

Mortal Sounds and Sacred Strains: Ann Radcliffe's Incorporation of Music in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

Thesis

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Abstract

The British gothic novel arose during the second half of the eighteenth century, amidst the effects of the Enlightenment and the beginning of Romanticism. The gothic genre drew on a conception of a superstitious past, depicting marvelous and otherworldly subject matter in order to express growing feelings of anxiety caused by urbanization, revolution, and a displacement of religion. In evoking these anxieties, gothic writing also drew on commonly held aesthetic theories of the eighteenth century, most notably the theory of the sublime. In order to enhance the experience of sublime emotions in her readers, the gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) incorporated descriptions of sound and music in her novels, particularly during apparently supernatural scenes. Radcliffe was the first gothic author to implement music and sound in this way, and her sonic descriptions had profound effects on the writing of gothic authors that came after her. Radcliffe's descriptions of sound and music in her 1794 novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, bear similarities with the mimetic techniques of eighteenth-century art music that was being performed in London during Radcliffe's lifetime. Biographical information indicates that Radcliffe was fond of attending musical performances in late eighteenth-century London, and was familiar with mimetic musical techniques that were understood by aesthetic theorists to evoke sublime emotions. Two compositions in particular, Antonio Sacchini's *Armida* and George Frederic Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, display musical characteristics that are similar to those that Radcliffe describes. These

similarities indicate that her writing was likely influenced by the performances she heard in late eighteenth-century Britain.

Dedication

To my parents.

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Introduction

By 1797, the gothic novel had grown exceedingly popular. A review from that year pokes fun at the genre by describing all of those characteristics which had become germane to it, including “bleeding bodies,” “skeletons,” and the “uttering of piercing groans.” In the process, the reviewer calls attention to another wildly popular phenomenon of the late eighteenth century, the music of Handel:

Cold hands grasp us in the dark, statues are seen to move, and suits of armour walk off their pegs, while the wind whistles louder than any of Handel’s choruses, and the still air is more melancholy than the dead march in Saul.¹

The anonymous author of this passage drew attention to an aspect of gothic literature that many contemporary musicologists and literary critics have overlooked: the function of sound in the gothic novel. In his incorporation of sound into his list of the gross, standardized excess that haunts gothic writing, this author also gives us insight into the musical tradition of late eighteenth-century England. His casual connection of the anthropomorphized “whistling wind” and “melancholy air” to the stately ceremonial music of Handel may be a clue as to why descriptions of sound, and, as we shall see, music, were being incorporated into gothic literature.

¹ *Spirit of the Public Journals. Being an Impartial Selection of the Most Exquisite Essays & Jeux D'Esprits, Principally Prose, that Appear in the Newspapers and Other Publications*, ed. Stephen Jones, vol. 1-4, (London: Printed for James Ridgway, 1797-1800), 227-28, quoted in Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (New York: Manchester University Press), 1995.

The appearance of music in the eighteenth-century novel is not rare. In non-gothic literature from this period, young female characters are often depicted as proficient musicians on the harpsichord or piano, mirroring a common expectation of educated ladies in European social life during the 1700s. Authors used music in these situations to indicate the moral or educated qualities of a character. Gothic authors went beyond using music to depict morality. They extended the function of music in their writing so that it also expressed the emotions of characters and heightened the emotions of readers.² Music was not incorporated by the initial gothic writers, however. Horace Walpole, the author of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), usually considered to be the first English novel of the gothic genre, does include some descriptions of sound in his gothic writing, but he does not utilize music.

The first gothic author to incorporate sound and music so completely and with obvious purpose into her writing was the British novelist Ann Radcliffe. Despite Radcliffe's pervasive influence on later gothic writers' incorporation of music into their own literature, descriptions of the audible in Radcliffe's writing have remained curiously overlooked. Perhaps sound has been overshadowed by the masterful way in which Radcliffe describes, or intentionally refrains from describing, the visible. Radcliffe's portrayal of the spectral and sublime visual elements is certainly an accomplishment in its

² Pierre Dubois, *Music in the Georgian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 8.

own right. Yet we should recognize that characters throughout Radcliffe's novels are consistently haunted and affected not only by the visible, but also by the audible. In fact, the description of sound is often made all the more powerful when the sound's visible source is obscured.³

Radcliffe published five gothic novels between 1789 and 1797. One more was published posthumously in 1826. All of her novels include extended descriptions of music and sound, and all provided important models for subsequent gothic writers. It was her fourth publication, the 1794 *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, that sparked her popularity. Most of the examples in the discussion that follows have been drawn from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

Sound, and more specifically, music, is closely tied to Radcliffe's famous descriptions of nature. She often uses musical terms such as melody, harmony, and cadence in her descriptions of breathtaking mountain views. Words denoting audible human sounds also describe other settings, especially dark and stormy scenes. These descriptions contribute to the perceived eeriness of the gothic setting especially because they are often preceded by silence. The introduction of sound to an otherworldly silence implies an unnatural presence when the sound is described in a way that gives it human

³ Noelle Louise Chao, "Musical Letters: Eighteenth-Century Writings on Music and the Fictions of Burney, Radcliffe, and Scott" (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2007), 194, ProQuest (AAT 3299543).

agency.⁴ Waves emit a hollow murmur, thunder mutters, and “long groans seem to pass in the air.”⁵ This combination of “humanized” sounds with scenery can produce a sense of sublime terror in a character, as it does in the passage below:

... the silence of the night was broken only by the murmuring of woods, that waved far below, or by distant thunder... He viewed, with emotions of awful sublimity, the long volumes of sulphureous clouds, that floated, along the upper and middle regions of the air, and the lightnings that flashed from them, sometimes silently, and, at others, followed by sullen peals of thunder, which the mountains feebly prolonged, while the whole horizon, and the abyss, on which he stood, were discovered in the momentary light.⁶

The wildness and terror of Radcliffe’s visual description of the storm is enhanced by the humanized “murmuring” woods and “sullen” thunder in this example. Radcliffe does more than enrich her settings with sound, however. She incorporates music throughout her novels in a calculated way in order to blur the definitiveness of these natural settings, and to introduce the possibility of the otherworldly. In other words, Radcliffe often employs music to enhance a theme most essential to the gothic novel: the supernatural.

In her investigation of the sonic gothic through multiple media, from television to literature, Isabella Van Elferen defines gothic music as “the sound of the uncanny, operating on various simultaneous levels that correspond with the levels that can be

⁴ Isabella Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 19.

⁵ Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794; New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 526, 564, 412.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 565-66.

distinguished in the gothic genre at large.”⁷ In media such as television or video games, sound and music can be applied both diegetically (when the source of a sound is present in the narrative world) and non-diegetically (when a sound originates outside the narrative) to effectively “haunt” an audience.⁸

Written descriptions of music that accompany a literary narrative can also be effective at inducing an unsettled feeling in readers, and they can imply an even greater sense of haunting than audible music used in television and video games. The fact that music in the gothic novel is a virtual, written sonic event rather than an actual sonic event adds to its spectral qualities.⁹ Within the novel, music must be described using language and thus cannot be heard by the reader. When the source of diegetic music in the narrative is obscured from a character it is doubly obscured from the reader: he or she cannot hear the sound, and cannot tell where the sound is coming from. This phenomenon might bear some resemblance to what R. Murray Schafer has called “schizophonia,” the separation of a sound from its living source through technology. When sound is mediated through literature, it is extended not through analog or digital technology, but through writing. Written sound is silent; the un-naturalness of its non-living source becomes apparent to the reader. Described sound is therefore a remarkably advantageous tool in

⁷ Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 3.

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ Ibid., 33.

gothic writing, which always strives to blur the boundaries of the supernatural and the natural. Van Elferen confirms this point: “Allusions to sound in literature can suggest but never confirm presence, and therefore the writing of sound is supremely hospitable to the uncanny.”¹⁰ To immerse herself in the imagined music of the novel, the reader must use her own imagination to experience the music being described, and her own history and “personal specters” come to bear on the sounds she imagines.¹¹ In the reader’s act of remembering, time is stretched and the past is evoked; the boundaries between supernatural and natural, and between past and present, are transgressed.

The Gothic Sensibility and Ann Radcliffe

The gothic novel arose during the second half of the eighteenth century, amidst the effects of the Enlightenment and the beginning of Romanticism. By this time, Enlightenment rationalism had established a perceived separation between a naturalist worldview founded upon reason, and a supernaturalist worldview founded on traditional authority.¹² The emphasis on classical values during the Enlightenment influenced a view of the past as being mired in superstition and wildness, a stark contrast to the rational present. Remnants of the past were thought still to exist in an oral culture of the folk,

¹⁰ Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 26.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 70.

which was understood as subordinate to a literate, urban society. Throughout the course of the eighteenth century, the perceived break between the superstitious and the rational, the past and present, and the oral and literate provided an opportunity for the supernatural to become a source of entertainment. An expanding and increasingly literate middle class was eager for diversion in the forms of writing, drama, and music, and these audiences found inspiration in the newly defined magic and superstition. Compilations of folk tales, western and non-western, were used increasingly for literary and theatrical inspiration.¹³ In the last half of the eighteenth century, gothic novelists drew upon these supposed “remnants of the past,” producing grotesque and exaggerated depictions of the marvelous and the otherworldly subject matter in order to express growing feelings of anxiety produced by the effects of urbanization, industrialization, revolution, and a displacement of religion.¹⁴ As Diane Long Hoeveler writes, “It is precisely in this historical gap – between the decline of magic and the rise of science – that the gothic imaginary emerges.”¹⁵ Gothic literature was an attempt “to explain what the Enlightenment left unexplained, [an effort] to reconstruct the divine mysteries that reason had begun to dismantle, to recuperate pasts and histories that offered a permanence and unity in excess

¹³ David J. Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 9.

¹⁴ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 23.

¹⁵ Diane Long Hoeveler, “Anti-Catholicism and the Gothic Imaginary: The Historical and Literary Contexts,” in *Religion in the Age of Enlightenment 3*, ed. Brett C. McNelly (Brooklyn: AMS Press, 2012), 31.

of the limits of rational and moral order.”¹⁶ In evoking these anxieties, gothic writing also drew on commonly held aesthetic theories of the time, most notably the theory of the sublime, which was understood as an experience of immensity that inspired feelings of terror and horror. It was in this context that the writer Ann Radcliffe worked.

Radcliffe was born Ann Ward on July 9, 1764 in London, the only child of Ann Oates and William Ward, a haberdasher. Her parents were not wealthy, but her mother had many respectable and well-off relatives, with whom Radcliffe resided for long periods of time while growing up. Radcliffe thus spent the formative period of her life moving between the houses of her relations in Bungay, London, St. Asaph, and Surrey. One of these relatives was Radcliffe’s grand-uncle, Dr. John Jebb, a medical doctor and political and social reformer who advocated for religious liberty, abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, and freedom for the American Colonies. Jebb was widely read, and Radcliffe may have been affected not only by Jebb’s politics, but also by his own favorite writers. In particular, Jebb may have introduced Radcliffe to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s writings, and his fondness for and expertise in Arabic probably provided inspiration for Radcliffe’s inclusion of Arabic legends in a scene at the Chateau le Blanc in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Radcliffe stayed with Jebb for numerous periods of time between the years of

¹⁶ Botting, *Gothic*, 23.

1771 and 1786, both when he was living in Bungay and after he moved to London in 1776 to begin his medical practice.¹⁷

Her uncle's recommended readings were not the only literary works to have had an effect on Radcliffe in the early part of her life. Though Radcliffe appears not to have been widely read, those authors she did read, she read thoroughly. As her biographer Rictor Norton puts it, "she mined a narrow valley deeply," sticking primarily to pre-Romantic poets and Shakespeare.¹⁸ In fact, her inclusion of English and Italian literary references throughout her novels can be taken as something of a statement, considering the context in which she lived. Although male authors of the eighteenth century often included references to serious literature, usually with classical allusions, female writers were denied a classical education and thus restricted to "a second-class literature of merely domestic reference."¹⁹ Radcliffe, however, took full advantage of being raised by scholarly guardians, and quoted liberally from her favorite writers. She continued to explore these few favored readings thoroughly, but Norton suggests that she did not expand the breadth of her reading after the age of sixteen or seventeen.²⁰ Additionally, she seems to have favored older works, for in her novels she rarely alludes to anything written after 1782.

¹⁷ Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

The revival of Shakespeare during Radcliffe's life had a profound influence on her novels. According to Norton, Radcliffe could have acquired the writings of Shakespeare, as well as those of Ludovico Ariosto and Torquato Tasso, from the libraries of London while she was growing up. This is an especially important conjecture, for Ariosto and Tasso became her favorite poets. Radcliffe quotes Shakespeare more often than any other author in her novels, and she incorporates the words of James Thomson, John Milton, William Collins, and James Beattie in short statements at the beginning of chapters and throughout her texts. While she does not quote Tasso or Ariosto directly, she does refer to the authors in her novels.²¹ Thomas Noon Talfourd, who wrote a memoir about Radcliffe shortly after her death, also attests to her love of Latin and Greek classics. It is noteworthy that he remarks upon her desire to hear these texts read out loud:

She was fond of listening to any good verbal sounds, and would often desire to hear passages from the Latin and Greek classics, requiring at intervals the most literal translations, that could be given, however much the version might lose in elegance by the exactness.²²

Radcliffe's desire to listen to these texts adds to the evidence of her being particularly sensitive to her auditory surroundings, a characteristic that may have influenced her decision to include a great deal of music and sound in her novels.

