

WOMEN, AGENCY, AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE: AN INVESTIGATION
OF ANN RADCLIFFE'S *THE ROMANCE OF THE FOREST*
AND *THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO*

by

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**Women, Agency, and the Public Sphere: An Investigation of Ann Radcliffe's
*The Romance of the Forest and The Mysteries of Udolpho***

Ann Radcliffe is traditionally regarded as the originator of the female gothic genre. For Sir Walter Scott, she is “the first poetess of romantic fiction,” who is also among the few who can be truly called “the founders of a class, or school. She led the way in a peculiar style of composition, affecting powerfully the mind of the reader . . . appealing to those powerful and general sources of interest, latent sense and supernatural awe, and curiosity concerning whatever is hidden and mysterious” (214). Radcliffe is the mistress of suspense, who put Burke’s theories of the sublime into action, and “made use of obscurity and suspense, the most fertile source, perhaps, of sublime emotion; for there are few dangers that do not become familiar to the firm mind, if they are presented to consideration as certainties, and in all their open and declared character” (Scott 214). Her art is one of concealment, of “throwing the narrative into mystery, affording half intimations of veiled and secret horrors” (Scott 214). Radcliffe’s use of secrecy extended to her private life, which she protected. Radcliffe was a shy and retiring member of a well-off middle-class family, who was primarily consigned to the domestic sphere despite her public career as writer. *The Edinburgh Review* noted after her death, she “never appeared in public, nor mingled in private society, but kept herself apart, like the sweet bird that sings its solitary notes, shrouded and unseen” (Kilgour 113). Kilgour believes Radcliffe “anticipates Percy Bysshe Shelley’s description of the ideal artists as a romantic nightingale, who influences society by

being outside of it” (Kilgour 113).¹ However, her guarding of privacy made Radcliffe in fact more open to public speculations; the mystery of her own life stimulated the public’s imagination to construct a suitable fiction around it. It was even rumored that Radcliffe’s desire for privacy was because she was driven mad by her own stories (Kilgour 113). While Radcliffe demanded a total separation of her art and life, her audience, educated by reading gothic novels, insisted that the two were the same. Despite her retirement, Radcliffe was very interested in the gothic, entering into the public sphere, and advocating women’s agency.

In her novels, Radcliffe does not simply portray supernatural events but rather characters’ beliefs (though often temporary) about and in the reality of those events. The frightening part about Radcliffe’s gothic narratives is found in her demonstrations that terror need not be supernaturally generated, each time bringing closer to home the potential for danger, manipulation, destruction, and transgression in the lives and world of her audience. The questions posed by Radcliffe’s fictions like *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* involve realms of domesticity and sexuality, issues we must consider in relation to Radcliffe’s didactic use of the gothic genre. For example in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, these questions involving realms of sexuality and domesticity center on the character of Montoni. We, as readers, are prompted to ask what moral, ethical, and social constraints limit the range of his behavior. The heroine Emily’s greatest fear is that there are no limits or constraints on his behavior, which permits the imagined portrayals of conditions in which traditional sanctities are subverted or overthrown. In this thesis, I argue that although Radcliffe was consigned to the private, domestic sphere by a patriarchal society, her novels subvert patriarchal ideals, simultaneously positioning her authorial persona and her

¹ Discussed by Maggie Kilgour. See Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Defence of Poetry.” “A Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why.”

voice in the male-dominated public sphere. Acclamation by public male literary figures like Sir Walter Scott evinces Radcliffe's participation in the greater public sphere. Just as Radcliffe positions herself in the public sphere in a non-traditional way via her gothic novels, Radcliffe's heroines Adeline and Emily, in *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* respectively, display significant agency allowing them to participate in a patriarchal and revolutionary Romantic society as well. The way Radcliffe portrays Adeline and Emily's agency serves as her comment on women's more public roles.

Brief History and Reputation of the Gothic and Its Emergence in Novelistic Form

Gothic fiction becomes separated from other genres at the end of the nineteenth century and readers both registered and responded to the growing difference between the gothic genre and other existing romance forms. In tracing the gothic genre back to its origins, the resonant word "gothic" has propelled some studies of gothic narrative back into the Middle Ages. Kenneth Graham believes researchers who work to uncover medieval sources of gothic narrative as leading us to insights into the genre, yet often carrying us too far from the real origins of the gothic in the eighteenth century (Graham 260). It is important to recall that the gothic novel is a product of a revolutionary age. Graham asserts, "the literary traditions represented by Lord Kames and Dr. Johnson in criticism, Swift and Pope in satire, and Richardson and Fielding in fiction demonstrate a commitment to ethical and aesthetic principles of rational order" (260). This very transgression of order and reason is central to the essential subversiveness of the gothic experience (Graham 260). Thus, the gothic novel springs from fears and uncertainties arising from instabilities in personal, social, and political realities during this period of revolution. In the eighteenth century, the gothic novel showed the way to political rebellion by daring to ask fundamental questions about the limits of art,

social organization, politics, psychology, and metaphysics. Graham believes gothic narratives play on apprehensions that a universe of disorder and transgression lurks on the borders of our worlds of order and restraint, which implies reasons as to why women writers may appropriate such a marketable, popular genre. Admittedly or not, English reading audiences were interested in reading thrilling, suspenseful gothic novels, in which their own very real apprehensions were explored. Simply, women could relate to a genre about transgressions because of their own secondary positions to men in a patriarchal society.

The gothic novel flourished from 1764, when Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* was published, to 1820. During this period, disorder touched many spheres in England, and the dissensions surrounding the revolution in France represented a continuation of a period of social and political revolution that had begun years earlier (Graham 261). Three separate revolutions, in addition to the French Revolution, threatened mid- to late-eighteenth century Britons with a tumultuous world of change. The Agrarian Revolution brought the development of more efficient farming methods and dispossessed a large number of farm workers. An incipient Industrial Revolution saw England gradually change from an agrarian to an industrial economy and was fed by the plentiful and cheap laborers no longer employed in agriculture. The Industrial Revolution initiated many fundamental changes in living and working conditions for a great number of people with "its strict scheduling of production, its cycles of superfluidity [*sic*] and scarcity and its enforced layoffs" (Graham 261). Factory production especially changed ways of thinking about working, and Britain saw a rapid growth of two social classes that hardly existed before the eighteenth century, a managerial middle class and what would in the mid-nineteenth century be termed as a working class. A third revolution, the American Revolution, created a Declaration of Independence that

constituted a fundamental assault on a British government that had become increasingly conservative in the course of the eighteenth century. Its assertion of equality and consent created expectations that challenged the very sources of political stability in Britain (Graham 261). All the while, political unrest in France weighed heavy on the minds of Britons who began to realize the potential for insurgency invoked by “others.” The revolutions in Britain and the French Revolution created and perpetuated Britons’ apprehensions about political uprising, influencing “others,” even women, to question authority and Britons feared the very real potential for chaos and disorder in Britain. So in upsetting the social, economic, and political expectations of an entire generation, it is no surprise that these revolutions created states of mind conducive to the gothic as a genre and cultivated a mass readership. Political uncertainty helped create this mass readership because all literate Britons, despite their class and status, felt the threatening potential of political uprising.

When literary historians have confronted the question of romantic poetry’s relation to gothic fiction and drama, they have usually described it in the language of influence. Recent monographs on the gothic have remarked at least in passing about the close thematic and chronological proximities of gothic fiction and the popular poetry of the same decades. That the gothic took the novel for its primary generic literary expression is of particular significance. In the eighteenth century, poetry was regarded as the “most sophisticated and accomplished mode of literature” (Stevens 23). David Stevens effectively identifies the origin of the gothic and the gothic tradition – particularly the gothic as a novelistic form. Stevens writes:

The novel, a relatively new generic form, was emerging from the popular romances published to meet the demands of growing literacy, and the accompanying

developments in book production and distribution. The vast majority of critics regarded the novel as distinctly inferior. This was not the view of the general public, however, especially the fast growing female readership. (23)

Further, many of the writers associated with the development of the gothic novel were women – notably Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, and Emily Brontë – and Stevens argues that the very existence of the gothic novel may be seen as dependent on female readers and authors (Stevens 23). This burgeoning of female readers and writers may have been a reaction to exclusion from the male-dominated “higher arts” of poetic and philosophical discourse. The writing and publication of women like Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Macaulay, Charlotte Smith, and Ann Radcliffe exemplifies the way women began penetrating the public sphere and redefining who is included and how. However, what may have started as a reaction to other literary modes rapidly took on its own conventions and identity in the “distinctive combination of traditional tales – often self-consciously harking back to a bygone, mythical past – and a definitively modern form” (Stevens 23). The feminization of reading practices and audiences played a vital part in the success of the female gothic novel. In a patriarchal era, this feminization of the market, the genre, and audiences contributed to the perception of the novel – especially the gothic novel – as a lower-status, second-rate art form in the eyes of the critical establishment. Contemporary criticism and literature reviews were often concerned with the dangers to the female sex of too much “lurid gothic reading” (Stevens 23). Stevens cites an anonymous article published in the *Scots Magazine* of June 1797, which addresses itself to the gothic novel’s potential for corrupting the female reader. The article indicts the gothic novel as being:

Liabie to produce mischievous effects ... some of them frequently create a

susceptibility of impression and a premature warmth of tender emotions, which, not to speak of other possible effects, have been known to betray women into a sudden attachment to persons unworthy of their affection, and thus to hurry them into marriages terminating in their unhappiness. (23)

The threat of “unhappy marriages” and unmentionable “other possible effects” in reviews like the one Stevens cites reveals a patriarchal uneasiness about the growing literacy and publication of women. This anxiety is also evident in the equation of certain types (and genres) of reading with the patriarchally assumed lower morality of women. Despite the male anxieties about the genre and form of the gothic novel, a ready market for the female gothic was assured. Authoritative warnings from the male-dominated arena of prescriptive behavior perhaps even served to increase the attractiveness of such “dangerous” reading.

Just as our critical understanding of the gothic’s multiple origins and cultural functions has increased, gothic as a field of study has burgeoned. In his 1980 manifesto *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter asserts:

Most of the major writers of the period 1770-1820 – which is to say most of the *poets* [*sic*] of that period – were strongly affected by Gothic in one form or another. And this was not merely a passive reception of influence: Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, and Keats all played a part in shaping the Gothic, in articulating a set of images and terror which were to exercise a potent influence over later literary history. (87)

With Punter, we know that a relationship between gothic fiction and drama and the poetry, verse tragedies, and metrical romances that we associate with “romanticism” is not one of simply passive influence, but one punctuated by simultaneous appropriation and critique

(Gamer 27-8). In a 1988 essay entitled “The Reception of the Gothic Novel in the 1790s,” David Richter posits that the gothic, and genre in general, must be reconceived “as an area of literary space, a niche in the ecology of literature” (117-8). Just as the gothic genre is conceived as a niche in romantic literature, the female gothic and particularly the Radcliffean gothic, is a niche in the gothic genre as a whole. Early in modern gothic literary studies Punter situates the gothic within the grander realm of romanticism, pointing specifically to romantic writers’ concurrent appropriation and critique of the gothic.

The gothic has generally had a negative critical reception. It has been seen as a “feminine” form, outside the mainstream of literature. Gothic writers have been criticized for dealing in trivialities and being too emotional, charges historically characterized as feminine. Since men *and* women wrote in the gothic genre, both genders have been accused of these gothic excesses. The gothic novel is grounded in its social context, as it reflects the revolutionary events in Europe in the eighteenth century. Common revolutionary aspects of the gothic include treatises on politics, a heightened class-based power consciousness (because of the French Revolution), and gender commentary. This revolutionary aspect of the gothic is generally identified as anti-rationalistic and bent on symbolism. The gothic has also generally been accepted as a psychological form whose subjective vision (or vision of a socially subordinate person) is the crucial aspect of the novel. However, this subjective, individual, female vision is in contrast to the social vision. However, Robert Hume suggested that gothic has not been a transcendent form. Hume believes:

It is the imagination which serves the romantics as their vehicle of escape from the limitations of the human condition. The Gothic writers, though possessed by the same discontent with the everyday world, have no faith in the ability of man to

transcend or transform it imaginatively. (Fleenor 9)

Thus, some people are not receptive to the gothic genre because, unlike some romantic poetry, the gothic often does not claim to escape subjectivity; it merely highlights that subjectivity. The gothic world is one of nightmare, and that nightmare is created by the individual in conflict with the values of society and his or her prescribed role in that society. The politics of the French Revolution and preliminary influences of the Industrial Revolution created an impetus for transgressive political writing. The niche the gothic genre created within the vast realm of high romantic literature serves as an escape for women from the limitations of patriarchal society.

Although we cannot pinpoint a precise reason for the popularity of the gothic, there are several both psychological and political theories to explain the increase in its readership. Whether reading Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, audiences were presented with the "dreadful pleasure" evoked by gothic fiction. Gothic readers experienced a sort of (non-literal) madness and terror that they may be in danger of losing their minds, and readers empathized with characters constructed as helpless victims of transgressions. Even Samuel Taylor Coleridge felt that danger as he read through and reviewed some of the early gothic texts (Coleridge 355-82). Yet of course, Coleridge was aware, as we need to be, that with this terror there is also a considerable admixture of pleasure. In *Gothic Fictions: Prohibitions/Transgressions*, Kenneth Graham contends, while these gothic pleasures are comprised of many kinds, readerly pleasure in the genre is largely psychological. Readers like Coleridge experienced the unpleasant pleasure that comes along with viewing a character in worse psychological shape than readers themselves and the deeper pleasure of being able to peer backwards on their own personal history, since "all

psychotic states are simply permutations of landscapes which we have all inhabited at some stage in our early infancy” (Graham 8). Graham views madness not as something peculiar that grows in people. Instead, Graham believes madness can more helpfully be defined as the radically inappropriate persistence of visions of the world which are perfectly natural in their rightful place and time but which should have faded long ago from the inner eye (8).

Obviously, with Freud too we can observe these states of mind and their operations in the world and as readers measure our experience against these extreme accounts of cultural dislocation and terror. While the endorsements of Freud and Graham regarding why psychological gothic thrillers captivated readers are not universally accepted claims, the fact remains that eighteenth-century Britons could not get enough of gothic novels.

Despite our inability to identify the exact reason for the gothic genre’s popularity in eighteenth-century Britain, social and political conditions as well as the Romantic shift inward to self-fulfillment and expression of imagination and feelings created the prime environment in which the gothic genre could thrive. Horace Walpole’s 1764 *The Castle of Otranto* is hailed as the first gothic novel. Walpole originally published *The Castle of Otranto* under the pseudonym “William Marshal,” but in second and subsequent editions, Walpole acknowledged authorship of his work. *The Castle of Otranto* and Walpole by extension is the forerunner to authors like Ann Radcliffe who are often considered the most direct descendents of the genre Walpole introduced to Romantic audiences. Walpole popularized the term “gothic” as a fiction label, but the genre evolved into a female gothic tradition when women appropriated the genre. The female gothic provides the underpinning

for one particular type of feminism as an ideology bent on depicting women as innocent victims of a corrupt and evil patriarchal system.² Feminist critic Diane Hoeveler argues:

Indeed, the fantasy, the ideology that seems to ground female Gothic novels is the same one that activates this one particular (white middle-class) type of feminism: the notion that women are victimized not simply by gender politics but also by the social, economic, political, religious, and hierarchical spaces that bourgeois capitalism has constructed. The ideological compulsion of the female Gothic can more accurately be read as the need to privatize public spaces, which is the same dream that compels modern feminists to assert that the personal is political. (108)

According to Hoeveler, the motivation for female gothic writers is both simple and complex: they aim for nothing less than the fictional feminization of the masculine world, the domestication of all those masculine institutions that exist to define the sexuality, not to mention the sanity, of women. Hoeveler asserts, “the optimistic dream that concludes the female gothic requires that juridical violence, paranoia, and injustice, coded as the masculine, be brought to heel, punished, and contained safely in the confines of the fantasy home—the female-dominated companionate marriage” (108). Hoeveler envisions this triumph as essentially the same dream that today motivates one type of feminism as an ideology. She perceives today’s middle-class, white feminist movement is rooted in gothic and melodramatic tropes of female victimization—the same tropes I will highlight in close readings of two of Ann Radcliffe’s female gothic novels. Hoeveler believes the present-day feminist movement is grounded in the history of discourse systems like the female gothic

² In the essay entitled, “Teaching the Early Female Canon: Gothic Feminism in Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Austen, Dacre, and Shelley,” Diane Hoeveler explains and explores the differences in the male and female gothic by pinpointing the innate differences in the genre when appropriated by women writers with what she believes are feminist agendas.

novel that cannot be understood without reading its rhetoric in the originating sources, gothic novels (108). However, I want to make it clear that although we can pinpoint subversive female gothic tropes of female victimization, we should not conflate this early commentary of female victimization with modern-day bourgeois feminism. We should instead, understand the history of the female gothic and become aware of the tropes of female victimization inherent in the female gothic novels as a way of informing our present notions of female victimization. I will explore the way Ann Radcliffe equips heroines Adeline and Emily with significant agency, while highlighting patriarchal oppression for women. I will also explore how Radcliffe positions herself as a female gothic writer in the public sphere, which parallels her depiction of her heroines Adeline and Emily of *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as women who find a place in the eighteenth-century British public sphere.

The Public Sphere (and Women in the Public Sphere)

Social historians and literary critics who have analyzed British culture in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century have tended to assume the existence of a “doctrine of separate spheres” based predominately on gender, which powerfully shaped the lives of both men and women. Men inhabited the public realm of government and commerce; women were confined to a private, domestic realm of the family, the emotions, and spirituality. Jürgen Habermas’ influential *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (published in 1969 and translated in 1989) offers one of the first definitions of the public sphere and its historical emergence. Habermas insists that the public sphere must be theoretically distinguished from the political state. He defines the “public sphere” as the arena of what he calls bourgeois “civil society,” a public space where the common good is

debated and promoted, a place where public opinion is based not on status or traditions but where the free and rational exchange of ideas can be developed. Habermas also argues that this public sphere emerged for the first time in Britain and France in the eighteenth century as an “emancipatory reasoned discourse enabled by the growth of print culture (newspapers, periodicals, books), postal services, coffee houses, and salons” (Mellor 1-2).

Habermas believes public opinion is unrestricted public discussion and that novels are a means of public consensus with the establishment of print culture. Habermas argues that the ideas explored in novels result from the sharing of public opinion. So, since these ideas arising in novels are based public opinion, ideas emergent in novels are, too, based on the dominant social concerns circulating in the public sphere. Therefore, the rise of the novel and the sharing of public opinion in British coffee houses are tied to the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in eighteenth-century Britain. Habermas believes that all that truly exists, materially and intellectually, comes to light in the public sphere; individual opinions, beliefs, and concerns can be voiced in the public sphere (although they are private and individual in nature and origin). Therefore, I will argue that cultural and political apprehensions, raised by the French Revolution and subtly interweaved in gothic novels truly exist and were, in fact, voiced in the public sphere. Radcliffe’s literal existence in the private sphere and her novels’ circulation in the public sphere is aligned with Habermas’ argument that even individual opinions and concerns are voiced in the public sphere.

