

ANN RADCLIFFE

ANN RADCLIFFE:
THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

By
IAN ROBERT HUGH WHITWELL, M.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts
McMaster University
October, 1969

MASTER OF ARTS (1969)
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario.

TITLE: Ann Radcliffe: The Development of a Narrative Technique

AUTHOR: Ian Robert Hugh Whitwell, M.A. (Auckland)

SUPERVISOR: Professor F. N. Shrive

NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 115

SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis is concerned with some aspects of Ann Radcliffe's development as a writer. Most of it deals with her as a writer of Gothic novels: her groups of Gothic and Romantic characters, her treatment of suspense, and her use of the Gothic castle. The chapter on landscape and background treats an aspect of her work which is not exclusively Gothic, but which contributes to the Gothic atmosphere, and which is sufficiently characteristic of her to warrant separate consideration. Some attention is given to sources and influences, and an attempt is made to evaluate her various techniques.

INTRODUCTION

The novels of Ann Radcliffe which were published in her lifetime appeared between 1789 and 1797, after the four great eighteenth century novelists, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, and before the nineteenth century Scott and Jane Austen. She falls into the interim period, between Augustans and Romantics, and in her work shows leanings towards both periods. Her novels are best known for being Gothic, and she is perhaps the best example in English literature of the strange flowering, in this interval between great writers, of the Gothic Novel, a genre which enjoyed in its brief, bright life an enormous popularity with its readers. The Gothic features which are typical of Mrs Radcliffe's work are, generally speaking, refined and subtle in comparison with those of her imitators, of whom there were many. She affords a good example of a writer developing a distinctive technique, and this is the basic theme of this thesis. Her first immature - she was twenty-five - novel has the elements which appear, in more highly developed forms, in her later works. Her most typical techniques appear at their best in The Mysteries of Udolpho, but they are also at their most formidably prolific. She seems to have realised this, for in The Italian she takes a different approach and corrects, to some extent, the over-emphases, and makes up for some of the deficiencies.

Gaston de Blondville was published posthumously in 1826: she apparently never intended to publish it herself. It is a historical romance, and a rather unsuccessful experiment which is so far removed from her previous work in its theme and style that it is not usually considered with her other novels, which form satisfyingly consistent patterns.

Little is known of Mrs Radcliffe's life, for she shunned any sort of publicity, even though she must have been, for a while, one of the most widely known women in England. She was born in London in 1764, and at the age of twenty-three married William Radcliffe, an Oxford graduate and journalist. She apparently took to writing in order to fill in evenings at home while her husband was working; there may have been anticipation of financial reward, but it is unlikely that she needed it. Her secluded life at home was interrupted only by one of her chief pleasures, travelling, though she never travelled far. A trip through Holland and Western Germany was the most extensive; otherwise she and husband travelled in Britain, she writing in notebooks and her husband reading them for amusement. She died in 1823, and perhaps the rumour that she died insane as a result of excessive use of her imagination was the reaction of a frustrated public, unable to penetrate the seclusion which she desired and maintained so successfully that a biography can contain little more than a few facts. Even a knowledge of these few bare facts makes more striking the contrast between the gentle, quiet, home-loving woman, and the scenes and situations which she described.

Mrs Radcliffe has not been the subject of a major close critical examination, apart from chapters devoted to her in books on the Gothic Novel or writers of the period. Most of the conclusions drawn and analyses made in this thesis are therefore based on evidence found in the novels themselves.

My thanks are due to Professor Shrive for his most co-operative advice and assistance.

CHAPTER ONE

In all her novels except the last, Gaston de Blondville, which she left unpublished, Mrs Radcliffe makes an extensive use of natural description as background to the movements and emotions of her characters. Her first novel, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, is set in the Scottish highlands, but at this stage she is more concerned with just narrating events than with setting the mood, and she was criticised for her evident lack of knowledge of the highlands. Nevertheless, there are passages which show that even in this first work she was developing the conception of landscape which was to dominate her later novels. In A Sicilian Romance, more use is made of the setting, and more still in The Romance of the Forest. By the time of The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian, the technique has become strongly characteristic, and the passages of landscape description become so frequent and elaborate that to the modern reader they become repetitive. The only serious criticism of The Mysteries of Udolpho made by contemporary reviewers was that local descriptions became tedious and prolix. The heroines all travel: Julia travels through the wilds of Sicily; Adeline travels from the Fontanville Forest to the Savoy Alps, to Nice and Languedoc, and back to the Savoy; Emily travels in the Pyrenees and the south of France, crosses the Alps to Venice, and then travels through the

Appenines to Udolpho, whence she returns to Languedoc. Ellena goes from Naples into the Appenines and back. The travelling gives great scope to Mrs Radcliffe's descriptive pen, for each place visited is described in a detailed and distinctive manner.

In describing her landscapes, Mrs Radcliffe uses various techniques and achieves certain consistent effects. Sometimes the techniques have a direct bearing on the effects achieved, but frequently a description seems to have little to do with either plot or character, and is probably present only for its colour, to remind English readers that they are in France or Italy - even though the gardens in Vivaldi's villa, and those of the Marquis de Montalt, are laid out like an English garden. A glance at Mrs Radcliffe's journals shows, too, that she delighted in describing landscapes for their own sake, and this pleasure is probably responsible for the descriptions which are repetitive and superfluous. Her landscapes fall into several classes, each class being described by a variety of techniques, used consistently, so that it is possible to classify the approaches she takes to a scene. There are landscapes intended to inspire awe or horror, while others may inspire pleasant recollections and associations. A landscape may be dark or light, and its effect will vary accordingly. Mrs Radcliffe shows a marked fondness for scenes of threatening darkness or obscurity, especially when used as a background to the wanderings and trials of the heroine. She frequently uses a pattern of contrasts, to emphasise one aspect of landscape by reference to another. Various stereotypes in the types of landscape described emerge, reflecting Mrs Radcliffe's own lack of first-hand observation of the places she describes. Scenes may be pictured as if

a landscape painting were being described. She may write almost with the detail of a botanist, or she may convey only an impression of darkness and mass. The first part of this chapter investigates the techniques used to build landscape pictures, the second part considers the use of landscape as an integral part of the structure of the novel, and the third discusses the possible sources of the descriptions.

One of Mrs Radcliffe's striking techniques is to be particular as to the type of vegetation which appears in the landscape, and different trees come to be associated with a type of landscape and with the emotions which are evoked by this landscape. Thus dark trees such as pine are associated with the gloom, awful sublimity, and horror of the precipitous crags and torrents, and contribute to the apprehension and suspense of the travellers:

Towards evening, they wound down precipices, black with forests of cypress, pine and cedar, into a glen so savage and secluded, that, if Solitude ever had local habitation, this might have been 'her place of dearest residence.' (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 402)

Here, the blackness of the trees makes more frightening the solitude of the glen and more pronounced its wildness. Trees which are not necessarily dark by nature may serve the same purpose if they are of great age. After being taken from the chapel of San Sebastian, Ellena draws near to a forest which she has been observing in the distance, and which provides an impressive premonition of the place where, it is intended, she will be killed:

They entered by a track, a road it could not be called, which led among oaks and gigantic chestnuts, apparently the growth of centuries, and so thickly interwoven, that their branches formed a canopy which seldom admitted the sky. The gloom which they threw around . . . gave a character of fearful wildness to the scene. (The Italian, p. 209)

Such trees are the sort which would grow in an enchanted forest: they suggest a comparison with Dante's "selva oscura", or with the entrance to Vergil's underworld. A modern parallel would be the trees of Tolkien's Mirkwood: in Tolkien's dark forests one expects to find goblins and orcs, while in Mrs Radcliffe's there is always the possibility of encountering the much feared but seldom seen banditti. The most sustained example of an enchanted forest is the Fontanville Forest, the setting for much of The Romance of the Forest. This forest is not described in detail, but it is a dominant presence, and provides a suitable setting for the reputedly haunted abbey. Although we know that it is very dark and thick, little attention is given to its physiography - its chief distinction seems to be its gloom and the difficulty of finding a path through it. The animals are like those of an enchanted forest, for they do not fear man, and as La Motte explores, he finds that "the pheasants scarcely flew from his approach, and the deer gazed mildly at him as he passed" (The Romance of the Forest, I.60).

In contrast to the darkness of the trees of the Pyrenees and the Appenines is the variation and exotic nature (to an Englishwoman) of the trees of Northern Italy and the Mediterranean, where there are always cypresses, cedars, oranges, lemons, almonds, poplars, and other trees which are typically associated with a Mediterranean climate. A basic contrast seems to be that this type of tree grows in cultivation, and cultivation means for travellers the relief of human habitation and civilisation after the dark woods of the wild mountains. When Ellena, Vivaldi, and Paulo reach Lake Celano on their flight from the convent of San Stefano, they delight in the contrast between the grimness of the

country they have crossed and the pleasant, reassuring nature of that which they have reached:

"Mark too," said Ellena, "how sweetly the banks and undulating plains repose at the feet of the mountains; what an image of beauty and elegance they oppose to the awful grandeur that overlooks and guards them! Observe, too, how many a delightful valley, opening from the lake, spreads its rice and corn fields, shaded with groves of the almond, far among the winding hills; how gaily vineyards and olives alternately chequer the acclivities; and how gracefully the lofty palms bend over the higher cliffs."

(The Italian, pp. 158-159)

The shade from such trees is soothing rather than awesome, and, especially in the scenes by the Mediterranean, there is a strong impression of fragrance and fertility. Whether such trees are ill-omened or not depends upon the situation of the heroine. Ellena, being led up the last steep slope to the convent of San Stefano, "like a lamb to the sacrifice", passes through "thickets of almond trees, figs, broad-leaved myrtle, and ever-green rose bushes, intermingled with the strawberry tree, beautiful in fruit and blossoms, the yellow jasmine, the delightful acacia mimosa, and a variety of other fragrant plants" (The Italian, p. 64). Here there is a contrast between Ellena's gloomy situation and the pleasant vegetation; shortly the cypress and cedar, which in Venice are emblems of the beauty and sophistication of that city, are seen as emblems of gloom and despair: "Partial features of the vast edifice she was approaching, . . . seen at intervals beneath the gloom of cypress and spreading cedar, seemed as if menacing the unhappy Ellena with hints of future suffering" (The Italian, p. 64).

The mildness of the Mediterranean climate always seemed to impress Mrs Radcliffe, and no doubt she intended cataloguing of plants, such as that in the preceding paragraph, to add to the authenticity. Sometimes,

however, her interest in local colour and facts becomes, like that of other novelists writing about an unfamiliar setting, too insistent. In her desire for detail, she comes close to a listing technique for describing the varieties of trees in her landscape. Usually, however, she has some distinctive quality about each one, or a contrast, which saves the description from sounding as if it were taken out of a hand-book:

[Blanche] now tripped sportively along the path, on which the sunbeams darted and the chequered foliage trembled - where the tender greens of the beech, the acacia and the mountain-ash, mingling with the solemn tints of the cedar, the pine and cypress, exhibited as fine a contrast of colouring, as the majestic oak and oriental plane did of form, to the feathery lightness of the cork tree and the waving grace of the poplar. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, pp. 476-477)

She avoids tedium in this example by remarking on the qualities of the different species, and by showing the effect of the trees seen as a mass, rather than by remarking on their presence only. The sentence demonstrates her very careful balancing, particularly of adjectives and nouns: the first two groups of trees, which are themselves balanced, balance the second two groups, which are also balanced in themselves.

When describing the ascent or descent of a mountain, Mrs Radcliffe sometimes takes care to detail the different belts of vegetation corresponding to the altitudinal zones. She is also attracted by landscapes which extend from the snowy peaks to the valley floor or plains:

The travellers, as they descended, gradually, exchanged the region of winter for the genial warmth and beauty of spring. The sky began to assume that serene and beautiful tint peculiar to the climate of Italy; patches of young verdure, fragrant shrubs and flowers looked gaily among the rocks, often fringing their rugged brows, or hanging in tufts from their broken sides; and the buds of the oak and mountain ash were expanding into foliage. Descending lower, the orange and the myrtle, every now and then, appeared in some sunny nook, with their yellow blossoms peeping from among the dark green of their leaves,

and mingling with the scarlet flowers of the pomegranate and the paler ones of the arbutus, that ran mantling to the crags above; while, lower still, spread the pastures of Piedmont, where early flocks were cropping the luxuriant herbage of spring. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 167)

Mrs Radcliffe wants to emphasise that it is Italy which Emily is descending to, and that the climate and vegetation of Italy are different from England's. By describing the progression through the zones, she is able to make a wide first impression of the Italian scene. She gives attention to the colours of the flowers and leaves, and their wide distribution - growing amongst rocks and "mantling to the crags above".

Mrs Radcliffe is attracted to "the grandeur of an extensive prospect, or the magnificence of a wide horizon" (The Romance of the Forest, I.24). As will be mentioned later, the inspiration for the extensive landscape seems to have been in the landscapes of Salvator Rosa, Claude and Poussin. Often her expansive views fall into a stereotyped pattern, of which there seem to be two main varieties: the view of mountains from within mountains, and the view from mountains of a landscape which stretches to the sea.

The first type typically includes crags and precipices, seen by the last rays of the setting sun, and a rushing torrent, which may be seen or only heard if the glooms of evening have descended:

She trembled at the sound of the torrents rolling among the cliffs and thundering in the vale below, and shrunk from the view of the precipices, which sometimes overhung the road, and at others appeared beneath it. (The Romance of the Forest, III.43)

There will usually be a shepherd's or hunter's cottage at hand to temper the wildness, and if there is not, this will be commented on as an additional stimulus to fear:

The haunt of man could now only be discovered by the simple hut of the shepherd and the hunter, or by the rough pine bridge thrown across the torrent, to assist the latter in his chase of the chamois over crags where, but for this vestige of man, it would have been believed only the chamois or the wolf dared to venture. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 164)

When there is no sign of man, the place holds a special terror:

It was in one of these rambles, that having strayed for some miles over hills covered with heath, from whence the eye was presented with only the bold outlines of uncultivated nature, rocks piled on rocks, cataracts and vast moors unmarked by the foot of traveller, he lost the path which he had himself made; he looked in vain for the objects which had directed him, and his heart, for the first time, felt the repulse of fear. No vestige of a human being was to be seen, and the dreadful silence of the place was interrupted only by the roar of distant torrents, and by the screams of the birds which flew over his head. (The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, p. 9)

Osbert is overcome with terror, and he retreats from the place; he wanders on until his eyes "were once more blessed with the sight of human dwellings." Those places in the Pyrenees which are bereft of any sign of human life often have some special omen of evil such as a gibbet or a cross, to warn travellers of the danger they risk by venturing away from human habitations.

The distinction between a scene with human life and one without it seems to be a basic one which Mrs Radcliffe sees in her landscapes. The remotest mountain valley will often have a tiny hamlet at its head, and a convent is usually not far off even in the deepest recesses of the Appenines or the Pyrenees:

He had now passed over some of the wildest tracts of the Appenine, among scenes, which seemed abandoned by civilized society to the banditti who haunted their recesses. Yet even here amidst wilds that were nearly inaccessible, convents, with each its small dependent hamlet, were scattered, and, shrouded from the world by woods and mountains, enjoyed unsuspectedly many of its luxuries, and displayed, unnoticed, some of its elegance. (The Italian, p. 113)

Places such as the one Osbert came across are rare, then, for even in the wildest spots there are usually at least signs of human presence, even if only a memorial, a track, or a pine felled across a chasm. This pervasive life means that one cannot depend upon places such as the ruined abbey in the Fontanville Forest or the deserted watch-tower in the Pyrenees being deserted. Mrs Radcliffe's seascapes and beach scenes in particular usually have life in the form of peasants and fishermen dancing on the shore; indeed, the sight of dancing peasants becomes somewhat inevitable whenever a beach is seen.

The second pattern - the view from mountains of a vast landscape - appears equally frequently, and, being less realistic, is one of the indications that Mrs Radcliffe's landscapes are sometimes idealised. A very long range vision must be necessary to pick out the details in this sort of view, which normally includes even sails upon the sea:

Through a vista of the mountains appeared the lowlands of Rousillon, tinted with the blue haze of distance, as they united with the waters of the Mediterranean; where, on a promontory, which marked the boundary of the shore, stood a lonely beacon, over which were seen circling flights of sea-fowl. Beyond, appeared, now and then, a stealing sail, white with the sun-beam, and whose progress was perceivable by its approach to the light-house. Sometimes, too, was seen a sail so distant, that it served only to mark the line of separation between the sky and the waves. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, pp. 53-54)

The plains of Languedoc . . . spread far to the north and the east; to the south, appeared the Mediterranean, clear as crystal, and blue as the heavens it reflected, bearing on its bosom vessels, whose white sails caught the sun-beams, and gave animation to the scene. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 467)

This method of organised composition is largely due to the influence of the landscape pictures she was familiar with, and shows that she was not drawing on her own observation. She herself had never been to France or

Italy, though the Edinburgh Review in 1823 supposed that Mr Radcliffe had been attached to embassies in Italy, and that there his wife had "imbibed that taste for picturesque scenery, and the obscure and wild superstitions of mouldering castles, of which she has made so beautiful a use in her Romances." On her one trip to the Continent, with her husband, they travelled only as far as Holland and western Germany. Their intention of going on to Switzerland was frustrated within sight of the mountains by a border official in Freiburg: "a disappointment, which no person could bear without severe regret" (A Journey, p. 275). More will be said later of the supposed sources for her descriptions, but since Mrs Radcliffe was not writing from personal experience it is not surprising if she falls into stereotypes. Nevertheless, the characteristics which she dwells upon so often form part of an artistic pattern which serves her intention of using landscape as a gloomy, wild background for the ordeals of the heroine, or as a vista of light and beauty as a background for her intervals of relief from danger.

With the close observation of landscape there also exists a certain vagueness. The vocabulary used in describing mountains and forests tends to be restricted, especially in the adjectives - mountains are stupendous, wild, fantastic, gloomy, sublime, and forests are gloomy, shady, or impenetrable. Very often the picture is blurred and vague rather than precise and distinctive, and the description gives an impression and a feeling rather than a clear picture which could be identified:

Their towering and fantastic summits, crowding together into dusky air, like flames tapering to a point, exhibited images of peculiar grandeur, while each minuter line and feature withdrawing, at this

evening hour, from observation, seemed to resolve itself into the more gigantic masses, to which the dubious tint, the solemn obscurity, that began to prevail over them, gave force and loftier character. (The Italian, p. 65)

Here she is describing what is happening to the view, rather than saying what the view is, so that the "images of peculiar grandeur" are left to the reader's imagination, while "towering and fantastic summits" conveys only a very general picture. This is not to negate the effectiveness of her description, for the "force and loftier character" added by the obscurity is something which one feels rather than sees. Her technique may be indirect:

They often paused to contemplate these stupendous scenes, and seated on some wild cliff, where only the ilex or the larch could flourish, looked over dark forests of fir, and precipices where human foot had never wandered, into the glen - so deep, that the thunder of the torrent, which was seen to foam along the bottom, was scarcely heard to murmur. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 42)

The cliff, the precipices, and the glen are described not in terms of physical details, but indirectly, in terms of some attribute which will form the impression. The cliff is so steep, rugged or barren, that only the hardiest trees will grow there; the precipices are so steep that they are inaccessible; and the glen so deep that its torrent can hardly be heard.

The vague word "massy" or "mass" occurs frequently in the landscape descriptions, and its distribution is significant, for it is usually used for a landscape which is being softened and obscured by evening. It is in the evening, or in the light of the sun's last rays, that the landscape has its most moving effect on the sensitive hero or heroine:

All without was obscured in shade; but Emily, turning her eyes from the massy darkness of the woods, whose waving outline appeared on the horizon, saw, on the left, that effulgent planet, which the

old man had pointed out, setting over the woods . . . Chilled with a melancholy awe, she retired once more to her bed.

(The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 84)

The sun, soon after, sinking to the lower world, the shadow of the earth stole gradually over the waves . . . How deep, how beautiful was the tranquillity that wrapped the scene! All nature seemed to repose; the finest emotions of the soul were alone awake. Emily's eyes filled with tears of admiration and sublime devotion. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 175)

A landscape seen as a mass has the advantage that malevolence can be concealed behind the obscurity. The darkness of the woods seems to Emily to conceal the mysterious music, and sunset in the Pyrenees makes the prospect more awful for Lady Blanche:

Where the torrent had been seen, it was now only heard; where the wild cliffs had displayed every variety of form and attitude, a dark mass of mountains now alone appeared; and the vale, which far, far below had opened its dreadful chasm, the eye could no longer fathom. A melancholy gleam still lingered on the summits of the highest Alps, overlooking the deep repose of evening, and seeming to make the stillness of the hour more awful.