²¹ Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 49.

²² Thomas Noon Talfourd, "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe," preface to *Gaston de Blondville, or The Court of Henry III; St. Alban's Abbey; Posthumous Works; Memoir*, ed. Henry Colburn, 4 vols. (1826; Nineteenth Century Collections Online, 2015), 100.

The influence of Ariosto and Tasso on Radcliffe is notable because eighteenth-century readers considered the works of these writers to be romances. Originating in the late Middle Ages, romances were long narratives that incorporated supernatural events and exotic adventures. Romances began to be imported into England from France in the late seventeenth century, where they affected both the development of the gothic novel and the growing fascination with oral poetry and ballads in England and Scotland that continued into the nineteenth century.²³ Despite the popularity of the romances, however, many critics in the middle of the eighteenth century looked with contempt on the romance's magical plotlines, understanding the genre as morally corrupt and thus distinct from the novel, a genre based in realism. According to mid-eighteenth-century understanding, the purpose of the novel was to portray real life, "providing guidance in the ways of the world rather than extravagant excursions of the imagination."²⁴ Conversely, romances were thought to encourage "readers' credulity and imagination, and in blurring the boundaries between supernatural and illusory dimensions and natural and real worlds, romances loosened the moral and rational structures that ordered everyday life."²⁵ Nevertheless, firm distinctions between the categories of the romance and the novel were increasingly difficult to define as the eighteenth century progressed. Writing in the late eighteenth century, Radcliffe cleverly blurred the boundaries between

²³ Botting, *Gothic*, 23-24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

these conceptions of the romance and the novel. She did so by using rational explanations to account for the apparently supernatural happenings in her novels. Despite the fact that in most of her narratives many events appear to have supernatural origins, Radcliffe almost always reveals the rational, natural causes that lie behind these apparently supernatural happenings.

Ann Radcliffe published her first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, in early 1789, but it was not widely reviewed. One critic assumed the author was a man because he “perceived more action than sentiment in its pages.”²⁶ Others suggested that the novel would be amusing to readers who were fascinated by the “marvellous,” its principal goal being to “elevate and surprise” its readers.²⁷ The novel became more popular as the appetite for the gothic grew, but it was not published with Radcliffe’s name on the cover until its third edition in 1799. Indeed, it seems that Radcliffe’s first novel met the same fate that other gothic literature would encounter in the latter half of the eighteenth century. As Fred Botting points out, gothic texts were generally condemned as “trashy” because of the threat they posed to “virtue, propriety and domestic order.”²⁸ Radcliffe’s later novels would become exceptions to this rule.

By 1790, Radcliffe published her second novel, *A Sicilian Romance*, which displayed her increasing skill in writing. Years later, an obituary for Radcliffe claimed

²⁶ Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 57.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Botting, *Gothic*, 22.

that *A Sicilian Romance* “established her fame as an elegant and original writer.”²⁹ This novel led Sir Walter Scott to define Radcliffe as “the first poetess of romantic fiction.”³⁰ Imitation of *A Sicilian Romance* was not confined to literature only, but spread to other media as well, particularly French opera:

The novel had an immediate impact even in France, where it influenced Marsollier’s *Camille, ou le souterrain*, an opera which Matthew Gregory Lewis saw in September 1791, and which was to influence the scene of Antonia in the crypt in his novel *The Monk* five years later.³¹

With the publication of *A Sicilian Romance* it is possible to see the quick exchange that took place between the theatrical and literary genres of the time. Not only did *A Sicilian Romance* inspire Marsollier’s French opera, but it was also adapted into the English opera *Sicilian Romance; or, The Apparition of the Cliff* by Henry Siddons, first performed in May of 1794 to a full theatre at Covent Garden in London. *A Sicilian Romance* inspired an increase in gothic literature production by other authors that continued through the 1790s.

Norton and Talfourd both suggest that Ann Radcliffe began writing her novels out of boredom. William Radcliffe was a writer himself, and it appears that he was

²⁹ Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 59.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. This is not the only instance in which Radcliffe would influence Lewis. After reading *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794, the seventeen-year-old Lewis immediately wrote home to his mother to tell her of how Radcliffe’s novel had affected him. *Udolpho* seems to be the final impetus Lewis needed to publish his own controversial and influential gothic novel, *The Monk*, in 1795.

supportive of his wife's writing habits.³² Ann Radcliffe's writing output increased significantly when her husband took his job at the *Gazetteer*, which required him to stay out late at night. Radcliffe would often write at night, when she could be undisturbed for long periods of time. The novel that followed *A Sicilian Romance*, entitled *The Romance of the Forest*, was immensely popular. Yet not one of her first three novels could match the influence of her fourth publication, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. It was in this novel that her use of sound, and in particular music, would be used to its full advantage.

Radcliffe, Music, and Sound

Clues about Radcliffe's personal experience with music and sound throughout her life are rare, though some information can be gleaned indirectly from her personal writings and her relatives' testimonies. William Radcliffe affirmed his wife's love of music with a statement in her obituary that her two "chief delights were the contemplation of the grander scenes in nature and listening to fine music."³³ Radcliffe's guardians must have also been aware of her partiality to music from a young age. In 1772, Radcliffe was staying with her uncle Thomas Bentley and her aunt Hannah Oates in Chelsea when Bentley and his business partner, Josiah Wedgwood, exchanged

³² William Radcliffe's two major translations were published in the same years as Ann Radcliffe's first two novels.

³³ *The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1824*, vol. 8 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1824), 99.

correspondence about a new organ that Wedgwood had purchased. In the following letter to Bentley, Wedgwood makes a point of offering the organ for Radcliffe to use for a brief time, when it is next sent to London for repair work:

The Organ arrived safe & a most joyful opening of it we have had. About twenty young sprigs were made as happy as mortals could be, & danced, & lilted away, It would have done your heart good to have seen them. I wish we had your little Sprightly Neece with us, but give my love to her & tell her that when the Organ is sent to Town again which It will be soon it shall be sent to Chelsea for her amusement a week or two.³⁴

There is no record of whether Radcliffe ever had the opportunity of experiencing Wedgwood's organ in Chelsea. Yet the fact that Wedgwood would go out of his way to send the instrument to Radcliffe suggests that her musical inclination must have been well-known among her guardians and friends.

We can gather from Radcliffe's diary that she was an attentive listener, not only to music, but to the soundscapes surrounding her. Biographer Aline Grant mentions a diary entry by Radcliffe in which, while eating breakfast with her husband at an inn in Portsmouth, Radcliffe comments on the different timbres of the bells that ring to summon the servants. "It was very diverting to hear the different tones and measure of the ringings... to hear them all ringing together, or in quick succession, in different keys and

³⁴ Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley (March 1772), *Letters of Josiah Wedgwood 1762-1772*, ed. Katherine Eufemia Farrer, vol. 1 (London: Women's Printing Society, Limited, 1903): 449-50, quoted in Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 29.

measure.”³⁵ Radcliffe notes with amusement that she can identify which patrons are more impatient than others: “at the third or fourth summons, the bell was in a downright passion.”³⁶

In her travel diary, Radcliffe describes sound just as much as she describes landscape. For example, when she writes about a night scene in Windsor, she begins with a description of her sublime visual surroundings, which are cloaked in obscurity, then takes into account the veiled sounds she encounters:

We stood in the shade on the north terrace, where a platform projects over the precipice, and beheld a picture perfect in its kind. The massy tower at the end of the east terrace stood up high in shade; but immediately from behind it the moonlight spread, and showed the flat line of wall at the end of that terrace, with the figure of a sentinel moving against the light, as well as a profile of the dark precipice below...No sound but the faint clinking of the soldier’s accoutrements, as he paced on watch, and the remote voices of people turning the end of the east terrace, appearing for a moment in the light there and vanishing... Why is it so sublime to stand at the foot of a dark tower, and look up its height to the sky and the stars?³⁷

This account of lived reality is strikingly similar to to Radcliffe’s fictional prose in its rapt description of a shadowy visual setting, complete with sounds from obscure sources.

In another diary entry, Radcliffe goes so far as to pair a description of a painting with the work of a specific opera composer. Upon encountering a landscape painted by

³⁵ Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany* (1795; New York: George Olms Verlag, 1975), quoted in Aline Grant, *Ann Radcliffe: A Biography* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), 125.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Talfourd, “Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe,” 98.

Claude Lorrain at the Belvedere House in 1805, Radcliffe recounts the experience of its lifelike qualities:

You saw the real light of the sun, you breathed the air of the country, you felt all the circumstances of a luxurious climate on the most serene and beautiful landscape; and, the mind being thus softened, you almost fancied you heard Italian music on the air – the music of Paisiello.³⁸

Here, Radcliffe is most intrigued by the ability of the painting to capture the essence of the real world. Her allusion to the composer Giovanni Paisiello suggests the pastoral music that might accompany such a scene in Italian opera. From Radcliffe's description, it seems she believed that the power of both the landscape painting and the Italian music resided in their ability to replicate aspects of the natural world and human experience.

Music and the Gothic Authors

There is no doubt that gothic literature inspired widespread imitation in eighteenth-century theatrical entertainment. In London, melodramas and operas took their subject matter from gothic novels, and fantastic scenes inspired by gothic literature were used as source material for eighteenth century Phantasmagoria.³⁹ Although many scholars have examined the significance of gothic writing for the performance genres of this time

³⁸ Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, quoted in Grant, *Ann Radcliffe: A Biography*, 122.

³⁹ Aubrey S. Garlington, Jr., "'Gothic' Literature and Dramatic Music in England, 1781-1802," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 15.1 (Spring 1962): 48-49; Anthony Newcomb, "New Light(s) on Weber's Wolf's Glen Scene," *Opera and the Enlightenment*, ed. Thomas Bauman and Marita Petzoldt McClymonds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 75.

period, few have investigated the extent to which gothic authors were influenced by music of their time.

Frits Noske is one of the few who have addressed this question. Nonetheless, his brief consideration of the subject ends with the conclusion that the “Gothic novelist had no model for his enchanting melodies and harmonies.”⁴⁰ Noske acknowledges Radcliffe’s and Matthew Lewis’s fondness for music, but he does not think that any of the music with which they would have been familiar could have instilled in them the idea for a connection between music and the supernatural. Noske notes that Classic music is lighter in tone than gothic literature, stating that “There is hardly a trace of the Gothic in Haydn’s *Seasons* or in Beethoven’s pastoral Symphony, let alone in earlier works of the kind.”⁴¹ Only in the music of nineteenth-century Romantic composers does Noske find a connection with musical descriptions in gothic writing, and he comes to the conclusion that Radcliffe may have been influenced by the increasingly Romantic styles of music she was hearing in the late eighteenth century. Noske qualifies his statement: to our ears, these late eighteenth-century works would not sound like the nineteenth-century music that musicologists have come to categorize as “Romantic.” Yet, despite this small concession, Noske is fairly confident that “music, unlike literature and painting, seems to

⁴⁰ Frits Noske, “Sound and Sentiment: The Function of Music in The Gothic Novel,” *Music & Letters* 62.2 (1981): 175.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

have offered no model for the writers of the tale of terror.”⁴² Noske seems to seek explicitly uncanny themes in the music of the late eighteenth century, and is disappointed when he cannot find them.

The work of musicologists Wye Jamison Allanbrook, Clive McClelland, and David J. Buch suggests a different way of understanding the art music of the late eighteenth century. Composers used mimesis, the art of imitation, to create representations of the supernatural in music throughout the eighteenth century. Allanbrook makes clear that during the late eighteenth century composers were exploiting musical *topoi* that mimicked other music and sounds. These musical characteristics triggered an associative memory in the minds of audience members that allowed them a greater understanding of the music they were experiencing. McClelland and Buch explain that composers used these associative musical elements to evoke supernatural ideas, terror, and sublimity in the minds of audience members, particularly in the context of eighteenth-century opera and oratorio.

Many of Radcliffe’s readers were well-acquainted with the musical traditions of late eighteenth-century London. Just as members of the English middle class would have understood the references that composers were making by incorporating musical elements with specific associations, they also would have understood the musical

⁴² Noske, “Sound and Sentiment: The Function of Music in The Gothic Novel,” 174.

descriptions in Radcliffe's novels to hold specific meaning. Similar to musical mimesis in performance genres of the time, descriptions of music in Radcliffe's novels triggered associations and ideas that were "replete with meaning for the contemporary reader."⁴³ By describing music with which her readers could associate certain historical and cultural contexts, Radcliffe could draw on readers' knowledge of their own society. As Pierre Dubois writes, approaching music through its literary depictions can give us a deeper understanding of the way music has historically been understood in different social contexts. Dubois suggests that

literature can efficiently reveal the way music is perceived and "imagined" (or conceptualized) in a given historical period and cultural context... Music is a practical activity – a social as well as an "embodied practice" – but it also generates, and is constitutive of, a discourse. The discourse on music is an essential part of the way that music is perceived and consequently used, for music, as Lawrence Kramer remarks, is "a historical construction."⁴⁴

Observing how Radcliffe uses music in her writing gives us a better understanding of how she and her contemporaries perceived the musical traditions of her time. Studying the musical traditions with which she was familiar allows us further insight into the reasons behind her use of such rich descriptions of music in her novels.

