© 2011 Samantha Plasencia
To my mom, dad, sister Amy, and fiancé William
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The idea for this project began over a casual conversation with fellow MA candidate Katherine Peters on Ann Radcliffe’s *Romance of the Forest*. As we sipped on coffee one hot afternoon in the summer of 2010, I mentioned an observation that would become the impetus for this work. I am indebted to Katie, whose enthusiasm and early discussions raised my interests on this topic. I also owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Professor Judith W. Page, who first worked with me in writing a conference-length paper on this topic, and later became my thesis director. Thank you so much for all your direction, support, and patience throughout the various research and writing phases of this project. I would also like to thank Albert Brick Professor Pamela Gilbert, whose reading of my argument provided invaluable insight. I am indebted to the English Department at The University of North Alabama for inviting me to present an early form of this paper at their annual “Going Gothic” Graduate Conference. I would like to specifically thank Associate Professor Larry Adams, Professor Anne E. Lott, and Assistant Professor Lesley Peterson, whose enthusiasm for the project encouraged me to expand it as my thesis.
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Eighteenth-century language theory deviated from seventeenth-century language theory in its increased invested in language as a tool for social communication. This new investment led to the association of language with progress, and to a spike in publications dedicated to the study of linguistic elements and codes. It also caused increased attention to be paid to linguistic “others”; individuals from other cultures, or from different regions or classes of the same culture, who spoke differently than the elite literate class. Interestingly, there has been very little work done on Ann Radcliffe’s contribution and use of this nuanced debate on language. Scholarly work on her use of language has focused on either her aesthetics, and/or her persistent endorsement of reason and balanced sentimentality. What critics have overlooked is her critique of the linguistic codes of the laboring class. By looking at the language of her laboring class characters, like Peter in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), Annette and Bertrand in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and the peasant guide in *The Italian* (1797), I argue that Radcliffe uses their redundant, unorganized, and imprecise linguistic habits representatively to critique sensibility while endorsing sense. In so far as their linguistic habits are “unenlightened,” I argue that they are used as part of a larger agenda
invested in a logical and rational epistemology. Furthermore, I argue that her dualistic portrayal of these characters, which both praises and disparages them, ideologically complicates the ideality of later Romantic portrayals of, what William Wordsworth calls, “low and rustic life.”
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“Of the laborious and mercantile part of the people, the diction is in a great measure casual and mutable; many of their terms are formed for some temporary or local convenience, and though current at certain times and places, are in others utterly unknown. This fugitive cant, which is always in a state of increase or decay, cannot be regarded as any part of the durable materials of a language, and therefore must be suffered to perish with other things unworthy of preservation”

—Samuel Johnson, Preface to Dictionary of the English Language

“Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that situation our elementary feelings exist in a state of greater simplicity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated”

—William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads

As these quotes demonstrate, the eighteenth century was a time of extreme and varied opinions on language, literacy and orality. In Literacy and Popular Culture, David Vincent argues that increasing literacy rates raised major questions about “how the common people thought about their world, and how they performed in it.” This interest fueled a spike in publications dedicated to the study of linguistic elements and codes. It also caused increased attention to be paid to linguistic “others,” individuals from other cultures, or from different regions or classes of the same culture, who spoke differently than the elite literate class. Interestingly, there has been very little work done on Ann


Radcliffe’s contribution and use of this nuanced debate on language. Scholarly work on her use of language has focused on either her aesthetics, and/or her persistent endorsement of reason and balanced sentimentality. What critics have overlooked is her critique of the linguistic codes of the laboring class. By looking at the language of her laboring class characters, like Peter in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), Annette and Bertrand in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and the peasant guide in *The Italian* (1797), I argue that Radcliffe uses their linguistic differences representatively to critique sensibility while endorsing sense, and to promote a world view based on reason. Furthermore, I argue that her dualistic portrayal of these characters, which both praises and disparages them, ideologically complicates the ideality of later Romantic portrayals of “low and rustic life.”

Radcliffe’s faithful servants have commonly been seen as appeasing conservative anxieties about a growing class consciousness. These accounts see the servants’ unwavering dedication to their masters as a relic of feudalism, when loyalties were vertical rather than horizontal. Angela Keane notes these characters’ “limited aesthetic response or judgment,” but only to argue that it is juxtaposed to the ‘middling’ class as a way of endorsing “original sensibility.” E. J. Clery writes that only the servants give a “whole-hearted credit to the signs of haunting,” while James Watt adds that they are “a class of people – it is repeatedly made clear – who are prone to receive ‘any species of


the marvelous . . . with avidity’.”6 Clery mentions the instrumental role these “marginal” characters play in Radcliffe’s plot development, but attributes it to Radcliffe’s emulation of the “range of laughter and terror” found in Shakespearean tragedy.7 Barbara Benedict also draws on Shakespeare, arguing that Radcliffe’s servants are Shakespearean character types whose “long-winded stories,” are meant to parody “discourse, like that of novels, which sets the self at the center of meaning and laboriously traces every feeling and thought.”8

Notably, none of these critics wrote extensively or exclusively on laboring class characters or their language. Their comments regarding these characters were made incidentally, as small asides in a much larger argument. The lack of attention paid to these characters is surprising given eighteenth-century concerns about the linguistic codes of servants and the lower classes. As early as 1692 John Locke warns against letting children converse with uneducated servants, saying that they should, if possible, “be kept from such conversations […] They frequently learn, from such unbred or debauched servants, such language […] as otherwise they possibly would be ignorant of all their lives.”9 Over sixty years later Thomas Sheridan questions the practice “so contrary to that of those polished nations, [to] suffer our children [committed] to the care


7 Clery, Women’s Gothic, 83.


of some of the most ignorant and lowest of mankind.\textsuperscript{10} Towards the end of the century John Walker claims that “Vulgarisms may be expected from Domestics, and from the Lower Orders of Society; but they are a reproach to people of education.”\textsuperscript{11} What these selections show is a cultural awareness and concern with the linguistic codes of the non-literate, or semi-literate community, and a continued attempt to deal with a national heteroglossia.

The first section of this paper will place Radcliffe amongst eighteenth-century language debates. Drawing from both primary source material as well as scholarly studies, I hope to demonstrate that Radcliffe’s critique of laboring class language draws on contemporary attempts to standardize spoken English. By attributing to the servants and peasants linguistic habits that her contemporaries had demarcated as “rural,” “illiterate,” “oral,” and “unenlightened,” Radcliffe is rooting her endorsement of rationality in the “literate” language of the Enlightenment. The argument that Radcliffe is invested in promoting rationality over excess sensibility is not new.\textsuperscript{12} But no one has


\textsuperscript{11} Phillip Withers, \textit{Aristarchus: or, the Principles of Composition} (London, 1789), 44, http://find.galegroup.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tablID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW113732518&source=gale&userGroupName=gain40375&version=1.0&doc-Level=FASCIMILE.

\textsuperscript{12} Her contemporaries drew attention to her ‘supernatural explain’d,’ and often praising this style for refusing to give into the mass taste for the paranormal. More recent critics, such as Barbara Benedict have called her plots “vehicles of an intellectual and moral logic,” and located in the balanced sentimental language of her heroines, an enforcement of “public reason, authority, and social conformity.” Others like Kate Ellis have drawn on religion and nationalism, arguing that Radcliffe’s linguistic association of Catholicism with superstition is part of a project to endorse Protestant “England as a rational, and hence superior nation.” Barbara Benedict, \textit{Framing Feeling: Sentiment and Style in English Prose Fiction 1745-1800}, (New York: AMS Press, 1994), 172; Kate Ferguson Ellis, “Ann Radcliffe and the Perils of Catholicism,” Women’s Writing 1:2 (1994): 163.
studied how she accomplishes this through the demotion of her laboring class character’s linguistic codes. This intent is perhaps nowhere clearer than in her one exception. As I will explain in more detail later, Paulo is the only prominent servant who lacks the linguistic codes associated with the laboring class. Significantly, he is also the only servant whom Radcliffe describes as skeptical of superstition.

