**Introduction**

**A Stranger in the Home: The Gothic servant**

Was Ever such a Blockhead seen!

To choose a servant for his Heroine!

* Henry and Anna Giffard, *Pamela. A comedy*, 1741[[1]](#footnote-1)

The epilogue of Henry and Anna Giffard’s co-written adaptation of Samuel Richardson’s enormously popular conduct novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (published in 1740, performed in 1741) highlights one of the socio-literary paradoxes of the eighteenth century. As the ‘comedy’ suggests, critical approval of a text such as *Pamela* requires an interrogation of the “Blockhead” author’s decision to “choose a servant for his Heroine.” The implicit irony in the Giffard epilogue comes from the fact that in spite of (or because of) her servant role Richardson’s Pamela Andrews was the archetypal heroine character through most of the early novel’s development, a young woman of low social standing who must famously “conquer Vice or die.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor's study *'Pamela' in the Marketplace* asserts that the publication of *Pamela* and the various responses it inspired created“a milestone in literary history, including a statistical spike in the production of new fiction that was unprecedented at the time.”[[3]](#footnote-3) In spite of the fact that a servant character arguably gave birth to the conduct novel and encouraged the development of British fiction more generally, however, servant characters hardly occupy a stable position in eighteenth-century literature. Authors such as Henry Fielding and Eliza Haywood led the ‘anti-Pamela’ movement and recast the servant-heroine as a scheming social climber in order to depict, as Haywood states, “the Mischiefs that frequently arise from a too sudden Admiration” and a lack of social boundaries.[[4]](#footnote-4) The social and personal aspects which defined ‘servitude’ and the ‘servant’ in fiction were as controversial in Haywood’s *Anti-Pamela: or, Feign’d Innocence Detected* (1741) and Fielding’s *An Apology for the Life of Shamela Andrews* (1741) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742) as they were redemptive in Richardson’s own description of Pamela’s “virtue rewarded.”[[5]](#footnote-5) These literary discourses enabled the incorporation of servant narratives in the eighteenth-century novel. However, the moral and political position of servants also rendered such narratives ambiguous. Even today, in a world relatively devoid of traditional servant-master relationships, popular culture assumes that such interactions involve a complex negotiation of repression and rebellion (as seen in a range of sources from Daphne Du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938) to television’s *Downton Abbey* (2010-present)). Pamela might have been a model heroine but the working and serving classes from which she was recruited typically occupied a more liminal space in an evolving British literary tradition. Servant roles and identities were problematized by middle class and aristocratic anxieties about the exposure of the private self and by broader cultural and political developments and destabilisation. As such, servant narratives in late eighteenth-century literature became spaces where reality and identity were compromised by a threatening yet pervasive ‘otherness.’ Their inclusion in late eighteenth-century Gothic texts in particular and the nature of their narrative performances therein reflect the developing impulses of a complex emerging genre.

In theory, the servant narrative’s place in British socio-literary spaces should be simple enough to understand. The functionality of the servant within a domestic space (itself a reflection of a closely interrogated social and personal identity) surely limits, or at least firmly delineates, their narrative purview and the style and form of their expression. According to Samuel Johnson's seminal *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) a servant is defined as “1.) One who attends another, and acts at his command. The correlative of master.” or “2.) One in a state of subjugation.”[[6]](#footnote-6) The term “*To* Serve” in Johnson's *Dictionary* is similarly defined as “1.) To work for. 2.) To attend. 3.) To obey servilely or meanly.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Other derivatives such as “servile,” “service” and “servility” overwhelmingly echo previous definitions with terms such as “involuntary obedience” and “dependence.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The assumption that servants effectively relinquish their right to personal choice (willingly or unwillingly) in order to serve others appears superficially straightforward and suggests a rigid adherence to a static hierarchal social structure. However, Johnson's definition also hints at a deeper issue connected with social understandings and literary depictions of servants. In particular the idea of ‘dependency,’ especially in the implication that the master's identity as a ‘master’ requires an obliging servant just as the servant is correspondingly materially dependent on the master, is troublingly inherent. In seeking to define a ubiquitous and potentially unstable social role, Johnson’s work sheds some light on the evolving influence of the servant in British literature and her impact on personal and public identity, particularly within literary constructions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Johnson was drawing from a complex tradition of servant characterization and service-oriented discourse that reflected early modern structures as well as the emerging economic and social developments of the eighteenth century. The above definitions cite examples from eighteenth-century authors such as Jonathan Swift, but also from earlier authors such as Milton, Dryden and especially William Shakespeare, whose plays *Richard III, Macbeth, Coriolanus, The Merchant of Venice, King Lear*, and others provide significant context. The use of such texts highlights changing perceptions of the servant’s ‘position’ within an evolving social discourse, a complex understanding of the servant's socio-political role in eighteenth-century Britain which affects constructions of literature during that time. The implication in Johnson’s definition that servitude requires a lowering of self and a personal dependency on the master, often with the subversion of the servant's individual will, is an important consequence of words such as “subjugation.” However, the servant's parallel identity as “the correlative of master” indicates that the identities of both servant and master are actually closely interlinked and that the inclusion of servant narratives in the national rhetoric informs the identity of not just one class but of all classes. In a world conforming to the overt patriarchal ethic expressed in Johnson’s definition, suggesting implicit co-dependency and explicit obedience, servant voices or ‘narratives’ would perhaps exclusively reflect the goals of the hegemonic patriarchal authority. Within an ‘ideal’ servant-master relationship, the master takes care of the physical requirements of the servant and the servant, in return, subverts his own will and identity, and obeys. This characterisation of service held a moral and commercial validity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but the reality is much more complicated. Moreover, such systems were increasingly interrogated in British fiction and particularly in late eighteenth century Gothic romance novels.

This dissertation will examine moral, social, and authorial identity as expressed and interrogated through the omnipresent servant narrative in the Gothic romances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The pervasiveness of servant narrative in the early Gothic genre reflects a multifaceted understanding of liminal groups and enables authors and readers to reinterpret social and literary structures, from the material politics of the eighteenth-century British class system to the furthest possibilities of narrative expression. Exploration of this topic will have profound implications for myriad critical discourses related to the genre specifically and to broader socio-literary studies. The stock servant character is usually instantly recognizable in the novels of Gothic authors such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Matthew Lewis – a figure who appears to superficially fulfil Johnson's definition of dependence and who is often dismissed by both external critics and in-text characters as a peripheral entity whose words have minimal objective value. The Gothic servant contributes her own tale within a conversation and is then frequently interrupted, ridiculed, or otherwise forced to defend her narrative’s validity. After insisting that she tell her own story in her own way, the servant provides significant information using a familiar pattern of class-specific idioms and then returns to the margins of the novel. The servant’s role as narrator appears to be, at most, a brief interjection, yet her persistent narrative opposition to the equally problematic hegemonic assertions of her employer, as well as the resulting emphasis on the covert yet pervasive social and personal co-dependency between master and servant, suggest otherwise. Moreover, the servant’s prominence in a genre specifically designed to both incorporate myriad literary traditions and experiment with new ways of articulating social and individual fears indicates a complex engagement therein. The liminal servant narrative is arguably at the height of its power in the early Gothic genre.

The servant ‘self’ in Gothic fiction develops a temporarily privileged individual narrative, a uniquely structured subjective viewpoint through which dominant perceptions of reality are challenged. Servant narratives in early Gothic texts are legitimised within the third-person narrative for a variety of reasons particular to specific literary engagements, and those goals in turn shape the individual narrator-character. Far from dismissing the servant narrative as overly subjective, however, it is important to understand how their unique construction is a literary statement which interrogates a variety of discourses, not the least of which is related to the identities of the ‘author’ and ‘reader’. The Gothic servant character is in fact a highly individualised creation, frequently charged with presenting the protagonist and the reader with a narrative which dramatically affects characterisation, plot, aesthetic, and mood. Bruce Robbins, in his study of servants in nineteenth-century realist fiction, argues that servants in literature and in life exerted a “secret pressure” on their masters.[[9]](#footnote-9) This is certainly also true in early Gothic and Romantic fiction, where depictions of servant “pressure” not only reflect specific political or socio-moral anxieties but also facilitate readings of the Gothic genre as ‘Gothic’. Servant narrative, the servant character’s creation and articulation of a dialogue, a story, or an interpretation of a character, situation, or setting, is a crucial part of the eighteenth-century Gothic tale. Such narrative performs an important function as it subtly complicates, investigates, and destabilises the ethical, social, and psychological realities within the text. Servants in the early Gothic novel help develop the story and offer an alternative means of engaging with narrative expression, social place and identity. They provide a commentary on, and often act as a manifestation of, the mechanisms which came to define the Gothic genre. These include discourses on supernaturalism, imagination, and “popular tumults” – what Elizabeth Montagu identified in Shakespeare as “the rude spirit of liberty” and “the dark shades of Gothic barbarism” which characterise “a native English literary tradition [...] worthy of protection, preservation and celebration.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Gothic authors consistently used servant narrative as a means of defining identity through “liberty,” “barbarism,” and “tradition,” and despite her social liminality the servant character in the Gothic genre does prove worthy of advanced literary engagement, a “celebration” of self.

This dissertation will argue that previous critical understandings of Gothic servants have underestimated servant narrative potential as such narratives reflect both specific Gothic discourses and broader narrative theory, particularly in terms of self-fashioning and authorial identity. Critics and readers alike have often focused primarily on nineteenth-century servants without acknowledging their early Gothic influences. These influences reveal a close engagement with Shakespearean politics and ‘performance’ as well as the development of the novel as a form which, as Mikhail Bakhtin suggests, has the ability to “criticize itself” and renew itself “by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the ‘novelistic’ layers of literary language.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Using close reading and applying a range of critical and historical discourses, this study will interrogate servant narratives in canonical Gothic texts. The results will rehabilitate and reincorporate servants in critical Gothic readings and therein cast new light on a previously underexplored subject. It is by examining what comprises and defines servant narrative in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Gothic novel and how that narrative reflects genre-specific goals, especially goals regarding identity and the narrative experience, that a more comprehensive understanding of the Gothic servant will be achieved.

In both fictional and non-fictional accounts from the early modern period through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, servants are creatures of fluid identity, forever walking a tightrope between acts of service and acts of self. Servants and service have nearly always had a place in the historical narrative to some degree, but they began to figure more prominently in socio-political discourse and literary output in the early modern period of British literature.[[12]](#footnote-12) David Evett argues that William Shakespeare, a figure who heavily influenced the early Gothic novel (and British literary identity more generally), defined servant characters through “volitional primacy,” an assertion of ‘will’ where the servant serves “not because God’s providence has placed him in that role, or because the vagaries of fortune have brought him there, but because he chooses to.”[[13]](#footnote-13) In so choosing, the servant exerts as much power as the master and facilitates a conflict of wills in which the identity of either the master or servant is temporarily compromised and subjected to the manipulations (good or bad) of the other. The concept of free will implies an agency which undermines the master-servant power dynamic, and Gothic romances frequently define servant narrative through the tension between servant obedience, servant agency, and particularly servant performance as an expression and subversion of the rationale of co-dependency. Returning to the early modern period may appear ambitious when defining Gothic servants of the eighteenth century, but it is evident that emerging literary discourses and concepts such as “volitional primacy” helped develop the Gothic servant’s narrative privilege. Very often Gothic servant characters reflect the shifting power dynamic articulated in earlier texts in exchanges of dominance and dependency.

The concept of “volitional primacy” as a moral discourse was explored and validated by early modern religious reformers such as Martin Luther, whose writings suggest that servant narratives in social-political spaces occupied just as complicated a place as servant narratives in literature. Writing in a time of political upheaval and developing views about monarchy, religious reform, and loyalty, writers such as Luther incorporated service and servants extensively in their theological dialogues. The prevalence of discourses of service in the writings of church leaders and reformers suggests, as David Evett argues, that the nature of service was defined by spiritual and religious debates of the time rather than the capitalist concerns which would influence servant identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[[14]](#footnote-14) Martin Luther's commentary that “To be sure, you are in a slavery of the body, but you are equals in spirit [...] When a servant thinks this way he serves gladly,” for example, suggests that service does not in fact violate an individual’s spiritual autonomy, though Luther would later revise any egalitarian implications present in his writings so that earthly distinctions appeared more absolute.[[15]](#footnote-15) Luther’s further assertions that a Christian is both “a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none” and “a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all” illuminate how perceptions of authority, servitude, personal freedom and individual selfhood were redefined during the Protestant Reformation.[[16]](#footnote-16) While Hans J. Hillerbrand’s assertion that the Protestant Reformation promoted a “personal and creative” religion is perhaps over simplistic, this insight does illustrate the pervasive interest in independent narrative identity in the early modern period.[[17]](#footnote-17) Given the increased focus on particular theological concepts articulated during the Protestant Reformation, such as the call for “universal priesthood” and the restructuring of formerly sacrosanct concepts of authority, personal and moral understandings of who to serve, how to serve, and the hierarchy of service would have been critical to ‘self-fashioning’ in the early modern period.[[18]](#footnote-18) The socio-cultural connection between service and spiritual integrity can be read in the often hyper-independent narratives of early modern servants, but it also echoes throughout the development of British literature as servant characters consistently influence far-reaching moral choices within particular texts.

The moral subtext in dialogues of servants and servitude in the early modern period, especially regarding one’s decision to serve and one’s reasons for serving, informed individual and social identities, and sometimes even national and political ones as well.[[19]](#footnote-19) Therein, anxieties about servants and their independent voices affect much broader attempts to contextualise lower class narratives and their impact. Assumptions about servant loyalty were compromised by the concept, as Evett argues, that “service does not absolve the servant of moral responsibility” and that “the law of God supersedes the laws of nature and men” in situations where the servant must act according to his own conscience.[[20]](#footnote-20) A superficial understanding of service posits that a ‘good’ servant allows his will (and by extension much of his narrative identity, though ‘narrative’ and ‘will’ are not interchangeable aspects of selfhood) to be secondary to his superiors, while the ‘bad’ servant is engaged in a near-constant conflict with his master, among others. Even in seemingly straightforward examples, however, this is not always the case. Bruce Robbins notes that the popular notion of Elliot Krieger’s Marxist concept of “pure service” in a “static social hierarchy” in Shakespeare’s work suggests a caricature of “the same all-too-loyal retainer” which is only a partial truth.[[21]](#footnote-21) Ariel in *The Tempest* (1610-1611), for example, offers little resistance to Prospero's mastery of him and accepts that he “will be correspondent to command / And do my spiriting gently” in exchange for the service Prospero did in freeing Ariel from a previous imprisonment.[[22]](#footnote-22) It is implied that Ariel is the ‘good’ servant obeying a wise master, even though Ariel and Prospero often achieve their goals through what Stephen Greenblatt identifies as the “artful manipulation of anxiety” and a “manifestation of aggression” which hardly suggests a moral ideal.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Alternatively, Prospero's other servant, Caliban, the ostensibly ‘bad’ servant, openly rejects volitional servitude and struggles to assert his own identity – he claims that “I needs must curse” in spite of Prospero’s threat of punishment.[[24]](#footnote-24) Characterisations of Caliban’s servitude and rebellion and the nature of his relationship with Prospero are complicated by postcolonial readings and particularly by Greenblatt’s New Historicist applications. Despite Caliban’s open disloyalty and his role as an off-stage attempted rapist, it is difficult to forget that Prospero is personally invested in repressing the individuality of the island’s original inhabitants.[[25]](#footnote-25) As Greenblatt suggests, Caliban arguably “achieves for an instant an absolute if intolerably bitter moral victory” in the assertion of his own narrative, which has been inescapably modified by human language (the language of the colonizer) but which also undermines the dominant colonizer narrative by allowing Caliban to “curse.”[[26]](#footnote-26) To complicate matters even further there are numerous instances in Shakespeare’s plays of ‘good’ servants who subvert the master’s will and assert their own for the betterment of their master or for the moral good of all. Similarly, certain ‘bad’ servants temporarily subvert their own will and obey the master when doing so is against the master’s best interests or is otherwise immoral. In *Othello* (1603) the servant-soldier Iago manipulates narrative dominance and narrative passivity in order to encourage his master's destructive behaviour and facilitate his own revenge plot. Iago famously states that “I follow to serve my turn upon him,” and performs a deeply insincere kind of service which is ultimately destructive precisely *because* he appears to obey his master so completely.[[27]](#footnote-27) In doing so he manages to temporarily reconstruct identity and reality to suit his goals. Iago’s winking asides to the audience (particularly in the context of a theatrical performance) only heighten problematic readings of identity and servant narrative.

Shakespeare’s characterisation of servants as individuals operating within a complex socio-moral framework contributes to the development of narrative heteroglossia in British literature, a development which impacted the rise of the Gothic. Discourses of service and the servant’s narrative privilege in Shakespeare and other canonical early modern texts such as Miguel Cervantes’s novel *Don Quixote* (published in two parts in 1605 and 1615) and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) complicate constructions of identity therein. Overwhelmingly, servant narratives, their influence, and their overt or covert goals are related to the moral rise or decline of one or more members of the story. While later writers would perhaps emphasise the capitalist aspects of service and the servant’s potential role as a social climber, it is also apparent that an early modern Protestant and Whig ideology continued to inform servant narrative and socio-moral concerns well into the eighteenth century. Narrative thus becomes a means of “self-fashioning,” a term introduced by Greenblatt in his work on Renaissance identity to describe the process through which a socio-moral self is constructed.[[28]](#footnote-28) While often associated with superficial signifiers such as clothing, ‘self-fashioning’ may occur within an individual’s interpretation and vocalisation of aspects of a specific identity, expressing a narrative which either reflects them personally or interrogates the motives of those around them. This right to ‘self-fashion’ is bestowed on all social classes within early modern literary discourse, thus enabling servant participation while complicating private and public identity for aristocratic or middle class fictional and non-fictional figures.

In historical accounts and fictional representations, early modern and early eighteenth-century servants tended to be evenly divided between male and female (with marginally more men serving than women) and often worked in highly structured aristocratic households rather than in more modest middle class abodes.[[29]](#footnote-29) The eighteenth-century servant had an identity distinct and separate from her early modern counterparts, however. Michael McKeon notes that during the “volatile modernization” of the eighteenth century “the theory of domestic service continued to be dominated by a ‘medieval’ model of personal discretion and submission that was increasingly at odds with the practicalities of wage employment.”[[30]](#footnote-30) As such, servant identity and the servant’s roles within the home were interrogated in ways that they had never been before, suggesting new domestic anxieties and new opportunities for narrative expression. E.P. Thompson argues in his seminal work *The Making of the English Working Class* that political and industrial leaders’ use of religious institutions in the eighteenth century as a means of delineating class identity “weakened the poor from within, by adding to them the active ingredient of submission.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Moral assumptions regarding ‘submission’ in earlier periods were thus reconstructed by the patriarchal authority in order to reinforce the social status quo and maintain a level of distance between servant and master.

Distance and division had an unforeseen backlash, however, and Thompson further notes that “in the years between 1780 and 1832 most English people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves and as against their rulers and employers.”[[32]](#footnote-32) Thompson ultimately suggests that “the working class community of the early nineteenth century was the product, neither of paternalism nor of Methodism, but in a high degree of conscious working-class endeavour,” a range of class-specific attitudes which stressed “self-discipline and community purpose.”[[33]](#footnote-33) These attitudes re-emphasised the servant’s place in a larger social scheme as representatives of a particular class-consciousness. Of course, servants were a distinct group within the lower classes (they were different from ‘peasants,’ for example), and employers were also concerned that the emerging servant identity negatively reflected habits observed and adopted from aristocratic masters, as illustrated in James Townley’s *High Life Below Stairs* (1759) and in other fictional and non-fiction works. Regardless of whether servant identity developed more through low / working class or aristocratic influences, however, it was clearly identified as an autonomous and potentially dangerous force within the domestic space.

Tension between the idealised “‘medieval’ model” of submission and the (real or imagined) highly individualistic and independent servant character are apparent in discussions about specific problems such as the falsification of servant character references and in more general assumptions regarding servant indiscretion. Patricia Meyer Spacks notes that in the eighteenth century “the consistency with which servants’ manuals recommended discretion, keeping the family secrets to oneself, reveals the universal assumption that servants would know such secrets.”[[34]](#footnote-34) This was all the more worrying for a middle class or aristocratic audience since servants potentially lacked the “medieval” loyalty necessary to keep secrets safe and thus promote and protect their employer’s assumed superiority. This is particularly relevant as servants had almost unrestrained access to private and domestic spaces, and since what McKeon identifies as the “discord of internals and externals, of virtue, status, wealth, and power” which arose in the early modern period and continued through the eighteenth century frequently manifested within and through the social and domestic borderlands which servants occupied.[[35]](#footnote-35) Eighteenth-century servants thus frequently operate both as non-familial ‘others’ and as forces in charge of repressing ‘otherness’ and maintaining household functionality. An emerging conflict within the middle class and aristocratic psyche regarding the need to self-censure one’s narrative and to enforce a rule of secrecy among one’s domestics would have had a profound impact on social and personal identity during this time. This anxiety is clearly and closely examined in eighteenth-century fiction novels and particularly in the corrupted or subversive domestic spaces depicted within Gothic novels.

Politics and religion might have pushed servants and the lower classes forward in the later eighteenth century, but alternatively many servants would likely have found it expedient to repress their individuality in order to remain employed. Bridget Hill comments that the position of the servant was easily jeopardized by the inconsistency of their employers or by other circumstances outside the servant’s control, such as illness or family problems.[[36]](#footnote-36) Daniel Defoe, in spite of including the influential Man Friday in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and making a socially mobile servant the heroine of his novel *Moll Flanders* (1722), assumed in his non-fiction works that servants in general were more suited to a “bawdy house” than a domestic space, and that if they suffered it was due to their own inadequacies rather than more general social disparities.[[37]](#footnote-37)As such, Hill states that in spite of the prevalence of servants in eighteenth-century England and the frequency with which they were included in the writings of the day “only occasionally [...] is their character revealed, their individual personality acknowledged.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Indeed, even in remarkably progressive accounts, servants and working class figures would rarely have written their own stories, and servants in most fictional works would instead have reflected an upper class employer’s perception of service. Servants may be ostensibly positioned as background figures, but their place in a system of submission and repression only adds complexity to their narrative identity in eighteenth century literature. Hill notes that their personalities are expressed on “rare occasions when, aggrieved by the demands made on them, suddenly, and quite spontaneously, they answer back," asserting their own personalities and violating assumptions of servility.[[39]](#footnote-39) Narrative outbursts, though infrequent, reflect the nature of the socio-economic and political institutions surrounding the servants as much as they reflect the individuality of the servants themselves. On a fundamental level the individual servant’s place in the household was complicated by the family-servant dynamic in which the servant was neither a stranger nor a family member within the household, but rather a social ‘other’ representing an ambiguously benevolent or malevolent group of what Spacks terms “visible observers.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

Why become a servant, then, if the situation was so repressive? Theresa McBride cites the “unique economic advantages” which “fulfilled all the traditional expectations women had for work,” and the prospect of advancement which men servants associated with service, what J. Jean Hecht calls a “path for social ascent.”[[41]](#footnote-41) The realities of social mobility are of course less straightforward, and historians such as Eric Pawson and Sara Maza suggest that, for many, life was an ugly choice between service and extreme poverty.[[42]](#footnote-42) D.A. Kent argues that because of the female servant’s position as an unmarried worker her wages “were the wages of an independent woman” and that “domestic service was an occupation which allowed women a measure of choice and relative economic independence.”[[43]](#footnote-43) While this was perhaps true in an economic sense, however, it is certainly not true on a personal level, as Hill notes that “service always involved a loss of freedom: of movement, of choice of friends, or free time and where it was spent.”[[44]](#footnote-44) Consider the literary example of Pamela from Richardson’s novel *Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded*. Servant-heroine Pamela is forced to leave her parents’ home in search of work in order to compensate for her family’s extreme (though honest) poverty.[[45]](#footnote-45) She states in a letter to her father after her mistress dies that “Much I feared, that as I was taken by her ladyship to wait upon her person, I should be quite destitute again, and forced to return to you and my poor mother, who have enough to do to maintain yourselves.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Pamela frequently suggests that economic necessity informs her decision to work, though interestingly this necessity later becomes secondary to her desire to preserve her virtue (and therein a critical aspect of her identity). Moreover, once she enters a household as a servant Pamela is completely under her master and/or mistress’s power regarding personal choices about friends, clothing, literacy, etcetera, even to the point where her master attempts to claim sexual ‘rights’ which bear a striking resemblance to a *droit du seigneur* tradition of sexual ownership.[[47]](#footnote-47) Her new master, Mr. B –, sees Pamela as an object which he can control and own, and Pamela is forced to restructure her identity and her responses to deny or conform to this interpretation as needed. In fact, she frequently uses her ostensible powerlessness as a means of inspiring paternalistic protection, though she is equally capable of subverting this discourse and suggesting a more republican alternative. Of course, authors such as Eliza Haywood and Henry Fielding posited in literary responses such as *An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews, Joseph Andrews*, and *The Anti-Pamela*, that Pamela could be characterised as a conscious manipulator attempting to climb the social ladder. While this complicates the moral message of the various texts it does not, however, undermine the servant’s role as a narrator capable of employing the “matchless arts” of a “young politician” in order to alternatively de-emphasise and re-emphasise social disparity.[[48]](#footnote-48) In fact, the servant in Anti-Pamela texts is depicted as even more consciously active and authorial while her aristocratic ‘betters’ consistently prove incapable of constructing a plausible defence against her.

Satirical commentary on servants in the eighteenth century further explored patterns of dependency and power within the domestic space, though again the goals of the author heavily influenced the construction of servant characters. Jonathan Swift, who famously satirised the foibles of humanity in works such as *Gulliver’s Travels* and “A Modest Proposal,” published *Directions to Servants* in 1743, a text which includes harshly humorous 'advice' for servants in general and for those occupying specific roles such as chambermaids or grooms. He mockingly advises servants that, "when you have done a Fault, be always pert and insolent, and behave your self as if you were the injured Person," suggesting a servant narrator’s capacity for reworking ‘reality’. Furthermore, he states that amongst servants “you may quarrel with each other as much as you please, only bear in Mind that you have a common Enemy, which is your Master and Lady, and you have a common cause to defend.”[[49]](#footnote-49) With the term “Enemy” Swift positions servants as dangerous combatants occupying the domestic home, reinforcing class division and conflict. Notably, Swift identifies servants as romantic ‘storytellers’ and purveyors of ghost stories and superstition, an idea which draws something from the traditions of the early modern period and hints at the importance of servant narratives in later eighteenth-century Gothic fiction. He suggests that the Children’s-Maid “Tell the Children Stories of spirits, when they offer to cry,” implying that doing so is a typical technique used to bully the master’s children and that servants in general encourage an uninformed worldview.[[50]](#footnote-50) Swift was perhaps alluding to John Locke’s concern in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) that “tender Minds should receive early Impressions of *Goblins, Spectres*, and *Apparitions*, wherewith their maids and those about them are apt to frighten them […] subjecting their Minds to Frights, fearful Apprehensions, Weakness and Superstition.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Servants are thus closely connected with discourses of “superstition” well before their emergence in the eighteenth-century novel. Moreover, spiritualism and superstition are also characterised by their troubling impact on the developing intellect and the exercise of ‘reason,’ another anxiety found in many in early Gothic novels.

Swift furthermore places the semi-servant tutor or governess in charge of formative reading habits: “Make the Misses read *French* and *English* Novels, and *French* Romances, and all the Comedies writ in King *Charles* II and King *William’s* Reigns, to soften their Nature, and make them tender-hearted.”[[52]](#footnote-52) Tutors and governesses obviously occupy a distinct role from servants, though they are still employees in the household and are clearly closely connected to class-specific patterns of ‘reading’ and ‘storytelling’. The fear of an ‘educated’ and political servant is incorporated in characterisations of these domestic educators, figures distinct from the uneducated lower classes yet still clearly source of some concern. Swift implies that the contagion of lower class superstition is a danger to young minds and also suggests that novels and popular romances negatively impact the development of national literature, condemning the servant’s perceived connection with a fanciful and distinctly ‘un-English’ narrative. He further emphasises this point by connecting servants with “*French* Romances” as foreign threats to British stability. Samuel Richardson also made the connection between the novel and nationalism by asserting in his preface to *Pamela* that “pernicious *Novels*” threatened to “Frenchify our English solidity into Froth” and depicting the novel genre as dangerously opposed to stable British values (an ironic statement as his own works, while ostensibly ‘conduct’ literature, are themselves proto-novels and novels).[[53]](#footnote-53) Tensions with France would only become more extreme through British involvement in the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the anarchic violence of French Revolution (1789-1799), while in 1743 the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) accelerated the “patriotic indoctrination” which influenced political and social constructs within the British home.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Swift was not the only influential literary figure during this period to link, sometimes with humorous intent, servant voices and ‘romance’ – authors such as Smollett, Sterne, Diderot and Fielding similarly incorporated servants into discourses of literary genre and identity. Numerous eighteenth century authors, British and otherwise, also followed Cervantes’ lead in parodying, or at least restructuring, the chivalric-romantic form, suggesting a socio-political interrogation of the novel genre. Some authors used servants within this genre as a means of exploring socially charged topics while others portrayed servants as figures of an anti-Enlightenment continental and inter-continental Romantic tradition. Pamela Horn argues that paternalistic rhetoric made it “all too easy for servants to be regarded as members of a separate race of people,” justifying the sometimes dehumanising control held over servants by their employers and the corresponding counter-narrative assertions verbalised by servant characters in fiction.[[55]](#footnote-55) This trend bespeaks the servant character and the novel’s precarious position in the eighteenth-century literary landscape as both participate in what Bakhtin describes as the “renovation” of “literary language”.[[56]](#footnote-56) Michael McKeon notes that the early novel is a form which “arrives upon a scene already articulated into conventional categories and that proceeds to cannibalize and incorporate bits of other forms – the traditional and canonic genres as well as aberrant, ‘nonliterary’ writings – in order to compose its own conventionality.”[[57]](#footnote-57) He further argues that a lack of internal rules in the novel genre’s structure paralleled the destabilisation of social categories in the eighteenth century, so that ultimately socio-moral power within novels is defined as “the ability to make others accept one’s version of events as authoritative.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Therein, servant narrative develops as a space of generic compromise and literary identity, as well as social tension, by imposing a counter-version of reality within the text. The combativeness that pervades servant-master exchanges in many literary works hints at a potentially explosive social context surrounding servant narratives in eighteenth and nineteenth-century fiction. It also highlights the modes of heteroglossia which force characters and readers to negotiate potentially unstable relationships in novels.

This battle for social and personal dominance was seriously affected by an increased preoccupation with domesticity which paralleled the development of the novel. The kinds of novels produced and the characters within them were in no small part affected by the target audience. While David Punter notes that “the price of books was in general prohibitive,” Ian Watt has argued that servants and women became a substantial part of the reading public in the eighteenth century.[[59]](#footnote-59) With the increased availability of leisure time and the educational disparity between the genders, fast-produced, English-language novels from circulating libraries would naturally have been more widely disseminated among women readers.[[60]](#footnote-60) As such, novels with a domestic focus and a willingness to blur the boundaries between public (male, political, external) and private (female, moral, internal) life similarly grew in popularity.[[61]](#footnote-61) In spite of the overall focus on the private sphere, however, the topics discussed in such novels, and particularly those having to do with social identity, are potentially deeply political and publicly-oriented. Nancy Armstrong suggests that “it was the new domestic woman rather than her counterpart, the new economic man, who first encroached upon aristocratic culture and seized authority from it,” implying an underlying political potential in domestic novels and a corresponding focus on servant narrative as an expression of the “new domestic” ideology.[[62]](#footnote-62) As such, Laurence Sterne’s Susannah and Trim from *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767)and Denis Diderot’s Jacques from *Jacques the Fatalist* (officially published in French in 1796) facilitate philosophical inquiry,the trials of characters such as Richardson’s Pamela and Daniel Defoe’s Moll Flanders show the extremes of aristocratic power and the terrors of poverty, and William Godwin's *Things as They Are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) functions as a treatise on the rights of both master and servant. The Gothic genre’s usual technique of positioning a middle class female against a transgressive aristocratic male is heavily coloured by the servant character’s response to the resulting conflict. These texts transpose public discourses onto private spaces and thus facilitate the interjection of serving-class commentary on myriad social and political issues.

E.P. Thompson notes that “the changing productive relations and working conditions of the Industrial Revolution were imposed, not upon raw material, but upon the free-born Englishman – and the freeborn Englishman as Paine had left him or as the Methodists had moulded him.”[[63]](#footnote-63) While we can reasonably assume that the average servant was aware of his basic rights as a British subject (the birth of political societies and the developing class consciousness in the latter half of the eighteenth century suggest as much) perceptions of the active political awareness of servants as a class are ambiguous. Henry Mayhew once illustrated unskilled labourers’ lack of interest in politics in the nineteenth century by stating that “they are as unpolitical as footmen, and instead of entertaining violent democratic opinions, they appear to have no political opinions whatever.”[[64]](#footnote-64) Alternatively, of course, some literate and semi-literate servants and labourers took a very active interest in political discourse, and complaints from masters (satirical and otherwise) that servants were too well-educated stem in no small part from a fear of ‘revolutionary’ servants. Once again Richardson’s *Pamela* both problematizes and fetishizes the concept of the educated and political servant. Ian Watt notes that Richardson’s Pamela “stormed the barriers of society and of literature alike by her skilful employment of what may be called conspicuous literacy,” an assertion of an informed social and political self-awareness that undermines narratives of patriarchal and aristocratic superiority.[[65]](#footnote-65) Social anxieties were further articulated in public discourses and through legislation such as the Pitt government’s 1789 Stamp Tax, which Paul Keen suggests demonstrated the government’s fear of a literate population.[[66]](#footnote-66) Perceptions of lower class literacy clearly suggest nervousness about lower class voices and narratives, and the revolutionary potential of subversive social discourse which took on particularly dangerous overtones in the political upheaval occurring at the end of the eighteenth century.

William Godwin’s Gothic ‘social problem’ novel *Things as They Are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* illustrates the potential political impact of literary servant narratives and the means through which socio-historical factors formed servant narrative identity. A fictionalisation of Godwin’s arguments in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), *Caleb Williams* tells the story, from the title character’s perspective, of a young servant who spies on his employer and uncovers a dark secret which results in subsequent persecution by his master, Falkland.[[67]](#footnote-67) Caleb’s own position in the text is almost solely defined by the power struggle between himself and Falkland. In this, Nicola J. Watson argues, Godwin “attempted to exploit the individualistic aspects of the sentimental novel to underwrite […] ‘Jacobinical’ anatomies of social ills.”[[68]](#footnote-68) In these “individualistic aspects” the plot is compromised by the subjectivity of first person narration as, as David Punter suggests, “we find ourselves looking through the cracks in his (Caleb’s) account of the persecuting universe.”[[69]](#footnote-69) This novel is essentially a collection of a form of competing ‘characters,’ or character references commonly written by employers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which defined the servant’s identity both in the workforce and in the broader social spectrum.[[70]](#footnote-70) Horn notes that “there was no *legal* requirement for an employer to give a character reference at all,” and if a master truly wanted to destroy a servant, or more specifically reshape the servant's identity within social spaces, he could do so through these ‘characters’ with very little chance of retribution.[[71]](#footnote-71) In the 1790s several laws were passed to prevent the creation and circulation of false references, but these laws overwhelmingly sought to protect masters who hired servants on forged references rather than any servant-victims of their master’s vitriol. Self-fashioning is thus limited by the servant’s role within the private space and the social restraints placed on their narratives therein as a reaction to fears regarding servant indiscretion and amorality. Falkland attaches one such falsified identity to Caleb, and Caleb’s personal narrative essentially becomes an attempt to assign his master a more accurate but similarly damning ‘character’ while at the same time rehabilitating his own both within and outside of an ineffectual justice system. Bruce Robbins notes that“Caleb, like Pamela, is in fact neither insolent nor artful. But as soon as he steps into the servant-master relation, his ‘character’ becomes irrelevant, or incoherent” due to problematic and unstable narrative primacy.[[72]](#footnote-72) As such both Caleb and Falkland’s true selves can only be re-established by narrative autonomy on Caleb's part.

While Caleb’s sense of self hinges on the servant-master relationship, Falkland’s own identity and his active re-structuring of his public and private selves are correspondingly dependent on Caleb’s narrative choices. Caleb’s alternating defence and condemnation of Falkland within the text emphasises the co-dependency and conflict inherent to the master-servant relationship and the essential fragility of the social self. After a novel-length account of his persecution at the hands of Falkland (though we eventually discover that Caleb’s fear has caused him to greatly exaggerate Falkland’s omnipotence), Caleb demonstrates narrative pseudo-self-awareness illustrating servant power and identity in the final chapters. Having more or less kept his master’s secret for years he finally fully embraces his narrative primacy, paraphrasing an important line from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1603) and a popular epitaph in Gothic fiction ('I will unfold a tale') -

Tyrants have trembled surrounded with whole armies of their Janissaries! What would make thee inaccessible to my fury? - No, I will use no daggers! I will unfold a tale-! I will show thee for what thou art, and all the men that live shall confess my truth![[73]](#footnote-73)

Strong words indeed for a servant character who has spent the majority of the novel recording an intense struggle for identity against the powerful, transgressive aristocrat. Caleb undergoes radical self-fashioning and demonstrates his new willingness to “unfold a tale” and “show thee for what thou art,” placing himself in a privileged position which will enable him to force “all the men that live” to “confess my truth.” Caleb accepts the political power of his own narrative and, with an emotionally honest appeal to those around him, ultimately justifies himself to the social body. Even then, however, the domestic preoccupation problematizes Caleb’s desire for publicity – Caleb ultimately comes to the conclusion that “if I had told to him (Falkland) privately the tale that I have now been telling, he could not have resisted my reasonable demand.”[[74]](#footnote-74) Having violated the requirements of servant ‘discretion’ in failing to keep the matter in the private sphere, Caleb takes responsibility for Falkland’s eventual death and as a character within the text derives no pleasure from the outcome. Bruce Robbins notes that as a narrator, however, Caleb “is also an agent of political justice” who ultimately achieves a higher moral purpose in this exposure of Falkland’s secret.[[75]](#footnote-75)

The genre placement and topical focus of Godwin's novel supports Paul Keen’s assertions that in the late eighteenth century “the republic of letters was threatened on one side by political upheavals which call into question the claim of authors to freedom of expression and, on the other side, by the growing popularity of fashionable literature, which effectively trivialized this freedom.”[[76]](#footnote-76) In retrospect it is clear that eighteenth-century engagements with the emerging novel form, republican and counter-republican political movements, and the ubiquity of servant voices developed together. A connection was soon discovered between literature and social mobility which further validated the writing and speaking servant. It was apparent to a number in the literary sphere that, as Keen argues, “social improvement [...] was the almost passive and apparently inevitable result of the pursuit of learning,” although alternatively tensions arose from the idea that those who lacked the privileges of a formal education were “unfit to be trusted” with a political voice.[[77]](#footnote-77) Godwin justified his decision to write *Caleb Williams* in novel form because the novel’s own theme suggested that “the spirit and character of the government intrudes itself into every rank of society. But this is a truth highly worthy to be communicated to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach,” that is, women, servants, and other types of people who would have preferred to read or would have had easier access to “low” literature such as novels.[[78]](#footnote-78) If Godwin's interpretation of Caleb's narrative dances ambiguously between sensationalist fantasy and rational political activism it is an understandable reflection of evolving social understandings of the servant, particularly in the politically charged latter half of the eighteenth century. Issues such as overt and covert loyalty, public and private identity, the co-dependent relationship between the king and his subjects, and the nature of imagination and of libel as analogous with treason were highly problematic in works such as *Caleb Williams* and indeed many other Gothic texts.[[79]](#footnote-79)

The British government had naturally incorporated dialogues of service into its identity since its formation, but in the 1790s discourses on the nature of service, freedom, loyalty and identity became further integrated into the national political landscape. Servant-master relationships were arguably defined through a combination of paternalism, awe, loyalty and force, but the political and domestic relationships between aristocratic, middle, and lower class peoples were destabilised by the rhetoric of the American and French Revolutions, the rise of ‘secret societies,’ and the unpopular and reactive attempts by the government of King George III and Prime Minister William Pitt to control dissent and classify treason in the broadest possible terms.[[80]](#footnote-80) As the British nation sought to define itself, employing the master-servant discourse became a means of contextualising broader tensions. John Barrell notes that for authors such as Godwin and Burke, political problems could be re-contextualised in domestic terms, and that in fiction “the family, as imagined in the language of sentiment, could still include the servants of a household […] but in doing so it represented the love they were supposed to feel for their employers as something far exceeding the love which it was their *duty* to feel.”[[81]](#footnote-81) The idea that servants, who were by necessity privy to all domestic secrets, possessed the power to reveal the inner workings of an individual’s personal life upset the delicate balance suggested by Samuel Johnson’s definition of servitude and emphasised co-dependence between classes over discourses of submission. Johnson himself stated in *The Rambler* that “no condition is more hateful or despicable, than his who has put himself in the power of his servant; in the power of him whom, perhaps, he has first corrupted by making him subservient to his vices, and whose fidelity he cannot enforce by any precepts of honesty or reason.”[[82]](#footnote-82) For this to happen the very definitions of selfhood – the master and the servant – must be undermined and the social and domestic status quo must be completely inverted. Moreover, this complex kind of individual and social self-fashioning is achieved primarily within an exchange, willing or unwilling, explicit or implicit, of personal narrative.

As such, socio-political discourses and popular literature at the end of the eighteenth century overlapped, and concepts of duty and love and loyalty as they impacted the servant-master / citizen-king relationship found their way into political pamphlets and fictional works. The development of literature, politics, and class structures found common ground in concepts of imagination, a challenging form closely associated with middle and aristocratic anxieties about the narratives of the servant classes and ‘treasonous’ activity.[[83]](#footnote-83) In Gothic texts such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) imagination as a reflection of both superstition and reason is examined in servant narratives. The master-servant relationship in the Gothic genre often depends on the servant exercising both a constructive and transgressive form of imagination, and then articulating the results regardless of discretion and restraint. ‘Imagination’ as a human experience was frequently linked to the emerging Romantic and Gothic genre, as well as being adopted within a broader spectrum of cultural understanding. John Whale suggests that imagination is an integral though occasionally problematic “component of cultural critique” and an “important reflex of cultural crisis,” and during the 1790s and early 1800s related discourses were a crucial response in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Edmund Burke, and William Godwin to the Anglo-French conflict, the French Revolution, and the rise of Utilitarianism in England.[[84]](#footnote-84) Indeed, the dismissal of every-day practicality stereotypically attached to Romantic poets is negated as imagination, especially as it affected personal and political interactions between social groups, also found a place in ‘prosaic’ discourse and in servant narrative. One’s ability to ‘imagine’ should rather be read as transcending and incorporating every-day topics into a protean theory of identity in which all social groups can take part, and which Gothic servants in particular investigate as they seek to contextualise themselves and others within an increasingly unstable universe. Joseph Addison notably ranked “the pleasure of the imagination” as “not so gross as those of sense, nor so refined as those of the understanding,” but rather as a potential middle ground where a nevertheless “great” and “transporting” engagement may be achieved.[[85]](#footnote-85) This definition, while consistently re-evaluated by eighteenth-century thinkers, nevertheless reflects some of the liminality attached to imagination and opens such discourses up to the fictional servant narrator.

The impulse of servant narrative, and particularly Gothic servant narrative, is one of resistance. It posits that a figure subjected to another’s control does in fact possess an individual voice which can be offered against the narratives of socially dominant characters. The eighteenth-century focus on imagination, republicanism, class boundaries, and domesticity in social and political discourse paralleled the rising preoccupation with ‘gothic’ systems and the development of Gothic literature in England. David Punter notes, as John Barrell and E. P. Thompson have suggested, that in particular “the 1790s were chaotic years in which domestic unrest and fears of invasion from abroad shaped political and cultural life, and the literary market was flooded with a mass of fiction” which can be best categorised as representative of the Gothic heyday.[[86]](#footnote-86) To quote Fred Botting:

Emerging at a time of bourgeois and industrial revolution, a time of Enlightenment philosophy and increasingly secular views, the eighteenth-century Gothic fascination with a past of chivalry, violence, magical beings and malevolent aristocrats is bound up with shifts from feudal to commercial practices in which notions of property, government and society were undergoing massive transformations.[[87]](#footnote-87)

The servant character, as demonstrated, already occupied an important, if ambiguous, space in literature and in life before this time. With the rise of the Gothic genre, however, this figure was now placed in situations where overt 'otherness’ constituted the primary threat to stability.

David Punter and Glennis Byron further suggest that “where the classics offered a world of clear rules and limits, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilized, a world that constantly tended to overflow cultural boundaries.”[[88]](#footnote-88) As the external world grew more chaotic, counter-narrative and liminal narrative functioned as a means of restructuring concepts of a political and socio-moral ‘self’. Thus the servants in late eighteenth and early nineteenth Gothic or pseudo-Gothic literature are frequently positioned significantly along the boundaries of the text as representatives of a peculiar narrative dialectic and socio-moral “overflow.” Nicola J. Watson notes that as political and social discourses on ‘sensibility’ evolved it became “harder and harder to authorise the voice of individual feeling as a form of legitimate rational protest,” particularly as ‘feeling’ was juxtaposed with “revolutionary thinking,” “seduction and victimization, or, worse, madness.”[[89]](#footnote-89) The ambiguity of sensibility as both an ideal mode of feeling and a dangerous weakness which prevented rational thought was incorporated into individual socio-political and gendered identity. Servant narrative in the Gothic genre demonstrates fluidity and interconnectivity between social positions and public and private spaces. It also provides a narrative multiplicity which allows for a more emotional-intuitive empiricism and response, while at the same time pseudo-‘authorising’ individual expression as a “rational protest.”

Often utilising a winding narrative, unnecessary details, and critical personal beliefs and opinions, Gothic servant narratives embody the chaotic, excessive, emotional, spiritual and imaginative aspects of the genre, aspects which harken back to the early modern tradition and which continued to define socio-political preoccupations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They usually engage with the desires or knowledge gaps of the middle class or aristocratic protagonists in a conversational dialogue. Servant narratives constitute everything from character sketches to passing observations to outrageous interpretations to important plot points, verbally and/or physically presented to their employers and/or directly to the reader. Protagonist-masters within the text then typically interrupt and re-interpret the narrative in order, paradoxically, to encourage the speedy conclusion of a tale or to request silence on the part of their servants. This exchange is a critical response to social and literary structures and an attempt to construct and re-enforce boundaries, even as it articulates the cultural context through which boundaries were being overwritten. Authors writing in what is now considered the ‘first wave’ of Gothic literature, the period from the 1760s to the 1820s, were constructing what E.J. Clery describes as a genre “which they knew most loosely and indiscriminately as, among other things, ‘modern romance’, encompassing poetry, drama, and fiction,” and embracing a multi-faceted approach to literary expression.[[90]](#footnote-90) The servant narrative thus becomes a discursive method and a pseudo-meta-fiction example of prose narrative and dialectic discourses within the Gothic genre.

Little critical attention has been paid to Gothic servants because of their frequent classification as ‘comic relief’ or as mechanisms of bathos. While this is not the sum total of the servant’s role, it does reflect a core servant response within the Gothic genre. Mikhail Bakhtin suggests in *Rabelais and His World* that there was a transition from the Renaissance and early modern period’s lower class grotesque, regenerative, carnival sense of humour towards a “stabilization of the new order” in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[[91]](#footnote-91) While this is certainly a valid assertion, the development of the novel, and particularly the Gothic novel, and the political upheaval occurring parallel suggest destabilised narratives which echo earlier literary forms. Clery states that while in the early eighteenth century “the common view would have been that a taste for tales of the supernatural was the sign of a weak mind, now the supernatural was converted into an opportunity for asserting poetic vision.”[[92]](#footnote-92) A formerly ‘vulgar’ or ‘peasant’ mode was at least partially transformed into an acceptable form of expression, one which introduced the possibility of the supernatural while at the same time stylistically mimicking a ‘humorous’ or ‘gossipy’ servant narrative. A servant character thus “contributes to the broadened spectrum of feeling in the novel,” articulates tragic and comic themes, and embraces a plurality of expression in a range of early Gothic texts.[[93]](#footnote-93) Humour becomes a sibling of terror and an unexpected and subversive duality develops through the flexible, liminal servant narrator. Bakhtin argues that in early modern texts “terror is conquered by laughter” and in particular the laughter of lower class groups, and in the Gothic genre authors such as Walpole openly stated that they employed servant narratives in order to better set “the pathetic of the former [princes and heroes] in a stronger light,” or to otherwise manipulate expressions of tension and terror.[[94]](#footnote-94) Servant characters in early Gothic literature are consistently connected with this long standing tradition of performative and procreative humour, from the carnival-like transformations of servant characters such as Zofloya in Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806) and Theodore in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) to the prevalence of imagined scenes of the ‘fantastic,’ such as the ones dreamed up by Annette in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Moreover, the tendency to imbue servant narrative with a comic edge is a highly suggestive response to the servant’s social position and the content of their stories as emotional and intuitive modes. While it would be wrong to dismiss the servant narrative as purely comic relief, the ‘comic’ narrative is an innovative response to the trauma of historical and social and spiritual upheaval depicted in early Gothic novels.

The development of Gothic servant narrative at a time when the relatively new novel form was struggling with legitimacy and romantic-historical ideology was still problematized within the cultural spectrums of late eighteenth-century life suggests a defensive positioning of the genre. In Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* servant Bianca actively justifies her narrative, stating that “there was no harm in what I said: it is no sin to talk” and that “a bystander often sees more of the game than those that play.”[[95]](#footnote-95) When Bianca is interrupted or dismissed she reacts in an outraged and assertive manner. She equates the validity of her existence with the validity of her story, an idea both literally and figuratively true – Bianca’s concept of identity hinges on what she experiences with her senses and imagination and how she expresses those experiences in a personal narrative, and her role as a character in the larger text similarly depends on the information she imparts to the protagonists and reader. She is one of what Bakhtin describes as “the most privileged witnesses to private life,” while her “stylistically individualized speech” reflects the “stylistic uniqueness” of heteroglossia in the novel.[[96]](#footnote-96) This type of discourse tends to amuse and frustrate both reader and protagonist but is essentially not unlike the structure of the Gothic novel (or, indeed, any novel) – a subjective form with layered characterisation and description, punctuated with ostensibly unrelated anecdotes, asides, and subplots which do not appear to contribute to the overall plot without personal interpretation. Therein the reader is faced with a concept which Terry Eagleton observes in Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*: “there is something about narrative itself, or literary design, which is a lie. There is even something falsifying about language itself, since to say one thing means excluding another. Life and language are at odds with each other.”[[97]](#footnote-97) Servant narratives demonstrate what are critically considered some of the weakest parts of the Gothic genre, such as contrived delay, the uncertainty of the ‘fantastic,’ and the subjectivity of individual interpretations. Within the engagement with narrative design, however, servants reflect the inherent ambiguity of subjective identity and language within a definitive socio-cultural space. In spite of manifesting these supposed weaknesses in narrative style and language, servants not only persist in their narrative but actively argue against attempts to limit or control alternative narrative assertions.

Beyond a direct structural defence of the Gothic genre, servants in the Gothic narrative are the figures who, because of their specific social and familial positions, can best and most comprehensively transcend cultural, historical, political and spiritual boundaries and even restructure fundamental aspects of self and identity therein. Indeed, masters and mistresses in both real life and fictional accounts seem to depend as much on their servants as servants depend on their masters, not only for physical comforts but also as a means of constructing or supporting a viable worldview and a functional identity. Perhaps the best word Samuel Johnson used in his definition of servant and service, then, was “correlative,” for one cannot understand the servant narrative without first understanding how both individuals and their narrative constructions must function within a system of mutual and conjunctive creativity and adoption. As such, their defence of their viewpoints and perceptions is a potent expression of alternative narrative privilege, a pseudo-self-aware justification of their place in the story independent of social marginalisation. They are the moderators of illicit knowledge critical to the development of the plot and a reflection of the broader socio-cultural and socio-political preoccupations of the text. As the guardians of history and family, servants and their narratives function as part of the historical-romance tradition and articulate the impact of the unresolved past on formations of present and future selves.

The first chapter of this dissertation will examine servant narratives and narrators in the earliest Gothic novels, primarily Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* and Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron*. Walpole is widely considered the father of the Gothic genre and credited himself with creating an innovative kind of ‘romance’. Walpole’s work was part of an ongoing literary discussion in the eighteenth-century regarding a national literary identity, focusing in particular on the merits of Shakespeare and early modern writings as opposed to neoclassical works. Shakespearean servants and their narratives develop as sites where the relevance or beauty of ‘low’ characters, supernaturalism, humour, and other aspects attached to the servant idiom within serious literature are examined. While Walpole’s servants are hardly naturalistic representations of the lower classes, their inclusion and importance in the narrative structure and in specific instances of self-fashioning enables Walpole’s exploration of Gothic narrative. They provide insight into personal and social relationships within the text. Moreover, their narrative style suggests a mode of writing and reading that requires the interpretation of systems of recursion as Gothic aesthetic, thus providing the foundation for the genre’s defining technologies. Clara Reeve is an important follow-up writer to Walpole, one who sought to relegate this new kind of romance within a literary tradition. Reeve engaged more directly with ‘realist’ Enlightenment texts and as such her servants are more restrained and function in a world significantly less chaotic, if morally simplistic. Her primary didactic impulse, the concern for moral justice and a proper hierarchical structure, hinges significantly on servant narrative approval and acts of identification. Servants in her text are documents through which a legal and socio-moral identity is established and a utopian romantic vision (reflecting a hope for a nationalistic revival) is achieved. These two works heavily impact later Gothic novels and verbalise the very necessary negotiation and placement of servants as significant in-text and genre-specific narrators.

The next chapter will expand on the interrogation of servant narrators and narratives by examining Ann Radcliffe’s extensive development of such aspects within her Gothic texts. The chapter will primarily focus on three of her later works – *The Romance of the Forest, The Mysteries of Udolpho,* and *The Italian* – all of which include active servants who frequently perform as pseudo-authorial metonyms or as spaces for critical dialectic engagement. *The Romance of the Forest* focuses primarily on the manservant Peter, a figure whose class and gender-specific agency enables Radcliffe’s examination of social and moral identity within the text. In keeping with this kind of narrative impulse the servants in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* frequently enact specific goals in their narratives in relation to the heroine’s own evolution. Elderly female housekeepers such as Theresa or Dorothée express grief, history, and memory, while the servants Annette and Ludovico articulate and embody romantic or fantastic discourses within a destabilised framework. These servants affect the protagonist’s progress and also contribute to larger constructions of Gothic aesthetic and novel structure. The final novel, *The Italian*, distinguishes itself by focusing more openly on narrative as performance, a response to Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*. Paulo, the novel’s primary servant character, essentially creates a theatre of service in which he actively performs a servant discourse for a hostile audience in order to explore identity (his own and his master’s) and radically alter the nature of the space he occupies. Throughout these texts Radcliffe demonstrates a conscious engagement with her servants both as narrators within the text and as reflections of broader genre or literary goals. Her works provide great insight into the political, psychological, and literary potential of servant narratives within Gothic studies.

Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* and Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya; or The Moor* will be the focal points for the final chapter of this dissertation. Servant narratives in these novels are particularly noteworthy in that they express an almost unprecedented amount of authorial independence and use the performative and physical or material aspects of narrative in order to form metonymic identity. Lewis’s Theodore writes and performs several poems and tales drawing from a wide range of folkloric or neoclassical traditions, creations which he then peddles to both aristocratic semi-critics and a popular audience. His creative work suggests a conscious examination of print culture and the literary landscape, as well as Lewis’s own negotiation of Gothic authorship. Moreover, Theodore’s physical and textual body could be considered its own kind of Gothic narrative, an expressive attempt at self-fashioning that suggests a radical re-making of identity. In Dacre’s work the ‘self’ is similarly depicted as an individually structured place of conflict rather than as a sacrosanct and socially moderated ideal. Zofloya, Dacre’s primary servant character, embodies a complex and troubling racial and cultural identity which heavily influences his role as a narrator. His fluid physical and verbal performance influences the construction of a Gothic aesthetic throughout the novel as well as eventually seducing the protagonist and encouraging her downward spiral. Discourses of service in both texts work as a means of enforcing an inherently unstable social structure, only to then help destroy almost every facet of hierarchal authority. The servant characters and their narratives also imply the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity through ‘performativity’ and the ‘surface’ as defined by Judith Butler, among others. Transgressive servant narrative is fully realised here, as is its ultimate creative potential.

Servant narratives and the evolving Gothic novel tradition – both of which articulate the dichotomy of Enlightenment tensions which Markman Ellis identifies as “light and dark, reason and superstition, liberty and tyranny, democracy and autocracy, public and secret” – are mutually informative.[[98]](#footnote-98) In ways both interdependent and independent, the British fiction novel and the servant class narrative developed concurrently. The ambiguity attached to servants from the early modern period through to the nineteenth century meant that the servant occupied a very important place in the socio-literary landscape of Great Britain and particularly of the early Gothic genre. Servant narrative is a constant subversion of social boundaries manifested in a systematic rebellion and a defence of the alternative narrative identity. The texts examined in this study constitute the main body of the early Gothic genre, and as such contain the most formative examples of Gothic servant narrators and narratives. Within them servant narrators engage with political, psychological, moral, and social discourses, occupying a unique liminal space where they negotiate identity as domesticated ‘outsiders.’ Critical discourses pertaining to Gothic narratives and the multi-faceted self within Gothic texts have failed to fully incorporate servant narratives and servants as narrators. As such contemporary readers have missed an important element, a cornerstone in the Gothic ruin, if you will, crucial to the construction of the early Gothic novel. Without servant narratives the haunted structure of Gothic identity remains both incomplete and unexplored. This dissertation will establish that the study of servant characters is essential to readings of early Gothic texts (and beyond), and that such characters also significantly restructure our broader understandings of identity, genre, and narrative in the eighteenth century. The results will have a profound influence on critical Gothic discourse, and only through such examinations will narrative in the Gothic genre be fully contextualised for future readers and critics.

**Chapter One**

**Horace Walpole and Clara Reeve:**

**Servant narrative and “a new species of romance”**

I might have pleaded that, having created a new species of romance, I was at liberty to lay down what rules I thought fit for the conduct of it.

* Horace Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” *The Castle of Otranto*, 1765[[99]](#footnote-99)

‘I will be the first to acknowledge my young Lord.’

* Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 1777[[100]](#footnote-100)

When Horace Walpole released the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, a work which is widely considered the earliest and most influential Gothic novel, he did so under a pseudonym and advertised it as a rediscovered ancient text newly translated into English. His preface to the first edition described a work whose “principle incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity” but whose “language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism.”[[101]](#footnote-101) It was not uncommon for authors of his time to deny or qualify creative ownership in their paratext in order to protect themselves from criticism and imply some literary veracity.[[102]](#footnote-102) However, given *The Castle of Otranto*’s revolutionary generic identity and its role as a formative Gothic text, such assertions regarding the novel’s “barbarism” are problematic, particularly in terms of eighteenth-century literary critique. In fact, both Walpole and his critics articulated ambiguous views about the work’s ultimate literary merit. Walpole’s habit of, as Michael Gamer states, “gesturing to literary conventions yet refusing to wield (or oppose) them with propriety” raises questions about whether the novel should be read as a serious study of genre or, as E.F. Bleiler suggests, as “an enormous, pointless joke.”[[103]](#footnote-103) It was only after the work was critically well received that Walpole revealed himself as the author and suggested that he had “created a new species of romance” which, while under the protection of the literary traditions it claimed to re-imagine and incorporate, was the independent product of “what rules I thought fit for the conduct of it.”[[104]](#footnote-104) *The Castle of Otranto* examined ‘ancient’ settings and belief systems yet remains firmly anchored in an eighteenth-century understanding of such systems, suggesting the re-appropriation of historical and literary forms as a means of articulating contemporary socio-cultural discourse. Walpole’s work could be considered anything from a satirical deconstruction and fetishizing of a ‘gothic’ and ‘barbarian’ literary past to a very serious restructuring of ‘romance’ in a modern novel form. Regardless, *Otranto* was indeed the genesis, accidentally or otherwise, of a genre with new “rules,” including those which addressed the characterisation, narrative, and “deportment of the domestics” who run rampant through the pages of many early Gothic texts.[[105]](#footnote-105)

In these “domestics” Walpole created characters partially defined by the “simplicity of their behaviour, almost tending to excite smiles,” who in fact function as self-conscious narrators within the work.[[106]](#footnote-106) Walpole argued in his preface to *Otranto*’s second edition that such servants “should not be made to express their passions in the same dignified tone” as their employers, and, insomuch as Gamer argues that the novel “exhibits in its opening pages the purposiveness of a manifesto,” the style and content of servant narrative clearly reflects Walpole’s conception of literary “rules.”[[107]](#footnote-107)The speaking servant’s prominence both within the text and as a part of Walpole’s wider literary discourse suggests an attempt to place the supernatural in the realm of the ‘everyday’ and thus reconcile ancient ‘romance’ and Enlightenment rationality. Ironically, of course, servant characters’ reactions in *Otranto* to the plot’s extraordinary events (a rejection of Samuel Johnson’s call for fiction to only portray “accidents that daily happen in the world”) rather threaten to render the tale, as James Watt describes it, a farce of “bathos and hyperbole.”[[108]](#footnote-108) Gamer notes that the novel creates a “sense of inherent irony and self-conscious artifice” in that “one is somehow not meeting with characters and things but rather with performances of characters and representations of things.”[[109]](#footnote-109) Precisely because the work is so “self-conscious,” reading servant narrative as a ‘performance’ proves crucial to understanding the origins of the Gothic and the genre’s techniques of representation.

In articulating fear and emotion and demonstrating a subsequent investigatory or intuitive response, servants help reveal repressed realities and highlight the psychological and political expressions of other characters within the text. They also provide insight into the inner workings of the new Gothic genre as a literary experiment, exploiting their own connection to ‘romance’ and repurposing their narratives as reflections of authorship and genre. John Locke and Jonathan Swift, among others, suggest in their respective works on domesticity and education that servants typically “Tell the Children Stories of spirits” and that servant-educators elevate ‘romance’ and novels over more rational pursuits, an observation in keeping with a long association between the lower classes and superstition in the popular imagination.[[110]](#footnote-110) While these authors are pessimistic about the ultimate impact servants and their stories have on the national literary identity, however, Nick Groom argues that the supernatural in *The Castle of Otranto* was Walpole’s “primary innovation.”[[111]](#footnote-111) Groom suggests that Walpole breathed life into the new genre by positing that “the Gothic, far from being an antiquarian knot of history and politics, culture and society, could instead be a metaphor for the less tangible anxieties and traumas of the human condition.”[[112]](#footnote-112) In fact throughout *Otranto* (and in other early Gothic novels) the servant’s role as a domestic ‘spy’ and assumptions about servant narrative idioms contextualises their insight into the supernatural, among other things, and enables them to successfully navigate Gothic spaces. Their narrative autonomy and their preoccupation with formulating and imposing potential realities onto mysterious circumstances structure them as pseudo-Gothic authors with complex political and personal goals.

Swift’s assumptions that servants operate against a “common Enemy, which is your Master and Lady” conceptualises servant identity as potentially uncanny.[[113]](#footnote-113) Such tensions colour the servant character’s occasionally traumatising yet frequently constructive insight within the Gothic novel. As Mikhail Bakhtin suggests, a servant character in the modern novel is “called upon to participate in all intimate aspects of personal life” and thus has the potential to render the domestic alien and the alien domestic.[[114]](#footnote-114) She is a source of anxiety about the invasion of the ‘other’ and the security of the home and the private self, while also representing a ‘romantic’ or ‘Gothic’ system of metaphor which has a very real impact on dialectic strategies therein. As Ian Duncan notes, early Gothic texts politically “represent a middle-class subject’s anxious intuitions of historical powers which are ostensibly alien to it – located in past and foreign scenes – and yet claim possession of it.”[[115]](#footnote-115) The invasion of the ‘other’ or Gothic servant in a setting which incorporates a recognisable social hierarchy complicates the formation of stable identity. However, the extent to which Walpole himself recognised how important his servant characters were to larger socio-literary discourses is difficult to determine. *Otranto*’s function within a cultural framework is complicated by its own level of sophistication and its role as a literary response. Regardless, Walpole pointedly included servant narratives in his novel, and this trend is echoed by other developing Gothic authors such as Clara Reeve, author of *The Old English Baron; or The Champion of Virtue* (1777). This technique indicates an impulse on the part of early Gothic writers to contribute to a national literary system by engaging with French and British proponents of neoclassicism and the contemporary authors of ‘realist’ and sentimental novels. It also suggests a broader appreciation for servant narrative as an interpretive tool within the Gothic genre.

Duncan has established that “the idea of a national literature was one of the fruits of the romance revival, the major aesthetic enterprise of a broad, mixed, contentious cultural movement between 1750 and 1830 culminating in what has been called the ‘invention of tradition.’”[[116]](#footnote-116) This tradition incorporated a complex and sometimes contested literary heritage and defined a cultural identity. Walpole ostensibly resisted being “cramped by the rigorous forms of composition” which (he felt) dominated the literary scene, but in fact Walpole and Reeve were more likely writing both, as Punter suggests, “within the mainstream of the realist novel” and, as Davison argues, “*in reaction to* the realist novel,” incorporating and reimagining common elements in innovative ways. [[117]](#footnote-117) E. J. Clery notes that early Gothic authors were seeking to connect with “an enlightened, sceptical audience” and “to engage readers on multiple levels, through the marvellous, the probable, and the sentimental,” through complex subject matter and varied “narrative economy.”[[118]](#footnote-118) This required navigation of the increasingly blurred boundaries between ‘romance’ and ‘realism’ and a negotiation of, as Jacqueline Howard suggests, the overlapping “discursive structures” or “competing discursive practices” that render the Gothic genre part of “a socio-historically specific context” in terms of social identity, cultural legitimacy, and methods of narrative expression.[[119]](#footnote-119) Walpole’s paratextual writings and criticisms suggest that he was more actively interested in opposing ‘realist’ forms, though the underlying elements of self-consciousness and satire in *Otronto* align him rather closely with figures such as Swift. Thus while Walpole frequently and emphatically asserts his own Shakespearean literary heritage, Janet Todd points out that “Walpole’s servants belong as much to the eighteenth century” and are “designed for a complex, subtly decadent, and shiftingly hierarchical age.”[[120]](#footnote-120) Reeve openly imposed ‘realism’ in her text in an attempt to tone down Walpole’s excesses, yet her efforts to unite ‘romance’ and ‘realism’ distinguish the decidedly Gothic elements of the particular tropes and methodologies she adopted. In fact, simply identifying a tale as ‘gothic’ and ‘romantic,’ for Walpole but particularly for Reeve, was a direct engagement with writers such as Cervantes, Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding, who, Clery argues, in spite of their pseudo and proto-Gothic elements, “all made the claim for the originality and relevance of their fiction by distinguishing it from otherworldly, outdated ‘romance.’”[[121]](#footnote-121) The inclusion of a multi-faceted servant narrative within a ‘romance’ thus indicates a conscious literary act that cannot be overlooked.