As Habermas describes the historical transformations of the public sphere in the eighteenth century, the feudal powers, the Church, the Prince, and the nobility disintegrated in a process of polarization and split into private elements on the one hand and public elements on the other. Before, feudal powers, the Church, and the nobility were carriers of

representative publicness (Habermas 11). Cities were once only trade centers then they became centers for news and news became a commodity, thus giving the news publicity (Habermas 21). Soon, whatever was submitted to the judgment of the public gained publicity and became/contributed to public opinion (Habermas 26). Habermas contends, “issues discussed in coffee houses became ‘general’ not merely in their significance, but also in their accessibility; everyone had to be able to participate” (37). However, like many other critics, I question whether Habermas takes into account women’s roles. Habermas believes that “the rational-critical public debate of private persons with one another flowed from the wellspring of a specific subjectivity,” which shows the relationship between subjectivity and the formation/existence/perpetuation of the public sphere perceived by Habermas (43). Novels like Radcliffe’s were submitted to the judgment of the public and formed public opinion. If Habermas believes novels formed public opinion, popular women’s novels read by the public were, in fact, positioned in the public sphere and displayed women writers’ agency and voice in significant ways. Critic Nancy Fraser precisely summarizes the Habermasian concept of the public sphere:

It designates a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, and hence an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principal be critical of the state. (70)

Habermas goes on to explain that the public sphere must be conceptually distinguished not only from the state, but also from the economy. The public sphere is an arena of debating and

deliberating rather than of buying and selling, “an arena of discursive rather than of market relations” (Mellor 2).

In the essay “Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-century France,” critic Keith Baker expounds upon Mellor’s description of the public sphere as a discursive arena, emphasizing the fact that this literary or discursive sphere actually has its own economic foundations (184-5). Baker asserts, “its existence depended upon the commercialization of culture in a capitalist society” (184-5). Baker explains:

Private persons could be constituted as a reading public, Habermas maintains, only through the postal services, periodicals, and other communications systems that had grown in regularity with a market society; their individual access to the printed word could be sustained only insofar as it fed the commercial expansion of the printing and publishing trades; their personal taste for culture could be satisfied only in the coffee houses, salons, reading societies, theatres, museums, and concert halls opened to them in the urban centers of a bourgeois society; their collective judgment could be informed only by the new class of writers and critics whose livelihood now depended on the production of culture as a commodity. (184-5)

Baker provides a clear understanding regarding the eighteenth-century British social conditions that allowed for Habermas’ assertions regarding the public sphere and the formation of public opinion. Specifically regarding Habermas’ discussion of *who* is included in the public sphere, feminist scholars such as Joan Landes, Nancy Fraser, Leonore Davidoff, and Anne Mellor, among many others, have pointed out that Habermas limited participation in the eighteenth-century bourgeois civil society or public sphere—in this discursive community whose rational debate generated public opinion—to men of property (Mellor 2).

However, if Habermas believes novels and individual interests and concern have a place in the public sphere, women writers, too, have a voice. In her revisionist critique of Habermas' public sphere, Nancy Fraser asserts her belief that not everyone stands in the same relation to privacy and publicity; some have more power than others to draw and defend the line. Fraser organizes her critiques of Habermas into four issues: social equality, multiple publics, common concerns versus private interests, and strong versus weak publics. In reference to social equality, Fraser says that the public sphere was an arena in which interlocutors set aside features like birth or fortune as if they were social and economic peers (63). However, Fraser points out the "as if" in this sentence. The fact remains that there still is not complete equality of status, birth, and riches even if people would like to pretend "as if" there is a utopian equality associated with the public sphere. Second, Fraser has a problem with considering the public sphere as a singular unit because she believes this perspective fails to account for the many voices of multiple publics. Fraser does not understand why in the case of a utopian public sphere, we imagine a solitary public. Fraser believes that multiple publics, not one public, are what move societies toward democracy. Third, Fraser questions who it is that decides what are matters of public concern versus private concern (i.e. what subjects are of "common interest"). Fraser believes the impossibility of complete equality and a singular public contribute to the fact that there cannot be a set of decided guidelines and regulations for what is of common interest and therefore discursively debated in the public sphere. In all four areas Fraser critiques the idea of the public sphere, we see the potential for privileged people (men) to overshadow the multiple voices in the greater public, make their own

concerns common concerns, and neglect private interests.³ However, according to Habermas, “women and unproprieted workers (or servants) could gain entrance to the public sphere only as *readers* [*sic*]” (Habermas 56). But how do we account for the female appropriation of the hugely popular gothic genre? Women dominated the genre, which entered the public sphere and affected public opinion, although we cannot say precisely to what extent.

In *Mothers of the Nation*, Anne Mellor argues that Habermas’ conceptual limitation of the public sphere in England between 1780 and 1830 to men of property is historically incorrect. Mellor contends, in the Romantic era women participated fully in the public sphere as Habermas defined it. About women’s definite and traceable participation in the public sphere, Mellor argues that women:

Openly and frequently published their free and reasoned opinions on an enormous range of topics, from the French Revolution and the abolitionist campaigns against the slave trade through doctrinal religious issues and methods of education to the economic management both of the individual household and of the state. Their views were openly circulated not only through the economic institutions of print culture (newspapers and journals, books, circulating libraries) but also through the public forums of debating societies and the theater. (Mellor 3)

Not only does Mellor argue that women participated fully in the discursive public sphere, she also argues that women’s opinions had a definable impact on the social movements, economic relationships, and state-regulated policies of the day. Although other contemporary critics acknowledge the participation of women in the public sphere in eighteenth-century Britain, many critics like Geoff Eley endorse the idea of “alternative” public spheres or the

³ In all areas of Fraser’s revisionist critique of Habermas’ public sphere, I see potential for women to be “out-classed” and out-ranked, their voices overshadowed and silenced by the concerns of the authoritative patriarchy in eighteenth-century Britain.

idea that multiple publics with varying interests make up the collective “public.” Mellor believes that while perceptions of “counter,” “alternative,” or “competing” public spheres are useful for giving a nuanced view of the multiple ways “others” (women, workers, and other marginalized groups) participate in such movements, these conceptions of “counter-publics” have “resulted in the erasure of the historical fact of women’s full participation in the very public sphere theorized by Habermas himself” (Mellor 3). Although this eighteenth-century public sphere was regulated by men, women as social others participated in formation of public opinion via their writing.

As evidence for her claims, Mellor confronts us with numbers. In support of her argument that women, as writers, educators, philanthropists, and social reformers, participated fully in the discursive public sphere and in the formation of public opinion, Mellor cites as evidence the sheer bulk of their literary production. We know of more than 900 female poets, at least 500 female novelists,⁴ and numerous other female playwrights, travel writers, historians, philosophers, and political writers who published at least one volume in the period (Mellor 3). The success of circulating or lending libraries, which spread like wildfire throughout England during the late eighteenth century, ensured that women dominated both the production and the consumption of literature. This female readership was composed in large part by increasingly literate and leisured upper- and middle-class women who preferred to read literature, and especially novels, written by women. However, my discussion of the female production and consumption of novels is not to claim that women’s participation in the literary public sphere was not contested; as we know, quite the opposite was the case. Numerous conduct books and other forms of public discourse—from sermons to literary texts to public discourses—urged women to remain silent, to stay at home, to

⁴ Mellor cites that the Corvey Library alone contains volumes of more than 300 female novelists.

devote themselves exclusively to the activities of raising children and pleasing their husbands. However, these masculinist discursive productions existed in open dialogue with women's published arguments that vigorously contested, qualified, or even on occasion endorsed them (Mellor 6). Therefore, the theoretical paradigm of "the doctrine of separate spheres" is getting in the way of a richer, more complex, and accurate understanding of the varied nature of the daily lived experiences of both men and women in England between 1780 and 1830, together with the literary culture they produced. For the purposes of my investigation, I choose to consider the interactions of men and women in the same public sphere, fully aware that Radcliffe's novels evince often separate and distinct gender roles, but within the *same* public sphere – which is not to mean women did not simultaneously exist in the private, domestic sphere (or that the public sphere did not contain multiple groups and individual voices).

While Mellor cites a multitude of publications that suggest women participated fully in Habermas' public sphere, feminist scholar Nancy Fraser does not understand why in the case of a utopian public sphere we imagine a solitary public in the first place. Fraser believes that multiple publics, not one public, are what move societies toward democracy. Although I argued previously against Fraser's notion of counter-publics, I believe she raises effective, pointed questions about the how women fit (or don't or aren't meant to fit) into Habermas' public sphere. Critic Joan Landes asserts that apart from the category of gender, there is perhaps no more widely employed concept in feminist historiography than that of the public and private (28). Landes makes the important point that we must consider the cultural meaning/value of domesticity at the time when we consider private/public and what gender inhabits in a given historical period (34). If subaltern groups comprise the public sphere, as

Fraser insists (whether we agree with Fraser that these subaltern groups create counter-publics or we think these groups are part of the same “public”), we must consider the ways these multiple groups and voices relate to one another and together create public opinion. Fraser discusses common concerns versus private interests and strong versus weak publics. I argue that even if all of these public variations do in fact exist, popular women writers with private interests that represent a weaker public still participate in the discursive public sphere. However, the extent to which women writers, and by extension the heroines they construct, participate in the public sphere is questionable in a patriarchal society. If novels are a means of public consensus according to Habermas, we must argue that women’s popular novels helped to create public opinion. And, if women’s novels contribute to the creation of public opinion, women *do* participate in the late eighteenth-century print culture and public sphere. While critics like Craig Calhoun, Geoff Eley, Nancy Fraser, and Anne Mellor provide a breadth of ways to read, understand, and apply Habermas’ theory of the public sphere, I will argue through separate investigations of *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* that Radcliffe intervenes through mass reading audiences in the public sphere in order to portray women’s agency.

Agency and The Female Gothic Genre

Recent discussions of the gothic have identified two traditions of the gothic, one male and one female tradition, the distinctions between which I more fully explored in my previous section on the gothic genre. The two forms reflect the way in which the modern redefinition of sexual relations is based on the idea of separate spheres. Diane Hoeveler is one among many critics who perceives a clear generic distinction between Walpole’s male

gothic and Radcliffe's female gothic.⁵ Though reading audiences did not necessarily or notably change due to the female appropriation of the gothic genre, Hoeveler sketches a specific formula that came to dominate the female gothic tradition during the 1790s. The first and most peculiar concern in early female gothics is the anxiety that a young, nubile woman faces when confronted with the central novelistic dilemma: whether or not to marry an odious man of her father's choice or be forced into a convent. The second characteristic of the Radcliffean gothic heroine concerns her strangely convoluted relationship with her parents – either she is an orphan or thinks she is (but is not), or she finds out her father has been murdered by one of her odious suitors or her mother has been imprisoned by her father (Hoeveler 53).

Hoeveler's primary argument, which I find useful for purposes of exploring women's agency in the public sphere in the female gothic is that the Radcliffean heroine is primarily characterized by her masquerade of playing the role of the overly feminine gothic victim. To describe this phenomenon of women employing agency through consensual victimization, Hoeveler coined the term, "victim feminism." Hoeveler defines this feminine gothic victim also as a veritable "professional girl-woman," a construction created in "the fertile but bored brain of Ann Radcliffe" whose husband was entertained by her "amusing little tales of corpses, poison, and adultery," which she read to him each evening when he returned home from work (54). We also have it on no other authority than her husband's that the Radcliffe's marriage was an extremely happy one (Hoeveler 54). Although Radcliffe's publication and popularity evince her participation in the public sphere, simultaneously we may assume it is likely that Radcliffe's marriage was a characteristically eighteenth-century male-dominated

⁵ In addition to Diane Hoeveler, I have come across critics such as Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Donna Heiland, Maggie Kilgour, Michael Gamer, Juliann Fleenor, and Fred Botting who identify two distinct (male and female) gothic traditions.

rather than companionate marriage. Like Radcliffe's existence in both private and (often oppressive) public spheres, Habermas reminds us that even though the public sphere functioned in a way that allowed "everyone" participation, we must remember that the patriarchy was still in control of English formal politics and economics. Because of this male-dominated economy of print culture, women writers could not be completely radical and still be as popular in the magnitude Radcliffe's novels were with the English reading public. Hoeveler's notion of victim feminism suggests the way women subversively utilized the written word and the gothic generic form to subtly, but surely, comment on truths in society especially, women's place in the late eighteenth-century public sphere. Reading audiences of the Romantic period were vastly different than those of the seventeenth-century print culture. This change in reading audiences contributed to the reasons novels of women writers like Ann Radcliffe were able to enter the public sphere and become popular and widely read.

White, bourgeois women writers have not simply been passive victims of male-created constructions but, through agency, they have constructed themselves as victims in their own literature. Hoeveler contends that the female gothic novelist constructs female characters that masquerade as "professional girl-women" caught up in an elaborate game of play acting for the benefit of an obsessive and controlling male *gaze*. My use of Hoeveler's idea that women subversively cast themselves in the roles of victims in order to penetrate male-created social constructions is fueled by Nancy Armstrong's consideration of actual history. Armstrong believes many critics ignore the historical conditions that women have confronted as writers and in doing so, these critics ignore the true place of women's writing in history thus perpetuating the second-class rating of women writers (8). Women

appropriated the gothic novel, a successful and widely read fictional genre, which contained implicit political and social commentary. Despite the means of appropriation, female gothic novels were widely read and circulated and thus, women's written words impacted literate Britons.

Romantic/Gothic Reading Public/Audiences

As a genre, the female gothic became highly refined in the works of Ann Radcliffe when what Hoeverler calls “one bored and neglected housewife” decided to translate her personal and social anxieties into words that could be read by other Britons also anxious about the general political and social unrest plaguing England at the end of the eighteenth century (55). Despite the popularity of the female gothic, we must recall the way the gothic was maligned by contemporary critics, evinced in my earlier discussion of the anonymous article published in the *Scots Magazine* of June 1797.⁶ So, I argue that Radcliffe claims agency in the appropriation of a genre held in disrepute. Literary critic Michael Gamer believes that one of the factors that makes the sudden popularity of gothic so upsetting is that it makes manifest the vast quantity of popular romance readers “out there” in British culture – readers who become threatening to reviewers, literati, clergy, and government officials only when their numbers are perceived, and their ability to affect British taste and morals are actually imagined and computed (32). The process by which the array of readers who produced, reviewed, and read gothic texts become mistakenly separated into these strata is captured most vividly in those figures who inhabit, either at various points in their careers or simultaneously, all three Jaussian⁷ positions of gothic writer, gothic reviewer, and gothic

⁶ See the first section of this introductory chapter.

⁷ Hans Robert Jauss (b. 1921, d. 1997) was a Germanic academic most notable for his work in reception theory and medieval and modern French literature. For the purposes of this paper, his three defined categories of readership are applicable to the Romantic period.

reader. The actual ability of these writers to occupy certain contained categories of readership that are at odds with each other in many ways. Gamer cites examples of the Romantic writing figures that cross over categories of the three Jaussian categories of readership. For example, Mary Wollstonecraft's contempt for "the herd of novelists" in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is as well documented as her predilection for Gothicism and sensibility in her own fiction. Like Wollstonecraft, Samuel Taylor Coleridge writes negative reviews of gothic fiction by Radcliffe, Robinson, and Lewis at the same time (1797) that he is composing his *Osorio*, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," and "Kubla Khan." Coleridge actually occupies these conflicting categories of readership with an energy and ease that do not lose steam over the next twenty years. Even Walter Scott wrote "Germanised" gothic dramas, contributed to Lewis's *Tales of Wonder* (1801), and translated Burger's supernatural ballads, but Scott nevertheless moves from producing texts that celebrate black magic and the supernatural to discrediting and exposing these same subjects in his critical writing (Gamer 34). Therefore, in spite of a burgeoning readership and a literary marketplace in which numerous men and women often read, wrote, and reviewed the gothic simultaneously, the discourses that make up the reception of gothic fiction and drama configure gothic readers, writers, and reviewers as wholly separate entities. These separate entities suggest that in the 1790s, perceptions of British readership change more slowly than the constitution of the readership itself.

Of these three Jaussian categories of readership, the first two (gothic reviewer and gothic reader) are especially fixed in opposition to one another at the turn of the eighteenth century. The gothic writer, although overwhelmingly perceived as a female figure writing for young women, nevertheless carries some class and gender instability because its ranks

include, much to the chagrin of its contemporary critics, antiquarians and men of taste like Horace Walpole and William Beckford⁸ who many reviewers believe have “wasted” their genius by writing in the gothic genre. This gender ambiguity – femininity blurred by what eighteenth-century reviewers termed a flamboyant, “wanton” masculinity – is itself a legacy of romance’s cultural status on the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Gamer 35). On the other hand, Gamer perceives gothic reviewers as speaking from far more predictable positions – as emblematic and experienced Men of Letters whose time is wasted by women who write, and especially women who read fiction. For instance, a 1793 gothic reviewer argues:

That the majority of novels merit our contempt, is but too true; and, for the above given, it is a truth of a serious and painful nature. The very end of a novel is to produce interest in the reader, for the characters of whom he reads: – but, in order to produce this interest, it is necessary that the novel writer should be well acquainted with the human heart, should minutely understand its motives, and should possess the art, without being either tedious or trifling, of minutely [*sic*] bringing them into view. This art is so little understood by the ladies who at present write novels, which none but young ladies and we, luckless reviewers, read, that it is not wonderful that they should have incurred a considerable share of neglect from us. (Bage 293)

For the above *Monthly* reviewer, a piece of fiction can only claim success, or a legitimate reason for existing, if it can demonstrate extensive and productive knowledge of human

⁸ William Thomas Beckford was an English novelist, known as a knowledgeable collector of art and patron of works of decorative art, a critic, travel writer and sometime politician was reputed to be of the richest commoners in England. He is most often remembered as the author of the gothic novel, *Vathek*. The first French publication of the novel was in 1787. A gothic novel, *Vathek* capitalized on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century obsession with the oriental, but included gothic stylings reminiscent of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764.

nature. In his seminal book *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt summarizes the view of eighteenth-century realistic novelists saying, “the novelist’s primary task is to convey the impression of fidelity to human experience, attention to any pre-established formal conventions can only endanger his success” (13). Watt argues that the formlessness often associated with the genre of the novel, as compared with a tragedy or an ode, is because “the poverty of the novel’s formal conventions would seem to be the price it must pay for its realism” (Watt 13). So the realism and subject of novels changes with time, culture, values, and reading publics. However, despite the changeable nature of the novel, above all, the novelist must be true to human experience. As the above reviewer’s pronouncements about the novel and about young female writers and readers suggest, such knowledge resides typically in a mature, experienced, and, in most cases, masculine minds much like the reviewer’s. Therefore, according to Gamer, Jauss’ reader-reviewer-writer model adopts itself surprisingly well to the reception of gothic fiction and drama in the 1790s and 1800s – not because it accurately or specifically represents British readership in these years, but because it coincides with how British readers perceive and represent themselves.

Just as we notice, when reading reviews of *The Monk* and other novels like it, how cursorily reviewers read (and misread) actual gothic texts even as they dismiss the genre as a whole, we also realize with increasing certainty that the categories of gothic writer, gothic reviewer, and gothic reader matter just as much as the actual, specifiable demographics of gothic’s readership. Critic Jon Klancher enters this dialogue saying, gothic writers, reviewers, and readers “are not simply distinct sectors of the cultural sphere. They are mutually produced as an otherness within [each’s] discourse” (Klancher 12). The lack of published or unpublished records or diaries of gothic readers has allowed critics and satirists

to assume that gothic readers were, in fact, like Jane Austen's satiric gothic heroine Catherine Morland of *Northanger Abbey*, young, female, naïve, and easily manipulated. Gamer goes as far as to suspect that no single stereotype about a readership "has enjoyed such a widespread acceptance on so little first-hand information" (39).