Radcliffe imbues her laboring class characters with linguistic habits that are more “oral” than those of her literate educated characters. These linguistic differences are represented stylistically, not in dialect. They are most evident in how the semi-literate characters present information – through linguistic patterns that are distinctively more redundant and copious, and less precise, focused, polite, and linear than the speech patterns of their literate counterparts. Though I may appear to dichotomize literacy and orality, the two were by no means mutually exclusive, but rather coexisted and comingled in complex ways throughout the century. However, Radcliffe deals with the issues of her day *generally*. She is not writing as an anthropologist or a grammarian, and so her critique will naturally lack the diversity found in life.

It is also important to note that Radcliffe’s novels take place in countries that eighteenth-century Britain already considered backwards, such as Italy. Drawing attention to her portrayal of these character’s linguistic codes as inadequate may therefore be seen as stating the obvious. But the distinctive stylistic elements of her writing, like anachronistic details, the ‘supernatural explain’d,’ and quoting from famous British writers, has proven that her interests lay firmly in middle-class British society and concerns, rather than in “a verifiable historical period.”

Critics such as Claudia

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Johnson have specifically connected these techniques to her engagement with social issues, arguing that Radcliffe uses anachronism as "a means of conducting social criticism." Although her conservative contemporary critics praised her writing for "providing a legitimate release or transport from the problems of the present," recent critics have proven that Radcliffe displacement of time and place in her novels is a literary strategy to occlude her social criticism from disapproving conservative male critics. Given their praise, it is safe to say she succeeded. My argument will therefore work under the assumption that though Radcliffe's novels often take place before the eighteenth century, and in countries other than England, her critique portrays the linguistic codes of eighteenth-century England.

For the purpose of clarity, in my close reading I will refer to the educated characters (such as Adeline and La Motte in Romance, Emily and Montoni in Udolpho, and the Confessor in The Italian) as "literate," and the non-educated characters (such as Peter in Romance, Annette and Bertrand in Udolpho, and the peasant guide in The Italian) as "semi-literate". By "literate" I do not mean knowing how to read and write, but rather having the linguistic habits that characterize a literate mind. I recognize that in labeling the laboring class' linguistic codes "semi-literate" I fall into the dichotomizing trap of identifying the oral tradition with illiteracy. Unfortunately, as Brian Stock argues "the conceptual vocabulary" for discussing literacy and orality "everywhere betrays an ineradicable bias towards written tradition." Though I enter this discussion as an


objective outsider, eager only to explore how Radcliffe’s use of literacy and orality allow her to promote an ideology rooted in reason, I recognize the implications of my vocabulary.
CHAPTER 2
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LANGUAGE THEORIES

The eighteenth century saw an unprecedented spike in publications dealing with "grammar, rhetoric, criticism and linguistic theory."\(^{17}\) While fewer than fifty of these works had been published between 1700 and 1750, there were well over "200 in the second half of the century."\(^{18}\) Jon Mee suggests that the increased focus in the practical uses of the English language parallels an increasing value of English, over the classical languages, "as a national treasure."\(^{19}\) We see this as early as 1690, when John Locke famously states that "if a gentleman be to study any language, it ought to be that of his own country."\(^{20}\) Over sixty years later Daniel Farro echoes Locke's endorsement for an English language education, arguing that "Britannia's sons in general may be universally benefited, and improved, by this grammar and vocabulary."\(^{21}\) Towards the end of the century Thomas Sheridan, confidently asserts that "there never was a language which required, or merited cultivation more" than English.\(^{22}\)


\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education, 81.


\(^{22}\) Thomas Sheridan, A General Dictionary of the English Language, One Object of Which is to Establish a Plan and Permanent Standard of Pronunciation (London, 1780), i, http://find.galegroup.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&abID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW113186737&source=gale&userGroupName=gain40375&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.
confidence in the potential of the national language may have been the impetus for the growing effort to improve and standardize it.

Murray Cohen, in his detailed and well researched *Sensible Words*, argues that there was a fundamental shift in how people viewed language from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Seventeenth-century grammarians looked at language philosophically, and focused their instructive texts on orthography. Eighteenth-century grammarians shifted their focus towards practical instruction. The splitting of orthography and orthoepy represents a fundamental shift in linguistic focus to social communication. Earlier generations had seen the “inevitable changes suffered by a living language,” as a defect that threatened the longevity of the country’s best literary texts. 23 By the eighteenth century, linguistic “change and variation” became “virtues worth recording.” 24 The popularity of etymology increased drastically as it became “a record of the progress of societies.” 25 These new linguistic perspectives put “interpersonal communication at the beginning of social development” and began to distinguish societies by how they communicated. 26 Language became integral to an eighteenth-century stadial theory of development invested in the premise that the present age was “more enlightened than the past.” 27 Using eighteenth-century England as a marker of civilization, writers who studied different cultures and languages were


24 Ibid., 79, 95.

25 Ibid., 124.

26 Ibid., 121.

able to measure a culture’s “movement toward civilization […] by the language they
spoke.”28 Given the cultural association of language and progress, it seems appropriate
that Radcliffe chose language to represent the epistemological distinctions she felt were
most important to the progress of a nation.

This shifting view caused language to become the “subject [of] various kinds of
scrutiny.”29 In 1712, Jonathan Swift argues that “our Language is extremely imperfect
[…] its daily Improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily Corruptions”30
Thirty plus years later, in his Plan of a Dictionary (1747), Samuel Johnson writes
enthusiastically that he hopes “to fix the English language.”31 Ten years later James
Buchanan complains that “the pronunciation of a great many, and especially of the
illiterate, is in most parts woefully grating and discordant.”32 To fix such an issue,
Thomas Sheridan calls for a “uniformity of pronunciation” to destroy the “odious
distinctions between subjects of the same King.”33 Others, were concerned with the

28 Adam R. Beach, “The Creation of a Classical Language in the 18th Century: Standardizing English,
31 Samuel Johnson, The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language (London, 1747), 11,
http://find.galegroup.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/ecco/informark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&
tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW110967141&source=gale&userGroupName=gain40375&version=
1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.
32 James Buchanan, A New Pocket Book for Young Gentlemen and Ladies or, A Spelling Dictionary of
the English Language (London, 1757), xii,
http://find.galegroup.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/ecco/informark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&
tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW105628288&source=gale&userGroupName=gain40375&version=
1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.
33 Thomas Sheridan, A Course of Lectures on Elocution (London, 1762), 206,
http://find.galegroup.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/ecco/informark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&
tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW110911836&source=gale&userGroupName=gain40375&version=
1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.
inconsistency between written and spoken language, and argue that we should “Spell as we Speak.” Over forty years later George Hams expresses concern with the “Variety of Spelling,” and warns that such a variety would “work an entire change, or rather Confusion in our Language, unless some Care is taken to prevent this growing Barbarism.” What all of these writers have in common is the belief that “the Progress of Language […] resembles the progress of age in man.” Thus in their attempts to reform language, whether through orthography, orthoepy, or spelling, eighteenth-century writers hoped to progress their “age,” and the men and women of it.

Carey McIntosh argues in *The Evolution of English Prose*, that the increased attention paid to the English language led to a shift in linguistic rhetoric from “more oral, more informal and colloquial” to “more bookish, more elegant [and polite], more precise, and more consciously rhetorical.” This shift, he argues, was the product of a widespread effort to standardize the English language. In language, McIntosh explains, standardization occurs when one set of linguistic habits is “identified with and attached to the central authorities of a developing state: it puts strong pressures on the language […] to be more orderly, more precise, and in general more written” and encourages a move “away from [the] redundancy, sloppiness, and concreteness of speech.”

