportunities for male predatory behaviour. In contrast, the pastoral is female, indicated by Emily obtaining ownership of La Vallée at the

novel's end, as well as by her having authority over the domestic within the pastoral setting of Gascony. Radcliffe traces Emily's unfolding identity in her reaction to the settings of the city and produces, as we shall see, interesting viewpoints. The city is held up as a terrain of temptation for both Emily and Valancourt. It is important to note that Montoni's response to Venice also comes into play here, as a mirroring of Valancourt's response to the temptations of Paris. Emily's prudence, sensibility and propriety are tested and the city of Venice becomes more than just background scenery.

The cityscape of Venice and Emily's reaction to it is crucial to Radcliffe's continuous argument for an emergent female identity that is self-regulated. Venice is at first presented to Emily as exotic and beautiful, decadent and opulent:

islets, palaces, and towers rising out of the sea, whose clear surface reflected the tremulous picture in all its colours. The sun, sinking in the west, tinted the waves and the lofty mountains of Friuli...while on the marble porticos and colonnades of St. Mark were thrown the rich lights and shades of evening. As they glided on, the grander features of this city appeared more distinctly: its terraces, crowned with airy yet majestic fabrics, touched, as they now were, with the splendour of the setting sun, appeared as if they had been called up from the ocean by the wand of an enchanter, rather than reared by mortal hands (1966:174-175).

One must note: we see Venice through Emily's eyes and are struck, as she is, by its essence of enchantment. We read, "Nothing could exceed Emily's admiration on her first view of Venice" (1966:174). The sensual excess of Venice is even more accentuated when we read that floating on the river were gondolas "full of gay parties" (1966:176). Its luxuriousness and magical aura is observable in the words, "crowned with airy yet majestic fabrics" (1966:175). But this enchantment is only from a distance and is connected to the key fact that the city is at first viewed as a picturesque landscape. Emily is therefore enchanted by the pastoral elements of Venice, with its "lofty mountains, waves and ocean" (1966:174-175). Venice reads as the idyllic landscape for romance and is meant to entice Emily who is separated from Valancourt by distance: the attention of Count Morano is meant to tempt her, as he embodies Venetian nobility. Once inside Venice, it becomes the decadent city space that tempts her to lose herself in it as Montoni and his wife do. Emily's immersion into city life would be akin to her losing her subjectivity: within its degenerate walls she will become merely an object of desire, at the mercy of the schemes of Count Morano and Montoni. This initial connection of

Venice to the pastoral is a deliberate device on Radcliffe's part; it strengthens her critique of the city as merely attractive at first glance but corrupt at its centre. This detailed attention to Venice as landscape also seems to set the scene for Emily's character development: although initially drawn to Venice she will not be completely lulled by the excess that the city represents or be tempted by it.

The contest between Emily's initial connection with Venice and her sense of propriety within the cityscape is encapsulated in the scene where Count Morano makes advances towards her. Emily is surrounded by music that Count Morano himself plays for her, on a lute, that is, as we remember, Emily's favourite instrument. The idyllic nocturnal landscape she inhabits is described as being "a new heaven" with "trembling stars below the waves, with shadowy outlines of towers and porticos" that seemed to "conspire with the stillness of the hour" (1966:184). This landscape serves to heighten her sensibility and "her softened mind returned to the memory of St. Aubert and to Valancourt, and tears stole to her eyes" (1966:184). The seductive, sensuous setting beguiles her but this does not persist. The Count, "who had again seated himself by Emily, paid her unremitting attention, and uttered compliments which she could not misunderstand" (1966:186). Emily shakes off her melancholy state and "to avoid them [Morano's compliments] she conversed with another Signora" (1966:186). We read further, "her manner to the Count assumed a mild reserve" and she "now wished for nothing so much as to return" to Montoni's mansion (1966:186). Clearly, Emily, even as her emotions are exaggerated so that her mind is "softened", exercises reason and propriety by firstly recognizing Morano's intentions and then spurning his advances (1966:184).

