

# Ann Radcliffe, ‘The Shakespeare of Romance Writers’

*by Rictor Norton*<sup>1</sup>

In 1798 the critic Nathan Drake called Ann Radcliffe ‘the Shakespeare of Romance writers’. He was not alone in comparing Radcliffe to Shakespeare; some critics judged Radcliffe to be the equal of Shakespeare, or even his superior. Drake’s epithet alluded to Radcliffe’s practice of heading chapters in her novels with a quotation from Shakespeare, and her modelling of some of her most striking tableaux on scenes from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In this essay I examine what Radcliffe’s Shakespearean sources were; how she employed Shakespearean themes and images in her novels and poetry; her critical contribution to the understanding of Shakespeare’s technique; her personal identification with Shakespeare; and the importance of the Shakespearean associations to her own lasting fame as a writer.

Radcliffe’s own understanding of Shakespeare’s technique is made explicit in her posthumous essay ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, not published until 1826, but probably written between 1811 and 1815. It originally formed part of a conversation between two English travellers in Shakespeare’s native county

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally published in Christy Desmet and Anne Williams (eds), *Shakespearean Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pages 37–59.

Warwickshire, which constituted the long introduction that Radcliffe pasted onto her romance *Gaston de Blondville* (written in 1802/3 and later, pub. 1826).<sup>2</sup> Henry Colborn wisely decided to publish this section as a stand-alone essay in his *New Monthly Magazine* in 1826, where it served as a teaser to stir up interest in his forthcoming publication of her posthumous romance. The essay gives us important glimpses into Radcliffe's own technique for creating a sense of the supernatural in her novels, and underlines how important Shakespeare was for her.

The key feature of her understanding of Shakespeare's method is that characters are coterminous with circumstances. In modern parlance, everything in a work of imagination will be more or less a projection of the passions of the characters. This view moves away from the pretence that stories are non-fictional histories, and frankly acknowledges the central importance of the creative artist, who necessarily endeavours to create a unified world. The traveller who represents Mrs Radcliffe herself is seen 'following Shakspeare [*sic*] into unknown regions':

Where is now the undying spirit, that could so exquisitely perceive and feel? – that could inspire itself with the various characters of this world, and create worlds of its own; to which the grand and the beautiful, the gloomy and the sublime of visible Nature, up-called not only corresponding feelings, but passions; which seemed to perceive a soul in

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<sup>2</sup> Ann Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', *New Monthly Magazine*, 16 (1826): 145–52. For the complicated history of the writing of *Gaston de Blondville* and its introduction, see Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (1999), chap. 14.

every thing: and thus, in the secret workings of its own characters, and in the combinations of its incidents, kept the elements and local scenery always in unison with them, heightening their effect.

The storm in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which parallels the passions of the conspirators in the porch of Pompey's theatre, is cited as an example of this 'correspondence' of 'attendant circumstances':

These appalling circumstances with others of supernatural import, attended the fall of the conqueror of the world – a man, whose power Cassius represents to be dreadful as this night, when the sheeted dead were seen in the lightning to glide along the streets of Rome. How much does the sublimity of these attendant circumstances heighten our idea of the power of Cæsar, of the terrific grandeur of his character, and prepare and interest us for his fate. The whole soul is roused and fixed, in the full energy of attention, upon the progress of the conspiracy against him; and, had not Shakspeare wisely withdrawn him from our view, there would have been no balance of our passions.

Although Radcliffe is describing a scene in *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene iii – 'When the most mighty gods by tokens send / such dreadful heralds to astonish us', such as 'gliding ghosts' and 'this dreadful night / That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars' – she is simultaneously thinking of Horatio's description of the same event in *Hamlet*, I.i.114–23: 'A little ere the mightiest Julius fell, / The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead / Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets / . . . / And even the like precurse of fierce events, / As harbingers preceding still the fates / And prologue to the omen

coming on'. The ghost scene in *Hamlet* affected Radcliffe so powerfully that Shakespeare's other plays were sometimes filtered through its lens.

A similar use of correspondence is praised in *Cymbeline*: 'how finely such circumstances are made use of, to awaken, at once, solemn expectation and tenderness, and, by recalling the softened remembrance of a sorrow long past, to prepare the mind to melt at one that was approaching, mingling at the same time, by means of a mysterious occurrence, a slight tremour of awe with our pity.' Radcliffe describes the scene in which Belarius and Arviragus are searching for Fidele (Imogen disguised as a page), and 'solemn music is heard from the cave, sounded by that harp which Guiderius says, "*Since the death of my dearest mother, it did not speak before. All solemn things should answer solemn accidents.*"' Immediately Arviragus enters with Fidele senseless in his arms.' *Macbeth* similarly 'shows, by many instances, how much Shakspeare delighted to heighten the effect of his characters and his story by correspondent scenery: there the desolate heath, the troubled elements, assist the mischief of his malignant beings.' And finally Radcliffe comes to *Hamlet*:

Above every ideal being is the ghost of Hamlet, with all its attendant incidents of time and place. The dark watch upon the remote platform, the dreary aspect of the night, the very expression of the officer on guard, 'the air bites shrewdly; it is very cold;' the recollection of a star, an unknown world, are all circumstances which excite forlorn, melancholy and solemn feelings, and dispose us to welcome, with trembling curiosity, the awful being that draws near; and to indulge in that strange mixture of horror, pity, and indignation, produced by the tale it reveals. Every minute circumstance

of the scene between those watching on the platform, and of that between them and Horatio preceding the entrance of the apparition, contributes to excite some feeling of dreariness, or melancholy, or solemnity, or expectation, in unison with and leading on toward that high curiosity and thrilling awe with which we witness the conclusion of the scene.