Chapter 1 begins by exploring the historical and religious context of late eighteenth-century London, and Radcliffe's coming-of-age in this society. In particular,

⁴³ Dubois, *Music in the Georgian Novel*, 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

religion is a major theme throughout the scenes in which Radcliffe incorporates music. The eighteenth-century theoretical writings on the aesthetics of music and sound, with which Radcliffe and eighteenth-century composers were acquainted, are also considered. The first chapter concludes with an examination of literary excerpts that demonstrate Radcliffe's strategies for describing music in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Chapter 2 begins with an exploration of the connections between eighteenth-century musical practices and aesthetic theory. Because of the importance of the aesthetic sublime to both music and gothic literature of the eighteenth century, special attention will be given to the ways in which composers incorporated musical elements to evoke particular facets of sublime experience in their audiences. A discussion of the general similarities between these musical characteristics and Radcliffe's description of music is then followed by speculation about London musical performances that Radcliffe may have seen during her lifetime. Two particular compositions, by Antonio Sacchini and George Frideric Handel, serve as examples of the broader musical context of late eighteenth-century London. These compositions reveal how composers incorporated specific musical characteristics to depict the supernatural and sublime. I hope to show that Radcliffe's pioneering use of music was indeed shaped by the musical performances that she was experiencing in London during the late eighteenth century. By emulating the practices of eighteenth-century composers, Radcliffe drew on elements of auditory mimesis in her writing, strategically using norms of representation that evoked the sublime.

Chapter 1: Descriptions of Music in Radcliffe's Novels

In order to understand how and why Radcliffe described music so often in her novels, we must first understand the religious and artistic context in which she was living. In the second half of the eighteenth century, debates over religious ideologies were manifesting themselves in literature. The English gothic novel was a prime space for the expression of growing anxieties in a society that increasingly emphasized a rational, scientific understanding of the world and distanced itself from a superstitious, Catholic past. Though anti-Catholic sentiment stretched back in England's history to the Protestant Reformation, the overwhelmingly Protestant nation of England still nursed a lingering prejudice against Catholicism in the late eighteenth century. Diane Long Hoeveler shows that Catholicism had an "uncanny tendency to resurrect itself as a continuing dynastic and political threat," in the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, and the attempt of Catholic Spain to invade England in 1779.⁴⁵ In reaction to these fears,

the British imaginary sought to soothe its anxieties by battling the lingering forces of Catholicism by way of proxy, in a genre that was populated by villainous monks, disputed inheritances, sexually perverse devils and nuns, and inquisitions that were the very antithesis of modernity's legal reforms and due process.⁴⁶

Through these manifestations, English gothic novelists could represent the political issues they encountered in their everyday lives, including their distrust of Catholic Church

⁴⁵ Hoeveler, "Anti-Catholicism and the Gothic Imaginary: The Historical and Literary Contexts," 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

officials, debates over transubstantiation, and their fears of being invaded by predominantly Catholic countries.⁴⁷

Critics are quick to point out, however, that even though these themes are commonly present, gothic literature was inconsistent in its ideologies. Religion as evoked in the gothic novel also contained undertones of nostalgia, as “a mode of writing composed by authors who mixed piety with equal parts of political and social anxiety.”⁴⁸ This nostalgia resulted from a dilemma that the “rational” people of the eighteenth-century faced when it came to understanding the material world around them:

The disappearance of God as an explanatory mechanism was, of course, the subject of a good deal of debate but ultimately gave way to the rise of a growing conviction or anxiety that anything in the material world that could not be explained by recourse to either a beneficent God or to natural laws had to have its source in the continuing realm of the demonic and magical.⁴⁹

Despite the desire for rational explanation of the physical world, it was apparent to people in the eighteenth century that not everything around them could be explained rationally. The anxiety caused by this unexplainable gap in understanding the world coincided with a growing Romantic fascination among the educated bourgeoisie with the magical folk stories and superstitious Catholic beliefs belonging to members of a usually rural and illiterate population. The gothic novel was an arena in which these questions and fascinations could be explored, so that Europeans were able “to inhabit an

⁴⁷ Hoeveler, “Anti-Catholicism and the Gothic Imaginary: The Historical and Literary Contexts,” 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 28.

imaginative space in which both the material (science and reason) and the supernatural (God and the devil) coexisted as equally powerful explanatory paradigms.”⁵⁰

Radcliffe was a member of the Church of England. Talfourd tells us that she regularly attended services and showed a “cheerful but sincere piety.”⁵¹ Norton, on the other hand, suggests that she may have been more of a Unitarian at heart, due to Dr. Jebb’s influence. Norton believes that Radcliffe’s descriptions of her heroines’ religious ideologies reflect her own belief system. For instance, in Radcliffe’s *The Italian*, Sister Superior’s relationship to the Roman Catholic Church might have been a mirror of Radcliffe’s own relationship to the Church of England:

Her religion was neither gloomy, nor bigoted; it was the sentiment of a grateful heart offering itself up to a Deity, who delights in the happiness of his creatures; and she conformed to the customs of the Roman church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation.⁵²

Norton explains that Radcliffe perceived God as a sublime deity: “that great first cause, whose nature soars beyond the grasp of human comprehension.”⁵³ To Radcliffe’s characters, God is a being of benevolent consolation invoked for purposes of comfort and looked upon as the “author” of the world.⁵⁴ That many of Radcliffe’s heroines and male

⁵⁰ Hoeveler, “Anti-Catholicism and the Gothic Imaginary: The Historical and Literary Contexts,” 29.

⁵¹ Talfourd, “Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe,” 105.

⁵² Ann Radcliffe. *The Italian*, ed. Frederick Garber (Oxford University Press, 1968; World’s Classics Paperback, 1981), 300, quoted in Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 18.

⁵³ Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, ed. Chloe Chard (Oxford University Press, 1986; World’s Classics Paperback, 1986), 275, quoted in Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 19.

⁵⁴ Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 19.

protagonists are scientifically inclined is another suggestion of Radcliffe's Unitarian views, which tended to value human reason, ethics, and scientific progress.⁵⁵ The two protagonists of *Udolpho* share an interest in science: St. Aubert is a botanist, and Emily is particularly interested in trees, taking care to name them throughout the novel.

It should be noted here that Radcliffe's novels are set in the past, usually in the late sixteenth century in the Catholic countries of southern Europe. According to Robert Miles, this time period fascinated gothic authors. He labels the late sixteenth century the "Gothic cusp... where the medieval is on the wane, and the Enlightenment begins to wax."⁵⁶ Emily and St. Aubert, living in France in 1584, are Catholic. However, throughout the novel they consistently display the characteristics and beliefs of eighteenth-century Protestants, and they are shown to be capable of "resisting superstition in trying circumstances."⁵⁷ As Jacqueline Howard writes,

Radcliffe can people her romance with two sorts of characters: those whose attitudes and practices are those of the old feudal order of tyranny, Machiavellian intrigue and popish superstition... and those who embody the new order of liberty and enlightenment, anachronistically having the fashionable sensibility, manners, and tastes of eighteenth-century England.⁵⁸

One way Radcliffe marks this distinction between superstitious and enlightened views is through the speech habits of the servants in her novels. God, the Holy Virgin, and local

⁵⁵ Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 19-20.

⁵⁶ Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*, 114.

⁵⁷ Jacqueline Howard, "Introduction," *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794; New York: Penguin Books, 2001), xiv.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

saints are audibly invoked by these lower-class characters, and their conspicuous reliance on the traditions of the Catholic Church shows that they are still steeped in a superstitious past. Radcliffe's ambivalence toward these old beliefs manifests itself when her upper-class characters ignore or dismiss the religious invocations of their servants.

Radcliffe's Use of the Sublime

Along with her inclusion of eighteenth-century Protestant beliefs in her novels, Radcliffe also persistently refers to the aesthetic concept of the sublime. As initially described by Longinus, a first-century rhetorician, the sublime characterized grandeur, describing something that could raise the passions to a violent degree.⁵⁹ After the translation of Longinus's writing on the sublime in the late seventeenth century, eighteenth-century theorists expanded upon the idea, describing the sublime as a combination of the feelings of terror and pleasure, usually invoked in the presence of the awe-inspiring grandeur of a natural landscape. The sublime was considered to be greater than mere beauty, producing a stronger effect in the viewer.

Landscape was not the only subject that had the potential to induce this combination of terror and awe in an observer. The divine could produce a sublime effect brought on by terror and awe. In 1704, the poet John Dennis categorized numerous

⁵⁹ Clive McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 10.

beings and events that could inspire terror, including “gods, daemons, hell, spirits and souls of men, ... enchantments, witchcraft, thunder, tempests, raging seas, inundations, torrents,” but noted that the most terrible of all was the wrath of an angry god.⁶⁰ The sublime could be evoked not only by expansive, awe-inspiring landscapes, but also by the awesome terror of supernatural beings and overwhelming natural events. The awe called forth by contemplation of a religious being was thought to cause the faithful to enter a sublime state of spiritual transcendence.

Edmund Burke made a monumental contribution to the conceptualization of the sublime when he published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757. Like earlier theorists of the sublime, Burke proposed that the sublime was the strongest emotion that a person could feel, and it was invoked through terror.⁶¹ Importantly, for Burke, the feeling of terror could be made even stronger through obscurity:

To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary... Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins... affect minds.⁶²

⁶⁰ John Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (London: Printed for George Strahan and Bernard Lintott, 1704), quoted in Andrew Ashfield, and Peter de Bolla, eds., *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 38.

⁶¹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. J.T. Boulton (London, 1757; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 39, quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 11.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 59.

Indeed, Burke believed that words had a greater potential than images for inducing the sublime because words are ambiguous. He recognized that using words to describe a landscape or setting always creates some degree of obscurity: a reader must use her imagination to construct objects or scenery according to how they are described in writing. A mental construction is never complete, and the gaps that exist can be used to inspire terror. This notion of obscurity would play an important role in the writing of Radcliffe and other gothic novelists, as well as in the eighteenth-century understanding of music and the sublime.

It is almost certain that Radcliffe read Burke's treatise.⁶³ She includes Burke's sublime characteristics in her novels, including "solitude, power, terror... greatness or vastness of dimension (as in mountain ranges, the sea, and towers), infinity, grandeur, magnificence, darkness and obscurity," especially in her sweeping and awe-filled descriptions of natural scenery.⁶⁴ Yet it was in portraying obscurity that Radcliffe particularly excelled. She shrouds her supernatural scenes in darkness, allowing sound but obscuring its source.

Radcliffe's decision to use sound to elicit the sublime may have come from her reading of the aesthetic theorists of her time, who were developing a notion of the audible

⁶³ Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 77. Norton states that Radcliffe first refers to Burke by name in her travel diary, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, but he also notes the possibility that she may have first read the treatise in 1790.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

sublime. In the early eighteenth century, Hildebrand Jacob suggested that it was not just the sense of sight that could produce terror in a person, but the sense of hearing as well. In his publication, he listed numerous auditory meteorological effects as examples of the sublime, including “heavy showers; the roaring of the sea; the noise of tempests amongst lofty trees; thunder.”⁶⁵ In 1747, John Baillie referred to music specifically, stating that “all grave sounds, where the notes are long, exalt my mind much more than any other kind; and that wind instruments are the most fitted to elevate; such as the hautboy, the trumpet, and organ.”⁶⁶ Baillie believed that these instruments, in particular, had the ability to elevate the mind of the listener to a sublime state by invoking the emotions of terror and awe.

Although Burke never wrote in any detail about how music could induce the sublime, he did address the role of sound: “Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror... The shouting of multitudes has a similar effect.”⁶⁷ He perceived that sudden and intermittent sounds also instigated sublime feelings:

a sudden beginning, or sudden cessation of sound of any considerable force, has the same power... A low tremulous, intermitting sound... is productive of the sublime. I have already observed that night increases our terror more perhaps than

⁶⁵ Hildebrand Jacob, *The Works* (London: Printed for W. Lewis, 1735), quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 10-11.

⁶⁶ John Baillie, *An Essay on the Sublime* (London: Printed for R. Dodsley, 1747), quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 11.

⁶⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, 82, quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 13.

anything else... Now some low, confused, uncertain sounds, leave us in the same fearful anxiety concerning their causes.⁶⁸

Sudden sounds emitted from visually concealed sources were thus an ideal match for Burke's understanding of terror, obscurity, and the sublime.

In a 1790 publication, Archibald Alison provided an even more specific analysis of how sound was connected to the sublime: he divided sound into four categories, then assessed which sound had the most ability to evoke the sublime. After establishing his four categories as i) loud and low, ii) grave and acute, iii) long and short, and iv) increasing and diminishing, he concluded that "The most sublime of these sounds appears to me to be a loud, grave, lengthened and increasing sound."⁶⁹ These "loud, grave, lengthened and increasing" sounds are certainly present in Radcliffe's novels, especially in the "low sounds," "deep voices," and "hollow tones" that characterize the voices Emily hears in the castle of Udolpho.⁷⁰

After the publication of Burke's treatise, other writers on the sublime began to relate Burke's ideas of sound to music. James Beattie's connection of music to sublime terror is notable:

Musick is sublime when it inspires devotion, courage or other elevated affections: or when by its mellow and sonorous harmonies it overwhelms the mind with

⁶⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, 83, quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 13.

