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FEMALE POWER AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN EARLY GOTHIC LITERATURE
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ABSTRACT

FEMALE POWER AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN EARLY GOTHIC LITERATURE

BY AURORA FINLEY

Early gothic literature often goes overlooked as sensationalist writing dependent on a repetitive plot and character types. However, Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or The Moor*, offer insight into political and social issues of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This essay examines the use of the supernatural in early gothic literature and the way in which it effects, possesses and even controls female characters within the novels. By analyzing the heroines of each novel as a basis for the study, their varied fates in relation to the supernatural make evident that there is a gendered power dynamic. The male characters' abilities to use the supernatural to their advantage show further how the supernatural works in favor of masculinity. Thus, early gothic literature presents the idea that the supernatural works inherently against women, symbolizing the oppressive and patriarchal chaos of the everyday.

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Introduction

In 1795, Matthew Lewis published his novel, *The Monk*, which would soon be one of the most controversial novels of the 18th century¹. Focused upon two young women, Agnes and Antonia, the novel describes each of their dramatic downfalls initiated by superstitions and actual supernatural happenings. Though the content itself was shocking to readers, the most surprising aspect was the novel's perverse use of gothic characteristics already established within the works of Ann Radcliffe. Radcliffe, who published *The Mysteries of Udolpho* just a year before *The Monk*, had already standardized the gothic heroine, (sometimes termed the "Radcliffean heroine") as well as the use of the supernatural within the genre. Radcliffe's works specifically rationalize the supernatural and dismiss it within the denouement, and, the heroines, as a result, may then find their happy ending. For example, Emily, the heroine of *Udolpho*, fails to find her own happy ending until all the possible supernatural happenings she discovers are explained rationally. Multiple critics point out Lewis purposefully challenges Radcliffe's works within *The Monk*, by making explicit what Radcliffe merely implies². A little over ten years later *Zofloya, or The Moor* was published by Charlotte Dacre, exaggerating the elements of both Radcliffe and Lewis. Dacre, yet again, complicates the relationship between the Radcliffean heroine and the supernatural by creating a villainous heroine, Victoria, who adheres to the qualities of the gothic heroine but who also uses the supernatural to destroy another gothic heroine character, Lilla. Interestingly, the more

¹ Michael Gamer brings attention to the fact that Lewis, by pressure of his publisher released an edited 4th edition that omitted such scenes as Matilda and Ambrosio's sex and Antonia's rape (1047).

² Lauren Fitzgerald recognizes this aspect when she states that Lewis forces "Radcliffe to say what she did not intend to say" (167-168).

heightened the supernatural circumstances are in these works, the less power the heroines have over their lives, bodies and, sometimes, minds.

Modern scholars retrospectively identified the character-type of the Radcliffean heroine. Robert Ignatius Le Tellier points out that the gothic heroine was first founded in *The Castle of Otranto*, within the characters of Matilda and Isabella. However, he states that the added dimensions of Radcliffe's heroines, such as the use of common sense, establish them as rounded characters (53). The Radcliffean heroine exists as a composite based on Radcliffe's novels considered as a whole. Radcliffean heroines are young, virtuous women who embody "beauty and morality" (Le Tellier, 50). Diane Long Hoeveler states they tend to have a "convoluted relationship with [their] parents", either being completely orphaned or partially so by the death of a father or entrapment of a mother (*Gothic Feminism* 53). The parental relationship is particularly relevant because it usually drives the heroine on her journey, as well as guides her actions and morals within the works. Hoeveler also expresses that these heroines are painted as "innocent victims," usually entrapped by patriarchal figures and unable to act for themselves (*Gothic Feminism* 14). The last distinguishing piece of the Radcliffean heroine is the tendency to indulge in art, such as poetry or drawing, which, as E.J. Clery points out, allows them to use their imagination as a resource. Specifically, Clery describes the gothic heroine as possessing an "artistic sensibility" and moderating "passions into sentiment" (61). Significantly, the element of imagination adherent to the creative process results in an over sensitive state, emphasizing the aspect of sensibility. In fact, sensibility extends beyond its use as a form of artistic expression to become a significant part of how the heroines relate to the supernatural. These characteristics of what a gothic heroine consists of will be used to identify who the gothic heroines of each work are, as to better specify the gendered relationship between female power and the supernatural.

The gothic heroine remains sensible throughout the various works, either in language describing her as such, or in actions that depict sensibility. Janet Todd points out that the heroine “is characterized by superlative sensibility, conveyed in a series of stylized actions and physical demonstrations” (119). Similarly, Terry Castle describes heroines of having “supercharged sensibility” as does Geary (122, 41). Many critics focus on Emily, from *Udolpho*, when considering the idea of sensibility within a heroine. Le Tellier describes Emily as “a paragon of pure and sensible womanhood” and other critics use her for the basis of their argument on sensibility (52). Emily, therefore, stands as a perfect example to explore the relationship between the Radcliffean heroine and sensibility, and will serve as a prototype to which the other heroines may be compared. However, the ambiguous meaning of sensibility, today and in the eighteenth century, makes it difficult to identify this characteristic in the heroines. Thus, the definition, for this argument’s sake, shall be established given critical and temporal context.

Sensibility became a particularly popular word during the late eighteenth century. As Maximillian E. Novak and Anne Mellor point out: feminist writers of the time were in a “fierce debate over whether sensibility was a positive or negative attribute for women” (15). Thus, it became a very pertinent topic within Radcliffe’s works and those who followed. Sensibility could have a variety of meanings, ranging from rational thought and “good sense” to sentimentality, as Donna Heiland considers (11). Unfortunately, no proper agreement exists on which meaning the late eighteenth-century sensibility was rooted in. According to Janet Todd, it “came to denote the faculty of feeling, the capacity for extremely refined emotion and a quickness to display compassion for suffering.” Todd also describes sensibility in this context as being physically based and shown through acts like crying, fainting, kneeling and blushing (7, 112). Such actions help to identify when a character is overcome with sensibility, even when not directly stated as so. More

specifically, Nelson Smith states late eighteenth-century authors used it to mean ““sense of sensitivity”” (578). This definition of sensibility means that the characters described as so will be more susceptible to their surroundings. Within this state of heightened susceptibility, Nelson Smith points out that a character may become “more susceptible to the irrational, to superstition” (577). Some critics even claim that sensibility poses danger due to Emily’s susceptibility and heightened imagination that allow her to think herself into a “hysteria” (Poovey, 322). Thus, sensibility, which either becomes important through its presence, or in Zofloya’s case, absence, defines the extent to which the heroines are affected by the supernatural within their narratives.

The supernatural was not a new aspect of literature when the gothic genre emerged, but it did drastically grow in popularity. Presenting itself as religious and haunting elements, the supernatural effects each novel differently. Terry Castle discusses the way in which the eighteenth century ““invented the uncanny”” because of the recent enlightenment and, ironically, elevation in rational thought (8). Similarly, Castle comments on the way in which the “phantasmatic” juxtaposes with a plot seemingly realistic, and how that specific relationship makes the works uncanny (4). Yet, Castle quickly points out that Radcliffe will explain the supernatural happenings within her novels, rather than allowing them to simply just exist (121). The supernatural effects the character of Emily specifically, but this power over her only exists until the explanation of the supernatural. However, once the clarification takes place, Emily regains her power both mentally, physically, and even fiscally. While Radcliffe’s works adhere to this, Lewis and Dacre’s differ greatly. In stark contrast to Radcliffe, Lewis not only allows the supernatural to exist in a realistic setting, but he reaffirms it against skeptical views. Robert Geary describes Lewis’s extreme plot as a “frightening reversal of [Radcliffe’s] techniques” (60). Such excesses mean that Lewis’s heroines, Antonia and Agnes, struggle more severely than Emily. Agnes, similarly to Emily, only

manages to find happiness after a significant moment of rationality, after years of being a victim to superstition. On the other hand, Antonia, a constant victim of actual supernatural happenings, unfortunately, never finds a reasonable happy ending. *Zofloya* takes it another step further, by mirroring many of the characters and relationship of Radcliffe and Lewis while simultaneously allowing the supernatural to exist against all odds and revealing the devil as Zofloya himself. As a result, Victoria, though originally in a position of power, loses her authority and becomes a possession of Zofloya. Instances like these suggest a gender-biased power dynamic between the victimized heroine and the oppressive supernatural, further demonstrated when compared with male characters of each novel.