Then follows a detailed analysis of the first scene of the play, on the watch-tower, when the audience's expectation of seeing the ghost is prepared for by the dialogue between Horatio and Bernardo. 'Oh, I should never be weary of dwelling on the perfection of Shakspeare, in his management of every scene connected with that most solemn and mysterious being, which takes such entire possession of the imagination, that we hardly seem conscious we are beings of this world while we contemplate "the extravagant and erring spirit".' Radcliffe is insistent that even minor details should correspond to the passion or mood of the work. For example, 'In the scene where Horatio breaks his secret to Hamlet Shakspeare, still true to the touch of circumstances, makes the time evening, and marks it by the very words of Hamlet, "Good even, sir," which Hanmer and Warburton changed without any reason, to "good morning," thus making Horatio relate his most interesting and solemn story by the clear light of the cheerfulest part of the day.'

Radcliffe feels that 'accordant circumstances' should serve to intensify a mood and to anticipate an event, and hence that they should share the same quality as that emotion or event rather than contrast sharply with it. Thus, though she acknowledges that 'objects of terror sometimes strike us very forcibly, when introduced into scenes of gaiety and splendour,

as, for instance, in the Banquet scene in *Macbeth*, she feels that the effect of sharp contrasts is transient, unlike ‘the deep and solemn feelings excited under more accordant circumstances and left long upon the mind’. Although ‘deep pity mingles with our surprise and horror’ at the appearance of Banquo’s ghost, it does not arouse ‘the gloomy and sublime kind of terror’ which the ghost of Hamlet’s father calls forth.

Radcliffe was almost certainly familiar with Elizabeth Montagu’s famous *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769), which pointed out, among other things, the ‘correspondence’ between the wandering star and the appearance of the ghost in *Hamlet*, and which defended Shakespeare’s use of ‘praeternatural beings’ on the grounds that superstitions were part of national folklore. Radcliffe’s theory of ‘correspondent scenery’ or ‘accordant circumstances’ derives from the mid-eighteenth-century critical theory of ‘association’, which characterises any type of writing that parallels a psychological mood without directly describing it. For example, Cawthorn in a poem quoted in *The Romance of the Forest* speaks of the ‘according music’ with which Handel matches the emotions of his characters.<sup>3</sup> Radcliffe consciously adopted this technique in all of her novels, even in her earliest novel *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), when Mary wanders through a wood ‘whose awful glooms so well accorded with the pensive tone of her mind’.<sup>4</sup> Music and sound in particular always accord with the moods of Radcliffe’s characters. The overarching metaphor is that of the

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<sup>3</sup> James Cawthorn, ‘Life Unhappy, because We Use It Improperly’, lines 165–76, quoted in *The Romance of the Forest*, chap. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), p. 42.

‘correspondent breeze’ which Wordsworth and Coleridge attributed to a numinous Nature.

The distinct feature that Radcliffe added to this theory of correspondence was the practice of devising associations that would serve to stir up feelings of fear and dreadful anticipation. In other words, most of her accordant circumstances were directed towards just one object: terror or the sublime: ‘The union of grandeur and obscurity, which Mr Burke describes as a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror, and which causes the sublime, is to be found only in *Hamlet*; or in scenes where circumstances of the same kind prevail.’ This of course is a reference to Edmund Burke’s influential essay *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), and it leads on to the passage most frequently quoted from Radcliffe’s essay:

Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend, that neither Shakspeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between horror and terror but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil?

Obscurity, or indistinctness, ‘leaves something for the imagination to exaggerate’. Burke, surprisingly, does not discuss Shakespeare in his *Enquiry*. Radcliffe must have found him deficient in this respect, but she makes amends by elevating Shakespeare as the supreme master of sublimity; at the potent

bidding of ‘those great masters of the imagination’ Shakespeare and Milton, ‘the passions have been awakened from their sleep, and by whose magic a crowded Theatre has been changed to a lonely shore, to a witch’s cave, to an enchanted island, to a murderer’s castle, to the ramparts of an usurper, to the battle, to the midnight carousal of the camp or the tavern, to every various scene of the living world.’

The simplest and most basic accordance or correspondence to be found in Radcliffe’s novels are the verse epigraphs, which anticipate the mysteries that will occur in each chapter. Shakespeare’s works were heavily exploited as heralds or tokens to achieve this effect. Warren Hunting Smith in a survey of nineteen Gothic romances by fifteen authors counted 561 poetical quotations used in the chapter headings: 157 from Shakespeare, 37 from James Thomson in second place, 30 from Milton in third place, 19 from Collins in fourth place, 9 from Ariosto, 7 from Spenser, 5 from Tasso, and a smattering from others.<sup>5</sup> One reason for this distribution is that Smith includes three novels by Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*.<sup>6</sup> Most of the novels that Smith surveyed post-date Radcliffe’s work and bear her influence. Hence it is not so much a matter of Radcliffe following the Gothic novel tradition of quoting Shakespeare, as a matter of Gothic novelists quoting Shakespeare as a result of Radcliffe having set the pattern for this tradition. The

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<sup>5</sup> Warren Hunting Smith, *Architecture in English Fiction* (1934), esp. pp. 55–8.

<sup>6</sup> The other novels Smith reviews are Lewis’s *The Monk*, Charlotte Smith’s *The Old Manor House* and *The Banished Man*, Regina Maria Roche’s *Clermont* and *The Children of the Abbey*, Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine*, Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell*, and nine lesser-known works.



frequency and distribution of authors quoted in Radcliffe's novels is virtually identical: 51 from Shakespeare, 18 from Thomson, 14 from Milton, 14 from Collins, 12 from Beattie, 10 from Mason, and a scattering from Pope, Macpherson, Dryden, Goldsmith, Gray, Young, James Cawthorn, Walpole, Warton and others. Most of the quotations from Shakespeare (in Gothic novels in general, and in Radcliffe's novels in particular) come from those plays with supernatural elements: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and references to ghostly happenings in *Julius Caesar*.

