MORAL VISION: A UNITY OF COSMOS, CHARACTER, AND INCIDENT IN MRS. RADCLIFFE'S NOVELS

by

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Abstract

Critical treatment of Mrs. Radcliffe's canon, in addition to being superficial, has laid altogether too much stress on the sensational aspects of her work. In my thesis, I assess the nature of the world which she creates, examine the consequent psychology of her good and evil characters, and point out the manner in which her treatment of some other themes correspond to that nature and that psychology. By this means, I intend to show that there exists in her works a strong moral vision and a unified artistic statement that shows them to be far less frivolous and incompetent than is generally thought.
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CHAPTER 1

MRS. RADCLIFFE, THE CRITICS, AND HER MORAL WORLD

Those critics who have participated in the revival of Mrs. Radcliffe's works in recent decades are prepared to consider them as links in the development of various literary styles and themes, to examine them as the racy sensationalism of a bygone era, or to find and plumb in them mysterious wells of symbolism, but very few have had sufficient confidence in her art to look at it with that cautious objectivity which is usually afforded other authors. Mrs. Radcliffe is one of those unfortunate writers whom we accord a significant position in the history of English literature, yet alternately praise or damn beyond the limits of their virtues and vices.

Critics are universally prepared to consider her work in an historical context. Her sources are well known, some commentators having traced the mechanical devices of her plots to Horace Walpole and Clara Reeve. Others find the source of her lavish descriptions of Italian and Provençal settings in contemporary travel literature, and


2 Varma (p. 122) points out their similarity to some of Mrs. Piozzi's Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany, 1789; J.M.S. Tompkins, "Ramond de Carbonieres, Grosley, and Mrs. Radcliffe," RES, 5 (1929), 104-118, notes passages copied from Ramond de Carbonieres' Observations Faits dans les Pyrenees (1789) and A.J. Grosley's New Observations on Italy and its Inhabitants (1769).
thus link her treatment of external nature to the eighteenth century
cult of the picturesque. Malcolm Ware, in turn, has conclusively
proven that effects wrought in Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptions depend
upon a close adherance to Edmund Burke's principles of sublimity, beauty,
and the psychology of fear. At the same time, many others have
discussed the descent of characters from the sentimental novel to the
"gothic" mode in general and Mrs. Radcliffe in particular.

Moreover, various scholars have mapped her influence both on her
time and on later periods. Robert Mayo, in the course of articles and
a book resulting from his close analysis of novels and short stories
in magazines of the late eighteenth century and regency periods, has
precisely measured the extent and longevity of her contemporary
influence. Others find that "the Gothic novelist, still 'enlightened'
but imperfect in his skepticism, gave to fiction a post-Enlightenment

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3 See, for instance, Bonamy Dobrée, ed., The Mysteries of Udolpho

4 Sublimity in the Novels of Anne Radcliffe, English Institute of
the University of Uppsala Essays and Studies on English Language and

5 Among them Ernest A. Baker, The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic
Romance, Vol. V of The History of the English Novel (London: Witherby,
1934), p. 175; Edith Birkhead, The Tale of Terror (London: Constable
and Co., 1921), p. 223; James R. Foster, The History of Pre-Romantic
p. 262; Fred Garber, ed., The Italian by Ann Radcliffe (London: Oxford
University Press, 1968), p. viii; and R.D. Hume, "Gothic versus Romantic:

6 In "How long was Gothic Fiction in Vogue?", MLN, LVIII (1943),
58-64, "The Gothic Short Story in the Magazines," MLR, XXXVII (1942),
448-54, and "Gothic Fiction" in The English Novel in the Magazines,
1740-1825 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962), he traces
her meteoric rise to lionization and the subsequent period of frenzied
 emulation that extended well into the nineteenth century.
pre-occupation with the preternatural, the irrational, the primordial, the abnormal, and (tending to include the rest) the demonic" and credit Mrs. Radcliffe with a share in inspiring Matthew Lewis, Mary Shelley, Maturin, and the Brontës. More specifically, they universally acknowledge the Byronic hero's debt to her villains, who pass on their physiognomy and inner torture to countless successors. Little wonder that both Varma and Montague Summers claim her work is pre-Romantic.

Yet all these historical arguments tend to ignore Mrs. Radcliffe's art. To label her as pre-Romantic or to discover in her characters the seeds of far greater and more popular figures of literature is to subordinate her work to literary giants, so that it appears relatively insignificant in itself. Similarly, when the cult of the picturesque or the rhetoric of sentiment is discovered at work in her novels, the critical tendency is to write her off as "just another" lady authoress who followed the fashions of the late eighteenth century. All such reflections tend to be unnecessarily demeaning.

At least everyone universally applauds Mrs. Radcliffe for her ability, one way or another, to titillate the reader. Both the dramatic

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9 p. 110.

nature of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels and contemporary theory do indeed indicate that suspense is a major purpose of her writings, and all applaud her handling of it. William Hazlitt declares that "in harrowing up the soul with imaginary terrors and making the flesh creep, and the nerves thrill with fond hopes and fears, she is unrivalled among her countrymen," and these sentiments are shared by nearly all those critics who have since treated her work. Among the pioneers, we find Edith Birkhead writing that "so unnerved are we by the lurking shadows, the flickering lights, the fluttering tapestry and the unaccountable groans with which she lowers our vitality, that we tremble and start at the wagging of a straw," while J.M.S. Tompkins finds that "like Walpole, though to a far greater degree, she roared, baffled, and finally satisfied the detective interest in her readers," and Ernest Baker marks as her greatest success the creation of "wonder and suspense, suspense above all."

To point out Mrs. Radcliffe's mastery of the sensational and to find in her work one of the finest examples of the conscious and

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11 Clara Reeve, in her "Preface" to The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story (London: S. Mawman, 1811), p. viii, says that in a "Gothic Story" "... there is required a sufficient degree of the marvellous, to excite the attention..."

12 quoted by S.M. Ellis in "Ann Radcliffe and her Literary Influence," The Contemporary Review, CXXIII (1925), 190.

13 p. 42.


15 p. 193; See also Hume, p. 284; and Dobrée, p. xii.
elaborate exploitation of suspense is all very well, but some critics pursue such recognition to destructive extremes. Titillation, to such critics, becomes the sole purpose and merit of her novels. In W.L. Renwick's view, for example, "she captures the reader's attention...by a broad appeal to all his senses, in their aesthetic extension as well as in their primitive being,"\(^{16}\) with little else in her novels to recommend them. Varma says that her characters are not important compared to her suspenseful plots and the sensuous moods created by her manipulation of setting;\(^ {17}\) in so doing, he follows J.M.S. Tompkins, who goes so far as to say that "action was chiefly important to her for its picturesque qualities, and as it changes the scene or modifies the atmosphere,"\(^ {18}\) and that, apart from Schedoni, "her other characters may, without great injustice, be compared to the figures of landscape painters, those groups of banditti, or lovers, or haymakers, whose function is to focus and enhance the sentiment of the scene."\(^ {19}\)

Most recently, some critics have enhanced our understanding of Mrs. Radcliffe's work by considering it as featuring archetypal outbursts of subconscious yearning in man, eighteenth century man in particular. They explore the ramifications of generic analyses such as Northrop Frye's, when he says "the essential difference between


\(^{17}\) pp. 104, 113.

\(^{18}\) *Novel*, p. 256.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 255.
novel and romance lies in the conception of characterization. The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes." This school of critics finds in the work of Mrs. Radcliffe and her fellow gothic writers the suppressed wishes of all men. In Montague Summers' words, "the world, if we had not our dreams, would, God knows, be a very dull place...We call our dreams Romance and it was just this that the Gothic novelists gave to their readers." Similarly, J.M.S. Tompkins finds that in the gothic "what De Quincey calls the 'dreaming organ', the inlet of the 'dark sublime', 'the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of the human brain' was activated...and the access to the reader's emotional, imaginative, and subconscious life opened. It is along these lines that revolution of the Gothic Romance is proceeding; and it is when the critical quarrel is temporarily lowered that the modern reader can best understand the enthusiasm of contemporaries and feels the vivifying force of the irregular stream of power that runs through these books, with all its grotesque flotsam and jetsam." On the same basis, both Edith Birkhead and Fred Barker

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22. Introduction to The Gothic Flame, p. xii.
24. p. xi.
compare Mrs. Radcliffe's characters and situations to fairy tales, and more specifically, a number of these commentators find that Mrs. Radcliffe's gothicism expresses the suppressed currents of emotional life in a particularly 'rational' age. Only Francis Russel Hart pleads for the essential reality of character and situation in all gothic novels, and then only so that the impact of their symbolic meaning can be most powerfully communicated.\textsuperscript{25}

In speaking of subconscious desires and myths, these commentators can dismiss the immediate fictional reality of Mrs. Radcliffe's work as insignificant beside broader, symbolic meanings. This is most important, because they frequently find that denotative reality faulty in the course of conventional analysis. Mrs. Radcliffe's plots are seen as facile and improbable: "if we scan her romances with a coldly critical eye - an almost criminal proceeding - obvious improbabilities start into view."\textsuperscript{26} Similarly, her characters, with the possible exception of Schedoni, are considered flat. Symbolic meaning becomes an excuse for this bad workmanship; thus, according to Fred Garber, "historical realism has as little relevance to her manner as would fully rounded characters, whose unpredictable activities would only get in the way of the total effect."\textsuperscript{27} Ultimately, the bad workmanship becomes a positive virtue in view of symbolic meaning: "Inaccuracies

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] pp. 91-2.
\item[26] Birkhead, p. 42.
\item[27] p. x.
\end{footnotes}
and inconsistencies, which established criticism feels must be explained away before the Gothic novel can be approached with fitting dignity and within suitably defined limits, give the surrealist no cause for alarm. On the contrary they represent a welcome and completely meritorious protest against the claims of the world of reason: an act of anti-rational provocation, in fact.  However, the surrealist position is the minority one.

For the most part, critics, while forced to acknowledge her significance as an authoress, still have grave reservations about Mrs. Radcliffe as an author, with the result that they concentrate exclusively on her use of the sensational or her revelation of the symbolic. The symbolic and archetypal approach assumes as a first principal an artistic clumsiness in her work that must be somehow overlooked or overcome if the novels are to be valued. Similarly, those who concentrate on Mrs. Radcliffe's mastery of titillation avoid, as do those who fix on her historical significance, analyses which, if not demeaning to themselves (it is easy to pronounce a work of literature shoddy), would be, in their view, disastrous to Mrs. Radcliffe's reputation. If, the reasoning goes, these works are merely frivolous and sensational, their other shortcomings are less culpable because the whole was not seriously done.  Even so, a large

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29 W.L. Renwick, p. 89, excuses Mrs. Radcliffe on the grounds that her novels were primarily for "pleasure", not "responsibility". The opinion is indicative of his attitude.
number of those who acknowledge her masterful use of suspense and fear, because they can see no redeeming merits elsewhere, condemn her work as morally and aesthetically distasteful. Ernest Baker charges her efforts with being "brutally aimed to make the flesh creep", for instance, a sentiment in which he is seconded by David Daiches and Bertrand Evans.

Thus, the critical consensus concerning Mrs. Radcliffe seems to be based on the assumption that her art, per se, is so inferior or abstracted as to preclude analysis and praise according to conventional critical approaches. What she actually communicates in her novels has almost universally been ignored as a result, and it is this critical imbalance which this thesis attempts to correct in part. I do not mean to deny totally the value of previous criticism; sensation is important in her novels, some of the archetypal interpretations are undoubtedly as valid as that approach is in any branch of literature, and the historical perspective already achieved by others has enabled me to frame my present arguments. However, by concentrating on those

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30 p. 175.

31 In "The Novel from Richardson to Jane Austen", A Critical History of English Literature in Two Volumes (London: Seeker and Warburg, 1961), Vol. II, p. 742, he dismisses Mrs. Radcliffe along with other Gothic novelists by saying their art "remains in itself a crude form of fiction, requiring careful blending with and subordination to other elements if it is to reach the level of mature art. Mere sensationalism, however, can always count on a certain amount of popularity, and this form of fiction has never wholly died out."

modes of criticism, critics have ignored the meaningful statement Mrs. Radcliffe makes in her novels about man and his world, and this statement, which is perceptible throughout her canon contributes, in a manner hitherto undocumented, to the aesthetic unity of each work.

Contrary to the opinions of many of the critics mentioned above, she constructs a viable fictional world on traditional moral foundations. In her view of man's relationship to his cosmos and her treatment of social questions she is cautious rather than revolutionary, and Augustan rather than Romantic. Her ideas of cosmos owe a great deal to the popular philosophy that emerged from the ideas of Rousseau and Shaftesbury, but they retain that typically Augustan restraint and security that is characteristic of the latter figure. Beyond the historical significance of these sources, they also impart a tone of restraint and security of value to her world. Similarly, her debts to Burke's sublimity and the cult of the picturesque have great qualitative significance in establishing a sense of pervasive order and justice in her world.

Restraint and decorum in response to this world are also the keys to her characters and the manner in which they interact. No one has yet analyzed adequately the significance that pertains in this respect

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33 More must be made of J.M.S. Tompkins statement (in Varma, p. xiv) that "The Gothic Flame, in fact, was often carried in a safety lamp; and this convenience could be constructed in various proportions of humour, nationalism, and moral propriety . . . as to dear Ann Radcliffe . . . she, too, clung to her safety lamp. What else is her explained supernatural, her unremitting propriety, but her effort, conscious or instinctive, to control the influx of the dark sublime?"
to the psychology of her characters; most critics, like Varma,\textsuperscript{34} write off her emotional characters as "stock" figures of the sentimental novel. Some relegate the emotional responses of her beleaguered heroines to mere decorative importance in her novels; Hume, for example, claims that Emily, in \textit{The Mysteries of Udolpho}, functions simply as a "moral norm", used to illuminate Montoni, whom he sees as the central figure.\textsuperscript{35} In fact, the psychological disturbance of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines and other characters and their need for emotional control take up so much of her efforts in all the novels, it is strange that no one has seen them as the crucial issues they are, given the nature of the world as she portrays it. Many of the other themes that find expression in her works depend, in turn, on these central questions.

Finally, the quality of Mrs. Radcliffe's art reflects the quality of life that she recommends through her characters, in response to the quality of the world she perceives. When she says that if she "has by its scenes beguiled the mourner of one hour of sorrow, or, by its moral, thought him to sustain it - the effort, however humble, has not been in vain, nor is the writer unrewarded,"\textsuperscript{36} she is not just making a traditional gesture at the utile so often demanded of the novelist;

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{34} p. 86.
\textsuperscript{35} p. 287.
\end{flushleft}
rather, she is expressing herself in a voice that, in its morality, and
restraint, is a fitting and harmonious concomitant of the world she
creates; moralizing in Mrs. Radcliffe is essential and vital, not
incidental and empty, because it completes an aesthetic unity of vision
that starts with her novels' world and continues through her characters
and incidents. In my opinion, *Northanger Abbey*, witty as it may be
in its parody of the mechanics of Mrs. Radcliffe's books, misses her
point in attacking them as sensational acts of literary irresponsibility.
In her way, she was quite as responsible and competent an author as even
Jane Austen could wish.

Certainly, however, it is easy to see how so many of her critics,
like that contemporary satirist, mistakenly have found Mrs. Radcliffe's
works to be primarily a matter of fearful thrills for their own sake.
Her world is fraught with all manner of dark evils, both natural and
human, as we shall see, and the emotional manner in which her characters
live through them tends to obscure, for the reader who fixes too
strongly upon it, her pervasive moral concern in writing.

In fact, hers is a moral cosmos, in which virtue is rewarded and
vice punished. In the course of each of her novels, virtue and justice
prevail against all difficulties with implied Divine help. At the
defeat of the Baron Malcolm in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, for
example, Mrs. Radcliffe tells us that Osbert "saw the innate and active
power of justice that pervades all the circumstances even of this life
like vital principle, and shines through the obscurity of human actions

37 See Alida Weiten, *Mrs. Radcliffe, Her Relation Towards Romanticism*
to the virtuous, the pure ray of Heaven; - to the guilty, the destructive glare of lightning."\textsuperscript{38} Similarly, according to the monkish narrator of the novel, \textit{Gaston de Blondeville} exhibits how "overpowering justice" rules over "deep villainy" and "mortal weakness" by means of "supernatural power".\textsuperscript{39} In addition to this sense of external moral agency imposing its will upon human affairs, her virtuous characters achieve mundane rewards because of their virtue. At the conclusion of \textit{The Romance of the Forest}, we are told that the "former lives" of Theodore and Adeline, the romantic leads, "afforded an example of trials well endured, and their present of virtue greatly rewarded,"\textsuperscript{40} and in \textit{The Italian}, Paulo, the hero's manservant, effuses "you see how people get through their misfortune, if they have but a heart to bear up against them, and do nothing that can be on their conscience afterwards."\textsuperscript{41}

In contrast, vice is always punished in a Radcliffe novel: "The late Marquis de Mazzini, and Maria de Vellorno, were interred with the honour due to their rank, in the church of the convent of St. Nicola. Their lives exhibited a boundless indulgence of violence and luxurious passions, and their deaths marked the consequence of such indulgence and held forth to mankind a singular instance of divine vengeance."\textsuperscript{42}


\textsuperscript{40}Ann Radcliffe, \textit{The Romance of the Forest} (London: Routledge, 1904), p. 429.

\textsuperscript{41}p. 414.

So much for the villains of *A Sicilian Romance*, but all the rest of her evil characters receive their just deserts: Malcolm dies of battle wounds in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*; The Marquis de Montalt commits suicide in *The Romance of the Forest*, as does Schedoni in *The Italian*; while his accomplice, the Marchesa di Vivaldi dies of dissipation; Montoni of *Udolpho* and the two villains of *Gaston de Blondeville*, meanwhile, are all executed for their crimes, the first by temporal powers, the last two by spiritual agency.

These retributions are ultimately manifestations of the same Divine justice that rewards virtue in the Radcliffian world, but the punishment of villains is operative also in lesser actions in each novel. Villainy is self-defeating; the antagonist is invariably the victim of a pervasive moral irony as his own evil actions beget more evil for himself and heap more damnation upon his head. LaMotte, in *The Romance of the Forest*, "saw himself entangled in the web which his own crimes had woven. Being in the power of the Marquis, he knew he must either consent to the commission of a deed from the enormity of which, depraved as he was, he shrank in terror, or sacrifice fortune, freedom, probably life itself, to the refusal. He had been led on by slow gradations from folly to vice, till he now saw before him an abyss of guilt which startled even the conscience that so long had slumbered."43 Similarly, because the hero, a merchant called Woodreeve, is dangerously near

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43 *Romance of Forest*, p. 268.
exposing him, the evil Prior "now, in his folly and wickedness, as
wickedness leads on to wickedness, and blinds its followers, judged it
necessary for his own life, that the merchant should perish." 44

Time and again, villainous objectives are thwarted by the very
evil means taken to achieve them. In A Sicilian Romance, for example,
the very vehemence of the Duke de Luovo in his pursuit of Julia and
Hippolytus leads him to attack a couple whom another would not have
mistaken for them. Not only does he lose valuable time in the pursuit,
but he is also wounded in the ambush. 45 Maria de Vellorno's plan to
keep Hippolytus from Julia backfires when he appears to have been killed
in an attempted elopement: "By a dextrous adaptation of her powers,
she had worked upon the passions of the Marquis, so as to render him
relentless in the pursuit of ambitious purposes, and insatiable in
revenging disappointment. But the effects of her artifices exceeded
her intention in exerting them; and when she meant only to sacrifice
a rival to her love, she found she had given up its object to revenge." 46
Similarly does the Marchesa di Vivaldi sit "meditating misery for others
and inflicting it only upon herself," 47 and Schedoni's machinations
operate against him in every instance, while the virtuous reap rewards:
"It may be worthy of observation, that the virtues of Olivia, exerted
in a general cause, had thus led her unconsciously to the happiness of

44 Gaston, II, p. 229.
45 See pp. 31-6.
47 Italian, p. 171.
saving her daughter; while the vices of Schedoni had as unconsciously urged him nearly to destroy his niece, and had always been preventing, by the means they prompted him to employ, the success of his constant aim."\(^48\) His very pride, in driving him to be so assiduous in the pursuit of monkish values, prevents his looked-for advancement by inspiring jealousy in his superiors, \(^49\) and by preventing the marriage of Ellena and Vivaldi, he thwarts his own ambitions of wealth and position, by obstructing the alliance of a relative with a noble family. \(^50\)

In addition to their futile pursuit of social ambitions, villains are even debilitated physically by their evil, as their selfish passions both cause and aggravate illness and even result in death. The Marchessa Vivaldi, as I mentioned, dies of her own luxurious dissipation. The Duke de Luovo, having been wounded in the ambush described above, is far more incapacitated by it than need be because of the caustic operation of his own selfish desires: "Those impetuous passions which so strongly marked his nature were roused and exasperated to a degree that operated powerfully upon his constitution, and threatened him with the most alarming consequences. The effect of his wound was heightened by the agitation of his mind; and a fever, which quickly assumed a very serious aspect, co-operated to endanger his life."\(^51\) Similarly, the

\(^{48}\) *Italian*, p. 384.  
^{49} Ibid., p. 227.  
^{50} Ibid., p. 243.  
^{51} *Sicilian Romance*, p. 36.
Marquis de Montalt, having been wounded in an exchange with the hero, Theodore, is so overcome by "those inveterate and malignant passions" which tear at his mind that his illness is dangerously and unnecessarily prolonged, so much so that his physician threatens him with dire consequences should he fail to regain tranquility.

What this reward of virtue and punishment of vice comprise in the action of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels is an ultimate sense of Divine justice abroad in the cosmos, and even when this inherent rectitude seems about to fail in the temporal world, there is still the "supreme consolation" of Divine reward after death, as it is offered by LaLuc when it appears his innocent son will be executed in The Romance of the Forest. Of course, Mrs. Radcliffe never actually does allow the morality of human affairs in her world to lapse, even if she must introduce a supernatural agent to execute it, as in Gaston de Blondeville. No matter how hard her villains try to perpetrate evil designs, God remains the revenger of vice and the rewarder of virtue who will not leave the scale imbalanced.

Nearly all Mrs. Radcliffe's commentators wrongly feel that they must make concessions for this moral universe, and the progress of incident and character within it. They find it "unreal". Thus

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52 _Romance of the Forest_, p. 238.


54 p. 369.
H.D. Hume and Montague Summers both caution their readers that reality is not to be found in the plot of Gothic fiction, Mrs. Radcliffe included, and then proceed to make excuses for that unreality; the former attempts to justify the shortcoming on the basis of the redeeming power of symbolic themes, while the latter explains it on the basis of an eighteenth century critical distinction between the romance and the novel. Though everyone attacks her generally for being unbelievably fantastic in point of incident and character, no one is prepared to do so specifically, because they cannot. Objective reality in a work of art is an irrelevant criterion of criticism, for no art reproduces it, even when the artist claims that it does; art, by definition, implies not an exact copy of reality, but something analogous to it which casts meaning upon it. Thus, the quality of Mrs. Radcliffe's incidents and characters can be unacceptable only if she fails to create an organic whole out of her fictional world. In my opinion, this world is perfectly valid, real if you will, because Mrs. Radcliffe encourages the suspension of disbelief through a unity of vision achieved by the manipulation of technique and symbol.

55 p. 284 ff.
56 pp. 32-3.
CHAPTER 2

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MORAL WORLD

Mrs. Radcliffe manipulates technique and symbol according to popular trends in contemporary philosophy and aesthetics, trends which her commentators have failed to link adequately to the meaning of her novels. She likens her descriptive passages, on several occasions, to the work of the picturesque masters Claude, Poussin, and Salvator, she makes distinctions between the sublime and beautiful in the course of her works which suggest that the thought of Edmund Burke is implicit in her outlook, and the moral and aesthetic quality of her world owes a great deal to Shaftesburian modes of philosophy. Yet most critics are content either merely to note the presence of these currents in her novels or to treat them as aspects of her frivolous mastery of the sensational, thus failing to demonstrate the skill with which she incorporates these elements into a coherent, unified, aesthetic totality. At best, they see the picturesque perspective and the qualities of picturesque artists in her novels as productive of an aesthetic appeal somehow separate from their meaning. Bonamy Dobrée, for example, condescendingly notes that "her descriptions, taken from other writers and from pictures and prints, make up in splendour for what they lack in accuracy,"¹ and Devendra Varma is similarly quick to acknowledge the presence of the picturesque in Radcliffian

¹ p. x [my italics].
description while ignoring the fact that it was a way of looking at the world, and, as such, imported certain distinctive qualities to the world in its depiction.

Similarly, Mrs. Radcliffe's critics are content to relate her use of Burke's concepts of sublimity to the sensational in her novel. Alan McKillop proves that Mrs. Radcliffe used Burke in the construction of terrifying suspenseful scenes; Malcolm Ware's exhaustive compilation of examples, mentioned above, concludes that sublimity, in precisely Burke's sense, is operative in Mrs. Radcliffe's landscapes and that this sublimity either leads her characters to God or frightens them to the point of enervation. But neither writer goes on from these perfectly valid observations to trace the significance of sublimity to the meaning of her fictional world, of which it is a central characteristic.

Nor are her benevolent tendencies subject to anything but neglect or gross over-interpretation. Only two of her critics, James Foster and Alida Weiten, acknowledge the congruency of her attitudes to Shaftesburian and deist thought, and neither makes any meaningful analysis of its significance in her novels. The rest either totally

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3*Novel*, p. 264.

deny her any transcending vision,\textsuperscript{5} or look too far ahead in their praise of her "religious exultation" by comparing her to great Romantic poets such as Wordsworth.\textsuperscript{6} None attempts to say what sublimity means in her fictional world, when actually, her use of the sublime, of various aspects of deist philosophy, and of the picturesque, lend to her fictional world that unique unity of design which justifies what otherwise might be unjustifiable.

Mrs. Radcliffe uses techniques analogous to those of her favourite graphic artists to create the two characteristic moods of landscape that define her fictional world. The picturesque artists whom she follows verbally in some manner exaggerated their subjects to make valid artistic statements about qualities within the landscapes they portrayed. Poussin figures forth his landscapes in conscious order and harmony, while Claude, in addition to favouring those qualities, creates scenes of soft light, shade and warmth. Both deserve the objective "idyllic" because they magnify certain qualities and features of the actual landscape through their control of colour and form. Similarly, Salvator communicates the awesome power of nature by exaggerating the dimensions of mountain and cloud, and emphasizing blackness and mass.

From such sources, Mrs. Radcliffe gains a talent for artistic selection and exaggeration in the name of mood. Some of her landscapes are hazy and indistinctly beautiful not because she is attempting to hide her lack of knowledge of her subjects,\textsuperscript{7} but because she is intent

\textsuperscript{5}See, for example, Hume, p. 289.
\textsuperscript{6}As does Varma, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{7}As Varma suggests, p. 111.
on reproducing the idyllic quality of Claude and Poussin. At the opening of The Italian, for example, there is a scene which in Mediterranean subject and softened quality imitate Claude, down to the distant villa and dancing figures that detail many of his paintings:

"The deep, clear waters reflected every image of the landscape, the cliffs, branching into wild forms crowned with groves, whose rough foliage spread down the steeps in picturesque luxuriance; the ruined villa on some bold point, peeping through the trees; peasants' cabins hanging on the precipices, and the dancing figures on the sand, all touched with the silvery tint and soft shadows of moonlight."\(^8\)

Similarly, Mrs. Radcliffe piles up mass and blackness, as did Salvator, to depict the awful and terrifying in nature. In these instances, the shade which elsewhere is a welcome and salutary feature of the scene becomes a threatening blackness as objects in the landscape assume overpowering vastness. In A Sicilian Romance, for instance, trees and shade, the two most prominent features of the idyllic scenes of Udolphi, are totally transformed in a sentence describing the flight of Julia and Madame de Menon: "After travelling for some hours, they quitted the main road, and turned into a narrow, winding dell, overshadowed by high trees, which almost excluded the light. The gloom of the place inspired terrific images."\(^9\) Similarly, the Convent of Mt. Carmel appears dark and huge through breaks in the forest as Ellena

\(^8\) p. 37. Similar prospects occur in the first twenty or so pages of Udolphi, in the views from La Vallee, the St. Aubert residence.

\(^9\) p. 41 [my italics].

\(^{10}\) p. 64.
is carried off to imprisonment in *The Italian.*

Even when she copies descriptions from the work of other writers—Mrs. Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789), *Observations faites dans les Pyrenees* by Ramond de Carbonnieres (1789), or A.J. Grosley's *New Observations on Italy and its inhabitants* (1769)—Mrs. Radcliffe selects passages written under the influence of the same cult and reflecting the art of men such as Claude, Poussin, and Salvator both in subject and quality.

More than a simple, mechanical adaptation of graphic technique to the written word, however, the picturesque in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels acts to establish the tone of order, the sense of a God-ordered creation, that reinforces the moral nature of her fictional world. At first, admittedly, "picturesque" seems to have meant to Mrs. Radcliffe little more than a term denoting "rough", "intricate", or just "like a picture". When, in *A Sicilian Romance*, she casually refers to forest scenery with a "picturesque wildness," she exhibits at best a shallow popular understanding of the word as it appears in William Gilpin's pioneer theory. Later, however, it she understood it more explicitly as the ordered composition of painted art, transmitted to the world of her novels.

Gilpin's theory of the picturesque—as it appeared in his travel literature, published from 1782 onward—and the popular notions which

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11 See above, p. 1, n. 2.

12 p. 56.
both inspired it and arose, amplified, from it, comprised the notions that "picturesque" signified "having that aesthetic potential, according to the rules of graphic art, of becoming a good picture"¹³ and that "picturesque" was therefore an aesthetic good in other art forms. It is in this facet of its meaning that Mrs. Radcliffe is most interested in the term. In the qualities of her picturesque description, she does not appear to have attempted to make any of the thorny theoretical distinctions concerning the picturesque that her contemporaries, Sir Uvedale Price and William Knight, made; her approach to the picturesque, in fact, is much less systematic than her treatment of another aesthetic concept, the sublime, would seem to imply. Rather, she responds to those notions which Gilpin rationalized and made general knowledge in his publications.

In particular, she used the notion of graphic composition mentioned above in most, if not all, of her settings and groups after The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne. Very often she refers to lengthy descriptive passages in terms of painting, often with a little flourish of technical virtuosity that smacks of the professional: having described the clandestine wedding party that gives the pages of The Italian in strikingly visual terms, she remarks, lest we miss what she has been about, that they "formed altogether a group worthy of the pencil."¹⁴


¹⁴ p. 185.
Likewise, Julia in *A Sicilian Romance*, while escaping from her evil father, watches the passing landscape "till the sun rose at once above the waves, and illuminating them with a flood of splendour, diffused gaiety and gladness around. The bold concave of the heavens, uniting with the vast expanse of ocean, formed a coup d'oeil, striking and sublime."\(^{15}\)

Yet more important than terminology, she overtly builds her settings and scenes on principles of graphic composition, so that the mental eye sweeps, as across a contemporary canvas, from foreground, through intervening perspective, to background, always with a clear perception of the spatial relationships existing between objects comprising a scene. Here is such a backdrop from *Gaston de Blondeville* (it is, incidentally, another example of the use of the quality of light in a manner reminiscent of Claude):

Willoughton leaned over the bridge, and looked upon the scene in silence. The brightness of the river, the dark, clear shade of the woods, reflected on its margin and rising with majesty up the steep, with the grey towers, in softened light, crowning all formed a harmony of tints and of objects such as he had not often seen, and which recalled to him that state of holy peace he had so lately experienced. \(^{16}\)

Notice the progression, in visual terms, from bridge, to water, to woods, to castle and sky, and the words in which the quality of their arrangement is communicated. Of course, there are other means of

\(^{15}\) p. 56.

\(^{16}\) Vol. I, p. 70 [my italics].
drawing our attention across the figurative picture. In The Mysteries of Udolpho, the backdrop to the Villeforts' journey in the Pyrenees is strikingly organized about streaming rays of sunlight and the precipitant planes of the mountainsides: "The rays of the setting sun now threw a yellow gleam upon the forests of pine and chestnut, that swept down to the lower regions of the mountains and gave resplendent tints to the snowy peaks above." With such subtle guidance, Mrs. Radcliffe's settings are an easy pleasure to visualize both in form and quality.

