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OTHER DESIRE AS TEXT:
GENDER AND DISCURSIVITY
IN
THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO, EVELINA
AND
NORTHANGER ABBEY

by

Cynthia D'Errico, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

October 24, 1986.

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ISBN 0-315-35821-1

The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research acceptance of the thesis

Other Desire as Text: Gender & Discursivity in
The Mysteries of Udolpho, Evelina, and Northanger Abbey

submitted by Cynthia Mary D'Errico, B.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

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December 8, 1986

ABSTRACT

Chapter One introduces the notion of "the other within" as a praxis for meaning other than the rational, thereby exposing the rational as an exclusively phallogocentric and therefore closed realm. It is an invitation to read the psycho-libidinal investments of discursive-literary practice following the trajectory of female desire as it circulates in and around a discursive site.

Chapter Two explores the anxiety that attends the postulation of female, "other" desire, a bimodal inscription which is particularly accessible in the Gothic and its elements. In The Mysteries of Udolpho, the female subject-postulate is coerced into recovering (her)self as death, absence, and horror within an enigma which attempts to transgress such terrorist closures.

Chapter Three unveils phallomorphism as an operation in the Romance whereby other desire is appropriate(d) to the masculine and the female other is educated into her object-status.

Chapter Four reads Northanger Abbey as a polylogue in which the architectonics of oppression are densely inscribed and repudiated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help and support of my family, La Compagnie de Pavage Broadway Ltée., my associate translator John D'Errico, my graphics consultant Robert V. D'Errico, John Farrell, Edwina Smith, my mother Joan, for her indefatigable support of every description, and to Dr. R.B. Rutland, for his interminable patience, nurturing and unfailing encouragement.

This is for myself and for my mother, Joan.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Other Desire as Discourse.

A Forensics of Meaning

The ideological investments of discursive practice, by their subterranean disposition, lend themselves to a psychodynamic reading which attempts to foreground veiled meaning and (re-)place it within the written text which harbours it. The project of a largely psychodynamic deconstruction is to relieve the written text of its unwritten, inscribed meanings, and (re-)view the text as con-text; a site of multiplicitous meaning. This analysis reads the written text as a dream, exploring material that is blocked, incoherent, that defies rhetorical assimilation, and remains outside the cognitive act of language order. These fragments are gathered up and exhibited in their dis-order as a dynamic, fulminating source of other meaning. As transference between text and analyst/reader occurs, it becomes impossible to identify the originator of meaning, and the project continues as a dialogic interplay. This investigative dialogue is necessarily inhibited by the entry into signification; an activity which, by itself and its privileged disposition as 'written', engages in a censorship of other meaning by assimilation, obliteration, and the (re-)imposition of order, among other stratagems. Working towards the unsignifiable through discursive practice, then, is an exercise always

in a state of embargo, retrieving fragmentative, incomplete material that is liable, at any point, to assimilation into a proscriptive closure. While this dialogue is therefore inescapably part of the prohibitive practice it seeks to undermine and interrogate, it is nonetheless committed to a continual retreat from traditional-critical categories of chronology, biography, single meaning, and the closure such ordering imperatives impose.

The sequence in which my texts appear, for example, flies in the face of chronology.¹ This was not merely a consequence of selecting texts that would accommodate my theoretical presuppositions, but also - indeed, rather - a psychic event that developed coextensively with the questions theory had taught me to pose. In other words, these texts assumed a pertinent place in my explorations according to what was emerging as a set of problematics suggested, rather than imperiously systematized in and set by the theory. In the course of reading a much larger group of texts, these three surfaced in a dis-order that would only fall into a sequence during the writing process. In some sense, the texts "chose" themselves and their sequence. In fact, prior to any theoretical forays, and the reading of the

¹ Evelina was published in 1778, The Mysteries of Udolpho in 1794, and Northanger Abbey in 1818 (although it is believed to have been composed between 1797 and 1803).

texts themselves, two loosely organized questions guided me towards the topic of "Woman as Text": one), how could the female other predicate - engage in a symbolic system - that operated by virtue of her repression, variously disposed in absence, objectification and (economic/psychic) fetishization;² and, two), what was it about the marginalized Gothic and Romance texts (and elements thereof) that consistently drew women to read and write them (a sociological impertinence, to be sure, but a beacon on the way into deconstruction, nonetheless). But it was precisely the speed and facility with which these two questions fanned out across and beyond disciplines in a way that continually re-generated them from different material values - social, cultural, economic, figural and libidinal - and in different traditions of thought-practice, that implicated the construction of gender and the problematics of otherness as an investigative flywheel of possibilities.

Similarly, novelistic discourse was particularly amenable to interrogative, interdisciplinary maneuvers because of its openness, its ambivalent relationship to linear discourse, its inscriptive déroulement in the face

² Clearly, the initially ingenuous formulation of this question has become irrevocably coloured by Lacanian terms. I will not now divest myself of mastery over a jargon that, in mastering, I have been able to re-write and re-route towards its deconstruction; an effort which exposes its central thesis as inimical to sexual difference.

of the closure such linearity required, and its sustained interpellation of a reading subject despite, or because of, its charged discursivity.³ Moreover, its discursivity suggests, if it does not practise, an unmanageability that is analogous to the dream-sauvage, leaving room for associative activity, and thereby freeing the interpellant-reader from attempting either an encyclopaedic or reductively thematic "interpretation". In this sense, too, there is little discussion of formal genre in terms of the Gothic and the Romance; rather, their elements are read as dispersed, sometimes in a relatively taut configuration as in Udolpho, and sometimes in a coterminous displacement, as in the figures of Isabella and Eleanor in Northanger Abbey. This manner of reading foregrounds contradictory and, as it were, contra-generic elements that a text expels in and about its trajectory, that cannot be accommodated by closure. As with the de-privileging of genre as a solidary form, the de-privileging of closure renders the textual trajectory susceptible to questioning. Relieved of the rigorous seal closure imposes, its readable possibilities effloresce in an accretive plenitude: meaning multiplies, escalates.

³ See Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (New York: Methuen, 1980), (hereafter, Belsey), and in particular, Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), (hereafter as, Kristeva, Desire).

Just as there is no heroic attempt to mine all the recesses of meaning in any of the given texts (including the theoretical text), there is no attempt to reduce the problem of difficulty involved in reading about other meaning. The latter seems just as impossible as the former, and indeed, acts as a substantive reminder that the order of language repels, obstructs, and generally problematizes the recuperation of other meaning. Nevertheless, the condition of desire, and the postulative possibility of predicating "other" desire - the desire of the female other - considerably narrows the undertaking, even as it questions its own presuppositions and, at the same time, argues that "otherness" drags everything along in its wake.

There is, then, always a certain posture maintained, not quite phallicly upright, but contortionist, even liberatingly allusive, as in pantomime. This allusiveness, suggestive as it is, is also pernicious, as an American feminist points out:⁴

. . . French [feminists'] theorizing on the subversion of the Logos has tended to replace, and not merely to supplement, the kind of political activism which Americans consider

⁴ The distinction between "American" and "French" feminism is now perhaps becoming unnecessary, since there has been an increase in dialogue. But the differing traditions and practices persist, as Domna Stanton points out, and as the reprint of The Future of Difference suggests.

crucial to their self-definition as feminists.
 . . . and as some recent French texts seem to
 confirm, a dis-connection with the real can
 lead to a regressive mystification of the
 'feminine' and may yield nothing more than a
 new 'lingo,'⁵ a code doomed to repetition and
 extinction.

The predominant tradition in American feminism - "empirical,
 inductive, anti-speculative. . . suspicious of theories and
 theorizing,"⁶ is committed to a socio-political reform that
 appears to jar with some French feminists' insistence on
 an anarchic, psycho-linguistic deconstruction of phallogo-
 centrism.⁷ Yet, as Domna Stanton suggests, the possibility
 that French feminism will retreat into or return to a
 mythologized, poetized concept of the female other can be
 averted if American feminists "can. . . alert our French
 counterparts to the traps and binds into which they may
be writing themselves, just as with their help we can. . ."
 transcend the limitations of our own feminist critical

⁵ Domna C. Stanton, "Language and Revolution: The
 Franco-American Dis-Connection," in The Future of Difference,
 eds., Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (New Jersey:
 Rutgers University Press, 1985), pp. 81-82 (hereafter as,
 Stanton, "Dis-Connection").

⁶ Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds.,
New French Feminisms (Amherst: University of Massachusetts,
 1980), introduction, p. xxii (hereafter, Marks). See also
 Stanton, "Dis-Connection", pp. 78-81.

⁷ See my text p. 13 n.18 on my use of this Derridean
 term.

enterprise" (my emphasis).⁸ Stanton's call for collaboration rather than alienation or the "erection" of a "prescriptive feminism" which would devalue French feminists' work as "intellectual and élitist" significantly glosses the dangers on both sides of the Atlantic: of, on the one hand, not questioning the psycho-libidinal investments of a language practice already in place and irrevocably (but conflictively) part of a feminist discourse; and on the other, over-emphasizing those investments to the apparent detriment of the socio-political reform which is, after all, the feminist psycho-linguists' aim. For those committed to an open, unrestricted dialogue, then, "the prevalent empiricist presupposition that linguistic change follows social change rather than determines it [should be] combine[d] . . . with more theoretical" work

⁸ Stanton, "Dis-Connection", p. 81. The fear that the other will be "poetized" anew by, for example, Cixous' "lyrical" reading of the female body as allusive source, i.e., "Text: my body - shot through with streams of song; [I mean] what touches you, . . . the rhythm that laughs you . . ." ("The Laugh of the Medusa," in Marks, p. 252), is shared by many feminists, including Julia Kristeva (see, "La femme, ce n'est jamais ça," *ibid.*, p. 141). Yet Kristeva appropriates this poetry of the body and works it through as a linguist sensitized to what Cixous so often repeats - that, "this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded" *ibid.*, p. 253. Essentially they agree, although Kristeva writes in a more lucid, accessible, phallic style: "In 'woman' I see something that cannot be represented, . . . something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies" *ibid.*, p. 137. Style apart, Kristeva is concerned about the co-optation by power, which, I suspect by her own phallic style, is something she herself struggles against.

aimed at re-viewing "Anglo-American logocentrism."⁹

The persuasion that language is a privileged or primordial material practice from which all other materiality - i.e., socio-political "realities" or constructions - follows, is what underscores the ludic mode or elusive centre of my interrogative enterprise. Along with Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, writing is understood and espoused as "the very possibility of change, . . . the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures":¹⁰ ". . . there can be no socio-political transformation without a transformation of subjects: in other words, in our relationship to social constraints, to pleasure, and more deeply, to language."¹¹ *L'écriture féminine*¹² is situated within the impulse to predicate despite a language structure that unrelentingly disabuses itself of such predication (often by assimilating it to the mystical or poetical), rather than abdicate from

⁹ Stanton, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in Marks, p. 249. (Hereafter as, Cixous, "Medusa"). Originally published in L'arc (1975).

¹¹ Julia Kristeva, "La femme, ce n'est jamais ça," in Marks, p. 141. (Hereafter as, Kristeva, "La femme"). Originally published in Tel. Quel (Autumn, 1974).

¹² *L'écriture féminine* is the anarchic re-postulation of the feminine as praxis in language so that the very place that has historically appropriated the feminine becomes a subversive site in which a feminine praxis is affirmed rather than destroyed or appropriated.

signification, or retreat from its complexities to sentinelize its more effable socio-political reflections.¹³

In the spirit of *l'écriture féminine*, then, this exploration confronts language as the material practice of a rational ideology, which, in projecting a linear discursive order, implicitly recommends its constructions - a particular view - as "reality". This practice becomes the condition for the production of meaning and prescribes action. As the praxis for meaning and action, rational discourse exerts,

both a real and an imaginary relation to the world - real in that it is the way in which people really live their relationship to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them.¹⁴

¹³ "Admittedly, [an] understanding of Cixous, Kristeva, Irigaray, and others requires knowledge of philosophy, linguistics, and psychoanalytic theory. Even more, one must be willing to decipher dense texts replete with plays on words and devoid of normal syntactical constructions," Stanton, "Dis-Connection," p. 79; "... American feminist critics, looking to the work of French women, might come to terms with the female unconscious, a problematic which we have ignored or denied because of its predominantly Freudian, phallocratic conception." *ibid.*, p. 81. See also Jane Gallop's remarks on Juliet Mitchell's now-classic Psychoanalysis and Feminism, in Jane Gallop, The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 1-14 (hereafter as, Gallop, Seduction).

¹⁴ Belsey, p.57.

Rational discourse therefore reflects and validates its own ideological presuppositions, one of which endows language with representational properties, adducing a direct, unmediated relationship between words and things, between meaning and its expression, between a supposedly gender-indifferent cogito and his signifying activity. Meaning is proposed and disposed in a language structure which will only accommodate and value that which conforms to its determinant structure. Difference, or other meaning, is either assimilated into a conformable state, mysticized, or obliterated: unrecognized and thereby devalued as "meaningless".

Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support and one of the privileged alibis.¹⁵

It is the identification of the devaluation of other meaning which exposes the coercive force of rational discourse as an act of mastery; an act which is able to (re-)produce singular meaning by repressing irreconcilable meaning. The homogeneity espoused and (re-)produced in this monological practice privileges "reason" as the activity by which "objective truths" can be known and expressed. This objective, rational posture ensures that other "lesser" subjective conditions which attend signifi-

¹⁵ Cixous, "Medusa", in Marks, p.249.

cation are disclaimed, excised as an interruptus in the pursuit of the objective-rational. In this way, "philosophical presuppositions, such as that truth, logic, identity," should be stable, serene, free from desire, sexually indifferent,"¹⁶ prevail. The subject is therefore reduced to the ratiocinative function of a structure which is prohibitive, disallowing "inappropriate" subjective dynamics.

The dismembering imperatives of rational discourse mark it as repressed and oppressive, the unavoidable interlocutor of a reading by the sexually different other who ferrets out its libidinal repression and exposes its order as oppressive. In other words, rational discourse is read as the symptom of a neurosis in which reason materializes as its fetishistic mode of coercive persuasion, and "objectivity" as the principle by which the subject of discourse veils the psychic and material oppression this neurosis perpetrates. Anxious to remain free of desire, sexually indifferent, rational discourse, in and through the absence of difference, materializes as a space inhabited by a cogito, posited only as male, (re-)producing, in his obsessive identification with the rational, an "economy

¹⁶ This is Jane Gallop's reading of Luce Irigaray's reading of Freud and the whole of Western philosophy. Jane Gallop, "The Father's Seduction," in The (M)Other Tongue, ed. Shirley Nelson Garner, et. al., (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 33. (hereafter as, Gallop, in (M)Other).

of sameness": a "homo-symmetry".¹⁷

What is implicit, then, in the difference which identifies itself as sexually other is that the subject of rational, privileged discourse is male. Consequently, the female "other" is absent from discourse, dispossessed of subject-status, the repressed/oppressed object of a gender-specific, self-privileging (male) cogito. The other gender is relegated to a limbo of the figural, coded into a metaphoricity which stands in for her difference: Nature, Culture, Truth, Love, Mother, etc. Alternatively, or rather, simultaneously, she is reduced to exchange currency on which the phallic constructs its order. As

¹⁷ In my anxiety to introduce desire, I run ahead of the (slow) argumentational course. The cogito's self-projection in and through the rational perpetually re-presents, re-presences his reason as him-self, or his "self" as reason. "Still incomplete is the enumeration, and, of course, the interpretation of the faces, the forms, the morphologies that can be taken on by that old dream of 'the same' which has defied the most prescient diviners, since their method did not question the credits that the method itself had already invested in that dream. The interpreters of dreams themselves had no desire but to rediscover the same. Everywhere. . . . Since, after all, the most able of the interpreters were also the most gifted . . . those most inspired by what was liable to perpetuate, even to reactivate the desire of the same? . . . when this same desire comes to speak, and theorize, and prescribe itself in the very name of, in the very place of, . . . sexual difference, then it seems that . . . that exhibition, is equivalent to announcing that the central postulate is in fact being called into question." Luce Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian G. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 27. See also, pp. 133-146. (Hereafter as, Irigaray, Speculum).

object-symbol, that is, present only as something other than her difference, she is the absent condition by which the phallic maintains both its (rational, male) privilege, and her absence from discourse. In an order which misrepresents and absents her, her self-predication is impossible, stymied by the coercive closure and self-symmetry the male, rational order has been able to hallucinate and establish through her absence.

The determinations of phallogocentric language theory, notably, irreducible desire and the privilege of the phallic signifier, advance a rationale of the symbolic that is extrapolated from the Freudian disposition (or rather, appropriation) of difference. A reading alerted to this rational appropriation has identified phallogocentrism¹⁸ as a paradigm of rational oppression

¹⁸ Phallogocentrism conjures up Derridean themes, all of which may not be pertinent to this thesis. However, I use the term confidently within a context which has identified language as a material practice of the phallogocentric order, and evidently, Irigaray, and Kristeva (especially in her early linguistic work), investigate Derridean themes as they plow tracks towards *l'écriture féminine*. The specularization of which Derrida accuses language practice, thereby proposing it as mendacious, is certainly congenial to the Homo-sexual, Homo-symmetry which Irigaray elaborates in *Speculum*. As Geoffrey Hartman has written, for Derrida, "language is not a 'cause' that cures (a 'talking cure') by drawing the mirror image into the discourse of the Other. . . . he sees no triumph of the therapeutic by means of a language that is itself infected by a sickness unto death he has labeled logo-centrism." "Psychoanalysis: The French Connection," in *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, eds., E. Kurzweil and Wm. Phillips (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 357.

because of its allegiance to male desire and its phallog-morphology. The practice of psychoanalysis, with its eminently rational distinctions,¹⁹ is not only complicit in the oppression of sexual difference, but is also the site at which appropriative operations become "blatant" and therefore recoverable.

While it is necessary and urgent to criticize the way psychoanalysis always reduces the otherness. . . to masculine models, it is also important to hold on to psychoanalysis as the place where the reappropriation of otherness by an economy of sameness (the economy of systematic philosophy, market exchange value, and imperialist foreign policy, among other examples) becomes blatant, readable, where the claim to exclusively male standards for gauging sexuality is loud and clear.²⁰

¹⁹ Specifically, the Lacanian distinctions between "desire" and "demand", and, "penis" and "phallus", Lacan corrected Freud's "meaning" and insists on these distinctions in order to prevent "logical reduction": "'far from yielding to a logicizing reduction, there where it is a question of desire we find in its irreducibility to the demand the very energy that also keeps it from being collapsed back into need. To put it elliptically: that desire be articulated, precisely for that reason it is not articulable. We mean in the discourse appropriate to it, ethical and not psychological.'" from Lacan, Ecrits, cited in Gallop, Seduction, p. 11, n.6. Lacan patronizes feminism for not adhering to the distinction between "penis" and "phallus", confusing the material with the imaginary. But as I and others argue, the imaginary is the material, is, indeed, its "support and alibi": "as long as the attribute of power is a phallus which refers to and can be confused. . . with a penis, this confusion will support a structure in which it seems reasonable that men have power and women do not." Gallop, Seduction, p. 97. You will note that my exploration de-sanctifies the Lacanian distinction.

²⁰ Gallop, in (M) Other, p. 34.

The advent of psychoanalysis unsettled the notion of a "serene" cogito, with its "discovery" of the unconscious.²¹ As its clinical practice tended more and more to dominate its theoretical practice, the problematic of fragmented subjectivity became locked into a dual disposition: one of indeterminacy, implied by the unconscious; and one overseen by clinical practice, which, in its effort to free the repressed unconscious by therapy, assumed that a "rational", stable subject could be retrieved from dis-ordered states, and "rehabilitated". Psychoanalysis retreated from radical thought as it consolidated into a discourse, becoming increasingly coercive in both practice and theory.²² Identity problematics became its proper "object" and psychoanalytical theories of "the subject" could be constructed in a discourse which enhanced the ideological position and whose "therapeutic" method could restore the "stability" of the subject.

²¹ This apparently digressive transit into a socio-historical critique of psychoanalysis is a discomfiting, but polemical move, intended to subvert the formal order of the thesis, by "striking off on another path that will no doubt intersect with the previous one. . . but in a zigzag fashion. . . ." as Irigaray says of Freud. Speculum, p. 17.

²² In other words, the psychoanalytic method "helps" people "to adapt to an unjust social structure", but presents itself as apolitical. Thus, the supposedly unidentifiable pressures which were seen to fragment the subject - render him neurotic, etc. - became localized in a process, a "talking cure", in which, once talked out, he would be cured, purged, returned to "normalcy" and "rational" behaviour. See Gallop, Seduction, p.xii passim.

Disenfranchised of its original, disruptive agenda, psychoanalytical discourse, in theory and practice, thematized rather than challenged the ideological concept-code of the rational, centred subject. In other words, rather than a venue in which sexual difference could be "discovered", psychoanalysis became the formal, authoritative site at which difference was reduced to and assimilated by a single, phallic standard.

Luce Irigaray, prior to her expulsion from the Freudian School,²³ submitted the Freudian text to analysis,²⁴ the method initialled by Freud himself. Reading his text as a dream, which "has the structure of a form of writing", a rebus, and in which "the important part . . . is given in the [verbal] elaboration of the dream - in other words,

²³ Speculum of the Other Woman was published in 1974, after which Irigaray was expelled from the Freudian School. But obviously, she wrote Speculum while under the rubric of this (super-patriarchal) phallic "order", just as this thesis is written in and around that order. Keep this point in mind when reading Chapter Two on the Gothic and especially, Chapter Four on Northanger Abbey.

²⁴ Gallop suggests that this is not a classic analysis because "Freud is not there to associate, thus, the reader becomes the dreamer", (Gallop, in (M)Other, pp. 35-36). But as Gallop implies, even if the path of transference is densely and multipliciously mediated, the analysis occurs at the level of what is written and what is readable; between, that is, the writerly and the readerly.

in its rhetoric",²⁵ Irigaray "listens without impatience" to the Freudian dream-text²⁶ and uncovers its "locus of greatest resistance." The Freudian dream has a "blind spot": "the female sex organs" which the dreamer "phallomorphizes", "appropriates to the masculine". The dreamer resists the possibility of sexual difference in a subject. Jane Gallop elaborates on this "resistance" in a discussion of the Irigarayan reading.