The revival of interest in Shakespeare during Ann Ward Radcliffe's childhood had a profound impact on her novels. The most distinctive characteristics of Radcliffe's work, namely the conjoint influence of Shakespeare and Burke's theory of the sublime, are immediately present right from the outset, in her very first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789). Although there are no chapter epigraphs in this novel, by the end of the first twenty pages, the reader realises that the tale is going to parallel Hamlet's attempt to avenge the death of his father. As in one of the affecting scenes in *Hamlet*, Radcliffe's Matilda, like Hamlet's mother, 'sunk lifeless in her chair' when Osbert informs her of his resolve.<sup>7</sup> Later, as in *Hamlet*, we shiver at 'the dismal note of a watch-bell'.<sup>8</sup> It is equally clear that Radcliffe must have already read Burke's influential essay on the Sublime, for Osbert 'delighted in the terrible and the grand, more than in the softer landscape;

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<sup>7</sup> Radcliffe, *Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

and wrapt in the bright visions of fancy, would often lose himself in awful solitudes'.<sup>9</sup>

Radcliffe's first direct quotation of Shakespeare appears in the epigraph to *A Sicilian Romance* (1790): 'I could a Tale unfold!' Readers would recognise the lines spoken by the ghost of Hamlet's father:

But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul . . .  
(*Hamlet*, I.v.13 ff.)

The power of suggestion for which Radcliffe's 'terrific' narratives are notable is achieved partly through such quotations from the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Thomson, Beattie and others, specifically selected to invoke feelings of sublime terror, pity, melancholy, mystery and pleasing dread. With *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) there is a sudden burst of poetic epigraphs, one (sometimes even two) for each chapter. There are about fourteen quotations from or allusions to Shakespeare throughout the romance, beginning with the epigraph repeated on the title page for each volume:

Ere the bat hath flown  
His cloister'd flight; ere to black Hecate's summons,  
The shard-born beetle, with his drowsy hums,  
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.  
[spoken by Macbeth, *Macbeth*, III.ii.40–4]

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

This quotation can be found in William Dodd's *The Beauties of Shakespeare Regularly Selected from Each Play*. This very popular anthology first appeared in 1752 and was frequently reprinted. Five more quotations used in *The Romance of the Forest* can also be found as 'beauties' in Dodd's collection: the five-line epigraph for chapter 3, from *As You Like It*; the brief allusion to 'melancholy boughs' in chapter 3, also from *As You Like It*; the epigraph for chapter 6, 'Hence, horrible shadow! / Unreal mockery, hence!', addressed by Macbeth to Banquo's ghost in *Macbeth*; and the two epigraphs for chapter 14, both from *King John*. However, the novel also contains additional quotations from Shakespeare that are *not* duplicated by Dodd: the epigraph for chapter 7, from *Macbeth*; the epigraph for chapter 8, from *Julius Caesar*; the epigraph for chapter 10, from *King Lear*; and an allusion to 'music such as charmeth sleep' in chapter 10, from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Moreover, the epigraph for chapter 4, 'My May of life / Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf' (from *Macbeth*, V.iii.22–3), is rendered as 'My way of life . . .' by Dodd, so *The Beauties of Shakespeare* cannot be reductively identified as the 'source' for Radcliffe's quotations. For this particular quotation, Radcliffe is clearly following Dr Johnson, who argued that 'As there is no relation between the *way of life*, and *fallen into sere*, I am inclined to think, that the *W* is only an *M* inverted, and that it was originally written, *My May of life*.' Johnson's note on this line was first published in 1745 in his *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*, but it was frequently reprinted in other collections more accessible to Radcliffe. There is a brief reference to Johnson's *Prefaces to Shakespeare* in Radcliffe's *A Journey Made in the Summer of*

1794 (1795),<sup>10</sup> so we do know she was familiar with Johnson's opinion, and we cannot rule out the possibility that she may have owned the 1771 edition of *The Works of Shakespeare with Dr Johnson's Prefaces*. Johnson's emendation was incorrect and has not been accepted by modern editors, but it was followed in several late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century editions of *Macbeth*, and was quoted in works by other critics, for example by Charles Dibdin in his study *A Complete History of the English Stage* (1800).

Although we cannot pin down the exact 'source' of Radcliffe's Shakespeare, nevertheless the habit of collecting 'the beauties of Shakespeare' is relevant to Radcliffe's own practice. Contemporary critics complained that, because Dodd's collection consisted almost entirely of passages of verse extracts lifted from the plays rather than any of the prose dialogue, it produced a model of Shakespeare the poet rather than Shakespeare the playwright. The resulting emphasis on Shakespeare's poetic imagination or 'fancy' is often seen in Radcliffe's own works, and is in keeping with her own appreciation of Shakespeare more as a conjuror-poet than as a dramatist. As Radcliffe flexed her talent in *The Romance of the Forest*, particularly her talent in poetry, it was natural for her to invoke the name of Shakespeare, who for her was the icon of the Romantic Imagination. Thus Adeline's own poems, such as 'Morning, on the Sea Shore' (in chapter 18) contains echoes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, and the long poem 'Titania to her Love' was written by Adeline 'after having read that rich effusion of Shakespeare's genius, "A

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<sup>10</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine* (1795), p. 135.

