

The Lady's Maid: Navigating *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

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## The Lady's Maid: Navigating *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

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### Abstract

In "The Lady's Maid: Navigating *The Mysteries of Udolpho*" the writer argues that, despite a lack of attention paid to the lady's maid Annette in critical scholarship on Ann Radcliffe's novel, Annette is crucial for readers' response to and involvement in the novel. While much scholarly work has examined *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, little has focused on Annette, and, as far as the author could determine, none on her role as an ally to Emily or her positive influence on readers. Analyzing the novel through a feminist reader-response lens grounded in Wolfgang Iser, the article finds that through her creation of suspense, familiarity as a lady's maid who conforms to eighteenth century expectations, and her position as an ally for Emily, Annette pulls us into the text, making us participate in the creation of a world where we can see women's need for cross-class relationships in gaining agency. The text, through Annette, helps us imagine a world where women can accomplish more by working together than they can apart.

Keywords: Reader response, class, ally, servant, lady's maid

Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, first published in 1794, is a Gothic novel set in the year 1584 in France and Italy. The protagonist, Emily St. Aubert, is a French young lady of an upper-class family that becomes financially ruined. After the death of her mother, Emily and her father travel the French countryside and meet her love interest, Valancourt; her father withers from grief and dies, leaving Emily to the care of her aunt, Madame Cheron, whose worldly interests lead them to Italy after her aunt marries Signor Montoni, a villain who has attained his fortune through raiding parties and schemes. After Signor Montoni discovers a plot against him in Venice, they repair to his castle, Udolpho, wherein Emily is beset by many trials as she encounters ominous portents, horrendous secrets hidden behind veils, and several conspiracies designed to induce her marriage to persons she finds objectionable.

During these turbulent times, Emily's aunt dies. Many times, her lady's maid, Annette, assists Emily in gathering knowledge and escaping danger, and, at length, Annette enables Emily to flee Udolpho and escape back to France, where she meets long lost relatives, discovers the truth about her connection to Castle Udolpho, and is finally reunited with Valancourt and consents to marry him.

The relationship of Emily St. Aubert with her lady's maid, Annette, when seen through a feminist reader-response lens, reveals the crucial nature of Annette not only as a figure that Radcliffe uses in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to create tension in both readers and Emily, but also as a female ally to Emily. Radcliffe puts women in tenuous positions of near imprisonment in her novel, and it is only through the servants' knowledge Annette brings of the castle and the people plotting within it that

Emily is able to negotiate her place and escape from the grasp of unwanted relationships with men. Moreover, through Annette's portrayal as a lady's maid and her behavior as a servant from the eighteenth century rather than from the sixteenth-century setting of the novel, she creates an atmosphere of familiarity through which to impart unfamiliar elements to her readers. Wolfgang Iser claims that "The literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents" (586). Essentially, the text makes us imagine what it discusses. Annette functions as a device to connect readers' imaginative faculties to the world of the novel, making them "recreate the world it presents," a world of cross-class relationships among women. Throughout the narrative, Annette conveys knowledge about the unknown to readers, builds suspense in the readers, and relays details in ways that enable readers to recreate the scenes. Readers imagine a world in which women are the most needed allies for each other and, thus, that women need to collaborate across classes to act with agency.

In this analysis, I will use feminist reader-response theory to reveal how Annette recontextualizes female relationships and makes readers become more involved in imagining the text. In other words, I will show that Radcliffe portrays female relationships as necessary for negotiating a world dominated by patriarchy and the male gaze. She uses Annette's role as a lady's maid to accomplish this building of female alliances in ways that comply with the expectations of her eighteenth-century readers. According to Iser, when reading a literary work, "whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself" (587). The twists and turns of a text pull us into it, giving readers the opportunity to become involved in the creation of the narrative. Radcliffe uses Annette as a device both to trigger and to fill in gaps. Constructing Annette as an eighteenth-century lady's maid, the text makes her familiar enough for her readers to imagine what actions she takes to gather information for Emily; we do not question so much Annette's ability to have knowledge, but we want to know the answer to the mysteries she brings to light. Moreover, when Emily is in peril, Annette often arises as the solution or rescue: she fills the gap in acceptable ways for readers. Annette's status as a servant releases her from the male gaze that keeps her mistress confined—her ability to go unseen

makes her a gap provider and filler. When we see how Annette helps Emily persevere, we are able to realize that Annette is not, as Sandro Jung argues "a negative role model against which Emily defines herself throughout her narrated development" (2). Rather, Annette is a reliable and loyal woman who reveals the importance of relationships between women across class divides.