She [Irigaray] does not aim to decipher Freud's peculiar psyche, but rather to unravel "an old dream," everyone's dream, even Irigaray's dream. The dream is everyone's inasmuch as everyone is within "the metaphysical closure," inasmuch as any reader is a "subject," which is to say has been philosophically reduced as consumer of discourse to a unified, stable, sexually indifferent subject, trapped in the old dream of symmetry.

The old dream belongs to any subject, to anyone speaking and therefore in the position of subject. "Every theory of the 'subject' . . . will always have been appropriate(d) to the 'masculine'" The neutral "subject" is actually a desexualized, sublimated guise of the masculine sexed being. Women can be subjects by fitting male standards that are not appropriate to, cannot measure any specificity of femininity, any difference.

What is the blind spot? . . . According to Freud, the sight of woman's genitalia horrifies the young boy because he sees an absence. . . . Nothing to see becomes nothing of worth. The metaphysical privileging of sight over other senses, oculocentrism, supports and unifies phallogentric sexual theory. . .

²⁵ Jacques Lacan, The Language of the Self. trans. Antony Wilden (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 30. (Hereafter, Lacan).

²⁶ Irigaray, Speculum, p. 18.

Every theoria, every viewing of the subject will have always been seen according to phallomorphic standards. Hence there is no valid representation of woman, but only a lack.

The female sex organs are the blind spot. Freud's theory must occult female sexuality in order to manifest symmetry.²⁷

The desire for symmetry, for sameness, is so intense that it hallucinates its order by resisting "the blind spot" - the point of anxiety and dis-order - and assimilates it to the masculine.²⁸ In other words, rather than investigate the difference such an absence suggests, the anxiety it arouses - the fear of castration - is veiled over it, replaces absence as fear of absence, and is thematized as the critical, cognitive event which constructs

²⁷ Gallop in, (M)Other, pp. 36-37.

²⁸ Reading (through) Freud, Irigaray writes, "...as far as the differentiation into two sexes is concerned, we can know something certain about only one of the terms of the difference. Ultimately this alone would be envisaged as the variable factor in a re-marking of sexuality - but which one? - through its own process. In other words, we can assume that difference is always already in operation although no acknowledgement is made of it (perhaps because its character is only representable with difficulty?). Out of this difference will be lifted one of the two terms - but determined in relation to what? - and this one term will be constituted as 'origin', as that by whose differentiation the other may be engendered and brought to light. The same re-marking itself - more or less - would thus produce the other, whose function in the differentiation would be neglected, forgotten. Or else carried back into mere extrapolation, into the infinity of some capital letter: Sexuality, Difference, Phallus, etc. Up to now, therefore, nothing can be clearly articulated but the history of the practice of 'male sexuality' with regard to Sexuality." Irigaray, Speculum, p. 21.

both male and female.

But this anxiety-ridden desire for sameness is founded on and corresponds to "the metaphysical closure", in which the privileging of binary oppositions²⁹ - subject:object; active:passive; idea:matter - is exhibited in rational discourse and its structure.

. . . the fact that the dream can be interpreted only as a 'rebus' should have persuaded the 'reader' to turn it in all directions and positions, and not favor one type of inscription that would already prescribe a meaning to it: a linear, teleologically horizontal or vertical displacement, over a surface as yet unwritten, which it brands by cutting it up according to rules of repetition and recurrence, obeying processes that already paralyze the 'body's' system of gestures within a given graphic order, etc.³⁰

The so-called Lacanian "revisions" to the Freudian dream-nightmare of fear of absence elaborate on how the order of language (whose coercive determinants Irigaray's

²⁹ "Subjectivity denied to woman: indisputably this provides the financial backing for every irreducible constitution as object: of representation, of discourse, of desire. Once imagine that woman imagines and the object loses its fixed, obsessional character. As a bench mark that is ultimately more crucial than the subject, for he can sustain himself only by bouncing back off some object-iveness, some objective. If there is no more 'earth' to press down/repress, to work, to represent, but also and always to desire (for one's own), no opaque matter which in theory does not know herself, then what pedestal remains for the ex-sistence of the 'subject'?" Irigaray, Speculum, p. 133. See all of Speculum.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 137.

laconic "etc." conjure up), sustains the self-presence of the subject. As an imaginary order - that is, an order which derives from or materializes from the pleasure principle³¹ - the Lacanian subject of language is awash in the "eternal return" of a repressed, irrecoverable desire, which constructs and sustains his discursive "totalization", or self-presence, yet leaves him

³¹ The "aim of the drives. . . is to eliminate states of tension either by introjecting an object deemed capable of closing the sense of loss, or by projecting an aim which produces an excess of tension". These drives act as the axle "between the body and the conscious subject", and produce "the possibility of predication, i.e., the subject-object relations". Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and The Theory of the Subject. (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1977), p. 102 (hereafter, Coward). See all of Chapter Six, "On the Subject of Lacan". Of course, it is incorrect to designate language an imaginary, for according to Lacan, the imaginary (in which the subject is constructed) precedes and leads to the symbolic, the (necessary) entry into signification, i.e., taking a position, establishing positionality within it. For it is the neurotic who confuses his imaginary with the symbolic - which is precisely my point about rational discourse. See Fredric Jameson for a dense, but useful discussion of Lacanian categories, in which Jameson suggests that, "the apprenticeship of language is an alienation for the psyche". Fredric Jameson, "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and the Problem of the Subject", in Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading: -Otherwise. ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 351. More succinctly, Jane Gallop writes, "Lacan talks about glissement (slippage, slide) along the signifying chain, from signifier to signifier. Theory is not metalinguistically immune to what Freud called displacement, which Lacan calls desire." Gallop, Seduction, p. 45.

terminally infantilized, desirous of a repeal of the separation from the (m)other('s body). Since this desire is impossible to fulfil and inarticulable, it becomes symbolized as the phallus; hence the privilege of the phallic signifier, since the desire it symbolizes is primary,³² and "the phallic signifier" is "a mark of difference which refers to a condition outside itself that makes articulation possible. . . .the situating of subjectivity in the symbolic order." Importantly, the phallus is only "a figural representation of the penis" and must not be confused with its material cognate (each to his own discourse, order).³³ But clearly, this

³² "But of course the paths marked out for the two sexes are not the same, and cannot obey the same law, whatever Freud would like. At best they may obey Law itself, the law of ~~the~~ the same, which requires that the little girl abandon her relation to the origin and her primal fantasy so that henceforth she can be inscribed into those of men which will become the 'origin' of her desire. In other words, woman's only relation to origin is one dictated by man's. . . .This is shown, specifically, in the way she is forced to renounce the marks of her ancestry and inscribe herself on man's pedigree. She leaves her [patronymic] 'house' . . . in favor of her husband's. And it would certainly be very interesting to raise the question of the 'phallus' and its power in these terms: it would not be the privileged signifier of the penis or even of power and sexual pleasure were it not to be interpreted as [my emphasis] an appropriation of the relation to origin and of the desire for and as origin. The tropism, as well as the rivalry, is in fact between the man and (his) mother. And woman is well and truly castrated from the viewpoint of this economy." Irigaray, Speculum, p. 33.

³³ Coward, p. 116.

elaborate theory of language is still based on the "absent" sexual difference of the other (otherness, other desire), a (now wistful) anxiety about that absence, and replacement of that absence by a desire which is male, and which can only signify her absence through appropriate(d) codes like mother, which are appropriate to male desire. The other, then, is always invoked as something else: a visible, but symbolically (which means, in effect, in-visible) absent subject.

Other desire is prohibited unless it is sexually constituted - predicates itself - the same as that of the phallic/male subject. As soon as the other eroticizes discourse (as Irigaray does below); as soon as m(other) disrobes, she is delinquently "subjective", irrational - the desire/predication of a(n other) subject arrested by the phallic rationale.

Female sexuality has always been theorized within masculine parameters. Thus, the opposition "viril" [sic] clitoral activity/"feminine" vaginal passivity which Freud - and many others - claims are alternative behaviors or steps in the process of becoming a sexually normal woman, seems prescribed more by the practice of masculine sexuality than by anything else.

All of that seems rather foreign to her pleasure however, unless she remains within the dominant phallic economy. Thus, for example, woman's autoeroticism is very different from man's. He needs an instrument in order to touch himself: his hand, woman's genitals, language - . . . [b]ut a woman touches herself directly, without mediation, and before any distinction between activity and passivity is possible. A woman "touches herself" constantly without anyone being

able to forbid her to do so, for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace continually. Thus, within herself, she is already two - but not divisible into ones - who stimulate each other.

Woman's desire most likely does not speak the same language as man's desire, and it probably has been covered over by the logic that has dominated the West since the Greeks.

In this logic, the prevalence of the gaze, discrimination of form, and individualization of form is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman finds pleasure more in touch than in sight and her entrance into a dominant scopical economy signifies, once again, her relegation to passivity: she will be the beautiful object.

Thus woman does not have a sex. She has at least two of them, but they cannot be identified as ones. . . . Her sexuality, always at least double, is in fact plural. Plural as culture now wishes to be plural?

. . . woman has sex organs just about everywhere. She experiences pleasure almost everywhere. Even without speaking of the hysterization of her entire body, one can say that the geography of her pleasure is much more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined - in a [male] imaginary centered a bit too much on one and the same.³⁴

Irigaray's iconoclasm (which is disturbingly vulgar/vulvar, subjective, outré, outside the subject in hand: really,

³⁴ Luce Irigaray, "Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un," excerpted in Marks, pp. 99-103 (hereafter as, Irigaray, "Ce sexe", in Marks).

in-appropriate), perforates the mastering, phallic economy of language by introducing her difference in terms of her body; terms which have been prohibited, "unauthorized".³⁵ At the same time, she has identified the symbolic, language, as an imaginary in which there is no difference interrupting the coitus of the male order, thereby making its governing law homosexual; homo-symmetrical, homo-logous.³⁶

Nevertheless, Irigaray speaks/writes: that is, in spite of recognizing language as a space inhabited by male desire in which there is only one 'rational' way of writing and reading, Irigaray assumes her gender as the difference which is never materialized - the difference

³⁵ See Jane Gallop's reading of Stephen Heath's use of the term "unauthorized", and her discussion of Lacan's "Name-of-the-Father: . . . language as our inscription into patriarchy." Gallop, Seduction, p. 47; also pp. 43-55.

³⁶ "Homosexuality is the law that regulates the socio-cultural order. Heterosexuality amounts to the assignment of roles in the economy. . . . Why exclude homosexuals, when society postulates homosexuality? Unless it is because the 'incest' at work in homosexuality must be kept in the realm of pretense. And so it is, exemplarily so, in father-son relations which assure the genealogy of patriarchal power, its laws, its discourse, its sociality. These relations which are operative everywhere can neither disappear - in the abolition of the family. . . . for example - nor be displayed openly in their pederastic love, nor be practiced in any other way but in language without provoking a general crisis. A certain symbolic order would come to an end." Irigaray, "Ce sexe", in Marks, p. 107.

of an-other subject.³⁷ The assumption of a subjectivity which is sexually other, which predicates meaning differently, constitutes a discourse of otherness which exposes and challenges the systematic, systemic, self-hallucinated primacy of the rational subject. This posture is also an interrogation, which, in its persisting difference, poises itself as an uncodifiable anonym (without "proper name, literal meaning"³⁸), understood not in opposition to ("the negative, the opposite, the reverse, the counterpart, of the only visible and

³⁷ As Hélène Cixous says, "Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement." "Medusa," in Marks, p. 245. "It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. . . . They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem." *ibid.*, p. 251. (Increasingly, Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixous and Gallop will speak through each other, in a polylogous, polyphonic conversation in which I take all as co-interlocutors. Like a mass hysteria, or an hysteria of the "mass", that which is taken as object, matter. As Madeleine Gagnon wrote, "I am a foreigner to myself in my own language and I translate myself by quoting all the others". "Corps I", excerpted in Marks, p. 180).

³⁸ Irigaray, "Ce sexe", in Marks, p. 101; see also Kristeva, "La femme", *ibid.*, pp. 137-138, and Cixous, "Medusa", *ibid.*, pp. 245-246.

morphologically designatable sex organ. . .")³⁹ the privileged subject of discourse, but different from him: someone other that defies assimilation, "colonization". In other words, as Julia Kristeva says, rather than "flee everything considered 'phallic' to find refuge in the valorization of a silent underwater body, thus abdicating any entry into history,"⁴⁰ the female other predicates, asserting her difference/body/desire as "that which conditions and underlies the novelty of any praxis," including the theoretical, the signficatory.⁴¹

Moreover, this posture is assumed primarily in language wherein "a first and a second person can be distinguished," constructing and (therefore) reinforcing the "difference", the distinction in "I" and "you". Jane Gallop reads Irigaray's Et l'uné ne bouge pas sans l'autre, a troubling plea-confrontation with the Mother,

³⁹ Irigaray, *ibid.* Kristeva, however, exploits the feminine as "negative" and reads it as the praxis of change in the unending construction of the self-questing, sexual subject. ". . . a woman cannot 'be'; it is something which does not even belong in the order of being. It follows that a feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists: . . . In 'woman' I see something that cannot be represented, . . . something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies." *Ibid.*, p. 137. See also my text, p. 31 and Stanton, "Dis-Connection", p. 75.

⁴⁰ Kristeva, "Oscillation du 'pouvoir' au 'réfus'", in Marks, p. 166. Originally published in Tel Quel, Summer, 1974 (hereafter as, Kristeva, "Oscillation", in Marks).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167. See also Irigaray, Speculum, p. 136.

in tandem with Kristeva's self-authoritating posture.

The title means 'And one cannot move without the other'. Not only does the title evoke paralysis and the impossibility of separation, but the initial 'Et' conjoins it, in its very identity, to something prior.

When the daughter [Irigaray] begs 'Keep yourself/me also outside', the statement supposes that the mother controls the process of absorption, of differentiation, of identity.

What if Irigaray were to let go of the rigid, fragile, arbitrary distinction between me and you, daughter and mother? According to Julia Kristeva, woman needs language, the paternal, symbolic order, to protect herself from the lack of distinction from the mother. As long as Irigaray speaks, given the rules of grammar, given the symbolic order of language, a first and a second person can be distinguished. The breakdown of these differences is mortally threatening. [Kristeva] wrote, 'a woman has nothing to laugh about when the symbolic order collapses. She can enjoy it if, identifying with the mother, vaginated body, she imagines herself thus to be the sublime repressed which returns in the fissures of the order. She can also easily die of it . . . if, without successful maternal identification, the symbolic paternal order were her only tie to life.' 42

Gallop's mediation between Irigaray and Kristeva (which here begins to imagine, dramatize their dialogue as between daughter/Irigaray and mother/Kristeva), implicates maternity - the problematic relation signified by "mother/other" - as a comfortable, but also dangerous, also sustaining, refuge in which the other who

42 Gallop, Seduction, pp. 113-115.

recognizes herself as sexual, must also deal with her
maternality, symbolically complicated and therefore
become antinomous to sexual otherness; read as inimical,
reductive, yet ineradicable, part of the multiplicity
which constitutes otherness. Thus, importantly, Kristeva's
posture 'represents the experience of an internal
heterogeneity which the mother cannot command'.⁴³

Unlike Irigaray, Kristeva can speak from the
mother's position. . . [Her] assertive style
and her mastery of several difficult jargons
give the appearance of 'knowledge' and
authority. Kristeva presumes to the right
to assert, to speak as if she 'knows' . . .

.
Although she has spoken from the mother's
place, Kristeva has also denounced that place
as vacant. . . No one is there. The 'mother'
is not master of this mysterious process. . .
Kristeva posits the fraudulence of speaking
from that place, and speaks from it none the
less, assuming and exposing the inevitable
fraudulence. Irigaray's . . . resentment of
the power of that place, leaves the mother
phallic, . . . Kristeva's presumption to speak
from the place which no one has the right to
speak from, . . . works to dephallicize the
Mother.⁴⁴

This congenial but imperilling problematic is paradiomed,
re-produced in the Gothic, where the search for subject-
ivity braids through the maternal and its spaces,
irretrievably locked into, ceiling-ed by a phallic order.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

This tension, which is never alleviated, makes for the Gothic anxiety, replicated over and over, unable to reach a viable place(ment), or closure. Yet the Gothic anxiety is more than a stretch towards and through the mother from within phallic corridors; it is also the attempt to predicate; to postulate, within and beyond the maternal, the dilemma of being a multiple other.

The anxiety to speak and therefore, somehow, be included in discourse is paralleled in the traditional, feminist literary-critical attempt to recuperate the Gothic text, re-place it in a canon which neglects and dismisses it (and its problematics) as "escapist," "excessive," "unbalanced".⁴⁵ But it is this dis-orderly "excess", mitigated by the metonymic gymnastics of the

⁴⁵ Despite the recent, heartening publication of The Female Gothic ed. Juliann Fleenor (Montreal: Eden Press, 1983), and other explorations of the maternal space in the Gothic, such as Claire Kahane, "The Gothic Mirror", in Garner, The (M)Other Tongue, the Gothic is still disparaged as a lesser text. With few (but perhaps, growing) exceptions, feminist critical practice still subscribes to a literary-critical practice whose assumptions about the other - material and imaginary - remain unchallenged. In that regard, Kristeva writes: "The women's movement. . . by its negativity, indicates what is otherwise repressed. . . . The trap that is set for this demystifying force. . . is that we will identify with the power principle we think we are fighting: the hysterical saint plays her pleasure against social order, but in the name of God. . . . As long as [feminism] does not analyse its own relationship to power and does not renounce belief in its own identity, it remains capable of being co-opted both by power and an overtly religious or lay spiritualism." Kristeva, "La femme," in Marks, p. 141.

phallic symbolic-imaginary, that the Gothic and its critical celebrants anxiously address.

This desire to participate in (a)n (dis)abusive symbolic-imaginary is where Kristeva and other feminisms pause in dialogue. For where traditional feminism seeks acceptance and approval - to be "daddy's girl", demure and docile, without showing her body as a text, a multiplicitous glyph, to be read, and read differently from any text heretofore, - Kristeva invokes her desire/difference as a "source of signification", albeit necessarily lost within the self-aggrandizing text of (male) history, and authoritates that source in and by her-self.⁴⁶ Kristeva, therefore, "authorizes" her discourse through her difference; becomes author and authority by means of a gender-specific praxis. Thus, when Irigaray, in her more self-assertive moments (when she's not paralyzed by Mother), speculates on "a double syntax"

⁴⁶ "A feminist protest might be lodged that to speak of a 'phallic mother' is to subsume female experience into male categories. Kristeva, however, hangs on to the phallic categories. . . . [perhaps] to undo the supposedly natural logic of the ideological solidarity between phallus, father, power and man. . . . Kristeva's presumption often takes the form of her text's drawing attention to her self, her body, her individual history in the midst of some larger theoretical discussion. . . . The surprising self-references that interrupt Kristeva's efforts to erect a theory might be seen as the marks of a female sexual economy. . . ." Gallop, Seduction, pp. 117-119.

which would not be reduced, "regulate[d] by the standard of representation, of re-presentation. . . . If [the male subject] were not 'wounded', threatened by 'castration', by anything he cannot see directly, anything he cannot perceive as 'like himself'. Did not feel, as a result, the need to invent a new 'theory'",⁴⁷ Kristeva responds (to this plaintive "if only") by mastering theory and redesigning it; adjusting its form and stressing it differently (mis-stressing) so that theoretical activity arises from a source, a praxis which she recognizes as "feminine":

sexual differentiation is interior to the praxis of every subject.

.
If we call the moment of rupture and negativity which conditions and underlies the novelty of any praxis 'feminine', we understand that this moment is also present in the elaboration of theorems, theories, and science. No 'I' is there to assume this 'femininity' but it is no less operative, rejecting all that is finite and assuring in (sexual) pleasure the life of the concept. 'I', subject of a conceptual quest, is also a subject of differentiation - of sexual contradictions.⁴⁸

Kristeva's agenda recognizes Irigaray's "diffuse tact" in which the other language "just barely separates from herself some chatter, an exclamation, a half-secret. . . .

⁴⁷ Irigaray, Speculum, p. 138.

⁴⁸ Kristeva, "Oscillation," in Marks, p. 167.

When she returns to it, it is only to set out again
from another point of pleasure or pain. . . . ceaselessly
embracing words and yet casting them off. . . . "49

Thus, when Kristeva insists that the subject be "posited
as the place, not only of structure. . . . but especially
of its loss, its outlay,"⁵⁰ she stresses the absences,
spaces, and margins which the language of the male
cogito borders, and "boards up".

In other words, meaning must be pursued beyond the
structura(b)l(e) limits of language into its spaces.
Language practice could then be re-viewed as "a hetero-
geneous process, with the speaking subject leaving its
imprint on the dialectic between the articulation and
its process."⁵¹ The active recovery of meaning would
process the trajectory within which both structurable
and unstructurable meaning occur as the constitutive

49 "She' is indefinitely other in herself. . . .
It is therefore useless to trap women into giving an
exact definition of what they mean, to make them repeat
(themselves) so the meaning will be clear. They are
already elsewhere than in this discursive machinery
where you claim to take them by surprise. They have
turned back within themselves, which does not mean the
same thing as 'within yourself'. They do not experience
the same interiority that you do and which perhaps you
mistakenly presume they share. 'Within themselves' means
in the privacy of this silent, multiple, diffuse tact." ,
Irigaray, "Ce sexe," in Marks, p. 103.

50 Kristeva, Desire, p. 24.

51 Ibid.

material of the production of meaning: "the intersection of language (the true practice of thought) with space (the volume within which signification. . . articulates itself)".⁵² Meaning is thereby accessed from a spatial-signifying intertext of which the investments of ideology and their structured articulation are the co-ordinates; an intertext whereby "diachrony" - traditional movement - would be transformed into "synchrony", and linearity would "appear as abstraction".⁵³ The subject traverses both in a dynamic movement: an ongoing activity which continually dissolves and reconstitutes both the subject and meaning.

Kristeva often uses poetic discourse as a model for this way of reading:

poetry is a practice of the speaking subject, consequently implying a dialectic between limits, both signified and signifying, and the setting of a pre- and trans-logical rhythm solely within this limit.