(The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 597)

What makes more awful the partial obscurity of that hour, when shapes previously distinct become massy, is the fact that "the fantastic forms of danger", though known to be there, can no longer be seen, but the mind is already affected by their presence. Twilight improves a landscape for Mrs Radcliffe, for when the features no longer appear distinctly but are blended into one great mass, then the romantic imagination has a greater scope for improving on what the eye can see, and for seeing in the gloom whatever a romantic inclination might want to see. St Aubert finds the evening gloom of the woods delightful, and explains to Emily the reason:

"I remember that in my youth this gloom used to call forth to my fancy a thousand fairy visions, and romantic images . . . I can linger, with solemn steps, under the deep shades, send forward a

transforming eye into the distant obscurity, and listen with thrilling delight to the mystic murmuring of the woods." (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 15)

Obscurity, therefore, gives the eye which is disposed to romanticism, a licence to see more than what is known to be there. This is in accord with the doctrine of Burke: "To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes."¹ Mrs Radcliffe regards imagination as an integral part of the art of appreciating wild scenery, and her travellers use it to add a further dimension to their observations: "To our warm imagination, the dubious forms, that float, half veiled in darkness, afford a higher delight, than the most distinct scenery, that the sun can shew" (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 598). Hints and obscurity are Mrs Radcliffe's stock-in-trade, and, as will be seen, the same principle applies to her treatment of suspense and horror. It is worth noting that such skilled application of the imagination to nature, or even just appreciation of nature, is an attribute which is limited to the refined members of the upper class. The vulgar Madame Montoni, crossing Mount Cenis, "only shuddered as she looked down precipices" from which Emily too recoiled, but Emily is able to feel more than fear - her emotions at such a time cover a large range: "With her fears were mingled such various emotions of delight, such admiration, astonishment, and awe, as she had never before experienced" (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 166). Both use their imagination, but while Emily is seeing, "in the eye of fancy",

¹Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry, p. 99.

Hannibal under attack while crossing the Alps, Madame Montoni is looking towards Italy and imagining the splendour of the life she is about to take up there. Paulo, the garrulous servant in The Italian, is unable to perceive the horrors of the pass on the way out of San Stefano, for his "spirits seldom owned the influence of local scenery." Peter, the servant in The Romance of the Forest, becomes ecstatic as he approaches his native mountains, but Mrs Radcliffe makes it clear that his enthusiasm is quite uncritical and unsophisticated, for "its disadvantages he totally forgot; and though he gave away his last sous to the children of the peasantry that run barefooted by the side of the horse, he spoke of nothing but the happiness and content of the inhabitants" (III.42). Adeline, on the other hand, feels both terror and delightful sublimity at the view, and is attracted by the romantic situation of the village.

Mrs Radcliffe's favourite time of day is sunset, for it is then that the atmospherics of the air most assist the atmospherics of her romance. A journey will often be completed at sunset. As Adeline and Peter approach Leloucourt, "the day was closing . . . and the sun, in all his evening splendour, now sinking behind their summits, threw a farewell gleam athwart the landscape" (III.43). La Motte finds the abbey just as the sun sets: "As La Motte looked anxiously from the window, he observed upon the vivid glow of the western horizon, some dark towers rising from among the trees at a little distance" (I.36). The approach to Venice in The Mysteries of Udolpho is illumined by the setting rays, which "threw strong contrasts of light and shade upon the porticos and long arcades, and beamed a mellow lustre upon the orangeries and the tall groves of pine and cypress, that overhung the building" (p. 209). They reach Udolpho

"towards the close of day":

The sun had just sunk below the top of the mountains she was descending, whose long shadow stretched athwart the valley, but his sloping rays, shooting through an opening of the cliffs, touched with a yellow gleam the summits of the forest, that hung upon the opposite steeps, and streamed in full splendour upon the towers and battlements of a castle, that spread its extensive ramparts along the brow of a precipice above. The splendour of these illumined objects was heightened by the contrasted shade, which involved the valley below. (p. 226)

Apart from the obvious fact that a journey is often completed at the end of the day, Mrs Radcliffe uses the setting sun for specific effects. The yellow rays are used as a spotlight for an object in the scene: here, our first view of the castle of Udolpho is splendidly illuminated, while its surroundings are in shadow, and the contrast emphasises both the castle's dominating position, high up where it catches the last rays, and its strength, as its ramparts spread along the brow which is still illumined. The sun acts as a spotlight again when it focuses on the three strangers on the terrace:

She turned to observe a fine effect of the sun, as his rays, suddenly streaming from behind a heavy cloud, lighted up the west towers of the castle, while the rest of the edifice was in deep shade, except, that, through a lofty gothic arch, adjoining the tower, which led to another terrace, the beams darted in full splendour, and shewed the three strangers she had observed in the morning. (p. 287)

The contrast between full light and deep shadow is present again, and attention is drawn to the figures in the light. The expression "turned to observe" indicates a certain deliberation on Emily's part which characterises the attitude of the romantic heroines towards such things: a sunset is not a thing to be observed in passing, but something to be considered carefully and used as an inspiration for writing poetry.

Mrs Radcliffe often describes her landscapes as if she is looking at a carefully composed painting, and there is an indication of her approach to these imaginative landscapes in Emily's sketching technique: "[She] tried to dismiss thought, took her instruments for drawing, and placed herself at a window, to select into a landscape some features of the scenery without" (p. 276). Mrs Radcliffe sometimes uses this process of selection in her own descriptions. Some evidence for her stylised technique has been mentioned, in her liking for complete landscapes which include things not reasonably visible in distant views. Sometimes, too, there is a strong sense of being a spectator at a tableau, as at the burial of Madame Montoni, when Mrs Radcliffe remarks: "At the moment, in which they let down the body into the earth, the scene was such as only the dark pencil of a Domenichino, perhaps, could have done justice to" (p. 377). The description following is full of different shades of colour:

"... the venerable figure of the monk, wrapt in long black garments, his cowl thrown back from his pale face, on which the light gleaming strongly shewed the lines of affliction softened by piety, and the few grey locks, which time had spared on his temples." (p. 377)

The wedding group of Ellena and Vivaldi in The Italian is described as "a group worthy of the pencil", and the figures are carefully positioned and each is given a distinctive or contrasting appearance. The scene has a deliberate dignity and motionless quality:

The figure and homely features of this sister; the tall stature and harsh visage of the brother, clothed in the gray habit of his order; the silvered head and placid physiognomy of the officiating priest, enlightened by a gleam from the lamp above, opposed to the youthful grace and spirit of Vivaldi, and the milder beauty and sweetness of Ellena, formed altogether a group worthy of the pencil.
(p. 185)

The selection process is seen at its best when not only the features of the people in the scene are selected, but also the objects which surround them. An example of such a carefully composed piece is the rustic scene outside the cottage of La Voison, in The Mysteries of Udolpho:

The old man she found sitting on a bench at his door, between his daughter, and his son-in-law, who was just returned from his daily labour, and who was playing upon a pipe, that, in tone, resembled an oboe. A flask of wine stood beside the old man, and, before him, a small table with fruit and bread, round which stood several of his grandsons, fine rosy children, who were taking their supper, as their mother distributed it. On the edge of the little green, that spread before the cottage, were cattle and a few sheep reposing under the trees. The landscape was touched with the mellow light of the evening sun, whose long slanting beams played through a vista of the woods, and lighted up the distant turrets of the chateau. (p. 90)

The life in this picture is composed in a picturesque group, with the children in front and the elders behind, and the son-in-law playing on his pipe to add a pleasant rustic note. The wine, fruit and bread serve as still life. Our attention is drawn from the flask of wine, to the table, then to the foreground where the cattle and sheep are "reposing"; thence to the woods, touched by the evening sun, and finally to the furthest object, the turrets of the chateau. There is a careful progression from point to point in the scene until the whole is seen as a balanced, complete, and framed picture.

One of Mrs Radcliffe's most consistently used techniques for evoking a mysterious atmosphere from her descriptions, or just for making them more specific, is that of contrast. A contrast which she uses very frequently is between light and dark. It may be for artistic effect, to achieve the black and white quality of an etching -

One of the supporting cliffs, with part of the bridge, was in deep shade, but the other, feathered with foliage, and the rising surges

at its foot, were strongly illumined; and many a thicket wet with the spray, sparkled in contrast to the dark rock it overhung.

(The Italian, p. 146)

- or more commonly, the part of the scene which is in light serves to suggest how dark and impenetrable by comparison are the glooms which lie beyond the sphere of light:

Sometimes, [the lightning] revealed the nearer recesses of the woods, or, displaying some opening in their summits, illumined the ground beneath with partial splendour, the thick foliage of the trees preserving the surrounding scene in deep shadow. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 409)

Moonlight has a more mysterious quality than sunlight; therefore it appears frequently, to illumine inadequately with its tremulous uncertain gleams an obscure path, or to make more striking the gloom of castle, convent or dungeon.

Another type of contrast is between two distinctive types of landscape: when they are found in close juxtaposition, their differences will be emphasised, to the advantage of one type. In this example it is the grandeur of the mountains which benefits from comparison with the pastoral scenery of the valley below:

His chateau was situated in one of those delightful vallies of the Swiss cantons . . . where the magnificent features of the scenery are contrasted, and their effect heightened by the blooming luxuriance of woods and pasturage, by the gentle windings of the stream, and the peaceful aspect of the cottage.

(The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, pp. 143-144)

Similarly, the Alps profit from the comparison with the Italian landscape, both being visible to Emily from Mount Cenis: the wild prospect "received a higher character of sublimity from the reposing beauty of the Italian landscape below" (p. 166).

A contrast is often noted between the wildness of the mountains

and the patches of cultivation and fertility which appear in their midst, which suggests again the idea of life always being present in the most remote places. In the Alps, Emily notes that "green pastures and vineyards spread their hues at the feet of perpendicular rocks of marble, or of granite" (p. 164). As Adeline journeys up the Rhone, she observes "the novelty of the scene through which she floated, now frowning with savage grandeur, and now smiling in fertility" (III.30).

As has been suggested, Mrs Radcliffe does not always use a landscape only for scenic effects, but often uses the setting as a reflection of the action and thoughts of the main characters, and the setting consistently has particular effects on the characters. The landscape rarely assumes the strength and individuality of an active force in the plot, as it does in, for example, Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native; rather, the setting is always there as a background suitable to the thoughts of a Gothic heroine, and as local colour to provide diversion for English readers. The choice of a southern setting was not random. Clara McIntyre has suggested that, the rise of the Gothic novel coinciding with a revival of interest in Elizabethan drama, Mrs Radcliffe owes a great deal to the attitude towards Italy expressed by the dramatists for her own conception of Italy and Italians.² Furthermore, the Roman Catholic religion still prevailed in the south, and to the Protestant English, Mrs Radcliffe included, monasteries, monks, and the Inquisition, held a strong attraction of romantic horror. As well as this, there was the typical romantic longing for any alien and distant setting. Therefore,

²McIntyre, 1921.

although the heroines are always the most correct young ladies of eighteenth-century England, the setting is distinctly foreign, and its most striking features are those things which, in accord with English opinions of Italy, will strike a genteel fear into a young lady's heart. The characters are very aware of their surroundings, and allow themselves to react fully to their changing settings.

Physical surroundings may reflect the emotions of the characters: a scene will often reflect or affect a character's disposition or spirits. A dawn may bring fresh spirits: "All nature seemed to have awakened from death into life; the spirit of St Aubert was renovated" (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 36). Alpine scenery may effect a general feeling of well-being: "The serenity and clearness of the air in these high regions were particularly delightful to the travellers; it seemed to inspire them with a finer spirit, and diffused an indescribable complacency over their minds" (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 43). The darkness of the woods will often reflect a gloomy mood: "[Emily] was reconducted by La Voisin through the woods, the pensive gloom of which was in unison with the temper of her mind. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 84). In The Italian, Vivaldi, arriving at the convent of San Stefano, finds the landscape's mood is in accord with his own feelings:

He sometimes rested to gaze upon the scenery around him, for this too was in harmony with the temper of his mind. Disappointment had subdued the wilder energy of the passions, and produced a solemn and lofty state of feeling; he viewed with pleasing sadness the dark rocks and precipices, the gloomy mountains and vast solitudes, that spread around him. (p. 116)

The tranquillity of a landscape may be used as a contrast with the discord and tumult of human thoughts and activities. While retained

in *Udolpho*, Emily looks at the peaceful mountains, which have temporarily lost their oppressiveness in comparison with the oppression and terror which exists within the castle:

As she gazed on the mountain-view beyond, the deep repose of its beauty struck her with all the force of contrast, and she could scarcely believe herself so near a scene of savage discord. The contending elements seemed to have retired from their natural spheres, and to have collected themselves into the minds of men, for there alone the tempest now reigned. (p. 318)

In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline, frantically exploring the garden of the Marquis in an attempt to escape, pauses in despair as she finds no exit from the beautiful and spacious gardens:

The scene around exhibited only images of peace and delight; every object seemed to repose; not a breath waved the foliage, not a sound stole through the air: it was in her bosom only that tumult and distress prevailed. (II.137-138)

A landscape will often have a soothing influence, and a character may find in nature a respite from the harsh conditions which Gothic heroes and heroines must endure. For this reason, Ellena, confined in San Stefano, in *The Italian*, is delighted to find she has access to a turret with a commanding view, "whose grandeur awakened all her heart. The consciousness of her prison was lost, while her eyes ranged over the wide and freely-sublime scene without . . . Hither she could come, and her soul, refreshed by the views it afforded, would acquire strength to bear her, with equanimity, thro' the persecutions that might await her" (p. 90).

A romantic landscape strengthens the feeling between lovers: "'These scenes,' said Valancourt, at length, ' . . . waken our best and purest feelings, disposing us to benevolence, pity, and friendship. Those whom I love -- I always seem to love more in such an hour as this'"

(*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 46). Lovers find that landscapes which

they have admired together act as a catalyst for reviving affection; or a scene which was loved by a person now dead may bring that person vividly to mind. Valancourt, left at Toulouse after Emily's departure for Italy, finds that

He could not immediately tear himself from the spot, where he had been accustomed to converse with Emily, or from the objects they had viewed together, which appeared to him memorials of her affection, as well as a kind of surety for its faithfulness; and, next to the pain of bidding her adieu, was that of leaving the scenes which so powerfully awakened her image. (pp. 291-292)

Emily is often reminded of her dead parents by looking at a scene, or one similar to a scene which they had loved; even to see again a landscape which they had admired together is sufficient to recall vividly the person, and the occasion when it was last seen in the company of the dead person. Emily's return to La Vallée after her father's death is a succession of memories, stirred by seeing again the sights which her father had last seen while alive:

Often, while she looked through her tears upon the wild grandeur of the Pyrenees, now varied with the rich lights and shadows of evening, she remembered, that, when last she saw them, her father partook with her of the pleasure they inspired. (p. 92)

The suggestion seems to be that while human fortunes rise and fall, nature remains unchanging. Returning to Toulouse, Emily finds that the trees and plants which were there when she left, are still there, indifferent to and unaffected by all that has happened to her since she last saw them:

"Ah!" said Emily, as she ascended, "these are the same high trees, that used to wave over the terrace, and these are the same flowery thickets - the liburnum, the wild rose, and the cerinthe - which were wont to grow beneath them! Ah! and there, too, on that bank, are the very plants, which Valancourt so carefully reared! - O, when last I saw them!" (p. 583)

When Adeline returns to the Swiss Alps, they trigger associations which

make her recall "the circumstances and sensations under which she had first seen them -- when an orphan, flying from persecution to seek shelter among strangers, and lost to the only person on earth whom she loved" (The Romance of the Forest, III, 337). Sometimes a character may deliberately use this process of association to bring back memories of another, and then a place or scene becomes the agent for bringing an absent person more vividly to mind. Emily, separated from Valancourt by her aunt, goes to the pavilion in the garden where they had sat together: "As she approached the lattice, [she] was sensible of the features of this scene only as they served to bring Valancourt more immediately to her fancy" (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 152). A scene or a place may thus become associated in the mind with the person with whom it has been shared, and to visit it again invariably prompts the memory to recall that person and the circumstances in which it was shared.

The natural surroundings may serve to tune the mind of the reader for terrors to come, as a scene "darkens towards a catastrophe or spreads into sunny safety."³ Nature acts in sympathy with the experience of the main characters. A good example is the storm which starts to brew in The Italian, as Ellena and Vivaldi walk to the chapel of San Sebastian to be married:

The scene appeared to sympathize with the spirits of Ellena. It was a gloomy evening, and the lake, which broke in dark waves upon the shore, mingled its hollow sounds with those of the wind, that bowed the lofty pines, and swept in gusts among the rocks. She observed with alarm the heavy thunder clouds, that rolled along the sides of the mountains, and the birds circling swiftly over the waters, and scudding away to their nests among the cliffs. (pp. 183-184)

³Tompkins, 1932, p. 263.

This description achieves its effectiveness by emphasis on colour and sound rather than action: the darkness of the waves and the hollow sound of the wind combine to give an impression of solemn power against which the birds can do nothing but take shelter. Shortly, Ellena and Vivaldi will be confronted with the power of the Inquisition (as they are led to believe), against which they have no redress. A passage which is very similar occurs as Ellena walks on the beach, followed by the villain Spalatro, and about to encounter her would-be murderer, Schedoni:

It was a lowering evening, and the sea was dark and swelling; the screams of the sea-birds too, as they wheeled among the clouds, and sought their high nests in the rocks, seemed to indicate an approaching storm. (pp. 219-220)

The atmospherics of the evening sky may be used to prefigure some impending horror. As Emily is led away from Udolpho by Montoni's men, she sees an ominous sunset:

The sun had now been set some time; heavy clouds, whose lower skirts were tinged with sulphureous crimson, lingered in the west, and threw a reddish tint upon the pine forests, which sent forth a solemn sound, as the breeze rolled over them. The hollow moan struck upon Emily's heart, and served to render more gloomy and terrific every object around her. (p. 406)

The sulphureous crimson of the clouds suggests the smouldering, latent violence of her escorts, and the hollow moan coming from the woods gives the woods a life which, in the context of this description, may not be benign. There is no suggestion of the softening of forms or soothing effect of most other sunsets.

Mrs Radcliffe's characters find solace in nature, and in nature they also find God. Nature becomes a manifestation of divine grandeur, and the sublimity of God is reflected in the sublimity of his creation. In The Romance of the Forest, La Luc, on the excursion to the Glacier

of Montanvert, reflects upon the view: "'The view of these objects . . . lift[sic] the soul to their Great Author, and we contemplate with a feeling almost too vast for humanity - the sublimity of his nature in the grandeur of his works'" (III.104). A very similar process operates with Emily St Aubert, as she looks at the night sky while staying at the convent in the Pyrenees: "From the consideration of His works, her mind arose to the adoration of the Deity, in His goodness and power" (p. 47). Blanche, in a similar position at her casement, looking at "the face of living nature", finds her thoughts arising "involuntarily to the Great Author of the sublime objects she contemplated, and she breathed a prayer of finer devotion, than any she had ever uttered beneath the vaulted roof of a cloister" (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 475).

Mrs Radcliffe seems to have derived her landscapes from three sources: travel writers, landscape painters, and her own imagination.

Clara McIntyre was the first to suggest a source among the travel writers, and she points out that Mrs Radcliffe "evidently had more ground-work of fact in her descriptions than she was sometimes given credit for; she took the authentic record of actual travel, and let her imagination play about it."⁴ The source Miss McIntyre suggests is Mrs Piozzi's Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany (1789). She finds similarities in the descriptions of the Brenta, with the difference that Mrs Piozzi's account is embroidered by Mrs Radcliffe with her characteristic setting sun, and with odours, sounds, and colours. Where Mrs Piozzi comments on the magnificence of

⁴ McIntyre, 1920, p. 59.

the orangeries, Mrs Radcliffe follows her but includes "a mellow lustre" from the setting sun, the scent of orange blossom, and a strain of music which steals out of the "embowered retreats". The descriptions of the sight of Venice rising out of the sea as the travellers approach are very similar, except that Mrs Piozzi sees it by the light of the moon, and Mrs Radcliffe applies the gilding rays of the sun. Her imagination enlarges upon Mrs Piozzi's version:

Mrs Piozzi:

The general effect produced by such architecture, such painting, such pillars; illuminated as I saw them last night by the moon at full, rising out of the sea, produced an effect like enchantment . . . The curious and elegant islets . . . started up in the midst of the sea, so as to excite amazement. (Observations, etc., p. 151)

Mrs Radcliffe:

As they glided on, the grander features of this city appeared more distinctly: its terraces, crowned with airy yet majestic fabrics, touched, as they now were, with the splendour of the setting sun, appeared as if they had been called up from the ocean by the wand of an enchanter, rather than reared by mortal hands. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 175)

The hint of enchantment in Mrs Piozzi's version becomes, with the influence of the setting, with Mrs Radcliffe an integral part of the description, for it is the simile which makes the impression rather than the factual details, which are actually very few and contribute little. Byron draws on the imaginative addition in Childe Harold: "I saw from out the wave her structures rise / As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand" (Canto IV, Stanza 1).