Other scholars, such as Charlie Bondhus, Sandro Jung, and Richard S. Albright, examine Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* from historical, deconstructionist, Marxist, feminist, and gender studies perspectives, as well as from critical and reader-response angles. They explicate time, gender, and class. Most analyses focus on Emily St. Aubert and how Radcliffe constructs her as a heroine, especially in terms of her gender in the eighteenth century. Several discuss how national sentiment at the time likely influenced Radcliffe in writing her characters more English than French or Italian, and the concern about modernity's relationship to the past as her motivation for writing characters that act like eighteenth-century individuals and mainly follow the beliefs and practices of the 1790s. While such critics' work has undoubtedly shown the depth of Radcliffe's contribution to texts written by women and the roles of women during the eighteenth century in relation to literature, they have not focused on the critical nature of the ally relationship Annette has with Emily and how that relationship reframes women as saved through female rescuers. Moreover, they have not looked at how Radcliffe's portrayal of Annette's role as a lady's maid makes the novel more eighteenth century and builds on eighteenth-century readers' expectations to make the novel more real and imaginable.

Critical discussion of this novel has been varied: overall, however, scholars do tend to focus on Emily's struggle with male authority, Radcliffe's problematizing of gender roles through her construction of Valancourt and Emily, and on issues related to time in the novel, such as its nominal setting of 1584 and its more clear setting in the late eighteenth century. Annette's role in the novel is often neglected. But during the eighteenth century, English gentlewomen generally employed the service of a lady's maid, a young woman to serve the mistress. Despite setting *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in the 1580s in France and Italy, Ann Radcliffe generates a lady's maid, Annette, who embodies the general model expected of a servant of an eighteenth-century English manor. While the sixteenth-century precursor to the la-

dy's maid, the lady-in-waiting, was typically considered part of the family and came from a similar class as her mistress, in the eighteenth-century this model changed: ladies' maids became increasingly less visible and of lower classes—they were relegated to separate eating quarters and considered strictly to be servants, not kin. Though not focused solely on *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Elizabeth Veisz speaks to the servant as a kind of spectral or haunting figure. She examines Mary Leapor's "Crumble-Hall" and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* to show that, despite general disregard of servants in literature, by the end of the eighteenth century the servant was becoming a more and more necessary and invisible force in the rise of the middle-class. Veisz briefly claims that in Radcliffe's novel and Gothic literature, servants do play a significant role, but their position as necessary forces that have freedom to move about the castle and their knowledge, combined with their invisibility and mobility throughout a castle or manor, make them Gothic forces. However, she spends little time examining Annette or Radcliffe, and asserts that the Gothic ignores the domestic duties that keep such households running. She claims that Leapor and Austen, on the other hand, reveal the reality of servants as needed yet ominous domestic forces that were increasingly being excluded from the family circle. In contrast to Veisz's view, we can clearly see that Annette's characterization as an eighteenth-century lady's maid creates an atmosphere of familiarity for readers through which to impart unfamiliar elements. Throughout the narrative, Annette is able to provide Emily (and the reader) with knowledge about the goings on in Udolpho. She serves not only to build suspense in Emily through her tales but in readers also, relaying knowledge second-hand to both reader and mistress. Annette's role as a lady's maid, which requires her to be present when requested and out of sight when undesired, frees her to move about the castle and collect information; Annette only appears when she has a function to perform in the novel. Radcliffe uses the familiarity of Annette's role as a lady's maid to draw readers into the story, but also to build suspense and illuminate how different classes can affect women's relationships with each other.

In the building up of suspense, Annette's position serves both to disclose and obscure what may be going on within the castle, making readers consider how cross-class relationships can help women. When Annette recites her accounts of events, she does so in imperfect