Midsummer Night's Dream".' Thus Radcliffe presents 'Shakespeare's genius' as being poetical rather than dramatic, and we should note that Adeline's poem is written after she had *read* the play, rather than after having *seen a performance* of it. Radcliffe's imitations of Shakespeare were successful: Anna Laetitia Barbauld felt that Radcliffe's poems 'Song to a Spirit', 'The Sea Nymph', and 'Down, down, a hundred fathom deep!' 'might be sung by Shakespeare's Ariel'.<sup>11</sup>

The poet and critic Charles Bucke, who was invited to dinner with Mrs Radcliffe, carefully noted that 'Her favourite tragedy was *Macbeth*. . . . her favourite poets, after Shakespeare, Tasso, Spenser, and Milton.'<sup>12</sup> This group of poets was virtually a literary trope. Joseph Warton, in *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756 and 1782), placed Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton in the highest class of poets, whom he categorised as 'sublime and pathetic'. The *locus classicus* for this grouping is Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762): 'The greatest geniuses of our own and foreign countries, such as Ariosto and Tasso in Italy, and Spenser and Milton in England, were seduced by these barbarities of their forefathers; were even charmed by the Gothic Romances. Was this caprice and absurdity in them? Or, may there not be something in the Gothic Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry?'; Hurd then gives high praise to 'Shakespeare's wild

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<sup>11</sup> Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 'Mrs Radcliffe', biographical preface to *The Romance of the Forest, The British Novelists*, vol. 43 (1810), pp. vi–vii.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Bucke, *On the Beauties, Harmonies, and Sublimities of Nature*, new edition (1837), ii.123.

sublimity'.<sup>13</sup> Thus Shakespeare is firmly placed among the epic poets rather than among dramatists.

*The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is even more replete with poetry than *The Romance of the Forest*. In addition to the verse quotations that head every chapter, there are about 75 quotations and 18 complete poems composed by the characters themselves. The chapter epigraphs come mostly from Thomson, Beattie and Collins, plus a few from Gray, Mason, Milton and others – and 22 from Shakespeare (five from *Macbeth*, four from *Julius Caesar*, three each from *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and one each from *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King John*, *Measure for Measure*, *Richard II*, *The Tempest*, and *Titus Andronicus*). Again, in *The Italian* (1797), each chapter has a verse epigraph, including eleven from Shakespeare (one each from *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King John*, *Richard III* and *As You Like It*, and two each from *Julius Caesar* and *King Lear*).

Radcliffe's employment of epigraphs and quotations is so systematic and so conspicuous that it clearly serves a metanarrative function. It seems likely that Radcliffe cultivated the 'epic poets' as a kind of imprimatur to signify the high culture of her own work. The verse that embellishes Radcliffe's romances demonstrates that they are not mere Novels, but works of Literature. In Madame de Genlis's *Adelaide and Theodore; or Letters on Education* (1783), the children are not given any fairy tales to read, but they are allowed to read

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), pp. 4 and 60.

Milton, Tasso, Ariosto, Shakespeare, Corneille and Voltaire.<sup>14</sup> Such a list – excluding Corneille and Voltaire! – would be used by Radcliffe to demonstrate her taste, and even to suggest that she herself was up there amongst the best of them. In this respect she was overwhelmingly successful. Her publishers Hookham and Carpenter even marketed her as a Shakespearean property: for example, in their advertisement for the fourth edition of *The Romance of the Forest* in *The Courier, and Evening Gazette* for Saturday, 10 May 1794, they give two quotations from *Macbeth*.

In France, even before the publication of her most famous novel, Radcliffe's energetic tableaux had been singled out for praise by Marie-Joseph De Chénier: 'le vrais coups de théâtre, et même quelques tons de Shakespeare'.<sup>15</sup> The review of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in the *Critical Review* for August 1794 similarly begins by praising Radcliffe in the highest possible terms:

'Thine too these golden keys, immortal boy!  
This can unlock the gates of joy,  
Of horror, that and thrilling fears,  
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears.'

Such were the presents of the Muse to the infant Shakspeare [*sic*], and though perhaps to no other mortal has she been so lavish of her gifts, the keys referring to the third line Mrs Radcliffe must be allowed to be

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<sup>14</sup> Madame de Genlis, *Adelaide and Theodore; or Letters on Education* (1783), i. 71.

<sup>15</sup> Marie-Joseph De Chénier, *Tableau historique de l'état et des progrès de la littérature française, depuis 1789* (1816), p. 229.

completely in possession of.<sup>16</sup>

The lines quoted in the review come from Gray's *Progress of Poesy* (III, lines 9–12) and refer to the prophetic birth of Shakespeare.

Radcliffe's canonisation was complete when Thomas James Mathias, respected scholar, editor of Gray, and Librarian to Buckingham Palace, in the 1797 edition of *The Pursuits of Literature* labelled her:

the mighty magician of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, bred and nourished by the Florentine Muses in their sacred solitary caverns, amid the paler shrines of Gothic superstition and in all the dreariness of enchantment: a poetess whom Ariosto would with rapture have acknowledged, as the

La nudrita  
Damigella Trivulzia AL SACRO SPECIO. O.F. c. 46.<sup>17</sup>

The quotation, from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, refers to a virgin whose youthful marks of poetic genius suggest that she was bred in the cave of Apollo – thus clinching Radcliffe's reputation as an enchantress-poet. Nathan Drake – who would become a competent Shakespearean critic – was prompted to write two Gothic tales after reading *The Italian*. When he described Radcliffe as 'the Shakespeare of Romance Writers' in 1798 he cited in full the passage about Radcliffe from the

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<sup>16</sup> *Critical Review* 11 (August 1794): 361. (This review is commonly, but mistakenly, attributed to Coleridge: see Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho*, pp. 105–6.)

<sup>17</sup> *The Pursuits of Literature* first appeared in 1794, but the reference to Mrs Radcliffe did not appear until the revised third edition (1797), p. 14.



seventh edition of *The Pursuits of Literature* in support of his own commendation.<sup>18</sup> Sir Walter Scott in his ‘Prefatory Memoir To Mrs Ann Radcliffe’ for *The Novels of Mrs Ann Radcliffe*, in Ballantyne’s *Novelist’s Library* (1824), also quoted Mathias’s praise of the ‘mighty magician’. Thereafter, virtually every extended comment on Radcliffe re-quoted the passage via Scott’s quotation. By such consensus and repetition was the canon constructed. The English traveller Jane Waldie recalled that while standing on the Rialto bridge in Venice she naturally thought not only of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* but of Radcliffe’s romances. ‘This is not the only spot at Venice which recalls fiction, poetry, and romance, to the mind. Shakespeare, Otway, and – in spite of many inaccuracies – Mrs Radcliffe, rise up every where in the shape of their heroes and heroines. The very situation of the city – the very names of the surrounding objects, constantly recall them.’<sup>19</sup> Waldie was probably recalling a similar judgement by Byron:

I loved her [Venice] from my boyhood; she to me  
Was as a fairy city of the heart,  
Rising like water columns from the sea,  
Of joy the sojourn, and of wealth the mart;  
And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare’s art,  
Had stamped her image in me . . .

