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Pre-Publication Version

Monika Class

Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest: Interspersed with Some Poetry*, 1791

The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the underworld. The thorn-bushes there, and the thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable. (George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 84)

Abstract: *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) secured Ann Radcliffe's reputation as a writer of Gothic literature. The novel continued and expanded, as this chapter will show, the Walpolean tradition of re-evaluating the modern romance by injecting it with the virtues of "respectable" novels such as plausibility, mimetic acuity and Protestantism. After a brief recapitulation of Radcliffe's theory of the supernatural in poetry and a plot comparison with the first British Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, the chapter analyses the figurative meaning of landscapes and architecture for national as well as gender identity in Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest*. In doing so, it examines Radcliffe's ruined abbey and forest as a chronotope related to the novel's characterisation. Radcliffe's scenic configurations made a significant contribution to the development of the British novel as a literary genre by anticipating the characters' embeddedness in their surroundings in nineteenth-century realist novels such as George Eliot's *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866).

Keywords: Re-evaluation of modern romance, national and gender identity, topography, deterritorialisation, spatial narration.

1. Context, Oeuvre, Moment

Known as “the great Enchantress”, Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) was the leading Gothic writer of the 1790s (De Quincey 1862, 74). Her novels enjoyed commercial and literary success and inspired a host of imitations (Miles 1995, 8). The translations of her page-turners became a Europe-wide success. Her literary career began in 1789, the year of the French Revolution. Her first two romances, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and *A Sicilian Romance*, appeared in 1789 and 1790, respectively, and received considerable critical attention. It was the publication of *The Romance of the Forest* in three volumes in 1791, however, that secured her literary reputation. Such recognition prompted Radcliffe to start publishing under her name. In a second edition of the novel in 1792, the hitherto “unnamed authoress” declared herself to be “Ann Radcliffe, Author of ‘A Sicilian Romance,’ &c” (Townshend and Wright 2014, 7). The demand for her books became so high that she earned the ‘unprecedented sums’ of £500 for the copyright of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and £800 for *The Italian* (1797) (Miles 2009, 77). This publishing phenomenon rendered Radcliffe “crucial to the rise of professional female writers” in the late eighteenth century (Townshend 2016, 545).

The Romance of the Forest, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *The Italian* did much to establish Radcliffe as the leading Gothic novelist of the decade (Miles 1995, 9). Besides the novels, she published travel literature that described her journey with her husband down the Rhine: *Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795). The couple’s voyage further south into Switzerland and France, where *The Romance of the Forest* is set, was cut short by the French Revolutionary Wars. In 1797, at the age of thirty-three, Radcliffe suddenly stopped publishing and withdrew from literary circles and society until her death of asthmatic fever in February 1823. Her last novel, *Gaston de Blondville*, appeared posthumously. Albeit designed as the prologue to the latter, her philosophical fragment “On the Supernatural in Poetry” was published separately in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* in 1826.

Radcliffe's novels were published during the clash of the liberal and conservative factions in Britain over the Revolution Debate, the so-called "war of ideas". While Edmund Burke (1729–1797) influentially declared the French Revolution an "abomination that ought to be expunged, and the monarchy restored" (Miles 1995, 58), Thomas Paine, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft supported the national and international movements of constitutional reform. Radcliffe's husband William held a "radical Whig position" (Miles 2012, 96), but her own writings resist the polarising forces of this public debate. The records of her sympathy for aristocratic refugees from France in her *Journey* mention the "the private malice of Robespierre's [sic] agent" (1795, 318) and suggest her condemnation of the "Reign of Terror" in Revolutionary France after 1792. At the same time, some scholars regard Radcliffe's recollection of her veneration for the Glorious Revolution in her *Journey* (1795, 389) as her "clearest expression of [radical] political principle" (Watt 2014, 68; Miles 1995, 62; Milbank 2018, 27). Irrespective of her views on the Revolution Debate, it is important to note that Radcliffe's *Journey* engages critically with ongoing attempts of forging a common national identity for Britons during the period (DeLucia 2014, 138). In this spirit, *The Romance of the Forest* partakes to a certain degree in the grand narrative of British exceptionalism revolving around the discursive construction of the island and British Protestantism (Colley 2003).

Sir Walter Scott declared that "Mrs RADCLIFFE, as an author, has the most decided claim to take her place among the favoured few, who have been distinguished as the founders of a class or school" (Scott 1833, 69). Central to this school is the so-called "explained supernatural", according to which "all the circumstances of her narrative, however, mysterious, and apparently superhuman, [are] to be accounted for on natural principles, at the winding up of the story" (Scott 1833, 70–71). Another key element of her compositions consists in landscape descriptions including architecture. The latter plays an important role in

Radcliffe's re-evaluation of Gothic romance. She enhanced the mimetic dimension of her writing and, in doing so, raised the profile of her romance productions almost to the levels of respectability that realist British novels had gained by virtue of narrative plausibility, innovation and moral emulation.