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34 *The Needful Attempt to Make Language and Divinity Plain and Easy* (London, 1711), 3.
38 Ibid., 6, 24.
to McIntosh’s reading of these linguistic changes is that there was a pointed move away from linguistic habits characteristic of orality and towards, what he calls “written” (and others have called ‘literate’) habits. Radcliffe’s treatment of language draws on this cultural shift. The narrator continuously refers to the servants/peasants’ language as loquacious, and their redundancy, sloppiness, and imprecision while speaking is comically portrayed as foolish and socially inept. Linguistically, these servants are juxtaposed to educated literates whose “elegant,” “polite,” and “precise” language is portrayed as the standard.

Tony Crowley also notes this shift in Language in History, but argues that the push to standardize English speakers was a nationalistic project. Both McIntosh and Crowley point to a pervasive concern amongst the literate classes about the varying languages within England’s borders. For example, Thomas Sheridan, writing in 1756 notes that there “were such various dialects spoken, that persons born and bred in different and distant shires, could scarcely any more understand each others speech, than they could

39 Such a reading follows thirty-plus years of research on literacy and orality. Though an in-depth explanation of this research is outside the scope of this paper, it may be helpful, given my argument, to know the two main models, as identified by Brian Street. These are the two main models that dominated literacy and orality research from the 1960s through the 1980s. The autonomous model uses literacy to explain the differences between pre-literate and literate individuals, societies and cultures. This model interprets the differences psychologically, arguing that pre-literate individuals have a different consciousness than literate individuals. The leading proponents of this theory include McLuhan (1962, 1964), Havelock (1963), Goody (1977), Greenfield (1972), Ong (1982), Stock (1983), and Olson (1977). This theory has never been adequately substantiated with cognitive research, and an alternative theory is the ideology model, that interprets changes in how people communicate in light of changing social and institutional practices. This theory assumes that the cognitive processes of the individuals stay consistent. The leading proponents of this theory include Scribner (1977), Scribner and Cole (1981), Leach (1966), Douglas (1980), Eisenstein (1979), Street (1984). Major research after the 1980s has favored “careful analyses of specific oral and textual practices” rather than overarching generalized theories. Paul Prior, “History of Reflection, Theory, and Research on Writing” in Handbook of Research on Writing: History, Society, School, Individual, Text, ed. Charles Bazerman, (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2009), 88; Brian Street, Literacy in Theory and Practice (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
that of a foreigner.” A stratification of English such as what Sheridan describes was problematic to a nation imagining itself as a community. “Cultural nationalism” requires community members to be able to communicate with each other “by means of the one thing they, and only they, share: the language.” A heteroglossia so severe that “different and distant shires” couldn’t understand each other threatens national unity and brings “imperial downfall.” The attempt to create a “monoglot language” by eliminating the “heteroglot elements from English,” was therefore one of the major forces driving language reform in the latter part of the century.

These “heteroglot elements,” Adam Beach argues “are the “local ‘englishes’” that “the imperial center wishes to denigrate […] as improper hybrids.” As McIntosh finely details, the specific linguistic habits in these “local ‘englishes’” set to be eradicated, such as “redundancy, sloppiness, […] concreteness of speech” and “loose sentences” were linguistic qualities generally associated with oral communities. What these critics all point to is an internal colonialist project that aims to “influence the [more oral] linguistic codes” of rural laborers by “less drastic methods than conquest and migration.” In Radcliffe’s text, the linguistic habits of the “local ‘englishes’” are associated with overly excitable sensibilities and a lack of reasoning. In the world of her novel, the monoglot language that internal colonialism promotes is therefore synonymous with a rational

41 Crowley, *Language in History*, 68.
43 Ibid., 68.
44 Beach, “Classical Language,” 133.
46 Ibid., 237.
world view. Radcliffe imbues her laboring class characters with the precise qualities that she sets out to eradicate.

Importantly, as the literate class standardized language with their right hand, they created linguistic “others” with their left. Language, Crowley argues, was the means by which the bourgeois participated in a process of self-identification. This process required “the construction of social ‘others’.”\(^{47}\) So as the bourgeois identified their own language, they also identified the language of the “other.” This was part of a “linguistic habitus” that made it socially profitable to drop the rural “local ‘englishes’” and adopt the linguistic practices of the literate class.\(^{48}\) It was within this context, Angela Keane argues, that the state “was reimagined as a professionalized, bureaucratic public sphere in which each […] literate individual – was self-governing.”\(^{49}\) So confident were eighteenth-century writers in the social power of English that John Ash, in 1761 writes passively that “The importance of an English education is now pretty much understood; and it is generally acknowledged, that […] an intimate acquaintance with the Proprieties, and Beauties of the English Tongue, would be a very desirable, and necessary Attainment, far preferable to a smattering of the learned languages.”\(^{50}\) Radcliffe’s novels are firmly invested in the improvement power of this standard, particularly in its

\(^{47}\) Crowley, *Language in History*, 74.


\(^{50}\) John Ash, *Grammatical Institutes: or, an Easy Introduction to Dr. Lowth’s English Grammar* (London, 1761), iii, http://find.galegroup.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&&t cabID=T001&prodlId=ECCO&docId=CW116757818&source=gale&userGroupName=gain40375&version= 1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.
connection to Enlightenment values. So much so, argues Keane, that in her fictions, reason is not only represented as “a peculiarly English faculty,” but one that is “best inculcated through the power of the national language.”

The change in rhetoric that McIntosh describes, and the increasing shift away from traditionally oral linguistic habits, has long been attributed to the advent of the printing press. The argument, in general terms, claims that “literacy generally, and printing in particular” created a culture with thought patterns distinctively different than an oral cultures. McIntosh emphasizes the advent of printing by arguing that the new linguistic habits “seem entirely natural if we think of it as an adjustment of classical rhetoric to print culture.” The “order” and precision McIntosh attributes to print (and literacy), were also noted in the period. Joseph Priestly in 1763 expresses doubt “that the language of any people, before the introduction of letters, could be otherwise than very incoherent and unconnected.” Nicholas Hudson has complicated this reading by arguing that printing did not create these differences, but rather allowed for writing and

51 Keane, Women Writers, 22.

52 Elizabeth Eisenstein’s The Printing Press as an Agent of Change (1979) provided the first large scale study of the printing press’ influence on communicative habits. Printed in two volumes, this largely influential work provided much of the historical background and foundation for both autonomous and ideological models of literacy. Though responsible for sparking a tremendous amount of scholarly interest on printing and its subsequent effects on communication, her work has often been critiqued for over emphasising the effects of the printing press. Elizabeth Eisenstein, The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformation in Early-Modern Europe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).


54 McIntosh, Evolution of English Prose, 158.

speech to be conceptually separated as two distinct and “dissimilar forms of language.”

Other scholars have connected literate print culture to Enlightenment values. David Olson, for example, argues that a “written literary style” is distinguished from an oral style by its “attempt to clearly distinguish the given from the interpretation.” In a print culture the given is the printed text, against which all else is compared. This focus, he argues, is rooted in the Enlightenment’s scientific epistemology and its emphasis on observed facts. Carey McIntosh, in his article on eighteenth-century dictionaries, also connects literacy to the Enlightenment. Following the “evolution” of his prose, he argues that dictionaries grew progressively more enlightened as the century moved forward. As proof he cites the growing standardization of language and measurements, and the increased “‘writtenness’ and logicality” of both dictionary entries and their categorization. The “precision,” and “order” that McIntosh identifies in “written” linguistic habits, are thus rooted in the Enlightenment. These accounts are significant to my argument because I hope to show that Radcliffe uses language distinction as representative of a distinction she is far more concerned with, rational thought. By rooting the servant’s social ineptitude on a linguistic code that is unenlightened she endorses one rooted in the Enlightenment values of reason and logic.


