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Feminine Advocacy: Charlotte Smith's Employment of Gothic Landscape

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FEMININE ADVOCACY: CHARLOTTE SMITH'S EMPLOYMENT OF
GOTHIC LANDSCAPE

by

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B.A., Southern Illinois University, 2006

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts.

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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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Approved by:

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

ALISA MORRIS, for the Master of Arts degree in ENGLISH, presented on November 12, 2010, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: FEMININE ADVOCACY: CHARLOTTE SMITH'S EMPLOYMENT OF GOTHIC LANDSCAPE

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Scott J. McEathron

This paper is an examination of the sublime as experienced through landscape by female characters in the novels of Charlotte Smith, particularly the spiritual sentiment experienced via the landscape. Ann Radcliffe is also used to understand the female relationship with landscape, especially in light of gothic tropes of feminine experience. Three of Smith's novels are examined: *Emmeline*, *Desmond*, and *The Young Philosopher*. Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* is also explored.

Though Charlotte Smith's plaintive persona often polarized critics, they do agree that her use of landscape was uniquely inventive and quite seminal. Anna Letitia Barbauld says, "There is much beauty in the descriptive scenery, which Mrs. Smith was one of the first to introduce" (441). Barbauld is referring not only to the specific features of Smith's scenery, but her breaking of narrative conventions, which enhanced the subversive quality of the writing, in opposition to the standard content of courtship novels. Blank and Todd note that, "Frequently she includes tales of female discontent and male despotism which deconstruct the redemptive values of the foregrounded romance and question the legitimacy of male authority in public and domestic life" (13).

Smith was greatly influenced by the writings of Rousseau, which stressed a return to the primitive and to the soul-healing powers of nature, that he believed modern society inherently corrupted. "For him, the complex hierarchies of European society contravene the laws of nature, while daily life is a demoralizing struggle to gain and keep one's position" (Fletcher 18). It is easy to see why Smith would have embraced Rousseau's philosophy. Contemporary society had certainly not been kind to Smith: fettered to an abusive husband, embroiled in a complicated legal battle, faced with the deaths of four of her twelve children and spending immeasurable hours hunched over her desk writing to protect her family from poverty. In her own words she was "compelled to live only to write & write only to live" (qtd in Blank and Todd 7). Her most acute complaint was against the unfair social system which did not protect women against patriarchal abuse.

Her landscape scenery, praised for its emotional barometer by Elizabeth Kraft, is similar to the work of conventional gothic novelist, Ann Radcliffe. "Like her contemporary Radcliffe, Smith often used landscape to suggest the psychological or emotional state of her characters" (xviii). Radcliffe's scenery is often also valued for its correlation to Burke's philosophy of the sublime. "Effects in her novels will be 'ticked off' on the Burkean checklist of sublime stimuli, rather than explored for the particular nature of her response to the nexus of ideas on psychology, politics, and aesthetics bound up in that overloaded word, the sublime" (Milbank x). Radcliffe's use of scenery, however, has also much in common with the subversive work that Charlotte Smith is doing. Hoeveler writes of Radcliffe's motivations for constructing within the gothic genre: "But reading them as paradoxically both subversive and accommodating documents allows us to see the tremendous rage and fear that existed at the heart of middle-class women, hemmed in as they were (and are) by a tremendous reliance on their families for survival" (58). Ross also notes that the women's tradition of dissent was greatly tied up in the subversive quality of its produced literature: "During the early Romantic period, women's political discourse -- across the ideological spectrum -- occupies a position of dissent" (92). It is the inherent quality of the style of this writing that offered itself for subversive qualities.

A great deal has been said about gothic tropes being tied up with fears of fractured domesticity in a time of socioeconomic change. These fears are usually represented by the haunted castle and tyrannical father figure motifs.