Much of the gradual institutionalisation of the novel "proper" as a literary genre depended on the assumption of the homogeneous outlandishness and inferiority of romance. Advocates of the novel like James Beattie downgraded medieval romances, condemning their tendency to excessive passions and warning readers that excessive reading of romances may cause insanity. Conversely, his rhetoric upgraded the emerging novel genre by highlighting innovation, moral edification and rationality. "The history of the novel is", as Deidre Lynch notes, "the story of a modern form's increasing refinement of the mimetic powers that separate it from the extravagance and [...] stereotypes of old romance" (2015, 183). Radcliffe's insertion of picturesque elements enhanced acceptance among the educated readership. The writer and her publishers emphasised the significance of the poetry in her prose production through subtitles such as "Interspersed with Some Pieces of Poetry" (Radcliffe 1986 [1791], xxxi; see also Bainbridge 2008, 186).¹ Radcliffe redirected her Gothic romance towards the philosophical sophistication of the sublime, beautiful and picturesque and thus elevated the subgenre.

Recent scholarship has highlighted the central importance of such meditative descriptions of landscape and people: "The crucial parts of the books are thus precisely those that seem least in touch with their sensational undercurrents" (Brown 2005, 182). Furthermore, her descriptive insertions tend to slow down the reception process; indeed, Leah Price speaks of them as "textual speed-bumps" (Price 2000, 96). The interspersed poetry and description trained readers "in the process of differentiating poetry from prose, 'reflection'

¹ All further references refer to this edition.

from ‘story’, description from narrative” (Price 2000, 93, 96). The hybridization of meditative poems on nature with “reprehensible” tales of murder and violence won Radcliffe widespread critical approval (see section 3). Although Gothic romance was often despised as mean entertainment, the “Radcliffe school” became the epitome of Gothic sophistication in the Romantic period. Spearheaded by Radcliffe, the Gothic vogue in literature “reached its apogee in the late 1790s” (Miles 2015, 234).

On the one hand, Radcliffe’s novels built on Horace Walpole’s precedent in at least four ways: First, Radcliffe reclaims plausibility, mimetic acuity and roundness of character for her Gothic tales in such a manner that old romance and the novel collapse into the Walpolean rubric “modern/ Gothic romance” (Walpole 2014 [1764], 9). Second, she models the representation of desires on architecture and credits strong passions with a catalytic force for the overall plot (see below). Third, the authoress assimilates elements of patriarchal violence in *The Castle of Otranto* such as incest, homicide and superstition, and she feminises the Gothic tale, notably by reversing the dynamics of the love match: Theodore, the hero of Walpole’s novel, is demoted to the heroine’s love interest in *The Romance of the Forest*. Fourth, Radcliffe continues and amplifies the revival of supernatural apparitions through the strategic use of Shakespearean references, priming readers for ghosts or acts of villainy through epigraphic chapter headings taken from *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* or *Hamlet* (Rumbold 2016, 134, 137).

On the other hand, Radcliffe independently developed her poetics. “On the Supernatural in Poetry” based her theory on both theatre observations of *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* and on Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the bold foundation of aesthetic experience in physiology (Guyer 2015, ix). Radcliffe’s philosophical fragment defined her school by subsuming her fiction under the aesthetic category of terror, which the author opposed to

horror. Radcliffe proposed that terror “awakens” mental faculties whereas horror “annihilates” thought and feeling (1826, 149). The text is written as a dialogue between “W.”, the author’s mouthpiece, and “Mr. S”, his imaginary opponent. The fictional conversation stipulates that horror is inferior to terror because the former depends on the explicit depiction of violence such as the gory scenes of lynching in Lewis’s *The Monk* (Frank 2016, 476). Terror, by contrast, depends on the evocative power of obscurity in writing. Part of her poetics of terror are two affective devices. In the spirit of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “willing suspensions of disbelief” ([1817] 1983, II 6), Radcliffe states that the evocation of the supernatural requires the “suspension, or momentary change, of the laws prescribed by *Nature*” (1826, 148). Her example is the night-watch scene on the isolated platform preceding the apparition of Hamlet’s father (1826, 148–149). The appearance of the ghost depends on its gloomy environment (Radcliffe 1826, 145). Terror-inspiring surroundings typically consist of castles, ruins, rocks, woodlands and plains often in stormy weather. This interweaving of personality traits with landscape descriptions plays a prominent role in *The Romance of the Forest*.

The classification of the latter as a Gothic novel is complicated by certain questions of periodisation as well as cultural diversity. Refined as Radcliffe’s compositions were, the novelist spearheaded the Gothic fashion in British literary high culture for some time until it petered out by 1820 (Alber 2017, 309). After that the Gothic continued to thrive in nineteenth-century popular culture. Miles notes that the post-1820 Gothic “migrated downmarket, into chap-books, bluebooks, and magazines”, piling up in circulating libraries, leaking into and transforming other kinds of fiction (Miles 2015, 234). Historically speaking, “Gothic” as the generic term we use today stems from the Victorian coinage for the formulaic, base emotions, blood and gore in contexts like the ‘penny dreadful’ (Clery 2002, 37 Fn 2; see also Sedgwick 1980, 9-10). Radcliffe’s novels resist such a classification. That

“Gothic” is absent from any of her novel titles is a case in point, for it is the eponymous romance which highlights Radcliffe’s generic transformation of the novel in the 1790s.