57 Olson, “Literacy and Objectivity,” 156.


Although McIntosh’s “evolution” of prose is a popular theory, recent scholarship has tried to show just how varied eighteenth-century culture and thought were. For example, Janet Sorensen, in her article on cant and vulgar dictionaries, notes that these works comprised “well over twenty repeatedly reprinted titles in the eighteenth century.” The continued demand for works like Francis Grose’s *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785), “suggest[s] a rhetorical rehabilitation of the people.” These works, she adds, claimed cant and vulgar language “as part of a free national-popular culture.” A nationalistic emphasis behind the printing of cant and vulgar dictionaries certainly complicates Crowley’s assertion of the nationalistic emphasis behind standardizing language. Nicholas Hudson’s *Writing and European Thought, 1600-1830* is another exploration of the nuanced and complicated changes in language thought and opinion. He argues that in the middle of the eighteenth century thinkers like Thomas Sheridan and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who considered writing a “less flexible form of communication than speech,” attacked writing for its “destructive influence on both language and morals.” These writers, Hudson argues, valued ‘orality’ because of


63 It should be noted that Sorensen agrees with both Crowley and McIntosh that defining a national standard required “othering” particular linguistic practices (and their speakers), making them “beyond the pale of polite, rational conversation.” But the persistence of vulgar and cant dictionaries shows a resistance to this “othering,” and a revaluing of a “linguistic subculture” on the basis of a “free” country. Carey McIntosh, *The Evolution of English Prose 1700-1800: Style, Politeness, and Print Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 435, 436.

64 Nicholas Hudson, *Writing and European Thought: 1600-1830* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2, 3.
its ability to express emotion better than writing. This argument questions the major
language theories that link the increase of print culture to the devaluation of the oral.

Hudson and Sorensen’s readings importantly complicate neat theories on the
“evolution” of language by demonstrating that there were counter “evolutions”
happening concurrently. Scholars that talk about a (singular) language shift fail to note
“the overlaps and hybridity,” of language.65 As David Vincent critically illustrates, “the
process of change was […] uneven both in pace and direction.”66 Singular “shifts” and
“evolutions” therefore only show part of the much larger and complicated picture.

Radcliffe steps into this complex discourse with an equally complex opinion that
endorses “more written,” “precise,” and “polite” linguistic codes, but only insofar as they
represent the Enlightenment values of reason and logic.

Hudson connects the mid-century revaluing of speech to ‘The Age of Sensibility’
that emphasized passionate emotion. How then do we account for the romanticized
notion of ‘orality’ even after eighteenth-century culture had recoiled from sensibility?
Penny Fielding argues that concerns over the behavior of “‘peasant’ culture led to a
splitting of the image of the oral into a romanticized and idealized form and a demotion
of the status of popular orality to a concept to be called ‘illiteracy’.”67 For orality to be
valued, Fielding argues, it must be “well clear of social realities.”68 It was this divorcing
of orality from actual experience that led to the Romantic notion that orality “signaled the

65 Barry Reay, Popular Culture in England 1550-1750 (London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited,
1998), 70.
66 Vincent, Literacy and Popular Culture, 13.
67 Penny Fielding, Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction
68 Ibid., 45.
expression of natural feeling,” an idea we see often in the writings of William Wordsworth. What we see in Radcliffe is a complicated dualism by which orality is valued theoretically (in the idea of nature, and a cultural simplicity unsullied by modern European culture), but devalued in reality (linguistically, or ideologically).

What Hudson and Fielding’s readings demonstrate is that the traditions of orality and literacy are far more complicated than any cause-and-effect, or progress argument can detail. Language did not simply grow more literate and less oral as the century went on. Nor was the language of rural laborers systematically eradicated by a society bent on eliminating all traces of orality. In some ways printing helped solidify the survival of oral narrative forms, such as the ballad. Maureen N. McLane powerfully argues that the tradition of balladry and minstrelsy demonstrates just how permeable the boundaries “between what we now call high and low culture, between literate elites and semi-literate rural folk” were. Most scholars will now note that “oral and literate cultures were in no way definitively cut off from each other,” but rather coexisted in complex ways. The change we should be looking for then, Brian Stock argues, is “not so much [a change] from oral to written, as from an earlier state, predominately oral, to various

69 Ibid.
70 I have purposely avoided using the term “popular” because of its vexed nature. By quoting from Fielding I do not mean to suggest that there existed a singular “popular” orality that was targeted by late eighteenth-century authors. “Popular” culture is no more a coherent whole than the literate culture I have described. If in my close reading it appears that I speak of a singular “popular” linguistic code is it because in many ways, Radcliffe does not linguistically differentiate her laboring class characters (and where she does make linguistic differentiations, as in The Italian, I draw attention to it).
combinations of oral and written.” Radcliffe’s portrayals of literacy and orality, though initially dichotomized, eventually recognize this coexistence.

73 Stock, The Implications of Literacy, 9.
CHAPTER 3
LABORING-CLASS LANGUAGE IN ANN RADCLIFFE’S FICTION

Radcliffe’s semi-literate characters are often presented as long-winded speakers, whose superstitions and unfocused stories provide comic relief amid stories of kidnappings and murderous plots. The language used to describe both the characters and their linguistic habits is often comically sarcastic. For example, in Romance as La Motte and his servant Peter explore a secluded chamber in the abbey, Peter notes the barred windows, and begins to compare the room to a prison cell, commenting on a local superstition he had heard while in town. After observing the windows for himself, the narrator tells us that La Motte “now interrupted the eloquence of Peter, and bade him carry the light before them.” The sarcasm in referring to his simple speech as “eloquent” is immediately evident to the reader. Similarly, In Udolpho Annette is painted as a superstitious woman who is easily excitable, and from whom “the faculty of speech was never long withheld.” In speaking of his imprisonment, Ludovico explains that he became “so weary of life that [he] often wished to get rid of it” (655). Annette, in perfect seriousness responds “‘Well, but they let you talk […] they did not gag you after they got you away from the chateau, so I don’t see what reason there was to be so very weary of living’” (655). The juxtaposition of Annette’s absurd statement with the tone and seriousness with which she says it, carries high comedic value in the scene.

At other times, the language describing the characters and their speech patterns is severe. For example in Udolpho the narrator tells us that Emily, “wishing to interrupt


[Theresa’s] ill-judged but well-meaning harangue” is forced to demand that she cease talking” (104). The use of the word “harangue” illustrates how rude and “ill-judged” Theresa’s speech was. As McIntosh powerfully argues “politeness in the eighteenth century meant something more than just etiquette […] it was a matter of civilization. It measured in part the distance a person or community had come from savagery.”76 By characterizing Theresa’s language as impolite Radcliffe portrays her as less civilized than Emily. In conflating language and politeness as an intertwined measurement of civilization, Radcliffe demonstrates to her readership how closely tied linguistic habits are to the progress of man.

At other times Radcliffe pulls from a consistent vocabulary in describing her character’s linguistic habits. For example, in The Italian the narrator tells us that as Emily, Schedoni and the peasant guide traveled, Schedoni refrained from asking questions. His occasional inquires, we’re told, had “received answers too loquacious for his humour.”77 The peasant’s “loquacity, however, was not easily repressed” (255). Radcliffe repeatedly uses the term “loquacious” to describe the character’s impolite, overly talkative, and socially overwhelming linguistic habits. Importantly, this loquacity is also the source of their comedy. Crowley argues that eighteenth-century “heteroglossia cannot be denied, it will always rupture and break through, but the attempts to silence, or to laugh at, or to allow [it] only on certain conditions […] is but one part of the defense of the monoglossia [by] the […] bourgeois linguistic sphere.”78 By inviting the reader to

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76 McIntosh, Evolution of English Prose, 160.
78 Crowley, Language in History, 92, emphasis mine.
laugh at these language habits, Radcliffe is constructing a linguistic “other” whose social displacement acts as a campaign for monoglossia.