detail, not being in possession of the complete tale. For example, when conveying her knowledge of Lady Laurentini, Annette reveals that the castle Udolpho "was to come to the Signor, if the lady died unmarried" (218). The implication is that the lady has died, and thus the estate has fallen to Signor Montoni; it would not be strange for readers to suppose that Montoni had a hand in her death because he clearly stood to gain from it, and his bloodthirstiness has been established. As proof of her tale, Annette offers multiple references to those who say such things: "several of the old servants, who remained here some time after, declare they saw her" (220). Annette's story is relayed as truth through Radcliffe's use of dialogue. In fact, though Emily expresses doubt, Annette asserts that "yes, it is true, indeed" (220), and reveals some things that are certainly true—for example, that Montoni was the next to inherit the estate. As Mary Laughlin Fawcett argues, "*The Mysteries of Udolpho* is made up of repetitive series of revelations, veils (or curtains) pulled aside" (483). However, at the same time, Annette's replies obfuscate the truth; Lady Laurentini does not pass until almost the end of the book, and has certainly not been "seen" as a ghost, despite Annette's claims. As readers work to navigate the truth of Annette's report and its varied dimensions, they are involved in creating what Iser calls "the virtual dimension of the text," which is a "coming together of text and imagination" (586). Essentially, what is in the text activates the readers' imaginations and makes them speculate about what Montoni likely did: murder Laurentini. Annette's dialogue introduces enough ambiguity about the events happening to make readers engage in the imagining of the text. Scholar Scott Mackenzie argues that Radcliffe skillfully uses lacunae, gaps that still carry meaning, to drive the plot—missing identities, hidden meanings, mysterious figures—which lead readers to moments where female reading is questioned by male characters; our persons as readers are pulled into the story through plural first person pronouns. As readers, Mackenzie contends, we share Emily's dangers and joys when we are pulled into the narrative as she searches for her identity in the marriage market. In other words, the novel pulls us in through mysteries and in the process makes us part of the book as we anticipate what will occur. However, Mackenzie neglects to consider the fact that, as a servant, Annette has access to the knowledge of other servants about the history of the castle, and thus is a key component to the lacunae that pull the

reader into the text. Annette's position allows her to inform readers about events, but her incomplete information and the relaying of unseen others' words obscures the true story, an effect which Radcliffe skillfully employs to involve readers in the text and show them how class divides can prevent the direct access to the information that can be so crucial for women seeking to gain agency. Annette, as the bearer of knowledge, reveals the ways women can benefit from cross-class relationships because Emily cannot plausibly get information from another character.

Further, Annette's position as Emily's trusted confidante destabilizes Emily's disbelief in the supernatural, and, consequently, the rational tone of the novel. According to Elizabeth Veisz, "Annette's superstition undermines Emily's trust in her own rationality, making the castle even more forbidding" (82). As Veisz points out, Emily is vulnerable to the feelings of the people around her. We can see the effect of such feelings when Radcliffe communicates that "Annette had now infected" Emily "with her own terrors" about the supernatural (221). Here, the term "infected" provides the imagery of a contagious disease; "terrors" become communicable from person to person with contact. Though one might argue that Emily could be susceptible to any character's relation of supernatural allusions, Annette's role as a lady's maid positions her perfectly to relay such tales. As Phillis Cunningham and Catherine Lucas state in *Occupational Costume in England from the Eleventh Century to 1914*, "a lady's maid was a confidante of her mistress" (195). In other words, Annette is close to Emily; she is able to serve as secret-keeper and provider of information. However, Annette's superior ability to communicate such information does not stop there. As a servant, she has access to a wealth of knowledge about the castle's goings-on, while others in Udolpho's employing class do not, due to their emotional distance or disdain of the servants and their society. Though, as Iser says, "each individual reader will fill in gaps in his own way" (587) and thereby create their own actualization of the text within themselves, Radcliffe's portrayal of Annette gives readers a gap trigger that is plausible. Readers can readily accept Annette's role as bringer of information because of her servant status. Therefore, Annette's station as a lady's maid bridges the gap between master and servant in a way that does not violate eighteenth-century social structures and sows doubt in Emily's mind, inserting suspense and uncertainty into the plot.

Moreover, Annette's position as servant allows Radcliffe to introduce a character who will become instrumental in Emily's deliverance: Ludovico. While it may seem that a simple manservant such as Ludovico can be introduced at any point, his interactions with Emily hinge upon his relationship with Annette. The act of reading shows us what simply must already be: as Iser says, "by reading we uncover the unformulated part of the text" (591). In other words, when we read we connect the unwritten, or "unformulated" text to the written part. Without Annette, the meeting with Ludovico could never occur. For one, Emily would never learn of his existence without Annette, and for another, his sympathies would not be engaged to assist her. Moreover, the readers could not conceive of him as a possible solution to the problem. Annette provides us with a way to cross this gap through her relationships with both of them. Thus, Annette acts as a bridge between Emily's need for rescue and the ways that readers might imagine that rescue to be facilitated. In both the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, acquaintance or collaboration between menservants and respectable young ladies was strictly against the moral code. Radcliffe grants Emily a means to command Ludovico's aid through the presence of Annette. For example, when it "suddenly occurred, that Ludovico might be of some service," Emily orders, "Go to him, Annette, tell him what I have to apprehend...I cannot speak with him myself for we might be observed, and then effectual care would be taken to prevent our flight" (367). Though Emily's injunctions about the prevention of "flight" are grounded, in many ways the reason Emily must not personally communicate with Ludovico is due to the separation pressed upon her by class and gender. She "cannot speak with him" herself because she is restricted both physically and socially by her status. Moreover, Emily is predisposed to accept Ludovico as a person and his aid through Annette, and confirms him in "the favourable opinion of him, which his care of Annette had already prompted her to form" on first meeting and proceeds to secure his aid in quitting the castle (402). We can see that her "opinion of him" is "prompted" by Annette. "Prompted" suggests a level of dependence, so we can see the significance of Annette's role in the building of her "opinion." Without a lady's maid, propriety would have restricted Emily from soliciting the assistance of a male servant. Thus, Annette is needed to actualize Emily's escape: Annette resolves the problem of how Emily will leave.