In the novels of Charlotte Smith, the tyrannical figure is often displaced with shark lawyers and grotesque figures who represent unjust social systems Smith personally encountered. “The trustees were featured as gothic arch-villains who persecuted her family and hoarded the money legitimately her children’s” (Blank and Todd 14). Smith heightened the subversive quality of her novels by embedding figures who she was known to criticize.

The gothic novel’s link to flawed social systems including the family unit, “focused on crumbling castles as sites of terror, and on homeless protagonists who wander the face of the earth, the Gothic, too, is preoccupied with the home. But it is the failed home that appears on its pages.” (Ellis ix). In the same way that the home is a sublime site of masculine terror, the landscape scenery in both Smith and Radcliffe form a kind of retreat for women, a separate, feminine location where women find safety from unjust and autocratic societal systems.

This essay sets out to determine modes of feminine advocacy related to landscape scenery in the context of Charlotte Smith’s work. Ann Radcliffe can help us to understand more about feminine experience by a comparison to tropes present in her gothic novel, *The Sicilian Romance* (1790). In both writers’ works the landscape serves as a representation of Burke’s beautiful sublime space which ameliorates terror and lies in opposition to the masculine sublime space known for increasing dread in the onlooker. These instances showcase Smith’s significance as a subversive female novelist who challenged unfair governmental systems and conservative social ideals in the age of enlightenment. Ellis acknowledges the significance of the medium of the novel

for women and argues the gothic novel allows for such subversion, “creating, in a segment of culture directed toward women, a resistance to an ideology that imprisons them even as it posits a sphere of safety for them” (x).

When Ann Radcliffe’s characters look upon the landscape in *A Sicilian Romance* it is not with the pointed sense of terror that Edmund Burke speaks of. From his 1757 manifesto on the sublime, Burke asserts that

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger; that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (2)

Burke’s definition of the dreadful sublime was popularized by the landscape painter, Salvator Rosa, who “peopled his scenes of Alpine desolation either with gaunt, fervently praying or crucified saints or with banditti lurking to attack innocent travellers” (Mellor 86). However, in Radcliffe’s novel, sublime terror is not exclusively connected to the landscape; but also connected to the characters’ romanticism of the domestic ideal and their fear of its fragmentation due to the changing marketplace culture. “Thus the middle-class idealization of the home, though it theoretically protected a woman in it from arbitrary male control, gave her little real protection against male anger” (Ellis xi). This male anger is showcased most prevalently in the maniacal father figure and the unfair laws that permit his tyranny.

Though some critics construe terror incited by the sublime in Radcliffe as experienced via landscape, it is actually more accurately experienced within the home and through the volatile interactions between the domineering male characters and the submissive female characters. The masculine sublime is displaced from the Salvator Rosa conditions of landscape-inspired terror into the domestic sphere -- inside the home. As Mellor observes "Radcliffe believes that sublime horror originates not from nature but rather from man. She calculatedly moves the terror of the sublime from the outside into the home, the theoretical haven of virtue and safety for otherwise 'unprotected' women" (93). However, her idea of the domesticated sublime extends from the dysfunctional family to encompass the patriarchal system as a whole.

In *A Sicilian Romance* the domestic figure who incites sublime terror is the father figure, the Marquis. His propensity to inspire fear is evidenced by the early suggestion that he somehow caused the death of his first wife and mother of his children: "The arrogant and impetuous character of the Marquis operated powerfully upon the mild and susceptible nature of his lady: and it was by many persons believed, that his unkindness and neglect put a period to her life" (Radcliffe 3). The reader is not told the chain of events which led to the Marchioness's death, but it is insinuated that something inherent in the Marquis' temperament combined with the receptivity of the idealized Madonna figure -- her "susceptible nature" (Radcliffe 3), instigated her death. The Marchioness's vulnerability links to her powerlessness against patriarchal tyranny, and the result

is her eventual imprisonment within an underlying, separate, area of the gothic castle, the cave, a kind of male-controlled womb.