Miss McIntyre's suggestion that Mrs Radcliffe's descriptions are a combination of authentic record and imagination is taken up by J.M.S.Tompkins, who traces two more sources.⁵ Ramond de Charbonnières,

⁵Tompkins, 1929.

in his Observations faites dans les Pyrénées (1789) takes the approach of a scientist; it was he who "established the existence of glaciers in the Pyrenees and solved the problem of the relation of marble and granite along the chain."⁶ Mrs Radcliffe mentions the glaciers, romantically magnified - ". . . the higher regions of the air, where immense glaciers exhibited their frozen horrors" - and notwithstanding Ramond's avowed difficulty in getting close enough even to see them. She also refers to the geology, when the Count de Villefort gives a speech on the natural history of the place - on the fossils, the shells found near the summits, and the veins of marble and granite. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 602) There are other resemblances which cannot positively be proved: "There is no plagiarism but much similarity."⁷

For Emily's journey to Italy, Tompkins suggests Pierre Jean Grosley's New Observations on Italy and its Inhabitants (1769), and once again there is the "delicate adjustment of vision to a more ideal angle."⁸ Grosley entered Italy by Mount Cenis, and, like all the other travellers, rode in "a handbarrow like a hurdle, fixed to two sticks. This is the carriage which the noblest grandees must take up with in passing the Alps."⁹ This method of conveyance is rather indecorous for Emily St Aubert, so Mrs Radcliffe is rather vague about it: "The chairmen trotted lightly and swiftly, almost, as the chamois bounded" (p. 166). Grosley's party stopped to rest at one point, and talked about Hannibal's passage of the Alps; in Mrs Radcliffe, "the carriers, having come to a landing

⁶Ibid., p. 296.

⁸Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 297.

⁹Grosley, I.36.

place, stopped to rest, and the travellers being seated on the point of a cliff, Montoni and Cavigni renewed a dispute concerning Hannibal's passage over the Alps" (p. 166). The difference between the two versions is that while Grosley quotes from Livy and Polybius to reinforce his learned and lengthy discussion, Mrs Radcliffe draws attention away from the argument as Emily's imagination leads her to see, "in the eye of fancy", Hannibal with his elephants as he is attacked.

As the travellers pass in to Italy, they reach Susa. Grosley comments briefly on its ancient fortifications, as does Mrs Radcliffe, with the addition that "these romantic heights" as seen by Emily are partially illumined by moonlight. Tompkins traces the original of the wax figure behind the black veil in The Mysteries of Udolpho to an image Grosley was shown in Ravenna, which he took to be "a pious contrivance for mortifying pride."¹⁰ The waxen image behind the black veil had a similar purpose: it was "designed to reprove the pride of the Marquis of Udolpho" (p. 662).

Mrs Radcliffe's favourite painters were Salvator, Claude, and Gaspar Poussin, and to their styles of painting is attributable much of her landscape, especially the dark variety.

From Claude she derives her wide prospects which extend over a plain or a valley to the sea, complete with ships' sails; Claude's landscapes usually merge into obscurity by the time the eye reaches the sea, but often the sails of small vessels are just distinguishable. His landscapes almost invariably have figures in the foreground, and frequently

¹⁰Ibid., I.205.

they are dancing or engaged in some other pastoral occupation. Dancing peasants form a favourite foreground for Mrs Radcliffe in both pastoral and sea scenes, while a beach will usually have fishermen working or singing on it, and the sea is always crowded with small boats. Claude's seascapes include fishermen and boats, and, almost invariably, a tower or mole on one side of the harbour. In this last respect, many of Mrs Radcliffe's descriptions apply quite directly to many of Claude's paintings:

Even the Roman tower that terminated the mole below, touched as it was with the slanting rays; and the various figures of fishermen, who lay smoking beneath its walls, in the long shadow, or stood in the sunshine on the beach, watching the approaching boats of their comrades, combined a picture which was no longer interesting.

(The Italian, p. 38)

To Poussin she owes her liking for a landscape embellished with a ruined arch, which is surrounded by wild scenery, often with an extensive valley of rugged contours fading into the distance. This is Mrs Radcliffe's version of Poussin:

There appeared on a point of rock impending over the valley the reliques of a palace, whose beauty time had impaired only to heighten its sublimity. An arch of singular magnificence remained almost entire, beyond which appeared wild cliffs retiring in grand perspective. The sun, which was now setting, threw a trembling lustre upon the ruins, and gave a finishing effect to the scene. (A Sicilian Romance, II.44)

To Salvator Rosa she owes the nightmare quality of much of her scenery - the crags and chasms, banditti, and gloomy, battered trees. She consciously imitates Salvator when she introduces his name:

The scene of barrenness was here and there interrupted by the spreading branches of the larch and cedar, which threw their gloom over the cliff, or athwart the torrent that rolled in the vale . . . This was such a scene as Salvator would have chosen, had he then existed, for his canvas; St Aubert, impressed by the romantic character of the place, almost expected to see banditti start from behind some projecting rock, and he kept his hand upon the arms with which he always travelled.

(The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 30)

Mrs Radcliffe's use of the contrast between savage mountains and pleasant valleys and plains has been mentioned, and since each of these aspects is typical of Salvator and Claude respectively, her technique often represents a blending of the darkness and fierceness of Salvator and the peacefulness of Claude.

Mrs Radcliffe's development of the use of landscape follows the same pattern which may be observed in other features of her work: it begins with a very limited use, and with little awareness of the technique's potentiality, in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, and increases in usage until it becomes tedious by over-use in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Then she seems to look critically at the technique herself, and in The Italian it is returned to a more natural place in the novel's composition, while other aspects such as characterisation assume a more important place.

CHAPTER TWO

When considering almost any aspect of Mrs Radcliffe's work, one is struck by the continuity of themes and types. In their broadest outlines, the plots follow the same pattern, with the beautiful heroine in the hands of or fleeing from the wicked villain, who stands between her and the young hero, in a setting of standard Gothic trappings. The characters, too, follow the same patterns, and can be classified quite neatly into groups, a representative from each group appearing in each novel. Different characters from the same group may be distinguishable from each other by name only, in that their reactions and sentiments fall into a stereotype. Mrs Radcliffe is frequently criticised for this, a typical attitude being that of Clara McIntyre, who considers that Mrs Radcliffe's failure to individualise her characters is one reason for the impermanence of her contribution to the novel: "It has been said that we are interested in the places which Scott described because we always associate them with the people that he has created. Quite the opposite is true of Mrs Radcliffe. We are interested in her people, for the most part, only because of the situation or the place in which they happen to find themselves."¹ For this reason the novels do not hold any interest after the first read-

¹McIntyre, 1920, p. 93.

ing: our attention is held by the changing events, but the lack of individuality in the characters means that once the outcome of the events is known, interest is lost. Each group of characters resembles, in Edith Birkhead's phrase, a "composite photograph" in which all distinctive traits are merged into an expressionless type.² The one exception to this judgement appears in The Italian, where Schedoni, though incorporating the characteristics of the villains who preceded him, becomes a strong, distinctive, imposing figure. He is generally acknowledged to be Mrs Radcliffe's masterpiece.

The groups of characters will be discussed under the classifications of villain, heroine, hero, and villainess. There are also sundry less significant groups.

Mrs Radcliffe's villains all take their basic inspiration from Walpole's Manfred; indeed, the seminal effect of The Castle of Otranto cannot be overemphasised, for from it came not only the character types but also most of the Gothic effects used by Mrs Radcliffe. Manfred is preoccupied with the prophecy of Saint Nicholas, which says that when the real owner of the Castle of Otranto should grow too large to inhabit it, the castle and lordship would pass from the present family. Manfred is a usurper, and is obsessed with the idea of continuing his family and retaining his power; this obsession makes him cruel, violent, and unscrupulous. He is not so by nature: it is fate, and the nature of his position as a usurper - for he knows that his grandfather killed Alfonso, the rightful heir - which has moulded his nature. Because of

²Birkhead, p. 45.

this obsession, Manfred makes his absurd accusations against Theodore, as he sees his heir destroyed and suspects the import of Theodore's information that the miraculous helmet is like the one on the statue of Alfonso the Good in the church of St Nicholas. Behind most of Manfred's schemes lies a fierce pride which will not stand any rebuke, and which suppresses any impulse of the old Manfred, who existed before the obsession with the prophecy: "Manfred's heart was touched. He forgot his anger in his astonishment; yet his pride forbade his owning himself affected" (p. 55). Though his speech reveals him as passionate and impulsive, yet he can be politic and cautious: "Injurious as this challenge was, Manfred reflected that it was not his interest to provoke the marquis. He knew how well-founded the claim of Frederic was" (p. 59). He inspires sympathy as a man bound and increasingly enclosed by his destiny, but sympathy is largely revoked for his callous treatment of his wife and daughter. Railo traces Manfred's prototype to Shakespeare, basing his theory on a fairly literal interpretation of Walpole's comment in his second preface, that, despite his claim to have created a new species of romance, he should be "more proud of having imitated, however faintly, and at a distance, so masterly a pattern, than to enjoy the entire merit of invention." Railo takes this to mean that "Shakespeare was Walpole's model in other matters than in the juxtaposition of the sublime and the naive."⁵ While one may reasonably suspect that, if Walpole had intended this, he would have said so more directly, after being so specific about the origin of "the deportment of the domestics", still it is tempting to see with Railo a

⁵Railo, p. 32.

type of the romantic tyrant in Leontes of The Winter's Tale, with his causeless jealousy and blustering language, and also with his inherent nobility of character, which has imposed upon it the insane jealousy. In Hamlet there is a persistent melancholy and the same brooding darkness which is typical of the romantic tyrant, and at the end of Hamlet we remain uncertain as to the true nature of Hamlet's melancholy and passion; the air of mystery and enigma is preserved, as it is with the Gothic villains. Railo also suggests that Shakespeare's theme of usurpation (The Tempest, Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, Cymbeline) influenced Walpole in the construction of his plot.⁴

While Mrs Radcliffe has left no preface acknowledging her indebtedness to Shakespeare or Walpole (though we know she was very familiar with Shakespeare and was certainly acquainted with The Castle of Otranto), her tyrants generally come from the same mould as Walpole's Manfred. They are proud, imperious, and sensitive of their authority and status; they are impelled upon their course of villainy by motives of pride, ambition and revenge; and the cause of their harshness and unscrupulousness is often some hidden crime, committed either by the tyrant himself or by his family. The secret crime pollutes and corrupts internally, and provides

⁴Clara McIntyre (1921, p. 663) points out some striking similarities between The Winter's Tale and Mrs Radcliffe's work. In The Italian, Olivia escapes from her husband and lets him think her dead, just as Hermione does. In A Sicilian Romance, the Marchioness is restored to her children, who have long believed her dead; the situation is similar to the restoration of Hermione to Perdita. Adeline's situation in The Romance of the Forest resembles Perdita's: her death was ordered by her uncle, but the man ordered to kill her relents and she is rescued by La Motte. So Leontes orders Antigonus to abandon Perdita in "some remote and desert place", but she is rescued by the shepherd. Indeed, Shakespeare's romances may be seen to have contributed much to repeated themes such as confused identity and relationships, rejection by parent and final restoration, and hidden or unexplained wickedness. Even Mrs Radcliffe's repeated shipwrecks may have their inspiration in the shipwrecks of the Shakespearian romances.

the air of black enigma and mystery about the tyrant, until it is confessed on a death-bed or explained by the authoress.

Mrs Radcliffe's first villain, Malcolm of Dunbayne, is "proud, oppressive, revengeful, mighty in injustice, and cruel in power", a man "whose understanding might have reached the happiness of virtue, but whose actions displayed the features of vice." In his death-bed confession, he reveals that, from "boundless ambition", he had caused his nephew to be hidden, and given out that he was dead, in order that he might take over his sister-in-law's property. He has killed the Earl of Athlin, and, with Osbert in his power, plans to force the dead Earl's daughter, Mary, to marry him, his motives being a mixture of passion and revenge: "For the first time he welcomed love, as the instrument of his revenge; and the charms of Mary were heightened to his imagination by the ardent colours of this passion" (p. 115). The fact that the reason for his desire for revenge is not made clear, but that revenge is assumed to be a natural and indispensable quality of the romantic tyrant, is an indication of how much Malcolm is a wooden copy of the traditional villain, and how distant he is from his successors, Montoni and Schedoni. There is no physical description of him, and little understanding of him can be gained from his speech in a book which is written almost entirely in reported speech. The situations which a villain like Malcolm creates, however, look back to Manfred and forward to the more rounded villains yet to be created by Mrs Radcliffe. The hidden crime, the usurpation, the death-bed confession, the attempt to force a helpless girl into a marriage which is repugnant to her, and the cruelty of the villain within his own family, become standard characteristics of the Radcliffean villain, while

as a consequence of his villainy arise the pursuit of the maiden, with hairbreadth escapes and final restoration to her true lover, the reinstatement of the true heir to his rights, and the rewarding of the virtuous and punishment of the guilty in the familiar Shakespearian pattern. As an individual, though, Malcolm of Dunbayne remains colourless and uncompelling.

The tyrant of A Sicilian Romance represents only a negligible advance on Malcolm. The Marquis of Mazzini is "a man of voluptuous and imperious character . . . naturally of a haughty and overbearing disposition." His character is marked by a "spirit of proud vindictive rage." Like Malcolm, he acts violently towards his own family, and carries the guilt of a secret crime - he has locked his wife away in an empty wing of the castle (the situation Jane Austen draws on in Northanger Abbey) in order to marry again. He tries to force his daughter to marry the odious Duke of Luovo, and is thus responsible for Julia's flight and all the exciting events which arise from it, while at the same time he imprisons his son for trying to assist Julia. While the book as a whole shows some advance on The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, in that the techniques of slow suspense and hints of terror and the supernatural are starting to appear, Mazzini remains doll-like and unconvincing, and there is no attempt to analyse or penetrate his character. Interest remains centred in the plot, which is a fast-moving succession of dramatic situations; indeed, it is probably the most crowded of Mrs Radcliffe's plots, and the later Mrs Radcliffe of The Italian would know how to achieve her effect from a plot with less action and episode. In A Sicilian Romance, many plot episodes seem to be squandered, for the summarizing, reported speech

narration is still evident. Of interest is the appearance of a secondary villain, the Duke of Luovo, who, though he remains entirely without distinction of character and is important solely for his part in the plot, anticipates La Motte in The Romance of the Forest. They are men of milder manners, generally, than the villain, and they play a secondary role in the persecution of the heroine. They lack the single-minded purpose of the villain, and they do not have his dark melancholy or commitment - they are, in fact, only a tool for the villain, and will be discarded if they do not serve his purposes. Count Morano, in The Mysteries of Udolpho, and Spalatro, in The Italian, also fall into this class.

In The Romance of the Forest, the Marquis de Montalt has murdered his brother, and placed his niece, Adeline, in a convent. When she refuses to take the vows of the religious order - a motif occurring in A Sicilian Romance and The Italian as well - he orders her to be murdered, but the plan fails. We are told that "the passions which ha^d 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" (III.295). His passion for Adeline, in ignorance of the fact that she is the niece he had wanted murdered, is the closest Mrs Radcliffe allows herself to get to the incest theme, which Walpole had used most boldly in his horrifying The Mysterious Mother. Description of the Marquis is scanty: we are told that he "had an air of dignity" and that "the spirit and fire of his countenance made the impression of time upon his features less perceptible" (I.218). The energy and dark grandeur which are qualities of the later villains are starting to appear: the Marquis is not so

much a ranting, angry puppet as are Manfred, Malcolm, and Mazzini. The Marquis is a man who likes to keep his own hands free of blood-stains - he is more of a politician, and prefers to direct his crimes from a distance, in the manner of a fastidious reprobate who dislikes public appearances. He appears to lack the immediate ruthlessness of his predecessors, and does not act without careful consideration, and without weighing some of the rights and wrongs of his policy: "[He] delayed the execution of his horrid purpose from a timidity natural to a mind not yet inured to enormous guilt" (III.298). His secret crime is hinted at in the skeleton in the chest, the rusty dagger, and the manuscript which Adeline finds.

In this book, it is in the treatment of the secondary tyrant that Mrs Radcliffe makes a more significant advance. La Motte is in the power of the Marquis, and finds himself in a confusion of loyalties between him and Adeline. He is a man who would be good but who is compelled by circumstances, which mostly arise from his own weaknesses of character, to do wrong. His initial error, which led to all his subsequent misfortunes, was not a grand passion, but a weakness for gambling. This exemplifies his subordinate, menial nature: he is a timid man, who hides in a derelict abbey, and who, having put himself in the power of the Marquis by robbing him, lives in terror of confrontation. He is worried and harassed, and commits his crimes not from motives of ambition or pride, but for reasons of self-preservation. Mrs Radcliffe takes some care to explain his basic weakness of character, which suggests that she is at last trying to provide a more psychological motivation in order to make her characters more interesting:

Pierre de la Motte was a gentleman, descended from an ancient house of France. He was a man whose passions often overcame his reason, and, for a time, silenced his conscience; but, though the image of virtue, which Nature had impressed upon his heart, was sometimes obscured by the passing influence of vice, it was never wholly obliterated. 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, co-operating with the force of passion, often dazzled his judgement and subdued principle. Thus he was a man, infirm in purpose and visionary in virtue: in a word, his conduct was suggested by feeling, rather than principle; and his virtue, such as it was, could not stand the pressure of occasion.

(I.6-7)

It is gratifying to see La Motte confronted with moral problems, and to see a character who shows himself in varying moods. He is the first character to stand between a clear division of good and bad: previous villains may have been good in the past but at the time of the action in the book they are incorrigibly evil. La Motte evokes our contempt for his fawning attitude to the Marquis, but at the same time we feel pity for his helplessness, and this duality of response is new also. Other villains have not been seen in situations of humility and abasement, and La Motte cannot command the respect we feel for the pride and stature of a Montoni. Contempt is evoked by La Motte's stooping to common highway robbery to support himself, but at the same time there is pity that he should find this necessary - the Montonis just do not find themselves in such situations. At least La Motte's virtue can withstand the pressure of the Marquis's orders to murder Adeline, even though he is not able to defy the Marquis openly. He is possibly the most ambiguous of Mrs Radcliffe's characters.

With Montoni, the Gothic villain reaches a full flowering, and the authoress takes more pains to describe him carefully, while at the

same time retaining the air of mystery and dark, obscure purpose. He dies a mysterious death in prison, supposedly poisoned, a prisoner of the senate, who considered him "a very dangerous person." The political activities which are connected with Orsino's mysterious visits at Venice, and with his sudden departure from Venice even at the necessity of postponing Emily's marriage to Morano, remain in the background to suggest dark misdeeds and wrong use of power. Mrs Radcliffe deliberately creates around him a feeling of enigma: we are told that he is sullen, proud, gloomy, bad-tempered, and revengeful, but we are never told why he is like this or what his origins are. He is not required to account for his actions, so we never learn why he goes to Udolpho or what he plans to do there. His ultimate designs are never known, though his immediate designs of getting Madame Montoni's and Emily's estates are clear. Compared to him, Manfred, Malcolm and Mazzini are uncomplicated and straightforward, for we feel that there is nothing unexplained about them by the time the book is finished. We are not sure whether Montoni carries with him the guilt of a secret crime or not; his gloomy and secretive nature suggests that he may, but we never find out. While his aims remain obscure and incomprehensible, the aims of the other villains are clear. For the first time, Mrs Radcliffe emphasises physical appearance as a reflection of the person within, with particular reference to the eyes, the windows of the soul. Thus Emily finds herself repelled from him by looks alone:

The fire and keenness of his eye, its proud exultation, its bold fierceness, its sullen watchfulness, as occasion, and even slight occasion, had called forth the latent soul, she had often observed with emotion; while from the usual expression of his countenance she had always shrunk. (p. 157)

At his first appearance he is described, with the apparent aim of early establishing the way in which his appearance alone may inculcate fear:

His visage was long, and rather narrow, yet he was called handsome; and it was, perhaps, the spirit and vigour of his soul, sparkling through his features, that triumphed for him. Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore. (p. 122)

She becomes observant of changes in his manner which are reflected in his eyes, and she learns to interpret his countenance:

Emily observed, that, at the mention of any daring exploit, Montoni's eyes lost their sullenness, and seemed instantaneously to gleam with fire; yet they still retained somewhat of a lurking cunning, and she sometimes thought that their fire partook more of the glare of malice than the brightness of valour. (pp. 172-173)

His malice appears in his treatment of anyone who opposes him.