Venice, in Emily's perspective, soon becomes synonymous with Count Morano's "persevering assiduities" and we are shown that the city begins to lose its charm for her (1966:191). When she hears Montoni talk of a journey to his Castle di Udolpho in the country, she "listens to the mention of this journey with pleasure" because it "afforded a release from the persevering assiduities of Count Morano" (1966:191). But it also signals a return to the pastoral, emphasizing Emily's rejection of the city. Radcliffe also inserts a contrast between the city and the pastoral that highlights her preference and argument that simple pastoral spaces are superior to the luxuriousness of the city. The exotic city is once

again associated with alluring opulence and seduction (and a threat to Emily's morals as well as her freedom). The rural country is rustic, guileless, true (an assumption about Udolpho that turns out false). We read that in

the country, too, she would have leisure to think of Valancourt. The ideal scenes [of country landscape] were dearer, and more soothing to her heart, than all the splendour of gay assemblies; they were a kind of talisman that expelled the poison of necessary evils, and supported her hopes of happy days; they appeared like a beautiful landscape (1966:191).

Venice is portrayed as a "necessary evil" (1966:191). Patent in these words is the idea that the city represents vice and corruption, juxtaposing the pastoral where "simple matter and general truths are embodied" (Williams, 1975:33). Emily is shown to prefer pastoral scenes to the "splendour of the gay assemblies", a facet of the city that she was attracted to from her first experience of Venice's landscape (1966:191). The word, "talisman" has an otherworldly feel to it and connotes a magical quality to the settings of the country (1966:191). The word "talisman" attributes to the pastoral that magical quality by which the city is defined. One can say that the rural landscapes supersedes the fanciful descriptions of Venice's landscapes because of the invocation of the word, "talisman" that contrasts strongly with the word "poison" that the city is likened to (1966:191). The word "poison" plays with the idea of death and destruction. Read deeper, the word "poison" avers the notion that the city presents a kind of death to those, like Montoni, who indulge in its excesses.

Emily's choice not to be overwhelmed and corrupted by the exotic, decadent delights of Venice is highlighted by the choices made by Valancourt and Montoni who are faced with the same temptations. It is in Venice that Montoni's diabolical nature first surfaces, as well as his predilection for gambling. Montoni's character mirrors and depicts the landscape riddled with excess and vice:

he delighted in the energies of the passions, the difficulties and tempests of life, which wreck the happiness of others, roused and strengthened all the powers of his mind, and afforded him the highest enjoyments, of which his nature was capable...Of this kind was the habit of gaming, which he had adopted, first, with the purpose of relieving him from the langour of inaction, but had since pursued with the ardour of passion (1966:182).



Montoni's restlessness and boredom ("the langour of inaction") is mirrored in the cityscape, where "the busy hum of mingling sounds was heard at a considerable distance on the water ... at near midnight "and where "Palladio's palaces were busy with parties of masqueraders" (1966:186 and 187). Montoni characterizes Venice in its decadence just as he exemplifies the untamable excess and dark Gothic power of Udolpho. In this sense, the city and Gothic space flow into each other, both embodying the corruptible, terrorizing qualities of Montoni

Valancourt, like Montoni, encounters the city (in this case Paris, not Venice) in a way that taints his character and presents his identity as weakened in comparison with Emily's self-governed identity. Paris opens up to Valancourt "a scene of novelty and gaiety, such as, till then, he had only a faint idea of" (1966:292). Valancourt becomes a part of the city, "soon frequenting the most gay and fashionable circles of Paris" (1966:293). He also frequents the house of Countess Lacleur, a woman who embodies what Paris represents. She throws parties where "deep play" occurs and Valancourt passes "his pleasantest, as well as most dangerous hours in these parties" (1966:294). She is also not the only woman he visits and with whom he forms a connection. Valancourt is also shown to be easily influenced by his fellow associates in the military, all of whom view him as an "object of unceasing raillery" and who "plotted against him, glorying in the thought of reducing him to their own level...of vice" (1966:292 and 293). The narrator sums up the argument here in the following comparison, "Thus dangerously circumstanced was Valancourt, at the time, when Emily was suffering at Venice, from the persecuting addresses of Count Morano, and the unjust authority of Montoni" (1966:295). Imbedded in the narrator's words is also the idea that both Valancourt and Montoni seek the excess of the city and revel in it while Emily is hounded by it but overcomes it. Explicitly, Radcliffe critiques the male encounter with the city and shows her heroine's identity to be superior to that of Montoni and Valancourt. Likewise, in having Emily experience landscapes as transformative spaces, Radcliffe shows that female self-determination, autonomy and authority are no longer confined to the domestic (as Armstrong argues), but become spatially dispersed.

