

THE HIDDEN DISCOURSE
OF
ANN RADCLIFFE

"A THOUSAND NAMELESS FLOWERS
AMONG THE GRASS":
THE HIDDEN DISCOURSE
OF
ANN RADCLIFFE

BY
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A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University
September 1986

MASTER OF ARTS (1986)
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: "A Thousand Nameless Flowers Among The Grass":
The Hidden Discourse of Ann Radcliffe

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 124

ABSTRACT

In an attempt better to understand the appeal of the Gothic novel during its initial appearance in eighteenth-century England, particularly that of the 'female Gothic'--a sub-genre recently declared by feminist critics such as Claire Kahane, Ellen Moers, and Tania Modleski--this essay considers three novels by Ann Radcliffe, possibly the best-known female writer of her time: *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), and *The Italian* (1797). Beginning with an examination of Radcliffe's unique use of landscapes and her adoption of Burke's Sublime, I postulate a symbology and subtext which address the generally unacknowledged topics of female sexuality and female creativity. The representation of feminine desire, as well as the continued theme of the hidden woman artist, I argue, together comprise the 'hidden discourse' integral to the 'female Gothic' pioneered by Radcliffe.

Bearing in mind the emergence in the later eighteenth-century of a large female audience for Radcliffe's novels, I analyse the different physical prospects and personalities associated with heroine and

villain as politically polarized 'visions' of reality. The inevitable moral and aesthetic conflict of these visions culminates in the heroine's ultimate triumph over the villain and the patriarchal society he represents. Through this analysis of her fiction's hidden discourse, Radcliffe's contribution to the Gothic genre can be seen as politically subversive, her novels concealing a defiance of her male-dominated culture as well as containing an affirmation of identity for her female readers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Richard Morton for his cheerful guidance and expert advice while supervising this thesis. Also my parents, for their support and encouragement over the past summer, and Stephen Beard, best friend and word processing whiz.

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Chapter One:

The Gothic: Review and Reevaluation

Over the past decade, a revisionist urge in academic circles has brought the Gothic novel back into favour as a subject of study. Judith Wilt, in *Ghosts of the Gothic* (1980) suggests a large socio-political component to this concern, as well as the attraction of Freudian and feminist analyses for a new wave of scholars who focus on the 'female Gothic' with "its deep revelations about gender, ego, and power" (3). These recent critical approaches are essential to our reevaluation of the work of Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823). Whatever the reasons for the current resurgence of enthusiasm however, the Gothic's two-hundred year old history clearly guarantees it a place in the well-documented development of English literature, a place deserving some study. Its influence has been felt and its significance charted by Lowry Nelson, Jr., Robert D. Hume and Robert L. Platzner, among others, who each consider its impact on Romantic and post-Romantic writers. Notes Nelson:

Even if we may be inclined to disparage the gothic novel we must still grant that it boldly

and often garishly presented fictionally fertile dilemmas of characterization and situation which slipped into the mainstream of Western literature and, along with many other things, helped bring about what we have now. (257)

While it undeniably bore fruit in the minds of those who followed, as these scholars and others convincingly demonstrate, its roots remain rather obscure. Montague Summers, one of the genre's earliest votaries, describes the origin of the appellation "Gothic":

The word 'Gothic', which was to play so important a part in later days, and which now has so very definite and particular a meaning (especially in relation to literature) originally conveyed the idea of barbarous, tramontane and antique, and was merely a term of reproach and contempt. From its application to architecture...it came to connote almost anything mediaeval, and could be referred to almost any period until the middle, or even the end, of the seventeenth century. (37)

First used in the subtitle of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764), it quickly came to be associated with any work of literature containing reference to architecture or settings that could be considered in some way "Gothic". The obvious physical manifestation or sign of this tantalizingly vague quality was the mediaeval castle, also introduced by Walpole, and faithfully maintained by the writers of

the new genre. Devendra P. Varma writes in *The Gothic Flame* (1957):

The element of terror is inseparably associated with the Gothic castle, which is an image of power, dark, isolated, and impenetrable. No light penetrating its impermeable walls, high and strengthened by bastions, it stands silent, lonely and sublime, frowning defiance on all who dare to invade its solitary reign. (18)

The castle's reign is realized in the Gothic's tyranny over its readers' emotions. The standard instruments of sensation its authors employ are any evoking terror, horror, or a mixture of both, superstition and the supernatural amid exotic or lurid scenery. By using these devices to appeal to its readers' insatiable appetites for emotional titillation, forbidden knowledge, illicit passion, the Gothic achieved its wide-ranging success.

If it created these effects through the ostentatious machinery of implausible plots or melodramatic characters, that did not appear to offend its readers. However, the same formula has traditionally barred it from serious critical consideration, the general assumption being that the Gothic had nothing to offer in the way of intellectual issues or socio-political comment. Its patently escapist nature seemed sufficient to effect its popular career in late eighteenth-century England, while at the same time

discouraging any serious study of the Gothic novel's significance and role, if any, within this important period of growth for English literature. The Gothic was, in fact, an unrepentant victim of intellectual snobbery. This view can be seen in Sir Walter Scott's comment on the Gothic's ultimate value:

Perhaps the perusal of such works may, without injustice, be compared with the use of opiates, baneful when habitually and constantly resorted to, but of most blessed power in those moments of pain and of langour, when the whole head is sore and the whole heart sick. (308)

In a century generally hostile to sore heads and sick hearts, the popularity and proliferation of Gothic novels would indeed appear akin to the secret consumption of intoxicants, a potentially dangerous habit to which young or idle people, especially women, have frequently been prone. According to Michael Sadleir, the mere activity of reading novels at this time was "held in contempt by persons of serious mind, and retained throughout the period something of the furtive allurements of a secret vice" (21).

The furtive, allegedly sinful nature of novel-reading--especially novels of the Gothic genre--suggests a content to match, one sharply at odds with the dominant ideology. Sadleir is quick to note the Gothic's subversive nature (4), which principally springs

from its unabashed emphasis on emotion. The Gothic flouted artistic convention and defied the century's bias towards reason by declaring its domain the relatively unexplored landscape of feeling. Coral Ann Howells confirms this in *Love, Mystery, and Misery* (1978), noting that the first authors of the Gothic were putting into novel form a subject matter that had formerly been the sole property of poetry and drama. Ann Radcliffe, one of the more influential contributors to the new genre, was in fact acclaimed by Scott "The First Poetess of Romantic Fiction". This new type of literature found in turn a whole new audience: middle and upper-class literate women. Perhaps both factors together convinced the authors of these "romances", as they were commonly called, to include the concerns of contemporary women in their fiction. Donald Thomas says of Radcliffe that her characters clearly "represent her readers in fancy dress, living in a Gothic fairyland but still confronted by the domestic or personal problems of middle-class mothers and daughters in 1790 or 1800" (94).

It would appear that the Gothic's mass appeal and large audience of women--negligibly educated, on average--helped assure its initial rejection from traditional academic and literary studies. Yet like its

own restless spirits it has refused to die, reappearing in numerous guises since its earliest incarnation, eventually recalling the attention of the academic world. Still, as late as 1969 Robert D. Hume prefaced his defence of the genre (*PMLA* 84, March 1969) with a statement assuming either "chilly indifference or condescension" on the part of literary historians. His argument for considering the major Gothicists as precursors of the Romantic poets--the canonized perennial favourites among scholars--is an important boost for the genre's reputation as well as its visibility. Hume claims to discern in the writings of the most serious and accomplished novelists of the period--including Ann Radcliffe--an increasing interest in the "literature of process" which reflects its creator's mind, as well as the tentative beginnings of what has come to be known as "reader-response" literature (284).

This fairly recent critical interest in the workings of the Gothic novel replaces more conventional surveys of the genre, such as Eino Railo's *The Haunted Castle* (1927), Montague Summers' exhaustive and idiosyncratic *The Gothic Quest* (1938) and the comparatively more sophisticated *Gothic Flame* (1957) by

Devendra P. Varma. With this century's pervasive interest in the related fields of psychology and sociology, the study of these so-called "shilling shockers" has been revitalized by new approaches which, in the hands of a number of very able critics, reveal new depths in a long-unmined literary vein. J.M.S. Tompkins observes in her Introduction to Varma's book:

For what has altered our attitude to Gothic writings is, of course, the application of Freudian psychology to literature and literary periods, together with the Surrealist dependence on dreams and the unconscious. What came to light in the Gothic Romances, on this theory, were the suppressed neurotic and erotic impulses of educated society. (xiii)

Indeed, as Judith Wilt noted, Freudian or psychoanalytic interpretations are among the most prevalent applied to the Gothic today. Railo was perceptive enough to see the confessional aspect present there. He says of Radcliffe, "In her books, she is obviously confessing her own deepest feelings and emotions" (73-4). Varma takes us in this direction, but generally confines himself to his fascination with the "sense of the numinous" as revealed in certain Gothic novels of the late eighteenth century and especially the 1790s, the Gothic's zenith.

Rhapsodizes Varma:

We discover our larger life in dreams, and the Gothic novel lifts us from the narrow rut and

enables us to join the unspaced firmament; it adds eternity to our trivial hours and gives a sense of infinity to our finite existence.
(212)

He goes on to laud Radcliffe as being ahead of her time, for through her insights into the workings of fear "she contributed to the development of the psychological novel" (107). Like Sadleir, he also perceives a subversive wish expressed in the Gothic, claiming that the very sentiment which "bedews" the pages of Radcliffe's fiction is a part of the covert rebellion introduced by Walpole's *Otranto* and coexistent with the French Revolution. It was, Varma declares, a rebellion fought to recapture emotional lost ground, for "Sentimentalism infused itself into general literature...as a protest and reaction against the emotional coldness of the classical age" (121). He then foreshadows Hume's argument by making the thematic connection between these Gothic novels and the poetry of the Romantics.

Still, in spite of these and other useful conclusions on the evolution of the Gothic, Varma, like Summers and Railo, is too much of a devotee of the genre to really disengage himself from it. He lacks the distance to come to a satisfying conclusion about its

appeal, and he does not consider its significance in the context of the socio-political attitudes of its time. He merely hints at these issues in his final chapter:

The 'fantastic' in literature is the surrealist expression of those historical and social factors which the ordinary chronicle of events in history does not consider significant. Such 'fantasia' express the profoundest, repressed emotions of the individual and society. (217)

Neither the traditional school of literary historians exemplified by Varma, Railo and Summers, however, nor the clever arguments proposed by Nelson, Hume, Platzner or Frederick Garber, who attempt to explain the Gothic's popular appeal by relating it to the Romantic flowering which followed, are really adequate for a better understanding of Ann Radcliffe's novels, the prototype for the 'female Gothic' discussed by so many critics (Moers, Modleski, Kahane). The invocation of the Romantics, after all, reminds us that their appeal in their period--and beyond--was generally to an intellectual elite, one almost completely made up by men. By contrast, the Gothic novel as pioneered by Radcliffe was read by a large, predominately female and undoubtedly less educated audience. The more ambitious readers among them sometimes went on to become writers themselves: this was how Ann Radcliffe started, as Aline

Grant tells us, inspiring other young women in turn through her own illustrious career (*Ann Radcliffe: A Biography*, 40). At the political level, this schism between the two audiences cannot be overestimated. Nearly two hundred years ago, the very act of writing was itself a political act for women, the public rebellion that mirrored the private insurrection of novel-reading. Equality for "the fair sex" was still being debated at the time Ann Radcliffe wrote; education for girls was only tentatively being established outside the home. Yet somehow women began to write and publish their novels. Robert Halsband, in his essay "Women and Literature in 18th Century England", describes the impact of this important development on English culture:

Women became professional writers and journalists; that is, they were for the first time able to earn their living through the sale of their writing. Like men they exploited all available ways: these were private patronage (mainly derived from dedications), subscription publication, journalism, and (through publishers) sale of their books to libraries and the general reading public. Women as authors became so numerous and so prolific, in fact, that during the second half of the century they actually produced the majority of all the novels that were published. (Fritz and Morton, 55)

Furthermore, Halsband notes that with the tremendous increase in female literacy around the turn of the century, women now made up an important part of the

reading public. The growth of the popular lending or circulating libraries, to which one might subscribe for a variable fee, coincided with the emergence of this new audience. This combination of events smoothed the way for Ann Radcliffe, the most well-known and well-respected practitioner of the Gothic, the inventor of the sub-genre labelled by feminist critics 'female Gothic'. She was the author of six completed novels or "romances", a travel book, some poetry and one important essay, "On the Supernatural in Poetry". In her own lifetime she was honoured by these titles: "The Great Enchantress", "The Mighty Magician of Udolpho" and even "The Shakespeare of Romance Writers". Her success inspired many imitators among her sex, but none really equalled her.

This proliferation of female Gothicists initially contributed, no doubt, to the trivialization of the genre as a pastime for bored, leisured ladies, to be devoured by an audience of equally bored and idle women. Indeed, the analogy drawn earlier between narcotic drugs and Gothic novels, the staple of this new audience, is an apt one, for "Novel-reading by women was regarded not merely as a waste of time but a positive threat to morality" (Halsband, Fritz and Morton, 69).

Today, this attitude has virtually reversed

itself in light of the increasing academic interest in women as writers and readers, loosely termed 'feminist criticism'. This is one of the principal reasons for the revival of interest in the novels of Ann Radcliffe, her literary sisters and descendants. About the woman herself, however, very little is known--much to the regret of psychobiographers. Aline Grant in her brief biography of Radcliffe has to work hard to flesh out the bare bones of her apparently quiet, pleasant life, a life devoid of any real excitement and certainly lacking in the kinds of adventures she gave her own heroines. It ended in invalidism and an early death from "spasmodic asthma", as her doctor diagnosed it.

This dearth of information represents the ironic triumph of the genteel lady over the opinionated artist, and satisfied Radcliffe's obvious desire to live in modest obscurity. However, this woman artist's need to be invisible encourages a closer look at a final product so carefully divorced from its creator. It is also an important statement for feminist critics who have focused on the Gothic novel in particular as "the novel of feminine radical protest" (Doody). These critics see a correlation between the recurring figure of the persecuted heroine and the situation of eighteenth-

century women in English society, a society which oppressed them through "the narrow restrictions of a lady's highly civilized existence" (Eva Figes). Margaret Anne Doody in "Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel" writes:

It is in the Gothic novel that women writers could first accuse the 'real world' of falsehood and deep disorder. Or perhaps, they rather asked whether masculine control is not just another delusion in the nightmare of absurd historical reality in which we are all involved. (560)

Tania Modleski, author of *Loving With A Vengeance* (1982) expands this idea, finding the original Gothic conflict within the traditional family unit:

...female Gothics provide an outlet for women's fears about fathers and husbands, fears which are much more pronounced than the sentimental heroine's....It spoke powerfully to the young girl struggling to achieve psychological autonomy in a home where the remote, but all-powerful father ruled over an utterly dependent wife. (20)

Both the medium and the message, in essence, expressed ideas opposing the traditional role of women. The writing and reading of the book required the education and intellectual activity of both its female author and largely female audience, while the content, as the observations quoted above imply, suggested the importance of female independence, if in no other respect

than in the free choice of a husband. This is more radical a stance than it sounds, for as Miriam J.

Benkovitz tells us:

The woman of the eighteenth century who liberated herself came to the realization that for self-development and self-fulfillment, she must first escape the narrow role assigned her by society, whether in the matter of education or in the making of marriages. She must have the right of choice in the educational and sexual decisions, the right to define her own emotional needs and seek their satisfaction. (Fritz and Morton, 40)

As a result of the socio-political awareness fostered by feminist criticism, many of the original Gothic novels-- particularly those written by women--have since been reread and restored to respectful places on library bookshelves, if not in the literary canon itself. Radcliffe's novels, among others, are currently being mined for their symbolic representations of the internal world or the psyche, as well as for what they can tell us about the reality their authors lived and knew. It has been strongly suggested through such analyses that the titillating Gothic, once considered purely escapist by virtue of its supernatural events and exciting adventures, may conceal a deeper truth--one shared by its readers--beneath its obvious props of romance and the various distancing devices. In Radcliffe's novels, for instance, one of the more

frequently noted effects is her use of Edmund Burke's Sublime.