What she does with landscape, she does also with the human groups featured in the course of her novels. There is a scene in The Romance of the Forest - that in which all the principals say farewell to the doomed hero, Theodore - in which every action, position, and gesture is strongly realized visually, so that the meaning of their mutual sentiments is conveyed poignantly by their appearance alone, as in a painting. A similar tableau occurs on the death of Schedoni as all the Inquisitors, the Vivaldis, and his accuser, Zampari, hang over his death-bed in the dim lamp light, and he communicates simply by a gesture and a look (both visual means) to Zampari that they are both poisoned. It is a moment of tremendous impact, chiefly because we have, from the authoress' hand, every detail of expression and movement that is necessary to convey its power. One other example deserves

17 p. 597.
18 p. 385.
19 The Italian, p. 402.
particular mention for its graphic capture of the quality of a scene; here is Roman Catholic grandeur and ritual, as Mrs. Radcliffe saw it, in a scene that occurs in *The Italian* just before Ellena escapes her convent prison with Vivaldi:

In a vaulted apartment of considerable extent, lighted by innumerable tapers, and where even the ornaments, though pompous, partook of the solemn character of the institution, were assembled about fifty nuns, who, in the interesting habit of their order, appeared with graceful plainness. The delicacy of their air, and their beauty, softened by the lawn that thinly veiled it, were contrasted by the severe majesty of the lady Abbess, who, seated in an elevated chair, apart from the audience, seemed empress of the scene, and by the venerable figures of the father Abate and his attendant monks, who were arranged without that screen of wire-work, extending the whole breadth of the apartment, which is called the grate.  

And so she goes on, for the rest of the page. We are told only a bare minimum of the simple physical attributes of the group - our imaginations are to supply those - but the quality of their characters and their institution is succinctly and graphically portrayed by the positions and demeanours of the figures. Little wonder, then, that the aestheteician, Christopher Hussey, can write that "her popularity was not a little owing to the delight with which her readers beheld live people wandering, galloping, sailing, and having innumerable adventures, in pictures."  

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20 p. 129.

The result, however, of this consistent practice of planning her scenes and settings after works of graphic art is a feeling of order, of aesthetic balance and unity in things supposedly gathered at random. The components of her fictional world are, in their own frame of reference, supposed to be naturally combined, not ordered by the pervading intelligence of an omniscient author. In the context of her fictional world, where Mrs. Radcliffe does not appear, the credit for creating and ordering the aesthetic perfections of its picturesque settings must rest elsewhere, with a rational, moral, and benevolent Deity who dispenses his creation in such a way as to promote beauty.

In fact, in Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world, virtue and taste can be equated in a rather Shaftesburian fashion. To Shaftesbury, the highest virtue was the intrinsic love of those aesthetic principles - order, harmony, and beauty - central in God's creation, a notion which hearkens back to his Neo-Platonic sources. As he himself put it, "what is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable is true; and what is at once both beautiful and true is, of consequence, agreeable and good"; it then becomes obvious that what is "harmonious and proportionable" in morality is associated with modesty, generosity, and the golden rule of Christian thought. How close are these thoughts to St. Aubert's moral reflections in The Mysteries of Udolpho, where he says, "virtue and taste are nearly

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the same, for virtue is little more than active taste, and the delicate affections of each combine in real love." To Mrs. Radcliffe, too, then, it is virtuous to appreciate and act according to Divine creative principles. Of course, as Alida Weiten points out, Mrs. Radcliffe's religion is strictly speaking Deist in neither the Shaftesburian nor the Rousseauistic sense, since it neither removes specific Divine agency from the world of the present, nor seeks to make evil simply a phenomenon of human society. Nevertheless, it is based on ideas congruent especially to the former, and no doubt reflects one of the many views of a mixed nature held as systematic philosophy sifts down to the level of popular belief.

As in Shaftesbury's system, nature in Mrs. Radcliffe's world is an overt icon of the nature and existence of God. The order, harmony, and beauty that make Him manifest, according to Shaftesbury's view, are visible to the virtuous man in His works; Shaftesbury's God is one with his creation, for not only are his creative principles active in the continued existence of the universe, but his very love for that creation is seen as contributing to its continued unity. He becomes an omnipresent Spirit infusing vitality. Mrs. Radcliffe uses a similar notion of revelation when her characters are inspired or consoled by nature.

Sometimes, what they view is the order, harmony, and beauty of Divine benevolence exactly as Shaftesbury would have presented it.

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23 p. 49.
24 p. 55.
In The Romance of the Forest, for instance, we find: "The first tender tints of morning now appeared on the verge of the horizon, stealing upon the darkness; - so pure, so fine, so ethereal! It seemed as if Heaven was opening to the view...Adeline's heart swelled...with gratitude and adoration," and in Gaston de Blondeville: "The heart of Willoughton was deeply affected by the almost holy serenity, the silent course of order and benevolence, that he witnessed in these first minutes of another day; he looked to Heaven, and breathed a prayer of blessful gratitude and adoration." More often, however, the view of Godhead is modified by Mrs. Radcliffe's use of the unique aesthetic theory of Edmund Burke, whose Inquiry, as we have noted, she followed precisely. Burke saw God in the sublimity of nature, just as Shaftesbury found him in more passive aspects of creation: "we may be admitted, if I may dare to say so", he claims, "into the counsels of the Almighty by a consideration of his works." And Mrs. Radcliffe's characters consistently find Godhead revealed most impressively in natural sublimity. Since there is very little description of any sort in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, an embryonic novel, relative to her later efforts, so for a clear instance, we must go to A Sicilian Romance, where we find the following passage:

25 p. 28.
26 Vol. III, p. 55 [my italics].
Here the vast magnificence elevated the mind of the beholder to enthusiasm. Fancy caught the thrilling sensation and at her touch the towering steeps became shaded with unusual gloom; the caves more darkly frowned - the projecting cliffs assumed a more terrific aspect, and the wild, overhanging shrubs waved to the gale in deeper murmurs. The scene inspired madame with reverential awe, and her thoughts involuntarily rose from Nature up to Nature's God. (28)

Note that all the objects here have attributes of the sublime - vast size, "unreal gloom", "terrific aspect", and "deeper murmurs" - and it is these that give Madame de Menon a vision of Deity. By the time of The Mysteries of Udolpho, the link between sublimity and God is explicit. Emily, for example, after her first terrifying night at the castle, lifts "her thoughts in prayer, which she felt always most disposed to do, when viewing the sublimity of nature,"29 and in the Pyrenees, "the travellers had leisure to linger amid these solitudes, and to indulge the sublime reflections, which soften, while they elevate, the heart, and fill it with the certainty of a present God."30 Emily, in fact, shows a clear preference for the sublime aspects of her environment, as opposed to the beautiful, because they give her a close view of God: "Nor was it in the soft and glowing landscape that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood-walks that skirted the mountain; and still more the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the

28 p. 39.
29 p. 242.
30 p. 28.
silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart and lifted her thoughts to the GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH."\(^31\) This preference for the sublime she shares with her sister heroines in Mrs. Radcliffe's other novels.

Such a distinction between Shaftesbury's and Mrs. Radcliffe's views is very important for the nature of her fictional world. The fact that it is sublimity rather than a softer beauty that inspires her characters to holy thoughts indicates that she attaches a greater importance to God's wrath and power than did Shaftesbury. His concept of a benevolent deity is based on cosmic love. Level to level, the hierarchic universe envisaged by the Cambridge Platonists, from whose thought he developed much of his own philosophy, was connected by a natural affection for all things, derived from God's love for this creation, and "for Shaftesbury, too, love is the energy that unites all things."\(^32\) By contrast, the sublimity that is repeatedly attributed to Mrs. Radcliffe's Deity is based on fear, fear of potential power: Burke notes that "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror is a source of the sublime...Indeed, the ideas of pain, and above all of death, are so very affecting, that whilst we remain in the presence of whatever is supposed to have the power of inflicting either, it is impossible to be perfectly free from terror."\(^33\)

\(^{31}\) p. 6.


\(^{33}\) Burke, pp. 39, 65.
This is not to suggest that the ultimate attitudes engendered towards Deity by Mrs. Radcliffe's view of revelation and Shaftesbury's theory are radically different. Sublimity produces a similar state of astonishment and awe to that ecstasy of reason which Shaftesbury experienced before the magnificence of creation. He says "there is a power in numbers, harmony, proportion, and beauty of every kind which naturally captivates the heart, and raises the imagination to an opinion or conceit of something majestic and divine."\textsuperscript{34} Burke, for his part, says that the sublime produces astonishment, admiration, reverence, and respect.\textsuperscript{35} This is the same reaction that Mrs. Radcliffe's characters undergo when viewing God in nature; in \textit{The Romance of the Forest}, for instance, La Laet tells us, "The view of these objects...lifts 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."\textsuperscript{36} There is even a moment in the same book where the heroines are too awestruck by nature to define it rationally in art.\textsuperscript{37}

Moreover, Mrs. Radcliffe's God inspires the same gratitude and adoration in the virtuous as Shaftesbury's. Once again, the reason lies


\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Inquiry}, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{36} p. 313.

\textsuperscript{37} p. 332.
in the nature of sublimity. Overwhelming power, in Burke's theory, must not threaten an individual immediately if he is to experience sublimity from it. 38 And in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, if a character is to experience sublime, religious feelings, he must not feel threatened by their cause. A perfect example occurs, once again, in The Romance of the Forest. Adeline's pleasure at viewing the Alps close up must be stronger than her fear of them before she can participate in the religious awe that ensues amongst her party as they climb: "She had not been accustomed to ride single, and the mountainous road they were to pass made experiment rather dangerous; but she concealed her fears, and they were not sufficient to make her wish to forego an enjoyment such as was now offered to her." 39 Always, Mrs. Radcliffe's characters experience sublime awe at creation when God is withholding the infinite power and potential threat to be seen in it. Thus, Mrs. Radcliffe implies that in withholding this infinite power from the beholder, God exhibits benevolent grace. The virtuous thence develop faith in the restitutive power of Divine grace, if not in the mundane future, then in after life. To Ellena, "it is scarcely possible to yield to the pressure of misfortune while we walk, as with the Deity, amidst his most stupendous works," 40 and La Luc claims that after long contemplation of nature, "We shall then be enabled to comprehend, perhaps, the sublimity of that Deity who first called us into being. These views of futurity, my

39p. 311.
40The Italian, p. 62.
friend, elevate us above the evils of this world...".

The threat of God's wrath and power, as it is exhibited in the sublime landscapes of her fictional world, indicates that, unlike Shaftesbury's cosmos, hers is postlapsarian. In Shaftesbury's system, the world still exhibited the total benevolence of God that had operated, according to traditional Christian doctrine, only before the fall from Grace, in which the Earl did not believe. In fact, evil did not really exist for him; as he put it in a notebook, "it follows that I must in a certain manner be reconciled to all things, love all things, and absolutely hate or abhor nothing whatsoever that has being in the world." Mrs. Radcliffe avoids this paradox of evil inherent in the systems of Shaftesbury and his deist successors simply by accepting the traditional view, for only if man and his world were fallen could God appear threatening and wrathful, as he does in the sublimity of her descriptive passages.

In fact, the moral nature of Mrs. Radcliffe's universe, in that it is postlapsarian, reveals that it is a very dangerous and painful place in which to exist. Evil is derived from the very nature of the fallen universe; we have seen that the very sublimity that makes God manifest implies a cosmic threat, one that pervades all aspects of life. As if to emphasize this threat, Mrs. Radcliffe makes very clear the miniscule scale of man beside the hugeness of objects and processes in

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41. Forest, p. 324.

42. Quoted in Grean, p. 34.
his world. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for instance, the scenery is always impending over man in a menacing way: "Sometimes the shattered face of a rock only was seen, crowned with wild shrubs; or a shepherd's cabin seated on a cliff, overshadowed by dark cypress, or waving ash." Similarly, the St. Auberts come across an inhabited valley which "with the surrounding Alps did indeed, present a perfect picture of the lovely and the sublime, of 'beauty sleeping in the lap of horror.'"

Moreover, natural objects that are elsewhere sublime and gratifying deteriorate into objects of debilitating terror as their threatening natures become more apparent. The mountains can be dangerous; as early as *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, we find Osbert reduced to abject terror by the solitude and desolation of highland slopes, and in the Sicilian ranges, Hippolytus finds that "innumerable dangers threatened ..., from which he would be secure on level ground." Moreover, the Appenines and Pyrenees hide the banditti of *Udolpho*. The sublime manifestations of weather, billowing clouds and whistling winds can become dangerous, too. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline's alpine party are all revelling in the spectacle of a gathering storm - she even wishes for lightning - when it breaks and a bolt of lightning panics Clara's horse, with near fatal results. Even the ocean, an object

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43 p. 7.
44 p. 55.
45 p. 10.
46 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 58.
47 p. 315.
singled out by Burke as sublime, can turn on its admirers. The sublimity of the ocean is destroyed for Adeline, as it is for Blanche (in Udolpho) by coming closer to it than a distant prospect so that its dangerous force is more apparent, and in three novels, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, A Sicilian Romance, and Udolpho, principals are subjected to shipwrecks.

Besides the direct threats of natural forces, humanity in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels is subject to accident, unpredictable misfortune that has evil consequences. When Alleyn is caught by the Earl, in the midst of an accidental meeting with Mary, whose birth precludes their love, Mrs. Radcliffe emphasizes the role of pure chance in causing evil: "The same accident which had unveiled to him the heart of Mary, and the full extent of that happiness which fate withheld, convinced him in despair. The same accident had exposed the delicacy of her he loved to a cruel shock, and had subjected his honour to suspicion; and to a severe rebuke from him by whom it was his pride to be respected..." Numerous other evil chances befall other characters in other novels. Among the least predictable and most dangerous are the collapse of the tower staircase under Ferdinand's weight in A Sicilian Romance and the failure of Ellena's light, just when she is about to read the

48 Inquiry, p. 58.
49 See Forest, p. 345, and Udolpho, p. 480.
50 Castles, p. 216.
51 p. 15.
escape instructions in her convent prison. Yet all these dangers and accidents, sudden reversals of all human value by chance, point to the more general reflection that Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world is a fallen one of mutability and inevitable death.

The gothic edifices themselves are an emblem of the general trend of things toward dissolution. In *Gaston de Blondeville*, we find Kenilworth, whose "walls, where gorgeous tapestry had hung, showed only the remains of door-ways and of beautiful gothic windows, that had admitted the light of the same sun, which at this moment sent the last gleam of another day upon Willoughton, and warned him, that portion of his life, too, was departing." In *The Romance of the Forest*, The Abbey St. Claire is described as "sinking into ruins, and that which had withstood the ravages of time, showed the remaining features of the fabric more awful in decay. The lofty battlements, thickly encrusted with ivy, were half demolished; and become the residence of birds of prey." Similar in quality and size are buildings from every novel - the ruined villa on the lakeshore and the Roman ruins of *The Italian*, Castle Udolpho in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the ruined monastery to which Mary is abducted in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, and the Castle Mazzini and the banditti hide-out in *A Sicilian Romance*. They are universally rotting physically and at least partially disused, emblems of the fate

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52 *The Italian*, p. 132.
54 p. 20.
of all things in Mrs. Radcliffe's world. The consistent association of the villains with these edifices indicates symbolically their alliance with the forces of dissolution and evil.

In addition, many of Mrs. Radcliffe's characters and narrators are powerfully aware of mutability and the inevitability of death, which consistently they remark at work in human affairs. In *A Sicilian Romance*, the narrator reflects, on viewing the ruins of Mazzini, "thus,...shall the present generation - he who now smiles in misery - and he who now swims in pleasure, alike pass away and be forgotten."\(^{55}\) In *Udolpho*, the age of the Pyrenees, the fact that they were once below the sea, reminds Count Villefort of the transience of earthly things, man in particular.\(^{56}\) *Gaston de Blondeville*, too, with its peculiarly medieval flavour, contains much appropriate moralizing over the impermanence of things. Simpson, for instance, one of the gentlemen travellers whose adventures frame the tale, is full of a melancholy longing to know something of "beings with passions as warm as our own - beings who have so long since vanished from the earth,"\(^{57}\) and the motif of transience is taken up by the medieval narrator when the court is in shock after Gaston's strange death; he muses, "How changed, indeed, was the whole appearance of this castle that it wore on yester-ere; where if the inhabitants were wakeful, it was only from the restlessness of joy, and

\(^{55}\) p. 1.

\(^{56}\) p. 602.

preparation for the grand festival of the morrow."

Later, he concludes the tale by adorning King Henry's departing progress with a warning of mutability - "And now the fading woods strewed yellow leaves on the long cavalcade, that wound below, whispering a moral to departing greatness" - and including himself in the whirligig of change and death: even in a monastery, "life is still a FLEETING VISION As such it fades, whether in court or convent, nor leaves a gleam behind - save of the light of good works!"

With sorrow, moreover, do these commentators view the inevitable passing of innocent, idealistic youth into disillusioned old age. Here, for example, is part of Adeline's poem "Morning on the Sea-shore", in which she regrets the passing of youthful illusions about the world:

Ye sportive pleasures, sweet illusions, hail!
But oh! at morn's first blush again ye fade!
So from youth's ardent gaze life's landscape gay,
And forms in fancy's summer hues arranged,
Dissolve at once in air at Truth's resplendent day.

To that we might add the comment of the narrator in Gaston de Blondeville as he describes the expectation with which the tournament is awaited.

"Woe to him, who would have set before their eyes the severe form of experience, and have reduced the gaieties of their boundless hope to the many chequered scenes of real existence. All in its season, comes the

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59 Vol. III, p. 46.
60 Vol. III, p. 50.
61 "Forest, p. 341."
noon-tide ray, and melts the beauteous visions of the morning." In every case, these individuals are painfully aware of humanity's subjection to change and death.

As if to back up their melancholy reflections, all Mrs. Radcliffe's novels are punctuated by sudden, seemingly arbitrary deaths. In _The Castles of Athlin and Dumbayne_, The Baron and Baroness Malcolm return to find their son and his nurse dead, then the Baron himself is killed accidentally; when Madame de Menon returns, in _A Sicilian Romance_, to her home, Calini, her few friends have died; Madame La Motte asks after her friends in Paris and learns that "within the few months of her absence, some had died and others had quitted the place"; when Emily returns to La Vallee after the sudden death of her own father, she finds "that some were dead whom they had left well; and others, who were ill, had recovered," and it is Signora Bianchi's unexplained and sudden demise that precipitates much of the intrigue in _The Italian_.

Nor are mutability and death the only evils facing Mrs. Radcliffe's characters. Hers is also a world of deceptive appearances, in which no individual can glean sufficient evidence to judge without danger of error. Sometimes the good appear evil with disastrous results, as when in _Udolpho_, St. Aubert mistakes Valancourt for a robber in the darkness and shoots him. More often, however, the process is the exact reverse.

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63 _Forest_, p. 83.
64 _Udolpho_, p. 94.
65 Ibid., p. 38.
Many of the villains, after all, appear to be virtuous men. It is the Marquis de Montalt's civilized demeanour that hides an extortionist, a lecher, and a murderer in *The Romance of the Forest*, just as Count Morano's musical accomplishments in *Udolpho* disguise his lust, and Schedoni's composure for a long time belies his guilt during his trial in *The Italian*. Because of such deception, even the most virtuous characters can be subjected to the evil machinations of villains, if they are left temporarily untouched by the natural processes of mutability and death.

Nor are the evils that befall humanity in Mrs. Radcliffe's world wholly external. Just as it is a mixture of unfallen deist harmony and the traditional disruptions of the fall, so man himself, though he has a number of attributes that suggest innate goodness, must be considered, for the most part, a fallen creature who may fall victim to the sinful promptings of his depraved mind.

It is easy to establish man's basic depravity, in accordance with her cosmological locus. Villains are consistently motivated by selfish passions which it is, or once was, in their power to control. The mind of Baron Malcolm, we learn, "was agitated with all the direful passions of hate, revenge, and exulting pride"; the Marquis of Mazzini "was a man of a voluptuous and imperious character"; his friend, the

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66 *Castles*, p. 34.

67 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 1.
Duke de Luovo, is similar, and his consort Maria de Vellorno "a woman of infinite art, devoted to pleasure." So might we catalogue all the villains, in each case finding boundless pride and some other passions as the root of their respective evils. Nor are we, as a rule, given so much as a hint of mitigation in the parading of their guilt. Even the two least reprehensible, Schedoni and La Motte, are both capable, as we shall see, of hardening their hearts to greater depravity in times of crisis, despite their knowledge of, and impulse toward, moral right. Furthermore, Mrs. Radcliffe's villains invariably admit having willfully contravened morality in their dying confessions. The dying Malcolm, for example, wins for himself a certain amount of our sympathy when, his face "overspread with the paleness of death", he admits, "I have understood virtue, but I have loved vice." Similarly, the Marchesa di Vivaldi dies admitting and repenting her complicity in Ellena's abduction, and Schedoni, lying poisoned in the inquisitors' prison, cheerlessly admits his guilt in the same affair, though we might argue that this is simply a ploy to trap his betrayer, Zampari, into exposure. The Marquis de Montalt, too, admits his sins in his suicide note, and Gaston de Blondeville even returns from the grave

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68 Sicilian Romance, p. 21.
69 Ibid., p. 1
70 Castles, pp. 204-5.
71 Italian, p. 376.
72 Ibid., p. 392.
73 Forest, p. 418.
to admit "my guilt was my doom." It appears, then, that all these figures will fully disregard moral standards as a result of inherent and deeply rooted passions which even they acknowledge as the source of their guilt.

By the same token, sympathetic characters are saved from a similar depravity only by strenuous education. In Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, "the vacant mind is ever on the watch for relief, and ready to plunge into error, to escape from the languor of idleness. Store it with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking; and the temptations of the world without will be counteracted by the gratifications derived from the world within." Hence, heroes and heroines are often under the strict but gentle guidance of older persons of unimpeachable morality and philosophy, from whom they learn their virtuous ways. Osbert and Mary have been educated by their noble mother, Matilda, Madame de Menon has charge of the education of Julia and Emilia, La Luc carefully raises Theodore and Clara in The Romance of the Forest, Emily St. Aubert grows into perfect youth under her father's tutelage, and Ellena receives precept and direction from her aunt, Signora Bianchi. In every case, these moral mentors encourage in their charges the sensibility, reason, and artistic acumen that are necessary to their virtue and happiness in the world. And if their presence behind at least one protagonist in every one of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels is insufficient to convince us of their importance in forming their charges' characters, the example of

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74 Caston, III, p. 23.
75 Udolpho, p. 6.
the Countess Laurentini in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, should persuade us in the matter. She is the repentant nun, Agnes, who dies of what might best be called nervous deterioration near the close of the book. Significantly, she laments that in her youth her parents did nothing to train her to curb her emotions and selfish passions, for, uncontrolled, they led her to adultery and murder for their gratification, and finally drove her, once her dormant moral sense was roused by her crimes, into madness. In Mrs. Radcliffe's view, then, the individual would fall naturally into the evil ways of villains were it not for strenuous education to the contrary.

Nevertheless, there are incidents and statements in the course of her novels that suggest innate goodness. For one thing, characters inherit good dispositions from their parents, though the pattern is by no means consistent. Both the La Luc children, for example, are described as inheriting their parents' goodness in *The Romance of the Forest*, as are the sisters Julia and Emilia in *A Sicilian Romance*. Yet even in the same novels, there are other offspring whose inherited traits would give the lie to any theory of innate morality based on the experience of those already mentioned. How is it, for instance, that the Montalt brothers, Adeline's father and uncle, the sons of the same parents, are so diametrically opposite in temperament and ethical predisposition, one good, the other bad? And if goodness is innate and inheritable, how is it that the Duke de Luovo's son in *A Sicilian Romance*

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76 See p. 655.
is so superior to his father? There is obviously some tension here between the notions that character is inborn or learnt, but perhaps, in the end, we still have to admit that education is the most consistent salutary influence on Mrs. Radcliffe's characters.

However, even this characteristic education sometimes suggests that its subjects are in possession of some measure of innate moral and (what is the same in Mrs. Radcliffe's cosmos) aesthetic sense. We never see the absolute beginnings of any virtuous character, so that it is impossible to know how much their first principles were learnt, or inherent. Furthermore, whenever a heroine "discovers" a talent or love for some virtuous activity in childhood, it is not made clear whether the discovery is the result of parental guidance or some innate predisposition. On one occasion at least, learning is overtly left to natural temperament, in the manner of Rousseau; La Lac, in following his philosophy of nature and common sense, allows Clara to become self-indulgent in her lute playing, and then simply waits while her conscience over the duties to others she is neglecting teaches her the value of self-discipline.77

While we are on the subject of Rousseauistic traits in these novels, Mrs. Radcliffe's consistent opposition of "natural" man living in rural virtue to the depravity of supposedly civilized, urban man seems also to suggest a measure of innate goodness. The fact that all her country dwellers, peasant and noble alike, are all good hearted,

77 See Forest, pp. 295-9.
strong, and moral, while her city folk are weak, immoral, sly, and pernicious implies that human evil is a product of bad education and culture, rather than innate depravity of will.

Even part of her indictment of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in her later novels, maintains that its institutions are in part responsible for their inmates' depravity. The unnatural deprivations and false principles of monastic life cause, beyond mere discontent, a disease of pent-up emotions. In nearly every case, a cloistered existence is portrayed as an unnatural and evil denial of simple emotional needs. Adeline, for example, in describing her narrow escape from a nunnery, explains,

    Excluded from the cheerful intercourse of society - from the pleasant view of nature - almost from the light of day - condemned to silence - rigid formality - abstinence and penance - condemned to forego the delights of a world, which imagination painted in the gayest and most alluring colours, and whose hues were, perhaps, not the less captivating because they were only ideal - such was the state to which I was destined. (78)

Such a life is filled with "too many forms of real terror"79 for a normal human being. Even the narrator of Gaston de Blondeville, himself a monk, notes how his life in a monastery is "seeming ages", "for these, pale moment, lingering after moment, like rain-drop following drop, keeps melancholy chime with chants too formally repeated to leave,

78 Forest, p. 46.

79 Ibid., p. 45.
except on very few, the due impression of their meaning, and with slow returning vigils."\textsuperscript{80}

This emotional deprivation breeds a secret conceit and worldliness amongst monks and nuns that is the more distasteful for being hidden behind forms of virtue. Margaritone, Ellena's jail-keeper in The Italian, is spiteful because she is jealous of her young prisoner's felicity, relative to her own; and wishes "to inflict upon others some portion of the unhappiness she herself suffered."\textsuperscript{81} This feeling she shares with her sister nuns, who are subject to a "malignant envy, that taught them to exalt themselves upon the humiliation of others."\textsuperscript{82} Moreover, she is distended with vanity of person, and cannot stand to hear Ellena praise sister Olivia's good looks. Once again, this inappropriate vanity is reflected in the entire sisterhood, this time in their preparations for the festival during which Ellena escapes:

The tables were to be ornamented with artificial flowers, and a variety of other fanciful devices upon which the ingenuity of the sisters had been long employed, who prepared for these festivals with as much vanity, and expected them to dissipate the gloomy monotony of their usual life, with as much eagerness of delight as a young beauty anticipates a first ball. (83)

So oppressively austere is their way of life that they fix their suppressed emotions on whatever trivia is at hand, with the result that

\textsuperscript{80}Vol. III, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{81}p. 66.
\textsuperscript{82}p. 68.
\textsuperscript{83}p. 125.
their vanity and envy, while reprehensible, is also pitiable.

The same complaint in their leaders, the more privileged clerics, is more enormous simply because they have more power by means of which to appease their sinful pride. In the abbess of Mt. Carmel, pride and resentment usurp the influence of every other feeling, so that she staunchly supports her supposed duty in abducting Ellena at the request of a noble such as the Marchesa. Her behaviour is nothing more or less than the envious spite of Margaritone, operating at a level where it can do more damage. Similarly, the quality of monastic life, its inertia and authoritarianism, makes the abbot of Mt. Carmel incapable of a virtuous action. "Indolence and timidity, a timidity the consequence of want of clear perception, deprived him of all energy of character; he was prudent rather than wise, and so fearful of being thought to do wrong that he seldom did right." Because their lives deny the essence of life in denying all pleasure, the inquisitors, too, drive themselves into unreasonable acts of cruelty. At the Roman fair, "while they regarded with secret contempt those, who could be thus lightly pleased, the people, in return, more wisely, perhaps regarded with contempt the proud moroseness, that refused to partake of innocent pleasures, because they were trifling, and shrunk from countenances furrowed with the sternness of cruelty."  

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84 Forest, p. 120.
85 Ibid., p. 121.
86 Ibid., p. 195.
By means of this constant denial of life, church institutions drive their servants into various evils. It is significant that those nuns, monks and clerics who are exceptional for their goodness and the achievement of tranquil piety in Mrs. Radcliffe's books are conspicuous for their religious and cultural liberalism. In so far as so many of the church's votaries are trapped or coerced into monastic life, as Adeline, Julia, and Ellena find out, and in so far as the church's institutions cause that disease of the emotions that leads to evil action, we might argue that such evil was thrust on the individual from without, rather than growing from an innate depravity within.

In addition to such suggestions of innate goodness running through the incidents of her novels, Mrs. Radcliffe does place, on one occasion, in the mouth of the Reverend La Luc, the notion that much theological and philosophical writing tends to destroy man's awareness of his potential for good by harping on his hopeless innate depravity. The authors of such works, he says, "have sought to degrade man in his own eyes, and to make him discontent with life," whereas "that consciousness of innate dignity, which shows him the glory of his nature, will be his best protection from the meanness of vice."\(^{87}\) Certainly, Mrs. Radcliffe lacked a puritan pessimism about the potential of human nature, even if it were depraved.

Now, since the appearance of innate depravity is primarily the villains', and that of innate goodness the sympathetic characters', it is tempting to claim that in her novels she exercises a double standard,

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\(^{87}\)Forest, p. 318.
villains being treated as innately depraved, while others are seen from exactly the opposite point of view. However, I do not think Mrs. Radcliffe was guilty of such prejudice and artistic equivocacy. After all, Shaftesburian concept of innate goodness nowhere denies the importance of will and self interest in human nature. Indeed, Shaftesbury himself acknowledges that self-interest "may prove an obstacle to piety, as well as to virtue and public love." 88 "Man alone of all creatures (is) capable of grasping his relationship to the whole of Being," 89 by reason of his powers of reflective and rational thought; he alone can actually distinguish between good and evil. It is up to him through the use of his reason and will, to fulfill himself as a man by choosing, in so far as he could, good in every instance. If he does not, he robs himself of humanity. This is not far qualitatively from the traditional Christian view that, though fallen, man is capable of virtue through the operation of reason, will, and Divine grace. Once again, I believe, Mrs. Radcliffe's position reflects the adventure of philosophy and traditional theology that resulted as tenets of deistic thinking became current in popular thought. In her works, man is the fallen creature of Christian theory, but he is also capable, through careful education of his faculties, the operation of his will and, presumably, the help of Divine grace, of virtue whose quality approaches that envisaged by the proponents of innate moral sense.

88 Selections, p. 316.
89 Grean, p. 33.
The dual nature of Mrs. Radcliffe's world, divinely ordered, just and beautiful, yet fraught with the evil of the fall, culminates in a traditional dichotomy of light and dark imagery. Of course, the pattern is by no means original to Mrs. Radcliffe; it is both a traditional part of Christian symbolism, and a favourite of Milton, whom Mrs. Radcliffe read and revered. Yet probably the most influential source of Mrs. Radcliffe's predisposition toward light and dark imagery was Burke once again. Burke identifies light, except that which is sudden or blinding, as a source of beauty and simple pleasure; Mrs. Radcliffe, in consequence, uses light to denote salutary things - Divine grace, the rule of reason, and moral good. By the same token, Burke identifies darkness as the supreme source of terror and therefore of the sublime because it is absolutely unknown. "In utter darkness," he says, "it is impossible to know in what degree of safety we stand; we are ignorant of the objects that surround us; we may every moment strike against some dangerous obstruction; we may fall down a precipice the first step we take; and if an enemy approach, we know not in what quarter to defend ourselves." The fact that Mrs. Radcliffe uses darkness as a principal component of sensational suspense and terror in her novels has been noted by many critics. However, Mrs. Radcliffe also uses darkness to suggest evil abroad in her

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90 See Inquiry, p. 80.

91 Ibid., p. 143; See also pp. 58, 80.

92 Among them Baker, p. 198; Foster, Novel, p. 263; A.O. McKillop, "Mrs. Radcliffe on the supernatural in Poetry," JEGP, XXXI (1932), 355; and Summers, p. 197.
fictional world, a use which includes the one noticed before.

The pervasive influence of darkness symbolizes all that is malignant and evil in Mrs. Radcliffe's world. In the first place, it punctuates and intensifies the danger of nearly every situation in which characters are threatened by evil. Thus, the first attempted storming of the Castle of Dunbayne is made more dangerous by the fact that "all was involved in the gloom of night and the silence of death prevailed." Similarly, the travellers in Udolpho are consistently becoming lost, or running across banditti in the obscurity of night, and the humorous escape attempts and abductions of the Radcliffe books all occur when the darkness can lead those involved into dangerous errors. Because it renders the sense of sight useless, darkness compounds the threats of an already threatening world.

