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## FROM PASTORAL LANDSCAPES TO TERRIFYING GLOOMINESS: SETTING AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO



## DE PAISAGENS PASTORAIS PARA ESCURIDÃO ATERROIZANTE: ESPAÇO E SUBJETIVIDADE EM THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO

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### Abstract

The end of the 18th century in England was marked by the beginning of the consolidation of a new literary genre, the novel. This genre already stood out at the time for the significant participation of women both as novel readers and novel writers. This fact was probably encouraged, among other aspects, by the Industrial Revolution that reorganized and changed many aspects of domestic and conjugal life. In this context, the Gothic Novel was one of the most popular types of novel and Ann Radcliffe the most renowned novelist. This paper discusses *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), fourth book written by Radcliffe, with focus on the analysis of setting. Setting is presented and described in detail along the narrative, which is evidence of its importance in this novel. The two types of setting, namely, the external one and the domestic one, are analyzed in order to understand their function in this novel.

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### Resumo

O final do século XVIII na Inglaterra foi marcado pelo início da consolidação de um novo gênero literário, o romance. Este gênero já se destacava na época pela participação significativa das mulheres, tanto como leitoras como escritoras. Este fato foi provavelmente encorajado, entre

outros aspectos, pela Revolução Industrial que reorganizou e mudou inúmeros aspectos da vida doméstica e conjugal. Neste contexto, o Romance Gótico foi um dos tipos de romance mais populares e Ann Radcliffe, a romancista mais renomada. Esse artigo discute *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), quarto livro escrito por Radcliffe, com foco na análise do espaço. O espaço é apresentado e descrito em detalhe ao longo da narrativa, o que evidencia sua importância neste romance. Os dois tipos de espaço, doméstico e externo, são analisados a fim de compreendermos a sua função neste romance.

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## Entradas para indexação

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**KEYWORDS:** Ann Radcliffe. Gothic novel. 18th Century. Setting. Subjectivity.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** Ann Radcliffe. Romance Gótico. Século XVIII. Espaço. Subjetividade.

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## Texto integral

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### INTRODUCING ANN RADCLIFFE AND *THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO*<sup>1</sup>

The end of the XVIII century in England was marked by the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, a historical fact that is considered to be one of the most important in the world. With industrialization in progress, not only was economy affected, but there were also many changes in the social order. One of the consequences of this process was a huge development in the arts (HOBBSAWM, 2002, p.351). As for literature, this development was marked mainly by the gradual consolidation of a new genre: the novel. It is worth noticing that women had significant participation both as novel readers and novel writers. In fact, the Industrial Revolution reorganized and changed many aspects of domestic and conjugal life, giving women more freedom and time to enjoy this new type of leisure of reading and writing fictional narratives (MEYER, 1993, p.47).

Among the different types of novel written in the XVIII century in England, the Gothic Novel was one of the most popular. Ann Radcliffe (9 July 1764 – 7 February 1823) is the most renowned author of gothic fiction, which apart from being understood as a reaction to historical events, also

demonstrates the potential of revolution by daring to speak the socially unspeakable (...), expresses and examines personal disorder, opposing fiction's classical unities (of time, space, unified character) with an apprehension of partiality and relativity of meaning. (JACKSON, 1984, p. 97).

Even though Radcliffe was not the first person to write gothic fiction -before her there is the well known *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole -, after publishing three novels, she had already established herself as one of the most

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famous novelists of her time being almost universally admired. In fact, some critics called her “the Shakespeare of Romance Writers” (STEVENSON, 1961, p. 164).

Nonetheless, it was with her fourth book, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), that Ann Radcliffe reached the apex of her career (STEVENSON, 1961, p. 165). Tompkins (1968, p. 249-250) claims that she and her fiction belonged to a context in which

[...] never had there been such ample provision for the romantic mood, so pure in quality and so respectable in form. Here was romance that could be enjoyed by statesmen and head-masters without embarrassment. [...] For the first time reading was an exercise to be undertaken with bated breath, and it was to this tension that Coleridge referred in the *Critical* when he called the *Mysteries of Udolpho* “the most interesting novel in the English language”.