Each of the works I am discussing offers not only a heroine who struggles against the supernatural, but also a male, usually a villain, who uses the supernatural to his advantage. This juxtaposition focuses attention on the gendered power dynamic that the gothic supernatural operates under. Though this specific topic receives very little critical attention, Jessica Volz recognizes that Radcliffe specifically “departs from man-made power and natural contexts of patriarchal power to show that women are ‘framed’ within the obscure” (124). The framing of women in the obscure presents itself in not just Radcliffe’s novel, but Lewis’s and Dacre’s as well. Thus, the male-favored supernatural remains evident within the writing, not just present in the oppression of the heroines but the individual relationships between male characters and superstition or the actual supernatural. In *Udolpho* the banditti, an overtly masculine entity in Italy, relies on others’ superstition in order to help them use a “haunted” part of an estate to hide their stolen goods. Similarly, the accounts of *Udolpho* repeatedly describe it as both supernatural and Emily’s prison, furthering the patriarchal oppression of Emily in conjunction with the supernatural. Within *The Monk*, Ambrosio uses magic to take physical possession of Antonia, resulting in her

tragic rape and death. In Agnes's storyline her brother, Lorenzo, uses reason to sidestep superstition, resulting in the rescue of his sister and the finding of his lover, Antonia. *Zofloya* complicates this dynamic as Victoria manages to successfully use magic for some period of time in order to kill both her husband, Berenza, and Lilla, an extremely feminine Radcliffean hero type. However, Victoria while masculinized enough to use the supernatural, ultimately discovers Zofloya, a disguised Satan, controls her the entire time. Within each novel, gothic heroines fall victims to a larger, patriarchal force of the supernatural. Such presence of the patriarchal and male-favored side of the supernatural elevates the claim that women, in comparison, are victims in this power dynamic.

While scholars explore the subjects of the supernatural, heroines, and varying gender-dynamics within gothic literature, they fail to sufficiently address the complicated relationship between the three. As a result, the gap forms in understanding how gothic literature uses the supernatural not just as a way of entertainment, but to make a larger political statement on the position of women in a patriarchal society. I hope to challenge the way in which heroines within gothic literature are assumed as passive victims as Hoeveler claims, and instead propose that their inability to act stems from a large exterior patriarchal force disguised as the supernatural (*Gothic Feminism* 14). In order to do so I will be looking first at Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and how, as a heroine, her heightened sense of sensibility causes her to lose power over her body and mind in scenes of supernatural happenings. Such relationship will be juxtaposed with that of the banditti and the castle of Udolpho, in which they are able to use belief in the supernatural to their advantage. Subsequently, I will examine *The Monk's* examples of the Radcliffean heroine: Antonia and Agnes. Antonia's susceptibility to the supernatural ultimately leads to her downfall, as seen in her graphic rape and murder scene as implemented by Ambrosio, a man who manages to use the

supernatural to accomplish such devastation. Alternately, Agnes, an unfortunate sacrifice to superstition, must suffer through starvation and entrapment until her brother manages to use reason to save her. The final text, *Zofloya, or the Moor*, contains Victoria, who loses power of possession over others and becomes a possession of Zofloya through her use of the supernatural. Alternatively, another strong woman of the text, Megalena, fails to accomplish her ultimate goal, but, since she did not come in contact with the supernatural, her consequences were minimal in comparison to Victoria. Each of these texts' heroines, and their male counterparts, will show the gendered power dynamic in use of the supernatural, and specifically how women lose power, either physically or mentally, when faced with the supernatural, whereas men characters gain power in the same circumstances.

The Mysteries of Udolpho- Ann Radcliffe

Emily's relationship to the supernatural in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* establishes an overarching struggle between women and the supernatural as a paradigmatic feature of Gothic literature. Emily, the heroine of *Udolpho*, advocates for reason above all else, making her one of Radcliffe's most admired heroines, especially important to debunking the "irrational woman" stereotype of the late eighteenth century³. However, despite Emily's insistence upon using reason, she becomes debilitated by terror during scenes she perceives to be supernatural. Emily embodies the traditional Radcliffean heroine and perfectly demonstrates what the character-type consists of. Similarly, Emily is also highly prone to sensibility, which results in her being more susceptible to the supernatural. This weakness towards sensibility allows for her to become more susceptible to and terrified of the supernatural, resulting in her loss of power. Thus, she loses power in face of the supernatural, only to regain it when she recovers the rationality she once depended on. Emily's struggle with the supernatural is made more evident when juxtaposed with the patriarchal and supernatural force of the castle of Udolpho, as well as the advantage of superstition the overtly masculine banditti takes. Understanding Emily's place within the supernatural power structure as a classical gothic heroine eases seeing how the other heroines compare in their relationships to the supernatural.

Radcliffe's works established the character type of the gothic heroine. Thus, Emily, her most famous heroine, perfectly embodies what the character consists of. Emily's introduction states she looks beautiful, specifically possessing a "delicacy of features, and...blue eyes, full of tender sweetness" (9). Emily's creativity also significantly describes her character as she writes

- ³ Allen Grove recognizes Radcliffe's works "challenge stereotypes of female irrationality and overwrought sensibility by presenting their heroines as reasoning" (434).

poetry and draws scenes of nature. While each of these establish her under the previously discussed notions of what a gothic heroine consists of, her family life makes her so important. Within the first few chapters of Emily's narrative she loses not just her mother, but her father as well. In fact, her father's death ultimately establishes the importance of sensibility explicitly in the novel, as well as propels Emily's journey to live in the castle of Udolpho. This journey, combined with Emily's constant focus on reason, complicates how she addresses superstitions and strange encounters, initiating the power issue between herself and the supernatural.

In order to understand how a reasonable young woman like Emily develops a susceptibility to supernatural terrors, we must look at the way sensibility not only prominently characterizes Emily, but shifts the way she reacts to her surroundings. In using the definition for sensibility established earlier, "sense of 'sensitivity,'" we can see how it heightened Emily's awareness and, eventually, terror (N. Smith 578). The definition established by Smith makes sense in the context of Emily's father, St. Aubert's, last wishes: "Beware of priding yourself on the gracefulness of sensibility; if you yield to this vanity, your happiness is lost forever. Always remember how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude, than the grace of sensibility" (79). Sensibility's juxtaposition to fortitude, described as "moral strength or courage" implies sensibility is, in comparison, a weakness (OED). Not only does this negative connotation cling to the term throughout the work, but sensibility directly connects to belief in the supernatural. During the disappearance of the servant, Ludovico, Emily's mind "reduce[s]...to a state of sensibility, which rendered it more liable to the influence of superstition in general," ultimately leading to the belief that it was a supernatural disappearance, when in reality it was simply the banditti (530). Thus, sensibility within *Udolpho* forms into a weakness associated with sensitivity of the mind resulting in a susceptibility to superstitious beliefs. Emily's heightened awareness makes her more

vulnerable to the control of the supernatural when she comes in contact with, what she perceives as supernatural happenings.

Some critics have pointed out that Emily's sensibility dangerously affects her not just mentally, but physically as well. One critic writes that "her imagination not only makes her more susceptible to superstition, it also increases her sense of self-delusion; though her sense of hearing and seeing at night seem overly developed, she has considerable difficulty in seeing things clearly, literally and metaphorically" (N. Smith 585). Emily continually imagines the image of Valancourt or the banditti during her travels, due to her heightened imagination rather than senses. These images derive from Emily's state of vulnerability to not just superstitions but her imagination in general, due to her sensibility. The same critic points out that the supernatural terrors "[result] from Emily's being a high-strung heroine susceptible to the dangers of sensibility" (N. Smith 583). In this way, Emily's active imagination and disfunction of her senses not only exposes her to superstition, but undermines her general reliance on reason. This physical disconnect continues more specifically in relation to how Emily's sensibility heightens her senses to the supernatural, while the terrors elicited by the supernatural make her physically senseless.

Emily's susceptibility to sensibility makes her more vulnerable to superstitions and the supernatural. When Emily's reason distorts, she imagines more supernatural scenes and, as a result of both heightened senses and imagination, becomes more terrified by her surroundings. The relationship between Emily and terror causes a power dynamic in which Radcliffe's language allows terror to take possession and control of Emily. In one scene, the connection between Emily's sensibility and control of terror is very clear:

Her mind, long harassed by distress, now yielded to imaginary terrors; she trembled to look into the obscurity of her spacious chamber, and feared she knew not what; a state of mind, which continued so long, that she would have called up Annette,

her aunt's woman, had her fears permitted her to rise from her chair, and to cross the apartment (211).

This passage illustrates how sensibility makes Emily prone to experiencing “imaginary terrors.” Despite Emily having no reason to fear and fails to know what exactly she is afraid of, she still feels overwhelmed with this “state of mind”. A personified fear gains power over Emily as it does not “[permit] her to rise from her chair,” setting a precedent echoed in later scenes where Emily, overwhelmed by emotion, usually fear or terror, loses power over both her body and mind.