While engaging with contemporary authors and critics, however, Walpole anchored most of his authorial identity within an on-going debate regarding the viability of early modern authors such as William Shakespeare in an eighteenth-century literary discourse. Within Walpole’s engagements with a literary identity and inheritance, the pervasiveness of the servant character’s narrative idiom in Shakespeare’s texts enabled the inclusion of ‘vulgar’ humour, systems of supernaturalism, and the blending of comedy and tragedy in violation of neoclassical unities. McKeon argues that critical focus on Aristotelian unities during the Restoration and arguably well into the eighteenth century “represents not so much a renewal of traditional standards and beliefs as the onset of crisis and the ingenuous experimentation (although contemporaries thought differently) with new modes of thought.”[[122]](#footnote-122) This sense of literary crisis and the resulting impulse for experimentation directed figures such as Samuel Johnson, Elizabeth Montague and François-Marie Arouet, known as Voltaire, towards the rehabilitation of William Shakespeare as a British literary genius, facilitating his incorporation into a body of national literature. The results of such discourses, for Walpole and other Gothic authors, lead to “ingenious experimentation” utilizing, among other things, servant narratives as constructive spaces for the development of in-text and authorial identity, as well as nationalistic and generic definition.

The blending of humour and tragedy in a single work and the inclusion of supernaturalism and ‘low’ characters required serious justification for Walpole, Johnson, and their contemporaries. Walpole defends his servant narrators in his prefaces to *Otranto*, drawing connections between himself and Shakespeare in that, like Shakespeare, “my rule was nature.”[[123]](#footnote-123) Walpole states in his second preface that:

The great master of nature, SHAKESPEARE, was the model I copied. Let me ask, if his tragedies of *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* would not lose a considerable share of their spirit and wonderful beauties, if the humour of the gravediggers, the fooleries of Polonius, and the clumsy jests of the Roman citizens, were omitted, or vested in heroics? Is not the eloquence of Antony, the nobler and affectedly-unaffected oration of Brutus, artificially exalted by the rude bursts of nature from the mouths of their auditors? These touches remind one of the Grecian sculptor, who, to convey the idea of a Colossus, within the dimensions of a seal, inserted a little boy measuring his thumb.

‘No,’ says Voltaire, in his edition of Corneille, ‘this mixture of buffoonery and solemnity is intolerable.’ – Voltaire is a genius – but not of Shakespeare’s magnitude.[[124]](#footnote-124)

For Voltaire, true literary merit “is simple without being low, and sublime without bombast; no declamation, nothing useless,” and thus a rejection of characters such as Shakespeare’s gravediggers in *Hamlet*.[[125]](#footnote-125) Suggestively for the Gothic genre, Anne Williams argues that servants and ‘low’ characters enact resistance: for example, “whereas the closet scene reveals Hamlet’s (and his father’s) effort to impose and enforce the law, the gravedigger scene illustrates the futility of such efforts.”[[126]](#footnote-126) ‘Low’ figures thus deny control, both within the specific text and in a broader rejection of literary unities and codes of legislative and political identity. The dismissal of servant characters on both technical and socio-moral grounds further problematizes and indeed politicizes their position within a literary discourse.Bakhtin misses the nuances of self-censorship and the private self in eighteenth-century life in his assertion that “people are as little embarrassed in a servant’s presence as they are in the presence of an ass,” but he is correct in suggesting that the active inclusion of servants in novels is part of a long-established and on-going interpretation of social relationships in literature.[[127]](#footnote-127) When speaking and performing servant characters appear in early Gothic fiction, then, they are at least partially a response to critical editions of Shakespeare’s collected works, exchanges between French and British authors and critics, and various theatrical adaptations and discourses. Such debates were crucial to the formation of British literary identity and the creation of the “spirit and wonderful beauties” which Walpole suggests develop through servant voices in literature.

In the course of a brief personal correspondence with Walpole, who found “fault in print with the criticism you (Voltaire) had made on our Shakespeare,” Voltaire characterised Shakespeare as a writer of exceptional talent marred by barbarity.[[128]](#footnote-128) “It is a beautiful nature,” Voltaire wrote, “but wild, no regularity, no propriety, no art […] I said that all genres are good except the boring kind. Yes, Sir, but coarseness is not a genre.”[[129]](#footnote-129) Voltaire infamously butchered his translation of *Hamlet* in an attempt to remove all its “coarseness,” and came to identify Shakespeare's work as “vulgar”and “barbarian.”[[130]](#footnote-130) By connecting ‘barbarity’ to Shakespeare and his incorporation of servant-specific narrative elements such as humour and supernaturalism, Voltaire suggests a negative reimagining of Britain’s ‘barbaric’ (or Gothic) past. Voltaire grew less equivocal as conflicts between the British and French flared up (including the Seven Years War (1756-1763)) and international relations deteriorated. In an open letter to the French Academy (presented in 1776, republished in England with a suitably bitter preface by Walpole in 1777) Voltaire asked the Academy to:

determine if a Nation, which has produced Iphigenie and Athalie ought to forsake them, to see on the Stage Men and Women strangled, Porters, Sorcerers, Buffoons, and drunken Priests; if our Court, so long celebrated for Politeness and Taste, ought to be changed into an Ale-House or a Gin-Shop, and if the Palace of a virtuous Queen ought to become a place of Prostitution.[[131]](#footnote-131)

Again the characteristics and preoccupations of the ‘lower’ orders, the “Porters, Sorcerers, Buffoons,” and the frequenters of “an Ale-House or a Gin-Shop,” are the aspects which Voltaire finds most inappropriate, though his letter to the Academy was decidedly more vitriolic than his former works. Voltaire’s opinion developed with his need to defend nationalistic literary traditions. Angela Wright notes that “although Voltaire argued strongly against the horrors of the Seven Years War in both his fictional and his non-fictional works, he was nonetheless unwillingly drawn into the polemics of the campaign” until ultimately “pragmatic patriotism” lead him to present “a far cruder version of Shakespeare” in his translations and criticism than he had originally conceived.[[132]](#footnote-132)

Shakespeare’s influence as a representative of a specific literary past reinforced his authority as a national figure, though in fact there were many technical aspects of Shakespeare's writing which both Voltaire and the British critics of the day found reason to dislike. Many British editors in the eighteenth century agreed with Voltaire in condemning Shakespeare’s disregard for the neoclassical unities, though as the campaign to defend Shakespeare grew more aggressive critics such as Elizabeth Montagu asserted that as a “Heaven-born genius” Shakespeare had a right to act “from something superior to rules” and “to appeal to nature herself.”[[133]](#footnote-133) Walpole clearly echoed this rejection of “rules” and appealed to a range of literary criticism in his incorporation of servant characters and narratives in his own texts. Samuel Johnson’s 1765 edition of Shakespeare’s collected works, a popular achievement which had a profound impact on Gothic writers such as Ann Radcliffe, among others, illustrates some of the ambiguity attached to the on-going critical discourse.[[134]](#footnote-134) Johnson protested against the extensive use of fancy in fiction and in his paratextual descriptions of Shakespeare admitted that his plays "are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind,” a “chaos of mingled purpose.”[[135]](#footnote-135) Johnson defines Shakespeare’s work as:

an interchange of seriousness and merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time, and exhilarated at another. But whatever be his purpose, whether to gladden or depress, or to conduct the story, without vehemence or emotion, through tracts of easy and familiar dialogue, he never fails to attain his purpose.[[136]](#footnote-136)

Johnson thus acknowledges the discursive styles which define servants as comic relief or as representatives of ‘barbaric’ superstition (or, in some cases, satiric rationality). He also points out an underlying “purpose” and artistic unity in Shakespeare’s work. ‘Low’ narratives thus allow for the exploration and exploitation of emotional expression and “familiar” and naturalistic depictions of life. As Johnson summarises in his Preface:

When Shakespeare's plan is understood, most of the criticism of *Rhymer* and *Voltaire* vanish away. The play of *Hamlet* is opened, without impropriety, by two sentinels; *Iago* bellows at *Brabantio'*s window, without injury to the scheme of the play, though in terms which a modern audience would not easily endure; the character of *Polonius* is seasonable and useful; and the Grave diggers themselves may be heard with applause.[[137]](#footnote-137)

When incorporated into a narrative whole, such narratives are thus not only acceptable but “may be heard with applause.” The “modern audience,” whatever it may “easily endure,” is asked to accept servant characters and their narratives as a way of depicting “nature” and of expressing new forms of literary experience.

Jess M. Stein argues that Walpole “recognized Shakespeare’s neglect of the ‘rules’ and consequently busied himself in preparing defences for him” as part of the formation of a national (and, in many ways, personal) literary identity.[[138]](#footnote-138) Walpole avowedly rejected the “timid laws” of the “French model” and called instead in his prologue to *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) for British “scenes” to be as “Free as your country” and to resist rules and boundaries both within texts and in delineations of genre.[[139]](#footnote-139) As Walpole wrote of his model: “who but Shakespeare could render mirth pathetic? His exquisite scene of the gravediggers is an instance of that magic and creative power – now so overwhelmed by the ignorance of French criticism, that it is acted no more!”[[140]](#footnote-140) In this, Stein asserts that Walpole also “struck something new in his treatment of Shakespeare’s tragic-comedy, justifying it, not defensively, but as a factor which adds to the beauty of the plays,” as a source of “creative power.”[[141]](#footnote-141) Walpole calls attention in his prefaces to the impact servant narrative has on other characters in the tale as a means of constructing a deeper and richer sense of characterisation: “the contrast between the sublime of the one and the naïveté of the other, sets the pathetic of the former in a moving light.”[[142]](#footnote-142) It is debatable whether Walpole succeeded in making his characters more “moving,” and Anne Williams notes that in terms of “his representation of ‘lower’ social orders and levels of discourse […] it is hard to judge the tone of this mock-heroic excursion into ‘literary theory.’”[[143]](#footnote-143) There is no doubt, however, that servant narrative does have an impact on how the reader appreciates the main characters as actors in a Gothic setting, shedding light on both their virtues and their flaws. Servant characters and the traits used to define them – their ‘lowness,’ their tendency to be wise comedians and rational fools, their superstitions, their importance in early modern works and as representatives of a Gothic past – made them spaces for a serious literary re-evaluation in British culture.

Of course, ‘nature’ as defined by an aristocratic or middle class readership and authorship did not necessarily accurately reflect lower class life. Tim Burke argues that “working class speech in Walpole’s writing is a parodic inflation of regular speech patterns” and is “characterised by repetition, redundancy, and cliché.”[[144]](#footnote-144) These discursive aspects construct a Gothic aesthetic and suggest unpredictability, suspense, and anxiety, the emotional reactions which define the genre. In terms of social critique, however, working-class poet Ann Yearsley responded satirically to Walpole’s choices in her poem “To the Right Hon. H-E W-E. On Reading *The Castle of Otranto*, December 1784,” published in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1785). Written from the viewpoint of maidservant Bianca in *Otranto*, Yearsley asserts that “My fluttering tongue, light, ever veering round, / On Wisdom’s narrow point has never fix’d; / I dearly love to hear the ceaseless sound, / Where Noise and Nonsense are completely mix’d.”[[145]](#footnote-145) This reclaimed servant voice suggests that Bianca’s “Noise and Nonsense” is a reflection of Walpole’s own immaturity as a writer and his negotiation of an aristocratic masculine identity. By parodying “the empty tattle, true to female rules,” Yearsley is, according to Burke, articulating a kind of “feminist irony” which exposes “the political fault-lines in its (*Otranto*’s) Gothic structure: the non-naturalistic representation of working speech, and the beguiling, but ultimately powerless, nature of its female voices.”[[146]](#footnote-146) This illuminates an aristocratic conservatism behind Walpole’s goals, as James Watt argues that Walpole was “mainly concerned about, on the one hand, subsuming eccentricity for a modern, leisured audience, and, on the other, confounding those readers without the necessary discrimination to accommodate such novelty.”[[147]](#footnote-147) While this argument threatens to undercut deeper readings of the text, it also suggests a conscious effort to engage with clichés, even unflattering ones, in order to articulate a discourse through the servant’s social and moral position. Indeed, as characters such as Walpole’s Bianca suggest, female servant voices are rather too pervasive to be completely “powerless.” As servants take on more active and independent roles within Gothic texts they articulate important political and social engagements, though they do not then necessarily herald the democratisation of literature.

Walpole’s Shakespearean servants in *The Castle of Otranto* and Clara Reeve’s equally conscious attempt to distance herself from Shakespeare in *The Old English Baron* are part of the development of a British literary tradition. While still part of the Gothic-Shakespeare debate, Reeve makes a serious effort to tone down the excesses of servant characters as a response to ‘realist’ constructions of early novels. Samuel Johnson delivered an equivocal look at ‘romance’ by stating that in ‘Gothic’ times “plebeian learning was laid out upon adventures, giants, dragons and enchantments.”[[148]](#footnote-148) This idea is echoed by early novelists and literary critics, who, Clery argues, saw ‘romance’ and supernaturalism as the realm of “fantasists and time-wasters.”[[149]](#footnote-149) In this way the works of Walpole constitute engagement through excess, while Reeve’s more restrained and Enlightenment-conscious narrative suggests that she was seeking to reconcile the “originality and relevance” of early novels with the revival of romantic forms.[[150]](#footnote-150) While Walpole’s adoption of the Gothic past was ambiguously defined by his class identity and his own love of irony, Reeve clearly demonstrates what Watt identifies as “the drive to refashion the self-image of Britain” as having a ‘Gothic’ history “defined increasingly in terms of a proud military heritage.”[[151]](#footnote-151) Clery notes that “novelists quibbled over the boundaries of probability and attempted to balance the demands of instruction and entertainment,” and that it is precisely the violation of “probability” which Walpole embraced and which Reeve in turn attempted to justify by limiting and qualifying her use of the supernatural and anchoring her plot in a moral-materialistic ethos.[[152]](#footnote-152) While there was conflict between definitions of literary value, however, there was also reconciliation and progression. Indeed, Reeve’s literary inquiry *The Progress of Romance* (1785) argues that entertainment and edification are not irreconcilable in romantic fiction.[[153]](#footnote-153) Servant narrative in ‘modern romance’ and early Gothic texts is an extension and embodiment of such discourses – servant narrators are the characters through which liminal understandings of personal and historical trauma are explored and expressed, and their narratives are designed specifically to incite emotions, reveal transgressive knowledge, and accelerate Gothicized upheaval.

Anne Williams and Christy Desmet argue that “if humanity resides within the individual self, as the evolving discourse on Shakespeare implied, that self, Horace Walpole suggested, was a man-made structure of considerable antiquity, strongly defended against external threats but concealing within itself dark unknown forces.”[[154]](#footnote-154) These dark forces, as per Edmund Burke’s famous assertion that “to make anything very terrible obscurity tends in general to be necessary,” are the source of Gothic dread within the text and an extension of Walpole’s ‘sublime’.[[155]](#footnote-155) They could be seen as metaphorical expressions of individual trauma and/or, as James Watt suggests, as “a historically conscious evocation” of a troubled socio-political self.[[156]](#footnote-156) Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* is a text which specifically depicts characters whose agency and perceptions essentially build the world around them as a means to exploring the self as a ‘Gothic’ structure. E.J. Clery argues that Burke’s *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (1757) “presented imagination not only as desirable – one rhetorical option among others – but as a necessity, mentally and even physiologically.”[[157]](#footnote-157) By attempting to leave, as Walpole states in his second preface, “the powers of fancy at liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention, and thence of creating more interesting situations” for both the characters and the readers themselves, Walpole initiates a narrative methodology based on Burke’s assertions which focuses on the subjective individual as an ‘author’.[[158]](#footnote-158) *The Castle of Otranto* is positioned between Enlightenment ideologies and perceptions of an internal ‘barbaric’ and creative self in its emphasis on the individual mind and the various influences which affect it. The arrogant, ambitious anti-hero Prince Manfred and the characters around him are alternatively controlled by “dark unknown forces” and “man-made” constructions of selfhood.[[159]](#footnote-159) Therein, servants are threats to the public and the private self, figures who insist on at least partially defining themselves through a subjective narrative and who therein undermine social structures and dominant ‘master’ narratives. Because of their ambiguity within eighteenth century socio-political and literary landscapes, Walpole positions them as figures who navigate both the domestic and exterior space and demonstrate an uncanny insight into the flaws and weaknesses of artificially constructed selves.

From the first pages of Walpole’s work servant narratives influence perceptions of self and the constructions of a Gothic aesthetic, destabilizing authority and narrative legitimacy. As Prince Manfred is introduced, Walpole filters the first voices of dissent through Manfred’s “tenants and subjects,” who “were less cautious in their discourses” and who connect Manfred’s decision to rush ahead with the marriage of his son Conrad and Lady Isabella to “an ancient prophecy” of obscure meaning.[[160]](#footnote-160) This passage significantly aligns lower-class oral storytelling with supernaturalism and discourses on legitimacy and history. Servants in this text occupy a position where their dependency on a patriarchal authoritarian narrative is undermined and where they, with the complacency of the omniscient narrator, pass judgment on their social betters. In contrast, Manfred’s wife Hippolita may only tentatively “venture to represent the danger” of her husband’s choices before she is silenced by Manfred and the limitations of her own gendered, political, and social position.[[161]](#footnote-161) In fact it is strongly implied that Manfred keeps the entire household, especially his female relatives, in a state of constant repression reflecting his own troubled sense of morality. Servant and familial counter-narratives thus suggest a psychological break in Manfred’s self as well as a potentially revolutionary tendency among certain domestic and social groups. The castle servants and the peasants, whom Manfred may threaten or bribe but who he is ultimately unable to fully silence, become the means through which aristocratic fears can be vocalised and Manfred’s mental and emotional states can be exposed. Servant narratives are legitimised as a space for liminal reconciliation and exploration through the servant’s willingness to read and interpret manifestations of ‘otherness’.

Details of the first supernatural incident to occur within the text (a giant flying helmet crushing Conrad) are conveyed to Manfred and the rest of the wedding guests by a servant, or rather by a servant’s inability to vocalise his meaning in a strictly verbal narrative construction. The unnamed domestic bursts into the scene, “breathless, in a frantic manner, his eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth. He said nothing, but pointed to the court. The company were struck with horror and amazement.”[[162]](#footnote-162) This servant narrative is a decidedly Gothic creation in keeping with David B. Morris’s evaluation of Burke and Freud’s understanding of sublimity insofar as it is “radically unstable,” an expression of “magnified feeling” unhindered by social restraint.[[163]](#footnote-163) Though the servant “said nothing,” his “frantic manner” creates narrative expression and inspires emotional responses in those around him. Gamer notes the novel’s “focus on sentiment and emotional gesture – on representing the *expression* of emotional conflict rather than on describing its internal processes.”[[164]](#footnote-164) Representation and ‘performance’ in servant narrative will take on a different meaning in later Gothic texts, but even in this instance the physicality of the servant suggests that the narrative ‘self,’ however it may reflect a private or individual identity, is a social, almost theatrical force. As per Jack Voller’s assertion that “Gothic supernaturalism seems to have been built almost according to a Burkean model,” David Sandner suggests that “the Gothic stands in for the void, actualizing emptiness and fear in the impossible images of the fantastic.”[[165]](#footnote-165) It is particularly fitting, then, that one of the very first servant narratives in the new Gothic genre would thus articulate the “impossible” “fantastic” through a narrative “void,” an actualised “emptiness” which very nearly embodies the full height of Burkean terror and sublimity in a representation of “*expression*.” Establishing the popular characterisation of the ‘insensible’ Gothic villain, Manfred is “less apprehensive than enraged” in response to what he perceives to be “the folly of his domestic.”[[166]](#footnote-166) This positions the servant narrative, incomplete as it is, as a foil for Manfred’s persistent yet ultimately doomed resistance to what Gamer describes as a “fixed narrative that no amount of character, no attention to detail, and no amount of stargazing can avert.”[[167]](#footnote-167)

When the servant is finally able to speak, he can only confusedly cry out the phrase “the helmet!” (a phrase then repeated by “a volley of voices,” the echo of a household in distress) and thus introduces the reader to the supernatural (manifested in the flying helmet) as a signifier (be it psychological, political, legal, etcetera) of dissent and displaced authority.[[168]](#footnote-168) In this text and other early Gothic novels interaction with the supernatural is inherently problematized as a system of reading, authentication, rejection, and confusion, the resurrection of a powerful past which proves important but ultimately depends on subjective interpretation. David Punter notes that in Gothic literature "the supernatural comes to represent the past, whether psychological or historical, rising up to assert its power within the present," and in fact Conrad’s death by flying helmet does suggest myriad repressed yet “rising” states.[[169]](#footnote-169) This argument is complicated by Chaplin’s assertions that in *Otranto* “spectral manifestations of a supposedly authentic ruling principle” are “ultimately no more ‘legitimate’ than Manfred’s own abject usurpation of power. The law exists in this text as no more than a spectral assemblage of signs circulating independently of the system of power which it is supposed to authenticate.”[[170]](#footnote-170) Without established symbols to enforce Manfred’s identity, hierarchical authority within *Otranto* becomes unstable. Therein the servant narrator’s choice to reinterpret the symbol of the helmet as profoundly threatening suggests a political engagement occurring amongst lower class representatives. The implications are profound as the servant deals a socio-political blow to the deviant aristocrat through a display of a kind of hyper-excessive ‘sensibility’ which reacts to and re-constructs Gothic ‘obscurity’. Even while leaving a major gap in his testimony this servant makes a profound emotional and psychological appeal to the audience through broken words and non-verbal expression, a primal reaction to the sudden appearance of a counter-symbol. His “frantic manner, eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth” is a performance of terror which effectively conveys a Gothicized emotion better than almost any verbal interjection.[[171]](#footnote-171) These aspects of servant narrative recur throughout the Gothic genre – the servant will usually appeal to the emotional rather than the rational self and will frequently herald complex developments in the text. Moreover, these narratives establish a corresponding servant approbation or rebellion responding to systems of authority within the social hierarchy.

Manfred, his plans temporarily disrupted by the death of his only male heir, quickly proposes a semi-incestuous and bigamous relationship with his almost-daughter-in-law, Isabella. Disrupted in his amours by the intervention of further supernatural occurrences, Manfred chases the unwilling object of his dubious affections through the dark passages of the castle. He also sends his domestics, the extensions of his household and in some ways of himself, out to look for her. The servants return quickly and the subsequent exchange alternatively reveals and problematizes knowledge:

‘Oh! My lord! I am glad we have found you!’ ‘Found me!’ said Manfred, ‘have you found the princess?’ ‘We thought we had, my lord,’ said the fellow, looking terrified, ‘but’ – ‘But what?’ cried the prince; ‘has she escaped?’ ‘Jaquez, and I, my lord’ – ‘Yes, I and Diego,’ interrupted the second, who came up in still greater consternation – ‘Speak one of you at a time!’ said Manfred; I ask you where is the princess?’ ‘We do not know, said they, both together, ‘but we are frightened out of our wits!’[[172]](#footnote-172)

Davison argues that Manfred is “a proto-detective” and “a suitable stand-in for the interpretive reader eager to make sense of the various cryptic clues that comprise Otranto’s narrative mysteries.”[[173]](#footnote-173) His reactions, then, reflect those of the external readership, placing servant speakers in a corresponding authorial role. This provides insight into Walpole’s Gothic mechanisms and manipulations. The reader can feel the heightened tension that results from the delay in information, caused (ironically) by Manfred as he attempts to navigate material reality and narrative. Like Manfred, the reader seeks narrative clarity. However, Manfred’s failure to quickly glean the facts makes the servants’ eventual assertion that they have seen a supernatural occurrence that much more unsettling. Found in “figures of speech which embody repetition,” in digression and interruption and narratives of “excess,” such discursive practices create and explore suspense and fear and connect such responses to servants as performers of Gothic narrative.[[174]](#footnote-174) Moreover, Manfred’s disruptiveness undermines his superiority as a master-character, emphasising the fact that he lacks important information and consistently misreads situations. Chaplin argues that *Otranto* “is a text obsessed by questions of legal origin, authority, and authenticity” as determined by myriad signifiers, and Manfred’s inability to understand and control servant narrative partially justifies his eventual fall from power.[[175]](#footnote-175)

The delay of information becomes almost incidental when the servants ‘accidentally/on purpose’ unleash a barrage of details peripherally related to the broader story, information arising from the aesthetic preoccupation of their narrative and contradicting the “impression of authority” which defines Manfred.[[176]](#footnote-176) Jaquez and Diego stumble over each other as they attempt to vocalize information, a pair of “competing voices” each attempting to gain primacy. They eventually give their names (and by extension their identities) and insight into the attitudes of the other servants (“not one of us has dared set foot around the castle, but two together”).[[177]](#footnote-177) They moreover hint at the upheaval caused by Conrad’s death and the fact that he has “not received a Christian burial.”[[178]](#footnote-178) Manfred’s role as a patriarchal authority is undermined by his failure to ensure the continuance of his line and fulfil his moral and material duty to bury his son, essentially domesticating and personalising ‘terror’ in terms of individual trauma and transgression. Morris suggests that the text’s “revision of the sublime is not concerned simply with hyperbolic emotion, but with the strange patterns of desire revealed in this family drama.”[[179]](#footnote-179) The details given by the servants, while suggesting “hyperbolic emotion,” nevertheless give insight into the plot’s emotional and psychological impact, and in particular how the responses of characters such as Manfred (in his pursuit of his daughter-in-law and suspension of fatherly grief) reflect “strange patterns of desire” within patriarchal hegemony. The servant narrative hides its secrets and complicates one’s perception of reality in the process, only to then redirect its audience back to the beginning. Jerrold Hogle states that the novel raises “the possibility that the boundaries […] may have been crossed, at least psychologically but also physically or both,” an anxiety which becomes part of the ambiguous servant figure’s idiom, the goal of their narrative expressions.[[180]](#footnote-180) The narrative which the servants attempt to share with Manfred in fact points to the real problem at hand – the incredible upheaval within the castle as a psychological, political, and moral structure, and that upheaval’s potential consequences.

Manfred’s selective understanding and rejection of information is a common reaction to Gothic servant narratives and, if one chooses to read Walpole’s work as a self-aware joke, a discourse on problematic reading practices. In attempting to modify Jaquez’s story Manfred censors an important part of the narrative and is ultimately left with an incomplete (and much delayed) explanation. Failing to read Jaquez’s tale properly limits his ability to fulfil his material or moral goals. The reader (if they did not attempt to ‘skip ahead’ like Manfred) as a result learns information which the in-text protagonist appears to miss and which is often critical to the specifics of characterisation and plot. This suggests an in-text response to the reader-author relationship and the development of the early novel as a digressive and subjective form. Manfred finally gleans from Jaquez that the incident took place in an area where Manfred had previously witnessed his own supernatural event, the “apparition of the portrait” that occurred in the very same gallery.[[181]](#footnote-181) The servant unwittingly recalls the incident of the portrait to Manfred’s mind and causes a mental and emotional review as “Manfred, who hitherto had treated the terror of his servants as an idle panic, was struck at this new circumstance.”[[182]](#footnote-182) The servant thus not only redefines the master’s narrative but also links it to identity as defined by portraiture, an alternative means of self-knowing and self-creating which is also connected to servant narratives in Ann Radcliffe’s texts, among others. Kamilla Elliott notes that Manfred “is a poor social identifier in general” and that in particular “the power of picture identification belongs to dependent women rather than men,” as evidenced later in the novel and throughout the genre.[[183]](#footnote-183) The objects and subjects of liminal narrative repeatedly suggest that identity is built by the individual and by uncontrollable forces both outside and within a structural ‘self’.

The servants complete their tale and reveal that a giant is moving about in the castle. Jaquez concludes his narrative with a demanding statement: “But, for heaven’s sake, good my lord, send for the chaplain, and have the castle exorcised! For, for certain, it is enchanted.”[[184]](#footnote-184) He is supported by a plea from the servant body:

‘Aye, pray do, my lord,’ cried all the servants at once, ‘or we must leave your highness’s service.’ ‘Peace, dotards!’ said Manfred, ‘and follow me; I will know what all this means.’ – ‘We, my lord!’ cried they, with one voice, ‘we would not go up to the gallery for your highness’s revenue.’[[185]](#footnote-185)

When servant’s talk “with one voice” in *Otranto* it suggests a unified narrative goal which opposes the drives of the protagonist. This revolutionary narrative reflects Bakhtin’s theories on the carnival grotesque and the ultimate subversion of social control enacted through ‘carnival’ narratives. Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund argue that, for Bakhtin,

A single narrative voice might give the impression of authority, unity and closure, but no authoritative voice can stifle the competing voices in a novel where a variety of meanings that stem from social interactions in dialogue are constantly produced. This plenitude of voices and meanings undermines the integrity of the dominant narrative voice.[[186]](#footnote-186)

The servant narrators, as a group with “one voice,” insist that Manfred either seek spiritual advice or risk losing his servants as symbols of his authority, presenting a paradoxically unified “plenitude” of voices and undermining “the integrity of the dominant narrative voice.” This reflects the construction of the ‘novel’ genre as what Bakhtin describes as a “working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality” in a “spirit of process and inconclusiveness,” as well as providing insight into the chaotic spontaneity of the Gothic genre.[[187]](#footnote-187) The servants reject Manfred’s authority in the devaluation of “your highness’s revenue” in favour of a moral and spiritualistic call for exorcism. Of course, Manfred will in fact ultimately lose the power attached to his wealth and position and will have to purge his family and his own soul in order to realise cosmic justice. Servants ambiguously set themselves up both as extensions of Manfred and as his opponents, violating the legitimacy of his rule and casting him as the potential demonic force that must be “exorcized.” Manfred expresses a desire to “know what all this means,” essentially seeking a narrative which supports his established identity, but the servant body rather chooses to accept their own interpretation and advocate spiritual realignment.[[188]](#footnote-188) The act of untangling a ‘mystery,’ and a social and personal identity, thus becomes a “process” which requires the on-going incorporation of narrative heterogeneity.

Eventually it is Princess Matilda’s female servant Bianca, the archetypal Gothic maidservant, who becomes the primary servant narrator in the text. Her narrative style and content is echoed time and time again in the works of Radcliffe and other early Gothic writers and is itself a rich portrait of Gothic identity and authorship. Matilda’s discussion with Bianca employs techniques of delay and interruption as a means of creating suspense and encouraging an emotional response. This response undermines Matilda’s understanding of herself and others by both overtly and covertly focusing on systems of socio-moral self-fashioning. Structurally, Bianca’s narrative fits perfectly into Walpole’s conception of a ‘natural’ form of everyday conversation (with digressions, interruptions, etcetera) and with broader constructions of a chaotic, emotional, and complex Gothic world – what Ann Yearsley calls “Noise and Nonsense.”[[189]](#footnote-189) Consider, for example, the interrupted exchange: “‘Blessed Mary!’ said Bianca, starting, ‘there it is again! dear madam, do you hear nothing? this castle is certainly haunted!’ – ‘Peace!’ said Matilda, ‘and listen! I did think I heard a voice – but it must be fancy; your terrors, I suppose, have infected me.’”[[190]](#footnote-190) These interruptions punctuate a story where suspense and delay heighten terror. Of course the reader knows that “this castle is certainly haunted,” and even when the disruption turns out to be a false alarm the psychological impact of fear is apparent. Matilda comments that Bianca’s “terrors, I suppose, have infected me,” and indeed Bianca’s manipulation of narrative, insofar as she presents terrors unrealised or unknowable, creates a Gothic aesthetic which influences perceptions of reality. Far from being marginalized, she in fact demonstrates pervasive agency and creativity. The suggestion that terror is ‘infectious’ points to a power in personal narration that transcends education and background. Bianca’s rejection of restraint suggests that the reality she is vocalizing cannot be contained. In many ways her character represents a narrative style which Chaplin argues “anticipates the Gothic’s tendency toward generic and epistemological anarchy.”[[191]](#footnote-191)

There is clearly an on-going re-evaluation of reality and identity occurring as Bianca converses and narrates in order to find the ‘truth’ about people and events and facilitates contextualised personal revelations. Bianca’s focus on discourses of marriage and deviancy paints women as heroine-protagonists and relegates Manfred to the role of tyrant, echoing previous servant exclamations.[[192]](#footnote-192) When Matilda questions her about Manfred’s motives for getting a chaplain (he summons a clergyman so he may quickly marry Isabella), Bianca suggests that “he is impatient to have you married; he is always raving for more sons; I warrant he is now impatient for grandsons.”[[193]](#footnote-193) Bianca is incorrect in assuming that Manfred wishes to marry off Matilda but correct in describing Manfred’s desire for grandsons and illustrating (perhaps accidentally) his paternal neglect of his daughter. She notes Manfred’s driving concern, the continuation of his line, which suggests that Bianca has heard Manfred’s “raving” and is thus conscious of Manfred’s motives and by extension the driving preoccupations of the text. She frames Manfred’s actions and impulses as ambiguous, both in their material goals and in their ultimate morality. Moreover, Bianca’s narrative hypothesis (which she moves through with breakneck speed – “how fast your thoughts amble!”) enables Matilda to vocalize her own opinions, agreeing with Bianca that her father is a man of “rugged temper” and “causeless severity” but adding that she “must not complain.”[[194]](#footnote-194)

Matilda’s reluctance to marry (due in part to Manfred’s poor treatment of Hippolita) becomes part of a larger social discourse:

‘Oh! madam,’ said Bianca, ‘all men use their wives so, when they are weary of them.’ ‘And yet you congratulated me but now,’ said Matilda, ‘when you fancied my father intended to dispose of me!’ ‘I would have you a great lady,’ replied Bianca, ‘come what will. I do not wish to see you moped in a convent, as you would be if you had your will, and if my lady, your mother, who knows that a bad husband is better than no husband at all, did not hinder you – Bless me! what noise is that! St. Nicholas forgive me! I was but in jest.’[[195]](#footnote-195)

Bianca facilitates discussion of the female body as a personal, social, legislative, and sexualized space in a Gothic identity. In doing so she reframes the formerly one-dimensional heroine character as an individual navigating repression and sexual morality. Her familiarity when discussing family matters – some would call it impertinence – suggests a tongue-in-cheek devaluation of servant narrative as ‘gossip’ yet proves valuable to the narrative progression. It illustrates what Robert Miles identifies as a “fear of cultural dislocation” in Gothic aesthetic.[[196]](#footnote-196) Bianca’s freely made remarks and Matilda’s subsequent engagements with them are just a few instances in the text where, as Miles notes, boundaries of “class, gender, and race are crossed, throwing ‘nature’ and self into question.”[[197]](#footnote-197) Within an “aesthetic of change, transition, a manifesto for new writing based on the authority of the old,” it is exactly Bianca’s willingness to ignore or manipulate social boundaries that facilitates the discussion of identity and “dislocation,” particularly regarding female characters.[[198]](#footnote-198) In Bianca’s narrative we thus see the predicament of women played out in this in-between world of ‘gothic’ romance and eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Bianca and Matilda identify marriage or religious life as the only two (equally problematic) options, with the possible consolation, according to Bianca, that marriage would make the woman “a great lady” and that even a “bad husband” ensures a wife’s social position. Her choice to use Hippolita as an example is troubling, again emphasising Matilda’s awkward options and illuminating Manfred’s amoral treatment of his wife. Bianca’s subsequent alarm and narrative retraction – “I was but in jest” – further problematizes servant narrative by suggesting the influence of a totalitarian surveillance state (comprised of human and supernatural elements) which severely punishes dissent, particularly within discourses on marriage and sexuality.

This view of marriage transcends history even as it directly points to inequality in the eighteenth-century British legal system. Bianca’s statement that “I would have you a great lady” and “a bad husband is better than no husband at all” reflects eighteenth-century legislative and literary attempts to, as Chaplin suggests, reconcile a contemporary national identity with “a body of ancient customs that had the quality of folklore or romance about them.”[[199]](#footnote-199) Such assertions by the liminal servant suggest a pseudo-satire of contemporary marriage and call attention to the destabilising injustices of past and present legal systems. Bianca and Matilda’s exchange references discourses found in William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769), in which, as Chaplin notes, “Blackstone famously likens the English constitution to a ‘Gothic castle’ in need of only a modicum of renovation to make it relevant and effective within a modern context.”[[200]](#footnote-200) This metaphor echoes Walpole’s own literary ‘renovations’. Particularly relevant are Blackstone’s arguments regarding ‘coverture,’ a common law tradition in which a woman essentially had no individual self in the eyes of the law after her marriage. The original text states that: “By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband.”[[201]](#footnote-201) Blackstone’s work was published after Walpole’s novel, yet coverture was still a legal reality which both Walpole and Blackstone place in the context of a ‘Gothic castle’. Of course, Walpole and Blackstone problematize the Gothic space differently, and Walpole appears to approach this topic with more implicit criticism than is evident in the earlier editions of Blackstone’s work. This is perhaps at least partially due to what James Watt identifies as Walpole’s underlying “alienation” and “disaffection” with politics and the world in general and his on-going attempts at “aristocratic self-fashioning.”[[202]](#footnote-202) The Gothicizing of the British legal system, particularly as it played out in exchanges between Edmund Burke and Mary Wollstonecraft and in discussions of Blackstone, becomes particularly important in the work of Ann Radcliffe and other female Gothic authors as a destabilising element within their texts, as an articulation of political anxieties, and as a meditation on the validity of ‘Gothic’ romance as a genre. Blackstone’s assertions have fundamental and troubling implications for female identity, and Bianca’s insistence on defining Matilda (and herself) through the marriage market presents a disturbing patriarchal narrative compromised by an unrestrained female servant voice.[[203]](#footnote-203)

When Bianca then redirects attention from the patriarchal ‘law’ to the validity of feminine regenerative desire, she is both illustrating and openly challenging a system in which female identity is compromised. Indeed, in spite of her originality Bianca’s discussions of sexuality and marriage illustrate Walpole’s debt to Shakespeare. For example, Bianca’s conversations with Matilda and Manfred parallel exchanges between the characters Emilia, Desdemona, and Iago in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, although the play is not directly referenced in Walpole’s text. Consider Emilia’s famous speech: “But I do think it is their husband’s faults / If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties / And pour our treasures into foreign laps, / Or else break out in peevish jealousies, / Throwing restraint upon us / […] Yet we have some revenge.”[[204]](#footnote-204) Emilia’s comic-serious and consciously irreverent desire to “Let husbands know / Their wives have sense like them” is met unenthusiastically by her mistress Desdemona, yet these words establish female agency and female desire as valid aspects of gender relationships.[[205]](#footnote-205) This kind of servant pragmatism suggests a significant and potentially revolutionary understanding of femininity and women’s individual roles within the patriarchal system. In seeking to find out more about the situations and people around her and in arguing for a liberated female identity Bianca not only criticizes her mistress’s own lack of judgment but also characterisations of the ‘heroine’ trope as inherently limited by the (arguably) arbitrary restraints of virtue and sexual hypocrisy.[[206]](#footnote-206) Bianca thus demonstrates an aristocratic and learned-class prerogative, as expressed through a liminal figure, to examine the negative effects of systematic repression as played out in Matilda’s relationships.

As the conversation between maid and mistress in *Otranto* progresses, Bianca calls attention to a critical signifier of identity – the portrait of “good Alfonso,” Theodore’s ancestor and the progenitor of the family line which will eventually retake Otranto castle.[[207]](#footnote-207) Bianca argues that this portrait is a site of female desire for Matilda, again articulating a narrative which depends heavily on interpretations of portraiture in Gothic space. Kamilla Elliott argues quite effectively in her work on portraiture that “portraits in Gothic fiction often lie outside of patriarchal authority, scrutiny, and directives, revealing knowledge withheld by patriarchal agendas and decrees.”[[208]](#footnote-208) In fact, Elliott identifies facial readings as “an area of literacy in which women were deemed to, allowed to, and *expected* to excel men,” and notes that female servants possess a particular insight in this field.[[209]](#footnote-209) As such both portraiture as identification and servants as identifiers take on “a countercultural and oppositional stance.”[[210]](#footnote-210) Discussion of Matilda’s desire and her connection with the portrait is framed by Bianca’s “oppositional” scepticism of the patriarchal narrative: “And you thank him, like a dutiful daughter, do you, madam?” Bianca sardonically responds to Matilda’s description of Manfred’s management of Matilda’s previous suitors.[[211]](#footnote-211) She continues: “But come, madam; suppose, tomorrow morning, he was to send for you to the great council chamber, and there you should find at his elbow a lovely young prince…a young hero resembling the picture of good Alfonso in the gallery.”[[212]](#footnote-212) Matilda’s defensive response that “I am not in love with a coloured panel” only emphasises the connection Bianca has already made.[[213]](#footnote-213) This portrait reflects the desire Matilda will later feel for Theodore and in the meantime serves as outlet for Matilda’s repressed personal identity, in addition to acting as a more general form of identification. As with the giant helmet, repressed psychological and material upheaval is brought to the surface through a signifying object and must therein be interpreted by, again, an impertinent domestic. Moreover, when Matilda attempts to curb Bianca’s curiosity through an appeal to familial obedience (“a child ought have no ears or eyes, but as parent directs,” an interesting statement given the compartmentalization of identity occurring throughout the novel), Bianca rebels.[[214]](#footnote-214) Matilda, by virtue of her role as heroine, is prevented from vocalizing her opinions about the injustice of her position until Bianca introduces the subject. Then, encouraged by the extremes of Bianca’s narrative, Matilda undermines patriarchal realities in response.

In an attempt to get information and construct a fuller narrative, Bianca tries teasing coercion:

‘But my lady Isabella would not be so reserved to me; she will let me talk to her of young men; and when a handsome cavalier has come to the castle, she has owned to me that she wished your brother Conrad resembled him.’ ‘Bianca,’ said the princess, ‘I do not allow you to mention my friend disrespectfully. Isabella is of a cheerful disposition, but her soul is as pure as virtue itself. She knows your idle babbling humour, and perhaps has now and then encouraged it, to divert melancholy, and enliven the solitude in which my father keeps us.’[[215]](#footnote-215)

Matilda attempts to restrain a subversive narrative by blaming Bianca’s “idle babbling humour” (reflecting, as Patricia Meyer Spacks and other critics outline, eighteenth-century literary assumptions about ‘gossiping’ servants).[[216]](#footnote-216) Again, too, Bianca tackles issues of covert female desire and identity. Bianca’s discussion of Isabella’s character is focused on her role as a sexual female, a young woman who prefers the “handsome cavalier” to her sickly fiancé. This suggests a level of sexual autonomy and a certain plucky spirit in Isabella, factors which might have endeared her to a more modern middle-class readership but which are hardly in keeping with the frigidity of a more straightforwardly virtuous ‘heroine.’ If Bianca’s characterisation of Isabella is accurate then it is clear that Isabella is toeing the line between resistance and duty and asserting an individualistic viewpoint contrary to a patriarchal framework (and perhaps also functioning as a semi-satirical element within Walpole’s work). In response to Bianca’s transgressive interpretation of the status quo, Matilda in turn engages with that interpretation according to her own identity and worldview. She both redefines Isabella’s ambiguous characterisation, her “virtue,” her “cheerful disposition,” and her inclination “to divert melancholy.”[[217]](#footnote-217) She then redirects the topic to the fact that the women of the castle live in “the solitude in which my father keeps us,” suggesting the misogynistic repression perpetrated by Manfred.[[218]](#footnote-218) Together, Bianca and Matilda construct a narrative for themselves and for the readership which layers characterisations of Manfred, Isabella, and Matilda. Bianca’s extreme vision allows Matilda room to vocalize her own discontent with her situation and characterise people whom she ostensibly should defend in front of a servant. The conversation bespeaks a complacent hypocrisy in this ‘romance’ which Walpole seems determined to exploit and expose.

Although Matilda initially contradicts Bianca’s assertions about Isabella, the more cynical reader may read Isabella herself as a problematic figure satirising certain romantic tropes. There is an open-endedness in Bianca’s words which the protagonist then fills in and, as with Manfred and his servants, narrative (in)completion becomes critical to the development of Gothic aesthetic and plot. The omniscient third-person narrator has already told the reader that Isabella “felt no concern for the death of Conrad, except commiseration,” reinforcing Bianca’s later assertion.[[219]](#footnote-219) Bianca’s characterisations of Isabella, who is Matilda’s Gothic double and who Morris argues “in effect holds the place in Manfred’s affection which he has denied Matilda,” are important to the examinations of moral and social identity.[[220]](#footnote-220) Bianca defends her assertions:

‘No, no, madam: my Lady Isabella is of another-guess mould than you take her for. She used indeed to sigh and lift up her eyes in your company, because she knows you are a saint - but when your back was turned’ – ‘You wrong her,’ said Matilda: ‘Isabella is no hypocrite: she has a due sense of devotion, but never affected a call she has not. On the contrary, she always combated my inclination for the cloister.’[[221]](#footnote-221)

Bianca implies that Matilda’s outlook is limited by her role as a “saint,” though Matilda is not such a saint that she does not appreciate the weaknesses of her peers or eventually explore her own passions. This is made apparent through the systematic advance and retreat between mistress and servant in which Matilda is forced to admit or deny assertions by the servant character and thereby subtly unpack practices of self-fashioning. This is essentially an instance of ‘gossip’ being used for the self-creation of a female identity: Alan F. Westin argues that “the individual’s desire for privacy is never absolute, since participation in society is an equally powerful desire,” though Patricia Meyer Spacks points out that frequently in the eighteenth-century literary imagination “the movement from innocence to experience involves also a shift from openness to self-concealment.”[[222]](#footnote-222) This suggests Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s assertions that, in the Gothic, “individual identity, including sexual identity, is social and relational rather than original or private; it is established only ex post facto, by recognition,” in this case by self-recognition or reader-recognition in narrative discourse.[[223]](#footnote-223)

Bianca explicitly states that Isabella is “of another-guess mould” than Matilda, but also calls upon Matilda to investigate and ‘recognise’ other people using her own dialectic awareness, her impulse to expand her knowledge through intuition and reason. Discussion of Isabella leads to speculation about other issues. Hints regarding Isabella’s sexual indiscretions double and reflect Matilda’s relationship with Theodore. Bianca insists on her own limited knowledge and posits her own theory after Matilda converses from her chamber window with the imprisoned foundling-hero Theodore:

‘No, no, madam, there is more in it than you great folks are aware of. Lopez told me, that all the servants believe this young fellow contrived my Lady Isabella’s escape: no, pray, madam, observe – you and I both know that my Lady Isabella never much fancied the prince your brother – well! he is killed just in the critical minute – I accuse nobody. A helmet falls from the moon – so my lord, your father, says; but Lopez and all the servants say, that this young spark is a magician, and stole it from Alfonso’s tomb.’ ‘Have done with this rhapsody of impertinence,’ said Matilda. ‘Nay, madam, as you please,’ cried Bianca; ‘yet it is very particular [...]’[[224]](#footnote-224)

This servant-master exchange manages to say both nothing and everything. The assertion that “there is more in it than you great folks are aware of” is certainly true, especially given the pervasive systems of repression within the castle. Bianca then moves on to tell Matilda something that “the servants believe” but which is not, in this particular narrative, something which Bianca can objectively confirm. The reader knows that Theodore did indeed help Isabella to escape, knowledge that establishes servant rumour as a valid means of obtaining information. The rest of the insight Bianca gives – that Isabella did not love Conrad, that Conrad was killed at “the critical minute” (cosmically speaking, and *directly* accusing nobody), and that the servants have discounted Manfred’s explanation of events – again suggests a rereading of reality which compromises authority and stable identity within the text. Bianca effectively redefines the identities of her employers, facilitates socio-political rebellion, and creates a ‘fantastic’ aesthetic all within a relatively succinct narrative assertion.

Matilda reacts negatively to this “rhapsody of impertinence” because to agree outright with her servant’s interpretation is to deny her own superiority, the dutiful compliance of Isabella, and the legitimacy of her father’s rule. Compromising Manfred’s legitimacy as a prince and Isabella’s identity as a dutiful princess (and as Matilda’s double within the text) would undermine Matilda’s material role, a role already violated by “spectral manifestations of a supposedly authentic ruling principle” and undermined by her servant’s “impertinence.”[[225]](#footnote-225) Bianca compromises with an “as you please” but then immediately reiterates that the whole situation is “very particular.” This is hardly a comprehensive retraction, and the lack of solid evidence to the contrary only buoys Bianca’s assertion. Matilda demands that Bianca dare not “breathe a suspicion on the purity of my dear Isabella’s fame,” while Bianca’s response is less than accommodating: “‘Purity or not purity,’ said Bianca, ‘gone she is –.’”[[226]](#footnote-226) Bianca’s response implies that the mere absence (absence again indicating Gothic anxieties and narrative method) of defensible identity is evidence of something darker. Matilda and Isabella’s competition for Theodore somewhat negates positive characterisations of Isabella in favour of Bianca's more cynical classification. Matilda’s later flowery protestations of friendship and Isabella’s ostensibly selfless reasoning behind her decision to remove Matilda as a romantic rival only support Bianca’s implicit reasoning that the two must and will compete for Theodore and that both are equally threatened by a repressive patriarchal system.

In this and in the information received, or not received, in her conversation with the then-unidentified Gothic hero Theodore (temporarily imprisoned beneath Matilda’s window), Matilda is forced to make some conclusions which validate servant narrative:

‘To be sure, said Matilda, ‘thy observations are not totally without foundation – Isabella’s flight amazes me: the curiosity of this stranger is very particular – yet Isabella never concealed a thought from me.’ ‘So she told you,’ said Bianca, ‘to fish out your secrets; but who knows, madam, but this may be some prince in disguise? do, madam, let me open the window, and ask him a few questions!’[[227]](#footnote-227)

Matilda refuses this request, stating that “I will ask him myself.”[[228]](#footnote-228) It seems that she alone has the right to determine Theodore’s narrative worth, even though Bianca notes that “perhaps the questions, I should have put to him, would have been more to the purpose than those you have been pleased to ask him.”[[229]](#footnote-229) In fact, Bianca hits on one of the most important plot developments of the story, that Theodore is in fact “some prince in disguise.” Adopting the role of authorial metonym, a manifestation of genre engagement and practices of ‘reading’ and interpreting, Bianca encourages a deeper probing of Theodore’s narrative in order to develop a romantic subplot: “this is certainly the young peasant; and by my conscience, he is in love – well this is a charming adventure! – do, madam, let us sift him. He does not know you, but takes you for one of my lady Hippolita’s women.”[[230]](#footnote-230) Bianca’s classification of this incident as an “adventure” places the narrative in a romantic-chivalric framework in which traumatic developments become “charming,” and therein redefines the prerogatives of the genre. When Theodore mistakes Matilda for a servant (and later mistakes Isabella for Matilda) the sub-plot suggests the bed-tricks of early modern writers as well as exploring what later Gothic writers would identify as a means to transcend social boundaries, an adoption of a servant ‘disguise’ for the sake of moving freely through dangerous spaces.[[231]](#footnote-231) Matilda, reads Theodore’s narrative as an aristocrat disguised as a servant (much like Theodore is also a prince pretending, accidentally, to be a peasant), and ultimately acknowledges that “it was no ruffian’s speech: his phrases were becoming a man of gentle birth” and suggests that a person’s character can be read in their speech-patterns and stylistic phrasing.[[232]](#footnote-232) In encouraging this method of conversation Bianca removes the characters from socio-moral systems of restraint and enables a dialectic response. In fact, Bianca allows her mistress to adopt numerous roles over the course of their conversation, including those of “saint” and heroine and sexual being, destabilising, redefining, and affirming identity by engaging with an alternative expression of narrative.

Ultimately Manfred and Bianca face each other in a competition for narrative control and moral legitimacy, pre-empting the final act of violence and incident of mistaken identity which closes the novel. Walpole sets these two characters up as contradictory narrative forces – the master who will not listen and the servant who insists on narrative control. This is a crucial narrative strategy, for Sedgwick argues that within the Gothic genre “the character’s social identity […] turns out to be an intimate and inclusive category: one’s true name, one’s closest ties, and one’s radical erotic choices” ultimately depend on “the accumulation of the various inscriptions of character” taken from external social forms.[[233]](#footnote-233) Manfred’s quest for narrative information again undermines his authority while also revealing personal or covert aspects of identity. Manfred corners Bianca in a hallway and confusedly asks if Isabella has feelings for a certain young man, waiting for Bianca to fill in the blanks so that he does not have admit to his amoral desires. He asks if she understands him and Bianca responds “Lord bless me! understand your highness? no, not I.”[[234]](#footnote-234) It soon becomes clear that Manfred and Bianca are operating at cross-purposes as Bianca repeatedly promises Manfred a narrative payoff which she then fails to deliver. After insisting, in a phrase reminiscent of Richardson’s heroine Pamela, that "though I am poor, I am honest," Bianca assumes narrative responsibility and, by extension, control over the moral reality.[[235]](#footnote-235) ‘Honesty’ in peasants and servant characters implies narrative legitimacy and is used by figures such as Pamela or Bianca as a means of resisting aristocratic attempts to devalue their identities. McKeon notes that in Samuel Richardson’s text Mr. B –’s desire to rape Pamela is an “expedient for enacting the venerable aristocratic plot,” but that assertions regarding the ‘honesty’ of the exploited serving classes denies the aristocrat’s attempts to “make others accept one’s version of events as authoritative.”[[236]](#footnote-236) By stating that she is “poor” and “honest” Bianca is formulating narrative rebellion against Manfred, labelling herself as one of the ‘deserving’ poor and justifying her narrative expression.

Bianca’s narrative is pointedly devoid of new information and punctuated by jabs at Manfred’s weaknesses. Bianca repeatedly (and correctly) suggests that Matilda, not Isabella, is the one romantically involved with Theodore. Manfred’s aggressive questioning does not get him far, and Bianca continuously requires proper identification before proceeding: “Where did they meet? – When?” Manfred interrupted Bianca. “‘Who! my Lady Matilda?’ said Bianca. ‘No, no, not Matilda; Isabella.’”[[237]](#footnote-237) Bianca's narrative associations reflects the confusion of Manfred's own mind – he neglects his true daughter in pursuit of a semi-incestuous relationship with his daughter-in-law and ultimately accidentally kills Matilda instead of Isabella in a fit of misdirected sexual jealousy. Bianca’s focus, intentional or otherwise, on the doubling identity of the two heroines again casts light on the material-patriarchal narrative that categorises the young women as possessions and marriage trophies. She calls attention to their individuality, their familial relationships, and their personal desires while at the same time, paradoxically, blurring and misplacing their identities as a reflection of the dominant narrative’s own ambiguities. Bianca moreover tacitly supports Theodore’s hereditary rights and moral superiority with the assertion that “we are all in love with him; there is not a soul in the castle but would rejoice to have him for our prince – I mean, when it shall please Heaven to call your highness to itself.”[[238]](#footnote-238)

It seems unlikely, in this context, for a woman who has prided herself on her own superior insight (even when she is wrong) throughout the text to suddenly admit to not understanding a question (“understand your highness? no, not I”) and to so directly insult the master of the house.[[239]](#footnote-239) However, the reader knows that Bianca is loyal to Matilda and that she covertly disapproves of Manfred and his choices. She is willing to engage in subterfuge to glean information and as a servant she is aware of much that goes on within the castle. These factors and her vague responses to Manfred suggest that Bianca seeks to draw him out and modify the narrative he is both presenting and receiving. If she is withholding the information accidentally then by implication she emphasises Theodore’s virtues because she is instinctively aware of the precariousness of Manfred’s position and confuses Matilda and Isabella because of their natural similarities. If, however, Bianca is actually actively aware of the impact that this delay and misdirection is having on Manfred then she is also engaging in a self-conscious and rather clever reconstruction of reality. In a unique kind of self-made authorship Bianca redirects Manfred’s focus to the morality of his choices and the tenuousness of his position while limiting the information provided in her own narrative. Morris notes that “Manfred’s pursuit of Isabella is not simply an expression of unrequited desire but the re-enactment of an ancient pattern,” a pattern which Bianca seems determined, consciously or unconsciously, to untangle and reflect back on Manfred’s own constructions of identity.[[240]](#footnote-240) Like a Gothic author Bianca selectively exploits narrative, making the reader and/or protagonist complicit in their own emotional manipulation and using narrative mechanisms such as exaggerated performativity, self-interruption, or conspicuous plot holes to elicit a response. Manfred essentially bribes her with jewels in order to confirm his own worst fears, while Bianca independently calls significant attention to Manfred’s problematic approach and to the idea that he is “jealous of young Theodore,” who, unlike Manfred, “is a proper young man.”[[241]](#footnote-241) It may be Bianca’s “duty to conceal nothing from me” but since Manfred cannot control Bianca’s narrative style or his own fears he cannot then interpret the narrative Bianca chooses to present.[[242]](#footnote-242)

Manfred has not escaped Bianca long before she returns to reveal the upheaval of the household, and in one fell swoop she nearly undoes the alliance forming between Manfred and Frederic, Isabella’s father. Bianca witnesses another supernatural occurrence and, as in other servant narratives, her emotional self-expression contains a moral veracity that reiterates the novel’s themes: “‘The giant! The hand! – support me! I am terrified out of my senses,’ cried Bianca. ‘I will not sleep in the castle to-night. Where shall I go? – my things may come after me to-morrow – would I had been content to wed Francisco! – this is what comes of ambition!’”[[243]](#footnote-243) Bianca’s response hinges on a need to acknowledge and understand supernatural signifiers, and in her narrative she reveals Manfred’s own predicament. Her lament “Would I had been content to wed Francisco” suggests that Bianca sees legitimate marriage (such as Manfred’s marriage to Hippolita) as a means of salvation which protects a person from the supernatural experience. In fact throughout the early Gothic genre marriage (or at least a happy, well-arranged marriage) frequently signals the end of supernatural interference and arguably constitutes a form of socially approved protection against spiritual instability. Regardless, marriage is usually overseen (particularly in the works of Radcliffe) by the approving, if somewhat fanciful, servant character, and Bianca herself seems to find it the best possible (though still problematic) option available to women. Bianca goes on to state that the supernatural attack “is what comes of ambition” – she does not specifically state whose ambition but could be referring to both/either her own ambition or Manfred’s, an ambition which places Bianca in harm’s way and which, in Manfred’s case, causes the supernatural signifiers of illegitimacy to arise in the first place.

Manfred attempts to silence Bianca in front of the Marquis (“the wench is subject to fits”) to no avail as Bianca interjects:

‘– for certain it comes to warn your highness: why should it appear to me else? I say my prayers morning and evening – oh! If your highness had believed Diego! ‘tis the same hand that he saw the foot to in the gallery-chamber – Father Jerome has often told us the prophesy would be out one of these days. ‘Bianca,’ said he, ‘mark my words’’– ‘Thou ravest,’ said Manfred, in a rage, “be gone, and keep these fooleries to frighten thy companions.’ – ‘What! My lord,’ cried Bianca, do you think I have seen nothing? Go to the foot of the great stairs yourself – as I live, I saw it.’[[244]](#footnote-244)

Bianca correctly assumes that the giant has appeared as a result of Manfred’s illegitimacy – the occurrence indicates a lack of spiritual cohesion (Bianca stresses that “I say my prayers,” implying that Manfred does not) and the need to interpret Gothic signifiers (since the goal of the giant must be “to warn your highness”). Bianca threads together what she witnessed with Diego’s earlier narrative and with the prophecy presented by Father Jerome. Unlike Manfred, Bianca believes the stories she hears around the castle and appreciates the value of Jerome’s own interpretation, connecting fundamental moral issues with the ultimate triumph of historical justice. While Manfred rages that the whole incident is little more than a story invented to “frighten thy companions” (winking at the broader goals of the Gothic narrative) Bianca takes the right to hear, tell, and interpret stories as a basic expression of identity. She is so deeply attached to her right to narrative that when challenged she reacts with very un-servile assertiveness – “as I live, I saw it.” Bianca equates her own life to the realities she experiences with her senses, and while her outburst may seem like colourful emphasis it is hard to ignore the deeper meditation on narrative validity within this exchange. It illustrates the importance of the Gothic servant’s particular role as a *witness*, a living text or a surrogate author who sees, knows, and testifies to the realities of even problematic actions and reactions and therein re-constructs identity and reality.

The hybridization of literary resources is played out here as what Ian Duncan describes as “a popular culture of living speech and song and tale-telling” and “the literary culture of an aristocratic hegemony in the past” meets in the middle to form a reconstructed ‘romantic’ reality.[[245]](#footnote-245) Also apparent is Walpole’s debt to Shakespeare, particularly in instances when a repressed narrative returns to assert ‘truth.’ We can compare Manfred’s “thou ravest” and Bianca’s “as I live” to the arguments between married servants Iago and Emilia in *Othello*:

Iago: What, are you mad? I charge you get you home.

Emilia: Good gentleman, let me have leave to speak.

‘Tis proper I obey him, but not now.

Perchance, Iago, I will ne’er go home.[[246]](#footnote-246)

[…]

Iago: Zounds, hold your peace!

Emilia: ‘Twill out, ‘twill out, I peace!

No, I will speak as liberal as the north;

Let heaven, and men, and devils, let them all,

All, all cry shame against me, yet I’ll speak.

Iago: Be wise and get you home.

Emilia: I will not.[[247]](#footnote-247)

The vehemence with which Emilia and Bianca speak (even when threatened by “devils”) and equate their right to narrative expression with their identities and the identities of others indicates that Walpole was consciously assigning value to the Gothic servant narrator within his text. Both maidservants resist attempts to repress their narrative by engaging with extreme emotion, excess, and exaggeration in their words and performance, and in doing so argue for a socio-moral ‘self’ necessary to narrative revelation.

Even the in-text reaction to Bianca’s story demonstrates that servant narrative, while superficially disjointed, carries an emotional and moral weight. Manfred tries and fails to limit the damage done: “‘Can your highness listen,’ said Manfred, ‘to the delirium of a silly wench, who has heard stories of apparitions until she believes them?’ – ‘This is more than fancy,’ said the marquis; ‘her terror is too natural, and too strongly impressed, to be the work of imagination.’”[[248]](#footnote-248) The marquis judges the validity of Bianca’s tale by her “terror,” her reaction to the supernatural and her narrative ‘performance’ in a Gothic romance. The marquis and Bianca’s desire to experience the story in its entirety (through speaking, listening, and reacting) denies Manfred’s attempts at narrative containment. When Bianca continues to speak, Manfred again tries and fails to regain narrative control, even though she is clearly on the verge of imparting important information: “‘Lord! what, has not your greatness heard the story of the giant in the gallery-chamber?’ cried Bianca. ‘I marvel his highness has not told you – mayhap you do not know there is a prophecy’ – ‘this trifling is intolerable,’ interrupted Manfred.”[[249]](#footnote-249) Bianca has resisted Manfred’s stratagems, is aware of the unsettling occurrences in the castle (both the supernatural incidents and the long repression of the feminine), and consistently refuses to limit her narrative according to her employer’s wishes. Manfred rants at “my domestics suborned to spread tales injurious to my honour” but in fact Manfred’s own actions are his most comprehensive instruments of betrayal.[[250]](#footnote-250) The servant narrator in *Otranto* ultimately stands as the ‘wise fool’ and a meditation on narrative expression as a means of understanding and constructing identity. This is the final example of servant narrative within the text, but it sets the stage for the final crisis and reiterates patterns which will come to define the Gothic genre.

Whatever Horace Walpole believed his servants capable of in this new genre with its new rules, there are plenty of authors who found such characters (or at least such characters as Walpole wrote them) ridiculous and who developed their own literary work as much in spite of Walpole as because of him. Clara Reeve’s novel *The Old English Baron* responds to *The Castle of Otranto* while marketing itself as a more morally and historically consistent version of Gothic romance. Dale Townshend argues that the story, a romantic-morality tale of a noble foundling reclaiming his birth right, “replays the central dramatic occurrences in *Hamlet*, ostensibly in the interests of restoring to Gothic romance the sense of high sublimity that, at least for Reeve, had been compromised by the ludicrous, laughter-inducing extremes of *The Castle of Otranto*.”[[251]](#footnote-251) As in *The Castle of* *Otranto*, however, servant characters who pursue an independent narrative in order to examine identity are crucial to *The Old English Baron*’s structure and plot. The moralistic tone and various depictions of an idealized social hierarchy suggest Reeve’s concern that there were increasingly more lower class readers at this time and that within a literary work, “through the vehicle of entertainment, moral inferences should be conveyed to the reader.”[[252]](#footnote-252) *The Old English Baron* is therefore less a Gothic novel in the traditional sense and more “a picture of Gothic times and manners” which, as Robert Miles puts it, “firms up the Romance tendency to identify class differences with the natural order.”[[253]](#footnote-253) As such, servants in the text are less preoccupied with emotional, spiritual, and psychological exploration and more focused on the historical past and the reassignment of familial inheritance (material and otherwise). They affirm social hierarchies and facilitate historical justice, a reflection of both Reeve’s debt to Walpole and her determination to do something different. James Trainer argues that *The Old English Baron*’s“importance in the history of the Gothic novel lay retrospectively in the attempt to temper some of the excesses of Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* and prospectively in the creation of a climate in which Ann Radcliffe’s more sophisticated characters could survive.”[[254]](#footnote-254) Reeve’s work suffers from a lack of immediacy and is arguably too preoccupied with moral edification to be as entertaining as other early Gothic novels. However, its treatment of servants and its struggle with systems of pseudo-republican meritocracy make it an important bridge between the earliest works of the Gothic genre and the popular heyday of Radcliffe and Lewis.

The characters of Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* distinguish themselves as within the genre by functioning within a much more restrained and idealistic set of hierarchical rules, even though servants in Gothic literature typically transcend social restraints with relative ease.Janet Todd suggests that Reeve attempted to “use fiction for interventionist purposes.”[[255]](#footnote-255) In doing so Reeve sought to interrogate and justify a system of belief and behaviour and thus, as Trainer argues, relies “upon all her own eighteenth-century social prejudices” and in particular on “rigid class distinctions.”[[256]](#footnote-256) To a certain extent this reflects the moral drives of what Michael McKeon describes as the idealised “‘medieval’ model of personal discretion and submission that was increasingly at odds with the practicalities of wage employment.”[[257]](#footnote-257) As such, in spite of the underlying moral preoccupations and the strong personal loyalty of Reeve’s servant characters, servant narratives in the text take on a more material value as pseudo-legal documents. Servants are primarily depicted as witnesses within a series of judicial examinations who ensure socio-moral stability through their ability to recognise and support aristocratic merit. As Sue Chaplin argues, “in its application of Enlightenment principles of categorization to a somewhat disorderly textual domain, Reeve’s project may be compared to Blackstone’s systemisation of the ‘romance’ of English common law: both articulate similar anxieties as to the nature of authority, textuality, history and fictivity.”[[258]](#footnote-258) Servant narratives function within this “systemisation,” negotiating these anxieties through their verbal and active support. The tension between ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ forms of law and literature and the emerging British identity that grew out of these tensions are negotiated within Reeve’s examination of social boundaries and social mobility. The novel thus serves an important political role, as well as a literary one, by presenting a new national ideal.