2. Narrative and Aesthetic Strategies

Central to the book is the natural scenery. The significance of these descriptions is three-fold: first, Radcliffe’s landscapes tapped into and modified the British national imaginary; second, the insertion of nature poems and prose played a vital role in Radcliffe’s upgrading of Gothic romance in Romantic literary culture and anticipated the technique of embedding characters in their surroundings in the Victorian realist novel; and third, the movement across topographical thresholds in, and the perception of, landscape and architecture in the narrated world allowed feminine agency and masculine vulnerability to emerge that would otherwise have been seen as an offence against decorum during the reign of King George III.

Radcliffe’s inventions rehabilitated the predecessor of the eighteenth-century “realist” novel in a manner that blended heterogeneous markers of national as well as gender identity. *The Romance of the Forest* questions and reconfigures Britishness, femininity and masculinity. The novel relates fictional occurrences in France and Savoy during the summer of 1658. Adeline, the vulnerable but resilient heroine, sets out on her journey, on which she mainly acts as an exchange commodity for male aggressors. Two French aristocrats, Pierre La Motte and Phillippe Marquis de Montalt, use her as a pawn in their power schemes involving conning, robbery, blackmail, sexual harassment, abduction, torture and murder (Hoeveler 1998,71). The kidnap and murder of Adeline’s (biological) father, Henry Marquis de Montalt, at the hands of his half-brother Phillippe is the dark secret at the heart of these dubious goings-on. The initial crime has taken place in the abandoned, dilapidated Abbey of

St. Clair in the remote woodland of Fontanville, in south-eastern France, in 1642 (341). This ruin is the very place where the 19-year-old Adeline finds herself at the mercy of La Motte and the Marquis almost two decades later. Nonetheless, Adeline emerges with her virginity and virtue intact as well as her aristocratic identity and wealth restored. She subsequently fulfils the social norms of ideal womanhood as the wife of Theodore, the embodiment of Protestant values.

At first glance, the novel presents seventeenth-century Roman Catholic France as the main locus of misbehaviour and guilt. The Mediterranean setting severs the plot from domestic culture as Radcliffe's Gothic romance removes tyranny, homicide, violence, attempted rape and possible incest to Catholic Europe. In this respect, the narrated world reflects eighteenth-century British national identity in terms of the antithesis to the alien "other" and arch-rival Catholic France. Such anti-Catholic sentiment fed into the common belief among Britons during the period that Protestantism held together the challenging union of Wales, Scotland and England (Colley 2003, 11–53).

At the same time, however, the story undermines the othering of France and suggests instead a pan-European outrage with aristocratic entitlement since the novel exposes the aristocratic debauchery that the exotic villains La Motte and the Marquis the Montalt personify. For instance, "La Motte" is a reference to pre-revolutionary intrigue involving Marie Antoinette at the court of Louis XVI in 1785–86, in which the Comtesse La Motte played a role (367). Such implicit critique of the upper classes combined with the elevation of lower social groups through the positive representation of the valiant manservant, Peter, points to the appeals for reform in the 1790s among the members of the Society for Constitutional Information. Their spokesman, John Thelwall, called for the recognition and improvement of the conditions of servitude and labour (Bainbridge 2008, 69; Hudson 2016,

41). Indeed, the exposure of aristocratic weakness and abuse of power is one of the ways in which the transnational desire for social reform and equality leaks into the narrative.

Yet, such sympathies seem to come to an abrupt end in the novel when Adeline “immediately threw herself at the feet of the king [of France] in behalf of Theodore and La Motte” (353). It is this act alongside the trial of the Marquis that brings about the resolution of the family intrigue and the explanation of the supernatural. These acts take place in Paris, thereby representing the French capital as the locus of the restoration of justice at the hands of both the monarch and legal system. At the same time, the Protestant characters from Savoy, the clergyman La Luc, his son Theodore, his daughter Clara and the servant Peter, hold the masculine monopoly on virtue and domestic affection in this fiction (245). The novel’s appeal to British national identity hinges above all on anti-Catholic sentiments and Protestantism.