Outside the sphere of the home are other father figures, products of the same system that instigates the female's passivity and victim status. One of these characters in *A Sicilian Romance* is the Abate at the monastery of St. Augustin. He is a double for the Marquis much as the monastery itself becomes a double for the house of Mazzini. Although his actions initially seem less horrific than the Marquis', he nonetheless uses his position of power over women to exert his will. It is noted that his demeanor is threatening: "The Abate was alone. His countenance was pale with anger, and he was pacing the room with slow but agitated steps. The stern authority of his look startled her" (Radcliffe 129). When Julia requires a hiding place and protection the Abate permits her to stay under the stipulation that she assume the veil and become a nun herself. It is within another patriarchal dominion, the church, that Julia must succumb to escape the secular patriarchal dominion -- all lands controlled by men outside the monastery walls. He does not help Julia because he fears for her life, but because he does not want the secular to invade his personal masculine boundaries, and thence, diminish his power: "Should his daughter be refused him,' concluded the *Abate*, 'he may even dare to violate the sanctuary" (Radcliffe 127). What follows is a kind of war between different male systems of control. The gothic castle is transposed to the monastery:

The ruined Gothic walls that link monastery and castle among the "blue and barren hills" elicit from their ground-plan a conceptual

connection between medieval church and medieval secular authority that still existed in the society of the 1780s. Church and government buttress each other. (Fletcher 21)

Julia's only recourse is to escape the confines of the Monastery and venture forth into nature. Mellor says, "Radcliffe here drives home her argument that the greatest evil women must fear comes from *within* the sanctified family, both the patriarchal family and the supposed institutional protector of that family, the Catholic Church" (94). Unfortunately, even religious authority denied women an independent voice in eighteenth century society.

It makes sense, then, that the heroine of this novel and of others like it are created with so much attention to their operation within the cult of sensibility. Their overdone emotional reactions serve as markers for the whimsical and tyrannical fancies of the father figures, and hence, the patriarchal system. Unfortunately, the woman in danger was often eroticized in the culture. This is most apparent in the character of Adelina in Smith's *Emmeline* (1788) : "She is a victim of her own excessive sensibility (Fletcher 14), and "as in Adelina's case, it usually implies a dangerous eroticism" (Fletcher 14). The women are not independent of male desire and command, and the caricature-like proportions of the masculine figures represent the maligned lack of agency for the female. Smith creates Adelina this way in order to condemn, by highlighting, women's oppression.

Of this attention to sensibility, Deborah Rogers also suggests that it has something to do with the female characters' response to the landscape:

Radcliffe's striking scenery not only reflects and enhances the plot, it also serves to define character, evoking the heightened emotions and spirituality associated with sensibility. (Only the good guys appreciate nature). (xxxiv)

Although she is correct, her point is somewhat simplified. Emotions of sensibility expressed when the female characters look upon scenery are affected by the landscape, but that is because the landscape serves, as it does for Rousseau, as an unadulterated retreat from the society. Landscape offers an authentic religious experience richer than that offered by the conventions of organized religion.

It is the females in the novels who most often experience a direct appreciation of nature. One finds it more difficult to recall an instance where a male figure so directly communes with nature in the same way as women. The men do not need to commune with nature because they feel they have mastered it already. Their power has by this time metamorphosed into the growing world of the marketplace and of commerce, a world that women cannot experience. "Radcliffian villains are unable to appreciate nature transmuted into 'scenery,' that is, nature emptied of its economic content as producer of food and thus a place of work as well as a source of capital" (Ellis 101). Contrary to Rousseau's philosophy, patriarchy perceives nature only for its potential to augment society; its power moved on to the cultivated world.