⁶⁹ Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (London & Edinburgh, 1790; Olms: G. Hildesheim, 1968), 247-50, quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 14.

⁷⁰ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 291, 325-26.

sweet astonishment: or when it infuses that pleasing horror... which, when joined to words descriptive of terrible ideas, it sometimes does very effectually.⁷¹

Radcliffe evidently read Beattie's work, as she includes quotations from his writing before some of the chapters in her novels. Beattie's description does seem congruent to the way Radcliffe employs music throughout *Udolpho*, especially in the notion that sublime music inspires (religious) devotion, has the potential to overwhelm the mind, and can infuse a pleasing horror, particularly when joined with words descriptive of terrible ideas.

Music in The Mysteries of Udolpho

Throughout *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe capitalizes on eighteenth-century understandings of religion and the sublime by using music to evoke the past and to refer to something greater than nature. By associating most of her descriptions of music with religion and the sublime, she blurs the boundaries between past and present, and between natural and supernatural. Her decision to use music in this way expands the uncertain space that lies in between these dichotomous terms, thus allowing her to better evoke terror in her readers. The examples below demonstrate how Radcliffe associates religious music with themes of memory, death, obscurity, and the sublime throughout

⁷¹ James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (Dublin: Printed for Mess. Exshaw et al., 1783), 187, quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 14.

Udolpho to elicit in readers a feeling of terror during scenes with implied supernatural elements.

One way in which music manifests itself in *Udolpho* is that peasants sing vesper-hymns, which evoke a sense of the mysterious soundscape of a Catholic past. The following example takes place in Part I of *Udolpho*. The heroine, Emily, and her father, Monsieur St. Aubert, are traveling about France at a leisurely pace for St. Aubert's health. In this particular scene, Emily, her father, and their servant Michael are attempting to reach a town where they can spend the first night on their journey to the Mediterranean Sea. When twilight begins to settle faster than anticipated, the group becomes increasingly nervous. The servant Michael tries to keep his nerves at bay:

Michael seemed endeavouring to keep up his courage by singing; his music, however, was not of a kind to disperse melancholy; he sung, in a sort of chant, one of the most dismal ditties his present auditors had ever heard, and St. Aubert at length discovered it to be a vesper-hymn to his favourite saint.⁷²

Michael tries to ward off the supernatural by singing a religious tune. As Isabella Van Elferen points out, it is not uncommon for religious music to be used in gothic literature to drive evil away, in a kind of exorcism (examples of the “liturgical expulsion of vampires” proliferate in vampire novels, for instance).⁷³ Nonetheless, the expulsion of evil does not seem to be Radcliffe's intention in including this vesper hymn. We are not

⁷² Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 33.

⁷³ Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 23.

told how the hymn makes Michael feel (indeed, it could be raising his spirits), but we do learn that the hymn does not affect St. Aubert and Emily positively. Indeed, it is described as “one of the most dismal ditties his present auditors had ever heard.” Emily and St. Aubert refuse to succumb to superstitious fear despite the dire surroundings. The chanted hymn serves to remind St. Aubert and Emily (and the eighteenth-century reader) of a superstitious past, the vestiges of which seem real to the less educated peasants of Radcliffe’s novel. The music instills doubt in its “enlightened” listeners and readers, reminding them that not all of life’s elements can be rationally explained.

Of all the music in gothic literature, liturgical music holds a prominent position, perhaps because of the long history that music has shared with ritual and the supernatural. Music can be particularly effective at allowing the listener to transgress the boundary between the everyday and the “divine or the occult... [the] boundary-crossing capacities of music acquire a transcendent dimension when employed in sacred and ritualistic contexts.”⁷⁴ In *Udolpho*, transgression between the natural and supernatural realms is achieved through religious music sung by monks and nuns. When Emily, her father, and their servant Michael take refuge from their travels at a monastery, Emily wakes in the middle of the night to hear the monks on their way to prayer. She steps out onto her balcony to listen:

⁷⁴ Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 30-32.

As she listened, the mid-night hymn of the monks rose softly from a chapel, that stood on one of the lower cliffs, an holy strain [sic], that seemed to ascend through the silence of night to heaven, and her thoughts ascended with it. From the consideration of his works, her mind arose to the adoration of the Deity, in his goodness and power, wherever she turned her view, whether on the sleeping earth, or to the vast regions of space, glowing with worlds beyond the reach of human thought, the sublimity of God, and the majesty of his presence appeared.⁷⁵

This passage employs the combination of religious music with the visual sublime of nature, which in turn brings Emily to a higher state of spirituality. The expansive “pure devotion” that lifts her soul is strongly reminiscent of Edmund Burke’s description of the sublime.

As Emily and her father continue on their journey, her father’s health deteriorates, and he passes away without being able to travel back to the family home in Gascony. He dies in a peasants’ village in the Languedoc woods, near a mysterious manor called Chateau le Blanc. A convent called St. Clair is also nearby, and St. Aubert requests that his body be interred in its church. It is thus that a devastated Emily finds herself at her father’s funeral, taking part in the processional to his tomb:

The superior had granted this place for the interment, and thither, therefore, the sad procession now moved, which was met, at the gates, by the venerable priest, followed by a train of friars. Every person, who heard the solemn chant of the anthem, and the peal of the organ, that struck up, when the body entered the church, and saw also the feeble steps, and the assumed tranquility of Emily, gave her involuntary tears.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 48.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

Emily is supported by two people while she walks, and she is followed by a train of nuns, “whose plaintive voices mellowed the swelling harmony of the dirge. When the procession came to the grave the music ceased.”⁷⁷

Because Radcliffe set *Udolpho* in the sixteenth century, it is reasonable to assume that in this example she is replicating, to the best of her knowledge, a funeral scene that might have taken place at that time. In order to make this setting all the more believable to her readers, she incorporates music that she supposes would have been heard at such a ceremony, namely, nuns singing a chant. The reference to older music allows the reader to better encounter the time period from which it originates and which it thus evokes.⁷⁸ In this way, as Jonathan Kramer argues, music not only allows the reader to transcend this boundary between natural and supernatural, but also a temporal boundary between past and present. Perhaps in order to retain the enlightened nature with which she has imbued Emily and her father, however, Radcliffe incorporates aspects of Protestant music into her description of this chant. She calls the chant an anthem, and states that it is accompanied by an organ, two characteristics that were associated with Protestant religious music. By infusing the scene with music that at once references an old, Catholic religion and a Protestant religion with which most of her English readers would have

⁷⁷ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 85.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York: Schirmer, 1988), 7.

been familiar, Radcliffe cleverly intertwines her audience's experience of funerals and thus, their association of music, ceremony, and death in real life with their memory of an imagined superstitious past. In using music that recalls each of these situations, Radcliffe effectively blurs the boundary between the natural and supernatural, the past and present.

The unhappy Emily stays at the convent for some time before making her journey home. Before embarking, however, Emily returns once more to her father's tomb, and experiences a striking sense of déjà vu. She waits to visit the tomb until all of the nuns at the convent have retired for the night. Consequently, she finds herself in a shadowy and isolated situation, walking with a lantern amid rows of graves. The reader is aware that, earlier in the evening, a nun warned Emily to beware of falling into a freshly-dug grave for a recently-deceased friar. Emily is still so distraught over her own father's death that she forgets this warning:

[Emily] scarcely heard the whispering echoes of her own steps, or thought of the open grave, till she found herself almost on its brink. A friar of the convent had been buried there on the preceding evening, and, as she had sat alone in her chamber at twilight, she heard, at distance, the monks chanting the requiem for his soul. This brought freshly to her memory the circumstances of her father's death; and, as the voices, mingling with a low querulous peal of the organ, swelled faintly, gloomy and affecting visions had arisen upon her mind. Now she remembered them, and, turning aside to avoid the broken ground, these recollections made her pass on with quicker steps to the grave of St. Aubert.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 88.

Multiple levels of memory come together in this passage. First, Emily's visual setting triggers an auditory memory: upon seeing the open grave, Emily recalls hearing the friar's burial from afar. Upon remembering that the religious music of the friar's burial had caused her to recollect her father's death, Emily feels a fresh wave of sorrow, and proceeds all the more quickly to her father's grave. In this example, the swelling of the monks' chanting, accompanied by a "querulous" organ, suggests a connection between religion and death that appeals to the collective memory of Radcliffe's mostly Protestant eighteenth-century British readers, similar to that encountered in the previous example. At the same time, this example exploits another effective tactic in order to be more haunting not only to Emily, but also to each of Radcliffe's readers: that of individual memory.

Van Elferen employs the notion of echo when thinking about music's connection to memory in the gothic novel. An echo exists when a sound survives its "physical origin both in duration and reach."⁸⁰ The echo has the power to suggest a presence where there no longer is one, and to elicit in its receiver a reminder of the past. In a way, the music of the deceased friar's funeral is an echo of St. Aubert's funeral: the music is similar enough that it brings the past into the present, and evokes extreme emotions of sadness in Emily. This is because, as Van Elferen states,

⁸⁰ Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 25.

musical experience generates an overlap of past and present through the evocation of memories and emotions. Hearing familiar music brings back the circumstances of former listening experiences; even in the case of previously unheard music, a melodic curve, a rhythm, or a vocal timbre can work as *mémoire involontaire* that inescapably evokes connotations. Musical experience allows long forgotten feelings, persons, or knowledge to suddenly reappear as if they had never left.⁸¹

In this way, music is constantly haunting listeners, giving shape to the specters of their pasts. This haunting is all the more terrifying because it is uncontrollable. The listener has no ability to “choose” the memories or emotions that resurface when listening to music, and though she might wish to escape from them, she cannot. Music, in this case, has the power to challenge the notion of chronological temporality commonly regarded as “natural” by allowing the past to superimpose itself on the present.

In a way, music in this situation also denotes another supernatural effect: that of invisible presence. Though the attendants at the friar’s funeral are no longer physically present in the catacombs, they are, in a way, present in Emily’s mind. The invisible presence that her memories of music conjure is enough to make Emily feel real and upsetting emotions. Her memories of sound, in this case, challenge the natural notion that presence implies visibility.

In *Udolpho*, Radcliffe implements narrative techniques to make music with religious connotations even more haunting. At several points, she recounts instances of sound and music emanating from visually obscured sources – a suggestion that there may

⁸¹ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 26.

not be a source producing the sound. This technique is even more effective when the disembodied sounds are human in origin. The real terror, for both the character and reader, “lies in the moments of fear that the sounds may have no physical origin at all, that they be made by bodiless beings.”⁸² Throughout *Udolpho*, Emily encounters disembodied human sound, particularly in instances of obscured visibility, such as at night or in a dark castle. She listens to sounds of human breathing, sighing, and moaning seemingly coming from the walls in the castle of Udolpho.⁸³ She encounters voices that seem to speak from those same walls. Perhaps most importantly, however, Emily hears music with no source repeatedly throughout the novel, in many different locations. If it is true that source-less human sounds easily suggest supernatural presence in gothic literature, then a disembodied singing voice may be the most terrifying of all.

Disembodied music plays an essential role in one of the main mysteries that runs throughout *Udolpho*. A mysterious voice accompanied by a guitar frequents the woods at night in Languedoc, near the convent of St. Clair and the Chateau le Blanc. When questioned as to the source of the sound, the locals, being peasants, naturally attribute the singing to a supernatural source. Emily and her father encounter this disembodied music shortly before St. Aubert’s death. In the passage below, they have taken refuge in the home of the friendly peasant La Voisin in the woods of Languedoc. The music first

⁸² Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 21.

⁸³ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 273, 355.

catches the attention of St. Aubert, and he asks La Voisin about its source. La Voisin replies:

That guitar is often heard at night, when all is still, but nobody knows who touches it, and it is sometimes accompanied by a voice so sweet, and so sad, one would almost think the woods were haunted... It has often made me think of my poor wife till I cried... They say it often comes to warn people of their death.⁸⁴

La Voisin describes the first time he heard the dulcet tones of the singer, stating that it was eighteen years ago, on a summer night, when he was walking alone in the woods. On this occasion, one of his sons was ill, and La Voisin was in low spirits. It was on this walk that he heard the music:

But, when I came to a place, where the trees opened, (I shall never forget it!) and stood looking up at the north-lights, which shot up the heaven to a great height, I heard all of a sudden such sounds! – They came so as I cannot describe. It was like the music of angels, and I looked up again almost expecting to see them in the sky... A few nights after, however, my wife herself heard the same sounds, and was as much surprised as I was, and Father Denis frightened her sadly by saying, that it was music come to warn her of her child's death, and that music often came to houses where there was a dying person.⁸⁵

No one will seek the source of the music, La Voisin explains, for fear of being “led into harm.”⁸⁶

The disembodied music in this example is described as having an agency all its own. La Voisin's use of the article “it” to denote the music in this statement signifies that it is not the mysterious being behind the music that brings tidings of death, but the music

⁸⁴ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 67.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

itself. The singing in the woods near Chateau le Blanc appears to have no physical source; this phenomenon is at odds with the real, yet paradoxical (“so sweet, and so sad”) sounds that appear to be issuing forth. The ambiguity of the meaning and origin of this music cues its listeners to ascribe to it a supernatural meaning. As Van Elferen explains, this situation also has a powerful effect on the reader: “The fact that these sounds and music are virtual, transmitted through the medium of text and only imaginable for the reader, leaves the rupture of their hauntography an implicit terror. These are the unheard sounds of the uncanny.”⁸⁷

There is an implication of religion throughout La Voisin’s description. Though he prefaces his story by saying that he is describing the first time he heard the singer and guitar, while actually telling the story he describes the music as seemingly coming from the sky, like the music of angels. His wife hears the same music, and a priest tells her that the music signifies the impending death of their ill child. One might suspect that Radcliffe intended this passage to demean the superstition of the priest. Curiously, La Voisin reports that neither he nor his son actually died upon hearing this music. Nevertheless, the fact that St. Aubert dies within a day of hearing the music complicates the plot: the reader is left to wonder whether the supernatural actually exists, or if these events can be explained away by rational phenomena.