Poetic discourse measures rhythm against the meaning of language structure and is thus always eluded by meaning in the present while continually postponing it to an impossible time-to-come. Consequently, it is assuredly the most appropriate historical discourse. . .⁵⁴

In response to Lacan, for whom "the relation between

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 65.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 25, p. 33.

signifier and signified is entirely enclosed in the order of Language itself, which completely conditions its two terms", and who wrote, "what defines any element. . . of a language. . . is that, for all the users of this language, this element is distinguished as such in any given set made up of homologous elements",⁵⁵ Kristeva abjures an order which does not recognize temporal and spatial dislocations⁵⁶ and trans-logical elements as components of meaning outside the "given set".

'the notion of the signifier as a network of distinctive marks is insufficient, because each of these marks is charged, over and beyond its discriminatory value as a carrier of signification, by an instinctual or affective force which, strictly speaking, cannot be signified, but remains latent in the phonic invocation or the inscribing gesture. . . as if . . . this affect did not break through the threshold of signification, and could not find any sign to designate it.'⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Lacan, p. 123; n. 85; p. 37.

⁵⁶ The intertext between Derrida and Kristeva is very evident here, since Derrida's neologism, "différance" refers not only to distinction, but also to a spatial and temporal deferral by which the subject shifts, and is "de-centered". Consequently, there is no subject in and of language. Kristeva, on the other hand, declares the temporal and spatial shifts in language practice as the dynamic, transformative site of the subject: the semiotic subject, which, in and through its shifting unfixity, is free, active and synergistic.

⁵⁷ Kristeva, "Féminité et écriture. En réponse à deux questions sur Polylogue," cited in, Stanton, "Dis-Connection", p. 75. See also Jacques Derrida, Positions (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1972); "entretien avec Julia Kristeva," pp. 27-50.

This "affective force" is the constitution of a subjectivity which continually traverses the intertextual co-ordinates of a discursive topography, reinstituting meaning that is elided by structured signification; retrieving meaning that is produced outside of structure, in a disposition of loss. The recovery of meaning from "all sources of signification" is "differentiation" of which sexual difference is the praxis, and which postulates another subject: a subject in and of differentiation; "a subject-in-the-making."⁵⁸ This other subject is in a disposition of flux, structurally dislocated; a transformative energy whose traversal "renews signification" by continually interrogating the incumbent subject of discourse

58 "... ruptures, blank spaces, and holes. . . are the sign of a force that has not been grasped by the linguistic or ideological system. This signification renewed, 'infinetized' by the rhythm in a text, this precisely is (sexual) pleasure (la jouissance). However, in a culture where the speaking subjects are conceived of as masters of their speech, they have what is called a 'phallic' position. The fragmentation of language in a text calls into question the very posture of this mastery. [Writing] confronts this phallic position either to traverse or to deny it. The word 'traverse' implies that the subject experiences sexual difference, not as a fixed opposition ('man'/'woman'), but as a process of differentiation. The word 'deny' means that the subject constitutes a fetishistic shelter in order to avoid castration. Only the truly great 'literary' achievements bear witness to a traversal. . . . In this way, the subject of the writing speaks a truth proper to any speaking subject, a truth that the needs of production and reproduction censure." Kristeva, "Oscillation," in Marks, p. 165.

and his discursive order. This other subject is always only a postulate, in a Derridean "deferral", yet poses itself and its "new" meaning as the imminent difference of an-other subject. That "different" subject materializes as sexually different, understood "not as a fixed opposition ('man'/'woman')," but positing

a certain bisexuality which is precisely the possibility to explore all the sources of signification, that which posits a meaning as well as that which multiplies, pulverizes and finally revives it.⁵⁹

This active revivification of a gender-sensitive production and re-production of meaning engages in "a different economy, one in which entry and inter-penetration do not mean . . . violation because they are not based upon the myth of . . . virginal wholeness."⁶⁰ An economy that identifies the "other within" as source, recognizes that the inscriptions of desire and anxiety - both libidinal investments - inhabit the signifying trajectory, and suggests a way to produce⁶¹ "double syntax"

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 165.

⁶⁰ Gallop, Seduction, p. xiii.

⁶¹ See, for example, Cixous, "L'Essort de Plusje," in L'arc, 54, p. 46. "S'il est un ici de Plusje, il est là non loin non près de la tectrimité. . . le nidci de Plusje est toujours plein de plus d'un I. Cette page ci alors se fait terre et muette couve l'imprévisible. Avant l'oeil. Emue, nullepare, et nue. Nénullepart. . ."

without assimilative operations, implicates the cogito and its post-Freudian analogues in an inquiry of which literary practice is the "laboratory". In some sense, then, literary practice mentors the problematics of a gender-identified subject, its meanings coinciding in both representational (privileged) and un-representable (under-privileged) elements and spaces.

The interlocutory relationship between this exploration and rational discourse is not conciliatory. Rather, it is dis-ruptive, dis-orderly, and un-closed in an attempt to transgress prohibitive and prohibited territory: to approach the "other meaning" through "sexual pleasure" as "the advent of non-sense which multiplies sense." ⁶²

⁶² Kristeva, "Oscillation," in Marks, pp. 165-167.

CHAPTER TWO

Notes on The Mysteries of Udolpho.

The Desire of the (Anxious) Text

' . . . pray, Dorothée, if it is not painful to you, tell us something more about the marchioness: I should like to look into the glass you spoke of just now, and see a few of the circumstances which you say often pass over it.'

The Mysteries of Udolpho¹

The codes which came to be identified as "gothic" such as exotic settings, ancient architecture, romance, and "irrational fear", all figured within a supernatural economy, emerged at the same time that the rational consolidated its hegemony. These were elements in a promiscuous disposition, as it were, arising from within the unconscious of that voracious ideology, yet like syphilitic siblings, set apart, thematized in an aggregate-text of "the irrational sensibility". This relationship works itself out in the Gothic as an inter-discursivity which skews the rhetorical machinery of the Gothic in favour of the rational "explanations" which are understood, throughout, as imminent. The adjectival quantifications

¹ Ann Radcliffe. The Mysteries of Udolpho. (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1931), Vol. II, ch. xxxvii, p. 162. Originally published in 1794.

of abstractions, for example, the qualifications of terrorist scenarios, and the disquisitions on Benevolence and Sentiment (which are virtually unreadable in the contemporary Gothic),² consistently mark the trajectory of a text which is attempting to postulate non-rational possibilities. In some sense, then, the gothic trajectory is encroached upon by inhibitive, rational forces, and the trans-active stress between them is described, more or less, as a generic "disorder".

Indeed, the Gothic is a nervous text; and its relation to the rational is highly suggestive, for the Gothic wears an anxiety on its sleeve that rational "readings" never dispel. The most coercive "reading" is the rational closure which contrasts sharply with the gothicism of the textual trajectory. This closure is the installation of the male (symbolic-)imaginary which sears the possibilities inscribed in that trajectory by assimilating them to its own order. A gothicist enigma is therefore reduced to a closure which then becomes its definitive reading: "a female picaresque. . .which

² "The gloom. . .struck Emily with a degree of terror." I, iv, p. 46: " . . .the veil. . .excited a faint degree of terror." I, xix, p. 252. See Juliann Fleenor, ed., The Female Gothic (Montreal: Eden Press, 1983), esp. pp. 8-11 in terms of the Gothic's development through the Sentimental Novel (hereafter, Fleenor).

express[es] a heroine's predicament in what proves ultimately to be a reasonable world;"³ or, "a 'carefully contrived exposition of eighteenth-century rationalism" in which the heroine must "distinguish between illusion and reality."⁴ In this way, closure supersedes the gothicism of the entire trajectory, substituting itself in place of a rhetoric which exhibits anxiety about the "reasonable reality" it is apparently meant to affirm. Closure nominates the enigma and its dis-closures as an orchestrated fraud, an exhibitionistic series of misperceptions to which the privileged female element's "inherent" susceptibility to the irrational has led her. The gothic elements retreat into a rational recantation and the text stands as testimony to "female/irrational sensibilities": the axiomatic identification of "irrational" with "female".

The gothic elements which produce this "female fear" are thus read as an "excess" which closure consumes, thereby at once invalidating and closing the pleasure of the text. In other words, the postulative premise of the Gothic, which is all along mitigated by rational incursions, ultimately gives up that excessive pleasure, the pleasure

³ Robert D. Hume, cited in Fleenor, p. 7.

⁴ Eva Figes. Sex and Subterfuge. Women Novelists to 1850. (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 68 (hereafter, Figes).

of postulating possibilities in excess of, or beyond, rational limits to rational closure, or, a closure which eradicates what has been postulated. In that regard, Eva Figes has suggested that, a text which must reconcile "the demands of fantasy" with other, constricting demands, suffers loss.⁵ The excess which is present in the trajectory, but irrecoverable at closure, then, is re-read as the postulation of an illicit energy, which is subversive of the rational, and seeks to defer and even obviate its assimilative closure. In effect, the pleasure of the text and its proliferative "formula" - specifically, the replication of its excessive, energistic machinery - suggest the compulsive repetition of recognitions which are not accessible through rational identifications. By re-reading the rhetoric as a space diffusively inhabited by the traumatic recognition of (horrible) displacement, and the (anxious) postulation of other desire, the Gothic emerges as a highly problematized fantasy-nightmare, bearing inscriptions of anxious desire and loss.

Rosemary Jackson has read fantasy as a "literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence or loss."⁶

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶ Rosemary Jackson. Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion. (New Accents, 1981), p. 3 (hereafter, Jackson).

Fantasy re-combines and inverts the real, but it does not escape it; it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real . . . not to be equated with irrationality. Anti-rational, it is the inverse side of reason's orthodoxy.

Contradictions surface and are held antinomically in the fantastic text, as reason is made to confront all that it traditionally refuses to encounter.

Significantly, in the Gothic the discursive encounter between the rational and the anti-rational is situated within the female element. This encounter is thereby complicated by a figure diffusing an energy which is both absent/absence and present/presence; a figure, that is, whose postulative activity occurs within, and is highly stressed by, a language structure from which she is absent(ed), yet is everywhere re-presented as something else - death, madness, mother. When the female other attempts to predicate under such traumatic conditions, not only are readings of desire and absence problematized,⁸ but the discursive topography in which

⁷ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁸ Jackson's reading, for example, identifies two kinds of threat represented in the fantasy: one in which the threat originates in the self, as in Frankenstein, or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; and one in which the threat originates elsewhere, but attacks and appropriates the self, as in Dracula. This typology reveals itself as appropriate(d) to the masculine through its textual examples, since "both" threats conflate into one in the Gothic. In other words, while the "other within" as praxis abjures the notion of otherness as alien, and attempts rather to embrace it(self)

that attempt occurs is marked by a sustained, excessive anxiety. In other words, when the "other within" is the site of the encounter between the rational and its otherness, i.e., the male symbolic-imaginary and an-other imaginary, desire, anxiety, subjectivity and absence exfoliate in multiple and multiply-displaced inscriptions that distinguish the Gothic enigma from other fantasy texts.

This energistic female site consistently exceeds the limits of the rational language order, and expels a disordered, un-balanced rhetorization of subjective states which defy rational accommodation. In The Mysteries of Udolpho (not one mystery, but many; not one secret, but a multiplicity), the rhetoric constructs an imaginary in which phenomena that defy rational explanation are posited, and prescribe action⁹ according to imperatives which engage those phenomena as "real". The rhetoric programs a trajectory in which the rational is read as its blind spot; a trajectory, in effect, which implies

as other, otherness in the Gothic is read as a threat. Thus, (and also), the threat originates outside the female self(-other) and appropriates it(s otherness). When Jackson ascribes "the survival of Gothic horror" to the "internalization and recognition of fears as generated by the self", the statement takes on a different resonance when the self is other, for it is the coerced fear of otherness that makes up the Gothic horror. Ibid., p. 24. See also, pp. 55-59.

⁹ Here, as elsewhere, "action" and "activity" are used synonymously to denote internal activity acting itself out on externals as the 'action of' the enigma..

an aversion to the rational. It thereby produces a(n other) logic which constitutes itself - predicates meaning - consistent with the rhetorically constructed imaginary, hallucinating, as it were, a discourse that the rational cannot appropriate. In the following passage, the rational is exploited, its resources depleted to the benefit of this other imaginary, so that the improbable is privileged as fact.

[Emily] again wavered in conjecture, and hesitated whether to speak to the figure, to which a strong and almost irresistible interest urged her; but terror, at intervals, made her reluctant to do so.

'If this is a person who has designs upon the castle,' said she, 'my curiosity may prove fatal to me; yet the mysterious music and the lamentations that I heard must surely have proceeded from him: if so, then he cannot be an enemy.'

She then thought of her unfortunate aunt, and shuddering with grief and horror, the suggestions of imagination seized her mind with all the force of truth, and she . . . determined, if the figure should appear, not to speak to it.¹⁰

Like Sister Agnes/Laurentini, who "sometimes argue[s] not only with method but with acuteness, and then in a moment start[s] off into madness",¹¹ Emily, the (most readable) heroine resolves "not to speak", i.e., not to act, on the basis of what the rhetoric has generated and sustained, i.e., the murder of her aunt, rather than what the rational

¹⁰ II, xxviii, p. 29.

¹¹ II, xlvii, p. 246.

would coercively suggest.

By contrast, prior to the active engagement of this other discourse, a rational apparatus is foregrounded, partially handicapping the rhetorical energy of the enigma's trajectory. Compare the highly rationalized language surrounding the appearance of St. Aubert's countenance with that of Emily's encounter with an apparition in the dead Marchioness's chamber.

It was lamentable that [Emily's] excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness. Instances of this temporary failure of mind had more than once occurred since her return home. . . . To this infirm state of her nerves may be attributed what she imagined when, her eyes glancing a second time on the armchair, which stood in an obscure part of the closet, the countenance of her dead father appeared there.

Emily stood fixed for a moment to the floor, after which she left the closet.¹²

. . . as [Emily's] eyes wandered over the pall itself, she fancied she saw it move. Without speaking, she caught Dorothee's arm, who, surprised by the action, and by the look of terror which accompanied it, turned her eyes from Emily to the bed, where, in the next moment, she too saw the pall slowly lifted and fall again.

. . . the pall was more violently agitated than before; but Emily, somewhat ashamed of her terrors, stepped back to the bed, willing to be convinced that [it was only the wind]; when, as she gazed within the curtains, the pall moved again, and in the next moment the apparition of a human countenance rose above it.

Screaming with terror, they both fled. . . .¹³

¹² I, x, p. 105.

¹³ II, xlii, p. 206.

Increasingly, as in the latter case, the rational retreats in the face of the indeterminable the rhetoric constructs and sustains. (Notably, while the rational is marginalized and rendered ineffectual, it is nonetheless present). Thus, the activity of the enigma is programmed otherwise, occurs elsewhere; that is, in an interstitial suspension between the internal-subjective and the externals onto which it is rhetorically projected. Meaning is expelled through an energistic, 'inarticulable dread', which is dispersed in the interaction between the heroine site and the Gothic architecture.

This dreadful, but 'impelling,' other meaning is placed within the Gothic topos; a topos, that on the one hand signifies the anachronistic and arbitrary presence of an oppressive (male) order, and, on the other, inscribes an intrauterine (pre-natal, inter-vulvar) space in which the separability between self and other is rendered indistinct.¹⁴ The figure of the heroine is enclosed within this edifice of conflictive, originary meanings, and posited as the (self-)cognitive site through which those multiple meanings may be read. The aphasia and disorientation which attend

¹⁴ See Claire Kahane, "The Gothic Mirror," in The (M)Other Tongue, pp. 334-351. (hereafter, Kahane).

the heroine figure in her exploration of a topography (she has) rhetorically re-produced, are responses to the complex problematics of attempting to retrieve, from within the site of appropriated origin, her self as desirer/predicator: that is, her(self as) origin, or, her origin as subject. That radical self-paradigm is lost within the dualistic Gothic mansion, which locks away, otherness into diminutive, claustic spaces, i.e., narrow, labyrinthine corridors, dark forests, forbidden rooms, hidden chambers within forbidden rooms, etc., and is rendered even more unreadable by its dispersal between two significant, interlapping loci - the Castle Udolpho and the Chateau-Le-Blanc.

In some sense, it is virtually impossible to separate the inscriptions of Udolpho from those of Le-Blanc. But it is significant that Castle Udolpho, in terms of the text's narrative course, appears first and assumes readerly primacy in a trajectory largely devoted to progressive encounters with self as other. Udolpho resonates with the architectonics of oppression, madness and death as the result of illicit, other desire much more coercively than does Le-Blanc. The rhetoric of dread sustained between Emily and the Castle (which is owned by the absent Laurentini), inscribes a horror not merely "of female physiology",¹⁵ but

¹⁵ Fleenor, p. 14. Kahane writes, "the heroine is imprisoned not in a house but in the female body, which

more particularly, of the self/other as desirer. As the instigator¹⁶ of the murder of the Marchioness de Villeroi (the absent chatelaine of Le-Blanc), Laurentini's illicit desire is externalized as the ubiquitous fabric of Udolpho, its various veils, curtains, and artifacts rhetorically enshrouded in a 'dreadful' gloom. Yet it is the Castle itself, that is, the edifice of appropriated origin, which re-presents and designates other desire as horror, a coercive nomination which can only lead the female element into a state of alienation from self(/desire), disenfranchise her of the possibility of (self-)predication.

[Emily] perceived no furniture, except, indeed, an iron chair fastened in the centre of the chamber, immediately over which, depending on a chain from the ceiling, hung an iron ring. Having gazed upon these for some time with wonder and horror, she next observed iron bars below, made for the purpose of confining the feet, and on the arms of the chair were rings of the same metal. . . . what was her agony when, . . . it occurred to her that her aunt might have been

is itself the maternal legacy. The problematics of femininity is thus reduced to the problematics of the female body, perceived as antagonistic to the sense of self, as therefore freakish." Kahane, p. 343. Kahane emphasizes what is visually produced in the Gothic, fleshly corruption and disfiguration, all of which remain within oculocentric parameters of the literal, the biological. On the other hand, I emphasize the cognitive effect such decrepit images inscribe: a psychic trauma that immobilizes, prevents the heroine-interpellant from predicating, even as the rhetoric expels the "dreadful excess" such immobilizing self-cognition produces.

¹⁶ Notably, the text implies that Laurentini's predicative activity is more worthy of punishment than the act of murder. See II, liv, p. 320 and II, lv, p. 331.

one of these victims, and that she herself might be the next! An acute pain seized her head. . . and, looking round for support, was seating herself, unconsciously, in the iron chair itself: but suddenly perceiving where she was, ¹⁷ sprung towards a remote end of the room.

The allusions to the marital state - "a restraining iron chair" with an "iron ring" suspended from the ceiling of this significant edifice - imply the immobilization to which the other(s desire) is materially condemned, and implicate the governing male order as oppressive. Co-inhabiting this particular space is the "indistinguishable", corrupt other. In this imposing chamber, Emily 'uncovers' a corpse, and the female is thereby terrorized into misrecognizing her otherness as horror.

Here [she] . . . perceived only a dark curtain . . . she wished, yet dreaded, to lift it; and to discover what it veiled. . . suddenly conjecturing that it concealed the body of her murdered aunt, she seized it, . . . and drew it aside. Beyond appeared a corpse. . . crimsoned with human blood . . . [t]he features, deformed by death, were ghastly and horrible. . . Emily, bending over the body, gazed. . . with an eager, frenzied eye; but, in the next, . . . she fell senseless at the foot of the couch.

Thus compelled to bear within her own mind the whole horror of the secret that oppressed it, her reason seemed to totter under the intolerable weight. . . Long fits of abstraction succeeded. . . .

¹⁷ II, xxvi, p. 17.

At the sound of [Montoni's] voice Emily turned her eyes, and a gleam of recollection seemed to shoot athwart her mind, for she immediately rose from her seat, and moved to a remote part of the room. . . . she regarded him with a kind of half curious, half terrified look, and answered only 'Yes', to whatever he said.

With some difficulty Annette led her to the bed, which Emily examined with an eager, frenzied eye. . . . and then, pointing with a shuddering motion to Annette. . . . begged that she, too, would not forsake her. - 'For since my father died,' added she sighing, 'everybody forsakes me.'¹⁸

Significantly, Emily's response to Montoni is posed within a cognitive response to Annette (as well) as horrible other, and to her father's absence, not only as death, but as the absence of a benevolent, patriarchal order. That order is here exposed as malevolent, through the presence of Montoni. This recognition is implicated in the "horror of the secret that oppresses", suggestively figured within the (mis-) recognition of self/other as horror. Emily thus interiorizes a self-dread which conjures death, corruption and absence as its terms; an absence which, in particular, has identified the male order as its source. In this regard, it is significant that Emily is led to discover the "corpse" behind the black curtain by Barnardine, a male element, under the pretext of visiting her incarcerated

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 17-21.

i.e., absent, aunt.¹⁹

In effect, the trajectory which Udolpho dominates, institutes self-misrecognition as if the threat posed by Laurentini's desire must be pre-empted before its nature is even identified. Laurentini's passionate eloquence in persuading her lover to poison his wife, the Marchioness, that is, Laurentini's predicative activity, is re-presented as an evil, and indeed, mis-represented throughout the text as the act of murder itself. Other predication, therefore, is an activity that is foreclosed, unutterable and unreadable, inscribed only through a self-dread which the nominated female figure is coerced into reading: an energy suffused about the female site which can only indicate the horrible (self-)inscription in strains of dementia. This self-dread is the de trop of the text, transgressing

¹⁹ Of course, it is Annette who tells Emily the story of Laurentini, just as Dorothee tells Emily and Blanche the story of the Marchioness. Notably, Emily is not interested in viewing the portrait of Laurentini, while she is very interested in that of the Marchioness. (See I, xviii, pp. 239-243; I, xx, pp. 282-283). Moreover, the corpse is actually a wax figure, kept in place to remind the Udolpho scions of their duty to the Church; an oppressive reminder of duties once neglected. (The significance of motherhood to male religion need not be belaboured here). In other words, the origins of self-misrecognition are lost in a history sanctioned by an ideology which both male and female have come to share.

Moreover, Emily's aunt, Mme. Cheron-Montoni has been incarcerated because she has refused to surrender her estates to Montoni: a significant inscription of the economic terrorism of the male order.

discursive structure, and which, generated from a coerced and coercive site of otherness (Laurentini) and returning to the minated female site (Emily), forbiddingly censures other predication.