The expansiveness of open pastoral scenes and the liberation of mind and body that it promises are juxtaposed with the confinement of underground spaces within the walls of the



Gothic castle. As I have established in Chapter 3, Radcliffe marks the underground labyrinths and caves, the 'other' spaces in her novels as female because these are outside of male surveillance. But unlike Julia and Ellena, whose navigation of labyrinths and caves lead patently to their freedom from patriarchal dominance, Emily's experience in underground passages of the Gothic castle are testing spaces that threaten to weaken her self-control and emergent rational self. Soon after Montoni in an undisclosed place in the castle imprisons her aunt, one of his servants, Barnadine, tells Emily that he knows where Madame Montoni is hidden. He offers to guide her there after midnight. Montoni's sentinels patrol the castle ramparts and passageways and Emily moves "with a mind agitated with doubts and fears and contrary determinations" through the darkness of the castle to meet Barnadine whom she suspects of working as Montoni's henchman to get rid of her (1966:343).

One is struck by the idea that Emily's mind cannot be "soothed" and cannot be liberated within this Gothic space because she is trapped within it, it is a "a grave in which she is buried alive" (1966:73, and Ellis, 2000:58). The word "grave" connotes the idea that Emily's self is suffocated and nightmarishly tortured, sharply contrasting with my earlier exploration of her liberatory experience in pastoral spaces. This opposition is further manifested in Emily's loss of self-control and weakening reason as she navigates the castle underground:

Emily, deceived by the long shadows of the pillars and by the catching lights between, often stopped, imagining she saw some person, moving in the distant obscurity of the perspective; and, as she passed these pillars, she feared to turn her eyes towards them, almost expecting to see a figure start out from behind their broad shaft (1966:343).

Her desertion of reason is apparent in the word "deceived", her sense is displaced through illusion, through the play between "long shadows" and "catching" elusive lights that are part of the Gothic repertoire (1966:343). Emily's mind is overcome by the suggestion of danger lurking in the obscurity of the "long shadows of the pillars" (1966:343). This is also Mishra's "Gothic sublime": her mind is haunted by the space she occupies, causing her to assume an irrational frame of mind as "she saw some person" moving in the distance (1966:343 and 1994:19). Her loss of self-government is evident in her heightened fear, and we are aware that it is her mind that conjures or 'expects' to see someone following her. She is also threatened and haunted by the possibility of being stalked as she "feared to turn her eyes towards them", as though she would completely lose her composure in the very act of turning to look behind

her (1966:343). There is also an implied suggestion that in refusing to look in the shadows, Emily attempts to retain what self-control she possesses. But this does not convince one: her state of apprehension escalates as she moves deeper into the labyrinths of the castle and climaxes when she enters what she perceives to be a ‘torture’ chamber. We remember from my analysis of this scene in Chapter 3 that Emily assumes that her aunt was tortured on that chair and that Barnadine brought her there for the same purpose.