With this aim of searching for the hidden meaning beneath the thrilling trappings of the maligned Gothic, I will consider the last three novels by Ann Radcliffe that were published in her lifetime: *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), the enormously popular *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)¹ and *The Italian* (1797). I begin by looking at the meaning of the sublime in Radcliffe's work.

Note to Chapter One

¹ It is worth noting that Radcliffe's greatest weakness may be her insistence on too much of a good thing: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, at 672 pages, is somewhat labyrinthine, commanding our respect for the capacities of the writer while demanding both leisure and patience on the part of the reader. Despite the conscientious editing done by the late Bonamy Dobrée in preparing The World's Classics edition (1980) of *Udolpho*, I believe I have found a small error or narrative blind alley: on page 493 Emily's unsuccessful suitor Du Pont takes an elaborate leave of her "with a countenance so expressive of love and grief, as to interest the Count more warmly in his cause than before" and quits the party. In the next scene there is no more mention of him until he magically reappears (500), just in time to ask Emily for a dance. He is referred to once more on page 504, then he does not return until page 564, to embarrass Emily once more with his unrequited admiration. I can only conclude that in her intricate interweaving of scene and character, Radcliffe picked up one extra stitch, dropping it again before it was noticed.

Chapter Two:

The Sublime and Radcliffe's Hidden Discourse

It is a fact long-recognized that one of the more significant influences on Radcliffe's novels was Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). This interesting treatise was the latest entry in a debate which began with Longinus' famous essay on the uses of rhetoric, and then diverged into multiple psychological, philosophical and aesthetical discussions of a sensation broadly labelled "sublime". Bandied about in this way for centuries, the term had since acquired the magnificent vagueness that made it ripe for artistic experimentation by the end of the eighteenth century. In fact, as Samuel H. Monk concludes:

No single definition of the term would serve in any single decade for all writers, for such unanimity was never attained; but the word naturally expressed high admiration, and usually implied a strong emotional effect, which, in the latter years of the century, frequently turned on terror. (233)

Since one of the essential functions of the Gothic was to evoke such a sensation, whether through the frenzied prose of Matthew "Monk" Lewis, or the subtler,

suggestive language of Ann Radcliffe, the sublime effect became almost indispensable for Gothicists. Their reliance on it signalled an important change in the concept of literature as a whole in the eighteenth century, for as Frederick W. Price observes "one of the most important changes in attitudes toward art...was the greater emphasis which writers began to place upon the power of art to affect or move the emotions of the beholder" (43-4). The sublime thus became an important artistic tool, whether evoking the awe felt in the presence of the divinity, or the grandeur of the natural universe. In the Gothic, it often provided the spark which, if not quite capable of carrying readers into what critics consider the classically Romantic transcendence of the temporal, could, as Robert D. Hume suggested in his article, point significantly towards such a sensation. In Radcliffe's particular case, the use made of Burke's *Sublime* is readily apparent: he provided not only the basic model for evoking the desired Gothic response but, more specifically, he first formulated the "Sublime of terror", a real source of inspiration for Radcliffe's own distinctive "terror-Gothic". According to the *Enquiry* this is:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say,

whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (39)

The stimulation of "the ideas of pain, and danger" can be frequently observed in Radcliffe's well-documented habit of creating a sense of imminent pain or danger or the appearance of the supernatural, a sensation which is ultimately either unfulfilled, or shown to be a product of her heroines' febrile imaginations. The "Sublime of terror" which creates this state of apprehension or dread, thus leads only to the bathetic deflation of both reader's and heroine's expectations.¹

In her interest in the manipulation of the imagination as well as her faithful adoption of his Sublime prototypes--repeated throughout the innumerable landscape descriptions which fill her novels--Radcliffe follows Burke closely indeed. For this reason Varma calls her "a mistress of hints, associations, silence, and emptiness", who "only half-revealing her picture leaves the rest to the imagination" (103). This remark is worth keeping in mind when examining her use of the Sublime, especially its numinous capacity to suggest

without stating. For as Thomas Weiskel puts it in *The Romantic Sublime* (1976), defining the "semiotic character of the sublime moment", "The absence of a signified itself assumes the status of a signifier, disposing us to feel that behind this newly significant absence lurks a newly discovered presence..." (28). The suggestive quality of her Sublime landscapes may not seem apparent on first consideration of those descriptive passages which appear so exhaustive--and exhausting--in detail to the reader. But according to Sir Walter Scott, one of her earliest admirers, they prove to be largely subjective and rhetorical under close scrutiny, impossible to recreate without significant shaping by the individual (qtd. in Howells, 38-9). Radcliffe seems to be an artist who revels in the "force" and "vividness" of her colours, as Varma comments, not in "correctness of outline", for Scott's observation applies to all her scene description, whether invoking the Burkean Sublime or not. Her fondness for such descriptive passages has been commented on by even her earliest reviewers: *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1794) objects to the "too great frequency of landscape-painting; which... wearies the reader with repetitions" (Vol. LXIV, Part II, 834). Close observation and comparison with her peers led

Samuel H. Monk to declare her "the landscape novelist of all time" (217). This particular characteristic suggests an added dimension to her carefully plotted novels, one which I shall explore with reference to her use of Burke's Sublime in this chapter.

Recently it has been proposed by several critics that this ostensible aesthetic cliché, the sublime, may have had a radically different function in its later usage than the traditional one of reiterating humanity's humble place in the vast and mysterious universe. According to Weiskel, the sublime was also used to provide "a language for urgent and apparently novel experiences of anxiety and excitement which were in need of legitimation" (4). Radcliffe presents her Sublime scenery to the reader with such regularity in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Romance of the Forest*, and even the comparatively streamlined *Italian*, that I believe it to be an essential if silent component in an understanding of these texts as members of a subversive genre. Coral Ann Howells observes that "the novels are full of sublime and picturesque scenic descriptions, sometimes evoking a purely aesthetic response in the reader, but more frequently used as a kind of visual correspondence suggestive of an inner psychological

state" (24). It is in terms of the projection of an internal state that I want to examine Radcliffe's use of landscape and the Sublime. One lengthy but pivotal passage from *Udolpho* will prove representative of a number of parallel scenes contained in the novels.

As the travellers still ascended among the pine forests, steep rose over steep, the mountains seemed to multiply as they went, and what was the summit of one eminence proved to be only the base of another. At length, they reached a little plain, where the drivers stopped to rest the mules, whence a scene of such extent and magnificence opened below, as drew even from Madame Montoni a note of admiration. Emily lost, for a moment, her sorrows, in the immensity of nature. Beyond the amphitheatre of mountains, that stretched below, whose tops appeared as numerous almost, as the waves of the sea, and whose feet were concealed by the forests--extended the *Campagna* of Italy, where cities and rivers, and woods and all the glow of cultivation were mingled in gay confusion. The Adriatic bounded the horizon, into which the Po and the Brenta, after winding through the whole extent of the landscape, poured their fruitful waves. Emily gazed long on the splendours of the world she was quitting, of which the whole magnificence seemed thus given to her sight only to increase her regret on leaving it; for her, Valancourt alone was in that world; to him alone her heart turned, and for him alone fell her bitter tears.

From this sublime scene the travellers continued to ascend among the pines, till they entered a narrow pass of the mountains, which shut out every feature of the distant country, and, in its stead, exhibited only tremendous crags, impending over the road, where no vestige of humanity, or even of vegetation, appeared, except here and there the trunk and

scathed branches of an oak, that hung heavily headlong from the rock, into which its strong roots had fastened. The pass, which led into the heart of the Apennine, at length opened to day, and a scene of mountains stretched in long perspective, as wild as any the travellers had yet passed. Still vast pine-forests hung upon their base, and crowned the ridgy precipice, that rose perpendicularly from the vale, while, above, the rolling mists caught the sun-beams, and touched their cliffs with all the magical colouring of light and shade. The scene seemed perpetually changing, and its features to assume new forms, as the winding road brought them to the eye in different attitudes; while the shifting vapours, now partially concealing their minuter beauties and now illuminating them with splendid tints, assisted the illusions of the sight.

Though the deep vallies between these mountains were, for the most part, clothed with pines, sometimes an abrupt opening presented a perspective of only barren rocks, with a cataract flashing from their summit among broken cliffs, till its waters, reaching the bottom, foamed along with unceasing fury; and sometimes pastoral scenes exhibited their 'green delights' in the narrow vales, smiling amid surrounding horror. There herds and flocks of goats and sheep, browsing under the shade of hanging woods, and the shepherds little cabin, reared on the margin of a clear stream, presenting a sweet picture of repose. (225-6)

Burke's concepts are clearly present in this dramatic passage: Sublime mountain ranges are contrasted with pastoral scenes either containing, or suggesting, the grassy meadow, cottage green, or--most significantly--the fertile valley. These separate vistas, suggesting by their juxtaposition the polarities

of up and down, prosperity and sterility, Byron's *Manfred* and Wordsworth's "Michael", among others, remain a constant in all three novels, although their descriptions may be condensed or extended depending on the narrative's requirements. I propose that in all such scenes a second, hidden discourse--as French thinker Michel Foucault popularized the term--is working through these elements, and working through the approved instrument of the Sublime. Invoking this established convention, Radcliffe is thus able to suggest something beyond the scope or capacity of her text to do: the politics and pleasures of female sexuality.

Within the accepted limitations of the text, the word, language itself, it can be assumed that Radcliffe suffered from additional restrictions, just as she did in her societal role as a woman in a male-ordered culture. And as a female writer, if she transgressed these implicit boundaries, she was liable to receive treatment analogous to her own heroines' persecution at the hands of autocratic males. While she appeared to accept uncomplainingly the female artist's added restrictions (as far as Grant can detect, anyway), to the extent of even dignifying by her lady-like demeanor the Gothic's somewhat unsavoury reputation, the striking use she makes

of these vistas invites the careful reader to reappraise her standing as the "decorous lady" Frederick Garber labels her, a reactionary hard at work to maintain an image of order in the face of chaos ("Meaning and Mode in Gothic Fiction", 163). I believe that Radcliffe's trademark landscapes contain a hidden discourse that presents a uniquely feminine viewpoint, one which could not be made overt at the time she was writing. In the words of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Guber:

the most successful women writers often seem to have channeled their female concerns into secret or at least obscure corners. In effect, such women have created submerged meanings, meanings hidden within or behind the more accessible, 'public' content of their works....
(72)

To make this supposition clear, it is necessary to examine the hidden discourse present in this central example.

This Sublime scene--for so it is labelled by the author--contains all the elements Edmund Burke deemed essential to the creation of that "astonishment" where "the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it" (Burke, 57). The mountain, Burke's archetypal Sublime, is a stock figure in these Sublime scenes and one that appears, to varying degrees,

in all three novels. This vista, just preceding their arrival--and the ladies' incarceration--at the castle of Udolpho, is increased and prolonged by an overview of the Italian countryside, encompassing cities, rivers, woods, and a glimpse of the Adriatic Ocean. But as Varma observed, these details appear more as "hints" or "associations", vaguely sketched in to create this moment of increased perspective that Radcliffe, as moral dramatist, chooses to juxtapose with Emily's imminent descent into the ethical purgatory that is Udolpho.

The mountains, however, are an undeniably real presence. I suggest that in all three cases they are a conspicuously male image--Freudian or otherwise--and one associated consistently with the villain. Outside of obvious sexual symbolism, the mountain further suggests will, power and the desire for knowledge, all contained in a huge, upward-thrusting topographical structure. The vertical movement reappears again and again in connection with these traditionally masculine pursuits and attributes while the mountain becomes an emblem of Radcliffe's masculine principle, present in the Sublime landscape. There are the inevitable variations from book to book, naturally, as Radcliffe refines her symbology: in *The Romance of the Forest*, which preceded *Udolpho*,

the forest is the major representative of the masculine principle, along with the Abbey. And in *The Italian* there is the unavoidable phallic symbol, the volcano Vesuvius--which the hero and his loyal servant regard fondly as a kind of talisman--as well as the sinister forest of Garganus where the heroine is smuggled off to be assassinated. (*The Italian* also shares with *Udolpho* a strongly stressed analogy between the perceived dichotomy of English--ill-disguised by her French setting in *Udolpho*--and Italian culture, and the archetypal bipolarity of Female and Male: see *Italian*, pp. 1-4.)

What I am postulating is a topographical symbology that emphasizes the conflict between villain and heroine in the novel's hidden discourse, which is finally one of sexual politics. This sexual theme has been frequently noted by critics of the Gothic and cited as the main motivation underlying the action of Radcliffe's novels: the betrothal, abduction, attempted seduction, and so on, of a marriageable young woman (see Figs, Mise, Kahane, Wolff). Raymond W. Mise, in his study "The Gothic Heroine and the Nature of the Gothic Novel" (1980) shrewdly suggests that the real mystery in the Gothic novel is human sexual behaviour. In fact, as Foucault so eloquently writes in his provocative book,

The History of Sexuality (1980), it is about this time that

sex gradually became an object of great suspicion, the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within us: a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends. (69)

The polarization of the sexes present in the topography implies both an instinctive conflict and a magnetic attraction, providing the hint of ambivalence remaining in the heroine's attitude towards the villain. Just as she fearfully admires the Sublime mountain, she also recognizes the villain's attractions while continuing to oppose his morally abhorrent schemes. This ambivalence leads some critics to posit a full-blown love triangle of heroine, hero and villain, operating subtextually (see Cynthia Griffin Wolff's article, "The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality" and Mise's study of the heroine). It is true that while withstanding the villain's wiles, the heroine nevertheless remains fascinated by his open display of passion and will, those qualities which she herself is most often denied. This ambivalence is then transferred to the masculine or Sublime topography. A moment of such mixed feelings occurs in a brief but striking tableau at

the beginning of *The Romance of the Forest*, when Adeline, in the company of villainous La Motte and his family, first enters the ruined Abbey, the villain's home and prime symbol of the masculine principle:

The horses being now disengaged from the carriage, the party moved towards the edifice. As they proceeded, Peter, who followed them, struck a light, and they entered the ruins by the flame of sticks, which he had collected. The partial gleams thrown across the fabric seemed to make its desolation more solemn, while the obscurity of the greater part of the pile heightened its sublimity, and led fancy on to scenes of horror. Adeline, who had hitherto remained silent, now uttered an exclamation of mingled admiration and fear. A kind of pleasing dread thrilled her bosom, and filled all her soul. Tears started to her eyes:--she wished, yet feared to go on;--she hung upon the arm of La Motte, and looked at him with a sort of hesitating interrogation. (Vol. I, 38-9)

Much later, in Leleucourt with her second 'family' Adeline observes a terrifying scene when Clara La Luc's horse, frightened by a thunderstorm, bolts down a mountain side with the petrified girl. Just previous to this, Radcliffe tells us that "Adeline almost wished to have witnessed the tremendous effect of a thunderstorm in these regions" (Vol. III, 91). The thunderstorm is feared and admired as a truly Sublime effect, a loosing of celestial passions--the angry rumble of thunder, the vengeful flash of lightning--which connect it with the

villain and the masculine principle. Once again, the heroine struggles with a mixture of fear and fascination for her opposite principle. The result, as this scene strongly implies, is the real danger--moral as well as physical--created by even a momentary surrender to passion.

A peal of thunder, which seemed to shake the earth to its foundation, and was reverberated in tremendous echoes from the cliffs, burst over their heads. Clara's horse took fright at the sound, and setting off, hurried her with amazing velocity down the mountain towards the lake, which washed its foot....Clara kept her seat, but terror had almost deprived her of her senses. Her efforts to preserve herself were mechanical, for she scarcely knew what she did. The horse, however, carried her safely almost to the foot of the mountain, but was making towards the lake, when a gentleman who travelled along the road caught the bridle as the animal endeavoured to pass. (Vol. III, 92)

This brave gentleman rapidly becomes Clara's suitor and one of the novel's subordinate heroes. He establishes his right to both positions by this quick action, one which demonstrates, at the second level of discourse, that he can control such seductive but dangerous energies as passion, exemplified neatly by the thunderstorm's disastrous effect on the skittish horse.