If, however, coerced self-misrecognition is the primary operation of Castle Udolpho (and perhaps, therefore, accounts for its privileged position in the narrative), it is a coercion suggestively circumscribed by the presence of the absent/dead Marchioness and her topos, Chateau-Le-Blanc. This much less readable, under-privileged superscription hovers about and around the deadly inscriptions of Udolpho until only one-third of the text remains, in which it gains a certain prominence.²⁰

²⁰ Unlike Udolpho, the Chateau shares its spotlight with the convent and the surrounding woods, and the text begins to privilege it only in Chapter Thirty-Five of Volume Two.

Significantly, the shadowy initiatives of its trajectory follow immediately upon the death of Mme. St. Aubert, and are insinuated well prior to Emily's incarceration in Udolpho.²¹ In this sense, the Gothic enigma is glossed with the absent, desexualized figure of a dead m(other), a reading which Claire Kahane privileges in "The Gothic Mirror":

What I see repeatedly locked into the forbidden center of the Gothic . . . is the spectral presence of a dead-undead mother, archaic and all-encompassing, a ghost signifying the problematics of femininity which the heroine must confront.

. . . the female child, who shares the female body and its symbolic place in our culture, remains locked in . . . a fundamentally ambivalent struggle for a separate identity. This ongoing battle with a mirror image who is both self and other is what I find at the center of the Gothic structure, . . .

If nonseparation from the Castle as mother - "mother as nurturer, as sexual being, as body, as harboring a secret" - is a primary Gothic fear, women . . . must find that fear . . . in the secret center of the Gothic structure, where boundaries break down, where life and death become confused, where images of birth and sexuality proliferate in complex displacements.²²

Indeed, this reading is congenial to the Marchioness-Lé Blanc inscriptions which appear to pose otherness within the

²¹ Emily's obscure view of her father's miniature of the Marchioness occurs as early as Chapter iii in Volume I, and St. Aubert dies at La Voisin's, in the shadow of Chateau-Le-Blanc.

²² Kahane, pp. 336-338.

maternal space more exclusively than those of Udolpho. Through the Marchioness's bedchamber, the female self is oriented to a maternity, on the one hand, postulated as part of the multiplicity which constitutes difference, and on the other, inscribed within an order which images the maternal legacy as death.²³ Postulative possibilities are implied because, in contrast to Udolpho, this topos is broached almost entirely through female elements, which operate as bilateral "keepers of the house" (Dorothee) and/or, absent or potential chatelaines (Blanche, Emily, the Marchioness). In terms of postulated possibilities, what is rendered almost unreadable is the Marchioness' thwarted desire for a man other than her husband; that is, a self-postulation within the proscribed space of the appropriate(d) female: the maternal. In this sense, Laurentini and the Marchioness are not opposites, one representing evil, illicit desire and the other representing (ac)quiescent innocence; but rather, doubles

²³ Again, it is difficult to distil otherness from the encrustations of the male order, except artificially. The Marchioness, after all, as well as Mme. Montoni, are paternal aunts to Emily. Interestingly, "The Provençal Tale" which Ludovico reads prior to his disappearance from the maternal space is about life-after-death, or rather, absence identified in a male mythology since the Knight "speaks" to the Baron, and the Baron acts in his stead by punishing his murderers and restoring "order". In one sense, the maternal legacy re-presents death or absence for the male as well.

or complements whose inscriptions overlap, and indeed, collide.²⁴ For although both are "punished", it is the predicator Laurentini, who is read as the terminator of the postulator, the Marchioness. The text, in fact, stresses that the Count is persuaded to kill the Marchioness on the basis of her alleged infidelity, i.e., the predication of an "illicit" desire, thereby cautioning against desire that remains in the realm of the postulate. (Like the postulations of the Gothic enigma?) Either way, "horrible" predicator or wistful postulator, the topos of otherness is made to resound with the sexual death/absence of the female m(other).

Moreover, unlike the fraudulent corpse in Udolpho, the Marchioness is, as it were, an 'authentically' dead, absent figure: a figure which Emily is coerced into encountering through artifacts and material possessions; the legacy of the (self-)disinherited. The Marchioness is a seme of absence itself, a figure of the other reduced to fetish-object, more and less than a discursive element

²⁴ Kahane and I part ways here, for although she is read as innocent, the Marchioness' desire for another man, posited from within the marital-maternal territory, renders her, in terms of the male order, more "guilty" than Laurentini. In this sense, I would change Kahane's reading of the Marchioness-Emily as "the passive victim of desire" to "the victim of passive desire". See Kahane, p. 339.

pulsing through a marked, yet anxiously postulative structure. If, as Kahane suggests, "Laurentini's corruption through the flesh, through the strength of her sexual desire, . . . mirrors Emily's own potential for transgression,"²⁵ then the Marchioness is both a prefiguration of Emily (and Laurentini), and a figure of the female/Gothic enigma itself.

'Pray, ma'amselle, stand beside the picture, that I may look at you together,' said Dorothee; who, when the request was complied with, exclaimed again at the resemblance.

In [the] closet were many memorials of the departed marchioness; a robe and several articles of her dress were scattered upon the chairs, as if they had just been thrown off. On the floor were a pair of black satin slippers; and on the dressing-table a pair of gloves, and a long black veil, which, as Emily took up to examine, she perceived was dropping to pieces with age.

[Dorothee] threw [the veil] suddenly over Emily, who shuddered to find it wrapped round her, descending even to her feet; and as she endeavoured to throw it off, Dorothee entreated that she would keep it on for one moment. 'I thought,' added she, 'how like you would look to my dear mistress in that veil; - may your life, ma'amselle, be a happier one than hers!'²⁶

Part of the difficulty in approaching the Gothic enigma lies in the continual, convoluted shifts among the female elements. Dorothee for example, may here be read as Emily's (m)other, as well as a postulative self or keeper of the house, while Blanche, who is here absent

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ II, xlii, p. 204.

other predication, Gothic inscriptions materialize, on the one hand, as the irredeemable absence of a(n other) subject, and on the other, as an anxious textualization of, or discoursing on, the possibility of self-recovery through desire - both of these expelling self-horror and trauma. Since other desire in the Gothic always coincides with anxiety, its predicative energy is subdued, so that self-misrecognition eradicates otherness even as it is being postulated. In this sense, the dialectic of the Gothic at once posits the possibility of a(n other) subject, and retreats from that possibility. Thus, the Gothic processes both denial and traversal;²⁸ that is, discourse is traversed by a subject-postulate who must expel her difference within a discursive structure whose terms fetishize her. Her movement shudders through the text as a presence in absolute opposition to the discursive economy which absents it: a fantasy which predicates itself amidst the very conditions which render it unreadable - make it impossible; "fantastic". Nevertheless, at the same time, the Gothic tenders a multiplicity through a traversing, "re-combinant" female

²⁸ In Kristeva's terms, the female site of the Gothic traverses a discursive structure which denies her for the (male) subject of that structure has constituted discourse as a "shelter in order to avoid castration". See Kristeva, "Oscillation", in Marks, p. 165.

site that moves in, through and beyond discursive order. Closure, which hovers over the trajectory, waiting to (dis-)solve its cognitive and subjective multiplicity, is, in some sense, obverted; taken not as a definitive end-stop or ground of reference, but rather as one of many possible meanings confronted in and by traversal. This is suggested, in part, by the compulsive replication of the Gothic trajectory. It eludes rational closure by "formularizing": that is, reproducing a formula that belabours the formal, discursive obliteration of the other (meaning of the other subject), as well as "formulaically" re-accessing the "excessive" energy of self-dread which places it beyond form, beyond closure.

On the other hand, closure adjourns other possibilities, dismantles energistic expulsions by accessing the marital code. Indeed, the accretive material inscriptions which surround and comprise the figure of the Marchioness and her maternal identifications, signal the re-emergence of economic, romantic, and marital elements: DuPont declares his love for Emily, Valancourt re-appears, and Count de Villefort initiates proceedings for the reclamation of Emily's "inheritance". Having relieved itself of the "unthinkable" sexual fear of—desire for, Count Morano; the absence of a romanticized, benevolent order (configured in Valancourt and St. Aubert); and the fatal intimidations

represented through Montoni, the trajectory re-institutes "order" through the "rational happiness" of marriage. "Comfort" and "affluence" materialize as the door prizes for those who have been chastened by oppression into self-misrecognition.

Soon after their return to La Vallée, the brother of Valancourt came. . .to pay his respects to Emily, with whom he was so much pleased, as well as with the prospect of rational happiness which these nuptials offered to Valancourt, that he immediately resigned to him a part of the rich domain. . . . The estates at Toulouse were disposed of, and Emily purchased of M. Quesnel the ancient domain of her late father, where, having given Annette a marriage portion, she settled her as the housekeeper, and Ludovico as the steward. . .

The legacy which had been bequeathed to Emily by Signora Laurentini, she begged Valancourt would allow her to resign to M. Bonnac. . . [t]he castle of Udolpho, also, descended to the wife of M. Bonnac, who was the nearest surviving relation. . . and thus affluence restored his long-oppressed spirits to peace, and his family to comfort.²⁹

However, the psychic entailments of the maternal space lurk within the legacy-settlements, in which Castle Udolpho passes from Laurentini to Emily and thence to Madame Bonnac, and Blanche remains heir to the stultifying Chateau-Le-Blanc. Thus, the uneasy pleasure of the Gothic is continually re-written, ineffable, undemonstrable,

— 29 II, lvii, pp. 343-344.

like "the duplicitous mystery of women in portraits whose gaze outward is really turned inward on themselves."³⁰

³⁰ Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet, eds., The Representation of Women in Fiction: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1981. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. xx, introduction.

CHAPTER THREE

The Marital Subject and

Phallomorphic Subjectivity in *Evelina*

...hardly knowing what I said, [I] asked if he had been reading? He paused a moment, and then said, 'Yes, my child: - a book that both afflicts and perplexes me!' He means me, thought I: and therefore I made no answer. 'What if we read it together?' continued he, 'will you assist me to clear its obscurity?'

*Evelina*¹

The Gothic reconnoiters the possibility of other desire inhabiting discourse, and registers the traumatic recognition of self as horrible absence. Its anxious attempts at predication are not billeted anew in the Romance text. Rather, the economic fetishization that accrues from being "visible, but absent" is addressed in the Romance. Its ideology transcribes Gothic (self-) horror into economic terms, in which the exchange value of the object-female is processed through the marital code. Love and Marriage are the ideologemes which

¹ Fanny Burney, *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Originally published in 1778. All quotations are from the 1982 edition. Volume II, letter xxix, p. 263.

inaugurate and sustain the Romance text, and the text, in turn, is the discursive obliteration of their economics, specifically its female currency. In effect, the ideology of Romance domesticates the other to her absent subjectivity, her object-status, establishing Marriage as its subject and primary signifier. Unlike the Gothic, there is no (other) discourse of possibility interposing itself; marriage in the Romance is the single 'plot,' expectation and closure collapsed into its coding. The Romance trajectory is therefore a much more programmatic, coercive operation than the Gothic, uncluttered by anxious attempts at self-predication.

What is suggestive, however, is the thematization of Romance ideology in the discursive space of the early novel, the latter proposing a problematic relationship to "truth" and "reality". The early novel "inscribed hesitation"² about its representational claims and

² Jackson discusses the inscription of "uncertainty and impossibility" in the novel of fantasy. In the early novel, this uncertainty takes the form of an authorial bravado which denominates the collaboration between text and reader as a contract of belief. Fielding, with a wink and a shrug, says it best in Tom Jones: "For tho' every good author will confine himself within the bounds of probability, it is by no means necessary that. . . he be inhibited from shewing many persons and things, which may possibly have never fallen within the knowledge of his readers. If the writer strictly observes the rules. . . he hath discharged his part; and. . . his reader. . . is indeed guilty of critical infidelity if he disbelieves him." Tom Jones, Volume I, Preface XIII.

paradigmed that hesitation in its form and content. The early novel thus emerged as a self-interrogative activity, asserting story as discourse and at the same time, questioning its validity as a medium of representation.

The interpellation of the reader to authorize its transactions, endorse its ideological inscriptions and respond to its hesitations - in effect, co-author the text - constituted the novel's affective appeal.³

Generating an ingenuous correspondence between text and reader, this dynamic kept them distinct from each other, discrete "surfaces" that intersected at the level of discourse.⁴ Yet by the nineteenth century, the novel had outgrown its self-consciousness, and that dynamic disappeared into "classic realism".⁵ The early Romance, however, made its debut within the precursive encounter between rational ideology and representationalism. Its strict adherence to appropriate(d) codes, such as rational "manners and morals", implied an attempt to

³ See Belsey, especially Chapter Three, "Addressing the Subject," pp.56-84.

⁴ Kristeva, Desire, p.65.

⁵ The sublimation of the reader into the text is partly caused by "the logic of its structure - the movement towards closure - [which] precludes the possibility of leaving the reader simply to confront the contradictions which the text may have defined." Belsey, p. 82.

acquire formal legitimacy.⁶ The epistolary Evelina, for example, was a formal imitation of the "literary histories" then flourishing, which, themselves, were registers of that encounter. Patterned after Richardson's Pamela, Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World was, as a text of letters, an anomalous choice for a female author.⁷ For initially, women writers were "anxious to disassociate themselves from . . . female romancers. . . despised women novelists. [Writers like Burney] found that Richardson's novel provided a convenient status symbol, a link with the great male tradition."⁸ Later, Richardson's format would be jettisoned by such writers, conscious that they "must at all costs avoid the subjective voice"⁹ if they are to handle the male pen at all. But the Romance's entry into an unwieldy, indefinite discursivity also implies a desire to exploit the vulnerability of the novelistic site in order to represent an (other) order of ambivalence; one which surfaces in a reading of the Romance discourse

⁶ Beyond legitimacy, it may have signified the desire to own a discourse that, unlike "all the older forms of literature. . . was young enough to be soft in her hands. . ." Virginia Woolf, Women and Writing. (London: The Women's Press, 1979), p. 25.

⁷ Figs, p. 16.

⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

⁹ Ibid.

and the economics it veils. Corralled within the Romance, these economics are inscribed in the language and gender assigned to character-elements, which, in turn, identify, or are identified with, three sites: the provincial gentry, fashionable London society, and shopkeeper London. The heroine, Evelina, is placed, like a chess-piece, in each site, and her text, for the most part, records thematically appropriate responses. The Romance heroine, is a figuration of ideologemes which are couriered into the discourse through its "guardian" code, signified by Reverend Mr. Villars and Lady Howard.¹⁰ Their exchange of letters opens the text (of the heroine) and institutes

10. The gender-denominations of Villars and Howard are part of a gender dialectic which is consistent throughout the enigma - indeed, through the Romance discourse itself. As the ideal but impotent father figure, Villars is a disempowered (emasculated) subject, in retreat from the dense ideological site of London, much like St. Aubert in *Udolpho*. Lady Howard is a female figure whose ideological (non-)status dominates the discourse in various manifestations - Mrs. Mirvan, Maria, Mrs. Beaumont, Lady Louisa, and Mrs. Selwyn. This dialectic, with many internal convolutions, is sustained in other configurations, such as, Lovel-Duval, Duval-Selwyn, and Orville-Selwyn. As Barbara Bowman suggests, the modern Romance reconstitutes these conflated figures and creates a set of characters which carry similar significations and are more easily identified. For example, "the male friend. . . is the hero's rival, [but also] corresponds to the ideal father. . . he is stable and dependable. . . [i]n some of the novels, he is not a direct rival to the hero, but instead is an earlier one, like the ideal father who dies. . . The male friend often offers support to the heroine. . . but he also undermines the hero's purposes. . . often, he fades from the picture unobtrusively. . . ." Barbara Bowman, "Victoria Holt's Gothic Romances: A Structuralist Inquiry," in Fleenor, pp. 70-71. See also pp. 69-81. By contrast, Villars (the ideal father) and Orville carry many of the same

nominations which code Evelina as "heroine". She therefore enters the enigma as a pre-fab element, "a little angel" yet with a very suggestive "air of inexperience and innocence".

Her face and person answer my most refined ideas of complete beauty: . . . [h]ad I not known from whom she received her education, I should . . . have been in pain for her understanding . . . [s]he has the same gentleness in her manners, the same natural grace in her motions; that I formerly so much admired in her mother. Her character seems truly ingenuous and simple; and . . . blessed . . . with an excellent understanding, and great quickness of parts, she has a certain air of inexperience and innocence that is extremely interesting.¹¹

In effect, Villars and Howard ("the clergyman" and "the lady") are the discursive praxis - morals and manners - by which the female object will be educated to her (non-)status. Notably, its coercions are activated when Evelina is passed from the provincial site (morals) to that of Lady Howard, who has proposed the trip to London. In this sense, the Romance enigma (and its recessed economics) is initiated through the female element. Although the text privileges Lady Howard, the enigma is in fact precipitated by Madame Duval, Evelina's shady maternal grandmother, who has communicated her

significations, including those of what Bowman calls, the "male friend". See, for example, III, v, pp. 306-307.

¹¹ I, vi, p. 21.

intention of reclaiming Evelina and introducing her into Paris society. Significantly, Duval's letter is not re-produced but, rather, handled and edited by Lady Howard: thus both "lady" and "madam" address the subject of Evelina's "inheritance". The inheritance register thus exfoliates within a site marked, on the one hand by the possibility of other desire (through the madam), and on the other, by the coercive force of economics (through the lady). This register is charged, however, with the text-body of Evelina's mother. Her story, interpolated in the Villars-Howard exchange ~~is~~ information which, like the manufacturing of the heroine, precedes the textual enigma, and materializes as the cautionary romance, leading to scandal and death (in childbirth). Commandeered by Madame Duval, Caroline Evelyn-Belmont was taken to Paris.

I need not speak to your Ladyship of the virtues of that excellent young creature. . . .How often have I regretted that I did not accompany her thither! . . . But - to be brief, Madame Duval. . . tyrannically endeavoured to effect an union between Miss Evelyn and one of [her husband's] nephews. . . enraged at [Miss Evelyn's] non-compliance. . . [she] threatened her with poverty and ruin. . . .Miss Evelyn. . . rashly, and without a witness, consented to a private marriage with Sir John Belmont, a very profligate young man [who]. . . [d]isappointed of the fortune he expected. . . infamously burnt the certificate of their marriage, and denied they had ever been united!¹²

¹² I, ii, p. 15.

The placement of this material (in the middle of the fabrication of the heroine figure) is suggestive, not only in terms of the negative associations it assigns to Duval, but also in terms of the dark resonance it adds to the heroine's "extremely interesting" innocence. For apart from the ideological coding which encloses Evelina, she is also the archive of this (other) fatal, romantic closure: an extra-textual enigma which hangs over the ideological Romance as possibility. As a double for Caroline Evelyn-Belmont, and the carrier of her grandmother's "depravity," the heroine, then, also carries a matrilineal legacy of intransigence, death and corruption. Thus, Evelina's text, which is both that of the heroine function and that of other scripts (i.e., her mother's), on the one hand, registers appropriate nominations, and on the other inscribes ambivalence and contradiction about such nominations. In this sense, while the Romance enigma is generated from a gender-specific genealogy, that genealogy is read as defunct, an impossibility, since death/depravity are coercive foreclosures. Moreover, the custodial presence of the lady is a surety against any matrilineal "option" exercising itself through the nominated heroine. In this sense, as the element through which this material is accessed and controlled (since the lady edits and re-presents the madam's instigations), the lady overrides

this "other legacy", and the inheritance apparatus remains within ideological parameters. But the interpolation of Duval in the textual enigma is very suggestive.

• Duval's presence in the text is in significant contrast to Caroline's absence. Duval's relationship to the absent other, which would constitute a conduit to uncoerced difference, is neutralized by her function as a site of multiple displacements. These exfoliate on several fronts - language, gender, subjectivity, and class - all and any of which are inextricably meshed together. The manner in which Duval is represented makes it virtually impossible to read difference as anything other than a sociopathic perversion. In effect, her figure materializes as a straw (wo-)man, a lampoon other, used to advance the ideological female (the heroine object) over and against inappropriate otherness. However, the complexity of the Duvallian site can, in part, be recovered through inscriptions which underlie the text of the heroine.

Duval's textualization is deferred until the heroine has been "Londonized", a process of self-defamiliarization which begins with the "female body surface,"¹³ and is

¹³ A provocative paper, "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," delivered by Kaja Silverman on March 7, 1986 at Carleton University suggested that the clothing of the female body surface is the "presence of the male gaze", or the manner in which "the male identified the female as spectacle." Her clothing is thus a "territorial" appropriation in which her entire body is read as an erotic site for male desire.

supervised by male elements.

The shops are really very entertaining; especially the mercers; there seem to be six or seven men belonging to each shop, . . .

. and such men! so finical, so affected! they seemed to understand every part of a woman's dress better than we do ourselves; and they recommended caps and ribbands with an air of so much importance, that I wished to ask them how long they had left off wearing them!

. I have just had my hair dressed. You can't think how oddly my head feels; full of powder and black pins, and a great cushion on the top of it. I believe you would hardly know me, for my face looks quite different to what it did before my hair was dressed. When I shall be able to make use of a comb for myself I cannot tell, for my hair is so much entangled, frizled they call it, that I fear it will be difficult.¹⁴

The female body becomes a coded space, a glyph of the economy which produces it. The inscription of self-misrecognition (or, self-alienation) and the rescension of self-control imply an ideological assimilation of the other which is total. Similarly, the heroine encounters language as a practice inhabited by a protocol which occults subjective meaning: "these sort of expressions, I find, are used as words of course, without any distinction of persons, or study of propriety."¹⁵ Unable to decipher a language indifferent to subjects, Evelina retreats

¹⁴ I, x, pp. 27-28.

¹⁵ I, xi, p. 29.

into a silent charade:

. . . another gentleman. . . desired to know if I was engaged, or would honour him with my hand. . . Well, I bowed, and I am sure I coloured [but did not answer] . . . [a]nd so, he took my hand, and led me to join in the dance.

.
I was seized with such a panic, that I could hardly speak a word. . .