Gary Kelly notes that Reeve’s “fictional world is purposely less alien, less ‘un-English,’ than Walpole’s,” and is set “in the 1420s, during a long period of instability, conflict, and civil war, with a child on the English throne, baronial factionalism that would in time ignite the wars of the Roses, threats of revolt in Wales, and looming English defeat in the Hundred Years War with France.”[[259]](#footnote-259) The plot is thus quickly contextualised in a space nationally recognisable and domestic and yet also vulnerable and unstable, reflecting anxieties regarding the Anglo-French conflicts occurring during Reeve’s time. Reeve incorporates a middle class meritocratic creed within a specific ‘Gothic’ setting, and in doing so prefaces an on-going dialogue with servant narrative as an expression of socio-moral discourse in Gothic literature. James Watt argues that Walpole’s work was defined by his aristocratic identity and cynicism while Reeve’s work reacted patriotically to conflict with the American colonies and France.”[[260]](#footnote-260) Reeve’s so-called ‘Loyalist Gothic’ was anchored in what Watt describes as “the drive to refashion the self-image of Britain.”[[261]](#footnote-261) Therein depictions of British Gothic histories were “purged of its associations with either democracy or frivolity and defined increasingly in terms of a proud military heritage,” though this seems to clash with Reeve’s underlying republicanism.[[262]](#footnote-262) As a result anxieties about servant loyalty and domestic revolution are negated or reworked in *The Old English Baron* in order to create a sense of political consistency, although Reeve preserved some of the narrative multiplicity and subjectivity that characterised Walpole’s own literary experiment. Servants in Reeve’s idealised system are defined by their loyalty to central characters rather than their ability and/or willingness to undermine the status quo, though they arguably do overthrow established hierarchical structures. They suggest an attempt to construct a nationalistic identity, Wright argues, in that Reeve “exposes the implicit tensions and connections between providing a moral version of what the British audience required, and catering to the self-same audience’s appetites for sentimental, seductive French narratives.”[[263]](#footnote-263) Servant narratives in particular arguably allow for the “sentimental” and forms of ‘sensibility,’ articulated as devotional service, while adhering to a more omnipresent moral code.

Reeve’s view of Gothic romance, unlike Walpole’s and in spite of its similarities to *Hamlet*, is not primarily a reflection of Shakespearean themes and style. Rather, Chaplin argues, *The Old English Baron* “anticipates the aesthetic, ethical, and epistemological principles of *The Progress of Romance* through a commitment to a variety of emerging eighteenth-century literary conventions – verisimilitude, the literature of sensibility and a revised (disciplined) Walpolean Gothic.”[[264]](#footnote-264) Reeve argues in her literary study *The* *Progress of Romance* that “no writings are more different than the ancient Romance and the modern Novel, yet they are frequently confounded together.”[[265]](#footnote-265) It thus requires discrimination to select books “capable of improving the morals and manners of mankind.”[[266]](#footnote-266) Like Walpole, Reeve sought to “unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and the modern Novel.”[[267]](#footnote-267) However, her ‘machinery’ was decidedly different from his. As previously noted, authors such as Richardson and Fielding sought to separate themselves, as Richardson himself stated, from “the pomp and parade of romance-writing” by “dismissing the improbable and the marvellous.”[[268]](#footnote-268) This attempt, as Robert Miles notes, was informed by “the Enlightenment’s self-conscious tones” and “the general drift of improving modernism,” but problematized by the romantic and proto-Gothic elements of these author’s works.[[269]](#footnote-269) Clery notes, however, that “by the 1770s the lack of new and original contenders was sending the novel into what appeared to be a terminal decline,” and Miles similarly suggests that by the 1780s “faith in the Enlightenment project was anything but firm.”[[270]](#footnote-270) Authors such as Sterne and Diderot suggest counter-Enlightenment aspects in their works, and the emerging libertine ideology of the Marquis de Sade also frequently employed Gothic elements as a means of constructing philosophical arguments and a specific aesthetic, complicating the Gothic genre’s moral didacticism. Within the genre Walpole’s “half-serious novelty” was reworked by Reeve and developed into “a viable commercial mode” which also contained serious literary and moral criticism.[[271]](#footnote-271)

Chaplin argues that Reeve essentially makes herself a “Johnsonian regulator of literary taste” in her attempt to “‘methodize’ the history of romance and account for its relation to the development of the contemporary novel.”[[272]](#footnote-272) Morris notes that Walpole made a “conscious protest against the Richardsonian model in fiction, with its realist techniques of narrative and its bourgeois attitudes toward marriage and social relations.”[[273]](#footnote-273) In contrast, as Davison argues, Reeve articulates “a more middle-class message in *Baron*, one that derives from Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*, especially its subtitle – *virtue will ultimately be rewarded*.”[[274]](#footnote-274)This is reflected in Reeve’s preface to the second edition of *The Old English Baron*: she states that in *Otranto* “the machinery is so violent, that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost *verge* of probability, the effect had been preserved.”[[275]](#footnote-275) Watt notes that, when it is used, “the supernatural in Reeve’s work plays a significantly benign and predictable role in the service of the hero.”[[276]](#footnote-276) Given the pervasive association between servants, romance, and the supernatural this trend has serious implications for servant narrative primacy and functionality. By toning down the fantastic supernaturalism and psychological implications, Ian Duncan argues that Reeve effectively “domesticates the extravagances of Walpolean Gothic through a bourgeois-puritan moral discipline” in the style of Richardson, suggesting that the text is essentially “a sort of origins of Grandison.”[[277]](#footnote-277) As in *The Progress of Romance*, *The Old English Baron* becomes a means of forming a literary ‘law,’ positing a system in which ‘romance’ provides “much useful instruction, as well as rational and elegant amusement.”[[278]](#footnote-278) Like Blackstone and Walpole, then, Reeve uses the Gothic to both problematize and define a didactic and dialectic system, to justify the genre’s place in the authority of a British literary tradition while also constructing identity and social structures through narrative.

Figures of authority within the text, such as the moral champion Sir Philip Harclay or the fatherly Baron Fitz-Owen, must engage with a servant narrative that either supports or denies their legitimacy, much like Manfred in *Otranto*. Reeve’s servants, however, pursue a much more methodical course in their narratives, and the ultimate results of narrative ‘questioning’ are decidedly less destructive than in Walpole’s work. Conscious, as Clery notes, of the “still risky nature of the venture into supernatural fiction, when established canons of taste rejected all improbabilities,” Reeve buttresses her examination of romance through a carefully constructed and hyper class-conscious servant narrative of moral and material identification.[[279]](#footnote-279) Unlike the works of many of her Gothic contemporaries, the main crux of Reeve’s story is not primarily the exploration of internal trauma but rather a materialist version of what Duncan terms “the structure of a dislocated origin.”[[280]](#footnote-280) Characterising servants as sacrosanct legal documents rather than talk-therapists, folkloric story-tellers, or anarchistic revolutionaries, Reeve constructs an idealised view in which the servant characters are almost blissfully devoted to the morally superior master, their individuality interwoven in their desire to serve. In one of the earliest examples of a servant-master relationship within the text, the servant of the honourable knight, Sir Philip, embodies subservience so profoundly that he was “maimed by the wounds he had received in the defence of his Master.”[[281]](#footnote-281) The servant is essentially an extension of Sir Philip’s war experience who dies and is quickly replaced by new character with connections to the main domestic plot. While finding this new servant, the son of a local peasant, Sir Philip comes across another lower-class figure, Wyatt, who confirms social boundaries and whose interaction with Sir Philip devolves into an exchange of obsequious humility condoned by Reeve. The ‘peasant’ figure is distinct from ‘servant’ characters in fiction and arguably less bound by servant-master co-dependency, but peasants in Reeve’s novel also illuminate the socio-moral discourses which define servant narratives.

Chaplin notes that “sensibility to some extent cuts across distinctions of class, facilitating democratic exchanges of hospitality” and suggesting an “egalitarian conceptualisation of subjectivity which […] to some extent unpicks notions of the legitimacy of juridical authority and ownership based upon bloodline alone.”[[282]](#footnote-282) Reeve structures class boundaries almost completely devoid of conflict as Philip and the peasant Wyatt:

conversed together on common subjects, like fellow-creatures of the same natural form and endowments, though different kinds of education had given a conscious superiority to the one, a conscious inferiority to the other; and the due respect was paid by the latter, without being exacted by the former.[[283]](#footnote-283)

No abrupt interjection of servant counter-narrative interrupts this conversation, and throughout the novel servants and those with lower-class backgrounds maintain a sense of “conscious inferiority.”[[284]](#footnote-284) Reeve qualifies this in her pseudo-democratic foundling subplot and in her acknowledgement of the artificiality of social roles for “fellow-creatures of the same natural form.”[[285]](#footnote-285) In spite of her patriotic or literary goals, Reeve’s depictions of social relationships and socio-moral legitimacy remain ambiguous throughout the text. While ‘public’ and ‘private’ selves are relatively uncomplicated here, protagonist Edmund’s placement both clarifies and complicates the system, as do prideful or ineffectual aristocrat characters and the general moral dialectic. Reeve identifies ‘bad’ aristocrats who are unworthy of their power while honouring the concept of “merit in obscurity.”[[286]](#footnote-286) However, the relative lack of servant ‘impertinence’ and the realization of Edmund’s true identity as a dispossessed nobleman rather than an exceptional lower class figure undercuts her liberalism. James Watt notes that, in contrast to other Gothic works, the novel “presents an aristocracy which is redeemable *because* it is possessed of merit,” a merit interrogated and approved by the servant-as-narrator.[[287]](#footnote-287) Reeve’s attempt to, as Chaplin states, “not only ‘methodise’ prose fiction, but morally to discipline its contemporary novelistic form” is thus reflected in a problematically un-problematic construction of servants as complacent parts of a carefully regulated socio-moral system. [[288]](#footnote-288)

Servant development occurs as ‘noble’ peasant and pseudo-servant (a martial squire rather than a domestic dependent) Edmund gradually proves his rightful place as lord of Lovel castle through the combined efforts of his noble and lower-class friends, especially old Joseph, a long tenured domestic. Stefan Andriopoulos notes that in regards to the reestablishment of lost identity and the safety of the protagonist character “supernatural agency is not directly represented anywhere, but is postulated in the gaps of the sometimes illegible manuscript” from which the story is ostensibly taken.[[289]](#footnote-289) Therein, Edmund’s ennobling successes are also frequently “displaced to the gaps in the narrative,” an absence suggestive of broader spiritual or historical agency rather than personal accomplishment.[[290]](#footnote-290) Indeed, the fact that the actions which arguably establish Edmund’s personal nobility are the ones displaced within the narrative redirects issues of meritocracy to discourses about the benevolence of a supernatural force, a sense of cosmic justice rather than individual value. In keeping with this discourse, Joseph, the primary servant narrator in the text, is himself a sort of manifestation of a lost and found manuscript, a remnant of the bygone past displaced and then rediscovered. Having “formerly served the old Lord Lovel,”

he only of all the old servants was left in the house, to take care of it, and to deliver it into the possession of the new proprietor, who retained him in his service: He was a man of few words, but much reflection; and without troubling himself about other people’s affairs, went silently and properly about his own business; more solicitous to discharge his duty, than to recommend himself to notice, and not seeming to aspire to any higher office than that of a serving man.[[291]](#footnote-291)

Joseph is an idealised servant, but also one who suggests narrative “gaps.” He is “left in the house” rather like furniture, but is also charged with the important task of handing over power and property “into the possession of the new proprietor.” Thus the omniscient narrator indicates in Joseph’s characterisation that this man has the power to bestow the castle, and the identity and authority that goes with it, on the ‘master’ in a symbolically critical way. His approbation or rejection is critical to establishing the identity of lost family members and to granting right of ownership to the correct heir, and though he ostensibly refuses to assert authority in his “few words” he is given power in his capacity for “reflection.” The use of the word “reflection” is particularly suggestive as Joseph eventually becomes a mirror (and thus more of an object than an active agent) through which Edmund sees his true self.

Joseph’s proprietorial position within the household emphasises the importance of the servant’s acceptance of the master’s legitimacy – in order for the system of hierarchal dominance and restraint (the mechanisms of volitional primacy) to function, all parties must willingly accept it. Reeve articulates an anxiety about the stability of social hierarchies and specifically illustrates the mutual co-dependency that exists between the classes, only to then sooth this anxiety by emphasizing the servant’s loyalty and lack of pretension. Joseph’s characterisation as a reliable narrator with a prevailing drive towards historical justice marks him out as crucial to the construction of identity, in this case most specifically the identity of Edmund (though other characters are also dramatically affected by Edmund’s social mobility). Miles even argues that “the old retainer Joseph is a potential father, a role he never realises owing to his instinctive recognition of Edmund as the repository of the house of Lovel’s legitimate blood.”[[292]](#footnote-292) This potential role incorporates Joseph into the configuration of “authority” as a kind of literal and figurative ‘father’ and thus a “cynosure of patriarchy” who confirms Edmund’s identity.[[293]](#footnote-293) This suggests what Davison argues is the examination of a “British class transition” in *The Old English Baron*, one which promotes “middle-class preoccupations” by sublimating aristocratic superiority to lower or middle-class moral interpretations of identity.[[294]](#footnote-294) However, Watt again suggests that such progressive discourses were in turn redirected by a nationalistic drive towards conceptions of an “ancient – and sometimes Gothic – constitution as an alternative, genuine source of political authority.”[[295]](#footnote-295) It is Joseph who demonstrates loyalty and love for the ostensibly lower-class Edmund very early in the text precisely because he recognises his ‘nobility’. He comments that “I cannot help thinking you were born to a higher station than what you now hold,” indicating a servant ‘sensibility’ to worth which further illuminates their narrative responses to ‘genuine’ authority.[[296]](#footnote-296) However, characterizations of Joseph as an ambiguous ‘authority’ himself in the context of ancient and modern systems and within middle class and aristocratic notions problematizes straightforward political readings of his narrative identity.

Edmund quickly attempts to re-assert an accepted narrative which denies Joseph’s suggestion, but Joseph pre-emptively removes himself from the narrative exchange and passes “out of sight and hearing” until such time as he is called upon to resume his narrative position, again indicating the intervention of a larger, pseudo-invisible moral impulse which directs all action.[[297]](#footnote-297) Joseph later strategically repeats to Edmund that “you are designed for great things; and I perceive that things are working about to some great end.”[[298]](#footnote-298) The use of the word “designed” further implies a shaping and creative forming of identity and suggests self-fashioning through internal and social attributes. Indeed, Edmund attempts to deny this identity but is prevented by Joseph’s appeal to higher influences: “Why do you call me your Master? I never was, nor ever can be, your Master. – God only knows that, said the good old man.”[[299]](#footnote-299) Perhaps it is more accurate to say ‘God and the servants only know that,’ for Reeve suggests that it is through both a cosmic plan for historical and moral justice and the servant’s insistance on personal worth and morality that Edmund comes to appreciate his own superiority.[[300]](#footnote-300) Joseph’s “instinctive recognition” indicates personal moral legitimacy beyond Edmund’s material power or wealth. That “Vain thought, that must have arisen from the partial suggestion of my two friends, Mr. William and old Joseph,” ultimately forces Edmund to take steps to reclaim his title.[[301]](#footnote-301) Edmund’s outlook is initially limited, but there is perhaps more inherent imagination within servant narrative. Edmund identifies his ambition as vanity and attributes its development to the combined suggestions of William and Joseph, one the youthful middling figure and one the old servant. However, the inescapable truth is that Edmund is the recognisably worthy and acknowledged master of the servant population and the space to which they are attached.

These characterisations come with great social and personal implications, including a decidedly economized understanding of personal responsibility. Stefan Andriopoulos identifies and Gothicizes Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776) as a reflection of the reconciliation of “private and social interests.”[[302]](#footnote-302) This arguably also characterises Reeve’s servant narrative assignation of identity and value to a master character, the cycle of servant and master narrative self-fashioning. The destabilisation of identity and social boundaries as well as the assumed interference of a supernatural ideal connects Smith’s economic theories with Reeve’s negotiation of the ‘self’ in narrative. Joseph’s narrative goals extend to the evaluation of personal productivity as a sign of legitimacy, suggesting the long term outcomes of Edmund’s rise to power – his affirmation of a noble identity will not only change his own life but the lives of those around him. Thus Edmund’s identity is part of an intensely interwoven socio-economic-moral system in which larger entities have a serious investment. Reeve’s novel, as Clery argues, is “an illustrative conduct-book for the proper correlation of wealth and virtue,” a materialistic morality play where a ‘master’ or property-holding identity is interrogated.[[303]](#footnote-303) Adam Smith’s system of economic self-regulation suggests the ways in which Edmund’s search for personal identity ultimately impacts upon the lives of his friends and dependents and how a divine plan could perhaps influence his development. Edmund is Smith’s ‘new economic man’: “By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends […] only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.”[[304]](#footnote-304) In identifying the legitimate ruler of the Lovel estate, Joseph essentially facilitates the agency of the “invisible hand,” the regulating force of spiritual, social, and historical identity, “to promote an end.” This end ultimately affects the roles of everyone connected to the estate, much like a merchant, in seeking his own gain, subsequently contributes to the health of the larger economy. Joseph reinforces economic systems himself by doing his “duty” “silently and properly,” with an air of restrained dignity in keeping with his role as a social representative, a legal document, and a tool of divine intervention.[[305]](#footnote-305) He is a kind of author of identity, then, or at least an object of text whose narrative constructs an alternative reality. This legitimizes the occasions when Joseph does speak up and justifies his moral position (he has not lowered himself to being a ‘gossipy’ servant), but it also suggests a selective absence, the gaps in narrative that perhaps indicate ‘otherness’ or the presence of an “invisible hand” which legitimizes or undermines identity independent of social norms.

In applying these kinds of social and material discourses Reeve posits that servant narrative compliance is crucial to the assertion of authority. In the course of Edmund’s personal journey Father Oswald tells him of Sir Walter, the illegitimate owner of the Lovel estate. Within his tale Oswald describes how Sir Walter asserted a narrative interpretation which the servants then rejected, much to Sir Walter’s detriment. Servants are again positioned as the figures of domestic regulation and socio-moral legitimacy. Servant narrators remember the (now dead) former Lady Lovel’s complaints about Sir Walter’s injustices, recollections which are then re-narrated to and by Oswald. Oswald recalls that “Sir Walter told the servants that Lady Lovel was distracted.” [[306]](#footnote-306) In this instance, Sir Walter attempts to dominate narrative by appealing to the better sense of the servant-audience. That Sir Walter wishes to control servant narrative at all is suggestive – servants are the innumerable and inescapable ‘loose ends’ of Gothic texts, and relatively free from the restraint which modifies upper-class narrative. The servants’ reactions and Sir Walter’s ultimate response foreshadow the mystery’s solution. Moreover, Oswald states that “the ghosts of Lord and Lady Lovel had been seen by several of the servants” and those who entered the apartments where Lady Lovel was confined “were terrified by uncommon noises and strange appearances; at length this apartment was wholly shut up, and the servants were forbid to enter it, or to talk of any thing relating to it.”[[307]](#footnote-307) In spite of this injunction and attempts by the master figure to limit servant speculation, “the story did not stop there; it was whispered about,” and the servants’ sense that something is wrong, either spiritually or materially, keeps the anti-Sir Walter narrative alive.[[308]](#footnote-308) Indeed, the former Lord Lovel is made a ghost through words if not through spiritual mechanisms. Servant gossip essentially defines actions and identity within the castle through the servants’ persistent resurrection of narrative phantoms.

Ultimately Sir Walter is forced to flee the home where he “was so disturbed every night” by the presence of avenging ghosts and most likely was disturbed again every day by irrepressible servant gossip.[[309]](#footnote-309) Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that gossip “is a catalyst of social process. It provides groups with means of self-control and emotional stability. It circulates both information and evaluation, supplies a mode of socialisation and social control, facilitates self-knowledge” and, in Reeve’s texts, provides a platform for social modification.[[310]](#footnote-310) Gossip has traditionally been devalued as a speech form and in Reeve’s texts it at least partially belongs to a dependent group whose ‘whispers’ nevertheless effectively wreck an aristocratic narrative. In this way Spacks’ characterisation of gossip as a way to “challenge the assumptions of the powerful,” while at the same time noting that “such talk serves interests of governing classes,” is evident in the servant narrator’s engagement with aristocratic moral legitimacy.[[311]](#footnote-311) When servant characters such as Joseph covertly condemn the explanations of their masters or, alternatively, identify and approve legitimate mastery, they are acting as figures of historical-moral validation rather than psychological-moral exploration. Gossip destabilises the domestic space while paradoxically serving the “governing classes” by moderating activity and ensuring proper social identification. A servant must accept the master as some kind of moral superior or socio-legislative representative in order for the overall structure to be maintained – thus Edmund is legitimized and Lord Lovel is de-legitimatized by a lower-class narrative which is itself a collection of fragmented collected evidence. In parallel, Joseph’s consistent positioning at times when judgment is being passed (usually wrongly) on Edmund indicates Joseph’s interest in unconsciously protecting the Lovel heir and his relevance, as a liminal servant, in matters of character-reading and socio-moral judgment. When Edmund himself is accused of gossiping it is noted that “the old servant, Joseph, at some distance, with his head leaning forward, as listening with the utmost attention to what passed,” consciously following the proceedings for and against Edmund and strategically shaping his response accordingly.[[312]](#footnote-312) The sympathy and emotional understanding of Joseph, who self- identifies as his (soon-to-be) master’s “friend,” is tempered by his earlier characterisation as a dutiful and unambitious servant, a figure with a higher calling than mere self-interest.[[313]](#footnote-313) His hybrid role as living manuscript and moral advocate makes his narrative assertions critical to the novel’s goals.

Dale Townshend notes that in this text “subjects are rendered known and knowable to one another only once they have disclosed the formative events of their personal histories through time.”[[314]](#footnote-314) This applies to all the characters, but Joseph’s narrative in particular and unnamed servant narratives in general thread together multiple narratives belonging to absent or otherwise incapacitated characters. These narratives have profound implications for Edmund’s identity. Joseph provides the detective-priest Oswald with the circumstantial and material confirmation of historical wrong-doing and Edmund’s legitimacy. This characterisation of servant narrative as a legal and organised system of response rather than an excess of emotional interjection reflects Reeve’s ‘methodizing’ of the romance novel.[[315]](#footnote-315) The emotionality of Lord and Lady Lovel’s deaths are still potent and the situation which Joseph describes is potentially traumatic, yet Joseph’s narrative reduces the event to a legal re-evaluation – the fantastic and excessive is made secondary to what Chaplin identifies as regularization “within the *moral* economy of the text.”[[316]](#footnote-316) In keeping with the Gothic servant narrative of interruption and response, Joseph vocalizes long held suspicions:

You then said, there were suspicions that he came not fairly to his end. I trust you both, and will speak what I know of it. There was a person suspected of this murder; and whom do you think it was? – You must speak out, said Oswald. – Why then, said Joseph, it was the present Lord Lovel. – You speak my thoughts, said Oswald; but proceed to the proofs.[[317]](#footnote-317)

Joseph speaks of “suspicions” rather than “proofs,” but his reluctance to commit to a narrative unless he is telling the tale to someone “I trust” validates his story and the worthiness of the listeners. Joseph’s story is again mostly collected gossip (qualified by phases such as “one of her women overheard” or “there were strange whisperings and consultations”) and he pads out his narrative with characterisations of the emotional and mental states of the figures involved.[[318]](#footnote-318) Oswald then further standardizes the narrative by seeking “proofs” and telling Joseph to “speak out,” again reflecting the impatience of a ‘master’ audience and the courtroom-like didactic method of the narrative.

Joseph recounts a conversation he shared with another character, Roger, the servant in charge of burying his mistress’s body (ironically, the figure in charge of burying her physical body becomes the figure who partially exhumes her true narrative), who “offered to take his oath” that the given account of the death of Lady Lovel was false.[[319]](#footnote-319) Joseph thus further complicates the narrative structure by not only re-creating past conversations but effectively embodying multiple texts and characters. In response to perceived narrative rebellion the new Lord Lovel attempts to repress the story circulating in his household before anyone can piece the truth together. Joseph notes that Lord Lovel “took most of the servants away with him, and Roger among the rest. As for me, they thought I knew nothing, and so they left me behind; but I was neither blind nor deaf, though I could hear, and see, and say nothing.”[[320]](#footnote-320) Joseph’s self-characterisation as “neither blind nor deaf” yet limited in his narrative by external circumstances is the core of the Gothic servant narrative – the repression and ultimate liberation of the problematic and the traumatic and the subsequent realignment of a ‘correct’ system of knowing or being. Thus Reeve echoes the core characteristics of Gothic narrative as established by Walpole, yet framing them in a system of regularized and material ‘evidence,’ a form of rational literature which, as Clery has argued, engages equally with “the marvellous, the probable and the sentimental.”[[321]](#footnote-321)

Clery suggests that in women’s Gothic literature “passions are represented with more immediacy” and are, in spite of her restrained style, the primary focus of Reeve’s efforts – if Reeve is emotionally understated in her novel it is arguably because she believed “in the immense affective power of the passions underlying her story.”[[322]](#footnote-322) Reeve is concerned with displacement within the story but the reconciliation of such displacement occurs in a legal rather than a spiritual reworking of identity. Rather than indulging in the emotional re-evaluation of psychological trauma in Gothic spaces, as in Walpole’s *Otranto*, Clery argues that for Reeve“the emphasis of the plot must lie in the arduous task of legal, social, and economic reparations.”[[323]](#footnote-323) Joseph is a legitimizing force for Edmund, the identifier of personhood. Once he is free to vocalize his narrative he states that:

I must tell you, though I never uttered it to mortal man before; the striking resemblance this young man bears to my dear Lord, the strange dislike his reputed father took to him, his gentle manners, his generous heart, his noble qualities so uncommon in those of his birth and breeding, the sound of his voice – you may smile at the strength of my fancy, but I cannot put it out of my mind but that he is my own Master’s son.[[324]](#footnote-324)

Joseph is effectively reading the character of Edmund, both in the physical and moral or emotional sense, and translating that reading into an oral confirmation of Edmund’s identity. He lists Edmund’s physical attributes (“the striking resemblance”), the actions and reactions of his adopted father, and his personal “noble qualities” which belie his assumed “birth and breeding” and point to a hidden yet irrepressible self. Servant narrative thus forms a kind of revolutionary impulse, but one which manifests as support for the ‘correct’ aristocrat over the ‘established’ one rather than as an indictment of the whole system. Joseph self-deprecatingly acknowledges a tendency to connect servant narrative and “fancy,” but this fancy has a basis in truth as suggested by the fact that Joseph “cannot put it out of my mind.”

Joseph’s identification of the material trappings of personhood is equally important, and he tellingly assigns private possessions accordingly:

’Tis my Lord’s armour, said Joseph; I know it well: Here has been bloody work in this closet! – Going forward he stumbled over something; it was a ring with the arms of Lovel engraved upon it. This is my Lord’s ring, said Joseph; I have seen him wear it: I give it to you, Sir, as the right owner; and most religiously do I believe you his son.[[325]](#footnote-325)

Joseph takes it upon himself to give Edmund Lord Lovel’s ring “as the right owner.” By “religiously” doing so he reinforces his own role as a narrator and the dispenser of material and moral identity within the story. As the caretaker of the castle, he is also the socio-morally significant figure whose approbation manifests itself in a verbal and physical performance of service and in the interpretation and gifting of signifiers of authority. He later identifies the bloody armour in front of witnesses, acknowledging evidence of crime and solidifying Edmund’s hereditary right: “it was my Lord’s, said Joseph; the late Lord Lovel; I have seen him wear it.”[[326]](#footnote-326) Chaplin argues that, as in *Otranto*, “authentication” requires the interpretation of “a symbolic order comprised of the ‘enchanted’ signs of a disavowed founding father.”[[327]](#footnote-327) In this case the signifier, without taking on the unrealistic agency of a giant flying helmet, is nevertheless a readable sign which the servant narrator uses to affirm or deny identity. Joseph’s narrative is both legal documentation and a confirmation of Heaven that justice has been served, the domestic legitimising force confirming the results of the morally significant trial-by-combat and the eventual confession of the criminal wrongdoer.

In this framework Joseph’s understanding of identity is also a moral one, suggesting that Edmund’s ultimate victory over obscurity has higher connotations. When asked whether Edmund could perhaps be the bastard son of Lord Lovel (as a way of explaining the unusual circumstances) Joseph’s response is vehement: “Hold there! Said Joseph; my Lord was incapable of such an action: If Master Edmund is the son of my Lord, he is also the son of my Lady.”[[328]](#footnote-328) When Edmund questions this, Joseph then directs the line of inquiry to “a person who can tell if she will: I mean Margery Twyford, who calls herself your mother.”[[329]](#footnote-329) Reeve’s “manipulation of the Gothic to reaffirm a Christian worldview” is not to be underestimated, especially as Davison suggests that Reeve’s novel posits the anti-Catholic message which pervades the Gothic genre before and after Reeve’s work and which characterises supernatural phenomenon.[[330]](#footnote-330) Joseph informs and defends the deceased Lord and Lady Lovel’s identity on a material and spiritual-historical level – as a figure of ‘memory’ he is the only one who can narrate a moral defence for those who cannot actively defend themselves. Establishing moral as well as material legitimacy reflects Reeve’s broader literary goals and casts the servant character as a pseudo-authorial metonym. Within this role Joseph’s actions and reactions legitimize Gothic techniques (for example, the use of supernaturalism) but also bring the argument into a discourse of political and social hierarchy and the volitional approval of the ‘lower’ orders.

Indeed, minor antagonist Wenlock assumes Joseph’s dishonesty in relation to spiritual and social loyalties – “you see cousin Jack, said Wenlock, how this villain has stole the hearts of my Uncle’s servants: I suppose this canting old fellow knows where he is, if truth be known” – while failing to understand that Joseph’s loyalty comes from Edmund’s being “so good a young man.”[[331]](#footnote-331) In a parallel Wenlock repeatedly calls Joseph’s loyalty into question even when circumstances suggest that Joseph’s responses are anchored in a higher spirituality. When encouraged to spend the night in the haunted rooms, Joseph reasonably replies:

My Lord, I am a poor ignorant man, not fit for such an undertaking: Beside, if I should see the ghost, and if it should be the person of my Master, and if it should tell me any thing, and bid me keep it secret, I should not dare to disclose it; and then, what service should I do your Lordship?[[332]](#footnote-332)

Wenlock responds “that Joseph is not a man for us to depend upon; he regards the Lord Lovel, though dead, more than Lord Fitz-Owen, living; he calls him his Master, and promises to keep his secrets.”[[333]](#footnote-333) Given Reeve’s re-imagining of supernatural mechanisms as both exciting and “useful,” Wenlock’s position suggests a failure to read such forms properly, a pedantic self-involvement through which Wenlock fails to reconcile what he ‘reads’ or hears with his moral development.[[334]](#footnote-334) While Reeve argued that supernatural tropes must be used sparingly in new Gothic fiction, Clery states that Reeve allowed such things to be “slipped back into the realm of truth” and re-interpreted for the moral good of all.[[335]](#footnote-335) Therein, Joseph suggests a dialectic methodology which the novel’s villain fails to comprehend. Moreover, as Fitz-Owen is the master of the castle it seems rather more fitting that he himself should investigate the paranormal activity of his home rather than requiring his subordinates to do it. He, too, proves an ‘illegitimate’ father figure in his failure to ‘read’ the supernatural and the servant’s narrative, particularly in light of Edmund’s later willingness to spend the night in the haunted rooms.

Eventually, Joseph overhears evidence confirming Edmund’s identity – he declares “I knew it! I knew it! Thank God for it!”[[336]](#footnote-336) Joseph’s insistence that “I will be the first to acknowledge my young Lord” indicates an inherent power attributed to the servant narrative as a means of constructing identity, not only for the master but also for the servant who sees value and primacy in his loyalty and narrative insight, his ability to read reality and vocalize what he is seeing.[[337]](#footnote-337) Oswald and Joseph designate themselves as the keepers of Edmund’s identity and link their own selves, their “last remains of life and strength,” to the restoration of his long lost birth right.[[338]](#footnote-338) Joseph’s narrative superiority, even over other servants, is apparent when “the moment Edmund entered the hall, every door in the house flew open; the servants all rushed onto the hall, and fear was written on their countenances: Joseph only was undaunted. These doors, said he, open of their own accord to receive their master! this is he indeed!”[[339]](#footnote-339) Joseph is again attached to the material household and charged with seeing the possessions and position therein bestowed on their rightful lord. The house, like a good servant, recognizes the true master. While the other servants are afraid, Joseph, who has narrative insight and a connection with both the protagonist and the domestic space, recognizes the signifiers of historical justice and rediscovered identity. The performance of narrative is thus physical as well as verbal and incorporates larger set pieces in order to ‘stage’ a cathartic homecoming. Andriopoulos’s application of Adam Smith’s work further suggests the ultimate reconciliation of Edmund’s private and public identities.[[340]](#footnote-340) It is strongly implied throughout that Edmund’s personal goal, the reclamation of his birth right, has far-reaching social consequences. While Edmund makes it clear that he is not overtly worthy of elevation, Joseph’s ultimate evaluation of Edmund’s identity and the identities of others in relation to him facilitates Edmund’s acceptance of his rights and responsibilities.

Finally, it is Joseph who retells the plot at the end of the novel, providing insight into the spiritual future of the new young lord and establishes an identity that is, as Sedgwick suggests, “social and relational rather than original or private”[[341]](#footnote-341):

Joseph took up the story where she left it; he told of the rising dawn of youth and virtue, darting its ray through the clouds of obscurity, and how every stroke of envy and malignity brushed away some part of the darkness that veiled its lustre: He told the story of the haunted apartment, and all the consequences of it; how he and Oswald conveyed the youth away from the castle, no more to return till he came as master of it: He closed the tale with praise to Heaven for the happy discovery, that gave such an heir to the house of Lovel; to his dependent such a Lord and Master; to mankind a friend and benefactor.[[342]](#footnote-342)

The author cedes narrative primacy in order to recount a reported speech (as opposed to dialogue), lending authority to Joseph’s re-telling and complexity to the notion of ‘found manuscripts’ and textual authenticity. The main plot of the novel as filtered through the socially-conscious Christian ethos of the servant narrator, and the themes of the entire novel are condensed and spelled out with special emphasis on the contextually Gothic light/dark and clarity/obscurity contrast. This kind of conclusion is a precursor to later Gothic works, particularly those by Ann Radcliffe, which include an in-text quasi-epilogue voiced by servant narrators and characterised by their spiritual, historical, and psychological insight. Joseph focuses his narrative on Burkean aesthetics of “obscurity” and “darkness” and more specifically on the ultimate triumph of “the rising dawn” over such darkness, a re-reading of the events of the plot in a manner which suggest, as Morris argues, the endowment of “old forms with new purposes and new powers.”[[343]](#footnote-343) He explains the nature and outcome of “the haunted apartment” episode, another Gothic development, and ultimately credits the Divine as the corrector of historical ills. The tale closes “with praise to Heaven” and hints at Edmund’s further role as “a Lord and Master” and “friend and benefactor,” indicating the reconciliation of private and public identity for the good of all. This narrative collusion is a reaffirmation of Joseph’s place as a head domestic and figure of pseudo-authorship whose great joy is to faithfully serve and “feast his eyes on the countenance of his own Master’s son, surrounded with honour and happiness.”[[344]](#footnote-344) Forces of historical, spiritual, and material legitimacy as realised in the idealised servant character affirm chivalric-romantic social systems. It is clear even in the earliest Gothic texts that servants have unique insight into the world around them and the plot developments driving fellow characters. Such narratives furthermore suggest an authorial identity which reflects broader literary discourses on aesthetics, morality, and the development of the Gothic genre.

David Morris argues that, in contrast to earlier interpretations of eighteenth-century sublimity which “occurs in a world of received, relatively stable meanings,” the romantic sublime suggests a Gothic space “in which words and images grow radically unstable, where meaning is continually in question, approaching or receding or fixed on a distant horizon, promising new dimensions or insight or (in abrupt absences) unexpectedly blocking the mind.”[[345]](#footnote-345) Coral Ann Howells further suggests that “with Gothic novels the stability of the external world breaks down in the way it had threatened to do in Richardson; it has become interiorised, translated into the private world of imagination and neurotic sensibility.”[[346]](#footnote-346) The servant characters in these two early Gothic works introduce servant engagement with narrative exploration and instability, though they approach the issue in profoundly different ways and with very different goals. On one level speaking and performing servants are characters who present stories, observations, and evidence to the master-protagonists and the reader, who insist on a voice despite personal and social restraints, and who transcend normalized boundaries to manage the Gothic setting. On another, even more complex level, they are figures whose narratives encompass Gothic goals and whose verbal expressions are focused on the psychological, moral, and historical impact of the genre.

Servant narratives become a unique form of aesthetic, a Gothic subject through which the reader must extrapolate a deeper meaning from obscurity, excess, unorthodox belief systems and emotional extremes. Whatever the ultimate result of his attempt, Walpole clearly saw servants as a literary tool to be read as more than just a comic interlude. Even Reeve’s attempts to give restraint and dignity to servant characters cannot fully sever Gothic servant narrative from Gothic excess and interruption, delay and supernaturalism. As formative Gothic texts, these early efforts clearly demonstrate that servant characters were not only crucial to the construction of the genre, but also one of the most widely used methods of engaging with multi-layered narrative. Both structurally, in their systematic use of interruption, assertion, delay and engagement, and through content which addresses ideas of repression, historical justice, spiritually, morality, and identity, servant narratives in these early Gothic texts support the exploration of Gothic goals. The importance of servant narrative even in these early versions of Gothic fiction demonstrates a fundamental appreciation for liminal voices. These figures of social and moral invisibility, by vocalizing and insisting upon their own opinions and interpretations of reality, offer an alternative ‘Gothicized’ narrative. The next chapter will examine how author Ann Radcliffe, perhaps the most popular of the early Gothic authors, further developed servant narrative within political and socio-moral discourse and used such characters as authorial metonyms capable of revealing and destabilising important constructions of identity within the text.

**Chapter Two**

**“A Delirious Dream”: Ann Radcliffe’s servant narrators**

‘Do be less tedious,’ said La Motte, ‘if it is in thy nature.’ ‘It is in my nature,’ answered Peter, ‘and if it was more in my nature, your Honour should have it all.’

* Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, (1791)[[347]](#footnote-347)

The above exchange between the transgressive aristocrat La Motte and his manservant Peter in Ann Radcliffe’s 1791 novel *The Romance of the Forest* addresses the concept of individual “nature” as reflected in the performance of servant narrative. Radcliffe’s effectiveness as one of the most popular authors of her time is in no small way due to her use of Gothic discourse in the reconstruction of dialectic methodologies such as these. Therein, Scott Mackenzie suggests, “sometimes literal gaps in writing, sometimes figural gaps in knowledge, with the overall structure of the narrative and the self-realisation of the heroine,” develop to “accommodate nominally separate discursive spheres.”[[348]](#footnote-348) Radcliffe’s work is essential to readings of early Gothic servant narrative as reflection of such spheres, and servants in turn define Radcliffe’s Gothic aesthetic and thematic goals. Sir Walter Scott, in an introduction to *Waverley*, stated that if he had classified his work as Gothic:

must not every novel reader have anticipated a castle scarce less than that of Udolpho, of which the eastern wing had long been uninhabited, and the keys either lost, or consigned to the care of some aged butler or housekeeper, whose trembling steps, about the middle of the second volume, were doomed to guide the hero, or heroine, to the ruinous precincts?[[349]](#footnote-349)

Scott and many contemporary authors and readers considered servant characters crucial to Gothic narrative. This was at least partially thanks to Radcliffe’s habit of including some “aged butler or housekeeper” whose counter-narrative assertions were used to “guide” protagonist and reader through “ruinous precincts” (both literal and figurative). Scott characterises the tale “produced by the jocularity of a clownish but faithful valet, or the garrulous narrative of the heroine’s fille-de-chambre, when rehearsing the stories of blood and horror which she had heard in the servant’s hall,” as so foundational to Gothic romance that it is immediately recognizable as a space for narrative engagement.[[350]](#footnote-350)

Scott distinguishes Radcliffe from other novelists for her “fanciful tone of natural description and impressive narrative.”[[351]](#footnote-351) Such distinctions are suggestive given Radcliffe’s Shakespearean influences, particularly what many critics have classified as her critical “emphasis on Shakespeare’s poetic imagination or ‘fancy,’” an emphasis which suggests the continuation of eighteenth-century literary re-appropriations of an early modern style.[[352]](#footnote-352) Radcliffe’s literary heritage is evident within her texts in epitaphs and references which Rictor Norton suggests are “so systematic and so conspicuous that they clearly serve a meta-narrative function,” as do the adoptions of servant characters who echo Shakespearean personae.[[353]](#footnote-353) Radcliffe also developed her Gothic style and her servants in response to contemporary Gothic authors such as Horace Walpole and Matthew Lewis. Incorporating diverse influences as well as independent developments, Radcliffe’s Gothic servants resurrect various literary ‘spectres’ in order to achieve a remarkably heterogeneous literary legitimacy. Servants claim a socio-moral and authorial insight through which they provide a critical analysis of dominant ‘master’ narratives and structures of social control, and act out a counter-narrative that is distinctly Gothic and increasingly functional and performance-oriented. As per Mackenzie’s assertions and Jacqueline Howard’s application of Mikhail Bakhtin’s literary methodologies to the Gothic, servants function in a pattern of exchange in which the “competing discursive practices” which emerged in earlier Gothic texts and define the Gothic genre are diversified and poeticized.[[354]](#footnote-354)

Radcliffe’s two earliest novels – *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story* (1789) and *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) – employ several interesting servant characters. However, servant roles within Radcliffe’s narrative structure undergo a significant shift between these texts and Radcliffe’s later work. Servants in the earliest works are primarily positioned as jailers or kidnappers and their narratives are defined by the absence and repression of information. The very brief exchange between Osbert, Earl of Athlin, and the treacherous servant who attempts to kidnap Osbert’s sister in the later pages of *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* echoes Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* byemploying discursive elements such as digression and interruption. Osbert’s frequent demands to “be brief, or you die” only delay the conclusion of the servant’s tale.[[355]](#footnote-355) Similarly opaque, the jailer-servant Vincent in *A Sicilian Romance* accuses a heroine-detective character of seeing illusions and claims to “hope little from confession,” dying before he can properly expose his secret and leaving an imprisoned mother character locked away in a literal and narrative dungeon.[[356]](#footnote-356) While “the insensible heart of Vincent at length began to soften” to the misfortunes of his prisoner, it is only after some significant investigation by the heroine that his incomplete narrative revelation facilitates the captive mother’s physical release.[[357]](#footnote-357) Servants thus play an important role within the progression of the plot but are limited in their narrative expression and by extension in their capacities as Gothic authorial metonyms. Vincent of *A Sicilian Romance* contrasts in particular with Peter in *The Romance of the Forest* – as an evolved version of Vincent, Peter is so changed by proximity to the heroine that he eventually uses his personal narrative to rescue her from the Gothic space.

A number of factors might have influenced Radcliffe’s decision to develop servant characters as speaking and performing narrators. As revolutionary and reactionary political movements grew in scope both domestically and abroad in England in the final decades of the Eighteenth Century social hierarchies were thrown into sharp relief, highlighting tensions and co-dependencies between groups. Radcliffe engaged with complex revolutionary discourses, problematizing social relationships within her texts. Moreover, 1790 saw the release in England of new legislation on servant ‘characters’ and forged references, a “species of imposture” enacted by servants and employers and illustrated in John Huntingford’s *The laws of masters and servants considered* (1790).[[358]](#footnote-358) The perceived instability of servant identity is evident in middle class and aristocratic anxieties over such “imposture” and in legislative examinations of the servant’s liminal positioning within household spaces. The publication of Wollstonecraft’s *Original stories from real life* (1791), which echoed Elizabeth Bonhote’s *The parental monitor* (1788) in its attempt to define the servant-master relationship through moral co-dependency, is also suggestive. Wollstonecraft argues in her text that “If I behave improperly to servants, I am really their inferior, as I abuse a trust, and imitate not the Being, whose servant I am, without a shadow of equality.”[[359]](#footnote-359) Similarly, Elizabeth Bonhote contends that “the meanest, most deprived of human beings, may, if treated with cruelty and injustice, prove a dangerous enemy; or, on the contrary, rise so far superior to his present station, as to be a valuable and useful friend.”[[360]](#footnote-360) Constructions of social identity at this time were thus increasingly focused on redefining social interdependency, creating a new narrative background for the servant class and justifying their proximity to their employers. Radcliffe’s depictions of servant-master relationships often echo these ideas, and her later work acknowledges the importance of servants within the social structure and within a middle-class moral self-fashioning.

Within this development servants by default embody both utility and anxiety, aiding the heroine while also suggesting the threat of narrative impropriety, the possibility that secrets may fall in the hands of “a dangerous enemy” rather than a “valuable and useful friend.” Sites of narrative control are particularly important as E.J. Clery notes that in Radcliffe’s work the heroines’ “aptitude for fancy” implies that “they are effectively the co-authors in their own stories.”[[361]](#footnote-361) As such Radcliffe is primarily concerned with examining and developing her heroine’s personal identity, though James Watt has noted that Radcliffe’s depiction “of elevated individualism remains potentially at odds with the organic and family-oriented community” and that even valued “subjective insight” must eventually conform to a “moralizing closure.”[[362]](#footnote-362) In this sense and insofar as the heroine’s journey is, as Maggie Kilgour suggests, a Gothicized version of a Rousseauian “progress from isolation to social integration,” servants narratives are critical to navigating liminal spaces.[[363]](#footnote-363) Many critics further link Radcliffe’s preoccupation with what Markman Ellis describes as “outlining and regulating a model of feminine virtue and propriety” to anxieties about public and private identity.[[364]](#footnote-364) Emily of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is almost excessively distressed by the idea “that she was to be considered as a dependent, not only by her aunt, but by her aunt’s servants,” assuming that servants are problematic ‘outsiders’.[[365]](#footnote-365) This concern is repeated through Radcliffe’s texts and reflects socio-cultural preoccupations. Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that in the Eighteenth Century in particular “the development of individualism for individuals can be a torturous matter in a society that assumes the primacy of family interests and the importance of community.”[[366]](#footnote-366) In spite of, or because of, these anxieties regarding the instability of individual ‘selves’ within a community, servant narrative performance defines Gothic identity when, as Jacqueline Howard suggests, a “more consistently epistemological turn” is required.[[367]](#footnote-367) *The Romance of the Forest, The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *The Italian* (1797), while each containing distinctive aspects, are united by what David S. Miall identifies as the heroine’s place in “a larger cultural formation” in which “the female protagonist, unlike the male, seeks to understand, not control,” and to “bring the unknown within the boundaries of reason.”[[368]](#footnote-368) This arguably reflects women’s roles in the ‘home’ as “guardians of an immanent British cultural frame,” to quote Scott Mackenzie.[[369]](#footnote-369) As such, servant narratives, positioned within an inherently unstable socio-political context, are required in the navigation of Gothic spaces and identities and allow for new articulations of transgressive or liminal selves within domestic spaces.

*The Romance of the Forest* tells the story of Adeline, a foundling adopted by the La Motte family, persecuted by the depraved Marquis de Montalt, and romanced by a dashing chevalier. It is a distinct novel in that, according to Robert Miles, its “treatment of the relationship between discovery and identity represents another step up in narrative sophistication” for Radcliffe.[[370]](#footnote-370) In this sense, La Motte’s manservant Peter ‘discovers’ various aspects of identity in his verbal and non-verbal narrative of social approbation, pseudo-sensibility, and morality. Daniel Cottom suggests that in Radcliffe’s work, “as in Austen’s novels and those of Sir Walter Scott, there is a great tension between the emphasis on individual merit, sensibility, and the dignity of common labour.”[[371]](#footnote-371) Peter’s social role obviously suggests discourses of meritocracy and labour, but ‘sensibility,’ a popular term paradoxically defined by Miles as both a “fashionable” and “anti-hierarchical” mode of emotional imagination, is “also an important fictional instrument” for Radcliffe insofar as it illuminates identity.[[372]](#footnote-372) Nicola J. Watson further clarifies this: ‘sensibility’ provided the “cultural shorthand” for “a Burkean ideal of feeling, defined in opposition to the disintegrative force of ‘Reason.’”[[373]](#footnote-373) However, ‘sensibility’ also served as a term for the “excess of feeling” which “disqualified both women and the French (as analogical ‘others’) from full bourgeois subjecthood,” an idea more in keeping with Mary Wollstonecraft’s criticism of Burke’s style and politics.[[374]](#footnote-374) Radcliffe’s writings acknowledged this paradox and sought to construct a heroine who could reasonably negotiate both “feeling” and the practical responsibilities of “subjecthood” in her interior life and in her ‘reading’ and dialectic practices. As such, Peter’s own characterisations depend on his value as a working individual and on his capacity to idealize ‘sensibility’ in others, even if his class identity complicates his own adoption of middle-class values and expression.

Peter’s gender also becomes politicized as the novel invokes both Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and the philosophy of Rousseau in order to “pose questions about the relationship between moral and political stability and different constructions of masculinity,” leaning, Claudia Johnson argues, toward Rousseau’s “progressive” views on education and man’s return to “nature.”[[375]](#footnote-375) Thus Peter’s narrative is initially predominately engaged with the problematized authority of his employer La Motte, a fallen aristocrat fleeing “from his creditors and the persecution of the laws.”[[376]](#footnote-376) La Motte is devalued (through the third-person omniscient narrator) as “a weak, and sometimes a vicious member of society,” yet is also temporarily identified as Adeline’s salvation and refuge.[[377]](#footnote-377) La Motte undermines upper class patriarchal superiority in his persistent ineffectiveness and selfishness. His lack of “merit,” “sensibility,” or “dignity” is indicative of what Cottom identifies as the “gradually waning strength of the aristocratic emphases” on rank and fortune.[[378]](#footnote-378) The consequences of this “waning strength” quickly become apparent as the La Motte family, Adeline in tow, move haphazardly away from civilization. While travelling Peter “ventured to remonstrate” with his master about their manner of proceeding while La Motte “reproved – commanded, and at length repented,” and ultimately strands himself and his family at a ruined abbey.[[379]](#footnote-379) La Motte’s decisions, punctuated by the advice of the more sensible servant character, place the family in the unstable Gothic space, and the resulting domestic confusion fittingly reflects a Gothicizing of identity.

La Motte’s outlook is ostensibly anchored in a patriarchal ideal in which, as Ellis describes it, “husbands properly dominated wives, parents dominated children, and masters dominated servants.”[[380]](#footnote-380) Socio-economic productivity (or at least the benevolent stewardship of the aristocracy) is therein tied to gendered authority, including authority over other men (manservants). In Radcliffe’s texts, however, hegemonic masculine authority is frequently subverted by the liminal servant’s performance of counter-narrative. Peter’s characterisation confirms Cottem’s views on aristocratic identity and Janet Todd’s argument that at this point in literature “the new ideal was found in independence and work, underpinned by a strong evangelical religion. The new work ideal was firmly masculine – set against the passivity of the domestic woman and the effeminacy of the idle aristocracy.”[[381]](#footnote-381) With this inherent socio-moral legitimacy, Peter’s narrative as a man and a manservant is class and gender specific. When La Motte states that the family will live in the ruined Abbey he is attempting to re-appropriate Peter’s earlier suggestion: “‘Why then your Honour has made a wise determination, according to my hint; for your Honour knows I said’ – ‘Well, Peter, it is not necessary to repeat what you said; perhaps, I had determined on the subject before.’”[[382]](#footnote-382) Peter physically provides the family with basic comforts, such as fire and food, and then optimistically suggests that the ruined Abbey is “none so bad, but what a little patching up would make it comfortable enough.”[[383]](#footnote-383) His awkward sentence structure suggests his working class identity. However, narrative emphasis on Peter’s moral optimism and his impulse to ‘patch up’ an old structure indicates a “firmly masculine” work ethic and the reassignment of the gendered father-as-provider role. La Motte’s failure to establish material or narrative dominance undermines aristocratic-patriarchal authority while Peter merely turns his attention to a new material project and “the dignity of common labor.”[[384]](#footnote-384) Peter states about the abbey that “I warrant I’ll make it a place fit for a king,” exhibits his own skills in that “I had always a hand at carpentry,” and provides “materials for repairing the place, and some furniture.”[[385]](#footnote-385) Such statements reflect Todd’s “new ideal,” but also hint at the political potential of the Gothic servant within the context of revolutionary ideology.

In rebuilding a Gothic ruin as a “place fit for a king,” Peter suggests Wollstonecraft’s protest in *A vindication of the rights of men* (1790) against Burke’s defence of monarchy during the French Revolution in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Peter particularly echoes her rhetorical question regarding the national legislative identity: “Why was it a duty to repair an ancient castle, built in barbarous ages, of Gothic materials? Why were the legislators obliged to rake amongst heterogeneous ruins; to rebuild old walls, whose foundations could scarcely be explored, when a simple structure might be raised on the foundations of experience?”[[386]](#footnote-386) Peter actively attempts to render the Gothic space domestic and liveable, focusing on the simpler aspects of comfort for the benefit of the aristocratic La Motte’s and the socially ambiguous Adeline. However, given that the La Motte family’s refuge is meant to hide them from the eyes of the law, only to then fail as a shelter and eventually leave them vulnerable to further amoral influences, Radcliffe appears to echo Wollstonecraft’s concerns about political and moral dependency on the ideals of the *ancien régime*. Sue Chaplin argues that within her techniques of ‘terror writing’ and discourses on social control Radcliffe “posits the paternal law, the Gothic castle of Blackstone’s legal imagination, not as a source of transcendentally sublime power, but as a materialisation of dread,” referring to William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1766) in which Blackstone “likens English law to an ancient, venerable Gothic castle that simply requires modernisation to render it effective in the eighteenth century.”[[387]](#footnote-387)

Peter is one of the few servants in Radcliffe’s work who physically tries to modernise a ruin as an extension of Blackstone’s metaphor, but the final results suggest Wollstonecraft’s scepticism and even the “materialisation of dread.”[[388]](#footnote-388) In spite of the grim nature of the Gothic ruin, Peter, as the self-reliant lower class male, “proceeded with alacrity,” ultimately rendering the apartments “not only habitable, but comfortable.”[[389]](#footnote-389) The third-person narrative emphasis on Peter’s activities and Adeline’s own appreciation of his efforts highlights Peter’s constructive agency. While the La Motte family hovers in a state of “placid despair,” Peter is described as “exempt from any evil of this kind; he knew no fear, and his mind was now wholly occupied with his approaching business.”[[390]](#footnote-390) Peter and La Motte’s reactions when faced with difficulties (particularly in their tendency to imagine positive or negative outcomes, suggesting John Barrell’s arguments on the imagination and political paranoia) illustrate the tensions inherent to the negotiation of the ‘gothic’ past and the lower class’s relative productivity in comparison to their degenerative employers.[[391]](#footnote-391) In spite of Peter’s efforts, however, the semi-domesticated Gothic ruin, both as a structure and as a signifier of La Motte’s personal revision of “paternal law” (as he attempts to hide himself from the actual ‘law’ while still asserting his own authority), is ultimately not only vulnerable to invasion but also potentially dangerous in and of itself. The repairs fail to help the La Motte family in the long term and Peter himself eventually flees with the heroine to what Claudia Johnson identifies as the “republican independence” and “sentimental domesticity” of the ideal Rousseauian home.[[392]](#footnote-392) Radcliffe thus uses class and gender specific servant activity and servant narrative to elevate the useful “simple structure” of “experience” over the ruin of the past, though James Watt notes that “Radcliffean closure has a highly ambivalent political charge” that effectively “allocates only a minimal role to human agency.”[[393]](#footnote-393)

John Barrell, in his study of treason-related legislation at the end of the century, argues that the term ‘imagination’ was increasingly incorporated, if not clearly defined, in the political turmoil of the 1790s and particularly in discussions of domestic rebellion. Some political and literary thought at this time gave “‘creative’ imagination” “the power of associating a vast range of ideas into a unitary design,” suggesting a constructive outlook born of “the imagination working hand in hand with the judgement.”[[394]](#footnote-394) In *The Romance of the Forest*, Peter’s tendency to imagine the rebuilt structure of the Abbey and to realise his vision as a semi-reality illustrates “‘creative’ imagination” in the figure of class-specific Protestant / Whig productivity. In contrast, the unregulated imagination creates “‘impossible existences’, sometimes benign and pleasurable to contemplate, sometimes frightening chimeras.”[[395]](#footnote-395) In this way eighteenth-century thinkers distinguished between constructive political possibilities and hysterical, exaggerated visions of danger in their attempts to contextualise “a war on two fronts, against a republican enemy abroad and a small but highly organised network of popular radicals at home.”[[396]](#footnote-396) La Motte’s self-involvement and often misdirected fear of “the laws” (which are not nearly as omnipotent as he believes) is thus partially symptomatic of the “frightening chimeras” of a paranoid imagination, a deviant kind of sensibility which will recur throughout the Gothic genre.[[397]](#footnote-397) Fear moreover leads to “placid despair,” “selfish prudence,” and the self-pitying reiteration of La Motte’s “misfortunes” in his narrative.[[398]](#footnote-398) La Motte’s exchanges with Peter, in which his emotions are exacerbated by the limitations of knowledge and his own personal weaknesses, further illustrate his tendency to ‘imagine’ negative outcomes.

Peter, in contrast, steadily confirms that “I knew I was doing for the best all the while.”[[399]](#footnote-399) He demonstrates personal and narrative autonomy, exercising his narrative capacities by elevating the heroine and devaluing the aristocratic father-figure. For example, Peter’s tongue-in-cheek observation that “there is no harm in loving good wine, as your Honour knows,” hints at the earlier dissolution of La Motte. La Motte the attempts to re-assert dominance: “‘Have done with this buffoonery,’ said La Motte, in a tone more authoritative, ‘and go first.’”[[400]](#footnote-400) This is a tense moment in the plot, yet Peter provides some comic relief. La Motte’s inability to keep the troublesome elements of his identity hidden suggests servant narrative validity anchored in socio-moral legitimacy and rephrased through humour. Furthermore, while La Motte has negligible courage Peter employs his own bravery for the good of the family. After clearing some owls out of the abandoned abbey Peter states: “‘I have drove them all out, master, and you have nothing to fear.’ The latter part of that sentence, intimating a suspicion of his courage, La Motte could have dispensed with, and, to retrieve in some degree his reputation, he made a point of proceeding through the passage.”[[401]](#footnote-401) Peter poetically attributes demonic characteristics to the owls of the Abbey as “a legion of devils,” suggesting ‘fancy’ tempered by rationality and establishing Peter as a character “in whom curiosity was more prevalent than fear.”[[402]](#footnote-402) La Motte, on the other hand, is defined by the “apprehension” of danger which left him “not much inclined” to explore Gothic spaces.[[403]](#footnote-403) These tendencies similarly reflect servant/master dichotomies such as those later articulated in William Godwin’s *Things as they are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, where perceptions of the master’s character are effected by, as the character Caleb describes it, a “not entirely ignoble” curiosity taking “possession” of the servant.[[404]](#footnote-404) This kind of exchange is problematic in that it assumes paternalistic pedagogy only to then turn the formula on its head by painting the aristocrat as the drunkard coward and the servant as the sensible moral moderator. Satirical depictions of drunken, irresponsible servants such as those found in James Townley’s *High Life Below Stairs* (1795) assert that “If Persons of Rank would act up to their Standard, it would be impossible that their Servants could ape them,” implying the servant’s dependency on their employer’s leadership.[[405]](#footnote-405) ‘Bad’ behaviour in servants is thus at least partially the result of a lack of aristocratic morality, or indeed a larger social instability. In *The Romance of the Forest* the roles are reversed and identity and narrative are destabilised therein, implying a failure in “Persons of Rank” as representatives of socio-moral superiority. Peter perceives La Motte’s moral and physical cowardice while shaming La Motte via narrative expression into an act of courage, effectively shaping the direction of his movements.

Other examples of Peter’s dialogue include insightful commentary and reflect the narrative principles which govern his (and the early Gothic servant’s) style of storytelling. Like servants from Walpole and other Gothic writers, Peter’s “tediousness” is part of his “nature,” and he uses discursive practices of excess or repetition to construct aesthetic and narrative form. La Motte asks, during a seemingly erroneous description of a man with a pipe, “Well – what has the pipe to do with the story?” but Peter insists “Nay, Sir, you put me out; I can’t go on, unless you let me tell it my own way,” and in fact the pipe becomes the only way of telling characters apart as the story progresses.[[406]](#footnote-406) Peter’s narrative methods are thus justified as a means of imposing order to a chaotic space. As such, when La Motte attempts to circumvent counter-narrative he receives important information regarding his own socio-moral status: “And so you are returned as wise as you went?” La Motte asks after much back and forth. Peter responds: “Why, Master, I hope I have too much spirit to submit to a rascal, or let you submit to one either.”[[407]](#footnote-407) Of course, La Motte does later “submit to a rascal,” and Peter not only recognises the moral decline of his master and the villainy of the Marquis de Montalt but also acts accordingly himself, having personally “too much spirit” to betray Adeline completely (though he is temporarily awed into submission by the Gothic villain). By vocalizing specific moral codes in a narrative Peter “contrives an authority” and engages with “the revolutionary voicing” of servant resistance much like, as Margaret Anne Doody suggests, Samuel Richardson’s servant-heroine Pamela.[[408]](#footnote-408) The servant character’s tendency to ‘imagine’ another reality, particularly as that reality affects the socio-moral reality of other social groups, suggests a form of pervasive narrative resistance in which La Motte paradoxically confirms his own devaluation and adjusts his sensibilities.

When Peter urges Adeline to flee the abbey he therefore also describes the situation as a moral one, justifying his disloyalty to La Motte using supernatural descriptors and a servant dialectic:

But these ghosts that haunt the abbey, I am no more a coward than most men, but I don’t like them: and then there *is* so many strange reports abroad; and my master – I thought I could have served him to the end of the world, but now I care not how soon I leave him, for his behaviour to you, Ma’amselle.[[409]](#footnote-409)

This speech suggests popular perceptions of the ‘superstitious servant’ yet anchors itself in moral rationality as Peter characterises the “ghosts” as secondary or as perhaps symbolic of larger anxieties. Peter becomes the watchdog of interpersonal behaviour as defined by gender and class-specific values – when he feels that La Motte is no longer a figure of moral authority or masculine agency, he severs his connections to him and instead seeks out embodied virtue in Adeline. He contrasts with servant narrators found in the works of Lewis and Dacre by opposing to the libertinism of the Marquis de Montalt. Servant narrative is occasionally employed in the early Gothic genre to articulate libertine engagement, but in this instance the servant is firmly aligned with the middle-class morality of the heroine. By extension Adeline is redefined as a valued heroine representative through Peter’s approbation.

The servant Ludovico’s “liberation” from his employer in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* will repeat this pattern, and suggests a certain social-moral authority in a group that ostensibly has very little social status.[[410]](#footnote-410) Like Ludovico or Vincent in *A Sicilian Romance*, Peter’s relatively “insensible heart,” or at least his masculine independence, is refined by proximity to an idealised middle-class heroine of sensibility.[[411]](#footnote-411) Such an evolution indicates a sort of ‘education’ of the servant through empathy. Peter’s attachment to Adeline reflects the tendency of narratives of ‘sentimentality,’ as Barrell argues, to “represent all virtues as private, indeed domestic virtues,” and thus construct a politicized sentiment which “had the effect of blurring the distinction between public and private.”[[412]](#footnote-412) As Michèle Cohen suggests, late eighteenth-century masculinity was increasingly defined by its relationship to the “culture of sensibility,” where interaction with the feminine encouraged the “spread of the chivalric ideal,” in this case manifested in Peter’s determination to rescue Adeline.[[413]](#footnote-413) Of course, Adeline, too, attempts to modify Peter’s narrative idiom and is rebuffed: “If you’ll let me go on my own way, Ma’am, you’ll soon know it; but if you hurry me, and ask me questions, here and there, out of their places, I don’t know what I am saying.”[[414]](#footnote-414) Peter bucks social controls which negate his narrative agency, but he also clearly values Adeline’s moral identity. Their plans for escape are temporarily disrupted by La Motte and the Marquis’s interference, but eventually Peter is tasked (with the newly reformed La Motte’s wavering approval) with transferring Adeline to a place of safety.