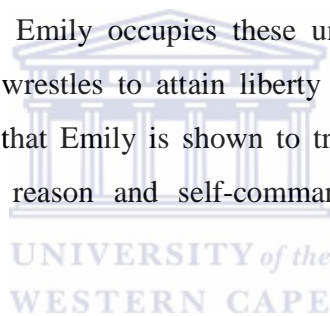
But before she reaches this chamber, we see Emily’s paranoia intensify when Barnadine leads her through the ruins of a chapel situated in the lower parts of Udolpho. Emily reacts with undisguised terror but ironically one sees that she also retains a measure of control. The narrative depicts her

looking fearfully on the almost roofless walls, green with damp, and on the gothic points of the windows, where the ivy and briony had long supplied the place of glass, and ran mantling among the broken capitals of some columns, that had once supported the roof. Barnadine stumbled over the broken pavement, and his voice, as he uttered a sullen oath, was returned in hollow echoes, that made it more terrific. Emily’s heart sunk; but she still followed him... and demanded, in a tremulous tone, whither he was conducting her (1966:344).

Emily’s mind is bombarded with Gothic motifs: the chapel is in ruins; its facade and Gothic windows are overrun by “ivy and briony” (1966:344). Her weakened state is apparent in the words, “Emily’s heart sunk” but this does not deter her from moving onward (1966:344). Her rallying spirit is evident in the fact that despite the desolate and terrifying spaces she traverses (and the possibility that he could end her life), she continues to follow Barnadine. The paradoxical state of her emotions and presence of mind is embodied in the fact that she “demands” in a “tremulous tone” their destination. The word “demands” signifies that she is in control of her self but her “tremulous tone” undercuts this assertion (1966:344).

She travels deeper into the underground courts, until they reach “adjoining vaults, the walls of which were dropping with unwholesome dews, and the vapours, that crept along the ground, made the torch burn so dimly, that Emily expected every moment to see it extinguished” (1966:345). Just like her much earlier excursion through the grounds of a Gothic chapel, Emily, “by uncertain flashes of light” sees “heaps of earth, that seemed to surround an open grave” (1966:345). Trembling and “so overwhelmed by terror” because of her isolation with

the “treacherous Barnadine”, she thinks that it is her aunt’s grave and that her body would be thrown into it as well, as soon as Barnadine kills her (1966:345). Her state of mind here also resonates with Mishra’s correlation between death and the Gothic sublime: Emily’s preoccupation with her own death is the Gothic sublime in which her own mind is overwhelmed by the excessive and overwhelming experience. Her identity is threatened by that which “signifies that sense of boundlessness and indeterminacy” (“boundlessness” symbolized by the open grave and death as incomprehensible, defying rationalization) (1994:19). The “uncertain flashes of light” exacerbates Emily’s agitated state but also emphasizes the ‘uncertainty’ or “indeterminacy” of her mind that pictures her life ending in Gothic nightmare (1966:345 and 1994:19). The open grave also carries overtones of Ellis’ statement that Emily is “buried alive” in the grave that is Udolpho: her exaggerated imagination compels her to think of every grave she sees as her own (2000: 58). It is as though, almost devoid of reason, Emily occupies these underground Gothic spaces as a shadowed self, a lesser self that wrestles to attain liberty and to overcome her irrational tendencies. But we are reminded that Emily is shown to triumph over the Gothic sublime when she eventually exerts her reason and self-command over Montoni that in turn vanquishes the Gothic horrors.



The pastoral is eventually restored to Emily following her triumph over the contested terrains of the city and the Gothic. Emily’s return to La Vallée at the close of the novel as an heiress gives her possession of the literal ground. In owning La Vallée she also owns the pastoral, making it her “prospect view” (Labbe, 1998:ix). In a metaphoric sense, the ‘pastoral restored’ signals that Emily can only find peace and solace in a place she has literal control over: she ceases to be the pawn and object for male desire in the city and the ‘terrorized and haunted body’ in the Gothic spaces of Udolpho. Also, it is only when she gains control over the pastoral that it can epitomize the qualities of a picturesque landscape: “restored to the beloved landscapes of their native country, the bowers of La Vallée became, once more, the retreat of goodness, wisdom and domestic blessedness!” (1966:672). The archaic Gothic and the modern city are thus finally rejected and overcome in favour of the utopia of an idealised pastoral.

