The Spectralization of Servants in Ann Radcliffe's __The Mysteries of Udolpho__

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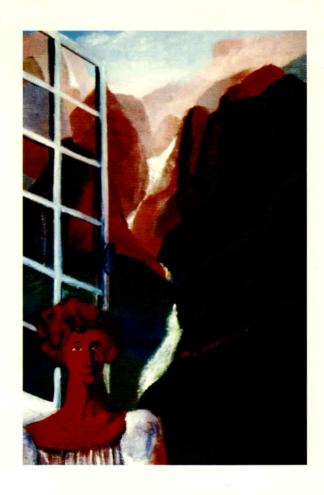
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LES MYSTÈRES
DE Mrs RADCLIFFE

The mysteries of Udolpho revisited

Nouveaux essais sur *Les Mystères d'Udolphe*
d'Ann Radcliffe (1794)

1999

THE SPECTRALIZATION OF SERVANTS
IN *THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO*

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Although the importance of ghosts in gothic fiction and in
Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* has been abundantly
studied, the special relation that this latter Gothic romance
establishes between ghosts and servants has received relatively
little attention.[1] Yet without taking into account the spectraliza-

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1. From the review questionably attributed to Coleridge to articles by
Walter Scott, the relationship between ghosts and the gothic, and in parti-
cular the role of the "supernatural explained" as trademark of the Rad-
cliffean gothic, has received steady attention. For these articles and more,
see *The Gothick Novel*, ed. Victor Sage (Macmillan, 1990); *The English
Gothic. A Bibliographic Guide to Writers from Horace Walpole to Mary
Shelley*, ed. Robert D. Spector (Greenwood Press, 1984); *The Critical
Response to Ann Radcliffe*, Deborah D. Rogers (Greenwood Press, 1994).
The most germane of recent work on this relationship has been Terry
Castle's "The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*,"
in *The New 18th Century*, ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown
(Methuen, 1987), reprinted in her *The Female Thermometer. 18th-Cen-
tury Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford UP, 1995).
Marshall Brown provides the neglected link to Immanuel Kant on ghosts
in "A Philosophical View of the Gothic Novel," *Studies in Romanticism*,
26.2 (1987), pp. 275-300, as I have also attempted in "Ghost Stories, the

tion of servants, readings of spectrality in Radcliffe must give skewed accounts of her politics. In order to redress our understanding of Ann Radcliffe, of the narrator in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and of the function of ghosts in Gothic writing, my focus here will be on the precise relation between servants and ghosts in *The Mysteries*.

In her study of the function of ghosts and spectralization in Radcliffe's fourth romance, Terry Castle has shown the paradox not only of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, but also of late eighteenth century culture : although the belief in ghosts and spirituality gave way to rationality, such rationality entailed that ghosts came to be found everywhere. As Castle puts it, the "consequences of this cognitive reorientation in the mummified emotional world of *Udolpho*" are that "absence is preferable to presence," "the dead are more interesting than the living," fetishized "objects are more compelling than people," and finally "living individuals — as opposed to the visionary forms [ghosts] of the mind — are curiously inconsequential."[2] Castle is undeniably half-right to argue that "Ann Radcliffe" "dismissed at a blow the age-old vagaries of Western superstition," "sought to create a new human landscape" in which "no horror [...] could disrupt the rational pleasures of the soul," yet also allowed "a return of irrationality" "in the midst of ordinary life."[3] Yet Terry Castle's account is only partial at precisely the place where it would be quasi-universal. For while speaking of "the everyday," of "modern Western consciousness," and of "late eighteenth-century European culture" as if they were homogeneous, her excellent analysis of spectrality takes no consideration of the social and political stakes in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.[4] It is however, as

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Sublime and the Fantastic Thirds in Kant and Kleist," *Colloquia Germanica*, 27.3 (1994), pp. 225-254.

2. In *The New 18th Century*, p. 249.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 253.

4. Although he does not study *Udolpho*, Alok Bhalla's *The Cartographers of Hell : Essays on the Gothic Novels and the Social History of England* (Sterling Publishers, 1995) provides the most provocative political reading of Gothic fiction to date. Cf. Fred Botting's *Gothic* (Rout-

we shall see, through the spectralization of servants that Ann Radcliffe critiques that social "class" of property owners with which she has all too readily been aligned.

There is not simply one kind of spectrality in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, but rather there are two "types" of ghosts in this novel. First, we find a traditional sort of scary ghosts associated with mysterious noises and movements in rooms, that become associated with unexplained deaths and possible murders : the music outside Chateau Leblanc is thought to be produced by a ghost as are the movements of the bedspread in the room of the same Chateau ; the voice in Udolpho of Du Pont is thought to be that of a ghost ; Ludovico is thought to have been abducted by ghosts, he is thought to be dead and when he comes back he is taken for a ghost by Annette.[5] The second type of ghosts are both the images and the visions which characters recurrently have of absent and/or dead people whom they were fond of (Emily's repeated visions of Valancourt, of her father ; St Aubert's vision of his wife) and the associations made by the characters or the narrator between a dead person and a living one who comes to figure, through the resemblance to the dead, a kind of return of the dead in the living, a kind of ghost (that is the case of Dorothée seeing Emily as the ghost of the Marchioness). The first "type" of ghosts belongs to the so-called "supernatural," and are for that generic reason "scary." It is this type whose manifestations are always, in

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ledge, 1996). Interesting political readings of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* include Kate Ferguson Ellis's in *The Contested Castle. Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (U Illinois P, 1989) and Maggie Kilgour's in *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (Routledge, 1995).

Aside from our objection to her partiality, we subscribe to Castle's analysis, and find it entirely compatible with similar arguments about spectrality, virtuality and simulacra, put forth by Jacques Derrida, notably in *Spectres de Marx* (Galilée, 1992), Paul Virilio, in *La vitesse de libération* (Galilée, 1995), Jean Baudrillard in *Le crime parfait* (Galilée, 1995), as well as those made by numerous German scholars of the history and theory of media, including and in the wake of Friedrich Kittler and Hubertus von Amelunxen.

5. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford World's Classics, 1980), p. 68 and 536, 395, 629. Hereafter page numbers given in text.

Radcliffe's first four romances, explained away rationally ("the supernatural explained"). The second type of ghost is, in fact, not at all of the scary ghost type; indeed it is pleasurable, and often the phantasmatic love object. This second type functions as a ghost insofar as the *image* of the dead or absent is made present and returns to haunt the living person's memory. Terry Castle's argument is that, if in the The Mysteries of Udolpho the first type of ghosts, the "supernatural" kind, is "explained away" or "denied," it nonetheless massively reappears in the form of the second type of ghosts : that is what she calls the "spectralization of the other."

Such "spectralization of the other" leaving untouched the "spectralization of servants," my argument will shift the focus back onto the first type of ghosts, i.e., the supernatural, in order to examine their relation to the servants. I want to suggest that in the relation of the servant to the ghost lies the social, the political, and the "class" dimension of Radcliffe's romance. Despite the fact that "class" is a term belonging to a later period, and despite the last minute erasure of this socio-political question precisely by the "supernatural explained," the possibility of servants' challenge to social order is nonetheless expressed through the figure of ghosts. This threat to the established order can only be glimpsed through the problematic history of the representation of the "servant," of the lower orders, of the "class struggle without class," and of the "political unconscious" in the mid to late eighteenth century. The work of Bruce Robbins and John Richetti, E.P. Thompson and Fredric Jameson has shown why any representation of servant rebellion in the eighteenth century (and thus in *Udolpho*) is limited for fundamental reasons : the genre of the novel in particular was an instrument of ideology and rhetoric, not history and reality.[6] Nonetheless, as we will show, the specificity of the

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6. Bruce Robbins argues that eighteenth century fiction "occupied it-self with servants rather than with proletarians," *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction From Below* (Columbia UP, 1986), p. 6. In his "Repre-senting an Under Class : Servants and Proletarians in Fielding and Smol-lett," Richetti argues, relative to the novel, that since it was based on an

servants in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is their proximity with two threats to social order : ghosts and "banditti."

1. Servants and Ghosts

In the romance, at the diegetic level as well as at the level of narrative structures, one can speak of a privileged proximity between the servants and ghosts of the first type. It is true that masters as well as servants think they see or hear spirits and ghosts (both Emily and Dorothée think they may have seen a ghost in the north chamber of the Chateau le Blanc). However, *servants are spatially closer* than masters to the location of ghostly manifestations : it is the servants who live *next* to the haunted north chamber of Chateau le Blanc, "*so near* to these terrific chambers" states the narrator; when one leaves the 'haunted' north chamber, the first rooms one comes to are those of the "female servants" (536). One can therefore at least speak of a certain spatial proximity between servants and ghosts.

Furthermore, servants know more about ghosts and spirits than the ruling rank. When the Count hears music in Chateau Leblanc, when he does not know who or what it is, and asks "Who plays at this late hour ?", it is the valet Pierre who gives him the clue : "music goes about the house at midnight [...] a spirit can do anything" (550). In a similar way, when Emily and Annette arrive at Udolpho, whereas Emily does not know anything about the

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individual character coming to an authentic selfhood, and since the servants were at most a literary type while the working "class" was not re-presented, the life of servants was too caricatural to allow for any authen-tification : "service as such excludes the singularity of personality that defines an authenticity (in fact a class privilege) we now identify as novel-istic" (*The New 18th Century*, p. 85). E.P. Thompson argues that ever-more repressive laws against "crimes" such as smuggling were in direct relation with the extension of the private property of those whom he calls, putting a twist on the Gothic we shall follow, "patrician banditti," in "Eighteenth-Century English Society : Class Struggle Without Class ?", *Social History*, 3 (May 1978), p. 139.

stories of Udolpho being haunted, it is Annette who knows about them and reveals them to Emily, even though Emily does not appear to understand at this point what Annette is telling her ("Emily did not appear to notice this remark," 231-32). Not only do servants know before the masters do about the alleged presence of ghosts, but moreover they also know about what could be considered to be the "cause" of the supernatural manifestations : Dorothée knows about the murder of the Marchioness by poison since she saw the Marchioness' face turn black after her death.[7] When the Count and Ludovico enter the north apartments of Chateau-le-Blanc, in order to take Ludovico to the room where he is going to spend the night looking for the ghost, Ludovico knows more than the Count about what is in what room. Despite having just joined the service of the Count, the servant Ludovico knows more than the owner of the castle : he directs the Count through the chateau, and is able to tell the story according to which a woman would have been murdered in that room : "There are several chambers beyond these, your *Excellenza* [...] and in one of them is a bed, they say" ; "The bed, my Lord [...] they told me, was in a room that opens beyond the saloon, and terminates the suite" ; "I have heard, my Lord [...] that the Lady Marchioness de Villeroi died in this chamber, and remained here till she was removed to be buried ; and this, perhaps, Signor, may account for the pall" (546-47).

Besides this proximity between servants and ghosts (both spatial proximity and the proximity of a certain knowledge), there are *two structural features* that link them. Throughout the novel, ghosts are represented as not obeying the laws of time and space. It is indeed one of the stereotypes of spirits in Gothic novels or romances, yet interestingly enough also one of the characteristics of the servants in *Udolpho*.