By contrast, the national imaginary of the topography works in terms of contradistinction as well as resemblance to France. British landscape before the English Reformation shines through the ancient buildings in the French landscape in much the same way as the past is reflected in the specific setting of the place. Mikhail Bakhtin calls the figurative function of a place that recalls the cultural memory of the past “chronotope”. This concept connotes tropes that relate space and time to one another (Bakhtin 1981, 425; Frank 2009, 73). Like Montoni’s isolated castle in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the ruined abbey of St. Clair in the remote woods of *The Romance of the Forest* “is saturated through and through with a time that is historical in the narrow sense of the word, that is, the time of the historical past” (Bakhtin 1981, 247). Indeed, the ruined abbey is the place where the arbitrary power once wielded by Popish priestcraft seems to erupt into the narrated presence in the novel: “‘And these walls,’ said [La Motte], ‘where once superstition lurked, and austerity anticipated an earthly purgatory, now tremble over the mortal remains of the beings who

reared them” (16). The Frenchman interprets the building as a long eighteenth-century Protestant Dissenter might have done, namely as a place of misplaced worship (Milbank 2018, 16). The setting also evokes necromancy – the belief that magic allows us to communicate with the dead – since the secret passageways are imbued with “the mysterious accents of the dead” (16). The atmosphere in the gloomy chambers of the abbey affects Adeline and La Motte to such an extent that they have the uncanny feeling that a horrific crime must have occurred there at some point. The past haunts this place.

In contrast to Montoni’s castle, the ruined abbey in Radcliffe’s novel also alludes to the history of the Church of England. The ruins of the monastery reminded Radcliffe’s reader of Britain’s Catholic past in general and in particular the dissolution of the monasteries spearheaded by Thomas Cromwell in the early sixteenth century, when his troops destroyed and ransacked numberless medieval cathedrals and convents on the British Isles (Hoeveler 2014, 108). Ruined Gothic abbeys, such as Tintern on the banks of the river Wye in Wales and the ruined monasteries at Melrose, Bury St Edmunds, Glastonbury or Faversham, were and are sites of the Catholic past. In Radcliffe’s texts, the ruined abbey symbolises the departure from the corrupt past, ideas of progress, Whig politics, and Protestant belief. However, the dissolution of the monasteries also entailed a “rage, resentment and genuine antiquarian angst about the horrendous loss of historical and cultural treasures caused by the widespread violence and destruction” (Hoeveler 2014, 108). Some of these sentiments in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries involved the fashion of deploying abbeys as a literary setting. Prime examples are William Wordsworth’s ode ‘Tintern Abbey’ (1798), George Moore’s serial publication of *Grasville Abbey* (1793–7), and Thomas Love Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) (Hoeveler 2014,107).

Another important chronotope in Radcliffe’s book is the eponymous forest. The glades of Fontanville are described as particularly wild, deep, dark and extensive. These

woods feature “obscure recess[es]” and boast an entire labyrinth of paths through obscure foliage, thickets and “interwoven branches”, which even at daytime “admitted only a sort solemn twilight” (73). For readers educated in Latin and Italian, these descriptions invoked Virgil’s and Dante’s verse about the enchanted woods in the underworld (Virgil, *Aeneid*, III. 22–48; Dante, *Inferno*, VIII. 25–37; XIII. 28–45). Besides that, these thickets also resonate with the fairy forest in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. Radcliffe’s insertion of “melancholy boughs” (14) in the landscape description in Chapter One alludes to the woodland of Arden in this play.

Like Arden, Radcliffe’s forest surrounding the abbey is ancient. In eighteenth-century culture, real, robust and old trees as the oak, the ash or the elm were considered “awful and majestic” (Burke 2015 [1757], 93), because they implied a long life. Unlike Arden, Radcliffe’s glades also insinuate transience due to their dilapidated state. This vegetation lives in symbiosis, and is cognate, with the decay of the abbey (Kavanagh 1863, 272): “High and spreading trees [...] seemed *coeval* with the building, and diffused a romantic gloom around” (15, my emphasis). In addition, the forest is known as one of the favourite roaming grounds for Gothic tribes and associated with former insurgency and destabilisation of (Roman) imperial domination. This uncharted darkness and place of danger is free from the restraints but also from the protection of the law (Botting 2008, 158–160). In short, this unmapped territory offers a figuratively fertile ground for Adeline’s tentative revolt against patriarchal forces.

Apart from ideological inflection of the landscape, there are transformative powers at work in *The Romance of the Forest* that extend to the subjectivity and gender performance of the heroine and the villain La Motte. Desire plays an essential role in Adeline’s quest for identity. She is represented as a disorientated foundling, an astute observer, a damsel-in-distress and, above all, a young beautiful woman. On the one hand “all men invariably fall in