(*Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Canto IV (1818),  
lines 154–59)

Another English traveller, John Sheppard, in 1816 observed that the name of Venice ‘is fraught with an undefineable charm,

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<sup>18</sup> Nathan Drake, *Literary Hours*, third edition (1804), i. 361.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Waldie, *Sketches Descriptive of Italy in the Years 1816 and 1817* (1820), iv. 163–4.

were it only for the associations linked with it by our Shakespeare, and by the “mighty magician of Udolpho”.<sup>20</sup>

As this body of praise suggests, the Shakespearean magic that Radcliffe conjured up was perceived primarily as the magic of poetry. Nevertheless, contemporary critics generally praised Radcliffe’s characterisation, as least beginning with *The Romance of the Forest*. Her comic characters come from the same stable as Shakespeare’s Mistress Quickly, or the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, or the rusticks in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, for example the rather tedious Peter in *The Romance of the Forest*, the passably amusing faithful servant Annette in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and her only really successful comic character, Paolo in *The Italian*, who is modelled partly on Shakespeare’s Puck. Radcliffe did nevertheless create believable characters within the sublime mould, beginning with La Motte in *The Romance of the Forest*, and nearly all critics agreed that the Abbess and the monk Schedoni in *The Italian* were finely drawn, with conflicting emotions co-existing in the same breast.

Hyper-critics such as Hazlitt did not appreciate Radcliffe’s efforts at characterisation: ‘Mrs Radcliffe’s heroes and lovers are perfect in their kind; nobody can find any fault with them, for nobody knows anything about them. . . . “Her heroes have no character at all”.’<sup>21</sup> Nor did Hazlitt share the near-universal admiration of Schedoni: ‘The dramatic power in the character of Schedoni, the Italian monk, has been much admired and

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<sup>20</sup> John Sheppard, *Letters, Descriptive of a Tour through some parts of France, Italy, Switzerland, and German, in 1816* (1817), ii, 438.

<sup>21</sup> William Hazlitt, ‘Why the Heroes of Romances Are Insipid’, *Sketches and Essays by William Hazlitt* (1839), p. 267.

praised; but the effect does not depend upon the character, but the situations; not upon the figure, but upon the background.’<sup>22</sup> Hazlitt did not understand that Radcliffe was deliberately trying to ensure that scenery and characters worked in unison through the creation of ‘accordant circumstances’. Sir Walter Scott, who also felt that her characters ‘are entirely subordinate to the scenes in which they are placed’,<sup>23</sup> nevertheless acknowledged that the portrait of Schedoni. ‘required no mean powers’. Leigh Hunt generally concurred with Hazlitt’s and Scott’s views, but Hunt nevertheless justly praised the characterisation of the duped aunt in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and St Pierre in *The Romance of the Forest*.<sup>24</sup>

Anna Laetitia Barbauld, in her biographical-critical preface for the 1810 reprints of Radcliffe’s novels in Rivington’s inexpensive edition of *The British Novelists*, expressed her special admiration for the characterisation of La Motte in *The Romance of the Forest*, even suggesting that Radcliffe’s technique in this instance was superior to Shakespeare’s:

There is a scene between [La Motte] and the more hardened Marquis, who is tempting him to commit murder, which has far more nature and truth than the admired scene between King John and Hubert, in which the writer’s imagination has led him rather to represent the action to which the King is endeavouring to work his instrument, as it would be seen by a person who had a great horror of its guilt, than in the

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<sup>22</sup> William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* (1819), p. 252.

<sup>23</sup> Sir Walter Scott, ‘Prefatory Memoir to Mrs. Ann Radcliffe’, *The Novels of Mrs. Ann Radcliffe* (Ballantyne’s Novelist’s Library, 1825), vol. 10, p. xviii.

<sup>24</sup> *The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt* (1862), i. 104.

manner in which he ought to represent it in order to win him to his purpose:

‘ – If the midnight bell  
Did with his iron tongue, and brazen mouth,  
Sound one unto the drowsy ear of night;  
If this same were a churchyard where we stand,  
And thou possessed with a thousand wrongs;  
– if thou could’st see me without eyes,  
Hear me without thine ears, and make reply  
Without a tongue,’ ’ &c. [*King John*, III.iii.37–50]

What must be the effect of such imagery but to infuse into the mind of Hubert that horror of the crime with which the spectator views the deed, and which it was the business, indeed, of Shakespeare to impress upon the mind of the spectator, but not of King John to impress upon Hubert. In the scene referred to, on the other hand, the Marquis, whose aim is to tempt La Motte to the commission of murder, begins by attempting to lower his sense of virtue, by representing it as the effect of prejudices imbibed in early youth, reminds him that in many countries the stiletto is resorted to without scruple; treats as trivial his former deviations from integrity; and, by lulling his conscience and awakening his cupidity, draws him to his purpose.<sup>25</sup>

This piece of astute criticism was quoted verbatim in the obituary of Mrs Radcliffe that was published in the *Annual Biography and Obituary for the year 1824*<sup>26</sup> – part of the aim

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<sup>25</sup> Anna Laetitia Barbauld, ‘Mrs Radcliffe’, *The British Novelists*, vol. 43 (1810), pp. vi–vii.