## Chapter 5

# Conclusion

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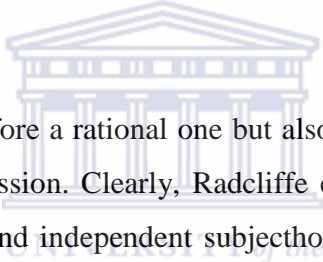
The preceding chapters of this thesis have explored the female subject that emerges within *Mysterias* as well as Radcliffe's other Gothic novels. As we have seen, the female subject is an ambivalent one, transgressing older patriarchal ideas of femininity but also validating enlightenment values of reason and order. The Gothic in Radcliffe's novels enhances this ambivalence: her heroines' agentive self cannot emerge without the archetypal villainous patriarchal figure or the haunting spaces of the Gothic castle, functioning as a foil as it were. As we have seen, Emily's identity, although at times partially shaped by her father, assumes a liberated self, independent of patriarchal rule once the Gothic domain has been purged of male power. Although largely reliant on her father's guidance and teaching in the first few chapters of *Mysterias*, she gradually begins to assert her individuality following his death. This nascent sense of self comes under attack through the callousness of Madame Montoni and ultimately the base villainy of Montoni. Radcliffe deliberately places her heroine within the threatening Gothic confines of Udolpho to test her developing autonomy. Her identity, like that of Adeline, Julia and Ellena undergoes persecution in the Gothic-scape of castles and autocratic homes and abbeys. The Gothic castle becomes the locus for excessive terror and male power, creating an exaggerated environment in which her self is repressed and tormented by the Gothic villain.

As we have seen, Emily's development within the Gothic castle oscillates between a surveillance of the self that is integral to her self-mastery and the surveillance of others like Montoni and his henchmen that menace her emergent freedom and self-assertion. We are aware that Emily, like Radcliffe's other heroines, paradoxically conforms to conduct book rules for female disposition in her practice of internal surveillance. The extent of her self-government must therefore be questioned. But as this thesis has argued, the following distinguishes Emily and the other Gothic heroines from being mere imitators of conduct book norms: Emily eventually exercises control of her self that is independent of the control of others. In this, she rejects the power of others to order, monitor and contain her.

Bombarded and terrorized inside the archaic Gothic spaces of Udolpho with horror both real and imagined, Emily also faces her own shortcomings – of a fanciful imagination and a seeming passivity. Her self is threatened with dissolution and collapse by Montoni's lust for her property and his henchmen's lust for her body. On another narrative level, the *condottieri's* battle for control of Udolpho outside its walls appears as a background contest in comparison with Emily's battle within its walls to retain control of her body and mind. Emily, like Adeline within the ruins of the abbey, undergoes a double-onslaught of her self. It is only when she triumphs over the aristocratic power of Montoni that she begins to assume control over her perceived weaknesses because of invocation of reason. It is therefore only her emergent rationality that can vanquish the irrational and chaotic Gothic space of the castle just as she 'vanquishes' Montoni's deviant, cruel nature. Montoni's tyranny is ultimately deflated by Emily's rational defiance to cede her property over to him. This is the climax of the novel: her refusal to give him her estates is embedded in her refusal to become his object, to be owned as the aristocratic male owns land. The matter of property ownership is thus what finally lends her power. Her escape from Udolpho's walls is therefore an anti-climax: it is not that she first has to be released from her prison in order to achieve individual freedom. Emily achieves a more liberated self within Udolpho; her victory is therefore more palpable.

But the Gothic castle is also an unruly, chaotic and antiquated domestic space that must be feminized and therefore tamed and restored to an Enlightenment order. As we have seen, Radcliffe destabilizes this space by removing the villain through his death. She also destabilizes it by making this space female: her heroines assume their place in the now vanquished site of male power (or they decide to leave these spaces to ruin, a patent symbol of the destroyed patriarchy). The patriarchal presence in the domestic space is eradicated and replaced with the new modern woman: one who has also assumed control over marriage by choosing her own husband. Radcliffe fashions a liberated female self that incorporates a different, unconventional view of love and marriage. The point is: Radcliffe contrasts the heroine and hero's different approach to love that delivers a critique of the conventional male idea of love and in so doing presents a liberated female subject. It is this freedom that culminates in a marriage that not only reflects independent female agency, but also a model