His wife, who, seeing the true character and station of the man she has married, stubbornly refuses to sign over her properties to him, he worries to death; Count Morano, whom he suspects of having attempted to poison him, he has thrown into a secret Venetian prison by means of the Denunzie secrete, which receives "anonymous information, concerning persons, who may be disaffected towards the state." Though an unspectacular method, for a villain, of obtaining revenge, it is efficient. To Emily, threatening in her turn to withhold from him the properties, he vows all his vengeance: "I have a punishment which you think not of; it is terrible!" Emily is saved from the awful punishment by the seige of Udolpho, so we never learn what Montoni had in mind.

Another development in the villain figure which appears with Montoni is the forceful, demoniac will which allows him to dominate all those he deals with. It is an indefinable quality, perhaps inherited from Milton's Satan, which makes itself felt in his fearlessness, his driving energy,

and his own special aura, which is mentioned at his first introduction: "This Signor Montoni had an air of conscious superiority, animated by spirit, and strengthened by talents, to which every person seemed involuntarily to yield" (p. 122). It is reflected in his bearing and temperament, which are stolid and unbending; while his temper is not even, it remains within controllable limits, which gives him the advantage over Morano in their duel, when Montoni speaks "in a cool sarcastic tone of voice" and Morano "in a tone of unrestrained vehemence." He is not at all susceptible to the imagination, which is as well, since he chooses to live in a castle which is a constant source of terror to the imagination-oriented heroine. He has no sympathy for Emily's request for a room with a door which can be locked from the inside, and he alone is undismayed when the voice echoes him during the conference at his table. Though angered and "disordered", he denounces it as a trick then and on the second occasion.

With the advent of Montoni, character at last is no longer subordinate to incident, and the plot is not quite as breathless as, for example, that of A Sicilian Romance. The long and frequent passages of landscape description establish a more leisurely air, but so too does the chance to pause and consider the strange qualities of Montoni. While Mrs. Radcliffe is at least attempting to enquire into the motivation of a character, and build up an intriguing picture, there is still little character development. Pierre de la Motte shows a tendency to be introspective and self-critical, and does reform after Adeline provides for him in the country of his banishment, but Montoni goes to his death unrepentant and unchanged. In giving Montoni such a quiet death, and

mentioning it virtually in an aside, Mrs Radcliffe may have been wanting to maintain the air of mystery about him; but it seems a flaw in the structure of the novel to build up such a strong character and then allow him to slip out of sight so quietly. After the episode at Chateau-le-Blanc begins, Montoni is mentioned only twice, in cursory summaries. Like Milton's Satan, Montoni attracts more attention than the designated hero or heroine, who remain merely ciphers, and it is with some relief that we turn from the tearfulness of Emily or the whining of Madame Montoni to the refreshing strength of Montoni.

If the abrupt dismissal of Montoni from the focus of attention suggests that Mrs Radcliffe had tired of her creation, then it is not surprising that her next villain should come from a different background and tradition, while sharing the melancholy, mysterious qualities of his predecessors. The Italian was published soon after Matthew Gregory Lewis's The Monk, and it is reasonable to assume that Schedoni was created under the influence of Lewis's depraved monk, Ambrosio. The relationship between Mrs Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis is an interesting one, for Lewis admits to having been inspired to continue his romance after having read The Mysteries of Udolpho, while Mrs Radcliffe seems to have written The Italian as a protest against the excesses of The Monk, and as a vindication of her own style of work. The Monk created a sensation for its treatment of lust, incest, violence, and demonic powers, all described with undismayed realism, but credit is due to Lewis for introducing the figure of the romantic monk to English literature. The irreligious monk had been a popular figure in German literature since the days of the Reformation, and an anti-Papal influence may be readily

discerned in his crimes and duplicity. Mrs Radcliffe herself had already shown anti-Roman Catholic tendencies, but it was not the convinced mistrust of an informed person but the involuntary fear of an English Protestant nourished on mythical stories of Roman Catholic custom. As has been mentioned, the use of a southern setting brought with it not only the new landscape and national characteristics, but also the mystique of religious practices known only by tradition and rumour, and feared for being different. Mrs Radcliffe's attitude towards Roman Catholicism as shown in her work is curiously ambivalent: she sees some attraction in the quiet seclusion and peaceful life of a convent, but its restrictions and severity displease her. She suspects monasteries and convents of being centres of superstition and loose living, and she shows this tendency even in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, when she describes a ruined abbey as "a monument of mortality and of ancient superstition." In A Sicilian Romance she provides an example of the popular caricature of a monk:

He was lifting a large goblet of wine to his lips, and was roaring out, "Profusion and confusion," at the moment when the Duke appeared. His appearance caused a general alarm; that part of the company who were not too much intoxicated, arose from their seats; and the superior, dropping the goblet from his hands, endeavoured to assume a look of austerity which his rosy countenance belied. (I.186)

She describes the monastery of St Augustin, where Julia takes refuge, with an unusual malevolence:

Here prejudice, not reason, suspended the influence of the passions; and scholastic learning, mysterious philosophy, and crafty sanctity, supplied the place of wisdom, simplicity, and pure devotion. (II.27)

In The Romance of the Forest, Adeline recounts her days spent in a convent, and gives her reasons for resisting pressure to take the vows:

Too long I had been immured in the walls of a cloister, and too much had I seen of the sullen misery of its votaries, not to feel horror and disgust at the prospect of being added to their number.
(I.91)

However, the arguments which Adeline's Lady Abbess uses to persuade Adeline are the same as those to which Mrs Radcliffe herself seems susceptible in The Mysteries of Udolpho, if the reaction of Emily can be supposed to have authorial approval:

She described the serenity of a monastic life - its security from the seductive charms, restless passions, and sorrowful vicissitudes of the world - the rapturous delights of religion, and the sweet reciprocal affection of the sisterhood. (The Romance of the Forest, I.94)

During her stay at the convent, the peace and sanctity that reigned within, the tranquil beauty of the scenery without, and the delicate attentions of the abbess and the nuns, were circumstances so soothing to her mind, that they almost tempted her to leave a world, where she had lost her dearest friends, and devote herself to the cloister, in a spot, rendered sacred to her by containing the tomb of St Aubert.
(The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 89)

Lewis's Ambrosio and Mrs Radcliffe's Schedoni share some characteristics but diverge on others. They both carefully cultivate a public image which masks their hypocrisy, and both strive to give an appearance of great sanctity, the better to conceal their true natures. The sins which each is covering up differ, however: Ambrosio is concealing passions which demand immediate gratification, while Schedoni is guilty of an obsessive desire for power - "Ambition was one of his strongest motives of action." It would be inconceivable for Mrs Radcliffe to attribute to one of her characters the sins of Ambrosio; they hover very delicately in the background, however, as incest and murder of a brother in Schedoni's past and the near-murder of his niece, Ellena. Schedoni shares with Malcolm, Mazzini, Montalt and Montoni the haughty pride and dark melancholy which is a generic characteristic, but he bears it with a greater

intensity, and, seemingly, a greater awareness, as if it were a cultivated pose which has become so natural to him that it is a pose no longer. A quality of the earlier villains which he does not share is their luxuriant self-indulgence as noblemen. His horrors are more obscure, because they lie not in readily apprehended faults but within himself. Mrs Radcliffe gives him a full introduction and develops in great detail his outward appearance, particularly as it reflects his strange character:

His figure was striking, but not so from grace; it was tall, and, though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth, and as he stalked along, wrapt in the black garments of his order, there was something terrible in its air; something almost super-human. His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face, encreased its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror. His was not the melancholy of a sensible and wounded heart, but apparently that of a gloomy and ferocious disposition. There was something in his physiognomy extremely singular, and that can not easily be defined. It bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated. An habitual gloom and severity prevailed over the deep lines of his countenance; and his eyes were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance, into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice. (pp. 34-35)

This Medusa-like, hypnotic quality of his eyes is used repeatedly. A look from his eyes is sufficient to cause Ellena, in the scene on the beach, to quail:

As he drew near, he viewed her askance, without lifting his head; but she perceived his large eyes looking from under the shade of his cowl, and the upper part of his peculiar countenance. Her confidence in his protection began to fail, and she faltered, unable to speak, and scarcely daring to meet his eyes. (p. 220)

During his last hours in prison, Schedoni's decline is reflected in his appearance, and his eyes remain full of potent expression to the last:

When he unclosed his eyes, death was in them. He was yet nearly insensible; but presently a faint gleam of recollection shot from them, and gradually lighting them up, the character of his soul appeared there. (p. 402)

Schedoni becomes a sort of Gothic superman, suggesting limitless power and personality. To the Marchesa he appears as "a spectre rather than a human being. His visage was wan and wasted, his eyes were sunk and become nearly motionless, and his whole air and attitudes exhibited the wild energy of something - not of this earth" (p. 110). In his conversation with the Marchesa, his arguments have an extraordinary cunning; as he works out his purposes, we feel the strength of his almost superhuman will, forcing and moulding people to his designs. Many of his schemes, such as the kidnapping of Ellena, or the committing of Vivaldi to the Inquisition, are carried out from a distance, so that we have the impression of a malevolent power controlling people from a place of advantage. Like those of his predecessors, his chief motivations are pride and ambition. To salve his pride, insulted by Vivaldi's attack in the church of the Spirito Santo, he works with the Marchesa on her own plans for revenge, which gives him opportunity for avenging himself; and the collaboration also satisfies his desire for promotion, denied him in his own brotherhood.

With Schedoni, Mrs Radcliffe's blacks and whites of character become grey again. He undergoes a conflict of will as he stands over Ellena, knife in hand, and he shows some positive feeling towards her when he discovers that she is, as he believes, his daughter. He seems a changed man as he returns with her to Naples, and, as he ponders the difficulties of his new situation, brought about by his own unexpected

feelings of conscience; we almost forget that he is the same man who has cold-bloodedly advocated the murder of Ellena. Mrs Radcliffe is so careful to describe the difficulties which this change of loyalties will place before him that she almost seems to be in sympathy with him.

A steady development, then, can be seen from Mrs Radcliffe's early villains, the unelaborate stock figures, to the later ones, figures of considerable individuality, who possess personal qualities which elevate them above the level of the other characters and make them the focus of attention, to the point where the last in the line, Schedoni, becomes of sufficient importance to have the book named after him. The same process cannot be discerned in the succession of heroines: these differ from one another in name only. There is a development in the presentation of the heroine, as it becomes wider, partly as a result of the books' becoming longer, and partly as a result of increased attention to character portrayal; but if Mary of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne is a preliminary sketch of Julia, Adeline, Emily, and Ellena, these later portraits are merely embellishments of the first outline. The heroines all share the same distinctive traits, and the similarities begin with physical appearance. They are all, needless to say, beautiful. Mary is given little description, but she is referred to as "the lovely Mary", and she has "fine auburn tresses." Julia sets the pattern with her description -

The figure of Julia was light and graceful - her step was airy - her mien animated, and her smile enchanting. (A Sicilian Romance, I.11)

- while the picture of her sister Emilia is remarkably similar in its outline to that of Adeline:

The person of Emilia was finely proportioned. Her complexion was fair, her hair flaxen, and her dark-blue eyes were full of sweet expression. (A Sicilian Romance, I.11)

[Adeline's] figure [was] of the middling size, and turned to the most exquisite proportion; her hair was dark auburn, her eyes blue, and whether they sparkled with intelligence, or melted with tenderness, they were equally attractive. (The Romance of the Forest, I.73-74)

The figure, hair and eyes are considered in turn, and the eyes have shining through them some of the heroine-like qualities. This expression revealed in the face is given more attention in the description of Emily:

In person, Emily resembled her mother; having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes, full of tender sweetness. But, lovely as was her person, it was the varied expression of her countenance, as conversation awakened the nicer emotions of her mind, that threw such a captivating grace around her. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 5)

The same pattern is followed with Ellena Rosalba:

Her figure had a distinguished air of delicacy and grace. Her features were of the Grecian outline, and though they expressed the tranquillity of an elegant mind, her dark blue eyes sparkled with intelligence. (The Italian, pp. 5-6)

The result of these descriptions is that the heroines remain virtually faceless: their faces, be they ever so beautiful, are featureless and anonymous. The qualities which show in their faces are those which Mrs Radcliffe sees as the basic requirements of virtuous young maidenhood. They are well-bred, exquisitely sensitive, intelligent, even-tempered, modest, and always decorous. They are all carefully educated, or, rather, their "understanding is cultivated". They are accomplished in elegant pursuits such as drawing, and they are all interested in music. Emily sings enchantingly to Montoni's party in Venice, and what is significant is that we are not told previously that she can sing, but that it is taken for granted that such an accomplished young lady can sing, and no well-bred reader would be surprised by this. Most heroines play the lute, that peculiarly romantic instrument, and they derive considerable

consolation from being able to sing or play to the mountains, forests, or stars. Adeline and Emily both have a remarkable ability to compose their thoughts into impeccably rhyming stanzas, and their verse is invariably heavily bedewed with sentiment and poetic diction - Emily's "ridgy waves" and "deathful quiver" and Adeline's "whelming billows" establish them firmly as eighteenth century young ladies, despite their creator's particularity as to their sixteenth or seventeenth century background. Their sense of propriety and decorum is most highly developed, and tends to take an unduly high place in their scale of concerns. Julia, like Ellena, is reluctant to escape with her lover from a forced match, for the sake of propriety: "She would escape the dreadful destiny awaiting her, but must, perhaps, sully the purity of that reputation, which was dearer to her than existence." Perhaps this excessive concern for reputation is an inheritance from Pamela and Clarissa Harlow. Emily, invited to Chateau-le-Blanc from La Vallée, and resolutely rejecting Valancourt on account of his supposed misdemeanours, finds that "though she wished to remain in the quiet shades of her native home, she could not avoid perceiving the impropriety of remaining there alone, since Valancourt was again in the neighbourhood." Numerous instances reinforce the feeling that these young ladies give propriety too high a priority.

The question of why these heroines are so dull and insipid must arise. The answer probably lies partly in the fact that virtue is boring and unromantic, while sin is exciting and romantic, and hence the villains are more interesting. The heroines' virtue comes too easily to them for it to be an admirable quality: without a struggle for virtue, there is little cause for admiration. For the same reason, their faces would be more

distinctive if they were not of such uniformly perfect form. Fanny Price of Mansfield Park is not easily liked for the same reasons. Fanny makes a bad impression with her weak health -- she is a heroine who cannot cut roses without getting a headache. So too do Mrs Radcliffe's heroines become tiresome in their propensity for fainting and weeping. It is only slightly gratifying that Julia does suffer from the ignominy of sea-sickness, for "she lay fainting with terror, as well as sickness" as she and Ferdinand are overtaken by a storm. Even here, terror is the primary cause of fainting. There is also the shade of Pamela hovering over them, with her "virtue rewarded", and Mrs Radcliffe ends each book with a neat and maudlin moral.

In The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne it praises justice:

Virtue may for a time be pursued by misfortune, -- and justice be obscured by the transient triumphs of vice, -- but the power whose peculiar attributes they are, clears away the clouds of error, and even in this world establishes his THRONE OF JUSTICE. (p. 280)

In A Sicilian Romance, we learn "that those who do only THAT WHICH IS RIGHT, endure nothing in misfortune but a trial of their virtue, and from trials well endured derive the surest claim to the protection of heaven" (II.192). The moral of The Romance of the Forest is most Richardsonian: "Their former lives afforded an example of trials well endured -- and their present, of virtues greatly rewarded; and this reward they continued to deserve" (III.347). It would be repetitive to repeat the morals drawn at the conclusions of The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian -- it is sufficient to say that they complete a pattern which is somewhat distasteful.

The heroines' dullness and unlikeableness is also partly due to their excess of pride, self-esteem, and awareness of superiority. They

are always right. When confronted by a tyrant, all their unimpeachable honesty and rectitude come to the fore as they answer with "mild dignity" and "dignified tranquillity". In the most distressing situations they retain their composure and sense of decorum, and deliver their self-righteous rebukes in speeches remarkable for their irrefutable logic and judgement, their disdain, and for their careful balancing of clauses in delicate patterns. An example is Ellena's retort to the abess at San Stefano:

"The sanctuary is prophaned: 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 command me to reverence my religion, you urge me to condemn yourself." (The Italian, pp. 84-85)

The heroines would seem more human and more likeable if they could occasionally be seen at a loss for words, and getting the worse of such a confrontation.

It is worth noting that Mrs Radcliffe twice introduces a secondary heroine - Clara in The Romance of the Forest and Blanche in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Both girls are more mawkish than their elders, and both are part of a seemingly irrelevant digression, to tell the tale of Clara and her lute, and of Blanche's expedition to the Pyrénées, which virtually repeats material from the early part of the book. Clara and Blanche could be so easily dispensed with, and are so completely uninteresting and vapid, even in comparison with their elders, that one wonders why Mrs Radcliffe bothered to introduce them, or, once introduced, why she devoted so much space to them.

The noble young hero falls under the same judgement as the heroine:

he is too virtuous, too generous, too impeccable in his manners, to be interesting or sympathetic. He stays in the background most of the time, coming forward at appropriate times to assume his traditional role of rescuing his lover and defending her from attack, and of denouncing and avenging villainy. He too has a highly developed sense of propriety, and would never consider compromising the reputation of his lover. There is never any evidence of physical attraction between hero and heroine: it is platonic only, unseemly passion being left for the villain and his henchmen - the Marquis de Montalt and Count Morano. These men try to secure their lady by carrying her off, while the hero only offers his love. His part is essentially that of the hero of the historical romance, and he undergoes an elaborate love ritual which subjects his faithful love to trials, dangers, tests, and obstacles, which form a sort of perilous quest. While he is always prepared to fight for his lover, he rarely has to prove his devotion by doing so, and only Theodore is actually physically injured. The hero is not required to undergo the terrors which the heroine suffers - his terror is more often confined to wondering what is happening to his lover. Valancourt, for instance, is in Paris while Emily is a prisoner in Udolpho. He may encounter physical dangers, but, except in the case of Vivaldi in the prisons of the Inquisition, never the more debilitating terrors of compulsion, kidnapping, and mystery. The argument that virtue is unattractive applies to the heroes too, but they are even less likeable than the heroines, for we feel that they do not deserve even the automatic sympathy which is due to those who suffer.

Development of the hero through the novels is negligible: he is the same predictable figure in The Italian that he is in The Castles of

Athlin and Dunbayne. The authoress's attitude towards him changes a little in The Italian, where Vivaldi is subject to criticism from Schedoni which he is forced to acknowledge is justified. Schedoni asserts that "he has a susceptibility which renders [him] especially liable to superstition", and Vivaldi "blushed at this reproof, now conscious of its weakness" (pp. 397-398). Vivaldi has the same tiresome excess of virtue, though, and the same awareness of it. In the following passage he is determining on a policy of absolute scrupulosity:

. . . but he exulted in the rectitude, which had preserved him from debasement, and, with the magnanimous enthusiasm of virtue, he almost welcomed sufferings, which would prove the firmness of his justice towards an enemy; for he determined to brave every thing, rather than impute to Schedoni circumstances, the truth of which he possessed no means of ascertaining. (p. 325)

It is tempting to regard such a passage as having overtones of irony, but it is difficult to see Mrs Radcliffe being ironic at the expense of any of her heroes or heroines. When Vivaldi (who is more of a politician than his predecessors) bribes a guard, Mrs Radcliffe hastens to explain that it was only for Paulo's advantage - she would not like any ill to be thought of Vivaldi.

The hero, then, is little more than a symbol for Mrs Radcliffe of idealistic virtue and heroism, and as long as he is fulfilling his traditional role, she apparently sees little reason to spend time on involving him in interplay of character.

Mention should be made of an interesting group of characters who fall into the category of villainess. These women are scheming and ambitious, and will not stop short of criminal actions to carry out their plans. The type first appears in A Sicilian Romance, where Maria de

Vellorno, Mazzini's second wife, schemes against her step-daughters and finally poisons her husband; her policy is to "seek relief from the pressure of disappointment in afflicting the innocent." Madame La Motte, in The Romance of the Forest, has some of the qualities of this type in her jealousy of Adeline and suspicion of her husband, but she does not have the innate maliciousness or vindictiveness of Mario de Vellorno. Madame Cheron, in The Mysteries of Udolpho, seems at first to be a villainess in the making, but after she becomes Madame Montoni, her ambition is seen to have been only foolishness, and as her pretensions, and condescensions towards Emily, become more pointless, she becomes a pathetic figure. The Marchesa Vivaldi, of The Italian, is the best example of a villainess; like the other characters in this book, she is relatively rounded, and her self-interested plotting against Ellena, and her readiness to act even against her own son, place her decidedly in this category. Moreover, she has the astuteness of her male counterpart, as is ably demonstrated in her conversations with Schedoni.