Thereby, the importance and contribution of Radcliffe’s novels, especially *The Mysteries of Udolpho* that was written with a “much-praised use of suspense technique” (PUNTER, 1980, p.67), to gothic fiction and later novelists is unquestionable. She did not only influence a large number of later British writers but, also, apparently, played an important role in our Brazilian context in the XIX century.

The influence of British fiction in Brazil did not happen at random. In the end of 1807, the Portuguese crown was threatened by Napoleon Bonaparte, who aimed to invade and conquer the country. To prevent this to happen, the Royal Family left Lisbon towards Brazil under the English protection. A few days after the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Family, in January 1808, the Prince Regent, in exchange for the help received, granted England numerous privileges and advantages. Since the English were forbidden to commercialize with other European countries because of Bonaparte’s Continental Blockade, England found Brazil to be a profitable market for its industrialized goods (LINHARES, 1990, p. 127). The presence of the English in Brazil, however, comprised much more than just economic issues. Among countless cultural aspects that were brought to the Portuguese colony was book trade, and, consequently, the beginning of systematic circulation of novels in Brazil. In this period, the novel was already an established genre in England, and now all the process of writing and reading fictional narratives that had been happening over a century in Europe was about to start in Brazil. As Sandra Vasconcelos (s/p) explains:

os diferentes tipos de romance, correntes na Inglaterra do século XVIII - doméstico, sentimental, gótico, de costumes, de doutrina -, circularam por aqui, oferecendo sugestões aos nossos ficcionistas de primeira hora.

The amount of books that arrived in our country during this period was astonishing. As Marlyse Meyer (1993, p. 49) states, these novels:

[...] desembocaram abundantemente ultra-Atlântico. Uma *Internacional Romancelira*, em suma. Novelas sem fronteiras. Obras de Fanny Burney, das irmãs Lee, das *mrs.* Inchbald, Opie, Radcliffe, Roche, Helme, e tantas

outras chegaram em contínuas levadas aos livreiros que foram estabelecendo-se no Rio de Janeiro após a chegada da corte e a abertura dos portos e, daí, se espraiando pela província.

Undeniably, Radcliffe can be considered one of the authors who influenced the early Brazilian novelists, which makes her an important writer for the literary Brazilian background in this period. As a matter of fact, the presence of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels in Brazil, among which one finds her famous *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, is registered in the Biblioteca Fluminense and in the Rio de Janeiro British Subscription Library (VASCONCELOS, s/p)

*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which is the subject matter of this paper, tells the story of Emily, a young girl who used to have quite a harmonious and calm life in La Vallée, France, with her parents. After the loss of both of them, Emily finds herself alone and far away from her house, from the happy life she used to have and from Valancourt, the man she was falling in love with. From this moment on, she has to live in an old and gothic castle located in Italy together with her unpleasant aunt, Madame Cheron, and Montoni, who is not only the owner of the castle, but also a very dark and mysterious villain. In this castle full of unsolved mysteries and seeming supernatural events that terrify her, she has a few people by her side; one of them is Annette, her aunt's servant that becomes her good friend, who faces with her these terrifying moments inside the castle of Udolpho. As we can already notice from this brief account of the story, setting has a great importance in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Therefore, the focus of this paper is on the discussion of both the external and the domestic setting. It is through the analysis of this narrative element that we are able to realize the characters' subjectivity, their psychological complexity, and, consequently, the problematization of the relation between rationalism and sentimentalism, which was a social-cultural concern of the period when this novel was written.

## EXTERNAL SETTING

On the pleasant banks of the Garonne, in the province of Gascony, stood, in the year 1584, the chateau of Monsieur St. Aubert. From its windows were seen the pastoral landscapes of Guienne and Gascony, stretching along the river, gay with luxuriant woods and vines, and plantations of olives. To the south, the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenées, whose summits, veiled in clouds, or exhibiting awful forms, seen, and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy pine, that swept downward to their base. These tremendous precipices were contrasted by the soft green of the pastures and woods that hung upon their skirts; among whose flocks, and herds, and simple cottages, the eye, after having scaled the cliffs above, delighted to repose. To the north, and to the east, the plains of Guienne and Languedoc were lost in the mist of distance; on the west, Gascony was bounded by the waters of Biscay. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 1).