.
'But you must speak to your partner first,'
[said Maria] . . . [h]owever, I had not
sufficient courage to address him. . . ¹⁶

Significantly, her meaning (as with her 'dressed' body) is assigned by what is read as the male element, signified by Willoughby, Orville and Lovel. But the interlocutory structure of this material is highly suggestive in terms of gender: Evelina is relating to her guardian (reader) a conversation about an unidentified female (herself) held among three men, overheard by Maria and in turn, related to her. The "male" reading is a schematic of the pre-established codes which signify the other and which, conversely, she is made to signify.¹⁷ These are the signifying limits set by the discourse itself which remain in place independent of any aberrant signification - such as, silence or the

¹⁶ I, xi, pp. 29-31.

¹⁷ Each satisfies himself as to what Evelina is: from a "beautiful angel" looking "all intelligence and expression," to a "poor, weak, pretty modest-looking girl." It is nevertheless her desirability which determines the terms of this exchange, notably initiated by Willoughby. (Here, as elsewhere, ambivalence surrounds her "defender"). I, xii, p. 35.

abdication from signification - on the part of the female. In other words, while Willoughby and Orville reduce (the) meaning (of the other) to that which is appropriate to male desire so that the female is inscribed as its object, the recessed, but nonetheless authoritative signification of Maria suggests that the female is the (repressed) signifier. The other as signifier of Romantic (male) meaning suggests that the subject of the Romance (marriage) is constituted otherwise than through gender and the heterosexual relations it projects. This is implied in the trans-sexual presence of Mr. Lovel. As a male subject "in drag", that is, male desire reduced to its fetish-statement, and also the element through which the discourse asserts its authority,¹⁸ Lovel paradigms a phallomorphism by which gender has become, not the means of predication, but its object. Although this phallomorphism is recognizably male, it has objectified the male subject as well, since he is prohibited from signifying his desire in discourse, and is reduced to, literally, "wearing" it.

Gender, as a predicative condition, is more rigorously

¹⁸ Lovel appears throughout the *enigma* as a high minister of the manners which rule the discourse. His importance to Evelina's "felicity" is suggested by Mrs. Selwyn: "Mrs. Selwyn said, she would advise me to pay my court to this Mr. Lovel; 'for,' said she, 'though he is malicious, he is fashionable, and may do you some harm in the great world.'" III, iv, p. 295, and Lady Louisa: "'... - don't we all know that you lead the ton in the beau monde? I declare, . . . you dress better than anybody.'" III, xxi, p. 393.

sabotaged in the figure of Madame Duval. A tandem reading of both Duval and Lovel suggests that the Romance subject is wholly constituted in an economic register, of which phallomorphism is both the condition and the result. Like Lovel, Duval is a man in drag. As "a woman, who is the uncontrolled mistress of her time, fortune, and actions. . .",¹⁹ she materializes as a phallic, but inappropriate, subject who, more conspicuously than Lovel, literalizes the fetishization of the entire discourse. She therefore becomes the object of a violent ridicule which is at once a terrorism vented on the absurd gender inversions (of which she is the figure) that the Romance generates, and also the unleashing of a delinquent misogyny which its heterosexual theme represses.

[Mirvan] held a candle to Madame Duval, that he might have a more complete view of her disaster, declaring repeatedly, that he had never been better pleased in his life.

The rage of poor Madame Duval was unspeakable; she dashed the candle out of his hand, stamped upon the floor, and, at last, spat in his face.

This action seemed immediately to calm them both, as the joy of the Captain was converted into resentment, and the wrath of Madame Duval into fear; for he put his hands upon her shoulders and gave her so violent a shake, that she screamed out for help. . . Duval was not released, till she quite sobbed with passion.

'Well,' cried the Captain, 'I met a person just now, so like you, I could have sworn he had been your twin-brother.'

'It would have been a most singular pleasure to me,' said Mr. Lovel, 'if I also could have seen

¹⁹ I, xviii, p. 73.

him; for , really, I have not the least notion what sort of a person I am, and I have a prodigious curiosity to know.'

And then. . . [Mirvan] hauled into the room a monkey: full dressed, and extravagantly à-la-mode! . . .

Poor Mr. Lovel, too much intimidated to stand his ground, yet too much enraged to submit, . . . vented his passion by giving a furious blow to the monkey. The creature, darting forwards, sprung instantly upon him, and clinging round his neck, fastened his teeth to one of his ears.²⁰

By reducing both Lovel and Duval (for whom this prank was intended) to a single distortion, the entire discourse materializes as distorted. In this regard, the comic burlesque in which their encounters are enclosed is a burlesque of the discourse itself.²¹ As the terrorist operative, Mirvan is the presence of an intractable cynicism which recognizes the Romance as propaganda and acts to subvert its coercions. The text therefore

²⁰ I, xvi, p. 66; III, xxi, pp. 399-401. Significantly, violence is read as exchanged solely between Lovel and the monkey, which, given Lovel's discursive authority and the monkey's correlative inscription, implies the internal conflict of the text and its self-critique.

²¹ Note Villars' agreement with Captain Mirvan: "Shall I own to you, that, however I may differ from Captain Mirvan in other respects, yet my opinion of the town, its manners, inhabitants, and diversions, is much upon a level with his own? Indeed it is the general harbour of fraud and of folly, of duplicity and of impertinence. . . ." I, xxiv, p. 116. Note also the heroine's suggestive description of the text, which, like the monkey, is "à-la-mode". ". . . really, I think there ought to be a book, of the laws and customs à-la-mode, presented to all young people, upon their first introduction into public company." I, xx, p. 83.

perpetrates violence against its own (ideological) meaning - their encounters emerging as a vitriolic (self-)critique which (comically) relieves the (set) text of its ideological limits. In another sense, the comic burlesque also prohibits a reading of their encounters as (otherwise) meaningful. In this way, Mirvan, Duval, and Lovel are material from which meaning is alienated, read simply as comic diversion.

Nevertheless, the coercions surrounding the Duvallian site are revealing in terms of what constitutes subjectivity in the Romance. As the target of Mirvan's (textual) violence (although, significantly, in her "absence", Lovel is substituted), Duval materializes as a phallomorphic fe/male; neither male nor female, but their composite effigy. On the one hand a discursive fetish-object, Duval is also, on the other, a phallic subject. This is implied in her objectification of Caroline, Evelina, and Mr. Dubois. In this regard, the manner in which Duval "ruined" her daughter is significant. Caroline "failed" as a heroine because she refused to make the economic alliance, "the rational marriage", Duval had arranged. Duval's intentions toward Evelina are exactly the same, so that what is forged is an economy of ruin (which uses the female as an exchange-object) and which Duval is recruited to represent. Although this rational alliance is identical to what is engineered by the

Romance enigma, its "romanticism" renders this identification unreadable. In effect, the text displaces its veiled economics onto Duval. She is the procurer-broker through which the text covertly administers its economics, which is predicated on the body of the female (including Duval's own body).²² Thus the text exhibits a pathological antipathy towards Duval, who represents that which it seeks to repress, and also represents the possibility of a phallic female; that is, a female who wins power by exploiting her body, and returns to police the exchange of her heiresses.²³ In some sense, this suggests why Duval's gender is disfigured, and how a fetish (text-)object can also exhibit (a phallic) subjectivity. By the same token, by suggesting that Duvallian subjectivity is determined no less oppressively

²² Duval has won her economic (phallic) status by having been married three times.

²³ This is discussed more explicitly by Elaine Showalter in, A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977). "... sexual discipline is administered to women by other women as agents for men. ... Thus the feminine heroine grows up in a world without female solidarity, where women in fact police each other on behalf of patriarchal tyranny." pp. 116-117. This lack of "solidarity" is pathetically represented in Volume Three when the outcome of a bet is decided by a race between two old women who, "feeble and frightened" run into each other. The heroine is restrained from aiding them by Lord Merton who calls her aid "foul play". See III, vii, pp. 111-112. Similarly, it is Mrs. Selwyn and Mrs. Clinton who expose Dame Green's changeling fraud; an action which is constituted on her knowledge of female (non-)status. See III, xvii, pp. 174-175.

than the male order, it implies that the subject of the Romance is always phallogorphic, regardless of which gender is discursively assigned.

The romantic coercions of the discourse therefore relax - in a sense, abandon the heroine to a topography of "ruinous" inscriptions - when Evelina is placed under Duval's "protection". For example, while the rhetoric of anxiety which attends Duval's entry into the text is calculated to recall the "other legacy" (which privileged death and depravity),²⁴ that anxiety is also suggestive of what is entailed by an "economic" inheritance. Although the "difference" of this other legacy has been effectively pre-empted, the dense relationship between Duval, Caroline, and Evelina, and that between the text and Duval, imply that economic "security" is acquired at the expense of identity (or, in Duval's case, gender), or the loss of desire and ultimately life (as in Caroline's case). Thus, the heroine's excessive response to Duval can also be read as the response to an element which inscribes (self-)loss as the condition of Romantic (read Duvallian) status.

²⁴ This passage resonates with "Gothic" excess: "I heard no more: amazed, frightened, and unspeakably shocked, an involuntary exclamation of Gracious Heaven! escaped me, and, more dead than alive, I sunk into Mrs. Mirvan's arms. . . . [Madame Duval] received me with as much tenderness as I believe she is capable. . . for when, overcome by the variety of emotions which the sight of her occasioned, I almost fainted in her arms, she burst into tears and said, 'Let me not lose my poor daughter a second time!'" I, xiv, p. 52.

Similarly, while the text disorders its privileged terrain (London) in order to prevent any identification between the Romance discourse and the Duvallian topography, it also exposes that discourse as "illusory".

O Maria, London now seems no longer the same place where I lately enjoyed so much happiness; every thing is new and strange to me; even the town itself has not the same aspect: - my situation so altered! my home so different! - my companions so changed! . . . to me, London now seems a desert; that gay and busy appearance it so lately wore, is now succeeded by a look of gloom, - fatigue, and lassitude; the air seems stagnant, the heat is intense, the dust intolerable, and the inhabitants illiterate. . . do you never re-trace in your memory the time we past here when together? to mine, it recurs for ever! And yet, I think I rather recollect a dream, or some visionary fancy, than a reality. - That I should ever have been known to Lord Orville, - that I should have spoken to - have danced with him, - seems now a romantic illusion: and that elegant politeness. . . which struck us with such admiration, I now re-trace the remembrance of, rather as belonging to an object of ideal perfection, formed by my own imagination, than to a being of the same race and nature as those with whom I at present converse.²⁵

The Duvallian topos, read as different from, but, also located within, the terrain of privilege, thus materializes as a Romance ghetto in which all the elements repressed by the discourse - desire, anxiety, death - surface.²⁶

²⁵ II, x, p. 172.

²⁶ The excessive anxiety surrounding the attempted suicide of Mr. Macartney (later disclosed as Evelina's half-brother) re-accesses the Carolingian enigma, since the indigent Macartney considers death as an option out of a "romantic" dilemma. The "Gothic" rhetoric of the Macartney enigma amplifies the inscription of the loss of desire

Moreover, it is this discursive unburdening that inducts the novice (heroine) into her object-status: an unveiling that is prohibited in the discourse itself. ~~Accordingly~~ under Duval's flag, Evelina is placed in scenarios of seduction, randomly accosted by unbridled (male) desire, and imaged with prostitutes, the latter regarded with the disinterested eye (but vested passion) of Lord Orville.

Every other moment, I was spoken to, by some bold and unfeeling man, to whom my distress. . . only furnished a pretence for impertinent witticisms, or free gallantry. At last, a young officer. . . with great violence. . . seized my hand. I screamed aloud [and] . . . ran hastily up to two ladies, and cried, 'For Heaven's sake, dear ladies, afford me some protection!'. . . However, [their] conversation . . . to my inexpressible horror, convinced me I had sought protection from insult, of those who were themselves most likely to offer it! . . . and such was my dread of their resentment or abuse, that I did not dare make any open attempt to escape.

but what, good Heaven! were my emotions when. . . I perceived. . . Lord Orville! . . . However, to my infinite joy, he passed us without distinguishing me; though I saw that, in a careless manner, his eyes surveyed the party.²⁷

The rhetoric of terror in which these scenarios are enclosed is at once a belaboured response to the need for protection, and also a programmatic terrorism directed at (the body of) the heroine-object. Unlike the

as self-loss or death even more pointedly than the comparatively brief inscription available in Evelina's reaction to Duval.

²⁷ II, xxi, pp. 233-234.

Mirvanian rampage, which is an outstanding departure from the Romance, this terror materializes as the most persuasive coercion towards the fulfillment of closure - marriage. Thus, in a topography of (male) desire and (female) fear, marriage is introduced: Mr. Dubois and Young Branghton (through Duval) propose to Evelina; Miss Polly and Mr. Brown are engaged;²⁸ and Mr. Smith pontificates on the bachelor state. The interpolation of marriage amidst a rhetoric of desire and terror implies that both seduction and marriage involve (self-)loss and betrayal.²⁹

. . . a large party of gentlemen, apparently very riotous. . . seemed to rush suddenly from behind some trees, . . . and formed a kind of circle, . . . we were kept prisoners, till, at last one of them, rudely, seizing hold of me, said I was a pretty little creature.

Terrified to death . . . I flew rather than ran up the walk [but] I was met by another party of men. . .

I was almost distracted with terror. . .

²⁸ Mr. Brown's submissive indifference to everyone around him and his placement between prostitutes from whom, like the heroine, he cannot escape, inscribes him as female. "It would be very difficult to say which was greatest, my fright, or Mr. Brown's consternation; who ventured not to make the least resistance, though his uneasiness made him tremble almost as much as myself. . . . I could not move [my arm] . . . and poor Mr. Brown was circumstanced in the same manner on the other side. . . ." II, xxi, p. 235.

²⁹ Eva Figes shows how Pamela neutralizes the distinction between the betrayal of seduction and the betrayal accrued through marriage. Figes, p. 16. A strong intertext between Evelina and Pamela emerges in this topography, far beyond their common form.

'By all that's sacred,' cried [a] voice, which I then knew for Sir Clement Willoughby's, 'tis herself!'

'Sir Clement Willoughby!' cried I. 'O Sir, assist - assist me - or I shall die with terror! - 'Gentlemen,' cried he, disengaging them all from me in an instant, 'pray leave this lady to me.' Loud laughs proceeded from every mouth, and two or three said, 'Willoughby has all the luck!'³⁰

Willoughby, whose attentions, dress, and manners Evelina has consistently compared to (and confused with) Orville's,³¹ here acts as Orville's proxy, since Orville remains on the border of this terrorist terrain. Moreover, the distinction between their nominations - Willoughby: seduction; Orville: marriage - is further neutralized by an epistolary duplicity³² in which Willoughby signs Orville's name to a scandalous letter addressed to Evelina.³³ This thinly veiled inscription, which begins near the end of the

³⁰ II, xv, pp. 195-196.

³¹ The rhetoric connives at this confusion as, for example, when Evelina compares Mr. Smith's manners to Willoughby's, the reader expects Orville's to be the standard of comparison: "It is true, no man can possibly pay me greater compliments, or make more fine speeches, than Sir Clement Willoughby. . . ." II, xi, p. 178.

³² A deceit registered in the epistolary form implicates the terms of language directly.

³³ The re-readings to which this letter is subjected by both Evelina and Villars suggests the difficulty of retrieving meaning from language. ". . . so eager was my first perusal, that, . . . I perceived not immediately the impertinence it implied, - I only marked the expressions of his own regard; . . . [but] upon a second reading, I thought every word changed, - it did not seem the same letter, - I could not find one sentence that I could look at without blushing. . . ." II, xxvii, p. 257. See also II, xxix, p. 266.

Duvallian topography, is suspended until very near closure, when Willoughby's "fraud" is exposed. But its protraction and the heroine's consequent melancholia suggest that the didactic function of the ghetto has been fulfilled: the text of the heroine therefore inscribes what underlies the Romance even as she eulogizes Orville.

Oh, Miss Mirvan, could you ever have believed, that one who seemed formed as a pattern for his fellow-creatures . . . that Lord Orville would have treated me with indignity? Never, never again will I trust to appearances, - never confide in my own weak judgment, - never believe that person to be good, who seems to be amiable! What cruel maxims are we taught by a knowledge of the world!

.
 . . . I cannot but lament to find myself in a world so deceitful, where we must suspect what we see, distrust what we hear, and doubt even what we feel! ³⁴

On the other hand, the heroine's abrupt removal from the privileged terrain and its ghetto also imposes a limit on a topography which is altogether too revealing. One of the ways in which its freedoms are curtailed and the discourse is able to (re)assert its romanticism, is through Mr. Dubois' proposal to Evelina. As Duval's male companion, Dubois is inscribed as female. But his marriage proposal, as the recognizable act (code) of a (male) subject, overrides this inscription and institutes

³⁴ II, xxvii, p. 256; II, xxviii, p. 261.

the end of (the) Duval(lian subject) and her topography. In other words, a female who has acquired a phallic subjectivity by exploiting the marital economy is inscribed as nevertheless vulnerable to its rejection when her use-value as its object diminishes.³⁵

The reversal of Dubois' gender inscription, Duval's dissolution, and the heroine's interim return to Villars, suggest that the text is ushering in an order of restraint; a much more 'classically' Romantic program, largely purged of delinquent inscriptions, retaining only their vestigial force.³⁶ In another sense, Dubois' gender reversal and Duval's consequent obliteration signal the reinstatement of (male) gender as a coercive, predicated construct, rather than an object reduced by and to its compulsive, phallomorphic fetishism. In Volume Three, therefore, this phallomorphic energy is subjected to an ideological discipline which is meted

³⁵ The abruptness of Duval's dismissal from the text also suggests that her function as a textual object is now superfluous since the text of the heroine has absorbed and recognized the inscriptions of Duval's "ghetto" topography.

³⁶ For example, in contrast to the earlier assault on the heroine, in which Willoughby "saves" her, it is Mrs. Selwyn's "protection" which dampens the desire of Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley. See III, i, pp. 273-276. Similarly, there is a discreet parallel to the heroine's previous walk with prostitutes, for in Volume Three, she "walked home between two ladies". See III, i, p. 276.

out by both Orville and Mrs. Selwyn.³⁷ Orville's rehabilitative function is inscribed in the monkey sequence, where his belated intervention is highly suggestive.

The creature . . . sprung instantly upon [Lovel] and clinging round his neck, fastened his teeth to one of his ears. . . . Lord Orville . . . ever humane, generous, and benevolent, . . . quitted his charge, [the heroine] whom he saw was wholly out of danger, and seizing the monkey by the collar, made him loosen the ear, and then, with a sudden swing, flung him out of the room and shut the door.³⁸

Lovel, whose authoritative fetishism has everywhere dogged the discourse, is here deposed not only by (the very suggestive figure of) a monkey, but by an order - signified by Orville - which is seen to defer its protection until the inappropriate Lovellian significations are punished. In terms of Lovel's surrogative relationship to Duval, such punitive action registers primarily against female objects (subjects in female clothing, and therefore, female 'subjects') who aspire to subjectivity. This is further inscribed by the manner in which the hero restores order; that is,

³⁷ Orville, of course, had previously chastened Lovel for his "impertinent" reminders to Evelina of her faux-pas at the dance. See I, xxii, pp. 101-102. Moreover, there are interesting correspondences between Orville and Selwyn. Ageist aspersions are cast on Orville as well as Selwyn. See III, i, p. 275, and III, iii, p. 288.

³⁸ III, xxi, p. 401.

by violently "shutting out" the monkey,³⁹ which is after all a feminized object (although it is also a conflation of both genders). Similarly, Selwyn's "satires" check the Romance (and other) excess which heretofore marked the text. Selwyn's inscriptive range, however, is much wider and more complex than Orville's. Like Duval, Selwyn is "a lady of large fortune" whose "understanding, indeed, may be called masculine; but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet."⁴⁰ Although she continues Duval's brokerage function, her dual gender inscription is not savaged by the discourse, as was Duval's. Since Selwyn negotiates the inheritance code inaugurated by both (madam) Duval and (lady) Howard, she is, in a sense, the link between their economic inscriptions. Her figure therefore enters the enigma when the economic inscriptions underlying the Romance have been established and the text of the heroine resonates with the recognition of her non-status: "I took my usual place, . . .disregarded, silent, and melancholy, [I] sat like a cypher, whom to nobody

³⁹ The rhetoric of "benevolence" proscribes a reading of Orville's violence, however.

⁴⁰ II, xxx, p. 268.

belonging, by nobody was noticed."⁴¹

In terms of status, the discursive reticence surrounding Selwyn's conflated gender is suggestive. Duval's subjectivity is deposed because she continues to (mis)recognize herself as (a)n (desirable) object of the very economy she has exploited: she is therefore "penetrable to [its] persuasions"⁴² which can - and do - declare her object-value exhausted, and thereby reveal her subjectivity as a mis-predication, subject to the conditions of male desire, which her economic status veils. Duval's susceptibility rendered her unable to successfully administer the exchange of her granddaughter('s body), or foresee Dubois' proposal.⁴³

⁴¹ III, xiv, p. 340; see also III, iii, p. 294: ". . . it is not very comfortable to be neglected by everybody [except Orville] . . . But I knew not, till now, how requisite are birth and fortune to the attainment of respect and civility" and, III, iii, p. 289: "Since I, as Mr. Lovel says, am Nobody, I seated myself quietly on a window, . . . [all] severally passed me without notice, . . . I feel extremely uncomfortable in finding myself considered in a light very inferior to the rest of the company."

⁴² Evelina complains that Duval is "impenetrable to ~~persuasion~~," "never to be dissuaded from a scheme she has once formed" just before Duval discovers Dubois courting Evelina. This significant discovery, of course, "dissuades" Duval from overseeing Evelina's 'rational happiness'. II, xxiii, pp. 244-245 passim.

⁴³ The text frequently registers Duval's "susceptibility". See II, ii, p. 141; II, vi, p. 161; and II, xxi, p. 236.

Selwyn, on the other hand, has recognized her own object-value as exhausted and is able to both negotiate the exchange of other female objects, and objectify the discourse which veils that exchange. Her satirical objectification of the Romance discourse itself as well as of the heroine('s body) is the manner in which she maintains a phallic subjectivity and also exhibits her (self-)freedom from its economic order.