towards equality. For example, in *Mysteries*, Valancourt's idea of love is one that demands to be constantly reassured by Emily. Told by Madame Montoni that he can no longer see Emily, he storms the chateau, demanding to see her. Emily fears for any impropriety and refuses to be alone with him. He interprets her conduct and silence as rejection. His idea of love reflects insecurity that can only be appeased by a sense of ownership. In short, for Valancourt, love also means possession. This juxtaposition between Valancourt's lack of reason and Emily's assertion of reason is later highlighted when Emily refuses his offer of marriage. Her idea of love seems characterized by reason and a lucidity that is able to cut through the emotional veil that Valancourt attempts to obscure her in. Remarkably, Emily's idea of love triumphs over Valancourt's perspective of love when she refuses to marry him and "now induced him to renounce it [a hasty marriage]" as well (1966:155). Valancourt, by contrast, is portrayed as incapable of self-governance and restraint (an aspect that is emphasized when he travels to Paris) (1966:155).



The Gothic heroine's love is therefore a rational one but also demands recognition of her as subject and not as object or possession. Clearly, Radcliffe espouses marriages of "rational happiness" informed by equality and independent subjecthood (1966:672). But despite this amelioration of convention, we are also aware that through their marriages the heroines participate in the universal normative model, expected for young women (marriage as the only outcome for their lives), and therefore they ultimately conform to this convention. Yet, Radcliffe's heroines assume domestic power, much like Charlotte Brontë's (1847) *Jane Eyre* does when she becomes mistress of Thornfield. We are also aware of the most distinguishing factors that set Radcliffe's heroines apart from an older ideal of marriage: her heroines are property owners before they choose to become the wives of the men they love. We see a continuance of a modern idea of marriage in the novels of the early nineteenth century. *Jane Eyre* rejects a marriage with St. John Rivers and chooses, despite the religious 'rightness' of their union, to marry Mr. Rochester. But this is not before she attains an "accession of fortune", making her ability to choose a reflection of not only her newfound economic liberty but her personal freedom as well (1980:445). Their union and its felicity is described in terms of freedom, as Jane says: "To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company" (1980:456). Similarly, Lucy Snowe in *Villette* (1853) epitomizes the modern

woman: her happiness is extended, not informed by her lover's return. She is already financially established: not only does she inherit money but she generates her own, allowing her to become mistress of her own school as well as a property owner. Her ownership of property and the freedom and happiness it affords is epitomized in the words: "My school flourishes, my house is ready" (1953:77). Marriage in Radcliffe's novels is not a prison for young women but an institution of liberty that excludes the archaic perspectives of socially controlled woman.

Emily is shown to ultimately replace her excessive sensibility with reason when landscape presents the possibility of indulging in overwhelming emotion connected with the sublime: she finally has access to a Kantian transcendent rationality at the end of *Mysteries*. The sublime is not only an aesthetic consumption of picturesque landscapes in Radcliffe's novels, it is also the Gothic sublime. Radcliffe's heroines eventually achieve transcendence over both through their application of reason: the aesthetic sublime (such as in the Alps) finally ceases to be fearful and overwhelming; the Gothic sublime is rationalized as a product of the heroine's fanciful imagination or the narrator explains away the supposed supernatural by providing 'rational' explanations for it. But as I have demonstrated, the Gothic sublime is shown to be not too easily overcome: it invades their sense with excessive "toxic breathlessness" and they either faint when faced with horror or they momentarily lose their discursive power (Mishra, 1994:19). Just as the Gothic space is particularly taxing for the heroine, so is the Gothic sublime. As we have seen, Emily experiences the Gothic sublime as a kind of death of the self: her loss of reason is analogous with her unraveling subjectivity. Horror overwhelms her ability to make sense out of what she hears or sees; hence she sees every grave as her own. Faced with the horror of the supernatural, reason is her lifeline lest she fall into the abyss of the Gothic horror. As we have seen, Radcliffe's heroine therefore has access to Kantian rationality that sees her achieve a self-transcendence that is not, however, complete. When Emily moves to another site of patriarchal order, the chateau of De Villefort, she again becomes susceptible to the Gothic sublime. My point is that any domestic space that is still representative of the older order is a terrorized, unexorcised space wherein the heroine cannot rest because she is incapable of realizing her independent identity.