love with” her (Bronfen 1994, 173); on the other hand, the novel largely adheres to the eighteenth-century norms of feminine propriety that require Adeline to subdue her attraction to Theodore until their wedding, and even then the social and novelistic decorum continues to repress her sexuality. Paradoxically, the feelings she evokes in the male characters victimises her inasmuch as it enables her to negotiate her situation. The circumstance that Adeline is orphaned makes her particularly reliant on the compassion and interest of strangers. Her looks and vulnerability constitute important assets for her. For instance, the Marquise commissions the criminal D’Augnoy and the brothers du Bosse to abduct and kill Adeline in a desolate and mean house not far from Paris, but the brothers have pity on the tearful beauty. Instead of murdering her, they force a random traveller to take her far away. This stranger turns out to be the fallen French aristocrat La Motte. At the same time, Adeline’s feelings spur her on to save the life of her gallant chevalier. After her love interest attempts in vain to save Adeline from the Marquise’s unwittingly incestuous advances, the latter takes revenge by having Theodore court martialled. It is Adeline’s urge to save her lover’s life that makes her leave the safe haven of Leloncourt and resume her journey to Nice and Montpellier along the Mediterranean coast to the French town near the Spanish border called Vaceau, where Theodore is tried. To counterbalance such constant arousal, the novel keeps emphasising that such desires require regulation, and does so often through enforced breaks consisting of nature poems. Moreover, the omniscient narrator never ceases to emphasise Adeline’s modesty and refined sensibility (e.g. 9, 21).

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari theorise desires like these as an affirmative force (independent from an ordinary lack), which is neither inherent in identity nor non-identity but comprises the potential in both. “Deterritorialisation” connotes this “ineradicable” potential to alter and change from within when affect erupts from separate, but interconnected segments (Grodin 2012, 118–119). The manifestation of this transformative

potential is what Deleuze and Guattari call “the line of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 10). Adeline’s release from the convent draws such a line. Her transition from imprisonment into seeming freedom is the initial event that sets in motion a whole series of flights in which the heroine moves from one southern European location to another.

Since the murder of her biological father, her uncle, the malevolent Marquis, has never seen his niece but has continued to exert control over her life, keeping her imprisoned in a monastery near Paris since she was seven years old (57). Because Adeline has stubbornly refused to become a nun, the Marquis decides to have Adeline eliminated. And so it is that Adeline leaves the enclosed walls of nunnery in the company of her alleged father D’Augnoy for the first time since her early childhood.

Ah! *then* that world [outside the convent] was bursting in my view. [...] What crowded streets! What magnificent hotels! What splendid equipages! I scarcely observed that the streets were narrow, or that way dangerous. What bustle, what tumult, what delight! I could never be sufficiently thankful to express my gratitude to my father, but his looks forbade me, and I was silent. I am too diffuse. (38–39)

The passage belongs to the heroine’s homodiegetic narration about her life in, and escape from, the monastery. This intradiegetic communication, framed by the otherwise heterodiegetic voice, primes readers for Adeline’s subsequent line of flight. It is the only instance in the entire novel when Adeline is allowed to tell the occurrences in her own voice. It is true that subsequent parts of the narration focalise through her, but the abovementioned memories make up Adeline’s only first-person narration in the whole book. It suggests that the crossing of the threshold of the convent is like bursting through the filter of one’s existence. The coalescence of the cityscape with the face of tyrannical paternity, the open

street and the paternal forbidding look, trigger joy and confusion in such a way that the margins of Adeline's existence start to blur and "diffuse".

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the face-landscape correlation is one of the ways to actualise the line of flight (2004, 191). Face and landscape deterritorialise one another (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 193). The face is a surface of a certain shape, independent from the head and the rest of body, featuring specific traits such as dimples or wrinkles. As such, facial features are readable like the map of a landscape. The face-landscape correlation includes architecture: "Face and landscape manuals formed a pedagogy, a strict discipline, and were an inspiration to the arts as much as the arts were an inspiration to them. Architecture positions its ensembles [...] to function like faces in the landscape they transform" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 191). The philosophers regard the dilution of the margins of one's existence as an "essential part of the genre [the novel]" (2004, 192) in general and in particular of the Anglophone novel (2004, 207). They even insist that disoriented characters have played a vital role in novels since the inception of the genre (2004, 192).

Apart from these claims, Adeline resembles the example that Deleuze and Guattari give for deterritorialisation, namely the lost knight of courtly love. Like the latter, Adeline does not know her real name. She believes the bandit D'Augnoy to be her cruel but reputable father named Louis de St. Pierre (341). Moreover, she is often unaware of what she is doing, what people say to her, where she is going or to whom she is speaking (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 192). Her precarious situation draws a line of flight. Not only are there many scenes in which she is running away from her persecutors, but her escape also gives rise to rebellious tangents of her desire as she is traversing the boundaries of segments of her narrated world (Botting 2008, 158). Even if the heroine is in the grip of a cruel and tyrannical familial order, her line of flight creates agency. Her criss-crossings of topographical boundaries symbolise a

host of subversions of normative womanhood and patriarchal order that would otherwise be incommunicable for a virtuous heroine like Adeline. It takes the embeddedness of the heroine in the landscape to throw her agency into relief.