<sup>26</sup> *Annual Biography and Obituary* 8 (1824): 91.

of which was to consolidate her reputation as the Shakespeare of Romance Writers.

Radcliffe's appreciation of Shakespeare came primarily from reading him on the printed page, rather than seeing him performed on stage. Nevertheless, from her essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' we know that she saw performances of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. The ghost scene in *Hamlet* was her great touchstone, but she felt 'no little vexation in seeing the ghost of Hamlet *played*'. She also complained about a production of *Macbeth*:

But who, after hearing Macbeth's thrilling question –

– 'What are these,  
So withered and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't?'

who would have thought of reducing them to mere human beings, by attiring them not only like the inhabitants of the earth, but in the dress of a particular country, and making them downright Scotch-women – thus not only contradicting the very words of Macbeth, but withdrawing from these cruel agents of the passions all that strange and supernatural air which had made them so affecting to the imagination, and which was entirely suitable to the solemn and important events they were foretelling and accomplishing.<sup>27</sup>

For Radcliffe, who was not superstitious, 'the only real witch [is] the witch of the poet', and to depict them naturalistically was to lessen their power over the imagination and destroy the

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<sup>27</sup> Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', p. 146.

illusion: ‘So vexatious is the effect of the stage-witches upon my mind, that I should probably have left the theatre when they appeared, had not the fascination of Mrs Siddons’s influence so spread itself over the whole play, as to overcome my disgust, and to make me forget even Shakspeare himself’.<sup>28</sup>

We can deduce that Radcliffe attended performances at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket and Covent Garden.<sup>29</sup> Thomas Noon Talfourd in his authorised memoir of Radcliffe says that she frequently went to the opera, and more rarely accompanied her husband to the theatre; and that she warmly admired Mrs Siddons, and spoke with pleasure at seeing her with her son Henry going to church in Bath.<sup>30</sup> F. W. Price has pointed out that Mrs Siddons performed the character of Hamlet at the Bath–Bristol Theatre Royal on 27 June 1781, when Ann Ward ‘was twelve days short of seventeen years of age and perhaps living in Bath’. Price allows us to infer that Radcliffe saw Mrs Siddons then.<sup>31</sup> But although this was Mrs Siddons’ first appearance as Hamlet in Bath, she had appeared as Hamlet on five previous occasions, the first of which was in Liverpool, in March 1778. There is thus a possibility that the fourteen-year-old Ann Ward may have seen Mrs Siddons in an earlier performance in Liverpool, in the company of her uncle Thomas Bentley on one of his business trips to that city. (It is almost

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>29</sup> She compared these theatres to the Frankfurt Theatre in *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, p. 233.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Noon Talfourd, ‘Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs Radcliffe’, prefixed to Ann Radcliffe, *Gaston de Blondville, or The Court of Henry III . . . St Alban’s Abbey . . . Posthumous Works . . . Memoir* (4 vols., Colburn, 1826), i. 99–100.

<sup>31</sup> F. W. Price, ‘Ann Radcliffe, Mrs Siddons and the Character of Hamlet’, *Notes and Queries*, N.S., 23 (4) (April 1976): 164–7.

certainly the case that Ann Ward did not live with her parents in Bath, but with her uncle Bentley in Turnham Green, London.<sup>32</sup> Bentley, the partner of Josiah Wedgwood, was originally a Liverpool merchant, and he regularly made trips to that city. He was also a theatre-goer, whereas her parents were not.) However, Bentley died in November 1780, so Ann Ward would indeed have been with her parents in Bath in June 1781. The year 1781 also seems a likely date for Ann Ward to have seen Mrs Siddons going to church with her son Henry, who was born in October 1774.

Radcliffe in ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ suggests that Mrs Siddons would have been better in the role of Hamlet than her brother John Philip Kemble: ‘I should suppose she would be the finest Hamlet that ever appeared, excelling even her own brother in that character; she would more fully preserve the tender and refined melancholy, the deep sensibility, which are the peculiar charm of Hamlet, and which appear not only in the ardour, but in the occasional irresolution and weakness of his character – the secret spring that reconciles all his inconsistencies. . . . Her brother’s firmness, incapable of being always subdued, does not so fully enhance, as her tenderness would, this part of the character.’ This passage suggests that she saw Kemble rather than Mrs Siddons in the role of Hamlet, but the raising of the possibility of a female Hamlet does suggest that it had a special meaning for Radcliffe. Perhaps she simply remembered seeing advertisements for Mrs Siddons’ 1781 performance, or hearing people discuss the notable event.

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<sup>32</sup> See Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho*, chap. 3.

Radcliffe shared her contemporaries' estimation of Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse. Mrs Siddons' performance as Lady Macbeth in a benefit at Drury Lane on 2 February 1785 was a triumph, and was repeated by royal command on 7 February.<sup>33</sup> Mrs Siddons had so successfully penetrated the mystery of Lady Macbeth, that from 1785 the role became her exclusive property. The Drury Lane season of 1784–85 included performances of *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*; in 1785–86 Mrs Siddons performed as Ophelia; in 1786–87 she played the role of Imogen in *Cymbeline*, which was remarked for its affecting scene in a cave (the scene Radcliffe analysed in her essay on the supernatural); on 10 March 1788 Mrs Siddons performed again as Lady Macbeth, and in the winter of 1788 her brother John Philip Kemble joined her on stage as Macbeth.<sup>34</sup> Ann Ward married William Radcliffe in January 1787, and it was probably during their courtship and first year of marriage that Mrs Radcliffe most frequently attended the theatre and would have had the opportunity to see Mrs Siddons. Her essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' certainly confirms that she saw Kemble and Siddons perform in *Macbeth*, when her disgust at the all-too-human Scotch witches was overcome by the genius of Mrs Siddons' performance: 'Mrs Siddons, like Shakspeare, always disappears in the character she represents, and throws an illusion over the whole scene around her, that conceals many defects in the arrangements of the theatre.' Mrs Siddons portrayed Lady Macbeth as a 'sublime' figure, virtually the female equivalent

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<sup>33</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble* (1825), i. 242–3, 248.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 250, 268; 328–30; 343; 415–19.



of Milton's Satan; as Hazlitt commented in *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817):

we can conceive of nothing grander ... it seemed almost as if a being of a superior order had dropped from a higher sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine; she was tragedy personified. . . . She glided on and off the stage like an apparition. To have seen her in that character was an event in every one's life, not to be forgotten.