⁸⁷ Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 30.

The narrative is further complicated when the reader learns that this same disembodied music bears other connections with death and religion as well. As a house servant relates to Emily later in the narrative, the first night the disembodied music appeared was the night some twenty years before when the Marchioness of Chateau-le-Blanc died, as a result of being poisoned by her husband the Marquis and his lover, Signora Laurentini. From that moment on, the music has consistently appeared in the Languedoc woods.

Only at the end of the narrative is it revealed to Emily and to the reader that the disembodied musician who has been present throughout the entire narrative has not been a supernatural or celestial being at all. After carrying out the murder of the Marchioness, Signora Laurentini feels great guilt and remorse, and she eventually goes mad. She enters the convent of St. Clair and takes the name of Sister Agnes, and it is thus that Emily finds her, twenty years later, as a deranged nun. Driven mad because she feels she can never atone for her sins, Signora Laurentini's doctor recommends that she play music as a treatment for her mental disorder. So as not to disturb the other nuns of the convent, Signora Laurentini's playing and singing takes place at night, outside the convent walls. The source of the singing is thus no specter, but a guilty nun. In the character of Signora Laurentini, Radcliffe blends the recurring theme of religion with a sublime terror evoked by obscuring a sound's source.

Radcliffe's use of disembodied music represents a transgression between the natural and supernatural worlds; the sound of the disembodied voice implies a communication across the imagined boundary that separates these two spaces.⁸⁸ The disembodied voice confuses the senses of the reader and causes him or her to feel unsettled because of the possibility that there may not *be* a physical sound source: "Rusty hinges, growling corridors and nocturnal singing represent invisible entities waiting in silence, a silence that may hide invisible, bodiless beings and virtual sounds."⁸⁹ The ambiguity inherent in voices that lack visual counterparts facilitates their ghostly connotations.

These examples demonstrate that Radcliffe's inclusion of sound and music in her writing is closely tied to understandings of religion and the sublime in eighteenth-century England. The particular types of music Radcliffe uses to evoke the terror and awe of the sublime bear a resemblance to strategies of representation that were common in eighteenth-century art music. Eighteenth-century composers experimented with ways in which they could make music mimic or refer to different aspects of the world around them. Many aspects of these musical techniques, especially those that index the terrifying or sublime, are similar to the music Radcliffe describes in *Udolpho*. Such similarity, compounded by evidence that demonstrates Radcliffe's affinity for music, suggests that

⁸⁸ Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 21.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 25. Chao, "Musical Letters: Eighteenth-Century Writings on Music and the Fictions of Burney, Radcliffe, and Scott," 202.

she may have conceived the idea of writing about music from the London musical performances she so often frequented.

Chapter 2: The Supernatural and Sublime in Eighteenth-Century Music

Eighteenth-century composers employed specific musical characteristics to evoke feelings of terror and the sublime in theatrical music associated with supernatural settings or characters. In this chapter, we will see how the expansive category of the sublime was represented through music, and then examine several specific subcategories of the musical sublime that were associated with the supernatural. These subcategories reveal general similarities between the music that accompanied supernatural characters and scenes in Radcliffe's time and the characteristics of the music that she incorporated into her novels.

In the eighteenth century, composers relied on a system of conventions to communicate with their audiences. They drew on a collection of expressive musical *topoi*. Wye J. Allanbrook defines *topoi* as “‘commonplace’ musical styles or figures whose expressive connotations, derived from the circumstances in which they are habitually employed, are familiar to all.”⁹⁰ Because these musical styles and figures indexed natural and historical associations in the minds of audience members, composers were able to suggest particular gestures, settings, or emotions to their audiences.

Composers achieved these associations in the minds of listeners by using music that mimicked elements of the natural world, according to the thinking that “objects in

⁹⁰ Wye J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 329.

the external world make an impression on our souls; music can, by imitating those impressions, move our souls in a similar fashion, placing us ‘in tune’ with certain substantial entities.”⁹¹ Beyond mimicking natural and human sounds, composers could also mimic music typically used in other contexts. In this case, certain musical *topoi* strongly suggest the place or social setting where such music would be used, as when funeral music calls up a somber church setting. The understanding of musical conventions would have enhanced the audience’s emotional experience of the musical performance. The composer relied on the past worldly and musical experiences of audience members, as music could “represent the passions through the mediation of the simpler music which men use to accompany their daily activities and amusements.”⁹² Composers recognized this auditory mimesis as effective in indexing not only other types of music, but also the *sounds* that people might encounter.⁹³ The musical motives that composers used referenced the everyday auditory experience of the audience member as well as common human gestures.⁹⁴

As the multiplicity of eighteenth-century writings on the sublime in chapter 1 shows, there was no consensus on the exact definition of the sublime throughout the eighteenth century. Some authors emphasized particular aspects of the sublime more than

⁹¹ Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, 4.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

others. Allanbrook outlines this eighteenth-century trajectory of the definition of the sublime:

The sublime admits of many degrees of difference. It begins as a lofty style of oratory – the “noble” mode. But loftiness should strike us like a thunderbolt, so the sublime becomes all that is vast, astonishing, irregular, original. A concern with how such objects strike the human soul moves the sublime away from rhetoric to Burke’s sensationalist (in both senses) psychology.⁹⁵

Because Burke’s influential writings emphasized terror as a crucial aspect in the inducement of the sublime, gothic authors understood terror as an essential part of the sublime. This special attention paid to terror coincided with a focus on the newly established supernatural, and the fairy tales and folk tales which gained such prominent attention after the Enlightenment and into the nineteenth century. In this social environment, the “sublime of terror” also made itself present in the theatrical, religious, and instrumental music of the same era.⁹⁶ However, as Allanbrook points out, there is no overarching *topos* of the sublime in music.⁹⁷ Instead, the sublime comprises a variety of *topoi*, and it does not necessarily mimic any one specific object or action:

Musical *topoi* current in late eighteenth-century music are signs by virtue of referring to some musical style or practice in common currency – remarkably precise, delimited expressions of our common humanity. Unlike these *topoi*, the sublime does not have an immediate musical and human referent that is identifiable no matter what the context: a recognizable metre and tempo, as in a march or minuet, reflecting the way we walk or dance, or a certain type of figuration, like the cantabile style, that bodies forth in instrumental music the all-

⁹⁵ Wye J. Allanbrook, “Is the Sublime a Musical Topos?” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 7.2 (2010): 264.

⁹⁶ Clive McClelland, “Ombra and Tempesta,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 294.

⁹⁷ Allanbrook, “Is the Sublime a Musical Topos?” 266.

important singing voice. Hence the sublime suffers from indiscriminate application over a wide variety of musical circumstances.⁹⁸

The wide variety of settings to which sublime music could be applied meant that there was no single expression of the sublime in music. Today, some scholars have chosen to view the sublime in music as a large, inclusive category embracing several distinct subcategories. Some of these subcategories were used frequently in eighteenth-century opera.

***Ombra* as a Sublime Type**

From opera's beginning, supernatural beings such as oracles, ghosts, witches, and demons made common appearances on the stage. Clive McClelland divides eighteenth-century supernatural appearances in opera into five categories:

1. Celestial: benevolent deities, heaven, paradise, and the Elysian Fields
2. Ceremonial: processions, rituals, sacrifices, prophecies, oracles, and statues
3. Ominous: incantations, sorcery, ghosts, tombs, dungeons, caves, night, and death
4. Infernal: malevolent deities, hell, demons, and furies
5. Devastating: sudden scenic transformations, monsters, storms, and earthquakes⁹⁹

These supernatural beings and events allowed composers to introduce “an assortment of discontinuous elements into the music”: special musical effects corresponding to the specific phenomena being evoked.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Allanbrook, “Is the Sublime a Musical Topos?” 266.

⁹⁹ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, vii-viii.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, vii.

Certain general composition techniques were associated with each category. Scenes involving benevolent celestial beings were often accompanied by music in the major mode in soft, homophonic textures, played at a gentle, soothing tempo. These scenes typically featured “conjunct motion in doubled thirds, lilting melodic lines, regular phrasing, and soft instrumentation including flutes and harps.”¹⁰¹ The same elements of music that accompanied celestial occurrences were also found in enchantment and sleep scenes.

On the other end of the spectrum, devastating scenes involving natural phenomena such as thunder and lightning were typically characterized by “fast tempo, minor keys, disjunct motion, rapid scale passages, dissonances, chromaticism, irregular rhythms, loud dynamics, and full orchestral textures often involving brass and timpani.”¹⁰² Many of these elements occurred in infernal scenes as well, and sometimes in mad scenes or rage arias. The music used for ceremonial supernatural contexts was often derived from martial and ecclesiastical styles, “including *stile antico* ideas such as *alla breve*, monophonic textures and chanting.”¹⁰³ As these are very different types of music, we can see that the supernatural manifested itself in disparate ways on stage. The varying scene types that McClelland presents usually require different musical elements,

¹⁰¹ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, viii.

¹⁰² Ibid.; David J. Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 48.

¹⁰³ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, viii.

but because all are affiliated in some way with the broader idea of the supernatural, McClelland chooses to define them all as fitting under the larger label of *ombra*, a category linked to the wide-ranging musical sublime.

In Italian, the term *ombra* means “shadow,” or “shade.” Musicologists have historically applied the term to music played during frightening appearances of ghosts in opera scenes. Though the term *ombra* was first affixed only to scenes with ghosts, McClelland believes that *ombra* should be applicable to all five of the categories he stipulates. The presence of a ghost on stage did not by default imply that ominous music must be used. If the spirit that appeared was benevolent, for instance, music indexing the celestial was more likely to be present. In fact, none of McClelland’s *ombra* categories are entirely distinct from each other. The infernal and ceremonial categories frequently draw upon music that conveys an air of solemnity and mystery, as well as styles closely connected to ritual and death.

Ombra does not denote music in one specific style, for some of the musical characteristics that fall under the heading of *ombra* have been categorized as different kinds of music by musicologists: “It is also apparent that *ombra* has characteristics in common with several styles, including not only fantasia and *Sturm und Drang*, but also French Overture, *Empfindsamer Stil*, *stile antico*, and the lament.”¹⁰⁴ Instead, *ombra*

¹⁰⁴ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 8.

suggests a group of different styles used to convey the supernatural to the audience, in so doing evoking in the audience a feeling of “creeping terror.”¹⁰⁵

The word *ombra* was not used to describe this kind of music during the eighteenth century. The term began to be applied retroactively in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁶ Even today, however, relatively few modern scholars have explored the term *ombra* and the music it describes. Allanbrook suggests that the *ombra* tradition extends back to Baroque opera:

The word *ombra* (from the Latin *umbra*) means “shadow” or “shade,” as of a tree, and thus “shade” as “specter” (the pun is available in Latin, Italian, and English). Scenes set in hell with oracular voices and choruses of infernal spirits were obligatory in the sixteenth-century *intermedios*..., and were a popular feature of Italian – especially Venetian – opera of the seventeenth century. The tradition continued into the eighteenth century with works like Gluck’s *Orfeo* and *Alceste*, and Mozart’s *Idomeneo*.¹⁰⁷

In his book *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, Leonard Ratner also recognizes the connection between *ombra* and the supernatural. He considers *ombra* to be a subcategory of the fantasia style, and suggests that the fantasia style was used in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century opera in order to evoke the supernatural and, by association, feelings of awe and terror in the audience. However, Birgitte Moyer argues that *ombra* is distinct from fantasia, both in its musical structure and in the contexts in

¹⁰⁵ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 1. Hermann Abert first used the term *ombra* in his 1908 book, *Niccolò Jommelli als Opernkomponist*, in which he analyzes scenes involving ghosts in Jommelli’s operas. Though Abert uses the term *ombra* in relation to these scenes, he never defines the term outright.

¹⁰⁷ Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, 93.

which it is used, even though at times the various categories of *ombra* may employ characteristics also found in fantasia. To her, *ombra* is “a body of music with an expressive intent so obviously suggestive of man’s terror and awe of hell that it cannot be overlooked.”¹⁰⁸ Moyer considers the writings of theorists such as C.P.E. Bach and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, both of whom define fantasia as an improvisatory style with less structured rhythm and harmony.¹⁰⁹ Distinct from the improvisatory fantasia style, *ombra* evokes the affects of terror, violence, anger, fear, trembling, fury, exclamation, despair, and sadness in a much more structured way.