The untouched natural world is the world that man has abandoned in his quest for power and the world to which women retreat for solace from patriarchal

constraints. Kraft connects Landscape ruins to the romantic tradition: “The motif of the contrastive ruin amid natural splendor would appeal to the Romantic sensibilities of writers such as Ann Radcliffe and William Wordsworth” (xviii). However, the phallogentric ruins, in this case, rocks, so prevalent in passages like Madame de Menon’s retreat into nature in *A Sicilian Romance*, can also be read as symbols of debilitated patriarchy in the natural world:

The scene again opening today, yielded to her a view so various and sublime, that she paused in thrilling and delightful wonder. A group of wild and grotesque rocks rose in a semicircular form, and their fantastic shapes exhibited Nature in her most sublime and striking attitude. (Radcliffe 104)

The feminine nature worship exemplified in the aforementioned passage has an aura of druidism--the Stonehenge-esque rocks are feminized by their insertion into the beautiful landscape. In this case, the rocks stand opposed to patriarchy’s organized religion.

The natural world does serve as a site for an alternative form of worship, one not bound by the laws of organized religion and one more attuned to the subjective emotions of the viewer. Anne Chandler furthers this claim about Radcliffe, by stating that she imbues her landscape scenes with “natural theology”(133): “We see her protagonists achieving a sense of spiritual consolation through a reverent appreciation of natural phenomena” (Chandler 135). I would add, in line with Mellor, that the spiritual consolation is related to the absence of societal construct within the landscape and the subsequent

identification with the self which is made nearly impossible when the woman is defined objectively. Rogers notes that changing ideas in the criticism of Radcliffe's landscape scenes have reflected a growing perception of Radcliffe as a challenger of patriarchal constructs. She invokes the critic, George Haggerty,, who "studies the role of Theodore to argue that *The Romance of the Forest* articulates a female principle that rejects patriarchal domination" (xxix). As expected, the rejection of patriarchal domination is not strictly relegated to *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). Radcliffe's earlier novel, *A Sicilian Romance*, utilizes female experience with the landscape in a unique, subversive way which is directly applicable to Smith.

The way the landscape is described also prescribes ownership to the viewer of that landscape, and hence, power over it. This landscape description is based upon the principles of the picturesque which Alison Milbank defines in her introduction to *A Sicilian Romance* as "viewing the landscape as if it were a painting" (xv). By placing oneself within the landscape, one exerts ownership over the landscape, but also over the self. This ownership over the self is exhibited by the relative free will of the characters during these vignettes of spiritual union. Smith and Radcliffe wish to stress women's self-sufficiency in a world that did not guarantee being provided for. Smith "sees that circumstances into which women are born and the culture in which they are reared militate on every side against female independence of spirit and self-sufficiency" (Kraft xxv).

Madam de Menon's escape into nature, allows for a surprise encounter with Julia. This type of appearance is a kind of wish fulfillment for Madam de

Menon, as Julia has long been absent. Similar sequences in eighteenth century novels begin to form a pattern. Characters often appear at the exact moment when they are being thought of or wished for. Terry Castle offers one explanation for this motif. She argues that the growing cult of individualism also causes a “growing sense of ghostliness in other people” (Castle 237). While the desire for individuality was warranted, a nostalgia for a more feudal, communal lifestyle remained existent in the contemporary consciousness. This wish was granted by what Castle calls, “the spectralization of the other“ (237); the wish for Julia to appear causes her appearance.

Castle also suggests that the spectralization of the other occurs because of growing shifts in society, for instance the shift from burial in cemeteries located within the heart of town districts to burial outside of town districts in the country (238). People’s growing fear of death and separation due to the growing dissolution of communal identity caused a greater fascination with the spiritual realm, but also an increasing rejection of it. What followed was an escalating propensity to phantomize others, even those already dead in a vague hope for survival beyond the passage of life. This exists in two places in Radcliffe’s novels, first as the spectralization of those who are still living in the landscape scenes described above and secondly in the elements of the supernatural which often appear. The explained supernatural in Radcliffe was merely another type of wish fulfillment granted by the author. The ghost which haunts the house of Mazzini is found to be the long lost mother at the climax of the narrative. While some did not like the fact that Radcliffe revealed her mysteries, she was in fact

attempting to close the gap between the physical world and the spiritual world like the public so desired.