Unlike the abuse levelled at Duval and reminiscent of the tolerance extended to Mirvan, Mrs. Selwyn is treated with a grudging and often fearful respect.⁴⁴ In some sense, the presence of (her) satire indicates that the discourse has absorbed the (Mirvanian) cynicism which formerly disordered it, and re-presents it as an

⁴⁴ Villars' "reluctance" to delegate the heroine's future to Mrs. Selwyn is subverted by the meaningful acknowledgment of her effectiveness, a preference veiled by its disposition in a secondary clause. Delicacy is therefore inscribed as secondary to Selwynian (rational) efficiency (and/or, a closure nervously inscribed as overdue in an overly-suggestive, protractive enigma?) "It is true, that Mrs. Mirvan would conduct this affair with more delicacy than Mrs. Selwyn; yet, perhaps, to save time is, of all considerations, the most important, since the longer this mystery is suffered to continue, the more difficult may be rendered its explanation [my emphasis]." III, xii, p. 337. Villars' nominated 'aversion' to Selwyn is paralleled by John Belmont's avoidance of her (significantly, after she has negotiated the exchange of his 'daughters'), for his "particular request" is that Selwyn not accompany Evelina to her second interview with him. Similarly, Merton and Coverley balk from confrontations with Selwyn since her satires inevitably best them.

asset necessary to the fulfillment of rational closure (as well as to the series of inscriptions which "educate" the heroine). Her mixed gender is very much an asset, since Selwyn's female denomination is used to dilute the authority of her satire and the discourse is thereby able to retain its primary projections as romantic, while at the same time her male inscription (which is only mildly disparaged) is used to carry out the requisite economics with rational (male) efficiency.

In another sense, Selwyn materializes as the male gaze refracted through the (used) body of a female object, which, in turn, reads Romance displacements as the condition of both the female absence and the male gaze. As a female whose object-status is absented, and also, authoritatively signifies as male (or, for the male), Selwyn is, in a sense, the "absent presence" of the female signifier, rendered readable precisely because of her conflated gender and the reticence with which the discourse treats that conflation.⁴⁵ The old women's race is suggestive in terms of Selwyn as the presence of the absent signifier, since the use of female objects determines who is the better "phaeton-driver" (the Letter man).

⁴⁵ Contrast Maria's recessed authority, discussed earlier on p. 73, and the subdued power of the maternal space both that of Caroline and the Marchioness in Udolpho, Chapter Two.

Since Selwyn remains impervious to textual abuse, the discourse sublimates its antipathy towards her (fulsome inscriptions) through the old women's race. Age, amplified in the rhetoric of this sequence,⁴⁶ is expelled in such a dense, misogynist texture that it is difficult to identify it as the condition which has both exposed Duval's subjectivity as a fraud and freed Selwyn to assume her (exploitative) subjectivity. Notably, Selwyn is unusually silent during this race.⁴⁷

When the signal was given for them to set off, the poor creatures, feeble and frightened, ran against each other, and, neither of them able to support the shock, they both fell on the ground.

Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley flew to their assistance. Seats were brought for them and they each drank a glass of wine. . . . Again, therefore, they set off, and hobbled along. . . . frequently, . . . they stumbled and tottered. . . . a foot of one of the poor women slint, and with great force, she came again to the ground. Involuntarily, I sprung forward to assist her,

⁴⁶ Much of the repudiation directed at Duval was ageist, although it was dispersed in negligible quantities compared to its density in this volume. "More likely," answered the Captain, "[hats] were invented by some wrinkled old hag, who'd a mind for to keep the young fellows in chace, let them be never so weary." I, xvii, p. 59. "Why how's this, Madam? What, has your champion deserted you? Why I thought you. . . old gentlewomen had it all your own way, among them French sparks?" I, xxv, p. 119. "We shall have rare sport," said the Captain, 'for do you know the old French-woman is among us? . . . II, ii, p. 136.

⁴⁷ The morning of the race, Selwyn says, "she never laid a wager against her own wishes," (against herself?)

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but Lord Merton, to whom she did not belong, stopped me, calling out 'No foul play! no foul play!'

Mr. Coverley, then, repeating the same words, went himself to help her . . . but the poor creature was too much hurt to move, and declared her utter inability to make another attempt. Mr. Coverley was quite brutal; he swore at her with unmanly rage, and seemed scarce able to refrain even from striking her. [my emphases] ⁴⁸

Among its multiple resonances,⁴⁹ this passage corresponds to the exhibitions of (Mirvanian) misogyny which were directed at Duval, although here the anonymity of the aged objects adduces a subtlety that escaped the earlier representation. On the other hand, the namelessness of the racers enhances the "I am nobody" refrain which marks the text of the heroine toward closure.

That refrain reverberates with meaning when Miss Belmont (a.k.a. Miss Green) enters the text (although her presence has been indicated throughout the enigma). Denominated as the heroine's double,⁵⁰ Miss Green is neither heroinized nor represented except from a(n anonymous) distance.

⁴⁸ III, vii, pp. 311-312.

⁴⁹ See p. 77, n. 23 for another, but related reading of this passage.

⁵⁰ Although Miss Green is coercively nominated as the double, other doubles are inscribed, their covalence to the heroine discursively veiled, such as Maria, the younger Miss Branghton, Mr. Macartney, and Caroline, the heroine's mother and predecessor.

[Dame Green] protested she had no ill designs, but that, as Miss would be never the worse for it, she thought it pity nobody should be the better.

While [Mr. Macartnev] was speaking, the young Lady I saw yesterday at the assembly, with a large party, entered the pump-room. . . .

[Lord Orville] danced with a young Lady who seemed to engage the general attention, as she had not been seen here before. She is pretty, and looks mild and good-humoured.⁵¹

"Brought up in as much retirement" as the heroine, Miss Green was raised in a French convent. Like the heroine, she is a romantic object whom marriage shuttles off to "a country seat".⁵² While the condition of (self-)loss appears virtually to squat on Miss Green; her figure absorbs the loss which is common to exchange-objects, a condition which must remain veiled in (the text of) the heroine.

It is through Macartney, however, that a convoluted symmetry materializes between the Green enigma and the Carolingian, both in their coercive nominations and their inscriptions. Equivalences (~) between the two enigmas are multiple and incestuous, presenting a difficulty in transcription that I hope is overcome in the schematic below. Note that the dissolution of the "two" enigmas

⁵¹ III, xvii, p. 375; ix, p. 318; viii, p. 316.
See also III, xix, p. 382.

⁵² III, xvii, p. 375; xvi, p. 366; xviii, p. 377.

into and by the ideological closure also obscures the "differences" between them.

As the heroine's half-brother, Macartney is at once a "male heroine" and a male subject - his inscriptions of (self-)loss here subsumed by a subjectivity he (re)gains through Belmont (as both his father and father-in-law).⁵³

The matrilineal legacy which is re-accessed - since the (non-)status of the double is incurred through a discovery of the mother's "fraud" - is also seen to merge with the ideological material. That is, this maternal legacy is accommodated by the ideological discourse which obliterates its Carolingian correspondences by revising its fatal closure to read as marriage. The Carolingian "death" is thus rewritten as marriage; that is, marriage to an

⁵³ The pederastic nature of the male economy materializes forcefully here.

element who (se subjectivity) inscribes self-loss, an element related to the heroine, who herself is about to be married. But this assimilation, through Macartney, of the Green enigma (and its Carolingian correlative) also exposes the duplicitous operations of the Romance discourse, since the fraudulent machinations of Dame Green are the same as those of its custodial agents - Duval, Howard, and Selwyn. This is further implied by the complex negotiations effected through Selwyn, 'rationally' endorsed by Orville, which constitute, in essence, a fraud.

' . . . after a very long conversation,' continued Mrs. Selwyn, 'we agreed, that the most eligible scheme for all parties, would be to have both the real and the fictitious daughter married without delay. Therefore, if either of you have any inclination to pull caps for the title of Miss Belmont, you must do it with all speed, as next week will take from both of you all pretensions to it.'

' . . . as I found out consultation likely to redound to [Orville's] advantage, I persuaded Sir John to send for him. . . . Everything was then discussed in a rational manner. You are to be married privately, tho' not secretly, and then go to one of his Lordship's country seats: and poor little Miss Green and your brother, who have no house of their own, must go to one of Sir John's.'

'I, who know the world, can see that half this prodigious delicacy for the little usurper, is the mere result of self-interest; for while her affairs are husht up, Sir John's, you know, are kept from being brought further to light. Now the double marriage we have projected, obviates all rational objections. Sir John will give you, immediately, £30,000; all settlements, and so

forth; will be made for you in the name of Evelina Belmont; - Mr. Macartney will, at the same time, take poor Polly Green, - and yet, at first, it will only be generally known, that a daughter of Sir John Belmont's is married.⁵⁴

As Selwyn remarks, this kind of duplicity serves male self-interest, even Macartney, "who, all-dismal as he is, you will find by no means wanting in pride and self-consequence."⁵⁵ In some sense, Macartney's accession to a phallic subjectivity is a key reversal. On the one hand, it detours around the Carolingian closure, in which Belmont abandoned Caroline because of economic "disappointment," and on the other, it definitively reinscribes all Romance subjects as male and all its objects as female, since it wipes out his female inscriptions. (Accordingly, the rhetoric of 'Gothic' excess falls away from his figure.) In effect, gender is reasserted at closure as the condition of predication in the marital economy and its discourse.

The accelerated economic exchange of the two objects and their transposition is a revealing exposé of how the identity of the object is ideologically constructed, a telling script which will disappear from modern Romance texts. Within one week, the heroine is laden with two

⁵⁴ III, xviii, pp. 377-378.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 378.

names, as is her double, and three fortunes, one at the expense of her double. Ideological identifications (economic fetish material), therefore, distinguish the heroine from her very suggestive double, since Miss Green is read as suffering a (slight) loss in title and status; in this way, any divergence from appropriate (ly duplicitous) codes is inscribed as damaging and subject to censure. But in effect, the race is called, and "nobody" wins.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Material 'Other' in Northanger Abbey

Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard?

Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body. Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried.

Northanger Abbey¹

In The Madwoman in the Attic, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar give a very suggestive reading of Northanger Abbey. They define "the authentic ancestral curse" as "financial dependency," and unweave "the series of monstrous fictions which deprive [a picaresque heroine] of primacy."² Thus, they conclude, closure is

in true heroine style, . . . rescued for felicity by an ending no less aggressively engineered than that of most sentimental

¹ Jane Austen. Northanger Abbey. ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), ch. 5, p. 58. Originally published in 1818.

² Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 135, 129, (hereafter, Gilbert).

novels. . . .In other words, [Catherine] succeeds in doing what Isabella is so mercilessly punished for wanting to do, making a good match.³

To a great extent, Madwoman broke new ground by reading the Gothic interpolation as one of the "fictions" Northanger Abbey exposes as dangerously misleading for a gender who, rather, must be domesticated to her economic-object status. Moreover, its reading makes a distinction between the economic inscriptions harboured in Gothic discourse and the "burlesque Gothic" set up through Henry, which ultimately "confines Catherine in prose".⁴

As exciting and enlightening as this reading is, however, its implicit assumptions follow the traditional literary-critical line: that there is a primary Romance enigma of which Catherine is the heroine (the privileged female element), with a didactic agenda that recommends marriage as an economic imperative. In this sense, Madwoman has recuperated Northanger Abbey for the literary-critical apparatus by remaining within the parameters of a Romance project, around which all other textual elements and discursive interpolations orbit, underscoring the economic agenda. Traditionally, the

³ Ibid., p. 132.

⁴ Ibid., p. 139.

Gothic elements have been viewed as an obtrusion on an ordinary, Romance enigma; a structural flaw which mars the "coherence" of the text.⁵ Moreover, the collation of an exhaustive "biotext."⁶ has (re-)produced Austen as the primary signifier of her work, and is in turn, used to authorize such critical "interpretations". As a critical product, then, the didactic agenda of the authorial signifier determines not only the project of the text, but also its problematics. Yet, while Madwoman relies substantially on this critical product,

⁵ In her Introduction to the 1972 Penguin edition, Anne Ehrenpreis notes: "Most critics agree that the Gothic burlesque : . . is not well blended with the rest of the story. The structural relationship between the Bath episodes and the Northanger experience is not comfortable, . . . [t]his may be because in the course of revising Jane Austen added the Gothic passages to a plot . . . originally concerned with a young lady's entrance into the world," p. 13. Similarly, Gilbert and Gubar mention the critical malaise surrounding the Gothic interpolation: " . . . many critics are uncomfortable with this aspect of the novel, finding that it splits here into two parts," Gilbert, p. 139.

⁶ I introduce this term to cover what Fredric Jameson calls "the ideological function" of biography: " . . . It should be observed that, where the older biographical criticism understood the author's life as a context, or as a cause as that which could explain the text, the newer kind understands that 'life,' or rather its reconstruction, precisely as one further text in its turn, a text on the level with the other literary texts of the writer in question and susceptible of forming a larger corpus of study with them." "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and the Problem of the Subject," in Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading: Otherwise, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 340, n. 4.

the significant difference of its reading suggests a way of (re-)reading Northanger Abbey that is a radical elaboration and extension of the theoretical implications inscribed in this important work. Its re-reading of the authorial signifier, for example, ultimately relaxes the boundaries between author, reader, and character,⁷ and thereby produces a model which can be applied to the inter-discursivity of Northanger Abbey.

Northanger Abbey can therefore be read as a polylogue, a text which retains (at least) three recognizable discourses: the Gothic, the Romance, and one, read as the authorial, for the moment designated as "recuperative," which is diffused inhospitably about the other two. The de-privileging of the Romance enigma allows for a free play of the topographies which exfoliate in and about the dense textual trajectory of Northanger Abbey. In this way, Isabella, for example, may be read - not as a pilloried object of the recuperative discourse, nor an overeager subscriber to economic security - but as an element

⁷ "With a heavy reliance on characters who are readers, all of Austen's early parodies point us, then, to the important subject of female imagination. . . . it is in Northanger Abbey that this novelist most forcefully indicates her consciousness of . . . her definition of herself as female and therefore secondary. Just as Catherine Morland remains a reader, Austen presents herself as a 'mere' interpreter and critic of prior fictions, and thereby . . . demonstrates her willingness to inhabit a house of fiction not of her own making", Gilbert, p. 145.

responding to something signified by Frederick Tilney. As she "admits" his attentions, she sinks into a self-absorption that cannot be accommodated by language.

Isabella seemed an altered creatureA something of languid indifference, or of that boasted absence of mind . . . would occasionally come across her; but had nothing worse appeared, -- that might have spread a new grace and inspired a warmer interest.⁸

Isabella is surrounded by a rhetoric of indeterminacy, not "shut up in prose," but rather, "shut out" of a practice unable to assign meaning to her alterité, get a verbal fix on it. Desire seems to breathe through her presence, a suffusive, interior state which is externalized as passivity - a "languor": it can only be implied in the language of "self-absence", and is read as something involuntary - a state that "comes across her" - rather than a suggestive self-fulfillment.

⁸ Ch. 19, p. 157. Isabella remains 'incorrigible,' as her letter (ch. 27, pp. 216-217) shows. Compare Catherine's "change" near closure. Somewhat educated - ("she would not be surprized if even in Henry and Eleanor Tilney, some slight imperfection might hereafter appear") - Catherine exhibits symptoms of a nervous disorder, at once expelling anxiety and desire - an "anxious desire". "She could neither sit still, nor employ herself for ten minutes together, walking round the garden and orchard again and again, as if nothing but motion was voluntary; and it seemed as if she could even walk about the house rather than remain fixed for any time in the parlour. Her loss of spirits was a yet greater alteration. In her rambling and her idleness she might only be a caricature of herself; but in her silence and sadness she was the very reverse of all that she had been before." Ch. 30, p. 237.

In this reading, Isabella materializes as a seme of desire, a(n other) heroine, enacting and responding to a condition proscribed by the Romantic parameters in which she is placed and in which she is traditionally read. Somewhat like Madame Duval in Evelina, Isabella is enmeshed in a mis-predication: an element attempting to (self-)predicate in an uncongenial discourse. Like Duval, Isabella is an errant element; she fails to grasp that the economic security contracted through marriage is contingent upon the other's recognition of her ~~object~~-status, a condition into which she must be educated and for which the Romance discourse and its texts exist. But Isabella is not a reader, her lack of fluency betrayed by the long list of Gothics she has not read,⁹ as well as such cautionary Romances as Sir Charles Grandison.

' . . . my dearest Catherine . . . [h]ave you gone on with Udolpho?'
 'Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil.'
 'Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are you not wild to know?'
 'Oh! yes, quite; what can it be? . . . I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina's [sic] skeleton . . . I should like to spend

⁹ See ch. 6, p. 61. It is not clear that Isabella has actually finished The Mysteries of Udolpho. Her coyness in answering Catherine's "excessive" interest is typical of her language, yet may also suggest that she herself does not know what is behind "the black veil".

my whole life in reading it.'

'...and when you have finished Udolpho, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.'

'...but are you sure they are all horrid?'
'Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews...has read every one of them...She is netting herself the sweetest cloak you can conceive.'

[But] I must confess there is something amazingly insinid about [Miss Andrews].¹⁰

As the intermediary between Isabella and Gothic discourse, the "lifeless" Miss Andrews, significantly netting herself a "cloak", is clearly unable to pass on the educative inscriptions underlying those texts to Isabella.¹¹

Thus, while the Gothic is read as couriered into Northanger Abbey through Isabella, she is an element profoundly alienated from its self-enfranchising possibilities: a displaced (Gothic) other, coercively disposed (and disposed to predicate) in the inappropriate Romance. Nominatively speaking, Isabella is "shut up" in the wrong discourse; if she is "punished", she is punished for mis-predication. Displaced in this way, Isabella's language is nevertheless marked by the

¹⁰ Ch. 6, pp. 60-61.

¹¹ Similarly and parallel to the incommunicado status between Eleanor and Isabella, Isabella and Catherine, Catherine and Eleanor, or Emily and her doubles in Udolpho, and Evelina and Miss Green in Evelina.

rhetoric of excess so characteristic of the Gothic.¹² Significantly, while Isabella's enigma is suspended from the text, the discursive trajectory pursues and resonates with Gothic inscriptions of which Catherine is the interpellated heroine.¹³ In this sense, that which the text evades in its Gothic interpolations may be read in the extra-textual space where Isabella's enigma is suspended. Catherine and Isabella may thereby be read as covalent signifiers of a textual trajectory in which female desire is alternately suspended and inscribed, but always and nonetheless displaced. Moreover, this gothicism is insinuated by degrees, in fragments, implicating both Isabella and Catherine, their nominations and (displaced) inscriptions, in a suggestive overlap.

¹² Excessive language also marks the Romance (remember Lady Louisa in *Evelina*: "I have been dying with the head-ach ever since I got up," III, iii, p. 286). In the Romance, however, it is read as a symptom of the departure from sensible, rational morals and manners. In the Gothic, it is affective, part of what makes a Gothic text "gothic". In any case, Isabella's nomination as Romantic coerces a reading of her language as "romantic".

¹³ Traditionally, Chapters 21-24 are considered the "Gothic chapters". But Gothic material is insinuated gradually, and may be read as beginning with Catherine's reading of *Udolpho* (ch.6); the mention of Mrs. Tilney's death (ch.9); the description of General Tilney as "a man of commanding aspect" (ch. 10); the abortive visit to Blaize Castle (ch. 11); and, the proposed visit to Northanger Abbey (ch. 17). These gothicist notes occur while the Romance enigma is privileged.

The carriage ride destined for Blaize Castle, for example, full of Catherine's "anxious" anticipation,¹⁴ is instigated by Isabella, and read as part of the Romance enigma. Its postponement, just miles away from the Castle environs, suggests, on the one hand, the impossibility of broaching a topography of (female) desire through Romance nominations, and on the other, the (very material) limits (i.e., the horses are tired, it grows dark) of a discourse, which, as I have suggested in Evelina, disables its own suggestive agenda by curtailing the (further) reading of possibilities.

This overlap is also a site of exchange in which set subjective and discursive nominations are confounded, thereby encouraging a reading of inscribed covalences as (other) meaning. In the following passage, subjective shifts not only evoke other meaning, but propose other meaning as central to understanding: in effect, without it, the passage is incomprehensible - "non-sense".

When I [Henry] think of his past declarations, I give him up. - Moreover, I have too good an opinion of Miss Thorpe's prudence to suppose that she would part with one gentleman before the other was secured. It is all over with Frederick indeed! He is a deceased man - defunct in understanding. Prepare for your sister-in-law, Eleanor, and such a sister-in-law as you must delight in! - Open, candid, artless, guileless,

¹⁴ See ch. 11, p. 104.

with affections strong but simple, forming
no pretensions,¹⁵ and knowing no disguise.

The subject here alternates between Isabella and Catherine, Henry and Frederick; and these shifts are readable - in effect, essential - because each subject-element has already been identified with specific codes. Thus, discursive and other meaning are produced in and cohabit the same space. Although "sister-in-law" appears to nominate Isabella, for example, it identifies Catherine who is recognizably "open, candid" Similarly, Frederick is read as the victim of Isabellian designs,¹⁶ a coercion which veils her object-status as well as a reading of female desire as praxis. Significantly, the subjective shift from Frederick to Henry is not readable until closure when Henry's ineffectual recuperations of the Romance and Gothic jeopardize Catherine, just as Frederick is now endangering Isabella. But the shift is implied in the inscribed transference between Catherine and Isabella. Moreover, since Catherine's inscription as a desired (in-law) object (otherwise a potential desirer) is embossed with Isabella's name (an active

¹⁵ Ch. 25, p. 207.

¹⁶ This coercion is sustained through to Catherine's reception of a letter from Isabella, upon which she informs Henry and Eleanor of "their brother's safety, congratulating them with sincerity on it, . . ." Ch. 27, p. 217.

desirer), Isabella thereby materializes also as an object (of Frederick's).