As the novel progresses, Emily becomes more regularly overpowered by her fear as a result of a supposed supernatural incident. In one instance Emily becomes “struck with superstitious awe, it is certain she was so much affected, that she had nearly fainted” (495). Emily's heightened feeling directly links to superstition, causing her to almost completely lose consciousness. At other times, Emily is explicitly described as sensible before being frozen: “She was sensible of what passed, but the extreme languor of her spirits did not permit her to speak, or move, or even to feel any distinct fear” (330). In this instance, Emily's sensibility acts as the agent responsible for depriving her of both her physical and mental abilities, and although she feels no “distinct fear” the implication exists that fear produces her inability to move. Multiple scenes occur in which not only does Emily's fear stop her from doing something, but terror takes power away from her. In one instance while Emily fears the noises she hears from her staircase, “her heart [becomes] faint with terror” resulting in terror “depriv[ing] her of the power of discrimination, as well as of that of utterance” (247). A terror rooted in Emily's inability to distinguish the possibly supernatural noises within and around her chamber strips her of power. In another example, terror affects Emily to such an extent it “seize[s] her” and “she ha[s] no power to oppose it” (383). Yet again, Emily's fear strips her of power and possesses her. The introduction of possession contrasts Emily's independent and autonomous characterization because she completely loses control. Emily's

sensibility first stripped her of the power of reason, which resulted in a heightened susceptibility to the supernatural, causing a further loss of power through fear, which directly shows how the connection of sensibility and fear to the supernatural allows for the supernatural to be the overall cause of Emily's loss of power.

Emily's loss of power because of the supernatural results in her also losing physical power over her body, inhibiting her ability to act in dire times within the novel. Near the beginning of the novel, when Emily believes there to be an intruder of some form, she "affirm[s] with a solemnity of conviction...that she had seen an apparition," as a result, Emily "screamed, and would have passed, but her trembling frame refused to support her" (283). Although the intruder never reveals to be anyone in particular and could have very well been a figment of Emily's heightened senses and imagination, her inability to scream for help or support herself threatens her life. If an intruder had intended to hurt her, she would need to act. Later in the novel, when Emily attempts to escape Udolpho, she must rely on Du Pont, a Frenchman she barely knows, to literally carry her on their journey off of the estate (423). Overwhelmed by emotion, Emily could not support herself in order to leave the oppressive castle she repeatedly refers to as a prison. Instead, a male prisoner of Udolpho needed to support her while a male servant led the way. Significantly, these male characters who escape do not even possess high-rankings within the castle. Rather, their status as male allows them to take action and escape, even when their social status should not. The importance of this scene in particular lies within the male power needed in order to escape a male-dominated, occasionally described as supernatural, castle because of Emily's sensibility to emotion and superstitions.

The effect of Udolpho on Emily exists beyond her aided escape. In fact, Udolpho serves as an overarching symbol of patriarchal power connected to the supernatural. Terry Castle comments

on the “irrationalism” and “chaos” of Udolpho and what this means within the context of the novel as a whole (122). However, in understanding Emily’s powerlessness develops specifically within the link between the supernatural and masculine power it seems evident that the supernatural is the chaos Castle alludes to. To begin, multiple characters refer to Udolpho as supernatural within multiple descriptions. Upon arrival to the castle, Annette, Emily’s servant, comments that she:

‘can almost believe in giants again, and such like, for this is just like one of their castles; and, some night or other, [she] suppose [she] 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’ (220).

The reference to giants and fairies allows for Udolpho to take on a supernatural ambiance, as the nature of the castle rests beyond the natural world. This establishes a superstitious feel to the castle, which is helped by the various stories of the mysterious disappearance of its previous owner, Signora Laurentini. The comment Annette makes about Udolpho also mentions the great hall looking more like a church. The religious reference again identifies the castle as beyond the earthly realm, as churches are meant to be places of spirituality and the castle is thought, at times, to be the host of spirits. It is within this supernatural setting that Emily becomes prisoner to Montoni, as well as loses both physical and mental power.

Beyond its supernatural characteristics, Udolpho also acts as a prison for Emily. Montoni takes Emily and Madame Montoni quickly away to Udolpho without warning, in which both women are placed in opposite sides of the castle, isolated from one another. Emily lives in a double chamber, one door of which she cannot lock herself but someone else could lock from the other side, which constantly leaves her exposed. Further, the descriptions of the walk to Emily’s room appear very confusing and where someone could easily get lost (220, 221). The setup of the castle alone leaves Emily physically vulnerable and isolated in which she must rely on Montoni’s word of protection, which he rarely upholds to. When Emily arrives at Udolpho she “look[s] on the

massy walls of the edifice, her melancholy spirits represented it to be her prison” (238). From this point on, Emily continually refers to Udolpho as her prison, and she seeks to escape it by any reasonable means. When Emily leaves Udolpho for protection, she feels relief, despite the anxiety she possesses concerning the two members of the banditti who accompany her. Emily is described as having “the sudden joy of a prisoner, who unexpectedly finds himself at liberty” (377). Significantly, Emily’s description as masculine in this instance, with the term “himself,” shows the power through masculinity she obtains simply from leaving the estate. Later, when Emily must return to Udolpho she sadly reflects “[she] is going again into [her] prison” (402). Yet again, Emily becomes a prisoner of Udolpho where she fails to escape the tyranny of Montoni.

The descriptions of Udolpho, paired with Emily’s escape led by two male characters, show the way in which the supernatural allows for men to gain power where women are stripped of it. The banditti also show this in the way they use another “haunted” castle in order to store the goods they’ve stolen. The banditti, described throughout the novel as aggressive, masculine thieves and hunters, stand as a very male-dominated entity within the work. They manage to use the superstition of others in order to be able to use part of the chateau:

To prevent detection they had tried to have it believed, that the chateau was haunted, and, having discovered the private way to the north apartments, which had been shut up ever since the death of the lady marchioness, they easily succeeded (595).

Emily, one of the people who falls into the superstition of the chateau, believes it is haunted, although she remains skeptical. In this instance, contrary to Emily’s weakness to the supernatural, the banditti can use the supernatural to their advantage. This, similar to the masculine nature of the prison of Udolpho, shows the way in which the supernatural works in favor of males, whereas it strips women, particularly Emily, of power.

The only way that Emily regains the power she loses due to the supernatural is towards the end of the novel when all the superstitions and supernatural happenings resolve with logical explanations. On discovering the truth about a covered object in Udolpho, which Emily believed previously to be either a dead body or some supernatural element, Emily reflects on why she was unable to discover it as just a piece of art work. Ultimately, Emily's "terror had prevented her from ever after provoking a renewal of such suffering, as she had then experienced" (622). If Emily looked again on the piece, she would have discovered it was a regular object as opposed to something possibly supernatural. Instead, her fear of the piece created an overall fear for the room and the castle of Udolpho itself, leading to further instances of terror which also deprived her of action. In this instance specifically, fear of the supernatural decreased Emily's ability to reason, causing for her to lose power over her judgement and, as a reaction to this terror, lose power over her mind and body in later instances of sensibility.

Emily's loss of power due to sensibility and fear resolves when reasonable explanations are given for each of the allegedly supernatural occurrences. Upon discovering that the banditti were behind Ludovico's disappearance,

Emily could not forbear smiling at this explanation of the deception, which had given her so much superstitious terror, and was surprised, that she could have suffered herself to be thus alarmed, till she considered that, when the mind has once begun to yield to the weakness of superstition, trifles impress it with the force of conviction (597).

Emily's reflection upon her unreasonable superstition points towards not only the foolishness of it, but also to the way each individual terror built upon the others causing her mind to "yield to the weakness of superstition". Thus, when Emily resolves all of her superstitions, and may look at each instance with reason, she no longer feels ailed by that particular weakness. Emily does not just shed a weakness through her discovery of reason, but she also gains both her birth-right

inheritance, and the property of her aunt allowing her the ownership of property. The happy ending of the novel in which Emily retires to her favorite estate with her love, Valancourt, is described as a “rational happiness” (631). This description of Emily’s happy ending puts emphasis on rational thinking and its rewards. Thus, the struggles Emily encounters throughout the novel as well as the supernatural terrors she develops all negatively result from irrationality. Emily’s inability to gain power due to the supernatural is shown yet again since she solely gains power through reason, as evident through the property she gains and the rational happiness she develops.

Emily’s character, and the connection of her as a classic Radcliffean heroine to the loss of power through the supernatural, clearly shows the gendered power-dynamic. Emily’s susceptibility to the supernatural, founded in her heightened sensibility, makes her more aware of possible supernatural happenings and, as a result, causes a loss of power over her own life, body, and mind. In understanding Emily’s experience in the context of the masculine and supernatural castle of Udolpho, the connection between the supernatural and Emily’s loss of power becomes more evident. Similarly, the banditti’s ability to use the supernatural to their advantage, makes visible the gendered advantage men have in relation to the supernatural. Emily and her plot within *Udolpho* serve as a foundation at which to study the works of Dacre and Lewis, looking specifically at the supernatural and female power.