The music that researchers today have labeled *ombra* was understood by aesthetic theorists of the early 1700s as the “high style.”¹¹⁰ By the late eighteenth century, the influence of newly refined theories of the sublime led theorists to reject the term “high” in favor of the term “elevated.” The elevated style was intended to produce the affects of terror, awe, despair, anger, and fear, all of which were likely to be induced during *ombra* scenes, and all of which were closely related to late eighteenth-century understandings of sound, music, and the sublime.¹¹¹ These associations were called forth by a number of musical features, including different combinations of steady rhythm, slow movement,

¹⁰⁸ Birgitte Moyer, “‘Ombra’ and Fantasia in Late Eighteenth-Century Theory and Practice,” in *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honor of Leonard G. Ratner*, ed. Wilhelm Stauder et al. (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1969), 288.

¹⁰⁹ Moyer, “‘Ombra’ and Fantasia in Late Eighteenth-Century Theory and Practice,” 303.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 291.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 292.

syncopation, the juxtaposition of long and quick notes, pauses, a full orchestra, tremolo, chromaticism, rising and descending scales and arpeggios, all of which appear in the *ombra* categories outlined by McClelland.¹¹² These musical characteristics could suggest feelings of terror to listeners, allowing them to experience the elevated sublime.

Many of these musical elements of the sublime of terror are sudden or unexpected, two characteristics that remind us of Burke's emphasis on obscurity as a source for the sublime. The use of unexpected harmonies along with abrupt silences and pauses made audiences uneasy through unpredictability. Dark instrumental timbres, such as those produced by low wind instruments and trombones, were also thought to represent obscurity.¹¹³ Eighteenth-century composers also made use of "purposeful unorthodoxies," such as chromaticism, sudden dynamic changes, and lack of resolution to evoke a sense of obscurity in the audience.¹¹⁴ The unexpectedness of these musical effects reduced the audience's ability to predict how the music would proceed, producing a kind of auditory obfuscation equivalent to the importance that Burke placed on visual obscurity.

¹¹² McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 13.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹¹⁴ Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, 197-98.

***Ombra* and Ecclesiastical Music**

Another important aspect of *ombra* was also crucial to theories of the sublime: religion. Especially during ceremonial and infernal scenes, archaic elements such as older styles of chaconne bass or “the ponderous dotted rhythms of an earlier style” contributed an authoritative sense of elevation, usually awakening religious associations.¹¹⁵ David J. Buch states that

...[in the eighteenth century] the use of older musical techniques, mostly from church music, became a more significant source of supernatural expression than in the past. Chantlike recitation, chorale-like settings, old-style polyphonic textures, and disjunct melodies that suggested baroque contrapuntal “subjects” contributed to a kind of musical antiquarianism evoking the otherworldly.¹¹⁶

McClelland agrees that these older church styles played a role in suggesting the supernatural, and also suggests that chant, initially used to index the ecclesiastical, also came to be used for other, non-religious supernatural or mythological beings. This transference may have come about because the style was already perceived as representing one kind of supernatural transcendence: that of religion.

... the *ombra* style incorporates aspects of church style, such as “alla breve” and “stile legato.” It is to be expected that gods and other supernatural powers of the ancient world speak, as it were, in a similar language to their ecclesiastical counterparts. That this style should be “antique” is also appropriate, and is indicative of a certain dignity and reverence associated with long tradition.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, 197-98.

¹¹⁶ Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*, 74.

¹¹⁷ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 4.

The non-religious incorporation of ecclesiastical music usually occurred in ceremonial scenes: “The solemnity and mystery surrounding ritual practices and sacrifices, and the quasi-religious utterances (always by bass voices) of oracles on monotones or with triadic outlines certainly derive from such ecclesiastical origins.”¹¹⁸ Just as in Radcliffe’s novels, the evocation of antique religious music (a musical style removed from the context in which it was originally implemented) could be a powerful tool for calling forth the idea of the supernatural and the past in the minds of audience members.

Even as elements of antiquated religious music were being incorporated into secular, dramatic manifestations of the supernatural, however, elements of *ombra* were also making their way into religious music of the eighteenth century. The familiar association of *ombra* characteristics with supernatural narrative themes led to the appearance of elements of *ombra* outside of theatrical genres, especially in sacred music.¹¹⁹ *Ombra* techniques appeared in sacred music more subtly than in opera.

In the context of sacred works based on bible stories or texts required for liturgical purposes, there is very little that corresponds directly to the scenarios familiar from opera, such as ghost scenes, oracles, witches, etc. Nevertheless, there are some occasions when a composer wishing to convey a sense of awe, mystery, or fear might have recourse to the musical characteristics of the *ombra* style... there are many instances where certain features [of *ombra*] are present in sufficient force to constitute an *ombra* reference, and such instances become stronger and more frequent towards the end of the century.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ McClelland, “Ombra and Tempesta,” 286.

¹¹⁹ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, ix.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 163.

Composers of religious music exploited a number of musical techniques from theatrical genres in order to better elicit a realization of the sublime terror and awe of God. In Masses, *ombra* techniques were most frequently found in the Credo because its words outline the narrative of Christ's suffering and crucifixion. Often, chromaticism and tremolos were featured during the *Crucifixus* passage of the Credo, with its textual references to the "suffering, death, and burial of Christ."¹²¹ Leopold Hofmann set a bass voice accompanied by trombones in the *Crucifixus* he composed for his *Missa in honorem Sanctae Theresiae* in 1760. The bass voice outlines triadic and octave leaps, both elements that "would not be out of place for an oracle or statue in the theatre."¹²² Oratorios, works in theatrical style that were based on Biblical narratives, also provided composers with opportunities to use *ombra* techniques. This was especially true for oratorio narratives based on death or supernatural events, including those about Moses, Saul, and the raising of Lazarus.¹²³

Radcliffe's Work and *Ombra*

Many elements of Radcliffe's descriptions of sound resemble the techniques associated with *ombra* and the sublime of terror. The most notable similarities lie in what McClelland describes as celestial, devastating, and ceremonial functions. Celestial beings

¹²¹ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 175.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 177.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 164.

in opera were usually accompanied by lilting melodic lines and quiet instrumentation such as flutes and harps.¹²⁴ In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the disembodied singing guitar player in the woods near Chateau le Blanc, supposed by La Voisin to be a celestial being, shares these characteristics. The singer's tune is described as simple but beautiful, and the singer is accompanied by a guitar, a quiet stringed instrument. By contrast, devastating scenes in opera usually involved events that happened in nature, such as thunder and lightning. The accompanying music was typically loud, often involving brass and timpani to heighten the audience's sublime experience of the overpowering dynamics. In keeping with these characteristics, Radcliffe also describes overpowering "sullen peals of thunder" as evoking the sublime.¹²⁵ She consistently describes storms in this way throughout *Udolpho*. When caught outdoors in a storm, Emily hears "the thunder, whose deep volley was heard afar, rolling onward till it burst over their heads in sounds, that seemed to shake the earth to its centre."¹²⁶ A stormy night at the castle of Udolpho is depicted thus: "the battlements of the castle appeared to rock in the wind, and, at intervals, long groans seemed to pass on the air, such as those, which often deceive the melancholy mind, in tempests, and amidst scenes of desolation."¹²⁷ Later in the novel, the inhabitants of Chateau le Blanc are distressed to observe a ship in peril during an evening

¹²⁴ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, viii.

¹²⁵ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 565-66.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 386

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 412.

storm: “the sea was now involved in utter darkness, and the loud howlings of the tempest had again overcome every other sound.”¹²⁸ Radcliffe’s descriptions of storms involve words that evoke overpowering volume of sound, similar to the musical elements used to depict violent natural phenomena in theatrical performances.

Ceremonial scenes in operas typically involved religious rituals, magical prophecies, and incantations: the musical setting for these scenes frequently drew on antiquated church styles such as *stile antico* and chant.¹²⁹ In *Udolpho*, Radcliffe uses the term “chant” to denote the music Emily encounters in the religious context of the convent of St. Clair, as well as the music Emily hears produced by peasants. In the convent, Emily encounters nuns singing a chant during her father’s funeral, and monks chanting a requiem during the funeral of a friar.¹³⁰ Because they involve funerals, these scenes can be described as religious rituals. The use of chant during these literary scenes is similar to a context in which chant might be used in opera. Radcliffe’s association of chant with peasants throughout *Udolpho* might be more closely related to incantation than religious ritual. The servant Michael “chants” a vesper-hymn to keep his fears at bay, and Emily observes that the music made by a group of peasants in the forest near Udolpho is sung “in a kind of chant.”¹³¹ These scenes do not involve strictly liturgical rituals. Yet, because

¹²⁸ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 457.

¹²⁹ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 15.

¹³⁰ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 85, 88.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 33, 295.

of chant's association with religion, describing the music as chant suggests for readers an address to the supernatural.

The similarities between these categories and Radcliffe's writing support the hypothesis that Radcliffe was selecting these musical characteristics from a larger array of associations that both "confirmed and defined" the role of the supernatural in the music that she was hearing.¹³² Nevertheless, it is difficult to identify exact performances that may have influenced Radcliffe in this way. We will now turn to an investigation of Radcliffe's life in London to determine some specific musical performances she may have heard.

Radcliffe and Music in London

Radcliffe's husband, William Radcliffe, began his career in London as a journalist for the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* before eventually moving to the *English Chronicle*. During their courtship from 1784 to 1787, Norton speculates that the couple regularly attended the theatre and opera. It also appears that Ann Radcliffe attended the theatre before her courtship. Despite their enthusiasm for Shakespeare plays, Talfourd suggests that Ann and William Radcliffe attended more opera performances than theatrical performances after 1787.¹³³ Unfortunately, no information is preserved about

¹³² Wye J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, 1.

¹³³ Talfourd, "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe," 99-100.

which performances, opera or theatrical, Radcliffe attended during the 1780s. Still, in memoirs written about Radcliffe soon after her death, writers alluded to her love of music. In his 1828 “Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe,” Talfourd praises Radcliffe’s love of music as an aspect of her cultured character:

To music she was passionately attached, and sang herself with exquisite taste, though her voice, remarkably sweet, was limited in compass. At the Opera she was a frequent visitor, and on her return home would sit up singing over the airs she had heard, which her quickness of ear enabled her to catch, till a late hour. She was peculiarly affected by sacred music, and occasionally went to the oratorios, when they afforded her the opportunity of listening to the compositions of Handel.¹³⁴

Talfourd based much of his memoir on conversations about Radcliffe with her husband William after her death. He also consulted Radcliffe’s travel diary for more information about her life.

Ann Radcliffe’s travel diary is an account of a trip she and her husband took to Germany in 1784. Although she does not mention attending any specific operatic performances during her travels, it appears that she did attend a theatre in Frankfurt. Her comparison of this Frankfurt theatre to London’s Little Theatre in Haymarket and Covent Garden is further proof that she was attending performances in London. She describes the Frankfurt theatre thus:

After this, the Theatre may seem to require some notice... The interior, which has been gaudily decorated, contains a pit, three rows of boxes, that surround the audience part, and a gallery over them in the centre. It is larger than the Little

¹³⁴ Talfourd, “Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe,” 99.

Theatre in the Haymarket, and in form, resembles that of Covent Garden, except that six or seven of the central boxes in each tier, encroach upon the oval figure by a projection over the pit.¹³⁵

Later in her diary, she gives further evidence of her knowledge of the London tradition in her comments upon the style of the ladies she sees at the performance:

The stage was well lighted, but the other parts of the theatre were left in duskiness, which scarcely permitted us to see the diamonds, profusely worn by several ladies. Six o'clock is the hour of beginning, and the performances conclude soon after nine.¹³⁶

After this passage, Radcliffe begins to talk more of the wealthy people of Frankfurt, as her above allusion to diamonds suggests. That she was disappointed in not being able to see the “diamonds, profusely worn by several ladies” in the theatre may be another indicator of her familiarity with the London theatre tradition, in which, as we can see from the *Gazetteer* articles of 1791, patrons and reporters were sometimes more interested in who attended and what they wore than in the theatrical or operatic performances themselves.

Norton has tried to piece together performances Ann Radcliffe might have seen by tracing the trajectory of William Radcliffe's job. William served as a reporter for the *Gazetteer* for eighteen months before ascending to the position of editor-in-chief on January 23, 1791. Because of his background in translation and his linguistic skills, one

¹³⁵ Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany* (1795; New York: George Olms Verlag, 1975), 233.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

of William Radcliffe's primary responsibilities may have been to translate French newspapers and pamphlets into English. But it is also possible that another of his duties as editor-in-chief was to write reviews of musical performances in London. Norton traces the 1790-1791 London performance season through the pages of the *Gazetteer*, singling out two in particular that Radcliffe may have seen. The first is Antonio Sacchini's *Armida*, notable because its narrative is based on Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, which Radcliffe is thought to have read:

[William] and his wife may well have been in the audience for the private rehearsal of *Armida*, with music by Sacchini, at the new opera at the Pantheon, the King's Theatre, whose rehearsals, postponements and performances were frequently reported in the paper between 29 January and 17 February.¹³⁷

Reviews of the opera's many rehearsals were generally favorable toward the performers and describe Sacchini's music as "charming."¹³⁸

The second performance Norton supposes Radcliffe to have attended is the Handel Commemoration of 1791. Organized by the Royal Society of Musicians, the Commemoration consisted of oratorios and other selections from Handel's sacred music, split up into a series of performances. On May 23, at Westminster Abbey, the oratorio *Israel in Egypt* was performed in its entirety, preceded by a variety of selections from the oratorios *Saul*, *Deborah*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, and *Esther*, the Coronation Anthem, and the

¹³⁷ Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 63.