Peter and Adeline’s journey from the ruined Gothic abbey to the La Luc family’s domestic space, a home which Claudia Johnson argues encompasses the “political mythology about the wholesome liberty of Englishmen,” is a critical trope.[[415]](#footnote-415) Robert Miles notes that Radcliffe’s “most significant innovation was to expand a particular element of *Otranto*, the heroine in flight from a patriarchal ogre in a European setting,” extending it into a broader landscape.[[416]](#footnote-416) Servant characters are crucial to this “flight.” They are bribed or coerced into attempting to free the imprisoned protagonists of *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and numerous other texts. Regina Maria Roche manipulates this formula in her novel *Clermont* (1798)when a duplicitous servant character ultimately delivers the heroine up to her enemies. There is clearly a tension here, as Spacks has noted, in the eighteenth-century conception of the private impulse for self-discovery and the need for social participation.[[417]](#footnote-417) Servants privy to the secret amoralities of the various authorities they serve (or betray) develop a moral autonomy in the eighteenth century, articulated in their investment in ‘journeys’ and ‘escapes’. Furthermore, as per Claudia Johnson’s suggestion that *Romance* is concerned with what the “sentimental regime does for women” as “softeners of male aggressivity,” Adeline’s role here as an “equivocal being” and “active moral agent” and Peter’s role as her travel companion play out some of the consequences of gendered sentimentality.[[418]](#footnote-418) Formerly classified by his uncertain loyalties, Peter, once their journey is underway, wins Adeline over by expressing “an artless interest in her welfare.”[[419]](#footnote-419) Adeline’s renewed faith in Peter’s loyalty “not only strengthened her confidence in the present undertaking, but made her listen to his conversation with kindness and pleasure.”[[420]](#footnote-420) Adeline engages, for the first time in a long time, in unaffected human interaction while Peter gets a chance to exercise his sensibility within a transitional space, where “they travelled for several hours in darkness and silence, and it was not until they emerged from the forest that Adeline saw the morning light streak the eastern clouds.”[[421]](#footnote-421) Adeline and Peter effectively move together from a space of narrative chaos and repression into a new regenerative ideal. Therein they embody what Richard De Ritter characterises as a Gothic reader’s “temporary submission to the transporting power of narrative,” engaging in a literal and figurative journey through Gothic spaces in an attempt to preserve their own identities.[[422]](#footnote-422)

Savoy is selected as a destination (serendipitously) because Adeline is herself “destitute of resources in France.”[[423]](#footnote-423) Peter has family in Savoy and states that his partisan status means that they “would be most likely to meet with protection and comfort.”[[424]](#footnote-424) Indeed, upon reaching Savoy Peter reflects a lower class version of what Claudia Johnson describes as “sentimental manhood” and falls into a passionate excess of patriotism and community spirit.[[425]](#footnote-425) Servants are distinct from peasants as a social group, participating in different spaces and demonstrating different kinds of autonomy. In many ways the ‘peasant’ narrative is more independent than the servant narrative, and the physicality of peasant activities (in Radcliffe’s work usually depicted as some kind of celebration or festival, in Matthew Lewis’s work depicted as the more problematic mob scene) suggest class-specific quasi-anarchic and quasi-regenerative forms of expression. Peter’s positive reaction renegotiates and approves working-class energy. While not particularly sophisticated, James P. Carson argues that Radcliffe uses excessive patriotism in servants to positively articulate “the sentimental virtue of local attachment,” echoed by characters such as Paulo in *The Italian.*[[426]](#footnote-426) Peter rhapsodises on the positive qualities of Savoy using “artless expressions” which give Adeline “melancholy pleasure.”[[427]](#footnote-427) The omniscient narrator, however, notes that Peter forgot the country’s “disadvantages” in his narrative. Cannon Schmitt argues that “admiration on such grounds betrays an insensitivity linked to class in that it fails to employ an aesthetic discourse of the sublime and the beautiful,” but Peter and indeed most other Radcliffean servants are neither insensitive nor ‘insensible.’[[428]](#footnote-428) In Savoy there is in fact an entire class of people ready to aid and protect the Gothic heroine and who immediately offer refuge to Peter and the dispossessed Adeline. Peter and peasant ‘sensibility’ is not destructive but rather, in keeping with Spacks’ argument that ‘good’ sensibility “depends on the intervention of reason,” a constructive feeling that “generates humanitarian action.”[[429]](#footnote-429) As Peter retraces “the scenes of his former days” he “seemed to live them all over again,” suggesting a tableaux performance which connects Peter, and by extension Adeline, to the emotional space of the town.[[430]](#footnote-430) Such expression illuminates a lower class version of sensibility which engages with external sites just as the heroine engages with grand landscapes, in spite of its failure to employ an elevated “aesthetic discourse of the sublime and the beautiful.”[[431]](#footnote-431) This focus and its ultimate results make Peter a foil character for upper-middle class men of sensibility and their more refined appreciation of sublime nature. While reformed sensibility is valuable, however, Adeline is hyper-sensitive to the fact that “during my whole life I have never known a friend,” while Peter in contrast develops identity through his community.[[432]](#footnote-432)

The manservant’s role as a quasi-heroic protector with domestic prerogatives suggests the Gothic genre’s profound dependency upon servants such as Peter as narrative performers and constructors of Gothic identity. Adeline, too, eventually discovers an idealised family and home in Savoy. Domestic bliss still requires lower-class participation, however. Peter must verbally assert, when Clara La Luc offers Adeline a loving adopted family, that Adeline “deserves it all […] for she is very good.”[[433]](#footnote-433) The ‘bias’ articulated in Peter’s sentimental patriotism clearly does not hinder his performance of servant sensibility in characterising Adeline, proposing, as Robert Miles suggests, a “democracy of feeling hearts” where, Claudia Johnson argues, “good men are men whose conduct is ‘suggested by feeling.’”[[434]](#footnote-434) If, as Johnson suggests, “virtuous manhood is defined by the kind and degree of its responsiveness to women,” then Peter is a lower-class epitome of virtuous manhood.[[435]](#footnote-435) In contrast the La Luc family, like the La Motte family, remains inactive until they “speak to Peter” and only begin the process of incorporating Adeline into their domestic space once her position has been explained.[[436]](#footnote-436) Domestic harmony and middle class and aristocratic moral activity, it seems, cannot be achieved without the servant’s input, suggesting the “establishment inaction” which Robert Miles notes defined aristocratic identity but which is occasionally also found in Radcliffe’s middle class characters.[[437]](#footnote-437) If Peter is, as James Watt suggests, part of “a suggestive depiction of pre-revolutionary France,” then Radcliffe is complicating class distinctions and ideas of co-dependency for definite political negotiations.[[438]](#footnote-438) Peter’s approval of Adeline also suggests Radcliffe’s sense of the potential conflict of public and private identities as navigated by liminal figures such as servants, and of class and gender specific aspects of identity. While Adeline and Peter’s journey suggests, as Anne Chandler argues, a “return to nature as humanistically redemptive,” and while Peter facilitates that exploration whole-heartedly, he also safely delivers the heroine to her new home and legitimizes her position therein, emphasising the constructive familial structures in which they may both partake.[[439]](#footnote-439) Thus Adeline enters the La Luc family as wife / daughter / sister, and Peter is present at the conclusion of the text to again provide material comforts for the new family.[[440]](#footnote-440)

Radcliffe’s next and perhaps most famous novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, again follows the evolution of a heroine as she navigates a Gothic space. In this text servants embody even more extensively what Howard characterises as “the competing, often contradictory discourses which give meaning to social reality” in Gothic novels.[[441]](#footnote-441) These discourses frequently illuminate deviant or forgotten histories or alternative methods of social interaction, or a belief in the supernatural which encourages the heroine’s reconciliation of her emotional-imaginative and rational selves. In many cases servants in *Udolpho* fulfil specific narrative functions, highly individualised goals determined by their placement in the text in relation to heroine Emily St Aubert’s personal progression. Theresa, the elderly housekeeper in the St Aubert family home, for example, helps to negotiate Emily’s grief over the loss of her father in the first volume and returns in the final volume of the novel to facilitate Emily’s reunion with her lover, Valancourt. Her initial narrative performance reconstructs the sentiments of the deceased St Aubert in a lower-class idiom and applies them to Emily’s pattern of mourning.

As a corresponding form of what Terry Castle terms “sympathetic imagination,” Theresa uses verbal and non-verbal signifiers of bereavement and consolation to engage with both the abstract and material comforts of life, sometimes in practically the same sentence: “‘Do taste the coffee,’ said Theresa. “My dear young lady, be comforted – we all must die. My dear master is a saint above.’”[[442]](#footnote-442) This narrative reflects a quasi-fatalistic Christian view of the afterlife which encourages some recognition of the natural distance between the living and the dead. Theresa furthermore resurrects the ghost of St Aubert in order to discuss grief:

‘Do come into the house. Think what my poor master would have said, if he could see you. I am sure, when my dear lady died, no gentleman could take it more to heart than he did, yet you know he seldom shed a tear.’

‘Pray, Theresa, cease,’ said Emily, wishing to interrupt this ill-judged, but well-meaning harangue; Theresa’s loquacity, however, was not to be silenced so easily. ‘And when you used to grieve so,’ she added, ‘he often told you how wrong it was – for that my mistress was happy. And, if she was happy, I am sure he is so too; for the prayers of the poor, they say, reach heaven.’[[443]](#footnote-443)

Theresa recalls St Aubert’s moderate emotionality and urges Emily to model her present and future conduct after her father, incorporating St Aubert’s words in her own verbal assertions. This interjection may be “ill-judged” due to its impudent familiarity and poor timing, but it remains a “well-meaning” and strategically placed assessment of the situation. As demonstrated by other servant narratives, memory, as Brandy Lain Schillace suggests, “serves as the key to almost all the mysteries *Udolpho* has to offer” while paradoxically producing “a disorienting overlap of past, present, and future […] causing a disorienting rupture of identity and thereby a potential dissolution of self.”[[444]](#footnote-444) Emily’s grief-driven entrenchment in a world where benign objects such as St Aubert’s old hat take on an “affecting metonymic power,” as Castle argues, blurs “distinctions between fantasy and reality, mind and matter, subject and object.”[[445]](#footnote-445) Theresa’s narrative of grief is a progression through and beyond systems which affect the heroine’s ability to interact with the fantastic and non-fantastic universe.

When Emily is removed from her home Theresa falls into the background as a victim of Emily’s extended family’s neglect. Theresa’s marginalisation reflects Emily’s own precarious position, yet she returns in the final volume of the text materially and emotionally supported by Valancourt. Theresa and Valancourt together keep a sense of La Vallée intact while Emily is incapacitated, and Theresa’s return to the narrative proper recreates an earlier emotional response. Theresa’s devotion to Valancourt brings her into a good-natured conflict with Emily as both articulate competing pre and post-Udolpho discourse. Although she is finally able to marry Valancourt, a goal which defined her resistance to the Gothic villain, Emily initially rejects him after she escapes Udolpho and is informed that Valancourt has fallen prey to the vices of city life. Valancourt becomes an uncanny character partially because of Emily’s refusal to articulate her fears. The two seemingly agree that, as Valancourt himself says, “I am not the same” but rather than initiating a systematic inquest the pair instead share in the “external details of emotional display,” a partial narrative of sighs and tears.[[446]](#footnote-446) The lovers fall victim to the pitfalls of the ‘unspoken,’ the supposed crimes themselves “being such as Emily could not name to the Chevalier, he had no opportunity of refuting them; and, when he confessed himself to be unworthy of her esteem, he little suspected, that he was confirming to her the most dreadful calumnies.”[[447]](#footnote-447) There are clearly limits to a narrative of sensibility, a disjunction between performance and understanding which causes Emily to respond counter-productively. Therein, the servant narrative as a narrative of quasi-sensibility is employed in a constructive re-evaluation of a problematic mode of knowing and feeling. Theresa’s narrative heralds Valancourt’s true character in opposition to the prevailing notion of his unworthiness, a notion which both Emily and Valancourt tacitly perpetuate in their confused lack of explicit speech.

Theresa eventually uses the emotional fingerprint of Emily’s pre-Udolpho experiences in her defence of Valancourt. She constructs emotional responses, assuring Emily that “you need not look so shy; I know all about it. Do you think I do not know, that he loves you?”[[448]](#footnote-448) Her appreciation of Valancourt is explored in a remembered conversation: “Ah! How he did love to talk of you! I loved him for that. Nay, for that matter, he liked to hear me talk, for he did not say much himself.”[[449]](#footnote-449) Narrating characterisation, especially in light of Emily’s experiences of other Gothic narratives, provides a methodology for discerning emotional identity. Rather than comforting Emily, however, these words instead result in an argument:

‘Theresa,’ said Emily seriously, ‘you must name the Chevalier no more!’

‘Not name him, mademoiselle!’ cried Theresa: ‘what times are come up now? Why, I love the Chevalier next to my old master and you, mademoiselle.’

‘Perhaps your love was not well bestowed, then,’ replied Emily, trying to conceal her tears; ‘but, however that might be, we shall meet no more.’

‘Meet no more! – not well bestowed!’ exclaimed Theresa. ‘What do I hear? No, mademoiselle, my love was well bestowed, for it was the Chevalier Valancourt, who gave me this cottage, and has supported me in my old age, ever since M. Quesnel turned me from my master’s house.’

‘The Chevalier Valancourt!’ said Emily, trembling extremely.

‘Yes, mademoiselle, he himself, though he made me promise not to tell; but how could one help, when one heard him ill spoken of?’[[450]](#footnote-450)

Emily orders Theresa to not “name” Valancourt, articulating a fundamental anxiety regarding Valancourt’s identity. Theresa responds with verbal emphasis on dialectic methods of ‘hearing,’ ‘telling,’ ‘naming,’ and ‘knowing.’ She questions what she is hearing from Emily, persists in ‘naming’ Valancourt, presents Valancourt’s gift of the cottage as objective proof of his goodness, and speaks although she promised “not to tell.” Theresa rejects Emily’s attempts to command Theresa’s feelings by verbally asserting that “my love was well bestowed” and furthermore devalues her social superiors by mentioning Emily’s amoral uncle M. Quesnel’s meanness and hinting at Emily’s own poor judgement. She takes it upon herself to try to correct narrative misconceptions and vocalize repressed knowledge with an impulse almost beyond her control, for “how could one help” vocalizing narrative, even secret narrative, when faced with false characterisations.[[451]](#footnote-451)

As Emily navigates narrative, Miles argues that there are “subtextual hints that in testing Valancourt Emily is asserting herself rather than bowing to ‘parental’ pressure.”[[452]](#footnote-452) Her rebellion evolves as Emily interrogates information presented by a social nobody, a retired and impoverished servant, while rebuffing father-figure Count de Villefort’s offensive repetition of an alternative suitor’s proposal, a proposal which Emily “had repeatedly rejected” with “displeasure.”[[453]](#footnote-453) While the Count attempts to enforce his narrative, Theresa mediates a dialogue between Valancourt and Emily and ensures emotional clarity therein: “Why, my dear young lady loves you now, better than she does any body in the whole world, though she pretends to deny it.’ ‘This is insupportable!’ said Emily; ‘Theresa, you know not what you say.’”[[454]](#footnote-454) In fact, Theresa seems perfectly aware of what she is saying, and in “preventing Emily from replying” Theresa reminds both Emily and Valacourt “how well you love one another” and “how much you are alike in your tempers and ways.”[[455]](#footnote-455) Sensibility is problematized, as Spacks has argued, when it is destructive and untampered by ‘reason,’ and by applying her own material and emotional ‘evidence’ Theresa proposes a more constructive form of feeling. Emily attempts to modify servant narrative yet cannot deny Theresa’s response: “Age and long service had given Theresa a privilege to talk, but Emily now endeavoured to check her loquacity, and, though she felt the justness of some of her remarks, did not choose to explain the circumstances, that had determined her conduct towards Valancourt.”[[456]](#footnote-456) Theresa’s liminal “privilege,” earned by service, enables her to rewrite narrative:

Dear! dear! to see how gentle-folks can afford to throw away their happiness! Now, if you were poor people, there would be none of this. To talk of unworthiness, and not caring about one another, when I know there are not such a kind-hearted lady and gentleman in the whole province, nor any that love one another half so well, it the truth was spoken![[457]](#footnote-457)

Theresa’s emphasis on “talk” and “spoken” truths suggest how the ‘unspeakable’ problematizes both Emily and Valancourt’s identity (in this incident and recalling Emily’s negotiation of narrative repression in Udolpho castle). Her descriptions also illustrate class and gender identity – the way “gentle-folks can afford” to act is a suggestive statement given repeated characterisations (articulated by other characters, the omniscient narrator, and by Emily herself) of Emily as a commodity. Theresa further argues: “Learning, to be sure, is a fine thing, but, if it teaches folks no better than that, why, I had rather be without it; if it would teach them to be happier, I would say something to it, then it would be learning and wisdom too.”[[458]](#footnote-458) In questioning the protagonist’s dialectic methodologies Theresa destabilises homogeneous narrative in a manner which reflects the Gothic genre and discourses of sensibility. She urges Emily, as St. Aubert did, to better identify the times when “reasoning must yield to nature.”[[459]](#footnote-459)

Emily’s navigation of heroine ‘sensibility’ gives her the emotional capacity to explore elements of the ‘fantastic,’ as Tzvetan Todorov defines it, as a “hesitation” between dialectic certainties.[[460]](#footnote-460) Howard argues that “often used with structures of recursion – repetitions and transformations of imagery, mediated narration, and story within story – the fantastic allows psychological states of oppression, anxiety, or obsession to be presented with a subjectively felt intensity.”[[461]](#footnote-461) This narrative structure is particularly evident once Emily enters Udolpho castle and interacts extensively with Annette, the maidservant to Emily’s aunt, Madame Montoni, and later to Emily herself. Rictor Norton asserts that Annette is a “comic metonym for Ann Radcliffe,” a valid argument complicated by the theory that a Radcliffean text is “a portrait of the artist as a Gothic heroine.”[[462]](#footnote-462) Moreover, in identifying Annette as “comic” Norton is dangerously close to taking an ambiguously reductive pseudo-Walpolean approach in which servants simply “excite smiles.”[[463]](#footnote-463) Annette’s discursive style is indeed sometimes humorous, but her comic moments frequently depend on Emily’s corresponding reactions. Annette is actually first and foremost a figure of sensibility. Unlike Emily’s ‘heroine’ sensibility, however, this sensibility manifests as ‘popular fiction,’ an empathetic imagination expressed through the self-constructed Gothic stories about ghosts and banditti that Annette peddles to Emily. Howells suggests that Radcliffe’s novels “reflect the romantic tendency to escape from immediate pressures into a private world where difficulties instead of being limitations become stimuli for imaginative flight,” and in particular Annette’s narrative provides what Todorov describes as the “uncertainty” between the known world and the world “controlled by laws unknown to us” in ‘fantastic’ literature.[[464]](#footnote-464) While Todorov argues that Radcliffe is not a strictly an author of the ‘fantastic,’ Annette’s narratives provide instances where “the effect of the fantastic is certainly produced” and where its impact on the individual may be examined.[[465]](#footnote-465) While many of Annette’s narrative creations are problematic, her engagement with Gothic narrative is crucial to Emily and the novel’s development.

Annette’s narrative style is consistent with the anarchistic reality of life in Udolpho and with Howard’s “structures of recursion.”[[466]](#footnote-466) Todorov argues that the fantastic as a genre “implies an integration of the reader into the world of the characters; that world is defined by the reader’s own ambiguous perception of the events narrated.”[[467]](#footnote-467) Thus Annette’s role as an authorial metonym navigating semi-‘fantastic’ spaces reflects the perceptions of Emily-as-reader and the external reader. Emily’s anxieties partially construct Annette’s Gothic narrative even in early instances:

‘Dear Ma’amselle!’ said Annette, ‘do not look so pale. I am quite frightened to see you. Here is a fine bustle below the stairs, all the servants running to and fro, and none of them fast enough! Here is a bustle, indeed, all of a sudden, and nobody knows for what!’

‘Who is below besides them?’ said Emily, ‘Annette, do not trifle with me!’

‘Not for the world, Ma’amselle, I would not trifle for the world; but one cannot help making one’s remarks, and there is the Signor in such a bustle, as I never saw him before; and he has sent me to tell you, ma’am, to get ready immediately.’

‘Good God support me!’ cried Emily, almost fainting, ‘Count Morano is below, then!’

‘No, ma’amselle, he is not below that I know of,’ replied Annette […][[468]](#footnote-468)

This conversation comes after the villainous Montoni has threatened to forcibly marry Emily to Count Morano. Emily suffers from Annette’s plentiful “remarks” and her own inability to question the servant effectively, perpetuating suspense as a result. Annette also operates as a ‘reader’ by perceiving Emily’s “external details of emotional display” and is suitably “quite frightened to see you.”[[469]](#footnote-469) Annette transforms Emily into a “pale” ghost-by-implication, foreshadowing later dangers. Moreover, Annette’s narrative, constructed using excessive (though not erroneous) information, the repetition of phrases with suggestive meanings (“such a bustle”), and an absence of explicit details, employs Gothic methods of storytelling. In this exchange master and servant together create a space of profound anxiety through narrative. This conversation signals the beginning of Emily’s journey into and through the Gothic space. It also previews later epistemological uncertainties, “exploded guesses,” and the “delusive patterning of evidence” which construct what Miles describes as “a new hermeneutics of reading” within “texts that readily lend themselves to the interpretative production of reader-response theory.”[[470]](#footnote-470)

Once Emily enters Udolpho, a space where, Howells argues, “all those feelings subversive of rational judgment have free range,” reality is increasingly defined through the storyteller servant.[[471]](#footnote-471) Emily temporarily falls victim to what Radcliffe calls a “lamentable” “failure of mind.”[[472]](#footnote-472) In response Annette often tells Emily to “cheer up, and do not take it so much to heart,” and Emily “was compelled to smile at the *naïveté* of Annette, in her remarks on what she saw” during the trip to Udolpho and in other instances.[[473]](#footnote-473) Examples of Annette’s optimistic ‘fancy’ become more crucial as Emily is forced to navigate Gothic spaces. Just as Emily’s “imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify,” so too do Annette’s narratives manage to alternatively create fear-inducing “circumstance” and/or “compel” Emily to smile or relax in spite of herself.[[474]](#footnote-474) During one of their first nights isolated in Udolpho castle, and after an unpleasant meeting between Emily and Montoni,Annette cheerfully creates a scene in which the terrors of the castle are put into an idealised supernatural context: “I can almost believe in giants again, and such like, for this is just like one of their castles; and, some night or other, I suppose I shall see fairies too, hopping about in that great old hall, that looks more like a church, with its huge pillars, than any thing else.”[[475]](#footnote-475) This statement constructs an aesthetic as Annette envisions the supernatural and transposes a fantasy world on to reality. Emily engages with the imaginative servant narrative with pleasure: “‘Yes,’ said Emily, smiling, and glad to escape more serious thought, ‘if we come to the corridor, about midnight, and look down into the hall, we shall certainly see it illuminated with a thousand lamps, and the fairies tripping in gay circles to the sound of delicious music.’”[[476]](#footnote-476) Emily-as-reader both enjoys servant narrative and expands on Annette’s vision.

Annette replaces Emily’s serious personal problems with a benevolent ‘fancy’ born of imaginative sensibility, returning protagonist and reader to the images of ghosts, fairies, and magic which constitute the underlying aesthetic preoccupation of *Udolpho*. Miles argues that “an irrational interregnum, when the mind was allowed to wander, to believe, and conjecture” was “central to her (Radcliffe’s) thematic purposes,” indicating that Annette’s construction of fairy-tale spaces reflects Radcliffe’s larger narrative design.[[477]](#footnote-477) This also suggests Norton’s argument that “the chief lesson Radcliffe learned from Shakespeare is that characters are coterminous with circumstances, that everything in a work of imagination will be more or less a projection of the passions of the characters.”[[478]](#footnote-478) The characters’ circumstances become interwoven with their self-expression in an exploration of narrative as both an articulation and rejection of fear, a manifestation and negotiation of “passions.” Therefore, as Castle states, in *Udolpho* “unpleasant realities cannot compete with the marvellous projections of memory, love, and desire” as “what once was unreal (the imagery of the mind) has become real.”[[479]](#footnote-479) Emily hits on the other implication: “But I am afraid, Annette, you will not be able to pay the necessary penance for such a sight: and, if once they hear your voice, the whole scene will vanish in an instant.”[[480]](#footnote-480) This self-aware statement hints at the power of narrative to not only create an aesthetic, as Annette does with her fairies, but also to make a vision “vanish” using an individual “voice.” This parallels more general Gothic reading practices – reading creates visions and within that experience coded systems of identity are explored. Such visions are then dispelled by a personal application of reason, despite of (or in conjunction with) the ‘lowness’ of the form and the ‘fantastic’ and Gothic genre’s recourse to metaphor. When Emily’s later loss of speech reflects her descent into mental instability these kinds of exchanges become especially suggestive, both in regards to Emily’s sense of ‘self’ and in her role as surrogate reader and author capable of manipulating narrative.

In this way, as Castle argues, “the supernatural is not so much explained in *Udolpho* as it is displaced.”[[481]](#footnote-481) In contrast, the villainous Montoni refuses to explore the language and descriptions which the servant Carlo uses to hint at the dangers of Udolpho castle. Carlo’s narrative uses Gothic imagery to depict scenes of desolation and isolation – “it has been a lonely place a long while” / “it is dangerous” / “my wife and I used to sit shivering” – and other pertinent details about the general state of the castle.[[482]](#footnote-482) Montoni, however, continually rejects what he believes are irrational explanations throughout the text, sometimes going so far in this ‘rationality’ that many of his arguments become paradoxically nonsensical. In denying narrative heterogeneity Montoni removes himself from spaces of ‘feeling.’ Annette and Emily, on the other hand, articulate emotional and spiritual-supernatural narratives as a means of defining and preserving their identities. Annette chooses to converse with Emily rather than the self-centred Madame Montoni out of personal necessity:

‘As to my lady, you know, Ma’amselle, one cannot talk about such things to her.’

‘And so,’ said Emily, smilingly, ‘as you must talk of them to somebody – ’

‘Why, yes, ma’amsellle; what can one do in such a place as this, if one must not talk? If I was in a dungeon, if they would let me talk – it would be some comfort; nay, I would talk, if it was only to the walls.’[[483]](#footnote-483)

Emily’s tone here is gently satirical, but for Annette narrating one’s negotiation of truth is a source of “some comfort” even in a “dungeon.” Annette *must* talk or risk a sort of mental and spiritual break, again foreshadowing Emily’s later loss of speech and suggesting the pattern of “sympathetic imagination” which defines Gothic feeling.[[484]](#footnote-484) In this Radcliffe suggests Joseph Addison’s argument that “we have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding” images of ‘fancy’ and that “by this faculty a man in a dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with scenes and landscapes more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole compass of nature.”[[485]](#footnote-485) This contextualises Annette’s “dungeon” imagery (as do the revolutionary discourses of the 1790s) and her tendency to create fanciful dreamscapes in her narrative. Imaginative narrative is thus depicted as having the power to give pleasure and also to inform and maintain identity even when identity is under threat.

As the two women explore Udolpho, Annette acknowledges that “I am not so much afraid of fairies, as of ghosts, and they say there are a plentiful many of them about the castle.”[[486]](#footnote-486) The hierarchy of ‘ghosts’-as-signifiers and the importance of the supernatural or unexplained as metaphor becomes significant in Annette’s introduction of various portraits (and the anxieties attached to them). While exploring the castle Annette, “perceiving that she had missed her way, while she had been so eloquently haranguing on ghosts and fairies, wandered about through other passages and galleries” before she and Emily stumble upon the infamous veiled portrait, one of Radcliffe’s most critically potent devices.[[487]](#footnote-487) Reading Annette as a metonym for Radcliffe, Annette’s entanglement in the “intricacies” of storytelling and her unexpected discovery of the veiled portrait pointedly suggests Radcliffe’s narrative structure.[[488]](#footnote-488) Furthermore, in this instance Annette’s curiosity is curbed by fear, leaving the central details about the portrait conspicuously unspoken:

‘Holy Virgin! what can this mean?’ exclaimed Annette. ‘This is surely the picture they told me of in Venice.’

‘What picture?’ said Emily. ‘Why a picture – a picture,’ replied Annette, hesitatingly – ‘but I never could make out exactly what it was about, either.’

‘Remove the veil, Annette.’

‘What! I, ma’amselle! – I! not for the world!’ Emily, turning round, saw Annette’s countenance grow pale. ‘And pray, what have you heard of this picture, to terrify you so, my good girl?’ said she. ‘Nothing ma’amselle: I have heard nothing, only let us find our way out.’[[489]](#footnote-489)

Annette refuses to “remove the veil,” walking away from the portrait and taking the light she is holding with her, leaving Emily in literal and figurative darkness. When questioned Annette states that, regarding the little she knows about the portrait’s history, “they made me promise never to tell,” and Emily, “who observed that she was struggling between her inclination to reveal a secret, and her apprehension for the consequence” decides to forbear investigating lest (ironically) Annette “should tell all.”[[490]](#footnote-490)

The veiled portrait unites the servant, protagonist, and omniscient narrator in a narrative black hole in which they all deny narrative progression, problematizing Annette’s authorial impulse and her relationship with Emily as Emily’s primary source of information with the castle. Annette’s refusal to alleviate Emily’s terror and confusion is a contrived delay which bespeaks a Gothic narrative strategy and places both servant-narrator and heroine-audience within discourses of ‘reading’ and authorship. Emily’s “unwillingness to tamper with the integrity of a servant” regarding this portrait and other secrets, even though “her curiosity was entirely awakened, and she had perceived that her questions might easily be answered,” is an act of self-restraint reflecting Emily’s progression as a Gothic reader, as well as her identity as a middle-class female preoccupied with propriety. If the veiled portrait is a convention meant, as Sedgwick suggests, to “point the reader’s attention back to surfaces” then Annette’s refusal to narrate its history affects the portrait as a significant object of Gothic performativity, a mystery which temporarily renders the heroine both literally and figuratively senseless.[[491]](#footnote-491) According to Macdonald “the lifting of the veil becomes a symbol of Radcliffe’s explanations,” the new hermeneutics of reading based in the denial of prescribed expectations.[[492]](#footnote-492) In the hierarchy of signifiers the portrait is thus crucial to the discourse of literary identity and genre, as well as the construction of self within the text – it denies Emily’s attempts to fully understand it and ultimately, for both Emily and the external reader, serves as proof of their own faulty rationality. Maggie Kilgour argues a parallel view that “it is not what is underneath the coverings but the coverings themselves that are significant as they constitute our human nature,” a reality “mediated, shaped and veiled by conventions, both literary and social.”[[493]](#footnote-493) This suggests multiple re-writings of both personal and public identity as dependent on myriad technologies and sources, including that of the socially liminal servant. The disparity between surface and substance (the public and the private identity) is typical in Radcliffe, and Annette’s symbolic refusal to lift the veil offers a critical examination of the Gothic genre as a didactic form.

Given the previous abortive attempts to reveal the portrait’s true nature it is no wonder that Emily shows so much reluctance when Annette bursts upon a later scene determined to show her a portrait of the missing Lady Laurentini. Emily assumes that the horror she had seen earlier behind the veil is in fact the dead body of Laurentini, a transgressive female whose disappearance is one of *Udolpho*’s primary mysteries. This fear is never explicitly stated but rather strongly implied by Emily’s emotional performance (and thus remains a persistent, if passive, source of anxiety for the imaginative reader). Annette expresses a particular concern for the actual portrait of Laurentini and its place within the larger narrative: she states that “that strange story is all, that makes me care about this old castle, though it makes me thrill all over, as it were, whenever I think of it.”[[494]](#footnote-494) Reading retroactively, it is interesting that Annette should identify Laurentini as a space for engagement when in fact the story of Laurentini and Emily’s aunt is the most materially important revelation to come out of Emily’s time in Udolpho, resolving Emily’s unspoken fears about her own possible illegitimacy (fears sparked when she accidentally observes her father weeping over an unknown woman’s likeness). By later recognising ‘Sister Agnes’s’ “strong resemblance to the portrait” of Laurentini, Emily is able to confirm her own parentage and impose her “bourgeois iconologies” and values onto Laurentini.[[495]](#footnote-495) As Kamilla Elliott argues, “picture identification allows the middle-class Emily to pass judgement on two higher-ranked women” (she later identifies her deceased aunt in the same way) so that “picture identification *by* Emily empowers her.”[[496]](#footnote-496) Again the political exchanges between Burke and Wollstonecraft and Blackstone’s descriptions of English law are suggested – Annette frames the Gothic castle as useful only insofar as it contains aspects of identity which, when discovered and internalised, enable the new middle-class woman to achieve self-realisation and empowerment.

Portraits in particular, as Kilgour argues, “emphasise the stasis of female identity,” but through Annette’s performative storytelling and Emily’s personal explorations they become a means of self-definition and liberation.[[497]](#footnote-497) The servant narrative is thus part of a strategy in which Radcliffe negotiates the paradox of female identity as dependent on a cycle of repression and reconstruction. Deborah D. Rogers suggests that “aspects of sensibility […] allow the heroine both to identify with the oppressed mother figure and to withdraw when maternal forces threatened to subsume her.”[[498]](#footnote-498) Emily’s developing understanding of Laurentini’s value as a ‘ghost’ and as Annette’s “secret” suggests a practical use for a kind of imaginative sensibility through which Emily may understand her history and surroundings. Annette defends her characterisation of Laurentini as a vengeful spirit by arguing that the Laurentini ‘ghost’ “never spoke,” a troubling yet important argument as Emily is frequently reduced to a vulnerable, passive state of fainting while Annette equates speech-acts with life.[[499]](#footnote-499) Furthermore, the portrait of Laurentini and Annette and Emily’s narrative classifications of it suggests an instance when, Castle argues, “one can control one’s image of other people; their very stability and changelessness seems to offer a powerful antidote to fear.”[[500]](#footnote-500) The importance of such engagement is, of course, temporarily lost on Emily in her attempt to repress Annette’s narrative and, by extension, her own confusion: “‘Let us leave this chamber,’ said Emily: ‘and let me caution you again, Annette; be guarded in your conversation, and never tell, that you know any thing of that picture.’”[[501]](#footnote-501) When Annette exclaims that “all the servants have seen it already” she is referring to the portrait of Laurentini, yet the idea of illicit knowledge and the narrative obscurity of the veiled portrait alarms Emily. Annette responds according to her own understanding of Emily’s lack of inquisitiveness: “there is nothing surprising in that; we had all a little more *curiousness* than you had.”[[502]](#footnote-502) This exchange assumes popular anxieties about servants and secret-keeping in domestic areas. Of course the irony here is that Emily has in fact already investigated the veiled portrait independently but remains persistently silent regarding it.

In spite of the “contradictory” nature of Annette’s narrative, once Emily’s family history is exposed the Annette-Laurentini narrative proves crucial, if incomplete.[[503]](#footnote-503) In this way, despite “an unwillingness to ask unnecessary questions, and to mention family concerns to a servant,” Markman Ellis suggests that the text conspires to provide Emily with “a powerful new emotional life, an arena of feeling action, where heightened passions are recognised, rewarded and explored.”[[504]](#footnote-504) Annette’s role as Radcliffe’s in-text representative is reinforced by her dialectic methodology. Emily hypocritically asserts that: “Annette, you love the wonderful; but do you know, that, unless you guard against this inclination, it will lead you into all the misery of superstition?”[[505]](#footnote-505) The narrator of *Udolpho*, in response, notes that “Annette might have smiled in her turn, at this sage observation of Emily, who could tremble with ideal terrors, as much as herself, and listen almost as eagerly to the recital of a mysterious story.”[[506]](#footnote-506) Servant narrative undermines the heroine while assuming a kind of omniscient insight, so that Annette functions as character *and* author *and* reader. Annette is a character who “dearly loved the marvellous” and uses the ‘fantastic’ as a primary mode of knowing. Moreover, “she was every instant on the point of speaking what she had heard,” distinguishing her from a repressed and propriety-oriented heroine.[[507]](#footnote-507) James Watt notes that conservative critics emphasised “the parallel between credulity or superstition and revolutionary idealism,” which, applied here, suggests a pervasive political negotiation in the servant class-bourgeois alliance.[[508]](#footnote-508) Therein, Annette offers stories, such as “the strange accident, that made the Signor lord of this castle,” which undermine, or at least problematize, Montoni’s aristocratic masculine authority.[[509]](#footnote-509) Emily does not reject these narratives outright, and “concealing the curiosity, occasioned by the mysterious hints she had formerly heard on that subject” mockingly asks Annette “what wonderful story have you now to tell?”[[510]](#footnote-510) Annette conforms to the stereotype of the eighteenth-century servants who, as Locke and Swift suggested, encourage an excessive and weak-minded fondness for romance, effectively infantilising Emily.[[511]](#footnote-511) However, if, as Miles argues, “a fundamental drive of her art is the creation of imaginative space for her heroines,” then Radcliffe’s exploration of Emily’s engagement with imaginative servant narrative suggests an inherent political and moral value in Swift’s stereotype.[[512]](#footnote-512) As Anne Williams argues, ‘female’ Gothic narrative has a “constructing and empowering function” in “its insistence on the possibilities of female ‘reason’” and “outlines of a female self that is more than the ‘other’ as purely archetypal or stereotypical.”[[513]](#footnote-513) The narratives of female servants such as Annette, as particularly liminal figures, demonstrate the constructive and gender specific protest of an alternative dialectic system, as do Emily’s engagements with such narratives.

While Emily attempts to curb Annette’s narrative impulse (“you do right not to mention it”), Annette insists on sharing her tales despite the very real possibility of punishment.[[514]](#footnote-514) After the disappearance of Madame Montoni Annette expresses the anxiety regarding the repression of knowledge and narrative: “‘Nay, ma’amselle, you know the worst already.’ ‘I know nothing,’ said Emily. ‘Yes, you do, ma’amselle; you know, that nobody knows any thing about her; and it is plain, therefore, she is gone, the way of the first lady of the castle – nobody ever knew any thing about her.’”[[515]](#footnote-515) To “know nothing” is to “know the worst” within an area of Gothicized ‘absence’ and repression. Annette’s need to narrate a dialectic engagement (even if her conclusions are false) again reflects Addison’s discourses and suggests that imagination and narrative are crucial to the maintenance of identity. Ironically, Annette’s attempt to close the knowledge gap using her own ‘fantastic’ ghost story leads her to an essentially correct conclusion – both Laurentini and Madame Montoni are pseudo-imprisoned victims of their own passions and have thus figuratively “gone” the same way.

Emily attempts to control this narrative only to destabilise it further. She asks questions, encourages Annette to “tell me the substance of your tale” and “let me hear the end of your story,” and interrupts, confuses, and re-directs Annette, suggesting a dialectic impulse and a dialectic failure as Annette’s information is alternatively exposed or repressed.[[516]](#footnote-516) However, this disjunction between ‘surface’ and ‘substance’ in Emily and Annette’s exchange is itself suggestive as Emily frequently fails to navigate the ‘surface’ in her own interpretations (for example in her interactions with the veiled portrait or in mistaking a dead soldier for her missing aunt). At one point Annette tells Emily that a ghost was seen by a cannon on the ramparts and, when Emily mocks her superstition, is amazed at her disbelief: “What! Not if I shew you the very cannon! Dear ma’am, you will believe nothing.”[[517]](#footnote-517) Annette refers back to the surface signifiers rather than focusing exclusively on ‘substance,’ articulating a fundamental ‘reading’ method which Emily and the Gothic reader must navigate in order to comprehend the deeper meaning present within objects and spaces. Servant gullibility is a source of amusement, but Emily’s ambiguous beliefs and her (in)ability to read and interpret Annette’s stories do construct larger aesthetic moods within the text and contribute to Emily’s own self-fashioning in both public (surface) and private (interior) spaces.

Annette defends her narrative, asking “why, is this not enough?” when she does give potentially important information which Emily chooses to ignore.[[518]](#footnote-518) In one important instance Annette even rejects hierarchical control outright by revealing Madame Montoni’s earlier and highly improper criticisms of Emily’s character, stating that “I cannot bear to see you so deceived, and I must tell you” that “my lady does not care what she says against any body.”[[519]](#footnote-519) Emily is hurt by this knowledge and barely manages to stutter out an emotional “I thank you for your pity” before she is overcome and unable to speak further. Annette insists that “I say nothing more than the truth,” suggesting narrative and emotional veracity, a freedom of expression which Emily lacks (or is denied).[[520]](#footnote-520) In the larger context of what Rogers identifies as Radcliffe’s “matrophobic Gothic” impulse, Annette positons herself as a moral judge with the knowledge needed to enlighten both protagonist and reader regarding Madame Montoni’s true character.[[521]](#footnote-521) There are elements of metonymic authorship in this judgement which are reinforced when Annette argues for the legitimacy of her own individualised style and aesthetic construction, not just in the substance of her story but also in her manner of telling it. Annette frequently asserts, when her audience attempts to rush her, that “I am not come to that yet” and “all in good time.”[[522]](#footnote-522) She also punctuates her own narrative by fearfully suggesting a supernatural presence demonstrated by noises and changes in lamp-light. In these elements and in the “substance” of her stories, in which Laurentini (and, later, Madame Montoni) is effectively ‘buried alive’ as “from that day to this, ma’amselle, she has never been heard of,” Annette constructs (reflecting Radcliffe’s own identity and authorship) a Gothic story-within-a-story with serious implications for Emily’s identity.

Annette’s insistence on using narrative storytelling to negotiate Gothic spaces leaves Emily “infected with her own terrors” and highly sensible to “imaginative space” therein.[[523]](#footnote-523) Perhaps the most notable instance in which the servant’s verbal and non-verbal performance influences identity, however, is one where Annette is responding to Emily’s own experience. After a botched kidnapping and her accidental interaction with a dead body which she assumes, in her despair, is her murdered aunt, Emily retreats from reality and transforms herself into a figure of repressed femininity. Emily is so terrified of Montoni’s “immediate vengeance” (punishment for the passive act of ‘knowing’ about a supposed crime) that she refuses to engage with verbal narrative.[[524]](#footnote-524) In fact she relies almost exclusively on an inconclusive physical performance:

Thus compelled to bear within her own mind the whole horror of the secret, that oppressed it, her reason seemed to totter under the intolerable weight. She often fixed a wild and vacant look on Annette, and, when she spoke, either did not hear her, or answered from the purpose. Long fits of abstraction succeeded; Annette spoke repeatedly, but her voice seemed not to make any impression on the sense of the long agitated Emily, who sat fixed and silent, except that, now and then, she heaved a heavy sigh, but without tears.[[525]](#footnote-525)

This profound inability to express a complete narrative or receive an “impression” from other speakers fractures Emily’s mind. Her temporary insanity is pointedly characterised by her “fixed and silent” demeanour, her inability to narrate pain. When Montoni attempts to speak to her “in accents somewhat softened from their usual harshness” Emily still regards “him with a kind of half curious, half terrified look, and answered only ‘yes,’ to whatever he said. Her mind seemed to retain no other impression, than that of fear.”[[526]](#footnote-526) Even a normally loquacious character is silenced and “of this disorder Annette could give no explanation.”[[527]](#footnote-527) This accidental and/or wilful remaking of narrative illustrates the power of Gothic performativity. As Howard argues, “narratorial assertions are set against Emily’s unjustified fears and imaginings are set against superstitions” yet “this dialogism is never resolved and reason and reality are revealed as arbitrary, shifting constructs.”[[528]](#footnote-528) Emily’s partial loss of spoken narrative and her shift to a non-verbal narrative style which affects the idioms of those around her is thus symptomatic of an inability, or problematic ability (suggesting the systematic ‘silencing,’ through various means, of the Gothic female) to reconcile personal fears within a larger Gothic space.

This chapter concludes, however, with Annette’s adoption of a heroine identity: “this girl, as affectionate as she was simple, lost in these moments all her former fears of remaining in the chamber, and watched alone by Emily, during the whole night.”[[529]](#footnote-529) Angela Wright argues that the influence of Shakespeare and “the plot of *Hamlet* in particular provides a strong impetus for this section of the novel,” as “Emily’s immediate reminiscence of her father recalls Hamlet’s murder of Polonius behind the arras, as well as Ophelia’s subsequent insanity.”[[530]](#footnote-530) Given the extent to which *Hamlet* especially was condemned for its ‘low’ characters by eighteenth-century critics such as Voltaire, the fact that Emily makes a point of soliciting the servant Annette’s help and “called her by name, and then in the naturally soft and plaintive tone of her voice, begged, that she, too would not forsake her,” is particularly critically reflexive.[[531]](#footnote-531) Elements of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* are also hinted at here, and Lady Macbeth’s midnight wanderings as witnessed by a Doctor and a “Waiting Gentlewoman” provide a notable comparison with Emily and Annette’s own relationship.[[532]](#footnote-532) Shakespeare’s Gentlewoman bears witness to her mistress’s madness while the Doctor tells her that “you have known what you should not,” implying the barrier of propriety which prevents transparency between mistress and servant.[[533]](#footnote-533) That Lady Macbeth “has spoke what she should not” while Emily speaks almost nothing at all suggests a comparative meditation on the effects of psychological trauma and narrative.[[534]](#footnote-534) In both cases female servants are furthermore charged with maintaining the mental and physical health of their mistresses and take responsibility for the preservation of their (temporarily) passive bodies. While Annette is still “simple,” her willingness to brave a place which she firmly believes is haunted for her mistress’s sake makes Annette a sort of Gothic heroine, one whose actions inspire the suffering Emily to address her “by name” and speak to her in the ‘natural’ tone of her voice. Only Annette, it seems, can elicit a reaction from Emily most in keeping with Emily’s original, if temporarily suspended, identity. Emily is arguably saved from insanity, from her conviction that “every body forsakes me,” by Annette “having discretion enough not to interrupt her tears” and losing “all her former fears” of the inherently terrifying Gothic space.[[535]](#footnote-535)

Annette further facilitates Emily’s liberation from Gothic spaces by introducing her to the character who will enable their escape from Udolpho castle – Ludovico, the manservant of Signor Cavigni (one of Montoni’s compatriots). Like Peter in *The Romance of the Forest* (and unlike the absent lover-hero Valancourt), Ludovico is a figure whose “independence” and “firmly masculine” abilities ensure the heroine’s safe passage out of the Gothic space.[[536]](#footnote-536) His gendered autonomy and productivity bespeaks an anxiety, as Janet Todd argues, that while formerly the “gentleman-in-waiting had been confidante and attendant,” social control in the eighteenth century was compromised as the “delicious semi-equal dependence the older nobility had on their servants was gone.”[[537]](#footnote-537) Ludovico is no thuggish criminal or “rogue,” however, but rather an independent figure with a distinct moral code, functioning, like Matthew Lewis’s Theodore in his later novel *The Monk*, as a reading, performing, authorial servant.

As such, Ludovico constructs a ‘romantic’ identity through a patchwork of sources. Annette is quite attached to Ludovico for his good looks and charm and, perhaps most suggestively, for his ability to “sing such sweet verses about Orlandos and about Black-a-moors, too; and Charly – Charly – magne, yes, that was the name, all under my lattice.”[[538]](#footnote-538) In this, Norton suggests, “culture is inverted” as the servant character Ludovico performs the “old romances” which ostensibly inspired the development of the Gothic genre.[[539]](#footnote-539) While Annette as a stand-in Gothic reader (and, perhaps, as an author reflecting on her literary ‘influences’) rhapsodises that “O! I have listened to him,” Emily notes that “it seems his verses have stolen thy heart,” assuming discourses of sensibility, seduction, libertinism, and female readerships.[[540]](#footnote-540) Perilous as such appreciation is, however, Annette responds by openly avowing her commitment to Ludovico and allowing herself to be stage-managed accordingly. Annette, who usually performs authorship of the ‘fantastic,’ adopts the role of ‘reader’ in response to Ludovico. Ludovico is no passive entity, however, and he repeatedly locks Annette up in order to keep her safe from the dangers of the castle, “notwithstanding all I could say to the contrary.”[[541]](#footnote-541) Ludovico keeps Annette from “running about the castle among all these drunken Signors,” a necessary action given subsequent attacks on Emily as she contends with Montoni’s “scheme of vengeance.”[[542]](#footnote-542) Ostensibly this parallels the habits of Gothic villains (for example the Marquis of Mazzini’s imprisonment of his first wife in *A Sicilian Romance*) but also suggests a necessary narrative restraint, the temporary imprisonment of the irrepressible Annette and Emily’s corresponding separation from a source of knowledge. In his self-justifications (narrated retroactively by Annette) Ludovico appears equally concerned with both restraining and protecting Annette, suggesting a problematic sensibility (framed as oral storytelling) in need of rational moderation. Ludovico also acts as a socio-sexual arbiter by protecting the virtue of the woman in his care, thus fulfilling a material masculine role. Ludovico is a foil for the socially superior hero, doing all that the conspicuously absent Valancourt does not and even performing a parallel romance with Annette, seducing her with songs much as Valancourt and Emily share a love of high literature. As in Peter and La Motte’s relationship in *The Romance of the Forest*, this suggests socio-moral and political ambiguity, the subversive idea that such individualistic lower class representatives not only exist but also perform masculine virtue more comprehensively then their social betters.

Moreover, Ludovico’s carefully constructed narrative and personal goals do not prevent him from transferring his allegiance to Emily in a turn suggestive of fellow manservant Peter in *The Romance of the Forest*. Ludovico rescues himself, Annette, Emily, and the ineffectual pseudo-lover Du Pont, recognizing that “our only hope is in that tumult” and exploiting the anarchy occurring within the castle.[[543]](#footnote-543) Ludovico tricks the guards into abandoning their posts by promising to “watch the gates the while” and falsifying his part in the “confusion.”[[544]](#footnote-544) The omniscient narrator allows Ludovico a great deal of narrative autonomy as he manoeuvres his way out of the castle, providing very little extraneous commentary. Both Annette and Ludovico value this independent performance as demonstrated by authorial insight into their thought processes: “Annette thought of this wonderful escape, of the bustle in which Montoni and his people must be, now that their flight was discovered.” Meanwhile:

Ludovico, on his part, congratulated himself, on having rescued his Annette and *Signora* Emily from the danger, that had surrounded them; on his own liberation from people, whose manners he had long detested; on the freedom he had given to Monsieur Du Pont; on his prospect of happiness with the object of his affections, and not a little on the address, with which he had deceived the sentinel, and conducted the whole of this affair.[[545]](#footnote-545)

Ludovico takes pleasure in a well-executed “affair” and particularly values his own cunning narrative. Use of words such as “rescued,” “liberation,” and “freedom” furthermore suggest a nationalistic ideal of liberty in keeping with Ludovico’s rising stature as an independent, potentially political masculine figure. His pride at liberating Emily and defying “people, whose manners he had long detested” suggests that Ludovico has moral values and is essentially a reformed rake in the style of Samuel Richardson’s Mr. B–, as well as a potentially revolutionary pseudo-freedom fighter. By extension, Ludovico proves susceptible to the heroine of sensibility much like previous Radcliffean manservants, hinting at a lower class alignment with a middle class idealised form of feminized sensibility.

Ludovico’s development is temporarily interrupted by the introduction of old Dorothée, a servant-narrator attached to the newly inherited estate of the De Villefort family, with whom Emily finds refuge after her escape from Udolpho. Dorothée is primarily defined by her personal longing for “regretted former times,” and in particular for her continuing loyalty to the Marchioness De Villeroi, Emily’s long-lost aunt who died under mysterious and tragic circumstances long before.[[546]](#footnote-546) In fact, memory very nearly constitutes a comprehensive reality for Dorothée: in her mind “Time runs round! it is now many years, since she died; but I remember every thing, that happened then, as if it was but yesterday. Many things, that have passed of late years, are gone quite from my memory, while those so long ago, I can see as if in a glass.”[[547]](#footnote-547) As Schillace argues, this recreates the effects of mental disruption for the reader through a “series of concentric circles that disrupt and reify questions of identity” within the text.[[548]](#footnote-548) This recourse to ‘memory’ becomes an active negotiation of identity when Dorothée recognizes the miniature inherited by Emily from her father as a likeness of the late Marchioness:

‘It is herself,’ said Dorothée, ‘her very self! […] these are her own blue eyes – looking so sweet and mild; and there is her very look, such as I have often seen it, when she sat thinking for a long whole, and then, the tears would often steal down her cheeks – but she never would complain! It was that look so meek, as it were, and resigned, that used to break my heart and make me love her so!’[[549]](#footnote-549)

Kamillia Elliott suggests that the “connections between memory and picture identification create a new kind of knowledge powerful in middle-class re-workings of social identity.”[[550]](#footnote-550) Dorothée’s narrative is haunted by the Marchioness’s “very self,” and servant recognition therein facilitates Emily’s reconciliation with her familial history. In spite of what Elliott identifies as the “revolutionary” nature of servant “literacy” and middle class response, gender and authority problematize portraiture. Sue Chaplin points out that “the notion of the family portrait as a signifier of juridical authority through its representation of authentic bloodline is undermined here as Emily confronts the representation of a disavowed female line.”[[551]](#footnote-551) Emily’s evaluation of the portrait and the resulting narrative revelations therein are key to Emily’s sense of legitimacy. However, the act of narrating memory is problematized as the act of a social inferior remembering a “disavowed” matriarch whose own story suggests transgression on her part and on the part of the patriarchal authority.[[552]](#footnote-552) Claudia Johnson notes that “the Marchioness’s tale reiterates the tales about female suffering erupting everywhere in the novel,” again distinguishing and denying individual identity in the text.[[553]](#footnote-553) As in Walpole, in the exchange between Bianca and Matilda, female suffering is negotiated and opposed through a female-centric coded servant narrative.

Dorothée’s narrative of the life and death of the Marchioness De Villeroi is performed in two parts, the first part a verbal narrative told in Emily’s chamber. If, as Punter states, “the gothic and the sublime best encounter each other on the terrain of memory and forgetting,” then surely Dorothée’s narrative is nothing if not a study in the Gothicization of memory.[[554]](#footnote-554) Dorothée recounts the Marchioness’s unhappy marriage (“I thought she did not seem happy at heart”) with details suggesting the servant’s problematic insight into domestic secrets.[[555]](#footnote-555) She refuses to speak the Marchioness’s former lover’s name (the focus of Emily’s unspoken fear that St Aubert was the Marchioness’s lover), arguing that “I will not even tell you, ma’amselle, for evil may come of it.”[[556]](#footnote-556) She further suggests, though she cannot prove it, that the death of the Marchioness was “strange” and perhaps connected to the locally well-known and mysterious music, the sound of which strikes Emily with “superstitious awe.”[[557]](#footnote-557) Dorothée’s story is punctuated by repeated and rephrased first person indicators of narrative memory: she states that “I saw” or “I used to hear” or “I thought,” placing herself within the story using all of her senses.[[558]](#footnote-558) She emphasizes ‘memory’ as a form of ‘knowing’ by repeating the phrase “I shall never forget” three times in two paragraphs regarding various actions of note (“his look”/“her shriek”/“the scene that passed”[[559]](#footnote-559)). The style of her narrative suggests, in keeping with Todorov’s classifications of the sub-genre, that “the represented (or “dramatized”) narrator is suitable for the fantastic, for he facilitates the necessary identification of the reader with the characters.”[[560]](#footnote-560) The “exaggerated emotion” and “repetition” which Morris identifies as part of Gothic sublimity take on particular meaning as Dorothée’s memory, Rogers notes, “valorises suffering and melancholy.”[[561]](#footnote-561) The Marchioness’s tale will not be completed until the lost Lady Laurentini adds her own narrative, yet even within the servant narrative Emily, Angela Wright argues, “becomes the site of the confessional for various characters in this novel” and a “catalyst for the reanimation of the past,” arguably at the risk of her own present.[[562]](#footnote-562)

The narrative space shifts as Dorothée and Emily enter the former chambers of the Marchioness, now locked up and (seemingly) abandoned, in order to view her portrait. The change of place emphasises elements of veracity and emotional expression: Dorothée empathetically places herself in the setting, weepily remembering that “it was here I sat on that terrible night, and held my lady’s hand, and heard her last words, and saw all her sufferings – *here* she died in my arms!”[[563]](#footnote-563) Again, feminine suffering and empathetic suffering take on an important, almost fetishized meaning. Such narrative, as Schillace argues, presents “memory that is out of place,” both “chronologically” and in the articulation of a past which “seems to belong to someone else entirely,” at the risk of causing a “disorienting rupture of identity and thereby a potential dissolution of self.”[[564]](#footnote-564) Moreover, Dorothée makes a point of drawing Emily (a relative outsider) into the narrative, pointing to the portrait of the Marchioness and telling Emily that “there is her very self! just as she looked when she came first to the chateau. You see, madam, she was all blooming like you, then – and so soon to be cut off!”[[565]](#footnote-565) The dangers to which Emily has been subjected are re-characterised in relation to the rediscovered familial past, while the threat of the death underscores Emily’s enquiry. Dorothée’s narrative bounces, as Elliott argues, “between a rhetoric of identity and a rhetoric of mimesis, and between a rhetoric of memory and a rhetoric of presence,” ultimately “transferring her private cognition onto a public image.”[[566]](#footnote-566) The consequences for Emily and her attempts at self-fashioning are profound. Dorothée vocalizes the uncomfortable similarities between Emily and the late Marchioness as Miles notes that “the reader is invited to surmise that Emily is the Marchioness de Villeroi’s illegitimate daughter.”[[567]](#footnote-567) Narrative overlap is inescapable and blurs distinct lines of identity. “‘Pray, ma’amselle, stand beside the picture, that I may look at you together,’ said Dorothée, who, when the request was complied with, exclaimed again at the resemblance” – meanwhile the situation becomes increasingly disturbing and even claustrophobic for both Emily and the reader.[[568]](#footnote-568) Dorothée’s insistence on transposing Emily onto her dead aunt suggests, as Castle argues, that the “persistent deindividuation of other people produces numerous dreamlike effects throughout the novel,” so that doubled characters appear “uncanny” and even potentially “fantastic” and “demonic.”[[569]](#footnote-569) As such, “there is an impinging confusion in *Udolpho* over who is dead and who is alive” and that “ambiguity is conveyed by the very language of the novel” and in servant narrative.[[570]](#footnote-570)

The possibility of Emily-as-surrogate-corpse is particularly evident when Dorothée calls attention to a veil worn by the Marchioness the night before she died. Veils, already explored in the incident of the veiled portrait in Udolpho, have important meaning as what Sedgwick identifies as “the place of any voided expectation.”[[571]](#footnote-571) This problematic object Gothicizes Emily’s identity and subverts her individuality in a traumatic repetition of the past. In a macabre attempt at role-playing:

Dorothée wept again, and then, taking up the veil, threw it suddenly over Emily, who shuddered to find it wrapped around her, descending even to her feet, and, as she endeavoured to throw it off, Dorothée intreated that she would keep it on for one moment. ‘I thought,’ added she, ‘how like you would look to my dear mistress in that veil; – may your life, ma’amselle, be a happier one than hers!’[[572]](#footnote-572)

Emily struggles to disentangle herself but, as Sedgwick argues, the veil “is the locus of the substitution of one person for another, in the service of an indiscriminate metonymic contagion of its own attributes.”[[573]](#footnote-573) Dorothée verbalizes a necessary historical narrative but proves problematic in that she can *only* really connect to the past. As such both Dorothée and Emily risk falling victim to a “contagion” of un-identity. Emily’s recognition of the past is crucial to her attempts to establish her identity but this exchange with Dorothée clearly demonstrates that the past might overwhelm rather than edify the protagonist. This narrative is in keeping with Terry Castle’s “Radcliffean ‘souvenirs of the other,’” characterizing the “obsession with the internalized images of other people”: hauntings are realised when “to think of the other is to see him,” when “the other is always present – especially when absent,” and when “every other looks like every other other.”[[574]](#footnote-574) These vignettes are apparent in Dorothée’s narrative and “bring out both the uncanniness of the fictional world and its oddly familiar emotional logic,” an instance of man-made ‘haunting.’[[575]](#footnote-575)

While in the Marchioness’s former chamber both Emily and Dorothée witness a ‘supernatural’ occurrence, a face materializing about the bed, almost as if their words and actions had managed to summon an actual spirit. It is noted that “Emily would almost have doubted her own perceptions, had not those of Dorothée attested their truth,” emphasizing the servant character’s role as a witness of ‘otherness’ materially realised.[[576]](#footnote-576) The re-evaluation of supernaturalism as a legitimate literary device is further explored during Ludovico’s own night in the allegedly haunted chamber. Ludovico offers to spend the night in the abandoned rooms in order to disprove the existence of spirits on the estate and showcase his “courage and gratitude for the kindness he had received from the Count.”[[577]](#footnote-577) He enters the chamber with his sword “that I may be equal to my enemy,” spiritual or otherwise, some provisions, and a book “that will entertain me.”[[578]](#footnote-578) Once alone Ludovico carefully examines the rooms for any sign of human or mechanical trickery (he is remarkably self-aware) and, having satisfied his curiosity, settles down with a “volume of old Provençal tales” lent to him by Dorothée (who is once again peddling Gothic stories).[[579]](#footnote-579) The setting conflates Ludovico’s roles as a Gothic character and reader as, “having stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, trimmed his lamp, and drawn his chair upon the hearth, he began to read, and his attention was soon wholly occupied by the scenes, which the pages disclosed.”[[580]](#footnote-580) In spite of his place within a Gothic novel, then, Ludovico still proves capable of transcending his material surroundings and entering a ‘story-within-a-story’.

The book itself is “disfigured and mouldy” and “so discoloured with spots, that it was not without difficulty the letters could be traced,” and superficially appears to be a classic Gothic ‘found manuscript’ defined by its need for rediscovery and interpretation.[[581]](#footnote-581) The content, too, is a ‘Gothic’ romance:

The fictions of the Provençal writers, whether drawn from the Arabian legends, brought by the Saracans into Spain, or recounting the chivalric exploits performed by the crusaders, whom the Troubadors accompanied to the east, were generally splendid and always marvellous, both in scenery and incident; and it is not wonderful, that Dorothée and Ludovico should be fascinated by inventions, which had captivated the careless imagination in every rank of society, in a former age.[[582]](#footnote-582)

This text is clearly different (and yet in some ways very similar) to Radcliffe’s own style. While Radcliffe’s mechanisms all have rational explanations the stories in Ludovico’s book are “marvellous” remnants of a “chivalric” time and space. The omniscient narrator argues that such romances have clearly “captivated” a democratized cross-section of the reading public, and the eclectic source material of such stories suggests that the Gothic is itself a patchwork genre open to innovative narrative explorations. Radcliffe defends such texts even as she distinguishes her own work from them, and Wright argues that Radcliffe “in no way privileged her own practice of the explained supernatural over the ghostly romance that Ludovico reads.”[[583]](#footnote-583) Rather, “the volume’s decrepitude becomes a metaphor for the neglect of the international origins of the romance genre,” and Ludovico’s reading becomes an attempt to renegotiate ‘romance’ politically (in terms of a British identity and the Anglo-French conflict) and as an examination of literary ancestries.[[584]](#footnote-584)

“The Provençal Tale,” which Ludovico (and the omniscient narrator, incorporating the text as a stand-alone inset tale with Ludovico’s interjections added parenthetically) reads as he waits in the old chamber, is a relatively straightforward critique of chivalry as an ancient good, despite the nationalistic Anglo-French tensions implied in the sub-text.[[585]](#footnote-585) Norton states that Radcliffe “uses her undisguised authorial voice to celebrate tales of mystery and imagination,” therein legitimising their roles as source material and modes of moral engagement.[[586]](#footnote-586) The text itself is “a rendition of the story of Sir Bevys of Lancaster as contained in Thomas Warton’s *History of English Poetry* (1749)*.*”[[587]](#footnote-587) Warton, for his part, was well versed in how traditional bards and troubadours “helped create the origins of romance,” and his inclusion points to the literary heritage of *Udolpho* as well as Radcliffe’s deviations from that literary tradition.[[588]](#footnote-588) The tale describes a Baron (harkening to the Count De Villefort’s superstitious and “bigoted” Baron friend) who, famed for his magnificent hospitality “such as we may not hope to see in these *degenerate days,*” is lured into the dark forest by the spirit of a murdered man seeking justice from “the honour of knighthood and the law of humanity.”[[589]](#footnote-589) In Radcliffe’s emphasis on the term “degenerate days,” Wright suggests, she appears “in many ways to be nostalgic for the simplicity of the romance fable” as well as for an ancient socio-political and moral system.[[590]](#footnote-590) This emphasis perhaps also reflects what later develops into Radcliffe’s “political disappointment” regarding the Anglo-French conflict and her own “interrogation and enlargement of political systems.”[[591]](#footnote-591) John Gregory’s *A comparative view of the state and faculties of man with those of the animal world* (1774), mentioned in Clara Reeve’s *The Progress of Romance*, similarly argues that it is a “depraved and unnatural state, into which mankind are plunged” in the modern world, primarily because of a failure to unify reason and instinct as they define human choices.[[592]](#footnote-592) According to Gregory, “our Instincts, our tempers, our passions, and our tastes […] must still be the immediately impelling principles of action” despite the restraining influence of reason.[[593]](#footnote-593) This suggestion illustrates Robert Miles’s argument for a reading of Gothic aesthetic via “primitivism,” in which both a “return to nature” and the constraints of “society” are rejected in favour of “the instincts of nature, our true self.”[[594]](#footnote-594) Ludovico, already established in the text as a very un-servile manservant as pseudo-heroic rescuer, now reads a story about a chivalric past and potentially reclaims those codes for his own specific identity. His exploration, Wright argues, is less “a Burkean nostalgia for the feudal era than a reassertion of the equal rights of all men.”[[595]](#footnote-595)

Ludovico transforms from performer-narrator to performer-reader, blurring lines of demarcation for both himself and the external reader as his placement in the haunted chamber and the setting of the story-within-a-story begin to overlap. William Hazlitt states in *Lectures on the English comic writers* that Ludovico’s reading of “The Provencal Tale” is “the greatest treat […] which Mrs. Radcliffe’s pen has provided for the lovers of the marvellous and the terrible.”[[596]](#footnote-596) Hazlitt argues that “the effect does not depend on the character, but the situations,” though in fact Ludovico’s role as a Gothic ‘subject’ and reader-surrogate not only suggests a complex literary discourse, but also enables, as Todorov suggests, “an integration of the reader into the world of the characters.”[[597]](#footnote-597) Richard De Ritter notes the tensions “evident in the work of many eighteenth-century theorists of reading who feared that female readers, in particular, would fail to undertake the labour of active thought as they read,” instead “exhibiting a dangerous passivity: an image of the self as haphazardly formed by external impressions rather than regulated self-development.”[[598]](#footnote-598) It is this anxiety which particularly affects critical appreciation of Gothic romance and later pervades Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1817), in which heroine Catherine Morland, as Joe Bray argues, navigates the blurry confusion between “discourse worlds, text worlds, and sub-worlds.”[[599]](#footnote-599) Ludovico may be read as a masculine precursor to Catherine and a sequel to Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest*, a ‘reader’ figure balancing the Gothic uncertainty of his surroundings with his tried and tested (and arguably gendered) ‘reason.’ It is the middle of the night, Ludovico is sitting in a comfortable armchair with a blazing fire and a bottle of wine, in a room which may or may not have a dark history of its own. Ludovico’s primary goal is to colonise the unstable space, the haunted chamber, and therein negotiate narrative (im)possibilities. His secondary goal is also clear – he wishes to be “entertained,” to be “fascinated by inventions” and indulge his “careless imagination.” This desire, echoing the external reader’s goals regarding Gothic fiction, is described as universal yet potentially problematic. Radcliffe clearly invokes a specific literary tradition and assumes a nuanced response anchored in cultural patterns of reading. This suggests “the relationship between studious application and personal pleasure” which De Ritter argues was the main source of engagement for a “critically competent readership.”[[600]](#footnote-600) Ludovico must be judged on his ability to engage with his surroundings and the content of his book with a rational “pleasure” compatible with the servant-hero’s inherent liminality.Cottom argues that eighteenth-century fiction re-enforced the idea that “aesthetic judgement is defined by a separation of classes within society.”[[601]](#footnote-601) Ludovico, however, not only defies class roles himself but also applies literary judgement. He shares similarities with Godwin’s Caleb Williams in that he enjoys “books of narrative and romance” and “panted for the unravelling of an adventure,” empathetically aligning himself with the thoughts and emotions of the characters within various texts.[[602]](#footnote-602) Schroeder notes that Emily’s self-discipline “denies many of the pleasures of Gothic fiction and, in the end, places the reader […] in an ambiguous position.”[[603]](#footnote-603) If Emily’s narrative problematizes literary enjoyment, however, Ludovico’s performance of readership offers an alternative negotiation in which both self-control and pleasure are achieved. Thus Ludovico’s responses to the text are in many ways just as important as the story itself, especially as the narrative begins to utilise prototype free indirect discourse, a method used to great effect in Jane Austen’s work. Joe Bray notes that in Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* for example, Austen defends her heroine’s reading practices in that “the use of free indirect discourse contributes to the impression that Catherine is retaining one foot in her real, ‘discourse world,’” even as she indulges in a study of Gothic terror.[[604]](#footnote-604) So, too, does Ludovico’s liminal position between his own space in a Gothic novel and his independent ‘romance’ reading construct a world “defined by the reader’s own ambiguous perception of the events narrated.”[[605]](#footnote-605) The fact that Ludovico engages with and is temporarily swallowed up by ‘Gothic’ romance (both in his reading and in his real-life kidnapping) only to emerge later with a rational explanation suggests Radcliffe’s own writing style and her perception of Gothic reader-response. Again, as Castle argues, the supernatural in *Udolpho* has been “rerouted, so to speak, into the realm of the everyday,” in this case from the story proper into the perusal of fictional literature by a domestic.[[606]](#footnote-606) Ludovico’s responses to the text reflect the Gothic reader’s own uncertainties, the ambiguities attached to definitions of the ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ in fiction. *Udolpho* refers, as Margaret Russett suggests, to “Walpole’s reference to the ‘gothic story’ from which his own gothic story grew,” so that“these fictions repeat their framing narratives in the register of the Imaginary, with all the taint of error this specular structure implies for the novel-reader implicated therein.”[[607]](#footnote-607) Radcliffe justifies Ludovico’s quest for entertainment but also suggests the reader’s complicity in the formation of a Gothic genre and the patterns explored by ‘readers’ as external participants.