The Monk- Matthew Lewis:

The Monk works within the paradigm established in *Udolpho* in which sensibility increases a heroine's susceptibility to superstitious belief. However, the implications of this model differ in *The Monk* because the supernatural not only heightens in severity, but becomes a realistic aspect of life. Set in Madrid where "superstition reigns", Lewis makes explicit that his world allows supernatural events to actually occur (11). *The Monk* contains two heroines designed after Emily, each heavily affected by not just the superstitions of the time, but by actual instances of the supernatural. Antonia, an almost caricatured version of Emily is described as excessively sensible, and largely susceptible to the allure of Ambrosio and, through him, the supernatural, ultimately leading to a violent rape and death. Agnes, a less conventional version of Emily's character, must enter into a convent due to her parents' superstition. This leads to a horrible imprisonment in which her brother, Lorenzo's, ability to reject superstition alone saves her. Both Antonia and Agnes face actual supernatural elements, which work against them ultimately leading to some type of physical torture, including, in Antonia's case, death. The supernatural strips both women of power over their own lives as well as power over their individual bodies.

Antonia

Within *The Monk*, Antonia caricatures the classic Radcliffian heroine, Emily. As Hoeveler points out, the gothic heroine has a strained relationship with their parents. In Antonia's case, her father's absence and the death of her mother in the latter part of the novel create this dynamic. Antonia is also quiet, modest, obedient and pious, which matches the definition of virtuous, and "an outstanding embodiment of beauty and morality" (Le Tellier, 50). Further, she embodies morality to such an extreme level that other characters in the novel point it out. Antonia's introduction to the novel of not wanting to remove her veil in a church, but only doing so after her aunt's insistence shows the significance of, despite everyone around her removing their veils,

Antonia only will do so when the order comes from her aunt, which she must obey (14). This initially establishes her insistence on following rules, even when they are not even necessary. Later, her aunt again points out her odd manner when she says: “‘Antonia, why do you not speak, child? While the cavalier says all sorts of civil things to you, you sit like a statue, and never utter a syllable of thanks, either bad, good, or indifferent!’” (18). Not only do others point out Antonia’s silence as abnormal, but her stillness reaches the next level at which she embodies a statue. When Antonia accidentally makes eye contact with Lorenzo, she drops her eyes “‘hastily upon her rosary; her cheek... immediately suffuse[s] with blushes, and she began to tell her beads; though her manner evidently showed that she knew not what she was about’” (15). Antonia’s silence not only shows a lack of communication but could also act as an initial lack of agency. Her reaction, tied with her telling of her beads shows an immense piety at the root of her behavior. Such actions create the conclusion that Antonia acts on her own, but just within a set of guidelines defined by religion, which appears throughout the novel in her devout reading of the Bible as well. Similarly, the text highlights her innocence when it says she knows “‘not what she [is] about’” (15). This description of Antonia conveys not just her ignorance of her physical appearance and its affect on those around her, but a general innocence echoed throughout the story in which her mother censors the more graphic portions of the Bible. In making Antonia a more extreme version of a character like Emily, she faces more perilous challenges of the supernatural. Lewis dramatizes and heightens the characteristics of and events against Antonia, emphasizing the gendered power dynamic.

Antonia’s character, in line with her other Radcliffian heroine characteristics, is described multiple times as sensible. Antonia acknowledges her own sensibility when she claims she is “‘very sensible’” in a conversation with her aunt (18). In this specific context Antonia insists that she is aware of something, again bringing the word to mean sensitive. Later, Lorenzo points out her youth

and how her heart is “full of warmth and sensibility” and “receive[s] its first impressions with eagerness” (22). In this instance, sensibility aligns with youth and innocence making it a more child-like quality to possess. The term also associates with “impressions” by which Antonia may be impressed, or affected, by more. Again, the context of the word falls under the “sensitive” definition. A humorous conversation between Lorenzo and Don Christoval brings up a complication on sensibility’s meaning. Lorenzo says he wants to make Antonia his wife because she is “young, lovely, gentle, sensible” at which Don Christoval replies: “Sensible? Why, she said nothing but Yes, and No” and Lorenzo concludes with: “She did not say much more, I must confess – but then she always said Yes or No in the right place” (25). The term “sensible” here receives little context, as Don Lorenzo simply states it is something he would like in a wife. Thus, it seems difficult to distinguish whether it means sensitive, as was used for Emily, or reasonable. Given that she says the words “in the right place” it would seem as if it could mean to have reason. However, in the context of “young, lovely, [and] gentle” the definition of sensitive fits best with these more classical feminine qualities. I point out the fuzzy distinction, however, because Lewis uses language to play with the established language of Radcliffe in order to blur concepts already established in the genre as well as, through the humorous nature, poke fun at them. This exchange again addresses the uncommon quietness of Antonia, while simultaneously pointing out her sensibility, showing a connection between her innocence and good behavior to her sensibility. Though Don Christoval objects, Lorenzo makes it a point to characterize her as such, even with the very few words Antonia produced, to provide evidence of her sensibility. All these instances conclude that, much like Emily, Antonia’s sensibility makes her more sensitive to her surroundings, particularly the supernatural.

Ambrosio points out Antonia's sensibility, ultimately alluding toward her vulnerability to the supernatural. He states that her affection towards him proves the "sensibility of [her] character" (223). Though she herself does not know it, Ambrosio, at this time during the novel, uses the supernatural in order to influence Antonia who, ultimately, remains susceptible to the supernatural through Ambrosio. Antonia also contains a "strong inclination to the marvellous" which creates a "superstitious prejudice in her bosom" leading her to be "often susceptible of terrors" (273). Although not explicitly stated, the descriptions are similar to those associated with Antonia's sensibility. Antonia's susceptibility "of terrors" mirrors the language Radcliffe uses to describe Emily. Similarly to Emily, Antonia may lose control or be debilitated by this susceptibility.

Certain scenes in the work show how Antonia's vulnerability to the supernatural affects her from the beginning of the novel. Initially, Antonia gets her fortune told by a gypsy, a superstitious act in itself. However, the fortune's tale of suffering greatly and dying by the hand of the devil is a terrible, yet eventually proven accurate, account of her future (37). This first taste of actual supernatural elements shows how sour her later interactions with the supernatural will be. In a dream Lorenzo has of Antonia she becomes captured by a monster with "Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!" on its forehead and ultimately attempts to take her into the flames with him. In attempt to escape, Antonia becomes "animated by supernatural powers," in which "she disengages herself from [the monster's] embrace; but her white robe was left in his possession" (28). This monster, whose qualities mirror those of Ambrosio⁴, manages to steal her white robe. The aspect

⁴ The quote "Pride! Lust! Inhumanity" refers to Ambrosio as evident in the descriptions of his character. In example, his first description immediately identifies him as prideful (38). His relationship with Matilda and his pursuit of Antonia embody lust, and his fate of signing his soul to the devil ultimately faces in with inhumanity.

of the monster not only accentuates the supernatural within the dream by creating an “other” but it also predicts Ambrosio’s future possession of Antonia. Similarly, the monster strips Antonia her specifically white robe, the color of innocence and purity, when she is “animated by supernatural powers”. This loss of purity strips Antonia of her most sought-after quality and the one that most strongly characterizes her. Stripped of such a characteristic, Antonia would no longer be the character of Antonia. Most importantly, Antonia’s shedding of innocence directly results from the supernatural, showing not just her vulnerability, but foreshadowing her loss of honor via Ambrosio’s magical power. Thus, the supernatural, even in this dreamed instance, erodes Antonia’s identity.

Perhaps the clearest instance of the supernatural affecting Antonia, and the one that most evokes Emily’s experiences, is when she confronts an apparition after her mother’s death. However, in contrast to Emily’s supernatural scenes, this instance never shows in hindsight to be false when subject to reason’s scrutiny. When Antonia sees the apparition for the first time she “attempt[s] to rise from her seat, but her limbs [tremble] so violently that she [is] unable to proceed” (274). Antonia becomes physically unable to move because of the fear incited by this vision. When the ghost appears to move, she sits “motionless and silent” while waiting for it to stop (275). Again, much like Emily, Antonia loses her physical agency due to a supernatural image. Finally, when the ghost claims that it will meet her again in 3 days, “Antonia shriek[s], and [falls] lifeless upon the floor” only to be moved to her bed where she is “still senseless” (275). This scene, full of supernatural terrors, causes Antonia to not just freeze, but fall “lifeless” to the ground. This language establishes the supernatural as something capable of taking life away from Antonia, a figure of speech that will become literally true at the time of her death. Ultimately, in each incident

in which Antonia faces some sort of supernatural element, her inability to protect herself becomes more evident, leading to Ambrosio's eventual supernatural power over her.