Importantly, these characters serve a much more significant role than just comic relief. Although the exchanges between literate and semi-literate characters is humorous, it stands as representative of the linguistic differences between a literate linguistic code and a more oral linguistic code. Perhaps the most noticeable communicative difference between these characters in Radcliffe’s work is redundancy and copiousness. McIntosh identifies this “redundancy” as part of a “sloppiness” that eighteenth-century rhetoricians and grammarians rejected.\(^7\) Part of the push to improve and standardize English, necessarily meant moving away from this more “oral” linguistic habit. The reason literate individuals so easily identify redundancy, Walter Ong explains, is that “writing establishes in the text a ‘line’ of continuity outside the mind,“ and so it does not matter if the mind is distracted, because it can always “glance back […] over the text selectively.”\(^8\) Oral cultures cannot provide the same continuity and so “redundancy [and] repetition of the just-said” helps to keep the speaker and listener on track.\(^9\) Khosrow Jahandarie supports this argument, adding that literate cultures have greatly reduced their need for redundancy due to the creation of “cohesive devices” used in “writing and literacy.”\(^10\) The frustration that literate characters feel towards redundancy and copiousness, David Olson argues, reflects an Enlightened society that

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81 Ibid.
“demanded a mathematical plainness” to their linguistic style, “free from all ‘amplifications, [and] digressions’.” These “cohesive devices” are part of the precise and orderly Enlightened rhetoric that the literate elite was trying to standardize.

Radcliffe’s linguistic dichotomization of these speech patterns contextualizes her in contemporary literary debates, and aligns her with attempts to standardize the rural “englishes” in literate and Enlightened ways.

We see an example of redundancy in *Romance* when Peter tells La Motte that a man with “a pipe in his mouth” entered the blacksmith’s shop. When La Motte interrupts him to ask what a pipe has to do with the story, Peter quickly replies “‘Nay, Sir, you put me out; I can’t go on, unless you let me tell it my own way. As I was saying-with a pipe in his mouth-I think I was there’” (49). When La Motte agrees that this is where he left off, Peter resumes and again says “taking the pipe from his mouth” (49). In a matter of seven lines of dialogue, Peter mentions the pipe in the man’s mouth three times. The same issue arises in *Udolpho* as Annette tells Emily about Udolpho’s previous owner. She starts “‘But as I was saying, she was very melancholy and unhappy, and all that, for a long time, and Holy Virgin! What noise is that? Did not you hear a sound, ma’am’selle?’” (250). Emily responds that it was nothing but the wind and asks Annette to continue with her story. Annette restarts by repeating her previous statement: “‘As I was saying—oh where was I? As I was saying—she was very melancholy and unhappy a long while’” (250-1). Similarly, in *The Italian*, the peasant recounts to the Confessor Schedoni a story he heard, saying

It was quite dark, as dark, Signor, I suppose, as it was last night, and he was making the best of his way, Signor, with some fish along the shore, but

83 David Olson, “Literacy and Objectivity,” 156.
it being so dark, he lost it notwithstanding […] as old Marco lay snug under the rocks, he thought he heard somebody coming, and he lifted up his head, I warrant, poor old soul! As if he could have seen who it was; however, he could hear, though it was so dark. (279)

The fact that it was dark is repeated in three separate places within this short passage. For Peter and Annette, redundancy serves the practical purpose of helping them restart their stories where they left them off. For the peasant, redundancy keeps him rooted to the important contextual details of his story. In all three cases redundancy effectively keeps the storytellers on track.

Radcliffe presents copious and redundant language as frustrating to literate listeners. Schedoni peppers the peasant’s stories with interruptions that plead for less detail, saying things like “‘Be less prolix,’” “‘You need not be so particular,’” “‘speak to the point,’” “‘Well, well, to the purpose,’” “‘Well! What has he to do with your story, then?’” (280). Similarly, frustrated by the amount of time it takes Annette to say the name of the person her story concerns, Emily exclaims “‘This trifling is insupportable […] prithee, Annette, do not torture my patience any longer’” (348). La Motte finds himself so utterly irritated by Peter’s linguistic habits that he threatens him with violence if he does not “speak more to the purpose” (26). Peter’s language finds no more of a sympathetic ear with Adeline, who impatiently demands that he “‘Be quick’” and “‘speak to the purpose’” (137). These listeners represent a late eighteenth-century rhetoric that encouraged the “precision and explicitness we associate with writtenness.”84 The instructions they give to Peter, Annette and the peasant to “be quick” and “speak to the purpose” reflect the linguistic codes they have already internalized. Insofar as these statements are commands, they can also be read as part of an internal colonialism seeking to effect

84 McIntosh, Evolution of English Prose, 142.
“widespread form of language change” by “eradicating the heteroglot elements from English.” Central to Radcliffe’s critique, is that these heteroglot elements, what Beach calls local “englishes,” are characteristic of orality, and pre-Enlightenment cultural traditions. These linguistic habits are inadequate, then, because their imprecision and vagueness is incongruent with Enlightened rationality.

Radcliffe also uses these linguistic habits to create suspense and keep audiences reading. Jane Austen famously has Henry Tilney assert that once he began reading *Udolphi* he “could not lay down again” until he had finished it. The servant’s and peasant’s storytelling methods retard the conveyance of information, increasing suspense and leading audiences to read the disordered and unfocused speeches in eager anticipation of the stories and news they relate. But a desire to know “the purpose” or “the point” is not the only reason for reading these passages, or else readers would simply turn to a synopsis of the story. The way these stories are told, and the frustration they produce, adds a comedic value to the exchanges, and thus increases the pleasure readers derive from these scenes. Although the novel’s audience identifies with the linguistic codes of the frustrated listeners, as readers they exist at a remove from the action of the novel. This distance allows them to identify with the literate listener’s frustration, and simultaneously enjoy reading the methods that frustrate them. While the comic aspect of this portrayal reinforces Radcliffe’s linguistic critique, taken together these scenes of comedic suspense remind us that the artistic choices that critics often discuss solely in theoretical terms are often also pragmatic.

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85 Crowley, *Language in History*, 6, 68.

Another linguistic difference that Radcliffe highlights is the negative impact of an interruption to a semi-literate character’s oral narrative. For example, in *Romance*, Peter, after being interrupted by La Motte, says “‘Nay, Sir, you put me out’” (49). In another instance, responding to Adeline’s repeated intrusions on his narrative, Peter says, “‘If you’ll let me go on my own way, Ma’am, you’ll soon know it; but if you hurry me, and ask me questions, here and there, out of their places, I don’t know what I am saying’” (145). In *Udolpho* Emily interrupts Bertrand twice during his narrative, and he angrily exclaims, “‘You have put me out twice with the question’” (423). In *The Italian*, the peasant responds to Schedoni’s intervening questions with “‘You put me out, Signor’” (281).

Several scholars of language have noted the problem that interruptions pose to oral story telling. For example, Walter Ong notes the “disabling” effects of longer pauses or “hesitation,” while Patrick Hogan argues that “long, repeated interruptions [...] would certainly cause a bard to falter.”87 In all three novels Radcliffe uses the phrase “you put me out” to illustrate the effects of these interruptions. Being that there is no line of continuity outside the storyteller’s mind, in a literal sense the phrase means that an interruption “puts” them “out” side of their narrative. Thus such a narrative break increases linguistic confusion, and requires added redundancy to get back on track. Figuratively, I would argue that this phrase comments on language reform, and more specifically, on the standardization that threatened to “put out” non-literate linguistic codes. This language illustrates Radcliffe’s own nuanced opinion on language. Though

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she is certainly invested in a rational linguistic code that is well ordered and precise, she seems to be acutely aware of how such a position contradicts her benevolent and sympathetic portrayals of rural culture and citizens. Unlike the two extremes that either entirely endorse, or entirely reject rural culture, Radcliffe’s position is interestingly divided. This is further exemplified in the importance she gives the semi-literate characters in plot development, while simultaneously caricaturing them in comically belittling ways.