In addition, Annette's ability to communicate with Emily freely leads to the latter's investigation of several objects in the castle rumored to have supernatural qualities. When, on the night of their arrival at the castle, Annette and Emily encounter the black veil, Annette positively refuses to look upon it or even stay in its presence, avowing that she has "heard there is something very dreadful belonging to it—and that it has been covered up in black *ever since*—and that nobody has looked at it for a great many years" (216). The diction here points quite clearly to Annette's role as conveyor: Annette "heard there is something very dreadful" beneath the veil. Because she has "heard" this, we see how she is connected to networks of information within the castle. Annette's connection to such networks allows her to convey such knowledge to Emily, which in this case leads Emily to investigate because, despite her fear, Annette gives no concrete reason for its origin. According to Sandro Jung, Annette "prompts Emily to uncover the wax model; Emily is therefore encouraged in adopting an experimental approach to gaining knowledge, one significant step in the development of her scientific and epistemological curiosity" (5). For Jung, Annette refuses to act scientifically and makes Emily do so instead. We can see that "the conversation of Annette, together with the circumstance of the veil" (230), causes Emily to lift the veil and "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" (230). Jung, however, argues that this moment leads to the development of Emily's scientific inclinations despite her failure to recognize the figure as a natural object or to contain her fear, a failure which leads to her fainting. In other words, while Jung's argument eventually comes to fruition, Emily is initially led to superstitious thought through Annette's information. We as readers are more inclined to believe Emily. If she encounters something and faints as a result, we will credit the frightful nature of the object more readily than we would if Annette or some other character did so. Thus, Radcliffe maneuvers Annette in order to lead Emily to discoveries that reveal the natural substance of things such as the wax figure while polluting Emily's mind—and the readers' minds as well—with superstitious possibilities.

Another important aspect of Annette's effect on readers is her anachronistic temporal implications as they work with eighteenth-century expectations. Though *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is set in 1584, Radcliffe ignores

time and builds a world which parallels the mode of the eighteenth century. She accomplishes this building through characters such as Annette. Up until the eighteenth century, it was typical for waiting women (the equivalent of lady's maids) to be of near equal status with the family, to be educated similarly, and to live and eat with the family. However, in the eighteenth century, this model was changed, and lady's maids were recruited from families of lesser status and increasingly relegated to the servants' hall. When Verezzi pursues Emily, she encounters her maid and proceeds "towards Annette's room, which was in a distant part of the castle" (400). We can see that the lady's maid sleeps apart from Emily and does not eat with her, though she does serve Emily food: "Annette brought dinner into her chamber" (263). Here we see that Annette is doing the typical work of a lady's maid, providing her mistress with whatever she needs. The chore of bringing "dinner into her chamber" encapsulates her status as a servant; Emily partakes of the fare while Annette stands by and chats until Emily finishes, whereupon the maid "began slowly to clear the table" (265). Merely the bringer of food and the clearer of "the table," Annette is not actually eating with Emily, but waiting for her to finish. Thus, they are physically separated. Radcliffe makes clear that there is a physical distance between Emily and Annette that is a result of their social divide. By the late eighteenth century, when Radcliffe was writing, this function of the lady's maid as separate from her mistress was the norm in England. Radcliffe employs modern models to familiarize the setting of her novel. Richard S. Albright uses historical criticism to argue that Radcliffe creates a new way of viewing time. He points out that Radcliffe unites feudal and modern, evoking the past through naming the year 1584, yet having her characters act in eighteenth-century ways. Albright claims that, as a ruin, the castle represents the progress of natural forces through time that cause sublimity; moreover, the descriptions of the castle take up readers' time and move the revision of temporality outside the text into the reader's experience of the novel by causing them to spend time contemplating the scenes. For Albright, Radcliffe's main move is her deconstruction of linear time in a way that makes the past, present, and future into the three-fold present, thus creating a novel both anticipatory of the future and evocative of the past in one moment: the present. We can see that by setting the novel as a mystery in historical times, Radcliffe achieves Iser's tenet of "activating the reader's