It is against this background that we will most appreciate Radcliffe's supreme characterisation of sublime terror in *The Italian*. It was specifically the character of Schedoni that prompted Nathan Drake's praise of Radcliffe:

every nerve vibrates with pity and terror . . . : every word, every action of the shocked and self-accusing Confessor, whose character is marked with traits almost super-human, appal yet delight the reader, and it is difficult to ascertain whether ardent curiosity, intense commiseration, or apprehension that suspends almost the faculty of breathing, be, in the progress of this well-written story, most powerfully excited.<sup>35</sup>

Dunlop's evaluation of *The Italian* is no less valid today than it was in 1814: that part of the novel which begins with Ellena's arrival at the desolate house on the sea-shore and ends with Schedoni conducting her home 'is in the first style of excellence, and has neither been exceeded in dramatic nor

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<sup>35</sup> Drake, *Literary Hours*, i. 361–2.

romantic fiction. The terror . . . is raised by a delineation of guilt, horror, and remorse, which, if Shakespeare has equalled, he has not surpassed.<sup>36</sup> The most powerful *coup de théâtre* in the novel is the scene in which Schedoni with his hired assassin Spalatro are advancing through a corridor to murder Ellena when they are suddenly confronted by the apparition of a beckoning bloody hand, which is clearly inspired by the vision of the bloody dagger in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The epigraph for this chapter of *The Italian* (vol. II, chap. ix) is: 'I am settled, and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.' These lines come from *Macbeth* (I.vii.79–80), indicating Macbeth's final determination to fall in with Lady Macbeth's demand that he assassinate Duncan.

This Shakespearean scene from *The Italian* inspired several paintings which were exhibited at the Royal Academy, including *Schedoni* by James Nixon (1798, No. 540), and *Italian*, by H. P. Bone (1805, No. 57), with a quotation: 'Spalatro, instead of obeying, now grasped the arms of the confessor: his starting eyes seemed to follow some object along the passage; and Schedoni looked forward to discover what occasioned this dismay.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> John Dunlop, *The History of Fiction* (1814), iii. 396.

<sup>37</sup> Other scenes from the novel inspired *Ellena di Rosalba*, by James Nixon (1798, No. 570), and *Morning: from Mrs Radcliffe's Italian*, by P. Ninsey (1801, No. 657). Radcliffe's novels provided the subject for at least ten paintings and drawings, more than any other Gothic novel, including *The abbey, taken from the Romance of the Forest*, by William Hodges (1794, No. 180); *From the Mysteries of Udolpho*, by J. C. Denham (1796, No. 751); *From the Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Henry Singleton (1796, No. 217); *From the Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Mary Lloyd (1798, No. 428); and *Vide the Mysteries of Udolpho*, by S. Drummond (1799, No. 59).

The most famous painting of this subject was by the American painter Washington Allston, who ‘exulted in the works of Mrs Radcliffe’.<sup>38</sup> He was deeply affected by Fuseli’s *Ghost Scene from Hamlet*, one of nine Fuseli paintings that were exhibited in the Shakespeare Gallery in 1789; it was frequently reproduced and praised for its sublimity.<sup>39</sup> Allston would paint several scenes from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, but his most famous painting was *Spalatro’s Vision of the Bloody Hand* (1830–1). In this painting, Spalatro ‘is seen half crouching, as if frozen with intense supernatural fear, and his eyes are dilated with horror; while the undismayed priest stands erect and haughty, holding the lamp above his head, and looking forward into the gloom with clear and steady eye’.<sup>40</sup> Allston painted this scene with rapt attention, frequently stepping back to assume the attitude of the figures.<sup>41</sup>

The other most powerful scene in the novel was the subject of a second painting by H. P. Bone exhibited at the Royal Academy, *Italian* (1805, No. 155), with a quotation: ‘Vengeance nerved his arm, and drawing aside the lawn from her bosom, he once more raised the dagger to strike, when, after gazing a moment, some new cause of horror seemed to seize his frame, and he stood for some instants aghast and motionless like a statue: when he recovered, he stooped, to examine again the miniature.’ Schedoni, about to plunge the dagger into the heart of the sleeping Ellena, suddenly sees a

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<sup>38</sup> M. F. Sweetser, *Allston* (1879), p. 174.

<sup>39</sup> According to a review of the Catalogue of the Shakespeare Gallery, at least 34 paintings depicted scenes from Shakespeare; *Analytical Review* 3 (May 1789): 111–12.

<sup>40</sup> Sweetser, *Allston*, p. 116.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

miniature of himself hanging at her neck, and believes her to be his own daughter (she is in fact his neice). I haven't found that any critics – contemporary or modern – recognised the parallel with *Macbeth*, and yet the title of an earlier painting exhibited at the Royal Academy, by Richard Westall (1790, No. 687), should make this clear: *Lady Macbeth prevented from stabbing the king by his resemblance to her father as he sleeps*.

Radcliffe does not merely employ Shakespearean allusions in an artificial stylistic manner – she also interacts creatively with the dramatic structures she finds in Shakespeare. Schedoni's near murder of Ellena is modelled upon the murder of Duncan in *Macbeth*, but with sex-changes: the sleeping Ellena takes on the role of the sleeping Duncan; while Spalatro, like Macbeth, sees the equivalent of the bloody 'dagger of the mind'; and Schedoni plays the role of Lady Macbeth urging her husband on, then finishing off the deed: 'Give me the dagger, then', says the Confessor. Or, to be more accurate, Schedoni plays the role of Mrs Siddons playing the role of the 'unsex'd female', Lady Macbeth.