Moreover, the "prudence" Henry ascribes to Isabella mitigates her coding and misses her enigma (i.e., of female desire) altogether.¹⁷ On the one hand, the Isabellian Romance is exposed as an imposture, since her 'delinquency' belies the rational prudence so necessary to the informed Romance heroine-object; and on the other, the ascription upholds that imposture, since Henry's authority has so far appeared unimpeachable. But this passage is part of a sequence in which Henry's authority is first seen to break down. In this sense, the "he" which nominates Frederick as a "deceased man - defunct in understanding" inscribes Henry, who is also the speaker, the "I" of the passage. Importantly, Henry is the textual operant of the authorial-recuperative discourse. Henry's fluency in the "female" discourses, the Romance and the Gothic, his conversance with female dress, and to some extent,

¹⁷ Note that Henry's reading of Isabella is expressed in the language of speculation, as it is when he "dispels" Catherine's anxieties about Frederick and Isabella while they are in Bath (ch. 19), and later, when he closes her attempt at Gothic traversal (ch. 25). In effect, Henry has as much to learn as Catherine for his shallow, uninformed readings of character-elements and discursive meaning expose the phallic reading as fundamentally mendacious.

his finical grammar¹⁸ act and are coded as corrective material, instituting discursive recuperations which patronize the other discursive elements and their operations. A re-reading of the sequence in which this patronizing is seen to falter is suggestive on many fronts. Notably, the Isabellian enigma is the site of this exposure, and it is Catherine who begins to cover - ("How quick you are!") - his erroneous patronizing, even as she signifies his error:

. . . Henry began to suspect the truth, and something, in which Miss Thorpe's name was included, passed his lips. 'How quick you are!' cried Catherine: 'you have guessed it. I declare! - And yet, when we talked about it in Bath, you little thought of its ending so.' (my emphasis).¹⁹

What is accessed through this exposure of (Henry's) recuperations is doubt, an indeterminacy which debilitates the recuperative force of what is read as the privileged discourse. In this sense, the recuperative discourse bifurcates into two programs: one whose operations appropriate the interpellated heroine to Romance ideology

¹⁸ See ch. 3, pp. 47-51 for Henry's seeming expertise in Romantic manners, including journal-writing and feminine attire; ch. 14, pp. 121-123, and ch. 20, pp. 165-166 for his Gothic expertise. His grammatical "corrections", interestingly, occur when the Gothic is in some way prevalent: ch. 14, p. 122 and ch. 24, p. 198.

¹⁹ Ch. 25, p. 205.

and (therefore) coercive (self-)readings; and one which is self-interrogative, posing doubt and indeterminacy against all such discursive appropriations. This dual program alternates between Catherine and Henry, exhibited through each in different proportions, at different times, throughout the text. (It is, however, consistently more readable in Catherine). Catherine, who initially found Henry's Romance satires "strange", begins, in this sequence, to interpret them, and that "interpretation" is increasingly ideological.

'I am afraid she will be very constant, unless a baronet should come in her way; that is Frederick's only chance. - I will get the Bath paper, and look over the arrivals.'
'You think it is all for ambition? - And, upon my word, there are some things that seem very like it.' ²⁰

Up to this point, meaning for Catherine (as for Evelina) has been literal; she could not "reconcile two such different accounts of the same thing."²¹

²⁰ Ch. 25, p. 207. Catherine becomes adept at picking up Henry's "ironic" meaning: " . . . your mind is warped by an innate principle of general integrity, and therefore not accessible to the cool reasonings of family partiality, or a desire of revenge. Catherine was complimented out of further bitterness. . . ." ch: 27, p. 218.

²¹ Ch. 9, p. 85. Compare with Evelina, for whom "words" are used "without any distinction of persons, or study of propriety," Evelina, I, xi, p. 29. Catherine, however, is still subject to doubt, which, I have suggested, is exchanged between herself and Henry. Yet her faith

It is Henry, who, up to this point, had relieved her (Romantic) self-doubt and mentored her into appropriation.

'Well! - Nay, if it is to be guess-work, let us all guess for ourselves. To be guided by second-hand conjecture is pitiful. . . . 'My dear Miss Morland,' [continued] Henry, 'in this amiable solicitude for your brother's comfort, may you not be a little mistaken? . . . Would he thank you . . . for supposing . . . [that] her heart [is] constant to him only when unsolicited by any one else? - He cannot think this -
 . . . you may be certain that one will never tease the other beyond what is known to be pleasant. . . . ' Catherine could contend no longer against comfort. . . . Henry Tilney must know best.²²

Proven wrong by the dissolution of James's and Isabella's engagement, Henry's language begins to retreat into a much more readable indeterminacy:

'You [Catherine] feel, as you always do, what is most to the credit of human nature. - Such feelings ought to be investigated that they may know themselves.' ²³

in his "recuperative" activity remains undisturbed, as when his father's meaning causes her some perplexity: "it being at any time a much simpler operation to Catherine to doubt her own judgment than Henry's, she [gave] him credit for being right, . . . How were people, at that rate, to be understood? Who but Henry could have been aware of what his father was at?" Ch. 26, p. 212.

²² Ch. 19, pp. 159-160.

²³ Ch. 25, p. 208.

Since this program of doubt coincides with the mis-reading of Isabella's enigma - female desire as self-predication - as well as her displacement in the Romance, it is the recuperative discourse which inscribes absent desire as a problematic. Read as the privileged discourse - that is, one which patronizes the others - this problematic is therefore dispersed among the Gothic, the Romance and their elements. Re-reading the passage in which meaning is available through subjective shifts, then, meaning and subjectivity are seen to materialize in extra-discursive spaces, floating, deferred, in a space of loss.

When I think of his past declarations, I give him up. - Moreover, I have too good an opinion of Miss Thorpe's prudence to suppose that she would part with one gentleman before the other was secured. It is all over with Frederick indeed! He is a deceased man - defunct in understanding. Prepare for your sister-in-law, Eleanor, and such a sister-in-law as you must delight in! - Open, candid, artless, guileless, with affections strong but simple, forming no pretensions, and knowing no disguise.²⁴

Thus, the speaking subject, that is, the subject created in and of discourse, is a "deceased man of defunct understanding," a reading advanced by and contained within the authorial-recuperative discourse itself. The problematic of the absent subject, the subject in deferral,

²⁴ Ch. 25, p. 207.

inscribed in what is privileged as a recuperative discourse, interrogates the way in which discursivity produces meaning and how that activity is divorced from the subject.²⁵

In some sense, it is the self-interrogative possibilities of discourse, and other extra-discursive meaning that are endorsed throughout Northanger Abbey. Both Catherine and Eleanor, for example, are the interlocutors of the above passage; and while Catherine responds to its single, nominated meaning, Eleanor recovers the subjective shifts and their meaning:

'Such a sister-in-law, Henry, I should delight in,' said Eleanor, with a smile. 'But perhaps,' observed Catherine, 'though she has behaved so ill by our family, she may behave better by your's. Now she has really got the man she likes, she may be constant.'²⁶

Eleanor's response not only retrieves the other meaning, but also situates and expands the meaning of the passage to accommodate the con-text which produced it(s multiplicity). Eleanor thus materializes as the exponent of possible meanings that everywhere compete with discourse, which, through its self-doubt, shows signs of stress. Eleanor

²⁵ This reading approaches the problem of the subject as gender-indifferent, whereby the (phallic) subject materializes as a victim of his own symbolic. Certainly the discursive density of Northanger Abbey calls attention to the mastery of language.

²⁶ Ch. 25, p. 207.

is an elision; though she is present throughout the text in all its discursive forays, she is read as a minor character. Yet it is Eleanor, who all along carries another kind of recuperative energy which eludes the density of the text, is prohibited in discourse, and to whom Catherine and every other element is prevented from responding.²⁷ Significantly, like Evelina and Miss Green in Evelina (or Emily and her doubles in Udolpho), Isabella and Eleanor never meet,²⁸ and the Isabellian Romance intercepts and defers Catherine's encounters with Eleanor,²⁹ just as Isabella's manic mis-predication

²⁷ In one instance, however, that energy perforates prohibitive discourse and Eleanor "recuperates" Henry's "odd ways" for Catherine. See ch. 14, pp. 122-123: "Come, Miss Morland, let us leave him to meditate over our faults in the utmost propriety of diction, while we praise Udolpho in whatever terms we like best." Still, her 'other' recuperation is veiled by the badinage which marks this sequence.

²⁸ The anonymous force of distance is effective in both Evelina and this text, as when Catherine points out Eleanor('s figure) to Isabella at a distance. Ch.8, p. 77.

²⁹ These interceptions begin in Chapter Nine: "The first wish of [Catherine's] heart was to improve her acquaintance with Miss Tilney, and almost her first resolution, [was] to seek her . . . in the Pump-Room at noon." The Thorpes arrive unexpectedly, and Catherine reluctantly defers her visit with Eleanor (ch. 9, pp. 80, 81 passim). In Chapter Eleven, Catherine reneges on a commitment to meet Eleanor because the Thorpes promise to show her Blaize Castle, and John Thorpe lies about having seen the Tilneys elsewhere (ch. 11, pp. 99-106). In the third instance, John Thorpe lies to the Tilneys and Catherine must scuffle - "Let me go, Mr. Thorpe; Isabella, do not hold me," - and run after the Tilneys to explain (ch. 13, pp. 115-120). This is reminiscent of the terrorism

interrupts and diverts Catherine from the "pleasure" of reading Udolpho:

[Catherine] was on the point of reverting to what interested her at that time rather more than any thing else in the world, Laurentina's [sic] skeleton; when her friend prevented her by saying, - 'For Heaven's sake! let us move away from this end of the room. Do you know, there are two odious young men who have been staring at me this half hour.' 30

In this regard, the Isabellian Romance materializes as an operation which acts to subvert the possibility of other (self-)readings, which could come about through a "reconciliation" between the interpellated heroine and Eleanor. In other words, Eleanor is the presence, outside discourse, of other knowledge, fraught with possibility, whereby, if their encounters were not proscribed, Catherine could be "otherwise reconciled". But Eleanor's presence is besieged by evasive operations. In fact, she rarely speaks, and whether or not she does speak, her significations are discursively monitored

directed at Evelina('s body) when she is lost at Vauxhall Gardens. Here, however, the terror is more explicitly linguistic, since Catherine's "excessive" reaction is caused by a lie that has been told about her (desire). Still, just as Evelina calls to Willoughby for help, Catherine enjoins Mr. Allen's authoritative "support" (see Ch. 13, p. 119).

³⁰ Ch. 6, p. 63; see also ch. 7, pp. 71-72.

or mediated through Henry or General Tilney:³¹

'Perhaps,' said Miss Tilney in an embarrassed manner, 'you would be so good - it would make me very happy if - .'. The entrance of her father put a stop to this civility, . . . 'Well, Eleanor, may I congratulate you on being successful in your application to your fair friend? . . . 'Well, proceed by all means. I know how much your heart is in it. My daughter, Miss Morland,' he continued, without leaving his daughter time to speak, . . . ' 32

Henry is continually interposed between Catherine and Eleanor. Note the contingent "perhaps", which is always discursively affirmed as positive, underscoring the male appropriation of discourse:

'I was not within at the time; but [Eleanor] has been wishing ever since to see you, to explain the reason of such incivility; but perhaps I can do it as well. It was nothing more than . . . ' 33

Below, even the nominal gesture of contingency is erased:

He laughed, and added, 'Come, shall I make you understand each other; or leave you to puzzle out an explanation as you can? . . . ' 'Miss Morland, do not mind what he says; - but have the goodness to satisfy me as to this dreadful riot.'

³¹ See ch. 20, p. 168; ch. 21, p. 171; ch. 22, p. 181; ch. 25, p. 206; and ch. 28, p. 219.

³² Ch. 17, p. 148.

³³ Ch. 12, p. 110.

'Riot! - what riot?'

'My dear Eleanor, . . . Miss Morland has been talking of nothing more dreadful than a new publication . . . with a frontispiece of two tombstones and a lantern - do you understand? - And you, Miss Morland - my stupid sister has mistaken all your clearest expressions. . . .'

Catherine looked grave. 'And now, Henry,' said Miss Tilney, 'that you have made us understand each other you may as well make Miss Morland understand yourself. . . .'

'I shall be most happy to make her better acquainted with [my odd ways].'

'No doubt; - but that is no explanation of the present.'

'We shall get nothing more serious from him now, Miss Morland.' 34

In effect, Catherine is disabled from retrieving meaning from Eleanor, and cannot determine (or, articulate) how Eleanor affects her:

[Catherine] was stooped by Miss Tilney's saying, with a little confusion, 'I believe it will be wisest to take the morning while it is so fine; and do not be uneasy on my father's account, he always walks out at this time of day.'

Catherine did not exactly know how this was to be understood. Why was Miss Tilney embarrassed?

[Eleanor] taught me; I cannot tell how. Mrs. Allen used to take pains . . . to make me like [hyacinths] but I never could . . .

'-Has my sister a pleasant mode of instruction?' Catherine was saved the embarrassment of attempting an answer, by the entrance of the General . . . 35

Eleanor's meaning is indeterminate, unless she is (coercively) read (by Catherine) within Romance parameters

34 Ch. 14, pp. 126-127.

35 Ch. 22, pp. 181, 179.

(as the hero's sister) or Gothic parameters (as a Gothic heroine). Just as Henry (erroneously) mentors Catherine's Romantic reading of *Isabella*, he coaches Catherine into a reading of herself as Gothic heroine.³⁶ Nevertheless, Gothic possibilities exist for Catherine, apart from Henry's coaching. In the following passage, it is the enigma of the Abbey that materializes as the topos-object of Catherine's desire. The Abbey claims all her attention despite the discursive coercions which exhaustively circumscribe and undermine its primacy:

Northanger Abbey! - These were thrilling words and wound Catherine's feelings to the highest point of extasy. . . .and with spirits elated to rapture, with Henry at her heart, and Northanger Abbey at her lips, she hurried home to write her letter. Mr. and Mrs. Norland . . .felt no doubt of the propriety of [such] acquaintance . . .

.
Every thing seemed to co-operate for her advantage. By the kindness of her first friends, the Allens, she had been introduced into scenes, where pleasures of every kind had met herThe affection of *Isabella* was to be secured to her in a sister. The Tilneys outstripped even her wishes in the flattering measures by which their intimacy was to be continuedshe was to be for weeks under the same roof with the person whose society she mostly prized - and, in addition to all the rest, this roof was to be the roof of an abbey! - Her passion for ancient edifices was next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney - and castles and abbies made usually the charm of those reveries which his image did not fill. To see and explore either

³⁶ See ch. 20, pp. 164-166.

the ramparts and keep of the one, or the cloisters of the other . . . had seemed too nearly impossible for desire.³⁷

Henry is an element on the fringe of her desire to "inhabit" an abbey, a bonus extra included in the dismissive, "all the rest". Her passion for him must be scaled in a descending degree, since "castles and abbeys" compensate for a "charm" which he lacks, "does not fill". Similarly, "the person whose society she mostly prized" could refer to Henry or to Eleanor. "[A]ll the rest" names, in its preceding summary, all the elements of all the discourses in the text, and syntactically subjects them to the enigma of the Abbey. In this sense, all of discourse and its elements are reduced to a problematic which is signified by the Abbey.

Appropriate(d) as Catherine's (self-)readings are, then, there remains a crawl-space, an opening which indicates the possibility of a Gothic traversal, and this possibility is linked to Eleanor, who is the Abbey's primary inhabitant.³⁸ Significantly, Henry is absent when Catherine begins to interpellate Eleanor as a Gothic heroine. In one sense, Catherine re-presents

³⁷ Ch. 17, pp. 148-150.

³⁸ She is frequently alone in the Abbey. See ch. 20, p. 164 and ch. 22, p. 184.

Henry during his absence, since, as his protégé, she uses "his words" as directives in her own Gothic self-reading. But Catherine's Gothic reading of Eleanor is suggestively free from appropriative operations. Compare the following:

Henry's words, his description of the ebony cabinet which was to escape her observation at first, immediately rushed across her; . . .

. . . it was so very odd, after what Henry had said.

. . . Well read in the art of concealing a treasure, the possibility of false linings to the drawers did not escape her, and she felt round . . . though she had 'never from the first had the smallest idea of finding any thing . . . it would be foolish not to examine it thoroughly while she was about it.'

. . . Till she had made herself mistress of its contents, however, she could have neither repose nor comfort;

. . . Instantaneously with the consciousness of existence, returned her recollection of

'I am particularly fond of this spot,' said

[Eleanor] with a sigh.

'It was my mother's favourite walk.' Catherine . . . waited for something more.

. . . 'I thought it not,' reflected Catherine, 'to endear it to her husband? Yet the General would not enter it.'

. . . Catherine's interest in the deceased Mrs. Tilney augmented with every question; whether answered or not . . . The General certainly had been an unkind husband. He did not love her walk: - could he therefore have loved her? And besides, handsome as he was, there was a something in the turn of his features which spoke of his not having behaved well to her.

. . . Here was another proof. A portrait - very like - of a departed wife, not valued by the husband! - He must have been dreadfully cruel to her!

. . . Something was certainly to be concealed; . . . and what that something was, a short

the manuscript; . . .
 She started at its
 import. . . a washing-
 bill [and] - a farrier's
 bill!

.
 How could she have so
 imposed on herself? -
 Heaven forbid that
 Henry Tilney should
 ever know her folly!
 And it was in great
 measure his own doing,
 for had not the cabinet-
 appeared so exactly
 to agree with his
 description of her
 adventures, she should
 never have felt the
 smallest curiosity
 about it. ³⁹

sentence of Miss Tilney's
 . . . seemed to point out:
 - 'I was going to take you
 into my mother's room - the
 room in which she died -'
 were all her words; but few
 as they were, they conveyed
 pages of intelligence to
 Catherine.

. . . something was to be
 done which could be done
 only while the household
 slept; and the probability
 that Mrs. Tilney yet lived,
 shut up for causes unknown,
 . . . was the conclusion
 which necessarily followed
 . . . when [Catherine] knew
 [the General] to be out
 . . . she directly proposed
 to Miss Tilney the accom-
 plishment of her promise
 [to show her Mrs. Tilney's
 room]. Eleanor was ready
 to oblige her; [but] Cathe-
 rine [reminded] her as they
 went of another promise. . .
 [soon Eleanor's] hand was
 upon the important lock. . .
 when the figure. . . of the
 General . . . stood before
 her [and called Eleanor
 away]

[Catherine] came to a
 resolution of making her
 next attempt on the forbid-
 den door alone

[She could not in Eleanor's]
 presence, search for those
 proofs of the General's
 cruelty. . . ⁴⁰

³⁹ Ch. 21, 22; pp. 173-178 passim.

⁴⁰ Ch. 22, pp. 183-184; ch. 23, pp. 189, 191; ch. 24,
 pp. 194-195.

Catherine's attempt to read herself as a Gothic heroine fails because the rhetorical and phenomenal "props" represent meaning that has already been identified for her by Henry. That is, Henry has already (mis-)read, satirically dismissed, and therefore closed her desire. In other words, gothic-like props substitute for the predicative activity, i.e., internal cognitive and affective states that invest objects and phenomena with (self-)meaning, which, as I have suggested in Udolpho, makes the Gothic a self-predicative exercise. Here, through Henry, meaning is already in a state of rational retention - ("it would be foolish . . .")_{es} - rather than constructing a meaning of its own, a meaning other than rational. "Appropriately" edited by Henry, then, the rhetoric and phenomena "impose" on Catherine.⁴¹

⁴¹ Note that an object, "the cabinet" is used synonymously/cognatively with the phrase, "his description of her adventures," hereby exposing the material (phenomenal?) effect his reading has produced. Catherine, we (have reason to) assume, is not at all "well-read" in the Gothic, but the other gender is nonetheless "well-read in the art of concealing [her?] treasure." Similarly, the "import" of the economic inscriptions escapes her, their meaning significantly deferred until closure when both she and Eleanor become "mistress of [such] contents" through marriage. These meanings are temporally and/or spatially dislocated, but nonetheless (perhaps therefore, especially) "impose".

By contrast,⁴² Catherine's reading of Eleanor as Gothic heroine creates and sustains itself - writes itself out - along the intertext of the deceased (m)other, its rhetoric evolving from the recognition and response to self as horrible or dead (m)other, persisting, despite phenomena and architecture that are found to be disappointingly un-gothic. Significantly, Eleanor is the compressed Gothic site of multiple operations: she is the keeper of the house (Dorothée, in Udolpho); the châtelaine, who, incarcerated and absent herself, is also the daughter of the dead/incarcerated/absent (m)other; also, she is a "heroine" and Catherine's other (or, the heroine-reader's other). Other meaning is constructed out of identifications with the inaccessible other who is also self: the other within. Thus proliferative, the Eleanoran site is also Romantic, her frequent anxiety reminiscent of the "rational" pressures exerted in the Romance:⁴³ inhabiting a "rationally" refurbished cloister; investing a chest (Catherine).

⁴² There is, then, a significant difference in these gothic representations: on the one hand, a spurious gothic, rhetorically adept but inscriptively prohibitive; and on the other, an attempt at Gothic traversal, anxiously predicating in and through self(-absence)/other.

⁴³ The rhetoric of indeterminacy which marks the Eleanoran Gothic is suggestive not only of the Gothic enigma, but of the Isabellian enigma which is (mis-)read as Romantic.

read(s) as gothic with economic fetish-objects -
 "appropriate" female dress, enclosed in wood and
 absent(ed) from sight⁴⁴ - and, finally "married off",
 the subject (object) or an extra-textual Romance
 enigma:

The anxiety, which in this state of their
 attachment must be the portion of Henry and
 Catherine, . . . can hardly extend, I fear,
 to the bosom of my readers, who will see
 in the tell-tale compression of the pages
 before them, that we are all hastening
 together to perfect felicity. . . . what

⁴⁴ This segment (ch. 21, pp. 169-171), which I have so far omitted, is highly suggestive, seeming to combine simulated-gothic and Gothic elements, which I have (perhaps too neatly) separated. This is not a "third" g/Gothic, but a recombinant operation which gives the lie to my assumptions; but, in doing so, also suggests the difficulty of approaching the Gothic "meaning"/other (see my text p.124, n. 46). Catherine's initial gothicist activity involves this chest which she "penetrates" only to find in its innermost "cavity", a "white cotton counterpane"; she herself is then discovered by Eleanor, whose economic recuperations bypass her. While Henry is not evident here, the text paraphrases much of the Gothic predicative operation, i.e., mimics its "anti-logical" rhetoric. It is difficult to determine how closure is instituted since Eleanor enters immediately upon Catherine's "shame-faced" disappointment. In effect, the female element is seen to impose a closure which dismantles its own possibilities even as it expels other possibilities, i.e., of finding something else in the chest. But perhaps closure is not the point. Catherine responds to her excessive activity - her "absurd expectations" - with "reasonable" shame, and Eleanor responds to, and recognizes Catherine's shame by telling of the chest's material purpose; giving a reason for its use-value, its placement and its "difficulty". In this sense, Eleanor imposes rational closure by retrieving economics from the Gothic problematic. In another sense, the Eleanor site, that is, the female site, institutes closure on all Gothic

probable circumstance could work upon a temper like the General's? The circumstance which chiefly availed, was the marriage of his daughter with a man of fortune and consequence, . . .