As one should be able to gather from the *"respectable* authors, both ancient and modern" who write about "spectres," and whom

Baron St. Foix "quoted" (547),[8] ghosts transgress the laws of natural time and space. Or, as the servant Dorothée explains to Emily, "spirits, *you know*, ma'am, can take any shape, or no shape, and they will be here, one minute, and, the next perhaps, in a quite different place !" (526). Similar to the ghost's transgression of temporal and spatial laws, Dorothée herself seems to have the power to *collapse time and space*. When Dorothée and Emily go into the "haunted room" for the first time since the death of the Marchioness, twenty years have elapsed since the death, yet Dorothée, the servant, notes that "it seems as if it was *but yesterday*" (531), and she adds, explicitly erasing the elapse of time, *"all the time* between then and now seems *nothing*" (532). As she is recounting the death of her "lady," a narrative told in the past tense, Dorothée suddenly switches from the past tense to the present tense : "A little before my lady's death [...] I *sat* down just *there*," she says and, then switching into the present, she adds : "I *see* her *now*." Thus, just as, according to the same Dorothée, a spirit can be here and there at the same time, Dorothée, in her mind and in her narrative, collapses time (then and now, the past and the present) in a given space. In addition to her collapse of time and space, Dorothée also explicitly spectralizes Emily, turning her repeatedly into the uncanny *revenant* of the Marchioness : "Dorothée ... threw [the veil] suddenly over Emily" and "intreated that she would keep it on for one moment. 'I thought [...] how like you look to my dear mistress in that veil" (534).[9]

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7. Dorothée "understood [the doctor who examined the corpse] too well." Despite the fact that she will "hold her tongue," "some of the other servants [...] suspected what I did" (528).

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8. Radcliffe puns on the anagramme, "re-spect-re" : "Ludovico received [the sword] with a respectful bow. 'You shall be obeyed, my Lord [...] I will engage, that no *spectre* shall disturb the peace of the chateau after this night" (545). The "respectable" authors, such as Immanuel Kant in his *Träume eines Geistersehers* (1766), argued that ghost stories can neither be proven nor disproven, just as does Count de Villefort : "Idle reports are floating round me, which I can neither admit to be true, or prove to be false" (570).

9. The out-of-timeness (or "nonsynchronicity" as Ernst Bloch puts it) of the sixteenth-century servants (the romance being set in 1584) is not irrelevant to timed labor in the age of industrialization (the time of the

The Count also stresses the power of ghosts to cross boundaries : as he says to Ludovico, his new servant, "a spirit, you know, can glide through a key-hole as easily as through a *door*" (544). Is it a mere gratuitous coincidence, then, if Dorothée, the housekeeper and the keeper of the keys, who is responsible for making sure that the doors remain locked, so that it can be known with certainty that no physical being has entered the room (536-37), bears in her very name the principle of the door, which ghosts easily go through ? Dorothée : Door-the, the door : "Dorothée exclaimed, as she entered, 'the last time I passed through this door" (531).

Other examples of a somehow miraculous crossing of boundaries by the servants are the instances when what is supposed to be secret is in fact already known by a servant : in the servants' time and space, information circulates much faster than among the ruling class. For example, after Emily is told a secret by Barnardine, she and the reader are surprised to find out that Annette also knows it even though Annette was explicitly excluded by Barnardine from his telling of the secret (341); likewise, as soon as Emily arrives at the convent after having left Chateau le Blanc, she is surprised to find out that the nuns, who insofar as they are explicitly said to be superstitious are associated with the servants, already know the story of the ghost which was supposed to be kept a secret. As the narrator puts it, "Emily had not considered with what rapidity a tale of wonder circulates. The nuns had acquired their information from peasants" (574). Information flies because servants, like birds or angels, fly : after informing Emily of the movement of Montoni's troops, "Annette, having told her tale, left the chamber, on the *wing* for new wonders" (299). Such flightiness is a characteristic only of servants. For immediately before this passage, Emily cites a poet : "How often did she wish to 'steal the lark's wing, and mount the swiftest

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publication of the romance). The development of the working class relied on the management of time, on the rationalization of time that accompanies the instrumentalization of reason and capital. I thank Joel Reed for his comments here.

gale' that Languedoc and repose might once more be hers !" (297).[10]

The second element that links servants and ghosts has precisely to do with the rumor. Ghosts only exist through rumors, through the "reports" that circulate in the novel and that are, indeed, reports or rumors of ghosts. These reports are spread by the servants : "I have heard" says Ludovico to the Count (547); "they say" says Ludovico to the Count (550); "some say [...] others say," Annette says to Emily and Madame Montoni (303); after one supposed ghost sighting in Chateau-le-Blanc, the narrator says that certain "other maids" spread the report which Emily herself had heard Annette discussing "with [yet] another female servant" (537). In conjunction with their function as vehicles of rumours about ghosts, is however the fact that the servants are never allowed to talk about the ghosts : for example, Emily "solemnly conjured [Dorothée] to conceal the occurrence of this night, [....] [so] that the Count might not be distressed by *reports*" (537). Similarly, the Count himself, when the rumor reaches him, "forbade any person to repeat it, on *pain of punishment*" (538). Servants explicitly know they have no right to mention the subject of ghosts. When Emily tells Annette not to mention ghosts in the presence of Montoni, Annette responds, that "No, No, I do know better than to do so" (232). However, inspite of strict orders prohibiting them from talking about ghosts, servants are at the source of the circulating rumors : "*strange reports* were *whispered* about the neighbourhood" (528); "Emily's injunctions to Annette to be silent on the subject were *ineffectual*, and the occurrence [...] spread such alarm among the servants [...] that a report soon reached the Count of the north side of the castle being haunted" (538). Thus, ghosts exist through the rumors circulated by servants; and rumors, like the servants themselves, circulate.

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10. This opposition between winged servants and wingless masters corresponds to that between prose and poetry. Emily cites poetry and "her present life appeared like the dream of [...] one of those frightful fictions in which the wild genius of poets sometimes delighted" (296), whereas the wingèd Annette "told her tale."

Indeed, just as rumours are in constant, even *a priori* circulation, servants, too, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* are constantly on the move, sent on errands by masters and madames, who are more or less immobile in their individual rooms (the masters do not share rooms with one another, as however do the servants).