¹³⁸ Petty, *Italian Opera in London, 1760-1800* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980), 279.

anthem “Song, O magnify the Lord.”¹³⁹ A review in *The Times* suggests that, despite the cold weather, there were 1,000 people in the audience.¹⁴⁰ More selections followed in the next performance of the festival on the 26th of May, pieces from *Saul*, *Athalia*, *Jeptha*, and *Joshua*, accompanied again by *Israel in Egypt* in its entirety. *The Messiah* was performed on June 1 “in the same Grand Scale as on preceding years,” before an audience that included the king.¹⁴¹ Norton believes that “Mrs. Radcliffe was almost certainly present” at some of the commemoration performances.¹⁴²

In his investigation of the theatrical works that Radcliffe may have seen, Norton conjectures as to how their plotlines may have influenced the narratives and characters of Radcliffe’s novels. But he does not consider how the music may have shaped her writing. In an effort to better understand the musical features that seem relevant to Radcliffe’s work, I have chosen to look closely at the 1791 performances of Sacchini’s *Armida* and Handel’s *Israel in Egypt*. It should be noted that, by 1791, Radcliffe had already published three of her novels (*The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, *A Sicilian Romance*, and *The Romance of the Forest*), but had yet to produce her 1794 publication, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, from which all of the examples in the preceding chapter are taken. Both of the pieces I have selected have been analyzed in recent musicological literature

¹³⁹ *The Times* (Tuesday 10 May 1791): 1, quoted in Ilias Chrissochoidis, “1791,” *Handel Reference Database*, accessed March 22 2016, http://web.stanford.edu/~ichriss/HRD/1791.htm#_ftn2.

¹⁴⁰ *The Times* (Tuesday 24 May 1791), quoted in Chrissochoidis, “1791.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 63.

for their inclusion of supernatural and sublime musical elements. Because I have chosen only two pieces that Radcliffe may have experienced, not all of the musical techniques that Radcliffe incorporates appear in the musical analysis that follows.

Antonio Sacchini, *Armida*

If William Radcliffe wrote reviews about the rehearsals and performances of Sacchini's *Armida* at the King's Theatre in early 1791, and if Ann Radcliffe happened to accompany him to at least one of these performances, she would have encountered a prime example of a composer's use of music to accompany an opera's supernatural narrative content. The tragic story of Armida and her love of Rinaldo, which became popular during the 1770s, comes from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*.¹⁴³ Sacchini set Jacopo Durandi's libretto, *Armida*, to music for a Milan performance in 1772. Though he revised the opera as *Rinaldo* for a London performance in 1780, the original 1772 *Armida* was shown at the King's Theatre during the London season of 1791.¹⁴⁴ Throughout the opera, Sacchini employs references to older sacred music and uses minor keys, unsettling instrumental effects, and particular instrumental timbres to portray supernatural elements.

David J. Buch discusses three sections of *Armida* in which the elements of *ombra* are especially prominent: a chorus of magicians and priests ("Coro di maghi e

¹⁴³ Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*, 188.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

sacerdoti”), a chorus of furies, and an instrumental Allegro. The chorus of magicians and priests, set in C minor for two tenors and a bass, appears in Act 3. An excerpt from the beginning of the chorus is shown in Figure 1 below. The chorus is marked *Maestoso* and is in alla breve meter. An instrumental introduction, composed for violin and bass viol, contains old-fashioned contrapuntal sequences and suspensions in a Baroque style. The introduction finishes with melodic segments played in octaves (measures 14, 17), with a cadence on three successive parallel octaves (i – V – i), a particularly antique and open sound. The chorus continues the polyphonic texture, entering with the ominous text “*Fra le nere ombre di morte*,” (“Between the black shadows of death”).¹⁴⁵ A chorus of furies, performed near the end of the opera, employs similar textural elements. Set for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices, this chorus is marked *Allegro giusto* and is accompanied by horns, oboes, and strings. It features imitative polyphony and Baroque-like suspensions, similar to the chorus of magicians and priests.¹⁴⁶ The instrumental number that Buch includes in his analysis is an Allegro in C minor, marked *terribile*. It contains rapid scales, tremolos, and rising triadic figures played by strings over sustained chords held by horns and oboes. The end of the Allegro contains a rising tessitura accompanied by a drawn-out crescendo, then concludes with a descent in volume and tessitura.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*., 188.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 190.

Violini

Viola Basso

7

12

16

21

Tenori 1

Fra le ne-re om-bre di mor-te

Tenori 2

Fra le ne-re om-bre di mor-te

Bassi

Fra le ne-re om-bre di mor-te

Figure 1. Antonio Sacchini, *Armida*, act 3, “Coro di maghi e sacerdoti”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*, 189.

Four important *ombra* characteristics run through these three excerpts from *Armida*: references to antiquated religious music, the key of C minor, unsettling instrumental techniques, and specific instrumentation. The imitative polyphony used in both choruses is reminiscent of McClelland's category of ceremonial music: it is a reference to sacred Catholic music from the Renaissance era. In this case, Sacchini is using music that he knows the audience will associate with the past, spiritual transcendence, and the terrifying grandeur of God. Knowing that his audience will understand this reference, he uses this style in a non-Christian supernatural setting, implying that the magicians and priests may not be communicating with God, but with another supernatural being. By mimicking antiquated church music, Sacchini is employing music much as Radcliffe employs Catholic chant. In both cases, the music is used to refer to the solemnity of church settings, and thereby increase the audience's susceptibility to sublime terror.

The stately *alla breve* meter in the chorus of magicians and priests also adds to the ritualistic feel of the music. As McClelland notes, the music used for ceremonial contexts was often derived not only from ecclesiastical, but also martial styles, which could be evoked by the regular 2/2 *alla breve* meter.¹⁴⁹ The hollow sound produced by

¹⁴⁹ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, viii.

Sacchini's use of parallel octaves at the end of the instrumental introduction to the chorus of musicians and priests might also be said to invoke the idea of chant.¹⁵⁰

The key of the chorus of magicians and priests and the instrumental Allegro is also significant. By the late eighteenth century, E-flat major and C minor had become keys commonly used during terrifying scenes. C.F.D. Schubart, writing in 1784, states that the key of E-flat major and its relative minor have a Christian association because their three flats represent the Holy Trinity.¹⁵¹ In the examples above, Sacchini used a key usually employed in religious settings to evoke the spiritual element even in a non-religious supernatural scene.

The instrumental effects of Sacchini's music also add to the audience's experience of terror. In the instrumental Allegro, the rapid scales and tremolos in the strings are made all the more unsettling because they take place over static chords in the oboes and horns. These rapid passages and the long crescendo passage at the end of the piece are reminiscent of the musical characteristics that McClelland associates with the devastating subcategory of *ombra*: "fast tempo, minor keys, disjunct motion, rapid scale passages, dissonances, chromaticism, irregular rhythms, loud dynamics, and full orchestral textures often involving brass and timpani."¹⁵² Buch states that these disjunct

¹⁵⁰ Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*, 48.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁵² McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, viii; Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*, 48.

and sudden musical elements were used in opera to “accompany all kinds of emphatic expressions, including powerful jolts, animal sounds, howling, and the horrific sounds emanating from infernal regions.”¹⁵³ Many of these characteristics relate to what modern musicologists call *Sturm und Drang* style, especially when they are applied to instrumental music. As McClelland notes, this overlap of *ombra* with different *topoi* was not uncommon, especially in infernal and devastating scenes. The primary purpose of these passages of sharply contrasting sound was to unsettle and surprise audiences in order to produce a sublime terror. Radcliffe seems to be aware of the usefulness of these contrasting elements, as she often employs words denoting extreme loudness during the scenes in which Emily hears thunderstorms in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

The strings, horns, and oboes used in the three excerpts from Sacchini’s opera are notable for the timbres they would have produced. The use of orchestration and instrumental timbre to indicate different supernatural beings or events had already been established before Sacchini’s time; horns, especially, represented infernal imagery.¹⁵⁴ In vocal music, low, chant-like incantation or chorale-like recitation was often associated with magicians, spirits, oracles, priests, and mysterious voices. Descending octave leaps were common during magicians’ solos.

¹⁵³ Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater*, 48.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

One can see composers' thinking about these techniques in a correspondence that took place between Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his father, Leopold Mozart. The following letter was written in Salzburg in October of 1780. Leopold advises his son to use a subterranean voice accompanied by low wind instruments and an overpowering instrumental crescendo to inspire terror in the audience:

I assume that you will choose low wind instruments to accompany the subterranean voice. How would it be if after the slight subterranean rumble the instruments sustained, or rather began to sustain, their notes piano and then made a crescendo such as might almost inspire terror, while after this and during the decrescendo the voice would begin to sing? And there might be a terrifying crescendo at every phrase uttered by the voice.¹⁵⁵

Leopold Mozart's description of terrifying musical elements resembles the techniques employed in both Sacchini's *Armida* and Radcliffe's *Udolpho*. The instrumental Allegro in Sacchini's opera ends with a powerful and long-lasting crescendo, similar to that which Leopold Mozart suggests will inspire terror. Radcliffe's description of disembodied voices usually implies that those voices are low. She uses the words "deep voices," and "hollow tones" to characterize the voices Emily hears in the castle of *Udolpho*.¹⁵⁶ When Emily encounters her weeping aunt inside the castle, she initially feels terrified at the "low moaning" sound of her aunt's crying before she discovers its source.¹⁵⁷ When wandering the castle chambers, Emily "stepped lightly and cautiously

¹⁵⁵ Emily Anderson, ed., *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, 3rd ed., (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), 700, quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 79.

¹⁵⁶ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 325-26.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 244.

along, till, coming to a door, from whence issued a low sound, she hesitated and paused; and, during the delay of that moment, her fears so much increased, that she had no power to move from that spot.”¹⁵⁸ Groans from the castle walls also seem to increase in volume: “He was interrupted by a groan, which seemed to rise from underneath the chamber they were in; and, as he threw a glance round it, impatience and rage flashed from his eyes, yet something like a shade of fear passed over his countenance.”¹⁵⁹ Radcliffe specifically states in these passages and others that these low voices and crescendoing sounds inspire fear in her characters. Though Radcliffe had not heard any Mozart operas before publishing her novels, the above instructions from Leopold Mozart to his demonstrate the widespread and conventional use of *ombra* within the musical traditions of the late eighteenth century.¹⁶⁰

George Frideric Handel, *Israel in Egypt*

Radcliffe’s experience with *ombra* techniques would not have been limited to opera. She encountered *ombra* outside of the opera genre, particularly in the oratorios of Handel. Just as eighteenth-century composers transferred many aspects of older sacred music into opera to elicit a sense of grandeur, terror, and the supernatural, a similar

¹⁵⁸ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 291.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 372.

¹⁶⁰ Petty, *Italian Opera in London, 1760-1800*, 271. The first opera of Mozart’s to be performed in London in its entirety, *La Clemenza di Tito*, would not arrive until 1806, and it would take an additional ten years before Mozart’s operas could be said to hold a consistent place in the repertory of the King’s Theatre.

transfer of opera techniques to religious music was taking place, particularly in the sacred genre most closely related to opera: the oratorio. Unlike opera, the oratorio did not include stage settings or dramatic action. But it was similar to opera in that it contained recitatives, arias, and choruses, and followed a dramatic narrative.¹⁶¹ Though ghosts, witches, and other supernatural beings did not frequently appear in oratorios, which were based on biblical texts, eighteenth-century composers did use certain *ombra* characteristics when trying to convey fear, mystery, or awe in the oratorio.¹⁶²

If we are to trust Talfourd's suggestion that Radcliffe was "peculiarly affected by sacred music," and that she "occasionally went to the oratorios, when they afforded her the opportunity of listening to the compositions of Handel," then it may be useful to observe which *ombra* characteristics, if any, may be found in Handel's oratorios.¹⁶³

The Handel Commemoration Festivals were initiated in 1784 by the London Concert of Ancient Music, an institution devoted to the performance and appreciation of older music, in collaboration with London's Society of Musicians. The 1784 event was to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Handel's death (1759). The Commemoration included a series of concerts with performances of Handel's oratorios in excerpts and in their entirety, held at Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon. The number of musicians involved in performing the music was astonishing for the time: a total of 525 musicians

¹⁶¹ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 163.

¹⁶² Ibid., 163-4.

¹⁶³ Talfourd, "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe," 99.

comprised the choir and orchestra. The entire royal family was in attendance for the concerts, and the festival served almost as a coronation in that it re-established the role of King George III after a period of political unrest.¹⁶⁴ The royal family continued to attend subsequent Handel Commemorations in the following years, including the 1791 festival. This 1791 Commemoration, similar to the first in that it included performances of Handel's oratorios by a vast number of musicians, was the last, and is usually recognized as important by musicologists for the notable attendance of Haydn.¹⁶⁵ Excerpts of oratorios such as *Saul*, *Athalia*, *Deborah*, and *Jephtha* were included in the 1791 Commemoration, along with two full performances of *Israel in Egypt*.

