

**‘Tell it my own way’: Servant narratives in early Gothic literature**

**By:**

Kathleen Nancy Hudson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

School of English

October 2015

Acknowledgements

Over the last four years I’ve had the most remarkable journey, this amazing experience which has changed me profoundly as a person in ways I never could have imagined. None of this would have been possible without those teachers, friends, and loved ones who supported me through all the ups and downs.

I’d like to thank Professor Angela Wright and Dr Joe Bray for supervising this dissertation and for guiding me through this PhD with respect and understanding. You both have put so much time and energy into this, thank you so much for sharing your knowledge with me!

I’d like to thank Mark Bennett, Richard Gough Thomas, and Peter Waters for their mentorship, and the entire English literature department at the University of Sheffield for their thoughtfulness and inclusivity. I very much appreciate everyone who has read and critiqued my work over the years, but I’d like to especially thank Lauren Nixon and Richard Gough Thomas for proofreading my final draft.

A big thank you to my friends, especially Kate Gadsby-Mace, Lauren Nixon, Ami Gell, Danny Southward, Mary Going, Mariyah Mandhu, and all those who have enriched my personal life and my research experience through their involvement in projects and activities in the department. Being able to talk to you all about research and vent about personal matters has given me crucial perspective and significantly increased my love of the work.

I’d like to especially thank Jo Longster and Sarah Noble and my incredibly patient and understanding flat-mate Darren Geoghegan for their consistent support. Your humour and care and stability (and wine and movie nights) has saved my sanity more times than I can count, and you truly are my crazy British family.

Last but certainly not least, thank you to my family for first inspiring me to pursue this degree and for constantly being the best cheerleaders anyone could ask for. If I go anywhere and accomplish anything in this life, it is because I know I have you guys to fall back on. Thank you Mom, Dad, Michael, and Sam… this dissertation is as much yours as it is mine.

Executive Summary

Early Gothic novels produced between 1764 and the 1800s developed the literary tropes and mechanisms which define an enduring and complex genre. As such, the ubiquitous servant characters in the British Gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries play particularly important roles as highly self-conscious Gothic narrators and storytellers, roles which have not been fully acknowledged or explored within Gothic criticism. Servant characters ‘narrate,’ verbally and through a physical performance, stories and constructions of identity in the works of the most critical early Gothic writers, namely Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and Charlotte Dacre. Such narratives deconstruct and interrogate social and personal identity through their manipulation of Gothic anxieties, and are critical to fully understanding the development of the Gothic genre. The earliest Gothic servant narrators, found in the works of Horace Walpole and Clara Reeve, help develop a new kind of ‘romance’ novel within a national literary identity. Later authors extend this further by casting servants as authorial metonyms who investigate the boundaries of the genre and techniques of Gothic storytelling. Ann Radcliffe demonstrates a conscious engagement with her servants as narrators, and her works provide great insight into the political, psychological, and literary potential of servant narratives. Matthew Lewis and Charlotte Dacre expand on these techniques by not only illustrating their characters’ authorial identities more overtly, but by also emphasizing their servants’ ability to create physical Gothic realities which correspond with their narrative goals. Thus servants within the Gothic literary tradition reflect generic goals by destabilizing hegemonic methods of ‘knowing’ and ‘performing’. They assert their own counter-narrative and therein compromise the identities of those around them. This dissertation will prove that Gothic servant narratives have a profound impact on readings of the individual texts, of the Gothic genre, and on narrative studies in general. This research will ultimately ensure that the Gothic servant narrative’s incorporation into developing literary criticism will open new doors for Gothic and literary studies, as well as providing significant insight into established areas of academic inquiry.

**List of Contents**

Introduction – A Stranger in the Home: The Gothic Servant

1

Chapter One – Horace Walpole and Clara Reeve: Servant narrative and “a new species of romance”

37

Chapter Two – “A Delirious Dream”: Ann Radcliffe’s servant narrators

99

Chapter Three – Performing servant narrative: Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* and Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya, or The Moor*

171

Conclusion – Resurrecting the Gothic Servant

243

Bibliography

267