Moreover, darkness portends approaching evil. In The Italian, for example, the descent of darkness symbolizes the coming of evil to disrupt the lovers' wedding: "As the appointed hour drew near, her spirits sank, and she watched, with melancholy foreboding, the sun retiring amidst stormy clouds, and his rays fading from the highest points of the mountains, till the gloom of twilight prevailed over the scene." Similarly, the vicinity of the Castle Udolpho is dominated by gloom; threatening crags "shut out every feature of the distant country."
It is darkness, in fact, that links cosmic and human evil; through it, the threat of the environment and the evil of the villain are equated. Here is a passage from the approach to Udolpho, mentioned above:

The gloom of these shades, their solitary silence, except when the breeze swept over their summits, the tremendous precipices of the mountains, that came partially to the eye, each assisted to raise the solemnity of Emily's feelings into awe; she saw only images of gloomy grandeur, or of dreadful sublimity, around her; other images, equally gloomy and equally terrible, gleamed on her imagination. She was going she scarcely knew whither, under the dominion of a person, from whose arbitrary disposition she had already suffered so much, to marry, perhaps, a man who possessed neither her affection, or esteem; or to endure, beyond the hope of succor, whatever punishment, revenge, and that Italian revenge, might dictate. (96)

The reader moves, significantly, from the gloom of the environs of the castle to the ethical gloom of the villain's evil, the one reflecting, as it were, negatively on the other. Little wonder then, that the Gothic edifices themselves, the lairs of the villains, are dark and gloomy in symbolic representation of the quality of their owners' minds. Udolpho is a place of darkness, from the environs described above to the burial catacombs under its floors, as is the Abbey of St. Augustin, "whose gloomy battlements and majestic towers, arose in proud sublimity from amid the darkness of the surrounding shades," or the forboding

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96 Udolpho, p. 224.

97 Sicilian Romance, p. 43.
and shadowy villa to which Ellena is taken in _The Italian_. Similarly, the visages of the villains are marked with the physical projection of their inner darkness. Mazzini, for instance, "was gloomy and silent," while Montoni's "complexion changed almost to blackness as he looked upon his fallen adversary." Similarly, the Prior, arch-villain of _Gaston de Blondeville_ is forever darkening his looks as "dark and thronging thoughts cast their shadows on his countenance."

But surely the most powerful application of the symbolism of darkness as applied to the villains occurs in _The Italian_. There, all the villains are consistently figured forth in terms of the shadows about their faces or the darkness of their robes, and even the mysterious monk of the old castle himself always appears in the pitch black of night, or the gloom of the inquisition jails until he is exposed by Schedoni, and Mrs. Radcliffe seizes a golden opportunity for an exquisite cameo of evil and darkness. Zampari "stood gazing at him (Schedoni) with the malignity of a demon. His glowing eyes just appeared under the edge of his cowl, while rolled up in his dark drapery, the lower features of his face were muffled; but the intermediate part of his countenance receiving the full glare of the torch, displaying

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98 See p. 213.
99 _Sicilian Romance_, p. 5.
100 _Udolpho_, p. 267.
all its speaking and terrific lines." 102 Ironically, the part of his face subject to any illumination only shows more clearly the figurative blackness of his vengeance-ridden soul.

Similarly, we know the torturers and inquisitors for the evil men they are in part because of the "portentious obscurity" which enveloped alike their persons and their proceedings. 103 They appear and act in darkness and the threatening, black imagery culminates in its comparison to hell: "Vivaldi almost believed himself in the infernal regions; the dismal aspect of this place, the horrible preparation for punishment, and, above all, the disposition and appearance of the persons that were ready to inflict it, confirmed the resemblance." 104 Interestingly enough, the darkness of the inquisition, symbol of its members monkish unreason, interferes with their ability to deliberate, just as their unreason does. On the one hand, "The suspicions of the tribunal, augmenting with their perplexity, seemed to fluctuate equally over every point of the subject before them, till instead of throwing any light upon the truth, they only served to involve the whole in deeper obscurity," 105 while on the other, the inquisitors are thrown into equal confusion by the physical darkness of the tribunal chamber, which thus becomes an icon of their vicious irrationality. 106

102 p. 396.
103 p. 311.
104 Loc. cit.
105 p. 332.
106 See p. 315 ff., when Zampari interrupts the court from the cover of its shadows.
Conversely to the role of darkness, light symbolizes all that is benignant and virtuous in Mrs. Radcliffe's world. The coming of light, in so far as it banishes the uncertainty of darkness, is a symbol of Divine grace, even when it approaches sublimity at sunrise. Time and again in the course of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, sunrise restores characters' confidence after the onslaught of evil, ultimately because it expresses Divine concern for the cosmos. Thus, after the escape from the convent in *A Sicilian Romance*,

> it was with inexpressible joy that Julia observed the kindling atmosphere; and soon after, the rays of the rising sun touching the top of the mountains, whose sides were yet involved in dark vapours. Her fears dissipated with the darkness - the sun now appeared amid clouds of inconceivable splendour; and unveiled a scene which in other circumstances Julia would have contemplated with rapture. (107).

Thus also, in *The Romance of the Forest*, when the sun "burst in full splendour on the scene of the La Motte's flight, "the terror of La Motte began to subside, and the griefs of Adeline to soften."108

The coming of light also signifies figuratively the ascendancy of reason and truth, the mental illuminations of Divine grace. In the description of the abbey in *A Sicilian Romance*, for instance, the narrator pontificates, "The dark clouds of prejudice break away before the sun of science, and gradually dissolving, have the brightening

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107 p. 55.

108 p. 12.
hémisphere to the influence of his beams." Similarly, "truth now glimmered upon the mind of Julia [when she discovers her mother], but so faintly, that instead of enlightening, it served only to increase her perplexity." 

Finally, in fact, the coming of light can mean the coming of any sort of happiness or good fortune. In *The Italian*, Olivia exclaims, "The gloom, which has long hung over my prospects, seems now to open, and a distant gleam promises to light up the evening of my stormy day," while the readers of *Gaston de Blondeville* are invited to look into the Baroness de Blondeville's future to see "the gleam of hope and joy striking athwart her path, and further still, the calm sunshine of happiness setting on her home."

Thus, then, light becomes a symbol of all good to balance the darkness, emblem of all evil in Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world. Though it is primarily a moral cosmos, presided over by a just and benevolent God, hers is still the fallen world, fraught with all manner of evils, both natural and human, as a result. Yet by means of her competent manipulation of the various philosophical and aesthetic principles discussed above, she is able to create out of potentially

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109 p. 43.
110 p. 64.
111 p. 371.
112 *Vol. III*, p. 45.
contradictory elements a single, coherent, cosmological point of view. As we shall see, this soundly conceived environment forms the basis of an overall unity of presentation that includes the constitution of her characters, the major issues facing them as individuals, and a number of other themes in her works.
CHAPTER 3

THE ISSUES OF CHARACTER: VILLAINS AND EVIL

I pointed out, in the preceding chapter, that the villains' selfish passions indicate the depravity of man in Mrs. Radcliffe's fallen world and that part of its threatening evil is their deceit; in this, I should like, in analyzing the desires, abilities, and shortcomings of her evil characters, to show how they further correspond to the world view she presents and contribute, therefore, to the artistic unity of her presentations.

While aesthetic and moral sensibility forms in her works a chief means by which characters relate themselves to their environment and achieve virtue and happiness, both aesthetic and moral insensitivity. Mrs. Radcliffe consistently treats as an evil. "Do not," warns St. Aubert, "...confound fortitude with apathy; apathy cannot know the virtue."¹ Apathy is often the result of experience in the evil of the world at large. Where we are "constrained...to behold objects in their more genuine hues, their deformity is by degrees less painful to us. The fine touch of moral susceptibility, by frequent irritation, becomes callous, and too frequently we mingle with the world till we are added to the number of its votaries."² And "when once sordid interest seizes

¹Udolpho, p. 80.
²Castles, p. 7.
on the heart, it freezes the source of every warm and liberal feeling; it is an enemy alike to virtue and to taste — this it perverts, and that it annihilates." It is entirely appropriate, then, that the villains, who are totally dominated by selfish passions, are distinguished in Mrs. Radcliffe's work by cruelty and an indifference to aesthetic values that borders on enmity.

Villains have no time for the arts. Montoni, for instance, grows weary of the singing Emily enjoys so in Venice, and goes with Count Morano to a casino. Again in Udolpho, M. Quesnel shows his inability to appreciate the balance of landscaping and venerable architecture at St. Aubert's former chateau by cutting down a noble avenue of trees at its approach immediately upon taking possession. It is a similar indifference to aesthetics that makes the Marchesa di Vivaldi "wretched amidst all these luxuries of nature and art, which would have perfected the happiness of an innocent mind. Her heart was possessed by evil passions, and all her perceptions were distorted by them, which, like a dark magician, had power to change the fairest scenes into those of gloom and desolation." Thus, their selfishness prevents them from exercising the pleasures of good taste. Only when they have an ulterior motive for doing so do they feign it. Thus, the Marquis de Montalt attempts to impress Adeline with the sententiously artistic trappings of his pleasure palace, Count Morano sings and plays for Emily in an attempt to win her heart and her money, and the Marchesa di Vivaldi sponsors

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3 Forest, p. 3.

4 Italian, p. 291.
a composer in the hope of aggrandizing her pride by his success. However, this enthusiasm is never of that genuine sort felt and expressed by the protagonists which links them to the aesthetic principles upon which creation is founded in Mrs. Radcliffe's system.

In addition to their shortcomings as devotees of fine art, neither do the villains achieve the sympathetic characters' creative response to nature. Some are wholly indifferent to nature as a result of the power of their selfish passions.  

"Over the gloom of Schedoni," for example, "no scenery had, at any moment, power; the shape and point of external imagery gave neither impressions nor colour to his fancy. He condemned the sweet illusions..." The Marchesa is little better; having been given a magnificent cameo of a scene before which she reclines, we read: "...her eyes were fixed upon the prospect without, but her attention was wholly occupied by the visions that evil passion painted to her imagination." Others, Madame Cheron (née Montoni) in particular, fail to appreciate nature properly. So strong is her self-love, for instance, that she can muster only fear in response to the sublimity of the Alps: "Madame Montoni only shuddered as she looked down precipices near whose edge the chairmen trotted lightly and swiftly, almost, as the chamois bounded, and from which Emily, too, recoiled; but with her fears were mingled such various emotions of delight, such admiration,

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5 Garber, p. ix.
6 Italian, p. 255.
7 Ibid., p. 292.
astonishment, and awe, as she had never experienced before." Only when she stands a chance of aggrandizing herself socially at the expense of the Quesnels does she boast of the natural sublimity about Castle Udolpho, "for Emily well knew, that her aunt had no taste for solitary grandeur, and, particularly for such as the castle of Udolpho promised."^9

This aesthetic insensibility is complimented in Radcliffian villains by their lack of benevolent feelings. Of course, they are the authors of most of the bloodshed, grief, and terror inflicted on others in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, because they will do anything to have their own way; they represent "that constitutional hardness of nerve, that cannot feel, and that, therefore, cannot fear."^10 Consequently, they despise good-heartedness in others, just as they despise every other timid or inoffensive sentiment. Schedoni, for instance, not only condemns as "weak and contemptible"^11 the humane reservations of the Marchesa over ordering Ellena murdered, but also expresses surprise at finding sensibility in his supposed daughter:

"What is the meaning of all this!" asked Schedoni with anger, "you cannot, surely, have the weakness to pity this fellow!"
"It is terrible to see anyone suffer," said Ellena. 12

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8 Udolpho, p. 166.
9 Ibid., p. 212.
10 Ibid., p. 358.
11 Italian, p. 266.
It is not surprising, then, that when a villain seems benevolent, he actually has some selfish end in view. In The Romance of the Forest, the Marquis de Montalt's initial concern and generosity for the La Motte family, whom he finds squatting in his ruined abbey, is eventually exposed as a cover for his lusting after Adeline. In Udolpho, Madame Cheron is busy flattering herself when she claims that she has been too compassionate with Emily in the matter of Valancourt, and the Countess Villefort's sensibility is merely a fashionable dissimulation of true sentiment: "In the country,...she generally affected an elegant languor, that persuaded her almost to faint, when her favourite read to her a story of fictitious sorrow; but her countenance suffered no change when living objects of distress solicited her charity, and her heart beat with no transport to the thought of giving them instant relief..."13

Yet this aesthetic insensibility and indifference to cruelty are all part of that predisposition toward selfish emotion which characterizes all Radcliffian villains. Generally, Mrs. Radcliffe treats emotion with suspicion. The laudable emotional susceptibility of the sympathetic characters is desirable only in so far as it is initiated and controlled by a rational perception of correct morality and the nature of Divine creation. Even heroes and heroines are capable of emotion which is or may become a function of selfish excess and which is unnecessarily painful. Presumably, because of their basically depraved nature, all men in Mrs. Radcliffe's world are potentially subject to the unreasonable demands of self, that is, to the passions, and to his passions, every one of Mrs. Radcliffe's villains is a slave.

13 Udolpho, p. 500.
In the first place, they all have developed uncontrollable appetites. Many, among them Maria de Vellorno, the Countess Villefort, La Motte, and the Marchesa di Vivaldi, flounder in a proverbial "vortex of dissipation," as depicted in the luxuriant lives they lead at Paris and Naples. In others, this sensual indulgence is complicated by lust; the primary vice exhibited by the Baron Malcolm, the Duke de Luovo, and the Marquis de Montalt, for example, in their respective pursuits of heroines is rampant concupiscence. Even Madame de Menon's senile desires lead her to throw herself and her estates at Montoni. Ultimately, of course, all the villains' ambitions and crimes are oriented toward the satisfaction of their appetites. Count Morano wants to marry Emily so that money from her Gascony estate can support his dissipated life in Venice - Montoni marries Madame de Menon for the same reasons. Likewise, it is a combination of lust for his brother's wife and greed for his brother's goods that drives Schedoni to murder, while the Marquis de Montalt, too, commits fratricide in order to enjoy the resources to build and use his pleasure palace. In some measure, all Mrs. Radcliffe's villains follow this pattern.

Yet the major keynote of their characters is pride. They all seek to transcend what appears to be the natural and normal limit of their situation in life by aggrandizing themselves. In female characters, pride means social affectation and ambition. We have already looked at Madame de Menon's boasting about Udolpho's scenery and the Countess Villefort's affectation of false sensibility out of a desire to be

14 See Forest, p. 188, for a description of its sensual luxury.
fashionable. Similarly, the Marchesa di Vivaldi keeps a composer, of whose reputation "She was as jealous...as of her own,"¹⁵ and will not countenance her son's marriage unless it is one that increases her stature. In fact, when Vivaldi elopes with Ellena, not even the most flagrant dissipation is capable of rendering the Marchesa's mind oblivious to the "gloomy forebodings of disappointed pride."¹⁶ Pride also leads to vicious sexual jealousies in the female villains, as male attention is important to their sense of success. "The dread of rival beauty operated strongly to the prejudice of Emilia and Julia" in the mind of Maria de Vellorno, for example, and "she employed all her influence over the Marquis to detain them in retirement"¹⁷ away from Naples; her jealousy increases to a diabolical hatred when "she saw, or fancied she saw, an impassioned air in the count (her favorite) when he addressed himself to Julia."¹⁸ Similarly, Madame de Menon is dangerously jealous of Montoni's addresses to Emily at Toulouse.

The male villains also exhibits a sovereign pride, but in their case it is a matter of political and economic power. They obviously enjoy the power they wield from positions they have already attained. Baron Malcolm, for instance, is "proud, oppressive, revengeful; and

¹⁵_Italian_, p. 10.
¹⁶_Ibid., p. 165.
¹⁷_Sicilian Romance_, p. 3.
¹⁸_Ibid., p. 7.
still residing in all the pomp of feudal greatness, within a few miles of the Castle of Athlin"\textsuperscript{19} at the beginning of \textit{The Castles of Athlin and Dumbayne}. Similarly, the Marquis Mazzini's "air" is "haughty, and his look severe"\textsuperscript{20} when he returns in state to entertain at his castle. Gaston de Blondeville, bearing "a proud defiance in his eye"\textsuperscript{21} enjoys the opportunity he has to spite the court's dislike of his advancement by riding at King Henry's right hand. Even so, success such as this is rarely enough; The Marquis Mazzini is prepared to sacrifice his daughter to a dissolute duke for the sake of better connections, just as Montoni would give Emily to Morano in the name of more economic power. Moreover, where pride has met a fall, as in Schedoni's case, it manifests itself in insatiable ambition: "His spirit, as it had sometimes looked forth from under the disguise of his manners, seemed lofty; it showed not, however, the aspirings of a generous mind, but rather the gloomy pride of a disappointed one."\textsuperscript{22} Consequently, Schedoni's pride and the love of power drive him, even as a monk, to seek high office in his church; it leads him to offer criminal services to the Marchesa in the hope of preferment and even to face private mortification before her if it will lead to public recognition: "A desire...of the immediate preferment so necessary to his pride...finally

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Castles}, p. 3;

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Sicilian Romance}, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Gaston}, I, p. 83.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Italian}, p. 34.
made him willing to subject every honest feeling, and submit to any meanness, however vicious, rather than forego the favourite object of his erroneous ambition."\(^{23}\)

Their contemptuous awareness of their superiority, as they see it, in point of rank and mentality, is yet more evidence of their conceit. The Marquis Mazzini, for instance, is really amusing himself with what he sees as his own mental superiority when he answers the superstitious apprehensions of his daughters with "...are the weak and ridiculous fancies of women and servants to be obtruded upon my notice?"\(^{24}\) Of a similar nature is his disgust of the marchioness' "meek submission" as a "mark of a servile and insensible mind,"\(^{25}\) and the other examples of villainous contempt of sensibility mentioned above. Nor is Montoni disinclined to congratulate himself through contempt of others he sees as lesser than himself. Over their misunderstanding of her projected marriage to Morano, for instance, he retorts to Emily,""I might as reasonably have expected to find sincerity and uniformity of conduct in one of your sex as you to convict me of error in this affair."\(^{26}\) It is undoubtedly no coincidence that among Mrs. Radcliffe's males, only the villains regard women as inferior.

Moreover, they often parade their actual superiority, mostly a

\(^{23}\) \textit{Italian}, p. 231.

\(^{24}\) \textit{Sicilian Romance}, p. 5.

\(^{25}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 65.

function of physical power, for the pleasure of flaunting it. When
during their explorations of the south buildings of the Castle Mazzini,
the Marquis cows his servants into obedience with a reminder of his
absolute power over them, his action is partially one of glorying in
his own power and appeasing his pride. Montoni does the same; though
he wishes to coerce Emily into accepting Morano as a husband, for
instance, he obviously relishes being able to retort to her protests:
"'By what right!' cried Montoni, with a malicious smile, 'by the right
of my will; if you can elude that, I will not enquire by what right
you do so. I now remind you, for the last time, that you are a stranger,
in a foreign country, and that it is in your interest to make me your
friend.'" 27

Because of his pride, none of Mrs. Radcliffe's villains can bear
incidents or reflections demeaning to himself: "Malcolm, whose pride
was touched by the defeat of his people; whose ambition was curbed by
the authority, and whose greatness was rivalled by the power of the
Earl, conceived for him that deadly hatred which opposition to its
favourite passions naturally excites in a mind like his." 28 Thus is
the hatred of a villain aroused or aggravated by a view of his
inferiority in some respect. Similarly, the Duke de Luovo, having been
refused by Julia, grows vehement in his determination not to be defeated
by a mere woman: "His passions, inflamed by disappointment, and

27 Udolpho, pp. 216-7.
28 Castles, p. 3.
strengthened by repulse, now defied the power of obstacle; and those
considerations which would have operated with a more delicate mind to
overcome its original inclination, served only to increase the violence
of his." 29

Such hatred often leads to revenge against the author of the
villain's embarrassment. Because his pride was hurt by Alleyn's escape,
the Baron Malcolm resolves to have revenge by submitting Alleyn's lord,
Osbert, to the slow mental torture of awaiting his execution for an
extended period. Schedoni is similarly affected by Vivaldi's accusing
him while he is at prayer: "That insult, which had pointed forth his
hypocrisy, and ridiculed the solemn abstraction he assumed, had sunk
deep in his heart, and fermenting the direst passions of his nature,
he meditated a terrible revenge." 30

Notice that this example involves the possible exposure of the
villain's guilt, not just to others, but to self. One supreme evidence
of the villains' overwhelming pride is his inability to acknowledge
his own guilt, potentially the facet of his character most demeaning
to his inflated self-esteem. Exposure means not only contempt and
physical punishment but also constant stimuli to shame. In the
example above, Schedoni is terrified by Vivaldi's hints concerning his
past crimes, 31 and when, during the inquisition trial, father Giovanni's

29 Sicilian Romance, p. 28.
30 Italian, p. 109.
31 Loc. cit.
testimony completes his exposure, he is utterly mortified. And it is only with the utmost effort that he forces himself to admit his complicity in Ellena's case: "Schedoni... appeared almost to writhe under the agony, which his mind inflicted on him..." For the same reasons, the Marquis cannot face guilt at the Parisian court in The Romance of the Forest and plots only how to avoid doing so. In fact, the thought of public exposure is so painful to Schedoni and the Marquis de Montalt that when they are finally threatened with it, they commit suicide rather than live with the shame. Little wonder, then, that to accuse a villain is to arouse his most inveterate hatred and ferocity.

Despite such reprehensible traits, the pride of Mrs. Radcliffe's villains is justified to a certain malevolent extent, in that they possess a self-centered, pragmatic intelligence that her sympathetic characters lack, as we shall have occasion to note later. They are prepared to catch at every advantage of timing and preparation. The Baron Malcolm, for instance, finding himself by chance in possession of Osbert at a time when he lusts after Mary, resolves to have her in ransom for her brother. The knowledge that led to his capture, in fact, is a matter of the Baron's astuteness in establishing spies in the enemy camp. In the same way, having recognised a potential threat, Gaston de Blondeville and the Prior rush forward their plans to destroy

32 *Italian*, p. 364.
Woodreeve while the latter's chief defender is away: "Neither the Prior, nor the Baron de Blondeville, augured well to themselves from the Archbishop, seeing the manner in which he had held himself towards them; and they sought, by all means, to have the prisoner disposed of, before the return of that powerful and intrepid prelate." Gaston's later fouling of an opponent at the tournament is yet another instance of his ability to seize any advantage and turn it to account.

Similarly, the villains are all intelligent and experienced enough to size up the characters of others less disingenuous than themselves and to use such weaknesses as they may find to their own advantage. As early as A Sicilian Romance, for example, Mrs. Radcliffe discusses Maria de Vellorno's control of the Marquis Mazzini in terms of her using his shortcomings: "His passions were vehement, and she had the address to bend them to her own purpose; and so well conceal her influence that he thought himself most independent when he was most enslaved." Nor is the pattern disused even in Gaston de Blondeville, where we find the Prior forcing his will regarding Woodreeve on King Henry by preying on the royal jealousy of sovereignty.

However, it is Schedoni, Mrs. Radcliffe's most developed and most intelligent villain, who exhibits this dangerous talent most clearly. From the first, he is accorded an uncanny ability to judge others; his eyes seem "to penetrate, at a single glance, into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts." It is not surprising, then,

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34 Gaston, II, p. 146.
35 p. 2.
36 Italian, p. 35.
to find him neatly fielding Vivaldi's inferences concerning his association with the mysterious monk of Pàluzzi. Vivaldi, having badgered Schedoni into inquiring what injury this monk has caused him, attempts to trap Schedoni: "You will observe, reverend father," he says, "that I have not said I am injured...If you know that I am, this must be by other means than by my words; I have not even expressed resentment." Schedoni is ready, because he has measured Vivaldi's inability to conceal emotion precisely: "When, he replies, "a man is vehement and disordered we usually are inclined to suppose he feels resentment, and that he has cause of complaint, either real or imaginary." Throughout the novel, moreover, he manipulates the Marchesa Vivaldi with considerable skill, when once he has correctly assessed her character: "He perceived that her passions were strong, her judgement weak; and he understood, that, if circumstances should ever enable him to be serviceable in promoting the end at which anyone of those passions might aim, his fortune would be established." Consequently, when he is grooming her in order to create such an opportunity, "he knew that by flattering her vanity, he was most likely to succeed. He praised her, therefore, for qualities he wished her to possess, encouraged her to reject general opinions by admiring as the symptoms of a superior understanding, the convenient morality upon which she had occasionally acted; and calling sternness, justice,

37 Italian, p. 51.
38 Loc. cit.
39 Ibid., p. 227.
exalted that for strength of mind which was only callous insensibility.\textsuperscript{40} Clara McIntyre calls his ability at manipulation Iago-like, \textsuperscript{41} and her estimation is just.

Obviously, the major technique of this villainous cunning is deceit, that ability in emotional disguises which the sympathetic characters can neither comprehend nor achieve. Because their ambitions are invariably criminal, many of Mrs. Radcliffe's villains find it necessary to further their ends under a mask of virtue, whether they are on the offensive or the defensive. For Gaston de Blonderville, for example, to exhibit any concern about the supernatural portents and temporal accusations which implicate him in murder would be disastrous to his position at court and perhaps even to his life. Thus, he makes every effort to hide his fear in gaiety, noble bearing, and, in the case of Woodreeve's charges, righteous indignation.\textsuperscript{42} Never do we find great evidence of malignity in his conduct, and even just before his retributive death he cuts an admirable figure as a knight. Likewise, Schedoni must approach the Marchesa with the appearance of her humble confessor, but she suspects his ambitious motives and rejects him. When he is finally tried, he, like the Marquis de Montalt before him, maintains a convincing appearance of indifference, "the hardihood of atrocious vice,"\textsuperscript{43} right up until the moment when conclusive evidence

\textsuperscript{40}Italian, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{41}"The Later Career of the Elizabethan Villain - Hero," \textit{PMLA}, XI (1925), 876.
\textsuperscript{42}See \textit{Gaston}, I, pp. 118, 128.
\textsuperscript{43}Italian, p. 339.
of his guilt is introduced. Thus far does he protect himself by his wits.

This subtle intelligence, of course, only applies to intelligent villains. The dull-brained thug, Spalatro, who is Schedoni's accomplice, is as incapable of deceit as any heroine, though the qualities he cannot hide bear no comparison. At the ruined villa, his face gives away his plan of poisoning to Ellena: "She was struck with the expression of his countenance which exhibited a strange mixture of archness and malignity. He seemed congratulating himself upon his ingenuity, and anticipating some observation of triumph..."44

Moreover, subtle powers of character manipulation and deceit appear only in those villains who have something to hide as well as to gain. They give way to brutality in villains who have no reason to hide their selfish aims, and who have already achieved a large measure of power over those they would coerce. Thus Mazzini,45 Montoni, and Baron Malcolm, all of whom are local rulers, are the ones who threaten violence, lock wives and sons in dungeons, and torture enemies with the possibility of execution out of revenge. Of course, this very brutality is based on a shrewd assessment of what they have power enough to get away with, but it lacks, somehow, the touch of evil genius that characterizes Schedoni, the Prior, and to a lesser extent, Gaston de Blondeville and the Marquis de Montalt.

44 Italian, p. 216.

45 Of course, while Mazzini is still trying to hide the secret of his imprisoned wife, he manipulates the superstitions fears of his servants and family to keep them away from the south buildings. But more of that later.
In any case, the leading malefactors of all Mrs. Radcliffe’s novels show considerable ability in manipulating affairs to their own ends, and it is fortunate that, in accordance with the moral nature of her fictional world, their designs cannot prevail. Sometimes, admittedly the villains are stumped merely by the limits of human reason. On two occasions, for example, Schedoni cannot, try as he may, come up with plausible excuses to explain his erratic behaviour in pursuit of ambition. Shortly after stopping short of Ellena’s murder, he can think of nothing to clarify his conduct toward her: “The circumstances of the late discovery were almost perpetually recurring to his affrighted conscience, accompanied by a fear that Ellena might suspect the real purpose of his midnight visit; and he alternately formed and rejected plausible falsehoods, that might assuage her curiosity, and delude her apprehension.”46 Later, when he must face her with the news of Ellena’s survival, he has similar difficulty with the Marchesa: “He was ruminating upon an excuse to be offered the Marchesa, which might be sufficient both to assuage her disappointment and baffle her curiosity, and he could not, at present, fabricate one that might soothe her resentment, without risk of betraying his secret.”47 Occasionally, very occasionally, the villain is also thwarted by the circumspection of his victim. When the Prior, for instance, comes for Woodreeve in his cell at Kenilworth, his pretense of being a confessor sent in the King’s name is not enough to gain him

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46 *Italian*, p. 246.

47 *Italian*, p. 257.
entry, for the circumstances of the incident arouse Woodreeve's fear and suspicion. For the most part, however, it is the vehemence of the villains' own selfish passions that undermines his deceitful plans and exposes his viciousness to all and sundry.

Very often, despite his efforts to the contrary, the force of his passions or his guilty fear as a result of them, is so strong as to preclude disguise, and he undermines his deceptions by doing or saying the wrong thing at the wrong moment. In *The Romance of the Forest*, for instance, the Marquis de Montalt, once he has imprisoned Adeline in his palace of pleasure, tries the urbane pleadings of a courtly lover on her, but gradually the facade of civilization deteriorates into savagery as she resists his seductive persuasions."48 Schedoni, too, is frequently unable to control himself in times of crisis, as in his nervous and desperate attempt to answer Ellena's suspicion of his involvement with the Marchesa: "'Informed of the Marchesa's designs!' said Schedoni, with embarrassment and displeasure: 'Have you ever imagined that I could be accessory - that I could consent to assist, I mean, could consent to be a confidant of such atrocious' - Schedoni, bewildered, confounded, and half betrayed, checked himself."49 He is so fearful that his guilt will be betrayed and his hopes dashed, that he almost exposes himself. Later on, Schedoni becomes apprehensive of the intentions of the peasant, their guide, in view of hints that the

49 *Italian*, p. 267.
peasant has let drop; in the course of interrogating him, however, he becomes so intent on turning the peasant's mind away from Spalatro's crimes that he reveals unwittingly that he knows more of them himself than he will admit.  

The process by which we and the characters of Gaston de Blondeville become apprised of Gaston's culpability is a series of similar lapses on his part. His acting as theJoyous Bridegroom at the revels that precede his wedding soon breaks down, for instance, and everyone sees that something is wrong when his preoccupation with Woodreeve's charges causes him to break the decorum of the assembly — "He stood apart looking on, and, when her Highness spoke to him, he seemed nigh senseless of the honour." Later, he betrays such emotion at Pierre's ballad, which preserves some of the details of his crimes, that many present, and the readers as well, scruple "not to think the story touched him nearly," and, when Woodreeve accuses the Prior of wearing the locket and chain of a murdered man, "my Lord of York observed the chain to tremble in its holder's [Gaston's] hand, and believed, that Woodreeve had spoken the truth."  

More than in words and actions, however, the villains' real feelings find most powerful expression in their faces, despite their efforts to

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50 Italian, pp. 278-9.
51 I, p. 146; Similarly, he mopes about at his own wedding feast (II, p. 21-2) to the displeasure of the court.
52 I, p. 172.
53 II, p. 270.
deceive. Thus, when, early in the examination of Woodreeve, Gaston de Blondeville lies to account for the man said to have been murdered, "though his words were strong and sufficient, they beheld in his countenance paleness and consternation," and every time that the ghost interrupts the royal ceremonies, it is only Gaston who changes countenance at its presence, for everyone else takes it for a human interloper. By the time Woodreeve is tried for supposed witchcraft in Volume Two, we, along with the Archbishop of York and much of the court, heartily distrust Gaston in the light of all his crucial slips. Schedoni, too, being moved by passions and fears of similar extent, has similar difficulty in hiding their expression in his countenance, though his errors are only momentary, marking the interval between the shock of some intelligence and the reaction of his evil intelligence in trying to hide his response. In his first confrontation with Vivaldi at the Marchesa's chambers for example, Vivaldi's charges reveal a chink in his smooth armour of deception. It is only an instantaneous exposure, but in it, Vivaldi "beheld a man, whose passions might impel him to the perpetration of almost any crime, how hideous so ever." Only when Schedoni knows he is totally exposed does his mask slip completely, however, and by then it is too late. Nevertheless, his reaction to the evidence is final confirmation of his guilt: "Vivaldi, whose attention was now

54 Gастonu, I, p. 120.

55 Italian, p. 51.
fixed upon Schedoni, observed a livid hue overspread his complexion, and that his eyes were averted from this extraordinary person with horror." The shock and dismay of Schedoni were too powerful for concealment." Montoni, in The Mysteries of Udolpho, even betrays himself by the quality of his natural expressions. When Emily first meets him, she notices that "sometimes the deep workings of his mind entirely abstracted him from surrounding objects, and threw a gloom over his visage that rendered it terrible; at others, his eyes seemed almost to flash fire, and all the energies of his soul appeared to be roused for some great enterprise." These glowing coals amid the glowering darkness of the rest of his face are obvious warnings of his viciousness.