To complement the masculine principle contained in the Sublime landscape, Radcliffe employs the Burkean Beautiful, in the shape of those pastoral scenes which

"exhibited their 'green delights' in the narrow vales, smiling amid surrounding horror", to suggest the corresponding feminine principle. The symbolic function of such landscapes for women is described by Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* (255-64) as well as by Gilbert and Gubar in their look at the archetypal feminine connection with the earth in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (93-104). In Radcliffe's case, the image that is most often paired with the heroine is the valley, with its associations of fertility, community and the downward movement--not to be interpreted here as a moral decline, but rather as a closeness to the earth, and an egalitarian character. Emily St. Aubert's first home, after all, is 'La Vallée', with its Edenic overtones and saintly father. This father benevolently partakes of the masculine principle to the degree that he studies "the treasures of knowledge and the illuminations of genius" from his upstairs study, where he enjoys his Sublimely melancholy prospect while his daughter, in her "green-house room", occupies herself with "her books, her drawings, her musical instruments", looking out on the pastoral setting before her (*Udolpho*, 2-3). While sharing, and indeed, teaching the heroine many of her cherished attitudes, St. Aubert is here described as a botanist, a career which demands

an aloof, scientific, rather than a reverent or artistic appreciation of nature: it is he who sees the common glow-worm in the magical gleam of light which inspires Emily to compose a poem (15-16). This sexual separation of attitudes towards nature is also present in *The Romance of the Forest*, for La Luc, the good father, is a part-time astronomer while his sister, Mme. La Luc, practices herbalism--not an artistic but certainly an egalitarian appreciation of nature's gifts, devoid of any intellectual elitism. This is another detail which emphasizes the upward movement of the masculine principle and the feminine's opposite motion (Vol. III, 53-4, 111-2), which features in the novels' repeated motif of sexual polarization.

The masculine principle innocuously suggested by La Luc and St. Aubert--good men who encourage the heroine's autonomy--becomes threatening only when realized in the villain. Radcliffe's villains make knowledge and power their obsession and are depicted in her symbolic landscapes as the "savage nature" of mountains, towers and castles. The feminine principle reflecting the heroine's psychic and sexual being, by contrast, is less commanding but just as persistent, imaged in the pastoral scene, especially the valley or garden landscape.

Another good example of Radcliffe's presentation of both landscapes in one prospect can be found in *The Italian*, 158-9, where hero and heroine automatically respond to the aspects embodying their respective principles. This symbology is noted also by Mise in his study of the Gothic heroine. He adds that this topographical contrast

suggests a masculine feminine differentiation as well as the passion versus reason conflict that is expressed by the contrasting of landscapes in *Udolpho*. The sublime scene suggests masculine assertiveness and passion while the cultivated valley suggests feminine submissiveness as well as rationality. The heroine's attitude toward the contrasting scenes, especially as revealed in *Udolpho*, is an example of her ambivalence. (179)

Mise's summation suggests more possible oppositions contained within the male-female dichotomy. The sexual ambivalence he ascribes to the heroine is a real factor, as I have allowed, but ultimately not the deciding one in terms of the novels' action or the heroines' behaviour. It should be noted, for example, that in *The Italian* Ellena and Vivaldi finally retire to an English-type valley (412), Radcliffe's appointed moral setting, while in *The Romance of the Forest* the reunited couple depart Paris for a more wholesome, pastoral lifestyle in Lelencourt (Vol. III, 289-99). And Emily and Valancourt, of course, return to La Vallée.

It is also apparent that the hero, like the good father, expresses only a portion of the masculine principle illustrated by the villain. Instead he occupies a somewhat androgynous position--undoubtedly more masculine than the heroine, but also more feminine than the villain: that is, containing the important attributes of virtue and sensitivity the heroine lives by. His position is best imaged, topographically, in the tree. It is the pine forests, after all, which provide the transition from rocky mountains to the pleasant valley in this passage from *Udolpho*, and we find an echo of the faithful lover or parent in "the oak, that hung nearly headlong from the rock, into which its strong roots had fastened."² But his symbolic identification with this landscape is inconsistent, only presented during the most dire confrontations between heroine and villain. Otherwise the hero makes his main identification with the masculine principle personified by the villain, as Vivaldi does in the scene referred to above.

These contrasting prospects of masculine and feminine principles involve differences of values, moral as well as aesthetic. The landscape containing the feminine principle is usually associated with music--that

most egalitarian of arts--and populated by peasants and farmers as a sign of its fecund humbleness. This pastoral element shows its psychological and political import by persisting even in the most unlikely places--as we see in this example from *Udolpho*--just as delicate Emily must bide her time with Montoni. Here in the passage quoted, the mountain's bulk is Sublimely obscured by rolling mists: a subtle depiction of the heroine/villain relationship, the masculine directness of the villain being continually rebuffed and diffused by the heroine's modest but firm temperament. Yet the female character is most frequently described by the villain and patriarchal society as "capricious"³. This is a charge which is ironic when applied to her loyal heroines, as Radcliffe makes amply clear, one expressing merely the villain's derogatory view of female autonomy (see Gilbert and Gubar, 16). On the second level of discourse, however, this description is curiously apt, for clouds, mists or vapours, all noted for their mutability or "caprice" are recurring features in landscapes containing both principles, implying, as in this passage where the mist obscures the mountain, a subtle subversion of the masculine power. But there is another reason for the connection of the heroine with

these capricious elements. Note the allusive potency of this line:

The scene seemed perpetually changing, and its features to assume new forms, as the winding road brought them to the eye in different attitudes, while the shifting vapours, now partially concealing their minuter beauties and now illuminating them with splendid tints, assisted the illusions of the sight. (226)

This delicate obscurity, in fact, becomes a statement of traditional society's attitudes towards sexual feelings, attitudes which the virtuous woman--in this case the heroine--has no choice but to adopt. Such an attitude demands that all vestiges of sexuality be hidden from view and suppressed by the young woman, who is taught to value delicacy and sensitivity as a result, consequently avoiding the directness of the villain, with its connoted sexual energy. The concealing aspect of the vapours represents the societal impulse towards suppression. Yet as Radcliffe suggests, vapours also have the capacity to shift and reveal or "illuminate", an action which refers to the heroine's natural impulse to make her intimate feelings known. As a result, this single line manages to convey both the influence of society as well as the assertion of human instinct. Furthermore, this very mutability or "caprice" can also be considered a general attribute--expressed by Radcliffe perhaps only

unconsciously--of the female experience of sexuality: one of subtlety, nuance and flexible energy. The villain's description of the heroine as "capricious" is thus an oddly appropriate one at the hidden level of discourse. This same sexual subtext reappears frequently, concealed by scenes of similar imagery throughout the three books.⁴

Radcliffe's sexual imagery is also flexible in its ability to allude to several different emotional needs. An important one, narratively speaking, is the desire of the pining heroine for her absent lover, a desire which is often projected onto the landscape, the heroine's main solace.⁵ When this happens, a displaced eroticism invests the natural prospect with the value of the longed-for person. This subtle transference of heroine's love for hero onto the physical environment is openly and humorously demonstrated in *The Italian*, when Paulo, a hapless victim of the Inquisition, picks out a prison roof beneath which he believes his beloved master is languishing (388). At their touching reunion, some pages later, Paulo cannot relinquish the former association of the prison roof with Vivaldi, investing it still with the concern he had felt then for his master:

The contrast of his present joy to his remembered grief again brought tears into

Paulo's eyes, he smiled and wept, and sobbed and laughed with such rapid transition, that Vivaldi began to be alarmed for him; when, suddenly becoming calm, he looked up in his master's face, and said gravely, but with eagerness, 'Pray Signor, was not the roof of your little prison peaked, and was there not a little turret stuck up at one corner of it? and was there not a battlement round the turret? and was there not'--Vivaldi, after regarding him for a moment, replied smilingly. 'Why truly, my good Paulo, my dungeon was so far from the roof that I never had an opportunity of observing it.'

'That is very true, Signor,' replied Paulo. 'very true indeed; but I did not happen to think of that. I am certain, though, it was as I say, and I was sure of it at the time. O Signor! I thought that roof would have broke my heart, O how I did look at it! and now to think that I am here, with my dear master once again!' (406-7)

It is this gap or absence of the beloved in the heroine's psychic landscape that the Sublime helps to fill, consequently lending an aura of unfulfilled potential to the physical prospect, although it may be translated afterwards into an awareness of God, the worship of nature, or a moment of creative inspiration. The very variety of the Sublime's possible meanings makes it a suitable repository for feelings which by society's laws are inadmissible to the text, if not to consciousness itself. That is another reason why clouds, mists, vapours and sunsets--sunset being also Emily's appointed time to think of her lover--are appropriate representations of

the heroine's desires. For not only are these natural phenomena suitably capricious, they are also mediatory in their effect, acting as 'thresholds' between one element or experience and another: sky and earth, day and night, water and air. This aspect makes them powerful symbols for female sexuality, which is caught between the crude directness of the villain, and the constraints of her role as an unmarried woman. This very elusiveness inspires the obsessive control of female sexuality which is the unspoken motive for so much of the action in Radcliffe's novels. According to Foucault,

the first figure to be invested by the deployment of sexuality, one of the first to be 'sexualized', was the 'idle' woman. She inhabited the outer edge of the 'world', in which she always had to appear as a value, and of the family, where she was assigned a new destiny charged with conjugal and parental obligations. (121)

The expression of her sexual nature thus slipping between the cracks of a male-centered moral and sexual code, it remains a mystery unexplored at the first level of discourse. But in the hidden discourse sexual imagery in the landscapes acts not just as displaced eroticism but also as a reaffirmation of the heroine's unique female identity, independent of male involvement. The pastoral valley or garden which briefly relieves the masculine

landscape, and refreshes the heroine, does so by offering a reflection of her own being in the midst of a situation physically and psychologically hostile to her. (See note four.)

A metaphor extended through all three books which addresses this complexity of sexual role and response is the veil, another "threshold" image and "an image of confinement that endows boundaries with a transitory and ambivalent fluidity" as Gilbert and Gubar describe it (469). Worn regularly by all the heroines, the veil Sublimely obscures without concealing, placing a delicate distance between the woman and the world--particularly the predatory vision of men--while simultaneously inviting this very attention.⁴ Gilbert and Gubar here expand on the veil's potential as a female symbol:

An image of confinement different from yet related to the imagery of enclosure that constantly threatens to stifle the heroines of women's fiction, the veil resembles a wall, but even when it is opaque it is highly impermanent, while transparency transforms it into a possible entrance or exit. Unlike a door, which is either open or shut, however, it is always potentially both--always holding out the mystery of imminent revelation, the promise or the threat that one might be able to see, hear, or even feel through the veil which separates the two distinct spheres: the phenomenal and noumenal; culture and nature, two consciousnesses; life and death; public appearance and private reality; conscious and unconscious impulses; past and present, present and future. (468-9)

The veil thus captures some of the resonances of the Sublime, but is usually restricted to a purely sexual context. It has the same tantalizing effect on observers as those sunlit vapours which "assisted the illusions of the sight", coyly concealing and then suddenly revealing the forceful statement of the majestic mountain. The veil protects the heroine's sexuality from direct assault, while inviting speculation, encouraging fascination. This interpretation helps explain Ellena's shock when she lifts her veil for an instant to signal to a disguised Vivaldi at San Stefano, and meets instead the appreciative gaze and silent salutation of an unknown man (*The Italian*, 130-1). The lifting of her veil clearly signified a sexual responsiveness Ellena was too eager to display.

Prudence thus becomes an important part of the sensibility which governs all the heroines' actions, despite the occasional excesses her sensibility leads her into (see Durant, Poovey, Smith). By contrast, direct speech and impulsive action are perceived not only as indelicate, but also as potentially dangerous, as Ellena's mistake with the veil shows: encouraging abduction, seduction and even rape. Heroine and hero both express this sensibility by maintaining

their own vision of the world, a moral vision which also requires aesthetic awareness in selecting its timely gaps and omissions. Writes Mise: "a screen, a veil, a secret, or an aspect of her personality such as delicacy, determine what Emily can see and thus know" (116). This "screen" of delicacy means that in *The Italian*, Vivaldi hesitates to tell Ellena everything about the machinations of her evil relative Schedoni (409), while she refuses to take in the horrible truth about the villain's midnight visit to her bedroom (242).

Her sensibility sets her apart not only from the villain--who is indifferent to all aesthetics--but also from the secondary characters with their phlegmatic natures. For instance, Mme. Cheron, early in *Udolpho*, misconstrues Emily's behaviour regarding Valancourt in the worst possible way (109-12), thus revealing her unfeminine bluntness and proving her a fit partner for brutal Montoni. Similarly, in *The Romance of the Forest*, Theodore's genteel labelling of Adeline as a "friend" is greeted with laughter by his boorish captors as a rakish innuendo (Vol. II, 144-5). It follows that both heroine and hero often prefer the imaginative world of art, music, poetry--including an occasional tendency to superstition--to coarse reality. But at the same

time, they share a realization of the limitations of artistic expression, and a wise sense of the indescribability of strong emotions, such as passion. This reinforces the importance of the nebulously defined Sublime as a repository for inexpressible or inadmissible feelings.⁷ Such awareness also highlights Radcliffe's allusions to the ultimate inadequacy of language, despite our desperate attempts to capture and control experience through the forging of discourse: a theme that is explored by Foucault.⁸ Radcliffe also includes a false sensibility, antithetical to the heroine's, which is displayed by villainous characters like the Marquis de Montalt and the Marchesa di Vivaldi, whose circumlocution regarding their evil plots is aimed at evading the responsibility and the ultimate guilt they must assume for them (*The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. II, 246-50 & Vol. III, 1-5; *The Italian*, 169-70). However, as Radcliffe shows, such silence is not tasteful but monstrous, uniting delicacy of speech with the evilness of the thought, a thought which they imply is inadmissible to speech, but not to consciousness. As Schedoni points out knowingly, "Silence is sometimes eloquence" (174), making these silent partners in crime even more despicable by their refusal to employ the discourse of villainy.

The true sensibility the heroine possesses would appear to leave no room for the expression of passion, at least, not in the direct fashion demonstrated by the villain, and, to a lesser degree, the young hero. The sexual symbolism I have suggested as comprising a hidden discourse does so in the subtlest way, connoting sexual receptivity while often reinforcing the conventions of the Sublime. Another "capricious" element which fulfills this dual function is the sunset or sunrise. One example of Radcliffe's use of this image to suggest the hidden discourse operating under the aegis of the Sublime is found in *The Romance of the Forest*:

One morning, being unable to sleep, she arose at a very early hour. The faint light of day now trembled through the clouds, and gradually spreading from the horizon, announced the rising sun. Every feature of the landscape was slowly unveiled, moist with the dews of night, and brightening with the dawn, till at length the sun appeared, and shed the full flood of day. The beauty of the hour invited her to walk, and she went forth into the forest to taste the sweets of morning. The carols of new-waked birds saluted her as she passed, and the fresh gale came scented with the breath of flowers, whose tints glowed more vivid through the dew-drops that hung on their leaves.