The semi-literate characters have a particular way of telling their stories, and despite all of the literate listener’s efforts to get at the “important” information quickly, the stories must be told in their “own way.” Peter makes this clear to Adeline, saying “‘If you’ll let me go on my own way, Ma’am, you’ll soon know it’” (145). The fact that there is a specific order for presenting information is also clear in Radcliffe’s other novels. In The Italian, when Vivaldi interrupts a fisherman’s narrative he is told, “‘All in good time, Maestro, you shall hear’” (107). Similarly, when Ellena interrupts the peasant guide, he responds, “‘You shall hear, Signora’” (262). Later, when Ellena hysterically demands that Beatrice tell her if Vivaldi has been injured, Beatrice insists, “‘I cannot, till I come to the right place, Signora’” (374). In Udolpho Annette often replies to Emily’s questions with “‘I am not come to that yet’” (250). Additionally, when Emily insists that Annette tell her “the substance” of her tale, Annette responds “‘All in good time, ma’am’” (251).

The difference between the linguistic habits of the semi-literate characters, and the linguistic expectations of their literate listeners, is a fundamental difference in how story lines are developed in oral and written narratives. Ong explains that people in today’s literate culture tend to think “of consciously contrived narrative as typically designed in a
climactic linear plot.‖ However, linear plots are not “ready-formed in people’s lives.” In fact, Hogan argues, it is “literature-specific development principles” that have allowed for “tighten[ed] plots” where “the causal sequence is not only clear and rigorous, but also minimal.” Oral narratives recount things as they “come out of human experience.” In other words, their narratives follow the trajectory of how things “really come] into being” temporally.

Reiner Wehse explains that the “extra” detail in oral narratives is the result of a difference of focus. As where literary narratives emphasize the final, the “purpose,” “point,” and “substance” of a tale (to borrow language from Radcliffe’s literate characters), the emphasis in oral storytelling is on “the action preceding the final solution, on the question of how the events develop or are brought about.” In the above examples, the servants and peasants cannot skip ahead to the details that the literates are asking for, because there is a temporal order to their narrative that values details leading up to the final “point” as much as the final “point” itself. The frustration felt by the literate listeners is not because the story lines have no order, but rather because they do not have the right order for an Enlightened audience that expects well organized and precise linear plots.

In Romance Radcliffe most explicitly demonstrates that this is a difference of storytelling method. Early in the novel, Peter returns from town having met a “world of

88 Ong, Orality and Literacy, 142.
89 Ibid., 143.
90 Hogan, “Writing as Art and Entertainment,” 194.
91 Ong, Orality and Literacy, 140.
92 Ibid., 140.
misfortunes” and ready to recount the story (26). He begins his story temporally, but is quickly interrupted by La Motte who threatens to give him a drubbing if he does not “speak more to the purpose.” At this point the narrator tells us that “Peter was now frightened into method” (26). The "method" that Peter is frightened into, is presumably different than the “method” he had started with. Given the non-linear, seemingly disorganized structure of Peter’s narrative, the reader is led to believe that what will follow is a linear story of his trip to town. Of course, given Peter’s comedic role he doesn’t actually “speak more to the purpose.” His narrative continues to follow a temporal timeline despite repeated pleas from La Motte to "omit [the] foolish particulars" of his story (27). Nevertheless, the pointed used of the word “method” illustrates to the reader that what is fueling La Motte’s frustration with Peter is a difference in story telling technique and focus.

The literate character’s distaste for tedious and “foolish particular[s]” reflects an ideology bent on identifying the enlightened from the unenlightened. The increased popularity of etymology could be read in this vein as a concerted attempt to identify the relative position of populations on their march towards enlightened civilization. Katherine O’Donnell argues that the eighteenth century is marked by this effort “to systematize and regulate all knowledge by identifying what John Locke called ‘the horizon […] which sets the bounds between the enlightened and dark parts of things.’ […] there is a focus on […] distinguishing shadow from substance.”94 Radcliffe’s work represents “substance” and “shadow” linguistically, and so scenes where a literate character tries to make sense of a story through the repeated use of pointed questions,

symbolically represents a search for “substance” amongst the “shadow.” In these scenes Radcliffe very clearly locates John Locke’s ‘horizon’ in the linguistic codes of the literate class. All other linguistic codes, those rural “Englishes,” are the dark “shadows” that threaten “imperial downfall.” Radcliffe’s work takes a nationalistic turn when she presents her linguistic “others” as not just a shadow within an Enlightened nation, but as the shadow that threatens the very enlightenment of that nation. Radcliffe’s depiction is pointed: a literate and enlightened monoglossia is the “substance” of an English nation. Acquiring it socially empowers the individual, and standardizing it will socially empower the nation.

In some ways Radcliffe’s ideological agenda is forced to take a back seat so that the story can progress conventionally. Scholars have spent considerable time discussing oral memory, and have argued that it works differently from literate memory. For example, Ong explains that literate cultures memorize text verbatim and often expect oral cultures to do the same. However, the lack of codified texts in oral cultures makes it difficult to verify that one is remembering something verbatim. J. Peter Denny notes that oral traditions believe “originality resides in surprising recombinations of familiar materials.” What is valued therefore is not the ability to remember an original story verbatim, but rather to be able to refashion an old story for a particular audience. It was print culture, Ong argues, that “gave birth to the romantic notions of ‘originality’ and ‘creativity’,” as distinctive features of someone’s work. And it is in a print culture that

95 Crowley, Language in History, 63.
97 Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy, 133.
verbatim memory is valued. Although Radcliffe gives her servants and peasants linguistic habits more characteristic of orality than literacy, she must sacrifice their memory for the sake of the story, and so she has them recite verbatim the dialogue that takes place around them.

For example, when Peter recounts to La Motte the events of the blacksmith, he repeats word for word the dialogue between himself and the two other men, saying:

“‘Indeed! Says the blacksmith, you know more of the neighbourhood than I do then.’ - ‘Aye, says the man with the pipe, that’s very true. How came you to know so much of the neighbourhood? I came here twenty-six years ago, come next St. Michael, and you know more than I do. How came you to know so much?’” (50). A similar recitation is present in Udolpho, mainly in Annette’s ability to recount for Emily stories other servants have told her, and her own conversations with others. For example she narrates to Emily a conversation she and Ludovico had regarding Montini, saying:

‘So much the better,’ says Ludovico, ‘so much the better.’ And to tell you the truth, ma’am’selle I thought this was a very ill-natured speech of Ludovico: but I went on. ‘And then,’ says I, ‘he is always knitting his brows; and if one speaks to him, he does not hear; and then he sits up counseling so, of a night, with other signors—there they are till long past midnight, discoursing together!’ ‘Ah, but,’ says Ludovico, ‘you don’t know what they are counseling about.’ ‘No,’ said I (313)

This continues for some time and shows Annette’s remarkable ability to remember both her and Ludovico’s contributions to the conversation. Interestingly, verbatim memory is not present in any of the conversations between the semi-literate and literate characters in The Italian.98 This may be a result of Radcliffe’s more mature attempt to illustrate the

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98 It does arise however, towards the end of the novel in the narrative presented by Ansaldo to the inquisitor. This scene, like those with the servants and peasants in Radcliffe’s other two novels, provides a practical means to further the plot line.
nuances of linguistic practices. Though verbatim memory is most likely a compromise Radcliffe was willing to make for plot development, its presence in semi-literate characters, particularly in its use to relay information to literate characters, may also be read as the influence of a literate culture on an oral culture. As Ivan Illich argues, the linguistic habits “that characterize the literate mind have spread, overwhelmingly, by means other than instruction in the skill of reading and writing.”99 That semi-literate or non-literate rural laborers would have known the value of verbatim memory, is not unlikely. Peter and Annette’s verbatim recitations may thus represent an understanding of literate linguistic habits.