In addition to exposing them to the reader and to their fellow characters, the force of the villains' passions also thwarts them by interfering with their ability to reason. As La Luc succinctly points out, "a bad heart and a truly philosophic head, have never yet been united in the same individual." Such erroneous conclusions as they reach by means of this specious rationality leads them into self-deception and dangerous mistakes in action.

The evidence of their unreason is fairly clear. In the pursuit of selfish ends, for example, two of Mrs. Radcliffe's villains attempt

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56 Italian, p. 344.
57 Ibid., p. 362.
58 Udolpho, p. 192.
59 Forest, p. 319.
to justify murder by means of specious philosophy of the type which both 
La Luc and St. Aubert abhor: "When the Marquis de Montalt tempts 
La Motte to evil he does so by means of the subversive tenets of the 
'new philosophy', the relativity of right and wrong, and the exemption 
of the strong spirit from the laws which control and support the weak."^60 
Schedoni uses similar principles, allied to a standard of justice 
defined by class to persuade the Marchesa that "death only can oblivi- 
ate the degradation she has occasioned; her death alone can restore the 
original splendour of the line she would have sullied."^61 

On both these occasions, the villains are pressuring figures who, 
relative to themselves, are dull witted, so the incidents could be 
considered simple examples of cunning deception were it not also true 
that the villains themselves think and act on similar principles derived 
from a passion-clouded reason. Schedoni is still the best example; 
when his brother cuts off the stipend he consistently squanders, his 
perverted reason suggests a justification for fratricide based on 
evidence provided by his passions: "It is certain that Schedoni, terming 
the necessary prudence of di Bruno to be meanness and cold insensibility 
to the comforts of others, suffered full as much resentment towards him 
from system, as he did from passion, though the meanness and insensibility 
he imagined in his brother's character were...real traits of his own..."^62

^60 Tompkins, Novel, p. 251. 
^61 Italian, p. 168. 
^62 Italian, p. 360 [my italics].
Similarly, his actions are reasoned from false premises based on a view of the world distorted by passion. At the trial, "Schedoni was somewhat surprised at this apparent candour of Vivaldi towards himself, but accustomed to impute an evil motive to all conduct, which he could not clearly comprehend, he did not scruple to believe, that some latent mischief was directed against him...." Nor can simple truth exist, in his jaundiced outlook: "he seldom perceived truth when it lay on the surface; he could follow it through all the labyrinths of disquisition, but overlooked it, when it was undisguised before him. In fact, he cared not for truth, nor sought it by bold and broad argument, but loved to exert the wily cunning of his nature in hunting it through artificial perplexities." By a fallacious analogy with himself, moreover, he denies goodness in human nature: "He regarded Vivaldi as a rash boy, who was swayed only by his passions; but while he suffered deep resentment for the evil in his character, he felt neither respect nor kindness for the good, the sincerity, the love of justice, the generosity, which threw a brilliancy even on his foibles. Schedoni, indeed, only saw evil in human nature." 

Ultimately, Schedoni's perversion of reason results in self deception and error. Though he recognized flattery, he fails to resist it: "While he detected her meaning, and persuaded himself that he despised the flattery, with which she so thinly veiled it [her order for Ellena's

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63 Italian, p. 337.
64 Ibid., p. 34.
65 Ibid., p. 52.
murder], unconsciously suffered his self-love to be soothed by the compliment."\(^{66}\) Nor is he capable of an objective self examination, as the protagonists usually are. After discovering his error in attempting Ellena's murder, he looks, agonized, upon his guilt, in search of its origin, "but the subtlety of self-love still eluded his enquiries, and he did not detect that pride was even at this instant of self-examination, and of critical import, the master-spring of his mind."\(^{67}\) In fact, all the values he does cherish, viewed rationally, make him a fool; "While he confounded delicacy of feeling with fatuity of mind, taste with caprice, and imagination with error, he yielded, when he most congratulated himself on his sagacity, to illusions not less egregious, because they were less brilliant, than those which are incident to sentiment and feeling."\(^{68}\) Ultimately, moreover, this foolish self-deception and errors in character appraisal such as that mentioned above (n. 65) lead him to his own destruction in the Inquisition.

Now, since they are motivated by similar passions, and since their actions in the pursuit of those passions are analogous, we might with reasonable safety imply a similar lack of reason in all Mrs. Radcliffe's other villains; indeed, many have left us with revealing examples of their thought, or lack of it, to back up this surmise. The Marquis de Montalt's philosophy we have already mentioned, so here is the

\(^{66}\) Italian, p. 176.
\(^{67}\) Ibid., p. 225.
\(^{68}\) Ibid., p. 289.
Marchesa di Vivaldi, sounding for all the world like Lady Macbeth complaining of her husband's scruples: "He has the faults of a mind which is merely well disposed; he is destitute of the discernment and the energy which would make it great. If it is necessary to adopt a conduct, that departs in the smallest degree from those common rules of morality which he has cherished, without examining them, from his infancy, he is shocked, and shrinks from action." 69 Similarly, Montoni's low opinion of women is based on fallacious medieval prejudices, even by eighteenth century standards. 70 Madame Montoni, of course, gives little evidence to refute it; she is so proud that she cannot recognize her own best interests and continues to oppose him when such opposition will only lead, as it does, to fatal consequences as a result of his power. 71 In Mrs. Radcliffe's first villain, Baron Malcolm, the passions even succeed in so completely debilitating the reason as to prevent his taking action. When Alleyn escapes from Castle Dumbayne, Malcolm is so overcome by conflicting passions, he can establish no viable course, not even of revenge, for some time: "Such is the alternate violence of evil passions that they never suffer their subjects to act with consistency, but, torn by conflicting energies, the gratification of one propensity is destruction to the enjoyment of another, and in the moment in which they imagine happiness in their grasp, is to them the moment of disappointment." 72

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69 *Italian*, p. 172.

70 See *Udolpho*, p. 270.


72 *Castles*, p. 76.
Thus, increasingly in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, do her villains expose and undermine themselves. Her first villains, Malcolm, or Mazzini, for example, tend to be self-declared and crudely brutal, yet even so, they fall, ironically, as a result of their own evil passions and acts. With her later miscreants comes a far greater complexity and subtlety of the same motif. In so far as they go to great lengths to appear virtuous while their plots become more devious and subtle, they make a progressively greater impact on the reader as their every design is somehow blocked or contributes actively to their final demise. The ironic, self-defeating aspect of villainy in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels at once contributes to Mrs. Radcliffe's negative recommendation concerning it, justifies the ordered, moral nature of the external cosmos she creates, and therefore reinforces the artistic unity her works represent.

This discussion of selfish passion and punishment should not be left to imply, however, that Mrs. Radcliffe's villains are totally depraved. On the contrary, in accordance with the duality of fallen mankind, all of them exhibit some virtue or conscience, be it ever so microscopic and unmitigating. All of them, for example, with the exception of Maria de Vellorno, Montoni, and the Prior, who die off-stage where their commentary is inaudible, undergo some sort of deathbed repentance which they communicate to those around them. Gaston de Blondeville and the Marquis de Montalt vary the pattern somewhat; the former returns as a spirit to expiate, while the latter leaves a repentant suicide note. Some, moreover, have an occasional shining moment under less fearful circumstances. The Marchesa di Vivaldi, for
instance, at least has scruples about ordering Ellena's murder. "Her mind was not yet familiar with atrocious guilt; and the crime which Schedoni had suggested, somewhat alarmed her. She feared to think, and still more to name it... ."  

Conscience even moves in the dull brain of Spalatro, who, having been plagued by hallucinations of his victims, will not kill Ellena. Similarly, Mazzini, when his wife begs his pity, suffers at the thought of his murdering her; "his mind was not yet sufficiently hardened by guilt to repel the arrows of conscience, and his imagination responded to her power." The Marquis de Montalt, too, is plagued by his conscience on the night he stays at the abbey wherein he murdered his brother, and when he has La Motte arrested in revenge for aiding Adeline, he "directed one of his servants to procure a carriage from Auboine, that Madame La Motte ...might follow her husband" - a singular bit of gallantry. However, Mrs. Radcliffe would explain these slight gestures at virtue as a device to heighten our awareness of her villains' evil by contrast. Of de Montalt, for example, she says "his character's ...nicer shades were blended with some shining tints; but these served only to render more striking, by contrast, the general darkness of the portrait." Conscience, furthermore, is part

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73 Italian, p. 169.
74 Ibid., p. 232.
75 Sicilian Romance, p. 70.
76 Forest, p. 407.
77 Ibid., p. 282.
78 Ibid., p. 406.
of every soul in terms of the traditional Christian concepts she appears to embrace in her novels. Yet, whatever the cause, most of the villains' saving graces are so miniscule in relation to their crimes that we are not materially encouraged to regard them with sympathy.

Only two of her villains so strongly exhibit latent sensibility, conscience, and virtue amid their crimes that they become sympathetic figures in the eyes of the reader. As Fred Garber has noted in passing, "When a bad character does show qualms and trepidation, he is on his way to becoming sympathetic, as in the case of La Motte, in The Romance of the Forest, and Schedoni in The Italian." Schedoni and La Motte are somewhat cognate with Milton's Satan, whose fall and suffering are poignantly portrayed and tend to solicit emotional sympathy; to these two we come far closer than to their colleagues, for the others are viewed almost exclusively from without, in terms of their actions and immediate motives.

La Motte, because he repents earlier treachery and bravely moves to save Adeline despite the consequences, becomes almost wholly the object of our condescending sympathy and approbation. That he is different from other Radcliffian villains becomes apparent when we learn that he is not vicious out of pride, but only from self-indulgent weakness: "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

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79 p. ix.
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..."  

His progress into evil has been led on by
passion to dissipation - and from dissipation to vice; but having once
touched the borders of infamy, the progressive steps followed each other
fast, and he now saw himself the pander of a villain, and the betrayer
of an innocent girl, whom every plea of justice and humanity called upon
him to protect."  

Of course, part of this weakness is a great timidity, which, compared
to the courage of the hero Theodore, or the blustering menace of the
real villain, Montalt, is so great, he often appears a pitiable figure.
Our first impression of him, at the mysterious house outside Paris, is
one of a quavering coward. He is terrified by the surmise that his
abductors intend to rob and murder him - he takes little heed for his
wife, and "after revolving every possibility of escape, he endeavoured
to await the event with fortitude; but La Motte could boast of no such
virtue." Later, he decides to hide his family from interlopers in
the Abbey dungeons, but in so deciding, "selfish prudence was more
conspicuous than tender anxiety for his wife," and when they are

80 Forest, p. 4.
81 Ibid., p. 247.
82 Ibid., p. 7.
83 Ibid., p. 67.
interrupted, he runs away to hide, leaving his female charges unprotected.\(^{84}\) Furthermore, it is fear for himself that persuades him to co-operate with the Marquis in the attempts on Adeline's virtue and life.

Only the extremities of this fear can occasionally force him, with limited success, into expressions that are more typically villainous in their violence or deceit. When, for example, he attempts to fabricate a "plausible falsehood" to explain to his wife and Adeline his peculiar relationship to the Marquis, he succeeds only in arousing greater surprise and curiosity.\(^{85}\) But at least he is able, at the height of his terror of the Marquis, to silence his wife's speculations: "'Bury your surmise in your own bosom, as you would avoid my curse and my destruction.'\(^{86}\)

Yet he is never so extreme a villain as most of Mrs. Radcliffe's malefactors.

The reason is, of course, that he does have scruples and finer feelings in greater abundance than the others, a moral reserve that eventually leads to his rehabilitation. There are numerous occasions before the real test of his character that indicate that he has much of the sensibility which Mrs. Radcliffe requires of her sympathetic figures. In the first place, for instance, his humanity is sufficient to prevent him from abandoning Adeline, to him merely a sick girl thrust on him by others, in favour of a faster flight from the authorities.

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\(^{84}\) Forest, p. 104.

\(^{85}\) Ibid., p. 112.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., p. 144.
In fact, he receives the news of her fever and exhaustion "with real concern - The beauty and innocence of Adeline had overcome the disadvantageous circumstances under which she had been introduced to him, and he now gave less consideration to the inconvenience she might hereafter occasion him, than to the hope of her recovery." Later, he comes to appreciate and give thanks for her "amiable disposition," and when she offers to go forth into the abbey to find out who has entered, he is deeply moved by her sacrifice to him. In addition, it is out of regard for his little family that he cannot bear the thought of fleeing the abbey on horseback, and the thought of his weaknesses consistently fills him with remorse.

It is certainly not implausible, then, that, though he is at first still prepared to take part in the Marquis' designs, their extent eventually shocks him into repentance and new moral strength. When Adeline is first returned to the abbey, "instead of employing his mind upon the means of saving Adeline from destruction, he endeavoured only to lull the pangs of conscience, and to persuade himself into a belief that he must proceed in the course he had begun. He knew himself to be in the power of the Marquis, and he dreaded that power... ."

87 Forest, p. 16.
88 Ibid., p. 55.
89 Ibid., p. 76.
90 Ibid., p. 64.
91 See Ibid., pp. 260, 374.
92 Ibid., p. 247.
When, however, he has been shocked with the realization that the Marquis contemplates murder, "he...saw before him an abyss of guilt which startled even the conscience that so long had slumbered." 93 From that point, his repentance is just a matter of time; though he goes half heartedly to her room as ordered, the sight of her innocence and the sound of her unknowingly appropriate supplication for his pity shock him into his first act of repentant virtue, her release, "one of those sudden impulses of humanity which sometimes operate even upon the most depraved hearts." 94 From that point on, despite his continued timidity, and weakness, he attracts our concern in his sufferings as the saviour of the heroine. When he leaves at the end of the book for a secluded exile, his conscience pained by Adeline's thanking him for the opportunity of escape, he goes with our blessing and a hint that his life will be, in future, reformed. 95

Schedoni, too, encourages our sympathetic interest through his painful burden of guilt and the "inchoate paternal passions he displays towards Ellena." 96 Like La Motte, Schedoni is shocked by the potential extent of his guilt, and twice refrains from murdering Ellena. On the first occasion, she has fainted before him on the beach near Spalatro's...

93 Forest, p. 268.
94 Ibid., p. 277.
95 Ibid., p. 402.
96 Garber, p. xiii.
villa: "As he gazed upon her helpless form, he became agitated. He quitted it, and traversed the beach in short turns, and with hasty steps; came back again, and bent over it - his heart seemed sensible to some touch of pity."

There follows a see-saw battle between virtue and expediency in his mind, one of Mrs. Radcliffe's best incidents of suspense, in which he eventually yields to virtue, but not without "shame and indignation against himself" for doing so. Later, he is able to order Spalatro to carry out the act, but when once again he finds that he must be the murderer, the pangs of conscience again begin to unnerve him:

Spalatro resigned his stiletto, and threw the cloak again over his arm. The Confessor stepped to the door, and, trying to open it, 'It is fastened!' said he in alarm, 'Some person has got into the house - it is fastened!'

'That well may be, Signor,' replied Spalatro, calmly, 'for I saw you bolt it yourself after I came into the room.'

'True,' said Schedoni, recovering himself, 'that is true.'

Not even the wine he gulps can preserve him from "severe emotion" on approaching Ellena's room. In the scene which follows, universally acknowledged as the emotional climax of the book, he repeatedly moves to stab Ellena, examining his motives as he goes, repeatedly cannot bring himself to do it, and finally falls into a stupour of shocked grief and conscience on discovering her to be his daughter.

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97 Italian, p. 223.
98 Ibid., p. 224.
99 Ibid., p. 231.
It is the emotional pain he experiences as a result of this discovery that most encourages our sympathy. Time and again, he is lost in horror and remorse at the thought of his plan: "...When he considered that this very Spalatro, whom Ellena had with such simplicity supposed to have, at some time, spared a life through pity, had in truth spared her own, and, yet more, had been eventually a means of preventing him from destroying his own child, the confessor turned in horror from his designs..." Similarly, when he must face the Marchesa, he experiences terrible emotional pain. When she demands knowledge of his success, he raises his eyes to her, but quickly looks away - "indignation had lifted them, and disgust and stifled horror turned them away." At first, he seems genuinely repentant of infanticide, and we pity him that he has no means of unburdening himself to his daughter.

However, for all the power and anguish of his suffering, Schedoni never wins the complete forgiveness, in terms of the novel, or in the readers' eyes for that matter, that La Motte does. Mrs. Radcliffe points out, for instance, that he spares Ellena out of instinct, not rational repentance of past crimes, and even if we refuse to accept such a glib explanation, we have to admit that his new found virtue extends only to one particular crime, unlike La Motte's repentance, which leads him to face, albeit in terrified despair, the consequences of all his previous misdemeanours. So unrepentant is Schedoni of all his other

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100 Italian, p. 267.
101 Ibid., p. 293.
sins that he attempts to deny them all in the court of the Inquisition. Moreover, no sooner has he recoiled from murdering Ellena than her importance as a daughter becomes a poor second to her value as a means, through marriage to Vivaldi, to his selfish and arrogant ends. Thus, Schedoni, though the attempted murder causes him much pain, gives up neither the pride nor the appetites that led him to contemplate it, and remains throughout the novel a powerful, interesting, yet reprehensible figure of evil.

Most of Mrs. Radcliffe's critics, then, have both over and under estimated the stature of her villain. Those who see little more in earlier gothic fiction than sensationalism can reduce him to a mere adjunct of the heroine's psychology, the necessary and affective cause of her fears. At the opposite extreme, those who treat Mrs. Radcliffe's villains and their world symbolically as a celebration of the power of irrational evil in the face of a rationally conceived world view make him a figure only quantitatively removed from Ambrosio, Melmoth, or Heathcliff. Actually, the villain of Mrs. Radcliffe's works lies between these two estimates.

He is more than a mere machine to frighten the heroine, though admittedly he holds that function as well. He is a character in his own right, whose passion-ridden life and death provide the bad notes on the scale of human worth in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. This is not to argue that he is complex, but since he has a violent emotional life

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102 See, for example, Evans, p. 9.
103 See, for example, Hart, pp. 88, 98.
of considerable colour, he is perhaps less flat in profile than most of his counterparts in the contemporary fiction of an age in which the didactic function of popular literature was still a central issue, and in which, as a result, authors tended to produce embodiments of moral attitudes rather than attempt the portraits of infinitely complex human psyches. Certainly, Mrs. Radcliffe's villain has a great deal more life and interest than a mere cypher of the plot.

However, he also remains less, on the other hand, than the sublimely shocking figure of Promethean evil that some find him to be. In the first place, unlike the figure of primal evil, he does not stand defiantly outside the moral world, but rather within it, as a self-condemning example of vice, against which virtue may be measured. He realizes he is evil; he wills his evil; in fact, he is a "social villain", but he is in no way shallow, simply because he has been created on the basis of those traditional Christian concepts of depravity, will, conscience, and Grace which structure Mrs. Radcliffe's cosmos. Nor is he unreal because he is part of a fictional world whose ultimate morality leads him, ironically, to contribute to his humiliation and destruction by means of his own evil acts.

A character so constituted in such a world can never achieve the mysterious attraction of Ambrosio, arch-villain of The Monk. Because in the terms of his own world and psychological make-up he remains socially culpable for his crimes, he gains little or none of our sympathy unless he repents. The guilt of his successors, on the other hand, is shrouded in moral doubt which allows us to excuse, at least to
an extent, their individual actions. Fred Garber strikes a significant contrast between Schedoni and Ambrosio in this regard: "Schedoni's pride," he says, "had driven him to Machiavellian manipulations and, before the events of the book, to fratricide. However shocking the latter, these are all the acknowledged, public, expected sins of the villain, sins which he had consciously chosen to commit and could presumably have chosen not to, had he so willed. Ambrosio, though, who has already realized the public reputation that Schedoni has not yet perfected, becomes the victim of bottled up lusts brought to fruition by a demon in human disguise."¹⁰⁴

Moreover, the Radcliffian villains are satanic only in a traditional, literary sense; they are men, rather than preternatural embodiments of evil. Aside from dark and glowering looks, which are to be found on the faces of nearly all her malefactors, only Schedoni, again, is accorded demonic qualities with any consistency, and even he remains a worldly plotter for self-aggrandizement, unlike Ambrosio: "The villains do not... share the same sins, and that this point of divergence, the monks of Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe reveal an ultimate difference in outlook. Schedoni wants power and status (and the wealth that comes with them), but Ambrosio's passions are self-destructive and have no other goal

¹⁰⁴ p. xii.

¹⁰⁵ In The Italian, (p. 34), we learn "there was something terrible in... his figure's air; something almost superhuman"; on p. 110, "he resembled a spectre rather than a 'human being'"; on p. 175, his appearance makes the Marchesa start, as at a ghost; and on p. 402, the pattern culminates in his cry of phrygic victory, "so strange and horrible, so convulsed, yet so loud, so exalting, yet so unlike any human voice..."
than immediate gratification."\textsuperscript{106} We are not forced to recognize in a Radcliffian villain an abyss of evil within ourselves; because he remains culpable in terms of his fictional world, he remains representative of currents in human nature which we do, or recognize that we should exclude from our own thought and behaviour.

\textsuperscript{106}Garber, p. xii.
CHAPTER 4

THE ISSUES OF CHARACTER: THE SYMPATHETIC CHARACTERS AND EMOTIONAL CONTROL

Just as Mrs. Radcliffe's villains, in accordance with their roles in Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional cosmos, exhibit boundless cruelty and aesthetic insensitivity which alienate them from it and leads to their downfall, so the sympathetic characters of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels distinguish themselves, in contrast, by their ability to appreciate the basic harmony and justice of the universe and to fit themselves to it by means of aesthetic sensitivity, moral sensibility, and benevolence, in the manner of contemporary novels of sentiment. Their aspirations and limitations, too, complement and follow the coherent thematic pattern that marks Mrs. Radcliffe's work.

In the first place, all her heroes and heroines exhibit a taste for the arts that suggests a love of those aesthetic principles on which creation is based in her novels. All are musical; heroine and hero alike are comforted by playing or listening to instruments. Julia, Emily, and Adeline, for instance, all play the lute. Similarly, Valancourt is an accomplished musician and even St. Aubert relaxes with an oboe.¹ Similarly, they possess ability and judgement in the graphic

¹For the sake of brevity, I shall not give individual references for each character. It is sufficient, I hope, to say that they may be found engaged in these activities at least once in the course of their respective novels.
arts. Julia paints, for example, while Adeline and Emily draw. In addition, Julia, Emilia, and Madame de Menon are described as cultivating conversation, in the eighteenth century manner, as an art, while both St. Aubert and Count Villefort exhibit a virtuoso-like regard of the natural and human history of a region which borders on aesthetic appreciation rather than scientific analysis.

But most important of these aesthetic interests is poetry, which many sympathetic figures both write and appreciate. Julia often retires with a volume of Tasso, while at Leleoncourt, La Luc's retreat, Adeline finds great pleasure in "the better English poets," Milton and Shakespeare. Similarly, Emily St. Aubert often retires to her room at La Vallee to read verse; Valancourt's rustic apartment is filled with volumes of Homer, Horace, and Petrarch; Ellena finds relief in the poetry Olivia brings to her convent cell; and even Baroness Barbara de Blondeville, a character little developed in Gaston de Blondeville, though she enjoys the attributes of a typical heroine, listens raptly to the songs of the court minstrels. Moreover, nearly all the characters mentioned above compose verse as well. In part, this poetical bent was a sine qua non of literary fashion. "A taste for introspective verse was an almost invariable accompaniment of sensibility. Every heroine possessed a copy of Thomson's Seasons, and the story of Lavinia in Autumn was found deeply affecting. Sombre reflections from Young's Night Thoughts (1742-45) are

\[2\] Sicilian Romance, p. 3.

\[3\] Forest, p. 308 [a fine bit of eighteenth century British nationalism].
often quoted chapter mottoes." Yet the characters' poetical interests in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels have much more significance than mere convention. The fact that her sympathetic characters are so attracted to the beauty, harmony, and noble thought of poetry or are so moved by some subject to write upon it indicates, in the context of Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world, a laudable sensitivity to both moral and aesthetic principles which, as we have seen, are ultimately Divine.

Of course, this sensitivity is revealed directly in their constant appreciation of Divine aesthetics, benevolence, and justice in the forms of the universe. Much of the description in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels that posits God as creator of natural harmony, beauty, and sublimity is, as we have seen, in terms of a sympathetic characters response to what he sees. And even on the countless occasions when Divinity is not actually involved, a character's appreciative response to nature is still a sure sign of a good heart and principles. Because, for example, "the serenity

4 Edith Birkhead, "Sentiment and Sensibility in the Eighteenth Century Novel", Essays and Studies of the English Association, XI, 101. All the poems mentioned in this quotation occur as chapter mottoes in Udolpho.

5 I should note in passing, moreover, that their poetry sometimes enriches larger currents within the novel as a whole. Occasionally, for instance, they have prophetic bearing on the plot, as does Osbert's Ode to Morning, sung by Mary, at the time of Alleyn's deepest dejection. It angurs, with its symbolic coming of light, that their fortunes will soon amend (See Castles, pp. 212-3). Similarly, Pierre's long ballad (Gaston de Blondeville, I, p. 150 ff). of dreadful murder avenged by supernatural agency is an amalgam of court gossip that augurs the truth about the evil baron. Sometimes, such poems comment obliquely on themes treated more directly throughout the novel. Two of Adeline's poems in The Romance of the Forest, Night (p. 100) and To the Visions of Fancy (p. 44), for example, discuss the role of the mind in supernatural experiences, and the gratifying nature of such expansions of imaginative thought, whereas the action tends to show how dangerous and enervating they are.
of evening and the still solemnity of the scene, conspired to lull her mind into a pleasing forgetfulness of her troubles," we know that she possesses both correct morality and taste. The same might be said for her brother, Osbert, when we learn that he is tremendously moved while rambling in the highlands. Similarly, it is because Madame de Menon slips "into a pleasing and complacent melancholy" at the sight of a pleasant evening landscape that we, in part, know her for the admirable figure she is. I might cite literally dozens of other similar incidents, but let me conclude with one that is quite overtly slanted toward the revelation of character. In The Italian, there is an unique passage in the course of the flight by Ellena and Vivaldi from the convent at Mount Carmel in which the travellers come upon a typical picturesque prospect of great beauty. Now, instead of describing the scene at length and then telling us how Ellena and Vivaldi reacted to it - Mrs. Radcliffe's usual manner of presentation - she has the characters engage in an aesthetic dialogue over it: "'This cool and balmy air revives me,' said Ellena, 'and what a soothing shade prevails over the scene! How softened, yet how distinct, is every object; how sweetly dubious the more removed ones; while the mountains beyond character themselves sublimely upon the still glowing horizon.'" Vivaldi, in turn, applauds and amplifies this descriptive appreciation, and so they go on, until our knowledge of the view and of their mutual appreciation is complete. In this way, we are directly informed of characters' virtuous sensibilities.

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6 Castles, p. 40.
7 Sicilian Romance, p. 39.
8 p. 161.
As a result of this appreciation of the Divine principles on which
the world is constituted, sympathetic characters are moved to carry out
benevolent and moral acts which, being in accordance with those
principles, integrate them most successfully with their world.
"Sensibility...is good, since it reveals a good heart: when one is capable
of feeling, a situation of distress will call for a response as much
as a landscape does. Benevolence and sensibility go hand in hand for
Mrs. Radcliffe."  

Once again, examples of benevolent thought and action are so copious
that space must limit the catalogue. Osbert pities deeply the ladies
he sees are fellow prisoners in the Castle Dunbayne, especially the
Baroness Malcolm. Yet, as in all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, "one act of
benificence, one act of real usefulness, is worth all the abstract
sentiment in the world," so, "awake only to the wish of alleviating
her sorrows, he rejected cold and useless delicacy, and resolved, if
possible, to learn the cause of her misfortunes." Similarly the real
Marchioness Mazzini finding her route of escape from her dungeon locked
thinks not of herself: "'I have too long been used to misfortune to
sink under its pressure...,'" she says. "It is for you, Julia, who so
lament my fate; and who being thus delivered to the power of your father

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9 Garber, p. viii.
10 Udolphi, p. 80.
11 Castles, p. 116.
are sacrificed to the Duke di Luovo - that my heart swells." In The Romance of the Forest, nearly every action of La Luc has an altruistic and benevolent intent, for "calamity taught him to feel with peculiar sympathy the distress of others," while Theodore, of course, sacrifices himself for Adeline's sake - "For himself, indeed, he saw nothing but destruction, and was only relieved from total despair, by feeble hope, that she whom he loved better than himself, might one time enjoy that happiness of which he not venture to look for a participation." In Udolpho, St. Aubert exhibits benevolence in his concern for his retainers, his kind assistance and hospitality to strangers such as Valancourt, and his consideration even for his enemies, the Quesnels, while Emily's first act on coming into the late Madame Cheron's estates is to satisfy the wants of their needy tenants. And it is Valancourt's exhibition of benevolent generosity in supporting the St. Aubert's old servant and in rescuing Bonnac from debtor's prison that finally starts to re-establish his reputation in Emily's eyes. Sometimes, even nature becomes an object of benevolent feeling because of its human associations; like La Luc, Ellena finds the scenery precious because of its relationship to others who are absent: "When every mountain of that magnificent horizon, which enclosed her native landscape, that country which she believed Vivaldi to inhabit, stood unfolded, how affecting, how

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12 Sicilian Romance, p. 67.
13 p. 290.
14 p. 242.
overwhelming were her sensations!" Such are the actions and feelings which are repeated again and again in these and other novels, and which exhibit major characters' virtues and their congruency to the nature of their world.

Of course, a strict sense of justice is often a necessary concomitant to benevolent feelings and actions towards one's fellow man. Thus it is, then, that Vivaldi will not implicate even the arch-villain Schedoni to the inquisition without proof of guilt: He "required of the tribunal to understand that he did not summon Ansaldo, or any other person, before them, but had merely obeyed their command to repeat what the stranger had said." By the same token, the merchant Woodreeve will not give up his just accusation of Gaston de Blondeville, "so confident was he that he was performing a duty; and, what is more, that to perform his duty in this world is the wisest, the most truly cunning thing a man can contrive to do."

So far I have mentioned only principals in this matter of benevolence and justice, but it extends to dozens of Mrs. Radcliffe's minor characters, of which I shall note but a few. Verneuil, for example, who rescues Clara La Luc from her bolting horse, begs "he might be spared the pain of receiving thanks for having followed only an impulse of common humanity." Similarly, the guard who helps Paulo

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15 Italian, p. 288.
16 Ibid., p. 329.
17 Gaston, I, p. 182.
18 Forest, p. 315.
escape the inquisition, being "too humane for his situation, was become wretched in it, and he determined to escape from his office before the expiration of the time, for which he had been engaged."\(^{19}\) Everywhere in her novels are similar incidents of servants, doctors, nuns and monks, none of whom play a significant role individually, helping their fellow men, and the heroes and heroines in particular. If nothing else, their efforts indicate that benevolence and moral justice are normal modes of behaviour amongst humanity, not the attributes of a saintly aberration.

Admittedly, the \(^{20}\) extent of various characters' good heartedness, especially in the earlier novels, can reach ludicrous extremes. Alleyn's failure, out of general humanity, to kill the guard who discovers him trying to escape is a case in point,\(^{20}\) as is Ferdinand's similar refusal "to involve an innocent man in destruction"\(^{21}\) when his jailer gives him an opportunity of escape by staying overnight in his cell. Yet, benevolence is self-rewarding in both the short and long term. As we have seen, benevolent virtue is always rewarded in the large movements of the plot - the protagonists always carry the day, and even specific acts of benevolence reap specific rewards from page to page. It is Adeline's benevolence that wins her a place of security amongst the La Lues, for example, for "the sweetness of her behaviour had entirely won the heart of Clara, and greatly interested that of her aunt, whose reports of Adeline, together with the praises bestowed by Clara, had

\[^{19}\text{Italian, p. 387.}\]

\[^{20}\text{Castles, p. 49.}\]

\[^{21}\text{Sicilian Romance, p. 37.}\]
excited both esteem and curiosity in the heart of La Luc." Further-
more, the soldier, Edric, whom Alleyn spares with such seeming foolishness,
becomes his means of escape, out of pity and gratitude. Because it always has its reward, moral feeling must still remain a valid mode of action in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels.

However, emotionality in general is dangerous in her fictional world. As we have seen, the villains' passions and selfish emotions, in so far as they expose villainous deception, foster their errors, and aggravate villainous diseases, contribute directly or indirectly to their destruction. Similarly, given the nature of Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world and of sensibility, it, too, becomes a painful and dangerous emotional attribute amongst sympathetic characters. Sensibility consists primarily of sympathetic emotional susceptibility to all manner of stimuli and to imagination, where such stimuli are not actually present. It is a form of psychological identification: "for sympathy," says Burke, "must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected." In these circumstances, sensibility is potentially painful — in a specific, physiological sense of causing undue tension in the nerves, according to Burke — where evil is

22 Forest, p. 305.
23 Castles, p. 53.
24 Inquiry, p. 44.
25 Ibid., p. 132.
encountered. If a person has sensibility, he will feel disagreeable emotions whenever he perceives someone else in trouble.