These are the opening lines of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). As we can see, the very first paragraph of this lengthy fictional narrative already allows us to realize the importance of setting. Setting in these first lines is even treated as a living “being” through the use of personification. The landscapes are stretching, exhibiting, frowning, hanging upon their skirts and delighting to repose. No wonder that Daniel Cottom (1985, p. 35) affirms that landscapes are the “central character” in Radcliffe’s novels.

In addition, the descriptions in the *The Mysteries of Udolpho* are built in such a way that they give the readers a complete idea of the external places where the characters are through the detailed presentation of color, size, shape, and sometimes even smell. Readers may not know Gascony, or they may not be aware if this place is really located in France or if it has all the characteristics that the narrator presents. Nevertheless, through detailed description that presents aspects that do exist in the real world – banks, river, woods, vines, clouds – Radcliffe’s fictional world looks like the real one as it persuades the readers quite convincingly that it exists exactly as the narrator tells us.

As a matter of fact, in what regards this persuasion, Eco (1994, p. 102) claims that:

Radcliffe convidou seus leitores a comportar-se como se estivessem familiarizados com as colinas da França. (...) Assim, Radcliffe não só pediu a colaboração dos leitores no tocante a sua competência do mundo real, e não só forneceu parte dessa competência, e não só lhes pediu que fingissem saber determinadas coisas a respeito do mundo real que eles não sabiam, como ainda os levou a acreditar que o mundo real possuía certos atributos que na verdade não se incluem entre seus pertences.

The narrative develops and the focus of the first chapters is still on the description of the external setting, which is mainly a natural one. As a consequence, action moves slowly in the first chapters of this novel, an aspect that could make it a difficult reading for today’s readers, since at the same time we are reading the novel it seems that we are caught in a point where nothing really happens. Differently from Radcliffe’s fifth book *The Italian*, which was released three years after *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and whose very first chapter brings many events and unsolved mysteries, the first chapter of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* basically offers description of stupendous landscapes.

All these descriptions are so detailed that we can almost picture the whole environment in our mind. For instance, when the characters are travelling “along the shores of the Mediterranean, towards Provence” (RADCLIFFE, 1008, p. 25), passing through countless beautiful natural scenarios, the narrator goes as far as to describe the air of this region:

They often paused to contemplate these stupendous scenes, and, seated on some wild cliff, where only the ilex or the larch could flourish, looked over dark forests of fir, and precipices where human foot had never wandered, into the glen — so deep, that the thunder of the torrent,



which was seen to foam along the bottom, was scarcely heard to murmur. Over these crags rose others of stupendous height, and fantastic shape; some shooting into cones; others impending far over their base, in huge masses of granite, along whose broken ridges was often lodged a weight of snow, that, trembling even to the vibration of a sound, threatened to bear destruction in its course to the vale. Around, on every side, far as the eye could penetrate, were seen only forms of grandeur — the long perspective of mountain-tops, tinged with ethereal blue, or white with snow; vallies of ice, and forests of gloomy fir. The serenity and clearness of the air in these high regions were particularly delightful to the travellers; it seemed to inspire them with a finer spirit, and diffused an indescribable complacency over their minds. They had no words to express the sublime emotions they felt. A solemn expression characterized the feelings of St. Aubert; tears often came to his eyes, and he frequently walked away from his companions. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 42-43).

The excerpt above does not only give the readers the idea of the setting's natural beauty but the description of this setting also shows how it moves the characters to a state of sublimity and emotion that they had never felt before. The use of words such as "contemplate", "serenity", "clearness" and "delightful" clearly expresses the emotion and comfort that the characters feel in this place. Moreover, this emotion is deeply connected with the characters' moral values and virtues. As a matter of fact, we can perceive that the relation between setting and some characters (mainly Emily, Monsieur St. Aubert, and Valancourt) does not exist for the characters that present no kind of virtue, such as Montoni (the great villain of the story) and Emily's aunt, Madame Cheron, who later becomes Montoni's wife. For instance, in the beginning of the narrative, while travelling with his daughter, Monsieur St. Aubert already presents this connection between virtue and taste:

'The world,' said he [St. Aubert], pursuing this train of thought, 'ridicules a passion which it seldom feels; its scenes, and its interests, distract the mind, deprave the taste, corrupt the heart, and love cannot exist in a heart that has lost the meek dignity of innocence. Virtue and taste are nearly the same, for virtue is little more than active taste, and the most delicate affections of each combine in real love. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 49-50).