Recent archival work actually persuades Michael Gamer to believe the practice of borrowing fiction was neither a female nor a middle-class enterprise, after all (Gamer 39). Through analysis of borrowing records of proprietary libraries and the catalogs of circulating libraries, Paul Kaufman finds British libraries to be dominated neither by women nor by gothic and sentimental fiction. Kaufman's recent library findings concerning the readership of fiction suggest that men read nearly as much as women, and gothic fiction attracted educated and elite readers capable not only of understanding irony but also of treating their own reading experience with it. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen explores this same gap between predominant stereotypes of gothic readers and actual readers of gothic fiction. No one is as convinced of the truth of the category of "gothic reader" than Catherine Morland. It is not just Catherine that reads the gothic; Henry Tilney is well versed in gothic fictions of the day. For both Kaufman and Austen, the actual gothic reader has little in common with young ladies assumed by the *Monthly* and other reviews to be the only readers of gothic fiction (Gamer 40). The very fact that in *Northanger Abbey* Austen raises and explodes this assumption about gender and gothic readers' education levels provides us with some sense of the prevalence of the stereotype and the degree of irritation it caused female gothic writers especially.

While gothic writers may remonstrate with reviewers directly, such remonstrations function even more potently as appeals to book-buyers and book-borrowers especially when

writers are able to position themselves in opposition to a supposedly older and masculine critical audience and (either directly or indirectly) in alignment with the female and younger readers who stereotypically comprise the bulk of gothic readership (Gamer 42). In a period that privileges male over female writers, poetry over prose, and learned and didactic over popular (gothic) literature, reviewers dismiss gothic writing almost by definition (Gamer 42). The gothic is automatically dismissed by reviewers “since to countenance it is to undermine the very positions of privilege from which they derive their authority,” furthering my supposition that female gothic writers actually *used* the popular genre to display their agency and subtly, rather than radically, claim agency in society through the means and politics of novel-writing and fiction (Gamer 42).

Although any genre depends partially upon reception, the claims writers make for (and in) their texts and the decisions publishers make concerning how to package and promote texts fundamentally matter for how genres develop and interact with cultures. For modern critics, genres matter for what they suggest about a text’s intended audience, expected stature, and anticipated sites of political resistance. Since writers and publishers attempt to frame reception, strategies or textual packaging can tell us a great deal about the anxieties and hopes that have shaped that text’s composition, production, and distribution.⁹ For Fredric Jameson, genre is inextricably tied to ideas of institutionally sanctioned propriety, and is therefore “a form of social praxis, . . . a symbolic resolution to a concrete historical situation” (117). Such a notion views popular genre not only as tapping into widespread readerly desire, but also as possessing the power to “placate cultural anxieties and displace them into the realm of fantasy” (Gamer 45). Gothic writers, even and perhaps

⁹ For more information about genre production and reception, refer to Michael Gamer’s book *Romanticism and the Gothic*.

especially women, integrate cultural and political issues of debate through symbolism, subversion, and displacement. Gothic writers, like writers of any other solitary genre, brilliantly utilize the generic realm of fantasy to articulate taboo topics to an audience. By invoking the gothic or any genre, writers *and* publishers can mark a text with a genre and attempt to place that text in a chosen position in contemporary literary landscape. In short, invoking genre is a means of marketing texts to imagined audiences, whereby writers utilize the genre to display agency and facilitate an often codified, even subversive dialogue.

Gamer contends that if Bakhtin¹⁰ is even partially correct in arguing that every genre choice presupposes an audience choice, then genre in the Romantic period increasingly becomes a way not only of targeting a particular audience but also a way of potentially negotiating *between* audiences, as writers demarcate their texts with multiple genres in order to propose pacts with multiple audiences. Here, Gamer does not say that every generic or discursive shift within a text or between texts signals a shift in audience, nor does it account for all of the ways that texts cite, sample, and allude to one another. However, Gamer does suggest that genre can become a means of reaching particular audiences whether comprised of “real” readers or imagined strata (Gamer 47). By invoking the gothic (or any genre), writers and publishers can mark a text with genre and thereby attempt to place that text into a chosen position in the contemporary literary landscape. It becomes a way for authors to market texts to imagined audiences and include subversive and/or symbolic messages based on these intended, imagined audiences. This amorphous, unclear cultural moment of the late

¹⁰ Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was a Russian philosopher, literary critic, and scholar who worked on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language. His writings, which cover a wide variety of subjects, inspire scholars working in a number of different traditions and in disciplines as diverse as literary criticism, history, philosophy, anthropology, and psychology. His most notable idea, applied often to some Romantic literature is that of the carnivalesque. The carnivalesque refers to a literary mode that subverts and liberates the assumptions of the dominant style through humor and chaos.

eighteenth century compelled many writers to shape the interpretive and ideological frameworks of audiences they wanted to speak to; they created new readerships and transformed old ones. So, we must consider to what extent generic production imagines and even defines reading audiences, and how audience reception changes generic identity and determines social status in the public sphere Habermas describes.

I have established my vantage point of the gothic genre (like any genre for that matter) as a vehicle, a means of transporting ideas and a means of marketing texts to audiences to make money; novels are commodities. Gary Kelly believes the increase in the participation of women in print culture, as readers and writers, in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was conditioned by a British cultural revolution that interacted with the political, economic, and commercial revolutions of the time. Namely, the French Revolution impacted and propelled the British cultural revolution. Despite woman's consignment to the private, domestic sphere, a particular figure of "woman" became central to the professional, middle-class cultural revolution in Britain. Kelly argues that "woman" was associated with revolution's key elements—the subjective self and the private and domestic sphere. While most traditional historians would assume revolutions are public and political, Kelly argues that women participated in the public sphere and cultural revolution while writing and simply existing in the domestic, private sphere. Commercialized print offered new opportunities to women lacking professional education and authorship did not require women to leave actual and figurative confines of domestic life; therefore, Kelly contends women participated in the public sphere from home. I contend that Radcliffe fits neatly into Kelly's formula.

Graham asserts that it is during these revolutionary times that concerns over questions of probability may reflect a preference for the realities of common sense, or realism in

novels, that is ideological and aesthetic (263). In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen references Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to encourage in her readership restraint and control over supernatural fears. Austen's response to the gothic transgression of psychological and social constraint is to reassert constraint by redefining a reality of limited possibility. In this sort of reality, an overactive imagination is punished by social embarrassment and ridicule; English generals are incapable of murder and English misses are not only relegated to, but are fulfilled by domestic activities. Austen responds to the revolutionary questions posed in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by trivializing them and branding them as completely false compared to ordinary experience. Hence, in my investigation, I am more interested in Ann Radcliffe's careful mitigation of the radical implications of questions posed in her narratives than I am interested in Austen's gothic reviewer-like position. If in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* Radcliffe raises questions with radical implications which Austen satirizes in *Northanger Abbey* by trivializing the questions Radcliffe raises, then we show that each female gothic writer acknowledges, although differently, the social and cultural impetus for such questions. Austen and Radcliffe's apprehensions about how (or even if) these issues should be set before English reading audiences obviously differ. Perhaps Austen perceives that the radical implications of gothic novels will have a more negative influence on audiences than Radcliffe perceives or, perhaps, since Austen thinks her heroine Catherine is wrong to take Radcliffe literally, Austen finds a different kind of tyranny at work in England. I am fascinated by Radcliffe's employment of the gothic genre to express the very ideas of which many prominent male *and* female writers, readers, and reviewers of the period are apprehensive. The very providence residing over Bath and a modernized and domesticated *Northanger Abbey* is far more moderate and reassuring than the threatening shadows in the

castle of Udolpho. *Northanger Abbey* asks no questions about good or evil, yet it is engrossed with less upsetting questions of right and wrong. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen warns her readers against succumbing to a feminine emotional response to terror and the supernatural, something she accuses Radcliffe of instigating in her own readership. Although Radcliffe is not inherently or ideologically radical, she constructs heroines who are able to claim some agency while still working within the confines of the patriarchal system.

Just as Radcliffe's heroines claim significant agency in a world enlightened by the revolutionary politics of the French Revolution, her political statements are made strategically through her portrayal of women's roles. While Burke regarded the calamity of revolution in France as a crisis of sentiment, Johnson stresses the way the French Revolution was, in turn, a crisis of gender. Critic Claudia Johnson argues that Radcliffean fiction conventionally honors the authority of male affectivity and the growing force of reaction, while gothically representing the "wrongs of women" only to concede in the end that these wrongs never "really" happened (16). In the context of her book's title, *Equivocal Beings*, Johnson argues that Radcliffe's heroines become equivocal beings in that they alone must shoulder the once-masculine virtues of stoic rationalism and self-control (16).

While Johnson argues that Radcliffe's heroines take on masculine traits, Nancy Armstrong suggests women find power through performing a newly conceived domestic role. Armstrong argues that domestic fiction introduced a new power structure for women who thrived in the private and public spheres via print. Armstrong argues that this power emerged with the rise of the domestic woman and established its hold over British culture through women's dominance over all of the objects and practices associated with private life (3). Armstrong believes that to consider the rise of the domestic woman as a major event in

political history is to trace the history of a specifically modern form of desire that changed the criteria for determining what was most important in a female in the eighteenth century (3). Armstrong believes she argues differently than other critics who argue women authors had to manage the difficult task of simultaneously subverting and conforming to patriarchal standards (7). The conditions for women's writing appear to remain relatively constant throughout history because the authors in question were women and because the conditions under which they wrote were largely determined by men" (7-8). Habermas reminds us of this same idea; although women entered the public sphere, men were still in control. Armstrong believes critics like Gilbert and Gubar ignore historical conditions that women have confronted as writers and in doing so, they ignore the place of women's writing in history (8). Although Armstrong sees women's power emerge in the rise of the domestic woman and her appropriation of power in the private sphere, I do not necessarily think that to agree with her means we must disagree with the notion that women subverted and conformed to patriarchal standards in order to *also* enter the public sphere. Armstrong calls us to understand, even simply recall the historical conditions of women's writing and the fact that men determined those conditions; however, men determined living (or writing or working) conditions of women inside *both* the public and private spheres – *both* of which are important to explore in Radcliffe's gothic fictions *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Romance of the Forest*.

How Radcliffe's Novels Address Women's Place in the Public Sphere

Despite a plethora of political and social advances for women since the Romantic period, it is up to contemporary scholars to recognize the ways women displayed agency and gained voices, participated in print culture and the public sphere, and responded to a society

of which they were a thriving part centuries ago. Because women read, wrote, published, and widely circulated literature, it is important take a closer look at their texts, their own words, in order conceptualize the dynamics of the public and private spheres to which they contributed. In my investigation, I mean to do a close reading of Radcliffe's female gothic novels *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in order to construct a workable, accurate notion of female gothic novelists' place in late eighteenth-century British society and of women's social roles they advocated through their gothic heroines.

In separate discussions, I will explore the way ideas I have introduced here are presented in two of Radcliffe's most widely read female gothic novels, *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Specifically, I will argue that Radcliffe's female gothic novels register her own fears and mediate the fears of her late eighteenth-century British audience about the French Revolution and its real threat of radical social disruption and change. I will argue that female gothic writers, like Radcliffe, existed both as marginal to literature and public debate and simultaneously entered into those same public debates by appropriating the gothic genre and unsettling masculinist hierarchies and assumptions, including those assumptions about gothic fictions and the genre of novels were inherently inferior literary genres, just as readers of novels and gothic literature were deemed inferior consumers of print. In my discussion of *The Romance of the Forest*, I will reveal the way Adeline's self-constructed victimization is foiled by female characters that exhibit overly emotional feminine traits as well as the way Adeline functions neither as traditional woman nor traditional patriarch. In showing the ways Radcliffe fashions performative roles of female victimization for Adeline, I argue that Radcliffe subverts hierarchies and establish the

potential for women's participation in socially prescribed domestic roles and in the British public sphere.

In my chapter dedicated to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, I will explore Ann Radcliffe's infusion of subversive politics concerning the agency of women and women's place in society. More specifically, I will point to different methods of articulating such women's agency in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* than I argue for *The Romance of the Forest*. In separate discussions of Radcliffe's appropriation of gothic conventions to assert women's agency, her choice of geographical location and use of anachronism to reveal the threat of the patriarchy, her casting of Emily into both public and private roles, her subversive political messages indicated by religion in the novel, and way Radcliffe's infusions of poetry evince significant agency for women, I will situate Emily as a carefully crafted heroine who represents a different, more radical version of woman who functions as "less than man, more than woman," and as a useful tool for Radcliffe to argue for women's agency in eighteenth-century Britain.

Adeline's "Glowing Charms" as Models of Agency in *The Romance of the Forest*

In 1791, Ann Radcliffe published her third gothic novel, *The Romance of the Forest*, as by "the authoress of *A Sicilian Romance*." In April of 1792, a second edition followed, and a third was published in November 1792. Interestingly, the fourth edition appeared the day after the publication of Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794, reportedly boosting Radcliffe's reputation. *The Romance of the Forest* is considered the earliest example of the mature Radcliffean formula with what became the typical Radcliffean villain, Marquis Phillippe de Montalt (Norton 82). *The Romance of the Forest* marks Radcliffe's first major success and it drew "widespread critical acclaim" (Norton 82). The *Critical Review* praised the novel and likened Radcliffe to Clara Reeve.¹¹ Although the *Critical Review* made an issue of the fact that while it knew Ann Radcliffe's name from the second edition of *A Sicilian Romance*, it did not know whether to call her Miss or Mrs. Radcliffe. Radcliffe's identification as a female author is important because she is writing in the male-originated gothic genre. The popularity of this novel and the effect it had on late eighteenth-century British culture and reading audiences is attested to by the fact that James Boaden adapted the novel as a drama, *Fontainville Forest*, which opened on 25 March 1794. Boaden boasted that he intended "to Gothicize the high priestess of the gothic herself" (Hoeveler 70). Boaden emphasized the supernatural elements of Radcliffe's novel and a real ghost appeared in four scenes. Whereas Radcliffe explains away the supernatural by rational explanations in her novel, Boaden emphasized the terror the supernatural in his drama (Hoeveler 70). Despite its divergence from Radcliffe's novel, Boaden's play attracted large crowds and ran for several

¹¹ Clara Reeve published *The Old English Baron* in 1777, nearly a decade after Horace Walpole first published *The Castle of Otranto* anonymously in 1764. Despite the gothic genre of Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, Radcliffe is considered the originator of the *female* gothic.

weeks.¹² In turn, *The Romance of the Forest* is widely believed to be an important influence on Jane Austen's 1817 novel, *Northanger Abbey* (Norton 82).

Radcliffe's acclaim was expressed not only in literary references to her novels and heroines, but her widespread popularity extended also to critical reviewers. Anna Seward mixed her praise of Radcliffe's gothic *oeuvre* with "some trenchant criticism" in letters that were to be published in Radcliffe's lifetime (Norton 82). In 1798, critic Nathan Drake called Radcliffe "the Shakespeare of Romance Writers" (Norton 82). Walter Scott called her "this mighty enchantress," a phrase echoed by De Quincey (Norton 82). Although her female peers were often considered poets rather than novelists, nineteenth-century French writer Stendhal positioned Radcliffe in the same league as Homer, Tasso, and Ariosto. Radcliffe's influence extended past Wordsworth and Coleridge to Byron, Shelley, and Keats and through Sir Walter Scott to Victorian, American, and even French fiction (Norton 251-57). Nearly a century after Radcliffe's entrée in the British public sphere, Christina Rossetti agreed to write about her for a fee of £50 in John H. Ingram's *Eminent Women* series, but after four months, Rossetti gave up the project in despair about finding information; Radcliffe took care to keep her life private (Norton 4-5). Eliza Lynn Linton wrote later in the mid-nineteenth century that Radcliffe was "our Conan Doyle"—having in mind the power of Sherlock Holmes to obsess his readers (Linton 87). In light of her overwhelming popularity, some critics infused their praise with some stinging criticism of the female gothic genre and of novel writing as a woman's task. Despite Radcliffe's popularity, acclaim, and critique in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England, Radcliffe was not much better known as a woman or a writer to her contemporaries than she is to us today.

¹² For more about James Boaden's adaptation of Radcliffe's novel, see page 70 of Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism*.

The obvious mystery surrounding her personal life is something Radcliffe must have been aware of, and I argue that Radcliffe, in fact, displayed agency in controlling her own public presence (or non-literal presence) and image. Just as she worked to keep her own life private, Radcliffe worked, too, to establish authorial and public agency in the form of gothic novels. As Radcliffe kept her private and public lives separate yet participated in both spheres, Radcliffe extends her advocacy for women participating in both spheres to her heroines who display agency in traditionally male and female roles, in both public and private spheres. Specifically, I will argue that Radcliffe's female gothic novels register her own fears and mediate the fears of her late eighteenth-century British audience about the French Revolution and its real threat of radical social disruption and change. The French Revolution inspired many women writers to address the issue of ultimate masculine authority and patriarchy. While some women writers reinforced ideas of masculine power and authority associated with patriarchy,¹³ the French Revolution inspired Ann Radcliffe to imagine the potential for transgression based on something other than class – gender. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Radcliffe asserts the idea that in order for women to claim agency and sensibility in eighteenth-century Britain, they must display a wise passiveness and control of their emotions. In this chapter, I will argue that Radcliffe existed both privately as marginal to literature and public debate and publically since she simultaneously entered into those same public debates. I will also argue that Radcliffe entered the public spheres and thus public debates by appropriating the male-originated gothic genre and unsettling masculinist hierarchies and assumptions, including those assumptions about gothic fictions and novels as

¹³ Poet Hannah More exemplifies a woman whose political writing, influenced by politics of the French Revolution, worked to reinforce the power and authority of the patriarchy. Therefore, for the purposes of my investigation, More can be viewed as women like Radcliffe's binary opposition regarding ways the politics of the French Revolution and its politics affected women's writing.

inherently inferior literary genres, just as readers of novels and gothic literature were deemed inferior consumers of print. An incarnation of Radcliffe's very agency as a woman writer is mirrored in heroine Adeline in complicated and varied ways in *The Romance of the Forest*, known particularly for its treatment of femininity and its role and influence in the gothic tradition Radcliffe did so much to invent and establish. In my discussion of *The Romance of the Forest*, I will specifically show the way Radcliffe fashions both performative roles of female victimization and more masculine displays of agency for her heroine, Adeline, in order to advocate female sensibility and to establish a more equal place for women in the British public sphere without abandoning women's domestic roles in the private sphere.

Cultural Context

Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain saw a striking increase in the participation of women in print culture, both as readers and as writers. This participation was facilitated and conditioned by the British cultural revolution interacting with the political, economic, and commercial revolutions of the time. As I described in my introductory chapter, these revolutions inspired many writers to realize the possibility of transgression, and the politics of the French Revolution, in particular, impacted and propelled the British cultural revolution. Novelists like Ann Radcliffe who were active in the 1790s and after were preoccupied with ideologies of the French Revolution and the philosophies that its proponents sought to enact.¹⁴ Despite women's consignment to the domestic sphere, a particular figure of "woman" became central to the middle-class cultural revolution in Britain.

¹⁴ More specifically, British women were able to relate to the "others," as defined by lower class status, who revolted in France. British women writers in the late eighteenth century incorporated the politics of the French Revolution into their writing especially in the ways they created and presented heroines—British women who existed as others. For more information, see Watson 11.