Now, as we have seen, Mrs. Radcliffe's world is fraught with evil. The natural environment threatens imminently; a storm may blow up anytime, or night may hide the hazards of the forest. Similarly, the individual must face the consequences of the machinations of evil men, and even should he escape these threats, he faces inevitable losses through mutability and death. Sensible (in the eighteenth century sense) individuals will feel all these threats and losses not only as they occur to themselves, but also, in some measure, as they occur to others, so that their burden of emotional pain in life is greatly increased.

Because, then, the absolute indulgence of sensibility in Mrs. Radcliffe's world is unbearably painful, she is careful to recommend, through her characters, its limitation. The moral mentors of some of her heroines warn against its complete indulgence and gear their charges' education to prevent such a calamity: "It was the particular care of Madame de Menon," for example, "to counteract those traits in the disposition of her young pupils which appeared inimical to their future happiness." But it is St. Aubert who really formulates the Radcliffian notions of emotional control and happiness.

"Above all, my dear Emily," said he, "do not indulge in the pride of fine feeling, the romantic error of amiable minds. Those, who

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26 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 2.
really possess sensibility, ought early to be taught, that it is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery, or delight, from every surrounding circumstance. And, since, in our passage through this world, painful circumstances occur more frequently than pleasing ones, and since our sense of evil is, I fear, more acute than our sense of good, we become the victims of our feelings, unless we can in some degree command them." 27

Moreover, it is he who points out that in Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world, "happiness arises in a state of peace, not of tumult. It is of a temperate and uniform nature, and can no more exist in a heart that is continually alive to minute circumstances, than in one that is dead to feeling." 28

On this basis, Mrs. Radcliffe presents us with a number of sensible heroes and heroines who exhibit in their various pursuits and problems all the unfavourable results of the indulgence of sensibility and the favourable ones of its control. Osbert and Mary, for example, "were arrived at an age, dangerous from its tender susceptibility, and from the influence which imagination has at that time over the passions." 29 Similarly, Julia is presented to us as a heroine whose imagination is dangerously "ardent" and whose sensibility to even slight reproof is extreme, 30 and Emily, too, "had discovered in her early years uncommon

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27 Udolphi, p. 79.
28 Ibid., p. 80.
29 Castles, p. 8.
30 Sicilian Romance, p. 2.
delicacy of mind, warm affections and ready benevolence; but with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace. In each of these cases, the characters are represented from the outset as possessing a dangerous attribute in their sensibility, and most of her other protagonists exhibit similar difficulties in the course of their respective novels; so pervasive, in fact, is her concern with this matter of individual psychology that it forms a major theme in all her work. Edith Birkhead has said of Samuel Richardson that "it was...cautious prudence...that won him favour with the moralists who feared the dangerous influence of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloïse* or Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther" in their indulgence of emotion per se. A similar restraint to that of Richardson is also to be found in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. She, too, shows sensibility at an extreme and insists that it must be controlled. We share vicariously the violent emotional agitations of the heroine and her struggle to control them, see the results of her failure, and presumably, extract a warning of the importance of curtailing them with reason and judgement, in a world such as that which Mrs. Radcliffe portrays.

Before going on, I should point out that there is nothing inconsistent about extolling emotional control in books which have suspense and terror as a major attraction. Our participation in their sensational aspects is merely, after all, an exercise in laudable sensibility. Apprehension for the characters as a result of suspense

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"Sentiment", p. 104.
and terrifying incidents is simply that level of sympathetic participation in their emotions which constitutes virtuous sensibility both within and without the novel world. In any case, the reader is removed too far from the action to experience those destructive pangs of fear and pain which actual characters must try to control. As adults, we do not experience the child's one to one identification with literature; as we read, we are always aware, somewhere in the back of our minds, that it is all fiction. Consequently, we always experience, in Mrs. Radcliffe's own terms, the soul-expanding sublime rather than enervating horror and fear as readers, no matter how great the characters' terror, because we are safely distant from the fictional present, in the here and now.

In Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, oversensibility and imagination in sympathetic characters sometimes leads to a dangerous and sinful pride of virtue, not aggressive, like the villains' passion, but pride nevertheless. An excessive apprehension for self, which, as we have seen, can be easily part of the psychological condition that constitutes sensibility, is perilously near self-indulgence. Here, for example, is Ellena expressing her self-consciousness of isolation: "'Alas,' said she, 'I have no longer a home, a circle to smile welcomes upon me! I have no longer even one friend to support, to rescue me! I a miserable wanderer on a distant shore!'"32 Similarly, La Motte is given to wallowing in the sorrow of his own situation. While he stands before The Abbey St. Claire, "the comparison between himself and the gradation of decay, which these columns exhibited, was but too obvious and

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32 Italian, p. 220.
affecting. "A few years," said he, "and I shall become like the mortals on whose relics I now gaze..."33 Adeline is infrequently as bad; viewing a sunset from a boat traversing the Provencal coast, she just has to reflect that "so vanished my prospect of happiness...and my future view is like the waste of waters that surround me."34 It is very easy to accuse such characters, at times, of gloating over the emotional potential of their own troubles. When sensibility becomes so extreme as to produce this characteristic and wasteful brooding over self, it becomes also an evil passion, like avarice and lust, because it interferes with a character's proper attention to matters outside himself.35

Nor is this self-consciousness limited to oversensibility to personal problems; two of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes are so enamoured of the image of themselves doing good works that they develop a rather unattractive hero complex. Osbert, for example, allows his sensibility of the wrong done his father and his imagination of leading the army that redresses it, to drive him into a rash and disastrous attack on Castle Dunbayne. At the clan festival, he is overcome by emotion "at the ritual toast of the clan, and" every consideration yielded to that of avenging his father,36 so much so that he regards pity for his mother

33Forest, p. 21-2.
34Ibid., p. 344.
35In Udolpho (p. 20), St. Aubert says, "even that sorrow, which is amiable in its origin, becomes a selfish and unjust passion, if indulged at the expense of our duty - by our duties I mean what we owe ourselves, as well as to others."
36Castles, p. 17.
a vice when it "overcomes the purposes of stronger virtue." When he is captured on account of his dangerous rashness, the sight of the Baron Malcolm roused "all those opposite emotions of furious indignation and tender pity, which the glowing image of his father could excite and produced a moment of perfect misery. The dreadful energy of these sensations exasperated his brain almost to madness; the cool fortitude in which he had so lately gloried, disappeared and he was on the point of resigning his virtue and his life..."; once again, the extremity of his rather self-conscious heroic feelings almost causes a calamity. When he escapes, only the cool reason of the Baroness prevents him from once more rushing into another abortive attack and his heroic vision is shattered like a "fairy scene" of magic.

In a similar manner, the heroic pretensions of Vivaldi early in *The Italian* are forever making a dangerous fool of him. At the outset, we are told that "he had somewhat of the fiery passions of the Marchesa," and from the moment he conceives himself as the noble protector of his love and her affairs, he becomes ludicrously belligerent and conscious of honour. He refuses to sing Ellena a serenade in the Neapolitan custom, for example, because it would "profane" his principled love for her.

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37 *Castles*, p. 22.
38 Ibid., p. 36.
39 Ibid., p. 147.
40 *Italian*, p. 8.
41 Ibid., p. 14.
He is imprudently hot-blooded in her defence; he is not only prepared to tackle any number of thugs single handedly for the right to protect her, but also ready to turn violently on anyone who opposes his rashness, even his friend, Bonarmo. Moreover, when he supposes that a rival is behind the monk's mysterious, threatening appearances, he launches himself into a tirade of rhetorical bombast that exactly mirrors his distressingly self-conscious nobility: "'And shall I tamely lie in wait for his approach? Shall I lurk like a guilty assassin for this rival?'" The Abbot of Mt. Carmel speaks more than he knows when he warns Vivaldi "...you are an enthusiast, and I pardon you. You are a knight of chivalry, who would go about the earth fighting with everybody by way of proving your right to do good; it is unfortunate that you are born somewhat too late.'" No doubt the veiled reference to Don Quixote is quite intentional.

Because its energies are directed toward virtuous action rather than vice, this passion for heroics never becomes as pernicious and damning as the pride of the villains. Nevertheless, it does represent an undesirable conceit which is not unlike the villains' evil motives in quality. Thus, then, the oversensibility of some of Mrs. Radcliffe's characters can actually lead them into vice.

However, the fact that oversensibility in Mrs. Radcliffe's sympathetic characters consistently causes them unnecessary fear and remorse is a

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42 Italian, pp. 15-6.
43 Ibid., p. 19.
44 Ibid., p. 122.
more significant symptom of the need for its control. To indulge fully benevolent and sympathetic feelings for the plight of others is bearable when a character is at a distance from them. Then the emotion is softened enough to remain pleasurable, as in the case of Ellena before the ruined fortress of Celano. 45 Just as we are removed by the fiction of literature from the immediacy of its emotions, so she is removed by class, time, and place from the immediacy of the despair of the fallen prince whose imprisonment she imagines. For this reason, she reaps nothing but pleasure from the situation. However, through the over-indulgence of sensibility, sympathetic characters often experience needless levels of emotional pain for others close to them when there is little they can do to alleviate the situation. In Mary's mind, for example, "the idea of her brother, surrounded with the horrors of imprisonment and death, would often intrude itself on her imagination, with an emphasis which almost overcame her reason," 46 and on Osbert's part, "whenever he permitted himself to think of the sufferings of the Countess and his sister, his heart melted with a sorrow that almost unnerved him." 47 Similarly, while Julia thinks he is dead, "not withstanding all her efforts, the idea of Hippolytus would at intervals return upon her memory with a force that at once subdued her fortitude

45 *Italian*, p. 159.

46 *Castles*, p. 32.

47 Ibid., p. 70.
and sunk her in a temporary despair,"\textsuperscript{48} and when Ferdinand, her brother, disappears in turn, she lapses into indifference and misery.\textsuperscript{49} Ellena, too, frets inordinately over Vivaldi, whom she believes Schedoni is merely holding by means of the Inquisition.\textsuperscript{50}

Often, moreover, the operation of imagination as concomitant to sensibility causes them to assume imaginary evils and entertain concern which is completely pointless. Vivaldi is so over apprehensive that when the monk warns of a death at Villa Altieri, he assumes Ellena is dead. As a result, "...when he reached the boundary of the garden, his whole frame trembled so, with horrible apprehension, that he rested a while, unable to venture further toward the truth,"\textsuperscript{51} even though only Signora Bianchi has died of old age. Similarly, Emily, having rejected as preposterous the notion that Montoni could have murdered her aunt, and having accepted a servant's offer to take her to her aunt's room, immediately assumes that the body she discovers in the course of her subsequent journey across the castle is that of her aunt, which throws her into a perfect paroxysm of horror and grief over, as it transpires, the corpse of a soldier. Clara La Luc thoughtlessly indulges her oversensibility of her brother's plight just after he receives a reprieve: "Clara without scruple lamented the possibility that her brother might

\textsuperscript{48}\textit{Sicilian Romance}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{49}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Italian}, p. 299.
\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 41.
yet be taken from them, and all their joy turned to sorrow." She, too, then, allows her imagination to suggest sufferings that by no means yet exist, with the unfortunate result of restoring the grief of both herself and her family.

In the same way, an over apprehension of self causes pointless fear and misery amongst sympathetic characters. La Motte, though he is not pursued, is so apprehensive of pursuit that he is without peace of mind throughout his flight from Paris. Similarly, Julia magnifies her real danger beyond reasonable bounds in her escape from the monastery: "Julia, whose fears conspired with the gloom of night to magnify and transform every object around her, imagined at each step that she took, she perceived the figures of men, and fancied every whisper of the breeze the sound of pursuit." Nor is she the only heroine whose imagination leads her to exaggerate her own misery; the high sensibility of Mary "served...to sharpen the points of affliction, increase their force, and to disclose, in stronger light, the various horrors of her situation" in having to marry Malcolm, or cause Osbert's murder, and at one point in Udolpho, Emily, "having then leisure to think over all the circumstances of her present afflictions,...imagined a thousand

52 Forest, p. 389.
53 Ibid., p. 13.
54 Sicilian Romance, p. 55.
55 Castles, p. 94.
evils for futurity, and these real and ideal subjects of distress alike wounded her mind."  

Occasionally, a character's distress at his own situation is blown so out of proportion to its stimulus by his imagination, that he appears foolishly in the upshot, to either himself or us. Isolated incidents of this sort involve many of her principal characters, but two examples in particular come to mind. Madame La Motte, for example, is so sensible of her position as her husband's wife that she allows her imagination to exaggerate his coldness and frequent absence from her into the signs of illicit passion for Adeline. When it transpires that her surmise is totally false, she is chagrined at the thought of having mistreated Adeline: "When she considered her orphan state - the uniform affection which had appeared in her behaviour - the mild heartedness and patience with which she had borne her injurious treatment, she was shocked, and took an early opportunity of renewing her former kindness. But she could not explain this seeming inconsistency of conduct without betraying her late suspicions, which she now blushed to remember."  

Vivaldi, too, allows his imagination to run away with his afflictions, but he scarcely discovers the fact until Schedoni tells him, at the end of the book, that it is by means of his own imagination

56 p. 320.
57 *Forest*, pp. 56-7.
that he is duped into serving the villain." In the meantime, as Fred Garber points out, "there is more than a little mockery in her treatment of...Vivaldi..., about whose personality we receive early warnings." In the first place, the extent of his sensibility about himself makes him out too frequently like an effete fopling than the hero he attempts to be. Early in the novel, "the expectation of seeing Ellena agitated him with impatient joy and trembling hope which still increased as he approached her residence, till, having reached the garden-gate, he was obliged to rest for a few moments to recover breath and composure." This is too much, even for one of Mrs. Radcliffe's romantic heroes. Others may be physically afflicted by great danger or sorrow, but Vivaldi's faintness, in the circumstances, is a ludicrous extreme. A similar deflation occurs later on, when he visits Ellena, and finds only Signora Bianchi:

his anxiety and apprehension had encreased so much that, believing he should be unable to support himself in her presence, he was more than once upon the point of leaving the house. At length he heard her approaching step from the hall, and his breath almost forsook him. The figure of Signora Bianchi was not of an order to inspire admiration, and a spectator might have smiled to see the perturbation of Vivaldi, his faltering step and anxious eye, as he advanced to meet the venerable Bianchi.

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59 Italian, p. 397.
60 p. ix.
61 Italian, p. 8.
Clearly, Mrs. Radcliffe intends us to see the extent of his apprehension and tension in these incidents for what they are, a joke.

Yet oversensibility is by no means all laughable. In addition to subjecting characters to unnecessary mental anguish, it also precipitates them, by its effects, into dangerous situations. Vivaldi's hero complex, for instance, leads him rashly to chase the monk through the ruins of Paluzzi where he can be trapped while Schedoni's thugs seize Ellena; moreover, because of the superficial resemblance between the monk and Schedoni, he immediately assumes they are one and the same, and belligerently accuses Schedoni in the sanctity of a convent church, which action arouses Schedoni's thirst for revenge, and thus leads to his brush with death in the Inquisition. Similarly, in the course of their escape from the convent, Julia and Ferdinand come across a monk in the church, whom Ferdinand is about to kill in the extremity of his fear; it transpires that the monk is a friend come to guide them out, so Ferdinand, out of over apprehension, had almost killed their means of escape. And so terrified is Julia when her father first appears at the convent, that she almost makes the fatal error of attempting to escape through an impassable maze of catacombs. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline's imagination represents Theodore's immediate danger to her in such exaggerated terms that she almost fails to leave for Paris, where her testimony is essential if his life is to be saved.

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63 *Italian*, p. 42.
64 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 54.
65 Ibid., p. 51.
66 p. 398.
In *Udolpho*, St. Aubert's extreme over-apprehension for the safety of his daughter and himself at night in the Pyrenees leads him to seriously wound Valancourt by accident. Later, at the castle, Emily so fears rape by Montoni's ruffians, whom she has just glimpsed drunk in another part of the place, that she assumes the knock on the door sometime after is them; when she finally does open the door, she finds she has locked out poor Annette, the maid, where the thugs could have done as they pleased with her, had they come by. And so we could go on, but the point is that, in every case, the oversensibility, in its widest sense, of the character involved has potentially dangerous and unpleasant consequences for himself or others.

Moreover, the extent of a character's emotional susceptibility can result in a physical and mental torpor, or fainting, both of which are worse than emotional torment because they resemble death, and nearly as dangerous, because they render their victim totally uncaring of his situation. Torpor results from a character's too active consideration of his own troubles or those of others, and comprises a despair that sometimes goes so far as to render him almost vegetable. As Mrs. Radcliffe tells us in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, "There is a certain point of misery, beyond which the mind becomes callous, and acquires a sort of artificial calm. Excess of misery may be said to blast the vital powers of feeling, and by a natural consequence

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67 p. 38.
68 p. 299.
consumes its own principles." Thus Adeline, though she can frequently beguile herself for a time with books, music, and nature, goads herself frequently, whenever she "pictures to herself all Theodore's sufferings, "into a state of dreadful torpor," in which she just sits, doing and feeling nothing. The inward condition of torpor, however, is far from calm, though it does mark a cessation of rationality. Thus Adeline's mind, when she is in this desperate condition, suffers "such a tumult of grief, regret, despair, and terror, that she could not be said to think." 

This suspension of rational thought and even of feelings, combined with the outward calm it produces, does mark, in fact, the temporary death of the individual involved as nearly all the vital functions of his spiritual life are annihilated in despair. Though he is not actually dead, he certainly might as well be, and consistently, Mrs. Radcliffe treats the torpor of despair as far worse than the most excruciating level of active emotional torment. Thus, in The Romance of the Forest, Theodore lapses from unprofitable lament into uncaring despondency: "the violence of his distress had now subsided into a stern despair, more dreadful than the vehemence which had lately possessed him." Similarly, any frenzy, so long as it is active, is better to Alleyn in the dungeon of Castle Dunbayne than the torpor of despair; therefore,

69 p. 223.
70 Forest, pp. 256-7.
71 Ibid., p. 243.
72 Forest, p. 242 [my italics].
he wills himself into activity which is desperate in the sense of being electric with reckless energy, and his efforts are eventually rewarded with escape.

This torpor, in addition to being tantamount to death, is exceptionally dangerous to the individual, because the despondent passivity he experiences in it renders him totally vulnerable and unable to pursue his interests. Though Alleyn, for example, makes every effort to avoid the enervation of despair, when the soldier who is to help him escape is replaced by another, "the stretch of human endurance" is exceeded and he sinks "down in a state of torpidity." In this condition, he forgets that he has the means of escape, now the vaults through which he must go are unlocked; in fact, "his senses had been so stunned by the appearance of the stranger and his mind so occupied with a feeling of despair as to exclude every idea of escape." So torpor here produces a dangerous delay, in view of the fact that Malcolm is planning Alleyn's execution. Similarly, La Motte's "torpidity of despair" prevents him from taking any action for himself in his trial and thereby accelerates him toward execution; it takes the anger and treachery of Du Bosse, one of the Marquis' retainers, to rouse him into organizing a defence. Significantly, with this new evidence, "the prospect of life again opened upon him."

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73 See Castles, p. 43.
74 Ibid., p. 54.
75 Ibid., p. 56.
76 Forest, p. 373.
77 Ibid., p. 391.
Of course, the female characters are as much, if not more, affected by this extreme consequence of their oversensibility than the men. Julia, for example, summoned before the Abate after his private interview with Mazzini, is by that time so enervated by her sensibility of her situation, that she is incapable of action or decision in the face of her enemies; it takes the knowledge that Hippolytus lives, that she has, therefore, hope, to free her from despondent inactivity and prompt her to engage in escape: "In learning that Hippolytus lived, Julia experienced a sudden renovation of life and spirits. From the languid stupefaction which despair had occasioned, she revived as from a dream, and her sensations resembled those of a person suddenly awakened from a frightful vision, whose thoughts are yet obscured in the fear and uncertainty which the passing images impressed on his fancy." Similarly, with interruption by the Marquis threatening imminently, the Marchioness hesitates to escape her dungeon with Julia out of "placid despair" and "broken spirits". Emily, too, because of her extreme sensibility, spends the period of the revolt at Udolpho in a languid torpor of shock and fear which prevents her from taking rational action to protect herself; she is only lucky that the brawling ruffians she stumbles across do not set about her as well as

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78 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 52.
79 Ibid., p. 54.
80 Ibid., p. 67.
81 *Udolphe*, pp. 317-18.
their enemies. In similar fashion, Ellena, in the hands of Schedoni's abductors, on her way to the ruined villa of Spalatro, "was tranquil, but it was with the quietness of exhausted grief, not of resignation; and she looked back upon the past, and awaited the future, with a kind of out-breathed despair." In this condition, she is totally at the mercy of her abductors, for she makes no effort to save herself.

All that has been said of torpor and despondency can be reiterated with greater emphasis in the matter of the heroines' frequent fainting. It exceeds torpor as a state of spiritual "death", because it involves total unconsciousness, and it is therefore to be avoided at all costs. Robert Utter is superficial and unfair when he accuses Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines of "practising dying before the mirror", and "reading their own flattering obituaries in the faces and comments of the 'interested' bystanders." He ignores the fact that for the most part they faint before villains who couldn't care about "flattering obituaries" for female captives; moreover, their fainting is almost always a genuine response to real threats to themselves or, to persons who inspire their sensibility. As Burke put it, "no passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear," and it is fear which robs heroines totally of those powers through unconsciousness.

Admittedly, on very rare occasions, heroines faint for no real

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82 Italian, p. 209.
84 Inquiry, p. 57.
reason, except perhaps shock. Julia, for example, passes out briefly at the news of Hippolytus' survival; presumably the violent change out of despair to hope and joy was too much. Occasionally, too, heroines faint when their oversensibility presents them with a threat that is unreal; Julia's collapse at Ferdinand's calling her at her room earlier in *A Sicilian Romance* is an example. Here, however, we can only indict the extremity of her sensibility, not her sincerity in reacting to it.

For the most part, however, their fainting is at the direct threat of villains and is exceptionally dangerous, for it renders them physically in the villains' power. When a gang of intruders come for Ellena in *The Italian*, for example, she is able to stall them so long as she has consciousness, even though she is terrified. Only when she faints do they carry her off. Later, when she first enters the custody of Spalatro, her horror again causes her to fall senseless, which again places her entirely at the disposal of a villain. When Emily faints over the body behind the arras, Count Morano's men have no trouble in carrying her beyond the castle gates; she is unable to call for help or to defend herself because of the "extreme languor of her spirits." Adeline also plays into the hands of abductors by failing

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85 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 53.
86 Ibid., p. 23.
87 p. 61.
88 pp. 210-1.
89 *Udolpho*, p. 348.
to remain conscious; she faints when her father's retainers come for her, allowing them to lock her safely away without resistance. At the hide-out of the banditti in *A Sicilian Romance*, Julia, too, adds to the danger of a situation by "sinking lifeless" into the arms of Hippolytus just when he confronts the robber who is attempting to rape her. How helpful is the incumbrance of her dead weight when he must fight this man in order to escape? And even Mary, when she is abducted, is at least unco-operative to her captors until, seeing herself "conveying towards the mouth of a horrible cavern", she faints in terror; only Alleyn's fortuitous arrival saves her.

Oversensibility goes further than physical debilitation in placing Mrs. Radcliffe's sympathetic characters at the disposal of her villains, moreover, for it also makes them easy objects of villainous machinations designed to dupe, coerce, or cause misery. The villains recognize in extreme emotional susceptibility, a weakness that can be a means to their ends.

To the sensible individual, actual bodily pain is nothing "compared to the subtle, the exquisite tortures of the mind," and in the course of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels many extremely susceptible characters suffer

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90 Forest, p. 53.
91 p. 60.
92 Castles, p. 41.
93 Italian, p. 127.
through villainous plans calculated to cause them optimum anguish in revenge, or out of malice. Thus, in *The Italian*, Schedoni has Vivaldi seized by the Inquisition so that he may be revenged by the effects on Vivaldi's mind of his anxiety for Ellena and the threat of torture. Later, also, he reveals his supposed relationship to Ellena in Vivaldi's presence "for the purpose of revenging himself for the evil, which Vivaldi's evidence had contributed to produce, and inflicting the exquisite misery such information must give." Likewise, Baron Malcolm decides to leave his captives, Alleyn and Osbert, imprisoned without knowledge of the fate he projects for them and for the family of Athlin, so that their susceptible imaginations and their fear of the unknown can cause them the greatest possible distress. When Alleyn escapes, Osbert experiences all the terrifying preparations for an execution which is stopped short only at the last moment, his sensibility subjecting him to the emotional torture Malcolm's revenge requires. So also, when Mazzini loses affection for his wife, yet must retain her despite his passion for Maria de Vellorno, she suffers under abuse best calculated to cause her pain.

Moreover, sympathetic characters suffer miserably from coercion calculated by the villains to persuade by wrenching its objects'

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94 *Italian*, p. 244.
95 Ibid., p. 365.
96 *Castles*, p. 34.
97 Ibid., p. 76.
98 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 1.
sensibility. Baron Malcolm conceals the fate of Osbert and his plan to satisfy his lust for Mary from Matilda so that uncertain anxiety will drive the poor Countess into such a weak state of desperation that she will accept his proposal of a trade. Similarly, just as the Abate of *A Sicilian Romance* threatens Julia with exposure to her father's unjust wrath if she will not accept the veil, so in *The Romance of the Forest*, the abbess of Adeline's convent does the same: "Here were the arts of cunning practiced upon fear [order reversed in text], not those of sophistication upon reason." In fact, awareness of Adeline's timorousness figures in most of the villains' threats in that work. La Motte on two occasions attempts to coerce her into receiving the Marquis' attentions by raising the spectre of her father's wrath, and when the Marquis de Montalt makes his amorous proposals, he does so in terms of Adeline's fears. "Monsieur La Motte has informed me of your misfortunes," he says, "and of the evil that now threatens you; accept from me the protection which he cannot afford."

Emily's surrogate parents employ similar tactics in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: they repeatedly play on her emotional susceptibility by threatening her with total alienation from friends and protection, a menace which culminates in Montoni's attempt to coerce her into marrying

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99 *Castles*, p. 38.
100 p. 45.
101 Ibid., pp. 144, 148.
102 Ibid., p. 146.
Count Morano: "I now remind you, for the last time, that you are a stranger, in a foreign country, and that it is in your interest to make me your friend."\(^{103}\)

In addition to undergoing such intimidations, sensible characters also play into the villains' hands by embracing those villainous deceptions which rely for success on attracting a sympathetic response from their sensibility. Thus, the Marquis de Montalt's kindness in allowing the La Mottes to stay in his abbey succeeds in attaining the initial sympathy of Madame, Adeline and Louis: "His softened aspect and insinuating manners, while regardless of himself, he seemed attentive only to the condition of Adeline, gradually dissipated the apprehensions, and subdued the sudden resentment of Louis."\(^{104}\) So also, he uses only a gentle voice and manner to Adeline when later he is attempting her seduction.\(^{105}\) Similarly, Gaston de Blondeville is able to strengthen the king's sympathy for his cause by pretending, in a private interview with the monarch, to be the injured party, so as to place Woodreeve's accusations against him in the worst possible light.\(^{106}\) By preying on Woodreeve's sensibility, moreover, the Prior actually persuades him for a time that his accusations of Gaston are in error. Counting upon

\(^{103}\) Udolpho, pp. 216-7.

\(^{104}\) Forest, p. 105.

\(^{105}\) Ibid., p. 188.

\(^{106}\) Gaston, I, p. 132.
Woodreeve's sense of justice to be moved, he casts doubt on Woodreeve's evidence, until "the merchant was no longer sufficiently confident in his own recollection, to adhere to a purpose so surrounded with danger, either to his life, or what was truly more important, and what he always held to be more important - to his conscience."\textsuperscript{107}

Nor, indeed, is this manner in which extreme sensibility makes characters vulnerable to their enemies its last drawback in Mrs. Radcliffe's world. As we have seen, it was felt in Mrs. Radcliffe's time that emotional stress caused a physical disorder in the nerves which might lead to disease; indeed, even today we recognize that nervous tension contributes to a number of physical indispositions. It is not surprising, then, to find that, just as the villains' selfish emotions could aggravate their diseases, so the extreme sensibility of a number of her sympathetic characters contributes to their illnesses, even death. Many of her female figures fall ill from anxiety. Countess Matilda, for example, on the loss of Osbert, falls into a "violent illness, which had nearly terminated her sorrows and her life,"\textsuperscript{108} and Mary, too, "her tender frame...too susceptible of the sufferings of her mind,"\textsuperscript{109} declines in health as she worries about Alleyn, who is also lost. Under the stress of Mazzini's demands that she marry Luovo, Julia

\textsuperscript{107}Gaston, II, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{108}Castles, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., p. 39.
loses "the vivid glow of health" that was once hers, and so extremely did her mother feel Mazzini's unfeeling authority, we learn, that illness reduces her to the cataleptic state in which she is first locked in the dungeon.  Adeline, too, becomes ill in part as a result of her emotional susceptibility immediately after her initial release from de Montalt's men: "the violent agitation of mind, and the fatigue of body, which she had suffered for the last twenty-four hours, had overpowered her strength, and in her whole frame trembled with illness." Similarly, once Ellena reaches the monastery on the shores of Lake Celano, "indisposition, the consequence of the long and severe anxiety she had suffered, compelled her to remain. A fever was on her spirits, and an universal lassitude prevailed over her frame."

Moreover, at least one of Mrs. Radcliffe's male characters is subject to a similar disability. St. Aubert, the passive recluse of Udolpho, is so sensitive to the evils of the world that, in so far as he can, he has withdrawn from them. The shock to his mind of the loss of his wife, which alienates him still further, is so great that his health begins to decline, and in a very real sense the first movement of the book, the tour in the Pyrenees, is the chronicle of St. Aubert's search

110 Sicilian Romance, p. 24.
111 Ibid., p. 65.
113 Italian, p. 179.
114 Udolpho, p. 25.
for mental and physical health. When, however, he finds that the evil of business associates has destroyed his fortune and his legacy to his daughter, he is so overwhelmed that he lapses into his final illness, and dies.

Because their emotional susceptibility, their sensibility, stands to cause them so much danger and pain in the Radcliffian world, the sympathetic characters of her novels must strive to attain emotional control, which Mrs. Radcliffe calls "fortitude", in order to optimize their happiness. This fortitude seems to signify three distinct levels and types of emotional control.

Firstly, characters may attain equanimity by escaping from themselves. They may, for example, lose themselves in books; Osbert attempts to stifle his sensibility of the wrong done his father "by application to his favourite studies," and time and again in the course of *The Romance of the Forest* do we find Adeline seeking "a refuge from her own reflections in the more pleasing ones to be derived from books." Characters may also find a means to prevent their oversensibility of evil from bearing them down by involving themselves in the problems of their fellow men. Ellena, for example, thinks not at all of "her own forlorn situation...while affection, pity, and irresistible grief for Bianchi occupied her heart," and Emily, too,

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115 *Castles*, p. 9.
116 p. 115.
117 *Italian*, p. 56.
can remain composed at the time of her aunt's death at Udolpho "while any duty required her activity." 118 Similarly, Julia nursed the interesting "nun at the Abbey of St. Augustin" with unremitting care, and seemed to seize with avidity the temporary opportunity of escaping from herself." 119 In fact, in nearly all Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, so long as a heroine has someone to care for, she can remain happy in the midst of adversity.

Emotional control can also mean an external calm in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. This sort of "composure", as it is often designated, is chiefly a matter of will; it allows her characters to continue under the threat of evil in spite of their tendency openly to break down as a result of sensibility. Mrs. Radcliffe's "heroines seem genuinely vertebrate in comparison with some of the moist, unpleasant jelly fish spawned by her contemporaries and predecessors." 120

Principally, this composure enables sympathetic characters to awe villains and so meet the onslaught of their threats. In A Sicilian Romance, for example, when she is forced to countenance the advances of Luovo alone, "the emotion of Julia...was beyond anything she had before suffered; but by a sudden and strange exertion of fortitude which the force of desperate calamity sometimes affords us, but which inferior sorrow toils after in vain, she recovered her composure,

118 Udolpho, pp. 374-5.
119 Sicilian Romance, p. 44.
120 Utter, p. 130.
and resumed her natural dignity."\textsuperscript{121} By this means, she is able to repel him and to gain a brief respite from the prosecution of his amorous intentions. Similarly, Emily, when Montoni attacks her for her refusal to marry Morano, opposes "his turbulence and indignation only by the mild dignity of a superior mind."\textsuperscript{122} He eventually gives up his threatening, and she rejoices in her victory with the words, "How much more valuable is the strength of fortitude than the grace of sensibility."\textsuperscript{123} When Adeline faces de Montalt with the same composure, she has equal success: "She liberated herself from his embrace, and with a look, on which was impressed the firm dignity of virtue, yet touched with sorrow, she awed him to forbearance. Conscious of a superiority, which he was ashamed to acknowledge, and endeavouring to despise the influence which he could not resist, he stood for a moment the slave of virtue, though the votary of vice."\textsuperscript{124} And Ellena outfaces the Abbess of Mt. Carmel with the following powerful bit of rhetoric: "I will neither condemn myself to a cloister, or to the degradation, with which I am threatened on the other hand. Having said this, I am prepared to meet whatever suffering you shall inflict upon me; but be assured, that my own voice never shall sanction the evils to which I may be subjected, and that the immortal love of justice...will sustain

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Sicilian Romance}, p. 22.  
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Udolpho}, p. 214.  
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Edel....}  
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Forest}, p. 193.
Of her brave heroines, surely Ellena is Mrs. Radcliffe's bravest.