Antonia's ultimate vulnerability to the supernatural rests in her infatuation with Ambrosio. Antonia's introduction describes her as captivated by Ambrosio, so, just as we begin to know her character, we know her as under the hypnotic allure of Ambrosio. When Antonia first hears Ambrosio speak, his words "penetrate her very soul" and cause her to feel "violent sensations" (20). Perhaps a foreshadow of her horrific death, these words of "penetrate" and "violent" are a stark contrast to the lovely Antonia we are initially introduced to. Specifically, the fact that it "penetrates her soul" foreshadows the ruin of her character by the loss of her chastity when Ambrosio rapes her. Similarly, due to the sensations her sensibility exposes her to, she also falls into Ambrosio's trap that leads to her death. This language describes the ultimate outcome of Antonia because of her susceptibility to Ambrosio, who eventually becomes a representation of the supernatural. Similarly, despite Antonia not wanting to make eye contact with Lorenzo, her "eyes followed [Ambrosio] with anxiety. As the door closed after him, it seemed to her as she had lost some one essential to her happiness" (21). The established infatuation, though innocent on her part, begins here in which Ambrosio affects her immediately after his introduction. Antonia's fascination with Ambrosio also borderlines on dangerous as it develops a negative "anxiety" within her. Although Ambrosio has yet to use any supernatural forces in this scene, Antonia's initial interest in him just escalates when he does manage to use magic to persuade her towards him more. This ultimately leads to Ambrosio using the supernatural to possess Antonia, leading to her downfall. Thus, Antonia's susceptibility to Ambrosio ends up becoming a weakness to the supernatural, as Ambrosio begins to use magic.

Ambrosio robs Antonia of her physical and mental agency by the supernatural to take possession of her. Once Ambrosio establishes that he will be using the magic mirror Matilda, a worker of Satan, gave him, as well as a spell in order to incapacitate Antonia for his desires, he looks “upon Antonia as already in his power” (239). Up to this point, Antonia had yet to be described as in his power, but merely admirable of his person; this shift of his power over her directly connects to his use of the supernatural. He also refers to her as an “object” from this scene on, in which she loses her human qualities he had once admired in her (281). It is the actual use of the spell, however that not just puts her in his power, but robs her of power over her body as well: “No sooner was the enchantment performed, than he considered her to be absolutely in his power” (260). This “enchantment” not only puts Antonia in Ambrosio’s power, but it also completely incapacitates her: she falls into a deep slumber in which she will not awake. Thus, the previous episode in which Antonia froze in the face of the supernatural similarly repeats, aside from Antonia having absolutely no agency over her own body, not even the ability to see or hear what is going on. This height of senselessness, caused expressly by Ambrosio shows his power over her on multiple levels, as aided by the supernatural. Ambrosio’s possession of her peaks when he rapes her in the vaults of the monastery acting as a “ravisher” and “accomplish[ing] his crime and the dishonour of Antonia” (328). As the Oxford English Dictionary points out, to ravish means, along with to rape, to cease- in which Ambrosio quite literally takes possession of Antonia. Not only does he manage to take her, unwillingly, but he also strips her of her virginity, one of the most desirable aspects of her character. This scene epitomizes Antonia’s victimhood in connection to the supernatural, as Ambrosio uses a potion in order to detain Antonia within the vaults where he rapes her. Thus, since Antonia embodies the classic gothic heroine, her victimization in connection

with the masculinized supernatural shows the complex gendered power-dynamic established within Radcliffe's writings, but accentuated by the extremities of Lewis's plot.

Ambrosio's ability to use the supernatural in order to obtain Antonia exemplifies yet again how the supernatural works in favor of men. Ambrosio, raised in the monastery, is surrounded by men his entire life. In such he develops in a purely patriarchal structure, where he becomes one of the highest ranking members. The text also refers to Ambrosio as the "Man of Holiness," intensifying his position within the hierarchy as not just a masculine one, termed by "Man," but a supernatural one by "Holiness" (19). This identity allows for him to be of interest to Matilda, who ultimately, under the guide of Satan, leads him to the use of the supernatural⁵. However, despite Ambrosio's male identity allowing him to use the supernatural to his advantage, his feminization throughout the course of the novel results in his power unravelling. Described as feminine in relation to Matilda, Ambrosio shows a weakness often likened within the novel as feminine. Ambrosio faints in a scene and is described as "senseless" feminizing him in the aspect of sensibility, seen so often in the gothic heroines. Further, he is "penetrated" by Antonia's look, in which he comparatively is feminized as the receiver of the penetration. Ambrosio's feminization complicates but accentuates the power dynamic as, while he manages to use the supernatural to his advantage, he ultimately falls under the control of Satan. Thus, the slightly feminized character of Ambrosio ultimately fails his goal for power, furthering the idea that the supernatural works in the favor of masculinity.

⁵ It is important to mention, here, that Matilda manages to successfully use the supernatural as well. However, only by the influence of Satan can she accomplish this. So, while a woman may be able to use the supernatural to her advantage, it is ultimately not for her own desires but for those of a larger patriarchal force, in this case, much like we will see in *Zofloya*, Satan.

In examining Antonia's vulnerability to the supernatural, rooted in her feminine sensibility, we can see how the supernatural is negatively weighted more towards women. Specifically, the exaggerated elements of Emily's character shown in Antonia's allow for a clearer depiction between the feminine and masculine relationships to the supernatural, while also creating more chaos in the plot of the heroine. Ambrosio's own masculinity allows for him to use the supernatural in his favor, only to fall victim to it due to the feminization of his character. Both of these characters' relationships to the supernatural allows for a further, more complex, understanding of the gendered power dynamic founded in the supernatural.

Agnes

Agnes's character interestingly crosses between the two previous heroines we've looked at: she contains the same independent and reason-based desires as Emily, while simultaneously being confronted by supernatural entities and superstitions as Antonia. From birth, Agnes's parents promised she would join a convent due to their superstitious beliefs. Emily and Agnes's escape plots are very similar in attempting to run away from oppressive structures; in Emily's case, Udolpho, and in Agnes's case the castle of Lindenberg. However, unlike Emily, Agnes contains the actual agency and power to enact a plan of escape. Also, much like Antonia, the actual supernatural within Lewis's novel intervenes and prevents Agnes from escaping, accelerating her imprisonment in the convent. Similarly, much like Emily must escape the castle through the help of men, Agnes only survives a near-death starvation because brother, Lorenzo, manages to look beyond superstition to find her. By analyzing Agnes's character, the specific shift in *The Monk* as compared to *Udolpho* becomes clearer because of the similarities in the plots of Emily and Agnes. Further, it will more explicitly state the gendered dynamic of supernatural power within these early gothic novels.

Agnes's qualities are much like that of Emily and Antonia. Agnes's interests in music and drawing, as well as her description of acting "gay, open, and good-humoured" similarly to Emily (116). Agnes also remains separated from her parents throughout the course of the novel, making her somewhat of an orphan. Further, she likewise possesses rational thought like Emily and continually doubts superstition. Despite dreading her fate in the convent, she also originally "submitted to the decree of her parents," an obedient aspect similar to Antonia (117). However, the characteristic most commonly shared between the heroines is sensibility. The novel describes Agnes multiple times as "sensible," yet, the introduction to this quality of Agnes blurs the meaning of the word. After Agnes drops her love letter and Ambrosio picks it up, Agnes lets out a "shriek

of terror” and flies “hastily to regain it” (43). Agnes quickly follows being “awoke[n] from her torpidity only to be sensible of the dangers of her situation” (44). In this instance, sensibility could be the ability to judge a situation, however it could also simply mean sensitivity heightens to the dangers of her situation. Interestingly, Agnes “awoke” which contrasts the previously established association between sensibility and senselessness, passing out and lifelessness. It is also significant to point out that before this episode of sensibility she “shriek[s] of terror”, associating sensibility yet again with the feeling of terror. Similarly, later Agnes grows “sensible that she [is] not born for solitude” (117). As a reference to her promised life in the monastery, Agnes being “sensible” in this case would, in context, mean aware of. However, this awareness rooted in sensitivity to her life and wants, means that it takes on the same technical definition used previously as a “sense of ‘sensitivity’” (N. Smith 578). Nevertheless, in contrast to both Antonia and Emily the connotation of Agnes’s sensibility remains a strength rather than a weakness, as it allows her to take action in tough times. Yet, sensibility still heightens her sensitivity to the supernatural happenings around her, which she relates to as a victim as well as someone attempting to use superstition against those who believe in it.

Agnes initially falls victim to the supernatural at birth, when her parents promise her life to a convent due to a promise they made to God. In such, Agnes becomes a martyr for her family because of their superstitious beliefs. When Agnes’s story is introduced by Raymond, he notes how her parents were “slave to the grossest superstition” (116). This comment establishes superstition as something with the ability to have possessive power over human beings. Agnes is also deemed to be a “sacrifice” to superstition by her parents, making her entire life’s purpose to fulfill the desires of this personified idea of superstition (117). Agnes even refers to herself as a sacrifice when she suggests not following through with the convent plan, as she says her parents

may ““expiate by some other sacrifice [her] mother’s fatal vow”” (118). Thus, Agnes’s relationship with superstition specifically starts in a sacrificial one where she plays the role of the sacrifice. Agnes, as a result, ultimately fulfills this sacrifice unwillingly leading, ultimately, to her becoming trapped and tortured.