She wandered on without noticing the distance, and following the windings of the river, came to a dewy glade, whose woods, sweeping down to the very edge of the water, formed a scene so sweetly romantic, that she seated herself at the foot of a tree to contemplate its beauty. These images insensibly

soothed her sorrow, and inspired her with that soft and pleasing melancholy so dear to the feeling mind. For some time she sat lost in a reverie, while the flowers that grew on the banks beside her, seemed to smile in new life, and drew from her a comparison with her own condition. (Vol. I, 165-7)

Two events immediately follow this sensuous scene. The heroine composes and sings a song inspired by the lily, and she encounters her future suitor for the first time: "a young man in a hunter's dress, leaning against a tree, and gazing on her with that deep attention which marks an enraptured mind." Instantly, Radcliffe tells us, "A thousand apprehensions shot athwart her busy thought; and she now first remembered her distance from the abbey" (168). The narcissistic song, proposing a subtle resemblance between girl and flower--their mutually "drooping" states--followed by the immediate alarm on seeing the unknown young man, strongly suggests the stirrings of sexual longings which are quickly camouflaged by a guilt too strong to be fully explained by such an innocent walk.

Another indicator of desire, already mentioned, is its inability to find shape in words. The normally well-spoken heroine, a match for the villain in eloquence and argument, becomes tongue-tied in the presence of feelings for which she has been taught no language.

Instead she expresses her heart with her face, her eyes, and once safely wed, we assume, with her body as well. In Rachel M. Brownstein's words, "Inarticulate forces that move solid bodies together--sex, storms, and magnetism--escape laws and language; reticence, the withholding of language may be powerful by suggesting the existence of a hidden power" (219). Such potent moments occur regularly between hero and heroine. Here is a striking instance, again from *The Romance of the Forest*:

Madam, proceeding with her plan, said, 'The Marquis was now expected, and she hoped whatever difference remained, would be perfectly adjusted.' Adeline blushed, and endeavouring to reply, her lips faltered. Conscious of this agitation, and of the observance of Madame La Motte, her confusion increased, and her endeavours to suppress served only to heighten it. Still she tried to renew the discourse, and still she found it impossible to collect her thoughts. Shocked lest madam should apprehend the sentiment which had till this moment been concealed almost from herself, her colour fled, she fixed her eyes on the ground, and, for some time, found it difficult to respire. Madame La Motte inquired if she was ill, when Adeline, glad of the excuse, withdrew to the indulgence of her own thoughts, which were now wholly engrossed by the expectation of seeing again the young chevalier, who had accompanied the Marquis. (Vol. I, 206-7)

Passages such as these suggest that rather than ignoring sexual behaviour, Radcliffe is in fact referring to it regularly, with the deftest touch reserved for her

supposedly sexless heroines, "speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as the secret" as Foucault writes. In fact, Eva Figes considers the Gothic novel as providing "a safety-valve--at least in fantasy--for the sexual repression actively promoted by women's novels which constantly hammered home the necessity for prudence and self-control in the passional sphere" (73). While nothing in the narrative of Radcliffe's novels presents a challenge to "prudence and self-control", [the very excitement echoed in the reader by the heroine's exotic adventures, the risks she is forced to take in her position as a captive and a woman alone in the world, implies a whole range of imagined actions] including but not restricted to sexual activity--to satisfy their readers' cravings for adventure and autonomy: physical, political, intellectual, sexual. Many critics believe that the Gothic is most significant in performing this function and so "illuminating the night side of life" as Raymond W. Mose terms it. According to Mose's study the heroine lacks confidence in her own sexuality due to her chaste and repressive upbringing. The abductions and sexual threats she is subjected to by the villain and his followers satisfy her unconscious need for such attentions, which in turn gratify her womanhood.

Mise's obvious psychoanalytic approach, which emphasizes the repression of the heroine's sexual urges and sees her persecution as the enactment of unconscious wishes is one commonly used for interpretations of the Gothic, particularly the 'female Gothic' Radcliffe pioneered. It finds a rich subtext in the haunted houses, dreams, incest--implied or actual--and bedrooms with mysteriously unlockable inner doors which recur again and again in the genre. This reading, however, too often reflects the misogyny inherent in Freud's theories of sexuality, these being the venerable foundation on which it is laid. It is therefore as much a product of patriarchal society as any of the exegeses which preceded it. Eino Railo's 1927 gloss on the heroine/villain relationship, for instance, is subsumed virtually intact within the psychoanalytic reading. In Railo's eyes:

This persecution [of the heroine], irrespective of the conditions in which it occurs, is at bottom an erotic feature, and reflects, no matter what the type of literature or the period may be, the active love-instinct of the male and the passivity of the female. (280)

Victimized in psychoanalysis as much as in society, the Gothic heroine thus remains a passive victim in the eyes of these scholars: the reluctant prey of her own

unacknowledged desires and their agents. Ellen Moers appears to subscribe to this view, concluding that "in the power of villains, her heroines are forced to do what they never could do alone, whatever their ambitions: scurry up the top of pasteboard Alps, spy out exotic vistas, penetrate bandit-infested forests" (126). Even minus her patronizing tone, Moers concurs with the psychoanalytic readers of Radcliffe by perceiving the heroine as a weak puppet of the villain, that villain Cynthia Griffin Wolff aggrandizes as the "demon lover". This reading reinforces the patriarchal notion that men are responsible for women's sexuality, seeing it as a force to be shaped and not an independent energy in its own right. This attitude perpetuates men's control of women through the "hysterization of women's bodies", among other strategies, as Foucault describes it (104 ff.). Coral Ann Howells argues that the heroine as persecuted victim of a masochistic fantasy was the only expression of female sexuality possible at the time Radcliffe wrote. She insists that

this failure [to talk about sex] can only be partially explained by the difficulty of finding a language to talk about passion and instinct; more importantly it is a failure to come to terms with such feelings on the part of the novelists themselves. They wanted to explore and exploit violent emotions, but at

the same time they were not certain enough of their own values to revolt against eighteenth-century moral and literary conventions. (13-14)

This argument appears safe enough, if taking a conservative stance towards these 'female Gothics'--and a slightly condescending one towards their authors--but does not allow for the veracity of Foucault's compelling argument: that we are subtly programmed by society to talk about sex constantly within certain neutralizing patriarchal contexts. Writes Foucault:

The central issue...is not to determine whether one says yes or no to sex, whether one formulates prohibitions or permissions, whether one asserts its importance or denies its effects, or whether one refines the words one uses to designate it: but to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it, and which store and distribute the things that are said. (11)

As a woman, Radcliffe would normally be restricted to being spoken about, an object rather than the subject doing the speaking, and her heroines merely passive recipients of others' desires. Yet within the phallogentric framework governing both text and society, I maintain that she has created a second level of discourse addressing the fact of female sexuality as well as the fact of its banishment from the process of

discourse. Judith Wilt is one critic who clearly disagrees with Howells' dismissive conclusion. She points to the presence of such a discourse in the Gothic, arguing that

The Gothic above all seeks to remind those caught in its plots of larger powers, of finer tremulations located in places outside (or inside) the scope of everyday life, located in places apparently abandoned but secretly tenanted, places apparently blank but secretly full of signals. (295)

Certainly this is a nebulous zone I am highlighting, an area that is indeed "apparently blank but secretly full of signals", in Wilt's apt phrase. Yet as Frederick W. Price reminds us, the woman writer had to tread very carefully for "Literary theory, eighteenth-century psychology, and contemporary society all contributed to the common assumption that what a woman was capable of imagining she might be capable of carrying into action" (124).

Still, within this stifling environment Radcliffe has created heroines who experience healthy desire--albeit one reflecting its own lack of permissible language--who regulate their own sexuality in a misogynistic world, and who are confident of their own identity despite being besieged by the villain and the masculine principle. This is not, in fact, a world of

"sublimation and repression" as Howells and the psychoanalytic critics would have us believe, but rather one where sexuality finds Sublime expression in a thriving hidden discourse.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ It may be that in her propensity for resolving scenes of Sublime tension with mundance explanations, a shift that the reader experiences as 'bathos', Radcliffe has in mind the essay by 'Martinus Scriblerus', which so eloquently presented the natural opposition of the two effects in writing--*The Art of Sinking in Poetry: Martinus Scriblerus' ΠΕΡΙ ΒΑΘΟΥΣ* (*Peri Bathous*) (1727)--minus that essay's satirical intent and derogatory use of the term.

² In fact, St. Aubert in *Udolpho* delivers a touching monologue on his identification with an old tree his frivolous brother-in-law, M. Quesnel, intends to cut down (13). Other examples of this connection are the first meeting between Adeline and Theodore in *The Romance of the Forest*--he is "a young man in a hunter's dress, leaning against a tree"--(Vol. I, 168) and the powerful dream Adeline has of her "father", met "in a lonely forest" (Vol. I, 90). Radcliffe's use of the mountain and the forest has an authentic tie with the original Gothic cathedral, according to G. R. Thompson in *The Gothic Imagination* (1974), who notes that "the external mass of the cathedral suggested a mountain...the interior, profuse with grotesque scrollwork around windows and ceiling, suggested branches and groves of trees" (4).

³ *Udolpho*: 197, 214, 270, 404-5 (the story told to Emily of the punishment of another capricious lady). *The Romance of the Forest*: Vol. I, 214 (an assessment of Mme. La Motte); Vol. II, 110-1 (Adeline's reluctant use of the expected feminine wiles on the Marquis). *The Italian*: 177-8, 288-9.

⁴ *Udolpho*: 43, 50, 165, 411 and 456 (Emily's pleasure on entering a landscape infused with the feminine principle), 467-8 and 476-7 (Blanche's awakening sexuality). *The Romance of the Forest*: Vol. I, 19, 48-9; Vol. III, 54-5 (Clara's budding sexuality). *The Italian*: 64 and 254-5 and 301 (landscapes containing the feminine principle), 161-2 (the different observations of hero and heroine looking over the same prospect).

⁵ Examples of this projection of desire for the absent lover onto the landscape are numerous but elusive. Here are a few of the more obvious instances: *Udolpho*: 191, 212-3, 597-8; *The Romance of the Forest*: Vol III, 79-80, 108-9 (shown in the memorial La Luc raises to his dead wife, on a scene she had once admired, which in turn conjures up the memory of the lost beloved); *The Italian*: 94-5, 301-2, 368-9.

⁶ *Udolpho*: 287, 454, 533-4 (where Emily feels trapped by the dead Marchioness' veil). *The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. I, 79 (Adeline is to "take the veil" at the convent); Vol. II, 6, 151 (veils used as metaphors describing the heroine's emotions or behaviour). *The Italian*: 5, 61 (Ellena's captors veil her), 191, 257, 411.

⁷ Moments containing this awareness occur in *Udolpho*: 43, 50, 668; *The Romance of the Forest*: Vol. I, 187, 206; Vol. II, 135, 208; *The Italian*: 12, 28, 39.

⁸ One of the discourses Foucault speaks of as operating in the domain of sexuality is incorporated into the setting of *The Italian* (1797). Here the Roman Catholic confession is made a pivotal part of the narrative events, while providing the added excitement of "the nearly infinite task of telling" as Foucault calls it, "telling oneself and another, as often as possible, everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, had some affinity with sex" (20). Before the events of the novel, the villain Schedoni--himself known as the Father Confessor--is irresistibly drawn to confess the murder motivated by jealousy and lust that he committed, a secret which will then, by Foucault's logic, become normalized, accepted as public property. This does not occur, as Schedoni's own Confessor drops his public office to respond with the passions of a private, outraged individual (337-41). Later, a prisoner of the terrible Inquisition, Vivaldi is repeatedly pressured to confess a deed he has not done--he is accused of the sin of abducting a nun with carnal intentions--share information he does not possess. Blindfolded and helpless in a dialogue with the relentlessly probing tribunal (it is a scene reminiscent of the psychoanalysis session as envisioned by Freud:

the patient passive, the analyst all powerful), Vivaldi's situation recreates, perversely, that of the penitent's confession of sin or guilty pleasure for the satisfaction of a ravenous society. And as Foucault observes, this relationship becomes a closed circuit which feeds its own craving to know all with an increased excitement in both participants in this sado-masochistic practice:

"Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap and reinforce one another. They are linked together by complex mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement" (48).

Chapter Three:

The Heroine as Secret Artist

At a dramatic moment approximately halfway through *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily makes this statement to her uncle Montoni:

'You may find, perhaps, Signor,' said Emily, with mild dignity, 'that the strength of my mind is equal to the justice of my cause; and that I can endure with fortitude when it is in resistance of oppression.'

The villain responds by sneering that she speaks "like a heroine" (381). This clever remark, alluding to society's appropriation of a literary type--operating within the text in the shape of Emily St. Aubert--for the purposes of defining an ideal, or to be precise, a fictional standard of behaviour, suggests that Radcliffe was well aware of the attraction her 'female Gothic' held for the women who read it.¹ It is also a pointedly ironic comment for the female reader who has already found in Emily--or Adeline or Ellena--the heroine she herself is kept from being inside her own reality. Rachel M. Brownstein writes about the special relationship between female reader and female

protagonist in *Becoming a Heroine* (1982):

Novels about those rare young women who know what a real heroine is address themselves to closet heroines: they assume and thus they encourage ironic self-consciousness. Seeing oneself as a character in a novel, one has the advantage, or so it seems, of seeing oneself objectively and clearly--whole. (147)

The escapist aspect of this relationship has already been well-stressed--perhaps over-stressed--by critics who see Radcliffe's 'female Gothic' as either "childish fantasies" (Lowry Nelson, Jr.) or a "safety valve" for repressed passions (Eva Figes). While it undeniably has some validity in explaining the intense popularity the Gothic enjoyed in its first bloom, this attitude reveals a lamentably patronizing attitude towards Radcliffe's readers. It also fails to account for the recent resurgence of interest in her special form of the Gothic novel. Critics of this school represent her novels as being at best a harmless cathartic for their largely female audience; at worst, a grown-up's equivalent of playing with dolls (see Moers, 138).

Those who argue for the Gothic as a subversive form (Varma, Wolff, Howells, Mise), on the other hand, are hardly less conservative, confining the subversive element in Radcliffe's fiction to the heroine's submission to the demonic sexual energy of the villain.

This is a theme which is revealed by psychoanalytic readings of novels' subtexts. As I stated in Chapter Two, I find this predominately Freudian approach to be one which perpetuates a phallogentric vision of the world where men--subsumed in the figure of the Gothic villain--continue to control women: socially, emotionally and sexually. (The little-discussed hero, or 'good' man, does not really enter into the basic sexual conflict of villain and heroine, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter.)

I propose a role and function for Radcliffe's heroines that is significantly political, demonstrating an actively subversive impulse rather than a capitulation to antisocial urges. The appeal of such a heroine to a female readership, therefore, may not be simply the vicarious pleasure of sexual titillation minus society's burden of guilt, but also, as Brownstein implies, the satisfaction felt in following a fictionalized self triumphantly through the maze of male-female relations. And as Radcliffe's novels illustrate, these relations are complicated indefinitely by society's added expectations of women, expectations that are still operating today. These would have been felt much more, however--while being spoken or written about much less--in Ann Radcliffe's time.

Claire Kahane, in "Gothic Mirrors and Feminine Identity" sums up what she considers to be a female reader's typical response to the 'female Gothic'. It is one observing

confirmations as well as threats in the Gothic paradigm. Not only does she take pleasure in the active role provided by the intrusive and questing heroine, but she experiences the power inherent in the heroine's conventional stance of passive resistance. (49)

This reaction confirms Brownstein's perception of the affirmative nature of the heroine-reader relationship. It also explains the quiet potency of Emily's retort to Montoni, her proud claim for "the strength of my mind" and the ability to "endure with fortitude, when it is in resistance of oppression." This "passive resistance" as Kahane labels it, is truly double-edged. Its manner conveys society's traditional opinion of women as dependent and helpless, while simultaneously demonstrating an attitude which covertly challenges the dominant male vision of reality, personified by the villain. It does this in a way analogous to the operation of the feminine principle which I described in the previous chapter. I argued there that the representation of female desire is much subtler than its male counterpart and harder to locate--in the text as in the woman--due to both its anatomical nature and the

unsympathetic environment in which Radcliffe wrote, vulnerable to attack by virtue of her sex. So for physical as well as socio-political reasons, it must remain hidden or obscure. I suggest here that the heroine's political rebellion is just as well disguised behind this appearance of "passive resistance", with its masochistic flavour--a pose commonly attributed to women by patriarchal psychologists.