Before I discuss the political “charge” of the British public sphere further, let me first define and explain what Gary Kelly means by cultural revolution, as this is both a material and ideological concept to which I will often refer. In *Women, Writing, and Revolution*, Gary Kelly investigates women’s writing as a major factor in the relationship of class and gender during a crucial stage in the cultural revolution that founded the modern state in Britain. Particularly, Kelly discusses women’s writing of the Romantic period as a cultural revolution, a revolution he believes was carried out by and for the professional middle class (calling to mind Habermas’ “bourgeois public sphere”) with a specific objective. Kelly argues that the primary objective of the cultural revolution was to consolidate the middle classes under the leadership of professionals in order to detach them from the ideological and cultural dependence on the dominant classes of court, aristocracy, and gentry, and secure them from cultural and ideological contamination by the lower classes (Kelly 3). The middle class achieved dominance by elevating private and domestic concerns. Kelly argues that “woman” became central to Britain’s cultural revolution largely because women were historically associated with the cultural revolution’s key elements—the subjective self, the private and domestic sphere, and the class’s social and cultural reproduction over time (Kelly 8). Kelly argues that women remained subordinate in the revolutionary class because women could be figures for both the virtues and vices of their class. In addition, Kelly argues that professional men subordinate to upper-class patrons could identify with the subordinated figure of “woman,” which he contends united professional men and women through a cultural revolution that was class-based and, therefore, gender-biased (8-9). Kelly explains that it is for this reason that “woman” continued to be a field of struggle within a cultural revolution that was itself a field of struggle.

The figure of “domestic woman”¹⁵ allowed women to not only participate in the cultural revolution but also to partake in one of the revolution’s main weapons—writing. Thus, the cultural revolution Kelly envisions was facilitated by a revolution in cultural consumption including print of all kinds. Print was not only a widely disseminated form of cultural consumption among the revolutionary class, but it was also a cultural practice that professionals had already mastered through their work as specially trained and paid readers, interpreters, and writers. So Kelly believes print was suitable for a revolution that aimed to operate within individual consciousness rather than by external forces and constraints. Hence, print enabled women like Ann Radcliffe to participate in this cultural revolution, and thus in political life, without abandoning the feminine character of “domestic woman.” Commercialized print offered new opportunities to women lacking professional education and authorship did not require women to leave actual and figurative confines of domestic life.¹⁶ The presence and even prominence of “domestic women” in the cultural revolution encouraged a feminization of culture in which women could claim to have some authority.

The cultural revolution and print extended women’s influence beyond the private sphere and into the public sphere without abandoning the private sphere in the process.¹⁷ In *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, critic Nancy Armstrong explains further how Britain’s cultural revolution and print culture offered women a place to display agency and claim authority. Armstrong argues, “domestic fiction actively sought to

¹⁵ Gary Kelly’s *Women, Writing, and Revolution* sets the foundational aspects of the cultural revolution in Britain, as stemming from the politics of the French Revolution. Specifically on page 9, Kelly discusses the gendered nature of print and hints at women’s subversion of patriarchy via print culture.

¹⁶ As Gary Kelly argues that authorship did not require women to leave the confines of domestic life, Mary Poovey argues similarly. In *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*, Poovey explores the struggle of three prominent women writers to accommodate their writing professions to the late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century ideal of the modest, self-effacing “proper lady.”

¹⁷ My introductory chapter discusses further the way Britain’s cultural revolution extended women’s influence beyond the private domestic sphere and into the public sphere without abandoning the private sphere.

disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics and, in so doing, to introduce a new form of political power” (3). This power emerged with the rise of the domestic woman and established its hold over British culture through women’s dominance over all of the objects and practices associated with private life. By controlling their emotions and performing wise passiveness in domestic, private roles, women could carve out places in society for themselves. Armstrong believes that to consider the rise of the domestic woman as a major event in political history is to trace the history of a specifically modern form of desire that changed the criteria for determining what was most important in a female in the eighteenth century (Armstrong 3). Since men during Radcliffe’s time desired the domestic woman, it is important that although Radcliffe’s heroines claim agency, they also do not abandon the socially prescribed and male desired domestic roles. Female writers like Ann Radcliffe had to manage the difficult task of simultaneously claim agency for women in domestic spaces and simultaneously conform to patriarchal standards, which I argue Radcliffe does through her participation in *both* public and private spheres. Armstrong informs my investigation, attending to the fact that although women writers displayed agency in domestic roles and conformed to patriarchal standards, a new form of women’s political power emerged in the cultural revolution because women existed in both the private sphere (literally) and the public sphere (through the texts they wrote and published). By casting heroine Adeline in the role of “professional” female victim, Radcliffe creates a way for us to read *The Romance of the Forest* as a sort of propaganda to equip women with the agency she believes they should enjoy in late eighteenth-century Britain. Further, I will argue that Adeline claims agency in both male *and* female roles, reflecting Radcliffe’s contention that women can occupy both public and private spaces in eighteenth-century Britain.

Gendering Victimization: Adeline's Self-Constructed Victimization

Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* hosts heroine Adeline whose mother dies when she is an infant. After refusing to join a nunnery, Adeline is imprisoned by her father, who hires bandits to kill her. The bandits balk at their duty and spare Adeline. However, the bandits capture La Motte and his wife, escaping gambling debts in Paris, and promise to spare their lives if they take young Adeline with them. Eventually, La Motte, Madame La Motte, and Adeline find refuge in the ruins of an abbey. When the abbey owner Marquis de Montalt returns, he is enamored by Adeline's beauty. Montalt is first challenged then enraged by his unrequited love. Adeline is instead mutually in love with a young man, Theodore. While at the abbey, Adeline discovers a secret chamber in her room. In the chamber, she discovers a manuscript in which a man describes the agonies of his imprisonment and confinement as he awaits his death. Throughout the novel, Adeline's empathy for the imprisoned author of the manuscript fuels her own fear of danger, deception, and manipulation. At the end of the novel, we find out that Adeline's father, who was imprisoned and killed by his brother the Marquis de Montalt, wrote the manuscript. Despite Adeline's dismay at the Marquis' advances, the Marquis abducts her and keeps her captive in his villa. One night, Adeline manages to jump out of a window and escape into the garden where Theodore meets her. The two climb a ladder that is propped up against the wall of the garden, escape the Marquis' property, and ride away to safety in Theodore's waiting carriage. *The Romance of the Forest* tells the story of motherless Adeline's adventures with the La Mottes in the abbey, captivating readers with the air of mystery and suspense that pervades the novel. Although in *The Romance of the Forest* Radcliffe comments on public issues such as

the Roman Catholic religion, rights of inheritance, and class, the novel is best known for its treatment of femininity.

Particularly important regarding the novel's treatment of femininity are the gothic tropes Radcliffe appropriates, which she evolves and establishes as female gothic tropes. Radcliffe's appropriated and revised generic tropes include the formulaic characterization of her heroines. Radcliffe's reviewers and critics specifically identify a few key characteristics of the typical Radcliffean gothic heroine, which I will discuss before turning more closely to the novel. In *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*, feminist literary critic Diane Hoeveler explores a few of the commonly-identified characteristics of the Radcliffean gothic heroine. What Hoeveler calls "the first and most peculiar concern" in Radcliffe's gothic novels "is the anxiety that a young nubile woman faces when confronted with the central novelistic dilemma: whether to marry an odious man of her father's choice or be forced to a convent" (52). Heroines are doomed whether they choose the Church or they choose a "forced, dynastic, loveless marriage," a choice Hoeveler believes effectively positioned women in the whore/virgin dichotomy as a lived reality (53). Parentless, Adeline lived in a convent and was raised by nuns for most of her life. Adeline "learned her father intended [she] take the veil," but in the *Lady Abbess*, Adeline "saw too many forms of real terror to be overcome by the influence of her as ideal host, and was resolute in rejecting the veil" (Radcliffe 36).¹⁸ Adeline's rejection of the veil stems from her observation of the sadness of nuns when she says, "too often had I witnessed the secret tear and bursting sigh of vain regret, the sullen pinings of discontent, and the mute anguish of despair" (Radcliffe 37). Adeline first displays agency in her refusal to become a

¹⁸ All quotations from Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* are from the Oxford World Classics edition, published by Oxford University Press, 1999.

nun, even despite her father's wishes. Prominently featured in all of her novels, the Catholic Church holds a sort of "ambivalent allure" for Radcliffe, largely because of what we can detect as an attraction to large, all-female communities that were only possible for women through the Church (Hoeveler 53). Generally, Radcliffe's heroines are happiest when living in small groups away from men. Women exhibit great fear of male sexuality, which motivates much of the high-energy, suspense, and action in Radcliffean gothic novels. Hoeveler insists the first characteristic of the female gothic novel is that this genre is "based on the premise that men are intrinsically and inherently violent and aggressive [and] to be feared by women" (53).

In addition to being forced to choose between marriage and consignment to a convent, a Radcliffean heroine is characterized by her "strange and convoluted relationship with her parents. Either she is an orphan or thinks she is (but is not), or she finds out her father has been murdered by one of her odious suitors or her mother has been imprisoned by her father" (Hoeveler 53). In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline is an orphan, literally forced into La Motte and his wife's custody, but at the end of the novel Adeline uncovers her true lineage and learns that the Marquis is responsible for her father's death. Radcliffe devises Adeline as "a cultural construct composed of many disparate discourse systems" (Hoeveler 53). Adeline speaks to religious, social, sexual, and political anxieties that "assailed middle-class British women in large numbers for the first time" (Hoeveler 53). Adeline has no choice but to participate in her culture's creation of bourgeois ideology. At the center of this ideology is the identity of woman as wife, an identity Radcliffe herself shared with her heroine. Hence, Adeline marries Theodore at the end of the novel resigning

herself to the private, domestic sphere after performing as “more than woman”¹⁹ for most of the novel. However, I will argue that consignment to the domestic sphere does not erase the possibility for women’s agency, as revealed in *The Romance of the Forest*. In this female gothic version of bourgeois ideology embedded in eighteenth-century British culture was the idea that the woman only becomes a wife and mother after a great struggle. Each and every hero is wounded (either physically or ritualistically) seriously in the course of the struggle to gain the beloved heroine, either by the beloved’s father or his substitute, which explains the struggle between the Marquis de Montalt and Theodore (Hoeveler 54). In accordance with bourgeois ideology, Adeline becomes Theodore’s wife at the end of the novel after claiming agency through various struggles and escaping dangers threatened by the supernatural and the Marquis de Montalt.

For the purposes of my investigation, I am most interested in the overarching Radcliffean gothic focus on victims, so-called because of their suffering. When reading the manuscript, whose as-yet-unknown author turns out to be Adeline’s father, Adeline sympathizes with the abduction, imprisonment, and impending execution of the manuscript’s author. In misery, the author of the manuscript requests sympathetic identification of his turmoil by his reader: “O! ye, who may hereafter read what I now write, give a tear to my sufferings: I have wept often for the distress of my fellow creatures” (Radcliffe 132). Adeline meets the writer’s plea for sympathetic identification, and displaces the writer’s afflictions with her own state and responds, “wretched, wretched victim! . . . O that I had been near! Yet what could I have done to save thee? Alas! nothing. I forget that even now, perhaps, I am like thee abandoned to dangers” (Radcliffe 140). In her mind, Adeline parallels the lot of the

¹⁹ The notion of heroines functioning as “less than man, more than woman” in *The Romance of the Forest* is that of critic Claudia Johnson. Saying Adeline was “more than woman,” but “less than man,” is the way Johnson names and identifies the agency Adeline displays throughout the novel.

wrongly imprisoned writer of the manuscript who is incapable of escape with her own imprisonment as a young woman without protection. The similarity Adeline perceives between the captive man and herself constructs womanhood, during Radcliffe's own time, as a perilous state of captivity. Adeline's peril is both literal and figurative. Adeline faces actual danger in the unwanted attention of the Marquis de Montalt, and she faces figurative danger because her powerful imagination and vulnerability assume danger, terror, and the possibility of betrayal everywhere. In sympathizing with the captive writer of the manuscript, Adeline's suffering can be read as a displacement of the anxieties and suffering that characterized womanhood in late eighteenth-century Britain. Radcliffe's contemporaries could empathize with Adeline's suffering as she does with the author of the manuscript.

Just as the manuscript's writer is male and is a suffering victim, we must realize that victimization is not only reserved for women in *The Romance of the Forest*. Radcliffe does not present a mere binary of male and female gender roles. Instead, Radcliffe presents characters who exhibit varying degrees of masculinity and femininity, allowing for the displacement of suffering for Radcliffe's contemporaries (namely, women) and for Adeline's appropriation of some masculine traits, which she utilizes to often surpass instances of victimhood and claim agency. In the exhibition of varying degrees of masculinity and femininity, Radcliffe offers revised notions of gender roles. There are also many instances in which Adeline does assume traditional feminine characteristics that cast her in typical female roles. I argue, though, that even when cast in stereotypical female roles, Adeline displays agency in the sense that she knowingly utilizes her passive, but wise femininity and emotional control and embodies the new figure of domestic woman; she *uses* her subordinate existence as a woman to question gender roles and display sensibility.

Like many of Radcliffe's characters, both male and female, Adeline is primarily characterized by her masquerade, her role-playing of the overly feminine gothic victim. Diane Hoeveler calls these Radcliffean victims "professional girl-women." Late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century white, bourgeois women writers have not simply been passive victims of male-created constructions but, through agency, they have constructed themselves as astute but passive victims in their own literature. Hoeveler contends that the female gothic novelist constructs female characters that masquerade as professional girl-women caught up in an elaborate game of play acting to acquire the obsessive and controlling male gaze. Further, female gothic novels propagandize a new form of conduct for women, teaching that "professional femininity," cultivated poses of wise passiveness and controlled emotions, would best prepare them for social survival. Adeline functions as a heroine of professional femininity through a cultivated "masquerade of docility, passivity, wise passiveness, and tightly controlled emotions" (Hoeveler xv). Through Adeline's passive performed femininity, Radcliffe popularized what Hoeveler would call "a newly defined species of bourgeois female sensibility and subjectivity," and Radcliffe appropriated the gothic genre for women writers (xv). As Radcliffe's contemporaries and readers would have noticed, the female characters in female gothic novels "appear to be as mechanical as the setting, the conflict, and the villains" (Hoeveler 55). Radcliffe uses the mechanical nature of the socially acceptable domestic woman as a tool for asserting women's agency. Since eighteenth-century British men desired domestic women, Adeline often plays the role of a domestic woman who is often cast as the victim in female gothic novels. Adeline claims agency through her role as the victim in order to get what she desires. Adeline's masquerades of professional, victim feminism reveal moments of agency, moments when Adeline

purposefully and intentionally plays her part as target, and thereby victim, in order to obtain agency within the confines of complete male-domination in patriarchal Britain. Like Hoeveler, critic Claudia Johnson is interested in the way “Radcliffe keeps returning to the both seductive and invigorating appeal of Adeline’s distress” (73). Johnson’s perception of Adeline as an equivocal being fuels my assertion that Radcliffe, through Hoeveler’s coined “professional femininity,” casts Adeline as a sensible victim.

Since sensibility is an esteemed quality particularly associated with men during the eighteenth-century, Radcliffe defines a new species of bourgeois female sensibility by assigning her heroines traits that display women’s sensibility. Radcliffe not only appropriates the gothic genre from males, but she also appropriates for women a new kind of sensibility. While Radcliffe subversively critiques patriarchy throughout the novel by imagining a new figure of the domestic woman, patriarchy is ultimately restored. At the end of the novel, Adeline finds out who her father really was, how he died, and buries him. In burying her father, Adeline escapes from patriarchy. However, because Adeline marries Theodore, Radcliffe does not construct a completely transgressive, subversive critique of patriarchy. The timing of the two events—burying her father and marrying Theodore—is crucial for understanding Radcliffe’s patriarchal commentary. First, Adeline buries her father, displaying Radcliffe’s imagined transgression of patriarchy. However, the novel strategically ends with knowledge of Adeline’s soon-to-be marriage and the ultimate restoration of patriarchy.

Although not all mainstream women novelists participating in this cultural revolution were trying to completely reshape their worlds subversively, many women writers constructed a series of subversive ideologies derived from the politics of the French

Revolution. For many women writers, the French Revolution shed light on the possibility of transgression. Since the French Revolution was rooted in transgression based on French class identity, many British women (and “others” of all sorts) related their subordinate gender identities to the class-based French Revolution and blamed the powerful, authoritative patriarchy. Though some women writers wrote supporting the patriarchy, other women writers like Ann Radcliffe saw the opportunity to construct subversive ideologies specifically within the gothic genre, a male-originated genre.²⁰ Diane Hoeveler considers these subversive ideologies to be a set of literary masquerades that allowed female characters and female readers a fictitious mastery over an oppressive social and political system (Hoeveler xii). I argue that moments of subversion through professional femininity allow Radcliffe to transfer her own agency to her female protagonists and reflect Radcliffe’s perception of the new figure of domestic woman as calling women to control their emotions and be wise in their passiveness. As Radcliffe herself moved in and out of the public and private spheres (privatizing her home life and publically disseminating her novels and thus her politics), Radcliffe equips her heroine Adeline with a similar agency.

Adeline performs femininity once when strangers intrude the abbey early in the novel when Adeline faints becoming “an object not to be contemplated with indifference” (Radcliffe 87). Although Adeline’s strategic fainting is an act of systematic subversion in itself (since she uses a stereotypical female trait to her own advantage), we are called to read into the way Radcliffe highlights Adeline’s sexuality upon fainting. After Adeline faints, the novel reads:

²⁰ Horace Walpole’s 1764 novel, *The Castle of Otranto* is accepted as the first, and in many ways the archetypal, gothic novel. In *The Gothic Traditions*, David Stevens describes the origin of the gothic as recovering and renewing a tradition that valued feelings and sensibility. At the time, such feelings were usurped by the developing dominance of reason as key to human problems. The gothic genre originated as a reaction against Enlightenment ideas. Please see page 10 of Stevens for more about Walpole and the male gothic.

Her beauty, touched with the languid delicacy of illness, gained from sentiment what it lost in bloom. The negligence of her dress, loosened for the purpose of freer respiration, discovered those glowing charms, which her auburn tresses, that fell in profusion over her bosom, shaded, but could not conceal. (Radcliffe 87)

In the above scene, Adeline's beauty and auburn tresses are likened to the image of Lady France, invoking for readers the parallel between Adeline's politics and French revolutionary politics particularly concerning gender. Viewed another way, Adeline's "glowing charms" solicit the heterosexual male gaze and her body definitely arouses what Johnson calls "varying degrees and admixtures of tenderness and desire" in the gentlemen bending over her (74).

Although Radcliffe devotes most of the novel to working out the competing interests various men take in Adeline, the pornographic scenes like the one quoted are not cheaply charged or without reason. Radcliffe often throws Adeline's camlet open "at the bosom, upon which part of her hair had fallen in disorder" because it presumes that "heterosexual passion is the 'natural' basis of ethical conduct, and that, with the occasional exception of Adeline herself, moral agents are males" (Radcliffe 7, Johnson 74). Johnson argues that virtuous manhood is defined by the kind and degree of its responsiveness to women, meaning that the ethical character of men in the novel centers on their reactions to Adeline's sexuality. In order to reveal the true ethical character of men in the novel, Radcliffe critiques certain men, certain behaviors, and certain patriarchies, but not all of each. Adeline's frequent fainting spells and throwing her camlet open are prime examples of Adeline embracing aspects of her female subjectivity to establish herself as a new species of domestic woman

who is aware, and in control of, her lot. Radcliffe achieves this ultimate gain in order to reveal how patriarchal society subordinates women.