Ludovico interrupts his own reading with an unspoken narrative performance which the reader interprets and links to his or her own responses: “[Here Ludovico thought he heard a noise, and he threw a glance round the chamber, and then held up the lamp to assist his observation; but, not perceiving any thing to confirm his alarm, he took up the book again and pursued the story.]”[[608]](#footnote-608) This kind of interruption suggests Thomas De Quincey’s later arguments on the psychological impact of narrative isolation and exposure in his essay “On Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth” (1823). As De Quincey suggests, while instances of terror are “cut off by an immeasurable gulph from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs – locked up as sequestered in some deep recess,” “the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.”[[609]](#footnote-609) So, too, does Ludovico’s interrupted reading call attention to the mechanics of genre and effectively heighten or dispel terror. This is an instance where, as Janet Todd argues, “readers are organised in their responses,” both “co-opted into the judgements of the narrator and also allowed into the suspense of the characters.”[[610]](#footnote-610) However, conscious removal from the novel-proper to the story-within-a-story suggests a meta-conscious reproach of those who respond with terror without then applying reason. In a larger discourse of reason and sensibility Ludovico’s ambiguous engagement with an old ‘romance’ is highly suggestive of the duality and disparity between the two.

Within the tale itself the Baron character, while investigating the mystery in the forest, “thought of the comforts of his warm chamber, rendered cheerful by the blaze of wood, and felt, for a moment, the full contrast of his present situation.”[[611]](#footnote-611) This description is immediately followed by the note that “[Here Ludovico paused a moment, and, looking at his own fire, gave it a brightening stir.]”[[612]](#footnote-612) Ludovico is clearly reacting to the text without verbalizing his actual ‘thoughts,’ a pseudo-free indirect discourse which makes the reading experience more personal and immersive while at the same time suggesting that Ludovico is conscious of his material surroundings and balancing his reading practices between textual domains. This act connects the reader (both the external reader and Ludovico) empathetically with the actions of the story-within-a-story, emphasizing Gothic aesthetic materiality. The tale is interrupted three times by Ludovico himself, as he pauses his reading to assess his own situation. In the final interruption:

[Ludovico started, and laid down the book, for he thought he heard a voice in the chamber, and he looked toward the bed, where, however, he saw only the dark curtains and the pall. He listened, scarcely daring to draw his breath, but heard only the distant roaring of the sea in the storm, and the blast, that rushed by the casements; when, concluding, that he had been deceived by its sighings, he took up his book to finish the story.] [[613]](#footnote-613)

Ludovico reacts with anxiety and fear to the space he occupies and the text he reads – he “started” as the sounds of the natural and outside world become acoustically distorted in the interior space. The storm is anthropomorphised as the sounds of nature become a “voice” and “sighing.” The noises he hears are ones which Macdonald notes “mysteriously match the supernatural noises within his story, but which turn out to be natural, and external to the chateau as well as to the story.”[[614]](#footnote-614) The incident highlights how Radcliffe’s ‘explanations,’ like the “natural” noises outside, mesh with the supernatural elements within the ‘unexplained’ ancient romance even as they clearly occupy different worlds. Perusal of a Gothic tale has left Ludovico susceptible to Gothicized terrors, though those terrors in turn reflect ambiguity. When it becomes clear that there are no supernatural elements effecting his situation Ludovico does not attempt to invoke them further but instead turns to “finish the story.” When he is done reading Ludovico returns again to his current setting and “having finished this story, he laid aside the book, for he felt drowsy, and, after putting more wood on the fire and taking another glass of wine, he reposed himself in the arm-chair on the hearth.”[[615]](#footnote-615) The uncertain ‘other’ is negated by a domesticated setting, and servant narrative places such engagement in a more manageable context.

Ludovico himself becomes an “explained” Gothic text when he disappears from the ‘haunted’ chamber only to later return and provide an explanation almost less believable than a supernatural one. Kidnapped by banditti, Ludovico is finally accidentally reunited with the Count and his associates. Ludovico’s story, which he later tells Emily and Annette, is a micro-version of Radcliffe’s larger Gothic style and a contradiction of the supernatural ‘rules’ laid out in ‘The Provençal Tale.’ It suggests the “new hermeneutics of reading” in the Gothic described by Miles as a reckoning of “the guesses the reader is encouraged to make, and the order in which she is encouraged to make them.”[[616]](#footnote-616) Prefacing Ludovico’s disappearance with an ‘unexplained’ supernatural tale suggests that, in terms of “order,” the reader is paradoxically encouraged and discouraged from concluding that Ludovico was the victim of ghosts and highlighting, as De Ritter argues, “a temporary failure of the reader.”[[617]](#footnote-617) Annette, for her part, listens to Ludovico’s tale in a state of “extreme curiosity,” assumes the interference of the supernatural (emphasizing Emily’s own “late credulity” on that subject), and argues that Ludovico must have “shook from head to foot” in fright throughout his adventures.[[618]](#footnote-618) Perhaps gender roles are partly to blame, but Annette is much more inclined towards the supernatural than Ludovico, while Ludovico in contrast more comprehensively balances his appreciation of ‘romance’ (and Annette) with reason. Annette takes her ‘failure’ as a reader in her stride, however, and furthermore notes, in response to Ludovico’s assertion that he was weary of life with the banditti, “Well, but they let you talk […] they did not gag you after they got you away from the chateau, so I don’t see what reason there was to be so very weary of living; to say nothing about the chance you had of seeing me again.”[[619]](#footnote-619) Annette reasserts an earlier theory regarding speech as an essential means of constructing and preserving identity, again assigning Annette an authorial role. Annette’s opinions perhaps take the sting out of the rational Gothic ending – she insists on subjectivity in narrative and calls attention to Emily’s own somewhat excusable credulity.

In the final moments of Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*,as Annette and Dorothée oversee the marriage of their mistress and the novel's conclusion, the servants restate their narrative idioms:

Annette almost fancied herself in an enchanted palace, and declared, that she had not met with any place, which charmed her so much, since she read the fairy tales; nay, that the fairies themselves, at their nightly revels in this old hall, could display nothing finer; while old Dorothée, as she surveyed the scene, sighed, and said, the castle looked as it was wont to do in the time of her youth.[[620]](#footnote-620)

This is one of the last sections in the novel and, as in *The Romance of the Forest* and Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (and as suggesting in Bianca’s views on marriage in *The Castle of Otranto*), servant approbation and narrative proves crucial to the final realignment of socio-moral norms. Annette and Dorothée both see their narrative desires realised – Annette experiences an actualised ‘fairy tale’ while Dorothée returns to “the time of her youth.” Like the manservant Paulo, who in the final pages of *The Italian* fancifully rejoices that he and his newly freed fellows “may fly in the sea, or swim in the sky,” they vocalize their individual narrative focus and the aesthetic patterns which define the novel’s core goals.[[621]](#footnote-621) Indeed, the omniscient narrator herself continues to use, as Castle points out, “oddly preternatural” language in keeping with a “mood of hypnotic, sweetish melancholy,” reinforcing an aesthetic of “haunted” spaces and mourning patterns.[[622]](#footnote-622) Employing narrative structures of recursion, servant narratives maintain the space between unstable modes of knowing, reflecting Castle’s understanding of supernatural ‘displacement.’ Thus servant narrative contributes to a ‘real’ world adoption of the Gothic aesthetic, suggesting lingering uncanny or supernatural codification of the new domestic ideal. The reconciliation of both supernatural belief and cyclical historical remembrance with an ideal ‘reality’ suggests that, while the plot has reached an ‘explained’ conclusion, there is still space for alternative narrative as incorporated in servant narrative. Dorothée sees the cycle of the past and future work its way to a satisfactory conclusion, and Annette sees a happy ending in which supernatural belief is positively incorporated in a scene which Castle describes as “tremulous with hidden presences” and “subjective, delicately emotional” textual ghosts.[[623]](#footnote-623) Their voices are ultimately the ones through which Radcliffe articulates her final narrative expression in the text.

Radcliffe developed her literary method in her final Gothic work, *The Italian*, by directing her primary focus away from the lower-middle class heroine Ellena and towards the villain Schedoni and the aristocratic ‘hero’ Vivaldi. In spite of this shift Robert Miles asserts that *The Italian*’s politics are that of a “provincial, dissenting, middle-class culture” which “can only contemplate the lower orders approvingly through the pastoral fiction of the loyal servant.”[[624]](#footnote-624) Janet Todd argues that this is an attempt “to provide escape and fantasy for harassed and intimidated employers” who were troubled by developing social realities.[[625]](#footnote-625) The perfect servant, according to Todd, will enable his master “to play all the roles that are emotionally delicious – of child, parent, and beloved, ever posturing but, for his servant, never an impostor.”[[626]](#footnote-626) In keeping with this theatrical tendency servants in *The Italian* are at least partially a response to Matthew Lewis’ Gothic novel *The Monk* (1796), a novel which itself responded to *Udolpho* and expanded on the idea of narrative as not only verbally expressed but also physically ‘performed’ using actions and surface characteristics. ‘Performativity’ in servant narrative is in many ways a conscious examination of print culture and the readership’s response to an emerging genre which focused increasingly on overt ‘carnivalesque’ mechanisms. It also serves as a natural extension of Gothicism, both in its capacity as a political destabiliser and in its purely literary tropes and forms.

In fact, even limited servant narratives in *The Italian* challenge the status quo by employing a literary performance. For example, an unnamed servant of the dissolute Marchesa (Vivaldi’s mother) is sent to fetch her co-conspirator, the amoral monk Schedoni. Unaware of the evil his mistress is planning, the servant still makes a moral judgement:

‘My mistress has committed some great sin, truly [!]’ said the servant, who had been twice to the convent within the last half hour. ‘It must lie heavy on her conscience, in good truth, since she cannot support it for one hour. Well! the rich have this comfort, however, that let them be never so guilty, they can buy themselves innocent again, in the twinkling of a ducat. Now a poor man might be a month before he recovered his innocence, and that, too, not till after many a bout of hard flogging.’[[627]](#footnote-627)

This passage provides a negative satire of Catholicism and specifically the sale of ‘indulgences’ to those who wish to “buy themselves innocent.” It also parallels the (for some eighteenth-century critics) problematic ‘gravedigger scene’ of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, particularly when a lower-class gravedigger comments that if Ophelia “had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.”[[628]](#footnote-628) The unnamed servant in *The Italian* echoes middle class concerns about aristocratic hypocrisy and presents a humorously over-simplistic understanding of theology. At the same time he suggests, subversively, that his mistress “has committed some great sin” and that her attachment to her confessor is in fact an indication of spiritual decay rather than virtue. Read through John Barrell’s understanding of a politicized imagination in the 1790s this statement is a form of ‘imaginative treason’ used to “perform a political function,” a re-evaluation of the aristocratic-ecclesiastical relationship.[[629]](#footnote-629) Servants perform a pedagogical function as unwitting satirists, correspondingly de-valuing their master’s problematic morals. While the servants in *The Italian* seem to embody a “pastoral fiction,” then, it is important not to dismiss their narratives as devoid of pertinent criticism.

In fact, the old housekeeper, Beatrice, is one of the first characters to illustrate protagonist Vivaldi’s tendency to embody a radical understanding of sensibility, as Miles suggests, “as a fashionable affectation which masked establishment inaction.”[[630]](#footnote-630) Beatrice informs Vivaldi of a death in the family – Ellena’s aunt, Signora Bianchi, was not expected to live much longer, yet, while “an indifferent person would have understood” that Bianchi was dead, Vivaldi’s “affrighted fancy” causes him to believe that Ellena has been murdered.[[631]](#footnote-631) The miscommunication results in Vivaldi’s “sudden intrusion” on, as the omniscient narrator suggestively labels it, “the sacredness of sorrow.”[[632]](#footnote-632) This “intrusion” echoes Vivaldi’s later interruption of Schedoni’s act of penance (an action which will haunt him later) and suggests a narrative rebuke of the impetuous Vivaldi. Vivaldi, after realising his mistake, then quizzes Beatrice for exact details. The omniscient narrator admits that the circumstances of Bianchi’s death are peculiar, yet the ‘conspiracy’ Vivaldi thinks he sees is actually a fantasy in keeping with Barrell’s assertions that “conspiracy and delusion could both be represented as effects of the ‘imagination’” in eighteenth-century politics.[[633]](#footnote-633) Therein Vivaldi is cast as a victim of sensibility. Beatrice’s "tedious circumlocution" is thus problematized as fuel for a paranoid lover[[634]](#footnote-634):

"Well then, Signor, I will own, that I do not like the suddenness of my lady's death, no, nor the manner of it, nor her appearance after death!"

"Speak explicitly, and to the point," said Vivaldi.

"Nay, Signor, there are some folks that will not understand if you speak ever so plain; I am sure I speak plain enough."[[635]](#footnote-635)

This is a rather biting comment given Vivaldi’s previous dialectic failure. Indeed, speaking “to the point” is clearly not necessarily the same thing as speaking “ever so plain.”

The servants who speak “explicitly” apparently run the risk of being dismissed as excessively garrulous, while abridged tales are crucially devoid of detail. Beatrice’s insistence on not giving a simple “yes or no” answer but rather working the narrative to “the right place” suggests the basic structure of storytelling, yet the protagonists repeatedly ask “Beatrice a thousand questions concerning the affair, without allowing her time to answer one of them.”[[636]](#footnote-636) After Ellena returns home, she has an almost identical conversation with Beatrice:

“‘O heavens!’ exclaimed Ellena, ‘he is dead! Vivaldi is dead!’ ‘You shall hear, Signora,’ continued Beatrice. ‘Be brief!’ said Ellena, ‘answer me simply yes or no.’ ‘I cannot, till I come to the right place, Signora; if you will but have a little patience, you shall hear all. But if you fluster me so, you will put me quite out.’”[[637]](#footnote-637)

The story is framed as Beatrice’s discussion with another peasant, suggesting, as John Richetti argues regarding the texts of Fielding and Smollett, the presence of a “literary servant being constructed out of an actuality in which there lurk other beings, the under class from which the eighteenth-century servant class was in fact recruited.”[[638]](#footnote-638) The presence of an “under class” with access to important knowledge is particularly noteworthy in this text as aristocratic vulnerability is later examined through the repressive Inquisition. Eventually Beatrice states that it is Vivaldi’s mother who has died, but such an exchange suggests the fatal miscommunication in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and a more general dialectic failure. Therein, servant and master define a narrative Gothicized by discourses of recursion, the dynamic between authorial insistence on order and the reader’s own emotional anxiety.

Beatrice is also given the task of recognising the long-lost matriarch in the text – Ellena’s mother Olivia, who had been hiding for years in a convent. Deborah Rogers argues that “destined to repeat the pattern of her mother’s life, Ellena must both reconcile and disidentify with her to avoid the devastating results.”[[639]](#footnote-639) Servant narrative is thus once again the space where identity is negotiated, and in this case it facilitates both the reunion of mother and daughter and their navigation of that relationship as individuals. Interestingly, Olivia initiates the conversation, abandoning her assumed identity by recognising Beatrice: “is it Beatrice Olca to whom I speak?” This question encourages personal investigation by Beatrice, who reads Olivia’s physical form as ‘text’ and finally exclaims “you are so like her, lady, yet you are very different too.”[[640]](#footnote-640) This is an interesting distinction that makes the lost mother-figure profoundly uncanny. Olivia does not attempt to justify herself but rather ask Beatrice to identify Ellena in the hope that Ellena might be Olivia’s daughter. Beatrice responds, again without explicitly confirming or denying anything, “how glad you must have been to find one another out!”[[641]](#footnote-641) The exchange thus confirms the relationship between Olivia and Ellena, a reunion which Beatrice watched “uniformly grave and observant,” until at the “mention of her late mistress (Bianchi), Beatrice recovered the use of speech,” in time to eulogize Bianchi.[[642]](#footnote-642) Beatrice’s verbal and non-verbal performance is a relatively standardised Gothic servant narrative, as is her role as messenger, witness, and facilitator of familial reunions.

Paulo, Vivaldi’s manservant and companion, quickly develops as the central servant character in *The Italian*, a “very fine picture of fidelity, integrity, and rustic good humour,” to quote a 1797 review in *The Monthly Mirror*.[[643]](#footnote-643) He is partially an extension of Radcliffean manservants such as Peter and Ludovico, but also a response to Lewis’s manservant character Theodore from *The Monk*, a Gothicized ‘Figaro’ and an overtly ‘performing’ servant who employs a pseudo-libertine anti-establishment code of conduct. Paulo is introduced after Vivaldi has already attempted to investigate a ruined Roman fortress near Ellena’s villa with his friend Bonarmo. Although he is Vivaldi’s social equal, Bonarmo abandons Vivaldi to his own devices after one abortive excursion. In this he reflects the underlying complacency of the upper classes and suggests a fundamental instability in the social hierarchy and in group identity. Bonarmo disappears from the narrative and is replaced by Paulo, whose loyalty is unquestioning and who, Janet Todd argues, “can be treated as an equal whenever his master wishes it, with no fear of presumption,” because of his role as an idealised, ostensibly submissive servant.[[644]](#footnote-644) The narrator describes Paulo as “a true Neapolitan, shrewd, inquisitive, insinuating, adroit; possessing much of that spirit of intrigue, together with a considerable portion of humour, which displayed itself not so much in words, as in his manner and countenance.”[[645]](#footnote-645) He is, furthermore, “naturally courageous, was incredulous to superstition of any kind,” and is thus comparable to Peter or Ludovico in his initial characterisation and his natural usefulness.[[646]](#footnote-646)

Paulo is troubling in his “happy faith in the wisdom of his superiors,” though he is notably only “devotedly loyal and subordinate” to those whom he personally values and not to amoral authorities such as the Inquisition.[[647]](#footnote-647) Miles suggests that “the double-bind of Paulo’s representation is that he is only permitted within the magic circle of Englishness if he is doggedly loyal; but this very loyalty renders him ‘Other’ and ‘insensible.’”[[648]](#footnote-648) Still, his insistence on vocalizing critical observations of Vivaldi’s conduct and character establishes Paulo as an agent of counter-narrative, as does his resistance to the dehumanising influence of the Inquisition. Paulo’s pragmatism contrasts Vivaldi’s foolhardy superstition in their conflicting characterisations of the monk figure shadowing them in the ruins near Ellena’s home:

‘I thought I saw a shadowy sort of a figure pass. He might be a ghost, by his silence, for aught I know, *Maestro*; but he seems to have a good mortal instinct in taking care of himself, and to have as swift a pair of heels to assist in carrying him off, as any Lazaro in Naples need desire.’

‘Fewer words, and more caution!' said Vivaldi, lowering the torch, and pointing it towards the quarter which Paulo had mentioned. 'Be vigilant, and tread lightly.’

‘You are obeyed, Signor; but their eyes will inform them, though their ears refuse, while we hold a light to our own steps.’

‘Peace, with this buffoonery!' said Vivaldi, somewhat sternly; ‘follow in silence, and be on your guard.’[[649]](#footnote-649)

Vivaldi may characterise Paulo’s advice as “buffoonery” but Paulo is not incorrect in his suggestion that holding “a light to our own steps” is not conducive to subterfuge and that self-exposure is potentially literally and figuratively dangerous in a Gothic space. Paulo’s own alternating narrative transparency and obscurity performs this ambiguity throughout the text.

Vivaldi seems more interested in silencing dissent than pursuing a more reasonable line of inquiry – he shares some similarities with representatives of the Inquisition in this respect and hints at an underlying destabilisation of identity. This is apparent in Vivaldi and Paulo’s discussion of the phantom monk: “‘In white, was he?’ said Vivaldi; ‘if he had been in black, I should have thought this must have been the monk, my tormentor.’ ‘Why, you know, Signor, that occurred to me before,’ observed Paulo ‘and a man might easily change his dress, if that were all.’”[[650]](#footnote-650) Norton argues that Vivaldi is “gently satirized for lacking both humour and imagination” while Paulo clearly embodies a constructive type of both (and while Vivaldi, to his credit, usually appreciates these traits in Paulo).[[651]](#footnote-651) In fact Vivaldi does have some ‘imagination,’ but Paulo employs both imagination and reason while Vivaldi is painted as a kind of “alarmist” William Pitt surrogate (applying Barrell’s study on notions of treason in the 1790s) whose fear of rebellion ironically becomes the cause of dissent.[[652]](#footnote-652) Moreover, Paulo does consistently criticise his master: “‘Thou art an excellent comforter,’ said Vivaldi, groaning. ‘You must allow, Signor, that you are even with me,’ replied Paulo; ‘and that you are as excellent a conductor.’”[[653]](#footnote-653) As in other Radcliffean textsthe servant narrative accidentally/on-purpose emphasises the master-protagonist’s lack of leadership qualities, his irrationality, and his faulty moral direction.

In the course of their temporary imprisonment in the ruin Paulo attempts to “assist his (Vivaldi’s) conjectures” about the identity of their tormentor, a mysterious monk, by telling Vivaldi part of the story of the confessional at Santa Maria del Pianto, where Father Ansaldo, who will later return in the narrative proper as part of Schedoni’s indictment, is introduced as the keeper of a terrible secret.[[654]](#footnote-654) This incomplete narrative reappears in various forms throughout the text and contributes to Vivaldi’s evolving understanding of Schedoni’s true character. The tale is told in typical servant fashion, echoing Emily and Annette’s exchanges in *Udolpho*: “‘Why, Signor, the story is not generally known,’ said Paulo in a whisper; ‘I half promised never to reveal it.’ ‘If you are under any promise of secrecy,’ interrupted Vivaldi, ‘I forbid you to tell this wonderful tale, which, however, seems somewhat too big to rest within your brain.’”[[655]](#footnote-655) Superficially, the “essential hierarchy is regained” through Vivaldi’s repression of Paulo’s narrative, though in truth the mere act of verbalizing narrative suggests the destabilisation of hierarchy and the adoption of an authorial role.[[656]](#footnote-656) Paulo’s independence and his willingness to perform other roles with Vivaldi’s consent implies an authorial identity. While not structured as self-consciously as servants in the works of Matthew Lewis or Charlotte Dare, there is still a self-reflexive element to Paulo’s storytelling. Vivaldi’s admonishment also contains a pseudo-self-aware acknowledgement that he has no power over Paulo’s choices given Paulo’s determination to engage with that specific narrative. The story ultimately does prove “too big” to remain within this particular context, in spite of the fact that “Paulo, who had roared himself hoarse, was very willing to be silent” while Vivaldi incorrectly assumes that such a story “could not afford him information connected with Ellena.”[[657]](#footnote-657) The narrative not only develops independent of Paulo and Vivaldi but also becomes a revelation of moral identity for many of the main characters.

As such, Paulo’s narrative illustrates moral empathy, a sense of ‘good’ articulated through interpersonal relationships. While Vivaldi’s tendency towards susceptibility draws him inward and away from areas of personal engagement, danger and trouble brings Paulo outside of himself.[[658]](#footnote-658) When both are trapped in the ruin the narrator states that:

Paulo forgot, for a while, his own situation in the superior sufferings of his master, and now, at least, endeavored to perform the offices of a comforter, for he tried to calm Vivaldi’s mind, by selecting the fairest circumstances for hope which the subject admitted, and he passed without noticing, or, if noticing, only lightly touched upon, the most prominent possibilities of evil.[[659]](#footnote-659)

However, once “Paulo had no longer a hope to suggest, or a joke to throw away” he begins “lamenting the rashness” (primarily Vivaldi’s rashness) which caused them to commit a social impropriety and placed them in physical danger.[[660]](#footnote-660) Vivaldi, Todd suggests, “must be calmed by the commonsensical servant, who cares for his master as a parent for a child,” but who also does not miss a revolutionary and pedagogical opportunity to point out that Vivaldi’s actions undermined his paternalistic responsibility as an aristocratic employer.[[661]](#footnote-661) He thus problematizes his and Vivaldi’s roles even as he performs them, and when both characters are later captured by the Inquisition this performance is re-emphasised. Vivaldi remains in a passive and complacent aristocratic role while Paulo incites rebellion through his unconventional and insistent narrative interjections. Their relationship again suggests Wollstonecraft and Blackstone’s evolving views on ‘Gothic’ laws and the ultimate usefulness of the ‘ruins’ of the British past.

It is while Paulo is “in the midst of a very pathetic oration, of which, however, his master did not hear a single word, so wholly was his attention engaged by his own melancholy thoughts” that he discovers a “ray of light” which allows them to escape the ruin.[[662]](#footnote-662) The contrast between darkness and light suggests Burke’s theories of sublimity, and also previews Paulo’s later comparison of various active volcanos to the Neapolitan “*illumination* night,” both of which may “light us on our way if we should happen to be benighted.”[[663]](#footnote-663) James P. Carson states that such displays provide “a spectacular show of light that fascinates the populace” and have “the potential to guide benighted travellers.”[[664]](#footnote-664) He argues that as such “Radcliffe would like to make a similar claim for her Gothic novels: they simultaneously fascinate and provide moral guidance for the reader.”[[665]](#footnote-665) This is a reflection of the novel form and a defence of Radcliffe’s dialectic impulse within the Gothic genre. Of course Edmund Burke might have considered such ‘lights’, and the texts they represent, “false lights” which “amuse and mislead us.”[[666]](#footnote-666) Paulo’s role as narrator thus has implications both within the revelation of the plot and as a reflection of Radcliffe’s own authorial goals. Arguably Paulo’s narrative legitimacy is undermined by his servant-narrative idiom, but Paulo’s lack of sophistication is not an indication of ‘insensitivity.’ He fails to rhapsodise on nature using poetic phrasing, but like Peter or Annette or Theresa his connection to a landscape of ‘home’ indicates an empathetic connection with ‘people.’ Even when “Vivaldi’s spirits began to fail” in the course of his journey, “Paulo, light of heart and ever gay, commended the shade and pleasant freshness of the woods, and observed, that if his master did lose his way, and was obliged to remain here for the night, it would not be so very unlucky.”[[667]](#footnote-667) By “endeavouring to make the best of what might happen” Paulo circumvents the hero/heroine’s tendency to imagine the worst possible outcome and in doing so provides the “ray of light” which guides the master character to psychological stability.[[668]](#footnote-668) Like La Motte and Peter in *The Romance of the Forest*, Vivaldi and Paulo suggest Barrell’s argument that “conspiracy and delusion” are the destructive side of ‘imagination.’[[669]](#footnote-669) However, the servant narrative exposes these tendencies as “frightening chimeras” rather than legitimate fears.[[670]](#footnote-670)

Once Paulo and Vivaldi are captured by the Inquisition, Paulo’s loquacity, redemptive as it is, causes extreme distress for both Vivaldi and the reading audience. His auditors are forced to negotiate a highly charged performance which is not regulated by awe or fear but rather by outrage and a sort of hyper-logical re-imagining of socio-moral regulations. Paulo, Todd argues, “turns modern dramatist by including the audience in his theatre” until “Paulo and his love are by the end so centre stage that the servant is even allowed the sentiment usually reserved for the hero.”[[671]](#footnote-671) Therein, Paulo is both vulnerable and invincible:

The officers, mean while, never spoke, but were observant of all that Paulo said, who perceived their watchfulness, but because he despised them as spies, he thoughtlessly despised them also as enemies, and was far from concealing opinions, which they might repeat to his prejudice, that he had a pride in exaggerating them, and in daring the worst, which the exasperated tempers of these men, shut up in the same carriage with him, and compelled to hear whatever he chose to say against the institution to which they belonged, could effect.[[672]](#footnote-672)

Using the fool-proof logic that “it is their own fault; they would thrust themselves in my company; let them have enough of it,” Paulo’s ill-advised verbal barrage is very nearly the most terrifying element of the situation.[[673]](#footnote-673) It ostensibly places both Paulo and Vivaldi in danger while in and of itself constituting an anarchic patchwork of excess and exaggeration.

However, the narrator notes Paulo’s refusal to be manipulated: “From the servant no information could be obtained; he asserted his master’s innocence, without once remembering to mention his own” and “with all his simplicity of heart, was both vigilant and shrewd in Vivaldi’s interests.”[[674]](#footnote-674) Even when they are separated Paulo, in a positive re-imagining of Caleb William, seems to behold his master “ever in my imagination before me” and uses his skills to protect his master’s secrets.[[675]](#footnote-675) This presents the reader with an ambiguous understanding of Radcliffe’s political agenda. *The Italian* is perhaps the most “republican” of Radcliffe’s texts, lending Paulo an “egalitarian individualism” which Norton argues reflects Radcliffe’s “Dissenting background.”[[676]](#footnote-676) The narrator notes that Paulo and Vivaldi are “separately interrogated,” but the descriptions of these individual interrogations are focused primarily on Paulo and his complete subversion of hierarchical control, creating a situation in which he appears to lose autonomy but in fact enforces an oppositional narrative.[[677]](#footnote-677) Paulo:

clamoured, with more justice than prudence, against the persons who had occasioned his arrest; and seriously endeavouring to convince the inquisitors, that he himself had *no other motive* in having demanded to be brought to these prisons than that he might comfort his master, he gravely remonstrated the injustice of separating them, adding, that he was sure when they knew the rights of the matter, they would order him to be carried to the prison of Signor Vivaldi.[[678]](#footnote-678)

Without Vivaldi to check him there is the threat that Paulo might say something damning, but instead Paulo “despised alike their reprehensions, their thundering menaces; and their more artful exhibitions,” and displays, as the omniscient narrator approvingly characterises it, an “honesty, such as they had, probably, never experienced before.”[[679]](#footnote-679) Paulo forms a solid resistance and the narrator attributes the Inquisitors with an unflattering “artful” and “thundering,” narrative style. As such Paulo effectively redefines his own identity, with the narrator’s support, and undermines hierarchical assumptions of morality. He paradoxically over-shares and conceals, his overwhelming verbosity negated by the lack of relevant information he gives to the Inquisitors, denying social restraint. Paulo inspires empathy and, Clery argues, “contributes to the broadened spectrum of feeling in the novel, providing consistent light relief to counterbalance the intensified darkness of Schedoni.”[[680]](#footnote-680) While he does so, Vivaldi contrastingly retreats further inward during his imprisonment, even to the point where he refuses to speak the words that might save him.

When Paulo is finally reunited with Vivaldi in prison he is, for once, “mute and grave, was watchful of all that passed; he observed the revolutions in his master’s mind, with grief first, and then with surprise, but he could not imitate the noble fortitude, which now gave weight and steadiness to Vivaldi’s thoughts.”[[681]](#footnote-681) This seems like a derogatory characterisation of an overwrought servant. However, Vivaldi’s own silence suggests a masochistic passivity which, while perhaps ‘heroic,’ makes Vivaldi a victim rather than an agent of his own destiny. Paulo does not shrink away from his duty when he realises the danger, and although he does not “imitate the noble fortitude” of Vivaldi, he maintains his own sense of self in his idealised devotion. Indeed, “noble fortitude” has significant limitations and Radcliffe subtly highlights the disparity between Vivaldi’s ineffectual self-sacrifice and Paulo’s determined assertion of ‘self.’ Unlike Vivaldi, Paulo proactively adapts the situation to his own inclinations – he remains loquacious, outrageous, and emotional, directly attacking the amorality of the Inquisition in his expansive verbal and physical narrative performance. Through this performance he manages to befriend a prison guard and make his escape, facilitating Vivaldi’s later release. Like Lewis’s Theodore and Walpole’s Bianca, Paulo finds literal and figurative freedom in a “performance” of submission which actually facilitates subversion, transgressing limits only to then use those limits against an oppressor. Paulo’s threat that “they shall know my mind” and that the Inquisitors “shall hear a little plain truth, for once in their lives” emphasises the Gothic ethos of the Inquisition, a persistent failure to ascertain ‘truth’ effectively.[[682]](#footnote-682)

A lack of ‘truth,’ or at least an ambiguous understanding of what constitutes, upends the political space, and, in keeping with Chaplin’s positioning of patriarchal law in *The Italian*, patriarchal authority comes to threaten individual identity. While Vivaldi sinks deeper into imaginative awe, Paulo acts and repeats signifiers of identity – his continual call for “my master” – which illustrate normal ranks and codes of conduct. Vivaldi tells him to “remember your situation” and “recollect yourself,” though Vivaldi himself is threatened by his own sensibility and his constant “state of uncertainty.”[[683]](#footnote-683) The offshoot of this admonishment is that Vivaldi correspondingly remembers his “parent role” and master role and acts nobly and selflessly.[[684]](#footnote-684) As the Inquisition threatens Vivaldi’s perception of his own identity, Paulo farcically performs disruption until “a sort of compromise was made” (both between Paulo and the Inquisitors and within Vivaldi’s own consciousness) and he is allowed to remain as a stabilising (and destabilising) force in a problematically Gothicized environment.[[685]](#footnote-685) Therein the novel, as Brenda Tooley argues, “enacts and interrogates a conflict between two constructions of selfhood, one inextricably interwoven with familial and social identifications, the other singularly autonomous (the human being with intrinsic rights violated by oppressive institutions) and yet, because embodied, painfully subject to inquisitorial control.”[[686]](#footnote-686)

Claudia Johnson points out that the novel “is constituted by two distinct movements which together make the narrative as a whole incoherent: first a progressive drive to assail the insolence and callousness of the old regime,” as articulated in Vivaldi and Ellena’s initial relationship, and secondly “a reactionary drive to defend authority and validate its efficacy.”[[687]](#footnote-687) Paulo verbalises a problematic counter-narrative, reasserting the characterisation of the Inquisition as structurally unsound and inherently amoral while Vivaldi eventually “commends the candor of the inquisitorial fathers and never gives a second thought to the extorted groans behind closed doors.”[[688]](#footnote-688) Radcliffe may be, as Johnson suggests, attempting to justify the authoritative body in a political context as opposed to anarchic revolutionary upheaval by asserting that “the tribunal is morally efficacious after all.”[[689]](#footnote-689) However, given Radcliffe’s engagement with Jacobite thinkers and Paulo’s inclusion as a rebellious servant authorial metonym it is quite possible that Radcliffe is in fact complicating Vivaldi’s socio-moral prerogatives. There is a didactic and pedagogical undercurrent in Paulo’s narrative in which “his opposition to the Inquisition is far more vocal and sustained.”[[690]](#footnote-690) Chaplin notes that while Vivaldi experiences a “political awakening” regarding the unjust system (the Inquisition) which “had previously supported his aristocratic privilege,” Vivaldi’s feelings change when the Inquisition begins to work in his favour.[[691]](#footnote-691) Paulo, however, never forgets or forgives what he perceives to be the systematic injustices therein. Paulo remains a text through which political injustice can be read precisely because that injustice was enacted against him and because his social role requires a different kind of investment in the patriarchal authority. Moreover, a subtle contrast is drawn between the socially superior friends who in “the coldness of their pride” do not appear until Vivaldi is already released, and Paulo, the lower class servant who effectively saves his master and comprehensively verbalizes poetic descriptions of liberty.[[692]](#footnote-692) Even in the final lines in the book Paulo repeatedly characterises the Inquisitors as “old devils,” highlighting Vivaldi’s views of paternal justice as a dialectic failure. Paulo also, as Chaplin argues, resists the “anti-romance stance” implied in the marriage of Ellena and Vivaldi by using the “colourful descriptions” of a “romantic tradition,” a persistent “anarchic presence” and “Carnivalesque quality” in keeping with the overall Gothic narrative.[[693]](#footnote-693) Although ultimately “even at the heart of the Inquisition, justice may be enacted,” Paulo’s narrative stresses that, as Tooley points out, “there is no final guarantee in the last pages that they will not turn again.”[[694]](#footnote-694)

The role of servant-hero colours Paulo’s final narrative assertions, his suggestion that “you see how people get through their misfortunes, if they have but a heart to bear up against them, and do nothing that can lie on their conscience afterwards.”[[695]](#footnote-695) Paulo is given the final word as he fancifully rejoices in the resolution of the plot:

All at liberty! And may run, if we will, straight forward, from one end of the earth to the other, and back again without being stopped! May fly in the sea, or swim in the sky, or tumble over head and heels into the moon! For remember, my good friends, we have no lead in our consciences to keep us down![[696]](#footnote-696)

Paulo recalls past emotional trauma and reiterates the novel’s moral lesson, and even hints at a potential political discourse on “liberty.” His statement expresses honest emotion within a particular aesthetic impulse, an impulse noted by “a grave personage” who interrupts Paulo in order to criticise his phrasing: “You mean swim in the sea, and fly in the sky, I suppose… but as for tumbling head over heels into the moon! I don’t know what you mean by that.”[[697]](#footnote-697) Paulo’s input represents, as Sedgwick suggests, “the pole of metonymy, of spread, which is dominant in all Gothic characters but deformed or paralyzed in the ‘higher’ characters by an additional insistence on metaphor and proper naming.”[[698]](#footnote-698) This “grave personage” is not the traditional restraining patriarchal master, at least not overtly. He is rather an unnamed killjoy, perhaps a literary critic or the English tourist who condemned Italian customs in the text’s opening prologue. He attempts to edit Paulo’s original idea into something more conventional, rewriting the words without the fantastical and chaotic jumble of sentiments and transforming them into more pedestrian statements through “proper naming.” When faced with something that he cannot easily contextualise he insists that “I don’t know what you mean by that,” implying a profound unwillingness to read empathetically.

Paulo, in response, is allowed to defend his illogical outburst, and indeed the uncontrolled expression of all servant narratives, against the unnamed sceptic:

‘who can stop, at such a time as this, to think about what he means! I wish that all those, who on this night are not merry enough to speak before they think, may ever after be grave enough to think before they speak! But you, none of you, no! not one of you! I warrant, ever saw the roof of a prison, when your master happened to be below in the dungeon, nor know what it is to be forced to run away, and leave him behind to die by himself. Poor souls! But no matter for that, you can be tolerably happy, perhaps, notwithstanding; but as for guessing how happy I am, or knowing any thing about the matter, - O! its quite beyond what you can understand. *O! giorno felice!O! giorno felice!*’ repeated Paulo, as he bounded forward to mingle in the dance, and *‘O! giorno felice!*’ was again shouted in chorus by his joyful companions.’[[699]](#footnote-699)

For Paulo, flaws in language do not compromise the resulting emotions. In fact, they elevate them. Paulo pities those whose lives lack the emotional complexity that comes with extreme joy or sorrow, who lack what Chaplin identifies as “liberatory potential.”[[700]](#footnote-700) Sedgwick further notes that the servant’s role “facilitates the few occasions on which emotion as such – as distinct from its graphic blazons, blush or pallor or immobility – is allowed to spread by contagion.”[[701]](#footnote-701) Paulo’s response silences the critic and as he concludes with an exuberant *O! giorno felice!* those around him become a “chorus” echoing his own positive sentiments.[[702]](#footnote-702) This passage empowers servant characters and Radcliffe’s own position as a Gothic author – her choice of the servant as philosophizing metonym with social and moral support justifies his roles as a Gothic narrator both within the text and as part of a larger critical engagement. Paulo’s interjections would be much less effective if they did not carry the air of the irrational, the chaotic, and the Gothic in them, and to criticise Paulo and the genre in which he operates is to miss the redemptive features which Radcliffe showcases in servant narrative.

Radcliffe’s servant idiom is defined by re-evaluations of the boundaries of knowledge and socio-moral understanding. Insofar as, as Scott Mackenzie suggests, “Gothic fiction was representative of the coincidence between feminized, formally chaotic fantasy and the woman’s world of domesticity which lacked most kinds of classical formal unity or structure,” servant narratives were ideal for navigating such boundaries.[[703]](#footnote-703) At one point, while in discussion with a travelling guide, *The Italian’s* Schedoni states that the guide’s “narrative resembles a delirious dream, more than a reality,” a reflection of Schedoni’s own guilt and fear.[[704]](#footnote-704) The guide defends his narrative style: “if you would only have let me gone straight on with the story, you would have found it out by this time, Signor.”[[705]](#footnote-705) His incredulous interjection – “as if a story could be told in two words, Signor!” – assumes that narratives require organisation and reflect a novelistic pattern, defining the “delirious dream” within a literary form.[[706]](#footnote-706) The servant’s performance and structuring of stories and information, the focus on Gothicized content, the ultimate commercial and artistic value of such stories – all of these aspects demonstrate how Radcliffe uses servants as a means of developing and exploring the genre and her own capacities as a Gothic author. As demonstrated, servant narrative becomes a method for building Gothic space and negotiating identity through material identifications (such as Beatrice’s acknowledgement of Olivia or Peter’s characterisation of La Motte), in facilitating an exploration of the self through more circumspect investigation (such as Annette’s impact on Emily’s sensibility and rationality), and, in some cases, openly defending the value of the genre (such as Paulo’s final speech). The next chapter will examine the work of Matthew Lewis and Charlotte Dacre, and will further develop characterisations of servant narrative by examining methods of performance in narrative in those authors’ most famous texts.

**Chapter Three**

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

He became a very Proteus, changing his shape every day…

- Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, (1796)[[707]](#footnote-707)

‘You have dreamt, but it was no fable.’

- Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya, or The Moor*, (1806)[[708]](#footnote-708)

While Ann Radcliffe was earning accolades as “the Shakespeare of Romance writers” with the release of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*,other authors were responding to and redefining Gothic narrative in different but equally important ways.[[709]](#footnote-709) Whereas Sir Walter Scott notes that the servant narrator in Radcliffe is most often found “rehearsing the stories of blood and horror which she had heard in the servant’s hall,” the servants in two other seminal early Gothic works, Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) and Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806), actively perform and embody Gothic identity within a narrative that they themselves create.[[710]](#footnote-710) The emergence of a ‘masculine’ Gothic subgenre refocused the Gothic impulse into the construction of what H. P. Lovecraft describes as an “active nightmare,” the disintegration of identity which Carol Margaret Davison notes is “in contradistinction to Ann Radcliffe’s concern with the stability of her heroine’s identity.”[[711]](#footnote-711) In the work of Matthew Lewis (who was responding to Radcliffe, among others) and later in the Gothic texts of Charlotte Dacre (whose pen-name ‘Rosa Matilda’ suggests that she was responding primarily, though not exclusively, to Lewis) the genre became a vehicle for explicit ‘horror’ rather than ‘terror,’ a conscious examination and re-evaluation of the tools which defined Gothic storytelling.[[712]](#footnote-712) As such these authors distinguish themselves by expanding the role of the servant narrator in a way that emphasised the performance / performing aspect of narrative. As noted in the previous chapter, the servants in Radcliffe’s novels and especially in *The Italian* demonstrate a performativity which is at least partially a response to Lewis’s work, though it is also, as Robert Miles states, part of Radcliffe’s “self-critique” of her own literary contributions.[[713]](#footnote-713) While previous servants usually lacked personal descriptors or only functioned in limited domestic spaces, however, Lewis and Dacre’s servant characters more self-consciously adopt the role of an individualistic authorial metonym. They assume the mantle of narrator and then redefine it as a conscious performance in which aesthetic is created by the active body as well as the content and style of an oral narrative. As such, they embody a negotiation of Gothic identity which illustrates themes of desire, imagination, authorship and representation, as well as suggesting the importance of narrative as a form of self-fashioning within the genre.

Servant narratives in Lewis and Dacre adopt a ‘performativity’ defined as instances where speech and gesture combine to perform a specific and intentional identity. Judith Butler, in her studies on gendered identity, argues that “acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organising principle of identity as cause.”[[714]](#footnote-714) The primary servant narrators in Lewis and Dacre narrate acceptable and unacceptable “desire” and transgressive or liminal (and often meta-textual) identity through the manipulation of the “surface,” the physical performance and characteristics that redefine their spoken words. While servants in Walpole and Radcliffe’s work have few, if any, physical descriptors and nearly no personal descriptors outside of those which characterise their specific servant voice (Annette’s credulity, for example), the servants in Lewis and Dacre define themselves within their embodiment of a more comprehensive Gothic narrative. They possess complexly constructed back stories, distinct physical attributes, and a self-knowledge which modifies their narrative as well as distinguishing them as individuals. Such forms of narrative expression, Butler suggests, “are *performative* in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.”[[715]](#footnote-715) This definition is based on Foucault’s theories of internalization and ‘governmentality’ as applied to Butler’s classifications of sexual norms, but it also has implications for the early Gothic genre. Thanks to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s contributions, Gothic criticism has a renewed appreciation for explorations of identity based on the manufacture of artificial surface signifiers.[[716]](#footnote-716) The potential instability and changeability of such signifiers affects aesthetics within the Gothic genre as well as illustrating the disintegration of identity which preoccupied Lewis and Dacre. The spoken word and the physical and acting text of the (servant) body suggest a different direction in the exploration of Gothic servant narrative, a shift from exclusively verbal expressions to physical meta-authorial constructions of servant narrators.

In this way servant narrative in Gothic literature reflects and complicates Angela Esterhammer’s conception of “the speaker’s identity as *shaped and determined, indeed performed by*, his or her utterance, rather than regarding the utterance and its effect on the world as determined by the status of the speaker.”[[717]](#footnote-717) This reverses classifications of narrative expression as a reflection of pre-made identity, instances where the servant’s narrative is inherently limited by the servant’s identity as a ‘servant.’ Alternatively, when a servant becomes something more than a ‘servant’ the “status of the speaker” influences how a certain audience engages with the narrative. Problematizing identity in this way legitimises a character’s narrative as a means of constructing identity spontaneously, potentially expressing authorial or unstable ‘carnival’ identity. Esterhammer, for example, explores the “socio-political speech acts” of another servant, William Godwin’s Caleb Williams of *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams,* as a narrative “which is explicitly a ‘performance’, the self-creation of a character.”[[718]](#footnote-718) Readers are gradually made aware that Caleb’s first-person descriptions of himself and his situation are in fact unreliable constructions by, of, and for his own identity. His story depends on his role as a ‘servant’ yet his narrator-role allows him to re-define his identity and the identities of other characters within what Caleb himself identifies as “a theatre of calamity.”[[719]](#footnote-719) Caleb’s final claim that “I will tell a tale – !” and “I speak with a voice more fearful than thunder!” links his narrative to the more Gothic elements of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and employs servant narrative performance as a Gothic system and as an expression of political identity.[[720]](#footnote-720) Indeed, Godwin’s 1794 preface to his novel suggests that his choice of genre is itself part of a political and literary performance: he stated that “if the author shall have taught a valuable lesson, without subtracting from the interest and passion by which a performance of this sort ought to be characterised, he will have reason to congratulate himself upon the vehicle he has chosen.”[[721]](#footnote-721) The narrative style and genre, for Godwin, unites political lessons with more emotionally potent entertainment. Politics thus developed within this context as a Gothicized identity, a space in which even the author himself is an unstable narrator.

Michael Gamer notes that Lewis’s contemporaries associated *The Monk* with “the ‘Jacobin’ productions of Holcroft and William Godwin,” and indeed Lewis engages as much with Godwin as he does with Radcliffe.[[722]](#footnote-722) Lewis’s destabilisation of religious and social authority within the text is certainly a reflection of Godwin, as is his use of overtly unconventional or ‘fantastic’ narratives and narrators. Dacre, too, investigates the means through which, as Marie Hockenhull Smith argues, ambiguous identity under the law initiates “transgression which creates havoc with hierarchies.”[[723]](#footnote-723) Lewis and Dacre’s treatment of revolutionary themes and libertine politics, both of which are extensively examined through liminal servant characters and which reflect, as Smith suggests, a narrative “ambivalence” towards a sense of ‘law’ and ‘order,’ are themselves “imprints of uneasiness” which defy clear categorization.[[724]](#footnote-724) In particular these authors take advantage of the ambiguous social and moral placement of ‘servant’ characters within the genre in order to emphasise fluidity of self both as a positive and a negative. They also suggest that servant narrators are authorial metonyms whose oral and physical performances reflect the mechanisms of the genre. In *The Monk* and *Zofloya* the style, content, and goals of servant narrative are individualized by the theatrical personas and props employed by charismatic servant characters. Theodore of *The Monk* and Zofloya of *Zofloya* still share numerous similarities with the servant characters of earlier writers as part of an ongoing response within the genre. They are also, Robert Miles suggests, “impelled to expose the conventions” of the Gothic genre.[[725]](#footnote-725) Servants in these texts call specific attention to narrative performativity as a means of creating Gothic (un)realities. Their verbal and non-verbal narrative efforts suggest the identity of the Gothic author while reflecting the broader construction of a Gothic literary space.

Matthew Lewis’s Gothic efforts are often critically contrasted with the more covert or ‘feminised’ depictions of violation found in the works of authors such as Ann Radcliffe. However, their ostensibly different modes of literary engagement often reflect similar political and moral anxieties. *The Monk* and *The Italian* essentially engage in an escalating, though varied and distinct, exchange of performing servant narrative, with ambiguous results. Both explore the limits of social control over liminal servant ‘performance,’ but while Radcliffe characterises the consequences of subversive performance as regenerative and social (though the influence of an unjust Inquisition and a complacent aristocracy proves problematic), Lewis suggests an inherent instability leading to violent revolution. Maggie Kilgour argues that “Lewis presents himself as the complete revealer, who takes all of the terrors that Radcliffe leaves submerged and exposes them, turning gothic potentials into reality.”[[726]](#footnote-726) This is partially achieved through the overt inclusion of a ‘libertine’ ideology or, more pertinent to the servant narrator, what Peter Cryle and Lisa O’Connell identify as “libertinage – the vernacular, dissident freedoms of everyday life.”[[727]](#footnote-727) This discourse could manifest in a “high libertine sphere of letters” or in an “underworld […] partly formed around the interplay between forms of bawdy and licentious discourse and the development of the new vernacular cultures, political arguments, and discursive spaces of enlightenment.”[[728]](#footnote-728) The presence of class-specific “vernacular cultures” as reflected through Bakhtin’s theories of dialogism and heteroglossia is particularly relevant when examining servant narratives, particularly since the servants in Lewis and Dacre are educated and articulate yet still employ narratives which subvert the elevated discourse of ‘romance’ and/or exploit a popular culture version of the genre. Sadean libertinism comes into play through the aristocratic Marquis de Montalt in Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest*, but in Lewis and Dacre’s work such discourse frequently falls into the realm of servant narrative as a socio-moral literary discourse. Therein, Miles asserts, “ideological cruxes” and “entanglements of power” are made manifest within competing subjective narratives.[[729]](#footnote-729)

Moreover, ‘liberty’ (either as an abstract term or in specific discourses on sexual freedom or anti-clericalism, both of which suggest ‘libertinism’) and its reactionary cousin ‘treason’ were, as John Barrell argues, connected in the 1790s with ‘imagination’ “in the processes of social affiliation and the formation of political identities.”[[730]](#footnote-730) Lewis’s incorporation of ‘libertinism’ in his servant character’s discourse restructures that character’s roles as an authorial metonym and protagonist double, highlighting a discourse in which hierarchies are undermined by narrative ‘liberty.’ In spite of (or because of) this underlying revolutionary ideology, however, Maggie Kilgour argues that “authorial insight in *The Monk* is itself thematised as a dangerous form of revelation,” drawing characters beyond regularized modes of human experience.[[731]](#footnote-731) While crimes of repression (such as the imprisonment of Agnes) are very serious, once exposed (problematically, as Agnes’s story remains incomplete well past the point where it inspires revolution) they become social crimes with dangerously chaotic modes of catharsis. As both repression and revelation punish the innocent and guilty alike, Jacqueline Howard argues that Lewis uses discourses of sublimity to “describe a world in which there is no universal rational and moral order.”[[732]](#footnote-732) Such narrative is a significant Gothic alternative and also fundamentally destabilising. Kilgour further states that “distinguishing between truth and falsehood, essential and artificial self” becomes the means of parsing power relationships and moral divisions within the novel.[[733]](#footnote-733) In the process of “turning gothic potentials into reality” the servant narrator himself not only articulates this instability but actually becomes a Gothic author and a stand-in for a more comprehensive meta-Gothic form.[[734]](#footnote-734)

*The Monk* is constructed as a series of overlapping plots which emphasise not only the carnival and emotional nature of the genre but also the inherent instability of identity within Gothic spaces.[[735]](#footnote-735) Lewis is particularly innovative in his employment of short narratives presented by a wide range of socially and morally diverse characters, utilising the kind of unconventional viewpoints exhibited in novels such as *Don Quixote* or *Tristram Shandy.* This technique again destabilises the narrative proper by redirecting focus and deconstructing narrative primacy. It also allows for a more complex examination of themes and particularly the problematic consequences of transgressive desire. By layering the narrative, Lewis not only suggests the different ways in which such desire may be manifested but also presents a view of the unique, and not wholly negative, outcomes of such transgression. This suggests a libertine political agenda but also implies a more complex understanding of narrative potentialities. The central narrative of the novel is primarily concerned with the moral decline of the monk Ambrosio, an ambiguous figure “driven by his desire to be free from the restraints of his monastic order.”[[736]](#footnote-736) Characters throughout the text have dualistic identities symptomatic of transgression and/or repression: the monk / demonic female Rosario / Matilda, the sister / sex object Antonia, the trangressive mother Elvira. The layers of the main plot express a pervasive concern with the performance of subverted or dual identity and the consequences of systematic repression therein, and there is a particular disparity between the social and private selves which blurs delineations of ‘surface’ and ‘depth.’[[737]](#footnote-737) However, it is primarily in the secondary plot tracing the troubled romance of nobleman Don Raymond and reluctant nun Agnes that the servant-as-performing-narrator articulates these concerns as a self-conscious literary examination.

The narrative responses of Raymond’s servant-page Theodore are particularly suggestive as he verbally and physically negotiates Gothic identity. Theodore shares some similarities with the servant narrators of other texts, such as Radcliffe’s Ludovico or Paulo. He distinguishes himself as a servant narrator, however, in the written and oral composition of two poems and several outlandish Gothic tales which he then essentially markets and ‘sells’ to a particular audience. In his self-construction as an ‘author,’ moreover, Theodore uses his physical body to support a verbal narrative and thus encourages the audience to read and re-read his identity as both author and text. He is adaptable, unpredictable, able to produce literary work for entertainment and enlightenment, capable of drawing out truth through fiction, and often acts out physical manifestations of the grotesque and carnivalesque. Such characteristics invest him with a level of authorial legitimacy and point to a heterogeneous literary heritage. Theodore is comparable to non-Gothic servant characters such as Diderot’s Jacques the Fatalist, Beaumarchais’s Figaro, of Cervantes’s Sancho Panza. Figaro in particular is introduced in the play *The Barber of Seville or The Useless Precaution* (1773) as having participated in an eclectic literary career “turning out complimentary verses,” and as having achieved some success in the theatre and “the coffee houses” before being hounded out of the profession by employers and critics.[[738]](#footnote-738) While Figaro does little actual writing during the play, he, like Jacques, Sancho, and Theodore, performs various narratives throughout the text in a way that dramatically affects all the characters involved. In this tradition Theodore develops as a literary persona whose work not only exposes the mechanisms of Gothic literature but also reveals ambiguous responses to the genre.

As per Theodore’s development as a Gothic author, his history is highly detailed and suggestively genre-specific. His backstory is itself a tale subset within a narrative (composed of a collection of tales) which Raymond is retroactively narrating to Agnes’s brother Lorenzo. Theodore’s mother, the unwilling prisoner-wife of a criminal, becomes accidentally entangled in a banditti attack on Raymond. Sedgwick notes that Marguerite engages in a “form of signifying” as a means of preventing the attack, a technique of ‘surface’ negotiation which her son will explore further in his own narrative.[[739]](#footnote-739) After this incident she eventually narrates her own history and the history of her children (“I will not therefore stifle a confession which covers me with shame”) which Raymond then repeats.[[740]](#footnote-740) Marguerite states that Theodore’s father was a nobleman turned banditti who kept “the horrible circumstances” of his profession from his wife, who was herself “of respectable parents.”[[741]](#footnote-741) Such characterisations suggest the vulnerability of ‘respectability,’ or indeed the tendency for ‘respectable’ middle class females to develop deviant (Gothic) tastes in literature and, potentially, developing into a female Quixote therein.[[742]](#footnote-742) Marguerite’s revelations illustrate Elizabeth R. Napier’s argument that, “because criminality and concealment are associated” with each other, “the moral impetus of the novel is that of unmasking, of exposing, and revealing.”[[743]](#footnote-743) Furthermore, this “moral impetus” seems particularly navigable for those who occupy liminal social spaces in the novel – in-text narrators are frequently gypsies, banditti, fallen or disguised nobility, and children born out of wedlock. Theodore is a fitting Gothic author because he is literally the child of the excessive passion of his mother (a type of passion present in almost every sub-plot in the novel) and the false identity of his father. He is also a mirror image of Ambrosio himself, a character who is born of a problematic relationship and then thrown into a repressive space. Theodore is an accumulation of Gothic influences and his ambiguous social status and his un-servant-like attributes couple with his literary and theatrical impulses to reflect Gothic identity throughout the text. His uncertain social identity is particularly note-worthy as Daniel P. Watkins argues that “a major emphasis in the novel is on the distortion, horror, crime, and ultimately social collapse which results from violations of social hierarchy.”[[744]](#footnote-744) Theodore’s positon as an active agent in the plot and, later, as a surrogate author, is in keeping with this social and narrative destabilisation.

Lewis further emphasises social ‘violations’ by positioning Theodore as a paradoxically powerful figure within the problematic co-dependency of the servant-master relationship. Theodore manifests authorial anxiety as per Foucault’s assertion that “discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.”[[745]](#footnote-745) The power dynamic between Theodore and Raymond depends on their narrative discourse and suggests the ambiguity described by Janet Todd as employers increasingly feared servants who, as James Townley suggests in his *High Life Below Stairs*, acted like “the Master, not the Man.”[[746]](#footnote-746) Raymond states that despite his reluctance to take on so young a servant “no persuasions could induce Theodore to give up the plan which I had first marked out for him,” namely his plan to adopt Theodore as a servant-page.[[747]](#footnote-747) Theodore thus becomes a problematic extension of Raymond, almost like a demonic lover or Mephistophelian figure. For Raymond’s part, “I could not resist the entreaties of this affectionate youth, who in fact possessed a thousand estimable qualities,” many of which come in handy later.[[748]](#footnote-748) Volitional primacy in this relationship renders the power dynamic unstable as Theodore denies control, attaches himself to Raymond in spite of Raymond’s ‘resistance,’ and takes an increasingly active role as Raymond’s own health declines. This suggests a doubling of the characters as well as a Faustian bargain in which Theodore performs morally questionable tasks beyond Raymond’s scope. Theodore again plays a Figaro character, able to, as Beaumarchais puts it, “lull vigilance to sleep, awake the transports of love, thwart the machinations of jealousy, confound base intrigue, and overcome every obstacle,” all the while demonstrating few of the moral or intellectual limitations that hinder more aristocratic characters.[[749]](#footnote-749) In this, there is also the implication that Lewis, by constructing such a character, is aligning himself with Theodore and, as Howard argues, reminding “his readers of the authorial risk-taking and driving energy” he consciously seeks to demonstrate.[[750]](#footnote-750)

In Don Raymond’s inset tale, in which he informs his prospective brother-in-law of the events leading up to Agnes’s captivity in the convent, both Theodore and Raymond parse self-construction through narrative performance. Theodore is initially styled as a young “page” rather than a traditional manservant (presumably complimenting Raymond’s role as a Quixotic ‘knight-errant’).[[751]](#footnote-751) As the story develops he proves well-educated and blessed with solid intellectual discernment. These traits are certainly more common amongst non-Gothic fictional servants such as Beaumarchais’s Figaro or Richardson’s Pamela, though Godwin’s Caleb Williams is a notable exception in a genre where servant intellectualism is greatly devalued, if it exists at all. Regardless, servant insight is frequently politicised as it suggests transgressive knowledge and the destabilisation of hierarchy. A class-specific skill set changes Theodore’s relationship with his master as well as his own personal status:

His conversation was gay yet sensible, and his observations shrewd and entertaining: he had picked up much more knowledge than is usual at his age: but what rendered him the most agreeable to me, was his having a delightful voice, and some skill in music. He had also acquired some taste in poetry, and even ventured to write verses himself. He occasionally composed little ballads in Spanish; his compositions were but indifferent, I must confess, yet they were pleasing to me from their novelty, and hearing him sing them to his guitar was the only amusement I was capable of receiving.[[752]](#footnote-752)

The ability to ‘entertain’ with “indifferent” yet “pleasing” conversation and compositions implies authorial approval of Theodore’s creative drives. This description suggests Michèle Cohen’s arguments that ‘conversation’ at this time was considered an advanced skill and a civilizing influence, for Raymond’s characterization of Theodore as an ideal conversationalist places Theodore in an important socio-moral context in relation to Raymond’s own desires and development.[[753]](#footnote-753) Arguably, homoerotic elements pervade Raymond’s appreciation and contextualise his increasing dependency on Theodore and his later impotency and separation from Agnes. In terms of authorial metonymy, Theodore’s ability to provide “the only amusement I was capable of receiving” indicates positive energy within his output as a literary figure (and authorial stand-in) who ‘amuses’ as well as edifies.

Theodore’s poetic and folkloric efforts are met with various degrees of approbation from both the discerning critic (Raymond) and the vulgar reading public (the nuns of St. Clare), but whatever the objective merits of his work Lewis is clearly identifying Theodore as a creative force. Even beyond specific literary critiques Theodore is free from the restraints of a class-specific system of knowledge and acts as a ‘discerning’ author capable of narrative exposure and restraint. Discernment is a notable servant quality examined in Walpole, Reeve, and Radcliffe, and indicates authorial credibility. For example, Theodore discovers Raymond’s secret love for Agnes yet keeps his knowledge to himself, having “too much discernment not to discover my secret, and too much discretion not to conceal his knowledge of it.”[[754]](#footnote-754) He remains silent “till my (Raymond’s) interests required his interference,” showing that Theodore’s “authorial insight” is, at least for the moment, not part of Kilgour’s “dangerous form of revelation.”[[755]](#footnote-755) Instead, it is folded into a potentially constructive (as opposed to Ambrosio’s self-absorbed and destructive) libertine impulse in which sexual freedom and anti-clericalism (and, by implication, other anti-institutional concerns) are employed to help Raymond fulfil his goals.

Theodore passes no moral judgement but instead sets himself in opposition to the often hypocritical or otherwise faulty socio-moral constraints which stand in Raymond’s way. His uncertain social rank liberates him from aristocratic or middle-class rules of propriety and he furthers this liminal identity by actively adopting alternative ‘roles,’ joining Raymond in donning disguises in order to get closer to Agnes. As in Radcliffe, the ideal servant-master relationship allows both master and servant to “play all the roles that are emotionally delicious.”[[756]](#footnote-756) Todd argues that this manifests as a subtle child / parent and lover / beloved exchange in Radcliffe and is particularly evident in Radcliffe’s response to Lewis in *The Italian*, suggesting an engagement with narrative performance. Theodore and Raymond do demonstrate this kind of exchange, but their theatrical adoption of costumes is arguably an even more obvious act of playful ‘imposture.’ Theodore’s companionship allows his master to dress up his identity in a material disguise and in the more general ‘knight-errant’ role with limited impropriety. As they seek access to Agnes, Raymond notes that “nobody was with me but Theodore; both were disguised, and as we kept ourselves close, we were not suspected to be other but what we seemed.”[[757]](#footnote-757) Operating outside the boundaries of socially acceptable romance, boundaries which characters such as the lustful Donna Rodolpho had already transgressed or exploited, effectively isolates and liberates Raymond both morally and socially. The servant’s presence and, by extension, the social approbation implied by the servant’s complacency (assuming Theodore is a representative of libertine discourse) in this context legitimises, or at least excuses, some of Raymond’s rebellion.

Raymond, Theodore, and Agnes’s adoption of various disguises is not explicitly an instance of the popular ‘masquerade’ scene of eighteenth-century English literature, which Terry Castle argues constitutes “merely a brief interlude” in the worlds of authors such as Richardson and Fielding.[[758]](#footnote-758) It is, however, ‘carnivalesque’ in a Bakhtinian reading of Carnival as “the feast of becoming, change, and renewal,” the “suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions.”[[759]](#footnote-759) This undermines libertinism as a particularly aristocratic philosophy but re-characterises libertine discourse as a more general revolt against socio-moral restraint. Indeed, Theodore’s output suggests Cryle and O’Connell’s delineation between a political “underworld of popular print” and the “obliquely philosophical [...] high libertine sphere of letters” as sub-discourses of revolutionary Enlightenment thought.[[760]](#footnote-760) The nature of physical ‘performance’ rather than ‘letters’ furthermore suggests a departure from purely verbal servant narrative and positions servant characters within a new kind of cultural interplay. Carnival disguises emphasise “the disruption of class relations” insofar as, as Castle argues, masquerade “drew on both sexes equally and on all ranks of contemporary English society” and suggests the troubling possibility that “‘low’ characters may gain new importance” therein.[[761]](#footnote-761) The ‘carnivalesque’ also implies the adoption of surface signifiers as complete identities and then problematizes those identities by emphasising their transitory nature. There is obviously a transgression in Raymond’s abandonment of himself and in his construction of an ephemeral and amoral ‘other’ identity, but social codes (the servant-master relationship) and personal identity (Theodore’s knowledge of Raymond as Raymond) are preserved through the servant character’s presence. A troubling consequence of this partnership is that the disguise also places Theodore and Raymond on equal footing. Castle describes this new equality as “the paradox of masquerade sociology” that “did in fact ‘promiscuously’ mingle the classes.”[[762]](#footnote-762)

As a lover and hero rather than a servant, however, Raymond repeatedly gives himself away when confronted by Agnes. Raymond reads Agnes reading Raymond as “a blush which overspread her cheek told me that in spite of my disguise I had been recognized.”[[763]](#footnote-763) This is indicative of higher feelings between Raymond and Agnes, yet hints at the ineptitude of upper-class characters attempting ‘imposture.’ Ironically, Raymond’s elevated social status lessens his ability to achieve his goals. Watkins notes that from the start “horrors delineated in this subplot occur entirely while Don Raymond travels as a lower-class citizen,” implying a moral and practical barrier between the aristocratic character and successful subterfuge.[[764]](#footnote-764) For Raymond, his disguises open him up to propositions from Agnes’s aunt and to supernatural attacks by the Bleeding Nun (whom he mistakes, in a spectacular failure of ‘reading,’ for a disguised Agnes), and ultimately undermine his moral identity. When he later invades the convent garden in order to see (and seduce) his lover, Raymond again adopts a disguise and employs an eye-patch, a prop which will later be recycled by Theodore in another attempt to gain access to the convent. Agnes recognizes Raymond “in spite of my disguise at a single glance” as Raymond’s attempt to role-play is again undermined by his own social identity.[[765]](#footnote-765) His presence in the garden moreover suggests that the honourable Raymond has transformed himself into the serpent-seducer whose sin causes Agnes’s entombment within the convent. This is an offshoot of the “unrestrained” behaviour of masquerade and carnival through which Castle notes deviant activities, including sexual activities, were “enjoyed to excess.”[[766]](#footnote-766) The rejection (with mixed success) of Raymond’s social and moral identity in favour of a temporary expedient facilitates the pattern of transgression which nearly destroys the lovers. It also suggests Raymond’s on-going issues with impotency, his inability to resist the influence of figures such as the Bleeding Nun and his broader failure to surmount social obstacles and win Agnes. Theodore, on the other hand, successfully fools a large group of nuns into believing his disguise and is recognized only by the external reader and the in-text character who can provide the narrative information needed to accelerate the plot’s conclusion. Theodore’s liminal self is thus, in fact, given “new status and importance” as a successful narrator and navigator of the Gothic through ‘masquerade.’[[767]](#footnote-767)

Previewing his later carnivalesque narrative performance, there are specific instances where Theodore demonstrates a carnival celebration of the “suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions,” as described by Bakhtin in his study of Rabelais.[[768]](#footnote-768) This is evident in Theodore’s treatment of Agnes’s chaperone and governess (and pseudo-servant) Cunegonda. “The unlucky duenna,” described by Raymond at one point as “little more than an animated mummy,” is abducted by Raymond in an attempt to keep her from disrupting his plans to elope with Agnes.[[769]](#footnote-769) Aided by Theodore, who “prevented her escape,” Raymond temporarily silences the problematic servant who, like Annette or Theresa or Bianca, expresses a rather loquacious narrative.[[770]](#footnote-770) Raymond states that:

I was conscious that this proceeding was cruel: as to Theodore, he had no scruples on the subject. Cunegonda’s captivity entertained him beyond measure… He seemed to think of nothing but how to find out new means of plaguing her: sometimes he affected to pity her misfortune, then laughed at, abused, and mimicked her; he played her a thousand tricks, each more provoking than the other, and amused himself by telling her that her elopement must have occasioned much surprise at the baron’s.[[771]](#footnote-771)

Raymond’s account problematizes Theodore’s morality, his “cruel” actions, while at the same time distancing the reader from the site of brutality and justifying Theodore’s jokes as humorous libertinism. In this way the incident also suggests an engagement with a specifically ‘servant’ and low-class humour illustrated in Bakhtin’s theories of ‘carnival’ as a lower class subversion of power structures through material degradation. Here, Cunegonda is a figure of arbitrary moral-sexual restraint, the “prohibitions” mentioned by Bakhtin. She is a representative of the sexually repressive, pro-clerical institutions that libertinism opposed, a singular target against which a servant-libertine character can apply his argument. To verbalize and perform this, the literary-minded Theodore turns to a working-class representative of carnival humour. The excessive “humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings” that defined traditional low-class ‘carnival’ humour parallel the “thousand tricks” Theodore uses to expose Cunegonda’s bullying and repression.[[772]](#footnote-772) The result is a regenerative, and politically subversive, laughter.