The conception of this sort of woman remains fairly dim in Mrs Radcliffe's work, but the figure reappears in Lewis's The Monk, in the form of Matilda. Matilda is an assistant to Lucifer, and is actually a female demon. Her beauty, as well as her occult power, seduce Ambrosio, and her schemes have a viciousness and single-mindedness which Mrs Radcliffe may have been imitating in her portrayal of the Marchesa Vivaldi.

Mrs Radcliffe's strength does not lie in character portrayal. She seems unable to expand upon the set of characters which she inherited from Walpole, and no character, with the possible exceptions of La Motte and Schedoni, shows any individuality, or anything to make him interesting.

Even Montoni is only a reproduction, albeit full and masterly, of a type of character: he lacks the nuances and oddities of an individual. There is little evidence in her journals that she was even very interested in people, although, as in her novels, there is ample description of natural scenery. Her greater contribution to the novel - certainly to the Gothic Novel - may have been in her development of a definite technique for creating suspense and terror.

CHAPTER THREE

If it is not development of character which keeps one reading a Radcliffe novel, then it is almost certainly an incentive of much more immediate effect, viz. suspense. A person of as respected judgement as Henry Tilney could not lay down The Mysteries of Udolpho, but finished it in two days, his hair standing on end the whole time. Mrs Radcliffe's manipulation of plot to effect suspense becomes quite deliberate, if not obvious, and she is generally acknowledged to be a mistress of suspense. She develops her use of suspense from a minor, rather insignificant place in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne to a dominating position in the narrative technique of The Mysteries of Udolpho, which is so heavily loaded with suspense situations that it would be better, as far as the reader is concerned, to describe them as "potentially suspenseful situations", since the frequency of them makes a sharp response unlikely. It is something of a relief that The Italian depends for its suspense not so much on the worn-out devices used in The Mysteries of Udolpho as on a much more dramatic plot.

A broad division may be made of the types of suspense which Mrs Radcliffe uses, into suspense of situation, which may extend over a period of time, and which legitimately involves the reader in the emotions of the characters, and that sort of suspense which the reader comes to see is

merely for titillating his responses.

The first type of suspense, thus divided, is not the commoner, but is more likely to be sustained over a long period. The best known example of such suspense is probably the black veil, made doubly famous by Jane Austen's reference to it in Northanger Abbey, in the discussion between Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland, to whom the black veil acts as the pivotal point of suspense in their reading of the novel. Between the first mention of the black veil and the final solving, or explanation, of the mystery, come some four hundred pages, in most of which the black veil is forgotten. This type of suspense, which is important for a short time and is then virtually forgotten with the mystery unsolved, and which depends for its effect on unsatisfied curiosity, usually leads to an explanation in the final tying up of all the threads. So the strangeness of the circumstances of Adeline's first appearance in The Romance of the Forest, weeping and distraught in an isolated cottage on a King Lear-like heath, is laid aside until the end of the book, when all is made known. No overt reference is made to the mystery of her background after La Motte takes her away, but this initial dramatic and mysterious scene makes sufficient impact for it to be kept at the back of the mind, and to cause a memory of it to return when Adeline bewails her orphaned, friendless state. The circumstances of the night which Vivaldi and Paulo, in The Italian, spend locked in the fortress of Paluzzi, remain unexplained until the end. It is obvious that they are shut in there to enable Ellena to be kidnapped, but the bloodstained garments and the groans heard through the walls are not accounted for until the final confession of Schedoni. This use of suspense maintained in the background becomes rather like that which is the staple

of a detective novel: the reader is mystified by events -- who did it? how was it done? -- but knows that at the end a figure will come forward and explain everything which remains in doubt. Sometimes Mrs Radcliffe, in her official position as narrator, does this herself, as in the conclusion of The Mysteries of Udolpho, or a character may divulge everything on his death-bed, as Schedoni does in The Italian.

The suspense may be maintained by a deliberate repetition of a mysterious event, the best example of this being the mysterious music which Emily hears wherever she goes in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Music is one of Mrs Radcliffe's favourite effects: she was fond of it herself, and in the memoir preceding the 1826 edition of Gaston de Blondville we learn that "at the opera she was a frequent visitor, and on her return home would sit up singing over the airs she had heard, which her quickness of ear enabled her to catch, till a late hour."¹ As Miss McIntyre puts it, "her heroines, in gazing at a beautiful landscape, are almost as sure to hear sweet music as they are to compose poetry."² The music may come stealing mysteriously out of the forest as the heroine watches pensively from her window, or it may play a more dramatic part in the narrative, when it interrupts a conversation. In The Mysteries of Udolpho, as Dorothee is telling Emily the story of the dead Marchioness, they are interrupted by the music which Emily heard there at the time of her father's death; Dorothee reminds Emily, in case we have forgotten, that she first heard the music soon after her lady's death, and she creates such a feeling of superstitious awe in Emily by asserting that it is the music of spirits,

¹Gaston de Blondville, 1826, p. 99.

²McIntyre, 1920, p. 86.

that Emily nearly faints. When the music is first mentioned, on the first visit to Chateau-le-Blanc, it is discussed in a comparatively rational fashion as La Voison explains its history, but he sets the pattern of reaction to the music by telling all the local versions of its origin - that the woods are haunted, that the music comes to warn people of their death, that it retreats into the woods as it is followed. In this way the atmosphere of the music is established, so that when the music recurs, the reader's mind recalls the sense of mystery which surrounds it, and suspense is maintained. A very effective scene which uses music in The Italian occurs while Schedoni and the Marchesa, in the confessional of the church of San Nicolo, are projecting the murder of Ellena. As Schedoni begins to describe the house where he plans the murder will take place, he is interrupted by "a few low and querulous notes of the organ." The well chosen "querulous" suggests the purpose of the notes, for the Marchesa, guilty and nervous, reacts immediately: "'What mournful music is that?' said the Marchesa in a faltering voice, 'It was touched by a fearful hand! Vespers were over long ago!'" As she realises that it is the music of a first requiem, the music works directly and strongly upon her guilty soul:

The Marchesa was much affected. "That body is now cold," said she to herself, "which but an hour ago was warm and animated! Those fine senses are closed in death! And to this condition would I reduce a being like myself! (p. 177)

Another type of suspense is that which lasts for a limited period and is then ended by the fears of the character being allayed. The suspense is not intended to last any longer than the brief episode, but this does not detract from its effectiveness; indeed, the effectiveness

of short-term suspense is often greater than that of suspense which is maintained, for often, by the time the reader is reminded that many chapters ago occurred an unexplained and mysterious event which is now occurring again, his reaction is likely to be jaded. Ellena's stay at the house on the beach, waiting to be murdered, consists of a series of such short, suspenseful episodes. On her first night, she hears Spalatro ascend to her room, and send his accomplice down again for what she assumes is a stiletto, but they do not enter the room. To make up for this disappointment, we are then told that her room has a secret door so that an assassin can enter whenever he likes, so the relief is only temporary. The attempted poisoning is the next episode, followed closely by the encounter on the beach, when Schedoni loses his resolution. The suspense takes another turn and focuses on Schedoni, as his guilt contends with his resolution, and his newly awakened apprehensions contend with the determination of Spalatro. The crisis is reached as he bends over the sleeping Ellena, ready to plunge the poniard into her bosom, and he sees and recognises the miniature she wears. When he claims her as his daughter the suspense is over; the main question which the reader has been awaiting an answer to, Will Ellena be killed? is now answered, but only after a series of preliminary questions, Will she be killed now? A similar pattern underlies the episode in The Mysteries of Udolpho in which Blanche and her party encounter the bandits in the fortress in the Pyrenees. The suspense starts as the Count benevolently tells Blanche that such places are sometimes the asylum of smugglers, and with the strange behaviour and appearance of the men who are within, the reader becomes aware that all is not well - as does the Count's party, though they dare not show their concern.

Once established that the men are indeed smugglers, the suspense changes from, What are these men? to, Will the Count's party escape? until their timely rescue by Ludovico gives the expected answer and the episode is ended. The episode is bound together from its start by the suspense inherent in the sense of danger of the fortress even as they approach it, made apparent by the stormy and the fierce landscape which must be crossed to reach it, as well as by the appearance of the fortress, "whose portals were terrible even in ruins." Within the episode are the two distinct directions which the reader's curiosity follows.

An example of suspense which lasts for only one brief episode and is then quite concluded is the arrival of Louis de la Motte at the Abbey in The Romance of the Forest. This episode is carefully prepared for, since when La Motte comes upon him after the soldiers have been searching, Louis' back is turned so that La Motte does not recognise his son, and flees in fright. When Adeline encounters him in the cloisters, maximum use is made of the suspense potential in the meeting, even though it is soon clear that the stranger is a civilised gentleman. It occurs to Adeline, as he follows her, that he might enter the closet and surprise La Motte at the trap-door, and this is just what happens: "who can paint the distress of Adeline, upon seeing the trap-door gently raised, and La Motte himself appear." Then the suspense can be maintained no longer, for the stranger's identity must be made known. Even then the ambiguity is maintained for as long as possible, with Louis' "'Hah!'", which, with what has already happened, could easily be interpreted as a cry of triumph, until the next sentence, describing their unexpected reaction to each other, finally ends the suspense.

A very similar type of suspense occurs in an episode in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, as Edric and Alleyn, escaping from Malcolm's castle through the underground tunnels, think they are close to the exit from the castle. They have already encountered darkness, a dead body, and the Baron's murdering men, when, as they suppose they are about to make good their escape, a neat statement brings the suspense to a new peak: "an abrupt turning in the passage confirmed at once this supposition, and extinguished the hope which had attended it", as they see four armed men facing them. Again the suspense is maintained until the last possible moment, as Alleyn advances with drawn sword, and it is not until the sound of his voice in the challenge is recognised that the four men are seen to be friends.

In all of these examples, the suspense is carried on for as long as reasonably possible, so that the reader does not know a moment before the characters do what the outcome of the events will be. An episode of suspense may contain within itself several different foci of suspense, contributing to the major point of curiosity; or it may be a single isolated episode. A book such as The Mysteries of Udolpho may be seen as a telescoping of one central point of curiosity within numerous others, which in turn telescope into others: so the central, overall question is always, What is going to happen to Emily and Valancourt? - while other questions frequently arise - What is going to happen to Emily while she is a prisoner in Udolpho? or, on another level, What is going to happen to Emily, a prisoner in Udolpho, at this particular point in the narrative? Thus, there is a merging and blending of the different levels of suspense, so that the plot becomes a complicated cycle of episodes within episodes,

each contributing to the overall effect.

A technique of suspense for which Mrs Radcliffe is well known, for she did over-use it, is that of leading the reader on in expectation of something exciting, only to leave him feeling foolish as the expected terror turns out to be something quite mundane and harmless. This technique is one of her more vulnerable points: as J.M.S.Tompkins remarks, "The sophisticated reader soon finds these shocks tedious and refuses to answer to the cry of 'Wolf, wolf.'"³ The process soon becomes tiresome when one knows that the suspense is only a titillation leading nowhere.

The commonest use involves an anti-climax. The scene is set for some awful happening, the heroine is swooning expectantly, but it is a false alarm. Emily, in her chamber at Udolpho, hears a loud knocking on her door, a heavy weight falling against it, and a breathing on the other side. Her mind goes through all the possible explanations, and she concludes that she is about to be murdered. She thinks she hears footsteps ascending to the inner door of her room, so she chooses the lesser of two evils and opens the outer door:

On opening the door, she was very near falling over a person, who lay on the floor without. She screamed, and would have passed, but her trembling frame refused to support her; and the moment, in which she leaned against the wall of the gallery, allowed her leisure to observe the figure before her, and to recognise the features of Annette. Fear instantly yielded to surprise. (p. 300)

The prolonged build-up of terror creates a potential which is put to no use, for the only thing missing in the build-up which is essential to Emily's tranquillity is the identity of the person outside the door.

³Tompkins, 1932, p. 261.

Once this is known, the suspense collapses, and Mrs Radcliffe moves glibly into another key. Frequently a brief anti-climax will occur as a character, under pressure of events or emotions, jumps to an unwarranted conclusion or allows over-wrought feelings to distort normal judgement. As Vivaldi watches the ceremony of novitiation at the convent of San Stefano, he thinks he sees Ellena:

When the priest prepared to withdraw the white veil from the face of the novice, and throw the black one over her, a dreadful expectation that she was Ellena seized him, and he with difficulty forebore stepping forward and discovering himself on the instant. The veil was at length withdrawn, and a very lovely face appeared, but not Ellena's.
(p. 119)

In an incident of this sort suspense is momentary only, and the technique is clumsy, for immediately another young woman appears, the same process of supposed recognition and lifting of the veil is gone through, and this time it is Ellena. It is too clear that the first, anti-climactic incident is there for the sole purpose of exciting further the reader's apprehensions, for it adds nothing to the plot and little to the atmosphere. These incidents of gratuitous suspense seem designed to play some part in the all-important atmosphere, but Mrs Radcliffe does better when she uses landscapes and sunsets, or a system of hints (the music, for example) than when she depends upon the reactions of characters in such incidents. The reader's own reactions become dulled by such pin-pricking, and the effect of such little incidents is one of tired, repeated disappointment. By the last chapters of The Mysteries of Udolpho, where this technique becomes most frequent, the reader comes to recognise the cues and prepare for the deflation. A good example of the attempt to add to atmosphere by using the over-sensitive reactions of a character is the scene in Chateau-le-Blanc, where Dorothée and Emily are examining the apartment of

the late Marchioness. The atmosphere is built up carefully: it is emphasised that Dorothée has not been in the rooms since she followed her lady's corpse out twenty years ago, and that everything is exactly as it was, except for dust and decay. The darkness, stillness, and sense of the past affect Emily, so that she "almost expected to have seen a human face . . . within the dark curtains", and, sure enough, as she turns from the bed, "Dorothée, who had now reached it, exclaimed, 'Holy Virgin! methinks I see my lady stretched upon that pall - as when last I saw her!'" Emily, shocked by this exclamation, looked involuntarily again within the curtains, but the blackness of the pall only appeared" (pp. 532-533). This is leading up to the actual movement of the pall by the smuggler concealed underneath, but the foolishness of Dorothée's illusion is irritating, and tends only to destroy the atmosphere which has been carefully built up: the nervous tension is dissipated by this false alarm.

This type of suspense based upon contrived misunderstandings is not successful, nor is that which depends upon delaying tactics - a garrulous servant is reluctant to pass on his important information or come to the point of his story. The maid or valet is present in all Mrs Radcliffe's novels, and they share a simple-mindedness and naivety which is reflected in their conversation. As in Fielding's novels, it is only the lower classes who are given dialogue which has any resemblance to natural speech, and the landlady in The Romance of the Forest uses the same colloquial expressions as the landlady at Upton in Tom Jones. Mrs Radcliffe copies her talkative servants from Walpole, who claims that his domestics have a Shakespearian inspiration, looking back to the

"humour of the grave-diggers, the fooleries of Polonius, and the clumsy jests of the Roman citizens."⁴ Walpole and Mrs Radcliffe both use their domestics for purposes other than comedy, for their very garrulousness provides an opportunity for suspense by delaying the imparting of their information. The pattern becomes standard: the servant arrives with something to tell, and the alarm of the master or mistress ensures that the reader's curiosity will be aroused; whereupon the servant either becomes incoherent, or he refuses to abbreviate his story and come to the point. In either case it is a simple method of delaying. The more the master protests, the slower the servant becomes, and there is no guarantee that the servant's information will be important anyway. The servant is most assiduous in avoiding answering the questions put to him. Walpole's and Mrs Radcliffe's servants are very similar:

Walpole:

--Oh, my lord! said Jaquez, Diego has seen such a sight! your highness would not belief our eyes. --What new absurdity is this? cried Manfred -- Give me a direct answer, or by heaven -- Why, my lord, if it please your highness to hear me, said the poor fellow; Diego and I -- Yes, I and Jaquez, cried his comrade -- Did I not forbid you to speak both at a time? said the prince. (The Castle of Otranto, p. 31)

Mrs Radcliffe:

"What happened?" said Schedoni, hastily.

"What I am going to tell, Signor. My cousin lived there at the time; so, however unbelievable it may seem, you may depend upon it, it is all true. My father knows I would not believe it myself till --"

"Enough of this," said Schedoni; "no more. What family had this Barone -- had he a wife at the time of this destructive shock?"

"Yes, truly, Signor, he had, as I was going to tell, if you but condescend to have patience." (The Italian, p. 270)

In this way Mrs Radcliffe manages to stretch the story out over many pages, and she develops the technique from Walpole's limited use of it to

⁴Walpole, p. 31.

the point where a protracted story becomes inevitable whenever a servant is required to speak. Walpole regarded it as a comic device, and Mrs Radcliffe uses it for comic effect and suspense. Unfortunately, Mrs Radcliffe's sense of humour is rather ponderous - there is no comparison, for instance, between the dialogue of the servants in Tom Jones, which provides much genuine humour, and the slow-footed ramblings of Mrs Radcliffe's servants. As for suspense, the deliberate process of holding out a bait and then snatching it away becomes as irritating to the reader as to the master, and kills rather than provokes suspense. Nothing tedious can raise a fright.

The delaying technique is present everywhere, and may be used with more effect than the examples just mentioned. As Ellena is escaping from San Stefano, she is overcome by fatigue and weakness, and twice is compelled to stop to regain her strength, while the reader wonders whether she will actually reach the gate, or be discovered before she gets there. Adeline, reading the manuscript, is delayed by the light going out, and by an excess of emotion which forces her to stop - so the reading is spread over three chapters. Dorothee is about to tell Emily the story of the Marchioness, and is just extracting a promise of secrecy from Emily when the dinner horn sounds, and she must go; nor can she continue that night for she must go to the dance of the vintage. Many pages later the promised story is finally divulged. In A Sicilian Romance, Vincent is about to reveal a horrid secret connected with the mysterious happenings in the south wing, but breathes his last as he starts to speak.

The attempt to provide incidental suspense in these ways is not one of Mrs Radcliffe's most successful techniques: it is too obvious.

More skilful is her use of atmosphere: as suggested in Chapter 1, her landscapes frequently play a part which extends beyond being background, as they show moods and reflects emotions, and the gloomy scenes are a source of constant tension and underlying horror. Even here, though, repetition dulls suspense - as Ernest Baker says, Mrs Radcliffe "seems to regard [banditti] as a kind of local fauna."⁵ Repetition is also used on a wider scale, especially in The Mysteries of Udolpho, in the repetition of the stay in Udolpho by the stay in Chateau-le-Blanc: the ghostly motifs are too similar, and the repetition of strange events too exhausting for both Emily and the reader. The incident of a maid falling outside Emily's door is repeated, for example, with the same effect on Emily - "Fear deprived her of the power to move" - and there is just the same feeling that the reader is owed an apology for being disappointed. It would have been tidier if the book had ended with the escape from Udolpho - as it is, it "gasps on for twenty chapters or more."⁶

Suspense is also created by use of a simple structural device which is used more skilfully in the later novels. It involves having two scenes of action, and leaving one at a dramatic moment to return to the other. In The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, there is potential for the use of this technique, but no advantage is taken of it - the scene switches dully and clumsily from one castle to the other. By the time of The Italian, however, Mrs Radcliffe realises the possibilities of breaking the narrative at strategic points: thus we leave Vivaldi, supposedly about to be put to the torture by the Inquisition, to return

⁵Baker, p. 195.

⁶MacCarthy, p. 173.

to Ellena, last seen being carried off from the chapel, and now being taken to the place of assassination.