This world, described by St. Aubert, is exactly the world where Montoni and his wife live in, besides other characters, who represent the evil in the narrative. In a certain way, in this novel, the characters' attitude towards the landscapes is what defines them as positive or negative characters. It is interesting to notice that the negative characters do not stop to gaze at some natural scenarios just like Emily and St. Aubert do quite frequently, when they are traveling towards Provence.

A little further in the narrative, when Emily is on her way to the castle of Udolpho with her aunt and Montoni, there is a moment when the narrator tells us that they are going through "a scene of such extent and magnificence opened below, as drew even from Madame Montoni a note of admiration." (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 225). The use of "even" here already points out that it is surprising that

Madame Montoni realizes how beautiful the place around her is. This is the only moment, during their journey, when the beauty of the landscape is not shown through Emily's eyes. On the other hand, we only know that Madame Montoni drew a note of admiration, but we do not know what she said as, right after that, the narrator focuses back on Emily, who was lost "in the immensity of nature" (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 225), and goes on describing the landscape along more than two pages, not mentioning Madame Montoni again, neither her husband who does not say a word during the whole journey. Emily is the only one who has the sensibility to notice such beautiful landscapes, exactly because she is the only one to have moral values and virtue.

Furthermore, there are some moments in the narrative when the characters themselves are compared with landscapes. For instance, when St. Aubert is talking to Valancourt, a man who St. Aubert considers worth of his esteem, he feels that:

The fire and simplicity of his [Valancourt] manners seemed to render him a characteristic figure in the scene around them; and St. Aubert discovered in his sentiments the justness and the dignity of an elevated mind, unbiased by intercourse with the world. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 49).

Valancourt's good manners and positive characteristics are a reflection of the landscape. He fits into this beautiful natural scenario simply because he is a good person who possesses moral values and virtues, and pauses to admire all the landscapes in front of him full of pleasure, and with a light heart (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 53). So, it could be concluded that not only Valancourt, but Emily, St. Aubert and all the virtuous characters in the novel are also expressed through these beautiful and stupendous landscapes described in minute details.

Another aspect that can be noticed concerning the relation between characters and setting is the opposition between sentimentalism and rationalism. This can be noticed in the end of the passage previously quoted: "A solemn expression characterized the feelings of St. Aubert; tears often came to his eyes, and he frequently walked away from his companions." (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 43). In fact, every time St. Aubert feels like crying, he walks away from Emily and Valancourt so as not to be seen in tears. He does so because he always taught his daughter that she should be rational and never act by the first impulse of her feelings (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 5).

St. Aubert's teachings, consequently, make himself and his daughter try to hide their feelings from each other all the time. Nevertheless, even if St. Aubert and Emily, who is always worried about making her father proud of her, try to pretend they are rational, the relation established between them and the settings shows how they are essentially sentimental people. This conflicting relation between sentimentalism and rationalism was a contradiction lived by the eighteenth-century bourgeois society.

This eighteenth-century society was living the era of Enlightenment, which has its basis on rationalism, which, as Punter (1980, p. 26) states, was the "official

culture"of the time. On the other hand, it was also the period of increasing popularity of novels which, according to Punter (1980, p. 26-27), were "the actual taste" and "never bore the full burden of rationalism, and, presumably, also that this was not what its readers demanded." So, at the same time that this rational society claimed against the reading of novels because they would lack human reason, the reading of novels grew significantly. In other words, the readership for this genre also comprised the people who criticized it.