Moreover, there are numerous suggestive literary parallels connected to this incident. Theodore’s gleeful torment of Dame Cunegoda suggests the verbal clash between Cervantes’ Sancho Panza and the duenna Dona Rodriguez in Part II of *Don Quixote*, during Don Quixote and Sancho’s stay with a remarkably self-aware Duke and Duchess.[[773]](#footnote-773) Lewis and Cervantes both set two servant archetypes – the quasi-libertine manservant and the repressive female chaperone – at odds for comic effect, re-structuring the female servant as a threat. This contrasts with other female servants in the works of Walpole and Radcliffe who explore the heroine’s identity rather than repress it. Lewis is perhaps suggesting a gendered reading of narrative repression in which ‘female’ Gothic denies narrative exposure and personal fulfilment, though throughout the early Gothic genre the ‘libertine’ servant is not exclusively male. Alternatively, James Hogg would later pit several female (and male) servant narratives against a masculine master character and his demonic servant-cohort for moral purposes in his 1824 novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner.* A housekeeper and sexually liberated “mistress-substitute,” Miss Arabella Logan, her “flippant and fearless” maid, Bessy Gillies, and a local prostitute, Arabella Calvert, eventually collect and recount enough (though still limited) narrative evidence to focus the popular attention onto the murderous religious hypocrite Robert Wringhim.[[774]](#footnote-774) This plays with libertinism and religious codes – while the marginal female servants (and male servant character John Barnet) do not embody the ostensible moral purity of the Calvinist Wringhim, they moderate a moral middle ground in which sexual liberation and “free principles” are accepted as legitimate and even, in some cases, as a positive means of subverting legal authority.[[775]](#footnote-775) Of course, Wringhim himself is under the control of a many-faced Mephistopheles named Gil-Martin, a figure who physically echoes Wringhim’s identity and, allegedly, commits crimes as his evil double. Servants become negotiators of identity within Hogg, suggesting the influence of earlier Gothic authors. John Barnet’s assertion that “Man’s thoughts are vanity, sir; they come unasked, an’ gang away without a dismissal, an’ he canna’ help them,” suggests exactly that kind of spontaneous narrative performance of desire and self which characterises Gothic servants so comprehensively.[[776]](#footnote-776) Hogg’s development reflects Lewis’s emphasis on Gothic servant narrative as a space for philosophical and moral inquiry within the narrative proper. Servant narrative is clearly complicated in a moral and political scheme, and Cunegonda’s former prohibitions and the hypocrisy of the higher orders becomes a target for fun for the performing carnival servant while also demonstrating how subversive narrative illustrates larger thematic engagements.

In keeping with readings of Theodore’s gender as a potential reflection of Gothic narrative strategy and his conflict with a repressive (and superstitious) female servant, Theodore’s inherent scepticism regarding the supernatural reflects Watkins’s argument that gendered “social expectations and opportunities for him are externally directed” and specifically that “his productive capacities are channelled toward the active world of men.”[[777]](#footnote-777) The homoerotic and homo-social elements of his relationship with Raymond again complicate this and shed light on Raymond’s own persistent emasculation. Theodore’s role in arranging for the Wandering Jew character to rid Raymond of the Bleeding Nun (who has been haunting Raymond ever since the failed rescue of Agnes) suggests a rational and “active” authorial engagement with the more intuitive-emotional technologies of the genre, particularly since Raymond is rendered comprehensively impotent by the Bleeding Nun. As demonstrated in his later literary efforts, both written and oral, the supernatural for Theodore has value only as entertainment and is typically subsumed by his more active efforts. Theodore considers the supernatural agent easily controlled and marginalised: the Wandering Jew approaches Theodore in order to gain access to Raymond and Theodore only belatedly remembers to inform Raymond of “a kind of message to you, but truly not worth delivering.”[[778]](#footnote-778) Theodore is specifically a ‘messenger’ between Raymond and the Jew, though he is aware of all the rumours surrounding the man and forms his own opinions about their validity:

‘Some supposed him to be an Arabian astrologer, others to be a travelling mountebank, and many declared that he was Doctor Faustus, whom the Devil had sent back to Germany. The landlord, however, told me, that he had the best reasons to believe him to be the Great Mogul incognito.’[[779]](#footnote-779)

Theodore, for his part, thinks “the fellow mad,” though he is of passing interest as entertainment.[[780]](#footnote-780)

The Wandering Jew is a recurring character in Gothic fiction, the “ever incomplete character of being” which defines the literary ‘grotesque’ and Gothic sublimity.[[781]](#footnote-781) Interestingly, such a figure reflects other servant characters in the early Gothic genre: Donald Roemer argues that “Caleb Williams suggests an archetypal Romantic exile, the Wandering Jew, a disinherited victim of prevailing social standards that stifle an individual’s intellectual, moral, and creative potential.”[[782]](#footnote-782) In terms of the master-servant exchange and the Gothic master’s frequent, ineffectual attempts to repress or otherwise modify servant narratives, this portrait of stifled potential and forced Gothicized exile is particularly intriguing and suggests a broader engagement with genre and authorial identity. Moreover, the above description closely predicts the terms Hogg uses to describe the demonic Gil-Martin in *Private Memoirs and Confessions*, as well as various characterisations of the satanic servant Zofloya in Dacre’s *Zofloya*. Theodore provides background aesthetic for the Jew as a figure of literary value and in doing so he introduces an aspect of servant performance which will later become integrated into the genre. In fact, Theodore’s later disguises and his own vaguely demonic characteristics suggest that he consciously chooses to perform a comparable ‘Gothic’ role, much like Gil-Martin or Zofloya or even Caleb Williams. For Theodore ‘imitation is a form of flattery’ – he later adopts a false persona and presents the nuns of St. Clare with similarly outlandish tales, indicating that he appreciates that kind of Gothic performance. Thus a self-aware value is given to this Gothic ‘role’ (both the Wandering Jew’s role and, later, Theodore’s parodic version) as a vehicle for subversive narrative potentiality closely linked to the servant narrative and the servant-as-authorial-metonym. Of course, within *The Monk* the Theodore’s narrative suggests eclectic excess as a compilation of gossip drawn from numerous unreliable sources. In performing the role of ‘author,’ however, Theodore is used by Lewis to negotiate a ludicrous yet highly charged plot device while maintaining a sense of legitimacy. Theodore is somewhat outrageous in his behaviour yet his rational compartmentalization of Gothic elements such as ghosts and magic suggest Howells’s characterisation of the novel’s narrative as “exaggeratedly Gothic dimensions told with immense narrative energy and a gusto which both embellishes the conventions of horror and at the same time subverts them by ridicule.”[[783]](#footnote-783) Therein, Theodore’s narration of events allows his master and the reader to “indulge in the extravagances of feeling while protecting us from their consequences by locating such extravagances quite superficially in the remote reaches of fantasy.”[[784]](#footnote-784)

Once Raymond’s narrative ends and the third-person omniscient narrator re-assumes primacy, Theodore more actively performs his own narrative identity and in fact develops into an almost completely independent authorial force. As Howard notes, Theodore’s “capacity for outrageous exploits, disguises, and stories echoes accounts of the extravagant pranks of the *Sturm und Drang* authors. This image of the author is thus very different from that constructed by Radcliffe.”[[785]](#footnote-785) This assertion is particularly relevant as Wendy Jones argues that “although his is only a minor character, Theodore functions as a figure for the author. He is the only character who professes to be a writer and the only one who shows his work for judgement.”[[786]](#footnote-786) He embodies Lewis’s attempt to distinguish himself as an author and explore his own methodologies. When Theodore first appears after Raymond’s account of his relationship with Agnes he is in the process of composing a poem. He “sat near a table with a pen in his hand, and was so totally occupied by his employment that he perceived not his lord’s approach,” suggesting a level of class-transcendence in the creative act.[[787]](#footnote-787) Moreover, Theodore’s desire for approval defines an aspect of authorial identity in a commercial-literary framework. The text of the poem is introduced first and foremost by Raymond’s perceptions of Theodore’s pride. Raymond observes that Theodore “longed to show his poetry, but first chose to be pressed for it,” a reflection of eighteenth-century writing practices, and further notes that “the satisfaction which sparkled in his dark expressive eyes betrayed the vanity of his little bosom.”[[788]](#footnote-788) Napier’s argument that “Lewis’s writing in *The Monk*, in parts controlled and moralistic, in others undermining and calling into question that control […] reflects the turbulence of a novelist doubting, defying, or perhaps insufficiently intrigued by his own moralistic messages,” suggests elements of self-aware self-examination in Theodore’s negotiation of print culture and authorship.[[789]](#footnote-789) Lewis is undoubtedly poking fun at himself, but also examining Gothic authorship within the construction of this servant character. As Howard elaborates, it is just as plausible that Lewis’s “modern and mythical reworkings” and “his self-consciously ‘authorial’ allusiveness and bold mixing of discourses and styles, had involved him in unavoidable contradictions.”[[790]](#footnote-790)

Raymond’s critical commentary introduces Theodore’s poem “Love and Age,” which Wendy Jones argues “is an allegory of divine/literary inspiration as well as of the regenerative, constructive power of love.”[[791]](#footnote-791) The poem describes the Greek lyric poet Anacreon in conversation with Cupid. Anacreon initially rejects Cupid’s influence, as “Remembering that my fairest years / By thee were marked with sighs and tears / I think thy friendship false, and shun the guileful snare.”[[792]](#footnote-792) However, after Cupid responds – “But such is man! His partial hand / Unnumbered favours writes in sand, / But stamps one little fault on solid lasting stone” – Anacreon eventually accepts him as a source of inspiration.[[793]](#footnote-793) This line echoes Lewis’s Preface in the beginning of the novel, his “Imitation of Horace” in which he pre-emptively assumes that his book will be “criticised” and, in describing himself, states his (or at least the author character’s) belief that “friendship is a pure chimera.”[[794]](#footnote-794) These lines characterise man as changeable and critical and applies that argument to a discourse of literary critique and print culture. Moreover, after the controversy that followed the publication of *The Monk*, Lewis changed the ending of later editions of his novel to include a last paragraph (as well as expunging certain controversial passages and phrases throughout the text). In this final apology he asserts that: “Lady, to look with mercy on the conduct of others, is a virtue no less than to look with severity on your own.”[[795]](#footnote-795) While ostensibly contrite, this defence arguably reflects Theodore’s own navigation of literary culture and Lewis’s on-going defence of authorship – though Lewis throws himself on the mercy of the “Haughty Lady” with a “reproach just bursting from your scornful lips,” he seems no less sensible of the potential hypocrisy of moral judgement and the arbitrariness of literary criticism.[[796]](#footnote-796) Lewis’s later revisions are thus qualified by his own self-aware critique of the fluidity and instability of literary culture and moral taste.

Once he has accepted inspiration, Anacreon receives a golden feather from Cupid so that he may articulate “the power and praise of Love.”[[797]](#footnote-797) Anacreon then turns his attention to memories of love’s pleasures and decides to employ his long dormant creative talents worshiping the abstract concept of ‘Love’ rather than individual lovers. Once Anacreon acknowledges his creative potential, “The fairest dreams of fancy rise, / And round his favoured head wild inspiration flits” in keeping with eighteenth-century discourses of ‘imagination’ and creativity.[[798]](#footnote-798) If the Gothic is “a reaction to the pretensions of rationalism,” as Peter Brooks argues, then Theodore’s fanciful depictions of imaginative potential are in keeping with genre goals.[[799]](#footnote-799) The ultimate effect of such creativity, the joys of love and the joys of narrative combined, is profoundly regenerative within Theodore’s poem. As soon as the name ‘Love’ is articulated by the creative persona “winter fled away” and fauns and fairies come “the spell to prove,” suggesting that divinely sanctioned words have a magical, if metaphorical, power over reality.[[800]](#footnote-800) If Theodore is a pre-Romantic poet he is part of a discourse preoccupied with imaginative creativity as a sort of divine power, and his desire to be recognized as a poet and the implications of the poem’s themes fuel overlapping narratives of desire, imagination, and identity within the text.[[801]](#footnote-801) Alternatively the neo-classical allusions and style of the poem suggests a high-brow sensibility within a commercial context. This poem contrasts with Theodore’s later adaptation of “The Water King,” a work which is expressed orally, adapted from German folklore, and performed for a Gothic audience.

Raymond’s response to the poem further illustrates Theodore’s role as a performer and provides a satirical commentary on the sometimes nonsensical folly of creative output in a critical and commercial literary scene. Raymond notes that, regardless of merit, “a bad composition carries with it its own punishment, contempt and ridicule. A good one excites envy, and entails upon its author a thousand mortifications.”[[802]](#footnote-802) The opening epigraph of the chapter, a quotation from Pope which discusses “Vanity” and “Fame’s mad voyage by the winds of praise […] For ever sunk too low, or born too high,” as well as the novel’s Preface “Imitation of Horace,” echo Raymond’s words and Theodore’s response and again articulate Lewis’s negotiation of authorial identity as opposed to or conforming to literary and social criticism.[[803]](#footnote-803) Moreover, critics themselves are described by Raymond, as Lewis’s Preface also suggests, as “treacherous and deceiving”: “they maliciously rake out from obscurity every little circumstance which may throw ridicule on the writer.”[[804]](#footnote-804) This assertion is reflected in the poem itself when Anacreon cites “false friendship” and Cupid notes the destructive consequences of focusing on “one little fault” amongst many positive qualities. Raymond’s characterisation also echoes Figaro’s summary of the literary scene as a “whole swarm of parasites” and “a pack of wolves” in *The Barber of Seville*, generalising the situation for humorous effect.[[805]](#footnote-805) In the poem, as in life, however, the impulse to create remains, through either / both written texts or / and oral and physical performances. While Lewis could not have fully predicted his work’s critical reception he uses Raymond and Theodore’s exchange to pre-emptively assert, as Raymond says, that “Authorship is a mania to conquer which no reasons are sufficiently strong; and you might as easily persuade me not love, as I persuade you not to write.”[[806]](#footnote-806) The impulse to “love” and “write,” combined in the poem, are now separately embodied in Raymond and Theodore.

Jones argues that “Love and Age,” both on its own and as an example of Theodore’s literacy, thus “thematises the connectedness of desire and narrative by suggesting that they are interdependent and analogous.”[[807]](#footnote-807) Desire is a recurring theme throughout the novel, as is the repression and exposure of narrative – the poem suggests a prophetic re-coding of such engagements within the text. Since “literature is dominated by the duality of desire, Theodore’s poems offer us a crude model of *The Monk*’s own reading and writing: differentiated desire in fact constitutes the structuring principle of the text.”[[808]](#footnote-808) Therefore, desire is not only understood as the socio-sexual or moral desire of the characters, played out through narrative restraint or assertion, but also as the desire of an ‘author’ and the author’s active engagement with the text. Theodore’s statement that “I write only for pleasure” fails to save him from commercial concerns, however.[[809]](#footnote-809) Raymond quips that “incorrectness may be forgiven in those who work for money” and who “are paid according to the bulk, not value of their productions,” no doubt framing a jab at authors who were at least partially defined by their work’s monetary worth. By contrast “in those whom no necessity forces to turn author, who merely write for fame […] faults are impardonable.”[[810]](#footnote-810) Theodore is disappointed that his poem is not unequivocally valued, but Raymond’s “half approving, half ironical” smile implies that the reading audience should take the poem half as a serious thematic exploration and half as a satirical indictment of literary production and criticism.

Of course, Raymond’s critique is not the final word in Theodore’s ongoing negotiation of authorship. In fact while Raymond and Agnes’s narrative attempts have problematic structures and ambiguous outcomes, Theodore’s performance of narrative becomes his greatest resource. When Agnes is entombed in the convent Raymond, assuming that she is dead, becomes paralyzed with grief and obsessed with finding the truth. As in his interaction with the Bleeding Nun, narrative repression renders Raymond passive and impotent. Meanwhile, “though convinced of its falsehood, his attendants encouraged him in a belief which formed his only comfort,” and Raymond “was assured daily that fresh perquisitions were making respecting the fate of Agnes: stories were invented recounting the various attempts made to get admittance into the convent.”[[811]](#footnote-811) The servant who “cares for his master as a parent for a child, hiding horrors from him and giving him unlikely hope,” described as an eighteenth-century ideal by Janet Todd, becomes ever more important as Raymond loses strength.[[812]](#footnote-812) While Raymond remains housebound, however:

Theodore was the only one who exerted himself to realize his master’s chimeras. He was eternally busied in planning schemes for entering the convent, or at least of obtaining from the nuns some intelligence of Agnes. To execute these schemes was the only inducement which could prevail on him to quit Don Raymond. He became a very Proteus, changing his shape every day; but all his metamorphoses were to very little purpose: he regularly returned to the Palace de las Cisternas without any intelligence to confirm his hopes.[[813]](#footnote-813)

Theodore becomes the active extension of Raymond’s desires and separates himself from his master only when his master’s wishes require it. This ostensibly undermines servant independence but in reality Theodore becomes a lead performer in what Todd describes as a “theatre of servitude” and/or develops as the pseudo-demonic figure whose power reaches new heights as his master weakens.[[814]](#footnote-814) As in Radcliffe *The Romance of the Forest* or *The Italian*, and as suggested by John Barrell, aristocratic imagination is described as self-destructive, as “chimeras,” while the servant’s imagination becomes a vehicle for the active realization of schemes and goals.[[815]](#footnote-815) Therein, servant liminality and the outlook such social and moral instability creates allows for personal and political development. Theodore remains determined to obtain “some intelligence” by manipulating his ‘surface’ identity and distancing himself from the domestic space and Raymond. Theodore’s ability to become “a very Proteus” redefines his role as semi-passive servant storyteller to that of an active, highly Gothicized narrative agent.[[816]](#footnote-816)

This ‘protean’ change occurs through both physical transformations and assumptions of verbal narrative authority. Lewis’s specific word choice is in keeping with his use of neo-classicism in “Love and Age”: Proteus is a sea god or river god in Ancient Greek mythology, famous for both his shape-shifting powers and his ability to tell the future. This characterisation of Theodore makes his later song choice of “The Water-King: a Danish ballad,” a story about a shape-shifter trickster who lures maidens to their doom, suggestive. Like the shape-shifter, Theodore employs a material disguise in his most successful narrative performance and in fact foreshadows several plot developments in his various songs and poems. After numerous failed attempts to gain information, “one day he took it into his head to disguise himself as a beggar. He put a patch over his left eye, took his guitar in hand, and posted himself at the gate of the convent.”[[817]](#footnote-817) Theodore effectively hides his real identity (that of Raymond’s servant and of an educated poet seeking literary fame) within the superficial appearance of a false one (that of a low-class musician performing for money). Adopting a disguise is obviously theatrical and also implies ‘masquerade’ and the “intense cultural ambivalence” associated with carnival disguises as mirrors of “deeper moral and ideological concerns,” as Castle argues.[[818]](#footnote-818) Theodore suggestively employs the same disguise, an eye-patch, which led to the sexual transgression between Raymond and Agnes. He actively subverts his superficial identity but at the same time his plan hinges on the possibility that he will be recognized or ‘read’ as himself by the right person, so that “‘if Agnes is really confined in the convent,’ thought he, ‘and hears my voice, she will recollect it, and possibly may find means to let me know that she is here.’”[[819]](#footnote-819) Once outside the convent he attracts the nuns with “his sweet voice, and in spite of his patched eye, his engaging countenance,” seducing them with surface attributes.[[820]](#footnote-820) Theodore is thus a narrator who has turned his verbal and non-verbal narrative self into a Gothic space. He, like his song “The Water-King,” performs an innocuous and entertaining Gothic surface while harbouring more serious goals within.

In this way Theodore’s goals reflect and advance beyond those of other Gothic servants. He recognizes his audience as specifically Gothic readers and shapes a corresponding narrative. Theodore is popular with the nuns “who all flocked with eagerness to a scene which promised some diversion,” much like an external readership.[[821]](#footnote-821) The superficiality of his physical identity calls attention to the nature of his narrative performance: “While he ate, the nuns admired the delicacy of his features, the beauty of his hair, and the sweetness of and grace which accompanied all his actions.”[[822]](#footnote-822) The core narrative worth itself is immaterial to the majority of the nun-audience as they focus on the charming veneer rather than the substance. Moreover, Castle notes that “the fantastic multiplicity and incongruity of the visual spectacle were to a larger degree replicated in the disparate composition of the masquerade crowd itself” in eighteenth century literary examples of masquerade, thus implying that “both aesthetically as sociologically the scene was indeed a carnivalesque hodgepodge of promiscuous elements.”[[823]](#footnote-823) Visual abnormality signals the underlying diversity in the characters’ backgrounds and opens the space up to the influence of the ‘other,’ in this case a servant disguised as a pseudo-Wandering Jew, a Gothic troubadour. Theodore’s performance thus implies the ‘disparity’ of his audience as much as it does his own transgressive potentiality, or at least suggests the incongruity between the nuns’ superficial identities and their true desires, destabilising identity therein. Given the “absence of interiority in *The Monk*” noted by Miles, the persistent focus on the surface emphasises that, as Sedgwick states, the “self is at least potentially social, since its ‘character’ seems to be impressed on it from outside and to be displayed facing inward.”[[824]](#footnote-824) Sedgwick points out that this is particularly true of Matilda, but the complex dichotomy between surface and self is also obvious when Theodore performs Gothic narrative, ‘infects’ those around him with an enthusiasm for Gothic un-identity, and is in turn re-made as an mini-Gothic story. Theodore comes up with a fantastic explanation for his physical appearance, stating that he lost sight in one eye by looking at a statue of the Virgin Mary with sacrilegious curiosity. He prefaces the tale by promising, with Gothic phrasing, that “I shall penetrate you with horror, reverend ladies, when I reveal my crime!”[[825]](#footnote-825) His tale transforms him into a grotesque figure for both the nuns and the reader – the use of the eye patch suggests the “defamiliarization of the human body” which inspires both laughter and repulsion in the audience, as does the accompanying story.[[826]](#footnote-826) Theodore then uses that particular prop to make a mockery of the Catholic hierarchy and the nuns of St. Clare. By exploiting Catholic superstition in his story the physical eye-patch becomes what Bakhtin would identify in early modern literature as the “lowering of all that is high, spiritual, and abstract” to “the material level, the sphere of earth and body.”[[827]](#footnote-827)

Theodore’s alleged transgression (the one for which he is supposedly blinded) is, fittingly for a servant, his “curiosity,” but it is also a curiosity tied to libertine discourse. The tale develops into a covert sexual burlesque of the Virgin – Theodore (or the character that Theodore is performing) looked up at a famous statue of Mary “at the moment the monks were changing her shift” and is subsequently unable to open his “sacrilegious eye” again.[[828]](#footnote-828) In this narrative Theodore acts as a mirror double of Ambrosio’s lust for the portrait of the Madonna, actually a portrait of the crafty Matilda, which Ambrosio sexualises and worships and which ultimately contributes to his fall. The Madonna figure is further problematized for Ambrosio as in worshiping it he inadvertently worships a demonic ‘other’ and denies his identity as a monk, and the unsettling disparity between devotion and sexualisation is emphasised further by Theodore. Libertine discourse in this instance articulates what Ellis identifies as the “breakdown of the conventional constructions of gender,” which then destabilises hierarchy by subversively revealing “evidence of the depravity of the Catholic Church.”[[829]](#footnote-829) The Virgin becomes Athena or Lady Godiva and Theodore is, like a Tiresias or ‘Peeping Tom’ of legend, struck blind as per a recognizable narrative twist. By adopting the eye-patch Theodore makes himself a Gothic text and therein mocks and manipulates the belief system which defines the identities of the in-text audience. The nuns, who not only believe this story but also “promised to intercede with the blessed Virgin for the recovery of his sight,” become complicit in their own degradation.[[830]](#footnote-830) The reader of course knows that Theodore is lying and witnesses the resulting breakdown of a highly structured socio-moral hierarchy within the double grotesquery of Theodore’s physical and verbal performance.

Once he has captured his audience’s attention, Theodore’s capacity for Gothic storytelling is matched only by the nuns’ eagerness to hear more:

The nuns heaped question upon question so thickly that it was scarcely possible for him to reply. One asked where he was born, since his accent declared him to be a foreigner: another wanted to know, why he wore a patch upon his left eye: sister Helena enquired whether he had not a sister like him, because she should like such a companion; and sister Rachael was fully persuaded that the brother would be the pleasanter companion of the two. Theodore amused himself with retailing to the credulous nuns for truths all the strange stories which his imagination could invent. He related to them his supposed adventures, and penetrated every auditor with astonishment, while he talked of giants, savages, shipwrecks, and islands inhabited

By anthropophagi, and men whose heads

Do grow beneath their shoulders,

With many other circumstances to the full as remarkable.[[831]](#footnote-831)

Theodore engages with “excess of style” and “exaggeration or hyperbole” in order to construct Gothic sublimity and create a cycle of literary supply and demand.[[832]](#footnote-832) The passage describing “Anthropophagi, and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders” is taken from Shakespeare’s *Othello*, again suggesting a consciousness of classic examples of performance. Theodore successfully invades the convent by offering up “all the strange stories which his imagining could invent” and passing them off for “truths” in spite of their fantastical implausibility. Like a Gothic author Theodore “penetrated his auditors with astonishment,” perpetrating a narrative invasion with sexual undertones and suggesting a libertine seduction. This performative seduction reflects the literary methodology of the Gothic – the use of pleasing forms and technologies inspire an emotional reaction, and thus draw the reader-audience into an ongoing exchange. The verb “retailing” is particularly noteworthy, for it anchors the narrative in an economic discourse which commercialises and arguably legitimises authorial identity. More troubling for a “complete revealer,” such narrative also elicits admissions of desire and discontent from the nuns and indicates a deeper and more problematic repression. Theodore is a libertine figure, for even if he is not seeking sexual favours from the nuns he is still employing a philosophical discourse and superficial charms to enact liberation and exposure. The desire for “such a companion” (be they female or male) in particular has problematic implications when deconstructing identity within a system of repression.

This carnivalesque and grotesque violation of norms extends to more worldly hierarchies as well. Theodore’s performance of a patently false (and Gothic) identity undermines authority at the convent:

His presence had the power to smooth for a moment even the stern brow of the superior. She asked several questions respecting his parents, his religion, and what had reduced him to a state of beggary. To these demands his answers were perfectly satisfactory and perfectly false. He was then asked his opinion of a monastic life: he replied in terms of high estimation and respect for it.[[833]](#footnote-833)

Theodore is obviously (to the reader) playing a highly constructed role specifically designed to expose both information concerning Agnes and the larger hypocrisy of religious institutions and particularly those in positions of authority therein. Since the prioress of the convent is described frequently as a “monastic tyrant,” Theodore’s narrative takes on further political libertinism.[[834]](#footnote-834) It also suggests more general associations between imagination and treason as described by John Barrell, particularly in Theodore’s attempt to use “‘creative’ imagination” as a means of collecting narratives and “associating a vast range of ideas into a unitary design.”[[835]](#footnote-835) As a Gothic author his goals are self-reflexive – the destabilisation of norms via alternating revelation and obscurity. Theodore as a servant who makes a mockery of authority is also Theodore the master Gothic narrator who uses “libertine narrative strategies” to demonstrate a circumspect awareness of social flaws and call attention to their effect on individual and social identity.[[836]](#footnote-836) Bakhtin’s argument that such forms of humorous insight “not only manage terror, but act as a means to attain political autonomy” link Theodore’s underlying political goals with his role as an authorial metonym.[[837]](#footnote-837) Given the later climactic destruction of the convent by a violent lower class force, such passages suggest Michael Foucault’s argument that “power is fluid” and thus “is itself a sort of *monster*, an organism that can exceed the control of individuals or groups of individuals.”[[838]](#footnote-838) By repeatedly ridiculing and utilising aspects of Gothic narrative in order to mock credulity and challenge authority, Theodore embodies a narrative-as-power and narrative-as-performance that is as potentially constructive as it is destructive, consuming both narrator and audience in ambiguity.

In contrast to his neo-classical poetry Theodore’s Gothic literary efforts are decidedly ‘fantastic’ and his role as a narrator thus adopts, as Tzvetan Todorov suggests, “an ambiguous status” as realism is suspended and re-readings and metaphor take precedence.[[839]](#footnote-839) Todorov argues that “the represented (or ‘dramatized’) narrator is suitable for the fantastic, for he facilitates the necessary identification of the reader with the characters.”[[840]](#footnote-840) In this case Theodore’s “dramatized” role is emphasised, as is his preoccupation with the commercial and literary implications of the stories he tells. The far-fetched tales which Theodore peddles and ‘retails’ (suggesting a commercial value) are fantastically dramatic, contain elements of the Shakespearean and Germanic, and are overtly Gothic, exploring myriad generic engagements therein. There is “the necessary identification” both within and outside of the story. When Theodore is met with incredulity after asserting that people in Denmark are “of a delicate pea-green with flame-coloured hair and whiskers,” the convent porteress responds “with a look of contempt and exultation” and confirms Theodore’s statement: “when I was a young woman, I remember seeing several of them myself.”[[841]](#footnote-841) This identification of the porteress with the servant-narrator obviously affects her self-constructed and performative identity in a way both humorous and somewhat pathetic.

The reader is not meant to identify with the nuns as much as with the self-aware and discerning reader / author who appreciates the Gothic genre without committing to the ‘fantastic’ as literal truth. Theodore talks of giants and shipwrecks and preludes his song “The Water-King” with assertions that Denmark (where the tale is set) “is terribly infested by sorcerers, witches, and evil spirits. Every element possesses its appropriate daemons.”[[842]](#footnote-842) This is a somewhat mocking assertion, but the idea of “appropriate daemons” in a text concerned with propriety and chaotic hierarchy suggests the ‘fantastic’ as a genre with “an implicit set of directions,” a conscious and legitimate creative form.[[843]](#footnote-843) Because most of Theodore’s songs and stories are his own personal adaptations of folklore and a reflection of *Sturm und Drang* authors, Lewis is emphasising what Robert D. Hume formatively identified as “the symptom of a widespread shift away from neoclassical ideals of order and reason, toward romantic belief in emotion and imagination.”[[844]](#footnote-844) Moreover, Lewis is clearly identifying himself and his writing within this literary trend. Theodore has arguably achieved what Robert Miles suggests is a kind of “aesthetic election” as the nuns are “moved emotionally and imaginatively” by his tales.[[845]](#footnote-845) Moreover, if we “read the Gothic aesthetic as a discourse, a site of power/knowledge,” then Theodore’s construction of an aesthetic response via verbal and non-verbal narrative performance indicates a meta-text examination of the nature of the genre and of Gothic authorship.[[846]](#footnote-846)

Theodore ironically turns his own personal perusal of fiction into a plan of action, having once “read the story of a king of England whose prison was discovered by a minstrel.”[[847]](#footnote-847) Hoping to attract Agnes’s attention and discover her hiding place, Theodore proceeds to sing a “Danish ballad” as a coded signal.[[848]](#footnote-848) Theodore’s songs and poetry draw focus to the differences between written and oral narrative, both of which are used in Gothic narrative as a means of articulating overlapping or conjoined subset tales. “The Water-King” itself is an oral creation in keeping with the servant-as-text style and drawing from German folk traditions rather than neo-classical metaphor. If “Love and Age” was Theodore’s critically indifferent high-brow effort then “The Water-King” is his wildly successful low-brow Gothic potboiler. Unlike “Love and Age,” Jones notes that this song “depicts desire in its destructive form.”[[849]](#footnote-849) It is distinct from Radcliffe’s appropriation of Burke’s sublime in that Lewis depicts the natural world as chaotic rather than elevating: Howard argues that “a God of love and order, it seems, is absent from Lewis’s world, a fact which throws in doubt the novel’s earlier ‘Protestant’ positionality and suggests a free-thinking stance – a strong shift to the moral and epistemological uncertainty of a primeval Gothic world.”[[850]](#footnote-850) The song, an adaptation of Johann Gottfried Herder’s ‘Der Wassermann,’ tells the story of a water sprite who, desiring a young maiden, adopts a false identity to obtain her.[[851]](#footnote-851) Theodore sings that “The witch she gave him armour white; / She formed him like a gallant knight” while the maiden, “nothing given cause to think, / How near she strayed to danger’s brink,” marries the water sprite and is soon drowned, whereupon “the fiend exalts.”[[852]](#footnote-852) The fulfilment of desire leads to the death and, it is strongly implied, the sexual violation of the maiden character.

The song most fittingly parallels the Ambrosio / Matilda / Antonia plotline, though the pattern of sexual transgression and desire therein reflects the Raymond / Agnes plot as well. Ambrosio and/or Raymond act as the Water King while Antonia and/or Agnes play the virginal maiden who naively falls victim to the trickster spirit’s seductions. Matilda is a suitable ‘mother-witch” surrogate who helps the seducer in his schemes, though Theodore might also function as a similar character in this context. Paralleling Raymond / Agnes and Ambrosio / Matilda’s impulses, as well as the relationship between Victoria and her servant Zofloya in Dacre’s *Zofloya*, Howard states that in Theodore’s poem, “by metonymic association or slippage, the sudden or isolated spontaneous wish or desire *becomes* the demonic force – an internalized force which carries all before it and so is not subject to conscious control.”[[853]](#footnote-853) “The Water-King” fits within the larger themes of dangerous passion and seduction and foreshadows the consequences of various seductions within the plot, but this specific poem also describes the character of a libertine, an identity which Ambrosio, Raymond, and Theodore all embody to some degree. Theodore is also describing an aspect of himself as a performer and an author – he is the Water-King seeking to lure young women (the nuns of St. Clare) into an imprudent revelation. He again mirrors back Ambrosio’s own negotiation of a libertine identity and a disguised surface self. Moreover his probing eventually leads to the convent’s destruction at the hands of an angry mob whose fury is comparable to the uncontrollable water. Supporting the implication that “there is no universal rational and moral order” in the natural world, the servant performance of identity makes little to no attempt to reconstruct social and moral codes after destroying them and instead seeks to bypass them completely.[[854]](#footnote-854)

The poem ends with a warning: “Warned by this tale, ye damsels fair, / To whom you give your love beware! / Believe not every handsome knight, / And dance not with the water-sprite!”[[855]](#footnote-855) Jones argues that desire as described in *The Monk* “must be either good or bad – and asserts the validity of this distinction by turning it into a narrative principle.”[[856]](#footnote-856) This song celebrates the individual imaginative impulse and while problematizing the performance of a false narrative as a means of accomplishing desire, particularly as desire itself results in unpredictability. When describing the Water King in a prelude Theodore states that he “employs himself in luring young virgins into his snare: what he does with them, when he catches them in the water, reverend ladies, I leave for you to imagine.”[[857]](#footnote-857) Encouraging the nuns to “imagine” the unspoken subtext of the song, and moreover a subtext with sexually violent connotations, suggests that Gothic narrative depends on the reader–author relationship and the political potential that comes from ‘imagination.’ It also hints that the nuns and the reader should re-examine Theodore’s narrative (and the author Theodore represents) for problematic elements. This conclusion suggests the dangers of excessive or transgressive desire and the importance of the rational discernment of narrative truths, interesting notions given Theodore’s own actions and the liminal nature of his narrative. That said, while Jonathan Wordsworth argues that Romantic poets believed that “everyone is capable of imagination in its primary form,” only a few are capable of Coleridge’s “sacred sympathy,” the higher imaginative understanding of a poet or artist.[[858]](#footnote-858) Directing this call for ‘imagining’ towards a group of women, the gender whose novel-reading tendencies allegedly left them vulnerable to “a susceptibility of impression,” transposes the in-text incident onto a larger engagement with a Gothic readership.[[859]](#footnote-859)

The majority of the nuns miss the deeper implications of the work and are delighted with the “sweetness of his voice” rather than the content of Theodore’s story. Theodore recognizes that “however acceptable this applause would have been at any other time, at present it was insipid” because his actual goal has not yet been realised.[[860]](#footnote-860) This is a departure from the attention-seeking poet seen earlier in the text – in this instance Theodore seeks a reader who will react constructively to his text. In spite of the disclaimer within the poem, however, the poem itself, when correctly interpreted by aged nun and discerning reader Mother St. Ursula, facilitates narrative exposure and encourages a comparable Gothic performance in another narrator. St. Ursula reads the hidden message in the poem and as a result expresses her own narrative to Theodore, undermining the repressive atmosphere of the convent. Just as Mother St. Ursula reads into Theodore’s character and beyond his superficial disguise so he too reads her physical text as “her mild countenance, and respectable air prejudiced him immediately in her favour.”[[861]](#footnote-861) The act of ‘recognition’ is echoed in Sedgwick’s work on surfaces and signifiers, as well as harkening back to Raymond and Agnes’s mutual recognition of each other (or, in Raymond’s case, an instance of failed recognition in the Bleeding Nun incident) through a kind of constructive sensibility. St. Ursula performs narrative as inherently multi-faceted and dependent on physical signifiers as well as verbal expression. She emerges and gives Theodore a basket as a ‘reward’ for his story:

‘Here is my gift,’ she said, as she gave it into his hand. ‘Good youth, despise it not; though its value seems insignificant, it has many hidden virtues.’

She accompanied these words with an expressive look. It was not lost upon Theodore; in receiving the present, he drew as near to the grate as possible.

‘Agnes!’ she whispered in a voice scarcely intelligible.[[862]](#footnote-862)

Exploration of the basket, a physical commodity with an innocuous surface, parallels other narratives performances within the text. The material object St. Ursula has given Theodore soon reveals a note hidden in the interwoven folds, a note which repeats the Gothic wording used by Theodore earlier in the text (and referencing Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*) in its promise of a future narrative that will “freeze your blood with horror.”[[863]](#footnote-863) St. Ursula’s suggestion that Theodore look past the superficially “insignificant” disguise and see the “hidden virtues” within is an invitation to the larger audience to explore servant narrative performance in a similar way.

The novel thus has significant recourse to ‘surfaces’ and ‘signifiers,’ a primary example of Sedgwick’s suggestion that “the more traditional image of ‘self’ as depth” depends significantly on Gothic conventions “that point the reader’s attention back to surfaces.”[[864]](#footnote-864) As such Lewis’s primary servant narrator emphasises the disparity and connectivity between physical ‘masks’ and carnival creations and the deeper implications of the narrative proper – not only the ways in which a superficial ‘mask’ obscures or reveals depth but also in how depth is reflected back onto the physical mask and how they both problematize each other in the performance of Gothic authorship. The blurred line between Theodore’s intentions, his narrative, and his performance suggests identity as “established only ex post fact, by recognition” or, more appropriately, by a particularly suggestive act of ‘reading.’[[865]](#footnote-865) This methodology is reflected in previous Gothic texts but in *The Monk* and in Dacre’s *Zofloya, or The Moor* carnival authorial identity indicates a meta-textual examination of the Gothic novel as both ‘Gothic’ and a ‘novel’ with its own formal and historicised rationale. Once Theodore’s performance is successfully ‘read,’ interpreted, and responded to, he retreats from the narrative proper. Radcliffe’s *The Italian* provides further engagement with Theodore by exploring servant narrative ‘performance’ in the character of Paulo. While Paulo eschews the carnival disguises and written literary efforts, however, Theodore constantly plays with his narrative as a performance of service within a theatre of his own construction and, eventually, deconstruction. In both of these texts service is performed, but the extent of master-narrative control is limited. In Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya* the servant narrative is not only unrestrained, it is morally and physically dangerous both within and outside of a performance of service, aesthetic, desire and identity.

Kim Ian Michasiw, in his introduction to Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya, or The Moor*, suggests that in spite of the ostensibly moralistic pedagogical impulse of the novel “the suspicion that Dacre’s narrator is of the devil’s party and knows it perfectly well is unavoidable.”[[866]](#footnote-866) Dacre’s willingness to subvert genre conventions and incorporate marginalised or transgressive characters problematizes narrative legitimacy and the performance of identity therein. Michasiw’s statement is quite suggestive considering that the devil himself not only makes an appearance in Dacre’s text but actually performs perhaps the most layered and invasive narrative therein under the guise of a Gothic servant. *Zofloya* is considered an example of early ‘masculine’ Gothic, a reimagining of the Faustian relationship described in Lewis’s *The Monk*. An exotic ‘Oriental’ servant, a mechanism of anti-heroine Victoria’s final moral plunge, “a projection of her own destructive desires” as well as an intensely potent Gothic figure in his own right, the titular Zofloya ultimately utilises an extremely complex narrative performance as a means of redefining identity and constructing a wider Gothic aesthetic.[[867]](#footnote-867) In *The Monk* Theodore’s relationship with Raymond exhibits elements of a pseudo-Faustian / demon-lover pact – in *Zofloya* the transgressive servant-mistress relationship is an asymmetrical subversion of physical, psychological, and moral selves. In fact, the servant narrative ultimately redefines constructions of ‘self’ so profoundly that it leads to the destruction of nearly all the supporting characters and damnation of the protagonist. Like Theodore, Zofloya appears to have Gothic aesthetic written into his DNA, and like most other early Gothic servants his social role complicates the performance of verbal and non-verbal narrative. Perhaps no servant in early Gothic literature re-writes codes of service and narrative so profoundly. Zolfoya as a narrator is in many ways the ultimate instance of “the self-creation of a character” via narrative performance.[[868]](#footnote-868)

The plot of *Zofloya* details the moral fall of the deviant female aristocrat Victoria di Loredani, eschewing, for the most part, the myriad subplots and sub-narratives of Lewis’s work in order to focus almost exclusively on Victoria.[[869]](#footnote-869) Initially there is very little in the novel to suggest Gothic aesthetic, and the goals of the omniscient narrator are complicated by Dacre’s narrative strategy. She begins her novel with the assertion that “the historian who would wish his lessons to sink deep into the heart, thereby essaying to render mankind virtuous and more happy, must not content himself with simply detailing events – he must ascertain causes, and follow progressively their effects.”[[870]](#footnote-870) This introduction is closely echoed in Dacre’s next novel, *The Libertine* (1807), a tale in which the masculine anti-hero shares some significant similarities, and particularly a lack of a moral education, with Victoria. Victoria is thus framed as a female rake who, in the tradition of numerous literary libertines from Samuel Richardson’s Lovelace onwards, has numerous potentially positive qualities that are corrupted by self-centred passion and a lack of effective social or self-control. *Zofloya* initially sells itself as a treatise on manners in keeping with what Kathleen Wilson and Felicity Nussbaum identify as the post-Richardsonian conduct fiction “which both documented women’s sexual desire and absolved them of responsibility for it,” expanding on “a growing anxiety about the relationship between women’s agency, sexuality and their control.”[[871]](#footnote-871) Dacre echoes Rousseau and Wollstonecraft (and her own novels, particularly *The Libertine* and *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer: A tale* (1805)) in her initial characterisation of Victoria. Notably, Victoria’s mother habitually makes “light of the sacred charge” of educating Victoria and ensuring her moral well-being.[[872]](#footnote-872) Wollstonecraft states in *A vindication of the rights of woman* (1792) that the best education will:

enable the individual to obtain such habits of virtue as will render it independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. This was Rousseau’s opinion respecting men: I extend it to women, and confidently assert, that they have been drawn out of their sphere by false refinement, and not by an endeavour to acquire masculine qualities.[[873]](#footnote-873)

This emphasis on virtuous and rational independence is particularly noteworthy because Victoria’s inability to negotiate Zofloya’s performance suggests the social and political anxieties which both elevated and problematized female rationality and sensibility. Victoria is ostensibly “independent,” but this independence does not come from the virtuous “exercise of […] reason” and as such is ultimately untenable. Sue Chaplin notes that Victoria ultimately falls prey to the performance of the “transcendentally sublime,” demonstrating an inability “to rationalise and control terror.”[[874]](#footnote-874) Moreover, Victoria’s “masculine qualities,” both physical and moral, make a burlesque of Wollstonecraft’s ideal. Victoria ultimately becomes, as Wollstonecraft threatens, a grotesque and transgressive female unable to resist either destructive passion or the Gothic identity.

In her examination of the genesis of a female rake, Dacre engages with Radcliffe as well as Lewis by reflecting what Deborah Rogers describes as the Radcliffean “matrophobic Gothic,” though while Victoria is an “inadequately mothered, deluded” heroine, she does not then “quest for maternal figures” as a way of compensation.[[875]](#footnote-875) Rather than engaging in, as Marianne Hirsch suggests, a “disidentification from the fate of other women, especially mothers,” Victoria’s eventual seduction by a demonic ‘other’ assumes a loss of identity within a pattern of female disenfranchisement and parallels her mother’s own moral fall.[[876]](#footnote-876) This failure to ‘dis-identify’ properly is reflected further in Victoria’s engagement with the institution of marriage (as, in her mind, a form of oppression) and the figure of the female ideal (her brother-in-law’s fiancé, Lilla). Ultimately Victoria’s relationship with the servant Zofloya becomes the climax of her dramatic destabilisation. Davison identifies “Dacre’s strategy of subverting traditional gender roles and positioning Victoria as the hero-villain” as part of her attempt to redefine the parameters of the Gothic genre.[[877]](#footnote-877) Within that narrative ambiguity the transgressive nature of Victoria and Zofloya’s relationship and their evolving roles as doubles and as a pair of competing libertine seducers becomes clear. Indeed, while Dacre is ostensibly responding primarily to Lewis’s Gothicism, Davison notes that “Dacre may be said, ironically, to take a page out of Radcliffe by repositioning such morally careless, desiring Radcliffean female subjects as Signora Laurentini in the protagonist’s role.”[[878]](#footnote-878) As E.J. Clery points out, up until the introduction of Zofloya “all her (Victoria’s) passions have centred on herself, and we have seen her capable of remarkable calculation and self-control.”[[879]](#footnote-879) She is the opposite of an Emily St Aubert character: Chaplin states that “she is sharp-witted, physically strong and courageous – a thoroughly improper female subject” who “lacks sufficient sensibility.”[[880]](#footnote-880) While the navigation of sensibility is a key part of Radcliffean Gothic, Victoria eventually becomes “a *villain* of sensibility, displaying several of the symptoms of virtue whilst possessing none of its graces.”[[881]](#footnote-881) A lack of sensibility and a superfluity of the transgressive or problematic elements of emotional sensitivity leave her utterly vulnerable to a charismatic performance of superficial sublimity in Zofloya without the benefit of redemptive moral integrity.

The evolution of Victoria’s characterisation is particularly noticeable within the brief relationship between Victoria and the servant girl Catau, whose interaction with Victoria is a mirror reversal of Victoria’s later relationship with Zofloya. Here the servant is manipulated into redefining her personality through subterfuge while later in the text Zofloya dominates and doubles with Victoria in spite of the social barriers between them. Catau is described superficially yet damningly as “short and thick in her person, hard favoured, of rude and vacant features, ignorant and inured to labour.”[[882]](#footnote-882) She is critical to the progression of the plot as the unwitting facilitator of Victoria’s escape from the house of the brutishly austere Signora di Modena. This is, interestingly, a rather Gothic incident depicting a ‘heroine’ in captivity, though Catau herself is as inept at acting the part of the loquacious servant-confidant as Victoria is at playing the heroine of sensibility. Dacre makes a point of extensively illustrating Catau’s character:

Catau was not only not so stupid as she was supposed, but was possessed of a certain shrewdness, and a power of combining ideas, which, hid beneath an habitual silence and placidity of disposition, had drawn upon her the mistaken imputation of heaviness and insensibility. Catau could think; and what was more, she could feel – yes, infinitely beyond those who so proudly sat in judgement upon her character.[[883]](#footnote-883)

Though her narrative agency is hemmed in by “habitual silence,” Catau is humanized by Dacre’s description. Her ability to “feel,” especially when Victoria is defined as “a girl of no common feeling” or, indeed, no feeling at all, indicates that Catau is a woman of unexpected depth and even heroine ‘sensibility.’[[884]](#footnote-884) Dacre takes the cliché of servant drudgery and renders it both uncanny and elevating and, by extension, seriously interrogates Victoria’s choice to leave Catau behind. Catau’s characterisations and her relationship with Victoria reflect and contrast with the relationship between heroine Maria and the “hardened” servant-jailer Jemima, who together learn to experience “feminine emotions” and empathy in Wollstonecraft’s *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798).[[885]](#footnote-885) Servant narrative, or at least servant potential, is emphasised during what is essentially Victoria’s first conscious step outside moral and social boundaries (literally through a garden gate), and her rejection of suffering-as-edification. As a servant ‘performer’ Catau suggests that the ‘surface’ (specifically her surface self) does not necessarily reflect the reality, although Victoria fails to see this. Victoria, for her part, “felt not a shadow of regret at leaving her faithful companion” and consistently falls victim to contradictory superficial performances.[[886]](#footnote-886) She will make the same mistake with Zofloya, seduced by a physical aesthetic that shields the implications of his words. In spite of Victoria’s brutal independence, Zofloya’s narrative and material invasion undermines her identity and ultimately leads to her downfall. They become Gothic doubles and Victoria’s own identity is increasingly subsumed by Zofloya’s performance – Catau’s empathy contrasts with Zofloya’s demand for total submission. Unlike other Gothic heroines whom Davison notes “are radically transformed and gain assertiveness in the course of their trials,” Victoria falls victim to an inversion in “the stunning revelation that Zofloya is actually her master.”[[887]](#footnote-887)

After surviving a series of moral and physical trials, Victoria establishes herself in a “*respectable*” marriage to her lover Berenza, who is described as a “philosophical, delicate, and refined voluptuary.”[[888]](#footnote-888) Berenza represents a vulnerable “voluptuary” or libertine philosophy which is itself unjust and which will eventually be exploited and twisted by the transgressive Victoria and Zofloya. Victoria in particular plots vengeance against him for, she believes, reproaching her “with her former degradation, and the abjectness from which it had pleased him to raise her.”[[889]](#footnote-889) In fact Berenza has ‘raised’ her materially but not morally, and is ultimately complicit in his own demise at her hands – Sarah Raff points out that, in the tradition of the Marquis de Sade (and reflecting an element of the exchange between Theodore and the nuns in *The Monk*), Dacre “dramatizes sexual initiation as a series of pedantic and doctrinaire lessons in depravity,” with Berenza “giving the woman he intends to seduce all the lessons an exemplary guardian would give his ward […] in order to make her a more delectable conquest.”[[890]](#footnote-890) Marriage itself, an institution which provides some protection against supernatural influences in the works of authors such as Ann Radcliffe, is devalued here as a space of particular moral vulnerability. Zofloya will develop these lessons further and along a different line of inquiry but Berenza is still culpable in Victoria’s emergence as a female libertine. She eventually exhibits a more extreme and destructive version of the anti-establishment selfishness in which Berenza had already indulged. In a way she later adopts Berenza’s former role – that of a weak-willed voluptuary who unites with a social and moral inferior only to have that inferior eventually destroy them. Throughout the text Dacre frequently paints socio-moral portraits of figures such as Berenza only to question and/or destroy their validity later, again suggesting an engagement with Lewis and Radcliffe and the goals of the early Gothic genre. Victoria’s marriage exists quietly for several years before she develops a desperate passion for her brother-in-law, Henriquez, who is in turn happily betrothed to the figure of “personified (were the idea allowable) innocence,” Lilla.[[891]](#footnote-891) While Victoria’s pragmatism is subverted by her desire and “the effervescence of Victoria’s mind increased almost to madness,” Henriquez himself is remarkably underdetermined and functions primarily as an object of lust rather than an active agent in the plot.[[892]](#footnote-892) Like Berenza, he serves as an inadequate restraint on the transgressive female and is unable to protect the ‘ideal’ child-bride Lilla. However, he does have a “highly prized” servant on retainer, one who will ultimately serve as a destructive catalyst.

Enter the demon-servant Zofloya, fittingly introduced to the reader within Victoria’s own dreams as a figure who is both performing a complex ‘self’ and functioning beyond the boundaries of physicality and identity. In spite of the influence Zofloya eventually exerts over not just the characters but also the larger aesthetic structure in the novel, he initially appears to be the epitome of narrative marginalisation, objectified by Victoria, as Adriana Craciun suggests, as “a projection of her own destructive desires.”[[893]](#footnote-893) While this ostensibly renders Zofloya a mere construct of the imagination, desire is a potent Gothic issue and dreams are highly charged spaces for Gothic exploration and for the development of emotional, social, and political identities. Zofloya’s ambiguous narrative identity within the dream space and in reality creates what Terry Castle describes as the “Todorovian notion of Ontological transgression – this breakdown of limits between mind and matter” which will keep recurring in Victoria’s waking state throughout the remainder of the text as a result of her proximity to Zofloya.[[894]](#footnote-894) His presence suggests that in fact, as Hoeveler argues, Victoria’s “unconsciousness has slipped the slight yoke of social control that her conscious mind has managed to cultivate.”[[895]](#footnote-895)

Victoria first sees Zofloya in her dreams only as “a Moor” who causes her to feel “inexplicable awe” and who “bent his knee, and extended his arms towards her” in two motions alternatively servile and possessive.[[896]](#footnote-896) Zofloya’s physical appearance within the dream provides a historical and material context for his “noble and majestic form”:

He was clad in a habit of white and gold; on his head he wore a white turban, which sparkled with emeralds, and was surmounted by a waving feather of green; his arms and legs, which were bare, were encircled with the finest oriental pearl; he wore a collar of gold around his throat, and his ears where decorated with gold rings of an enormous size.[[897]](#footnote-897)

The emphasis on physical appearance is notable here because servants in early Gothic literature are often superficially underdetermined and because Zofloya ultimately employs a narrative where gestures, costume, setting and other external examples of masquerade ‘performance’ are incorporated. This is true even within the dream context as Zofloya’s performance also blurs the boundaries between dream-states and consciousness. Victoria, filled with “terror” and “dread,” wakes up in alarm, while Zofloya has already invaded Victoria’s subconscious mind.[[898]](#footnote-898) While Victoria has, up to that point, experienced no true sublime emotion or natural sensibility, hereafter in the text she will be almost continually falling in and out of dreamscapes which grow progressively more unstable and fantastic. When Victoria again drifts into her dream she is presented with further visual representations of her transgressive desires and the ultimate results of her actions. Victoria witnesses the dumb-show marriage of lust-object Henriquez and love-rival Lilla, punctuated by interjections by the dream-Zofloya urging the fulfilment of her desires and promising success if Victoria will only “be mine.”[[899]](#footnote-899) Zofloya’s ultimate goals and the pattern of exchange, co-dependency, and ownership described in the servant-master narrative are articulated in this incident.

Victoria attempts to negotiate this initial narrative, these “dreams of a mysterious tendency,” with the same problematic approach that she will employ for the remainder of the text.[[900]](#footnote-900) Dream-Zofloya kneels like a servant, extends his arms like a lover, and verbalizes his main argument: “‘Wilt thou be mine?’ in a hurried voice whispered the Moor in her ear, ‘and none then shall oppose thee.’”[[901]](#footnote-901) Victoria hesitates. Presenting another vision of Henriquez and Lilla, Zofloya repeats his demand again with more force and inspires a more vicious response from Victoria: “‘Wilt thou be mine?’ exclaimed the Moor in a loud voice, ‘and the marriage shall *not be!*’ – ‘Oh, yes, yes!’ eagerly cried Victoria, overcome with intense horror at the thoughts of their (Henriquez and Lilla’s) union.”[[902]](#footnote-902) Narrative emphasis, excess, and repetition as well as a highly stylized Gothic backdrop and performance demonstrate Zofloya’s narrative powers. Victoria misreads the content of the dream much as she will later read Zofloya: “all else she considered as irrelevant to the true purport of her dream, and the fantastic ebullitions of a disturbed mind.”[[903]](#footnote-903) Ironically, Victoria dismisses the “true purport” of her dream as something “fantastic,” a subjective product of her own imagination not worthy of consideration. This instance maps out Victoria’s process of acquiescence, her hesitation and her submission to a performance where superficiality both performs and obscures the truth. Zofloya is, at this point in the dream, an extension of Victoria’s will and therefore part of the negotiation of “extreme states” of identity which Craciun argues are “both pleasurable and dangerous.”[[904]](#footnote-904) The radical acknowledgement within this destabilisation of identity follows Victoria into her conscious state. Chaplin notes that after the dream Victoria is “in a state of extreme agitation,” struggling to “take control of her dread, subjecting it to a rational interpretation.”[[905]](#footnote-905) Victoria no longer functions as the independent anti-heroine and rather reveals a vulnerable identity which suggests Wollstonecraft assertion that it is a “farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason.”[[906]](#footnote-906)

It is only after Victoria wakes that she recognizes the figure in the dream as the servant Zofloya, a named and known quantity, rather than some more ephemeral representative. This reinforces Sedgwick’s argument that in the Gothic “individual identity […] is social and relational rather than original or private; it is established only ex post facto, by recognition,” much like Theodore’s identity is only later revealed to Mother St. Ursula in *The Monk*.[[907]](#footnote-907)As such, Zofloya’s identity consistently is only revealed through a process of belated ‘recognition’ while Victoria’s own identity is also correspondingly externalised, drawn out from the private dream space by the invading servant. This again suggests Victoria’s inability to successfully navigate identity, but it also brings in a socio-political discourse on service which textures the narrative Zofloya is performing. Victoria acknowledges that “why *he* should be connected with her dream, who never entered her mind when waking, she could not divine: but certain it was, that his exact resemblance, though as it were of polished and superior appearance, had figured chiefly in her troubled sight.”[[908]](#footnote-908) The ‘invisible’ quality of an ideal servant is suggested here and furthermore indicates the pervasive presence of a troubling marginalised ‘other’ within the domestic space. Moreover, this formerly innocuous figure still defies attempts at categorisation, embodying uncanny identity in Victoria’s mind in her memory of his “exact resemblance” textured with a new “polished and superior appearance,” a hint at the ultimate disparity between the veneer and truth of Zofloya’s selfhood.[[909]](#footnote-909) Zofloya’s uncanny and superficial performance of identity suggests anxiety about “the paradox of masquerade sociology” as Zofloya’s carnival self does “‘promiscuously’ mingle the classes” in myriad troubling ways.[[910]](#footnote-910)

Zofloya is introduced outside of Victoria’s dream as having a "strict friendship” with his master Henriquez, with whom he presumably performs a suitable servant-master exchange. Characterisations of Zofloya as an uncanny ‘other’ reflect an anxiety about his “social and relational” identity as a Moor which in turn problematizes his performance. Sara Schotland notes that “*Zofloya* was written during a period of intense anxiety about slave revolt, especially the cataclysmic rebellion in Saint-Domingue” from 1791 to 1804.[[911]](#footnote-911) Such revolts undermined any attempt to enforce an idealised master-slave (or master-servant) patriarchal ideal and suggests an inherent instability within the system. Hoeveler moreover suggests that, like Matthew Lewis’s character Hassan from *The Castle Spectre* (1798), Zofloya’s actions suggest “dualistic characteristics that blacks (and, we might add, Italian women in Gothic novels) were thought to possess: a superficial eagerness to please combined with a tendency, when injured, to plot violent and extreme revenge.”[[912]](#footnote-912) Indeed, Lewis’s Hassan inspires pathos when describing how he was “dragged from his native land” and subjected to the taunts of slavers wondering “how a negro’s soul could *feel*.”[[913]](#footnote-913) When he then states that he “vowed aloud endless hatred to mankind” his actions are thus contextualised within codes of postcolonial guilt and function within a vengeance plot.[[914]](#footnote-914) Since a contemporary reviewer noted that in *The Castle Spectre* “even those scenes with which we have been the most familiar in the closet, have frequently the effect of novelty now that they appear in dramatic shape,” the theatrical performance of a narrative of servitude/slavery is particularly emphasised within a Gothic/Romantic context.[[915]](#footnote-915) Superficiality is emphasized and the disparity between the surface and the reality makes the character himself an uncanny performance piece – where the reader was complicit in Theodore’s performance in *The Monk*, however, Zofloya’s performance pointedly reflects uncomfortable social anxieties. Ironically, this subversive tendency also makes Zofloya an ideal Gothic author insofar as the ‘Gothic’ was understood as a kind of ‘civilized barbarism.’[[916]](#footnote-916)

Therein, the narrative of Zofloya is problematically individualized as a Gothic text by post-colonial readings and by the sub-genre implications of slave-narratives and abolitionist and anti-abolitionist propaganda. Zofloya’s race is an obvious signifier within the text, one which Zofloya himself exploits while re-working discourses of service and Gothicism as narrative strategy. In spite of the impulse to apply an abolitionist agenda to this text, however, Kim Michasiw illustrates the important distinction between the ‘Negro’ and the ‘blackamoor’ or the ‘Moor’ in eighteenth-century literature. Typically the ‘Negro’ is a staple of abolitionist literature, a man or woman of “pastoral innocence” who is sold into slavery and eventually dies as a result of institutional brutality in a manner meant to push pathos to the extreme.[[917]](#footnote-917) Michasiw points to Dacre’s poem “The Poor Negro Sadi” as a fittingly titled example of abolitionist literature, noting however that “the speaker’s overt longing for revenge” individualizes the poem.[[918]](#footnote-918) In contrast, the figure of the ‘Moor’ is anchored in seventeenth-century representations of a highly intelligent, combative group who formerly functioned as “Europe’s internal Other.”[[919]](#footnote-919) Zofloya and Hassan demonstrate little “pastoral innocence” and rather define themselves by their superior cunning or warrior identities. Such characters thus suggest “a salutary protest against the primitivism and pathos of abolitionism’s negro” while still anchoring the novel’s themes in negotiations of ‘otherness.’[[920]](#footnote-920) Arguably, then, Zofloya’s narrative should rather “be understood in relation to the discourse of abolitionism and the constructs that discourse had imposed upon the African,” the attempt to frame a servant like Zofloya in a social-cultural sphere while problematizing his power and influence therein.[[921]](#footnote-921) Edward W. Said’s argument that such a characterization was “more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is a veridic discourse about the Orient” hints at the complexity of Zofloya’s narrative and Dacre’s attempts to contextualise him within a discourse of identity within the novel.[[922]](#footnote-922)

The reader is thus forced to acknowledge Zofloya’s racial difference as well as the ultimate failure of what Hoeveler identifies as Victoria’s attempt “to make Zofloya a subject of racial, cultural, and national representation that she and by extension the white bourgeois world could ultimately control.”[[923]](#footnote-923) Zofloya manipulates discourses of slavery and racial coding as a way of undermining the master-servant exchange. He is a figure of *Orientalism*, a form of Gothicism (and a pervasive cultural influence) which Said formatively defined as “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience,” particularly as “one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other.”[[924]](#footnote-924) The racial and cultural costumes (such as the turban and jewels) and the Gothicized knowledge of poisons and other secrets which Zofloya later displays play into the aesthetic of what Dale Townshend describes as “Other enjoyment.” Defining racial ‘otherness’ by “its opulence, its grandeur, and its excess” Townshend notes that Slavoj Zizek and Jacques-Alain Miller extend the “Lacanian conceptualisation of racism and its relation to enjoyment in order to argue that it is *jouissance,* the phantasmatic substance of enjoyment, which informs the broader cultural work of nationalism.”[[925]](#footnote-925) Appreciation of Zofloya’s performance of an ‘Orientalist’ Gothic narrative thus arguably creates feelings of “stolen enjoyment,” the appropriation of a cultural identity which ultimately, and perhaps dangerously, belongs to someone else.[[926]](#footnote-926) Given Castle’s arguments about the primacy of the “fantastic” in Radcliffean Gothic as the blurred “distinctions between fantasy and reality, mind and matter, subject and object,” Zofloya’s characterisation as a racial other within increasingly fluid landscapes and dreamscapes very nearly embodies these blurred distinctions as a comprehensive Gothic identity.[[927]](#footnote-927)

The dream sequence is a significant performance, yet Zofloya’s actual introduction as a character only occurs after his ‘death’ and ‘resurrection’ at the hands of a fellow servant who attempts to murder him. The racial identities of the two servants suggest Shakespeare’s *Othello*, though of course it is Zofloya (a Moorish Iago) who later wreaks havoc on the identities of those around him. The ability of the servant character to adopt roles and transform identity within an increasingly performance-oriented narrative is taken to its logical extreme here, as is the fear that the servant is ultimately a threat and invader in a domestic space. Indeed, the exchange of servant-Zofloya for demon-Zofloya is a sort of literary sleight-of-hand trick which only becomes apparent later in the text and in close re-readings, and echoes the strategies of other Gothic servant narrators. Michasiw notes, moreover, that “the introductory history is proved in the place of a eulogy: unlike the revenger, Zofloya does not (cannot at this point) speak his history.”[[928]](#footnote-928) Given the influence of personal narrative on identity, this could indicate Zofloya’s social disenfranchisement or perhaps hint that the ‘real’ Zofloya is actually no more. Of course, Zofloya’s later assertion that he is “in possession of a secret transmitted to me by my ancestors, for speedily healing” his wounds not only saves his life but establishes that he possesses a specific knowledge that individualises him, bespeaks a complex personal past, and anchors his racial identity as a cultural inheritance.[[929]](#footnote-929) Even if the ‘real’ Zofloya is dead, then, his knowledge and therefore a sliver of his identity remain intact.