I know of no one more entitled, by unpretending merit, or better prepared by habitual suffering, to receive and enjoy felicity. Her partiality for this gentleman was not of recent origin; and he had been long withheld only by inferiority of station from addressing her.

Her husband was really deserving of her; independent of his peerage, his wealth, and his attachment, being to a precision the most charming young man in the world. . . .

[T]his was the very gentleman whose negligent servant left behind him that collection of washing-bills, . . . by which my heroine was involved in one of her most alarming adventures.⁴⁵

The Eleanoran site exposes the economic-libidinal order which gives rise to the (re-)writing of the "impossible" Gothic fantasy, and underlies the Romance. Eleanor is the site at which (both) Gothic(s) and Romance convene,⁴⁶

material; a reading which is posed against Henry's apparent closures and which I will continue to track as my text advances.

⁴⁵ Ch. 31, pp. 246-247.

⁴⁶ This graph may be more a hindrance than a help, but like the text, it is both.

merge in her figure and immediately also dissipate, rendering readings of her difficult or simplistic (i.e., a "minor" character). The absent presence is therefore poised in Northanger Abbey as material in excess of language capacity. In one sense, then, her silence is the provocative weight of absence; a self-cognitive abdication, a(n) (ac)quiescence, which, like her white garb,⁴⁷ refracts that which the other is made to signify as well as that which her presence suggests but cannot (be made to) signify. Alternatively, it is read as ballast, its occasional fragments (she occasionally "breaks" her silence) adding texture to, or muddying, a practice which orders itself by way of that silence.

Although Henry appears to close (both) the Gothic(s) -- in the first case, his "words"; in the second, a "speech" on English "order" -- it is the Eleanoran site through which closure is established. In the first, this closure is virtually unreadable until textual closure when the owner of the bills is identified as the "hero" of Eleanor's recessed Romance enigma. The second calls in question the nature of all Gothic material represented in this text. What arrests Catherine's predicative

⁴⁷ Ch. 12, p. 107: "'Miss Tilney always wears white.'"

activity is the absence of a central Gothic space - the maternal chamber.

On tip-toe she entered; the room was before her; but it was some minutes before she could advance another step. She beheld what fixed her to the spot and agitated every feature. - She saw a large, well-proportioned apartment, an handsome dimity bed, arranged as unoccupied with an housemaid's care, a bright Bath stove, mahogany wardrobes and neatly-painted chairs, on which the warm beams of a western sun gaily poured through two sash windows! Catherine had expected to have her feelings worked and worked they were. Astonishment and doubt first seized them; and a shortly succeeding ray of common sense added some bitter emotions of shame. She could not be mistaken as to the room; but how grossly mistaken in every thing else! - in Miss Tilney's meaning, in her own calculation! This apartment, to which she had given a date so ancient, a position so awful, proved to be one end of what the General's father had built.

. . . she was on the point of retreating as softly as she had entered, when the sound of footsteps, she could hardly tell where, made her pause and tremble . . . She had no power to move. With a feeling of terror not very definable, she fixed her eyes on the staircase, and in a few moments it gave Henry to her view.⁴⁸

In other words, the topography of otherness has been wholly obliterated, "rationally" renovated, its remains clinging like an aroma to Eleanor, an unreadable figure, whose meaning here, as in every other instance, is sabotaged. In some sense, the topography of otherness

⁴⁸ Ch. 24, pp. 196-197.

is always in a material/literary state of embargo, but in this text, it is the heroine's discovery of a female space and its psychic entailments that have been taken over by the male order, which inscribes discourse and (its) absence as the only tenable position in language, and the position from which the text is written, i.e., discoursing and therefore necessarily invoking (lamenting) its (own) (absence)s. The textual interpolation of Gothic material, then, becomes the diffuse site of a different interrogation; one which questions the activity of female predication when faced with a discursive, material economy that immediately censures, erases it. In this sense, the Gothic material in Northanger Abbey is both a gesture - moving, in its interrogations, beyond the possibilities the Gothic postulates - and a jest, making a jest of, such impossible movement: *texte noir*. Is this, then, the (under-)privileged agenda of Northanger Abbey: the annihilatory premise of "other" activity?

Eleanor, as both the repositor and interlocutor of unsignifiable meaning, is the unwed bride of discourse. Present in, but absent from discourse, her presence remains uncoded, uncodifiable; in an inassimilable disposition. In this sense, Eleanor at once encompasses

the text and is encompassed by it; a concentrist⁴⁹ element which carries both the polylogue of the text and its polyvalence, the multiplicity it can only suggest. The (Eleanor) other is the Abbey, and not just the Abbey, but its keeper; the condition which underlies its order.⁵⁰ The other is the unacknowledged architect(ure) of (other) meaning.

⁴⁹ I recognize Gallop's reading of the word "concentric" (with some, but not much, academic reticence) as "cuntcentric". Her reading, of course, develops from those of many "others", including Michèle Montrelay: "Unlike 'desire,' unlike Freudian masculine libido, feminine sexuality is not subject to metonymy, mediation, and sublimation. Desire may always be masculine, but not sexuality. If the sexuality of desire (mediated, sublimated) is phallogentric, if desire is eccentric, feminine sexuality (immediate, olfactory) is, according to Montrelay, concentric. Montrelay borrows the term 'concentrique' from Béla Grunberger [who wrote:] 'we said that singleness is the mark of narcissism and, indeed, there is a concentric aspect characteristic of woman's libidinal cathexis: she is always at the center of it, but at the same time the center is the phallus which is also essentially unique. . . .'. For Grunberger 'concentric' is ultimately 'phallogentric' . . . it may be that 'centric' of any sort is always phallic. After all, 'centric' derives from the Greek word kentrein meaning 'to prick'." Gallop, Seduction, pp. 28-29. See all of Chapter Two, "Of Phallic Proportions: Lacanian Conçeit," pp. 15-32. Eleanor, then, is phallo-concentric, living, as Irigaray says, "in the privacy of this silent, multiple, diffuse tact," and also in the (phallic) Abbey.

⁵⁰ Specifically, the patriarchal edifice or, roof. Compare this abbey to Castle Udolpho and Chateau-Le-Blanc, which become workshops of other meaning. By contrast, the Abbey space is overrun by, taken over by, patriarchal re-furbishments.

"Recuperative" closures instituted through the male element leave the heroine "in a state of well-prepared insensibility."⁵¹ But Henry has as much to learn as Catherine, the speculative language of his recuperative function a telling indication (a pre-cognitive index) of (self-)mitigations which also continually return to dismantle his closures. In the following passage, the subjective shift between Henry and Catherine occurs through an exchange of gender; that is, the setting up of a significant exchange in predicative activity. Henry, the speaker, becomes Emily the Gothic heroine, while Catherine, the Gothic interpellant, becomes Valancourt, the "courting"⁵² Gothic hero.

[If we] engage in the never-ceasing inquiry of 'Have you read this?' and 'Have you read that?' I shall soon leave you as far behind me as - what shall I say - I want an appropriate simile; - as far as your friend Emily herself left poor Valancourt when she went with her aunt into Italy. (my emphasis)⁵³

⁵¹ Predicating through the m(other), Catherine reads a "staircase" which "might well have favored the barbarous proceedings of [Mrs. Tilney's] husband. Down that staircase she had perhaps been conveyed in a state of well-prepared insensibility!" Ch. 23, p. 191. This same staircase will later give "Henry to her view". Ch. 24, p. 196. I suggest that this ubiquitous staircase substitutes in part for the absent maternal space, especially since Henry uses it to reach "the stables and the offices".

⁵² See my text p.133, n. 57.

⁵³ Ch. 14, p. 122.

In assuming the postulative activity of the Gothic heroine, Henry is inscribed as female, although, in some sense, the alternation of the program of doubt between Catherine and he already implies this. Conversely, Catherine is inscribed as an appropriate(d) female, her potential otherness substantially debilitated throughout the text, here signified by her equivalence to Valancourt. These significant covalences are, however, enclosed by Henry's boast of a numerical superiority in Gothic (mis-)readings; and it is this statement of primacy which is privileged, thereby veiling the postulative, "other" activity with which Henry is inscriptively identified, and which underlies and stymies even his most forceful recuperations.

His empty meaning is further implied by his place in the significant Abbey: "a dark little room,/. . . strewn with . . . books, guns, and great coats." ⁵⁴ He is relegated to a Gothic - dark, obscure, close - space, surrounded by emblems of male authority. Similarly his finical grammar - "more nice than wise" - suggests that his meaning/understanding is fragmented, incomplete - profoundly "defunct". In The Madwoman in the Attic, the authors declare Henry a misogynist who is also "a specialist in 'young ladies' ways'"

⁵⁴ Ch. 23, p. 187.

(my emphasis).⁵⁵ Thus Henry is more and less than a misogynist, a type for which there is no appropriate word. He is, as Jane Gallop might say, "a prick". Compare her reading of Lacan with all I have so far suggested about Henry, and indeed, about (all) the male element(s) my text has re-viewed.

L'Arc 58, is both the Lacan issue and an issue to which all the contributors are women. . . . What is unusual, in this case, is that the women gave birth to a women's issue which is at the same time the Lacan issue. By what right does Lacan's portrait grace the cover of L'Arc's women's issue?

[The] lecture on 20 February begins with Lacan saying 'For a long time now I have desired to speak to you while strolling a bit among you.' . . . He desires to stroll through the audience in order to shed some light on this silent 'dark continent': to ask the question Freud avoided, 'Was will das Weib?' Lacan derives a phallic enjoyment from his lectures, where everyone adoringly takes down his every word as if it were The Word, the Logos which has a phallic fullness, self-sufficiency. Yet Lacan would talk from the audience, 'with the women,' in an attempt to get at the other enjoyment, that which responds to the phallic.

This satisfaction is refused him. He cannot talk from the audience. He cannot talk and at the same time be in the audience. Yet that is his longstanding desire. He wants to be with the women, but as the ladies' man. He wants to take that stroll as the cock of the walk.

Throughout [his] lectures [of that year] the phallic order and phallic enjoyment are shown to be a kind of failure: a failure to reach the Other, a short-circuiting of desire by which

⁵⁵ Gilbert, pp. 139-140.

it turns back upon itself. The phallic order fails because, although unable to account for the feminine, it would, none the less, operate as a closure, attempting to create a closed universe that is thoroughly phallogentric.

Shoshana Felman in her contribution to L'Arc, 58 . . . distinguishes between Lacan and contemporary French 'deconstructive' philosophy on the grounds that philosophy, . . . remains 'discursive,' whereas Lacan's writing is 'poetic': allusive, contradictory. The ladies' man is an expert at flirtation. Unlike the man's man, philosopher or hunter, who spends his time with serious, frank confrontations, the ladies' man is always embroiled in coquetry . . . [t]he ladies' man is looked at askance by the 'real man' who suspects the flirt of effeminacy.

Lacan is always seductive and elusive. His coy flirtation continually tends to freeze into a rigid system centred upon the phallus as transcendental signifier.

To designate Lacan at his most stimulating and forceful is to call him something more than just phallogentric. He is also phallo-eccentric. Or, in more pointed language, he is a prick. . . . [T]he prick is both resented by and attractive to women. In vulgar (non-philosophical) usage, the 'prick' is both the male sexual organ (the famous penis of penis-envy: attraction-resentment) and an obnoxious person. . . .

Unlike phallogentrism which locates itself in a clear-cut polemic field where opposition conditions a certain good and evil, the prick is 'beyond good and evil,' 'beyond the phallus.' Phallo-centrism and the polemic are masculine, upright matters. The prick, in some crazy way, is feminine.

The prick does not play by the rules; he (she) is a narcissistic tease who persuades by means of attraction and resistance, not by orderly systematic discourse. The prick, which as male organ might be expected to epitomize masculinity, lays bare its desire.

Lacan, inasmuch as he acts gratuitously nasty,

betrays his sexualized relation to his listeners. The phallic role demands impassivity; the brick obviously gets pleasure from his cruelty. The evidence of the pleasure undermines the rigid authority of the paternal position.⁵⁶

Henry's knowledge, like Lacan's, is merely technical, showing, making a show of, an expertise in "ladies' ways," (coy ways, wiles, implying something hidden, covered - a motive, a body, a difference?). This coyness works both ways. When Henry cavalierly⁵⁷ admits

⁵⁶ Gallop, Seduction, pp. 33-38. I have stolen behind Gallop's skirt, authorizing my discourse - not with the Lacanian "Name-of-the-Father" - but with the uncertain word of the Phallic Mother: for me, Gallop, who in turn describes Kristeva as speaking from that "paradoxical" place (see pp. 47-48, and ch. 8, "The Phallic Mother: Fraudian Analysis," esp. pp. 116-117). However, I have taken Gallop out of her "context", a context she exhibits in an assertive, yet comfortable intercourse with Lacan. I resist any rapport with Lacan.

⁵⁷ Again, I approach (accost) Lacan only through Gallop, who here takes Stephen Heath's article 'Difference' as her (rather suspiciously sweet) companion. "Heath situates Lacan's relation to the woman question in a devotion - 'seminar devoted to "what Freud . . . left aside"' - a devotion, a fidelity, a constancy. Yet Lacan said nothing of devotion; he used the word 'aborder' (come to, enter upon, approach, accost) . . . what does [the woman] want? devotion or to be accosted Oddly, 'accost' comes precisely from 'à côté' - you come up alongside someone, you approach from the side and speak: 'Wanna go for a ride?' 'Wanna see my etchings?' . . . Freud left the side of the woman; Lacan has just arrived there; but Heath offers devotion, . . . The choice is between Heath's gallant chivalry . . . and Lacan's cavalier approach ('Woman does not exist', [they] don't know what they're saying, that's all the difference between them and me - . . .): chivalry or cavalier approach?" Gallop, Seduction, pp. 43-44.

to his pleasure in the Gothic, he also coyly circumvents the other Gothic pleasure by (op)posing it against his Oxford studies, and by punctiliously dismissing Catherine's reading: "' . . . do not you think Udolpho the nicest book in the world?' 'The nicest; by which I suppose you mean the neatest. . . .'" (my emphasis).⁵⁸ Having seduced Catherine into speaking her Gothic reading, he then intimidates her out of it (the system "freezes"). This expert-prick can only ever "speculate" on her meaning, and his speculative "approach" - his phallic performance - effectively closes it.

Nevertheless, Henry's boastful admission is read as a recuperation of John Thorpe's "lie" about his own Gothic reading.⁵⁹ Yet both take (away) pleasure from the Gothic. Similarly, just as John Thorpe's lies about Catherine's economic status incite the General against her,⁶⁰ Henry's recuperations relieve her of the anxious doubt that the text, throughout, inscribes and endorses. Both thereby place her in jeopardy not only of life, but as Eleanor significantly breaks her silence to

⁵⁸ Ch. 14, p. 122.

⁵⁹ See ch. 1, p. 69 and ch. 14, pp. 121-122.

⁶⁰ See ch. 30, pp. 241-243 and ch. 31, p. 247:
 " [General Tilney learned] that he had been scarcely more misled by Thorpe's first boast of the family wealth than by his subsequent malicious overthrow of it; . . . Catherine would have three thousand pounds."

point out - "to comfort, appearance, propriety, to your family, to the world."⁶¹ The phallic performance is inflammatory, a cruel failure (" . . . Henry, so near, yet so unconscious")⁶² of the unconscious - in effect, unconscionable: bravuristically re-presenting itself as an informed text, yet a bravurist lie; the text, in other words, that the other is coerced into reading, that Catherine has all along been reading, seduced by its (phallic) performance.

There is, then, an insidious mendacity to male recuperations which Northanger Abbey whisperingly denounces. In this regard, the covalence between Catherine and Isabella, implied by the suspension of Isabella's enigma while the text pursues Catherine's Gothic "experiences," inscribes the other (desire) as the common (universal)⁶³ object of the male lie. It is significant that the letter from James, alleging evidence of Isabella's "elopement" with Frederick, appears after the Gothic interpolations; the letter

⁶¹ Ch. 28, p. 224.

⁶² Ch. 29, p. 228.

⁶³ " . . . woman is that which exceeds any attempt at universalization." Gallop on Lacan's seminar, "Dieu et la jouissance de La femme," in Gallop, Seduction, ch. 3, p. 33. (Perhaps this is why her objectification is universal).

is immediately preceded by Catherine's internalization of Henry's Gothic "closure".⁶⁴ It is as if this language-object is a demolition site in which Isabella's (the other's) desire is pulverized by the coercive force of all the discourses, which, together, convene multilaterally to prevent and dissipate - in effect, obliterate - other desire.⁶⁵ The other desire is overwhelmingly man-handled: the letter is "held out [to Catherine] by Henry's willing hand. She thanked him as heartily as if he had written it himself." Similarly, James's mystification at "what [Isabella] would be at" is syntactically undermined by the assertion of an 'obvious' cause: " . . . for there could be no need of my being played off to make her secure of Tilney." James's "speculative" activity concerning Isabella surfaces, and then passes to Henry's elaborative finesse. Significantly, however, it is Catherine who imagines that Isabella "is to marry Frederick " (my emphasis). In other words, Catherine begins to 'speculate' within the ideological parameters of the Romance discourse without having recognized (or, like Evelina, been chastened by) its underlying economic inscriptions. Accordingly, she 'recuperates'

⁶⁴ See Ch. 25, pp. 201-202.

⁶⁵ See ch. 25, pp. 203-208.

other desire, i.e., desire which is also her own, and like her mentor, Henry, her recuperations of Isabella and ultimately herself fail:

Catherine found, with some surprize, that her two young friends [considered] Isabella's want of consequence and fortune as likely to throw great difficulties in the way of her marrying their brother. Their persuasion that the General would, upon this ground alone, independent of the objection that might be raised against her character, oppose the connexion, turned her feelings moreover with some alarm towards herself. She was as insignificant, and perhaps as portionless as Isabella; and if the [Tilney heir] had not . . . wealth enough in himself, at what point of interest were the demands of his younger brother to rest? The very painful reflections to which this thought led, could only be dispersed by a dependence on the effect of that particular partiality, which, as she was given to understand by his words as well as his actions, she had from the first been so fortunate as to excite in the General; and by a recollection of some most generous and disinterested sentiments on the subject of money, which she had more than once heard him utter, and which tempted her to think his disposition in such matters misunderstood by his children.⁶⁶

In some sense, Catherine's boldness in assuming that her reading of the General is superior to Henry's and Eleanor's is a step away from the male symbolic; the initiative of a female imaginary, but an imaginary which can only operate within, is limited by, the constructed oppositions, i.e., Isabella:Catherine,

⁶⁶ Ch. 26, p. 209.

and the appropriate(d) desires in which it has been re-presented. It is then a gesture towards a female specularization which necessarily turns back upon itself, her-self being the only object that the delimiting male symbolic recognizes.

We can assume that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the "masculine." When she submits to (such a) theory, woman fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the [male] imaginary. Subjecting herself to objectivization in discourse - by being "female." Re-objectivizing her own self whenever she claims to identify herself 'as' a masculine subject. . . . Once imagine that woman imagines and the object loses its fixed, obsessional character. As a bench mark that is ultimately more crucial than the subject, for he can sustain himself only by bouncing back off some objectiveness, some objective.

[But] the "object" is not as massive, as resistant, as one might wish to believe. And her possession by a "subject," a subject's desire to appropriate her, is yet another of his vertiginous failures. For where he projects a something to absorb, to take, to see, to possess . . . as well as a patch of ground to stand upon, a mirror to catch his reflection, he is already faced by another specularization. Whose twisted character is her inability to say what she represents.⁶⁷

The other can only recognize her-self as object, an immobilizing self-specul(ariz)ation that especially gives the lie to the "impossible" postulations of the Gothic, but in doing so, also moves beyond that anxious

⁶⁷ Irigaray, Speculum, pp. 133-134.

attempt: hence, texte noir but also sexte.

It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded - which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by . . . peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate [Sexed language/Sextes] will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, . . . submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word "impossible" and writes it as "the end." 68

For the self-doubting Northanger Abbey, this is utopian 'hysteria', but it nevertheless describes the overreaching interrogations of Northanger Abbey, which target the impossible and represent it as a cul-de-sac arrived at in the fog (of discourse); hence Catherine is quickly (or simultaneously) (re)pressed once more into service. Catherine's "step away" is a step into space because without the male symbolic, or even - imagine - a more congenial psychic register, another imaginary cannot operate. (As James, her "benevolent" brother, writes to her, "your love I do build upon".)

68 Cixous, "Medusa", in Marks, pp. 253-256.

. . . - let us imagine that man (Freud in the event) had discovered that the rarest thing - the most exciting as well as the most scientifically rigorous, the most faithful to factual materiality and the most historically curative - would be to articulate directly, without catacombs, what we are calling these two syntaxes. Irreducible in their strangeness and eccentricity one to the other. Coming out of different times, places, logics, "representations," and economies. In fact, of course, these terms cannot fittingly be designated by the number "two" and the adjective "different," if only because they are not susceptible to comparison. . . . Their distribution and demarcation and articulation necessitate operations as yet nonexistent, whose complexity and subtlety can only be guessed at without prejudicing the results. Without a teleology already in operation somewhere. But had the man Freud preferred the play, or even the clash, of those two economies rather than their disposition in hierarchical stages . . . then perhaps he would not finally have cracked his head against all that remains irreducibly "obscure" to him in his speculations. . . . And there, [in that dark continent] in what he recognizes as outside the range of his systematic prospecting (beyond the self?) Freud is in fact indicating a way off the historico-transcendental stage, at the very moment when his theory and his practice are perpetuating, in the mode of enunciation and the drama of enunciating, that very same stage, which we may now call the hystero-transcendental. Announcing by this re-mark, by this effect of repetition - *re-petitio principii* - of recapitulation and, without his knowledge, of mimicry, that his breath is privileged. And he is out of breath.⁶⁹

Having indicated - that is, having 'gestured' - Northanger Abbey warms up to the fog and retreats from vertiginous specul(ariz)ations: "to be guided by second-hand conjecture is pitiful."

⁶⁹ Irigaray, Speculum, p. 139.

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