Initially the superstitions of Agnes’s parents only prevent her from marrying Raymond, and in order to escape such opposition Agnes attempts to use their superstition in her favor to escape. As Raymond points out during his narrative: “the superstition of the parents of Agnes... seemed to oppose such obstacles to our union as were almost insurmountable” (122). Thus, Agnes resorts to using the tale of the Bleeding Nun by taking on the role of the ghost to escape. In first proposing this plan, Agnes says “I have too much reason to lament superstition’s influence to be its victim myself” however, she believes she can trick her aunt into believing her to be the spirit long enough for her to escape (125). Agnes’s instinct to not only disbelieve the superstition but also use it to her advantage strikingly contrasts both Emily and Antonia in which she has more rational thought than Antonia, but a better will to act against the supernatural than Emily. This instinct also represents a more masculinized quality; as seen in *Udolpho* and in the character of Ambrosio, men normally take on the task of using the supernatural. In this way she seems to be more assertive in her relationship to the supernatural, attempting to rectify her parents’ superstition by using it against them. However, when the Bleeding Nun actually exists, rather than remaining just a superstition, and the spirit gets saved from the estate rather than Agnes, the supernatural forces her back to imprisonment. Thus, Agnes cannot escape the trap of superstition, because superstition is validated against her rational thinking. Lewis, in this instance, reaffirms the supernatural’s existence against the reason of the characters. In such, Agnes becomes a “prisoner”

in the castle until she joins the convent by force soon after (126). Agnes, then perfectly exemplifies how, despite the attempt to use reason to escape superstition, women still fall victim to it.

Agnes's pregnancy, the result of an affair within the convent, forms her into a more feminized, and therefore more persecuted, victim of the supernatural. When the abbess discovers Agnes's pregnancy she locks Agnes away. Agnes then remains "confined by superstition in [the] vaults" (321). Again, a personified superstition reigns over Agnes, forcing her into solitude and eventually on the brink of death. During the time of her confinement, Agnes ends up losing her baby, stripping her specifically of the feminine role of mother just as she gains it. It seems that superstition especially victimizes Agnes as an expected mother in the extreme torture of starvation and psychological trauma. Whereas before Agnes was simply trapped within a castle or the convent, her prison in the vaults elevates to a more extreme level of sacrifice than expected. The detail of Agnes's pregnancy elevates her torture by the supernatural, showing how the more feminine a character, the harsher the punishment.

Agnes only survives by her brother, Lorenzo's, ability to ignore superstition, which shows both the female-victim as well as the male-hero who can escape the supernatural in a way women cannot. When Lorenzo attempts to find Agnes, the nuns plea that he does not touch the statue above the trapdoor. This derives from the nuns being told the statue was cursed, and they developed a superstition from this false story. However, Lorenzo ignores their protests of him touching it, and in doing so can find an emaciated Agnes (314). Thus, although all the nuns could have distinguished the fact that the statue was not cursed, they fell victim to superstition. Alternatively, Lorenzo avoids falling into the trap of superstition and finds his sister and, also, Antonia, his lover. In this instance, Agnes and the nuns were influenced by superstition and the supernatural, whereas Lorenzo, a man, overcomes it completely and without issue.

Similar to Emily, Agnes manages to find a happy ending after the restoration of reason. After Lorenzo's ability to escape superstition to save her, Agnes reunites with her lover and restores her good health. Having been relieved of her role as a sacrifice to superstition, Agnes can once again live as "happy as can be...allotted to mortals" (357). Interestingly, this happiness uses the term "mortals," emphasizing the non-supernatural existence she lives after her rescue. She and Raymond also look "calmly upon [fate's heaviest storms] terrors" (358). The element of calm also portrays a somewhat reasonable and peaceful existence hereafter. Thus, Agnes adopts a kind of rational happiness similar to Emily's in the denouement of *Udolpho*.

Agnes's struggle to overcome the superstitions and, eventually, the supernatural itself, paired with Lorenzo's ability to easily overcome such obstacles confirms the gendered power dynamic of the supernatural. Agnes, a woman, falls victim to superstition by birth, which results in an imprisonment enacted by an actual supernatural appearance of the Bleeding Nun. When Agnes takes on a more feminine role of motherhood, her punishment by superstition heightens during her terrible captivity in the vaults of the convent. Only when Lorenzo saves her by sidestepping the nuns' superstition that she escapes and finds a reasonable, non-supernatural happiness. Ultimately, Agnes's plot allows for a more explicit and traceable understanding of the power-dynamic present in the supernatural within gothic literature. This dynamic established by *Udolpho* and *The Monk* becomes more skewed in Dacre's *Zofloya*.

Zofloya, or The Moor- Charlotte Dacre

Dacre's *Zofloya* simultaneously acknowledges and perverts the gothic foundations set by Radcliffe and Lewis. In using Radcliffe's established plot-structure and character types, Dacre inverts the power structure to put a female "heroine" in the position of power. The heroine, Victoria, subscribes to most of the aspects of the Radcliffean heroine except for morals. The perverse heroine of Victoria is haughty, selfish and sinful which ultimately leads to her use of the supernatural. Similarly, Dacre makes the supernatural realistic like *The Monk*, but, rather than a man tempted to use magic, Victoria uses it instead. These alterations to *Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Monk* are purposeful, as evident in the allusions Dacre makes throughout the novel. Specifically, Berenza, one of Victoria's love interests, states that he could never be "rationally happy" with her (69). As a direct reference to Radcliffe's use of rational happiness in *Udolpho*, this reference hints at the way in which Victoria and Emily differ greatly. Victoria also kills a very typical Radcliffean-heroine type, Lilla, a show of Victoria's masculinity, and also a symbol of Dacre killing off Radcliffe's classic heroines. Dacre uses names to allude to *The Monk*, which emphasizes its influence on the novel. The first edition of *Zofloya* was published under the penname "Rosa Matilda" alluding to Lewis's infamous gender-bending demon character, Rosario/Matilda. Dacre also names a minor character Ambrosio, whose residence Victoria must pass in order to escape (55). The passing through symbolizes how Dacre needs to experience Lewis's writing in order to write *Zofloya*. Thus, *Zofloya* is an aware compilation and distortion of both Lewis and Radcliffe's works, ultimately leading to a more extreme interaction between female agency and the supernatural, as is evident in the character of Victoria and her relationship with the supernaturally enhanced, Zofloya.

Victoria, the "heroine" of *Zofloya*, distinctly contrasts the other heroines discussed thus far. Lacking many of the feminine qualities attributed to the other characters, Victoria embodies a

strong, masculinized figure who contains power over not just those in her household, but within all aspects of her life. Victoria does, however, maintain some standard qualities of the Radcliffean heroine, which Dacre uses to familiarize her character to the reader. For instance, similar to how Antonia and Emily write poetry, Victoria draws in order to relax during a period of captivity (48). Victoria also has an estranged relationship with her parents. Her father's death scene happens similarly to that of St. Aubert's in *Udolpho* through the way he attempts to reconcile Victoria's behavior and offers advice for how she should act in the future (20). Victoria also suffers a complicated relationship with her mother who runs off with another man, thus making her into somewhat of an orphan who seeks a lover instead of a family. This falls in line with Hoeveler's observation that gothic heroines often have a "convoluted relationship with [their] parents" (*Gothic Feminism* 53). Thus, Victoria, though different in temperament, takes on many of the typical gothic heroine qualities.

Victoria's relationship to sensibility complicates how the supernatural affects her. The idea of sensibility, most often tied to Emily but also expanded to both Agnes and Antonia as well, often describes Victoria. At one point she is "sensible of [Berenza's] emotion," which in context means she is sensitive and aware of them (79). The question of which form of sensibility applies to Victoria is obvious because she continually acts "beyond...reason" (135). This is an interesting emphasis on Dacre's part as it almost parodies the somewhat unclear ways sensibility was used by her predecessors. In such, Victoria, while sensitive, lacks the reason which strengthened Emily and Agnes. Victoria then embodies a more extreme heroine in the one-sided state of sensitivity, making her more susceptible to the temptations of the supernatural, especially because of her lack of reason. Ultimately, sensibility ties Victoria's identity to other gothic heroines. Thus, with the

quality of sensibility paired with the basics of art and family, Victoria assumes the general structure of a gothic heroine, especially like Emily and Antonia, but only to be altered in morals and actions.

Victoria's attitude and morals make her different from any of the previous gothic heroines. Not only does she starkly contrast Emily in her rejection of reason, but she lives "proud, haughty...careless of censure" and "of an implacable, revengeful, and cruel nature" (4). Victoria's "ideas wildly wandered" and she has a "heated imagination," leading to her inability to reason (28). Victoria's "self-sufficient" nature remains, perhaps, the only similarity in character to Emily (4). Ultimately, she seems the exact opposite of the "outstanding embodiment of...morality" Le Tellier observes in gothic heroines (50). Whether Victoria's immoral character allows her to have power over others, or her power that causes her to have such a haughty, self-centered character, her attitude directly correlates to the way in which she maintains dominion over the other people in her life.