Early in the novel after just meeting the La Mottes, Adeline performs femininity when she tries to raise La Motte from his despair. After being handed over from the robbers to complete strangers, Adeline is grief-stricken and says to La Motte: “Heaven has sent you to my relief, and will surely reward you for your protection: I have no friend in the world, if I do not find one in you” (Radcliffe 7). Adeline overcomes her lonely despair and plays the role of the helpless female victim to ensure an alliance with the La Mottes. A few scenes later, Adeline again casts herself in a traditional female role when she acts exuberant and even joyous (though she herself is unsure of her own future) when she tries to cheer up La Motte. When La Motte “sat in gloomy silence, musing upon the past,” Adeline “endeavored to liven his spirits, and to withdraw him from himself” (Radcliffe 33). We are then told that “Adeline’s mind had the happy nature, or, perhaps, it were more just to say, the happy nature, of accommodating itself to her situation,” revealing the way Adeline performs roles expected of her gender in order to cultivate happiness in La Motte and, more importantly, ensure the dependability and steadfastness of her new guardians to ensure her own safety (Radcliffe 34). In the late scene where Adeline escapes from the Marquis’ villa and runs to safety with Theodore, Adeline constantly blushes. While this is an instance where Adeline displays masculine traits in order to save herself, an issue I will address further later, Adeline blushes and becomes faint in an effort to display typically feminine traits once Theodore accompanies her. Because Adeline abandons her masculine role that allowed her escape and becomes more helpless, she is able to depend on Theodore who encourages her to “exert yourself yet a little longer . . . and you will be in safety” (Radcliffe 168).

Radcliffe's Critique of Traditional Femininity

In addition to Adeline's displays of traditionally female behaviors to establish a new eighteenth-century figure of domestic woman, Radcliffe also critiques the "old" or traditional feminine behaviors through the use of a foil character. Radcliffe specifically explores traditional feminine behavior by casting Madame La Motte as Adeline's foil. In this foil of the two female characters, Radcliffe uses Madame La Motte's hyper-femininity to highlight Adeline's role as a new figure of domestic woman allowed by the cultural revolution. Madame La Motte, who is cast in the role of the stereotypical, overly emotional woman serves as the binary opposition for Adeline allowing Radcliffe's audience to see the difference between Madame La Motte's femininity and that of Adeline. When first stumbling across the abbey, La Motte, Madame La Motte, and Adeline are hesitant to enter. Since Madame La Motte's "heart shrunk from the proposal" to enter the abbey, Adeline becomes more than woman when she musters the courage of "surmounting the fears [and] she offers herself to go" (Radcliffe 78). Once Adeline leaves, Madame La Motte recognizes the young woman's bravery and Madame's "admiration of her conduct began to yield to other emotions. Distrust gradually undermined kindness, and jealousy raise suspicions" (Radcliffe 63). Madame believes "'it must be a sentiment more powerful than gratitude' . . . 'that could teach Adeline to subdue her fears'" (Radcliffe 63). Madame La Motte, who embodies the stereotypical eighteenth-century British woman, is in awe of Adeline's courage, but is also suspicious of her unfeminine bravery and her display of a new kind of femininity. Through the character of Madame La Motte, Radcliffe highlights Adeline's valor despite her femininity.

Whereas Adeline utilizes her femininity to claim agency, Madame La Motte frequently jumps to conclusions when she does not know what is going on in a situation, she is fraught with emotion, and she has contempt and jealousy for Adeline—the young girl whose behavior the novel hails as righteous for women. Not long after Adeline and the La Mottes began staying at the deserted abbey, La Motte robs, assaults, and nearly kills a wealthy man traveling in the forest near the abbey. Desperate for money in order to survive outside of his debtors' radars, La Motte believes he killed the man he robbed. La Motte buries his treasure in the forest, and tells no one about his fortune. La Motte retires to the forest often to check on his loot and Adeline, too, often escapes to the forest, a place in which she finds solace. However, Madame La Motte hastily assumes that Adeline and her husband must be having an affair. Although her suspicions are ungrounded, "the pangs of stifled jealousy struck deeper to the heart of Madame La Motte, and she resolved, at all events, to obtain some certainty upon the subject of her suspicions" (Radcliffe 47). Madame La Motte becomes furious because she was already jealous of her husband's attention to Adeline and her beauty prior to this incident. "The secret broodings of jealousy cherished her suspicions," and Madame La Motte "became less kind to her, even in manner" (Radcliffe 47). Madame La Motte's jealousy actually escalates into resentment for Adeline.

In addition to displaying jealousy and hypersensitivity attributed to her femininity, Madame La Motte's preferred form of entertainment is also typically feminine. Madame La Motte's "books were her chief consolation" (Radcliffe 34). Just as novel-reading was a woman's leisure activity during Radcliffe's time, Madame La Motte's novel-reading characterizes her further as traditionally feminine. By juxtaposing the two versions of femininity that Adeline and Madame La Motte each represent, Radcliffe reveals the way in

which women can, in fact, claim agency and display sensibility through typically feminine behaviors (Adeline) without being cast in the role of the foolish, overly emotional woman (Madame La Motte). Radcliffe suggests that the correct behavior for women is an admixture of traditionally acceptable female behaviors and a revised idea of femininity, a modern femininity in which women display agency and do not function as traditionally feminine.

In reference to possible inversion of this model of victim feminism, female gothic heroines' "strategies of resistance have tended to degenerate into illusory, often self-destructive forms of idealization" (Hoeveler xvi). Although there may exist such a fault line in the female gothic, it is only by recognizing the contradictions implicit in gothic feminism (or romantic feminism) that we can argue for the overarching, subversive nature of gothic feminism. Since not all gothic heroines "successfully" resist gender roles prescribed by patriarchy, we see how multiple female gothic writers actively experiment with different means for resisting patriarchy in their gothic novels. If there are not variations and exceptions to the rule or ideology being argued, namely victim/professional feminism in the female gothic, it is impossible to insist on the majority's using the genre to critique the patriarchy at all. Although Adeline utilizing her femininity to her own advantage fits into the model of victim feminism, the kind of patriarchy in *The Romance of the Forest* is not always compatible with a *pure* model of victim feminism. I argue this because Radcliffe casts Adeline into traditionally female *and* traditionally male roles. Functioning as neither a traditional woman nor a traditional patriarch, Adeline exhibits the possibility that women can function both privately and publically and can oscillate between the two spheres.

“Less Than Man, More Than Woman”: Neither Traditional Woman, Nor Traditional Patriarch

In addition to performing victim feminism and serving as Madame La Motte’s foil, Adeline claims agency through the appropriation of masculine traits. At times, Adeline displays too little agency for victim feminism and at other times she displays too much agency, where she cannot really be considered a victim. Throughout *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline is “not only a palpitating provocation of the ethicosexual affectivity of men . . . but she is also an active moral agent in her own right” (Johnson 77). When Adeline, La Motte, and Madame La Motte consider “who should first venture abroad into the abbey, to learn, whether it was vacated by the officers of justice,” La Motte proves himself a coward and makes excuses as to why he cannot go into the abbey first (Radcliffe 62). La Motte’s reason for not first entering the abbey is that “if he was again seen, he should be effectually betrayed,” but the narrator expresses that La Motte’s fears “would not be *so* certain, if one of his family was observed, for they were all unknown to the officers” (Radcliffe 62). Because Madame La Motte is entirely too emotional at the prospect of entering the abbey, Adeline courageously enters the abbey. Because Adeline is parentless and cannot rely on her guardians for protection in the novel, Adeline is left to her own devices for survival.

Radcliffe repeatedly places Adeline in situations where only her own more masculine traits of cunning and bravery can save her. For example, many times while reading the manuscript of the imprisoned man sentenced to death, “Adeline could not go on,” because her mind “was in such a state, that she found it impossible to pursue the story” told in the manuscript (Radcliffe 141). Adeline is often afraid to return to “the lonely situation of her room, remote from the rest of the family . . . who were almost beyond call, struck so

forcibly upon her imagination, that she with difficulty preserved herself from fainting” (Radcliffe 140). Although Adeline nearly faints at the thought of returning to her room and to the rusted dagger and the terrifying manuscript, Adeline consistently “tried to command her feelings so as to avoid disturbing the family” (Radcliffe 141). Radcliffe tells us that Adeline specifically chooses not to alarm the La Mottes and although Adeline is afraid, she musters up the courage to brave the supernatural threats of the abbey on her own. Later in the novel when Adeline overhears La Motte and the Marquis discussing the Marquis’ becoming Adeline’s suitor, Adeline is “several times upon the point of throwing herself at [Madame La Motte’s] feet, and imploring her pity and protection” from the Marquis (Radcliffe 152). However, Adeline’s “cooler reflection shewed her the extravagance and danger of this conduct: she suppressed her emotions, but they at length compelled her to withdraw from the presence of Madame La Motte” (Radcliffe 152). Adeline summons the courage to deal with her despair alone without succumbing to the “extravagance and danger” of such conduct as weeping at Madame La Motte’s feet out of fear. Adeline displays similar courage when she visits the terminally ill La Luc at the end of the novel, as she “endeavored to restrain the expression of pity which she features had involuntarily assumed” because “she wished him not to know that she observed he was unhappy” (Radcliffe 283). Adeline’s harboring of her own emotions to save the emotions of La Luc is yet another example of Adeline exhibiting masculine traits and remaining strong for men.

Once the Marquis captures Adeline from the abbey and imprisons her in his villa, Adeline and her purity are threatened. “In the . . . hope of discovering some means of escape,” Adeline surveys her chamber (Radcliffe 163). Adeline describes her chamber in detail, realizing that her purity is threatened; she is merely a sexualized object as long as she

remains captive in that room (Radcliffe 163). Although the Marquis visits Adeline's chamber multiple times before she eventually escapes, Adeline is brave enough to thwart the Marquis' intended sexual corruption. At the beginning of her captivity, Adeline has "little doubt of escaping" and she never considers counting on a man in the novel to assist her in her escape; Adeline never intends to rely on anyone except herself and her own bravery (Radcliffe 164). It is almost in the very moment Adeline sees a garden beneath the window that she "sprang forward and alighted safely in an extensive garden" (Radcliffe 163). As more than woman, Adeline strategically plans her own escape and has the courage to jump from a window on a night when the Marquis' "countenance was flushed with drinking" (Radcliffe 165). Because Adeline is not completely masculinized in the novel and functions somewhere in between woman and man, Theodore rescues her when she reaches the far end of the garden and the two climb a ladder that is propped up against the garden's outer wall (Radcliffe 167). Although Adeline's love rescues her and tells her he has arranged a carriage to carry them to safety, it is Adeline who first displays the bravery to escape from the Marquis' villa. Adeline proves to be more than woman when she is able to escape from the Marquis, the very villain who murdered her father. Not even her father, a man, could escape the Marquis, but Adeline escapes and makes it to the outer wall of the Marquis' property without assistance. Although Adeline escapes from the Marquis' villa on her own and Theodore simply arranged a carriage, Adeline's relentless blushing and taking on a more feminine role (as previously discussed) to let Theodore assume the masculine role actually ends up saving Theodore. Although Theodore is at one time hunted by soldiers for abandoning his military duty, he "not only received an ample pardon, but in consideration of his gallant conduct towards Adeline, he was soon after raised to a post of considerable rank

in the army” (Radcliffe 353). Therefore, because Adeline allows Theodore to assume the masculine role she once occupied when saving herself, Theodore is actually awarded for the heroic feat of “saving” Adeline.

Just as we see the way Adeline often exhibits more masculine behaviors, inversely, male characters such as La Motte are also feminized. In much the same way as Madame La Motte foils Adeline, the powerful, patriarchal Marquis feminizes La Motte. La Motte serves the Marquis’ lust for Adeline in exchange for protection from the Marquis’ anger with himself for robbing and nearly killing him. Although Adeline escapes from the Marquis’ villa and his incestuous lust, the process of Adeline’s exchange from La Motte’s hands to the Marquis’ hands is intriguing. La Motte himself is feminized through his readiness to put the will of the Marquis before the heteroerotic interests he should take in Adeline himself:

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. He contemplated his picture—he shrunk from it, but he could change its deformity only by an effort too nobly daring for a mind already effeminated by vice. (Radcliffe 209)

Although La Motte is a feminized character that has no heteroerotic interest in Adeline and the Marquis lusts for Adeline from the outset of the novel, Adeline’s interactions with male characters are consistently centered on either sexual charge or the lack of sexuality.

Although La Motte himself is not sexually interested in Adeline, he sells her out to the Marquis in a sort of bargain where he trades his life for Adeline’s femininity, which is equated here simply to her sexuality. Discussing socially prescribed roles for women calls to mind the proper roles of men. The conduct of La Motte, Montalt, and La Luc is suggested by feeling and their moral development is measured by their passionate receptivity and response

to Adeline herself (Johnson 75). This discourse of morality that stems from male characters' responsiveness to Adeline's femininity, and thus sexuality, differentiates bad or effeminate men of feeling from good, manly men of feeling. As many of Adeline's guardians are less than men, Adeline displaces their masculinity and appropriates some of the agency traditionally associated with masculinity.

In addition to burying her father, Adeline finds out she is an aristocrat at the end of the novel, and assumes this newly recognized aristocratic identity, playing into the class politics of the French Revolution. In addition, the Marquis is sentenced to death for his crimes and poisons himself while awaiting trial. He leaves behind a written admission of his guilt, and wills Adeline his fortune. Because Adeline recognizes her aristocratic identity, patriarchy is restored. Since the novel emphatically ends on the restoration of the patriarchy, it is necessary to analyze what Radcliffe asserts by this restoration. Through the Marquis' admission of his crimes and conferring of his wealth to Adeline, Radcliffe critiques only improper or immoral patriarchy. Though she critiques immoral patriarchies and patriarchs in her novel, Radcliffe suggests patriarchal power and authority are acceptable as long as they are moral. Accordingly, Hoeveler argues:

The optimistic dream that most often concludes the female gothic novel requires that juridical violence, paranoia, and injustice, figured as the 'masculine,' can be brought to heel, punished, and contained safely within the confines of the ultimate fantasy home—the female dominated companionate marriage. (xiv)

Adeline has a title at the end of the novel, but her love Theodore has to earn his title by "saving" her. Truly, Adeline saves Theodore from his imprisonment by the Marquis rather than him saving her. Although Theodore is cast to be the audience's favorite male character,

the novel ends in a companionate marriage, which carries out a subtle critique of patriarchy. Although marriage and women's consignment to the domestic sphere were seen as a means of protecting women, the novel suggests Theodore will soon leave Adeline alone and unprotected in marriage because he will go to war. It is in this non-traditional, non-conventional domestic role Adeline will play in her marriage that we see how woman's place within the domestic sphere is not always compatible with the gothic heroine. Radcliffe does not take care to preserve only the domestic sphere as a place for woman's agency and authority, even though she retires to the private domestic life and patriarchy is ultimately restored. Not only does Adeline save Theodore so that the novel can result in a companionate marriage, but Adeline also saves La Motte who represents a version of patriarchy in the novel. Even La Luc's tuberculosis is cured when Adeline saves Theodore. What is more, in the eventual restoration of the patriarchy, Adeline's agency and acting outside the traditionally accepted roles for a woman are what saves every man in her life and herself. So, despite the tension Radcliffe creates between the restoration and subversion of the male-prescribed gender roles throughout the novel, patriarchy is ultimately restored in Adeline's burial of her father and her companionate marriage to Theodore.

During the trial in which the dealings between La Motte and the Marquis de Montalt surface, Adeline learns that the Marquis is her uncle, that he killed her father to gain possession of the abbey of St. Clair, and that he wanted to hold on to it by killing Adeline as well. Adeline effectively masculinizes herself when she solves her father's beating and murder at the hands of his younger brother, her evil uncle the Marquis. Adeline learns that the property did not belong to her father, but to her mother, thus learning that the Marquis is a patriarchal authority who built his power, wealth, and status on the oppression of women.

In *Gothic and Gender*, critic Donna Heiland argues that Adeline takes the role of patriarch herself as she moves into the place first occupied by her biological father and then by the marquis (71). Although the event of Adeline moving into the position held by both her father and the Marquis is important to consider, I believe, contrarily to Heiland, that Adeline does not actually take the role of patriarch, but she displaces patriarchal power and appropriates and claims it for herself. Heiland also suggests that since Adeline takes on this role of patriarch through the legacy of her mother, that matrilineal descent is what empowers Adeline (71). Heiland argues that it is through such clearly placed mother-daughter relationships that Radcliffe explores the workings of this relationship in a patriarchal society.

Although I believe Heiland's vision is complicated by the absence of Adeline's mother, the eventual importance of Adeline's maternal heritage exists as an alternate exploration and affirmation of patriarchal society, yet still in terms of mother and daughter. Women with agency and males as patriarchs are both acceptable as long as their positions are acquired and performed morally. The problem with Heiland's belief that Adeline's matrilineal descent is what empowers her is the fact that Adeline only reclaims the legacy of her mother for a brief moment before Adeline marries and leaves behind that maternal legacy. Therefore, I believe Radcliffe's novel suggests that the way for a woman to escape the gothic nightmare of patriarchal society is ironically through identification with the patriarch, fitting with Johnson's model of heroines as "less than man, more than woman" (76). Because Adeline steps into the role of patriarch after her biological father and the Marquis, Adeline is cast in the role of neither a proper female nor a proper male. Radcliffe subverts notions of traditional patriarchy by placing Adeline in roles in which she can always claim agency. Because victim feminism alone does not offer a heroine *enough* agency to

actually take on a male role, Adeline displays male agency, which parallels the male agency Radcliffe takes on by appropriating the gothic genre and entering the public sphere. By claiming agency through the exhibition of traditionally female traits *and* traditionally male traits, Adeline reveals the way women can exist in both public and private spheres.

The Compatibility of Adeline's Agency with the Figure of Domestic Woman

During Radcliffe's time, the domestic woman was consigned to the home for her own good, the good of her family, and the good of society and the nation, so women writers could utilize their domestic authority to their advantage and even participate in print culture from the confines of the home (Kelly 7). In this way, women writers performed agency. The gothic novel subversively critiques the patriarchy based on ideologies of the French Revolution. There is a fine negotiation between the gothic novel's critique of patriarchy and domestic authority for women in the gothic novel. In a gothic novel like *The Romance of the Forest*, the female protagonist possesses authority and agency that are not always derived from the domestic sphere. *The Romance of the Forest* presents Adeline as necessarily existing outside the domestic realm, as she has to leave the domicile in order to save Theodore. Therefore, in the female gothic genre, it is not plausible for the novels to both uphold subversive ideologies of the French Revolution and simultaneously present the sort of domestic revolution Kelly envisions. Just as women's agency in the domestic sphere propelled authorship and entrance into public discourse and print culture, Adeline gains agency within the home since the companionate marriage places sexuality in the home. Radcliffe's placement of sexuality in the home contrasts the aristocratic tradition of extra-marital affairs. Based on the agency Adeline displays in the novel, we have no reason to

assume that once Adeline and Theodore are married Adeline's subversive and cautious agency will cease to be exhibited in the domestic sphere.

Previously, I have discussed the two contrasting perspectives of subverting and reinforcing patriarchy that exist in tension with one another throughout the novel. I argue that this oscillation between subverting and reinforcing patriarchy mirrors the tension felt by women writers existing both in the domestic sphere while simultaneously producing popular novels disseminated in the public sphere. For example, Adeline exemplifies this subversion and reinforcement of patriarchy both by marrying Theodore and by being threatened with rape by the Marquis, since Adeline's fear of rape displays the patriarchy's power to define women's sexuality. Adeline escapes the Marquis' patriarchal oppression at the end of the novel, though Radcliffe places great emphasis and importance on the actual tension of subverting/reinforcing patriarchy throughout the novel. I believe it is possible that the restoration of patriarchy in *The Romance of the Forest* results from a widely shared sense of uncertainty during a cultural revolution from which Britain would rise as a more modern nation-state. The tension between subversion and restoration of patriarchy honestly represents Britons' greatest anxieties about the newly-conceived imaginations of possible transgressions of patriarchy influenced by politics of the French Revolution and a rapidly changing sense of public and private, gender roles, and who belongs where.