imagination” (588) through not revealing all. Lacking knowledge, the reader begins to fill gaps on their own. As Albright asserts, “Despite the reference to the year... we cannot really locate the novel in a particular era, and Radcliffe ignores references to particular historical events of the period” (50). In other words, the novel is not truly located in 1584. Radcliffe ignores the historical setting to usher readers into her world of mystery, which conforms—as seen through the example of Annette—to the standards of the eighteenth century.

Radcliffe, the “master” of the text, creates a world wherein Annette serves not only as lady’s maid to Emily but also to Radcliffe herself, using Annette’s position and ability to build suspense in a way that mirrors the behavior expected of lady’s maids in the eighteenth century. Moreover, Annette functions as a lady’s maid not only as a character but also in the way she fulfills purpose within the text by increasing readers’ sense of danger. Because the servant must always be present when needed and absent when undesired, the invention of the back stairs for houses at the beginning of the eighteenth century made the servant, as Mark Girouard puts it, “if not invisible, very much less visible” (138). Similarly, Annette is only present in the text when performing a function for Radcliffe; in these moments, the reader must “use his imagination to synthesize the information given him” as Iser asserts (589). In practice, the reader must put together clues in the text to discover meaning. Rather than relying on Annette for answers, readers must work to fill the gaps her incomplete information leaves—thus, her absence activates readers’ imagination. Indeed, sometimes Annette’s absence is more instrumental than her presence, for when Annette professes her discomfort, claiming that if Emily were “so sleepy, you would not desire me to sit up with you” (239) and begs leave, Emily initially does not want her to go. Annette is tired, but Emily still derives comfort from her presence—we can see how important Annette is for her mistress’s peace of mind. At length, Emily “took no further notice of the subject, and, after some struggle with imaginary fears, her good nature prevailed over them so far, that she dismissed Annette for the night” (240). Upon reading of these “imaginary fears,” we may be inclined to believe that Emily’s apprehensions are merely fanciful worries. But Radcliffe uses Annette’s absence and Emily’s concern to foreshadow a frightful moment wherein a stranger in the dark alarms Emily: “springing towards the bed, Emily discovered—Count Morano!” who at-

tempts to kidnap her after his failed coaxing of her affections (241). Here the punctuation—the dash and the exclamation mark—highlight the fright of such a meeting. The word “springing” indicates the suddenness of movement; this language adds to the startling nature of this midnight encounter and the swift approach of assault. Without Annette, Emily’s circumstances, should such a meeting be known, become much more dire: she could be forced to marry Count Morano because he was “springing towards the bed” in her chamber. If his presence near or on her bed were discovered, her reputation would be ruined and she would have few options left outside of marriage. This encounter is facilitated by Annette’s retreat from her lady’s presence, a move that serves Emily ill, but Radcliffe well. Both present and absent as desired, Annette becomes Radcliffe’s lady’s maid as the author furthers her story and the tension readers experience as they anticipate Emily’s fate.

Radcliffe also uses Annette to make Emily’s thoughts and concerns appear weightier to the reader. When Emily believes that “Madame Montoni might be there confined” in a remote and unfamiliar reach of the castle, she perseveres in her quest despite her fear (297). Radcliffe makes it clear that Emily is proceeding on her own to find her aunt, having determined that “no person was in the corridor” (296), hoping that she is at the most “confined.” Because “no person” is in her path, she ventures out alone. Upon discovering Annette, Emily attempts to ascertain whether Annette might “possibly, know something of the situation of Madame Montoni, or direct her to the turret” (297). Emily’s worries are conveyed through the rational third-person narrator, a literary choice which makes Emily appear to be calm and composed. Annette is the first person she turns to for information about her aunt’s situation, as she fears asking assistance from others. Greatly concerned for her aunt, Emily’s thoughts contrast Annette’s, who, after having been locked up in a room for one night without food so she would be safe from battle, exclaims she “shall die of hunger; I have had nothing to eat since dinner!” (298). Annette speaks in dialogue, so we can hear her worries from her own mouth; we can see that she is exaggerating the extent of her hunger, of which she claims she “shall die.” Moreover, though she was locked up to be saved from battle, she does not express relief at her escape or think of how she might have died, but instead focuses on her immediate concern: her hunger. When juxtaposed with Annette’s frivolous concerns,