If Radcliffe gives these characters cultural capital with one hand, by imbuing them with an understanding of the linguistic value of verbatim memory, she takes it away with the other by making them superstitious. For example in Romance Peter suspects a supernatural presence in the Abbey, noting that though he is “‘no more a coward than other men’” he does not like the “‘ghosts that haunt’” it (147). Radcliffe also dichotomizes epistemology along class lines in her discussion of the Abbey’s local residents, saying that among this population “it was said, that strange appearances had been observed at the abbey, and uncommon noises heard; and though this report had been ridiculed by sensible persons as the idle superstition of ignorance, it had fastened so strongly upon the minds of the common people, that for the last seventeen years none of the peasantry had ventured to approach the spot” (31). Superstition is also a staple of laboring class epistemology in Udolpho. Annette tells Emily several times how “‘the servants had told [her] often and often that [Udolpho] was haunted’” and that the

“dismal galleries and halls” in it were “fit for nothing but ghosts to live in” (315, 246). Annette herself subscribes to such superstitions, once claiming to have seen “a tall figure gliding along […] into the room that is always shut up” (315). Annette’s willingness to believe in supernatural entities is juxtaposed to Emily’s guilt at having suffered “her romantic imagination to carry her so far beyond the bounds of probability,” and her determination “to endeavour to check its rapid flights, lest they should sometimes extend into madness” (329). In these first two novels Radcliffe makes her servants superstitious, a common sign of “rural,” “uneducated” and certainly “unenlightened” people. Their linguistic codes, then, are significantly made to represent a less rational oral culture whose superstitious beliefs threaten the progress of a nation invested in a scientific epistemology.

Importantly, Paulo in The Italian, is in large part a deviation from her earlier trope in that he is “incredulous to superstition of any kind” (71). In a fascinating reversal of roles, Radcliffe portrays Paulo as anchored in rationality and his master as susceptible to superstition. For example, when Paulo realizes that his master Vivaldi “was not altogether indisposed to attribute to a supernatural cause the extraordinary occurrences at Paluzzi,” he begins to tease him (71). A bit later as Vivaldi prepares to go investigate Paluzzi, we’re told that he was “nearly regardless of defence against human agency” but that “his servant was, however, preparing for that alone” and “very properly represented the imprudence of going to Paluzzi in darkness” (71). Once there, Paulo comments on having seen a “‘shadowy sort of figure pass’” who, he jokes, may have been a ghost given his silence, but “‘seems to have a good mortal instinct in taking care of himself, and to have a swift pair of heels to assist in carrying him off’” (73). Later
when Vivaldi exclaims that “‘this form can be nothing human!’” it is Paulo who observes that lack of rational logic in his statement, saying, “‘if so, Signor […] why should it fear us? As surely it does; or why should it have fled?’” (75). Unlike Annette and Peter who quickly turn to superstition, Paulo looks for rational explanations in seemingly ambiguous situations. Vivaldi’s superstitious tendencies are a radical break from her dichotomously classed portrayals of language and reason in *Romance* and *Udolpho*, and illustrates that Radcliffe recognizes that superstition cuts across class lines.

The comic use of these scenes is also interestingly reversed so as to be pointed at the master instead of the servant. In *Romance* and *Udolpho* the masters are often made to laugh at the hastily superstitious assertions of their servants. Our identification as readers in these scenes is with the masters, and so we too laugh at the irrationality that leads Peter to talk of ghosts, and Annette of apparitions. But in *The Italian* the comedic aspect of these scenes operates differently. La Motte and Emily were able to laugh freely at Peter and Annette because of their superior class status. But Paulo is a laboring class character. Having him openly laugh at the aristocratic Vivaldi would be inappropriate given the class hierarchy Radcliffe is invested in preserving. She therefore uses irony to draw out the comedy of these scenes. For example as Vivaldi and Paulo fumble through the darkness looking for the mystery figure, Vivaldi instructs Paulo to keep quiet. Paulo quickly notes that “‘while [they] hold a light to [their] own steps’” the figure’s “‘eyes will inform” him “though [his] ears refuse’” (73). Vivaldi responds “‘Peace with this buffoonery’” (73). Later when they get locked inside a chamber, Paulo points out that he had warned Vivaldi to these types of dangers when he entreated him not to go to Paluzzi at night. To this Vivaldi responds “‘Peace, good signor Buffo! […] a truce
with this nonsense” (76). Given that our epistemological identification lies with Paulo’s rationality, the irony of these statements is that Vivaldi, not Paulo, is in fact the buffoon, and his superstition the nonsense. Importantly, like in Romance and Udolpho, Radcliffe uses comedy to critique epistemologies not rooted in reason. But her significant shift in how comedy functions, demonstrates her investment in a behavioral code based on a class hierarchy.

Paulo’s linguistic codes are also significantly different than those of the servants in Romance and Udolpho. The redundant and repetitious linguistic habits of the servants are consistent in all their conversations. Although Radcliffe does portray Paulo losing “the thread of [his] story,” this happens only once in the novel, suggesting that it is not part of his linguistic habit (80). This scene takes place in the locked chamber in Paluzzi, as Vivaldi and Paulo discuss the order of the Black Penitents. Paulo begins to recount a story he had heard about a particular monk who entered the confessional muffled up to his head in clothing so as to shield his face. Such shielding was not necessary, Paulo explains because it was so dark in the church. He side tracks his story momentarily to explain why it was dark, but is interrupted by Vivaldi who says “‘You have dropt the thread of your story’” (80). Paulo responds, “‘True, Signor, let me recollect where I lost it. – Oh! At the steps of the confessional; -- The Stranger knelt down upon them’” (80). This response is notable, particularly in how it differs from the responses of Peter, Annette, Beatrice, and the peasant guide when they are interrupted. Paulo does not complain that Vivaldi has “put [him] out,” nor does he claim a temporal linearity to his story. Instead he agrees that he has run off track. Moreover, he does not utilize redundancy or repetition to help him return to the thread of his story. In a striking
deviation from the linguistic habits of the other servants, Paulo pauses linguistically to recollect where he was. This is markedly represented by Radcliffe’s use of a dash.

Several questions from Vivaldi, and a variety of mysterious sounds go on to interrupt Paulo’s narrative as the scene progresses. But none of these pauses affect his story, and each time he effortlessly resumes his narrative without redundancy or repetition.

Paulo’s story telling method is also distinctively different than the other servants, and is most notable in how he reacts to interjected questions. The exchange regarding the mysterious monk goes on for some time, and Paulo is interrupted several times by Vivaldi. For example, at one point Vivaldi interrupts saying “‘In white, was he? […] if he had been in black, I should have thought this must have been the monk, my tormentor’” (81). Instead of claiming that he has not yet gotten to that point, or that Vivaldi shall hear the story “all in good time,” Paulo responds to this comment saying “‘Why, you know, Signor, that occurred to me before, […] and a man might easily change his dress, if that were all’” (81). When Vivaldi asks him to proceed, he picks up where he left off, without repeating previously stated information, and says “‘Hearing this account from the porter’” (81). Paulo’s ability to respond specifically to interjected questions is a linguistic habit characteristic of a literate culture trained to look for a line of continuity in a printed text. For an oral culture with no line of continuity outside the mind of the story teller, responding to interjected questions would severely affect the continuity of the original story. Thus Peter, Annette, Beatrice, and the peasant guide are unable to respond to pointed questions that interrupt the flow of their narratives.