Yet critics have traditionally preferred to see Ann Radcliffe as a consummately conservative artist, one who demurely kept to her place in her literature as in her life. Mario Praz, for instance, credits Radcliffe's motif of the persecuted woman, a theme picked up by many female writers who followed her, with no special significance, artistically or politically:

Like Mrs. Radcliffe, other authoresses also adopted the persecuted woman as a character; but there may be nothing more in this than another of the many manifestations of female imitativeness. As the literary tradition has been the monopoly of man, at any rate up till the present, it is natural that women writers should slavishly adopt in their works the masculine point of view. (113)

Other critics, less blatantly phallogentric, have also been negatively influenced by the apparent passivity of Radcliffe's heroine. This is a judgment I believe to be a product of the patriarchal vision dominating our

perception as readers of a text irrevocably marked by its production and reception in a male-dominated culture.

Such an attitude is evident in the following comment by Devendra P. Varma on the Gothic heroine invented by Radcliffe:

The acquired accomplishments of the Gothic heroine were legion. She could paint and sew, and play either the lute, the harp, the guitar, or the oboe--the four plaintive instruments to soothe one's melancholy. She could compose ballads of unrequited love, and sing them melodiously to the pale moon floating upon the waters. The only initiative she ever displayed was in the unfailing courage to explore the dark recesses of castles and convents. (183)

More recently, Cynthia Griffin Wolff makes much the same observation in her article "The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality":

No matter what these heroines have been doing before the novel opens (and the variety is wide), once the predictable plot begins, they *do* almost nothing. They are ciphers, drained of initiative--even of a large measure of most feelings other than fear. (102)

Wolff further comments that "their accomplishments and their supposed ingenuity and intelligence are never of the slightest practical use" (102). This is another example of an interpretation skewed by an over-emphasis on the patriarchal constructs by which the text is framed, and suffering from an anachronistic impatience. Anachronistic because it is obviously extremely unlikely

that the average eighteenth-century female would be prepared, either physically or mentally, to 'rescue' herself from the situations Radcliffe devises for her heroines: in the author's day, this would be a markedly Utopian, or simply unacceptable, fictional development. And Frederick W. Price has already indicated the strong link then existing between fiction and reality--or between literary radicalism and an actual insurrection--in the minds of the reading public.

If we agree that such heroics are an unlikely fictional option for a woman as conservative as Ann Radcliffe apparently was (see Grant), we can then analyze the heroine's behaviour with more insight and less impatience, as the product of a text influenced indelibly by its time. We can proceed to separate the first level of discourse--which clearly reflects the abiding attitudes of Radcliffe's male-centered society--from the second, which is where the author as an individual can speak more freely. It is in this second or hidden discourse that the subversion of male authority becomes visible in the actions of Radcliffe's heroines. I postulate that the heroine--Emily, Adeline, Ellena, as well as the secondary heroines, those recognizable younger sisters²--functions in the text as a hidden or

secret artist, rebelling against the patriarchal vision of reality which is forced upon her, as it was upon Radcliffe and her readers, past and present. Patricia Meyer Spacks, in *The Female Imagination* (1975), addresses this very question, writing that "Confronting a restrictive environment while powerless to effect significant change in it, a woman may find herself driven inward, to a realm where she can assert the omnipotence life denies her" (160). This analysis helps explain the motivations of the woman creating the fictional work, as well as the actions of her invented self, the protagonist. Radcliffe's heroines, in effect, stage their quiet rebellions by creating and maintaining their own artistic visions of reality.

I also propose that within the framework of the novel, the heroine's vision takes on an active moral guise, in the form of a simple progression from the 'good' image to the 'good' action. (David S. Durant reverses this process in his article, "Aesthetic Heroism in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*", claiming that all the 'good' characters automatically possess 'good' taste.) The heroine thus opposes the villain's antipathetic vision with an artistic "triumph of integrity over temptation" as Radcliffe terms it. According to Spacks,

the female artist inside the text as well as without "grows from irresponsibility to control, learning...not how to relinquish her critical perspective on the world around her but how to use it" (189), for "the solitary imagination can turn what society offers it to its own purposes, making a world of its own less an alternative to than a transformation of the 'real' world" (261). In Radcliffe's novels the hidden discourse speaks of the individual female artist's conflict with the male-dominated world, which supplies still another reason for their appeal to women readers everywhere and of every time.

The first proof of this supposition is the number of creative or artistic activities ascribed to Radcliffe's heroines. As her habitual use of chapter headnotes illustrates, Radcliffe is fond of poetry, and she gives her heroines the same predilection: all of them share an appreciation of its beauty, and several have the gift of composing it, usually without benefit of ink and paper. A substantial space is accorded these poems, which are often lengthy or intricately structured, and most often inspired by a natural scene. Here Emily shows her artistic ability in a thoughtful moment from

The Mysteries of Udolpho:

This, too, was his favourite season of the year, at which they had often together admired the rich and variegated tints of these woods and the magical effect of autumnal lights upon the mountains; and now, the view of these circumstances made memory eloquent. As she wandered pensively on, she fancied the following address

TO AUTUMN

Sweet Autumn! how thy melancholy grace
 Steals on my heart, as through these shades
 I wind!
 Sooth'd by thy breathing sigh, I fondly trace
 Each lonely image of the pensive mind!
 Lov'd scenes, lov'd friends--long lost! around
 me rise,
 And wake the melting thought, the tender tear!
 That tear, that thought, which more than mirth
 I prize--
 Sweet as the gradual tint, that paints thy
 year!
 Thy farewell [sic] smile, with fond regret, I
 view,
 Thy beaming lights, soft gliding o'er the
 woods;
 Thy distant landscape, touch'd with yellow hue
 While falls the lengthen'd gleam; thy winding
 floods,
 Now veil'd in shade, save where the skiff's
 white sails
 Swell to the breeze, and catch thy streaming
 ray.
 But now, e'en now!--the partial vision fails,
 And the wave smiles, as sweeps the cloud away!
 Emblem of life!--Thus checquer'd is its plan,
 Thus joy succeeds to grief--thus smiles the
 varied man! (592)

These settings of poetic inspiration may be Sublime,
 reminding heroine and reader of the masculine principle,

or conversely, Beautiful landscapes which recall its opposite. But whether the heroine is joyous or despondent, the creative activity goes on, generally exemplified by poetry, sketching and music making. Imprisoned in Udolpho, Emily sketches a scene from her window; Adeline is observed to sing in her sleep by an amazed La Motte, preparing to murder her; and Ellena wards off depression while confined to San Stefano with books and drawing-instruments.³ Or, to look at these examples in another way, one disassociating itself from the patriarchal constructs of the text, these young women are artists who must be punished--imprisoned, threatened with rape or death--for their independence, illustrated by such acts of creativity. By refusing to relinquish their artistic activities, in effect, Radcliffe's heroines present a silent but enduring threat to the *status quo*: pursuing their chosen vocations over forced or expedient marriages, they defend a vision of the world antithetical to the prevailing phallogentric one.

The political significance of the heroine's function as secret artist thus cannot be over-emphasized, for through her artistic diligence the heroine remains an active agent of her fate. Her role as artist is in direct opposition to the villain's perception of her as

artefact, to be either 'sold'--translating her submission to his will in terms of financial gain, as Montoni does, or as a means to a promotion within the Church for Schedoni--or 'bought', as the Marquis de Montalt first proposes in his wooing of Adeline, then in his plan to silence her by murder, so 'buying' her permanent compliance. In any case, she is always a product or commodity for the villain and patriarchal society, an attitude which encourages Montoni's incarceration of Emily in Udolpho just as much as Ludovico's love-inspired decision to lock up Annette (*Udolpho*: 321-2). She must defend herself against this objectification by insisting on process--the creative process of thought as well as feeling--particularly through her own attempts to capture the eternal process of nature through art. It is a sign of Radcliffe's interest in the artist's role, therefore, that her heroines are always made aware of the inevitable limitations of all artistic endeavour.⁴

It is her creativity which separates the heroine not simply from the villain, but from the older society woman Radcliffe carefully juxtaposes against her as well: Mme. Montoni, Mme. La Motte, the Marchesa di Vivaldi. It also assures the heroine's psychic independence regardless of her physical situation, for creative

activity, Patricia Meyer Spacks points out, is itself a liberation:

The image, product of an imagination engaged with the outer world, amounts to an idealized version of the self, responsive to pressures from without and within....The capacity to generate such an image defines the person's power. And the image itself, artificial though it may be, provides a means to self-knowledge.
(300)

This self-affirming experience is intrinsically linked to the expression of female sexuality, as Mary Poovey has observed, pointing to the connection in Radcliffe's novels between imaginative responsiveness and sexual desire (Poovey, 321). This may help explain the occasional ambivalence which surfaces in the form of authorial cautions regarding the imagination or, as it is frequently termed in its larger moral meaning, sensibility. There is still debate over Radcliffe's ultimate attitude regarding this nebulous quality (see Poovey, Smith), which may never be completely resolved, thanks to her continual qualifications. In her novels, it seems to comprise sympathy--for the misfortunes of others, as well as the indulgence of one's own sorrows--and an easily-triggered imagination. The latter at its worst descends into superstition, the "momentary madness" which is the domain of uneducated and inexperienced

people, as Radcliffe shows; at its best, imagination provides the inspiration for a work of art, a drawing, or a poem. In *Udolpho*, Radcliffe, first through Emily's sage parent St. Aubert (and in *The Romance of the Forest*, La Luc), then through her own narrative asides, condemns the worst excesses of the imagination, showing the need for its control through discipline.²

Generally her heroines prove they have learned through their instinctive regulation of their artistic behaviour, making it an ability which can always be drawn on, but which never precludes other responsibilities. As Spacks points out, creative activity without discipline threatens to plunge the unwary into enervating narcissism (see Spacks, 159-89). This explains the purpose of the extended anecdote (and moral lesson) concerning Clara La Luc's obsessive lute-playing in *The Romance of the Forest* (Vol. III, 56-66). Radcliffe's final opinion seems to be that the imagination must be controlled but never forfeited. As a result, the regulation of it is linked with the heroine's control of her sexuality, for in a very similar way, the imaginative ability remains essential to an independent understanding of one's place in the world: "women dominate their own experience by imagining it, giving it form, writing about it" (Spacks, 322).

The mysterious manuscript Adeline finds hidden in the Abbey, Sublimely obscure in its gaps and omissions (Vol. III, 46-69)--later revealed to be the record of her murdered father's last days--also functions as a symbol of the woman writer's position in a male-dominated culture. The female writer is compelled to reveal her special experience of life, even if its recording must be disguised as fiction, or 'hidden', as the manuscript literally is here, to be found in time by another fugitive. Hence the desperate tone of the manuscript, for as Gilbert and Gubar tell us, within a male-dominated culture, the combination of woman and artist is a potentially maddening one:

...the loneliness of the female artist, her feelings of alienation from male predecessors coupled with her need for a female audience together with her fear of the antagonism of male readers, her culturally conditioned timidity about self-dramatization, her dread of the patriarchal authority of art, her anxiety about the impropriety of female invention--all these phenomena of 'inferiorization' mark the woman writer's struggle for artistic self-definition and differentiate her efforts at self-creation from those of her male counterpart (50).

By contrast, the cool sanity of Radcliffe's heroine as secret artist, a sanity which aids her triumph over the villain when he is forced to recognize his own lesser nature (Moers, 138), is undoubtedly one cause of the

special pleasure women receive from reading her novels, savouring their delicate presentation of such self-assured female artists.

Further evidence for Radcliffe's heroines as hidden artists appears in a less obvious but more interesting form, one which suggests a reason for the great number of natural prospects gazed on almost exclusively by these young ladies. This dimension of her novels has certainly not gone unexplored, and various purposes have been suggested for the prominence Radcliffe assigns scene description. David S. Durant, in his article "Aesthetic Heroism in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*", claims that these landscapes are significant solely in their aesthetic impact on the perceiving heroine--and consequently the reader--since "the heroine's limited perspective necessitates a restriction of the narrative to outward appearances" (179). According to Durant's argument, vision equals thought, appearance is reality, and every vista in *Udolpho* is a product of Emily's own camera-like perception. As well, those characters who admire aesthetically pleasing scenes--and who are, as often as not, personally pleasing in themselves--are incorrigibly heroic or virtuous. Durant is unusual in that he does not see these

landscapes as denoting anything more complex in the way of mood or characterization than this moral positivism. He ignores the ambivalence surrounding the villain Montoni, who is indifferent to aesthetics and yet strongly associated with the Sublime scenes Emily appreciates. Further, his insistence on the passivity of Emily's role is belied by the amount of mental activity she must constantly engage in as the reader's 'eye', observing and necessarily shaping every scene. This controversy surrounding the nature of the heroine's role as 'eye' or 'I' is another popular one, with most critics declaring the heroine's role to be passive, her actions akin to a puppet's galvanized motions. Consequently even her mental actions become merely reactions or responses to the monomaniacal villain, the catalyst for all her adventures.

By assigning the heroine--the figure with whom the female reader generally identifies--a static position as the receptor for whatever sensory data the villain confronts her with on her forced journeys, the theory of art as a fluid, individual process is ignored, thus separating reader as well as character from the potential growth suggested by the novel's vicissitudes. Eva Figes, in *Sex and Subterfuge* (1982), defines Radcliffe's art in regard to her landscapes as nothing more than static

representation, and a representation so formalized and sterile that it alienates even the heroine:

Radcliffe always builds up her pictures of scenery as though she was describing paintings in a frame....Her scenes, however wild and romantic, are always rendered innocuous because they are framed. The reader, like the heroine, is looking at a picture, or is set off against it, she is never actually *in* it. (69)

This assumption that the scenes perceived by the heroine are somehow rendered "innocuous" or emotionally neutral by the author, presupposes a fixed response on the part of both heroine and reader. In this case the only act of free will comes in the shape of the 'framing' done by the omnipotent author. However, some critics believe that it is the heroine who--through the auspices of her creator--orders the perceptions of reality, so that the innumerable vistas observed by the heroines of each novel become individual works of art. In other words, Radcliffe is presenting Emily, Adeline, Ellena, Blanche or Clara, in an actively artistic role, creating--not simply registering--through her own powers of perception and unique appreciation of the world, her own picture.

Furthermore, I see this as a positive action, rather than the introverted, victimized reaction some critics believe it is (Howells, *Mise*), her act of perception being an engagement with the world rather than

an escape from it. The consistency with which Radcliffe's heroine orders reality to her liking--seeing what she admires or filtering the elements of the scene through her own aesthetic value system--merely confirms her unique vision of the world as active artist rather than passive victim. Radcliffe points to this artistic capacity when she says of the primary heroine of *The Romance of the Forest*: "Adeline's mind had the happy art, or perhaps it were more just to say, the happy nature, of accommodating itself to her situation" (Vol. I, 74; italics mine), which is a passive description of an active process.

Through this mental process the heroine acts as much as she is acted upon, and the intellectual interchange results in a harmonious *gestalt*, a reaffirmation of her own identity in a world striving to submerge it for the sake of its own interests: the world of the willful villains Montoni, Schedoni, the Marquis de Montalt. Barton Levi St. Armand explains the creative nature of this activity in *The Gothic Imagination* (1974):

Emily does not merely contemplate these sublime themes, but she actually helps to create, through the ever-expansive faculties of her Romantic imagination, the mountains beyond mountains and the plains beyond plains. Her mediumistic powers of reverie and feminine weaving of the warp of landscape and the woof

of dreamscape are halted only by a traumatic confrontation with the dark and limiting male reality of Udolpho itself. (68)

I would qualify this comment, however, by positing that the heroine's created vision of the world--a conflation, St. Armand points out, of physical and mental images--is not impeded by its confrontation with the masculine principle embodied here by Udolpho. His exegesis, like the traditional view of Radcliffe's books, is unduly influenced by the very "limiting male reality" it discerns in the text. By examining a passage illustrating the creative nature of perception, I hope to indicate that there is a lasting positive effect created by such mental activity--an effect which Spacks calls the "control evoked by artistic sensibility"--which is equal to that evoked by the conventional artwork practiced by the heroine. This effect is political in that it defies the ability of the villain to control anything more than the raw materials for the female artist's self-defining act of creativity. Here is a typical example of the creative perception of the natural world, demonstrated by the primary heroine from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:

Daylight dispelled from Emily's mind the glooms of superstition, but not those of apprehension. The Count Morano was the first image, that occurred to her waking thoughts, and then came a train of anticipated evils, which she could neither conquer, or avoid.