This society, in a certain way, is represented by the protagonist Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. She is a completely innocent and sentimental young girl, but, at the same time, she tries to hide her feelings in an attempt to be a strong and rational person, just like her father taught her to (try to) be. Consequently, as Monsieur St. Aubert sees Emily's delicacy and charm as dangerous characteristics,

He [St. Aubert] endeavoured, therefore, to strengthen her mind; to enure her to habits of self-command; to teach her to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool examination, upon the disappointments he sometimes threw in her way. While he instructed her to resist the first impressions, and to acquire that steady dignity of mind, that can alone counterbalance the passions, and bear us, as far as is compatible with our nature, above the reach of circumstances, he taught himself a lesson of fortitude; for he was often obliged to witness, with seeming indifference, the tears and struggles which his caution occasioned her."(RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 5).

This excerpt clearly shows how St. Aubert really tries to teach Emily to be rational through the development of self-control of her emotions and feelings by throwing disappointments in her way as if to test her in order to see if she is able to behave properly, that is, to refuse to behave by impulse. On the other hand, by teaching Emily, St. Aubert also learns a lesson, for when his daughter is in tears he has to teach himself to be indifferent, or at least, pretend to be a man with fortitude, "with seeming indifference" (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 5). This quotation of St. Aubert's own lessons of fortitude already gives us the idea that they are both sentimentalists trying to be rational. An idea that is confirmed once these characters are in contact with nature.

For instance, in the beginning of Emily and St. Aubert's journey, both of them are in a state of melancholy for they have just lost Madame St. Aubert. However, this issue is not directly mentioned by any of them:

He [St. Aubert] and Emily continued sunk in musing silence for some leagues, from which melancholy reverie Emily first awoke, and her young fancy, struck with the grandeur of the objects around, gradually yielded to delightful impressions. The road now descended into glens, confined by stupendous walls of rock, grey and barren, except where shrubs fringed their summits, or patches of meagre vegetation tinted their recesses, in which the wild goat was frequently browsing. And now, the way led to the lofty cliffs, from whence the landscape was seen extending in all its magnificence. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 27)



As we can see, they are both pensive and in silence during the journey, and what cheers Emily up is the beautiful landscape around them. However, all these delightful impressions - as well as Madame St. Aubert's death - are not mentioned by any of the two characters. They perceive the scenarios around them and feel moved, but they do not talk to each other about them. A little further in the journey, the landscape around them reminds St. Aubert of his late wife, and he can no longer hide his tears from Emily:

It was some time before St. Aubert or Emily could withdraw their attention from the surrounding objects, so as to partake of their little repast. Seated in the shade of the palms, St. Aubert pointed out to her observation the course of the rivers, the situation of great towns, and the boundaries of provinces, which science, rather than the eye, enabled him to describe. Notwithstanding this occupation, when he had talked awhile he suddenly became silent, thoughtful, and tears often swelled to his eyes, which Emily observed, and the sympathy of her own heart told her their cause. The scene before them bore some resemblance, though it was on a much grander scale, to a favourite one of the late Madame St. Aubert, within view of the fishing-house. (...) The recollections subdued him, and he abruptly rose from his seat, and walked away to where no eye could observe his grief. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 29)

In this extract, for the first time in the journey, St. Aubert stops to speak with his daughter. Ironically, he describes the natural scenarios around them by using science, "rather than the eye". So, even if they are moved by these beautiful surrounding landscapes, he speaks with his mind and not with his heart. However, in the moment he thinks about Madame St. Aubert and tears roll down from his eyes, he returns to his habit of keeping silent and thoughtful. As a consequence, once again, he steps away from Emily so as not to be seen in tears.

All these failed attempts of St. Aubert and Emily to act as rational people are deeply connected to the external settings and stupendous landscapes, which represent virtue, morality and sublime emotions which lead them to a state of extreme happiness. In other words, this type of setting in the novel is mainly related to positive aspects. However, there are a few passages in which these external places create terror in the character's mind. At this point, it is important to remark the difference between terror and horror, as defined by Radcliffe herself: "Terror anv to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them." (RADCLIFFE, 1826, s/p). In other words, terror is connected to the mind, it is part of the imagination whereas "when the threat takes a concrete shape, it induces horror." (MILES In: PUNTER, 2000, p. 41). Consequently, as we are discussing the relation between characters and setting, we are talking about terror rather than horror, for the fear of the characters is mainly psychological. For instance, at a certain point of their journey, the travelers - Emily, St. Aubert and Valancourt - find themselves in a scenario a little different from what they usually see along the journey, which is an aspect that calls Emily's attention:

On the other side of the valley, immediately opposite to the spot where the travellers rested, a rocky pass opened toward Gascony. Here no sign of cultivation appeared. The rocks of granite, that screened the glen,

rose abruptly from their base, and stretched their barren points to the clouds, unvaried with woods, and uncheered even by a hunter's cabin. Sometimes, indeed, a gigantic larch threw its long shade over the precipice, and here and there a cliff reared on its brow a monumental cross, to tell the traveller the fate of him who had ventured thither before. This spot seemed the very haunt of banditti; and Emily, as she looked down upon it, almost expected to see them stealing out from some hollow cave to look for their prey. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 54)

In this excerpt, there are not banditti or anybody else chasing after them. However, the fact that the setting around them is not as beautiful as most of the places where they pass through along their journey is enough to make Emily feel that something terrifying is about to happen. The fear is only built in Emily's mind, for there is no concrete threat appearing in front of them. Emily's terror is once again connected with the opposition between sentimentalism and rationalism, since, as a rational person, she would not give credit to a hypothesis or fear that banditti might appear on her way. Emily should, as her father taught her, "reject the first impulse of her feelings" and look at the situation "with cool examination" (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 5). Therefore, in other words, she would have to rationally realize that there is no reason to feel anxious or scared.

Nevertheless, the terror presented in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is not only created by the external setting. In fact, terror plays an important role in the narrative when Emily is at the castle of Udolpho, once the death of her parents left her no other option but to live with her aunt and Montoni.

## DOMESTIC SETTING

'There,' said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, 'is Udolpho.'

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen, rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend.

The extent and darkness of these tall woods awakened terrific images in her mind, and she almost expected to see banditti start up from under the trees. At length, the carriages emerged upon a heathy rock, and, soon after, reached the castle gates, where the deep tone of the portal bell, which was struck upon to give notice of their arrival, increased the

fearful emotions, that had assailed Emily. (RADCLIFFE, 1008, p. 226-227)

From the moment when the characters arrive at Udolpho, the recurrent description of peaceful and beautiful landscapes gives way to over two hundred pages of terror and terrifying “supernatural” events inside this gothic castle that belongs to Montoni, the great villain of the novel. In fact, it is possible to see in the quotation above how Emily is already terrified with the castle by just looking at it. As in the passage Udolpho is described from Emily’s perspective, it clearly builds this idea of fear through the use of words such as darkness, melancholy, gloomy, gothic, duskiness, and obscurity. In addition, it is interesting to notice that, once again, the narrator makes use of personification, this time to describe the castle. In this sense, the fact that the castle “frowns defiance” on people would express the idea that not only was Emily scared to enter it but “it” (i.e. the castle itself) was mad that she was doing so.

Emily finds herself now in a completely different place and living a completely different life when compared to the one she used to have with her parents in La Vallée. Now, she suffers and fears daily in the castle of Udolpho. However, most of the time, Emily’s fears are psychological as there are very few moments in the narrative when the threat is actually concretely shaped to her. For instance, in the end of the quotation above, Emily almost expects to see banditti appearing in front of her, due to the darkness of the place. Once again, there is nobody there, but her psychological fear and lack of rationalism make her believe the opposite.

Another moment of Emily’s psychological fear can be found in the passage in which Montoni orders her to meet him to talk about her aunt’s estates. Madame Montoni is, at this point of the narrative, quite ill and Montoni wants Emily to sign some papers that will make him the owner of Madame Montoni’s possessions after she dies. Emily completely refuses to do what he wants, which makes Montoni feel angry and threaten her with a promise of revenge. Right in the moment when Montoni threatens Emily, a voice that seems to come from underneath the chamber is heard:

Another groan filled the pause which Montoni made.

‘Leave the room instantly!’ said he, seeming not to notice this strange occurrence. Without power to implore his pity, she rose to go, but found that she could not support herself; awe and terror overcame her, and she sunk again into the chair.