Originally the power Victoria has over the people in her life seems almost supernatural. While she has yet to encounter the supernatural, she is introduced as being the "deity" of her household. Similarly, if fails to follow her word it "would have been deemed amounting to sacrilege" (14). Thus, Victoria elevates not just in power but in status beyond human. She becomes associated with a religious-oriented supernatural power just in her own, mortal existence. In connection to Victoria's immoral character, however, the supernatural power is not always a positive one. In an interaction with her mother, Victoria is described as having a "forked tongue," which equates her to a snake, and, ultimately, Satan (31). This likeness foreshadows the true height and eventual collapse in Victoria's power when she falls under the influence of Zofloya who later reveals himself as Satan. However, in this instance, Victoria simply becomes elevated beyond a mortal identity. This elevation assists in her ability to have control over people in her life.

Another aspect of Victoria's character altered to allow her to possess power over others is the masculinization of her female persona. While the descriptions of her physical appearance remain very feminine, the language describes many of her actions as masculinized. Throughout the novel Victoria "penetrates" other objects and people both physically and mentally. She must penetrate the garden in order to escape Signora di Modena's estate (53). Similarly, she "wrenche[s] the key with violence" in order to leave the gate of the estate (56). The imagery of Victoria penetrating, especially with the phallic symbol of the key entering a lock, masculinizes her. This is especially true when she attempts to "penetrate Berenza's inmost soul" (83). This use of penetration is an exact relation to her attempt to control Berenza, which she ultimately succeeds in. Thus, Victoria's masculinization through the language of "penetration" directly relates to her rise in power over others.

A further example of the masculinization of Victoria leads to heightened power in her relationship to Lilla. Lilla's character almost exactly replicates the Radcliffean heroine, and beyond that, she exists as overly feminine. At the age of thirteen, Lilla is the epitome of innocence and piety, described as having an "angelic countenance, slightly suffused with the palest hue of the virgin rose" (133). Further, the promise she keeps to her late father to wait until after a year of his death to marry Henriquez not only shows her dedication and honor, but ends up being the reason for her violent death by the hand of Victoria (131). Dacre creates this caricatured Radcliffean heroine, more extreme than even Antonia, for Victoria to envy and destroy. The fact that Victoria murders Lilla emphasizes Victoria's masculine character by placing her in the position of characters like *Udolpho's* banditti and *The Monk's* Ambrosio.

The language describing scenes of Victoria's hatred for and violence against Lilla emphasizes her masculinization. In one interaction between the two Victoria is described as "the

murderer [who] might be tempted to fondle the beauty of the babe, whose life he intended to take” (143). Dacre’s switch in using male pronouns to describe Victoria creates a more obviously masculine description of her. Male pronouns describe Victoria again when she is described as a “tyrant, who condemns his subjects to the torture, that he may laugh at their agonies” (143). Both instances of male pronouns used to describe Victoria are done so when she is in a place of power. In the first one she murders the babe, an infantilized Lilla, and in the second one she becomes a tyrant. Thus, Victoria’s power directly links to her masculinized character. The way Victoria murders Lilla is also a very overtly masculine action. Again, using the language of penetration, Victoria kills Lilla by stabbing her repeatedly with a dagger. The first stab “wounded only her uplifted hand, and glancing across her alabaster shoulder, the blood that issued thence, slightly tinged her flaxen tresses with a brilliant red” (225). This scene can be equated with Ambrosio’s rape of Antonia. While no actual act of rape happens within the scene, Victoria’s penetration and the blood that ruins Lilla’s white image symbolizes a loss of purity and innocence. Thus, Victoria is masculinized not just in the action of penetration, but by being likened to Ambrosio, the masculine villain of *The Monk*. Victoria’s masculinization, emphasized in her murder of Lilla, allows her to gain more power over others, compared to Emily, Antonia or Agnes. This masculinized power, paired with her “deity” power translates into her relationship with men, primarily Berenza.

Victoria’s relationship with Berenza is a constant power struggle of possession between the two, which ultimately Victoria wins. Despite pride originally preventing Berenza from pursuing Victoria, she eventually forces him to acquire “a *real* passion for her” (29). At first, Berenza recognizes that he can “never [possess] either the heart or the mind of [Victoria],” however, this changes as he assumes he has changed her character (71). Berenza then becomes

interested in possessing Victoria, especially since he believes that other men “must *envy* [him] in their hearts the possession of [his mistress]” (75). Established here, possession becomes the biggest part of their relationship. Throughout their relationship, Berenza believes himself as the “possessor of her dearest affections” (80). When Berenza thinks Victoria attempted to save his life by risking her own, he sees her as an object which he cannot “bare possibility of losing” and must “bind her more completely his” through marriage (125). Victoria’s objectification is rooted in what Berenza assumes to be a change in character, when it is actually an accident. This incident results in Berenza finally believing he has possession of her, which enables Victoria to have a “complete and powerful a dominion” over him (125). Victoria manages to keep power over Berenza for the rest of his life, as she eventually murders him to pursue his brother, Henriquez.

Victoria manages to have power over every other character until she comes in contact with Zofloya. Zofloya, who eventually reveals himself as Satan, is an elevated form of the supernatural in comparison to both Radcliffe and Lewis’s works. Particularly, where in *The Monk* Satan remains a small character only revealed as in control at the end, Zofloya is the center focus of the novel aside from Victoria. His presence ultimately complicates the relationship between the heroine of Victoria and the supernatural. Zofloya is described as “scarcely human” and influences Victoria through “magic arts [she knows] not” (190, 246). His looks alone often communicate his supernatural status. Further, though, Victoria recognizes his supernatural abilities, and specifically how she does not know what exactly they consist of. Victoria, then, loses power in comparison to Zofloya because she does not have the same knowledge as him. It is this supernatural power that Zofloya uses to manipulate and control Victoria both mentally and physically.

The shift in power between Victoria and Zofloya happens only through Victoria’s perspective, as the reader knows she was in his power the entire time. At the beginning of the

interaction between Zofloya and Victoria, Victoria appears as the one in power. This partially results from Zofloya claiming that her “very *thoughts* have power to attract [him],” placing Victoria in the position of power (178). Victoria also often reminds herself that he is “but a menial slave” to her, as he claims to be acting in her service (234). These perspectives, however, turn out to be incorrect, and highlight the way in which Zofloya does have power over her. While her thoughts might attract him, Zofloya later reveals he possesses the power to read them. Similarly, while Zofloya claims to be acting as her slave, he manipulates her into using the supernatural. Dacre also uses similar language to emphasize the shift in power from Victoria’s character to Zofloya. Zofloya’s voice “penetrate[s] to the very heart of Victoria,” mirroring the masculinizing language used to describe Victoria previously, specifically with Berenza (198). Similarly, the language describes Zofloya’s ability penetrate Victoria’s thoughts, accentuating, yet again, his supernatural abilities, as well as his masculine authority over her (233). All of this leads to Zofloya’s possession and power over Victoria, which he hints at when he says “you have not yet found that I have deceived you,” both foreshadowing and threatening his overtaking of her (173). This deception Zofloya speaks in results in Victoria being stripped of power and reacting to the supernatural as Emily, Antonia and Agnes did.

Much like Emily, Victoria begins to experience terror in reaction to the supernatural. Unlike Emily or Antonia, Victoria’s terror begins with actual supernatural influence. The first interaction Victoria has with Zofloya is through a dream, in which he first incites terror within her. She awakens from this dream because she “fill[s] with terror,” making this reaction the foundation for her future exchanges with Zofloya. Victoria’s mind also exists “in a chaos of agitation and horror” in reflection of the dream, aggravating her state of mind and changing her usually fearless and carefree state of mind to a troubled one (137). The dream, created by Zofloya, establishes the

supernatural interaction Victoria later confronts. Victoria, thus, immediately becomes overtaken by terror, like the way the other gothic heroines discussed would experience terror in their supernatural situations. From this point on, she often trembles in his presence, especially if he expresses anger with her (172). Similarly, “gloomy terrors [press] upon her heart,” oppressing her (233). Victoria, who had been a very powerful figure, shifts into someone submissive to Zofloya due to the terror incited by his existence. Up until her death at the end of the novel, Victoria reacts to Zofloya this way at one point stating in a terrified tone that she rests in his power, showing the way in which his supernatural power looms over her and gives this affect (266). Zofloya’s ability to induce terror within Victoria is just the beginning of the influence he has over her.