She rose, and, to relieve her mind from the busy ideas, that tormented it, compelled herself to notice external objects. From her casement she looked out upon the wild grandeur of the scene, closed nearly on all sides by alpine steeps, whose tops, peeping over each other, faded from the eye in misty hues, while the promontories below were dark with woods, that swept down to their base, and stretched along the narrow vallies. The rich pomp of these woods was particularly delightful to Emily; and she viewed with astonishment the fortifications of the castle spreading along a vast decay of rock, and now partly in decay, the grandeur of the ramparts below, and the towers and battlements and various features of the fabric above. From those her sight wandered over the cliffs and woods into the valley, along which foamed a broad and rapid stream, seen falling among the crags of an opposite mountain, now flashing in the sun-beams, and now shadowed by overarching pines, till it was entirely concealed by their thick foliage. Again it burst from beneath this darkness in one broad sheet of foam, and fell thundering into the vale. Nearer, towards the west, opened the mountain-vista, which Emily had viewed with such sublime emotion, on her approach to the castle: a thin dusky vapour, that rose from the valley, overspread its features with a sweet obscurity. As this ascended and caught the sun-beams, it kindled into a crimson tint, and touched with exquisite beauty the woods and cliffs, over which it passed to the summit of the mountains; then, as the veil drew up, it was delightful to watch the gleaming objects, that progressively disclosed themselves in the valley--the green turf--dark woods--little rocky recesses--a few peasants' huts--the foaming stream--a herd of cattle, and various images of pastoral beauty. Then, the pine-forests brightened, and then the broad breast of the mountains, till, at length, the mist settled round their summit, touching them with a ruddy glow. The features of the vista now appeared distinctly, and the broad deep shadows, that fell from the lower cliffs,

gave strong effect to the streaming splendour above; while the mountains, gradually sinking in the perspective, appeared to shelve into the Adriatic sea, for such Emily imagined to be the gleam of blueish light, that terminated the view.

Thus she endeavoured to amuse her fancy, and was not unsuccessful. The breezy freshness of the morning, too, revived her. She raised her thoughts in prayer, which she felt always most disposed to do, when viewing the sublimity of nature, and her mind recovered its strength.
(241-2)

Although she concludes this passage with a gesture towards piety--one of the traditional interpretations of the experience of the Sublime--an examination of the language reveals the hidden discourse and its artistic theme. This description presents the activity of the artist whose ruling eye (or I) calls the disparate features of the prospect into an order satisfying the aesthetic as well as the emotional need. While anxiously foreseeing "a train of anticipated evils, which she could neither conquer, or avoid", Emily's gaze and mind turn towards the equally immutable, indifferent landscape, and 'frame it' to her advantage. She does this by focusing on the features most sympathetic to her state of mind, while containing the antithetical Sublime elements by renaming and thus reclaiming them. First she personifies the "alpine steeps" as "peeping" eyes which reflect her own active gaze. Then she considers the

"rich pomp" of the woods, and the "grandeur" of the castle's battlements, turning them into glossy oil-paintings and picturesque ruins, respectively: she objectifies them as the villain would her.

The freedom and selectivity of her vision is stressed in the next line: "From these her sight wandered...." At this point the landscape changes and the pastoral element begins to appear ("the valley"), and with Emily's help, to overwhelm the Sublime landscape first perceived. Emily's stress on the obscuring effects of shadows, sun-beams and vapour, recalls the feminine principle and its unique representation of desire. They remind her of the continuing importance of her sexual identity as well as expressing with silent eloquence her longing for Valancourt. This displaced eroticism is clearly revealed in the subtle "veiling" of first the masculine mountain, then the forest: "a thin dusky vapour, that rose from the valley, overspread its features with a sweet obscurity. As this ascended and caught the sunbeams, it kindled into a crimson tint, and touched with exquisite beauty the woods and cliffs...." This female symbology precedes Emily's emblematic glimpses of the hidden pastoral presence: "the green turf--dark woods--little rocky recesses--a few peasants'

huts--the foaming stream--a herd of cattle, and various images of pastoral beauty." Here the ellipses remind us once more of the artist's roving, authoritative eye.

The sunrise which gradually overtakes the lingering gloom is yet another representation of feminine desire:

Then, the pine-forests brightened, and then the broad breast of the mountains, till, at length, the mist settled round their summit, touching them with a ruddy glow. The features of the vista now appeared distinctly, and the broad deep shadows, that fell from the lower cliffs, gave strong effect to the streaming splendour above; while the mountains, gradually sinking in the perspective, appeared to shelve into the Adriatic sea.... (242)

This delicate picture also suggests the temporary triumph of the feminine principle over the masculine.

Such a scene clearly reaffirms Emily's feminine identity as well as exorcising--for the moment at least--the longing for her lost lover, in a union of Sublime masculine and Beautiful feminine principles. Emily is then able to return to her existence at Udolpho with a unified sense of self. The feeling of wholeness is clearly due to the artistic 'framing' of her current environment, a framing which includes rather than excludes her. Therefore, instead of receiving "fortitude and patience from the divine order of nature" (114), as Varma interprets it, Radcliffe's heroine actually

projects her own desires onto the passive scene. In this way she takes control of her psychic environment, if not her actual physical situation. This demonstration of a "liberated inner life" may well lead to "new freedoms of actual experience" (Spacks, 314). Thus, by their active perception as well as their creative activities Emily, Adeline, Ellena, Blanche and Clara each subvert oppressive male authority by the most insidious means possible: the artist's mind.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ Historically it has been recognized that women readers became a force to be reckoned with by the end of the eighteenth century. Raymond W. Mize writes, "Women, especially those of the middle class in urban areas, had an increasing amount of leisure time, but few suitable activities were available for them; for this reason many of them became avid novel readers" (24).

² Blanche de Villefort in *Udolpho*, Clara La Luc in *The Romance of the Forest*.

³ *Udolpho*, 276; *The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. III, 14-5; *The Italian*, 93-4. Other references to artistic activities practiced by Radcliffe's heroines include: *Udolpho*: both heroines' poetic abilities: 16-7, 73-4, 164-5, 169-70, 179-81, 188, 206-8, 414-5, 462-4, 477-9, 540-1, 592, 640-1, 665-6; Emily's lute-playing: 185, 539; Emily's drawing: 418. *The Romance of the Forest*: Adeline's prolific abilities as a poet: Vol. I, 76-7, 166-8; Vol. III, 28-9, 84-5, 125-6, 130-1, 137-9, 148, 154-7; Clara's interest in poetry, painting, and her lute-playing: Vol. III, 55-66, 295-6. *The Italian*: where Ellena sings, draws, plays the lute and does exquisite needlework: 5, 8-9, 11, 23-4, 27.

⁴ There are several important references to the inability of art, or even language, to express all that the artist observes and feels in the presence of nature. This difficulty mirrors the inadequacy of established public discourse in expressing the nuances of personal desire. See *Udolpho*: 43, 60, 163, 189; *The Italian*, 37, 63; *The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. III, 125, 148.

⁵ In *The Romance of the Forest*, for instance, Radcliffe shows how Adeline's imagination occasionally leads her to thoughts which incite panic or hysteria. This occurs when Theodore is struggling with the Marquis' henchmen beyond her view (Vol. II, 189-90), or when later she envisions his imprisonment and execution in scenes of melodramatic shadings (Vol. II, 236-7; III, 241-2). These fantasies, however, do bear some resemblance to the

highly-charged scenes of reunion with Theodore (Vol. III, 185 ff.) while he is under sentence of death, despite the wise La Luc's concern that an excess of emotion is morally debilitating. Such scenes truly test the limits of bearable (before it becomes laughable) emotion, and are reminiscent of the earlier infamous *Man of Feeling* (1771).

Chapter Four:

The Contest of Visions

At this point, having delved so deeply into the hidden discourse surrounding Radcliffe's heroine, it is worth returning for a moment to the fictional landscape in which she is planted, a secret artist and sexual being. Consistently thrown on the mercy of strangers at a tender age, the heroine is forced to rely on her own resources and trust her own judgment in true *bildungsroman* fashion.¹ The wise advice of saintly fathers (St. Aubert and Count de Villefort in *Udolpho*, La Luc in *The Romance of the Forest*) and the inspiration of ethereal mothers (Olivia, the concealed Countess di Bruno of *The Italian*, is the only mother who survives at the author's hands) are important influences, but infrequently available. This combination of events encourages the formation of a philosophy which is based on an acute sympathy and an active imagination. These qualities are ultimately codified in the 'sensibility' for which these young ladies are renowned. As I argued in Chapter Three, this sensibility comprises an aesthetic component drawing on the imagination, and a moral component inspired by sympathy or empathy.

In addition to the obvious relationship between imagination and art, and sympathy and morals, the good or virtuous action also utilizes the moral insight facilitated by the imagination, while the 'good' or aesthetically pleasing scene is partly rendered so by the artistic use of sympathy, or the affinity of feeling between observer and object. This flexible theory of moral aesthetics, first proposed by David S. Durant in "Aesthetic Heroism in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*", continually shapes the heroine's philosophical vision of the world. Both ethical and aesthetic, it is underlined by Radcliffe particularly during the heroine's conflicts with the villain, the humorous "garrulous servant", or the weak and frivolous society women.² It is a part of her identity as an artist as well as a sexual being, for with this unique vision of reality she is able to regulate both passion and imagination, exploiting neither. (Though as noted in Chapter Three, the heroine still succumbs, upon occasion, to the force of the latter.) Such a vision gives the heroine stability and the necessary confidence to deal with the villain and his threats to her autonomy. As a result, the "passive resistance" Claire Kahane described as the heroine's mode of action, is largely the determined refusal to surrender

her view of reality, and her active role within it, for the morally barren world of the villain. This helps create the Manichaeian nature of their conflict where the heroine opposes the villain's selfish schemes with the moral or aesthetic 'good' conceived by Radcliffe, the ultimate author of her philosophy.

The determination to hold onto this ideal vision is evinced again and again by Radcliffe's heroines, to the initial incredulity but ultimate frustration of her oppressors. Here is an example of Ellena's loyalty to this vision in *The Italian*:

'I will neither condemn myself to a cloister, or to the degradation, with which I am threatened on the other hand. Having said this, I am prepared to meet whatever suffering you shall inflict upon me; but be assured, that my own voice never shall sanction the evils to which I may be subjected, and that the immortal love of justice, which fills all my heart, will sustain my courage no less powerfully than the sense of what is due to my own character. You are now acquainted with my sentiments and my resolutions; I shall repeat them no more.'

The abbess, whose surprise had thus long suffered Ellena to speak, still fixed upon her a stern regard, as she said, 'Where is it that you have learned these heroics, and acquired the rashness which thus prompts you to avow them? -- the boldness which enables you to insult your Superior, a priestess of your holy religion, even in her sanctuary!'

'The sanctuary is prophaned,' said Ellena, mildly, but with dignity: 'it is become a prison. It is only when the Superior ceases to respect the precepts of that holy religion,

the precepts which teach her justice and benevolence, that she herself is no longer respected. The very sentiment which bids us revere its mild and beneficent laws, bids us also reject the violators of them; when you condemned me to reverence my religion, you urge me to condemn yourself.' (84-85)

The heroine's unweakening resolve is a product of her vision of reality, where the impulses of passion and imagination are morally and aesthetically controlled but never negated. The moral component is demonstrated when she resists the plans of the villain to barter her sexuality through a forced marriage (*Udolpho*), violate it through rape or seduction (*The Romance of the Forest*), or deny it by forcing her into a convent (*The Italian*). The argument between Ellena and the Abbess quoted above is really about the restriction of women's sexuality. In this case, the heroine has transgressed society's laws by entering a potential marriage relationship with a man of a superior class. Her punishment, if Ellena does not agree to forfeit her love, is "taking the veil"--a sterile alternative all of Radcliffe's heroines reject. By resisting society's control and refusing to be either coerced into the convent or degraded into prostitution, these young women reject the ancient dichotomy implied in the villain's schemes: virgin/whore. Instead they seek a healthy

middle ground of passion, gained on their own terms. This insistence on a vision constantly denied by the villain and other voices of patriarchal society leads inevitably to the propriety or prudery in her behaviour so often ridiculed in studies of Radcliffe's heroine. For instance, Emily resists or refuses no fewer than four possible liberations from the villain's power and the castle of Udolpho (pp. 203, 263, 350, 380), the last one offered by Montoni himself. All of her refusals hinge on some notion of propriety or moral delicacy, a point which has been frequently noted and derided by Radcliffe's critics.

In fact, this moral rectitude is intrinsic to her vision of reality and of herself as an autonomous person who must be under obligation--sexual or otherwise--to no man. This explains the heroine's repeated refusals of the hero's plans to elope, for even though she shares his passion, she must remain faithful to her concept of herself as an independent person, in control of her sexuality as of all her impulses (see *Udolpho*, 154-5; *The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. II, 175-6; *Italian*, 59). At the end of *The Romance of the Forest*, when the wicked Marquis is dead, Theodore rescued from death, and Adeline's fortune and family title restored, she still

resists the pressures of her deferred desire by insisting on having the proper period of mourning for her long-dead father. Similarly, in *The Italian*, it is only under extreme duress that Ellena is convinced--through the gentle influence of her mother, disguised as Sister Olivia--to escape from San Stefano with her lover, Vivaldi. And just as she feared, this initial moral compromise leads to a greater one: the hasty marriage at San Sebastian (182-4), which is so dramatically interrupted by Schedoni's thugs. In effect, the heroine's first weakening of resolve--caused by a giving way to passion--gave the villain the opportunity to separate the lovers a second time.

As I noted earlier, the villain's appreciation of the heroine is of a commodity, a valuable pawn in a male-ordered world. To resist such objectification she must reject the oppressively patriarchal wherever it appears, whether in villain or in lover. Her eventual victory over the villain stems from her attack--through her "passive resistance"--on this phallogentric vision. Raymond W. Mize, however, disagrees. He claims that the heroine's sense of herself derives from her value for others and that "sexual threats and assaults exalt her sexuality. They testify to her femaleness and give her

confidence in her adequacy as a woman" (123). In refutation of his point, there is Adeline's obstinate refusal to be tempted by the decadent Marquis during his Pluto-like abduction of her (*The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. II, 102-17). Even the erotic song played for her benefit arouses only her contempt (Vol. II, 113-4), an obvious instance of the moral sense controlling the aesthetic. While her heroines are often deeply affected by media which draw on the imagination--sometimes to the point of excess, as Radcliffe points out--when they observe its use for the furthering of the villain's patriarchal vision, they are immovable (see *The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. II, 104-6, 116). Consequently, the popular notion that Radcliffe's ultimate message is the danger of undisciplined sensibility is partially true (see Figs, Smith, Howells). As Nelson C. Smith concludes: "All Mrs. Radcliffe's 'heroines of sensibility', then, deserve criticism--for their self-indulgence, excess of sensibility, or untempered imagination--and all receive it directly at their author's hands" (590). Yet both sympathy and imagination are essentially important in maintaining the philosophical vision vital to the heroine's ultimate triumph over the villain.