One of the best-known characteristics of Mrs Radcliffe's work is that her suspense, though it may be prolonged, will always end - there is always a perfectly rational and reasonable explanation for any mysterious event which has left the reader's nerves on edge or expectations unsatisfied. This does not apply, of course, to that type of suspense which involves a drawing out of the action or the growth of fear in a character - rather it is suspense provided for the benefit of the reader only, for sometimes the explanations do not come out in the course of the narrative but are inserted in a comment from the authoress. Mrs Radcliffe actually uses the supernatural only once, in her last novel, Gaston de Blondville, where a flat-footed ghost does appear. Adeline's dreams may also be supposed to be the result of supernatural influence - no explanation is ever given. All her other apparently supernatural manifestations turn out to have a thoroughly reasonable source, whereas Walpole uses the supernatural quite unashamedly. The Castle of Otranto is entirely dependent for its plot structure upon the appearance of the giant Alfonso, and there are numerous incidents of unabashed supernatural intervention. No attempt is made to account for them - it is assumed that they do not require any explanation, and sometimes the expressionless presentation is more reminiscent of comedy than horror, as, for example, when the three drops of blood fall from the nose of the statue of Alfonso. The Mysteries of Udolpho contains the most examples of Mrs Radcliffe's mysteries which turn out to be only devices for maintaining the reader's curiosity. Emily is instructed by her dying father to destroy his letters; in doing

so she inadvertently looks at one and sees a "sentence of dreadful import". Though curious, she completes "the triumph of integrity over temptation" and burns the letters. At several points it is suggested, very delicately and indefinably, that Monsieur St Aubert may not always have been a model of integrity, and that these letters have some bearing on his obscure past. In the last chapter, the mystery is explained - the letters dealt with unhappy family affairs which St Aubert wished to protect Emily from, so they have been nothing but a device to keep the reader's curiosity alive. The strange music which is generally supposed to have a supernatural source turns out to have been played by the mad nun, alias Signora Laurentini, as she walked in the woods at night. It was an indulgence granted her against the rules of the convent and therefore kept secret, and "thus the mysterious music of Laurentini had combined with other circumstances, to produce a report, that not only the chateau, but its neighbourhood, was haunted." The echo of Montoni's voice as he starts to tell his friends about the disappearance of Signora Laurentini, which we are long left to suppose is some indication of supernatural disapproval, turns out to have been the voice of a prisoner who has discovered a passage behind the walls which is unknown to Montoni. Railo suggests that this device has its source in Walpole's The Mysterious Mother, where a strange echo frightens plotting monks.⁷ The person who appears on the castle walls at night, supposed to be a supernatural visitant, turns out to be a prisoner who is allowed by his guard to go out for a breath of air. It is this process of rationalisation which Jane Austen parodies in Northanger Abbey: Catherine Morland, who has apparently been reading The Romance of

⁷Railo, p. 63.

the Forest, finds a manuscript in a chest, and is about to read it, expecting it to be a dying message, when she accidentally snuffs out the candle - another parody of the Radcliffean model, as are the gust of wind and the distant sounds which next arise. Next morning the manuscript turns out to be a laundry bill.

Early critics commented on this reasonableness imposed upon romanticism, and the feeling was that the explanations were a cheat and robbed the novels of their abiding interest by destroying the mystery: once read, the outcome is known, and there is no mystery left. Coleridge remarked, "Curiosity is raised oftener than it is gratified; or rather, it is raised so high that no adequate gratification can be given it; the interest is completely dissolved when once the adventure is finished, and the reader, when he is got to the end of the work, looks about in vain for the spell which had bound him so strongly to it."⁸ While strenuously avoiding any strain on the reader's credulity, she taxes the patience of the reader, especially when she goes so far as to add a learned footnote to back up her explanation. When Emily is leaving Udolpho the first time, a storm comes on, and a flame appears at the point of Bertrand's lance. Emily is relieved "from some of the terrors of superstition" by Ugo's explanation that it is an omen of a storm, and Mrs Radcliffe, to make sure, adds, "See the Abbé Berthelon on electricity."

Her limitations lie in her failure to satisfy the expectations which are aroused by her suggestions: her own imagination fails to provide what the reader's imagination is awaiting. On the other hand, as Arthur Cooke points out, once the practice of the explained supernatural is

⁸Quoted in Varma, p. 106.

accepted, the rational reader has the challenge of puzzling out the natural causes for the seeming supernatural: "Thus the Gothic romance was transformed from a kind of ghost story into a kind of elaborate brain teaser, a sort of battle of wits between the author and the reader."⁹ Cooke quotes the Critical Review, which commented on this new aspect of the Gothic novel in its review of The Mysteries of Udolpho:

[Mrs Radcliffe] delights in concealing her plan with the most artificial contrivance, and seems to amuse herself with saying, at every turn and doubling of the story, "now you think you have me, but I shall take care to disappoint you."¹⁰

Thus the rational eighteenth-century reader has the pleasure of supernatural terrors without his reason being offended, and the faculties of imagination and intellect are called upon as well.

Mrs Radcliffe stands between the blatant improbabilities of Walpole and the crude excesses of "Monk" Lewis. Walpole's ghosts are real enough, but remain well-bred and basically decorous; Mrs Radcliffe's hints and suggestions may send a genteel shiver down the spine, but with Lewis there are no half measures, and his chamber of horrors makes the blood curdle. Mrs Radcliffe does not depend upon violence of action: she uses instead "the maximum of apprehension without any vulgar effusion of blood."¹¹ There are corpses and bloodstains, but they are not usually important - the bodies may not belong to persons worth naming, and they act only as another catalyst in the build-up of suspense. Even the celebrated corpse

⁹Cooke, p. 434.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Baker, p. 194.

behind the black veil is only a wax image - unpleasant, but with nothing of the sheer gruesomeness of the body of Agnes' baby in The Monk, which Lewis dwells on with relish: "Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms which bred in the corrupted flesh of my infant" (p. 396). The interest in Mrs Radcliffe's novels lies not so much in the actions themselves, as in the careful description of the effect of an impending action on a character, an effect usually of fear; or as Tompkins puts it, "Her theme is not the dreadful happening - very often nothing dreadful happens - but the interval during which the menace takes shape and the mind of the victim is reluctantly shaken by its impendence."¹²

Mrs Radcliffe often appears to be interested in the psychology of the development of fear, and at times this almost provides her with a defense against the accusations of false frights, as she makes it clear that the terror often does not exist in something external, but rather exists in the character's mind, and is the result of stress. Emily St Aubert is the heroine who is most susceptible to the imaginary terrors, and she provides a full study of a person, normally stable and rational, whose judgement and reason are affected by circumstance. Her nature is early described as having "a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace." No Gothic heroine could be without this susceptibility, but Emily treats it as a weakness which must be overcome. At times she is able to detach herself from it and see how foolish such a weakness appears in others, but at other times she is too oppressed by circumstances or feelings to resist. To give way to the imagination

¹² Tompkins, 1932, p. 258.

is deemed a weakness and a fault, and in this respect Mrs Radcliffe is true to her century, in that reason is seen to be the strongest part of the mind.

Mrs Radcliffe's supernatural, then, is present only in the overwrought minds of the characters, and, inasmuch as the minds of the readers participate in the turmoils of the characters, in the minds of the readers. Mrs Radcliffe frequently insists upon this point by emphasising that the terror is in Emily's imagination only, and the reader may get the impression, from a careful reading, that the authoress is suggesting that it is his own fault if he allows his own susceptibilities to be played upon. As Emily enters Udolpho for the first time, she is filled with foreboding, and "her imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify" (p. 228). Certainly, if the reader's mind is sensitive to Emily's mood, he too will feel the vague terrors, but Mrs Radcliffe cannot be criticised for falsely raising a fear of the supernatural: she makes it quite clear that it is Emily's imagination which we are seeing at work, and she further comments on this in the next paragraph: "One of those instantaneous and unaccountable convictions, which sometimes conquer even strong minds, impressed her with its horror." It is on such occasions that the conflict between imagination and reason appears, and when imagination is the stronger, fear is the result. In Udolpho, Emily's imagination has much to dwell upon. A feeling of terror is brought on by the gloomy surroundings and by Montoni's unaccountable behaviour, but for Emily there are also the irrational terrors: "To these circumstances, which conspired to give her just cause for alarm, were now added those thousand nameless terrors,

which exist only in active imaginations, and which set reason and examination equally at defiance" (p. 240). Thus there may be real terrors and imaginary terrors, and once the mind has started to yield reason to imagination, it is prey to any impression. Emily comforts herself with this argument when she is embarrassed by the simplicity of the explanation of the face under the pall in Chateau-le-Blanc: "She was surprised, that she could have suffered herself to be thus alarmed, till she considered, that, when the mind has once begun to yield to the weakness of superstition, trifles impress it with the force of conviction" (p. 635). Imagination is most likely to conquer reason when the mind is occupied with or affected by disturbing emotions, such as bewilderment, solitude, or grief. The figure on the rampart seems to Emily, under the strain of detention in Udolpho and puzzled by the circumstances of its appearance, to be a supernatural figure. However, when the first fright is over, she feels differently - "When her spirits recovered composure, she looked around for some other explanation" - and she considers all the reasonable possibilities in turn. Reason fails to satisfy her, however, so "imagination again assumed her empire, and roused the mysteries of superstition." Further rationalisations again fail to satisfy her, so, again, "the suggestions of imagination seized her mind with all the force of truth, and she believed, that the form she had seen was supernatural" (p. 360). Mrs Radcliffe at no point says it is supernatural; she says only that Emily thought it was, because of the power of imagination in her mind. When she returns to La Vallée after the death of her father, Emily is crushed by grief as the familiar scenes recall past happiness, and this mood makes her senses very receptive to a feeling for the supernatural:

"The subject she had been considering, and the present tone of her spirits, which made her imagination respond to every impression of her senses, gave her a sudden terror of something supernatural" (p. 95). In a revealing paragraph, Mrs Radcliffe sheds much light on her understanding of the workings of fear in a susceptible mind:

The solitary life which Emily had led of late, and the melancholy subjects, on which she had suffered her thoughts to dwell, had rendered her at times sensible to the 'thick-coming fancies' of a mind greatly enervated. It was lamentable, that her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination, which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness. (p. 102)

For Mrs Radcliffe, therefore, the supernatural can exist only as a fancy in a disordered mind, which the reader can share according to the extent of his involvement with the characters. To the lower classes, especially servants, the supernatural is a reality which no rationalising can undermine, and the unquestioning nature of their belief in the supernatural constitutes a dividing line between classes. In A Sicilian Romance, a light is seen in the deserted south wing of the castle. The family is puzzled, perhaps nervous, but "in the minds of the vulgar, any species of the wonderful is received with avidity; and the servants did not hesitate in believing the southern division of the castle to be inhabited by a supernatural power" (I.19).

Mrs Radcliffe accepts no responsibility for anything supernatural - to allow oneself to believe in it, even momentarily, is a weakness. Emily recognises this, and is able to see the foolishness of superstition when it appears in others, even though she is vulnerable herself:

The certainty that Morano was not arrived, allowed her to smile at the superstitious terror, which had seized on Annette; for, though

she sometimes felt its influence herself, she could smile at it, when apparent in other persons. (p. 247)

After enduring the terrors, real and imaginary, of Udolpho, Emily has become wiser, and her imagination does not react so readily to circumstances. Even so, reason is not yet completely dominant:

Emily smiled, and, remembering how lately she had suffered herself to be led away by superstition, determined now to resist its contagion; yet, in spite of her efforts, she felt awe mingle with her curiosity, on this subject. (p. 490)

. . . and this unaccountable circumstance . . . affected Emily's imagination with a superstitious awe, to which, after having detected the fallacies at Udolpho, she might not have yielded, had she been ignorant of the unhappy story, related by the housekeeper. (p. 537)

In The Romance of the Forest, Adeline is affected in the same way. As she sits in the abbey late at night, all alone, reading the manuscript with "distempered senses", she imagines she hears sighs and sees figures:

While she sat musing, her fancy, which now wandered in the regions of terror, gradually subdued reason . . . Her imagination refused any longer the control of reason, and turning her eyes, a figure . . . appeared to pass along an obscure part of the chamber . . . All remaining quiet, after some time she began to question whether her fancy had not deceived her. (I. 59-60)

In The Italian, as has been mentioned, the supernatural does not form an important part of the terror motif. Its possibility is alluded to, though, in the scene in the fortress at Paluzzi, chiefly by the superstitious servant, Paulo, and in the strange happenings in the prisons of the Inquisition. Vivaldi is tempted to accept the supernatural as an explanation for the latter, but reason is dominant in him:

"I have heard of the spirit of the murdered," said he, to himself - "restless for justice, becoming visible in our world - " But Vivaldi checked the imperfect thought, and, though his imagination inclined

him to the marvellous, and to admit ideas which, filling and expanding all the faculties of the soul, produce feelings that partake of the sublime, he now resisted the propensity, and dismissed, as absurd, a supposition, which had begun to thrill his every nerve with horror.
(p. 347)

Ellena is not troubled by Emily's weakness of giving way to imagination.

One example shows the difference between the two heroines. Ellena, travelling with Schedoni, suspects that the malevolent Spalatro is following them:

No human figure stole upon the vacancy; yet the apt fears of Ellena almost imagined the form of Spalatro gliding behind the columns, and she started as the air shook over the wild plants that wreathed them, before she discovered that it was not the sound of steps. At the extravagance of her suspicions, however, and the weakness of her terrors, she blushed, and endeavoured to resist that propensity to fear, which nerves long pressed upon had occasioned in her mind.

(The Italian, pp. 260-261)

Emily, under similar circumstances, suspects some supernatural manifestation:

As she mused she saw the door slowly open, and a rustling sound in a remote part of the room startled her. Through the dusk she thought she perceived something move. The subject she had been considering, and the present tone of her spirits, which made her imagination respond to every impression of her senses, gave her a sudden terror of something supernatural. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 95)

The physical factors are the same -- the rustling sound and the half-seen movement -- and the states of mind are similar, but the later heroine has a suspicion of natural things rather than supernatural. Emily, in Ellena's position, would have supposed the figure to be a supernatural form.

A significant result of the importance of suspense is that the novels become much more dramatic in structure than those of Richardson and Fielding. Those writers used elaborate plots in which every incident played its part in the working out of the plan, but interest is not so

much in what is going to happen finally - that is usually clear enough anyway - but in how it will happen. We know that Clarissa will be ruined by Lovelace, and we know that Tom Jones will marry Sophia Western, so our interest is centred on how these actions will be brought about, especially in the case of Tom Jones, where Fielding deliberately introduces difficulties so that the main direction of the plot must seem to be thwarted. Clara McIntyre¹³ claims that the chief interest in these writers lies not so much in the plot itself, even though it is complicated sometimes, as in the characters and their reactions to the plot, and then argues that in Ann Radcliffe's novels, interest is centred on the plot and the solution of the mysteries. Her method is a development of Walpole's initial, feeble, but seminal attempt to make the focus of the book the denouement. Walpole's attempt fails, at least for the modern reader, because of the extreme improbability of his mysteries. Mrs Radcliffe takes pains not to alienate her reader with improbabilities, and the great interest lies in how the mysteries will be solved - there is little interest in how the fortunes of the characters are going to work out. We know that Osbert and Laura, Alleyn and Mary, Julia and Hippolitus, Adeline and Theodore, Emily and Valancourt, and Ellena and Vivaldi will finally marry, and frequently the obstacles placed in their way are very similar to those which Fielding uses - the situation between Emily and Valancourt after Emily has decisively rejected Valancourt for his supposed loose living is a parallel to Tom's near loss of Sophia. The distinction which Miss McIntyre makes lies, rather, in the fact that in Mrs Radcliffe's work the motivation for reading on is created by suspense, and in Fielding's and Richardson's by interest.

¹³ McIntyre, 1920, p. 77 ff.

There is interest in the question of how, in The Italian, Ellena is going to escape the designs of the Marchesa, but there is suspense in wondering whether she will escape the wicked abbess at San Stefano, or whether she will be murdered by Schedoni, or whether Vivaldi will escape the Inquisition. It is this element of nervous anticipation which distinguishes Mrs Radcliffe from her predecessors, and it is this breathless quality which makes her novels amenable to dramatisation --

A Sicilian Romance, The Romance of the Forest, The Italian, and Gaston de Blondville were all dramatised, and The Mysteries of Udolpho was considerably adapted for a play.¹⁴

While considering the contribution of suspense to the dramatic aspect of the novels, other dramatic features may be mentioned. The influence of the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights has already been touched on, and is well covered by Miss McIntyre.¹⁵ Of particular note are the echoes of Shakespeare which appear - it is apparent from notes in Mrs Radcliffe's journals that she greatly admired and had an intimate knowledge of Shakespeare. In The Italian, the scene in which Schedoni and Spalatro are disputing who shall kill Ellena recalls Macbeth, as Spalatro claims he is haunted by murdered figures from the past - "The bloody hand is always before me!" - and as Schedoni finally says, "Give me the dagger, then" (p. 230). The mysterious figure which walks on the battlements of Udolpho suggests an original in the ghost of Hamlet. The

¹⁴ McIntyre (1920) gives details of translations and dramatic versions, pp. 68-76.

¹⁵ McIntyre, 1921.

taste for the sensational is derived from the Jacobean drama: the worm-eaten wax image behind the veil, and the horror it inspires, repeat an incident in Webster's The Duchess of Malfi, where the Duchess is shown the wax figures of her husband and children, to make her think they are dead. It is reasonable to suppose that Mrs Radcliffe was familiar with the Jacobean playwrights, for during the decade preceding her most productive years there was a revival of interest in their performances, and many of the plays were also reprinted. Miss McIntyre suggests several aspects of Mrs Radcliffe's novels which show that the drama may have been a source of inspiration for more than just the sensational. There is the tendency towards violent and bloody scenes - Theodore and the Marquis, in The Romance of the Forest, fight a duel in which both are injured; Ellena, in The Italian, is twice abducted, and is frequently subjected to the threat of violence; Madame Montoni, in The Mysteries of Udolpho, is treated most roughly by her husband. Poisoning, a characteristic crime in the Renaissance drama, appears relatively frequently as a means of killing others or oneself. There is some preoccupation with death and its trappings, and a tendency to brood over the details of death, reflecting, perhaps, the influence of the Graveyard Poets as well. The account of Madame Montoni's burial takes advantage of all the dark associations of death, with open graves and vapour-filled vaults, while Adeline's dream, supposedly inspired because she is sleeping close to where her father was murdered, is full of funereal details.

CHAPTER FOUR

In a discussion of Mrs Radcliffe's use of the Gothic castle, it is again reasonable to start with Walpole, from whom Mrs Radcliffe inherited a collection of properties and machinery which became part of the Gothic tradition. In Walpole's book, the castle itself is the stage setting: without it, the story would be inconceivable, for the romantic atmosphere would be quite lost. Otranto was apparently modelled on Walpole's property at Strawberry Hill, which he, as a passionate follower of the revival of interest in antiquities, transformed into a kind of Gothic castle. Although little was then known about the architecture of a real Gothic castle, his romantic additions - a chapel, a round tower, stained glass windows - were sufficient, for him, to constitute a Gothic castle. In his preface to The Castle of Otranto, he makes it fairly clear that "the author" was describing a real castle, for, he says, "he seems frequently, without design, to describe particular parts" (pp. 5-6). He relates that the story originated in a dream, in which he saw the hall and staircase of Strawberry Hill blended with the portals of a Cambridge college, supposed to be Trinity. Walpole was not inventing anything new in using a haunted castle to provide an atmosphere of terror and gloom: it is necessary to look only as far as Shakespeare to find a similar usage. Macbeth's castle, though not haunted, makes its contribution to the feeling

of evil and darkness as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth pursue their crimes within its walls. The castle of Elsinor has a wandering ghost, a tyrant, and bloody deeds - in fact, many of the elements of a Gothic romance. The first scene of Hamlet, on the castle battlements, in starlight, with the suggestions of the supernatural in the conversation of the guards, forms a most striking and enduring impression of a haunted, romantic castle. Elsinor is the stage setting for Hamlet and Otranto is the stage setting for The Castle of Otranto, but there is a difference in that Walpole uses the castle as a complex piece of machinery, with many inner workings, and increases its importance until it becomes imbued with a life of its own and almost acquires the strength of another character. The castle becomes a most active force: parts of it actually move and act - the portrait and the statue - and the plot is closely moulded around it.

This chapter will deal with Mrs Radcliffe's use of the Gothic properties, especially the castle, which she inherited from Walpole: her extension and sophistication of them, and her progress in adapting them until finally she seems to be becoming somewhat independent of them. Walpole's actual castle has an undistinguished appearance: he is primarily concerned with what happens inside and under the castle, and does not utilise the physical facade for any effect. However, though its setting and physical appearance are not mentioned, it contains all the features which were to become requisite for Mrs Radcliffe - galleries, courtyards, furniture, chapel, underground vaults and cells, secret passages and trap-doors, and rusty locks. Mrs Radcliffe takes all these things, expands them and elaborates on them to produce her own distinctive atmosphere, and adds her own contribution of decaying ruins. By the time of The

Italian, she has dispensed with the castle altogether, substituting for it a variety of ruins and awesome buildings. In fact, a castle as the stage setting, or at least as an important part of the setting, is used in only three of her novels - The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, A Sicilian Romance, and The Mysteries of Udolpho. In The Romance of the Forest the castle is replaced by a ruined abbey, and in The Italian by several ruins and the prisons of the Inquisition, all of which serve the same purpose, artistically, as a castle.