Adeline's line of flight is interwoven on the levels of the story and narrative discourse. By "story", I mean the sequence of events, whereas "the narrative discourse" designates the representation of these events as they unfold from page to page (Abbott 2002, 16). The following analysis combines the concepts of the line of flight with the perspective of postclassical narratology for several reasons: Postclassical narratology studies the link of cultural, psychological, rhetoric, and media inflections with the structuralist core of narrative theory (Alber and Fludernik 2010, 5). The methodology also attributes equal significance to story ("event sequencing") and narrative discourse (Herman 2009, 9). The consideration of topography shapes not only the events in the story, but also the heroine's otherwise hidden disposition to feminine rebellion since it offers the map for her deterritorialisation. Last but not least, perspectivism provides a key for understanding the intradiegetic gender dynamics.

Compared to her combative counterparts like Theodore in *The Castle of Otranto*, Adeline plays a passive role in the story. This position makes the itinerant heroine particularly dependent on her physical environment for her to develop a limited degree of agency in the story. Her crossing of topographical boundaries constitutes the major events and epitomises feminine agency in the novel. Thresholds in the narrated world do not merely serve as clear-cut, fixed markers for eventfulness, i.e. the quality of constituting an event (Martinez 2017, 4). If traversing a spatial line forms the events, each event brings about change, subversion and a certain degree of revolt (Lotman 1977, 233–240). The *Romance of the Forest* harnesses this dynamic for the heroine's rebellion. Conversely, the physical environment becomes the psychic map for the state of her identity.

Adeline cannot help becoming complicit in La Motte's dubious affairs. Bankrupted by his excessive lifestyle, he, his wife and the manservant Peter have to flee "his creditors and the persecution of the laws" (1). Hence, her flight leads to the ruins of the Abbey of St. Clair in the forest of Fontanville. The location offers La Motte a convenient hiding place from his creditors. In the labyrinthine passageways of the abbey, Adeline enters a concealed stone chamber and discovers two clues pointing towards a crime scene, namely a dagger stained with the rust of blood and a decaying manuscript. The identity of the victim and the perpetrators of the crime still elude her. Her motion through the vault and hidden trapdoors correlates with her growing sense of terror and unsettles her profoundly.

When the seal on Adeline's letters to Theodore discloses to the Marquis that she is his niece, Phillipe orders La Motte to assassinate her. She flees again, this time aided by the valiant servant Peter. They escape from French territory near Lyon by embarking on a small vessel, which takes them up the Rhône to Peter's childhood home in Savoy. During the journey, the heroine floats on the river in much the same way as she slides in and out of consciousness. Upon arrival in the village Leloncourt, Adeline drifts into a delirium. Yet, she receives a cure and refuge in this Alpine idyll under the care of the venerable, ill clergyman Arnaud La Luc and his daughter Clara, who promptly adopt her.

Her line of flight transmutes into a solidification of identity as the story reorients towards Paris, the seat of the monarchy and the highest court of law (Botting 2008, 160). In the capital, the threads of various legal procedures in the story finally intersect. Once Adeline has safely arrived here, the court proceedings disclose the Marquis' heinous crimes and bring about justice: Theodore receives an ample pardon and gets a promotion in the military; the arrested Marquis commits suicide before his trial but after the full legal confession of his guilt; d'Augnoy is hanged; a remorseful La Motte is sentenced to exile in England; and, above all, Adeline's noble lineage and inheritance of immense wealth is reinstated. She has

reached a point in her development at which she finally lives up to the highest rank of social class and feminine etiquette.

The end of the story brings deterritorialisation to a halt by taking Adeline back to pastoral Savoy where her wedding takes place: Adeline and Theodore find their “sweet domestic pleasures and refined society” in the picturesque village Leloncourt (358). Adeline’s flights with their nightmarish possibilities break off in this pastoral idyll. Against the backdrop of this scenery, a marriage modelled on bourgeois norms, domestic femininity and aristocratic genealogy provide her with the basis for a heteronormative identity. This “happy ending” subscribes to the companionate marital model; it suggests the marriage of equal minds, namely of Adeline with Theodore, the personification of Protestant virtue and “reformed masculinity” (Hoeveler 2014, 107; Hudson 2016, 40). Their union combines rationality with sensibility in the name of perfect femininity. As such, the story eventually purges the Gothic romance of excessive desire and replaces it with Protestant values. In doing so, *The Romance of the Forest* imitates plausible, “morally edifying” British novels like Defoe’s *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719). However, one small, incestuous detail complicates this view, namely that Adeline has effectively married her host brother. After all, Theodore is La Luc’s son (304). This points, on the one hand, to the psychoanalytic notion of Deleuze and Guattari that even such a paragon of virtue as Adeline cannot trust herself to desire appropriately (Grodén 2012, 118); and, on the other hand, this suggests the impossibility of domesticating the wild tangents and desires inherent in Gothic romance.