There is a fairly simple way to account for this privileged relation between servants and ghosts : in the gothic novel, servants are both superstitious and talkative : these characteristics are *generic* elements. It is even probably one of the most *generically* determined traits of the servants to be superstitious, to believe in ghosts and to spread rumors, whereas reason and controlled speech are on the side of the masters who have left superstition behind : "it is not wonderful, that Dorothée and Ludovico should be fascinated by inventions [i.e., the marvellous, the supernatural], which had captivated the careless imagination in every rank of society in a former age" (551-52). So in former times, everybody (masters included) was superstitious ; yet with the Enlightenment, the masters have been disenchanted (as Kim Ian Michasiw most recently and interestingly argues).[11] Just as the higher ranks are somewhat disenchanted, they also know how to maintain an absolute silence in front of servants on the subject of ghosts (for e.g., Emily knows she should always conceal her thoughts about ghosts from servants, which she half-fails to do when, after seeing the face in Chateau-le-Blanc she is, "deprived of all presence of mind, [and therefore] made only a feeble attempt to conceal the occasion of *terror* from the astonished *servants*" (537); similarly, Count Villefort, as a good Roman, i.e., as reader of Tacitus and head of a 'county,' enjoins the more Gothic designated Baron St. Foix to keep silent, despite the Baron's sacred faith in ghosts, a silence which the landowner baron knows well enough to observe). If the masters are silent about superstition, or about ghosts, the lower orders have retained superstition, precisely as a sign of their lower status. Indeed, whereas on the one hand Emily tells Annette "not [to]

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11. "Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 6.4 (July 1994), pp. 327-346.

indulge fancies" about ghosts, thereby associating ghosts and fancies (i.e., the non real), Annette, on the other hand, believes in the "reality" of ghosts (she says precisely that ghosts "are not fancies") and she even fears turning into one : "I verily believe, if I *live* long in [the halls of Udolpho] I shall turn [into a ghost] myself" (232).

But to content oneself with a generico-formal reason for the servants' superstition and loquacity, so as, in turn, to explain, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the relation between servants and ghosts, is to miss the entire socio-political dimension of the text.

2. A Critique of the Socio-Political Order

In other words, the privileged relation between servants and ghosts is not merely a generic trait; it is also the form through which we can glimpse a critique of the socio-political order. In Radcliffe's romances, in the wake of *Hamlet*, the rumors of ghosts are always related to crimes that have not been elucidated, to murders that have never been solved, and the ghost is always feared to be the revenge of the wronged, the return of Justice and of the Law that has been transgressed. Indeed in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the murder of the Marchioness constitutes the "original" crime whose result would be the presence of a ghost in Chateau-le-Blanc. In her previous romances, the lord of a castle is always a wrongful owner, and the mysterious noises associated with ghosts are always causes of anxiety for the castle usurpers. The lord tries to prevent people from investigating noises since, as in *A Sicilian Romance*, the lord knows the noises are those of a living person (his wife) held captive. The problem of ghosts therefore suggests that the owner is not legitimate, testifies to injustice as the foundation of the house, and by extension, of the social order. In *Udolpho* the ownership of Chateau-le-Blanc is not a usurpation but the castle that the Count has inherited has been the scene of an unresolved murder, so that the inheritance itself is clouded by the transgression of the law.

The ghost is therefore a threat to the *House* insofar as the house is founded on injustice or crime, and the ghost would be the return of justice, or, at the least, the sign that justice has not yet been done. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the threat represented by the ghost to the illegitimate stability of the house takes the form of a threat to the house lineage. Just talking about the ghost threatens the house-in-the-genealogical-sense : for example, after Ludovico's disappearance, the outcome of the Count's conversation with his son about Ludovico's supposèd abduction by ghosts, is that the son, Henri, loses his liveliness and comes to be associated with the grave. Right after the conversation about the ghost, we read, "Henri [....] lost much of his *vivacity* and his manners were particularly *grave*" (562). When father and son talk about the ghost that inhabits their house, the successor of the House figuratively risks dying, which constitutes a threat to the genealogy.

What is interesting in *The Mysteries* is that the ghosts that constitute a threat to the stability of the house turn out *not* to be the return of the law that had been transgressed. That is, the ghostly manifestations have nothing to do with righting the wrong done to the Marchioness. Rather, *the 'ghosts' turn out to be the intrusion in the house of the out-laws*, the pirates, the bandits, the robbers. Generally speaking, in eighteenth-century fiction, ghosts and banditti do both have in common that they each in their own way represent threats to the family and social order. For the ghost, as the possible return of a transgressed law, threatens the house and the genealogy while the banditti, as they transgress the law, disrupt the social order. In the specific case of *Udolpho*, these two threats become one. Ghosts *are* banditti. Whenever the banditti are mentioned, they are defined as ghosts : thus, the Pyrenees are called the *"haunt* of banditti" (501). Likewise, other spiritual outlaws are also ghosts : "here the scent of spirits (for the travelling smugglers, who *haunted* the Pyrenees, had made this rude people familiar with the use of liquors) was generally perceptible enough" (33). The phantom economy is doubly spiritual, for it is run by those who "haunt," i.e., are not

present, and who deal in "spirits." The way the text presents these "numerous banditti, [...] [these] band[s] of robbers [...] who *haunted* these wild regions" (38), makes them virtually identical to other out-siders who live inside Europe, such as gypsies, of whom it is said : "*numerous bands* of gipsies [...] at that period particularly *haunted* the wilds of the Pyrenees" (40). Thus, if the ghosts in Chateau-le-Blanc turn out to be bandits, it is not surprising since the bandits themselves are ghosts.