While this external composure helps Radcliffian characters to defeat villainous threats, it seems also to bolster the inner spirit to an extent. Perhaps their success in making the villains look small makes these characters more confident of their ultimate delivery; perhaps their concentration on externally resisting the villains helps them forget their own misery. Yet whatever the reason, if Ellena, for example, "could endure with calmness the hardships which she could not avoid, half their weight would be unfelt," and so it is for all the others.

However, neither simple escape nor this external calm are permanent solutions to the sympathetic characters' problems of emotional control in relation to evil. Of course, they must always return to sorrow when the spell of the books, music, or charity which holds their attention is broken. Likewise, both Emily and Ellena, immediately after the incidents described above, withdraw to the safety of their rooms there to cry away their "long-oppressed spirits". When a sensible character steels up his composure by an act of will in order to meet the threats of his adversary, it costs him so much in pent up emotional pain that must find release in anguished transports at some later period.

Fortunately, there is a third, more permanent sort of fortitude

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125 Italian, p. 84.
126 Ibid., p. 85.
possible. Ideally in Mrs. Radcliffe's world, fortitude is an inner peace, full resignation based on philosophic confidence in God, an attribute seen most constantly in the moral mentors of her heroes and heroines. Of course, resignation incorporates composure, by definition, and so we find Madame de Menon, for example, facing Mazzini's charges that she aided Julia's escape with the utter dignity of virtue,\(^{127}\) or St. Aubert calmly awaiting his death with no remorse.\(^{128}\) "Philosophy," we learn, moreover, "had strengthened, not hardened" the heart of La Luc; "it enabled him to resist the pressure of affliction rather than to overcome it."\(^{129}\) Resignation does not eliminate feeling, then, but rather softens its otherwise destructive force into a typically "gentle but not unpleasing melancholy,"\(^{130}\) which closely resembles Burke's concept of grief. "In grief, the pleasure is still uppermost because the person involved is contemplating the perfection of the object of his grief; and the affliction we suffer has no resemblance to absolute pain, which is always odious, and which we endeavour to shake off as soon as possible."\(^{131}\) We might say, then, that with the help of Divine consolation, Mrs. Radcliffe's characters are sometimes able to metamorphose debilitating emotional pain into a gentle sort of grief, the central characteristic of resignation.

\(^{127}\) Sicilian Romance, p. 38.

\(^{128}\) Udolpho, p. 81.

\(^{129}\) Forest, p. 290.

\(^{130}\) Countess Matilda's disposition in Castles, p. 7.

\(^{131}\) Burke, Inquiry, p. 37.
Both this resignation and composure, as forms of emotional control, imply, moreover, the necessary ascendancy of reason over emotion in the individuals involved. The effort of will required for a character to face the villain with composure implies that he has rationally decided that the external appearances of his debilitating emotions must be hidden behind a facade of calm if he is to present his best defence. Resignation, moreover, is based even more on the consistent operation of reason in the individual. True, to a certain limited extent, resignation and hope are instinctive; Adeline, for instance, is regarded as not having lost "by long oppression that elastic energy which resists calamity,", and even Matilda, when her son is lost, seems to cling to hope as if thus to keep her tranquility is a natural reflex of the human mind. Yet long oppression does easily break down this automatic emotional control in both their cases. The sole consistent basis for resignation in the Radcliffe world is reason.

It is reason, for example, that allows La Luc to "elevate his mind above this world and...to...view the sublimity of another." Having acknowledged its importance to all men, he goes on to define its role in establishing his religious faith: "Yet how wonderful! that man, whose frame is so diminutive in the scale of beings, should have powers which spurn the narrow boundaries of time and place, soar beyond the

132 Forest, p. 13.
133 Castles, p. 99.
134 Forest, p. 292.
sphere of his existence, penetrate the secret laws of nature, and calculate their progressive effects.\textsuperscript{135} It is rational reflection on the works of God in Creation, the perception of their harmony, beauty, and justice, that establishes, or at least reinforces, the religious faith of nearly all Mrs. Radcliffe's sympathetic characters and explains the countless occasions in her novels on which the contemplation of nature alone is enough to re-establish tranquil resignation in their minds. Reason is the means, for example, by which La Luc turns the evidence of natural beauty and sublimity gathered in his solitary alpine walls into a compensation for all the evils that have beset him, even the loss of his wife.\textsuperscript{136} The same rational process is also implied in the following passage, in which Ellena reaches for resignation after her abduction from her home:

Ellena, after having been so long shut in darkness, and brooding over her own alarming circumstances, found temporary, though feeble, relief in once more looking upon the face of nature; till, her spirits being gradually revived and elevated by the grandeur of the images around her, she said to herself, 'If I am condemned to misery, surely I could endure it with more fortitude in scenes like these, than amid the tamer landscapes of nature! Here the objects seem to impart somewhat of their own force, their own sublimity, to the soul. It is scarcely possible to yield to the pressure of misfortune while we walk, as with the Diety, amidst his most stupendous works.'\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{135}Forest, p. 325.
\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., p. 291.
\textsuperscript{137}Italian, p. 62.
and Justice on their behalf that also resigns them to affliction is similarly derived from a process of reason. In most cases it is implicit, but in that of Woodreeve, it is consciously pursued. Having reflected on the power of Divine Grace, "he trusted, that he, who was guiltless of any crime, and whom pity for a murdered kinsman had exposed to this danger, would not be left to be destroyed by any artifice of man."  

His consciousness of virtue convinces him that he will be saved and his oppressors damned, either in the temporal world or in the hereafter, and this conclusion gives him the inward confidence to face them undismayed. All the numerous instances of characters attaining brave resignation by means of recalling their virtue have been preceded by the same sort of rational process sometime in the past. "The pride of conscious worth," for example, can revive Ellena's courage and patience and enable her firmly to resist the Abbess of Mount Carmel because, in the back of her mind, she knows that will be ultimately saved, whether temporally or otherwise, by Divine Grace. For the same reason, Emily's heart, her ethics being under attack by Montoni, "swelled with the consciousness of having deserved praise instead of censure"; Theodore is confident enough to accuse the Marquis de Montalt publically, to his face, and Vivaldi's demeanour before his accusers in the Inquisition is "calm and dignified", while "his countenance

138 Gaston de Blondenville, II, p. 194.
139 Italian, p. 68.
140 Udolpho, p. 270.
141 Forest, p. 230.
expressed the solemn energy of his feelings, but nothing of dejection."  

As J.M.S. Tompkins puts it, Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes and heroines "have no enemy within; they are sure that innocence will be divinely shielded, and they never doubt their innocence." This tranquil confidence in the face of adversity is based on concepts of religion and morality that are established by reason as well as faith.

Just as reason in sympathetic characters helps them to establish the lasting emotional control of resignation in adversity, so it also enables them, by keeping events in perspective, to prevent the over apprehensive tendency of sensibility from troubling them with chimerical evils. The Marchese di Vivaldi, for example, when his son runs away after Ellena, takes every reasonable precaution for finding him, but assuming no evil where there is no evidence, he does not allow anxiety to prey on his mind until Vivaldi has been missing for an inordinate period. Similarly, reason makes it clear to some characters which evils are inevitable and therefore to be borne, rather than fought and fretted over. When Osbert resolves to go to war, for instance, "Matilda, whose mind was strong as her heart was tender, since she could not prevent this hazardous undertaking, summoned all her fortitude to resist the impression of fruitless grief, and to search for the good which the occasion might present," and Ellena, too, endeavours "to meet with

142 Italian, p. 336.
143 Novel, p. 259.
144 Italian, p. 296.
fortitude and to endure with patience, the evil which she could neither avoid or subdue."\textsuperscript{146} This ascendancy of reason over emotion thus tacitly recommended in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels as the best means of achieving emotional control constitutes, I think, another clear indication of that unity and coherence which is present in Mrs. Radcliffe's books. In them, she creates a cosmos based on theological and philosophical models which themselves emphasize that reason in man should have mastery over emotion. The aesthetic principles, moreover, according to which this cosmos is perceived - sublimity and the picturesque, for example - are cerebral and analytical offspring of the eighteenth century which also reflect a great importance attached to rationality by their adherents. Within this cosmos, as we have seen, man, whether hero or villain, suffers whenever his emotions rule his actions, and in these circumstances it is entirely appropriate that only when sympathetic characters' rationality is in control can they successfully face the evil that falls to their lot.

Sympathetic characters, however, much as they may succeed from time to time, are by no means consistently successful in attaining this emotional control so necessary to their peace and safety. We might argue that some few characters appear to develop the ability to control and resign themselves in the course of their novels, but the process of learning is far from consistent. Nowhere do we find the clear pattern of self revelation, followed by a dramatic change in

\textsuperscript{146}Italian, p. 65.
attitude. Alleyn, for example, "in the joyful experience of unexpected deliverance" resolves "never more to admit despair" when his escape attempt is a success, yet afterwards, he falls into despondency over both what he fears is his failure to free Osbert and the seeming hopelessness of his love for Mary. Similarly, one might argue that when Adeline rescues M. Amand from despondency and ill-health over the loss of his wife, she is exhibiting her own new-found resignation, yet the business of Theodore's condemnation soon throws her into a similar welter of grief and despair, and in any case, she has been able to counsel others from the very first, while failing to take her own advice. Only Vivaldi seems truly to learn emotional control; he moves from the affected, passionate fop of the first few pages of *The Italian*, ridiculously ardent in his love, rash, and egregiously superstitious, to the calm and circumspect prisoner of the Inquisition, who detects and treats cautiously a spy sent to incriminate him, and whose "better judgement" shows him "that innocence cannot suffer disgrace from any situation or circumstance", so that he can undergo the inquisitors threats and accusations with perfect equanimity. However, the moment is never portrayed wherein he realizes that his own oversensibility has caused him pain and danger and changes his ways.

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147 Castles, p. 62.
148 Forest, p. 342.
149 Ibid., p. 37, where she talks La Motte out of a fit of despondency.
150 p. 301.
151 p. 309.
For the most part, in fact, the struggle within Mrs. Radcliffe's characters for emotional control she portrays as a see-saw battle that is never wholly resolved. That resignation in a character which comes of confidence of deserving the help of Divine Grace is easily shattered by the reflection that his suffering or death may cause someone else emotional pain. Ellena, for example "while she witnessed in imagination, the grief and distraction which her mysterious departure and must have occasioned him [Vivaldi], the fortitude with which she had resisted her own sufferings, yielded to the picture of his,"\(^{152}\) and Vivaldi's "virtuous indignation gave a loftiness, a calm heroic grandeur to his mind, which never, for a moment, forsook him, except when he conjectured what might be the sufferings of Ellena. Then his fortitude and magnanimity failed, and his tortured spirit rose almost to frenzy."\(^{153}\)

Similarly, that resignation that comes from a confidence in God derived from the contemplation of his works is often impossible, as the imminency of some dire threat prevents a character from any aesthetic response whatsoever. Burke claims, "It is absolutely necessary my life should be out of any imminent hazard before I can take a delight in...anything...from any cause whatsoever,"\(^{154}\) and Mrs. Radcliffe's characters seem to act according to a kindred principle. Thus, the scene in the garden of Montalt's palace from which she is trying to escape "would have

\(^{152}\) *Italian*, p. 95.


\(^{154}\) *Inquiry*, p. 48.
soothed a heart less agitated than was that of Adeline,\(^\text{155}\) and because Emily suffers under the threats of Montoni, she can no longer find comfort with the view at evening.\(^\text{156}\)

So many and varied are the evils inflicted upon them, and so limited are the means by which Mrs. Radcliffe's characters can maintain emotional control, most of them fluctuate erratically between fortitude, in all its forms, and despair. Woodreeve, faced with the prospect of execution, fights "for composure and resignation"\(^\text{157}\) as his reflections waver between confident faith in God and abject grief at his wife's suffering. Emily, too, after a brief period of inner strength and resignation "found again that thought cannot always be controlled by will; and hers returned to the consideration of her own situation;"\(^\text{158}\) in fact, both she and Adeline vacillate frequently between fortitude, and complete debilitation and despair. Even the moral mentors, who most perfectly exhibit consistent resignation, tend to lose emotional control when the evil that besets them is sufficiently pernicious. As we have seen, St. Aubert allows the loss of his wife and estate to bear him down to death in spite of his warnings to Emily; even on La Luc's countenance, "a struggle for resignation and composure"\(^\text{159}\) when his son

\(^{155}\) Forest, p. 195.

\(^{156}\) Udolpho, p. 403.

\(^{157}\) Gaston, III, p. 32.

\(^{158}\) Udolpho, p. 383.

\(^{159}\) Forest, p. 360.
is condemned, while the emotional pain he suffers appears to be hastening him, too, toward death until Theodore is cleared. In the light of such evidence, we can only conclude that virtue in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels lies only in the attempt to strike a balance between sensibility and emotional control which can minimize the danger and emotional pain that are inevitable in her fictional world.
CHAPTER 5

OTHER THEMES RELATED TO THE MORAL WORLD AND TO CHARACTER

So far, we have examined the qualities of Mrs. Radcliffe's moral world, the central issues of character and human position within it, and the close relationship between the two. In effect, we have set up frames of reference for further discussion of her novels. However, since it is my intent to argue for unity and coherence in her works, as well as to refocus other critical investigation, it is important that we should carry this discussion further, in an effort to relate some of Mrs. Radcliffe's other concerns in her novels to that single point of view, in cosmos and in character, that has been the object of preceding chapters. Time and space, of course, prevent a detailed examination of all the matters that attract her attention, but it is sufficient perhaps, to pause over three additional themes which command an important position in her various works and which have caused much, and occasionally muddled, critical concern. The following chapter, then, will examine society, romantic love, and the supernatural as Mrs. Radcliffe treats them, in an attempt to show how all three depend, in some measure, on the nature of her fictional world, and on the consequent need for emotional restraint amongst the human beings within it.

Nearly all of her critics scold Mrs. Radcliffe for her failure to complete the suggestion of supernatural agency with its actual appearance. Most find her consistent debunking of such elements in her
work artistically unsound, if not downright fraudulent. S.M. Ellis, for example, finds her guilty of "literary false pretence" for raising our expectations of a ghost, then deflating them. Edith Birkhead does not enjoy "being baffled and thwarted in so unexpected a manner," and Devendra Varma impatiently protests that "the suspense has been so long protracted, and the expectation raised so high, that no explanation can satisfy, and no imagery of horrors can equal the vague shapings of our imagination." These latter two, moreover, perhaps as a result of their dissatisfaction, seriously underestimate supernatural innuendo in Mrs. Radcliffe's works, when it is in fact an abiding concern throughout her canon.

Some others justify her attitude in this matter by an historical rationalization, which is no doubt sound as far as it goes. James Foster, for instance, gives it as his opinion that "to regard her work as a development of the sensibility that craved strong situations and the somber decorations of tombs and ruins, it is not necessary to belittle the importance of the attempt to arouse fear, yet one must remember that she considered herself representative of the century of enlightenment and checked all impulses to go beyond the appearance of the supernatural." In these sentiments, he is seconded by a number

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1 p. 192.
2 Tale, p. 50.
3 p. 97.
4 Varma (pp. 88, 92) denies its existence in Castles and Forest; Birkhead (p. 52) denies that it figures in The Italian.
5 p. 461.
of the critics to whom we have already had recourse. 6 No doubt what
they say is generally correct; Clara Reeve's preface, one of the few
contemporary critical documents extant on Mrs. Radcliffe's genre, takes
Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto to task for just such an abuse of
rationality in the presentation of the supernatural as that which these
commentators claim bothered Mrs. Radcliffe. 7 However the critics make
no attempt to relate their explanation to the meaning of her novels;
the debunked supernatural remains, in fact, an interruption, to them,
of that chilling flow of sensationalism in which they find her novels'
chief worth. Since critical evaluation of this subject usually ceases
at its sensational value, no one has really paused to analyze the full
impact of Mrs. Radcliffe's treatment of the supernatural. Actually,
the supernatural experiences in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels are aberrations
of sensibility, plausible extensions of both her character psychology,
and the nature of her world, and, therefore, artistically sound, forceful
amplifications of her basic contentions on those matters.

In part, the apprehension of the supernatural is an experience
which arises out of a lack of control of one's emotions and sensibility.
Supernatural experiences and fears occur on numerous occasions, for
example, when characters are already emotionally overwrought for some
other reason, so that their rationality, being already weakened, is
unable to prevent an unnecessary, chilling surmise. During the interview

6 Among them Summers, p. 135; and Dobreć, p. xi.

7 On p. ix, she complains of the supernatural incidents, "Had the
story been kept within the utmost verge of probability, the effect had
been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or
detains the attentions."
with Schedoni in which she orders Ellena's murder, the purely natural co-incidence of the terrible warning inscribed over the confessional and the mournful sounds of a passing funeral strike the Marchesa, who is already horror stricken by the prospect of her guilt, as a real supernatural portent. In *Udolpho*, Emily is subjected to the "thick-coming fancies of a mind greatly enervated" by fear and grief in the form of "supernatural" hallucinations, so frequently that Mrs. Radcliffe remarks, "It was lamentable, that her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather those starts of imagination which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness." Similarly, Ferdinand attributes a faint groan he hears while exploring the deserted wing of Castle Mazzini "to the illusion of a fancy, which terror had impregnated," even though he is overcome by it when it sounds again, and Osbert, awaiting his chance to escape Dunbayne, dismisses the ghostly figure he has just seen as "the phantoms of a sick imagination, which the agitation of his spirits, the solemnity of the hour, and the wide desolation of the place, had conjured up."

In addition to being a symptom of the debilitating effects of oversensibility, the experience of the supernatural is also a product

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8 *[Italian]*, pp. 176-7.
9 p. 103. Other similar occasions occur at pp. 63, 221, 228, 240, 355, 407.
11 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 18.
12 *Castles*, p. 149.
of the vanity of imagination, that faculty which, as we have seen, tends to aggravate the apprehensions of the sensible mind. In Udolpho, Mrs. Radcliffe traces belief in the supernatural to "that love, so natural to the human mind, of whatever is able to distend its faculties with wonder and astonishment." The basis of this love is self-interest, for it is part of man's continual desire to raise himself in his own eyes to greater levels of power and perception, and by perceiving something so awesomely powerful and unknown, as the supernatural, the mind can claim for itself, in Burke's words "some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates."

The full expression of the theory which I think Mrs. Radcliffe puts into practice in her novels occurs in a contemporary essay by one Dr. John Aikin; perhaps Mrs. Radcliffe does not follow him as she does Burke, but she at least writes from a point of view congruent to what follows: "A strange and unexpected event," he says, "awakens the mind and keeps it on the stretch; and where the agency of invisible beings is introduced, of 'forms unseen and mightier far than we', our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its power. Passion and fancy co-operating, elevate the soul to its highest pitch; and the pain of terror is lost in amazement." In this view, then, the supernatural has all the self-aggrandizing attractions to the imagination of other sublime experiences.

13 p. 549.
14 Inqury, p. 50.
In accordance with this instinctive attraction to such soul-expanding phenomena, whenever a character anticipates the supernatural in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, his imagination is depicted as running out of rational control, compulsively seizing upon likely evidence and turning it into that which it is not. Vivaldi, for example "was awed by the circumstances that attended the visitations of the monk, if monk it was...and...by the solemn event which had verified his last warning; and his imagination, thus elevated by wonder and painful curiosity, was prepared for something above the reach of common conjecture, and beyond the accomplishment of human agency." In fact, "his passions were now interested and his fancy awakened, and, though he was unconscious of this propensity, he would perhaps, have been somewhat disappointed, to have descended suddenly from the region of fearful sublimity, to which he had soared - the world of terrible shadows - to the earth, in which he daily walked, and to an explanation simply natural." Moreover, there are numerous examples in which the same faculties and processes are involved, but less explicitly realized. When Emily speaks to the guards on the parapet of Udolpho about the strange figure she has seen there, "her imagination was inflamed while her judgement was not enlightened, and the terrors of superstition again pervaded her mind." In her dark room at the Abbey, Adeline "remembered the narrative of Peter, several superstitious circumstances of which had impressed her

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16 Italian, p. 58.
17 Loc. cit.
18 Udolpho, p. 371.
her imagination in spite of her reason, and she found difficulty wholly
to subdue apprehension;"¹⁹ this twinge of superstitious terror is only
an introduction to the consistent battle she fights to keep down both
her imagination and her sensibility to its suggestions until finally,
while she is reading the grisly manuscript, "her imagination refused
any longer the control of reason, and turning her eyes, a figure, whose
exact form she could not distinguish, appeared to pass along an obscure
part of the chamber; a dreadful chillness came over her, and she sat
fixed in her chair."²⁰ In each of the above cases, overactive imagination,
in seeking the expansive experience of a spiritual world, has inspired
the oversensible mind of the character involved into abject terror at
hallucinations of its own making.

Mrs. Radcliffe, then, makes the experience of the supernatural in
her characters a manifestation of that over-imaginative susceptibility
which hinders their lives in general, and it is in this context that
the exposure of their terrifying assumptions is significant. Because
they are directly threatened by supernatural power, they experience, as
a rule, none of the sublime pleasure which Aikin sees the reader of a
tale of supernatural phenomena enjoying; they experience abject terror
instead. Thus, when the ghostly noises and figures Ferdinand experiences
in A Sicilian Romance turn out to be his imprisoned mother and her
jailors, when the ghostly figure and song at Castle Udolpho turn out to

¹⁹ Forest, p. 41.
²⁰ Ibid., p. 159.
be Emily's fellow prisoner, Dupont, or when the object of Vivaldi's terror in *The Italian* turns out to be Zampari, a henchman of the villain, Mrs. Radcliffe is pointing out to us what unnecessary emotional pain the characters involved give themselves by allowing their imaginations and sensibility so to exaggerate slight evidence and cow their rationality.

Moreover, from her first novel, in which the guards at Dumbayne assume in terror that Osbert has escaped by supernatural means to her last, in which a garrulous old villager is the only modern character who really believes in supernatural agency, the belief in ghosts is a trait condescendingly attributed to "the minds of the vulgar", where "any species of the wonderful is received with avidity," presumably because they lack the education and the rationality to subdue their imaginations. By having her educated, supposedly enlightened heroes and heroines also suffer themselves to be affected by preternatural suggestions, even while participating in condescension toward their poor, ignorant servants and often while their servants exhibit greater control than they, Mrs. Radcliffe creates a good deal of highly effective irony at the expense of their own oversusceptibility. Thus, Paulo's unconcern at Castle Paluzzi casts ironic light on his master's terror at the sight of the monk; so also the La Motte's bumpkin

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21 *Castles*, p. 164.
23 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 4.
servant, Peter, is happy to venture down a dark passage, the noises from which have La Motte in superstitious panic. When Peter returns with the news that the mysterious sound was only owls and rooks fluttering about,24 the irony is complete. Similarly, Emily's superiority "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 others,"25 and on several occasions throughout the novel, she lectures this poor maid on the resistance of superstitious propensities, only to give in to them, on very slight occasion, herself.26

In addition to being a source of unnecessary emotional pain, and characteristically the attribute of the vulgar and ignorant, vulnerability to supernatural suggestion, like the general oversensibility of Mrs. Radcliffe's sympathetic characters, leads to various dangerous and unfortunate consequences for them. Emily, for example, at one point during her imprisonment at Castle Udolpho, had almost summoned, through rational judgement, confidence enough to ask help of the mysterious figure on the parapet, but when occasion arises, "she trembled, breathed with difficulty, an icy coldness touched her cheeks, and her fears for a while overcame her judgement"27 to such an extent that she cannot speak.

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24 Forest, p. 25.
25 Udolpho, p. 247.
26 See, for example, Udolpho, p. 239, on which, having been infected with Annette's superstition, she nearly faints when another servant knocks at the door.
27 Ibid., p. 360.
Of course, the figure is Dupont, who is trying to contact her so that they may attempt escape. Because of her unnecessary terror, the escape is delayed for weeks, during which Montoni submits her to mental tortures she might have avoided.

Occasionally, the villains use the superstition of other characters, just as they manipulate the rest of their over-imaginative sensibility, in the pursuit of evil ends. At the conclusion of The Italian, for instance, Schedoni tells Vivaldi how easy it was to dupe him into an unconscious co-operation in the plot against Ellena:

"...the ardour of your imagination was apparent, and what ardent imagination ever was contented to trust plain reasoning, or to the evidence of the senses? It may not willingly confine itself to the dull truths of this earth, but, eager to expand its faculties, to fill its capacity, and to experience its own peculiar delights, soars after new wonders into a world of its own!"  

Thus had Schedoni sent the ghostly Zampari to frighten Vivaldi away from Ellena and, when that failed, to lure him into the Castle Paluzzi where he might be detained while she was abducted. Similarly, the Marquis Mazzini exploits the superstition of his family and servants to prevent them from discovering the imprisonment of his first wife in the south buildings. At first, he attempts to silence the apprehensive curiosity of Madame de Menon and his servants about the noises and lights in the castle by arguing that the supernatural is bunk. When Madame de Menon approaches him on the subject, he "represented the appearances she described as the illusions

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28Italian, p. 397.
of a weak and timid mind," and he leads his fearful servants on a
tour of the south buildings, during which he heaps sarcasm on their
"phantasms of idleness," while of course, nothing supernatural is found. He hopes in both cases to inspire shame and thereby discourage
apprehension and curiosity. When, however, Ferdinand tells the Marquis
of his own more terrifying experiences, he admits to a secret belief
in the supernatural, and warns his son of a ghost in the castle.
Naturally, this is all a cunning hoax; "the circumstance related was
calculated, by impressing terror, to prevent farther inquiry into the
recesses of these buildings. It served, also, to explain, by super-
natural evidence the cause of those sounds, and of that appearance
which had been there observed, but which were, in reality occasioned
only by the Marquis."  

Like other aspects of characters' emotional susceptibility and
imagination superstition is unnecessarily painful, because its terrors
are wholly illusory, and potentially dangerous, as it makes the
individual more vulnerable to the machinations of evil. Mrs. Radcliffe,
in exposing most of the supernatural phenomena as dangerous and
disquieting chimeras of undisciplined imagination, links them to the
overall problem of emotional control experienced by her characters.
Far from being an artistic imperfection, then, her debunking of the
supernatural in fact forms a necessary and meaningful part of the moral
statement of her novels.

29Sicilian Romance, p. 5.
30Ibid., p. 30.
31Ibid., p. 70.
We might even argue that in some cases, her sympathetic characters learn first to control the temptation to entertain superstition, and that this new discipline then becomes emblematic of a new control in the entire spectrum of their emotional lives. Very often, the revelation of supernatural incidents as natural phenomena embarrasses them into self-knowledge; Adeline, for example, in her room at the Abbey "perceived the arras, with which the room was hung, wave backward and forwards; she continued to observe it for some minutes, and then rose to examine it further. It was moved by the wind; and she blushed at the momentary fear it had excited."  

Emily, too, is embarrassed by Dupont's revealing himself to be the ghost of Udolpho: "remembering how lately she had suffered herself to be led away by superstition, she determined now to resist its contagion."  

From this sort of evidence, it is attractive to conclude that in Emily's case at least, her rejection of the supernatural after her escape from Udolpho indicates a new strength of rationality and a new emotional discipline. Even after she is frightened by the lifting pall at Chateau Blanc, another incident during which already weakened spirits contribute to superstitious terror, she is prepared calmly to await the explanation of the phenomenon that both she and we expect after the business of the other castle.  

However, the control of superstition,

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32 Forest, p. 136.
33 Udolpho, p. 490.
34 Ibid., p. 537.
like other forms of emotional control, seems ultimately beyond the consistent reach of the individual. As Ludovico's disappearance from the "haunted" rooms becomes more protracted, and as even Count Villefort is terrified by a night spent in them, Emily gradually begins once again actively to fear supernatural agency. 35 Though the novel ends on an optimistic note, with Emily once again chagrined at her weakness in fearing yet another supernatural hoax – resident smugglers had caused both the lifting pall and Ludovico's absence, 36 we cannot help but reflect that her ability to resist superstition is far from consistent, like her ability to control her oversusceptibility in general. There are going to be other situations in which Emily's self control fails, even if, generally speaking, its power has increased since the beginning of the novel.

Of all Mrs. Radcliffe's characters, only Vivaldi clearly learns to reject superstition. As we have seen, it is his overactive imagination which at first brings him to look for the supernatural in the events at Castle Paluzzi. Yet his superstition reaches a peak when the mysterious monk first appears at the Inquisition: "he looked up at the shadowy countenance of the stranger; and almost believed he beheld an inhabitant of the world of spirits." 37 That "almost" is the crucial word; Vivaldi is not wholly convinced he sees a ghost, though

35 Udolpho, p. 544.
36 Ibid., p. 635.
37 Italian, p. 320.
he experiences terror. The fact that he resists his fright and continues to demand of the figure what proof he can produce of his charges\textsuperscript{38} is a definite indication of his increasing emotional control. His fear of the monk, whatever his nature, is, as Mrs. Radcliffe points out, justified: "To be thus exposed to the designs of a mysterious and powerful being, whom he was conscious of having offended, to sustain such a situation, without suffering anxiety, required somewhat more than courage, or less than reason."\textsuperscript{39} He soon shows new-found strength of mind in decisively rejecting all notions of fear that go beyond this temporal influence: "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."\textsuperscript{40} When Vivaldi finally acknowledges the justness of the dying Schedoni's assessment of his formerly overactive imagination, Mrs. Radcliffe steps in to remind us that he has now achieved greater self control than he had commanded before hand.\textsuperscript{41}

Mrs. Radcliffe's treatment of the supernatural, then, is linked to her characters' need for emotional control given the fallen world

\textsuperscript{38}Italian, p. 322.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 334.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 347.
\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 398.
in which their own inward qualities may betray them to evil and misery. If, to an extent, she encourages us vicariously to entertain, through her manipulation of darkness and the unknown, the same unreasonable apprehensions as her characters, we also participate in their embarrassment and the consequent chastening of their outlook when the 'ghostly' phenomena are exposed. Yet, when the situation is presented in terms of an illusion practised upon reason by imagination, or when it occurs, as in the case of the lifting pall in Udolpho, after the exposure of other supernatural phenomena, our feelings cannot be interested, as we expect a hoax. Were this pattern of undermining the supernatural not a just part of Mrs. Radclife's moral statement, thus to undermine its sensational value would be as artistically unsound as others have suggested.

However, Mrs. Radcliffe does not deny all supernatural agency as reprehensible fallacy; a ghost, after all, is the prime mover of the entire plot in Gaston de Blondeville. In three of her other novels, indeed, the possibility of the genuine appearance of ghosts in pursuit of Divine moral retribution is several times raised in passing and is never contradicted. In discussing the supernatural with Emilia and Julia, for example, Madame de Menon says that the only ghosts that can have being appear "only by the express permission of God, and for some very singular purposes."42 Similarly, Adeline, reflecting on the events surrounding her room in the abbey and the manuscript she finds, believes that "such a combination of circumstances...could only be produced by

some supernatural power, operating for the retribution of the guilty,"\textsuperscript{43}
and the ghost in which Vivaldi is initially prepared to believe is a "spirit of the murdered...restless for justice, becoming visible in our world."\textsuperscript{44}

In addition, even in the novels which most strongly exhibit the debunked supernatural, sympathetic characters experience dreams with a verified portentous significance that suggest the operation of \textit{bona fide} supernatural agency. Adeline, for example, though her nightmares are described as suggestions of "her perturbed fancy,"\textsuperscript{45} they portray, on several occasions, events which in fact occur later in the book; in one, she is in the forest with her "father" - the Marquis de Montalt - and "his looks were severe, and his gestures menacing,"\textsuperscript{46} just as they are later when he attempts seduction and murder. On another, she repeatedly dreams of chambers where she finds the record of distress of one murdered there,\textsuperscript{47} and a few pages later, the dream experience finds its counterpart in reality.\textsuperscript{48} This exact correspondence of dream with reality suggests the work of supernatural agency, and Mrs. Radcliffe significantly makes no attempt to explain the likeness,

\textsuperscript{43}Forest, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{44}Italian, p. 347.
\textsuperscript{45}Forest, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., p. 51.
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., p. 130.
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., p. 137.
but allows it to stand as a mystery instead. The same sort of thing occurs again in The Italian where, though Vivaldi's dream, like Emily's in Udolpho, is put down to the effect of his waking thoughts on his imagination, he dreams exactly what in fact occurs later on - a monk comes and dramatically reveals to him a bloody dagger, as it turns out, Schedoni's weapon of murder. Once again, the correspondence of the dream with what occurs is left to stand as a genuine supernatural mystery, and in both cases, the supernatural event warns the character who experiences it of danger from the villain, or exposes in some way the villain's guilt. These occurrences fit, therefore, into that realm of moral retribution which is inherent in Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world, and which she never closes to the possibility of supernatural agency.