The new domestic space ruled by female sensibility and reason is therefore newly imbued with liberty, and a model democratic space, because of the heroines' ability to choose. In *Mysteries* Radcliffe approaches the domestic space differently as in her previous novels, she shows an idyllic world, far removed from conflict and subterfuge. But Radcliffe collapses this ideal through the early death of St. Aubert, suggesting that even a domestic space ruled by a benevolent patriarch is not the ideal space for the emergence of a modern female subject. As I have shown, the ideal space is a female-owned one, a rationalized and ordered domestic space that reflects the heroine as an Enlightenment subject. I have argued that Radcliffe problematizes the domestic, extending Armstrong's perspective of the new middle-class woman whose supremacy over the household ushers in a new mode of power relations. I have shown that Radcliffe places her new aristocratic woman in the domestic realm, and stabilizes this space because she is an estate owner. The new power relations within the household are therefore not Armstrong's tentative classification of male and female roles that shows the new middle-class woman to be in control of the domestic but in a passive form. The new domestic space is a powerful female one, emphasized, as I have shown, by the fact that Radcliffe doubly stabilizes the domestic space by according her heroines ownership over the pastoral: they are placed within landscapes to inscribe a female experience on these spaces that serves as a temporary surrogate for property ownership.

While theories around the Gothic and female identity has been widely commented on in academic scholarship, I have attempted to extend these arguments. Instead of merely reading Radcliffe's Gothic works as defiant of patriarchy, I have argued that Radcliffe's particular female subject not only transgresses male dominance but also exemplifies the status quo. Her female subject is an ambivalent one: Gothic heroines reject being male-defined but are also governed by older norms of propriety and decorum. This ambivalence is further extended: Radcliffean heroines eventually become Enlightenment subjects in their exercise of reason, rejecting patriarchal stereotype of women as weak and unstable. I have also contended that landscape is more than just an aesthetically consumable object or picturesque backdrop in her novels. Landscape is a contested terrain, a sexualized landscape that Radcliffe suffuses with female experience. In *Mysteries*, landscape alters from an aestheticized space to a substitute for the heroine's ownership of land. Her possession of property becomes a literal ownership

of the pastoral. This has been my key argument concerning the tripartite division of spaces in *Mysteries*. The pastoral, city and Gothic spaces are in part pitted against each other. The city, I argued, is a male space because the novel's male characters can indulge decadence and profligacy. But paradoxically, the city is also a testing space that exerts power over Montoni and Valancourt as they are overcome by its temptations of vice and corruption. This loss of power ceded to the city later equals their loss of property and power over the pastoral at the novel's end: Montoni loses control over his Gothic castle, literally and figuratively. Valancourt cannot attain ownership of land bequeathed to him because his reputation has been sullied in Paris. It is only when he is redeemed by his marriage to Emily, that he regains possession of property. Conversely, the heroine assumes command over herself in her own testing space of the Gothic underground and because she vanquishes it, the pastoral becomes her domain, her site of power.

As Gothic romances show, the idea of womanhood was a deeply contested terrain at the end of the eighteenth century. Through her fictional heroines, especially Emily, Radcliffe was participating in the revolutionary changes of the era that saw the sweeping away of old aristocratic structures of power, not only in the political terrain but also in the intimate relationships between men and women. Radcliffe's heroines, at their best, emerge from their dark Gothic ordeals as new women, confidently asserting their place in a masculine world. Emily's and Radcliffe's other heroines' triumph is that they reassert again and again their capacity for agency and reason that is a counter to a male perspective of femaleness, of stereotypes that stipulate that a woman's place is in the home. Not only does Emily conquer and resist her own weakness and persistence of male authority to define her but her assertive command ultimately fashions a new kind of fictional heroine that is self-determined.

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