The first thing we notice about Mrs Radcliffe's castles is that they are old. While Otranto is of undifferentiated age, it is at least contemporaneous with its inhabitants, and has no signs of decay. Mrs Radcliffe's castles are invariably ancient or falling into ruin. The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne is the only book in which the action is actually set in medieval times, though even Dunbayne has its ruined quarter. In all the others, the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth-century inhabitants live in a medieval building which is hallowed by antiquity and decay. To Mrs Radcliffe ruins are more romantic and offer more scope for establishing her atmosphere. Athlin is presented as "an edifice built on the summit of a rock whose base was in the sea. This pile was venerable from its antiquity, and from its gothic structure" (p. 1). Dunbayne is described in terms of equal vagueness, but a judgement is implicit in the description: "The edifice was built with gothic magnificence upon a high and dangerous rock. Its lofty towers still frowned in proud sublimity, and the immensity of the pile stood a record of the ancient consequence of its possessors" (p. 26). The different qualities are invested in the frowning towers, the proud sublimity, and

the dangerous rock. The castles reflect the natures of their inhabitants: Athlin is "venerable from the virtues which it enclosed" while Dunbayne is "a record of the ancient consequence of its possessors", which, with the detailed account of its impregnable fortifications which is also given, suggests that the consequences have been gained by force and strength rather than by integrity. Both castles are classified as "gothic", though it is doubtful whether Mrs Radcliffe yet had a very clear idea of what she meant by the word; and both are described as "piles", suggesting strength and massiveness, and beginning a tradition of any ancient, forbidding building being a "pile".

The chief feature of Mazzini's castle, as described in A Sicilian Romance, is its size. It is "a large irregular fabric", and this leads to an aspect of the Gothic castle which was initiated by Clara Reeve in The Old English Baron - the deserted wing, usually supposed to be haunted: "Its present family inhabited only a small part of it; and even this part appeared forlorn and almost desolate from the spaciousness of the apartments, and the length of the galleries which led to them" (I.8). Ruins have already made a brief appearance in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, but their potential was unrealised. At this point in the development of the Gothic castle, the tradition branches: the main part of the castle has a particular type of architecture which is described in terms usually fairly general, while the empty wing or the ruins have their own very distinctive attributes.

In The Romance of the Forest, a ruined abbey is used as the stage setting, and this enables Mrs Radcliffe to achieve a vastly improved atmosphere of desolation and awe. Its towers are first seen rising above

the trees, which is the standard aspect of an abbey, monastery, convent or castle, ruined or not, when first seen, and then:

He approached, and perceived the Gothic remains of an abbey: it stood on a kind of rude lawn, overshadowed by high and spreading trees, which seemed coeval with the building, and diffused a romantic gloom around. The greater part of the pile appeared to be sinking into ruins, and that, which had withstood the ravages of time, shewed the remaining features of the fabric more awful in decay. (I.38)

The word order of "the Gothic remains of an abbey" should be noted: it suggests that the abbey itself is not Gothic so much as its ruins - its Gothicism lies in the sublime sensations which the ruins inspire. The relation between the building and its setting is more fully realised, and the romantic effect is acknowledged. The building is a "pile" again, and the ruins, which include the feeling of antiquity, increase the romantic effect.

In The Mysteries of Udolpho two castles are used, Udolpho and Chateau-le-Blanc. The first sight of Udolpho is described chiefly in terms of its setting - the fading rays of the sun, the dark forests, the castle's dominating position - but we do get some impressions, fairly general, of its size and solidity:

The gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object . . . the gloom, that overspread [the edifice], allowed her to distinguish little more than a part of its outline, with the massy walls of the ramparts, and to know, that it was vast, ancient and dreary. From the parts she saw, she judged of the heavy strength and extent of the whole. (pp. 226-227)

The word "gothic" is used loosely again, with the same unexpected position in the phrase - it is the greatness of the features rather than the features themselves which is Gothic. The use of the word "mouldering" suggests too that words are being used in a stereotype: the castle is in

a state of disrepair, certainly, but it is strong enough to withstand a prolonged seige, so "mouldering" is being used for atmospheric rather than informative purposes. Emily's too ready perception, from a glimpse of the outline of the ramparts, of the age and dreariness of the castle, indicates that these qualities have become so established and expected in a Gothic castle that their presence is automatic. Chateau-le-Blanc, the second castle, is seen by Blanche, an avowed romantic, as a castle of medieval romance:

As Blanche drew nearer, the gothic features of this antient mansion successively appeared - first an embattled turret, rising above the trees - then the broken arch of an immense gate-way, retiring beyond them; and she almost fancied herself approaching a castle, such as is often celebrated in early story, where the knights look out from the battlements on some champion below, who, clothed in black armour, comes, with his companions, to rescue the fair lady of his love from the oppression of his rival. (p. 468)

Chateau-le-Blanc, it soon appears, is just a replacement for Udolpho.

As already mentioned, there is, technically speaking, no castle in The Italian, but the prisons of the Inquisition serve the same purpose, in their outward appearance, in their atmosphere, and in what happens within the walls. In appearance, it is their mass which is impressive:

These walls, of immense height, and strengthened by innumerable massy bulwarks, exhibited neither window or grate, but a vast and dreary blank; a small round tower only, perched here and there upon the summit, breaking their monotony. (p. 196)

The architecture of these buildings is usually left fairly blurred and confusing, but some features are nearly always present. A massive gate and portal, and a large entrance hall, are the first things a visitor sees; from that point the geography of the building becomes vague until the long silent galleries, with numerous apartments leading

from them, are reached. From the galleries the heroine can watch, unseen, the activities in the halls below, and from the ramparts, which are also necessary, the villain surveys his domain. The galleries usually end in large winding staircases leading to lower floors. Underneath the building are the vaults, which have a geography entirely of their own. A closed door at the end of a gallery is likely to be the entrance to a deserted wing which is falling into ruin, or the entrance may be through a secret panel or a hidden trapdoor.

The portal of the castle is imposing, and calculated to inspire despair in those who pass under it. The grand gateway of the castle of Malcolm of Dunbayne is reached only after crossing a drawbridge, which can slam down suddenly and trap Alleyn's party in the inner courtyard. As Pierre de la Motte enters the silent abbey, he is affected by the feelings which the sense of the past and the gloom inspire, and he feels terror:

La Motte paused a moment, for he felt a sensation of sublimity rising into terror - a suspension of mingled astonishment and awe! He surveyed the vastness of the place, and as he contemplated its ruins, fancy bore him back to past ages. (I.40)

Adeline's reactions as she enters are similar:

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. (I.45)

Madame de la Motte's response is concerned less with the sublimity of the past, and more with her immediate reaction:

"Let us quit this spot," said she, "any evil is preferable to the feeling which now oppresses me. Let us retire instantly." (I.46)

Udolpho's gateway is "of gigantic size, and defended by two round

towers, crowned by overhanging turrets . . . The towers were united by a curtain, pierced and embattled also, below which appeared the pointed arch of an huge portcullis, surmounting the gates" (p. 227). The gates open with much undrawing of bolts, and Emily feels overwhelmed as she passes under the portal:

As the carriage-wheels rolled heavily under the portcullis, Emily's heart sunk, and she seemed, as if she was going into her prison. (p. 227)

As she enters the second court, which is even wilder than the first, "long-suffering and murder came to her thoughts. One of those instantaneous and unaccountable convictions, which sometimes conquer even strong minds, impressed her with its horror" (p. 228). As she re-enters the castle after her brief absence during the seige, she has the same sensations: "she found herself once more beneath the gloomy arch, and heard the door close, that seemed to shut her from the world forever" (p. 428). The Countess de Villefort, entering the precincts of the Chateau-le-Blanc, exclaims immediately, "What a dismal place is this!"

Vivaldi enters the prisons of the Inquisition through the principal entrance, "from the grandeur of its portal, and the gigantic loftiness of the towers that rose over it; and soon after the carriage stopped at an arch-way in the walls, strongly barricadoed" (p. 196). The door-keeper has a countenance which "might have been copied for the 'Grim-visaged comfortless Despair' of the Poet" (p. 196).

The portals, then, provide a portentous front door to the castle, and Mrs Radcliffe manipulates them to provide an atmosphere so striking and oppressive that the characters have a feeling of terror forcibly thrust upon them as they enter.

The hall inside is used to reinforce this sensation: it is large, gloomy and silent. In The Romance of the Forest it is the decaying chapel of the abbey, and as La Motte walks through it, he feels as if his echoing footsteps are sacrilegious, and are disturbing the dead who lie, no doubt, under his feet. The hall of Udolpho is magnificent and grand, but Emily surveys it "in timid wonder", being too aware of its hidden corners and lurking shadows. Chateau-le-Blanc has a less awesome hall, though it is large and gloomy: it is "entirely gothic, and sumptuous tapestry, which it was now too dark to distinguish, hung upon the walls, and depicted scenes from some of the antient Provencal romances" (p. 469). To Vivaldi, it seems that the entrance hall to the prisons of the Inquisition must be one of the burial vaults for the victims of the Inquisition, judging by the death-like silence, and imperfectly ascertained limitations of the room:

. . . nor did any distant sound contradict the notion, that they were traversing the chambers of the dead. To Vivaldi it occurred, that this was one of the burial vaults of the victims, who suffered in the Inquisition, and his whole frame thrilled with horror . . . Still no footstep whispering along the pavement, or voice murmuring through the arched roofs, indicated it to be the residence of the living. (p. 196)

Even this far inside the castle, in making use of the portal and entrance hall to prefigure suffering, Mrs Radcliffe has demonstrated her more sophisticated use of the things which Walpole, with his economical style, took for granted.

Little attention is given to the living rooms of a Gothic castle, and indeed, it is often difficult to imagine life going on in a castle, or to imagine what the inhabitants did to fill their days. We know fairly well how the inhabitants of one of Jane Austen's country houses or cottages

employed their time, even if it was only in indolence, but there are large gaps in the days of Gothic castle dwellers when they seem to be just waiting for something frightening to happen. Emily has her little library, Mazzini's daughters have their music and lessons, and Adeline has her walks in the forest, but these cannot occupy all their time. It is impossible to say what Madame Montoni or Madame de la Motte, for example, did with their days. Occasionally, there is a scene of normal domesticity. In The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne "the Countess was sitting with her family in a room" when the storm brings the Count de Santmorin to their shore. Madame Montoni is occasionally seen to be sitting, but little more. The domestic scenes of the La Luc family in The Romance of the Forest ooze sentimentality and falseness. Generally, attention is deflected from day to day activities and focused on the unusual. There are living areas in the castle, however, and, though they are mentioned only in passing, their appearance is in accord with the rest of the castle. In Udolpho there is "a spacious apartment, whose walls, wainscoted with black larch-wood, the growth of the neighbouring mountains, were scarcely distinguishable from darkness itself" (p. 228). The dining room of Udolpho is described in some detail:

It was an antient hall, gloomy from the style of its architecture, from its great extent, and because almost the only light it received was from one large gothic window, and from a pair of folding doors, which, being open, admitted likewise a view of the west rampart, with the wild mountains of the Appenine beyond.

The middle compartment of this hall rose into a vaulted roof, enriched with fretwork, and supported, on three sides, by pillars of marble; beyond these, long colonades retired in gloomy grandeur, till their extent was lost in twilight. (p. 312)

This is not the place for a cosy dinner-party, nor does the appearance of the guests encourage a feeling of intimacy or security, for they

"had all an expression, more or less, of wild fierceness, of subtle design, or of licentious passion."

The galleries and corridors are mentioned briefly in The Castle of Otranto. They appear again in Mazzini's castle, where one gallery may open into another, or perhaps end in a staircase, either magnificent or decaying. In La Motte's abbey there is a plethora of dark corridors and staircases which lead into deserted apartments or into mysterious subterranean rooms, all needing to be explored tremblingly. The plan of the abbey may have been clear to Mrs Radcliffe, but as La Motte explores it, it is easy for the reader to become lost in the multitude of apartments which are undifferentiated except as regards their state of decay. Galleries abound in The Mysteries of Udolpho, and contribute to the terror-filled atmosphere, for they are long and dark, and a candle does not show very far ahead:

With light and hasty steps she passed through the long galleries, while the feeble glimmer of the lamp she carried only shewed the gloom around her, and the passing air threatened to extinguish it. (p. 252)

Figures can appear at the end of a corridor, and be seen imperfectly, or they may lurk in the shadows of the pillars or in the unused rooms which line the passage. The corridors are so numerous that a person may become lost, as Emily does on her way to the east turret to look for her aunt. Even Mrs Radcliffe seems to give up here:

At length, she obtained something like a direction to the east turret, and quitted the door, from whence, after many intricacies and perplexities, she reached the steep and winding stairs of the turret. (p. 322)

Galleries provide an ideal place for the heroine to pace up and down, and for her to run down as she is pursued by shadowy figures. The galleries of the prisons of the Inquisition are pervaded with a discrete terror:

they are uniformly dark, deserted and silent, and from the doors lining them come the groans of the tortured. They seem designed by the Inquisition and by Mrs Radcliffe to oppress the prisoner with a taste of his fate:

Along the galleries, and other avenues through which they passed, not any person was seen, and, by the profound stillness that reigned, it seemed as if death had already anticipated his work in these regions of horror, and had condemned alike the tortured and the torturer. (p. 309)

Walpole's subterranean passage, leading from the vaults of Otranto to the church of St Nicholas, became a favourite part of the castle with later writers, for it brings a whole new territory for exploitation. Under the Gothic castle are intricate cloisters and vaults, some almost lost to memory, but all dark and awful to those wandering through them. Unnerving encounters take place in them, for they are often inhabited not solely by the pent-up vapours which threaten to choke the light and life of an intruder. They may lead to unexpected places, and their entrances and exits are usually discovered by chance in a trap-door or sliding panel. Their value to the Gothic novelist lies partly in their potential for horror - and they lend themselves equally well to the spine-tingling horrors of Mrs Radcliffe's preference and the blood-curdling terrors of Lewis - and partly in their exemplifying the imaginary world which has been created, for their qualities, and the conditions under which they are explored, are perhaps the furthest removed from the comfortable sitting-room in which Mrs Radcliffe wrote her stories and in which they were probably read. Secret passages remain a staple of children's stories in this century: they combine mystery, ingenuity, and adventure. The underground vaults constitute another world, a land of darkness where the rules of the daylight

world do not apply.

The section of The Castle of Otranto where Isabella flees through the underground passage is a fruitful piece of source material for Mrs Radcliffe. Into a few pages, Walpole compresses many of the Gothic properties which were to become Mrs Radcliffe's staples: it is an archetype whose economically expressed hints she enlarged and used repeatedly. Otranto's vaults are a region of awful silence and blasts of wind. Isabella has resource to them in order to gain the sanctuary of the altar of St. Nicholas, to protect herself from Manfred. As she proceeds timidly, she hears a sigh, and while investigating it her lamp is blown out by a sudden gust of wind, leaving her in utter darkness. She encounters Theodore, whom she believes at first to be the ghost of Conrad. She tells him of a trap-door, which is found with the help of a ray of moonlight which shines fortuitously through a crack in the roof; Isabella opens the spring lock and the secret passage is revealed. As they descend into the darkness, the voice of Manfred is heard as he approaches, and Theodore drops the trap-door before he has entered; it locks, and as he does not know the secret of opening it, he is found by Manfred.

The motifs which are gathered up by Mrs Radcliffe are: the reasons for taking to the vaults, which usually involve an escape; the loss of the light; the frightening encounter or discovery; the struggle with locks; and the pursuit. Not all the motifs are necessarily present, and they may appear in any order, but the pattern is usually recognisably similar to Walpole's.

Even in the immature The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, Mrs Radcliffe makes maximum use of the underground setting and its associated

horrors and difficulties. Alleyn, languishing in a "horrible dungeon" in Malcolm's castle, observes that his guard frequently checks a piece of pavement in the cell. On investigating it with a small knife which he has luckily retained, he finds a loose stone, and digs down "a few feet" till he finds a trap-door. The same knife serves to cut round the lock on the trap-door, and he jumps into a vault. A barred window resists his attempts to break out, until he notices a massy door, fastened by a lock and several bolts. By this time his guard has come to check his cell, and he is discovered. The attempt was not in vain, however, for his guard, Edric, wants to escape also, and he knows that beyond the massy door is a "chain of vaults, which stretched beyond the wall of the castle, and communicated with a subterraneous way, anciently formed as a retreat from the fortress, and which terminated in the cavern of a forest at some distance" (p. 57). Alleyn, with the aid of a bigger knife, opens the trap-door again, and with considerable difficulty opens the massy door. They make their way through the vaults, their imaginations filled with terror by the darkness and the profound silence, which is disturbed by the echoes of their footsteps. Their lamp is blown out and they are left in darkness - "Their feelings may be more easily imagined than expressed" (cf. Isabella - "Words cannot paint the horror of the princess's situation"). This is the beginning of their troubles and frights, for no secret passage gives an easy traverse. They stumble over a corpse in armour. They see men in the distance, and, fleeing, find themselves against a door with a spring lock and the key on the other side - an inevitable feature of Mrs Radcliffe's doors. Somehow the strange men pass them by, and they grope on; as they approach the exit, four men appear, but, as mentioned in

Chapter 3, this is for suspense only, for the men are friends.

In this, her first episode of subterranean adventure, Mrs Radcliffe follows closely Walpole's model in the use of trap-doors, spring locks, figures appearing, and the silence of the vaults and the frightening darkness of the underground. The most notable difference is the way in which she draws out the episodes: Alleyn does not go straight through the trap-door, but is obliged to delay his attempt, and he makes his way through the massy door only on his second attempt. The passages are many and confusing, and there are several hold-ups on the way out. This is part of Mrs Radcliffe's technique of suspense, but it also shows an awareness of the potentiality of Gothic machinery, which can be exploited much more thoroughly than Walpole chose to do. Mrs Radcliffe always uses a proliferation of doors, usually locked, or at least closed by rusty bolts, to hold up her fugitives.

A Sicilian Romance has the most remarkable collection of ruins and secret passages of all Mrs Radcliffe's books, and it reaches a climax in the flight of Julia and Hippolitus from the dungeon of a ruined monastery, whither they have fled from bandits. They find their way into the dungeon in the usual way: they manage to force open a steel door, whereupon the air rushing out from the enclosed space nearly extinguishes their light. The door locks on a spring behind them and we learn why their light was spared - it is needed to show them the gruesome spectacle, the bodies in the receptacle for the banditti's victims, in which they find themselves locked. However, they discover a trap-door by a hollow sound under their feet, and it is only the first of a series of trap-doors, vaults, and tunnels, each with its own difficulties. The final door is fastened by

strong iron bolts, which they uncloze just in time, for the voices of their pursuers draw near. Shortly after, Julia enters a cave, in flight from her pursuers; she passes through several doors, all with bolts and locks to be struggled with, and emerges, improbably, in the dungeon in which her mother, the Marchioness, has been imprisoned. The door she enters by is closed by a spring lock, and they are trapped there. The physical features of the vaults which appear in A Sicilian Romance are the same as others - damp, hidden steps, strange entrances - as are the horrors which are present there - bodies, darkness - and the inconveniences - doors, bolts, and spring locks.

In The Romance of the Forest, the underground vault does not lead anywhere - there is no through passage. It does provide a means of escape for La Motte and his family, however, when strangers come to the abbey, but since La Motte first explores it without the pressure of pursuit, there is not the same necessity for locked doors, and the leisurely exploration permits a more effective absorption of the atmosphere of the vaults. As he opens the trap-door, "the chill damps of long confined air" rushed, and at the bottom of the steps, "the damp vapours curled round him and extinguished the light." La Motte is not in a hurry, so he returns for another light and proceeds. The damps have done him a good turn by decaying the wood around the lock of a door at the end of a passage, so he breaks through without difficulty. He enters a dungeon in which the expected horrifying spectacle awaits him - the remains of a human skeleton in a chest. Through another door are low cells which seem to La Motte, in the state of mind brought on by these sights, to be the burial places of the monks. Underground passages have this depressing effect on those who enter them: if

they are not sufficiently distraught already, the passage will provide them with reason to be.

In The Mysteries of Udolpho, attention is concentrated on the castle above ground level at the expense of the vaults. Only one secret passage occurs, that leading from the sea to the dead Marchioness's apartment in Chateau-le-Blanc, and it is mentioned only in passing. The nearest Mrs Radcliffe comes to the scenes which she had previously shown such delight in is the midnight excursion of Emily, led by Barnadine, through the chapel and vaults to the chamber where Madame Montoni lies. Many doors have to be unlocked, but it is not a chase, and Barnadine has the keys. As they enter the vaults the vapours are waiting for them, creeping along the ground and threatening to extinguish the light. The horrifying spectacle appears as the open grave, which Emily assumes is for her unfortunate aunt. It seems to her to be "a place suited for murder, a receptacle for the dead" (cf. La Motte in the monks' cells and Vivaldi in the prisons of the Inquisition), but there are no bodies. This seems to be a reflection of Mrs Radcliffe's being no longer dependent upon physical horrors and dangers for her suspense: the horror is now more likely to be in the minds of the characters. It may be implanted by a scene such as the one Emily observes in the vaults, but only a suggestion of violence is necessary, for the increased reliance on scene painting, with light and shadow, and on characters' more refined reactions, dispenses with the need for skeletons and bodies in the vaults. Underground passages now become more functional as a means of escape: their horrifying trappings are no longer used, though the darkness, doors and spring locks remain. There is almost a return to Walpole's method, which, in spite of its economy,

shows Isabella's reactions in such a way that they are not entirely predictable, and which, without dwelling on the physical attributes of the vaults, gives a convincing feeling of horror and mental distress. The underground passage which is used in The Italian is a return to this simplicity: the episode is expanded, but the expansion is in the dialogue rather than in the Gothic machinery. Ellena and Vivaldi, escaping from San Stefano, follow Jeronimo (a name borrowed from Walpole) down the passage without complicated trap-doors, stairs, or other hindrances, without even the inconvenience of vapours. The one door, at the end of the passage, proves an obstacle not easily overcome, and Jeronimo leaves them there. The usual grisly scene is restricted to a sight of one of the traditional Gothic prison cells, in whose straw mattress Ellena thinks she sees the death-bed of the recalcitrant nun she has been told of - but there is no skeleton. The pair are alarmed by a "hollow sigh" (cf. Isabella) which turns out to come from an aged monk at his devotions. He is able to unlock the door for them, just as footsteps approach down the passage. The monk plays the same role as Theodore in The Castle of Otranto, both in sighing and in coming to their assistance. Ellena's distress is caused by her situation as a fugitive and by the unlikelihood of her escape, not by any charnel-house horrors. Horror is now more a matter of psychological realism than of reaction to obstacles or horrors placed in one's way.