This turning of bandits into ghosts, and vice versa, is part of a process of a picturesque "idealness" that is itself the pendant of picturesque "idleness." First, banditti are in picturesque painting at most an *idealizing* device : from William Gilpin we know that to adorn a "horrid scene," as he puts it, "nothing could suit it better than a group of banditti".[12] Banditti are not *really* part of landscape ; they are added to it by the bourgeois-aristocratic leisured tourist ("They travelled leisurely," 42) who has learned how to construct picturesque views. Not *really* there, the banditti are only *ideally* present, "ideal" in the sense that it has throughout *The Mysteries of Udolpho* : that is, "ideal" in the sense of "like ghosts," like ghosts that are part of a picturesque landscape that is the pure invention of a bourgeois-aristocratic aesthetic. If such "ideal" banditti in picturesque painting are like ghosts, like what Count Villefort calls "ideal terrors" (548), non-real threats (like Valancourt whom St. Aubert shoots after mistaking him for a "banditti [...] who haunted these wild regions," 38), they are also like precisely the other element which Gilpin says makes a picturesque painting, namely "idle" peasants.[13] For "idleness" is the pendant of "idealness."

Second, then, labour is more picturesque when it is "idle," and this Gilpin says in the same breath as he says bandits should be added into landscapes :

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12. William Gilpin, *Northern Tour to the Lakes, etc. Made in 1772*. Published 1786. Vol. II, p. 44. Quoted in Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque. Studies in a Point of View* (Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1960), pp. 117-118.

13. Valancourt, no peasant, is however idle : he is a "wanderer" who disguises himself to have an "ostensible business" (32).

Moral and picturesque idea do not always coincide. [...] In a moral view, the industrious mechanic is a more pleasing object than the loitering peasant. But in a picturesque light, it is otherwise. The arts of industry are rejected; and even idleness, if I may so speak, adds dignity to a character. Thus the lazy cowherd resting on his pole ; or the peasant lolling on a rock, may be allowed in the grandest scenes. [...] The characters that are most suited to these scenes of grandeur [...] all [...] touch on the sublime. Figures in long, folding draperies ; gypsies ; banditti, and soldiers — not in modern regimentals ; but as Virgil paints them [...] [and] mixing with the magnificence, wildness or horror of the place, they properly coalesce.[14]

The moral and the aesthetic do not coincide, but the ideal (the idealized bandit) and the idle (the lazy labourer) do. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the gypsies and bandits which we see "haunting" the landscape are indistinguishable from the workers, the labourers, because both the "ideal" bandits and the "idle" workers are projections of the picturesque-seeking leisured viewer.[15] Moreover, when peasants are depicted in the text, they are not working (they dance, play music, are eating). Where their work is represented, they are themselves absent, as on the opening page of the romance : "From" the "windows" of the "chateau of Monsieur St. Aubert" "were seen the pastoral landscapes [...] gay with [...] vines, and plantations of olives" as well as "pastures" upon which there are "flocks, and herds, and simple cottages" but no labourers (1). Just like "ideal" bandits," labour is either "idle" or so "ideal" as never to be present. Moreover, all throughout her œuvre, Ann Radcliffe puns on the relation between the "idle" and the "ideal," page 255 in *The Mysteries* being

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14. *Op. cit.*, II, p. 44, Gilpin's emphasis.

15. Of course Emily paints banditti into her landscapes, suiting them as if she were Gilpin's Virgil, and spiritualizing them : "The figures seemed so well *suited* to the wildness [...] that [...] she sketched them for banditti, amid the mountain-view of her picture, when she had finished which, she was surprised to observe the *spirit* of her group" (276). For roughly the same scenario, cf. p. 402.

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one instance where the second edition corrected "ideal terrors" with "idle terrors."[16]

Ghosts are bandits, bandits ghosts. Moreover, the privileged relation of servants to ghosts that I sketched above aligns servants both with ghosts and with banditti. If servants are in a special relation to ghosts, and if ghosts are in fact bandits, then servants have a special proximity with such outlaws. What is interesting in this common paradigm to which they all belong is that it testifies to the threat that the servants represent to the ruling order. Now, this threat of servants to the House can never be seen in any radical manifestation. Rather, as John Richetti has pointed out, regarding the representation of servants in eighteenth-century fiction, it is nearly impossible for the servant to exist in open rebellion against the Lord; the servant is, by the definition which governs the representation of the servant in fiction, an obedient, behaving figure. The servant would not be a servant if it were represented as openly rebellious or belligerantly disobedient. We cannot therefore see represented rebellion as such.[17]

However, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, servants do *threaten* to rebel against the masters, and it is no coincidence if it is

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16. In the context of colonizing land usurpations of the colonized, Frantz Fanon writes, "[t]he native's laziness is the conscious sabotage of the colonial machine; on the biological plane it is a remarkable system of auto-protection; and in any case it is a sure brake upon the seizure of the whole country by the occupying power." This laziness-as-sabotage is a form of "idleness" or idealness. Servants are those whose property has been confiscated by what Thompson called a "patrician banditti," or by a colonizing power : Jean-François Lyotard's suspects that the servants of Swift's satiric "Directions to Servants" are Irish, and work for an English master. Lyotard writes that "[w]hat gets thought above stairs by the master, and I assume that Swift's master is English, bears little relationship to what gets done (written) below stairs by the servants, who are presumably Irish. Or if it does, it is pure chance," "Forward," *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. x.

17. I am speaking relative to genres such as the Gothic romance. One might find instances of servant rebellion in Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift's guide-books on servants.

precisely on the topic of ghosts that they do so. Servants disobey the rule of silence imposed by the masters about the ghost : as we have already seen, the rumors spread by the servants about the ghost constitute a trangression of the masters' injunctions to be silent (Emily's injunctions to Annette, the Count's orders, accompanied by threats of physical punishment). The servants' speech is thus a first form of threat to the order. The very act of a servant speaking at all if not addressed is already out of order (Annette speaking without being addressed by her mistress, 629); servants continuing to speak after having been told to shut up is another rebuke to authority which can almost get the most vener- able among them dismissed from service and even make them lose their pension (Emily threatens to do so to Theresa, 527, 537), but servants talking about ghosts is a direct affront and indeed an outright disrespect for the Lord-Master's authority (for e.g., 232, 528, 530, 537, 538).