Emily's worry and Madame Montoni's plight become magnified. Going without food is a trying experience, but when contrasted with possible torture or death, it appears trivial. Maximillian E. Novak insists that when Emily removes the black veil over the wax figure, "Mrs. Radcliffe heightens the horrific effect by having Emily's thoughts dwell on the scene with anxiety" (61). However, it may be argued that whenever Emily has cause to contemplate scenes of horror, such as the blood that convinces her that Madame Montoni is murdered, her terror is further heightened by the contrast with Annette's milder worries. According to Iser, "The efficacy of a literary text is brought about by the apparent evocation and subsequent negation of the familiar" (593). We as readers experience the importance of the text through defamiliarization. In Novak's formalistic reader-response approach, he claims that we find the Gothic in the terrifying experiences that stick with the characters, as when Emily is transfixed by the horrific sights under the various veils she encounters. Novak suggests that Montoni's use of power to cause pain or fear in others, as well as his pleasure in so doing, provides a glimpse of evil in the world. The disgusting corpses, dungeons, and other expected horrors are what create the sense of the grotesque for us when we read Gothic fiction. For Novak, the central question is not the supernatural or lack thereof in Radcliffe's work, but what makes the Gothic such; the encounters with the grotesque which Radcliffe incorporates are essential. However, despite his claims, Novak does not consider Annette's involvement in the facilitation of the grotesque in the text. We can see that Radcliffe enhances Emily's fear and horror at her aunt's imagined fate by placing it alongside a more commonplace worry: food. Annette, concerned with her hunger, has more short-term worries than Emily; her relatively bearable circumstance serves to elevate Emily's plight and causes her anxieties to appear more important than Annette's. Thus, Radcliffe places Annette below her mistress to increase the importance of Emily's concerns, as well as to negate the familiar and make the reader think about Emily's problem: If her aunt is dead, Emily will be under Signor Montoni's power with no hope for a savior. Perhaps she will be trapped for the rest of her life. Annette is merely worried about food. The disparity between their circumstances aids Radcliffe in casting Emily and her anxieties as more important than Annette and her much less dire worries.

Annette also serves to contrast romantic development within the novel. Upon deciding to marry Ludovi-

co, Annette never second-guesses her choice; even when it is suggested that Ludovico is in danger of dying from his battle wounds, she exclaims, "Holy Saints! Why he will not die, surely!" (303). The word "surely" implies certainty and reveals Annette's reluctance to entertain any hints that her marriage plans may go awry. On the other hand, Emily experiences long separations from Valancourt, and though she also fears his death, questions the wisdom of accepting his proposal through her father's death, her aunt's critique, Signor Montoni's machinations, and the Count de Villefort's counsel. According to Charlie Bondhus, Radcliffe allows her heroines to overcome sensibility (excessive emotion) through the benevolent patriarchal force of the sublime. As Emily is warned by her father, who is connected to sublime nature, about the dangers of excessive sensibility, her ability to maintain fortitude and equanimity is similarly reinforced by her resisting of villains. In Bondhus' view, Radcliffe utilizes the sublime as a patriarchal force that shapes Emily into a proper eighteenth-century woman who follows proper patterns for courtship and marriage. Indeed, we can see that authority figures cause Emily to doubt her emotional involvement with Valancourt at various points, and Emily, unlike Annette, is often questioned or advised in regards to whom she ought to marry. But Bondhus neglects to consider the other romance Radcliffe presents: Annette never doubts her selection of Ludovico; though she occasionally fears for Ludovico's life, she selects him as her life partner and is never forced to question whether he is an acceptable match. On the other hand, as Mary Laughlin Fawcett contends, "Each time Emily or the reader is admitted actually or vicariously, into the private apartments of married people, she finds open anger or wasting silence" (485). Indeed, with the exception of her parents' relationship, the examples of marriage we see among individuals of similar class are all fraught with struggle. The problems that plague those marriages are the ones Emily desires to escape, leading to her inner struggle on the matter of her marriage to Valancourt. Annette, however, faces no such struggle, and her uncomplicated romance contrasts Emily's trials, allowing Radcliffe to demonstrate the problems upper-class women of the eighteenth century had when selecting a suitable partner. Despite her place of privilege, Emily lacks of freedom; this contrasts with Annette's ability to make her own choices. The text often suggests marriages in the upper class were fraught with trials in ways that those of lower-class women's were not. Therefore, Annette's status illuminates the dif-



ferent ways women in master and servant classes negotiated their lives through marriage.