Similar to Ambrosio’s magical powers to take control over Antonia’s body, Zofloya manages to gain control over not just Victoria’s body, but her mind as well. Where Emily was unable to move due to terror, Victoria often struggles to move because Zofloya purposefully prevents her from doing so. After Henriquez’s suicide, Victoria attempts to cover it up; however, Zofloya demands her not to and exclaims: “independently of *me*, you canst not even breathe!” (227). When Victoria does attempt to clean Henriquez’s room “her eyelids involuntarily closed, and she was compelled to yield to a power superior to her will” (228). Presumably, the unknown power most comes from the threatening Zofloya, who was there when she awakened and his voice “arrested her movement” (229). This long scene, in which Zofloya continually overpowers Victoria by using the supernatural, shows the way in which Zofloya robs Victoria of her agency. Even further, this is dire time in Victoria’s story in which she may be found as the culprit for a whole series of murders, and yet she fails to escape the impending discovery. Victoria again obeys him later when the narrator points out that it is “impossible for her to resist the smallest proposition of the Moor” (242). In this instance, she quite literally cannot disobey him, a stark contrast to her

previous description of not just doing as she pleases, but being obeyed by others herself. He also prevents her from speaking when he “passe[s] his arm gently around her waist...her heart was oppressed, and she could not speak” (248). There are two key factors at play in this passage. The first in Victoria’s oppressions by his actions over her, directly showing the oppression of women that the supernatural causes. The second is again Victoria’s lack of agency, this time over her speech, because Zofloya purposefully prevents her from speaking. It is also significant to point out that his arm around her signifies a form of possession or ownership, which becomes a large aspect of their relationship. Overall, Zofloya’s ability to physically control Victoria is similar to the previous novels in the fact that the heroine is robbed of agency in relation to the supernatural, but in this case, is heightened due to the fact that he has direct and regular control over her body and mind.

Victoria’s “self-sufficient” nature diminishes as soon as she first interacts with Zofloya. When he convinces her to follow his orders so she can prevent the wedding of Henriquez and Lilla he asks, “Wilt thou be mine?” to which Victoria replies, “Oh, yes, yes!” (136). This exchange shows the first instance of ownership Zofloya has over Victoria, and she agrees to it. Yet, this ownership escalates when Zofloya admits his aim is to have her, and he later threatens that she will be “completely [his]” (200, 240). This shows an interesting shift in what was early seen in Victoria and Berenza’s relationship. While Berenza attempted to possess Victoria, he fails even after years. However, within just months of being around Victoria, Zofloya manages to possess her, but this is, of course, with the power of the supernatural. Zofloya tells Victoria later that he has “gained [her], and lose [her] now [he] neither can nor will” (248). Thus, Zofloya possesses Victoria in such a way that it seems to be a permanent situation that neither of them, though especially Victoria, can escape from. While other heroines, like Emily, fear to be owned by

contemptuous men as their wife, Victoria faces a much worse fate. Zofloya states that Victoria is neither his wife or his mistress but ““she will be [his]...for [they] are linked by indissoluble bands”” (239). This threat sounds more extreme in nature, because where marriage could be escaped from through death, divorce, or running away, Victoria becomes strongly attached to Zofloya. The menace is reiterated when Zofloya says ““While thou livest...I will remain with thee—and death shall have no power to tear thee from me”” (249). Such possession elevates the ones seen in the other novels. When Ambrosio takes possession of Antonia, she can escape through death, however, Victoria will never be able to escape Zofloya, even in the afterlife. This element is the culmination of Dacre’s distortion of Lewis and Radcliffe’s novels. Not only is the supernatural elevated, but the fate of the horrible fate of the heroine is inescapable and never ending.

In order to prove that Victoria’s fate was dependent on her usage and interaction with the supernatural, I will use the character of Megalena as an example of a female who was able to gain power similarly to Victoria, but ultimately only failed moderately as opposed to heinously. In doing so, the way that the supernatural specifically oppresses women will become clearer. Megalena takes control over Leonardo, Victoria’s brother, in the hopes of killing the supposed lover who betrayed her, Henriquez. In order to accomplish this task she “overpower[s]” and “enslave[s]” Leonardo to get him to do her bidding (118, 114). Interestingly, Megalena is described as an “enchantress,” a “siren,” and to have “bewitched” Leonardo (120, 106). These descriptions draw attention to the fact that, despite how she may be labeled, she never actually uses magic or any other supernatural means to attract Leonardo. In fact, wine is the closest thing to a potion Megalena even comes in contact with (119). Rather, Megalena’s character is just a seductive woman able to gain “power over [Leonardo’s] soul” and “possesse[s] over him an unlimited power” (112, 109). Megalena, then, uses such power to persuade Leonardo to kill Berenza, which

he ultimately fails and she must then run away. Her fate of living in slight exile, however, is calm compared to that of Victoria's, and it is because she did not use the supernatural.

Megalena and Victoria are likened in multiple ways throughout the novel, making their differences more distinct. This is evident through the way they interact with other people, the attention they demand and ownership over men they believe themselves to have (especially over Berenza). When Victoria recalls Megalena staring at her in the canals she describes it as gazing upon her "with a basilisk's eye" (117). The language is mirrored when Victoria looks upon Lilla "with the eyes of a basilisk" (150). These similarities of language allow for the reader to compare the two characters more easily. In such, it becomes evident that Megalena, while ultimately failing her goal, is able to continue living a happy life, whereas Victoria, also ultimately failing her goal, is forced to not just live unhappily, but exist so even after death. Since Megalena did not use the supernatural, she managed to live out a relatively normal existence, whereas Victoria became the property of Satan, a terrible, never-ending fate. Thus, the supernatural is the responsible entity for Victoria's eventual downfall, showing that it is a force of oppression.

Zofloya takes the character types and conflicts of *Udolpho* and *The Monk* to an extreme level to further communicate the gendered power dynamic associated with the supernatural. In such, Victoria, a powerful, masculinized heroine can use the supernatural to her advantage. Yet, ultimately, this leads to her downfall because, as a female, the supernatural works against her in such a way that she becomes the eternal possession of Satan himself. Juxtaposed with Megalena, a masculinized and powerful woman also within the novel, it is obvious by her ability to live a normal life that the supernatural specifically victimized Victoria. As a result of Dacre using elements from Lewis and Radcliffe's novels, what may not have been as clear within their works

becomes more explicit because the plot itself does not shy away from any subjects, as *Udolpho* had, and emphasizes the gender power dynamic in a way that *The Monk* failed to.

Conclusion

While critics tend to emphasize the repetition of plot and character types in the gothic novel, reading *Udolpho*, *The Monk*, and *Zofloya* side by side tells a different story: each of these authors innovates plot and character, and in such a way that makes increasingly explicit a central belief: the supernatural favors men and masculinized characters. Just after a revolutionary period, the gothic genre was a revolt of the Enlightenment; in such, it seems to abandon rational thought. Yet, as evident in Radcliffe's insistency on rational and belittlement of supernatural belief, it did not start out as a radical genre, but rather a certain form of romance novels. When Lewis published *The Monk*, however, he perverted not just the plot, but the heroines and heroes of the story as well, somehow making them both more realistic and more supernatural. Within this distortion of Radcliffe's works, specifically *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the power dynamic between who can use the supernatural and who the supernatural oppresses became more explicit. A little over ten years later Charlotte Dacre saw this interaction and pushed it even further by creating a gothic anti-heroine, Victoria, who could both use the supernatural and be victimized by it. Throughout each of these works, despite their differences, the fact that the supernatural acts in favor of male or masculinized characters, while oppressing female or feminized characters, remains evident.

As seen in Emily, Antonia, Agnes, Victoria and even the feminized Ambrosio's interactions with the supernatural, the force works against women in a way that can control and overpower both their bodies and minds. However, masculine entities and characters, such as the castle of Udolpho, the banditti, Ambrosio, Leonato, and the masculinized Victoria, use the supernatural to their advantage. While some of these exchanges may be stronger than others, depending on if the novel acknowledges these happenings as real or fake, it is seen in some way that the supernatural works in a gendered power dynamic.

It is important to acknowledge that each of these novels treat power and gender in their own unique way. Yet, examining them together brings out their commonalities. Whether the supernatural is explained rationally, prevails against reason, or is unquestioned, it always negatively affects, and eventually controls, a female character. Similarly, even when it seems as if a female character may obtain power by using the supernatural, such as Agnes or Victoria, it ultimately backfires against them, where this rarely happened with male characters. The only male character who the supernatural affects in a negative way is Ambrosio who is shown to be feminized throughout the work. Thus, the supernatural within early gothic literature acts as a patriarchal force that works to oppress women.

In understanding that each of these novels was written by very different authors, what does this offer us in forms of a conclusion? It is not as if the fact that patriarchal forces oppress women is particularly shocking. Nor is it that surprising that Radcliffe, Lewis and Dacre communicated that in their work, as Radcliffe was counted as a feminist, and Lewis and Dacre were more forward and radical with their social beliefs. Perhaps the most enticing element of this research is the fact that the irrational entity of the supernatural seems to be a masculine power. It could, in this way, be a metaphor for the chaos of patriarchal societies, which would be timely considering the amount of revolutions both revolting from and turning into patriarchal structures, especially considering the French Revolution was right within this time frame. Similarly, Ambrosio's fate of falling victim to the supernatural because he is feminized seems similar to the contemporary idea of toxic masculinity, in which men unable to maintain the masculine standard are seen as weak or less than. Whichever the conclusion of these novels may be, they each contribute to a larger political and societal criticism, moving beyond the sensationalist genre critics often accredit them as.

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