Any view that Radcliffe employed Shakespeare in a purely calculated, professional manner, is undermined by much evidence that she had a very strong personal response to Shakespeare. In her posthumous poems, forests, cliffs and seashores invariably remind her of *The Midsummer Night's Dream*<sup>42</sup> or *The Tempest*.<sup>43</sup> On returning to Dover after her only trip abroad, she delighted in seeing once again

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<sup>42</sup> Radcliffe, *Gaston de Blondville . . . Posthumous Works*, 'In the New Forest', iv. 179.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Shakspeare's [*sic*] Cliff', iv. 169.

‘Shakespeare’s cliff, bolder still and sublime as the eternal name it bears’.<sup>44</sup>

It is likely that Radcliffe collected ‘picturesque’ scenes for her novels during her travels. She often took notes on scenes that reminded her of Shakespeare, carefully recording the ‘accordant circumstances’ that would contribute to supernatural wonder in her novels. For example, during her holiday tour in July 1800, while approaching Hastings one night she observed ‘no moon; starlight; milky-way very lucid; seemed to rise out of the sea. Solemn and pleasing night-scene. Glow-worms, in great numbers, shone silently and faintly on the dewy banks, like something supernatural. Judgment of Shakespeare in selecting this image to assist the terrific impression in his ghost-scene.’<sup>45</sup> During her autumn 1800 tour, ‘Three miles of continual ascent, or descent of almost tremendous hills, long and steep opening to vast distances, now obscured in ruin, but sublime in their obscurity’, remind her of a quotation – “‘These high, wild hills and rough uneven roads, / Drag out our miles and make them wearisome.’” *CYMBELINE*.<sup>46</sup> These lines come not from *Cymbeline*, but from *Richard II* (II.iii.4–5). She relied on memory in these journals, and was occasionally liable to misquote.

Radcliffe was highly sensitive to what she called ‘picturesque sounds’,<sup>47</sup> which she often associated with Shakespeare. For example, in October 1811, after returning to their inn at Steephill on the Isle of Wight, she mused:

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<sup>44</sup> Radcliffe, *A Journey*, p. 369.

<sup>45</sup> Talfourd, ‘Memoir’, i. 43; The reference is to *Hamlet*, I.v.89–91.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 43–4.

<sup>47</sup> Radcliffe invented this phrase in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the beginning of vol. I, chap. vii.

How sweet is the cadence of the distant surge! It seemed, as we sat at our inn, as if a faint peal of far-off bells mingled with the sounds on shore, sometimes heard, sometimes lost: the first note of the beginning, and last of the falling peal, seeming always the most distinct. This resounding of the distant surge on a rocky shore might have given Shakspeare [*sic*] his idea when he makes Ferdinand, in the *Tempest*, hear, amidst the storm, bells ringing his father's dirge; a music which Ariel also commemorates, together with the sea-wave:—

“Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell,  
Ding, dong, bell!”<sup>48</sup>

This beautifully poetic passage could easily have fit into one of her novels. Similarly, during a midnight visit to Warwick Castle in 1802, ‘there arose a strain (like French horns), as if commanded by Shakespeare’s wand’, which reminds her of ‘the sweet sound, that breathes upon a bank of violets’ (*Twelfth Night*, I.i.5–6).<sup>49</sup> But it is to the ghost scene in *Hamlet* that Radcliffe constantly recurs:

Near the summit [of one of the towers of Warwick Castle] an embattled overhanging gallery, where formerly, no doubt, sentinels used to pace during the night, looked down upon the walls of the Castle, the rivers and the country far and wide, received the watch-word from the sentinel, perched in the little watch-tower, higher still and seeing farther into the moonlight, and repeated it to the soldiers on guard on the walks and gates below. Before those great

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<sup>48</sup> Talfourd, ‘Memoir’, i. 79.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* i. 71.

gates and underneath these towers, Shakespeare's ghost might have walked; they are in the very character and spirit of such an apparition, grand and wild and strange; there should, however, have been more extent. Stayed before these grey towers till the last twilight.<sup>50</sup>

There is some evidence that Radcliffe suffered from clinical depression in 1802–3 and again in 1810–11; she lived in retirement at Windsor from 1812 to 1815, probably recuperating from a nervous breakdown.<sup>51</sup> There she spent much time rambling through Windsor Forest, and pacing the terraces of Windsor Castle late at night, perhaps wrestling with her own ghosts:

The massy tower at the end of the east terrace stood up high in shade; but immediately from behind it the moonlight spread, and showed the flat line of wall at the end of that terrace, with the figure of a sentinel moving against the light, as well as a profile of the dark precipice below. . . . No sound but the faint clinking of the soldier's accoutrements, as he paced on watch, and the remote voices of people turning the end of the east terrace, appearing for a moment in the light there and vanishing. In a high window of the tower a light. Why is it so sublime to stand at the foot of a dark tower, and look up its height to the sky and the stars? ... It was on this terrace, surely, that Shakespeare received the first hint of the time for the appearance of his ghost.–

“Last night of all,  
When yon same star that westward from the Pole  
Had made his course to illumine that part of heaven

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., i. 60

<sup>51</sup> Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho*, chap. 16.

Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
The bell then beating one —”.<sup>52</sup>

This passage from the travel journal was re-used in the introduction to *Gaston de Blondville* that was printed separately in Radcliffe’s essay ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’. Ultimately we are left with the non-literary issue of personal psychology, and Radcliffe’s unanswerable question: ‘Why is it so sublime to stand at the foot of a dark tower, and look up its height to the sky and the stars?’

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<sup>52</sup> Talfourd, ‘Memoir’, i. 97–98, quoting *Hamlet*, I. i. 35–9.