In the eighteenth century, readers would anticipate and be prepared for lady's maids to have trustworthy characters and keep the secrets of their mistresses silent. This is a task which Annette fails, and she can use her failure to help Emily as well as harm her. Indeed, Radcliffe often alludes to Annette's inability to keep silent during the sequence in which Count Morano attempts to kidnap Emily. While planning to see her aunt, who is in confinement, Emily reflects "[t]hat the circumstance, which Barnardine had so solemnly enjoined her to conceal, he had himself told to so indiscreet an hearer as Annette, appeared very improbable" (316). Clearly, Emily understands that Annette is unlikely to be entrusted with any secret because of her loose tongue. For example, she tells Emily of several "secrets," such as plots underway in the castle and Montoni's "odd goings-on—all these, as I told Ludovico," which "can bode no good. And he bid me hold my tongue" (275). We can see that though her silence was enjoined, Annette talked anyway. However, Annette discovered the secret not through Barnardine but through another unidentified individual, through whose protected identity "Annette shewed, that she *could* keep a secret" (318). So, even though Annette has a tendency to reveal secrets, her loose tongue saves Emily from the trouble it brings. As Elizabeth Veisz asserts when discussing the hidden things in the castle, "Annette's anterior knowledge of the portrait reveals her superior knowledge of the castle, making her a necessary ally for the heroine's survival and escape" (82). Annette's understanding of the castle and its constituents, combined with her tendency to reveal secrets, becomes essential in foiling Barnardine's scheme. In telling her story, Annette discloses that she disregarded Emily's orders to stay put, and, having "heard enough of his secret...determined to be even with him, and to save you, too, ma'amselle" had to "find my way through the passage under the chapel" (327). Annette then decided to "save" her mistress through listening to "his secret" and struggles to "find her way" through the underground passage on her own. Facing the passage "under the chapel" in the dark, she displays both loyalty and courage. Upon learning the secret, Annette's loose tongue is crucial; she never hesitates to expose the secret, and uses her knowledge of the castle to aid her mission. Therefore, Annette's inability to keep secrets is mitigated by her loyalty to Emily, and Radcliffe restores Annette to good standing by using her failing as a virtue.

Despite her failure to keep secrets, Annette demonstrates the premier quality desirable in a lady's maid—loyalty—and gains the ultimate approval of her mistress to become a respected ally. Though Radcliffe uses Annette's silliness, gullibility, and tendency to disclose secrets both to put Emily in danger and extract her from it, she ultimately casts Annette as a lady's maid worthy of the title. Annette's honest concern for Emily and strivings for her success make clear that she is completely loyal. Iser asserts that "implications, worked out by the reader's imagination, set the given situation against a background which endows it with far greater significance than it might have seemed to possess on its own" (584). Essentially, what we see hints at a deeper reality; the clues the text gives us reveal the deeper meanings in acts that might seem simple on the surface. Thus, Emily's honoring Annette at the book's conclusion is not merely a happy ending to the novel, but also a sign of how deep their relationship goes. Towards the end of the novel, after Annette and her relationship with Ludovico proved instrumental in Emily's escape from Udolpho, Emily determines "if it appeared, that his affection was as unchanged as that of the simple and honest Annette, to give her a marriage portion, and settle them on some part of her estate" (588). It is worth noting that Ludovico's rise in position is contingent on how "his affection" appears to Emily: if he continues to seem satisfactory as a partner for Annette, he will be retained and even exalted in position. Emily, then, is looking out for Annette's wellbeing by guarding her from the possibility of a strained marriage, an act which reveals that their relationship is deeper than usual for a mistress and her servant. Through this consideration, Radcliffe shows readers that despite her faults and comic nature, Annette is Emily's valued ally; Emily's gift of house and home proves that she holds Annette in high regard. Though Sandro Jung argues that "Annette, despite her servant status, represents a negative role model against which Emily defines herself throughout her narrated development" (2), in truth Annette is able to negotiate her status as a servant and become indispensable to her mistress. Upper servants, a category in which lady's maids fall, could gain recognition for their loyal service by rising in rank through the successful execution of their tasks. Annette's work as lady's maid is rewarded by being made a housekeeper at "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" (619). In granting Annette a housekeeping post,

Emily demonstrates her great trust and regard, and Radcliffe demonstrates that women need allies across classes. Despite social divides, women can cultivate mutual respect and friendship with one another.