Aesthetically, as well as morally, the heroine demonstrates a special perception of reality. This is partly illustrated by her creative use of the feelings triggered in her by different prospects or situations, as in her creation of poetry, drawings or music. In keeping with the definition of 'aesthetic' as "pertaining to the appreciation of the beautiful", as well as "the philosophy or theory of taste and of the perception of the beautiful in nature and art" (*OED*, A.2:B.2), she is constantly projecting her own aesthetic order onto the disorderly material world, both through these creative activities as well as through her active perception. The truism that good taste is the result of artistic selectivity is applied by the heroine to the moral issues contained in the novels. For instance, there is the heroine's dread of directness, whether of sexuality or of death. In *Udolpho* this is illustrated by the veiled allusion to rape (444-5) and her fear of seeing corpses from the battle (425). In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline is initially shocked by the idea of a tryst with Theodore (Vol. I, 235). Her strong sense of decorum, which appears so non-adaptive to modern readers, is an important example of this aesthetic component of her

vision, a physical commanding of the scene akin to the mental ordering of material reality described in Chapter Three. Her control over the imaginative ability assures the congruency, the mental and moral security of the heroine and consequently must be preserved regardless of the circumstances, for to renounce it would be to acknowledge the superiority of the villain's vision.

This theory of conflicting visions helps us appreciate the novels' hidden discourse, and the quiet insurrection initiated by these young women. Ellen Moers mocks the incident where, upon escaping Udolpho at last with Ludovico, Annette and Du Pont, and arriving in a small town, Emily's appearance

excited some surprise; for she was without a hat, having had time only to throw on her veil before she left the castle, a circumstance, that compelled her to regret again the want of money, without which it was impossible to procure this necessary article of dress. (454)

By the next page, however, the travellers find they possess some unexpected funds, and Emily is able to purchase "a little straw hat, such as was worn by the peasant girls of Tuscany" (455). Comments Moers: "This kind of novel-writing deserves being laughed at" (138). Once again, this is a view strongly influenced by an implicitly patriarchal mentality. Emily's compulsion to

behave and appear decorously is heroic rather than neurotic in the context of the novel's sexual politics for she thereby refuses to be victimized by submitting to the villain's vision. The fact that during the party's escape she still has her veil, the significance of which is discussed in Chapter Two, indicates that morally and sexually she still retains her identity. The missing hat, however, is a sign of the momentary loss of control over the aesthetic, or imaginative impulse, analogous to the giving way to superstition or paranoid fantasies. Further on, Moers--somewhat sarcastically--admits the unstated value of such behaviour. Emily and her fictional sisters are "ill-equipped for vicissitudes of travel, climate, and native mutiny, but well-equipped to preserve their identity as proper Englishwomen" (139).

It is now necessary to examine the heroine's malignant nemesis, the Gothic villain. In attempting to show that the heroine, so often scorned by scholars and critics, plays an actively subversive role in these novels, I have referred to the villain only in generalities. It is he, however, who is usually granted the most discussion in studies of the Gothic (see Lowry Nelson, Jr., Judith Wilt, Robert D. Hume). There he is sometimes reborn as the 'Gothic hero'--"a nice

distinction", as Adeline comments of a similar instance of moral *legerdemain* (*The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. I, 154)--by adherents of the Romantics. The villains, for such I believe they are and remain in Radcliffe's novels, comprise Montoni in *Udolpho*, Schedoni in *The Italian*, the Marquis de Montalt and to a lesser degree, Pierre La Motte (or de la Motte, as he is occasionally called) in *The Romance of the Forest*. While there are also numerous assassins, thugs and brigands aiding--or sometimes thwarting--these men and their schemes, Radcliffe clearly gives place of pride to their arrogant chiefs. In his Introduction to *The Romance of the Forest*, Devendra P. Varma proposes three categories of Gothic villains, later exploited by the Romantics: "the Manfred figure" (from *The Castle of Otranto*), "the Victim of Destiny", and the "gothic superman" (xiv ff.). Montoni, Schedoni and the Marquis partake of all three descriptions in their various ways, but La Motte remains an aborted villain in Radcliffe's fiction, doomed never to rise above the Victim of Destiny position. His evilness is repeatedly described by his author as emanating from weakness of character, rather than from the strength of will the other villains are known for. As a result, he is finally granted Adeline's

pardon at the end of the book, a turn of events unthinkable for the real villain. In her final statement on the volatile La Motte, Radcliffe, with her heroine, absolves him of any real responsibility:

This kindness [Adeline's intervention on his behalf in court] operated so powerfully upon his heart, which had been betrayed through weakness rather than natural depravity, and awakened so keen a remorse for the injuries he had once meditated against a benefactress so noble, that his former habits became odious to him, and his character gradually recovered the hue which it would probably always have worn, had he never been exposed to the tempting dissipations of Paris. (Vol. III, 279)

This traditional condemnation of the city as morally debilitating brings La Motte's story full-circle by recalling the opening pages when La Motte was forced to flee Paris because of his crimes there, but his moral rehabilitation is dubious, one step above a death-bed conversion. Radcliffe's remark also reminds us of St. Aubert's delight in *Udolpho*, upon first meeting Valancourt and realizing that "this young man has never been at Paris", an assessment that later Emily sadly recalls, musing on that city's baleful influence (584).

However, at the outset of the novel, unrepentant La Motte is painted in the unmistakable colours of the Gothic villain, if somewhat muted:

With strength of mind sufficient to have withstood temptation, he would have been a good man; as it was, he was always a weak, and sometimes a vicious member of society: yet his mind was active, and his imagination vivid, which, cooperating with the forces of passion, often dazzled his judgment and subdued principle. (Vol. I, 4)

It is this lethal combination of imagination and passion--those twin spurs to action--which creates the essential vision and personality of Radcliffe's villains. By the very fact of their maleness in the male-dominated world represented in the text, these villains have access to power--secular or ecclesiastical--money, adventure and politics. This freedom of action inspires their greed for more, a desire which is easily satisfied, thanks to patriarchal society's tolerance of their initiative and their egotism. Though their immoral machinations ultimately bring the weight of justice down upon them, whether in the French courts, the Inquisition's dungeons, or a Venetian prison, for the greater part of their adventures there is only the heroine to oppose their reign of will. The villain's vision of reality is clearly depicted by Radcliffe in her summation of Montoni's character:

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. Without some object of strong interest, life was to him little more than a sleep; and, when pursuits of real interest failed, he substituted artificial ones, till habit changed their nature, and they ceased to be unreal. (182)

The description of Schedoni, undoubtedly her most accomplished creation,³ similarly reveals the marks of an indomitable will (*The Italian*, 34-5). The overwhelming ambition, passion and imagination necessary to procure the power, fame or riches the Gothic villain craves are an integral part of his personality. It is his demonic will which sets the plot in motion. Says Schedoni, "I have been through life the slave of my passions, and they have led me into horrible excesses" (*Italian*, 339). Even the unctuous Marquis de Montalt, admittedly less dominant a figure in the text--he shares the villain's role with La Motte, after all--is ultimately defined in these terms:

The passions which had tempted him to the commission of a crime so horrid as that of murder--and what, if possible, heightened its atrocity, the murder of one connected with him by the ties of blood, and by habits of even infantine association--the passions which had stimulated him to so monstrous a deed, were ambition and the love of pleasure. The first was more immediately gratified by the title of his brother; the latter by the riches which would enable him to indulge his voluptuous inclinations. (Vol. III, 255)

In addition to lacking morals, the villain lacks an aesthetic sense, as the term was defined earlier. Both Montoni and Schedoni are described as being indifferent to the scenic prospects they pass through on their travels with the heroine, who is inevitably drawn to the contemplation of them (*Udolpho*, 171; *Italian*, 255). The Marquis, meanwhile, is interested in art only for what it may accomplish, as shown in his attempt to seduce Adeline (Vol. II, 102-17), or as a way of aggrandizing his own worth: one of the jewelled trinkets La Motte steals from the Marquis is a miniature of himself (Vol. III, 198). This narcissistic attitude, where the villain's will dictates his own actions in an obsessive bid to control those of others, is eloquently summarized by Judith Wilt in this assessment of Schedoni: "Contracting himself away from externals into a still, hard point, Schedoni hopes to manipulate the outer world to the model of his inner world; his self-control is the most precious thing in the universe to him" (37). This self-control is used exclusively in manipulating others so that the villain's own obsessions may be concealed behind his vision. As Schedoni haughtily exclaims at the assassin Spalatro's suggestion of a motive for murdering Ellena: "'Dare no more to insult me with the mention of

reward. Do you imagine I have sold myself! 'Tis my will that she dies; this is sufficient...'" (230). And from *Udolpho's* Montoni, "'It is my will that you remain here,' said Montoni, laying his hand on the door to go; 'let that suffice you'" (361).

The villain's mysterious, inexorable will is presented by Radcliffe as an abuse of the imagination--a theme later popularized by the Romantics--as well as a surrender to passion. The Sublime, first associated with the villain in its physical manifestation as mountains, towers and upward-thrusting prospects, intellectually acts as a model for the eternal thrust of the villain's mind towards knowledge and power. As I observed earlier, it also suggests--and thus becomes a fitting representative for--the ineffable, inexpressible state of desire. It is able, in the context of Radcliffe's novels to imply unattainable experiences of passion as well as infinite imaginative possibilities. Both medium and message, it is used by Radcliffe as a moral yardstick in her presentation of villain and heroine. I suggest that the heroine keeps her attractions to the imagination and the expression of passion under reasonable--and reasoned--control. Art is her compromise with imaginative energy, whether it is an

artistic product or the creative selecting process of the mind itself, as described in Chapter Three. Passion is channelled into her desire for the hero, to be consummated in their eventual marriage. The villain, on the other hand, eschews control and follows the impulses of passion into immoral schemes with greed and pleasure their final goal. The excesses of the imagination culminate in his egotistic, invincible will. Again, Judith Wilt's comment is apt: "The brilliant transfixing eye of the Gothic antihero is only secondarily a machine to destroy enemies; essentially it is attempting to pin the world in place" (41).

The original conflict between villain and heroine may in fact be summarized through this image of perception, or vision, where the powerful "transfixing" gaze of the villain is met and matched by the heroine's creative eye. Indeed, it is most fitting to label both character's individual philosophies 'visions', for it is the sense of sight that is invoked more often than any other in Radcliffe's novels. This clash of opposites is made more powerful by Radcliffe's insistence on the pride or self-love both heroine and villain have in common, which implies an equal stake in the preservation of their individual visions. Ellena and her uncle Schedoni are

each described as being incapable of bearing contempt (9, 109, *The Italian*), while Adeline possesses self-love, a characteristic shared by her nemesis (*The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. 1, 182). Emily's pride is readily observable in her numerous confrontations with Montoni (*Udolpho*, 198-200, 270, 381) where she refuses to compromise herself or her principles for comfort's sake, comfort being always an insidious lure into the villain's domain. Radcliffe's heroines are thus presented as the exact inverse of their oppressors, a situation which reminds the reader of the polarized landscapes containing either the masculine or feminine principle. However, unlike the synthesis possible by the combination of the two principles in nature, their psychic conflict never reaches a balance through the union of opposites. This conflict of wills can only end in victory for one, defeat for the other. The heroine's will, by definition, is less flamboyant than the villain's, but Radcliffe does make its presence known. Here, it is contrasted with the villain's rampaging energies:

...her sufferings, though deep, partook of the gentle character of her mind. Hers was a silent anguish, weeping, yet enduring; not the wild energy of passion, inflaming imagination,

bearing down the barriers of reason and living
in a world of its own. (*Udolpho*, 329)

This important comment, outlining the two facets of the villain's existence--passion and imagination--reveals the dangerous egotism caused by the intemperate expression of either impulse, by concluding with the damning pronouncement: "bearing down the barriers of reason and living in a world of its own." Radcliffe's comment explicitly describes the villain, yet it is undeniably true that the heroine also inhabits her own "world", one at odds not simply with the villain, but with numerous other characters morally situated somewhere between the two adversaries. The heroine's world or vision may be disparaged as idealistic, of course, but it is also the one championed by Radcliffe, and vicariously experienced by so many of her readers. This authorial stamp of approval, however, does not minimize the heroine's difficulties in her fictional society, or her occasional attraction to her nemesis, documented in Chapter Two. I suggest that this is due to her unacknowledged fascination with the villain's freedom in society as a man, in addition to the obvious lure of the opposite principle. However, Radcliffe shows that in the final outcome, the heroine has the upper hand. And her

triumph occurs long before her final vindication by the forces of society.

Emily triumphs over this patriarchal will by the strength of her own principles. Radcliffe hints at the final victory in this scene depicting Emily's state of mind following a bitter meeting with Montoni:

To her own solitary chamber she once more returned, and there thought again of the late conversation with Montoni, and of the evil she might expect from opposition to his will. But his power did not appear so terrible to her imagination, as it was wont to do: a sacred pride was in her heart, that taught it to swell against the pressure of injustice, and almost to glory in the quiet sufferance of ills, in a cause, which had also the interest of Valancourt for its object. 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. (381-2)

In another passage the author skillfully describes the heroine's feelings during such a confrontation, emphasizing her control of passion and imagination through the moral and aesthetic discipline integral to her vision:

Emily, who had always endeavoured to regulate her conduct by the nicest laws, and whose mind was finely sensible, not only of what is just in morals, but of whatever is beautiful in the female character, was shocked by these words; yet, in the next moment, her heart swelled with the consciousness of having deserved praise, instead of censure, and she was proudly silent. Montoni, acquainted with the delicacy of her

mind, knew how keenly she would feel his rebuke; but he was a stranger to the luxury of conscious worth, and, therefore, did not foresee the energy of that sentiment, which now repelled his satire. (*Udolpho*, 270-1)

Ellena deflates Schedoni's villainy by arousing--even when unconscious, as in the dramatic midnight murder attempt, pp. 232-7--his nobler instincts and emotions, neutralizing his evil with her unfeigned goodness. And even while trying to seduce Adeline, the Marquis is defeated--emotionally as well as physically--by her moral resistance:

He threw her arm around her, and would have pressed her towards him; but she liberated herself from his embrace, and with a look, on which was impressed the firm dignity of virtue, yet touched with sorrow, she awed him to forbearance. Conscious of a superiority, which he was ashamed to acknowledge, and endeavouring to despise the influence which he could not resist, he stood for a moment the slave of virtue, though the votary of vice. (*The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. II, 116)

This victory, both aesthetic and moral in its conception of the world and human behaviour, is termed by Radcliffe "the triumph of integrity over temptation". At the second level of discourse, this is clearly the triumph of the independent, artistic woman over the oppression of patriarchal society. In fact, the villain's persecution of the heroine requires the exploitation of her imagination and passion. These

qualities are the origins of those traditional feminine vices, 'idle' curiosity and caprice, characteristics often associated, falsely, with the heroine. By refusing to let her heroines fall into these cliched moral traps, Radcliffe focuses attention instead on the villain's societally condoned abuse of the same qualities. And the victim of these twin forces of desire, she cleverly demonstrates, is finally not simply the villain himself, but also the misguided older woman, a figure often described as sharing some of the villain's capacity for despotism, greed and insensitivity to moral or aesthetic graces: Mme. Montoni, Laurentini di Udolpho, Mme. La Motte, the Marchesa di Vivaldi (possessed of "a man's spirit") and the cruel Abbess of San Stefano, where Ellena is first imprisoned. Three of these secondary characters die by the end of their novels in a suitable state of remorse. This is Radcliffe's method of punishing their villainous actions while also recognizing that, like La Motte, they were each corrupted by a greater evil: patriarchal society.

With this examination of the subtext of sexual politics in Radcliffe's novels, the figures of heroine and villain take on virtually titanic proportions, threatening to squeeze all other characters off the

stage. The young hero may seem a victim of this conflict, for his role in Radcliffe's novels has generally been considered a marginal one, his character merely a peg on which to hang Romantic clichés.⁴

Eino Railo, in his classic book, *The Haunted Castle* (1927) comments: "It is characteristic of the type that in spite of all the authors' efforts to raise these heroes to the position of chief character in their works, a striving we can follow, for instance, in Mrs. Radcliffe's books, they are nowhere successful" (40).