Inasmuch as the story entangles character development with landscape, narrative discourse associates the landscape with characters’ personal views and traits. The omniscient narrator largely refrains from narratorial comments and thus remains covert but often intersects her voice with the sight and sentiments of multiple characters, above all with La Motte or Adeline. That way the narrator adopts the characters’ perceptions and emotions that

are induced by their encounter with the abbey, the forest, the sea or other people. In Franz Stanzel's terminology, these personalised descriptions are "perspectival" (Stanzel 1995, 155–159; see also Fludernik 2017, 103). Perspectivism can be manifest through movement. For example, the initial depiction of the ruined abbey is filtered through La Motte as he explores the building cautiously. Verbs of mobility and visual perception like "He approached," "He entered," "La Motte paused", "he surveyed", "he walked", and "he observed" (15–16) signal to readers not only that La Motte is the focalising instance, but also that he is alive and moving while he transmits the verbal pictures of the exterior and interior of the ruined abbey. Furthermore, the description is interspersed with La Motte's cultural memories – "the chapel of the abbey, where the hymn of devotion had once been raised, and the tear of penitence had once been shed"; and with his emotional responses – "he felt a sensation of sublimity rising into terror – a suspension of mingled astonishment and awe" (15). Not Adeline but La Motte is the main focalising instance in the first volume. Many depictions of physical features in the first third of the novel, be it Adeline's body or the ruined abbey, are filtered through his gaze. This technique contributes to the complexity of this villain figure.

Narratorial comment and character sensation intertwine at one point in Chapter Two. Sir Walter Scott was particularly impressed with Radcliffe's creation of La Motte, calling him the "gloomy despot" and the "needy man who has known better days" (Scott 1833, 65). Part of the character depth is due to the homology of the figure and the ruined abbey.

Several of the pillars, which had once supported the roof, remained the proud effigies of sinking greatness, and seemed to murmur of the blast over the fragments of those that had fallen a little before them. La Motte sighed. The comparison between himself and the gradation of decay, which these columns exhibited, was but too obvious and affecting. 'A few years,' said he, 'and I shall become like the mortals on whose

reliques I now gaze, and, like them too, I may be the subject of meditation to a succeeding generation, which shall totter but a little while over the object they contemplate, ere they also sink into the dust.’ (16)

On the one hand, the passage indirectly instructs readers to interpret the sinking pillars of the abbey as a metaphor for La Motte’s masculine vulnerability, loss of power and lack of legacy: that is, to read the entire architectural description of the abbey as an allegory for his character. On the other hand, the excerpt captures La Motte’s thoughts and thus appeals to readers’ sympathy. Inasmuch as Adeline’s character development depends on the change of scenery, La Motte’s vulnerability is predicated on the architecture of the abbey. This ruin is not a character by itself as the castle in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is often said to be (Otto 2014, 300), but its correlation with masculinity as well as with the aforementioned French Catholicism is a vital part of the intersection of gender, class and nationality in the novel. Character-landscape configurations like this made a significant contribution to the development of the British novel as a literary genre by anticipating the characters’ embeddedness in their surroundings in nineteenth-century realist novels such as Mrs Transome in George Eliot’s *Felix Holt* (1866).

3. Reception and Theoretical Perspectives

Ann Radcliffe’s works were widely appreciated during her lifetime, especially in the period between 1798 and 1823: Critics mentioned her “exceptionality, be it aesthetic, generic, political and otherwise; her inventiveness, originality and genius; her central place within the development of the English novel and the history of English letters in general; and her genealogical relations to earlier canonical writers, be they either in the classical or in the

English or ‘Gothic’ literary tradition” (Townshend and Wright 2014, 14–15). One of the highest praises that Scott bestowed on Radcliffe was that “nature” had given her “the eye of a painter, with the spirit of a poet” (Scott 1833, 66). Not only did Scott celebrate Radcliffe as “the founder of a distinctive literary school”, he also called her “an original genius” (Townshend and Wright 2014, 6). Scott’s praise for Radcliffe’s “eye of a painter” suggest that the early responses to Radcliffe’s novels recognised her affinity to the paintings by Claude Lorrain (1600–1682) and Salvator Rosa (1615–1673) (Miles 1995, 122; Rosa). Yet, her works were not only imitated and praised but also satirised and derogated.

During her withdrawal from public life, some misogynous critics rumoured that Radcliffe “had gone insane and been confined to an asylum in Derbyshire” (Townshend and Wright 2014, 14), speculating that over-indulgence of the imagination was the cause of her alleged madness (Anonymous). Benign writers still lampooned the sensationalist plot and tropes of the Radcliffean school. The mouldering manuscript is a case in point. Unearthed manuscripts like the letter written by Henry Marquis de Montalt from beyond the grave became a stock ingredient of the Gothic romance (Miles 2015, 235; Dent 2012). Jane Austen satirises such a manuscript in *Northanger Abbey* (1818) with a profane handwritten laundry bill, which misleads the heroine into wild speculation and exposes her overindulgence in Radcliffe’s Gothic romances. Numerous writers imitated Radcliffe’s descriptive engagement with architecture in their novels. Among them were Ann Mary Hamilton’s *Montalva; or Annals of Guilt* (1811), Catherine Ward’s *Mysteries of St Clair; or Mariette Mouline* (1824), and Mary Sherwood’s *Convent of St Clair* (1833) (Hoeveler 2014, 109).