Furthermore, the fear generated by the ghost leads the servants to group themselves and form collective entities : during the ghost scare at Chateau-le-Blanc, the servants are said to have *"all assembled* in their hall" (538) and "they refused to go *singly* to any part of the castle" (538). Keeping in mind the danger that mob assembly represented throughout the eighteenth cen- tury, but especially in its last years, one measures the threat implied by the grouping together of the servants, united in one cause, that of protecting themselves and resisting the master in the form of disobedience (536). In that respect, the servants as collective and therefore threatening entity in *The Mysteries*, become like the bandits, who throughout the eighteenth century tend to be represented in groups (and who, in *Udolpho*, are never called in any other way than "first ruffian" or "second ruffian," "first robber" or at most by a first "Christian" name, "Jacques," 608-615). The collectivity of servants, gypsies, and bandits is partly owing to their lack of proper name.[18] None of them have proper names, and therefore no genealogy, no House.

The threat represented by the collective entity of servants increases as they threaten to leave the masters : for e.g., after one of the maids claims to have seen an apparition, we read "the terror of the servants increases to such an excess that several of them determined to leave the chateau, and requested their *discharge* of the Count" (543). Discharged by the Count, they would become outside any social control. The term "discharge" is interesting, for "discharge" here means, "release from service" (as opposed to Ludovico who, we learn at the same time is "now in the service of the Count," 538); the "service" is a certain con- tract and duty, and their discharge would therefore put the servants outside contract and duty. Furthermore, discharge has an electrical energy sense, and one "discharges" a gun when one fires it. Releasing these servants, who are charged up with fear of ghosts, is letting into the environment dangerous, uncontrolled elements who could then become marginal figures. Indeed, after Ludovico's disappearance from the north chamber, the servants do leave the castle : "Terrors of the Count's servants increased to an excess, that occasioned many of them to quit the mansion immediately, and the rest remained only till others could be procured to supply their places" (563). The servants thus represent threats to the stability of the house and to the ruling order insofar as they break the rule of silence, challenge the legitimacy of the master, group themselves in mobs, disobey orders, and function as loose charges.[19]

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18. I have pursued this argument at much greater length in "Vérite animale et hétéro-biographique d'Ann Radcliffe," *L'Animal autobiogra- phique. Autour de Jacques Derrida* (Galilée, 1998).

19. Definitions of "discharge" from the 4th (and expanded) edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* (1773) do not include the "electrical" sense, but Rad- cliffe, as p. 408 testifies, was familiar with "electricity" ("See the Abbé Ber- thelon on Electricity," she writes in a footnote). Johnson's definitions do include the "discharging of a gun" as well as of a "servant" : "4. To unload a gun. 'A conceit runneth abroad, that there should be a white powder, which will discharge a piece without noise' (Bacon); 'The galleys also did oftentimes, out of their prows, discharge their great pieces against the city' (Knolles's *History*); 'We discharged a pistol, and had the sound returned upon us fifty-six times, though the air was foggy' (Addison on Italy); 5. To

Finally, through the emblematic figure of Ludovico, the servants also embody the possibility of taking over the power of the count. Indeed, when Ludovico offers to watch, during a night, in the haunted rooms, in order to kill the ghost and thereby save the count, he asks for arms : "I wish to have arms, that I may be equal to my enemy, if he should appear" (544). If Count Villefort were to accept the offer, and he will do so after considerable hesitation, the Count would be placing the power (the power of the guns, the power of the powder, of the discharge) in the hands of the servant.

So, if, for essential generic, historical and ideological reasons, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* never represents explicit and overt rebellion of servants against masters, what I have tried to trace is a latent current of rebellion and threat to the established order, a threat which the servants embody and which provides a socio-political reading of their privileged relation to ghosts (and to outlaws).

3. Radcliffe's ideological position

Finally, I want to locate, in this representation of the social order, the ideological position of the writer who appears as such in the text and concludes the novel speaking in her name. It is often said of Ann Radcliffe that she is conservative, and the ending of *The Mysteries* can be read in that direction : the bandits are locked up, the good servants are rewarded, the house keeps functioning and the lineage seems to be guaranteed.[20] It

clear a debt by payment. 'Death of one person can be paid but once, And that she has discharged' (Shakesp. *Ant. and Cleopatra*). 8. To set free from obligation. 'If one man's fault could discharge another man of his duty, there would be no place left for the common offices of society' (L'Estrange). 12. To divest of any office or employment ; to dismiss from service : as, he discharged his steward ; the soldier was discharged. 13. To dismiss ; to release; to send away from any business or appointment. 'Discharge your pow'rs unto their several counties' (Shakesp.)."

20. Robert Miles provides an overview of studies which argue for the conservatism of Radcliffe, prior to developing his pertinent critique of

seems to me, though, that despite this very generically conformist ending, a number of elements construct correspondances between Ann Radcliffe, the servants and the ghosts. In other words, what I want to suggest is that Radcliffe inscribes herself (I mean the real person Ann Radcliffe) in the paradigm of those who constitute the threat to the ruling order rather than in the paradigm of the ruling order.

Just as the Count tells Ludovico, the best (and the most dangerous as we have seen) of his servants, that his courage "*shall not go unrewarded*" (544), the scriptor ends the novel with the statement that neither has her effort been vain, "*nor is the writer unrewarded*" (672). Not only are the writer and the servant in the novel linked by a symmetrical reward, but furthermore Ludovico at the end of the novel is made a "ste[-]ward" (672).[21] When we keep in mind that Ann Radcliffe's maiden name was Ward, we cannot but read these rewards as well as the steward as elements which link the servant and the writer through the name of Ward. Obviously there are also links that can be made between Ann Ward-Radcliffe and Emily, not only because, as Maurice Lévy points out, Emily is a "ward" throughout the novel, but also because of certain biographical resemblances.[22] My point is not to deny a possible identification between Radcliffe and Emily. It is to make the position of the writer more complex and to suggest also an identification between the writer and the servant. If the scriptor is said perhaps not to go "unrewarded," if Ludovico

such studies. Cf. *Ann Radcliffe. The Great Enchantress* (Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 149-73 and 180.