Milbank notes the religious experience of Smith's characters in nature: "It is notable that Charlotte Smith's Emmeline, in the novel of the same name of 1788, similarly sets herself in potentially sublime landscapes, such as the sea-shore, where she gives herself up to meditation" (Milbank xix). In *Emmeline* (1788), the male characters do not manifest the same degree of terror as Radcliffe's male characters, but they do inspire a degree of fearfulness and awe in the females who are subordinate to them. The tyranny in *Emmeline* is most obvious in the character of Delamere, who seems to exist as a force of nature. Delamere becomes a more interesting character when he is viewed in light of Mellor's domestication of the sublime. Fletcher notes that of all the characters connected to duels in *Emmeline*, "Delamere and de Bellozane, the two exemplars of aristocratic recklessness and self-indulgence, are the only ones who fight with intent to kill (Fletcher 21). However, she also realizes that ideas of masculinity in that society were often connected to a contemporary fetishizing of male violence. She calls "Delamere, for some contemporary readers, the most attractive of Emmeline's suitors" (Fletcher 21).

However, it is actually Emmeline's uncle, Lord Montreville, who possesses the real control over Emmeline. Without Lord Montreville, Emmeline would resist Delamere at all costs due to her code of honor. She is temporarily forced to give in to Delamere because of her unfortunate reliance on the patriarchal system. Klekar observes that

Her promises to Montreville and Delamere cast the heroine's reliance on patriarchal authority in the language of the gift and obligation, depicting these relations as ostensibly based on filial affection, rather than on the coercive and violent qualities that motivate this authority throughout the novel. (270)

The practice of gift and obligation in eighteenth century society was so established that Emmeline's subservience to its tropes exhibits itself as a customary family affection rather than as a fear of Lord Montreville's authority. Therefore it appears that Emmeline obeys Montreville's wishes not because she is fearful of him, but because she does not wish to ill humor him. However, this is not the case; Emmeline knows her status as a receiver of gifts and her resultant obligation. If she does not wish to irritate him it is because she is afraid of his revocation of the gift of financial support. Fletcher confirms this:

Emmeline is also caught, less dramatically, between clashing notions of how women should behave. Her plot is concerned not so much with sexuality as with the way property, and therefore independence and power, is distributed. She is apparently illegitimate and therefore outside the social hierarchy, but on several occasions she must choose between obedience to the only family connection she has, the Montrevilles, and the right to choose her own husband and friends. (15)

Mellor's sublime terror that exists as violence within the domestic sphere of Radcliffe's gothic novels is hidden by a more subtle system of terror in

Emmeline, the female obligation to the male constructed society. Emmeline is only able to exert any kind of power when she relies on another socially constructed platform, female honor. By constantly upholding and defending her own honor, she is able to resist the advances of those men who would possess or rape her. This assertion of her honor system also occurs when she must face Lady Montreville. However, Lady Montreville has assumed a more masculine status by her manipulation of her husband's power; she is also representative of that system. It is her influence and also Montreville's inner wishes for masculine power via the governmental system that causes him to treat Emmeline with such disregard. Only after Lady Montreville's death is the Lord redeemed in the reader's eyes. This is due to the fact that his wife, a Lady Macbeth-esque character, no longer holds the whip hand over him. His waffling between masculinity and femininity throughout the course of the novel is interesting; however, Smith also presents feminized male characters who are part of the patriarchal system, but also sympathetic to the situation of women. Emmeline's real love interest, Godolphin, is one of these characters. He is a double for Delamere, but also vastly different from him. "Godolphin comes mid-way between extremes. To be an ideal male for the contemporary reader, he must be eager to punish the seduction of his sister. However, as a more feminized type of hero he proves willing to listen to his two woman friends" (Fletcher 20). Godolphin's expression of masculinity is safe and attractive to Emmeline because it is not imbued with sublime terror. His inability to inspire terror is

connected to his self-made man status, which differs from Delamere's leisurely lifestyle.