‘Quit my presence!’ cried Montoni. ‘This affection of fear ill becomes the heroine who has just dared to brave my indignation.’

‘Did you hear nothing, Signor?’ said Emily, trembling, and still unable to leave the room.

‘I heard my own voice,’ rejoined Montoni, sternly.

‘And nothing else?’ said Emily, speaking with difficulty. – ‘There again! Do you hear nothing now?’

‘Obey my order,’ repeated Montoni. ‘And for these fool’s tricks – I will soon discover by whom they are practiced.’ (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 395)

This is one of the many moments in which something supernatural seems to be happening in Udolpho. Moments that contribute to weaken Emily's attempts to maintain her fortitude. As it is possible to observe in the quotation above, she is so frightened with this weird and unknown voice that she does not even have the strength to stand on her feet. On the other hand, Montoni, who is totally the opposite of Emily, ignores the groans and acts with consciousness and rationality once he is sure that if there is a sound being produced, it comes from some person that is trying to trick (or scare) them, even if it seems to come from a place where, supposedly, nobody would go to. At the end of the novel, this particular "supernatural" event, and all the other similar events, is rationally explained: Monsieur du Pont, Emily's admirer who went to Udolpho after her, produced the noises in order to scare Montoni and try to make him stop threatening her.

All in all, Emily's more intense fear when she is at Udolpho is not connected to the so-believed supernatural events only. Returning to the point where they arrive at Udolpho, she and Annette (Madame Montoni's servant who becomes Emily's friend) go in search for Emily's chamber, which is located in a remote part of the castle. As they walk, Annette does not hide how frightened she is to be there, since she fiercely believes that there are many ghosts living in the castle, to what Emily reacts: "Ridiculous! (...) 'you must not indulge such fancies'" (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 231). It is interesting to notice that in this moment of the narrative Emily is able to act rationally with a person that is not ashamed to let others see her weakness. However, when they finally arrive at the chamber and Emily realizes that she is going to stay there all by herself, her rationality fades away:

The lonely aspect of the room made Emily unwilling that Annette should leave her immediately, and the dampness of it chilled her with more than fear. She begged Caterina, the servant of the castle, to bring some wood and light a fire.

[...] The bed and other furniture was very ancient, and had an air of gloomy grandeur, like all that she had seen in the castle. One of the high casements, which she opened, overlooked a rampart, but the view beyond was hid in darkness.

In the presence of Annette, Emily tried to support her spirits, and to restrain the tears, which, every now and then, came to her eyes. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 234-235).

We can notice that, in this moment, Emily does exactly what her father used to do with her, that is, she tries to hold back her tears only because Annette is there and others should not see her "weak" side. At first, Emily is not persuaded by Annette that there are ghosts in the castle, but she cannot pretend for too long to be the rational and strong person that she would like to be, once she finds herself in a place like her chamber. She even considers asking Madame Montoni to allow Annette to spend the night with her, "but was deterred by an apprehension of betraying what would be thought childish fears, and by an unwillingness to increase the apt terrors of Annette" (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 235-236). So, despite her fear, she prefers passing the night all by herself to sounding childish to her aunt.

At this point, it is worth remarking that the intensity of terror lived by Emily gradually grows due to stories she hears and events that happen to her in Udolpho.

Events that, at first, seem to have no rational explanation. For instance, when Emily and Annette are heading to the chamber, they walk through another room where a black veil hides an unknown picture of a lady. Supposedly, this lady was named Signora Laurentini di Udolpho, who had lived in the castle of Udolpho many years ago and had suddenly disappeared. This sudden departure made people believe she was dead and that now she was one of the many ghosts haunting Udolpho. As Annette tells this story, she awakens Emily's curiosity to the point that Emily decides to later go back to that room and look at what was underneath the black veil:

Emily passed on with faltering steps, and having paused a moment at the door, before she attempted to open it, she then hastily entered the chamber, and went towards the picture, which appeared to be enclosed in a frame of uncommon size, that hung in a dark part of the room. She paused again, and then, with a timid hand, lifted the veil; but instantly let it fall — perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture, and, before she could leave the chamber, she dropped senseless on the floor.