The servant-villain’s Orientalism (and implicit liminal quality) is reemphasised as part of a semi-stable identity as the third person narrator notes that “Zofloya, though a Moor, and by a combination of events, and the chance of war, (in the final victory of the Spaniards over the Moors of Granada,) reduced to a menial position was yet of noble birth.”[[930]](#footnote-930) His menial status is undermined by the acknowledgement that he is “beloved of all” and possesses “superior qualities” and “an elegant person.”[[931]](#footnote-931) In the course of his travels Zofloya receives an impressive education and willingly enters “into the service and guardianship of Henriquez.”[[932]](#footnote-932) Zofloya thus performs servant identity in order to undermine it – though considered “rather as a friend than as inferior,” Michasiw notes that Zofloya “insists that the status of his relationship with the novel’s whites not be forgotten.”[[933]](#footnote-933) In this dualistic status Zofloya embodies both servility and superiority. He is an ‘other’ who denies any attempt to undermine his ‘otherness’ and the complicit social marginalisation and injustice in which white characters take part. Zofloya’s tendency to manipulate and emphasise his ‘grotesque’ (insofar as it is ‘other’) racially and socially coded body within his narrative thus, Edwards and Grauland suggest, “offers a creative force for conceptualizing the indeterminate that is produced by distortion, and reflecting on the significance of uncertainty that is thereby produced.”[[934]](#footnote-934)

Victoria becomes obsessed with the idea that “the mere presence of Zofloya possessed a secret charm to facilitate her wishes” concerning the seduction of Henriquez and the satisfaction of her libertine desires.[[935]](#footnote-935) In fact, Zofloya’s “mere presence” will come to influence Victoria as much as his actual words and actions, indicating a highly stylized narrative performance. Social barriers vanish in their first physical meeting:

Surprise, accompanied by an emotion of anger, lightened through her mind, that an inferior should thus presume to intrude upon her retirement: this later sentiment, however, faded in an instant before the majestic presence of the Moor; she looked upon him with an anxious air, but did not speak, and observed that in his hand he carried a bouquet of roses.[[936]](#footnote-936)

Victoria is initially a forceful and commanding master exhibiting her imperious nature – she does not accept the ‘presumption’ of an “inferior.” Zofloya’s “majestic presence,” however, not only prevents the imminent social clash but also renders the forceful Victoria “anxious” and, suggestively, speechless. Zofloya is performing a narrative self which completely undermines Victoria’s own identity, suggesting a masquerade or carnivalesque social upheaval. Rather than immediately asserting dominance over Victoria, however, Zofloya instead performs a pantomime of service – he humbly ventures “to appear uncalled before you,” strews roses about her feet, and, when a thorn pricks Victoria, collects and preserves her blood “as a sacred relic” (and pseudo-blood pact) in a parodic religious ritual.[[937]](#footnote-937) Though Zofloya appears ostensibly “uncalled,” he is in fact summoned by Victoria’s evil wishes and thus acts as Victoria’s double and/or as a manifestation of her psyche. Zofloya performs what Howard describes as “the sudden or isolated spontaneous wish or desire *becomes* the demonic force,” a moment suggested in Theodore’s “The Water-King” and in a libertine discourse of will and desire.[[938]](#footnote-938) Within this interaction, “the vanity of Victoria was flattered” by Zofloya’s expressions of his own unworthiness, calling attention to the “disparity of situation” present between the master and servant while effectively negating it using “unconquerable fascination.”[[939]](#footnote-939) Victoria’s arrogant focus on social status and her identity as a ‘master’ character is thus undermined by a performance of Gothic “fascination” through Zofloya’s embodiment of a Gothic aesthetic.

After setting the stage with a physical performance of majesty and a verbal / physical performance of servitude and dependency, Zofloya then proceeds to manipulate narrative to further undermine Victoria’s identity. Victoria is responsive to Zofloya’s narrative strategy:

There was little in the words of Zofloya to excite hope in the bosom of Victoria; yet enlivening hope shot through her bosom, and she half rose from her reclining attitude.

‘Zofloya,’ she said, in a doubting accent, finding that he did not proceed, ‘what hope could *you* offer me?’

‘Some, perhaps, Signora – name your grief.’

She started wildy from her seat – ‘Moor!’ she exclaimed, ‘your words are big with meaning; they contain more than meets the ear! Quick, and tell me, boldly, all you would say.’

Zofloya rose from the ground, he presumed to take the hand of Victoria, and led her again to her seat; in a moment she was calm. – ‘Now, Signora, deign to acknowledge to me what secret oppresses, and has for long oppressed your soul; the Moor, Zofloya, may repay you for your confidence.’[[940]](#footnote-940)

This exchange reflects the traditional servant narrative formula – the master encourages the servant to be more explicit while the servant affects narrative sublimity by responding ambiguously. In fact Zofloya’s words are, and will continue to be, “big with meaning” in ways which indicate an authorial impulse, a conscious Gothicising of narrative which winks suggestively at the external readership. Rather than explicitly forcing Victoria into an immoral act, Zofloya asks instead that she “acknowledge” her desires verbally. In “naming” her problem Victoria gives him insight into her own name / identity, though it is strongly implied that Zofloya already knows of Victoria’s desires via their telepathic connection and his ability to read Victoria as a text-body. Such an exchange is perhaps not uncommon in other examples of Gothic servant narrative, but here narrative performance has an immediate effect on Victoria:

‘Signora,’ he began, in an harmonious voice, while every uneasy feeling of Victoria’s bosom vanished as he spoke – ‘I am not to learn that dreadful oppression of soul weighs you to the earth; but the cause of your unhappiness I desire to hear from your own lips, more explicitly than you have yet acknowledged it. Think not, beautiful Victoria, that, in the spirit of idle curiosity merely, I would dive into the recesses of your bosom; no, it is from a hope I entertain, that I possess a power equal, almost to my wishes, of alleviating the sorrows you endure. But even should I not possess that power, even then there is a delight, of which you will speedily become sensible, in confiding them to a sympathizing breast.’[[941]](#footnote-941)

Zofloya’s verbal response is defined by his wish to “possess a power” as a result of Victoria’s narrative – the power to help Victoria, which he explicitly acknowledges, and the power to possess Victoria, as implied in the subtext. His performance is again partially defined by a potent and meaningful superficiality as his “harmonious voice” has the power to dismiss “every uneasy feeling” within Victoria almost immediately.

The notion of narrative as transgressive is apparent in this exchange. The third-person narrator adopts a tone of horror as Victoria was “on the point of betraying her inmost thoughts, her dearest wishes, her dark repinings, and hopeless desires; of betraying them, too, to an inferior and an infidel!”[[942]](#footnote-942) In spite of the sense of violation and exposure in the act of ‘naming’ and narrative (and indeed, given Zofloya’s performing role and Dacre’s own adoption of a nom de plume, the call to ‘name’ desire is very suggestive), Zofloya’s social status as an “inferior” is presented as a barrier only to be immediately dismissed, as is his identity as an “infidel.” Zofloya’s identity is subsumed into a larger performance and deconstruction of self which is then reflected and redirected back on Victoria. Once she tells Zofloya of her feelings for Henriquez her narrative and her corresponding identity are made vulnerable. The questions Zofloya asks in response mockingly restructure some of Victoria’s core identifiers. For example Zofloya asks with a smile: “are you not a holy catholic, Signora?”[[943]](#footnote-943) These questions point to the more troubling aspects of Victoria’s personality: “‘Are you of a firm and persevering spirit, Signora?’ ‘This heart knows not how to shrink,’ she answered, forcibly striking her bosom, while her eyes flashed fire; ‘and in its purpose would persevere, even to destruction.’ ‘Are such the attributes of your character, Signora?’”[[944]](#footnote-944) The result of an “explicit” confirmation, he promises, will be two-fold – he can perhaps help her and, even if this is not possible, suggests the “delight” to be gained from expressing narrative. He identifies himself as “a sympathizing breast” who wishes to “dive into the recesses of your bosom” just as he will later throw Victoria herself into the recesses of Hell, the two places decidedly mirroring each other.[[945]](#footnote-945)

Zofloya uses highly suggestive romantic language to encourage Victoria’s vocalization of her deepest desires. What’s more, he is successful in no small part because of the strength of his narrative performance:

Scarce had Zofloya opened his lips, ere uneasiness, as we have said, vanished from the mind of Victoria. As he proceeded, the most agreeable sensations fluttered through her frame, and in her brain floated fascinating visions of future bliss, that passed too rapidly to be identified. Scarce had his silver tones sunk on her ear in thrilling cadence, than she felt even eager to express to the Moor her inmost thoughts: excessive, yet confused pleasure, filled her heart – .[[946]](#footnote-946)

Even without examining the content of Zofloya’s narrative, Zofloya’s voice and performance are enough to utterly enthral Victoria. Zofloya’s capacity as a Gothic author corresponds with Victoria’s Gothic imagination, illustrating the complacency of the author-readership exchange hinted at in Theodore’s experience with the nuns of St. Clare. Zofloya had “scarce…opened his lips” before Victoria’s resistance is undermined, and his “silver tones” with their “thrilling cadence” dominate through “sensations” rather than reason-based arguments. He is able to fill Victoria’s head with “visions,” a narrative of “future bliss” brought about by his ambiguous promise of service which convinces her to submit further to Zofloya’s demands. This performance depends not only on verbal content but also on the construction and embodiment of a Gothic aesthetic, a material and sensational form which inspires an emotional reaction. Perhaps most notably apparent in this kind of structured exchange, however, is the underlying discourse of desire, a feeling of emotional and sexual ownership. Because, as Michasiw notes, “Zofloya’s status is never clarified,” his frequent self-identification as “the lowest of your slaves” adopts a very real socio-racial meaning in spite of Victoria’s attempts to “regard these as courtly metaphors.”[[947]](#footnote-947) This narrative ambiguity and indeed the “confused pleasure” which Victoria experiences reveals, Michasiw suggests, “a trace of his ironic participation in the discourse of Romance,” as well as Zofloya’s narrative manipulation of his own racial and social identity within a master-servant exchange.[[948]](#footnote-948) Therein, in order to avoid the racial and social implications of their relationship, Victoria characterises Zofloya’s narrative as romantic, suggesting chivalric descriptions of elevated love and the idealized characterization of the servant as a devoted pseudo-lover – she manages to avoid one racially significant narrative only to fall into the language of sexual transgression. In this way Zofloya embodies qualities which “Dacre’s contemporaries, even the most committed of anti-slavery activists, would have denied,” not the least of which being his physical beauty which later adds a transgressive sexual element to his and Victoria’s relationship.[[949]](#footnote-949) Racial difference, “other enjoyment,” and sexual desire are blurred within narrative coding.

Much as the third-person narrator had previously directed attention to the dualistic nature of Victoria’s vices as potential virtues, where “haughtiness might have been softened into noble pride, cruelty into courage, implacability into firmness,” the ambiguity of servant narrative performance invites double-meaning and destabilisation.[[950]](#footnote-950) In spite of his own emphasis of his physicality, Zofloya asks “does the Signora believe, then, that the Moor Zofloya hath a heart dark as his countenance? Ah! Signora, judge ye not by appearances!”[[951]](#footnote-951) Zofloya illustrates his identity before immediately undermining comprehensive readings of it. Zofloya does, in fact, have “a heart as dark as his countenance,” though Victoria’s inability to judge him by anything other than his “majestic” appearance prevents her from fully grasping his identity as a demonic ‘other.’ Moreover, real immorality is ostensibly obscured by hackneyed philosophy. When Zofloya argues his point he echoes Sadean philosophy and the words of Radcliffe’s Marquis de Montalt character in *The Romance of the Forest*:

Is not self predominant throughout animal nature? and what is the boasted supremacy of man, if, eternally, he must yield his happiness to the paltry suggestions of scholastic terms, or the pompous definitions of right and wrong? His reasoning mind, then, is given him only for his torment, and to wage war against his happiness; yet what cause can be adduced, why *another* must be permitted to stand between him, and his fair prospects, overshadowing them with hopeless gloom?[[952]](#footnote-952)

Like his physical appearance, Zofloya’s verbal assertions are complicated by double meanings and skewed realities. They repeat de Sade’s assertions in *Justine* that “there is no God, Nature sufficeth unto herself” and that the man “in tune with Nature” “abjures forever those pretty humanitarian doctrines… he no longer fears to be selfish.”[[953]](#footnote-953) De Montalt’s speech on the noble savage and “Nature, uncontaminated by false refinement,” also suggests this philosophy.[[954]](#footnote-954) This defence re-characterises Zofloya as a libertine whose narrative both articulates Victoria’s own emotions and seduces her down a more extreme path of amorality. Zofloya thus performs as Victoria’s libertine double as well as her seducer/destroyer. Given Zofloya’s super-human identity and the frequency with which servant characters in this genre are defined by the transcendence of boundaries, both physical and moral, it is perhaps not surprising that these philosophical arguments are so effective against “scholastic terms” and “pompous definitions.” It is the emotional response rather than the “reasoning mind” Zofloya appeals to, again suggesting, as Chaplin argues, Victoria’s dependence on a “feminized imagination that responds in a certain way to sublime power.”[[955]](#footnote-955) It is, however, Zofloya’s non-verbal performance of a narrative of mastery that becomes one of Victoria’s strongest motivators: “the cool deliberateness of his manner, in expressing his sentiments, induced Victoria to believe that they were the result of conviction,” adding an apparent legitimacy to the servant narrative and narrator.[[956]](#footnote-956)

Zofloya goes further still in his seduction of Victoria by continually delineating areas of responsibility and self, stating that Victoria’s destiny “will be of your own making: I am but the humble tool, the slave of your wishes; your co-operation with me can alone render me powerful; but fly me, distain my assistance, and despise my friendship I *sink abashed into myself, and am powerless!*”[[957]](#footnote-957) Such a statement emphasises the servant-master co-dependency which defines Gothic servant narrative, particularly in Zofloya’s racially-significant assertion that he is a “slave.” As part of Zofloya’s process of self-identification he illustrates his Orientalised background by telling Victoria of his ability “to compound poisons with such infinite art, that, from the most speedy and subtle, I could vary their degrees to the slowest and most imperceptible.”[[958]](#footnote-958) His particular characterisation suggests a Gothic world of poisons and illicit knowledge, but also hints at a narrative poison, the way Zofloya’s words drive Victoria slowly, almost unconsciously, to her own destruction. Zofloya’s identity as a racial other thus becomes a kind of prop and/or weapon even as it distinguishes his narrative identity. When Zofloya demands of Victoria “whether *you* would choose the slow poison, or the swift?” it is clear that he has already chosen the slow verbal poison for the fulfilment of his own desires, the colonization and destruction of Victoria.[[959]](#footnote-959) Zofloya’s emphasis on Victoria’s own identity, what “*you* would choose,” makes it unclear whether Zofloya is merely performing a discourse of service or whether he really is dependent on Victoria for his power. The repeated emphasis on Berenza only accepting poison from Victoria and, later, Lilla’s violent murder by Victoria against Zofloya’s wishes reinforces Zofloya’s relative passivity outside of his narrative performance. His verbal narrative and the performance of tone, inflection and emotionality, as well as the manipulation of physical imposture and setting, only give him agency insofar as they give him authorial control over the setting and the ability to read other characters.

While Zofloya moves around Victoria “as if informed by the sympathetic influence of her wishes,” words and directions become a battleground where ‘mastery’ is decided, and often decided in Zofloya’s favour. He tells Victoria that “if my directions are in the smallest tittle infringed, you weaken the power by which I act, and destroy the effect which strict adherence to the rules laid down can alone produce.”[[960]](#footnote-960) In spite of this ostensible limitation, Zofloya is sufficiently manipulative and the consequences of Victoria’s participation in an unstable servant-master discourse become very clear as issues of self-identification arise. Zofloya mocks her agency using a kind of Socratic questioning, usurping narrative response and negating Victoria’s will: “‘Do you want resolution, then, fair Signora, to effect, by means to trifling, your highest wishes? – and did I err,’ he added ironically, ‘in the different estimate I had formed of your character?’”[[961]](#footnote-961) Identity is undermined and reality is re-defined by the servant’s “estimate” of the master’s character. When Victoria questions Zofloya’s demands this problematic servant-master exchange becomes even more extreme:

The Moor started back, and looked scowlingly upon Victoria; never before had she beheld him look so terrible: in an instant her proud rage subsided, her eyes were cast on the earth, and she trembled at what she had suffered to escape her lips. Yes, Victoria, who had never before trembled in the presence of mortal being, who did not tremble to agonise and insult a father, to revile a mother, and consign a husband to the grave, trembled now, in the presence of Zofloya.[[962]](#footnote-962)

Zofloya projects and performs a Gothic narrative reality in which he is the dominating master figure and Victoria the passive dependent curbing her identity to please him. This suggests a reversal of the servant and master roles but also an instance of doubling in which Zofloya becomes a manifestation of Victoria’s guilt, resurrecting her treatment of her father, mother, and husband and subsuming them into Zofloya’s “presence.” Victoria’s imagination cannot resist the awe-inspiring aesthetic he creates because, unlike other heroines, she lacks the moral fortitude so highly prized by Wollstonecraft and is herself a kind of transgressive ‘other.’[[963]](#footnote-963) She reads the text of his face and body language and responds as a Gothic reader does, with the proverbial chill up the spine, but cannot translate her feelings into any corresponding sublime elevation. Notably, she “had never before trembled in the presence of a mortal being,” and her physical reaction not only implies that Zofloya’s narrative has essentially un-made her but that in fact Zofloya himself is not a “mortal being.”

Zofloya ensures that the discourse of the servant-master relationship remains in place by tying his performance of self with Victoria’s own identity. Like Paulo in *The Italian*, Zofloya seems conscious of when it is expedient to “play all the roles that are emotionally delicious” before reaffirming social boundaries through a “symbolic and theatrical gesture.”[[964]](#footnote-964) When Victoria states that “you are eloquent,” Zofloya suggestively responds that “I am not naturally eloquent, but the wish of promoting your happiness renders me so,” problematizing his narrative by denying ownership of his narrative identity. [[965]](#footnote-965) As per codes of servant ‘performance,’ once Victoria surrenders to Zofloya’s will Zofloya conciliates her with a return to a more servile (and inherently meaningless) narrative framework, doubly influenced by a romanticized subtext:

‘Well , Zofloya, I will in all respects follow your directions; relax then the sternness of your brow, and smile upon me as usual.’

‘Beautiful Victoria! you are resistless,’ cried Zofloya, dropping on one knee – ‘’tis I now who sue for pardon, and promise to devote myself to your service.’

‘Rise, gentle Moor, and accept my hand,’ cried the vain and flattered Victoria; ‘never shall I have power to recompense you.’

‘*You recompense me, Signora, in accepting my services*[…]”[[966]](#footnote-966)

Victoria cedes authority because of Zofloya’s performance of a Gothic aesthetic, the “terrible” look which caused her to “tremble.” Once she agrees to obey him Zofloya then performs idealised, romanticised service, physically “dropping on one knee” and appealing to Victoria’s vanity. As in the works of other early Gothic authors, as Todd suggests, the ‘performing’ servant allows the master to adopt roles without violating propriety and class roles, or at least by re-establishing such roles afterwards. Zofloya undermines this system of class dominance by self-consciously suggesting that he is in fact ‘performing’ or faking a narrative. The double meaning of words such as “*recompense*” and “*services*” also hint at the anxieties surrounding the ‘economics’ of loyalty for paid servants, and suggest later unforeseen consequences for Victoria.

The consequences of extreme and deviant co-dependency between servant and master become more apparent as Zofloya and Victoria’s relationship develops. Soon they are no longer performing Todd’s comfortable servant-master ‘posturing’ in which roles are assumed only to be mutually and respectfully discarded later. Rather they engage in a killing spree which destroys every social structure they come in contact with. Arguably this is, as Davison describes it, a performance of “anxieties about the degeneration of British institutions both domestically and internationally.”[[967]](#footnote-967) If Zofloya represents racial injustice and Victoria represents a deviant femininity then their alliance poses a threat to institutionalized patriarchy while at the same time rendering both characters ‘others.’ Social barriers are raised only to be undermined or used in a meaningful subversion of identity:

‘And I too, Signora, shall have proud cause to *mark* that day; for it gave to the unworthy slave, Zofloya, the most beautiful and enterprising of her sex.’

‘It gave thee my friendship, indeed, Zofloya,’ said Victoria, slightly surprised; it gave thee my gratitude, not myself; for I am irrevocably, as though knowest, devoted to another.’

‘Be not offended, beautiful Victoria, nor let us waste the precious moments in defining terms; for the signor Henriquez, to whom I am obedient for your sweet sake alone, requires my presence: were it not for you Zofloya would no longer appear in a character unfitting his state, the character of a menial.’

‘And what would you then, generous Zofloya? for sure you were the attendant of Henriquez, ere I became known to you.’

‘Were *you* otherwise than *you are*, fair Victoria, I should not now be here.’[[968]](#footnote-968)

Victoria’s earlier anxieties about social elevation (both her own status and Zofloya’s) and her focus on Zofloya’s low station as an “unworthy slave” illustrates the social and personal reversal of the servant mastering the master. Social violations seem more transgressive to Victoria than racial ones. Moreover, all identity has become fluid within their relationship. In spite of Victoria’s attempts to assign stable identity to him, Zofloya states that his “character” – the character he assumes as a servant, bespeaking eighteenth and nineteenth century anxieties about falsified servant character references – is “unfitting his state.” Arguing that “were *you* otherwise than *you are*,” with emphasis on the individual “you,” Zofloya states outright that his menial position is more a reflection of Victoria’s identity than his own and that it is, in fact, all an extensive narrative performance in which Victoria is playing an unwitting part. This kind of discourse foreshadows Hogg’s description of the demonic relationship in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Robert Wringhim’s “natural character” is the avowed reason why Gil-Martin “resolved to attach myself as closely to you as possible,” again blurring the boundaries of individual identity and problematizing the social assumption that the servant must suspend his identity in order to serve.[[969]](#footnote-969) Servant identity is thus unstable and, in the Gothic genre, potentially demonic or otherwise ‘other.’ By extension master identity as a correlative of servant identity is similarly ambiguous.

This exchange develops into a system of ‘reading’ characters and Zofloya, who has always been adept at identifying the motive and desires of others, easily categorises Victoria’s thoughts and feelings: “I can read them now, beautiful Victoria! that high-flushed cheek, that wandering eye, are evidences that cannot be mistaken.”[[970]](#footnote-970) Unlike Victoria, however, Zofloya is by default an unknowable being who defies close-reading. Victoria wonders “how happens it, that with a thousand questions to ask him, I find time to ask him nothing? and, which a thousand inquiries to make respecting himself, my tongue refuses in his presence to perform its office, and I remain unsatisfied?”[[971]](#footnote-971) He redirects such readings back onto Victoria herself with ease: “the wily Moor had turned her attention from his mysterious insinuations to her own conscious feelings; these alone regained possession of her, and every thing else appeared trivial in her view.”[[972]](#footnote-972) In the Moor’s constructed reality these “conscious feelings” override Victoria’s rationality and therein Zofloya “regained possession of her.” The word ‘possession’ suggests a demonic influence and the material master-slave reversal of ownership which Victoria accepts almost unthinkingly. The implications this has for early Gothic servant narrative is obvious – if Gothic sublimity “explores a terror of the unspeakable, of the inconceivable, of the unnameable,” as David Morris suggests, then Victoria’s inability to read and know Zofloya and articulate a response becomes a reflection of sublimity as a narrative form.[[973]](#footnote-973) Rather than explicitly imposing a narrative on the situation, Zofloya denies narrative stability and then embodies that denial in a physical performance. Moreover, the reader’s awareness that Zofloya is performing an ambiguous narrative complicates Zofloya’s narrator role and transforms it into a larger discourse on Gothic performances and identity. While Zofloya is asserting this kind of narrative authority in a verbal and non-verbal performance which denies clear readings even when Zofloya is at his most explicit, Victoria’s narrative expression conversely suffers.

Recourse against this violation of established social and narrative norms is apparently impossible: “Victoria felt surprise; she lifted her eyes to the countenance of the Moor, but they feel beneath his fiery glances – she would have spoken; she knew not what conflicting emotions chained her tongue.”[[974]](#footnote-974) Victoria is a victim of Gothicized ambiguity embodied in a servant performance, a re-making of identity which negates her independence. This experience is repeated later: “His dark but brilliant eyes, like two stars in a gloomy cloud, pursued her with their strong imperious rays, even to the threshold of the door; she stopped, hesitated, and attempted to speak, but the effort was vain; and without power to offer resistance, she quitted the apartment.”[[975]](#footnote-975) Once she has acknowledged that she was “in his power,” the performance of narrative once again changes to something conciliatory and more in keeping with a servant role. Afterwards “his features had resumed their usual expression, animated, but serene, resembling the returning brilliant calmness of a summer sky, that had looked lurid with the threatened storm.”[[976]](#footnote-976) Zofloya achieves authority by transforming himself into a Gothic body, subduing Victoria by physically performing a Gothic “excess of style.”[[977]](#footnote-977) The nature imagery which is often associated with Zofloya’s person and particularly in his narrative performance again suggests Orientalism and the image of the ‘noble savage’ in de Sade’s work. Perhaps most importantly it also defines Zofloya’s performance as something external and outside of domesticity, as a chaotic reimagining of man in nature and nature in man which undercuts humanist morality. Zofloya’s performance appears to be at least partially a ‘carnival’ disguise emphasising “the disruption of class relations” even while it points to distinguishing class markers.[[978]](#footnote-978) While Zofloya does not adopt a literal mask, his whole identity is falsified as Satan-as-Zofloya and then falsified again by the double meanings of a verbal narrative and the excessive and, for Victoria, unreadable nature of his physical features.

Such characterization invites readings of Zofloya as a living Gothic story and as a conscious Gothic author while at the same time achieving the in-text goal of subverting Victoria’s will to the dominant manifestation of her darker impulses. Once this uncanny figure enters the scene Victoria is filled with “strange, incongruous ideas” which “even to herself, were indefinable,” and this is at least partially because of Zofloya’s physical and material sublimity, the manipulation of a lacking or dysfunctional sensibility in Victoria.[[979]](#footnote-979) Chaplin notes that Zofloya serves as Victoria’s guide “through sublime landscapes to which she would earlier have been largely indifferent,” and these landscapes are constructed both in Zofloya’s own physical body and in his creation of exterior settings and dreamscapes.[[980]](#footnote-980) The two almost always meet and/or commit their crimes while in scenes of nature – this is a purposeful staging which corresponds with Zofloya’s own characterisation and burlesques Radcliffe’s treatment of sublimity in nature. With his features like “a threatened storm,” and the emphasis on his “fiery” eyes and other such attributes, Zofloya is equated to a sublime landscape and therein performs Gothic sublimity. Physically his terrorist impulse is manifested not only in a sort of angry fire but also in “beauty” “which appeared like the sun beaming from a gloomy cloud” but which is no less horrifyingly uncanny, a manifestation of the illicit desire of the grotesque ‘other’ and the uncanny undermining of seemingly normal modes of defining attraction.[[981]](#footnote-981)

Unlike Emily St Aubert or other Gothic heroines for whom sensibility is both a potentially destructive and constructive mode of feeling, Clery notes that Victoria’s “emotions as are elemental rather than creative, drawn towards an extraordinary intensity of being, rather than channelled into the social route of aesthetic representation.”[[982]](#footnote-982) Zofloya’s performance of ‘elemental’ nature is thus particularly effective, and Victoria is prevented from constructively contextualising his narrative due to her own anti-heroine limitation. Such moments echo Lewis’s tendency to employ sublimity, as Howard suggests, as proof of the world’s natural chaotic state and as a sign of “the devil’s omniscience and omnipotence.”[[983]](#footnote-983) In fact, once Victoria has nearly completely resigned herself to Zofloya she witnesses him carefully positioned in a scene of Gothic sublimity:

Such was the scene that, as the blue lightning flashed, in terrible and stupendous confusion, struck upon her view. – Amidst these awful horrors, with folded arms and majestic air, stationed nearly opposite to her stood the towering Zofloya. To him the scene appeared congenial, and Victoria acknowledges to herself, that never before had she beheld him in his proper sphere. – Common objects seemed to shrink in his presence, the earth to tremble at the firmness of his step; now alone his native grandeur shone in its full glory, not eclipsed by, but adding to the terrible magnificence of the scene.[[984]](#footnote-984)

Chaplin notes that “Victoria’s imagination is overcome in the face of the sublime landscape and she herself submits upon awakening to the transcendentally sublime” Zofloya, who, it appears, is as much a part of the setting and surrounding aesthetic as he is a character.[[985]](#footnote-985) In this way Dacre positions Zofloya as a Gothic author whose presence defines an aesthetic space as Gothic, but since Victoria is not a rational heroine or a discerning Gothic reader she is unable to negotiate Gothic awe properly and therein structure a stable identity. Victoria is problematically susceptible to the aesthetic presented by a transgressive ‘other,’ and in a way which is dangerous rather than elevating. Chaplin notes that Victoria’s response to Zofloya “is more in keeping with that of the traditional heroine of sensibility; she is overawed by spectacle. This is further evidence that Victoria is losing her ability to rationalize and control terror,” and, unlike her fellow heroines, she does not then manage to re-establish her rational self later and re-assert master-narrative control.[[986]](#footnote-986)

By the concluding chapters of the novel Victoria has developed a comprehensive material, moral, and psychological dependence on Zofloya. He himself has taken on an eroticized master narrative and frequently reminds Victoria “that independently of *me*, thou canst not even breathe.”[[987]](#footnote-987) Indeed, as the novel progresses the text increasingly emphasises Victoria’s dark features and hermaphroditic qualities, suggesting that the two characters are becoming one, or at least that Victoria is becoming Zofloya, physically as well as spiritually.[[988]](#footnote-988) This development implies the laws of coverture as laid out in Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the laws of England* in which“by marriage […] the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband.”[[989]](#footnote-989) In eighteenth-century Gothic literature such language not only complicates gender relationships but also British law. Victoria and Zofloya’s relationship is arguably a kind of marriage, suggesting both Craciun’s argument that Dacre paints conventional marriage as a demonic pact in which “Victoria is destroyed through her submission to another” and Davison’s counter-argument that Dacre sees marriage as theoretically positive but that she is “representing the compact with the devil as a marriage.”[[990]](#footnote-990) Either argument implies Victoria’s polygamous submission to two different men (she frequently sees Berenza and the institution of marriage as entities through which “my energies are all enslaved, my powers fettered”) and a loss of identity therein, though the debate appears to be whether Dacre’s focus is on gendered or racial slavery.[[991]](#footnote-991) Craciun suggests that Victoria is already an ‘other’ for whom submission to Zofloya is the “liberation of repressed desire,” thus negating Zofloya’s individual agency.[[992]](#footnote-992) Davison, on the other hand, suggests that “marriage is an equal opportunity slaver,” undermining the gender roles of the characters and redefining the discussion as “a cautionary tale about colonial rebellion.”[[993]](#footnote-993) Given the emphasis on servant narrative performativity within the text and Victoria’s own complex re-gendering as a deviant and hermaphroditic female, application of Blackstone’s coverture laws as a reflection of Davison’s argument implies gender discourse but particularly emphasises ‘service’ as suspended identity and points to the radical power dynamic and power shift between Victoria and Zofloya. Victoria may define herself as a repressed heroine, but her ‘otherness’ and rebelliousness are nothing compared to Zofloya’s narrative performance of identity and what effectively evolves as a colonial revenge testing Gothicized anxieties about British law.

The narrator particularly notes Zofloya’s increasing power and connects it to his physical performance: “fascination dwelt in every movement of this singular being, and in nothing was it more evinced, than in the power he held over the proud heart of Victoria.”[[994]](#footnote-994) Zofloya, for his part, also desires something crucial: “*Your* friendship – *your* trust – *your* confidence – *yourself.*”[[995]](#footnote-995) Even when he is sincere the narrative is problematically dualistic, as when Zofloya states that,

indeed I admire that inflexible spirit you possess, Signora – that unyielding soul, whose thirsty vengeance is never satiated.’ Victoria turned her looks upon the Moor, to read if he spoke earnestly – and she rejoiced to behold, in the lambent fire of his ardent eyes, relentless cruelty and mischievous delight, as he had uttered the last words.[[996]](#footnote-996)

Of course, in addition to systematically dominating Victoria, Zofloya is also taking the opportunity to mock her, hinting that his “mischievous delight” is actually gleeful anticipation of Victoria’s eventual destruction. Zofloya’s verbal and non-verbal narratives are sometimes contradictory, and the fact that Zofloya often speaks with “jeering” or “scornful archness” indicates to the reader that narrative performance and narrative identity are fluid, particularly for the servant-as-author.[[997]](#footnote-997) The language of dream prophecy and elements of meta-narrative characterise his influence over her: “already have the unrestrained passions of your soul precipitated your fate, and hastened the shame that waits to overcome you; – from that shame, even yet, I offer to rescue you. – Listen to what I shall reveal. – You have dreamt, but it was no fable.”[[998]](#footnote-998) Of course Victoria’s story is, in some respects, a Gothic ‘fable’ encouraging re-readings and close readings of reality and requiring a willingness and ability to discern covert moral lessons from the text. Like any character from a ‘fable’ however, Victoria cannot read her own story until it is too late to escape the consequences.

Victoria is almost completely under the spell of a narrative which performs the Gothic aesthetic while restructuring the social restraints of the servant-master dynamic. Victoria complains that “thy converse to me is unintelligible” and that she is being prevented from seeing and realising the true effect of the situations and relationships in which she is involved. Zofloya in turn confirms that “it will not *always* be so,” the emphasis again alerting the reader to doubling in Zofloya’s narrative and the obvious suggestion that the plot will end in a ‘big reveal.’[[999]](#footnote-999) In Victoria’s mind, and indeed with the seeming agreement of the omniscient narrator,

such powerful fascination dwelt around him, that she felt incapable of withdrawing from his arms; yet ashamed, (for Victoria was still proud) and blushing at her feelings, when she remembered that Zofloya, however he appeared, was but a menial slave, and as such alone had originally become known to her – she sought but sought vainly, to repress them.[[1000]](#footnote-1000)

The phantom system of socio-moral restraint highlights her inappropriate desire for a “menial slave” (and all the racial and class-specific cultural assumptions that classification entails), but is ultimately powerless to stop either Victoria or Zofloya. No sooner does Victoria see “that beautiful and majestic visage, that towering and graceful form, than all thought of his inferiority vanished, and the ravished sense, spurning at the calumnious idea, confessed him a being of superior order.”[[1001]](#footnote-1001) This disruption of normal delineations of rank and position clearly presupposes the utter subversion, and indeed the practical worthlessness, of formerly normalized distinctions. Zofloya’s later assertion that “am I not thy equal? – Ay thy superior! – proud girl, to suppose that the Moor, Zofloya, is a slave in mind,” separates the interior identity from the subjugated body and the social codes which ostensibly define it.[[1002]](#footnote-1002) Such discourse plunges the narrative dialectic headlong into a state of carnivalesque and grotesque re-imaginings, one in which subversive identity is not only *asserted* but also *true*. Zofloya is thus ‘performing’ service’ – his narrative is a superficial fulfilment of dependency while underneath a dangerous equality presupposes the breakdown of all systems of social regulation. Victoria’s resistance is in vain: when she struggles “a numbing torpor began to creep over her as before; she essayed to conquer it, though contrary to the direction of Zofloya; and her incapacity to do so conveyed a bitter pang to her heart, while she felt that she was no longer mistress over herself or her faculties.”[[1003]](#footnote-1003) This is partially because of Zofloya and partially because Zofloya has transformed Victoria into an ‘other.’

Victoria, with her “almost subjugated heart” attempts too late to probe deeper into the mind of her new travelling companion and ‘master’:

‘But tell me at least thy thoughts, I entreat thee.’

‘*My* thoughts!’ said the Moor with a serious air, and looking gloomily upon Victoria.

‘Yes – thou takest, methinks, Zofloya, no part in the common occurrences of life – what are thy thoughts?’

‘Destruction!’ – he returned in a terrible voice.

Victoria involuntarily shuddered –

‘True,’ – he pursued – ‘I take no part in the common occurrences of life – *common* occurrences do not interest me. – The dreadful, the terrific, the surprising alone of nature, have power to call me forth, – nor even in them do I mix, unless invited or allured!’[[1004]](#footnote-1004)

Of course, servant narrators are usually preoccupied with the “common occurrences of life” and Zofloya is distinguishing himself by clearly self-identifying as a Gothic author, one who only really has a place in “the dreadful, the terrific, the surprising” spaces. Even in this framework, however, Zofloya suggests service and commercial exchange, stressing that he must be “invited or allured” before he takes an active part. He acts both as the master who requires evidence of service from others and the servant whose agency is dependent on the commands of a master. Victoria is given one last chance to recognize the truth of the servant-figure’s narrative, a chance that comes, fittingly, as a dream-vision from her “good genius” who states that Zofloya “is not what he seems.”[[1005]](#footnote-1005) Again the focus is on the physical attributes, the unspoken narrative of a character, as “Victoria saw beneath the feet of the resplendent vision, the moor Zofloya – he lay prostrate – stripped of his gaudy habiliments, and appearing monstrous and deformed! – Still she recognized him for Zofloya.”[[1006]](#footnote-1006) Whatever attempt at socio-moral realignment this recognition may inspire, however, it is clearly too late. Zofloya interrupts and asserts that “You are mine, I have gained you, and lose you not I neither can nor will,” while Victoria, deprived of narrative agency “replied not, her thoughts were confused respecting the Moor, and again a sentiment of fear predominated over every other sensation.”[[1007]](#footnote-1007)

The servant-turned-demon narrative follows the plot to the end, concluding in a final reveal in which Zofloya shows his true self and the consequences of Victoria’s submission to his will:

‘Behold me as I am! – no longer that which I appeared to be, but the sworn enemy of all created nature, by men called – SATAN! – ‘Tis I that lay in wait for frail humanity – but rare, too rarely it is, that by allurement or temptation, I seduce them to my toils! – Few venture far as thou hast ventured in the alarming oaths of sin – thy loose and evil thoughts first pointed thee out to my keen, my searching view, and attracted me towards thee, in the eager hope of prey! – Yes, *I* it was, that under semblance of the Moorish slave (supposed the recovered favourite of Henriquez) – appeared to thee first in thy dreams, luring thee to attempt the completion of thy wildest wishes! – I found thee, oh! Of most exquisite willingness, and yielding readily to all my temptations! – But what hast thou gained? for I have deceived thee throughout; – yet hast though permitted thyself to be led along! – thou hast damned thy soul with unnumbered crimes, rendering thyself, by each, more fully mine.’[[1008]](#footnote-1008)

The narrative emphasis no longer focuses on Victoria’s identity but rather on Zofloya’s “I,” what “I am” rather than “that which I appeared to be,” and that it was “*I*” acting “under the semblance of the Moorish slave.” The disparity between actual and falsified identity suddenly makes it clear that Victoria and the reader have been engaging with a performance (Victoria whole-heartedly, the audience with a sly self-awareness) presented by a powerful actor-narrator capable of manipulating the spoken word and physical signifiers of aesthetic. The final pages of *Zofloya* present a parodic version of Peter and Adeline’s journey in Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest* ending in destruction rather than social re-integration. In a dramatic inversion, Victoria’s own identity is destroyed as Zofloya’s gains primacy. The novel concludes with Victoria still under Zofloya / Satan’s control: “as she fell, his loud demoniac laugh, his yells of triumph, echoed in her ears, and a mangled corse, she was received into the foaming waters below!”[[1009]](#footnote-1009) Even the final sentence reasserts Zofloya’s verbal power as it affects Victoria’s identity. She is still listening to his voice, his triumphant narrative, as it “echoed in her ears” and she reaches her destination (the end of her life and the end of the novel) a “mangled” being rather than a fully intact physical or narrative body, consumed by the “foaming waters.”

If the narrator of *Zofloya* is “of the devil’s party” and if the story may be at least partially considered a tract on education and morality, then Zofloya is clearly acting as an authorial metonym by serving as an embodied state of moral ambiguity and as an agent of Gothic aesthetic. Lewis similarly employs the servant narrator in order to redefine the parameters of the Gothic genre and complicate identity as “*fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.”[[1010]](#footnote-1010) Interestingly, Dacre manages to subvert even that goal within her text – again both innocent and guilty alike are punished and, as in Lewis, a “rational or moral order” is implied only to be denied. As a Gothic novelist and as a moral “historian” Dacre seeks to explore the genre through the employment of an amoral and active authorial servant. The result is that, as Victoria tells Zofloya, “your words, your looks, terrify and confound me,” while the reader self-consciously explores both terror and confusion as constructed in Gothic narrative.[[1011]](#footnote-1011) Lewis and Dacre represent a shift in the genre towards an ostensibly more revealing yet ultimately more ambiguous narrative style. As such their employment of servant narrative is more comprehensively a performance, a theatrical staging of a Gothic story and a more confident assertion of authorial agency. These servants influence the actual Gothic universe, and moreover seem to understand how and why they do it. The connection between the servant narrator and broader understandings of authors and authorship suggests a primacy of the Gothic servant narrative voice and calls attention to those aspects of Gothic narrative which structuralize Gothic identity and genre.

**Conclusion**

**Resurrecting the Gothic Servant**

The character of Annette, a talkative waiting-maid, is much worn […]

- Anon. [Samuel Taylor Coleridge], “Review: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*,” (1794)[[1012]](#footnote-1012)

In 1794 an anonymous review (most likely penned by Samuel Taylor Coleridge) expressed scepticism about the continued potency of the servant “character” in literature as embodied in Ann Radcliffe’s “Annette, a talkative waiting-maid.” Such characters were apparently already so “worn” for some critics by the 1790s that they appeared to function merely as a familiar cliché within a Romantic formula. Even positive reviews (both in the eighteenth century and today) of Radcliffe’s work and the writings of other Gothic authors categorise most instances of servant activity and speech within the texts as unoriginal and clumsy, if indeed they mention servant characters at all. However, in 1867 French author Paul Féval recast a young Ann Radcliffe as a character in his novel *La Ville-Vampire* (*Vampire City*). A self-reflexive, semi-satirical examination of Radcliffe’s writing style and the Gothic genre as both a universal and national form, *La Ville-Vampire* is an insightful piece of Gothic meta-fiction which pointedly includes several servants as pseudo-heroes and contains a larger discourse on service and the subversion of self. At one point Féval describes a scene where the irrepressible Irish manservant Merry Bones fights off the inhabitants of the dreaded Vampire City. Féval’s narrator tellingly remarks that “unfortunately, there was no one to enjoy that amazing spectacle: a simple domestic servant, keeping at bay a riot composed of all the vampires on Earth, driven to the utmost extreme by their fury.”[[1013]](#footnote-1013) At a climactic moment in the novel the “simple” servant is forced to contend with a flood of supernatural horror, yet, despite being an “amazing spectacle,” no other character witnesses the scene. Since the story of Merry Bones’ escape is ambiguously framed, Féval was perhaps manipulating perceptions of Gothic excess in his descriptions in order to highlight the relationship between author and subject. Regardless, this passage, despite its placement as a retroactive incorporation and re-examination of Gothic tropes, points to the nature of servant narrative within Gothic fiction. Servant characters are far from “worn” even in the later nineteenth century – in fact they consistently remain capable of engaging in remarkable ways with all manner of worldly and otherworldly forces within the Gothic novel.

While the narrating and performing servant goes as far back as early modern texts (and perhaps even further) the appropriation and development of such characters as complex literary devices in the early Gothic novel soon established servant narrative as a familiar trope in fiction, facilitating new dialectic approaches in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Arguably the early Gothic genre is a climactic moment within the literary history of the servant character, and servant narrative continued to define Gothic systems of knowing and contextualising individual and political identity well into the 1810s and 1820s. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* (1818), James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), and numerous novels by Sir Walter Scott, particularly his novel *Redgauntlet* (1824), were published at what is critically considered the end of the first Gothic wave and well before the Victorian Gothic revival. These texts incorporate many of the tropes crucial to the genre. However, positioned in a post-Waterloo and post-Peterloo political landscape (Shelley’s work was first published before the 1819 Peterloo Massacre but was republished in a second edition in 1831) and responding to the looming threat of creative stagnation within the Gothic genre, the authors of these works also developed the servant’s narrative in ways unique to their own goals. In these novels a political impulse is particularly noticeable and the servant’s role is more explicitly outward facing and social (as opposed to domestic and psychological/spiritual). Identity and genre take on new meanings and servant narrative adjusts its performance to conform to these discourses. Within these texts it becomes apparent that servant narrative continued to develop as an important aspect of the Gothic genre well beyond the efforts of the earliest Gothic authors.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is a formative Gothic text which, while still considered a ‘Gothic’ novel, bent genre boundaries as one of the first works of science fiction and horror fiction. Within *Frankenstein*’s negotiations of identity and self-creation discourses of service take on a notable political potency. Gender and class is a source of anxiety in both the original 1818 edition and particularly in the reworked 1831 edition, and the servant character’s narrative, or lack thereof, develops within the text as a space in which socio-moral disparity is highlighted. The primary servant in Shelley’s text is a female servant in the Frankenstein household in the tradition of a Bianca or an Annette. However, she is framed, both in her narrative and in the denial of her narrative, as a double for other female characters and as a victim of Victor Frankenstein, his Creation, and the larger social body. Justine Moritz reflects the problematic identities of her masters through her mostly passive role as an object to be desired, exploited, or destroyed rather than through her individualistic insight into a psychological self. The 1831 edition emphasised Justine’s passivity and Victor’s female cousin Elizabeth Lavenza’s parallel identity as an object, “a promised gift” who Victor views as “a possession.”[[1014]](#footnote-1014) This position is further complicated by Elizabeth’s ambiguous social background – in spite of her noble birth her upbringing highlights her orphan status and her lack of social support.[[1015]](#footnote-1015) Elizabeth and Justine share similar backgrounds and join the Frankenstein family in similar ways, yet Justine occupies the place of a servant and Elizabeth is positioned as Victor’s “pretty toy” and future bride.[[1016]](#footnote-1016) Their social difference, while defensible, is somewhat arbitrarily and artificially prescribed, and throughout the text their roles as interchangeable victims (along with the Creature’s aborted ‘bride’) of both Creature and Creator problematize their uncertain social status, their gender, and their unstable narrative roles.

As Elizabeth / Justine and Victor / the Creature’s narratives and identities are doubled and conflated within the text, both pairs play out patterns of masculine desire and feminine un-identity which reflect gendered and social disparity. Elements of sexual transgression and social status act as serious signifiers of identity within these exchanges, expanding on anxieties about the interdependency of servant-master relationships. Elizabeth is problematically positioned in Victor’s mind, and the implications of their relationship are reflected in the Creature’s interactions with Justine. Justine, while caring for Victor’s younger brother William, is observed, objectified, and eventually framed for William’s murder by the misanthropic Creature. The Creature observes Justine in the 1818 edition of the text as she is passing by his hiding place and identifies her as “one whose smiles are bestowed on all but me; she shall not escape.”[[1017]](#footnote-1017) In the later edition the passage is expanded – Justine is rendered even more passive as the Creature finds her sleeping, approaching her to whisper, in a kind of self-conscious parody of romance, that “thy lover is near.”[[1018]](#footnote-1018) Justine stirs but does not verbally respond, and in the absence of an actual narrative the Creature projects a response onto her. Once again a lack of explicit narrative facilitates the negotiation of Gothic identity, reflecting a tradition going all the way back to the servant heralding Conrad’s demise in Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*. In this instance, however, the stakes are decidedly different and the servant herself takes on new meaning within the construction of a narrative. The Creature assumes Justine would reject him utterly and, in a rage, transforms her into a stand-in for all womankind: “The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me – not I, but she shall suffer: the murder I have committed because I am for ever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime had its source in her: be hers the punishment!”[[1019]](#footnote-1019) If, as Anca Vlasopolos suggests, the Monster “can be seen as Victor’s double, who performs the deeds Victor desires but is unable to carry out,” then the Monster’s mental passion play with the unconscious Justine and his subsequent punishment of her suggests Victor’s own transgressive desire for a social ‘other’ (either Justine or Elizabeth) and his corresponding impulse to destroy when desire is denied or problematized.[[1020]](#footnote-1020) Indeed, Elizabeth notes in a letter to Victor that Justine “was a great favourite of yours” (notwithstanding textual evidence that Victor had more or less forgotten about her at several points), suggesting the potential transgression of social and sexual boundaries within Justine and Victor’s relationship.[[1021]](#footnote-1021) Justine, for her part, “was the most grateful little creature in the world,” and ostensibly suitably submissive in a master-servant exchange.[[1022]](#footnote-1022)

Justine thus echoes other servant characters in the early Gothic genre, figures whose narratives are complicated by the stereotypes imposed upon them and the methods of control used to moderate their voices. She is both a reflection of earlier patterns of servant-master exchange and a prototype of servant characters throughout Victorian fiction. Within the text she transforms into a stand-in disenfranchised female against whom the Creature can perform his own discourse. Within her own attempts to perform narrative, however, Justine’s source of persecution is primarily a broader social one, albeit one manipulated by the Creature. She is accused, due to false evidence planted on her by the Creature, of the murder of Victor’s younger brother. She is systematically condemned by both the court system and the clergymen in charge of her moral well-being because the physical evidence contradicts her verbal narrative. The unexplained presence of a stolen locket is more than enough to completely undermine Justine’s identity in the eyes of her peers: when the court asks for character references, “several witnesses were called, who had known her for many years, and the spoke well of her; but fear, and hatred of the crime of which they supposed her guilty, rendered them timorous, and unwilling to come forward.”[[1023]](#footnote-1023) Justine’s comment that “I commit my cause to the justice of my judges, yet I see no room for hope,” is obviously pessimistic, but also suggests that Justine sees no alternative given the evidence and society’s attitudes towards the transgressive servant.[[1024]](#footnote-1024) She accepts her re-definition under law and religion by eventually confessing to a crime she did not commit. Only Elizabeth comes forward to defend Justine (and to a certain extent herself), but in this Justine is doubly damned for “blackest ingratitude” as a servant who had offended her worthy employers, one of whom then actively defends her.[[1025]](#footnote-1025) Shelley acknowledges her debt to her father William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* in this – Caleb’s primary crime, according to social opinion, is a lack of gratitude towards his master rather than his alleged attempts to rob him.[[1026]](#footnote-1026) Justine is similarly transformed from “the most grateful creature in the world” to a dangerously disloyal servant. This narrative falsification is particularly upsetting for her double, Elizabeth, and also implies that Justine’s immortal soul is endangered within a socio-legal and moral re-imagining: “I did confess; but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins.”[[1027]](#footnote-1027)

Within this battle with social forces, Justine’s entire identity is overturned and she is widely condemned. Once ‘saving’ Justine becomes impossible Justine’s situation, and thus her narrative person, becomes a stage on which Elizabeth can perform political discourse (again reflecting Godwin’s prerogatives):

Yet heaven bless thee, my dearest Justine, with resignation, and a confidence elevated beyond this world. Oh! how I hate its shews and mockeries! when one creature is murdered, another is immediately deprived of life in a slow torturing manner; then the executioners, their hands yet reeking with the blood of innocence, believe that they have done a great deed. They call this *retribution*. Hateful name![[1028]](#footnote-1028)

Justine’s response is limited to a languid smile and the ambiguous rejection of what Justine identifies as Elizabeth’s sin of despair – “I must not learn the lesson that you would teach me.”[[1029]](#footnote-1029) In the 1831 edition the passage is expanded significantly and Justine philosophizes that God “gives me courage to endure the worst. I leave a sad and bitter world; and if you remember me, and think of me as of one unjustly condemned, I am resigned to the fate awaiting me.”[[1030]](#footnote-1030) This provides a slightly more optimistic view that Justine’s social identity may be retroactively rehabilitated through Elizabeth's positive remembrance (rather than Justine’s active self-fashioning) and that her soul is redeemed by her decision to “submit in patience to the will of Heaven!”[[1031]](#footnote-1031) The original text limits Justine’s verbal narrative to suggest ambiguity about her ultimate social fate and the fate of her soul. The later edition allows Justine more words and thus ostensibly more narrative control, but paradoxically undermines the subversive implications of Justine’s persecution by citing her tacit approbation of her fate and her faith in a larger theological discourse.

Justine’s narrative is destabilised by her false confession and by her marginalisation within Victor’s first person re-telling. However, Frankenstein’s narrative authority (as well as Elizabeth’s initial adherence to the idea of a benevolent patriarchy) is also undermined by Justine’s passive performance of injustice. Justine’s narrative is rejected while the Creature’s fraud, the false arrangement of physical evidence, is accepted by the social body and thus makes a mockery of social authority. Shelley initially frames Justine’s position within Elizabeth’s naive critique of national cultures and her tacit support of patriarchal hegemony, again suggesting the politicized irony of *Caleb Williams*: “A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France and England. Justine, thus received in our family, learned the duties of a servant; a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include the idea of ignorance, and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being.”[[1032]](#footnote-1032) This description obviously becomes problematic when Justine is eventually sacrificed to her master’s moral cowardice, the brutal retribution of the justice system, and destructive male desire. In fact, her name is likely an oblique reference to that other troubling paragon of virtue found in *Justine, or the Misfortune of Virtue* (1791) by the Marquis de Sade, another ‘Justine’ who is similarly violated by a series of corrupt (though philosophical) authority figures and who is also plagued by false accusations of criminality within a corrupt social system.[[1033]](#footnote-1033) Moreover, as the character who will ultimately suffer a parallel fate, though notably without the added pressures of social condemnation, Elizabeth becomes a narrative surrogate who, after Justine is hanged, is re-incorporated passively into Victor’s narrative as he “turned to contemplate the deep and voiceless grief of my Elizabeth” and resumes his narrative primacy.[[1034]](#footnote-1034) In Justine’s narrative and in her pervasive narrative absence she is both an object and an individual whose objectification devalues the system which represses her. Her stark destruction provides a contrast of her own potential and Victor’s specific transgression: “Justine also was a girl of merit, and possessed qualities which promised to render her life happy: now all was to be obliterated in an ignominious grave; and I the cause!”[[1035]](#footnote-1035) Thus the servant narrative voice is re-worked several times in *Frankenstein* in order to engage with political or moral themes, exploiting discourses of nationalistic and social identity to illustrate destructive gender relationships and political repression. Shelley’s political overtones reflect a new direction in early Gothic literature in a post-Revolution and post-Napoleonic world.

The 1820s and 1830s saw a significant shift in Gothic literature (many consider it the end of the early Gothic genre) as ‘romance’ came to redefine itself as a form. In spite of the blurring of generic boundaries, however, servant narratives remained a crucial component for constructing anxieties and interrogating identity within Gothic and pseudo-Gothic texts. While Sir Walter Scott’s novels are typically categorized as historical romance, he clearly demonstrated a critical interest in the mechanics of the Gothic genre and its potential as a narrative form, as evidenced in his evaluations of Radcliffe and other Gothic authors. Scott also openly included elements of Gothic narrative in several of his novels, including ‘Wandering Willy’s Tale’ in his work *Redgauntlet* (1824). Wandering Willie is not a servant in the formal sense but his rejection of the discourses of service paradoxically calls attention to the means through which such discourses complicate a particularly Gothic narrative. Willie is “angrily” dismissive of his female companion’s exhortations to “Stay in a house and play to the gentles! – strike up when my leddy pleases, and lay down when my lord bids! Na, na, that’s nae life for Willie.”[[1036]](#footnote-1036) Willie figures into the novel’s examination of Jacobite politics but also reflects a more universal impulse towards rebellion within servant and working-class narratives. In keeping with this impulse to speak in free opposition of the “gentles” and their attempts to subvert rebellious narrative, ‘Wandering Willie’s Tale’ rejects the role of submissive servant and also undermines the sanctity of the nobility and their domestic space. His story even complicates the protagonist’s (and author’s) attempts to incorporate it into the main narrative, and is presented as an independent inset in the novel proper, suggesting the persistence of rebellious potentiality inherent to working class and servant narratives. However, the framework of Willie’s tale is arguably at least partially an attempt to reduce the revolutionary principle into what Nicola Watson calls “historiographical knick-knacks,” a strategy of conservative political ideology demonstrated in Scott’s ‘re-imprisonment’ (to further paraphrase Watson) of narratives of a political or folkloric history.[[1037]](#footnote-1037) Willie’s story, while a stand-alone socio-cultural piece, is ultimately, like Shelley’s Justine, subsumed into a subjective and personal ‘master’ narrative. This suggests a reworking of anxieties about volitional servitude and the primacy of counter-narratives, illuminating similarities and differences in narrative strategies and lower-class characters in this later reimagining of the Gothic.

In his tale Willie’s grandfather, Stephen ‘Steenie’ Steenson, is (more or less accidentally) wronged by the aristocratic Redgauntlet family, his landlords and the (not wholly unsympathetic) antagonists in the larger text. As a result, Steenie must visit a recently deceased Redgauntlet laird in Hell in order to claim a receipt of payment that will prove his honesty. As in Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela,* Steenie’s insistence that “I am an honest man” defines a working-class narrative against a transgressive or persecuting aristocratic impulse.[[1038]](#footnote-1038) In fact, Steenie proves himself willing to go, literally, to Hell and back to establish his identity as an ‘honest’ servant, undergoing his own kind of Gothic trial as well as gaining insight into a supernatural space. After a brief conversation with a mysterious and most likely other-worldly character, Steenie winds up in an underworld version of Redgauntlet Castle, a space filled with demonic revelry and debauchery. Redgauntlet and members of “many a noble family” are placed in this Hell-scape within a problematic working-class narrative.[[1039]](#footnote-1039) This implies both/either insight into the corruption of the aristocracy and/or the projection of rebellious feelings by a ‘wronged’ class onto their social betters – the younger, living Redgauntlet heir even accuses Steenie of taking “advantage of some malicious reports concerning things in this family” and the old laird’s troubling death (which Steenie did in fact witness) in order to gain a profit.[[1040]](#footnote-1040) It becomes clear through Willie’s narrative that the Redgauntlet family are widely considered Hell-bound pseudo-criminals who are only barely ‘passing’ as acceptable aristocrats and landlords within this context. This idea has troubling implications for the legitimacy of the social structure, both in Steenie’s time and later in the protagonist Darsie Latimer’s reaction to Willie’s recreation and re-telling of this ‘ghost story.’ Moreover, Hell itself is depicted as doubled image of Redgauntlet Castle, suggesting an uncanny domestic space and a Gothic, almost Radcliffean re-imagining of Burke and Wollstonecraft’s discussion of an “ancient castle, built in barbarous ages, of Gothic materials” as a metaphor for a corrupted political system.[[1041]](#footnote-1041)

Redgauntlet’s own servant, Dougal MacCallum, who died not long after his master, is also present in Hell and tellingly warns Steenie not to eat or drink or otherwise commit himself to anything while in the castle, providing Steenie (and the reader) with a dialectic method for spiritual and material survival. Dougal’s presence suggests the inherent co-dependency between ‘servant’ and ‘master’ identities, though Steenie tellingly refuses, as Redgauntlet demands, “to pay your master the homage that you owe me for my protection” by referring himself “to God’s pleasure, and not to yours (Redgauntlet’s).”[[1042]](#footnote-1042) Early modern debates about the autonomous moral identity of the servant and Protestant-Whig identity within a social exchange, present in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* or *Othello*, among others, are still manipulated as a source of dread in Scott’s work.[[1043]](#footnote-1043) Scott contrasts the servant who follows his master to Hell and the tenant who, along with his descendants, comes to reject submission to the “gentles.” Both Dougal and Steenie’s responses echo an anxiety present in most servant narratives – social superiority is not necessarily an indication of moral superiority, and literal and figurative ‘supernatural’ forces are equally important regardless of social status. Moreover, the preservation of ‘other’ narratives – Dougal and Steenie’s stories or verbal statements incorporated within Willie’s own highly political idiom – place servant narratives (from both living and dead servants) on equal if not greater footing with their social ‘betters.’

Of course the narrative itself suggests the rustic and subjective ‘old wives tales’ which follow the traditional servant narrative pattern. Scott’s interest in Scottish oral traditions and political histories no doubt influenced his stylistic choices, as did his admiration for Ann Radcliffe and the Gothic genre. While he incorporates the kind of narrative expression that could be found in Walpole or Radcliffe, however, his references are anchored in a specific historical and political context and a Scottish oral tradition. He sought to distance himself, at least in his own mind, from accusations that he imitated Radcliffe, writing in his journal regarding his work *Woodstock, or The Cavalier* (1826)that “my object is not to excite fear of supernatural things in my reader but to show the effect of such fear upon the agents in the story.”[[1044]](#footnote-1044) In this way Scott at least partially summarises the paradox of servant narrative in the Gothic, particularly as such narratives suggest a metonymic or meta-textual goal. Servant narratives are often dismissed for being too uncouth or chaotic to inspire real terror in the reader, but terror, fascination, and wonder is inspired in the “agents” and audience within the story. Willie and Steenie’s reactions (and the reactions of those to whom they tell the story) show an engagement with fear (though perhaps fear of different things) which provides a psychological and historical context for material realities. Moreover, Willie and protagonist Darsie Latimer’s reactions carry their own weight within the text proper, particularly given Darsie’s later persecution at the hands of Redgauntlet and his own quest for an identity. Scott’s attempt to place servant and working-class narrative in an easily categorised collection of “historiographical knick-knacks” does not deny the possibility that Scott is also using the traditional Gothic form and Gothic servant narrative in order to explore emotional “effect” in literature.[[1045]](#footnote-1045) If anything, such techniques imply a regularized and systematic examination of narrative potentiality and, in spite of Scott’s overall conservatism, a lingering ambiguity in ‘Wandering Willie’s Tale’ which defies easy codification and bespeaks the continued innovation of common tropes within the Gothic genre.

Resisting a conservative national narrative, James Hogg employed servant narratives to construct a proto-post-modern or proto-meta-modern re-evaluation of the limits of genre in his novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. While not widely appreciated when first released, Hogg’s work foreshadows new movements in the Gothic and illuminates the servant’s evolving role therein. The novel reflects the structures of the Gothic genre while also redefining its boundaries within the style of found manuscripts and oral folklore, constructing a story through, as Nicola Watson argues, “solipsistic, fragmentary, and determinedly illegible” counter-fictions which “self-consciously pushed sentimental paradigms to their furthest extreme in order to fashion revolutionary subjectivities.”[[1046]](#footnote-1046) As in Shelley and Scott’s work servant narratives are couched in this novel in a highly subjective narrative, often written in first-person. However, much more so than other texts, servant narratives in Hogg’s work defy attempts to fit them comfortably within a ‘master’ or protagonist narrative precisely because the protagonist’s narrative and the editorial framework of the novel is already overtly unstable. Servant narratives are presented by characters Bessie Gilles, John Barnet, and Samuel Scrape in Hogg’s novel both in the relatively authoritative ‘Editor’s Narrative,’ which introduces the background of the tale, and in the highly subjective narrative of Robert Wringhim, the ‘justified sinner’ himself. Arguably these narratives demonstrate working-class independence echoing the novels of Radcliffe or Lewis and are much more extensive than Justine’s limited expressions in Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Discourses of identity connected to this Gothic tradition of ambiguous, unruly servants are reflected in the narrative fragments of a cyclical novel that is continuously collapsing and rebuilding itself – in this text the events and identities depicted therein resist definition at the precise moments when the reader believes they are successfully defined. Servant narratives in the novel point to the evolving futility of such attempts to ‘read’ and ‘understand’, as well as illuminating the methodologies, reflective of the oral narratives of the travelling bard, of a working-class dialectic. Within this pattern, servants both complicate and clarify personal and social identity (and the space between the two) in important ways.

*The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* divides itself into ambiguous depictions of, in the first part, the biographical background and a subsequent murder mystery and, in the second part, a religious fanatic’s moral decline and seduction by a demonic ‘other’. Within both lines of inquiry servants play an important role, though throughout the novel prominent characters (servants included) in the Editor’s Narrative are often absent or marginalized in the Sinner’s Narrative, and vice versa. In the Editor’s Narrative the character who is instrumental in bringing the deviant Robert Wringhim to justice is superficially identified as a ‘servant’ – Miss Arabella Logan enters the household of the Colwan family as a ‘housekeeper’ and the elder George Cowan’s mistress, and eventually develops as a surrogate mother for the family’s eldest son, George. Service becomes an alibi for an extra-marital affair, yet Miss Logan is also both a mother-figure and a kind of detective-protagonist within the Editor’s Narrative, a socially-ambiguous entity who ultimately connects the dots and discovers George’s murderers. Logan, a prostitute-witness named Arabella Bell Calvert, and Logan’s maid Bessie are the primary detectives in the opening Editor’s Narrative (the detectives / readers at the text’s conclusion are male members of the contemporary literary scene) and responsible for collecting material evidence for Wringhim’s socio-judicial condemnation. Wringhim’s Narrative, in contrast, focuses rather on the narratives of male servants who illuminate his spiritual hypocrisy. Wringhim’s misogyny notwithstanding, female servants in the Editor’s Narrative avenge their lost domestic space. Male figures in Wringhim’s narrative fulfil a different purpose more relevant to Wringhim’s navigation of his own moral identity.

Bessie Gillies, Miss Logan’s housemaid, functions in the Editor’s Narrative as the epitome of the “talkative waiting-maid” of earlier Gothic texts. In order to aid her mistress, who is trying to get Bell Calvert, a witness to George’s murder, freed, Bessie uses her specific idiom to manipulate the court of law, exploiting the concepts of oaths and truth as a means of undermining the nature of ‘knowing.’ Calvert had in fact serendipitously robbed Logan – without committing perjury, itself a sin and a violation of narrative legitimacy, Miss Logan and Bessie are forced to deny ownership and/or knowledge of ownership of certain recovered articles in order to free her. Material grave goods are employed in the final Editor’s narrative at the end of the text as a means of discoursing on the textual body (the mummified body with which the rediscovered ‘Memoirs’ are found), while in this instance physical items, some of them bearing the marks of Arabella Logan’s own identity, her initials, must be rejected so that a different story may be told. As a means of avoiding detection within the courtroom Bessie“answered in so flippant and fearless a way that the auditors were much amused,” managing to undermine social systems through her employment of bathos while avoiding very serious material consequences (and also suggesting the literary tradition of ‘comic’ servant narratives).[[1047]](#footnote-1047) She also calls attention to ‘doubling’ within the text. When asked to identify one of her mistress’s stolen gowns, Bessie responds:

‘I hae seen ane very like it.’

‘Could you not swear that gown was your mistress’s once?’

‘No, unless I saw her hae’t on, an’ kend that she had paid for’t. I am very scrupulous about an oath. *Like* is an ill mark. Sae ill indeed that I wad hardly swear to anything.’