Emily's trust reveals the depth of her relationship with Annette and proves that Annette has fulfilled her role as female ally. Radcliffe shows that Annette feels at the Chateau-le-Blanc that "she had not met with any place, which charmed her so much, since she read the fairy tales; nay, that the fairies themselves, at their nightly revels in this old hall, could display nothing finer" (619). Annette's service is rewarded by a place of honor and a role that exceeds even the plentiful fairytales she has read or the horrors she has endured. This is her reward for rescuing Emily and for leading the readers through what Iser refers to as "elements of indeterminacy" (588). Such elements raise questions or present mysteries, gaps which readers must work to fill by engaging with the text by imagining of the unwritten. Throughout the book, Radcliffe has Annette generate suspense in the novel and introduce ideas or rumors that cause the reader to imagine what the explanation might be: Annette constantly forces the reader to fill gaps and imagine possible solutions to points of indeterminacy, even as she leads to or provides the solution to such gaps. Annette is critical as a female ally because she is the only way Emily can escape the pressures of men. However, Radcliffe also says that "Annette looked down" (618) on the sight of Emily's wedding, using the symbolism of being above others to show that Annette is in a place of respect. Without Annette, Emily would lack information about the events in the castle and a means to escape it—thus, Emily rewards Annette for her loyalty. The implication of Annette looking down, though, is that she has risen to a place, at least in relation to Emily, that gives her status beyond her class; through her loyalty, she has transcended the role of servant and become a trusted ally. Therefore, we see that Annette is not extraneous but crucial, and that cross-class relationships can be critical for women when navigating life's perils.

Annette is a trustworthy companion because she stays with Emily through many troubles. Through her significance, she illustrates how social divides can be detrimental to building close relationships between women. When Barnardine attempts to kidnap Emily, not only is Annette reluctant that Emily be alone with him and is the one to get help from Montoni, but she also stays by her side afterwards when Emily is overcome

with illness and is unable to recognize others: "This girl, as affectionate as she was simple, lost in these moments all her former fears of remaining in the chamber, and watched alone by Emily, during the whole night" (326). Here Radcliffe demonstrates how strong Annette and Emily's connection is by showing that Annette will discard "all her former fears" for Emily. She has a strong emotional connection to Emily, and "as affectionate as she was simple" is able to lose her fears because she cares more than a normal servant might about their employer. It is particularly significant that Annette stays with her "the whole night." Night is not only a symbol of darkness or negativity, but a time in the novel during which many troubles occur, such as attempted kidnapping and battles. Annette is loyal, then, to the extent of braving the threat of death. Radcliffe further develops Annette and Emily's strong bond through the fact that though Emily cannot recall Signor Montoni, she calls Annette "by name," hoping Annette will stay with her (325). Radcliffe thus reveals that Annette is important as a loyal confidante to Emily, a role she can maintain due to her status as a servant.

"The work is more than the text" according to Iser (583), and consists of the meeting of the readers' imaginations and the literal text to form a new creation. We must realize, though, that Emily's need for an ally cannot be met by a man because it would not be plausible to eighteenth-century readers. Neither can it be a woman like Emily, a woman from the upper class, because such a woman would also be restricted. Though Annette is of a lower class than Emily, Radcliffe critiques how social divides can prevent women from building the close relationships they need by showing how Emily needs Annette. Radcliffe casts Annette as a worthy confidante and ally for Emily and shows that relationships across class divides can provide women with more information and ability to make their own decisions. In the end, the barriers put between women by patriarchal society must be crossed for women to gain agency in their own lives.

Ultimately, then, Annette is a lady's maid worthy of her title, a servant who fulfills her role according to eighteenth-century standards. Radcliffe masterfully creates a world that opens for Annette when her participation is required for the development of the narrative. Despite her marginal role and status as a servant, Annette becomes an integral part of the novel, introducing elements of the supernatural and providing opportunities for terrors to prey on Emily's mind. Annette functions not only

through her presence in the narrative but through her absence as well. In the end, Annette fulfills her role and is rewarded with a new post. The text critiques class divisions between women by showing the necessity of their relationship. Annette and Emily are able to overcome the barriers of social expectations that would prevent most eighteenth-century women from becoming allies; through this crossing of class borders, we can see that women in any era, whether the sixteenth, eighteenth, or twenty-first centuries, need to build trust and respect across class barriers. While Annette triggers and closes multiple gaps in the literary text, she also illustrates how women can overcome societal pressures from class hierarchies and male dominant figures if they allow themselves to ignore social strictures and work together. Radcliffe gives us a clear picture of how patriarchal power can imprison women, but she also illuminates a world in which, through cross-class women's relationships, we can overcome such situations. Through Annette, Radcliffe helps us imagine a world where women can accomplish much when they have the ability to escape the gaze of men, and that working together gives women more options than staying divided can.

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