21. Old Carlo is also a "steward." As I show in "Vérité animale et hétéro-biographique," all the "rewards," "stewards," "cowards," "forwards, afterwards, upwards," etc., harbor the narrator, conceal a socio-political position at odds with the usual expectations about Ann Radcliffe.

22. "Montoni is a *guard* more than a guardian, and whoever has the ambition of approaching his 'ward' may count on meeting with his aggressive vigilance." Maurice Lévy, *Ann Radcliffe. The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Didier Érudition, CNED, 1996), p. 140. Pierre Arnaud's wonderful study, *Ann Radcliffe et le fantastique. Essai de psychobiographie* (Aubier, 1976), provides the biographical resemblances.

receives the promise that he shall not go "unrewarded," it is interesting to note Ludovico's response to this promise of "reward" and what he in fact receives : "I desire no reward, your Excellenza ... but I wish to have arms.... Give me a sword, my lord Count" (544). Rather than a "reward," Ludovico desires a "sword." Although the "sword" eventually ends up in the hands of the Count (he lets "fall the bloody sword he held," 614), what Ludovico obtains is less the power of the "s-word" than it is that of "word-s." Ludovico has a special relation not only to the "reward," and thus to the scriptor-author, but also by his name to "words" and the possibility of the "re-word," that is to say, a special relation to their "ludicity" or playfulness, and thus again to the writer.[23]

The identification between Radcliffe and the servants is reinforced by the relation established in the text between the nar-

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23. The name "Ludovico" suggests the "ludic," as Jean-Marie Fournier pointed out to me. I explore the "ludicity" of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, of words such as "allusion," "illusion" and "delusion" in "Epiphanic ~~Reading~~ in the Works of Ann Radcliffe." *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Epiphany*, ed. Wim Tigges (DGR Studies in English Literature. Rodopi, Amsterdam, Atlanta, Ga., forthcoming, 1999).

It belongs to another essay to explore the verbal playfulness of Ann Radcliffe. Suffice it to say that the poems are where the poetic, the ludic, the impossible, are possible, i.e., where an impossible imaginary, manifest at the level of the signifier, flourishes. This impossible imaginary, or, the supernatural *not* explained, flourishes in the temporary absence of the symbolic law (or the "supernatural explained") ; thus it is that the poems are where Radcliffe's punning is most *lavishly* at play, although it spills over into the prose. All the transgressions of language in words like "Illiad illapsed" for "elapsed," the work on the signifier "lave" and "love" as well as the sexual fantasies in poems like "The Glow-Worm" (16-17), the "Sea Nymph" (179-181), the same sexual fantasies expressed through the play on "s" and "t" sounds in the "Rondeau" (184), chiasmi such as "*Luke* [...] *trusts* [...] *treacherous* [...] *clue*" in "The Pilgrim" (415) testify to a sexual and poetic *economy* of language. The poetic function is also what disperses *Count* Morano and *Count* de Villefort in words such as the "*contour*" (184) of Emily who becomes the hybrid sex of Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen, or in "countenance" (184, 570), where the latter Count's losing his "tenants" is told in his losing "countenance," set up by an earlier "the Count's tenants" (504).

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rator and the servants. On several occasions, the narrator of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* explicitly appears in the narration (when, for example, the narrator states, "we now return to Valancourt," 291, or "we leave him," 295). At the end of the novel this narrator is identified as a writer, as "the weak hand that has recorded this tale" (672). Just as this narrator-writer is an omniscient narrator, so does Annette recurrently know more than she is expected to and more than her mistress (she is always ahead of Emily, knows things before Emily does, and knows things which Emily believes are confidential).[24] The servant's knowledge that appears to be omniscient functions symmetrically to the omniscient narrator's knowledge. Furthermore, the omniscient narrator recurrently seems to take Annette's side. For e.g., after Emily aims to give lessons to Annette telling her to 'guard' herself against ghost stories because they lead to the '*misery* of superstition,' the narrator intervenes on Annette's behalf : "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" (278). "Might have smiled' indicates that Annette *did not smile* ("might have" indicates an omniscient narrator ; "may have" would have indicated a limited narrator, i.e., perhaps Annette did smile). Therefore, "might have" shows the narrator's point of view. The narrator clearly takes sides with Annette, against Emily. Emily, who always smiles smugly at Annette, is here ridiculed by the narrator who defends Annette. As the narrator puts it elsewhere, taking sides with Annette : "This honest girl's suspicions [...] were perfectly just" (353). When the narrator writes, "Annette now infected" "Emily" "with her own terrors" (239), such a statement is a comment on the narrator's own desire relative to the reader (especially since

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24. "Emily was somewhat surprised, on the following day, to find that Annette had heard of Madame Montoni's confinement in the chamber over the portal, as well as of her purposed visit there, on the approaching night. That the circumstance, which Barnardine had so solemnly enjoined her to conceal, he had himself told to so indiscreet an hearer as Annette, appeared very improbable" (341).

"infection" here should not be read without its being associated yet contrasted with "affection," the ethos of the St. Aubert's and of certain comfortable eighteenth-century readers). There are other scenes where metatextually Annette is staged as the narrator of *Udolpho*, and Emily as its reader. Annette defends the narrator against the objections of the Emily, the implied reader, who objects to the narrator's commentary upon the action which disallows the illusion of the story. Emily tells Annette (the narrator) that her frequent interruptions will destroy the reader's suspension of disbelief :

> Emily : "if once" "the fairies" [i.e.,the make-believe of the story itself] "hear your [Annette's, the storyteller's] voice, the whole scene will vanish in an instant."
> Annette : "it shall not be my fault if the show vanishes".
> Emily : "I will venture to say, it will not be your fault if the enchantment will vanish."
> Annette : "Well, ma'amselle, that is saying more than I expected of you" (231).