While it may appear an overstatement to consider Valancourt, Theodore, or even Vivaldi as Radcliffe's "chief character" in the three novels I have been considering, it is clear that the hero is an equal participant in the *bildungsroman* aspect of these texts. As such, his growth and adventures parallel the heroine's. He is also the obvious foil to the villain as the heroine's absent but preferred mate and one of the important players in the villain's schemes: Schedoni's aim is to separate Ellena and Vivaldi, Montoni comes between Emily and Valancourt's impending marriage to use Emily as a marketable pawn, and the Marquis de Montalt moves quickly to separate Adeline from his new rival Theodore, first to further his own suit, and later, to

render her once more a friendless victim to his will.

Yet these youths, in spite of their manly charm and suitable heroics, are consistently overshadowed by the villain; even their most tender assignations with the heroine fail to generate the excitement of one of her confrontations with the wicked older man. This is primarily because of the essential similarity of personality between hero and heroine, beyond the sex-differentiated behaviour required by their society. They share the same sensibility and the same vision I have described as integral to the heroine, with only minor differences granted them by Radcliffe for their separate sexual identities. There is no moral gap between them, no dramatic clash of masculine and feminine principles at the psychic level but rather the recognition of oneself in the Other. The hero is actually the heroine's mirror image in male guise, her animus, to use Jung's term loosely. As such, he embodies all the important virtues of the beloved father--long since internalized by the heroine--thus guaranteeing himself a permanent place in her heart.

Valancourt, for instance, is depicted in this self-centered fashion a number of times in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. It is on the journey through France with

her dying father that Emily first meets her future lover, and establishes a bond with him that neither time nor distance can sever, in true Romance style. Once St. Aubert overcomes his paternal possessiveness--he accidentally shoots the young man, p. 38--Valancourt quickly earns his approval. And Emily, notes Radcliffe, "had never before listened with so much pleasure to the praises he bestowed; no, not even when he had bestowed them on herself" (58). The hero's face is described on one occasion as being "the mirror, in which she saw her own emotions reflected" (127) and he is seen to perform actions mirroring Emily's (593-4) elsewhere. In fact, Valancourt's situation echoes hers in several important ways: he too is orphaned, loves poetry (he writes a poem, 558-9), music and nature. He must also embark on adventures to gain experience and maturity before their long-anticipated nuptials can occur. And in their unexpected meeting at Languedoc after a long separation, they scrutinize each other's faces in an interesting scene, to read there quite a similar story:

The lights, which were hung among the trees, under which they sat, allowed her a more perfect view of the countenance she had so frequently in absence endeavoured to recollect, and she perceived with some regret, that it was not the same as when she last saw it. There was all its wonted intelligence and fire; but it had lost much of the simplicity, and

somewhat of the open benevolence, that used to characterise it. Still, however, it was an interesting countenance; but Emily thought she perceived, at intervals, anxiety contract, and melancholy fix the features of Valancourt; sometimes, too, he fell into a momentary musing, and then appeared anxious to dissipate thought; while, at others, as he fixed his eyes on Emily, a kind of sudden distraction seemed to cross his mind. In her he perceived the same goodness and beautiful simplicity, that had charmed him, on their first acquaintance. The bloom of her countenance was somewhat faded, but all its sweetness remained, and it was rendered more interesting, than ever, by the faint expression of melancholy, that sometimes mingled with her smile. (502)

The agonizing period which follows this meeting, during which Emily refuses to accept Valancourt's suit until he has vindicated his calumniated character, serves two important purposes: it shows him the equal of the heroine in fortitude and persistence of feeling--qualities tested in Emily at Udolpho--and it demonstrates the unchanging nature of their visions. For Emily, we see, is still susceptible to the influence of the imagination and the moral suggestions of others, while Valancourt remains a vulnerable target for malice, being reluctant to dissemble. Their tearful reconciliation (667-9) means he has proven himself worthy of the ideal vision Emily has protected for so long.

All the heroes share this vision, expressing an artistic nature in action or behaviour as well as a

tender conscience. Passionate Vivaldi is somewhat more impulsive, as befits the more complex shadings of *The Italian*--he is also linked to the villain through his wicked mother--but he still retains the hero's sensibility. He is musical (26), as is Theodore of *The Romance of the Forest* (Vol. II, 283-4), and both play the lute, the heroine's preferred instrument. Interestingly enough, Radcliffe focuses attention on Vivaldi's susceptibility to superstition, that excess of the imagination, rather than giving Ellena this traditional feature of heroines (*Italian*, 58, 397). In fact, it is perhaps the character of Vivaldi who can best support the claim of sharing "chief character" role with the heroine, for in this later novel Radcliffe increased suspense by alternating chapters on her separated lovers rather than centering on the heroine's predicaments. While a prisoner of the Inquisition, Vivaldi repeats the heroine's role as persecuted innocent: he even wears a cloth or "veil" (325). Furthermore, his declaration of courage in these dire circumstances is clearly modelled on the "passive resistance" that marks the persecuted heroine's actions:

It was by a strong effort for self command, that he forebore bursting the bonds, which held him, and making a desperate attempt to seek her [Ellena] through the vast extent of

these prisons. Reflection, however, had not so entirely forsaken him, but that he saw the impossibility of succeeding in such an effort, the moment he had conceived it, and he forebore to rush upon the certain destruction, to which it must have led. His passions, thus restrained, seemed to become virtues, and to display themselves in the energy of his courage and his fortitude. His soul became stern and vigorous in despair, and his manner and countenance assumed a calm dignity, which seemed to awe, in some degree, even his guards. (*The Italian*, 198)

As well as sharing the heroine's vision, the hero shares her experience of imprisonment, a part of the lovers' adventures while separated. Valancourt spends some time in prison in Paris (*Udolpho*, 652), Theodore is sentenced to death by the Marquis, while Vivaldi is a captive twice: with Paulo in the Paluzzi ruins, as well as in the Inquisition's dungeons.

This similarity of circumstance and temperament finally extends into a type of mental sympathy between hero and heroine which allows the hero to appear just when the heroine seems to need or long for him the most. Although he is limited in his power to help her escape her oppressor, these seemingly magical encounters nevertheless rejuvenate both, supporting the notion that hero and heroine are indissolubly linked in a preordained psychological or spiritual bond. This explains why Emily is so quickly convinced that Valancourt is also a

prisoner of Udolpho (385-6). It is as a reminder of this bond, this essential sameness, that the hero appears: the succour he can give her is secondary for, as I have shown, the heroine prefers to rely on herself, or if that is not possible, the disinterested aid of loyal servants (Peter in *The Romance of the Forest*, Annette and Ludovico in *Udolpho*). Here Vivaldi enters the very scene the heroine had just been contemplating to soothe her longing for him:

While she sat before a window, observing the evening light beaming up the valley, and touching all the distant mountains with misty purple, a reed...sounded from among the rocks below. The instrument and the character were such as she had been unaccustomed to hear within the walls of San Stefano, and the tone diffused over her spirits a pleasing melancholy, that rapt all her attention. The liquid cadence, as it trembled and sunk away, seemed to tell the dejection of no vulgar feelings, and the exquisite taste, with which the complaining notes were again swelled, almost convinced her, that the musician was Vivaldi.

On looking from the lattice, she perceived a person perched on a point of the cliff below, whither it appeared almost impracticable for any human step to have climbed, and preserved from the precipice only by some dwarf shrubs that fringed the brow. The twilight did not permit her immediately to ascertain whether it was Vivaldi, and the situation was so dangerous that she hoped it was not he. Her doubts were removed, when, looking up, he perceived Ellena, and she heard his voice. (*The Italian*, 123-4)

This moral sympathy or psychic synchronicity, is one important reason for the heroine's attraction to the

hero. Another is the proof, through the necessary delays and inevitable frustrations of their nuptials, that the hero can control his desire for the heroine and master his passion. Similarly, control over the power of the imagination is shown by the artistic and moral sensitivity that both share, a part of the larger vision subscribed to equally by the young lovers, but principally represented by the heroine. The union of the pair in long anticipated matrimony and traditional Christian ceremony, rather than an elopement or secret marriage, is the proper finale to Radcliffe's novels. By this action, the heroine solidifies her triumph over the patriarchal vision which threatened her own. In doing so, she unites with her male counterpart, who has proven himself a worthy partner in her world and a satisfying successor to the wise father who provided a benignly androgynous middle ground between the polarized masculine and feminine principles. The hero is also a product of this intermediary position: he is more 'feminine'--in Radcliffe's terms that means sharing the heroine's sensibility--than the villain, but undoubtedly more 'masculine'--physically braver, more passionate--than she.

By rejecting the villain's world and accepting the hero's, the heroine embraces her own vision, affirms her selfhood. Their marriage is therefore a statement of self-actualization, as well as the reward that caps both characters' development from emotional apprenticeship to full maturity.

* * *

However, this theory is not universally held by critics of Radcliffe, and a number profess just the opposite: that the novel's identical comic resolutions are unsatisfying, regressive rather than progressive (Kahane, Poovey, Kelly). Gary Kelly writes in his article, "'A Constant Vicissitude of Interesting Passions': Ann Radcliffe's Perplexed Narratives":

Radcliffe's novels are essentially unprogressive, like eighteenth-century fiction in general. The novels have no real concatenation of circumstances and character, the characters change very little, the little change is not dramatized, and there is only an end to the 'constant vicissitudes' and no real conclusion. (59)

There is in fact some truth to this summation: Radcliffe's heroines do not change dramatically, their constancy of character being the sign of their author's insistence on the endurance of the vision each embodies. While holding onto her principles, however, the heroine

learns better to control her attraction to passion and the imagination, emerging, as the description of Emily later in *Udolpho* indicates (p. 502), sadder but wiser. Meanwhile, Kelly goes on to deplore the inadequacy of characterization, and the avoidance of psychological realism in Radcliffe's novels, as well as "the eschewing of the erotic suggestiveness". His disdainful attitude is clearly inspired by comparisons of her novels with eighteenth-century texts that could be considered in the mainstream: those written by established male writers. I contend that Ann Radcliffe, despite her achievement of popular success, recognized herself as an anomaly, writing from a unique perspective and marginal position as a woman. She was given a special opportunity in these last three novels, when her name was increasingly well-known, to reach an international audience, an opportunity virtually unheard of for a woman artist at that time. At the same time, she was able to maintain her reputation as a 'lady' by concealing her social criticism and insights regarding the female psyche, female sexuality, behind the constructs of the male-ordered eighteenth-century novel.

Yet by seizing the chance to shape the new genre we now call Gothic--subsequently inventing the sub-genre

critics today term 'female Gothic'--she was able to use these same constructs to explore aspects of women's lives never before open to discussion. She created a fertile new form of expression for women writers and a self-affirming experience for female readers. According to Margaret Anne Doody, this was indeed an important step for women, since "The Gothic novel has a value...in making accessible what was strange and elusive, and so paying full attention to what had been undeveloped in the work of earlier novelists" (570). Raymond W. Mize agrees: "The popularity of the works of Radcliffe, Lewis and their imitators, indicate that these fantasies were not attributable to only a few eccentric literary people but, rather, that they were attributable to a large part of the middle-class, especially to women" (235).

The characterization Kelly criticizes thus has an important political function in the novels' subtext of sexual politics. The expression of feminine sexuality is an important element of their hidden discourse, illustrated by the suggestive reticence displayed by hero and heroine in their tender moments together, as well as by the representation of desire found in the books' elaborate landscape descriptions. I hope I have demonstrated in this paper that Radcliffe certainly does

not eschew the erotic. Nor does she omit psychological insight into her characters. Here is one further example of the author's perspicacity--the presentation of Schedoni's crisis of will in *The Italian's* remarkable beach scene:

As he gazed upon her helpless and faded form, he became agitated. He quitted it, and traversed the beach in short turns, and with hasty steps; came back again, and bent over it--his heart seemed sensible to some touch of pity. At one moment, he stepped towards the sea, and taking water in the hollows of his hands, threw it upon her face; at another, seeming to regret that he had done so, he would stamp with sudden fury upon the shore, and walk abruptly to a distance. The conflict between his design and his conscience was strong, or, perhaps, it was only between his passions....

As he stooped to lift her, his resolution faltered [sic] again, on beholding her innocent face, and in that moment she moved. He started back, as if she could have known his purpose, and, knowing it, could have avenged herself. The water, which he had thrown upon her face, had gradually revived her; she unclosed her eyes, and, on perceiving him, shrieked and attempted to rise. His resolution was subdued, so tremblingly fearful is guilt in the moment when it would execute it's [sic] atrocities. Overcome with apprehensions, yet agitated with shame and indignation against himself for being so, he gazed at her for an instance in silence, and then abruptly turned away his eyes and left her. (223-4)

I do not claim that Radcliffe openly, or perhaps even consciously, defied the literary conventions and patriarchal notions of her time. Rather, she worked within them to create a text containing an important

hidden discourse. This discourse reflected her own unrecorded, still largely unacceptable experience as a woman. It also suggested what might be called a heroic alternative to the restricted power and limited potential of women in an oppressively patriarchal culture. In fact, the "emotional and sexual awakening" her books quietly describe was the "liberating factor in a woman's self-awareness, her self-evaluation" (Benkovitz, Fritz and Morton, 40). Ann Radcliffe's own contribution to the collective culture and personal identity of women everywhere was her invention of the 'female Gothic' containing a subtext of sexual politics hidden behind her detailed descriptions of landscapes and adoption of Burke's Sublime. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Italian*, she was able to offer as entertaining "fantasies", serious issues that were to emerge with increasing urgency in the works of the women who soon followed the example of this discreet lady but daring novelist.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ Emily St. Aubert is doubly orphaned over the course of the first few hundred pages in *Udolpho*, while Blanche de Villefort is exiled to a convent for some years by a jealous step-mother (446). Adeline de Montalt of *The Romance of the Forest* is wholly dependent on strangers in the shape of La Motte and La Luc and their families. Clara La Luc is motherless (Vol. III, 49). Ellena di Rosalba is brought up by her aunt in *The Italian*, only meeting her mother at the end of the novel (378).

² The recognized, humorous figure of the loquacious servant shows up several times in the novels: Annette, Theresa and Dorothée in *Udolpho*, Peter in *The Romance of the Forest*, Beatrice and Paulo in *The Italian*. The weak or misguided society women (inflated into a villainess proper by some critics) are: Mme. Cheron/Montoni, Laurentini di Udolpho and the Countess de Villefort in *Udolpho*, Mme. La Motte in *The Romance of the Forest*, and the Marchesa in *The Italian*. I do not put these women's evilness in the same category as the villain's because it is a more relative hence more human failing, containing a death-bed repentance in the worst examples (Laurentini, the Marchesa).

³ It has often been remarked that Radcliffe transcends her own artistic limits in the depiction of the monk Schedoni, who "captured the Romantic imagination with his blend of pride, melancholy, mystery, and dignity.... With this character her blacks and whites became complicated and grey" (Frederick Garber's Introduction to *The Italian*, xii-xiii). Greater sympathy is aroused for this villain than either Montoni or the Marquis, as Schedoni prefigures the Faustian anti-hero the Romantics were so interested in. However, for the purposes of my analysis, I shall emphasize the ways in which he conforms to the pattern of villainy outlined in this chapter.

⁴ The heroes are: Valancourt and Du Pont in *Udolpho*, Vivaldi in *The Italian*, and Theodore Peyrou La Luc, Louis La Motte, M. Verneuil, M. Amand in *The*

Romance of the Forest. As with the heroines, however, the most well-realized heroes are the primary ones discussed here--Valancourt, Theodore, Vivaldi.

☞ Other instances of seemingly magical meetings: *The Romance of the Forest*, Vol. II, 123-5; *Udolpho*, 145, 501, 624, 667; *The Italian*, 12, 123-4.

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