The most memorable landscape scenes in *Emmeline* occur on Godolphin's estate near The Isle of Wight's stormy seashore. In one passage after Emmeline has read a desperately sad poem authored by Lady Adelina she experiences Castle's spectralization of the other. This occurs after a sleepless night related to her fears concerning Delamere, Fitz-Edward and Adelina's poor mental state:

She cast an eye of solicitude towards the Eastern horizon, and wished for the return of the sun. In this disposition of mind, she was at once amazed and alarmed, by seeing the figure of a man, tall and thin, wrapped in a long horseman's coat, as if on purpose to disguise him, force himself out from between the shrubs which bounded one part of the lawn. (Smith 426)

The scene is framed by Emmeline's wish fulfillment. Her wish to see the sun rise over the eastern horizon is also a wish for her fears to be assuaged by a reunion of the parties who are causing her distress. It is of no surprise that the figure who then emerges is indeed Fitz-Edward, which gives rise to a series of events that will eventually reunite him with Adelina. The spectralization of the other exists not only as a wish for reunion, but, for Emmeline, a wish to exert control over a situation she is powerless against. At the root of this predicament is the moral judgment that denies a proper union between Adelina and Fitz-Edward despite their sincere affection for one another. Smith's decision to allow

Adelina and Fitz-Edward to marry negates this unfair reality, an event hinted to take place after the conclusion of the narrative.

Charlotte Smith's *Desmond* (1792) exhibits similar feminist and political subversity. When Mrs. Verney first encounters what she believes to be a stranger sleeping on her property she is immediately frightened, scared because he is a strange man, and also because he is physically and mentally encroaching upon her hidden natural world and place of retreat. Interestingly, she quickly learns that the mysterious male figure is Desmond. The report of her secret hideaway and the preceding incident to her sister in a letter is noteworthy. She says "It is, my dear sister, in this sequestered nook that I am going to wander, and to think of you as the most pleasing contemplation in which I can indulge myself" (Smith 244). That she does not convey this information and her emotional experience to a male character demonstrates the exclusive female kinship with the experience of not only natural theology, but the misunderstood world of women. Blank and Todd note that "Geraldine equates her husband's power over her body with that of a plantocrat's over his slave: to her sister she admitted to feeling such a dread of her husband that there was 'no humiliation' to which she had 'not rather submit' than that of considering herself 'as his slave'" (32). Smith provides a female parallel to the repressive powers of male brotherhood. The feminine sphere is corrupted by Desmond's infringement; her knee-jerk fearfulness demonstrates this:

I had no idea of his face, for his hat and his hair concealed it; nor did I stay to see if I recollected his figure; but, concluding that this

was the same person who had been met by the children, I was returning very hastily, from an impulse that had more of fear in it than his general appearance ought to have raised. (245)

Mrs. Verney's immediate fearfulness upon first seeing Desmond is remarkable. He is unrecognizable; he could be any man. Mrs. Verney's unique social situation is also worth mentioning. Unlike Emmeline, Mrs. Verney has long been married to a man who is both a part of the social system and a frank abuser of it. Of course, Mrs. Verney is one of Smith's many doubles for herself. When Geraldine discovers that the stranger is indeed Desmond, it is because she desires Desmond's presence, but also because in her increasingly desperate situation, she realizes that he might be her best alternative. By the conclusion of the novel she accepts him. Her wish fulfillment is not allowed as free a reign as Emmeline's. It is directly related to her and her children's protection and care. Smith offers a more realistic, albeit less ideal romance than Radcliffe.