One of Mrs Radcliffe's major contributions to the set of Gothic trappings found in the castle is the use of ruins. Since about 1745 artificial ruins had been fashionable; they were intended to stimulate the imagination, and ruins were a feature of the paintings of Claude and Salvator Rosa. Mrs Radcliffe's ruins serve a double purpose: to remind

us of the triumph of time or to evoke an image of the past; and to provide an appropriate setting for horrors which may be associated with desolation and decay. In effect, she transforms the sham ruins of the landscape gardeners from things of frivolous romantic fancy into places of unpleasant realism, oozing with damp and concealing dangers unseen but not unperceived. The romantic motive for the ruins remains, but its emphasis is altered: no longer are they to arouse a genteel and fashionable melancholy - they are now designed to excite a feeling varying from sublime terror to unreserved horror.

Her ruins may appear as a part of the castle itself - the deserted wing and the chapel are usually in ruins - or as a separate building - a ruined cottage, monastery, convent, or fortress.

Deserted wings occur in all of Mrs Radcliffe's novels except the last. Save for the Marchioness's apartment in Chateau-le-Blanc, which has been closed for only twenty years, they are all in a suitable state of decay - windows are broken and ivy replaces the glass, marble floors are cracked, tapestries hang in tatters from the damp walls, and a few pieces of ancient furniture may remain. Outside, weeds and long grass blow in the wind. Once again, a development in technique may be observed. The deserted wing in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne is passed over quickly. Osbert enters it by a secret panel and finds himself in what "seemed to be the deserted remains of a place of worship." The rooms are dreary, gloomy and vast, but apart from a mention of thick ivy which almost excludes the light, there is nothing particularly distinctive about the rooms, and there is no mention of Osbert's reactions. The empty wing of Mazzini's castle (which was imitated by Charlotte Brontë in Jane Eyre,

where Rochester shuts his wife in the closed top floor of his home) is more dilapidated, and there is a greater feeling of neglect and strange sorrow: "The gallery was in many parts falling into decay, the ceiling was broke, and the window shutters shattered" (I.81).

The mystery of the desertion starts to make itself felt on those who enter these empty parts. La Motte finds a closed-off apartment in the abbey; as he enters, a sudden noise makes him step back, but it is only the "birds of prey" which have made their residence in the remains of tapestry which hang in tatters on the walls. The windows are shattered, and the pieces of ancient furniture are broken and rusty. La Motte feels wonder and curiosity that such a place should remain, and wonders whether it might not have been the last refuge of a person like himself, and whether he has followed his footsteps, "but to mingle my dust with his."

Deserted apartments are common in Udolpho, for large parts of the castle are closed. As Emily walks through them, she feels a melancholy awe, realising that hers are probably the first footsteps there for many years. The black veil is in one of these empty chambers, and the mystery of it and its surroundings arouses in Emily, before she lifts the veil, a faint degree of terror, which, Mrs Radcliffe explains, is purely sublime. The empty rooms inspire a sense of awe for their past, and the observer feels the presence of the earlier inhabitants in the ancient remnants of their existence. This is especially true of the Marchioness's apartment in Chateau-le-Blanc, for her belongings were left just as they were when she died, and the sense of her presence is still very real to Emily and Dorothee. Her prayer book is open and her lute is lying where she dropped it. Emily picks up a veil, falling apart with age, but drops it quickly

when Dorothee tells her that it has not been moved since her lady's hand laid it there. In such cases the past comes too close to the present.

Ruins follow a regular pattern in their appearance. Several examples suffice to show that one ruin is physically not very different from another:

The hall, of which he and his people had taken possession, exhibited in every feature, marks of ruin and desolation. The marble pavement was in many places broken, the walls were mouldering in decay, and round the high and shattered windows the long grass waved to the lonely gale. (A Sicilian Romance, I.190)

The lofty battlements, thickly enwreathed with ivy, were half demolished, and become the residence of birds of prey. Huge fragments of the eastern tower, which was almost demolished, lay scattered amid the high grass, that waved slowly to the breeze. "The thistle shook its lonely head; the moss whistled to the wind." (The Romance of the Forest, I.38)

Each forlorn and decaying feature of the fabric was gradually disclosed, and struck upon her heart a horror such as she had never before experienced. The broken battlements, enwreathed with ivy, proclaimed the falling grandeur of the place, while the shattered vacant window frames exhibited its desolation, and the high grass that overgrew its threshold seemed to say how long it was since mortal foot had entered. (A Sicilian Romance, II.15)

She looked fearfully on the almost roofless walls, green with damps, and on the gothic points of the windows, where the ivy and the briony had long supplied the place of glass, and ran mantling among the broken capitals of some columns, that had once supported the roof. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 344)

Nor is the impact of one ruin different from that of another: it is the sense of awe in the presence of the past, the inexplicability of the abandonment, and the air of pregnant expectation which seems to hover around, which make the heroines tremble with sublime terror as they approach a ruin. While Blanche scrutinises the ruined fortress in the Pyrenees, the authoress observes:

The air of solemnity, which must have so strongly characterised the pile even in the days of its early strength, was now considerably

heightened by its shattered battlements and half-demolished walls, and by the huge masses of ruin, scattered in its wide area, now silent and grass grown. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 606)

If a building is imposing, gloomy, or threatening in its original state, therefore, it is more so in its ruined state. To the romantic mind, ruins are much more interesting, for all the romantic qualities of the original building are heightened.

A feature of ruins, or of any Gothic building, which should be noted is the Gothic cell. This is present in most of Mrs Radcliffe's books, and it seldom varies in its properties. The first one appears in Dunbayne:

The inside of the apartment was old and falling to decay: a small mattress, which lay in one corner of the room, a broken matted chair, and a tottering table, composed its furniture; two small and strongly grated windows, which admitted a sufficient degree of light and air, afforded him on one side a view into an inner court, and on the other a dreary prospect of the wild and barren Highlands. (pp. 35-36)

Mazzini's wife is provided with similar accomodation in her dungeon.

Adeline's room in the house on the heath, before La Motte rescues her, has "a small bed without curtains or hanging: two old chairs and a table were all the remaining furniture in the room." The window is grated, and the door fastens on the outside only, this being a characteristic of the door of almost any room in which the heroine is required to spend a night. The nearest to a Gothic cell in The Mysteries of Udolpho is Emily's chamber in Udolpho. Though not actually a cell, the furniture is very ancient, and the room is equipped with an extra door, opening into a narrow passage, and locking only on the outside, through which Emily's would-be abductor, Morano, or anyone else, may enter. Ellena's room in San Stefano is furnished with a mattress, one chair and a table,

with a crucifix and a prayer book. Schedoni's cell in Spirito Santo has exactly the same pieces, with the addition of some books of devotion and instruments of torture. The cell at the end of the underground passage from San Stefano is walled and vaulted with rock, has one small aperture in the roof to admit air, and contains no furniture except one table, a bench, and a straw mattress. To Ellena it seems to be the cell she has been warned of by Olivia:

"Within the deepest recesses of our convent, is a stone chamber, secured by doors of iron, to which such of the sisterhood as have been guilty of any heinous offence have, from time to time, been consigned. This condemnation admits of no reprieve; the unfortunate captive is left to languish in chains and darkness, receiving only an allowance of bread and water just sufficient to prolong her sufferings, till nature, at length, sinking under their intolerable pressure, obtains refuge in death." (p. 126)

This is evidently a toned-down version of the dungeon in which Lewis's Agnes de Medina was incarcerated, and which was even equipped with "emblems of death", i.e. bones. Ellena's room in Spalatro's lake-side house has the same assemblage of tattered mattress, grated window, and door locking on the outside, and also, we learn later, a secret door by which an assassin may enter. Vivaldi's cell in the Inquisition prison is similarly equipped with this last refinement.

Perhaps the last word on Mrs Radcliffe's Gothic castles should be left to a very minor character, Mademoiselle Bearn, who makes a brief appearance in The Mysteries of Udolpho. Her one speech suggests that Mrs Radcliffe was quite aware of the possibilities of absurdity which lie in using the same pieces of machinery too often. Mademoiselle Bearn speaks to Blanche:

"Where have you been so long?" said she, "I had begun to think some wonderful adventure had befallen you, and that the giant of this enchanted castle, or the ghost, which, no doubt, haunts it, had conveyed you through a trap-door into some subterranean vault, whence you was never to return." (p. 473)

The Italian follows, with its change of emphasis from the traditional Gothic plot to a form which requires a deeper understanding by the author of character, less obvious plot manipulation, and less dependence on the usual pieces of well-worn machinery.

CONCLUSION

Catherine Morland's perception that her fondness for "horrid novels" may not be quite socially desirable was not in error, and even today the Gothic Novel is not always an entirely respectable subject. The prejudice is presumably based on the idea that Gothic Novels were hack works produced to satisfy the demands of a temporarily deranged reading public, and as such are not worthy of serious study. Apart from the fact that the influences of the Gothic Novel are extraordinarily far-reaching, extending from Emily Bronte, through Nathaniel Hawthorne and Charles Dickens, and up to modern writers like Iris Murdoch, it is unreasonable to put all Gothic novelists into the same disreputable class. I hope that this thesis has demonstrated that Mrs Radcliffe showed no presumption in pursuing her craft. Even though she cannot be classed as a first class novelist, because of her failure in characterisation, credit must be given her for her mastery of the use of atmosphere and suspense. She was perhaps one of the first novelists to concentrate on the physical background and use it as an integral part of the atmosphere and even the plot. The recurrence of patterns in her work is at once an attraction and a disadvantage. To a typologist it is a delight, for it makes her work an ideal subject for analysis, but to an ordinary reader it is a bore, for the patterns become too predictable. While it

is satisfying to be able to classify her Gothic properties tidily, this is of little interest to a reader who may not be looking for archetypes. The same may be said for the dull characters: it may be able to put them into neat groups, but they are still dull, and one can hardly argue that their dullness justifies itself by facilitating their classification. Nevertheless, her work should be of interest to students of literature because of the techniques which she made her own, and because of her place in the history of English literature, bridging the gap between Augustans and Romantics and representing the best which a curious period of literature produced.

APPENDIX

Ramond de Charbonnières

Many passages from Ramond invite comparison with Mrs Radcliffe. There is never imitation by the latter, but frequent overtones indicate that she had probably read Ramond -- published five years before The Mysteries of Udolpho, in which the scenes from the Pyrenees appear -- and later drew on her impressions of it, either remembered or refreshed by a second reading, as a background for her mountain landscapes, especially those in the Pyrenees. The likenesses are not conclusive, but are sufficiently frequent and sufficiently striking in their echoes, to make it worth listing some more of them.

Mrs Radcliffe may derive her perilous alpine bridges from Ramond. Both writers stress the fact that the bridge links opposing cliffs, and both contrast the slightness of the bridge with the height it spans. Both are concerned with the structure of the bridge and the way it is anchored to the cliffs.

Ramond:

Des rochers d'une effrayante hauteur, resserrent de même un torrent furieux, qui roule, tombe, fuit entre leurs débris, au fond d'un horrible précipice. Un chemin, taillé dans les flancs escarpés de ces rochers, soutenu souvent, en saillie, par des voûtes qui le suspendent au-dessus du torrent, le franchit, lorsque tout appui lui manque, & cherche sur les rocs opposés des pentes moins rebelles.

(p. 18)

Au terme de cette triste vallée, on arrive à un pont de bois assez long, soutenu, au milieu, par un pile de pierres sèches, négligemment amoncelées sur un rocher qui divise le courant. A peine on l'a passé, que l'on voit les montagnes qui en resserroient le lit, s'ouvrir devant soi, & se fermer derrière. (p. 62)

Mrs Radcliffe:

Ellena perceived that the road led to a slight bridge, which, thrown across the chasm at an immense height, united two opposite cliffs, between which the whole cataract of the river descended. The bridge, which was defended only by a slender railing, appeared as if hung amidst the clouds . . . the road gradually descended the precipices for about half a mile, when it opened to extensive prospects over plains and towards distant mountains. (The Italian, p. 63)

Both writers see the Pyrenees as a range which is slightly menacing in its form and distinguished by the contrasting light and shadow through which it is seen:

Ramond:

On découvre les Pyrénées d'une grande distance, & dans quelque sens qu'elles se présentent à la vue, c'est, comme dans les Alpes, un amas de sommets découpés, aigus, hérissés, dont la couleur est tantôt le blanc des nuages, tantôt l'azur du ciel, selon qu'ils réfléchissent la lumière ou qu'ils sont couverts d'ombre.

Mrs Radcliffe:

To the south, the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenees, whose summits, veiled in clouds, or exhibiting awful forms, seen, and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy pine, that swept downward to their base.

(The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 1)

Mrs Radcliffe's interest in cloud effects may be derived from Ramond, in particular her emphasis on the way clouds may hide or reveal a scene:

Ramond:

Tout-à-coup les monts disparurent, & à peine le lac s'offrit-il deux instans, en entier, à notre vue . . . La brume voloît avec une telle rapidité, que le premier moment où il se découvrit, fut trop court pour que j'eusse le tems d'attirer les regards de mes guides, sur le singulier spectacle qui frappoit les miens. Le nuage s'ouvroit & se fermoit avec une promptitude égale. Tantôt c'étoit le sommet d'un Pic, tantôt c'étoit le fond d'une vallée, que l'on entrevoyoit à travers ses déchirements. Il ne s'arrêta qu'une fois. Alors, il couvroit toute la contrée que nous traversions, & nous montroit, par

ouverture circulaire, la riche & fertile pente des monts de la vallée d'Aran, dorée par le soleil, & d'un couleur vraiment céleste. (p. 261)

Mrs Radcliffe:

Emily, often as she travelled among the clouds, watched in silent awe their billowy surges rolling below; sometimes, wholly closing upon the scene, they appeared like a world of chaos, and, at others, spreading thinly, they opened and admitted partial catches of the landscape. (The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 165)

While, above, the deep blue of the heavens was unobscured by the lightest cloud, half-way down the mountains, long billows of vapours were frequently seen rolling, now wholly excluding the country below, and now opening, and partially revealing its features.

(The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 43)

One of the few bandits who actually appears in Mrs Radcliffe's work may have had his inspiration in a smuggler Ramond met in the Pyrenees. Both writers comment on his face and hair, and Ramond's reference to Romans and Goths becomes scrambled in Mrs Radcliffe's version: the cap, rather than the footwear, is Roman, and the Gothic features appear in the brows rather than the footwear - perhaps another instance of her tendency to romanticise:

Ramond:

Je vis, au haut du même vallon, un homme de bonne mine, armé d'un fusil, & qui descendoit avec un air d'agilité & de fierté que j'admire; c'étoit un contrebandier Arragonois. Aussi-tôt qu'il nous apperçut, il s'arrêta, & se mit en état de défense . . . Cet homme avoit la figure hardie & fière; une barbe épaisse & frisée se confondoit avec les cheveux noirs et crépus; sa large poitrine étoit découverte, & ses jambes nerveuses étoient nues; pour vêtement il avoit une simple veste, & pour chaussure, celle des Romains & des Goths: un morceau de peau de vache, le poil en dehors. (p. 80)

Mrs Radcliffe:

He was a tall robust figure, of a hard countenance, and had short black hair, curling in his neck. Instead of the hunter's dress, he wore a faded military uniform; sandals were laced on his broad legs, and a kind of short trowsers hung from his waist. On his head he wore an ancient Roman helmet; but the brows that scowled beneath it, would have characterised those of the barbarians, who conquered Rome, rather than those of a Roman soldier.

(The Mysteries of Udolpho, p. 610)

Ramond's style is a mixture of the scientific and imaginative. Sometimes he writes with a clinical detachment, as when he lists his reasons for believing that there are permanent glaciers in the Pyrenees (p. 83); at other times, he combines close and careful observation with a lyrical tone which shows that, like Mrs Radcliffe, he sees more in landscape than outward form:

On a maintenant le torrent à gauche, & le paysage s'attriste de plus en plus. Des bords du Gave, vers lequel on est descendu, on ne voit que hautes montagnes dont la pente uniforme s'élève rapidement, presque toujours sans repos, sans verdure & sans habitations. Ce n'est que de loin en loin, que l'on aperçoit une cabane isolée, sur le penchant d'un long éboulement dont une portion a pu se couvrir d'herbe, ou une scierie à peine discernable entre les débris énormes dont les bords du torrent sont joncés, & qui dérobe aux terrible jeux du Gave, quelques arbres roulés du haut des monts. (p. 62)

A passage such as this provides an archetype for Mrs Radcliffe's alpine stereotypes. Ramond combines scientific detachment, present in the impersonal pronouns (which, together with the present tense, suggest that the picture is a composite), with a sensitive observation of colour, sound, and atmosphere. There is a good number of subjective, non-clinical adjectives and expressions, which Mrs Radcliffe's receptive imagination could readily expand upon.

Mrs Radcliffe's own Journey is an almost purely factual narration, each town and village being dealt with in a thorough and unrelenting detail which allows little scope for imaginative and personal observations. Her chief aim seems to be to impart information, not opinions, and, considering that it was published a year after The Mysteries of Udolpho, the contrast between the romanticism which is the basis of her attitude towards the landscape in that book, and the careful restraint in the Journey, is most striking. As an example of the extent to which she

pursues detail and accuracy, many pages, some filled with columns of figures, are devoted to a day-by-day account of the blockade of Mentz.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

All references are to the following editions:

Primary Sources:

Radcliffe, Ann. The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. London, 1789.

----- . A Sicilian Romance. 2 vols. Fifth Edition, London, 1818.
(First published 1790)

----- . The Romance of the Forest. 3 vols. Second Edition, London, 1792. (First published 1791)

----- . The Mysteries of Udolpho. Edited with an introduction by Bonamy Dobrée. London: Oxford University Press, 1966. (First published 1794)

----- . A Journey made in the Summer of 1794 through Holland and the Western Frontiers of Germany. London, 1795.

----- . The Italian, or The Confessional of the Black Penitents. Edited with an introduction by Frederick Garber. London: Oxford University Press, 1968. (First published 1797)

----- . Gaston de Blondville, or the Court of Henry III keeping Festival in Ardenne. London, 1826.

Secondary Sources:

Baker, Ernest A. The History of the English Novel. Vol. V : The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., [1929].

Birkhead, Edith. The Tale of Terror. New York: Dutton, n.d.

Burke, Edmund. A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. A New Edition. London, 1812.

Cooke, Arthur L. "Some Side Lights on the Theory of the Gothic Romance", Modern Language Quarterly, XII (1951), 429-436.

Grosley, Pierre Jean. New Observations on Italy and its Inhabitants. Translated by T. Nugent. 2 vols. London, 1769.

Lewis, Matthew G. The Monk. Introduction by John Berryman. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959.

MacCarthy, B.G. The Later Women Novelists, 1744-1818. Oxford: Cork University Press, 1947.

McIntyre, Clara F. Ann Radcliffe in Relation to her Time. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920.

-----, "Were the 'Gothic Novels' Gothic?", Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, XXXVI (1921), 644-667.

Railo, Eino. The Haunted Castle. New York: Humanities Press, 1964.
(First published 1927)

Ramond de Charbonnières. Observations faites dans les Pyrénées pour servir à des observations sur les Alpes, insérées dans une traduction des lettres de W. Coxe. Paris, 1789.

Tompkins, J. M. S. "Ramond de Carbonnières, Grosley and Mrs Radcliffe", Review of English Studies, V (1929), 294-301.

-----, The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800. London: Constable & Co., 1932.

Varma, D. P. The Gothic Flame. London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1957.