Radcliffe's Agency in the Public Sphere

Women writers like Radcliffe appropriated and popularized men's learned discourses. Radcliffe and other female gothic writers utilize masculine discourses and a masculine genre in a wisely passive manner. Radcliffe's agency in Britain's cultural revolution is reflected in Adeline's agency. Just as Radcliffe kept her own life private, but her novels were published

and disseminated in the public sphere, Adeline performs a new version of femininity that is oftentimes not compatible with traditionally accepted roles for women. As a female gothic writer, Ann Radcliffe actively participated in masculine traditions of all sorts during the cultural revolution. By adopting male rhetoric and discourse and writing in a male-originated gothic genre, Radcliffe performed agency in order to both systematically subvert and reinforce key ideologies of the revolution. The victim feminism Radcliffe employs in the novel is similar to the woman writer's way of claiming agency in the public sphere. In both cases, women must *use* male-originated constructions (whether genre or socially-acceptable female roles) and appropriate these constructions for themselves in order to enter the masculine discourse. Female authorship and a new print culture generally enabled women to participate in masculine discourses without abandoning their domestic duties and their agency in the domestic sphere. Radcliffe inscribes social conflict (like woman's place in society) within a domestic configuration (like a female character). Radcliffe utilizes sexual relationships, or relationships between Adeline and men, as the model for power relationships. Other than Adeline's relationship with Madame La Motte, Radcliffe purposefully portrays relationships between Adeline and various men who represent various facets of the patriarchy and female oppression.

Radcliffe's subversive critique of the patriarchy functions to propose women's agency and to indict immoral representations of certain patriarchies. Critic Nicola Watson argues that the late eighteenth century novel "suffers from a radical ambiguity, strung as it is between a powerful validation of individual, transgressive desire and a strenuously extended effort to close that desire down in the name of the father" (11-12). Therefore, it is justifiable to perceive Radcliffe's means of subversion as multi-faceted, both transgressive through

heroines with agency and in support of certain, moral patriarchies. Radcliffe's complex exploration of proper behaviors for patriarchs and for women with agency is founded in ideologies of the French Revolution. Although the French Revolution impacted and even propelled Britain's cultural revolution, not all ideologies of the French Revolution are compatible with the domestic revolution critics like Gary Kelly envision. The gothic novel carefully negotiates between the competing interests of political radicalism or critique of the patriarchy and a domestic role for a woman that derives its very justification from the patriarchy. Although women in the late eighteenth century were consigned to the home and domestic duties, I assert the possibility that this consignment may function as another form of victim feminism. Women utilized an acceptable position for them in society, which they appropriated and molded into a new version of the domestic woman, to their own advantage and created for themselves a sphere that they could build, create, and control. The presence of the domestic woman in Britain's cultural revolution encouraged this feminization of culture in which women could claim to have some authority. Even though the gothic heroine is not completely compatible with the type of domestic authority critic Gary Kelly sees as important for women, Adeline possesses agency as more than man even though it is outside the domestic sphere. Adeline may acquire domestic authority as Theodore's wife, as another form of victim feminism, but Adeline also may not change her means of victim feminism just because of marriage. Either way, Radcliffe's audience can be sure that Adeline will continually possess agency and exist as more than woman.

The Romance of the Forest suggests that for women writers to participate in the cultural revolution, women do not have to abandon their domestic roles in order to display such agency. Since the domestic roles of women receive their very justification from the

patriarchy, Radcliffe posits Adeline as a young woman with agency both inside and outside of the domestic realm, thus situating her as an even stronger woman not wholly reliant on the domestic roles prescribed for women by men. However, discussion of the complicated relationship between ideologies of the French Revolution and a domestic revolution to empower women raises an important question. Though Adeline as a female gothic heroine does not function within the domestic sphere, it is possible that eighteenth century women writers of genres other than gothic cast their heroines in roles where they possess domestic authority as a performance of victim feminism. Heroines that are empowered by the domestic sphere may even embrace their placement in the home as a means for subtly and subversively performing agency and even by exhibiting masculine traits.

Embodying the Sensible and the Sublime: Emily's Agency in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

On 8 May 1794, Ann Radcliffe published *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, her best-known gothic novel, which earned her £500 (Norton 93). Though Radcliffe published *The Romance of the Forest* through Hookham, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was printed by a different publisher named Samuel Robinson (Rictor 93). The publication of this novel was advertised a few months earlier, on 22-4 April, in the *London Chronicle*. Then, the day after *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was published, Radcliffe's previous publisher, Hookham, issued "a whole clutch of related works: new editions of her first two novels, a fourth edition of *The Romance of the Forest*, and James Boaden's dramatization of the latter," capitalizing again on Radcliffe's popularity (Norton 94). The effect of this advertising, which continued, was "to elevate a hot property to celebrity status," and the four large volumes sold for one pound (Norton 94). According to the contract extant at the University of Virginia, dated 11 March 1794, Robinson bought the copyright for £500, which was "unbelievably high" for a gothic. Critic Rictor Norton compares the sale price of this copyright to what Elizabeth Inchbald²¹ received for the copyright of *A Simple Story*: Robinson paid two and a half times Inchbald's copyright cost for Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (94-5). The money came to Radcliffe and her husband in installments, which is rumored to have financed both a holiday abroad and the purchase of a house (Norton 96). Clearly, Radcliffe's gothic novels were incredibly popular and she a stunning economic and novelistic success. In her introduction of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Jacqueline Howard writes, "with its unprecedented ability to maintain suspense, teasing its readers with suggestions of the spectral, and in poetic descriptions of picturesque and sublime scenery, *Udolpho* became the most popular novel of

²¹ Elizabeth Inchbald (b. 1753 d. 1821) was an English novelist, actress, and dramatist. She published *A Simple Story* in 1791.

its author's time" (vii). Not only did *Udolpho* "secure Ann Radcliffe lasting fame and influence; it also brought the Gothic romance into ascendancy" and "helped establish novel-writing as an acceptable and profitable occupation for women," which is an important point for my investigation (Howard vii).

The popularity of Radcliffe's novels gained her notoriety among not only the general reading public, but also among esteemed Romantic writers and critics who read and discussed Radcliffe's gothic novels. Samuel Taylor Coleridge described the experience of reading Radcliffe when he wrote, "the secret, which the reader thinks himself every instant on the point of penetrating, flies like a phantom before him" (*Critical Review* 361). Rictor Norton says, "the discerning critics like Henry Crabb Robinson and William Hazlitt (not to mention Jane Austen's Henry Tilney) read *Udolpho* several times with continuing pleasure;" one Charles Bucke went through the 600 plus page novel nine times, and Austen's Catherine Morland wished she could spend her life reading it (Norton 126). Fellow gothic writer Matthew Gregory Lewis thought it was "one of the most interesting Books [*sic*] that has ever been published," and Lewis' enjoyment was fed by his curious conviction that there were similarities in character between himself and the villain, Montoni (MacDonald 109-10). Lewis returned to writing *The Monk*,²² which he is rumored to have "set aside in despair, after reading *Udolpho*" (Norton 121).

Radcliffe's influence extended even beyond the female gothic novels for which she was best known. Interestingly in 1795, the year before she published her last novel, Radcliffe published her account of her European travels the previous year in a travel book entitled *A Journey made in the Summer of 1794* [*sic*], again published by Robinson (Norton 108). As I assert that Radcliffe's own agency is displayed in her appropriation of the gothic genre and

²² Lewis ultimately published *The Monk* in 1796.

entrance into the public sphere through her writing, I also assert that Radcliffe's own agency is extended to her gothic heroines. The fact that Radcliffe's publishing career closes with the publication of Radcliffe's European travel writing exemplifies a further extension of Radcliffe's agency. I argue that Radcliffe appropriates the gothic genre, gains great popularity, and participates in the public sphere through her writing. However, to understand the varied ways Radcliffe displays agency, beyond her own agency through publication and her heroines' agency, it is important to realize that Radcliffe continues to display agency even when she stops publishing novels. This continued agency is seen in the fact that Radcliffe, a woman, traveled across Europe and published her travel accounts. Evidence of Radcliffe's travels is seen not only in her travel writing, but we also see her knowledge of other countries and locations in her gothic novels. For example, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* hosts a vast amount of poetry, songs, and observations of other-than-Britain Western European countries; knowledge clearly obtained first-hand through extended travels across Europe like those in 1794.

The influence of Radcliffe's European travels is not only evident in her gothic novels, but I argue that Radcliffe's choice of other-than-Britain settings is imperative for her female gothic agenda. Because the terrors of the supernatural haunt characters in gothic novels, they are always set outside of England in places where the underlying political and social anxieties in the novels could be represented without alerting authorities in England. Radcliffe's travels, experiences unshared by many English women, enabled her to write gothic novels set in distant and mysterious European lands. Later in this chapter, I will specifically discuss the temporal and geographical choices Radcliffe makes in the novel and the ways I believe these choices facilitate Radcliffe's female gothic agenda.

Whereas Radcliffe's agency displayed in her travels, her publicity, and her gothic heroines subtly argues for women's potential to participate and thrive in the public sphere, Radcliffe does not abandon socially prescribed domestic roles in the least. It is important to remember that while I argue that Radcliffe displays agency in multiple ways, Radcliffe was still a woman of her time, also playing the role of the domestic woman. Knowing this, it is no surprise to learn that Radcliffe actually "would have liked to add William Radcliffe's name on the title-page if only he would have agreed, since he supplied political and economic observations" (Norton 108). Knowing Radcliffe only through her novels, we can only speculate about what her true intentions or motivations were for urging her husband to let her include his name on the title page of the novel, if she even "tried" to include him or not. The question of her reasons for not writing another novel after her 1796 *The Italian* is still unresolved, as Radcliffe worked hard to keep her private, domestic life separate from her public work—her writing.

Just as Radcliffe performs her own role as a woman differently (and with different degrees and types of agency) when writing, publishing, and traveling, the way Radcliffe imagines women's agency through her heroines differs between novels. Whereas in my discussion of *The Romance of the Forest* I argue that Radcliffe often uses victim feminism and subtle and subversive means to equip heroine Adeline with agency, I argue that Radcliffe displays women's agency differently in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In separate discussions of key plot points, time and geographical location of the novel, Radcliffe's comments about religion, her use of poetry, and Emily's functions in the public and private spheres in the novel, I will situate Emily as a carefully crafted heroine, an atypical woman who functions as

“less than man, more than woman,”²³ and as a useful tool for Radcliffe to advocate women’s agency in late eighteenth-century Britain. Specifically, Radcliffe’s inclusion of the masculine art of poetry in the novel reveals her appropriation of yet another masculine genre in addition to the greater gothic novelistic genre in which she writes. Therefore, Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is an even more mature and developed depiction of women’s agency than we see in her earlier novel.

Radcliffe’s Appropriation of Gothic Conventions to Assert Women’s Agency

The Mysteries of Udolpho announces itself as “A Romance; Interspersed with some Pieces of Poetry,” with an epigraph composed by Radcliffe glossing the title:

Fate sits on these dark battlements, and frowns,
And, as the portals open to receive me,
Her voice, in sullen echoes through the courts,
Tells of a nameless deed. (Radcliffe 3)²⁴

The apprehension of a potential threat in these lines anticipates the very suspense and sublime terrors of “the central Gothic situation in the story itself—the confinement of the young, beautiful and orphaned Emily St Aubert within the castle of Udolpho by her Aunt Cheron’s new husband, the proud and inscrutable Montoni” (Howard viii). Emily’s father is an ideal patriarch (though he dies) and the hero and Emily’s love, Valancourt, is a paragon. The villain of the novel, Montoni, marries Emily’s aunt and becomes her wicked uncle and functions as her bad father figure throughout the novel. Radcliffe appropriates the character

²³ Referring to Emily as “less than man, more than woman” invokes my prior discussion (in Chapter 2) of Adeline performing as “less than man, more than women,” as first indicated by critic Claudia Johnson. Although Johnson does not reference heroine Emily as performing “victim feminism,” I will argue later in this chapter that such a statement can be made about *Udolpho*’s heroine.

²⁴ All quotations from Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* are from the Penguin Classics collection, published by Penguin Books in 2001.

of the bad father figure in her female gothics in order to critique patriarchy. Because Emily cannot rely on any men who step into father figure roles after her father's death, she is left to her own devices for survival. Even Emily's lover, Valancourt, is unable to rescue her from the oppression of her male guardians, and Emily frequently finds herself alone in the gloomy and mysterious castle of Udolpho. Emily is also in the dark about Montoni's intentions, as Montoni represents yet another male character Emily cannot trust, but instead must question. Emily's aunt represents the typical gullible and emotional woman especially when she falls victim to Montoni's need for money and is completely scammed. Emily must brave her environment and summon the fortitude to cope with Montoni and her unwanted suitor, Count Morano.

In much the same way as *The Romance of the Forest's* Adeline is foiled by the hyper-feminine Madame de Montalt, Emily too is foiled by her aunt who lets tyrannical male figures, like Montoni, take complete advantage of her. In summoning the strength and courage to deal with Montoni, Count Morano, and various crude suitors despite her aunt's female-attributed weakness, Emily performs as less than man and more than woman. Because of Emily's sensibility and ability to ultimately reason away the terrors of the supernatural (a trope of the gothic genre), Emily fights throughout the novel to "quell the wild imaginings and terrors which threaten to overwhelm her" and prove herself not to be typically feminine and weak (Howard viii). However, the "mysteries" indicated in the novel's title affect Emily's life even beyond the terrifying castle of Udolpho.

We see Emily cope with the loss of her parents and her idyllic life at La Vallée and combat the sways of both her aunt and her oppressor, Montoni. The appropriated convention of a parentless heroine escalates readers' fear for Emily throughout the novel and especially

during dangerous encounters with either untrustworthy men or the supernatural. Not only is Emily a more sympathetic character because she is parentless, but there is also a more dire necessity for Emily, like Adeline, to display agency and act on her own behalf since there are no guardians on which she can completely depend. Radcliffe appropriates the trope of the mysterious possibility of mistaken identity that we often see in gothic novels. Emily endures the disturbing and oftentimes grueling questions about her own identity and shattering (false) reports about the character and integrity of Valancourt, the love of whom is one of the things that gives Emily the strength to endure. Through the trope of questionable identity, Radcliffe explores further the possibility for transgression. We know how Emily feels because, throughout the novel, Radcliffe's third-person omniscient narration draws us close to Emily's consciousness. For example, when a nun tells Emily the story of Sister Agnes who found refuge in a convent after escaping her father and the suitor he chooses for her, Radcliffe brings readers inside Emily's mind as she processes the story. After reading the scene, we are told that "Emily was affected by this history of the sister, some parts of whose story brought to her remembrance that of the Marchioness de Villeroi, who had also been compelled by her father to forsake the object of her affections, for a nobleman of his choice," and we see Emily shed tears for Sister Agnes (Radcliffe 544). Not only do we know precisely what Emily feels throughout the narrative, we are also told how to perceive and process situations like that of Sister Agnes. By divulging Emily's consciousness to her audience, Radcliffe prompts empathy for her heroine and molds her audience's recognition of victimization and frames the way her audience processes and registers Radcliffe's politics.

Many critics²⁵ consider readers' nearness to Emily's consciousness to be a cue Radcliffe took from Samuel Richardson. Richardson's epistolary novel *Clarissa*, published in 1747-8, "built a claustrophobic atmosphere of entrapment in its portrayal of his heroine" (Howard ix). Like Emily, *Clarissa* is "virtually forsaken, by despicable parents, and must draw on all her strength and conscious virtue to ward off rape by the villain, Lovelace" (Howard ix). In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe breaks new ground in frequently allowing her audience to know what Emily sees and feels, "and by giving her presentiments which blur the boundaries between illusion and reality, thus keeping readers guessing" what is real and what Emily is imagining (Howard ix). In doing so, Radcliffe "far surpasses the technique of her predecessors in Gothic romance, Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee" (Howard ix). Radcliffe's method of drawing us into her characters' world, specifically by revealing to us Emily's consciousness, blurs the line of fictional and real threats. Our closeness to and insights about Emily's thoughts and feelings envelop us in her experiences of fear of the patriarchy. Therefore, Radcliffe's political messages threaten not only Emily, but Radcliffe's contemporary audience as well.

In my prior discussion of *The Romance of the Forest*, I reflected many critics' assertions that the Radcliffean heroine is often motherless. Emily is no different. Supposed to have been dead for a long time, Emily's mother dies from a serious illness and "leaves her vulnerable to the sinister experiences surrounding the Marchioness de Villeroi, who, it seems, might be her real mother, whose black veil is the subject of terrible speculation, and who, like Madame Montoni, ends up murdered" (Wordsworth 77). Just as terrors in the abbey haunt Adeline and she is ultimately able to reasonably explain away supernatural

²⁵ In her introduction to the Penguin Books 2001 edition of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Jacqueline Howard, not unlike other critics have done, likens reader's nearness to Emily's consciousness to readers' nearness to *Clarissa*'s consciousness in Samuel Richardson's 1747-8 epistolary novel, *Clarissa*.

threats, Radcliffe's "delight in supernatural appearances" is evident in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. For example, Emily faints at the sight of a gory corpse, which turns out to be a waxwork (Wordsworth 77). Radcliffe's appropriation of the gothic genre extends to her use of gothic conventions to cultivate suspense, terror, and emotional involvement in the novel for her audience.

Just as Adeline discovers a manuscript that tells the story of a murdered man, Emily has brief glimpses of her father's letters during her stay at Udolpho, leading her to speculate about a terrible secret, a concealed crime in her family history. In Radcliffe's female gothic novels, her heroines' family secrets are resolved and are often rendered innocent, but only after her heroines are thoroughly haunted by threats of danger, manipulation, and transgression. Radcliffe's use of suspense encourages her audience to imagine and indulge themselves in extravagant threats of danger, though the always-rational explanations offered later serve to undercut the supernatural, terrifying expectations of her heroines and readers.

Geographical Location and Use of Anachronism to Reveal the Threat of the Patriarchy

Ann Radcliffe uses history and the supernatural as principal tools for understanding the political statements she makes about women. Unlike Horace Walpole, the originator of the gothic genre, Radcliffe in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* does "not admit the frankly supernatural or marvelous;" there are no giant helmets falling from the sky without an explanation (Howard xi). Nor does Radcliffe take up the possibility, explored by Clara Reeve, of "situating her fiction in a Gothic world of old superstition in which belief in the supernatural is universally accepted" (Howard xi). Instead, Radcliffe chooses the late sixteenth-century, which in popular historical understanding, "was considered the transitional

period between the Gothic era and the modern.²⁶ The time period in which Radcliffe chose to situate *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is just as crucial as the fact that she sets her novels in places outside of England. Setting this novel in the late sixteenth-century (and in European countries outside England), Radcliffe can populate her novels with two types of characters:

Those whose attitudes and practices are those of the old feudal order of tyranny, Machiavellian intrigue and popish superstition (Montoni, Madame Montoni, Laurentini di Udolpho), and those who embody the new order of liberty and enlightenment, anachronistically having the fashionable sensibility, manners, and tastes of eighteenth-century England (Monsieur St Aubert, Count de Villefort, Valancourt, Emily, Blanche, Henri). (Howard xi)

All of these characters fit into types with which Radcliffe's contemporary audience could identify. Through her audience's identification with those fashioned by the values and tastes prized in Radcliffe's day, Radcliffe could associate the negative traits of tyranny and patriarchal oppression with the past, promoting change in the present. By situating the narrative around the turn of the ancient into the modern, Radcliffe is able to displace patriarchy-imposed terrors into the past, the ancient, in her advocacy of possibilities for new women's roles in modern, present times. Therefore, Radcliffe's choice of time and geographical location allow Radcliffe to both displace the terrors she explores in other places and times and to explore women's agency through her heroine Emily, simultaneously commenting on tyranny and patriarchal oppression in late eighteenth-century Britain.