One has only to look through the reviews of the Commemorations to understand how Handel's music was perceived. Charles Burney described the 1784 Commemoration in *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon, May 26th, 27th, 29th; and June the 3rd and 5th, 1784 In Commemoration of Handel*, published in 1785. In this publication, Burney singles out Handel's quick musical transitions in *Israel in Egypt*, particularly those that happen in the alternating recitative and chorus in Miriam's song: "the effects of the composition are at once pleasing, grand, and sublime!"¹⁶⁶ During the 1791 Commemoration, which began on March 11 and ended

¹⁶⁴ Simon McVeigh, "London: 2. Concerts," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed February 20, 2016.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Claudia L. Johnson, "'Giant HANDEL' and the Musical Sublime," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19.4 (Summer 1986): 527.

with a production of *The Messiah* on June 1, *Israel in Egypt* was once again labeled as sublime. One critic's review of the oratorio singled out a passage known for its special effects:

The grand chorus, perhaps the finest of all Handel's compositions, of "He gave them hailstones for rain," was twice repeated. The Abbey is peculiarly well adapted to this music and the effect of it was beautifully sublime.¹⁶⁷

This chorus, "He gave them hailstones for rain," along with the chorus immediately following it, "He sent a thick darkness," appear in Part II of *Israel in Egypt*. Both choruses, which depict the afflictions that God sent upon Egypt, incorporate aspects of *ombra*, and were effective at producing the terror and awe so essential to the sublime.

"He gave them hailstones" (Figure 2) mimics the natural phenomenon of a storm. A short introduction consisting of syncopated rhythms sounded by horns and strings portrays the first raindrops before the deluge of the storm. When the torrent begins, the strings take on rapid descending scalar patterns and tremolos, the overall effect taking on a "swirling" quality. The initial entrance of the choir is homophonic and triadic, evoking a sense of majesty and awe. The following vocal sections incorporate fast-paced syncopated rhythm, in an effort to induce agitation in the listener. The instruments include oboes, trombones, and bassoons, all of which were likely recognized by the audience as indices of the supernatural thanks in part to Jommelli's earlier incorporation

¹⁶⁷ *The Times* (Tuesday 24 May 1791), quoted in Chrissochoidis, "1791."

of oboes, trombones, and bassoons into scenes with ghosts.¹⁶⁸ The loudness of the movement and its pairing with the fast-paced agitation in the instrumental and vocal parts reflect *ombra* techniques typically associated with storms: fast tempos, disjunct motion, rapid scale passages, irregular rhythms, loud dynamics, and full orchestral textures.¹⁶⁹

Raging tempests plays a crucial role in Radcliffe's novels. As we saw in the excerpts cited in the first part of this chapter, Radcliffe describes storms in distinctly audible terms throughout *Udolpho*, showing that she felt the audible was just as important as the visual in invoking the sublime. Emily hears thunder's "deep volley" from afar, "rolling onward till it burst over their heads in sounds, that seemed to shake the earth to its centre."¹⁷⁰ Radcliffe's auditory description of tempests evokes the same sense of agitation that Handel employs with disjunct, contrasting *ombra* techniques in "He gave them hailstones."

The latter chorus from *Israel in Egypt*, "He sent a thick darkness" (Figure 3) is set in stark contrast to "He gave them hailstones." It reflects the obscurity and the unsettled feeling that Burke associated so closely with the sublime. The words describe a theme of obscurity: "He sent a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness which might be felt." Handel enhances the obscurity that the words imply by employing compositional techniques that masterfully convey this terrifying darkness through the sound of the

¹⁶⁸ McClelland, "Ombra and Tempesta," 291.

¹⁶⁹ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, viii.

¹⁷⁰ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 386.

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The image shows a page of a musical score, page 42, for George Frideric Handel's 'Israel in Egypt, part II, 'He gave them hailstones''. The score is written for a large ensemble, including three Trombones (I, II, III), three Trumpets (I, II, III), Timpani, Oboes (I, II), Fagotti, Violins (I, II), Viola, Soprano (I, II), Alto (I, II), Tenore (I, II), Basso (I, II), and Tutti Bassi, e Organo. The lyrics are in Latin: 'He gave them hail - stones for rain; Er sand - te Ha - gel her - ab;'. The score is in G major and 2/4 time. The bottom of the page is marked 'H.W. 16.'.

Figure 2. George Frideric Handel, *Israel in Egypt*, part II, "He gave them hailstones"¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ George Frideric Handel, *Israel in Egypt*, HWV 54, ed. Friedrich Chrysander, *George Friedrich Händels Werke*, Band 16, (Leipzig: Deutsche Händelgesellschaft, 1863), 42.

music. The piece begins with low strings and a pair of bassoons, playing repeated low, long notes. (The characteristics of long notes and low timbres are two aspects of music that the theorist John Baillie first called sublime in 1747.)¹⁷² The chorus enters with slow, smooth notes, dark in timbre. The unsettling feeling of the piece is achieved through continuously shifting tonality and mysterious harmony. The piece begins in C major, then suggests various keys including B-flat minor, F minor, E-flat major, and eventually D minor, B minor, and A minor without settling, so that by the end the listener has no notion of tonal stability.¹⁷³ The chromatic ascent of the bass line adds to the obscurity of any tonal center: it is as if we are wandering in the dark, unsure of where we will end up. All of these unsettling elements lead McClelland to deem this piece “one of the boldest tonal journeys in the eighteenth-century canon.”¹⁷⁴ Certainly, the somber timbre, slow rhythm, low tessitura, and tonal instability that Handel invoked in this piece contribute to the movement’s ability to represent obscurity and therefore better evoke sublime terror for the audience.

Obscurity (and often obscurity because of darkness) is also a key technique for Radcliffe. The origins of “deep” and “hollow” disembodied voices are usually cloaked in darkness, and her description of the timbres of these voices resembles the somber, dark

¹⁷² Baillie, John. *An Essay on the Sublime* (London: for R. Dodsley, 1747), 38, quoted in McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 11.

¹⁷³ McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century*, 172.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

55

CHORUS.

Largo.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Fagotto III.

SOPRANO.

ALTO.

TENORE.

BASSO.

Tutti Bassi.

Largo, non adagio.

Pianoforte.

He sent a thick dark - ness o. ver all the land, o. ver all the land,

Er sand,te di. cke Finsterniss ü. ber all das Land, ü. ber all das Land,

He sent a thick dark - ness o. ver all the land, o. ver all the land,

Er sand,te di. cke Finsterniss ü. ber all- das Land, ü. ber all das Land,

H.W. 16.

Figure 3. George Frideric Handel, *Israel in Egypt*, part II, "He sent a thick darkness"¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Handel, *Israel in Egypt*, 55.

vocal timbre in “He sent a thick darkness.”¹⁷⁶ For instance, in the castle of Udolpho, just after midnight, Emily is “recalled from a reverie, into which she sunk, by very unusual sounds, not of music, but like the low mourning of some person in distress. As she listened, her heart faltered in terror...”¹⁷⁷ In another scene, Emily is following a servant through the darkness of the castle in an attempt to reach her sequestered aunt. The “hollow echoes” of the male servant’s voice strike her as terrifying: “Bernadine stumbled over the broken pavement, and his voice, as he uttered a sudden oath, was returned in hollow echoes, that made it more terrific.”¹⁷⁸ Handel may have been one source for Radcliffe’s decision to describe the obscured voices in her novels using terminology that references long and low sounds. It seems likely that Radcliffe may have been influenced not only by hearing Handel’s music, but also by reading what critics and theorists of the late eighteenth century were saying about the relation of Handel’s music to the sublime.

To aesthetic theorists, Handel’s compositions demonstrated music’s ability to represent the sublime terror of nature in an audible way. A look at critics’ reviews from the 1791 Handel Commemoration indicates that this association of Handel with the sublime was influenced by the emphasis Burke placed on terror, awe, and nature. Johnson notes that two types of sublime sound that Burke highlights appear especially often in late-eighteenth-century writing about the Handelian sublime: the “sudden and

¹⁷⁶ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 325-26.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 336.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 326.

unexpected,” and overpowering volume.¹⁷⁹ Unexpected musical techniques were lauded in Handel’s music from the time it was first performed, and continued to be understood as sublime in posthumous performances of Handel’s music. Burke thought that extreme loudness corresponded with the vastness so crucial to his visual understanding of the sublime: “excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror.”¹⁸⁰ Burke’s emphasis on extreme volume was a contributing factor in the incorporation of a very large number of musicians in the Handel Commemorations of the late eighteenth century. Undoubtedly, Radcliffe could not have missed this vast sublimity, both visual and auditory, if she was present at the 1791 Commemoration in Westminster Abbey.

As the examples of Sacchini and Handel demonstrate, many of the conventional musical techniques used to elicit feelings of sublime terror bear similarities to the way Radcliffe describes music in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The music she experienced used mimesis to evoke associations with religion, obscurity, and the past in the minds of audience members. Recognizing these elements as effective, Radcliffe incorporated similar mimetic strategies into descriptions of music and sound in her writing to better evoke emotional reactions in her readers.

¹⁷⁹ Johnson, “‘Giant HANDEL’ and the Musical Sublime,” 525.

¹⁸⁰ Burke, quoted in Johnson, “‘Giant HANDEL’ and the Musical Sublime,” 525.

Conclusion

Emily continued to listen, but no music came. “Those were surely no mortal sounds!” said she, recollecting their entrancing melody. “No inhabitant of this castle could utter such; and, where is the feeling, that could modulate such exquisite expression.”¹⁸¹

In this passage, Emily gestures towards music’s connection to emotion. Her comment “where is the feeling, that could modulate such exquisite expression” encapsulates the mystery that Radcliffe, Burke, Sacchini, Handel, and so many other great figures of the eighteenth century sought to solve: that is, how music could call forth emotion. Though each was pursuing this question in his or her own way, each participated in the expressive norms and conventions of the day. These conventions offered a rich set of strategies for portraying extreme experiences; and, as I have argued, those strategies could be adapted even across different artistic media to great effect.

This small study has greater implications for what may yet be learned from eighteenth-century novels about the musical traditions and, more broadly, the sound world of eighteenth-century Britain. Music helps us to deepen our understanding of how Radcliffe and her contemporaries made sense of the world around them. When we open one of her novels, we are invited into a world made all the more palpable because we can both see *and* hear it. By incorporating music, Radcliffe taps into the memories and the spiritual and supernatural beliefs of her readers, so that emotions (voluntarily or not) are

¹⁸¹ Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 320.

called forth. When we think about these descriptions of sound in a broader context, they allow us insight into how Radcliffe and her contemporaries understood the sounds they routinely encountered. For example, Radcliffe's use of religious music draws on eighteenth-century British understandings of Protestant and Catholic identity. Her implementation of low, disembodied voices adheres to aesthetic theorists' descriptions of the types of sound that were understood to elicit sublime emotions in the eighteenth century.

The constantly evolving theory of the sublime helped to organize authors' and composers' thinking about how they could affect the emotions of their readers and listeners. It makes sense that the sublime, understood as a combination of the most intense emotions a person could have, was of interest to these authors and composers. The sublime's emphasis on terror and awe, in particular, and the growing analysis of sound and the sublime throughout Radcliffe's lifetime, meant that Radcliffe encountered sublime manifestations of sound and music not only in theory but also in practice, in a variety of artistic contexts

The two musical compositions discussed in the second part of this study exemplify connections to eighteenth-century notions of sublime terror. Sacchini combined mimetic musical elements to signify the past, religion, and the supernatural, using many techniques that some scholars today label as *ombra*. The excerpts of Handel's music call forth the notion of sublime terror as well, in a way that strives to capture the

devastating effects of the natural world and obscurity. That critics of Radcliffe's time labeled Handel's compositions as sublime implies that Radcliffe may have been influenced by the public's understanding of Handel's music as much as by the music itself. In her novel, Radcliffe uses musical *topoi* much as both of these composers do, especially in her inclusion of religious music to denote the supernatural, her descriptions of the extreme meteorological effects of storms, and her masterful implementation of obscurity, both visual and audible. While it cannot be proven that Radcliffe attended either of these performances, these compositions should be taken as individual examples of larger trends in how notions of the sublime were incorporated into music by eighteenth-century composers. If Radcliffe favored music as much as her biographical information suggests she did, she surely was aware of these contemporary expressive strategies in the music of her time. Radcliffe's careful, calculated inclusion of music into her narratives was inspired by the mimetic musical tradition with which she was familiar.

Radcliffe's use of music paved the way for other authors who used sound in narratives of terror from the late eighteenth century through the present, including Matthew Gregory Lewis and Sir Walter Scott. She influenced authors in her own time by providing a foundation for music that is associated with gothic and horror narratives of all media types today. Two centuries later, we are still haunted by the sound world of Radcliffe's novels. Her descriptions of sound and music have much the same emotional effect on us today as they did on her earliest readers. Just as in most of Radcliffe's novels

the reader is given a rational explanation for events otherwise shrouded in mystery, an interdisciplinary study of late eighteenth-century literature, music, and understandings of emotion can dissolve some of the obscurity that surrounds the sources of Radcliffe's musical inspiration. A reading of her work with an appreciation for the musical, aesthetic, and religious traditions that surround its creation reveals that the mysterious music included in her writing does indeed have a source: the musical traditions and aesthetic theories of eighteenth-century Britain.

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