Not only were Radcliffe’s descriptive powers instrumental for the Gothic vogue in the 1790s, for her “literary school”, and for the re-evaluation of modern romance, but they also left their mark on Romantic literary culture. John Keats was so impressed with Radcliffe’s frequently used landscape nouns that he inventoried some (Stabler 2014, 187). The poet told

John Hamilton Reynolds in letter written at Teignmouth dating from 1818: ““I am going among the Scenery whence I intend to tip you the Damosel Radcliffe – I’ll cavern you, and grotto you, and waterfall you, and wood you, and water you, and immense-rock you, and tremendous sound you, and solitude you”” (cited in Stabler 2014, 187). Turning the Radcliffean nouns (“cavern,” “wood,” “sound,” and “solitude”) into verbs and adding new nouns and phrases (“grotto,” “waterfall,” and “immense rock,”), Keats “adapts the sprightly punning technique of a favourite Shakespeare play” (Stabler 2014, 187). Lord Byron in *Child Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1818) names Radcliffe alongside Otway, Schiller, and Shakespeare as one of the primary inspirations for his poetic renderings of Venice (Townshend and Wright 2014, 22). Mary and Percy Shelley read and reread *The Italian* in 1814, and so did other influential contemporaries. Among them were William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Thomas de Quincey and Anna Letitia Barbauld (Miles 1995, 3). The latter anthologised *The Romance of the Forest* and *Udolpho* in volume XLIII of *The British Novelists* series in 1820 (Townshend and Wright 2014, 26).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Radcliffe’s work continued to receive mixed attention. After her death, Radcliffe’s popularity decreased, possibly as a consequence of the numerous second-rate imitations. The end of the nineteenth-century and the early twentieth-century then saw a resurgence of lay and academic interest in Radcliffe’s Gothic (Rogers 1994; McIntyre 1920). Yet it was in the 1970s and 1980s when feminist, psychoanalytic, historicist and other critical approaches revisited Radcliffe’s oeuvre and precipitated her novels into the English literary canon. Within her oeuvre, *The Romance of the Forest* is known for setting a benchmark for women’s success in publishing, while *The Mysteries of Udolpho* remains her most often studied work to date.

Ellen Moers’s feminist approach in *Literary Women* (1976) has proven influential for twentieth- and twenty-first-century studies of Radcliffe’s work. Moers coined the category of

the “female Gothic” for the woman-centred narrative about a heroine suffering under patriarchal forces that *The Romance of the Forest* can be said to instantiate. Building on Moers’s coinage, Claire Kahane (1981), Kate Ferguson Ellis (1989), Elisabeth Bronfen (1998), Dale Townshend (2007), Fred Botting (2008) and other scholars have theorised and assimilated the concept “female Gothic” for the analysis of Radcliffe’s work in general, and for the Radcliffean notion of terror in particular. Accordingly, the “female Gothic” connotes a psychoanalytically inflected category for a feminine symbolic order, epitomised by the metaphors of the cloister, convent or castle standing for women’s incarceration. In this psychoanalytic vein, more recent readings of Radcliffe’s figurations of Clara’s and Adeline’s relations draw on queer studies (Chow 2017–18). Scholarly opinions on the “female Gothic” are divided, though. Some scholars have argued that the unsuccessful struggles to overcome essentialist tendencies suggests that the “‘female Gothic’ would seem to have been best avoided” (Howard 1994, 58). Other experts argue that the category intersects with Stephen Greenblatt’s notion of self-fashioning as well as with Foucauldian discursive analysis of hysteria and thus straddles the perceived divide between Freud and Foucault, Psychoanalysis and New Historicism (Miles 2012, 95).

Notwithstanding, the importance of theological ideas has lately gained increasing attention in Radcliffe studies. This strand of scholarship addresses the sometimes underestimated resilience of the supernatural in Radcliffe’s writings despite all rational explanation. Drawing on the philosopher Charles Taylor (2007), Miles has interpreted the theological codes in *Udolpho* as a series of collisions between “English Protestantism and European Catholicism” rather than an expression of “patriotic assertion” (Miles 2014, 125). By contrast, Milbank contextualises *The Romance of the Forest* within the discourse of natural theology in the tradition of Shaftesbury’s *The Moralists* (1709) in order to account for Radcliffe’s metaphysics (2018, 86–118). The resurgence of interest into the deistic

implication of the Radcliffean sublime points to the perceived dissatisfaction of some scholars with the hermeneutics of suspicion and the concomitant call for the phenomenological study of reading experiences such as enchantment (Felski 2008). If scholars follow such an appeal, the novels written by “the great Enchantress” might attract even more scholarly attention beyond Gothic studies.

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