That the narrator, or Ann Radcliffe, is identifiable with the servants, may explain not only why Annette is a "little Ann," but also how the names "Annette" and "Old Carlo" function. Although they are not the only places where she does so, the names "Annette" and "Old Carlo" are where Ann Radcliffe cryptonymically signs her own name : "Ann" in "Ann-ette" is obvious; only slightly less obviously, the "d Carl" gives "Radcl" (Ol-*d Carl*-o), and the two chiasmi of "ette" and "Ol lo" in "Ann-*ette*" and in "*Ol*-d Car-*lo*" evoke the chiasmus in Radcliffe's name itself, "iffe" (vowel – consonant – consonant – vowel). And, after all, Annette and Old Carlo *are* the two narrative principles of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for Annette stands for "divulgation" and Old Carlo for the "silencing" of secrets, just as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* operates by an exaggerated alternation between revealing and guarding secrets.

This identification between the inscribed writer of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and the servants may explain why in this *romance* the real hero and heroines are the servants : it is

Ludovico and Annette who are the heroic figures of the romance. Indeed, it is Ludovico and Annette who are destined for the marriage of this Gothic romance, even more than Valancourt and Emily. That Ludovico is the hero is obvious : he frees Emily, Annette and Dupont from Udolpho, he also springs Count Villefort, Baron St. Foix and Lady Blanche from their being held captive by the bandits. It is moreover obvious that Valancourt is a total failure, a failure that is ironic because he is explicitly *the only one of the ruling ranks* who is "friends" with the servants. The servant Theresa reports Valancourt saying, I quote the text, "'you will sometimes remember me your friend. Yes — those were his very words — *me your friend !*' Emily still paced the room, without seeming to hear what Theresa said" (623). If Valancourt is friends with servants, Emily herself never considers Annette to be a "friend," she disdains her, even if she refers to her as her "affectionate servant." When Emily thinks of her friends alive and dead, they include only her nuclear family and her clone family (Villefort, Blanche). The high ranks are never "friends" with servants, but Valancourt is an exception. The reason the unlanded *Val*ancourt is "friends" with the lower ranks, the servants, and is the *only* one of the high ranks to be friends, is that he represents as such the *interval*. Almost every time the word "inter*val*" is used, around one hundred times, the name "*Val*ancourt" is in very close proximity. For a few examples between pages 400 and 500 : "Valancourt," "interval" (424), "Valancourt," "interval" (438), "interval," "Valancourt" (442), "interval," "Valancourt," "Ludovico" (445, the "l," "v" and "c" shared by the names are no accident), "Valancourt," "interval," "rival," "arrival" (488). Once the slippage occurs from just "interval" and "Valancourt" to all the other "lav" or "val" sounds, there is at that point an infinite dispersal of them throughout the text among "Valancourt," "valley," "La Vallée" (416), "Chevalier," "Valancourt" (443), "vale," "veil," "Valancourt" (446), "rival," "Valancourt," "La Vallée" (460), "Carnival," "arrival," "vessels" (462), "Valancourt," "arrival," "La Voisin" (493). The romance draws to a close in the

euphony of "vale," "lave," "veiled" and "Valancourt" (666-667). There is no stopping this breakdown which contaminates words across a spectrum that spans from "love" through "veil" to "evil" (to mention only these), and which is the principle of *espacement*, "*différance*," or that which structures while undoing oppositions, such as those between "serious" spectrality and "unserious" spectrality, as well as between masters and servants.[25] Related to his literary cousins *Val*mont (Laclos) and *Val*cour (Sade), not to mention his successor Cler*val* (Mary Shelley), or his aunt in the text, Madame Clair*val*, *Val*ancourt is not just, as has often been noted, he who "courts" La Vallée, but is himself the principle of the *interval* in the text — between good and evil, the rich and poor, high rank and servant class, and even between homosexuality (his "deep play among men") and heterosexuality ("deep play" with Countess Lacleur).

If there is a slippage in the hero from Valancourt (high ranking loser) to his counterpart of Ludovico (low ranking winner), so, too, is there one from Emily to Annette, from Emily as figure of reader to Annette as figure of narrator (as we saw). Whereas Emily is passive, immobile, always waiting for information from Annette, Annette is always active, finding information, creating the story : it is Annette, not Emily, who *serves* to forward the plot. Like the servants, the narrator or writer does the work, whereas the reader, like the ruling class, waits until it is served. The heroic status of the servants suggests that the narrator, identified with the servant, asserts superiority over the reader, associated with the ruling class.

Although Emily is often represented as reading, or more accurately, as *trying* to read, she in fact always fails to read. The

model for reading is, in fact, provided by Ludovico. Unlike Emily as failed reader, Ludovico is able to read "The Provençal Tale" successfully. Perhaps a successful reading of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* must be a reading which takes as its clue the servants, a reading that reads from the perspective of the servants, a reading ludically keyed by Ludovico. For it is the servants, the "stewards" and figures like Annette and Old Carlo, who are the *countersignature*, the authenticating, confirming and secret signature of "Ann Ward Radcliffe." The truth, *vérité* or *Wahrheit* of the "supernatural" that is supposedly "explained" is rather that it is warded, guarded, kept cryptically among an unacknowledged economy of bandits, servants and workers that can only be hidden behind an acceptable, bourgeois spectrality. And indeed, the servants have a special relation to ghosts, and the narrator/ writer has a ghostly presence among the servants. The servants, figure of the rewarded narrator, are the ghosts and the will, as it were, of the narrator/writer in the text.

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25. It is this sort of verbal play worthy of Shakespeare on the part of Radcliffe which, in my view, goes beyond a psychological "poetics of Gothic" suggested by Anne Williams, and which, moreover, renders entirely inadequate to Radcliffean writing the notion of the "failure of Gothic" put forth by Elizabeth Napier. Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness. A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago UP, 1995) ; Elizabeth Napier, *The Failure of Gothic. Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-century Literary Form* (Oxford Clarendon, 1987).