On one other occasion, furthermore, Mrs. Radcliffe justifies the supernatural, and here it is in a critical sense. During a dialogue on the supernatural which originally formed part of the introductory framework to Gaston de Blondeville, but which was published as part of The New Monthly Magazine after her death, she has the "sensible" eighteenth century aesthete, Willoughton, whose theories and reflections open her last novel, defend the use of apparitions, quite apart from moral considerations, in literature "when they are congruous with setting and situation." So even though, as an "enlightened" authoress,

49 p. 83.

50 Italian, p. 318.

she usually rejects the direct intervention of ghosts as irrational bunk, she does appear to recognize that they have a legitimate place in literature.

It would also appear that she wished to make that recognition before introducing overtly the supernatural in the form of the spectre of Kenilworth in *Gaston de Blondeville*. What, in fact, she creates in that shadowy personage is a supernatural phenomenon that meets all her criteria for a real and justifiable ghost. He both fits his medieval context and is the agent of God in the moral universe.

In the first place, the appearance of an armed ghost is perfectly congruent to the medieval atmosphere of superstition, magic, and religious belief. For this, the "enlightened" reflections of Willoughton as he reads this old book prepare us: "As he turned over the leaves, curious to see the thraldom of superstition to which the people [sic] of a remote age were liable, he often smiled at the artless absurdities he discovered, the clumsy inventions practised upon the fears of the ignorant by the venality of the monks." 52 Indeed, when the hallucinatory pageant of the spectre at the royal banquet is taken to be the delusions of a "jongleur's" white magic, 53 we know we are immersed in an age when supernatural experiences are a plausible part of human life. A similar effect is wrought by the Archbishop's consistently recognizing the ghost, with a solemn holy sign, as a Divine supernatural agent. 54

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52 *Gaston*, I, p. 74.  
53 *Gaston*, II, p. 76.  
54 Ibid., p. 82, for example.
Furthermore, the ghost is clearly distinguished from those chimerical hallucinations of fancy to which Mrs. Radcliffe attributes most of the supernatural experiences of her novels. When, for example, during interludes in the narrative, we return to the present of the tale's fictional framework, Willoughton is musing in the dark over his ancient manuscript and revelling aesthetically in what he knows are illusions of his own creation. Looking to the castle, "already he fancied he could perceive half-armed men, on guard, pacing the battlements, and the warder's fire blazing on the summit and contending with the moonlight." Similarly, while he is musing on the battlements of Warwick Castle with his friend Simpson, the wind, to Willoughton, "seemed like a voice imperfectly uttering forth some dark prophesy." The point is that, in the modern sense, these things only "seem", and "could be"; Willoughton's experiences are, he knows, illusions of his fancy, whereas the hauntings of the tale itself are very real and lack the characteristic semantic pointers which Mrs. Radcliffe customarily employs to repudiate the validity of belief in the supernatural. Even in the context of the tale itself, Mrs. Radcliffe is at pains to distinguish the ghost from illusion. At one point, for example, Woodreeve is comforted in prison by the apparition of his dead kinsman accompanied by singing; this he attributes wholly to his fancy, despite hints of Heavenly grace, but it later transpires that the singing was actually

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56 Ibid., I, p. 64.
57 Ibid., II, p. 318.
his wife outside his prison, singing to attract his attention, while
the apparition and the hope it imparted were real spiritual phenomena. 58
Similarly, just before the ghost appears to King Henry, he thinks the
tapestry of Richard the Lion-hearted which adorns his wall has come
alive: "This," the narrator tells us, "was but a passing phantasie of
the King's own mind, as was afterwards declared: but that, which followed,
was said to be no deceit of fancy." 59

Beyond giving the ghost a new and convincing reality in his
fictional context, Mrs. Radcliffe also makes him of just the type which
in A Sicilian Romance and The Italian she never denies. The basis of
his haunting is moral retribution; he can have no rest until those guilty
of his murder are punished: "A knight-hospitaller was slain," he tells
King Henry, "by that sword; it has, this day, slain his slayer,
Gaston de Blondeville. The Prior of St. Mary's was his accomplice.
Punish the guilty. Release the innocent. Give me rest." 60 His efforts
are an example of "overpowering justice" ruling over "deep villainy"
and "mortal weakness" by means of "supernatural power." 61

In his disruption of the social order of the court, the ghost is
at once the Divinely inspired emblem of the moral and spiritual canker

58 Gaston, III, p. 10.
59 Ibid., p. 20.
60 Ibid., p. 21.
61 Ibid., p. 48.
hidden within it in the form of Gaston and the Prior, and the means of redressing that evil. On each of the numerous occasions on which he appears, he disrupts the symbolic order of court functions and establishes confusion. He so disturbs the wedding ceremony that it is delayed; his appearance before the King's table causes the Baron, by his consternation, to disrupt the formal hospitality of the royal board; when spectral visions of the murder are recognized at the wedding feast, "a murmur and confused noise" run through the hall, and many stand, where heretofore they had been sitting in state according to rank; and his appearance at the trial and the portent of the Baron's bloody clothes likewise disrupt the proper forms of law as a sign of Gaston's guilt. This whole process of bringing anarchy to the formal order of court culminates at the tournament, where the ghost strikes Gaston dead by a gesture with his sword, thereby inspiring a tumult of confusion:
"Immediately, Woodreeve perceived a rising up, and some confusion in the pavilion; the King motioned with his arm; the Archbishop made a sign in the air; some of the nobles, who stood round his Highness' chair, pressed forward - others drew back; and those behind, seemed to move to and fro in disorder." So complete is this disorder that the pageantry cannot continue, and the confident tone of system and structure is not again established until the Prior is punished as well.

63 Ibid., pp. 44-5.
64 Ibid., p. 79.
65 Ibid., pp. 374-5.
In each case, the supernatural disturbance occurs to call attention to Gaston's secret disregard of the God-given values on which courtly order is established and King Henry's irresponsible refusal to recognize his favourite's guilt. The confusion so caused is symbolic of the anarchy to which such an attitude leads. The Divine nature of the ghost's mission is only made more apparent by his being the instrument of moral retribution as well as the emblem of disorder.

The ghost, moreover, aids and comforts the innocent, besides exposing and punishing the guilty. We have already seen, for example, how his benign appearance inspires Woodreeve to hope, and how he demands that prisoner's release from the King. In addition, when the King has sentenced Woodreeve to death, a welter of haunting occurs in protest at the church.66

Mrs. Radcliffe's only real ghost, then, is both a plausible part of his medieval milieu, and a powerful and effective personification of moral force in the fictional world of Gaston de Blondeville. What a pity that, having created him, she occasionally throws a slight doubt upon his existence through the titular author's monkish caution: "We vouch not," says he, "for the truth of all here told; we only repeat what others have said and their selves credited; but in these days what is there strange and wonderful, which does not pass as current as the coin of the hand; and what will they not tell in hall or chamber, seated by night over blazing logs, as if their greatest pleasure were to fear?"67 In all her other novels, the criticism that she pointlessly

66 Gaston, III, pp. 4-5.
67 Ibid., II, p. 257.
undermines the supernatural is invalid because she does so for sound artistic reasons. Here, it may be valid, in so far as her narrator's voice represents her own, because in so questioning the fictional reality of her spectre, however slightly, she casts doubt on his important symbolic function and therefore on the meaning of her novel as a whole.\footnote{Of course, this is not true if the narrator's outburst is a function of his character rather than that of the author. I raise it because, for the most part, the narrator of \textit{Gaston} is presented as entirely credible, so that any distinction between his voice and the author's seems unlikely.}

For the most part, however, the ghost in \textit{Gaston de Blondeville} fits the terms of that novel as appropriately as the supernatural innuendo in Mrs. Radcliffe's other works contributes to their unity and coherence; the fictionally real and debunked supernatural are complimentary manifestations of two different aspects of the world of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. On the one hand the spectre of the murdered knight is Mrs. Radcliffe's ultimate symbolic expression of that moral justice which, originating in the Divine benevolence of the Creator of her fictional world, pervades, as we have seen, each of her novels. On the other, the debunked supernatural amplifies her characters' need for emotional control as a result of threatening evil both within and without themselves given the fallen state of the cosmos.

The nature and concerns of love in her novels are also governed by the nature and extent of evil in the affairs of her fictional world. Because it is in the nature of Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world that her heroines should be threatened over matters of romance from both within and without their families, that they and their lovers exercise...
sexual restraint and circumspection in love becomes an essential part of that overall emotional control which is necessary to their happiness.

Generally speaking, there is a degree of familial duty in the matter of marriage that Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines acknowledge. Julia, for example, feels that despite the extreme provocation to which she is submitted, she must still apologize to Madame de Menon for running away from a marriage of social and economic convenience;\(^\text{69}\) Emily dutifully obeys her aunt in rejecting the suit of Valancourt, and Mary, too, rejects Alleyn, whatever it costs her personally, as his supposed low birth would be a disgrace to her family. By the same token, there is an acceptable level of familial restraint and insistence in the same matter, though Mrs. Radcliffe's position here tends to be a little equivocal. Parental regulation of their children's amours is regarded as laudable and necessary as long as it is in the children's own best interests. So long, for example, as Matilda "extended her views beyond the present evil, to the future welfare of her child,"\(^\text{70}\) she is right in opposing Alleyn's progress in Mary's heart and recommending the advances of Count Santmorin, though in the latter case, she drops her support when she sees that the Count can have no place in her daughter's affection.\(^\text{71}\) Similarly, Madame La Motte is seen as justly opposing Louis' attachment to Adeline "as an obstacle to the promotion and the

\(^{69}\) *Sicilian Romance*, p. 39.

\(^{70}\) *Castles*, p. 188.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., p. 209.
fortune she hoped to see one day enjoyed by her son." Meanwhile, at
the other end of the spectrum, Signora Bianchi, reflecting on Vivaldi's
attachment to Ellena, "sometimes thought that it might be right to
sacrifice considerations which in other circumstances would be laudable,
to the obtaining for her niece the protection of a husband and a man
of honour." A principled supervision of amours by those in parental
authority and a corresponding duty toward their judgements on the part
of the lovers would appear to be positive value in the view of Mrs. Radcliffe.

Yet there are certain equivocal reservations expressed against any
sort of family duty in love at all. In A Sicilian Romance, for example,
Hippolytus refers to familial duty - admittedly, where it recommends
misery to the individual for life - as a matter of "the prejudices of
education." In The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, Osbert's opposition
to Alleyn's love for Mary is described as the product of prejudice and
ancient pride," and in The Italian, the Marchese di Vivaldi's pride
of birth is "at once his vice and his virtue, his safeguard and his
vice," an attribute which Ellena in exasperation calls "a visionary
prejudice." However, amid all these various protests against the

72 Forest, p. 87.
73 Italian, p. 25.
74 p. 24.
75 p. 248.
76 p. 7.
interference with the rights of lovers perpetrated by class distinction and family duty, both are always served in the end. Never do any of her lovers actually succeed in marrying in defiance of convention and the desires of their families; always the low-born hero or heroine is revealed to be a lost heiress or noble so that the original attachment may be consummated without violating any of the restrictions of the social order. Perhaps in this case, Mrs. Radcliffe uses her moral universe, in so far as it rewards virtuous protagonists in her novels, as a means by which to elude a painful and potentially powerful encounter between her sympathy for the rights of the individual in love and her conservative precepts of social distinction. As her novels stand, she attempts to uphold both, as her plots preserve the justice of the latter, while her characters' sufferings before the plot is resolved exhibit the former.

Whether or not class distinction and family duty are justifiable in themselves, Mrs. Radcliffe consistently treats as a cruel and disastrous misuse of parental power any attempt to force marriage or celibacy on the grounds of family aggrandizement. Everywhere the terms used to portray this insistence suggest treachery and outlandish self-interest. In *A Sicilian Romance*, for instance, the Marchioness organizes Julia's enforced marriage to the Duke de Luovo out of family ambition and a jealous desire to dispose of a rival for Hippolytus' affection. In these circumstances, Julia is "the joint victim of ambition and illicit love."\(^{78}\) The evil machinations of the Marchioness are particularly

\(^{78}\) p. 25.
perfidious in relation to the parental role she should play: "In reviewing the events of the last few weeks," Julia saw "those most dear to her banished or imprisoned by the secret influence of a woman, every feature of whose character was exactly opposite to that of the amiable mother she had been appointed to succeed."\(^79\) In the same way, the evil intentions of the Marchesa against Vivaldi and Ellena are intensified by comparison with the just sentiments of a mother. When the lovers have escaped Mt. Carmel, "she was in a disposition, which heightened disappointment into fury; and she forfeited, by the transports to which she yielded, the degree of pity that otherwise was due to a mother, who believed her only son to have sacrificed his family and himself to an unworthy passion."\(^80\) Even the Marchese, having promised his dying wife to allow Vivaldi to marry Ellena and having "felt disposed to consent to all that might restore him to happiness, could he but be restored to liberty,"\(^81\) is unjust enough to reject Schedoni's claims about Ellena's birth and character out of continuing prejudice.\(^82\)

Such unjust and despotic exercise of parental power often leads to disastrous errors. In The Italian, the Marchesa's brutal enforcement of her opposition to Ellena eventually has Vivaldi, her

\(^{79}\) Sicilian Romance, p. 43.
\(^{80}\) Italian, p. 165.
\(^{81}\) Ibid., p. 388.
\(^{82}\) Ibid., p. 393.
son, facing death at the Inquisition. In *A Sicilian Romance*, a similar insistence on absolute obedience on the part of two separate families leads to a calamitous mistaken identity. On the one hand, the Duke de Luovo mistakes a couple fleeing over the Sicilian landscape for Julia and Hippolytus, and in trying to capture the wrong people by violence, is himself wounded. On the other, Julia and Madame Menon are seized by armed men and taken to a ruined house, where they are harangued by an irate and autocratic father who, to his embarrassment, finds Julia is not his runaway daughter. Though the connection is not overtly made, the daughter he seeks must be the one the Duke mistook for Julia, and the entire, dangerous misunderstanding exhibits to what lengths unreasonable strictness drives parents.

Such violent abuse of parental responsibility in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels has the effect of alienating her heroines from their families, which leaves them bereft of identity and purpose and in imminent danger from a hostile world. As Francis Russel Hart says, in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, and in gothic novels in general, "characters haunt and pursue each other in demonic malevolence when normal unities disintegrate as relations are thwarted." Thus, this violence on the part of the heroines' families signifies the perversion of the traditional affective familial bonds by ambition and lust, and indicates that they no longer

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83 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 35.
84 Ibid., p. 43.
85 p. 96.
86 Notice the large part played by villainous passions in destroying these essential ties.
offer protection, but rather another threat. And in terms of their milieu, Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines can have neither identity or protection outside a family; alone they have no power and no legal rights beyond those which the weak chivalry of the world at large may offer. It is by no means unreasonable, then, that they all treat this alienation as one of the worst possible evils when it threatens them. Ellena, for example, feels after Bianchi's death "as if going forth into a new and homeless world."\textsuperscript{87} We have already seen how Emily's relations consistently threaten her with total withdrawal of their protection in order to coerce her according to their wishes, but by the time the abduction attempt has been made, and she has seen what she thinks is her aunt's body, she recognizes that she is, in any case, totally alienated from the love and protection that is usually due her, and she clings desperately to Annette's friendship as her last hope in the world. But it is in Adeline's case, more than any other, that the isolation of the heroine plays the greatest role; alienated from the protection of her supposed father by his cruel insistence on her taking the veil and by his later abandonment of her to violent hands, she is forever reflecting on her helplessness and loneliness in the world at large: "'An orphan in this wide world'", she laments, "'thrown upon the friendship of strangers for comfort, and upon their bounty for the very means of existence, what but evil have I to expect!'"\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Italian}, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Forest}, p. 121.
What, indeed! Though such reflections may often sound self-indulgent, the fact remains that the alienated heroines of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels are genuinely threatened by the lusts and ambitions of evil men. Conformity to mores of chastity and propriety is still the basis by which a single woman is judged in the world at large. More significantly, moral virtue remains important absolutely, as it relates each individual to his God. For these reasons, purity of reputation, to Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines, is "dearer...than existence" because its preservation means life itself.

Once the heroine has lost the effective temporal protection of her family, the heroine's virtue, that all important attribute, becomes the prey of the unscrupulous because she is physically vulnerable. Thus, the Marquis de Montalt and the Duke de Luovo can pursue Adeline and Julia to any lengths of viciousness out of lust, Montano can attempt to abduct Emily, and the church, under the Marchesa's orders, can attempt to prostitute Ellena to the man of their choice.

Consciousness of this vulnerability, especially their sexual vulnerability, tends naturally to cause Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines generally to distrust men, whereas they are more at ease amongst women, be they ever so unknown. One of the circumstances, for example, which most alarms Ellena about Spalatro's villa is that there is no woman living there. Similarly, when Adeline, at de Montalt's palace,

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89 Sicilian Romance, p. 23.
90 Italian, p. 213.
"perceived that the Marquis was gone and that she was in the care of
two women," she is more at ease. When she awakes from her fever at
Leleoncourt in the care of Clara and Madame La Luc, she troubles herself
not at all, as we might expect, to anticipate in them the presence of
enemies. It is as part of this necessary caution about all men that
the heroines of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels must be exceedingly circumspect
in their love affairs.

Of course, they must resist love where it conflicts with the just
demands of family duty, even when the resistance is ultimately hopeless.
Mary, for example, though she cannot banish her love for the supposed
peasant, Alleyn, never gives in to it and makes every effort to hide it
from both herself and others. Similarly, because love is, in any case,
a potentially disquieting emotion, in that it may be betrayed, the
heroines must always entertain it with caution. Here, Julia is a perfect
example; she embraces with wholehearted and naive exultation the atten-
tions of Hippolytus, and works herself into a frenzy of happy expectation,
only to sink into languor and disappointment when he abruptly leaves
Castle Mazzini. Henceforth, she treats the affair with greater caution.

But most significantly, the heroines must resist the demands of
love, or at least proceed with extreme caution, where they conflict with

91 Forest, p. 195.
92 Ibid., p. 288.
93 See Castles, pp. 65, 67, 81.
94 Sicilian Romance, pp. 8-9.
95 Ibid., p. 17, where she resolves "to conceal her sentiments till
an exploration of his abrupt departure from Mazzini, and subsequent absence,
should have dissipated the shadow...which hung over...his conduct."
the precepts of absolute propriety; to fail to do so is to ignore their vulnerability in a hostile world and to court the personal and public disaster of a lost reputation. Thus, Julia entertains the thought of eloping with Hippolytus only because her parents' injustice is so extreme, and she sees no means of avoiding the disgrace accompanying such an act "but by rushing upon the fate so dreadful to her imagination." 96 Later, though her immediate marriage with Hippolytus would end the threats of her father and the Duke, though "she loved Hippolytus with a steady and tender affection," because she thinks Ferdinand is dead, she refuses Hippolytus' proposal on grounds that it would be a "profanation of the memory of that brother who had suffered so much for her sake, to mingle joy with the grief which her uncertainty concerning him occasioned." 97 Beyond the dictates of public morality, it is essential that her own standards be maintained for the sake of self esteem.

Adeline, too, must exercise extreme caution in her affair with Theodore. In the first place, because she is only too aware of the vulnerability of her position with the La Mottes, she consistently blames herself for having suffered her thoughts to consider an object, the young officer to whom she is attracted, "which she perceived was too dangerous to her peace." 98 Only because he wishes to impart to her

96 Sicilian Romance, p. 24.
97 Ibid., p. 63.
98 Forest, p. 117.
important information about the Marquis does she permit herself to meet him, and even then, "she blamed herself for having made an appointment, doubting whether he had not solicited it for the purpose of pleading a passion; and now delicacy checked this thought, and made her vexed that she had presumed upon having inspired one." Later, when she is satisfied that her affection is returned, and it appears that it cannot be denied, she still refuses; even when she and Theodore are fleeing the Marquis' violent revenge, an immediate marriage "with a man, of whom she had little knowledge, and to whose family and connections she had no sort of introduction;" she recognizes that in terms of her society it is "an engagement which, at this time, can be productive only of misery to us both." Her devotion to propriety in this case places her once again in the hands of the Marquis, but by following morality to the letter, she preserves her self-esteem and insures her future happiness.

Emily, too, first refuses Valancourt at Toulouse because she realizes that a clandestine marriage would be a blot for life on her personal standards and on their public reputation that is not worth the risk and because her own principles demand obedience to Madame Cheron. When, later on, Valancourt appears to be a gambler and a wastrel who

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99 *Forest*, p. 124.
102 *Udolpho*, p. 155.
has deceived her and with whom she could not be happy, she knows that her rejection of him is "necessary to her future peace" no matter what its temporary cost in emotional pain. Her fear of her vulnerability in this situation keeps her steadfastly aloof from him until the charges against his character are cleared.

At first, Ellena, like the others, refuses to admit her affection for Vivaldi because she knows that his parents will undoubtedly baulk at her humble origins; indeed, had she known the extent of their opposition at the beginning of their acquaintance, "a just regard for her own dignity would instantly have taught her to subdue, without difficulty, this infant affection." She must protect herself from the heartbreak of disappointment to which her class dooms her. When, however, it appears that Vivaldi's parents may be persuaded to accept her, and while she has the encouragement in this affair of her prudent aunt, she yields, against her better judgement, to her love. By the time she finds out about the absolute opposition of Vivaldi's parents, it causes her much bitter remorse and confusion, for now though she recognizes that to continue with her plans to marry him is to violate her own principles by entering a family "so decidedly averse to their marriage," she cannot bring herself to reject him. Still, her path

103 *Udolpho*, p. 513.
104 *Italian*, p. 32.
105 Ibid., p. 38.
106 Ibid., p. 69.
107 Ibid., p. 125.
is not clear, even when he has rescued her from the convent; she must decide whether or not they are to marry, and Mrs. Radcliffe is at pains to show us that her heroine's scruples in this matter are much more than petty vanity: "She was too sensible of the difficulties of her present situation, and too apprehensive of the influence which her determination must have on all her future life, to be happy, though escaped from the prison of San Stefano, and in the presence of Vivaldi, her beloved deliverer and protector." Only with the greatest uneasiness does she consent to the marriage as the least of many evils.

In this way, then, apprehensiveness of their own vulnerability in the world and a corresponding desire to preserve the public reputation and the private standards on which their happiness and safety are founded drive Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines to insist on absolute propriety in matters of the heart. Even in *Gaston de Blondeville*, where the romantic theme is scarcely developed, Lady Barbara's consolation for the loss of Gaston is that her happiness would have been destroyed forever by having to live with such a villain: "She must have known him for the perpetrator of that lawless and wicked act, of which he was accused, and, moreover, for the cruel destroyer of domestic faith and happiness."

As a result of this apprehensive reserve, a hero, if he is to attract the affection or even the respect of a heroine, must conform to absolute propriety lest he appear too great a threat to her. For

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109 *II*, p. 394.
the most part, this means he must curb the vehement passions of sexual
love, whose violence and selfishness is often cruel in any case.

Unsuccessful lovers must learn to curb their emotion with resignation
because to force their suits, having been refused, is to cause another
unnecessary emotional pain in a futile cause. As Alida Weiten points
out, the mutual love of hero and heroine in a Radcliffe novel is arbitrary
and unassailable,\textsuperscript{110} so he has no chance of changing her mind; to persist
is only to cause continuing distress for both her and himself. Thus
Adeline rejects with moral indignation the passionate pleadings of
Louis La Motte early in \textit{The Romance of the Forest}: "'You distress me,'
interrupted Adeline; 'this is a conversation which I ought not to hear.
I am above disguise, and, therefore, assure you, that though your
virtues will always command my esteem, you have nothing to hope from
my love.'"\textsuperscript{111} However, once Louis has made the effort to control his
passion and has nobly scorned to be jealous of Theodore,\textsuperscript{112} Adeline
"finds her esteem for him ripen into gratitude, and her regard daily
increase."\textsuperscript{113} Similarly, Dupont, Emily's rescuer in \textit{Udolpho}, must first
learn to moderate his passionate and unwelcome professions of love
before she can accept him as a friend.

Nor can the successful lovers command the heroines' affections

\textsuperscript{110}p. 18.

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{Forest}, p. 126.

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., p. 363.

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., p. 379.
while they continue in the ill-advised assumptions and outbursts of their passion. Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes seem to be guilty of selfishness in the pursuit of love. Vivaldi, for example, on several occasions attempts to force Ellena into a promise of immediate marriage, despite the emotional strain she is under after their escape from San Stefano, and despite the threat of pursuit. Valancourt, too, has trouble staying on the benevolent side of passion in his relationship with Emily. Early in Udolpho, when Emily insists that he follow proper form in suing for her hand, knowing that he will be refused by Madame Cheron, he breaks into a fit of impetuous insistence that frightens Emily with its violence; later, because she cannot bear the thought of a secret marriage, he quite brutally accuses her of not loving him. Nor are his passions better controlled initially when she rejects him for his supposed immorality. At that time, he pleads for forgiveness with a vehement disregard for Emily's already distraught emotions.

These violent outbursts in favour of morally culpable, precipitant acts are, of course, indicative of a mental state that the heroines must reject for their own safety and happiness. Therefore, they regularly oppose them with coldness and upraid the heroes for the cruelty of their expressions, whereupon the heroes' more tender sensibility usually returns, and they defer apologetically to their loves.

114 See Italian, pp. 144-5, for example.
115 p. 146.
116 p. 154.
When Alleyn, for example, gives in to his frustrated affection for Mary and throws himself in a fit of pleading at her feet, her cold reply brings him quickly to his senses, and makes him sorry so unfairly to aggravate their mutual distress. 117 Julia crushes a similar abject display on the part of Hippolytus thus: "'Rise my lord...that attitude is neither becoming you to use, nor me to suffer.'" 118 When Adeline repeatedly rejects Theodore's proposals of immediate marriage and asks for retreat in a convent, he, in an outburst of frustrated anger, like Valancourt in Udolpho, casts doubts upon the sincerity of her love. Her shocked and hurt reaction awakens tenderness, however: "'What a wretch was I,'" says he, "'to cause you this distress by questioning that regard with which I can no longer doubt you honour me! Forgive me Adeline; say but you forgive me, and whatever may be the pain of this separation, I will no longer oppose it.'" 119 This pattern of emotional outburst, followed by cool, moral reaction and remorseful apology is repeated again and again between nearly all of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes and heroines. Moreover, it is only when the hero begins to defer to the impeccable delicacy of the heroine that her affection becomes totally his. Theodore's conduct, we learn, "since Adeline's escape, had excited her warmest gratitude, and the danger which he had now encountered in her behalf, called forth her tenderness, and heightened it into love." 120 Likewise, "by acting with an honour so delicate" for the most

117 [Castles, p. 215.]
118 [Sicilian Romance, pp. 16-17.]
119 [Forest, p. 228.]
120 [Ibid., p. 212.]
part, Vivaldi "unconsciously adopted a certain means of increasing her Ellena's esteem and gratitude," so that shortly she is indeed prepared to marry him, in spite of possible consequences.

Even so, it is tempting to accuse Mrs. Radcliffe of some sort of primal feminine aggression in the way she consistently opposes male passion to female delicacy, to the detriment of the former. After all, the immediate marriage or elopement for which he pleads would, as in the cases of Hippolytus, Theodore, Valancourt, and Vivaldi, put the heroine out of danger from voracious relatives or lust-ridden nobles. Moreover, his passionate complaints are based only on the flattering fear that he might lose her. Yet the heroines appear universally cold, rational, and cruelly unfeeling: "these exquisitely sensitive, well-bred heroines alienate our sympathy by their impregnable self-esteem, a disconcerting trait which would certainly have exasperated heroes less perfect... than Mrs. Radcliffe's Theodores and Valancourts." Were it not for each heroine's isolation and the magnitude of the threats facing them in their world, it might be hard to justify their behaviour.

Furthermore, we must note in her defence that the heroines of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels frequently have just as much trouble denying the inclinations of passionate love as their male counterparts. Love in Mrs. Radcliffe's world is an organic symbiosis of minds based on common sentiments and interests. Vivaldi and Ellena grow together

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121 Italian, p. 160.
122 Birkhead, Tale, p. 46.
during long evenings spent in conversation and mutual adoration of Neapolitan landscape, while Emily and Valancourt swiftly discover the congruency of their aesthetic taste and moral principles during the St. Auberts' tour of the Pyrénées, and when we read the following during Adeline's first contact with Theodore, it becomes obvious that they are destined for one another: "Her conversation no longer suffered a painful restraint; but gradually disclosed the beauties of her mind, and seemed to produce a mutual confidence. A similarity of sentiment soon appeared, and Theodore, by the impatient pleasure which animated his countenance, seemed frequently to anticipate the thoughts of Adeline."\textsuperscript{123} Such a strong and deep-rooted attachment is not to be denied, at least not long.

Often, just at the moment when the heroines would like most for reasons of circumspection to hide their love, it shows through in spite of their efforts. When Mary, for example, is challenged on the subject, "the soft blush of her cheek showed the colours of her mind, while in endeavouring to shade her feelings, she impelled them into stronger light."\textsuperscript{124} Ellena, too, cannot be as hard as she would like; she prudently sends her new suitor away, but "an involuntary smile"\textsuperscript{125} contradicts her reserve.

Certainly, Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines suffer as much conflict

\textsuperscript{123}Forest, p. 114.  
\textsuperscript{124}Castles, p. 91.  
\textsuperscript{125}Italian, p. 27.
internally in asserting the rational dictates of delicacy as the heroes do externally in accepting them. As she listens to her mother's reservations about Alleyn, for instance, Mary's "judgement acknowledged their justness, while her heart regretted their force,"\(^\text{126}\) and throughout the book "the insignificance of the peasant was lost in the nobility of the character, and every effort at forgetfulness was baffled."\(^\text{127}\)

When Emily St. Aubert is first told of Valancourt's evil ways, the consequences send her into such a welter of grief that she alternately believes and disbelieves the evidence,\(^\text{128}\) and from that point until he is cleared, she is extremely hard put to deny her love in favour of the cold, rational rejection she knows is necessary. Her heart consistently contradicts the evidence of her reason, and by the time Valancourt is cleared, what she has learned herself of his benevolence to Therese and to his own tenants is already secretly restoring even her rational esteem.\(^\text{129}\) Adeline experiences similar difficulty in refusing the proposals of Theodore: "Adeline, who had long strove to support her spirits in his presence, while she adhered to a resolution which reason suggested, but which the pleadings of her heart powerfully opposed, was unable longer to command her distress, and burst into tears."\(^\text{130}\)

\(^\text{126}\) Castles, p. 82.

\(^\text{127}\) Ibid., p. 68.

\(^\text{128}\) Udolpho, p. 509.

\(^\text{129}\) Ibid., p. 593.

\(^\text{130}\) Forest, p. 228.
Ellena even gives over her delicacy in favour of love and a clandestine marriage with Vivaldi, though it is not without the encouragement of her late guardian and an excuse for ignoring the opposing wishes of Vivaldi's family. To exercise restraint is as difficult for her as it is for the others, for "whenever prudence and decorous pride forbade her to become a member of the Vivaldi family, as constantly did gratitude, affection, irresistible tenderness plead the cause of Vivaldi."\textsuperscript{131} She suffers considerably to refuse Vivaldi's proposals as long as she does. However, her affection does have the support of Signora Bianchi, her guardian,\textsuperscript{132} and she early realizes "that the injustice her imprisonment at San Stefano, which his family had exercised towards her, absolved her from all consideration of their displeasure, otherwise than as it might affect herself."\textsuperscript{133} With the help of these considerations, soon "she appeared to herself an unjust and selfish being, unwilling to make any sacrifice for the tranquility of him, who had given her liberty, even at the risk of his life. Her very virtues, now that they were carried to excess, seemed to her to border on vices; her sense of dignity appeared to be narrow pride; her delicacy weakness; her moderated affection cold ingratitude; and her circumspection, little less than prudence degenerated into meanness."\textsuperscript{134} And she assents to the marriage. Perhaps this last example, since it is also

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{131}\textit{Italian}, p. 182.\\
\textsuperscript{132}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 38.\\
\textsuperscript{133}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 123.\\
\textsuperscript{134}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 181.
\end{flushright}
Mrs. Radcliffe's last portrayal of the struggle of heart and head in a heroine, represents a mellowing toward love at the expense of prudence in comparison with her earlier works. Certainly, it is much easier to forgive all her heroines' strict propriety when we realize how much it costs them to achieve.