²⁶ Critic Robert Miles has termed this period between the Gothic era and the modern, the "Gothic cusp." For more information, see *The Great Enchantress* by Robert Miles.

Radcliffe's use of anachronism has a distinct and important purpose. Critic Jacqueline Howard usefully chronicles some of the most obvious anachronistic elements in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, saying:

St Aubert's 'botanizing at his chateau and his taste for the sublime and picturesque, his dispute with his brother-in-law, Monsieur Quesnel, about the re-landscaping of his boyhood home, Emily's creative sensibility and accomplishments, Montoni's conversing with ladies about 'the French opera', and Emily's being offered coffee by La Voisin at his cottage and 'coffee and ice' and 'collations of fruits and ice' in glittering Venice – these are all characteristic of Radcliffe's own century. (xii)

In his discussion of the motivations and development of gothic fiction, Robert Mighall argues convincingly that, from its inception, "the idea of the Gothic carries a (pseudo-) historical inflection, and testifies to one culture's view about its perceived cultural antithesis" (qtd. in Howard xii). Mighall argues, "the modern heroine or hero (the reader's counterpart who is equipped with an appropriate sensibility and liberal principles) is located in the Gothic past" and it is in this location that the heroine or hero is "forced to contend with the supposed delusions and iniquities of its political and religious²⁷ regime" (qtd. in Howard ii). Mighall argues that it is this "conflict between the civilized and barbaric, the modern and the archaic, the progressive and the reactionary which provides the terrifying pleasures" of texts like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (qtd. in Howard ii). Therefore, the anachronistic implementation of Radcliffe's contemporary concerns allow her readers the opportunity to create a bridge between the archaic, Medieval, gothic past and the present. Radcliffe's geographic choice of the southern Catholic culture of sixteenth-century Europe blended with eighteenth-century

²⁷ Radcliffe's religious commentary, specifically pertaining to the Catholic Church, is an important issue I will take up later in this chapter.

sentiments and practices reinforce for her readers a distance between the enlightenment of modern times and the repressive and misguided past. Radcliffe's choice of place and time allowed her to depict the anachronistic survival of old, out-dated customs into the enlightened present, meaning that when her readers notice and question her use of anachronism, they are forced to associate the way customs, like those specifically separating women from men in society, have been anachronistically carried to the eighteenth-century present day.

Because Radcliffe's geographical settings were usually in southern European countries,²⁸ particularly Italy and France, Radcliffe worked in Walpole's tradition, "continuing the association of Catholicism²⁹ with superstition, arbitrary power and passionate extremes" (Botting 63-4). By the eighteenth century, England has had a long history of Catholic persecution. Particularly, the sixteenth century was a significant time of Protestant and Catholic conflict, hence Radcliffe's novelistic setting in the sixteenth century. Since eighteenth-century values existed just beneath the surface of the popular gothic tales of other times, reading audiences were attracted to the terror offered by Radcliffe's novels, novels infused with issues of thematic importance intertwined in a strategic configuration of place, time, and geographic location. The attraction of reading audiences to terror "had an overwhelming political significance in the period," since "the decade of the French Revolution saw the most violent of challenges to monarchical order" (Botting 63). In Britain, the French Revolution and "the radicalism that inspired it were represented as a tide of

²⁸ In the essay, "Place and Eros in Radcliffe, Lewis, and Brontë," Nina daVinci Nichols also explains the way gothic novels rely on location to situate and evoke the terror of gothic themes.

²⁹ In a later section of this chapter, I specifically address Radcliffe's commentary on and use of religion in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In this particular argument, however, I am relating Radcliffe's choice of geographic location to the fact that the countries she chose for her novel's settings are first, outside England, and second, in Catholic countries. These are two systematic and important choices Radcliffe made in order to create a female gothic genre in which there is room for political commentary.

destruction threatening the complete dissolution of the social order” (Botting 63). So, critic Fred Botting aptly argues:

In Gothic images of violence and excessive passion, in villainous threats to proper domestic structures, there is a significant overlap in literary and political metaphors of fear and anxiety: metaphors that imply how much a culture, like the heroine and the family, sensed itself to be under attack both from within, in the dissemination of radical ideas, and from without, in the shape of revolutionary mobs across the Channel. (63)

Radcliffe’s use of terror postulates the radicalism inspired by the French Revolution as a very potential threat to the English. Radcliffe reveals how, like a culture, the heroine and the family are threatened from within *and* from without, which brings the politics of the French Revolution close to home. Radcliffe brings the politics of the French Revolution close to home by displacing the terror into other locations and eras, which exemplifies Radcliffe’s appropriation of gothic conventions to package her own political messages.

Public and Private: How (and Where) Emily Functions in the Novel

In much the same way as Radcliffe expresses political issues in her chosen temporal and geographical locations, Radcliffe systematically positions Emily both publically and privately in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Radcliffe’s public and private spaces function as binaries that work in the plot to define each other. The novel’s opening setting draws readers’ attention to “the timelessness and suspense of Emily’s childhood idyll,” as Emily “lives in harmony” with nature and her loving parents in a never-never world, a truly happy valley called ... ‘La Vallée’” (Kilgour 114). A sheltered and highly sentimental world, La Vallée exists as a version of a Rousseauian ideal community, which is presided over by the “wise

and benevolent St Aubert” (Kilgour 114). Like Radcliffe’s settings, her stock characters tend to be generic. Thus, St Aubert functions as the wise father and his generic type can be compared to La Luc in *The Romance of the Forest*. In the opening of the novel, Radcliffe describes St Aubert (and thus the father type) saying:

Amidst the changing visions of life, his principles remained unshaken, his benevolence unchilled; and he retired from the multitude more in *pity* [*sic*] than in anger, to scenes of simple nature, to the pure delights of literature, and to the exercise of domestic virtues. (Radcliffe 5)

Critic Maggie Kilgour argues, “even in isolation, Emily is being prepared for life in society, which means accepting that one cannot have one’s own way” (115). Emily’s education with her father and even after his death involves further learning “to find a middle course of balanced self-government, in which sentiment is not repressed into a cold, unfeeling stoicism but controlled by the higher faculty of reason” (Kilgour 115). Exemplifying Kilgour’s assertion, the novel states, “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” (Radcliffe 80). Critics like Kilgour note Radcliffe to be attacking the whole concept of individualism, which she sees as threatening to communities at large. By educating her inclination for sentiment “by the higher faculty of reason,” Emily displays Radcliffe’s preference for community over self-interest and individualism. Kilgour credits the flatness of Radcliffe’s stock characters “to a conservative distrust of individualism” (173). I expand on Radcliffe’s preference for community over individualism later in my discussion of Radcliffe’s use of poetry to create and represent private and public spaces in the novel.

While Radcliffe clearly defines many temporal and geographical locations in the novel, as previously discussed, there is limited clarification of the temporal and geographic location of the idyllic La Vallée. Built on a river near beautiful pastoral fields, La Vallée is a threshold world that is cut off from the outside world by mountains that shelters and protects it:

To the south, the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenees, whose summits, veiled in clouds, or exhibiting awful forms, seen, and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy pine, that swept downward to their base. These tremendous precipices were contrasted by the soft green of the pastures and woods that hung upon their skirts; among whose flocks, and herds, and simple cottages, the eye, after having scaled the cliffs above, delighted to repose. (Radcliffe 5)

The novel's opening scene brings together into a picturesque whole the two types of landscapes that become polarized later in the text when Emily's travels take her to places that either exemplify the awful sublime of mountains or the soft beauty of a pastoral world. These two aesthetic principles, as in Burke, have clear gender associations – the sublime with the male and the beautiful with the female. Radcliffe utilizes systems of opposition and antithetical representations to make statements about male and female roles, individual and community, and public and private.

Radcliffe's creation of antithetical spaces facilitates her ability to recreate the oppositional public and private in the novel. In my prior description of the novel's opening scene at La Vallée, we see the opposition between the "natural, simple, happy, and loving

country, a private realm of the family governed by sentiment and sympathy” and thus associated with femininity, “and the artificial, cruel, mercenary, and hypocritical city, inhabited by isolated individuals who are ruled by self-interest” and which Radcliffe associates with masculinity (Kilgour 116). Since St Aubert originally brought his family to La Vallée to escape from a corrupt society, La Vallée is the “epitome of the idealised [*sic*] private world of selflessness and benign relations which is set in opposition to the public realm of self-interest, male conflict, and aggression” (Kilgour 117). In addition to the two antithetical worlds defining each other, there is a necessary and natural relationship between them. Characters are able to move back and forth between the two worlds, and it is ultimately only through entrance into the wider world outside La Vallée that Emily is able to develop. But first, Emily must be prepared to enter the wide public world. I argue that Radcliffe’s authorial device of parental elimination instigates the necessity for Emily’s movement. If her parents did not die and she was not left to her own devices for survival, we might assume Emily would remain in her isolated world indefinitely. Thus, Radcliffe employs the female gothic archetypal elimination of parents to quite literally push Emily out into the public realm. Although Emily is pushed into this public realm, Radcliffe allows much movement *between* private and public realms – a dialogic movement, which Radcliffe advocates and something I discuss further shortly. Radcliffe’s extreme and intentional taking of Emily from the private realm and placing her in the public reflects Radcliffe’s revolutionary perception of women’s possible existence in the eighteenth century British public sphere. Through Emily’s plucking from the private and placement in the public, Radcliffe dramatically shows how women *could* function, despite the potential for many women’s contentment in the private, domestic sphere.

Emily moves from a sentimental past and isolated world into the gothic present and social world. Oftentimes, Emily also steps into more masculine public roles. However, she does not abandon the private domestic sphere or the social world, which is different than the public sphere. Whereas the public traditionally refers to the realm of politics and the private refers to areas of family and domestic life, the social world functions differently than both the public and private spheres. Some women are able to enter into the social world of extended family and economics without fully entering the public sphere. While the public sphere concerns the business of formulating and weighing public opinion and discussing politics, eighteenth-century British women often literally entered the social world without entering the public sphere of public opinion formation and politics. Radcliffe advocated the possibility of women's entrance into the actual public sphere. The new world that Emily enters can be considered a "nightmare version of her own perfect past, in which many of the elements of La Vallée are exaggerated and replayed in a gothic form" (Kilgour 117). Outside the idyllic La Vallée, Emily is suddenly surrounded by dangerously sublime (masculine-associated) landscapes and she and St Aubert "have no words to describe the sublime emotions they felt" (Radcliffe 44). Therefore, Emily both functions and exists in the social world, as is acceptable for women, without actually entering the public sphere formulated by political debate and public opinion. The castle of Udolpho is the gothic version of La Vallée. Like La Vallée, Udolpho is detached from society, "but its isolation is a sign of the total power of its ruler who, far from social restraints, is able to exercise his own will" because he is a man (Kilgour 119). Udolpho is a private space where the freedom of uncontrolled individualism is destructive. We can see Radcliffe's insertion of eighteenth-century tastes and virtues into her commentary of Udolpho when she measures her characters' morality by their responsiveness

to nature. La Vallée is in harmony with the natural world and Udolpho totally dominates the natural world. The castle's sublime rule over the natural world mirrors and draws our attention to Montoni's total authority over Emily within the castle, within the confines of the domestic woman's space. Montoni functions as the human version of the sublimity of the mountains as he, like the mountains, overshadows and overpowers Emily, keeping her in the dark about his intentions. My discussion of the novel demonstrates the way Emily achieves agency despite her consignment often to private spheres and domination by those characters that represent masculine hierarchies. For example, despite Montoni's attempts to maintain ultimate power over Emily, I argue that she often, but not always, transcends the parameters of the private sphere and social world and actually displays agency in the public realm, a man's world.

Similar to the way St Aubert functions as a gothic type in Radcliffe's novels, Emily's parents are replaced by a series of gothic parental substitutes. Emily's original parents were married for love and are replaced by Madame Cheron and the evil Montoni, who are "married through reciprocal swindling, a couple who are in fact deadly enemies" (Kilgour 118). Emily and Valancourt's marriage is established as a means of recreating the happiness of her parents, a means of restoring sentiment only after experience with the sublime. Reducing male and female characters to binaries has consequences for the relations *within* the sexes as well as *between* them. Just as I contend in my previous chapter that Madame La Motte both rivals and foils heroine Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest*, I believe Madame Cheron rivals Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Madame Cheron's only real means of power is tormenting women who are weaker than she, reflecting Radcliffe's assertion that women, left alone in the isolated and private domestic world, as they are confined in various

places throughout the novel, will fight amongst and against themselves for male attention. I contend that this is yet another instance in which we see Radcliffe asserting the necessity for women's ability to fluctuate between private and public spheres. Similar to the way women will fight among themselves for male attention if confined inevitably to the private sphere, left to themselves, men become caught up in conflicts between themselves and tidily knock each other off the power map in Radcliffe's novels. Moving women into public spheres suggests that the male-induced aggression and corruption in the world would be minimized or calmed. Similarly, male movement to (or in and out of) private spheres would not only provide women with agency, but it would also minimize the amount of conflict and jealousy among women. There is no possibility for revolutionary ideas about women's agency coming to fruition without peace, sisterhood, and an organized front, which are things that would be more possible with less tension between women in the private spheres if men and women moved more (but not completely) freely between both spheres. This oppositional division of the sexes not only turns them against each other, but also creates a sort of battle between the spheres, which is yet another way Radcliffe reveals the necessity of male comprised of unselfish individuals. The convent, Udolpho, and La Vallée are all private spheres associated with women turning against each other. Early in the novel, Emily nearly enters the private sphere of the convent, a choice that deserves further discussion for its implications about not only private (feminized) spaces, but also religious (and thus often political) implications.

The Role of Religion in Radcliffe's Subversive Political Messages About Women's Agency

In all of my previous discussions about *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, I accentuate the importance of Radcliffe's use of conventions to articulate the very real potential for female

agency to her audience. Specifically, the gothic genre's conventional use of religion becomes for Radcliffe a way of asserting female agency. Like most gothic novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* assigns a large role to Roman Catholicism and monasticism. Following the death of her father, Emily stays at a convent under the care of nuns. Emily admits later, once she gains the fortitude to resist becoming a nun, that "the peace and sanctity that reigned within, the tranquil beauty of the scenery without, and the delicate attentions of the abbess and nuns," are "circumstances so soothing to her mind, that they almost tempted her to leave a world, where she had lost her dearest friends, and devote herself to a cloister" (Radcliffe 86). The way Emily describes how in a time of despair and weakness, she almost consented to becoming a nun, exposes the Catholic Church as an enticing force to be overcome. The Catholic Church is described much like the patriarchy and sexual tension between men and women in the novel function as sometimes enticing and usually deceptive forces that must be overcome with great strength and courage. Consistently throughout the novel, Radcliffe imbues her Catholic heroine with Protestant enlightenment.

It is only after tasting the freedom of the outside, public world in roles where she has agency that Emily completely realizes the importance of her decision not to join a convent. Also, after speaking to Blanche de Villefort who spent many "dull years" in a convent, the two women are deeply critical of the religious practices of Catholic monasteries (Radcliffe 447). Blanche laments, "how can the poor nuns and friars feel the full fervor of devotion, if they never see the sun rise, or set?" (Radcliffe 444). Blanche continues this critique of Catholic cloistered devotion saying, "never, till this evening, did I know what true devotion is; for, never before did I see the sun sink below the vast earth" (Radcliffe 444). Blanche not only grieves for the cloistered Catholic laity, but she also importantly expresses joy from

having escaped the convent and tasted the freedom of the outside public world. Further, Blanche differentiates between Protestantism and Catholicism, calling to mind for Radcliffe's audience the private and public spheres. In a soliloquy, Blanche asks:

Who could first invent convents . . . and who could first persuade people to go into them? And to make religion a pretence, too, where all that should inspire it is so carefully shut out? God is best pleased with the homage of a grateful heart, and, when we view his glories, we feel most grateful. I never felt so much devotion, during the many dull years I was in the convent, as I have done in the few hours, that I have been here, where I need only look on all around—to adore God in my inmost heart.

(Radcliffe 447)

Blanche equates the private with Catholicism and the public with Protestantism, a comparison that Radcliffe's eighteenth-century British Protestant audience would have easily made. Just as Radcliffe casts Emily into the role of a woman who fluctuates between the private and public spheres, in the preceding scene we readers see Blanche's satisfaction of escaping the confines of the private world. In this way, the Catholic Church, which Radcliffe situates as diametrically opposed to Protestantism, represents literally and figuratively, the confining nature of private spheres. Since Radcliffe's eighteenth-century audience is Protestant and would agree with her disparaging remarks about Catholicism, it is important for her agenda concerning women's agency that Radcliffe equates women's private spheres with the oppression of Catholicism.

Because Radcliffe's contemporary audience would understand Catholicism as an illustrative and representative institution of patriarchy and oppression, the conventional Catholic Church functions systematically in Radcliffe's novel. In the essay "The Gothic

Transgression of Disbelief: Walpole, Radcliffe and Lewis,” critic Anne McWhir asserts, “the tendency of the Gothic novel to encourage intellectual skepticism to co-exist with imaginative and emotional indulgence is particularly obvious in its anti-Catholicism” (36). While many, if not most, gothic novels mock superstition, “the atmosphere of alien religion is often dominant,” which contributes to the atmosphere and effect of the fictional genre (McWhir 36). Read one way, almost all gothic novels are almost anti-Catholic propaganda, “owing much to the English tradition of making fear of Rome itself a superstition” (McWhir 36). Horace Walpole, the originator of the Gothic genre, presents *The Castle of Otranto* in such terms, as the “preface describes it as a piece of monkish propaganda turned by its editor to a different purpose” (McWhir 36). Lewis’ *The Monk* and Radcliffe’s *The Italian* provide other examples of gothic anti-Catholicism—Lewis blatantly mocks Catholicism and Radcliffe more gently admonishes it. To Radcliffe’s Protestant English reading audience, the Catholic Church is understood as a representation of patriarchal authority and oppression. Patriarchal religion threatens Protestant English audiences of Radcliffe’s time. I discussed the way Emily is nearly tempted to join a cloistered convent during a time of weakness, just as women in Radcliffe’s society are tempted to remain under the thumb of the patriarchy out of fear of repercussions and an ignorance about how to initiate change. Unlike women in Radcliffe’s society though, heroine Emily escapes the almost sexual teasing and tempting of the Catholic Church, escaping the patriarchal religion and thus, patriarchal oppression. Radcliffe imbues her novel with this parallel between the Catholic Church and the present-day eighteenth-century patriarchal oppression for women because she knows her Protestant readers will relate to a disdain and distrust for the patriarchal Catholic religion, which Radcliffe hopes readers will transfer to a distrust for contemporary patriarchy.