When she recovered her recollection, the remembrance of what she had seen had nearly deprived her of it a second time. She had scarcely strength to remove from the room, and regain her own; and, when arrived there, wanted courage to remain alone. Horror occupied her mind, and excluded, for a time, all sense of past, and dread of future misfortune [...]. (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 248-249)

The narrator here uses the word *horror* instead of *terror* on purpose to give the reader the idea that Emily is sure of what she saw; in other words, that what made Emily faint was not something created by her mind. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that in a novel full of minute descriptions of places and objects as seen by Emily's eyes, the narrator does not describe the picture in this moment. We can understand that it is not just a picture, but we do not know what it is exactly. The fact that the narrator keeps silent about what Emily sees does help to keep the mystery about this lady, who at this point of the novel is still unknown, and also to create ambiguity about Emily's reaction when looking at the picture. After all, is Emily horrified at what she really sees or is she terrified by her own psychological fear?

Understandably, the mystery of this picture, just like most of the other mysteries faced by Emily, is only revealed in the last pages of the narrative. To start with, the picture was made of wax in order to build a realistic reproduction of a dead human body disfigured by worms (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 662). In addition, the unknown lady had in fact run away from Udolpho after poisoning another woman and changing her own name so as not to be discovered.

It is worth pointing out that the mysteries in this narrative are all so interestingly connected to one another that the truth of this veiled picture, only revealed at the end of the narrative, also reveals the first mystery in the novel, which happens right in the end of the second chapter in the first part of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In that moment of the narrative, Emily sees her father in his closet looking at some papers and at a picture of an unknown lady. The fact that Emily does not understand what her father is doing late at night looking at this



picture intrigues her. This lady is actually St Aubert's sister, who had been poisoned by Laurentini. St. Aubert hides this story from Emily in an attempt to protect her and, consequently, conceal his own emotions about this event. Ironically, his attitude causes even more suffering for Emily, for she starts to think that maybe the woman in the picture would be her real mother or the woman his father actually loved. Therefore, at the end of the narrative, and shortly after finding out about the veiled picture and the missing woman, Emily finally understands that her father was affectionately looking at the picture of her aunt. Despite her sadness, Emily is relieved that "all the circumstances of her father's conduct were fully explained" (RADCLIFFE, 2008, p. 663).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When discussing Ann Radcliffe's fiction, Jonathan Bate (2010, p. 126) well remarks that the most common elements in Radcliffe's narratives are:

A dark castle in a wild (and sublimely described) mountainous landscape. A young, innocent, beautiful, and brave heroine in isolation from her family and familiars. A brooding villain with a sinister secret in his past. Terrifying and seemingly supernatural events. These are the stocks elements of Radcliffean romance.

All these characteristics are certainly present in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* build the terrifying suspense that is so typical of gothic fiction. As we could see above, setting is, among all narrative elements, one of great importance in this novel. Moreover, both the external and the domestic settings are important to be considered due to their main function in the novel, namely, the expression of the problematization of the relation between sentimentalism and rationalism, which was a social concern in Radcliffe's time. In other words, by analyzing the relation between settings and characters we could understand this problematic relation. In fact, it is through the characters' dialogues and particular attitudes that we can notice their effort to act rationally, especially in what concerns St Aubert and Emily. On the other hand, it is through setting that sentimentalism is clearly presented in the novel.

We can then affirm that the external setting of this fictional narrative not only awakens positive feelings in the characters but also moves them to the admiration and contemplation of the beautiful landscapes that are disclosed in front of their eyes. Landscapes that are, therefore, also used as a metaphor to the characters' moral values and virtues. It is worth emphasizing that the readers can only know about the characters' admiration through the third-person narrator and his description of the natural scenes, since the characters do not really talk to each other about sentimental matters. On the other hand, the domestic setting, which is also connected with sentimentalism, awakens opposite sentiments in the characters, that is, sentiments of deep anxiety, terror, and psychological fear. Consequently, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* it is the domestic setting that is actually associated to the main typical narrative aspects of Radcliffe's gothic fiction as discussed by Jonathan Bate. Aspects that connect every little single happening in the novel and make it such a masterpiece of gothic fiction

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