Labbe notes the male protagonist's use of landscape in Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1794). "In his many treks from his family house at West Wolverton to the estate of the Manor House, Rayland Hall, Orlando Somerive frequently uses the natural scene to chart his emotional development" (Labbe 14). Nordius also notes Smith's progressive use of scenery in this novel, saying that "it includes a number of mysterious events set in the mouldering vaults of an ancient English Building, scenes eerie enough to clearly merit the epithet 'gothic'"(40). Indeed, Smith does something differently in this novel. Faced with

criticism for the overtly political tones of *Desmond*, Smith instead subverts the political message in *The Old Manor House* into the narrative. Whereas *Desmond* openly advocated the principles of The French Revolution, *The Old Manor House* challenges the corrupt legal system. She does this by creating a drama of opposites. The lead female protagonist is replaced by the male, Orlando. Lady Rayland, his elderly aunt symbolizes the unfairness of property laws reliant on the outdated custom of primogeniture. As Katharine Rogers states: "Although Smith never explicitly condemns the excessive power that a husband held in marriage, she reiterates the injustice of primogeniture, an almost equally sacrosanct part of the family property system (79).

The use of landscape in this novel is connected to Orlando's desire for the Rayland Estate inheritance. Orlando's experience with landscape is most evident by his trips through the landscape from home to Rayland Hall and then to the landscape of America in order to garner Lady Rayland's acceptance. Orlando is therefore able to experience nature, but only in the context of his servitude to Rayland and only until he assumes the role of patriarchal authority through the increase in property. When he is fearful of his ability to win Rayland over, or of his loss of Monimia, whose possession symbolizes his authority over women, the landscape is usually shrouded in night. "The night was overcast and gloomy; chill and hollow the wind whistled among the leafless trees, or groaned amid the thick firs in the dark and silent wood; --the water-falls murmured hollow in the blast, and only the owl's cry broke those dull and melancholy sounds,

which seemed to say--'Orlando, you will revisit these scenes no more" (Smith 249)!

The most resonant landscape scenery in *The Young Philosopher* (1798) is the gothic setting in Scotland during Mrs. Glenmorris's captivity. Smith, like Radcliffe, connects patriarchal power to religion; Mrs. Glenmorris is held captive in a decrepit abbey. "The abbey of Kilbrodie had formerly been a very large building, and great masses of ruins were scattered, for some acres, beyond that part of it which served as an habitation for its present Laird" (Smith 110).

Lady Kilbrodie kidnaps Mrs. Glenmorris with the intention of murdering her baby. The grotesque characters of Lady Kilbrodie and her son are another example of Smith's subversive criticism of primogeniture in English society. Their motivation for the kidnapping is the usurpation of her husband's seat of patriarchal power. It is Mrs. Glenmorris who suffers most acutely at the hands of this unfair social system.

This type of deliberate, though subversive, commentary by Smith upon the situation of eighteenth century women was a way to make money and help her own circumstances, but it was also a way to open avenues of free thought for other women. Her opinions on this matter were not strictly relegated to her novels; they are also present in her poetry. Willson confirms Smith's literary intentions:

Smith offers her readers a double narrative. Women who read the novel might identify with the emotional terrain through which the suffering heroine is propelled by plots and cruelties; but they were

also being shown that the world has an intricate, objective reality, and that to name and understand its structure is to find a survival strategy. (vii).

One way that Pascoe says Smith subverts patriarchal power in her nature poems is by giving women a scientific language, a language more akin to the secret knowledge of the patriarchal world. Her nature poems “set forth a poetic manifesto which, in its insistence on close observation and faithfully rendered detail, challenges the prevailing strictures of the artistic establishment of her day” (Pascoe 194). For Smith a survival strategy was to operate within the masculine world of financial independence by penning her own novels and poems. Like her heroines, she also took solace in the arena of the natural world. She shows this through the cataloguing of the natural world and also through the lyrical romanticism of her poems. In “By the same To Solitude” the female narrator finds herself immersed in solitude in the natural world. Like many of Smith’s poems it ends on a woeful note, but it is through the female narrator’s communion with nature that she is able to substantiate her emotions, and therefore, experience power over them.

Radcliffe and Smith alike realized the changing position of women at this unique time. Smith specifically wrote to illustrate the weaknesses of the contemporary social constructs. It remains ironic that her work failed to exert a noticeable influence over the misfortunes of her own life.

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