Emily's Agency As Seen in Radcliffe's Infusion of Poetry in the Novel

Radcliffe continues to challenge eighteenth-century notions of patriarchal hierarchies and equip women with agency to enter the public sphere by infusing the novel with poetry. The novel's original subtitle indicated it was "A Romance, Interspersed with some Pieces of Poetry." The use of poetry within the novel genre situates Ann Radcliffe herself as "less than man, more than woman." In late eighteenth-century British culture, poetry was considered the greatest form of literary achievement. Since poetry was a form held in a higher regard than novels, which were considered a woman's genre, Radcliffe's integration of poetry in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* separates her into a much smaller category of women writing in the "higher literary forms," far apart from other women writers who simply wrote novels.³⁰ In much the same way as I describe Emily as functioning as "less than man, more than woman," I argue that Radcliffe situates herself somewhere between female and male roles in the act of infusing her novel with poetry. Jacqueline Howard writes:

At a time when poetry, the literary sphere of men, was deemed the language and special indication of genius and aesthetic sensibility, its inclusion in *Udolpho* stakes a claim for the authority and respectability of female authorship and for the romance as a literary form. (xx)

On one level, Radcliffe's inclusion of poetry in *Udolpho* establishes the way women writers, too, can and do excel in higher forms of writing like the poetry Radcliffe writes herself and implements in the novel. On another level, Radcliffe's choice of including poetry within a novel of all genres reflects Radcliffe's argument that the romance should be recognized as a legitimate literary form.

³⁰ For a more complete discussion of English reading audiences in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which includes a discussion of novels as a genre and the way they were socially received, please see the corresponding section in my introductory chapter.

some of these brief quotations are also worked into the omniscient narration of the novel. The ease with which Radcliffe is able to relate literary quotations to the situations of characters she creates and rattle off quotations of influential literary figures reflect the way Radcliffe situates herself as an author among men and raises her status above simply a writer of novels.

In addition to brief quotations and epigraphs preceding chapters, Radcliffe includes full-length poems, supposedly written by the characters themselves, in the novel. It is through these poems, most of which are composed by Emily, that Radcliffe “uses Emily’s sensibility, her feeling heart and continual receptiveness to the changing qualities of the landscape, to celebrate her creative ‘enthusiasm’” (Howard xx). Although an emotional reaction to the sublime occurrences of nature were prized traits of a feeling person, generally a feeling man, Radcliffe gives Emily the ability to respond to the sublimity of nature in the same way as a man of feeling. During the course of the novel, Emily is inspired to compose thirteen poems (of nineteen total poems in the novel), which, despite their individual subject matter, all situate Emily as more than a woman and as capable of recognizing and feeling more than society credits women as being able to feel. Although readers impatiently reading the suspenseful and enthralling story may gloss over the poems, the poems are important aspects of the novel. Emily’s poems urge readers “to consider the role which Emily’s poetic sensibility plays in giving her ‘sublime’ authority and the mental ‘fortitude’ to resist Montoni’s predatory demands that she hand over her inherited estates” (Howard xx). While thirteen poems are credited to Emily, the other poems are attributed to Du Pont, St Aubert, Count Morano, Blanche, and Valancourt. Because Emily composes more poems than the few male characters whom Radcliffe gives poetic license, Emily is given a voice among men, a poetic voice that dominates the poetic voices of male characters.

Many of Emily's thirteen poems are about victims. Importantly, by inserting her poetic voice into a male discursive tradition, Emily finds agency through her mastery of poetry. As the audience, we are warned of the dangers of victimization from the outset of the novel. As he lay dying, St Aubert expresses his fear that "since our sense of evil is . . . more acute than our sense of good, we become the victims of our feelings, unless we can in some way command them" (Radcliffe 78). St Aubert warns Emily not to become a victim of her emotions (which, influenced by Radcliffe, Austen also warns her readers of in *Northanger Abbey*), but to instead acquire command over her emotions. In his last words, St Aubert urges Emily to "always remember how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude, than the grace of sensibility" (79). In this scene, we realize not only that St Aubert represents the kind of moral patriarchy Radcliffe advocates, but we also understand St Aubert's foreboding of Emily's struggle as a victim.

Because Radcliffe's audience realizes early in the novel that Emily will struggle with victimhood, her audience readily recognizes Emily in the role of victim in much of her own poetry. In one "Sonnet," as Emily watches a "bat circle on the breeze of eve," she grieves over her "lonely visions of despair" (Radcliffe 93). Although she finds nature to be a brief respite from her confinement, she is still plagued by her consignment to the private sphere of the castle in which she feels imprisoned. In another poem Emily composes entitled, "The Pilgrim," Emily calls the pilgrim the "prey" of a "ruffian" and describes watching his "eyelids close" as "the Pilgrim bleeds to death" because "his meek spirit knew no vengeful care" (Radcliffe 391). In composing this poem,³¹ Emily reflects on the victimization of the pilgrim who is murdered by a ruffian, and she credits his victimization to the fact that he was

³¹ "The Pilgrim" previously appeared in a periodical publication prior to the publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

incapable of vengeance. Emily composes another poem entitled “Shipwreck,” in which the ship’s sail “bends to the storm” and sinks (Radcliffe 527). Emily laments the fate of the helpless, “wretched mariners” for whom “no more shall day / Unclose his cheering eye to light [them] on [their] way” (Radcliffe 527). Throughout the novel, Emily realizes her own victimization and recites original poetry in which she imagines others also as victims.

Because Emily’s use of victims in her poetry is non-feminist (as her poems most often host male victims), Radcliffe seeks empathy for victims from all readers no matter their gender. Through the very act of composing poetry, though, Emily claims agency over her own victimization in a way that the pilgrim and the shipwrecked mariners are unable to do.

Although Radcliffe’s contemporary critics and reviewers gave attention to her verse, particularly “The Sea-Nymph,” which she has Emily composes during her stay in Venice, many reviewers agreed that her poetry was not memorable. Coleridge even claimed that most readers skipped the poetry in Radcliffe’s work because it interfered with the unfolding of the plot, saying, “the love of poetry is a taste; curiosity is a kind of appetite, and hurries the headlong on, impatient for its complete gratification” (qtd. in Watt 114). However, James Watt contends, despite Coleridge’s claim, “it is fair to say that most reviewers acknowledged and endorsed Radcliffe’s concern to elevate her construction of romance within the unofficial hierarchy of genres” (114). Other critics like Jacqueline Howard argue that Radcliffe’s “sublime and picturesque scenic travel descriptions” are Radcliffe’s unique contributions to the female gothic genre for which she was most recognized and remembered by contemporary reviewers (xxi). However, I argue that Radcliffe’s infusion of poetry and epigraphs into her novel separates her from many other women writers, as she appropriates

the techniques, and even the words, of male writers.³² Nevertheless, Watt cites Sir Walter Scott as calling Radcliffe “the first poetess of romantic fiction” and the “first writer to introduce into her prose fictions a beautiful and fanciful tone of natural description and impressive narrative, which had hitherto been exclusively applied to poetry” (qtd. in Watt 113).

In 1810, Anna Laetitia Barbauld wrote, in Coleridge’s sentiment, about the tendency of readers to skip over the poems in Ann Radcliffe’s novels, but Barbauld reminds readers of the poetry’s importance:

It ought not be forgotten that there are many elegant pieces of poetry interspersed through the volumes of Mrs. Radcliffe . . . The true lovers of poetry are almost apt to regret its being brought in as an accompaniment to narrative, where it is generally neglected . . . and the common reader is always impatient to get on with the story.

(Barbauld viii)

Although the subtitle, which calls our attention to the interspersion of poetry, is dropped from modern editions and bibliographies, it asks us to pay attention to the “interspersed” poetry as distinctive acts of the novel’s form (Horrocks 507). In her 2008 essay “‘Her ideas arranged themselves’: Re-membering Poetry in Radcliffe,” Ingrid Horrocks contends that the primary function of poetry and quotation in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is “overwhelmingly creative and community building, as reflected in its presence only in the parts of the novel in which Emily is not physically confined or psychologically overwhelmed” (526). Horrocks argues that Radcliffe’s poetry is instead associated with those moments in which Emily is free to wander through the landscape or at least to imagine wandering free from that which confines

³² In saying Radcliffe separates herself from traditionally female literary forms, I do not mean to say that Radcliffe was the only woman writer during her time to do so. I am merely highlighting Radcliffe’s literary contributions and non-adherence to the socially prescribed gender roles for literary genres.

her (526). Horrocks believes that it is in this novel that Radcliffe begins defining the “particular conditions needed to make accessing or evoking this kind of collective experience possible,” and says that Radcliffe “begins to make this a specific kind of community—and at points, a Nation” (527). In the politically charged atmosphere of the 1790s, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* “amounts to a historically situated argument for the need for imaginative freedom and its associated sympathies” (Horrocks 527). For the purposes of my argument, I believe Horrocks calls our attention to the way imaginative freedom, expressed through not only poetry but also through Radcliffe’s advocacy of women’s agency, is one of the first real steps in real late eighteenth-century British women’s acquiring agency. Radcliffe’s gothic novels create imaginative spaces in which women are able to envision the potential for their own, very real agency.

Radcliffe uses the communal nature of poetry oftentimes to connect Emily’s thoughts with greater political concerns of Britain. Radcliffe merges Emily’s thoughts with those of Britannia “at the exact moment in which Britannia mourns the degeneration of her empire into a state of warfare, and represents herself as being under siege” (Horrocks 516). The quote appears in a moment in which Emily mourns her own loss of a view of the open sea:

Emily gave a last look to the Adriatic, and to the dim sail,

That from the sky-mix’d wave [*sic*]

Dawns on the sight, [*sic*]

And the barge slowly guided between the green and luxuriant slopes of the river.

(Radcliffe 208)

Radcliffe sets up a parallel between Emily’s vulnerable situation and that in which Radcliffe believes Britain finds herself. It is in this, Emily’s assertion, that Emily “speaks in unison

with a particular idea of the wider public” (Horrocks 516). Therefore, some of the poems in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* register Britons’ collective and communal fears of the politics of the French Revolution. Radcliffe’s conscious entry into public political debate is through Emily’s female voice. Just as Radcliffe appropriates the gothic and novelistic genres, Radcliffe uses poetry to evoke a community in order to diffuse the isolated, individual identities of women.

We wonder, then, what happens in the moments in which Emily composes poetry and what we readers are missing if we read over or past them, as Barbauld and Coleridge feared many readers did. Radcliffe’s poetry actually helps her readers understand the fiction of her novel better. In “Deconstructing the Patriarchal Palace: Ann Radcliffe’s Poetry in ‘The Mysteries of Udolpho,’” Ellen Arnold agrees that not only does poetry function as a collective registering of Briton’s political fears (as Horrocks contends), but the poems also “open various levels of meaning within the plot” (Arnold 21). Although Barbauld and Coleridge express the potential that many readers would skip over the more complex poetry to get back to the plot of the narrative, those who skip over the poetry would miss out on key insights the poems reveal about the true contemporary issues integrated into the plot. In much the same way as I argued that the audiences’ nearness to Emily’s consciousness is a tool Radcliffe uses to guide our reading of the narrative, Arnold argues that the poetry identifies key insights about the narrative. Just as Emily is restricted by patriarchal society, Radcliffe displays uneasiness and ambivalence toward her poetic voice as shown by her decision to bury her poetry within the chapters of her novel (21). Arnold believes that Radcliffe’s wrestling with her own poetic voice by presenting poetry only as interspersed in a novel parallels Radcliffe’s wrestling with a voice of agency (21). I believe this is a useful reminder

that although Radcliffe's assertion of women's agency is identifiable consistently in her novels, Radcliffe is still a product of her own era's assumptions and values, which creates the impossibility for her to completely and radically subvert all patriarchal ideals in an abruptly revolutionary manner. Although Arnold believes Radcliffe wrestles with a voice of agency as she wrestles with creating a female poetic voice, Radcliffe's use of poetry *and* her depictions of women's agency are honest and revolutionary despite the fact that they are often subtle, patriarchies are ultimately restored, and we see Radcliffe struggling with ideas about women's agency and how she imagines its function in society.

Just as the burial of the poems in the novel calls our attention to the divide in men and women's acceptable art mediums, the gender of poems' speakers is an important divide. Although Emily composes the majority of the poems, the other poems are generally credited to male characters. In addition, while Radcliffe's poems usually focus on non-feminist victims, the poetry composed by males is usually odes or hymns to women or to nature. Poetry written by males, whether addressed to women or nature, reinforces the eighteenth-century British male aspiration to be "men of feeling." The complexity lies in the fact that Radcliffe, a woman, composes even the poetry spoken by her male characters; Radcliffe's agency is overarching and all-encompassing in the novel's poetry. The first poem in the novel, "Sonnet,"³³ is written in praise of Emily by a male character unknown to Emily, but later turns out to be DuPont, a hopeful suitor. By wearing a masculine persona in the composition of DuPont's spoken poem, Radcliffe reproduces the masculine poetic tradition and re-enacts its objectification of the feminine (Arnold 21). Because the poem describes Emily's physical charms, her "light'ning smile," her "animated grace," and calls her a

³³ The character Du Pont's poem entitled "Sonnet" is not to be confused with the poem entitled "Sonnet" composed by Emily and discussed for its reflection of victimization.

“Goddess,” the poem adopts a masculine stance toward the feminine object (Radcliffe 10-11). At the same time, the “masculine” poet blames Emily for his lovesickness and accuses her of duplicity:

How off the flowret’s silken leaves conceal
 The drug that steals the vital spark away!
 And who gazes on that angel-smile,
 Would fear its charm, or think it could beguile! (Radcliffe 11)

After hearing the poem, Emily discloses to her audience that although she was first flattered by the poem, “the little vanity it had excited . . . passed away, and the incident was dismissed from her thoughts amid her books, her studies, and the exercise of social charities” (Radcliffe 11). Emily’s response reveals the response to flattery advocated by Radcliffe for all women. DuPont’s poem sets up a conflict that reverberates throughout the novel (Arnold 21). Emily, “the object of the poem and the heroine of the novel, faces a patriarchal tradition that seeks to gaze on her and own her, while denying her subjectivity,” just as Radcliffe herself faces a literary tradition “that sees her as a fit object for inspiring art while denying her ability to create poetry herself” (Arnold 21).

As I discussed the way Radcliffe struggles to become a poet as she wrestles with the assertion of women’s agency in the novel, she portrays Emily as a poet, but Radcliffe also portrays the pressures and difficulties faced by female poets during her time. After Emily shares her poem “The Glow-Worm” with her father and receives his “patronizing appraisal,” none of her other poems are written; they are all sung or recited, but never recorded in any permanent medium (Arnold 22). Valancourt overhears Emily singing “To Melancholy” and Emily’s friend Blanche recites “To the Bat,” a poem Emily shares with her, but her poems

are never written again in the novel. Emily's sharing of a poem with Blanche, as well as Blanche's recitation of Emily's poem functions as an extension of women's agency; Radcliffe positions herself in the public sphere by publishing in a variety of appropriated genres, Emily reflects Radcliffe's own agency as a poet and as less than man, more than woman, and Emily's agency is extended to Blanche when she excitedly recites Emily's poem. Other female characters, like Blanche, share the idea of women's agency, an idea that Radcliffe prompts her audience to share. In contrast to Emily's non-written and only spoken or sung poems, Emily's two male suitors, Valancourt and DuPont, "write poems and leave them in conspicuous places where they will be found and read by Emily" (Arnold 22). For example, Valancourt literally carves his words into stone, demonstrating "his masculine claim to the right of producing immortal art" (Arnold 22). The fact that Emily's poetry is unwritten accentuates female poets' struggle to gain recognition for writing in the male-dominated poetic tradition.

Politics of the male and female acceptable social positions are exemplified in other forms of writing in the novel other than just poetry. It is important to note that in the situations when Emily actually does write, her words betray her (Arnold 22). In a key scene, Radcliffe "dramatizes what may be seen as the paradigmatic female experience with language: it becomes a masculine tool for alienation, objectification, [like DuPont's poem discussed previously] and silencing of women" (Arnold 22). Emily writes a letter to her uncle in this particular scene, giving him permission to sell her estate. Emily writes this letter on the back of a letter which Montoni, her legal guardian that she does not realize yet is evil, has already written on and which he does not allow her to read. Montoni explains to Emily that he has only written in reply to her uncle's inquiry about a matter of only some interest to

Emily. Emily does not know that the matter does not regard her estate at all, but it regards “her body, her freedom, her very being, for it concerns her marriage to a friend of Montoni,” a marriage which Emily vehemently opposes (Arnold 22). Emily is tricked into giving written permission to those who regard her, a woman, as an object.

This particular scene is crucial to understanding Radcliffe’s portrayal of women’s relationship to language. Because of the terms of the agreement, the language in which communication is accomplished is established by and for men, and Emily seems doomed to be betrayed by their terms when she attempts to employ them. This idea relates to Radcliffe’s burying of poetry in her novel. Radcliffe highlights for her audience the way the men around Emily scheme to keep her ignorant and the way patriarchal language equates woman with the other, with the object. Radcliffe equips Emily with agency in the majority of the novels’ poems, but Radcliffe uses the poems (and even a letter) written by men to actually warn women about objectification through patriarchal language. Again we see that the novel is not completely subversive, but instead, Radcliffe artfully interweaves scenes in which women are objectified (as when Emily is imprisoned and objectified by suitors) and scenes in which women display agency, juxtaposing the two in order to *show* the danger of patriarchal oppression. Although I agree with Arnold that this prose is subverted by the poetry within it, I have argued in this chapter the varied ways Radcliffe equips Emily with agency. In addition to poetry, I argue that it is also through strategic choices about religion, geographic location and the use of anachronism, and advocating women’s movement between public and private spheres that Radcliffe articulates to her audience the threat of patriarchy and undercuts it by equipping her heroine Emily with agency. In these varied ways, Radcliffe imagines the deconstruction of the public/private and male/female dichotomies on which patriarchy is

built. In the world Radcliffe imagines, women are no longer passive, alone, and confined, but instead are powerful, free to move between private and public spaces, and part of a larger community of women.

In her appropriation of the female gothic genre, Ann Radcliffe challenges and even dismantles eighteenth-century British notions of public and private and gender roles. Just as Radcliffe herself maintained a quiet private life and simultaneously entered the public sphere through an authorial persona, Radcliffe's heroines occupy both private and public spaces. While in *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* Radcliffe's politics are not completely radical, it is through the act of bringing revolutionary politics and the possibility of transgression close to home from Britons that Radcliffe has a hand in the formation of public opinion. In appropriating gothic conventions and popularizing the female gothic genre, which entertained a vast readership, Radcliffe depicts worlds in which women as victims are able to perform more public roles without abandoning private, domestic roles. For her contemporary readership and for us today, Radcliffe exemplifies the fortitude and intellect necessary to translate revolutionary politics to practical social methodology. In Radcliffe's world, women are not cast in unbelievable patriarchal roles nor do her female characters remain passive victims. Radcliffe's heroines represent Radcliffe's perceived necessity for an ideological shift to true modernity, to a modern nation where women have the freedom and the choice to occupy private *and* public spaces, and to move freely between the two. Most importantly, female gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe informs, impacts, and even shapes public opinion.

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VITA

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN, AGENCY, AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE: AN INVESTIGATION OF ANN RADCLIFFE'S *THE ROMANCE OF THE FOREST* AND *THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO*

by Sarah Coppola Jewell, M.A., 2010
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This thesis examines the way Ann Radcliffe positions herself and her female gothic heroines in both public and private spheres, while registering Briton's fears about the threat of patriarchy and politics of transgression stemming from the French Revolution. Late eighteenth-century Britain's cultural revolution and print changed the way Britons produced and consumed literature. This thesis argues that women like Radcliffe contributed to the formation of public opinion through their writing without abandoning the domestic sphere. In separate discussions of *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), this thesis argues that Radcliffe existed both privately as marginal to literature and public debate and publically since she simultaneously entered those same public debates. Without abandoning the domestic sphere, Radcliffe entered the public sphere by appropriating the male-originated female gothic genre and unsettling masculinist hierarchies and assumptions, including those assumptions about gothic fictions and novels as inherently inferior literary genres, just as readers of novels and gothic literature were deemed inferior consumers of print.