It would appear, then, that adherence to the strict forms of decorum in matters sexual is one facet of that overall emotional restraint which both hero and heroine must strive to attain in order to live, as successfully as possible, the moral life in a fallen world. Only when they have well endured the evils that beset them and resisted the potentially disastrous temptation to yield to the passions of sexual love outside the approved modes of society do they enter those scenes of marital bliss which, like the weddings concluding Shakespearean comedies, symbolize ideal earthly happiness.  

Nor are the supernatural and romantic love the only themes that are governed by Mrs. Radcliffe's recommendations of emotional restraint. Because the quality of her fictional society and its institutions is governed by the quality of the emotional lives of those in her novels who administer it, she also recommends emotional restraint and damns selfish passion in government and church.

Most critical theories of the historical or social significance of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels go to ludicrous extremes that cannot be

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135 See, for example, Udolpho, p. 670; Castles, p. 258; Italian, p. 412; and Forest, pp. 422-3, all of which depict fairy land wedding celebrations of great richness and idyllic future lives.
supported adequately from her texts. Many find them to be a positive or negative projection of eighteenth century values into the medieval period. Evans, for example, claims that "Otranto and the genre it initiated erupted from two related ideas: first, medieval life was dark, gloomy, and barbarous; second, it would be terrifying if enlightened gentlemen and 'sensible' ladies were transported from contemporary society and suddenly thrust into that earlier time." In this he is partially supported by André Breton, the French Surrealist, who finds in gothic fiction an expression of the revolution of democracy over feudalism, in which the ruined edifices equal fallen feudalism, the phantoms the threat of the past, and the dark passages the struggle of the individual out of the slavery of the past. To the contrary, Robert Utter finds Mrs. Radcliffe's works, in particular, a yearning for the past. The heroine's fainting in a Radcliffe novel, he says, we may think of "as a symptom of a sort of aristocracy complex, and of the Gothic romance as a dream of feudalism by way of escape from an inevitably rising tide of democracy." Wylie Sypher even manages to suggest that Mrs. Radcliffe was a direct forbear of Marxism: "If one can force himself to penetrate the surface of Mrs. Radcliffe's gothic fabrications a pattern of socio-economic contradictions, paradoxes, ambivalences, and ambiguities appears that affords some criteria of the greater romantics and of

136 p. 8.
137 As Montague Summers represents him, p. 398.
138 p. 163.
British romanticism generally... In her, one more readily comprehends the total situation - the bourgeois standards and the oblique negation of those standards. All these theories, because of the sweeping generalizations they make at the expense of the text, amount to just so much meaningless jargon.

It is simply a fact that Mrs. Radcliffe's novels reflect only the life and views of the eighteenth century in England, even though they are set nominally in the foreign past. Gothic heroines like Emily and Adeline do not function as "projections of the nervous system of their own time" into the "Dark Ages," because in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, the fictional milieu is eighteenth century in essence, whatever it may be in name. Indeed, the very ruined appearance of the gothic castles, as opposed to the numerous chateaux which give the impression of a far later era - they are all fitted up in delicate eighteenth century fashion - suggest, along with the protagonists' concerns and values, that the whole flavour of the novel is contemporary to the period of its writing and that the nominal period setting is merely a trick of temporal distancing. I am prepared to agree with those critics who claim that Mrs. Radcliffe introduced these supposed foreign and past settings in accordance with contemporary critical theory which made such technique important to the suspension of disbelief.


140 Evans, p. 9.

141 Among them Foster, pp. 456-7; Hume, p. 286; and S. Diana Neill, A Short History of The English Novel, p. 115.
Of course, there is one exception to prove the rule, Gaston de Blondeville. In this singular example, much ignored by the critics, Mrs. Radcliffe uses a medieval setting, authentic in so far as she can make it, to figure forth a compelling picture of a structured society disrupted by evil and restored by its purging. The extent to which she has sought detailed authenticity in her text, as testified by her copious notes, makes Gaston, more than any of her other books, a reproduction of life and manners in a past age, though her commentators have attacked her here as pedantic.

This attempt at authenticity imparts successfully, at least to a layman, a peculiarly medieval quality to the supposedly medieval narrative. There are numerous, interpolated moral asides, for example, all marked with a typically medieval other-worldliness. Here, for example, is a medieval commonplace, straight out of Mrs. Radcliffe's text: "Gradually a sense of the vanity and nothingness of this fleeting part of an external existence, instead of being a melancholy, will be a complacent perception, more than reconciling us to the shortness of its imperfect joys and deeply consoling us for its sorrows." Of course, it is undoubtedly no coincidence that this sentiment is philosophically congruent to that resignation offered by La Luc,

142 Except Birkhead, p. 57, who notes it in passing as "an early attempt to figure forth the days of chivalry", and Varma, p. 101, who plagiarizes her opinion word for word.

143 See Foster, p. 269; Birkhead, p. 57; and Varma, p. 88.

144 Gaston, II, p. 314. For other similar reflections, see I, p. 93; II, pp. 95, 347; III, pp. 13, 46, 50.
St. Aubert, and others in Mrs. Radcliffe’s earlier novels, but nevertheless, it is both structured in a medieval manner and introduced in the text in a medieval way - for no great reason at all save its intrinsic value.

Moreover, the narrative drifts gracefully, just like the medieval chronicle it is supposed to be, into digressions and descriptive cul-de-sacs. The character of the Prior we first glean from incidental references to his presence, characteristic more of a chronicle than a novel. At the hunt, for example, we learn that the Prior of St. Mary's "was in the King's train; for he joyed in sports of the forest more than well became one of his calling,"145 this statement occurring quite as an aside from the description of the pageantry of the hunt. Similarly, the anecdote of Maister Henry's ballads being shortened by royal decree is cheerfully brought in as a means for the titular author, in the medieval manner, to apologize for the length of his tale and to insist upon the necessity of its prolixity: "...for mine own part, I must be circumstantial, or else nothing, as this 'Trew Chronique' in due time must show."146

The style of composition is also characteristically medieval. Mrs. Radcliffe quite successfully masters a medievally-flavoured prose. Not only does she stud her sentences with archaisms - "When they came

146 Ibid., I, p. 141.
nigh to Kenilworth,"\textsuperscript{147} "Certes, the noise of the trumpets,"\textsuperscript{148} "warders in their niches to the number of eight;"\textsuperscript{149} She also makes copious use of studied and formal similies worthy of a medieval text of Latinate rhetoric: "This noble train...was... like unto some mighty river, that flowing along, appears, where the shades open, in shining bends upon the plain, and is lost again as they enter beneath the gloom."\textsuperscript{150} The example is one of three similes which, occurring together, occupy an entire page of the text.

In fact, in its length, its richness of detail, and its subjects of order and ceremony, Mrs. Radcliffe's copious descriptive passages achieve the quality of medieval tapestry, or some of Chaucer's lush chivalric passages. There are so many paragraphs that might be quoted, but here is one substantial example, significantly medieval not only for the rich detail of appearance, but also in the order and ritual portrayed:

But, the finest sight of all was the going of the chamberlain to the cupboard, accompanied of three nobles of the highest estate in the realm, that were then present, (save the King's family) to receive the King's cup and spice-plates; and then the bringing up of the voide before his Highness. And, first, the usher, having assembled the King's sewers, their towels about their necks, with the four esquires of the body and the knights and esquires of the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{147} \textit{Gaston}, I, p. 86.
  \item \textsuperscript{148} Ibid., p. 92.
  \item \textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p. 95.
  \item \textsuperscript{150} Ibid., p. 80.
\end{itemize}
household, to the number of seventeen; these, with other officers, being met at the cupboard, the Chamberlain took the King's towel, and, having kissed it, as the custom is, delivered it to the Earl of Norfolk, who, reverently received the same, and laid it safely upon his shoulder. Then, the said chamberlain gave the gold spice-plates covered to the Earl of Hereford; and then the King's cup of massive gold, covered also, to the Earl of Warwick. At the same time were given to the knights of the household the Archbishop's spice plate and cup, covered also, to be carried up, by the space of one minute after the King's. 151

A place for everything, and everything in its place. Here is another incident of rich pageantry, this time from the tournament:

First came, in solemn march, eight trumpeters, four abreast, blowing up amain, in their yellow tabards and high caps, their banner rolls displayed: then cornets, drums, and clarioners, in warlike fashion. Then came twelve knights armed, two and two, on foot. Next came the banner of the King's Highness, carried by a knight completely armed, and borne up by four other knights armed, but bare-headed, each having his two shield-knaves...beside him carrying his spear, shield, and helmet. Then followed eight knights, appointed like the first, each with his two knaves, bearing helmet and shield; then forty yeomen, in doublets of scarlet and gold, bearing their partizans upright, their coats broidered with a golden lion and the King's crown above, surmounted with a crescent and a blazing star. 152

This passage continues for three more pages, equally as lush, and similar examples punctuate all three volumes of the text. The dramatic framework of this narrative, distanced in time by its eighteenth century setting

151 Gaston, I, p. 139 ff.
152 Ibid., II, p. 338.
and in attitude by the eighteenth century philosophy and aesthetics of the characters who discover the manuscript, serves only to throw into relief the characteristics of the "medieval" past against the tone of the fictional present of Willoughton and Simpson.

The quality of serene confidence, formality, and order which distinguishes the manner of the narrative reflects symbolically upon the society depicted in it. Through passages such as those quoted above, Mrs. Radcliffe creates in this medieval setting an extremely secure, humanly ordered world to which it is difficult not to be attracted instinctively. It is this pervasive order and justness in things which is dissipated by the ghost, who, as we have seen, is a manifestation of the evil which is actually undermining the moral values of the society in the form of the Prior and Gaston, and which must be removed before the proper tenour of life can be restored. Mrs. Radcliffe's attempt thus to imitate the quality of medieval life marks the only occasion on which the historicity of her novels assumes anything more than superficial significance.

Nevertheless, though it may not be tied to any particular period, there is in her novels a good deal of criticism of upper class life, as it relates to individuals' responsibilities within that class to guide and rule society. Usually, this criticism bears on the failure of her nobles and clerics to live the life of restraint she recommends in general. All her villains, after all, are nobles and churchmen who abuse their stations as a result of their indulgence of evil passions.

Her titled villains, in order to satisfy their greed and pride, consistently abuse their authority at the expense of their subjects.
Baron Malcolm's lands are "scarcely sufficient to support his wretched people, who, sinking under severe exactions, suffer to lie uncultivated, tracts which would otherwise yield riches to their lord;" the result of his oppressive policy is ultimately a revolt amongst his own household "who, impatient of the yoke of tyranny, only waited a favourable opportunity to throw it off, and resume the rights of nature." Similarly, it is an emblem of Montoni's avaricious irresponsibility that he will not repair his seat, from which he is for the most part absent, even though his retainers must suffer discomfort as a result. In the following description of the last champion at the tournament in Gaston de Blondeville, all those who preceded him are damned for their irresponsibility to their estates by comparison: "I say not more of his appearance, seeing he made not much, when compared with others, on that day; only this I will add, he was of a most compassionate and honest nature; and might have vied with the rest, if he would have pressed harder upon his dependents, or would have mortgaged his lands, as so many did, to the Jews." The general view of the nobility to be had from Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, moreover, only extends this irresponsibility in wider circles. In A Sicilian Romance, the rulers of one era are compared to those of

153 Castles, p. 13.
154 Ibid., p. 123.
155 Udolpho, p. 230.
156 Gaston, II, p. 358.
another, and there is little difference but for a change of passions and vices: "The rude manners, the boisterous passions, the daring ambition, and the gross indulgences which formerly characterized the priest, the nobleman, and the sovereign, had now begun to yield to learning — the charms of refined, conversation — political intrigue and private artifice."  

With similar force, Ferdinand, reflecting on the possible impact which his sudden absence from his sister's wedding would have (he has been imprisoned by his father for attempting to help her escape), "knew too well the dissipated character of the Sicilian nobility, to doubt that whatever story should be invented would be very readily believed by them; who, even if they knew the truth, would not suffer a discovery of their knowledge to interrupt the festivity which was offered them;" appetite comes to their minds before moral responsibility. In *Udolpho*, the St. Auberts seem to be the only honest, responsible, ruling family left amidst corruption; M. Quesnel, who takes over their family seat, immediately shows his social irresponsibility symbolically by defacing the traditional forms of its decorations, for example, and in Montoni and Morano we have nobles who are little more than common banditti. Similarly, it ultimately transpires in *Gaston de Blondeville* that the greed of many of the rulers of the town of Kenilworth has been sufficient that they accept bribes from the Prior.

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157 p. 43.
158 Ibid., p. 27.
159 pp. 22-3.
in order to protect him, a treacherous robber, from justice; indeed, "those who, from education and station, might not have been suspected of such baseness, were now brought to truth, and were fain to hide their heads for shame."160

The clerics, too, as co-administrators of the state with the nobility in Radcliffe's novels are often just as corrupt. As we have seen, part of her indictment of the Roman Catholic church depends on that oppressiveness in Church institutions which causes diseased passions in its votaries. In addition, the secrecy and absolute power of Church institutions tend to make it accessory to crime; in The Italian, the symbolic opening, during which the Englishman is horrified to find a Cathedral asylum for a known assassin,161 is repeated in the action as the anonymity and secrecy that surrounds the orders of monks allow Schedoni to conceal his plans against Ellena and Vivaldi and to escape justice. In Gaston de Blondeville, the same attributes enable the Prior, who, like Schedoni, is "no true son of the Church," to remain concealed so near the scene of his robberies and murders.

Even so, the Church as an institution is still only as culpable as its individual clerics' hypocritical vices. Consistently, the abbots, abbesses and priests of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels abuse their spiritual and temporal authority to appease their own greed and arrogance. One abbot, however overdone the incident, uses the walls of his cloister to hide that riotous high living which he professes to

160 III, p. 40.
161 p. 2.
eschew; another protects Julia from her father only out of revenge for the blow to his pride which Mazzini's ultimatums represent: "The spirit of the abate was roused by this menace; and Julia obtained from his pride, that protection which neither his principle nor his humanity would have granted." The Father-director of the pilgrimage with whom Vivaldi travels in The Italian is a similar case in point: "The superior willingly resigned the solemn austerity of his office and permitted the company to make themselves as happy as possible, in consideration of receiving plenty of the most delicate of their viands; yet somewhat more of dignity was mingled with his condescensions, that compelled them to receive even his jokes with a degree of deference, and perhaps they laughed at them less for their spirit than because they were favours." Thus is a sacred moral office reduced to a tissue of gluttony and conceit. Vivaldi's inquisitors, by the same token, seek only "the self-applause of successful art" in their examinations as they pursue pride rather than justice, and the evil Prior of Gaston de Blondeville consistently abuses his authority as head of St. Mary's by using it to avoid his responsibilities as a cleric and indulge still further his appetites for food, drink, and hunting.

Very often, such clerics, corrupted by their passions, form unholy

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162 Sicilian Romance, p. 34.
163 Ibid., p. 48.
164 p. 114.
165 Ibid., p. 206.
166 See, . . . II, p. 67, where he is still carousing with the nobles though his monks are at prayer.
alliances with equally depraved members of the nobility with a view to gaining mutual satisfaction in evil ends. The abbess of Adeline's convent in *The Romance of the Forest*, for example, co-operates with Montalt's scheme to put the orphan out of the way as a nun with a view to gaining for herself and her convent the resources of a rich sister. Similarly, out of pride and the expectation of reward, the Abbess of San Stefano agrees to imprison and coerce Ellena. Schedoni, moreover, combines in himself both dissipated noble and corrupt cleric.

Yet beyond the power of these passion-ridden lords and priests, Mrs. Radcliffe even presents us, in the *King Henry III* of *Gaston de Blondeville* with a figure of royal authority debased by pride and self-indulgence. Though his heart is in the right place as a ruler and he does not consciously reject justice and responsibility, he is as lavish and spendthrift as his knights: "With this King Henry it was ever so, on the score of money; good as he was, on many other points he ever lived for the present hour, and suffered the next to shift for itself." 167 His problem, as the narrator points out, is too much selfish passion, the lack of a cool heart and head. 168

Similarly, he insists on promoting foreign favourites before those indigenous nobles who deserve preferment principally as an assertion of his will, with the result that political discontent rages at his court,

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167II, p. 306.
168Ibid., p. 307.
as we are consistently told by the narrator. Gaston de Blondeville is one such favourite whom he promotes to a Barony and the hand of an English beauty in stubborn defiance of grievous suspicions concerning the man’s character, in order to assert his power over the discontent of his people. Admittedly, in part this stubbornness is simply his original benevolence, swayed and disfigured by the evil misrepresentations of the villains. At first, indeed, his "Highness had seemed willing to move more deliberately in this business of the Baron, and to sift it to the bottom," but, because his "understanding was often baffled by his humours and by the arts of cunning men," he listens more and more to the private arguments of Gaston, who claims Woodreeve's charges are part of a plot against him, and against King Henry's foreign favourites, a reason he already suspected. Once he is convinced of this, his pride of power causes him to act harshly and unjustly in Woodreeve's case, not only in the belief that he is thereby protecting an innocent, Gaston, but also "to reprove and caution those of his subjects, who had a public prejudice against strangers." Pride of power, then, leads his original benevolence and justice astray, "and thus it is, if Kingly

170 Ibid., II, p. 122.
171 Ibid., II, p. 273.
172 Ibid., I, p. 132.
173 Ibid., p. 111.
174 Ibid., p. 132.
power pertain to a weak head not carefully warned by early instructions against the dangers, which must beset all power, whether public or private, whether in Prince or subject; for the passions are the helm, whereon designing men seize to steer into action, as they wish."  

By contrast to all these figures of irresponsible rule, Radcliffe's sympathetic characters in authority, by living in so far as they can according to the creed of sensibility and emotional restraint, fulfill their responsibilities with justice and humanity. In contrast to the hatred engendered by Baron Malcolm's oppression, for instance, Osbert's people are overjoyed to see him on his escape: "In the delight of that moment, his heart bore testimony to the superior advantages of an equitable government." The St. Auberts employ most of their time in seeing to the comforts of the unfortunate among their retainers, as we have noted, a symbol of their own just and humane government. Surely also, the open, mutual warmth of the reunion between Paulo and Vivaldi, in contrast to the consternation it causes amongst the Roman fops in whose salon it occurs, speaks well of Vivaldi's worth in the role of leader; "while the lacqueys were repairing the mischief Paulo had occasioned, were picking up the rolling snuff boxes he had jerked away in his passage, and wiping the snuff from the soiled clothes, Vivaldi was participating in all the delight, and returning all the affection of his servant."  

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175 Gaston, II, p. 392.
176 Castles, p. 169.
177 Italian, pp. 405-6.
certainly must deserve it. In *Gaston de Blondeville*, moreover, the justice, responsibility, and compassion of young Prince Edward form a significant contrast to his father's shortcomings. Where King Henry is a careless spendthrift, we are consistently told of Edward's promise in statecraft, and the chaste frugality of his tent, "not in any feigned fashion, but in that, which belongeth to tents in war," symbolizes alongside the gay dissipation of the others at the tournament his solemn dedication to what will be the responsibilities of his office; where King Henry is prejudiced and unjust in the matter of Gaston, Edward suspects Gaston and feels Woodreeve is innocent.

Just as these lords temporal act responsibly as rulers, so do Mrs. Radcliffe's good clerics discharge their duties well by eschewing self and passion in favour of benevolence and reason. It is La Luc's enlightened and benevolent influence in his cure, for example, which make it "flourishing, healthy, and happy" where the surrounding countryside suffers "the usual effects of arbitrary government." Similarly, the liberal views of religion and monasticism taken by the Mother Superior of the convent Santa della Pieta, the only one that escapes criticism in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, prevent her institution from denying its members life. It is by no means insignificant that her religion tends toward deism, her sermons toward Shaftesburian ethics,

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181 *Forest*, p. 284.
and her austerity toward benevolent limitation. The Archbishop of York, too, in taking pity on Woodreeve and, after an objective examination of the evidence surrounding his charges, urging the King not to be hasty of judgement, exhibits that benevolent sensibility and reason that distinguishes him from his depraved colleagues.

Mrs. Radcliffe's social criticisms, then, never reach the point of condemning whole classes or institutions of government, as in contemporary novels of purpose. She was too conservative, too augustan, to be a revolutionary democrat. Always, after all, there are good nobles and clerics as well as bad, and the dependants of a good lord are well provided, happy and faithful, not discontented victims of oppressive institutions. What Mrs. Radcliffe preaches is not the inherent rottenness of a system, but of the people who lead it, and their failure in most cases to bring to the system personal standards, standards of emotional control, benevolent sensibility, and justice, that are the only means by which they can adequately rule in a world such as that which she portrays.

The fact that the headquarters of the corrupt rulers of Mrs. Radcliffe's societies, the capital cities and courts, are universally portrayed as centers of dissipation only intensifies their perfidy. It is the evil temptation to gross indulgence found at Paris, for instance, which hold La Motte in a dizzy spiral of luxury: "the habits, which he had acquired, enchained him to the scene of his former pleasure; and thus he continued

182*Italian*, p. 300.
183*Gaston*, II, p. 103.
an expensive style of life till the means of prolonging it were exhausted." 184 It is Paris, too, at which Valancourt is tempted into vice, such as it is. 185 When Vivaldi is taken through the holy capital, Rome, on his way to the Inquisition, all he sees are scenes of loud entertainment and dissipation, and even the splendours of the English court in *Gaston de Blondeville* are dulled slightly by its artifice and enervating luxury. Many of its members, the narrator tells us, "thought it were better...to live amongst...woodlands, in blessed ease and sprightly health, than confined in the golden trammels of a court, where every feeling was checked, that it might move only to certain steps of order, and nature was so nearly forgotten that, if perchance she did appear, she was...reproved for a child of ignorance." 187

Not only do the corrupt rulers do nothing to improve these places which should be the seats of a benevolent and just administration, they also actively patronize their vices. In fact, Paris and Venice, with their brothels, casinos, and routs are associated with their titled inhabitants to suggest the corruption of a whole society through that of its leadership. Montoni and Morano, for example, both spend copiously at the casinos of Venice, and there is even a veiled hint that Montoni keeps a whore in Signora Livona, the "lady" who is always in his party there. Likewise, the two gambling salons of evil reputation to which

184 *Forest*, p. 5.
185 *Udolpho*, pp. 292-5.
186 *Italian*, pp. 194-5.
187 *II*, p. 125.
Valancourt falls victim are run by noblewomen, Countess Lacleur and the Marchioness Champfort. Little wonder then, that Mrs. Radcliffe's cities can only appear attractive to the idealistic and youthful eyes of her heroines.

By contrast, Mrs. Radcliffe's virtuous characters live the simple idyllic life of the country. All her peasants and woodsmen enjoy perfect virtue and peace as a result of their mode of living. Both Alleyn's guardian in The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne and La Voisin, the country patriarch who extends hospitality to St. Aubert and Emily in Udolpho, exhibit that perfect combination of sensibility, benevolence and contented resignation that is the ideal of existence in her novels. Similarly, in The Italian, the simple but benevolent lives of the shepherds contrasts strongly with the corrupt machinations of Neapolitan mansions, and convents: "The simplicity of their appearance, approaching to wildness, was tempered by a hospitable spirit. A venerable man, the chief shepherd, advanced to meet the strangers; and, learning their wants, conducted them to his cool cabin, where cream, cheese made of goats' milk, honey extracted from the delicious herbage of the mountains, and dried figs were quickly placed before them." 188

In nearly every novel, moreover, sympathetic characters enjoy an interlude of perfection in country retreat, very often, as in the cases of Villefort and St. Aubert, with conscious intent of avoiding that city life which they recognize to be corrupting and painful to the sensibility.

188 p. 150.
At the opening of Udolpho, the St. Aubert family, resigned "to the influence of those sweet affections which are ever attendant on simplicity and nature," enjoy a state of perfect rural happiness in pursuit of benevolent and aesthetic pastimes, a state wholly cognate to that in which La Luc lives at Leleoncourt, "untainted with the vicious pleasures of society." In *A Sicilian Romance*, it is Julia's retreat from society at Mazzini that frames ideal happiness: "The refined conversation of Madame, the poetry of Tasso, the lute of Julia, and the friendship of Emilia, combined to form a species of happiness, such as elevated and highly susceptible minds are alone capable of receiving or communicating." Even a character of dubious worth like La Motte responds to the clean living of the country after urban depravity; at the Abbey St. Claire, "his mornings were usually spent in shooting, or fishing, and the dinner thus provided by his industry, he relished with a keener appetite than had ever attended him at the luxurious tables of Paris."

Indeed, nearly all the heroes and heroines return to an idyllic country retreat as part of the earthly happiness they assume on marriage. Ellena and Vivaldi set up housekeeping in a modest villa overlooking the sea, significantly distant from the corruption of Naples;

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189 p. 4.
190 *Forest*, p. 322.
191 *Sicilian Romance*, p. 3.
192 *Forest*, p. 42.
Adeline and Theodore, "contemning the splendour of false happiness" leave France to join La Luc at Leleoncourt; Emily and Valancourt return to La Vallee there to re-establish the peaceful happiness of the St. Aubert family seat.

It would seem, that, given the nature and extent of evil in her world and the fragility of her characters' emotional lives, such retreats as these represent the best mode of living Mrs. Radcliffe can recommend. Because life at large in human society, as represented by the cities, is sordid and linked palpably to those evils which the villains represent, since constantly to face the threats of such evils in such an environment is painful, if not fatal to the sensibility of virtuous characters, life in a rural retreat remains the only viable alternative to misery and corruption. There, where, amid the Divine harmony of creation and the security of a trusted circle, virtue can be preserved, the individual is as far removed as he can be from the threat of human evil, and has, therefore, the best chance of optimizing the felicity of his existence.

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193 *Forest*, p. 429.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In the preceding discussion of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, I have tried to show that, despite its ultimately moral nature, the quality of Mrs. Radcliffe's fictional world is threatening. It threatens her characters physically, because it is subject to decay, death, and violent natural processes. Similarly, because its political, religious, and economic institutions are corrupted by evil men, it threatens them socially. Moreover, while villains threaten the individual from without, the very virtues which distinguish sympathetic characters and elevate them above the vicious, passionate existence of their tormentors threaten their happiness from within.

Yet despite the dire nature of the individual's position in such a world, Mrs. Radcliffe delineates it discretely, properly, and according to simple, sure principles which reduce our shock and insecurity on vicariously entering it. By using exclusively the third person omniscient narrator, she is able at once to abstract and objectify the whole story from its readers, and to develop a fine control over their responses to the material she presents. In her novels, as a result, we are always aware of being told a story, and because that story comes from one source, the third person narrator, we usually agree with his response to the material at hand. Characters and events are precisely what he says they are. This single viewpoint, and the distance we
maintain through the narrator, from the substance of the work, is a very secure, safe point of view from which to view a threatening cosmos. Even the leisurely pace in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels which Montague Summers attributes to suspense I see as a function of this secure point of view, because to move slowly and steadily through the material suggests a safe, complacent attitude in the narrator toward it. Mrs. Radcliffe wishes to convince us, and - who knows - perhaps even herself that, though the cosmos she perceives is dangerous, there is a secure, safe manner in which to deal with it.

For this reason, she presents her readers with no unusual challenges to their values. She adheres, for example, to traditional Christian theology and ethics in structuring her world, and as we have seen, adds to them only those precepts from the deist school that enhance rather than challenge her basic outlook. We can always, as a result, be sure in her novels that the heroine is laudably virtuous and the villain damnably vice ridden; Mrs. Radcliffe is not one to look on evil and find a dreadful attraction there.

Similarly, while we cannot call her moral psychology of passion, sentiment and reason, by which these certain moral polarities are established, subtle, it is at least straightforward and approaches truth. Without the simple criteria she develops to cast judgement on her characters, she could never develop the security of moral value her works enjoy; her characters are overtly delineated not so much because

1 p. 55.
she was a bad artist but because she wished them to represent, in their opposition, clear dichotomies. It is precisely because they must speak through her code of morals and taste, which enforces a rigid decorum in every mode of existence, that their conversations are stilted. Moreover, this moral psychology is not a lie, but only an oversimplification of the truth. We still recognize that emotions, that is, passions, tend to be selfish, whereas rationality, if it is not clearly altruistic, at least judges objectively between the two extremes. Similarly, we still find "sensibility", or more accurately, all that it implies about sensitivity and benevolence to others, more attractive than cold indifference. Indeed, the positive value placed on the ability to feel for others and act accordingly is universal in human society. Selflessness is always more virtuous than selfishness, and upon that universally accepted premise, Mrs. Radcliffe's views of character are built.

Just as her cosmos and her characters are built on sure principles designed to safeguard her readers' secure view of the evil world, so she refrains from shocking him, as a rule, with the stark fulfillment of the threats it presents. Everywhere, in Mrs. Radcliffe's canon when death and suffering are to be represented, they are either modified by philosophical reflections, which call to mind the dignity of such deprivation in a good cause (as in the case of St. Aubert's demise, the threatened execution of Theodore, and the death bed repentances of villains), or represented vaguely offstage. As J.M.S. Tompkins has it,

\[2\text{As Baker, p. 195; Birkhead, p. 45; and Foster, p. 266 seem to suggest.}\]
"where precision would lacerate the imagination, she is impressively vague, and Vivaldi in the dungeons of the Inquisition hears nothing but a distant groan, sees only some undefined 'instruments', and though once stretched in preparation on the rack, never feels its strain."\(^3\)

In addition, though in every novel, some hapless character is imprisoned, she "left the dust and vermin out of account, ignored tedium, and defied the power of unremitting oppression to produce imbecility of mind."\(^4\)

She usually dissipates ultimate threats, moreover, before they can materialize. If she were to submit her virtuous characters to the most distasteful, horrifying experiences, it would violate the code of moral restraint through which she can portray the evil world in a manner which does not challenge our security and shake our confidence in the moral means she recommends, through those characters, of avoiding the world's evil in large measure.

Only rarely, in incidents of little actual importance to the course of her characters' lives, and when sensationalism, the other principal raison d'être of her works, tips the balance awry, does she stoop to the shocking and nauseous explicitness of, say, "Monk" Lewis. For the most part, she regards the horror so aroused as debilitating and undesirable,\(^5\) but it seems that sometimes she could not resist. In the Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, for example, Alleyn stumbles on a

\(^{3}\) Novel, p. 260.

\(^{4}\) Ibid., p. 272.

\(^{5}\) McKillop, p. 357.
corpse in the dark, and we are treated to the grisly spectacle of his reaching out and touching its pudgy, cold flesh in order to find out what it is: "Every nerve thrilled with horror at the touch, and he started back in an agony of terror." The fact that the body is written of lightly shortly thereafter and has no relevance to the central persons or events of the novel does nothing to justify its inclusion in the text. Similarly, though it is an irrelevant bit of morbidity, she cannot resist the temptation to include the effigy of a rotted corpse behind a black veil, a ghastly object she had read about in a contemporary travel-book, in The Mysteries of Udolpho for the sole purpose of tantalizing and shocking her readers. Nor could she refrain from having La Motte open a trunk at the Abbey to find a human skeleton crouched within, though admittedly this incident has some bearing on the plot, for they are the remains of Adeline's father. Fortunately, these grisly lapses are few and far between, and Mrs. Radcliffe, for the most part, keeps the evil of the world at arm's length.

Despite these few slips, however, her writing for the most part in a peculiarly decorous, formal, and sedate manner reflects exactly that style of life, that mental outlook which she recommends through the experience of her characters. The values behind that restraint and

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6 p. 59.

7P.J. Grosley's New Observations on Italy and its Inhabitants (1769); see Tompkins, "Ramon de Carbonnières", p. 299.

8See pp. 248-9, 662.

9Forest, p. 66.
conservatism in authorship which prevents sentimental narratives from inspiring overbearing disquiet in their readers at the condition of humanity in the world is congruent to that combination of sensibility and emotional restraint for which, as we have seen, her characters must strive in order to be as happy as possible. One might even argue that those moments in which her sentimentality is banal or morbid mark occasions similar to those which continually beset her characters, try as they may for equanimity and the control of the passions; her sensibility or her selfish passions run away momentarily with her reason, and she breaks momentarily the smooth decorousness of her narrative tone.

Mrs. Radcliffe's medium, then, corresponds to her material. In every aspect of her novels, we find a consistent and unified moral and philosophical point of view that gives them, even if they are not great literary art, far greater aesthetic value than that with which they are usually credited.
Abbreviations:

JEGP - Journal of English and Germanic Philology
MLN - Modern Language Notes
MLR - Modern Language Review
MLQ - Modern Language Quarterly
MP - Modern Philology
N and Q - Notes and Queries
PMLA - Publications of the Modern Language Association
PQ - Philological Quarterly
RES - Review of English Studies
SP - Studies in Philology
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