‘But you say that gown is *very like* one your mistress used to wear.’

‘I never said sic a thing. It is like one I hae seen her haw out airing on the hay raip I’ the back green. It is very like ane I hae seen Mrs. Bulter in the Grass Market wearing too: I rather think it is the same. Bless you, sir, I wadna swear to my ain forefinger if it had been as lang out o’ my sight as’ brought in an’ laid on that table.’

‘Perhaps you are not aware, girl, that this scrupulousness of yours is likely to thwart the purposed of justice, and bereave your mistress of property to the amount of a thousand merks.’ (*From the Judge.*)

‘I anna help that, my lord: that’s her look-out. For my part, I am resolved to keep a clear conscience, till I be married, at any rate.’[[1048]](#footnote-1048)

The unknowableness of identity within a subjective text is asserted in Bessie’s counter-examination of the judicial formula. As a parallel, Robert Wringhim doubles with the demonic ‘other’ Gil-Martin but also doubles with and therein undermines other characters and the author himself (or, assuming multiple and subjective authorships within the various layers of the Editor’s Narrative, ‘themselves’), collapsing literary authority. As such Bessie prefaces this development by refusing to admit that things are or are not what she is told they are – she rather suggests the ambiguity of a subject encompassing *no* identity and *all* or *multiple* identities simultaneously. “Like” is in fact something of an “ill mark,” particularly when an object, as Bessie describes it, superficially “is like ane I hae seen” in multiple places and as products of several individual identities (either / both Miss Logan or / and Mrs. Butler). Her acknowledgment of the complex multiplicity of identity within the text and her refusal to perjure or otherwise modify her narrative to impose meaning to something so unstable is a profound reflection of a literary work which ultimately denies a single meaning or straightforward interpretation.

Bessie’s ambivalence towards established identity is echoed later in Robert Wringhim’s narrative by the character John Barnet, a servant to the elder Wringhim. Again, due to the overt subjectivity and inconsistency of Wringhim’s narrative, readings of his text are doubly problematic. However, Wringhim’s editorializing commentary on Barnet’s words does not negate their impact. Wringhim’s response rather suggests that Barnet is actually being employed to vocalize the editor / Hogg’s opinions and serve as an authorial metonym. His exchange with the zealous Calvinist minister Robert Wringhim (the elder) over the possibility of Wringhim having fathered young Robert and, by extension, having hypocritically undermined his own moral code, is in keeping with the Gothic servant’s didactic style:

‘I hope there is nothing personal under that remark, John?’

‘Gin the bannet fits ony body’s head, they’re unco welcome to it, sir, for me.’

‘John, I do not approve of these innuendoes. You have an arch malicious manner of vending your aphorisms, which men of the world are too apt to read the wrong way, for your dark hints are sure to have *one* very bad meaning.’

‘Hout na, sir, it’s only bad folks think sae. They find ma bits o’ gibes come hame to their hearts wi’ a kind o’ yerk, an’ that gars them wince.’[[1049]](#footnote-1049)

Barnet appears to understand the Wringhims’ religious and personal hypocrisy, and both asserts and denies a narrative which no doubt reflects the reader and author’s opinions. He describes narrative as a passive act which takes on complex meaning when the auditor/reader responds to it, whether “bit o’ gibes come hame” or not. When Barnet cannot equivocate his way out of direct impertinence he is fired by the elder Robert Wringhim and responds in a suitably belligerent manner which emphasises notions of voluntary service and individual liberty: “Auld John may dee a beggar in a hay barn, or at the back of a dike, but he sall aye be master o’ his ain thoughts an’ gie them vent or no, as he likes.”[[1050]](#footnote-1050) Of course, many in the novel, Robert included, are not masters of their own thoughts, and Barnet’s words suggest that servant rebellion is just one fragmentary part of a larger ambiguity.

Barnet’s further mediation between the younger Wringhim and his schoolmate and antagonist / victim M’Gill in a later episode is particularly relevant, especially since the name ‘M’Gill’ suggests the name adapted by ‘Gil-Martin’ later in the text and since Wringhim’s attempts to ruin M’Gill’s life foreshadow his future crimes and attitudes towards others. M’Gill, after a troubling incident in which Wringhim contrives to get him expelled from school on a false accusation, physically attacks Wringhim. Wringhim’s unreliability and tendency to lie is foreshadowed in this incident, as is his general cowardice. Barnet sees the altercation from a distance and breaks up the fight, at which point M’Gill defends himself by stating that Robert Wringhim is a liar. Barnet responds: “I ken he’s a’ that ye say, an’ mair, my man.’ quoth John. ‘But am I sure that ye’re no as bad, an’ waur? It says nae muckle for ony o’ ye to be tearing like tikes at one anither here.”[[1051]](#footnote-1051) This is one of the few episodes from Robert’s childhood that he describes in his narrative, albeit in a subjective manner which attempts to excuse some of his cowardly and amoral attributes. However, Barnet’s strange justice both acknowledges Robert’s identity and leaves M’Gill’s own characterization open-ended. In his fairness he judges M’Gill by his actions rather than by Barnet’s own dislike of Robert, undermining theories of Calvinist predestination which make up Wringhim’s core tenets of faith and instead emphasising the importance of ‘works’ and actions in constructing an identity. Wringhim’s choice to retroactively remember a distant incident from his childhood and include it in his narrative, albeit glossed over in a blatant attempt at self-justification, suggests an unconscious attempt to reconcile himself to his developing situation. Figures such as Barnet perhaps function as representatives of Wringhim’s subconscious moral impulse, and Barnet’s recurring voice within the broader narrative therein re-emphasises concepts of incorporated alternative and fractured selves.

While Robert ostensibly rejects Barnet’s conceptions of identity (or at least only reluctantly and retroactively includes them in his attempts at self-construction) he later depends heavily on the narrative of “Samuel Scrape, who was a very honest blunt fellow,” and who provides Robert with the strange details “which he gave me concerning myself, and the ideas of the country people concerning me.”[[1052]](#footnote-1052) Scrape informs him that the locals “say the deil’s often seen gaun sidie for sidie w’ ye, whiles in ae shape, an’ while in another. An’ they say that he whiles takes your ain shape, or else enters into you, and then you turn a deil yourself.”[[1053]](#footnote-1053) Wringhim has trouble dismissing this “jumble of nonsense,” not the least of which because it contains elements of truth and because it is so profoundly threatening to his own identity.[[1054]](#footnote-1054) Scrape, in order to comfort Robert (ineffectually, as it turns out), tells him that such ideas are “balderdash.”[[1055]](#footnote-1055) To illustrate his point further he recalls a pertinent tale told to him by an “auld wife” about a devil appearing in a town secret disguised as a preacher, later exposed by protagonist Robin Ruthven. The tale is full of working-class opinions on the “mony deils aneath the masks o’ zealous professors,” and, as in “Wandering Willie’s Tale,” provides contrast between the oral traditions of the wandering bard and problematic ‘learned’ discourses. The story ends with a moral lesson and an attempt at textual authentication. Scrape tells Robert: “‘Now, this is a true story, my man,’ quo the auld wife, ‘an’, whenever you are doubtfu’ of a man, take auld Robin Ruthven’s plan, an’ look for the cloven foot, fo it’s a thing that winna week hide,” and that “still there is a gouden rule, whereby to detect it, an’ that never, never fails.’”[[1056]](#footnote-1056) The rule is not explicitly stated, though Scrape states at one point that “*Man mind yourself* is the first commandment,” but after the story Wringhim “went to try my works by the Saviour’s golden rule, as my servant had put it into my head to do; and behold, not one of them could stand the test.”[[1057]](#footnote-1057)

The universality of that rule refers to a general moral discourse, and filtering it through a servant’s narrative suggests a return to a class and culturally specific dialectic which nonetheless has important implications for a wide audience. Wringhim is actually very nearly redeemed by doing what “my servant had put it into my head to do,” suggesting a regenerative quality in the servant narrative, especially as that narrative is presented as a folkloric tale rather than a religious discourse (a discourse which perhaps would have only furthered Wringhim’s degeneration). Wringhim, despite an apparent willingness to despise “simplicity of nature,” admits “that the clown’s absurd story, with the still more ridiculous application, made me sick at heart a second time.”[[1058]](#footnote-1058) He insists that “It was not because I thought my illustrious friend was the Devil, or that I took a fool’s idle tale as a counterbalance to Divine revelation,” but actually Scrape’s narrative does provides an alternative to Wringhim’s faulty theology. Scrape’s words provide a “counterbalance” and prove much more effective than a theological argument. Unable to pick apart and analyse an actual ‘argument,’ Wringhim feels an emotional reaction, a shudder, and realises that Scrapes narrative “gave me a view of my own state” through an alternative viewpoint.[[1059]](#footnote-1059) Narrative forms as well as the identity of the narrator himself perform a reconstruction of identity at a critical point in the protagonist’s development, and within this context servant narrative develops personal and political goals within a Gothic space.

These authors in the in the 1820s and 1830s evolved within and departed from the boundaries of the early Gothic genre, and through their use of servant narrative in political discourse, meta-narrative, and the development of historical romance effectively moved the genre away from its former spaces. Hogg and Scott’s work is typically classified as historical romance or a mixed genre rather than Gothic literature and signalled a shift in the Gothic genre’s popularity. This is not to say that the Gothic servant died out with the ‘end’ of the early Gothic genre. Rather, she adapted herself to new genres while still displaying threads of her Gothic roots, returning to repeat narrative patterns in Victorian Gothic fiction. Perhaps the most popular example of an early Victorian Gothic servant is Nelly Dean in Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), a character whose subjective narrative covers a great deal of the text. Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) also employs servants who are once again secret keepers and parallel the earlier Gothic domestics who care for some imprisoned female character. Servants continued to operate as characters and narrators as the Gothic genre developed and branched outwards. Victorian detective and sensation fiction, while not strictly Gothic, suggest elements of the Gothic genre and frequently employed servant narratives as destabilising elements – this is particularly noticeable in the works of Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The servant remains a space of anxiety and ambiguity well into the Twentieth century, particularly in Daphne Du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938), later adapted into a film by Alfred Hitchcock. Ms. Danvers, the forbidding housemaid with an obsessive attachment to her late mistress and to the family home as a haunted space, echoes her literary predecessors in her attempts to re-negotiate narrative truth and inspire an emotional response.

While these texts reflect an evolving negotiation of servants as narrators and wider emotional and psychological responses to servant narratives, they continue to demonstrate elements developed in early Gothic texts, the tropes and clichés of servant insight which validate their importance and allow them to push further into constructions of narrative. There is a significant distance between Walpole’s Bianca and Du Maurier’s Danvers, yet both redefine identity through Gothic narrative within a Gothic text – they negotiate ghosts, trauma, repression, psychology and emotionality, reshaping the world around them and the text that encompasses them by creating their own personal Gothic stories and articulating them in spite of socio-moral boundaries. If anything, the fact that they are liminal figures, a sort of enemy within, allows them to navigate unstable Gothic spaces more efficiently and articulate the aspects which they find most relevant or troubling within that space. Matilda and the second Mrs. De Winter both suffer in their inability to narrate their feelings efficiently, and although servant voices in both instances are ultimately subsumed by another being’s third or first person narrative, their negotiations develop as critical spaces for understanding and restructuring identity. Far from being prematurely “worn,” then, servant narratives are essential to the development of the Gothic genre and fiction in general. Their consistent relevancy within the genre as methods of knowing and expressing and the political and personal insights that they themselves articulate suggest a rich and complex source of engagement.

William Hazlitt, who claimed that Ludovico’s reading of the “Provençal Tale” in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was “the greatest treat” Radcliffe provided for her readers, admitted that even great Gothic works had their limitations. He argued that in a well-written Gothic novel “the effect does not depend on the character, but the situations; not upon the figure, but upon the back-ground,” thus negating the influence of the servant as a ‘character’ and indeed undermining complex readings of Gothic identity in general.[[1060]](#footnote-1060) However, even in this instance Hazlitt paradoxically suggests a new method of reading servants-as-characters / narrators and indeed for exploring Gothic characterisation in general. “Effect” depends on “situations” and “back-ground,” which obviously limits depictions of the protagonist’s internal development and focuses rather on their responses to external factors. However, servants by definition are the figures who occupy the “back-ground,” semi-objects who occasionally become active subjects within a social pattern of self-expression. The nature of the servant-‘subject’ is itself a distinct reflection of on-going literary discourse and the construction of the novel form. Mikhail Bakhtin, contextualising “a new artistic-prose model for the novel,” points to the Socratic dialogues and specifically to the “image of Socrates, the central hero of the genre, wearing the popular mask of a bewildered fool with the image of a wise man of the most elevated sort; this combination produces the ambivalent image of wise ignorance.”[[1061]](#footnote-1061) This image reflects Bakhtin’s view of the novel as an inherently fluid genre, a genre which was still in its early stages when early Gothic literature developed. Interrogating servant narrators in the early Gothic genre, this dissertation has examined a figure within early Gothic texts who embodies the Socratic ‘wise fool,’ the winking innocent who pursues truth through dialogue and narrative exchange. Servants in the novel, and to a certain extent in their real-life functions, are defined by their liminal social and moral position and by the unease they inspire in their masters – their role as an ‘other’ within a domestic space. This anxiety is expressed comprehensively in their narrative position, the interjections which redefine both external aesthetic and internal and self-constructed identity within the characters.

So how does a comprehensive understanding of servant narratives impact readings of the early Gothic genre and our critical appreciation of Gothic legacies? Robert Miles suggests the pitfalls of narrative multiplicity in his examination of David Punter’s review of Elizabeth Napier’s *The Failure of Gothic*. Napier argues that the Gothic genre suffers from “artistic uncertainty or a simple lack of skill that is not reaching hesitantly for a ‘higher’ (because less determinate) meaning.”[[1062]](#footnote-1062) This charge could define servant narrative as an artistic uncertainty rather than as an alternative literary technique. Punter responds, however, by suggesting that what Miles identifies as “forms of disjunction” are in fact a reflection of “a fracture, an imbalance, a ‘gap’ in the social self which would not go away.”[[1063]](#footnote-1063) ‘Fractured’ identities and ‘fractured’ narratives based on a sometimes incomplete, often intuitive, spontaneous, unconventional, emotional and revolutionary dialectic approaches define the core impulses to the Gothic genre – these traits are embodied in the Gothic servant narrative. Servants navigate unstable identity, narrating ghost stories and supernatural tales, important emotional upheavals, or crucial histories. Much critical theory has marginalised servants and their voices as poorly written comic relief, paradoxically undermining both the seriousness of many servant narratives and the importance of comedy in the Gothic. Regardless, servants almost always push the boundaries of social and moral restraint and identity and manipulate the forms of narrative performance in order to achieve highly suggestive goals. Their very nature as figures who live in and interrogate ‘gaps’ in the self reflects the most basic definitions of the Gothic form. They articulate wider concerns about genre and literary heritage by constructing synecdoche Gothic tales, exploiting Gothic mechanisms, or even by inhabiting an authorial identity with profound implications for the internal characters and external literary scene.

There is no single unifying theory for mapping and reading servant narratives in Gothic literature – as the brief survey provided in earlier chapters has proved, even those servant narratives found in this specific branch of literature are too complex and varied for that. However, close engagement and incorporation of servant narratives both as stand-alone elements and as mechanisms in a much larger literary structure can illuminate myriad aspects of critical theory which have never been examined in this way before. This dissertation has achieved a number of goals. Firstly, it has proved that servant narratives within early Gothic novels are often vessels for critical information and thus, in practical terms, impact constructions of character identity and dialectic understanding within individual novels. As an extension of this, close examination has proved that numerous Gothic authors use servant narrators as metonyms for a variety of goals, reflecting issues and anxieties about authorship and identity in literary culture as well as providing insight into the inner workings and techniques of the genre. This dissertation’s interrogation of servant narratives has established that they perform a specific function unique to the Gothic genre. The servant character’s presence and insistence on a specific style and structure of narrative creates both social and empirical destabilisation and introduces the possibility of alternative yet valid ‘realities.’ This indicates an engagement with the Gothic as a genre with roots in a complex literary and cultural history as many of these realities negotiation pre-Enlightenment forms of supernaturalism and irrationality. Finally, servant narratives provide a unique insight into the critical origins of the novel genre itself, manifesting the specific ambiguities and hybridization which contemporary critics have sought to define.

Jane Austen’s heroine Elizabeth Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) is quite correct when she muses:“What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant?”[[1064]](#footnote-1064) Servant characters in literature are capable of reshaping, through their narratives, individual identities, the identity of a society, and the identity of a literary form. Within a genre particularly concerned with unstable selves and narratives of ‘otherness,’ servant narrative is not only significant to critical understanding – it is a vital source of engagement, a living text which requires close interaction with the Gothic reader. If, as Robert Miles argues, “Gothic writing needs to be regarded as a series of contemporaneously understood forms, devices, codes, figurations, for the expression of the ‘fragmented subject,’” then servant narrative is one of the most important tools available for the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Gothic novel, particularly as that novel relates to a socio-historical identity.[[1065]](#footnote-1065) This dissertation has opened the doors to future critical incorporations of servant narrative theory in Gothic studies, inviting further engagement in the on-going process of re-defining Gothic narrative and identity. Such narratives have a clear and profound impact on our understanding of individual Gothic texts and also on our understanding of the Gothic genre and on constructions of narrative and genre theory in the broadest possible terms. Gothic servant narrators are well-prepared to “tell it my own way” as long as we are willing to listen.

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2. Giffard, "Epilogue to *Pamela*," p. 64 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Keymer, Thomas and Peter Sabor, *'Pamela' in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Haywood, Eliza, *Anti-Pamela: or, Feign’d Innocence Detected*; *in a series of Syrena's adventures* (London: J. Huggonson, 1741), p. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Richardson, Samuel, *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (London, W. W. Norton & Company, 1958) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Johnson, Samuel, *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers,* Vol. 2 (London: W, Strahan, 1755), accessed through *Eighteenth Century Collections Online,* image 667/1206 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language,* image 667/1206 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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11. Bakhtin, M. M., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holoquist, translated by Caryle Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 6, 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mikhail Bakhtin states that “servants replace the ass (donkey) in the later history of the adventure novel of the second type (that is, the adventure novel of everyday life)” as “that distinctive, embodied point of view on the world of private life.” In the earliest manifestations of the novel in the 16th century the servant character thus emerged as a critical component “without which a literature treating private life could not manage.” Since then the servant has alternately “retreated into the background” and developed and maintained complexity and significance in his role as “the eternal ‘third man’” in literature. (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, pp. 124, 125) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Evett, David, *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare’s England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 143 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Evett, *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare’s England*, pp. 11-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Luther, Martin, “Lectures on 1 Timothy,” *Luther’s Works*, edited by Hilton C. Oswald, vol. 28 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), p. 363; Evett, *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare’s England*, p. 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Luther, Martin, “The Freedom of a Christian Man,” *The Protestant Reformation*, edited by Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), p. 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Hillerbrand, Hans J., ”Introduction,” *The Protestant Reformation*, edited by Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), pp. xxii, xxiii [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Luther, Martin, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,” *Works of Martin Luther: With Introductions and Notes*, translated by C. M. Jacobs, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915); The term ‘self-fashioning’ is of course taken from Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), and refers to the process of building a personal identity within a set of social influences and structures. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Consider, for example, William Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, Act IV, scene I, when Henry V moves about his military encampment in disguise, discussing morality and war with his soldiers. Henry resists his soldiers’ characterisations of a ruler’s comprehensive moral responsibility regarding acts of war. This discussion incorporates servant-master discourses and ultimately vindicates Protestant suggestions about the individual conscience in national and domestic understandings of service. The lower class characters may perhaps take issue with moral individualism in this instance (particularly in their attempts to place all the blame for war on their king), but underlying republican tones in this exchange justify their attempts to voice their opinions in the first place. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Evett, *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare’s England*, p. 116 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Robbins, *The Servants Hand: English fiction from Below*, pp. 34, 35; see also Krieger, Elliot, *A Marxist Study of Shakespeare’s Comedies* (London: Macmillan, 1979) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Shakespeare, William, *The Tempest*, edited by David Linsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.2.297-298; All dates of publication for Shakespeare’s plays are scholarly approximations. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Greenblatt, Stephen, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 143; I recognize that this is a much simplified analysis of Prospero and Ariel’s relationship and that Ariel does in fact offer some resistance to Prospero at certain points in the text. Overall, however, Ariel’s character conforms to an employer / colonizer’s fantasy of a submissive yet incredibly powerful servant. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 2.2.4 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Greenblatt, Stephen, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1990); see Chapter 1: “Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Greenblatt, *Learning To Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, p. 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Shakespeare, William, *Othello*, edited by Norman Sanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.1.41 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Greenblatt, Stephen, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980) [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Horn, Pamela, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975); Hill, Bridget, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. McKeon, Michael, *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600 – 1740* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 369 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), p. 390 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 457 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Spacks, Patricia Meyer, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 197 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600 – 1740*, p. 150 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century*,p. 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Defoe, Daniel, *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business* (London: T. Warner, 1725), p. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century,* p. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century,* p. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*, p. 199 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. McBride, Theresa, *The Domestic Revolution* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976), pp. 116, 115; Hecht, J. Jean, *The Domestic Servant in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 177 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Eric Pawson, *The Early Industrial Revolution* (London: Batsford Academic, 1979); Sara Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton University Press, 1983) [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Kent, D.A., “Ubiquitous but Invisible: Female Domestic Servants,” *History Workshop*, no. 28 (1989), p. 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 110 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The concept of ‘honest poverty’ is pervasive in eighteenth century literature and even in contemporary discourses regarding the ‘deserving poor’ and meritocratic economic systems. ‘Honesty’ at least partially justifies ‘poverty’ in eighteenth-century discourse, though perceptions of implicit inferiority remain beneath the surface. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Richardson, Samuel, *Pamela*; *Or Virtue Rewarded*, p.3 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. There is little evidence that *droit du seigneur*, otherwise referred to as *jus primae noctis*, existed as a legal right in medieval Europe, though the idea has been exploited in literary culture even before the term itself was popularised by Voltaire’s *Dictionnare Philosophique* (1764).Richardson never bluntly states that Mr. B- is attempting to enforce that specific legal precedent (the restraints of ‘Englishness’ do much to curb such notions), but it is clear in Mr. B-’s dialogue that he views sexual mastery (among other kinds of mastery, such as narrative or political) of Pamela as his right in some sense. Indeed, other aristocratic males within the text seem to believe, without explicitly condoning Mr. B-‘s actions, that his moral culpability is lessened by Pamela’s social status and the fact that no one with social ‘value’ was harmed in the seduction. Parallels may be drawn between *Pamela* and Pierre Beaumarchais’s *La Folle Journée, ou Le Marriage de Figaro* (translated *The Marriage of Figaro* (1778)), in which the aristocratic Count Almaviva’s attempt to enforce his right to *droit du seigneur* is foiled by servant protagonists Figaro and Suzanne. Nancy Armstrong’s book *Desire and Domestic Fiction: The Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) further discusses this aspect of *Pamela* and suggests that the transposition of gender and class is a means of politicizing the domestic space and exploiting sexuality as a pseudo-metaphor. Miranda J. Burgess’s work *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) takes the argument further by assigning Mr. B- the role of “a quasi-Jacobite country Tory” with ties to France and to “the absolutism of the *ancient regime”* which can only be overcome “by British nature and the romance that conveys it” (Burgess, *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830,* pp. 40-41). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Fielding, Henry, *An Apology for the Life of Shamela Andrews* (London: A. Dodd, 1741), p. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Swift, Jonathan, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift: Directions to Servant and Miscellaneous Pieces, 1733-1742* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1959), pp. 7, 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Swift, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift: Directions to Servant and Miscellaneous Pieces, 1733-1742*, p. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Locke, John, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1693), p. 227 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Swift, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift: Directions to Servant and Miscellaneous Pieces, 1733-1742*, p. 65; King Charles II (1630-1685) was a Restoration king who defended Catholicism; King William possibly refers to William III (1650-1702), otherwise known as William of Orange, one of the leading figures in the so-called Glorious Revolution or the Revolution of 1688. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Richardson, Samuel, “Preface to *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*” (London: Rivington, 1742), p. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Wein, Toni, *British Identities, Heroic Nationalisms, and the Gothic Novel, 1764-1824* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 3; There is an extensive amount of literature on Anglo-French conflicts during the eighteenth century and the impact of nationalism on the Gothic, though what many such works fail to examine is the connection between nationalism and the servant in early Gothic literature. The tendency to link servants with foreign spaces, and with the French nation in particular, is pervasive – Laurence Sterne’s Yorick persona hires a French manservant in *A Sentimental Journey* (1768; note the close relationship between ‘sentiment,’ servants, and France) whom he describes as a rather romantic character. In the Gothic genre Radcliffe’s servants are pointedly non-British and Charlotte Dacre even employs an intensely exotic servant in *Zofloya* (1806). British servants generally seem to espouse a sort of political tension, such as Pamela of *Pamela* or Caleb Williams of *Things as They Are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). The fact that Gothic tales are very often set in foreign areas and that the servants themselves demonstrate regionalism suggests classifications of the servant as distinctly ‘other’. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 111 [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 67 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*,p. 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*,p. 359; McKeon notes that this is a particularly prevalent strategy in *Pamela.* [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Punter, David, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the present day*, Vol. 1 (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1996),p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Watt, Ian, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), pp. 42-43; I should clarify that there is in fact strong evidence that men in the eighteenth century enjoyed reading novels just as much as women. Jane Austen implies as much in her Gothic parody *Northanger Abbey* (1817), and there are numerous examples which suggest that, in spite of pervasive socio-literary guidelines classifying ‘appropriate’ fiction, the demographics of the novel reader cannot be defined solely by gender. However, stereotypes of frivolous feminine education and assumptions regarding the novel’s deficiency as a literary form often made ‘the novel’ a site for gender discourse regardless of the realities of readership. Watt’s assertion simply suggests that the female audience was a factor as it never was before and that as such the focus on domestic and ‘women’s issues’ facilitated the incorporation of the servant narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, p. 143 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Armstrong, Nancy, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 59 [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 213 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Mayhew, Henry, *London Labour and the London Poor,* vol. 3 (London: Griffin, Bohn and Company, 1862), p. 243 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, p. 47; Pamela’s revolutionary tendencies are arguably ‘corrected’ and legitimized by her new social status once she honourably weds Mr. B-. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Keen, Paul, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s: Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999), p. 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. It is worth noting that Caleb Williams is not a professional spy – he is merely attempting to satisfy a natural curiosity which characterises him and which he defines as a “perpetual stimulus” (Godwin, 122). This characterisation is an important choice on Godwin’s part as his own politics made him vulnerable to active forms of espionage in his own life. By making Williams a curious but well-meaning character Godwin arguably differentiates between acceptable and non-acceptable forms of curiosity in order to justify his character as a protagonist. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Watson, Nicola J., *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the present day*, p. 122 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 45 [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Robbins, *The Servants Hand: English fiction from Below*, p. 100 [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Godwin, William, *Caleb Williams*, edited by David McCracken (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 314; The original line from Shakespeare, spoken by the Ghost of Hamlet’s father, is as follows: “But that I am forbid / To tell the secrets of my prison-house / *I could a tale unfold* whose lightest word / Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, / Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres, / Thy knotted and combined locks to part / And each particular hair to stand on end / Like quills upon the fearful porpentine – / But this eternal blazon must not be / To ears of flesh and blood.” (Emphasis mine) (Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet*, edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014),1.5.13-22). Caleb, like the Ghost, similarly suffers from being “forbid / To tell the secrets of my prison-house,” or the secret of Falkland’s rediscovered past, though he is later given a narrative autonomy which is arguably denied to Hamlet’s father. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Godwin, p. 323; This qualification potentially undermines the political impulse of the text – in spite of the fact that Falkland has consistently resisted Caleb’s narrative and behaves selfishly and unjustly, he rehabilitated retroactively as if to suggest that in fact nothing could have justified Caleb’s narrative rebellion. Again, this might reflect Godwin’s issues with servant disloyalty in his own life (see above footnote). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Robbins, *The Servants Hand: English fiction from Below*, p. 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Keen, *The Crisis of Literature*, p. 115 [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Keen, *The Crisis of Literature*, pp. 57, 58 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Godwin, William, 'Preface,' *Caleb Williams*, edited by David McCracken (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); This preface is dated May 12th, 1794. It is followed by a second preface, which reads: "This preface was withdrawn in the original edition, in compliance with the alarms of booksellers. Caleb Williams made his first appearance in the world, in the same month in which the sanguinary plot broke out against the liberties of Englishmen, which was happily terminated by the acquittal of its first intended victims, in the close of that year. Terror was the order of the day; and it was feared that even the humble novelist might be shown to be constructively a traitor." This addendum is dated October 29th, 1795. It refers to the Suspension of Habeas Corpus enacted in May 1794 and the subsequent Treason Trials. More information on those trials can be found in John Barrell’s *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796*, (2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Barrell, John, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 354 [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796*, p. 51 [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Johnson, Samuel, *The Rambler*, no. 68 (1750) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. John C. Whale and John Barrell place imagination firmly in the realm of the poets, but in fact there are very strong links between the imagination and servant narratives in early novels, and from *Don Quixote* to *Pamela* to *The Mysteries of Udolpho* there are highly suggestive instances where the narrative depends on the construction of a servant imagination. Consider, as a brief example, Manfred’s characterisation of his servants “distempered imaginations” in *The Castle of Otranto* or the battle of wills between Pamela and Mr. B-‘s interpretation of events in *Pamela*. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Whale, John, *Imagination Under Pressure, 1789-1832: Aesthetics, Politics and Utility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1, 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Addison, Joseph, “On the Pleasures of Imagination,” *The Spectator*, no. 411 (June 21, 1712) [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the present day*, p. 54 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Botting, Fred, “In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture,” *A Companion to the Gothic*, edited by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Punter, David, and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), p. 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions,* p. 39 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Clery, E. J., *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*, 2nd edition (Devon: Northcote House Publishers Ltd., 2004),p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968),p. 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Clery, *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley,* p. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Clery, *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley,* p. 83 [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 336; Walpole, Horace, “Preface to the Second Edition,” *The Castle of Otranto* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966), p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Walpole, Horace, *The Castle of Otranto* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966), pp. 46, 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, pp. 125, 262 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Eagleton, Terry, *The English Novel, An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2005), p. 85 [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Ellis, Markman, “Enlightenment or Illumination: The Spectre of Conspiracy in Gothic Fictions of the 1790s,” *Recognizing the Romantic Novel: New Histories of British Fiction, 1780-1830*, edited by Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 80 [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Walpole, Horace, “Preface to the Second Edition,” *The Castle of Otranto* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), p. 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Reeve, Clara, *The Old English Baron* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 64 [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Walpole, Horace, “Preface to the First Edition,” *The Castle of Otranto* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), p. 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *Otranto*’s plot is obviously highly unrealistic, but in implying that the source text was itself authentic Walpole echoed paratext assertions by earlier authors such as Defoe or Richardson. Walpole stated in his first preface that the text was printed in Naples in 1529 and originally written in Italian sometime between 1095 and 1243, suggesting an exotic setting (Walpole, p. 17). James Watt notes in *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (1999) that despite the Walpole’s assertion in his prefaces that he feared critical ridicule, Walpole’s true reasons for denying and later asserting creative ownership of his novel are highly ambiguous. This is a reflection, perhaps, of what a critic for the *Edinburgh Review* termed Walpole’s “bundle of inconsistent whims and affectations” (Macaulay, Thomas Babington, “Review of *Letters of Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann*,” *Edinburgh Review*, no. 58 (1833)). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Gamer, Michael, “Introduction,” *The Castle of Otranto* (London: Penguins Books Ltd, 2001), p. xxix;Bleiler, E.F., “Introduction: Horace Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto*,” *The Castle of Otranto* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), p. x [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” p. 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” p. 22; Gamer, “Introduction,” p. xxv [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Johnson, Samuel, *Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson,* edited by W. J. Bate and A. B. Strauss, vol. 3 (London: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 19; Watt, James, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999),p. 36 [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Gamer, “Introduction,” p. xxx [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Swift, Jonathan, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift: Directions to Servant and Miscellaneous Pieces, 1733-1742* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1959), p. 63; Locke, John, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1693) [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Groom, Nick, *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 71 [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Groom, *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction*, 72 [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Swift, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift: Directions to Servant and Miscellaneous Pieces, 1733-1742,* pp. 7, 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Bakhtin, M. M., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michal Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 124 [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Duncan, Ian, *Modern Romance and the Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Duncan, *Modern Romance and the Transformations of the Novel,* p. 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Walpole, Horace, “The Mysterious Mother,” *Five Romantic Plays, 1768-1821*, edited by Paul Baines and Edward Burns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), postscript lines 151-152; Punter, David, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1764 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 45; Davison, Carol Margaret, *Gothic Literature: 1764-1824* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009)*,* p. 59 [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Clery, *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*, 2nd edition (Devon: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 2004), p. 31 [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Howard, Jacqueline, *Reading Gothic Fiction: A Bakhtinian Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 2, 49, 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Todd, Janet, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” *Men by Women*, edited by Janet Todd (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981), p. 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Clery, E. J., “The genesis of ‘Gothic’ fiction,” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. McKeon, Michael, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1987), p. 126; McKeon does note, however, that in fact many elements of rigid neoclassicism “play no part in Aristotle’s conception of dramatic unity” (McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740,* p. 126). [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” pp. 22-23 [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Voltaire, "A Letter from M. Voltaire to the French Academy: Containing an Appeal to that Society on the Merits of the English Dramatic Poet Shakespeare," translated with preface by Horace Walpole (London: J. Bew, 1777), p. 23 [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Williams, Anne, “Reading Walpole Reading Shakespeare,” *Shakespearean Gothic*, edited by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*,p. 125 [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Walpole, Horace, “Letter to Voltaire,” 21 June, 1768, *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*: *Miscellaneous Correspondence II, 1766-1781,* edited by W.S. Lewis and John Riely, vol. 41 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 149; ‘Barbarity’ was a charge often levelled at Shakespeare in the eighteenth century, even by his supporters; Samuel Johnson even notes in his preface to his collection of Shakespeare that “The *English* nation, in the time of *Shakespeare*, was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity” (Johnson, Samuel, ‘Preface,’ *The Works of Shakespeare,* vol. 1 (London: J. and R. Tonson and C. Corbet, 1765, )p. 30). Note, however, that Walpole refers to Shakespeare in terms of national ownership (“our Shakespeare”) in his defence of the author. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Voltaire, “Letter to Horace Walpole,” 15 July, 1768, *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence: Miscellaneous Correspondence II, 1766-1781*, edited by W.S. Lewis and John Riely, vol. 41 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 151-157; Original Text: *C’est une belle nature, mais sauvage, nulle régularité, nulle bienséance, nul art […] J’ai dit que tous les genres sont bons hors le genre ennuyeux. Oui, Monsieur, mais la grossièreté n’est point un genre.* [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Voltaire, "A Letter from M. Voltaire to the French Academy,” p. 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Voltaire, “A Letter from M. Voltaire to the French Academy,” p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Wright, Angela, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820: The Import of Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 22-23; see also Dobie, Madeleine, “The Enlightenment at War,” *War*: *PMLA* special issue (Oct., 2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Montagu, Elizabeth Robinson, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare, Compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets, with some remarks upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire* (London: J. Dodsley, 1769), pp. 7-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Wright, Angela, "In Search of Arden: Ann Radcliffe's William Shakespeare," *Gothic Shakespeares*, edited by John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 113 [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Johnson, Samuel, “Preface,” *The Works of Shakespeare,* vol. 1 (London: J. and R. Tonson and C. Corbet, 1765) p. 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Johnson, “Preface,” p. 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Johnson, “Preface,” pp. 13-14 [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Stein, Jess M., “Horace Walpole and Shakespeare,” *Studies in Philology*, vol. 31, no. 1 (January 1934), p. 53 [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Walpole, Horace, “The Mysterious Mother”, *Five Romantic Plays: 1768-1821,* edited by Paul Baines and Edward Burns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Walpole, Horace, “Letter to Robert Jephson,” late February 1775, *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, edited by W.S. Lewis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 289; Walpole is referring specifically to the criticism found in Voltaire’s *Lettres philosophiques* (1734). However, many British critics seriously edited Shakespeare’s works to suit their own standards of literary excellence well up to the point when Edmund Malone’s editions (published in 1790) established the importance of textual ‘authenticity’ (see Margreta de Grazia’s *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)). William St Clair notes that Shakespeare’s works entered the public domain in 1731, and traces the impact publishing practice had on Shakespeare’s works in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (2004). He notes in particular that “between 1737 and 1767 the market value of the intellectual property in Shakespeare […] rose sharply” and that “once perpetual intellectual property was ended in England in 1774, and Shakespeare was sold in conditions of economic competition […]the number of editions rose sharply, print runs lengthened, and the minimum price fell” (St Claire, William, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 156, 157. David Garrick himself rewrote and performed a version of *Hamlet* in 1772 at Drury Lane with the gravedigger scene completely omitted. He wrote later that: “I have ventured to alter *Hamlet*, and have greatly succeeded; I have destroyed the grave diggers, (those favourites of the people) and almost all of the 5th Act – it was a bold deed, but the event has answered my most sanguine expectation” (Garrick, David, “Letter to Pierre-Antoine de Laplace,” 3 Jan. 1773, *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, edited by W.S. Lewis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 289). Note Garrick’s dismissive tone regarding ‘the people.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Stein, “Horace Walpole and Shakespeare,” p. 56; Walpole, “Letter to Robert Jephson,” p. 289 [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Williams, Anne, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 31 [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Burke, Tim, “The Politics of Education and Voice in Ann Yearsley’s ‘To the Right Hon. H-E W-E. On Reading *The Castle of Otranto*, December 1784,’” *Fictions of Unease: The Gothic from ‘Otranto*’ *to ‘The X-Files*,’ edited by Andrew Smith, Diane Mason, and William Hughes (Bath: Sulis Press, 2002), p. 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Yearsley, Ann, “‘To the Right Hon. H-E W-E. On Reading *The Castle of Otranto*, December 1784,” *Poems on Several Occasions* (London: 1785), p. 88, lines 5-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Yearsley, “‘To the Right Hon. H-E W-E. On Reading *The Castle of Otranto*, December 1784,” p. 88, line 9; Burke, “The Politics of Education and Voice in Ann Yearsley’s ‘To the Right Hon. H-E W-E. On Reading *The Castle of Otranto*, December 1784,’” pp. 21, 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*, p. 33 [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Johnson, “Preface,” p. 31 [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Clery, “The genesis of ‘Gothic’ fiction,” p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Clery, “The genesis of ‘Gothic’ fiction,” p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*, p. 44 [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Clery, “The genesis of ‘Gothic’ fiction,” p. 23 [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Reeve, Clara, *The Progress of romance, through times, countries and manners;…in the course of evening conversations*, 2 volumes, (London: Colchester, 1785) [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Williams, Anne, Christy Desmet, “Introduction,” *Shakespearean Gothic*, edited by Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 6; for more on early modern Protestant-Whig ideology and the ‘individual self’ in Shakespeare, see Introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Burke, Edmund, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), p. 43 [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*, p. 31 [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Clery, “The genesis of ‘Gothic’ fiction,” p. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Walpole, “Preface to the Second Edition,” p. 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Williams, Desmet, “Introduction,” p. 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Walpole, Horace, *The Castle of Otranto* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), p. 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Morris, David B., “Gothic Sublimity,” *New Literary History*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Winter, 1985), pp. 299, 303 [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Gamer, “Introduction,” p. xxxi [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Voller, Jack G., *The Supernatural Sublime: The Metaphysics of Terror in Anglo-American Romanticism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. 17; Sandner, David, *Critical Discourses of the Fantastic, 1712-1831* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), p. 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Gamer, “Introduction,” p. xxvi [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Punter, David, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the present day*, vol. 1 (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1996), p.179 [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Chaplin, Sue, *The Gothic and the Rule of Law, 1764-1820* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 57 [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Davison, *Gothic Literature: 1764-1824,* p. 69 [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Morris, “Gothic Sublimity,” pp. 303, 302 [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Chaplin, Sue, “’Written in the Black Letter’: The Gothic and the Rule of Law,” *Law and Literature*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Spring 2005), p. 62 [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Edwards, Justin D., and Rune Graulund, *Grotesque* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Morris, “Gothic Sublimity,” p. 303 [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Hogle, Jerrold E., “Introduction: the Gothic in western culture,” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), p. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Elliott, Kamilla, *Portraiture ad British Gothic Fiction: The Rise of Picture Identification*, *1764-1835* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 175 [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Edwards, Justin D., Rune Graulund, *Grotesque*, p. 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*,pp. 61, 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Yearsley, Ann, “‘To the Right Hon. H-E W-E. On Reading *The Castle of Otranto*, December 1784,” p. 88, lines 5-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Chaplin, “Written in the Black Letter,” p. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 45 [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* pp. 45, 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Miles, Robert, “The Gothic Aesthetic: The Gothic as Discourse,” *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Spring 1991), p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Miles, “The Gothic Aesthetic: The Gothic as Discourse,” p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Miles, “The Gothic Aesthetic: The Gothic as Discourse,” p. 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Chaplin, “Written in the Black Letter,” p. 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Chaplin, “Written in the Black Letter,” p. 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Blackstone, William, *Commentaries on the laws of England,* vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765-1769), p. 430 [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*,pp. 37, 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Diane Long Hoeveler notes that Clara Reeve similarly “condemned the ‘veil’ of ignorance and prejudice that kept women from seeing clearly the conditions of the lives,” and in fact this negotiation of a repressed identity, usually female, becomes an important concern within the genre. (Hoeveler, Diane Long, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University press, 1998), p. 112) [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Shakespeare, William, *Othello*, Edited by Norman Sanders, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.3.82-89. Coincidentally, many of the failings Emilia uses to characterize bad husbands are enacted by Manfred in the text of *Otranto*. For example he shows himself to be jealous and arbitrary, and is guilty of slacking in his duties and seeking out “foreign laps” in his pursuit of Isabella. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Shakespeare, *Othello*, p. 4.3.89-90 [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Shakespeare, *Othello*, 4.3.90; I do not want to over-simplify the Gothic ‘heroine’ character. I would, however, argue that a heroine’s impulse for narrative restraint is an extension of what Harriet Guest calls “domestic invisibility” (Guest, Harriet, “A Double Lustre: Femininity and Sociable Commerce, 1730-60,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Summer, 1990), p.482). Guest argues that “the virtues of ‘aristocratic’ feminine display are continuous with those of retirement, and this ideal femininity therefore seems more domestic as well as more ornamental than does that of the newly wealthy,” suggesting that Walpole saw female “retirement” as a factor in his construction of a ‘heroine’ narrative (Guest, “A Double Lustre: Femininity and Sociable Commerce, 1730-60,” p. 482). Diane Long Hoeveler similarly argues for the “uneasy slippages” between “public and libidinal sexuality poised against private and unimpeachable chastity,” connecting feminine identity with sexuality and moral sexuality with the ideals of restraint and the ‘private’ (Hoeveler, Diane Long, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), p.4). These anxieties about the public and the private selves are particularly apparent in Ann Radcliffe’s novels, as demonstrated in Chapter Two. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Elliott, *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction: The Rise of Picture Identification*, *1764-1835*, p. 174 [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Elliott, *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction: The Rise of Picture Identification*, *1764-1835*, p. 174 [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Elliott, *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction: The Rise of Picture Identification*, *1764-1835*, p. 177 [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Spacks, Patricia Meyer, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 196-198 [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Morris, “Gothic Sublimity,” p. 305 [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 51 [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Westin, Alan F., *Privacy and Freedom* (New York: Antheneum, 1967), p. 7; Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*, p. 70 [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” *PMLA*, vol. 96, no. 2 (March, 1981), p. 256 [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Chaplin, *The Gothic and the Rule of Law, 1764-1820*, p. 57; Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
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231. Ian Duncan notes that Radcliffe and Lewis identify ‘romance’ as “a *fiction apart* from modern life,” but argues that “the Gothic never quite completes the passage into an alternative version of reality” (Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel* (1992), pp. 20-21). Servants appear to occupy this space between ‘real’ life and the ‘alternative reality,’ whether they are consciously aware of it or not, either by believing in a supernatural world or by recognising or developing into romantic-heroic characters and sublime Gothic entities. This is in keeping with an underlying eighteenth-century understanding of servant’s as the ambiguous domesticated ‘other.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 51; see Michèle Cohen’s work *Fashioning Masculinity: National identity and language in the eighteenth century* (London: Routledge, 1996) for insight on masculine conversation in the eighteenth century as an indication of cultural identity and chivalric values, and especially how conversation between genders was influenced social identity. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Sedgwick, “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” p. 262 [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 94 [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
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237. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto,* p. 94 [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
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278. Reeve, Clara, *The progress of romance*, p. xvi [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
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428. Schmitt, Cannon, “Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality: Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” *EHL*, vol. 61, no. 4 (Winter, 1994), pp. 856-857 [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
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431. Schmitt, Cannon, “Techniques of Terror, Technologies of Nationality: Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” pp. 856-857 [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, p. 242 [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, p. 257 [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*,p. 153; Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*, p. 75; The phrase “suggested by feeling” is first articulated by Radcliffe to characterize La Motte as a man whose “conduct was suggested by feeling” (Radcliffe, p. 2). Johnson argues that “La Motte is at his best only when he gives way to his feelings, especially for Adeline, without the intervention of reason” (Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*, p. 75). I would argue that, while this is true, La Motte is also criticized for not being more reasonable in general, and that characters whose ‘feelings’ are confused with their desires or passions within the text are not positive examples of sentimentality. Therefore I would wish to clarify this statement by stating that, in this instance, “good men are men whose conduct is ‘suggested by feeling’” as long as those feelings are in keeping with the heroine’s particular middle-class Protestant moral code. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*, p. 74 [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, p. 256 [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
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441. Howard, *Reading Gothic Fiction: A Bakhtinian Approach*, p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. Castle, Terry, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995),p. 123; Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 94 [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
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449. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 594 [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, pp. 594-595 [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. It is interesting, given later anxieties in British culture regarding the prevalence of ‘false characters‘ or false references given by servants entering a household, that Theresa, in this instance, would be charged with affirming or refuting such a character reference for someone outside her own class while the upper/middle class characters persistently misread the truth. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
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458. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 637 [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
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613. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 557 [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
614. Macdonald, “Bathos and Repetition: The Uncanny in Radcliffe,” p. 200 [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
615. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 557 [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
616. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*,p. 134 [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
617. De Ritter, *Imagining women readers, 1789-1820: Well-regulated minds*, p. 175 [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
618. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, pp. 630, 631 [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
619. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 633 [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
620. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* p. 671 [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
621. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 478 [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
622. Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, p. 122 [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
623. Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, p. 123 [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
624. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*,p. 168 [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
625. Todd, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” p. 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
626. Todd, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” p. 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
627. Radcliffe, Ann, *The Italian; or the Confessional of the Black Penitents,* edited by Robert Miles (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2000), p. 194 [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
628. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 5, scene 1; Many eighteenth century critics found this scene intensely problematic, as illustrated in Chapter One’s examination of Voltaire’s writing and the varied responses of British critics such as Samuel Johnson, Horace Walpole, Mary Elizabeth Montague and David Garrick. [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
629. Barrell, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796,* p. 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
630. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*,p. 153 [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
631. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 51 [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
632. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 53 [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
633. Barrell, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796,* p. 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-633)
634. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 53 [↑](#footnote-ref-634)
635. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-635)
636. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 117 [↑](#footnote-ref-636)
637. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 432 [↑](#footnote-ref-637)
638. Richetti, John, “Representing an Under Class: Servants and Proletarians in Fielding and Smollett,” *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature* (New York: Methuen, Inc., 1987), p 86 [↑](#footnote-ref-638)
639. Rogers, *The Matrophobic Gothic and Its Legacy: Sacrificing Mothers in the Novel and in Popular Culture,* p. 60 [↑](#footnote-ref-639)
640. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 435 [↑](#footnote-ref-640)
641. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 436 [↑](#footnote-ref-641)
642. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 437 [↑](#footnote-ref-642)
643. “Review: *The Italian,” The Monthly Mirror* (March, 1797), p. 158 [↑](#footnote-ref-643)
644. Todd, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” p. 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-644)
645. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 84 [↑](#footnote-ref-645)
646. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 84 [↑](#footnote-ref-646)
647. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*,p. 168 [↑](#footnote-ref-647)
648. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*, p. 168 [↑](#footnote-ref-648)
649. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 87 [↑](#footnote-ref-649)
650. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 96 [↑](#footnote-ref-650)
651. Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The life of Ann Radcliffe*, p. 138 [↑](#footnote-ref-651)
652. Barrell, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796,* p. 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-652)
653. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 93 [↑](#footnote-ref-653)
654. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,pp. 94-95 [↑](#footnote-ref-654)
655. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 85 [↑](#footnote-ref-655)
656. Todd, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” p. 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-656)
657. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 97 [↑](#footnote-ref-657)
658. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 458 [↑](#footnote-ref-658)
659. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 94 [↑](#footnote-ref-659)
660. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 115 [↑](#footnote-ref-660)
661. Todd, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” p. 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-661)
662. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 115 [↑](#footnote-ref-662)
663. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 187 [↑](#footnote-ref-663)
664. Carson, “Enlightenment, popular culture, and Gothic fiction,” p. 256 [↑](#footnote-ref-664)
665. Carson, “Enlightenment, popular culture, and Gothic fiction,” p. 256 [↑](#footnote-ref-665)
666. Burke, Edmund, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), p. 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-666)
667. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 132 [↑](#footnote-ref-667)
668. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 132 [↑](#footnote-ref-668)
669. Barrell, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796,* p. 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-669)
670. Barrell, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796,* p. 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-670)
671. Todd, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” p. 36 [↑](#footnote-ref-671)
672. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 224 [↑](#footnote-ref-672)
673. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 224 [↑](#footnote-ref-673)
674. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,pp. 352, 353 [↑](#footnote-ref-674)
675. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, p. 325 [↑](#footnote-ref-675)
676. Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The life of Ann Radcliffe*, p. 166 [↑](#footnote-ref-676)
677. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 352 [↑](#footnote-ref-677)
678. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 352 [↑](#footnote-ref-678)
679. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 353 [↑](#footnote-ref-679)
680. Clery, *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley,* p. 83 [↑](#footnote-ref-680)
681. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 230 [↑](#footnote-ref-681)
682. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 414 [↑](#footnote-ref-682)
683. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, pp. 414, 422 [↑](#footnote-ref-683)
684. Todd, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” p. 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-684)
685. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 415 [↑](#footnote-ref-685)
686. Tooley, Brenda, “Gothic Utopia: Heretical Sanctuary in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” *Utopian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2000), p. 51 [↑](#footnote-ref-686)
687. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*, p. 123 [↑](#footnote-ref-687)
688. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*, p. 133 [↑](#footnote-ref-688)
689. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*, p. 132 [↑](#footnote-ref-689)
690. Chaplin, *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime in Eighteenth-Century Women’s Fiction*, p. 137 [↑](#footnote-ref-690)
691. Chaplin, *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime in Eighteenth-Century Women’s Fiction*, p. 131 [↑](#footnote-ref-691)
692. Radcliffe, *The Italian,* p. 470 [↑](#footnote-ref-692)
693. Chaplin, *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime in Eighteenth-Century Women’s Fiction*, p. 137 [↑](#footnote-ref-693)
694. Tooley, “Gothic Utopia: Heretical Sanctuary in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,” p. 52 [↑](#footnote-ref-694)
695. Radcliffe, *The Italian*,p. 477 [↑](#footnote-ref-695)
696. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 478 [↑](#footnote-ref-696)
697. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 478 [↑](#footnote-ref-697)
698. Sedgwick, “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” p. 266 [↑](#footnote-ref-698)
699. Radcliffe, *The Italian*, p. 478 [↑](#footnote-ref-699)
700. Chaplin, *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime in Eighteenth-Century Women’s Fiction*, p. 137 [↑](#footnote-ref-700)
701. Sedgwick, “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” p. 266 [↑](#footnote-ref-701)
702. This echoes and contrasts with the ‘chorus’ of servants who respond to Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto*, as described in Chapter One. [↑](#footnote-ref-702)
703. Mackenzie, “Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic narrative and the readers at home,” p. 410 [↑](#footnote-ref-703)
704. Radcliffe, *The Italian,* p. 329 [↑](#footnote-ref-704)
705. Radcliffe, *The Italian,* p. 322 [↑](#footnote-ref-705)
706. Radcliffe, *The Italian,* p. 323 [↑](#footnote-ref-706)
707. Lewis, Matthew, *The Monk,* edited by David Stuart Davies (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2009), p. 207 [↑](#footnote-ref-707)
708. Dacre, Charlotte, *Zofloya, or The Moor*, edited by Kim Ian Michasiw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 229 [↑](#footnote-ref-708)
709. Drake, Nathan, *Literary Hours, Or Sketches Critical and Narrative,* 2nd edition, vol. 1 (London: J. Burkitt, 1800), p. 359 [↑](#footnote-ref-709)
710. Scott, Walter, “On Contemporary Fiction: Introductory to *Waverly*,” *Sir Walter Scott: On Novelist and Fiction*, edited by Ioan Williams (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 431 [↑](#footnote-ref-710)
711. Lovecraft, Howard Phillips, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, edited by E. F. Bleiler (New York: Dover, 1973), p. 30; Davison, Carol Margaret, *Gothic Literature, 1764-1824* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 131; see also Moers, Ellen, *Literary Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 137-138 [↑](#footnote-ref-711)
712. The distinction between ‘terror’ and ‘horror’ in the Gothic draws from Edmund’s Burke’s notions of obscurity and terror in *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (1757). Ann Radcliffe’s posthumously published essay “On the Supernatural in Poetry” describes her understanding of these terms: “Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend, that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompanies the first, respecting the dreaded evil?” (Radcliffe, Ann, “On the Supernatural in Poetry,” *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1826)). This argument is evident in Radcliffe’s reliance on obscured ‘terror’ as the source of Gothic ‘sublimity’ in her own fiction, while Lewis, as suggested later in this chapter, prefers the more overt mechanisms of Gothic ‘horror.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-712)
713. Miles, Robert, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A genealogy*, 2nd edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 161 [↑](#footnote-ref-713)
714. Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 136 [↑](#footnote-ref-714)
715. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. 136 [↑](#footnote-ref-715)
716. Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” *PMLA*, vol. 96, no. 2 (March 1981); Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986); Dale Townshend illustrates this critical transition in *The Orders of Gothic: Foucault, Lacan, and the Subject of Gothic Writing, 1764-1820* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 2007), p. 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-716)
717. Esterhammer, Angela, “Performative Language and Speech-act Theory,” *A Companion to Romanticism*, edited by Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998), p. 454 [↑](#footnote-ref-717)
718. Esterhammer, “Performative Language and Speech-act Theory,” p. 457 [↑](#footnote-ref-718)
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720. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, p. 314; Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet*, edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 1.5.15 [↑](#footnote-ref-720)
721. Godwin, *Caleb Williams,* p. 1; Godwin withdrew this preface and then reattached it to a later edition in 1795 in response to the political conflict occurring in Great Britain in which “terror was the order of the day; and it was feared that even the humble novelist might be shown to be constructively a traitor” Godwin, William, 'Preface,' *Caleb Williams*, edited by David McCracken (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-721)
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723. Smith, Marie Hockenhull, “The Children Will Be ‘Subject to the Infamy of Their Deluded and Unfortunate Mother’: Rhetoric of the Courtroom, A Gothic Fantasy and A Plain Letter to the Lord Chancellor,” *Law and Literature*, vol. 18, no. 3 (Fall, 2006), p. 415 [↑](#footnote-ref-723)
724. Smith, “The Children Will Be ‘Subject to the Infamy of Their Deluded and Unfortunate Mother’: Rhetoric of the Courtroom, A Gothic Fantasy and A Plain Letter to the Lord Chancellor,” pp. 406, 409 [↑](#footnote-ref-724)
725. Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A genealogy*, p. 149 [↑](#footnote-ref-725)
726. Kilgour, Maggie, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 142 [↑](#footnote-ref-726)
727. Cryle, Peter, and Lisa O’Connell, “Sex, Liberty and Licence in the Eighteenth Century,” *Libertine Enlightenment: Sex, Liberty and Licence in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Peter Cryle and Lisa O’Connell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-727)
728. Cryle, O’Connell, Sex, Liberty and Licence in the Eighteenth Century,” p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-728)
729. Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A genealogy*, p. 149 [↑](#footnote-ref-729)
730. Barrell, John, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide, 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-730)
731. Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 144 [↑](#footnote-ref-731)
732. Howard, Jacqueline, *Reading Gothic Fiction, A Bakhtinian Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 219 [↑](#footnote-ref-732)
733. Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 144 [↑](#footnote-ref-733)
734. Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 142 [↑](#footnote-ref-734)
735. Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: The M.I.T Press, 1968); Castle, Terry, “The Carnivalization of Eighteenth-Century English Narrative,” *PMLA*, vol. 99, no. 5 (October 1984), p. 904. Both criticism suggest that ‘Carnival’ in specific instances such as masquerades or the more general idea of the ‘carnivalesque’ as a rhetorical breakdown of boundaries, as depicted in eighteenth-century literature (and earlier), are reflections of cultural negotiations. *The Monk* and *Zofloya*’s carnivalesque tone suggests particular cultural aspects and affects readings of individual and social identity in servant narrative. [↑](#footnote-ref-735)
736. Ellis, Markman, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 89 [↑](#footnote-ref-736)
737. Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” *PMLA*, vol. 96, no. 2 (March 1981), pp. 255-256 [↑](#footnote-ref-737)
738. Beaumarchais, Pierre, *Le Barbier de Séville ou la Précaution inutile (The Barber of Seville or The Useless Precaution)*, translated by John Wood (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), pp. 42-45; Figaro’s perception of the literary scene as compared to Don Raymond’s words of wisdom to Theodore on the nature of literary achievement will be discussed later in this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-738)
739. Sedgwick, “The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel,” p. 259 [↑](#footnote-ref-739)
740. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 92 [↑](#footnote-ref-740)
741. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 92 [↑](#footnote-ref-741)
742. The ‘female’ reader in Lewis is quite distinct from the male precisely because she almost always proves incapable of the kind of rational and constructive reading practices developed by heroines in Radcliffe’s texts. Dacre echoes this issue in *Zofloya*, though reading failures depicted as more universal and less gender-specific in her text. See Richard De Ritter’s *Imagining Women Readers, 1789-1820: Well-regulated minds* (2015) for a comprehensive study on the self-regulating female reader. [↑](#footnote-ref-742)
743. Napier, Elizabeth R., *The Failure of the Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-century Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987),p. 113 [↑](#footnote-ref-743)
744. Watkins, Daniel P., “Social Hierarchy in Matthew Lewis’s ‘The Monk,’” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer, 1986), p. 117 [↑](#footnote-ref-744)
745. Foucault, Michael, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (Middlesex, Penguin, 1981), pp. 100-101 [↑](#footnote-ref-745)
746. Todd, Janet, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian,” Men by Women*, edited by Janet Todd (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981), p. 31; Townley, James, *High Life Below Stairs. A Farce of Two Acts*, 3rd edition (Dublin: G. Faulnew, O. Nelson, 1759) [↑](#footnote-ref-746)
747. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 96 [↑](#footnote-ref-747)
748. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 96 [↑](#footnote-ref-748)
749. Beaumarchais, *The Barber of Seville or The Useless Precaution,* p. 53; There are, of course, limits to a Theodore/ Figaro comparison, the most notable being that Theodore is a character in a Gothic novel, not a farce, and as such reflects genre-specific goals. [↑](#footnote-ref-749)
750. Howard, *Reading Gothic Fiction, A Bakhtinian Approach*, p. 189 [↑](#footnote-ref-750)
751. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 96; In spite of the ambiguous nomenclature and the anachronistic social hierarchy attached to the term ‘page’ it is clear that Lewis still considers Theodore a servant. [↑](#footnote-ref-751)
752. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 124 [↑](#footnote-ref-752)
753. Cohen, Michèle, *Fashioning Masculinity: national identity and language in the eighteenth century* (London: Routledge, 1996) [↑](#footnote-ref-753)
754. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 109 [↑](#footnote-ref-754)
755. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 109; Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 144 [↑](#footnote-ref-755)
756. Todd, “Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian,”* p. 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-756)
757. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 109 [↑](#footnote-ref-757)
758. Castle, Terry, “The Carnivalization of Eighteenth-Century English Narrative,” p. 903 [↑](#footnote-ref-758)
759. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-759)
760. Cryle, O’Connell, “Sex, Liberty and Licence in the Eighteenth Century,” p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-760)
761. Castle, “The Carnivalization of Eighteenth-Century English Narrative,” p. 910 [↑](#footnote-ref-761)
762. Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-762)
763. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 110 [↑](#footnote-ref-763)
764. Watkins, “Social Hierarchy in Matthew Lewis’s ‘The Monk,’” p. 117 [↑](#footnote-ref-764)
765. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 136 [↑](#footnote-ref-765)
766. Castle, “The Carnivalization of Eighteenth-Century English Narrative,” p. 904 [↑](#footnote-ref-766)
767. Castle, “The Carnivalization of Eighteenth-Century English Narrative,” p. 910 [↑](#footnote-ref-767)
768. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-768)
769. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 113 [↑](#footnote-ref-769)
770. Lewis, *The Monk*, pp. 112, 113 [↑](#footnote-ref-770)
771. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 113; Dame Cunegoda’s name could also be a variation on the name of Voltaire’s character Cunegonde in his novel *Candide* (1759). In Voltaire’s novel Cunegonde is the protagonist’s love interest. She loses her charm and beauty by the novel’s conclusion but is still reluctantly wed by Candide. This is perhaps a humorous reference emphasising Dame Cunegonda’s own fury at Raymond and Agnes’s happy relationship and Theodore’s mocking assertion that her disappearance is the result of an “elopement.” [↑](#footnote-ref-771)
772. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-772)
773. Saavedra, Miguel de Cervantes, *The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha*, translated by John Rutherford (New York, Penguin Books, 2001) [↑](#footnote-ref-773)
774. Hogg, James, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (London: Vintage Books, 2009),pp. 16, 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-774)
775. Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner,* p. 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-775)
776. Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner,* p. 88 [↑](#footnote-ref-776)
777. Watkins, “Social Hierarchy in Matthew Lewis’s ‘The Monk,’” p. 119 [↑](#footnote-ref-777)
778. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 124 [↑](#footnote-ref-778)
779. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 124 [↑](#footnote-ref-779)
780. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 124 [↑](#footnote-ref-780)
781. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 32; The ‘Wandering Jew’ is a recurring character in Gothic fiction and Jacqueline Howard also argues that he bears a strong resemblance to characters from the folk stories and works of Johann Karl August Musaus (1735-1787). She notes that Sydny M. Conger has also suggested comparisons with the works of Schiller and Schubart. The prevailing Germanic influence will later further contextualise Theodore’s literary achievements within the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-781)
782. Roemer, Donald, “The Achievement of Godwin’s ‘Caleb Williams’: The Proto-Byronic Squire Falkland,” *Criticism*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Winter, 1976), p. 44 [↑](#footnote-ref-782)
783. Howells, Coral Anne, *Love, Mystery, and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction* (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), p. 62 [↑](#footnote-ref-783)
784. Howells, Coral Anne, *Love, Mystery, and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction*, p. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-784)
785. Howard, *Reading Gothic Fiction, A Bakhtinian Approach*, p. 189; Howard cites Garland, Henry Burnand, *A Concise Survey of German Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p. 72 and Kohlschmidt, Werner, *A History of German Literature 1760-1805* (London, Macmillan, 1975), p. 140 [↑](#footnote-ref-785)
786. Jones, Wendy, “Stories of Desire in *The Monk,” ELH*, vol. 57, no. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 134-135 [↑](#footnote-ref-786)
787. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 143 [↑](#footnote-ref-787)
788. Lewis, *The Monk*, pp. 143, 144 [↑](#footnote-ref-788)
789. Napier, *The Failure of the Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-century Literary Form*, p. 132 [↑](#footnote-ref-789)
790. Howard, *Reading Gothic Fiction, A Bakhtinian Approach*, p. 216 [↑](#footnote-ref-790)
791. Jones, “Stories of Desire in *The Monk,”* p. 135 [↑](#footnote-ref-791)
792. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 144 [↑](#footnote-ref-792)
793. Lewis, *The Monk*, p. 145 [↑](#footnote-ref-793)
794. Lewis, *The Monk*, pp. 3, 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-794)
795. Lewis, Matthew, *The Monk, a Romance*, 3rd edition, vol. 3, (London: J. Bell, 1797), p. 315 [↑](#footnote-ref-795)
796. Lewis, Matthew, *The Monk, a Romance*, 3rd edition, vol. 3, pp. 314, 315 [↑](#footnote-ref-796)
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1011. Dacre, *Zofloya, or The Moor*, p. 230 [↑](#footnote-ref-1011)
1012. Anon. [Samuel Taylor Coleridge], “Review: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*,” *Critical Review* (August, 1794), pp. 361-372 [↑](#footnote-ref-1012)
1013. Féval, Paul, *La Ville-Vampire* (*Vampire City*), translated by Brian Stableford (Encino: Black Coat Press, 2003), p. 151 [↑](#footnote-ref-1013)
1014. Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*, edited by Marilyn Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 207 [↑](#footnote-ref-1014)
1015. Again, Elizabeth’s vulnerability increases in the 1831 edition – she becomes a foundling rather than a cousin, highlighting the benevolence of her foster family. The off-shoot is that she is by implication more disposable in a social sense without her family connections. [↑](#footnote-ref-1015)
1016. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 207 [↑](#footnote-ref-1016)
1017. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 118 [↑](#footnote-ref-1017)
1018. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 222 [↑](#footnote-ref-1018)
1019. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, pp. 118, 222 [↑](#footnote-ref-1019)
1020. Vlasopolos, Anca, “Frankenstein's Hidden Skeleton: The Psycho-Politics of Oppression (Le Squelette caché de Frankenstein: La psycho-politique de Poppression),” *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (July, 1983), p. 129 [↑](#footnote-ref-1020)
1021. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-1021)
1022. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-1022)
1023. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-1023)
1024. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-1024)
1025. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 64 [↑](#footnote-ref-1025)
1026. Shelley dedicated her novel to her father, and contemporary critics noted that the text “is formed on the Godwinian manner and has all the faults, but likewise many of the beauties of that model.” (“Review: *Frankenstein,” Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany, A new Series of the Scots Magazine* (March 1818)) [↑](#footnote-ref-1026)
1027. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 66 [↑](#footnote-ref-1027)
1028. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 67 [↑](#footnote-ref-1028)
1029. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 67 [↑](#footnote-ref-1029)
1030. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 218 [↑](#footnote-ref-1030)
1031. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 218 [↑](#footnote-ref-1031)
1032. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-1032)
1033. De Sade, Donatien Alphonse François, “Justine,” *The Marquis de Sade: Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and other writings*, edited and translated by Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Grove Press, 1965) [↑](#footnote-ref-1033)
1034. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus,* p. 218 [↑](#footnote-ref-1034)
1035. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, p. 61 [↑](#footnote-ref-1035)
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