Like the laboring class characters in Radcliffe’s other novels, Paulo’s speech is meant to draw laughter from the audience. But unlike the other characters, the source of
Paulo’s comedy is not his linguistic codes, but rather the socially inappropriate expression of his intense emotion. It becomes increasingly clear as the novel proceeds that a differentiating marker in Paulo’s language is its overflow of emotion. For example when Vivaldi gets arrested by the inquisition, the narrator tells us that Paulo vociferates “‘You shall not separate me from my master […] I demand to be sent to the Inquisition with him’” (190). When they arrive at the prison and the guards begin to separate them, Paulo cries out “‘What did I demand to be brought here for […] if it was not that I might go shares with the Signor in all his troubles? This is not a place to come to for pleasure, I warrant; and I can promise ye, gentlemen, I would not have come within a hundred miles of you, if it had not been for my master’s sake’” (199). When Paulo is later released without Vivaldi, his anger erupts, and despite pleas for him to speak in a whisper, Paulo shouts “‘I scorn to speak in a whisper. I will speak so loud, that every word I say shall ring in the ears of all those old black devils on the benches yonder; aye, and those on that mountebank stage too, that sit there looking so grim and angry as if they longed to tear us in pieces’” (358). These emotional outbursts, though honest, are socially inappropriate and imprudent given Paulo’s particular situations.

During scenes such as these Vivaldi often tries to redirect Paulo’s behavior in more socially acceptable ways. He often says things like “remember your situation, Paulo […] consider mine also, and be governed by prudence,” and “recollect yourself, Paulo, and be composed” (357, 358). Other times Vivaldi gives Paulo “a significant look, which [is] meant to repress his imprudent loquacity” (192). Radcliffe repeatedly uses the word “imprudence” when describing such outbursts, signaling the audience to how rash, indiscrete, and inconsiderate such displays of emotion are. Like Teresa’s ill
judged harangue to Emily, Paulo’s speeches are meant to be read as a reflection of his lack of manners and social breeding. If we look at Paulo’s language in light of McIntosh’s argument that the eighteenth century attempted to make language “more polite, more gentrified, and more written,” then Vivaldi’s efforts are in the same vein as La Motte and Emily’s, though they focus on a different aspect of language.\(^{100}\) Paulo’s linguistic code is already literate, so there is no need to direct him towards things like less redundancy and more focus. But his extravagant emotion is less gentrified and polite. Radcliffe thus sets her servants along a continuum of civilization, where Paulo is more civilized than Peter and Annette, but still less civilized than La Motte, Emily and, in certain respects, Vivaldi.

Radcliffe draws Paulo’s emotional outbursts comically for the same purposes she makes Peter and Annette’s linguistic codes comic, to critique them as ridiculous when compared with more appropriate displays of emotions, such as Vivaldi’s. In this novel Radcliffe works the audience’s identification in much more complex ways than in her first two novels. In *Romance* and *Udolpho*, the dichotomous portrayal of class, language, and reason allowed for the reader to identify with, and only with, the literate characters. By presenting these qualities in more diversified ways in her last novel, Radcliffe uses comedy to guide reader identification. In the novel’s early scenes the comic focus is on reason, and the reader identifies with Paulo’s rational logic as opposed to Vivaldi’s irrational superstition. In these later scenes the comic focus is on emotional expression, and Paulo is portrayed as a buffoon whose lack of social tact produces socially inappropriate emotional outbursts. Radcliffe’s comedy therefore

operates in the creation of “others,” whether they be linguistic, like the peasant guide, epistemological, like Peter and Annette, or behavioral others.

Her portrayal of Paulo indicates that in her later novels, Radcliffe is perhaps more interested in exploring the nuanced linguistic habits of the laboring classes. Rather than presenting literacy and orality in dichotomously classed ways, in *The Italian* Radcliffe presents multiple linguistic habits among the laboring class, imbues a servant with reason while making his master superstitious, and avoids unrealistic verbatim recitations. Paulo, though lacking the social breeding to fully utilize his literate linguistic habits, is representative of the laboring class one step closer towards civilization. It is unclear why Radcliffe deviated from her tropes in *The Italian*. It is possible that as she matured as an author, she chose to undertake a more detailed and complex portrayal of linguistic habits. Or perhaps she felt bored with the trope she had been using and felt that it was time to portray a main servant character in a different light. It is also possible that her lengthy journey through Holland and Germany in 1794 made her more aware of the cultural and linguistic range found in rural populations. Ann Radcliffe was a notoriously private person. Even early biographers had trouble compiling information from her short career, noting that she “confined herself, with delicate apprehensiveness, to the circle of domestic duties and pleasure.”\(^{101}\) Had she kept journals like Frances Burney it would be possible to make a more educated guess. Regardless of why she chose to deviate from her earlier trope, the shift is present, and it strongly counteracts critics who label her writing and characterization as homogeneous.

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101 Ann Radcliffe, *The Posthumous Works of Anne Radcliffe: Comprising Gaston de Blondeville, a Romance; St. Alban’s Abbey, a Metrical Tale; With Various Poetical Pieces. To Which is Prefixed a Memoir of the Authoress, With Extracts From her Private Journals V.1.*, (London, 1833), 3, HathiTrust.com
Despite the lack of critical attention to Radcliffe’s portrayal of laboring class language, her appreciation of “low and rustic life” has been widely documented, and has often been linked to the early Romanticism of the 1790s, and to the work of poets such as William Wordsworth. Although Wordsworth himself had considered gothic literature among “the deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse,” critics since the early twentieth century, seeking to recover the gothic’s literary merit, have linked Wordsworth to gothic writers like Ann Radcliffe. Although most critics have focused on their nature writing, I would argue that there are profound similarities between their treatments of linguistic codes. Insofar as Wordsworth’s primary concern is language, he differs greatly from Radcliffe. As I have tried to show, Radcliffe utilizes language representatively, to distinguish her character’s epistemologies. Wordsworth’s focus is on language itself. Interestingly, despite differences in authorial intent, both present a split image of these populations, romanticizing an idealized form of rustic life while simultaneously demoting their linguistic codes.

In the last decade of the eighteenth-century, Wordsworth distanced himself from the language theory of the previous sixty years. Unlike Rousseau and Sheridan who felt that emotions and passions were inexpressible in writing, Wordsworth was committed to the idea that “spontaneity and passion were qualities that […] could be achieved in writing as well as speech.” He did however agree with their “diastase of artificial language” and in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads expressed the desire to rehabilitate

102 Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 128.

103 Hudson, Writing and European Thought, 143.
language from “false refinement [and] arbitrary innovation.” Wordsworth’s concern, W.J.B. Owen argues, is with creating a language that will withstand inevitable linguistic changes. Wordsworth’s fiction claims to find this language tucked away in the natural valleys and fields of England, in a traditionally oral rustic population that “belong rather to nature than to manners” and who “convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions.” In a radical break from efforts to gentrify and standardize the heteroglot elements of English, Wordsworth’s work claims to value the rural “englishes” for their purity from the tainting influences of civilization, and sees in them ‘the real language of men.’

Although Wordsworth claims to have adopted this language in *Lyrical Ballads*, it was quickly noted by his contemporary Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and by literary critics and readers since, that his language is in fact far from the language spoken by the rural populations of England. Wordsworth does not present the rural “englishes” in dialect, or stylistically. That not even he believed rural “englishes” adequate for a poetic language is strongly suggested by the fact that *LB* reflects only the linguistic codes of the literate class. This complete erasure of semi-literate linguistic codes allows Wordsworth to portray this environment as a “phonocentric paradise.” Not only does this idealized portrayal divorce these populations from their “social realities,” but it effectively displaces that reality to such an extent that it is completely forgotten. Radcliffe’s

104 Ibid., 147; Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, 124.
107 Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, 45.
108 Ibid.
dualistic portrayal of benevolent characters with deficient language ensured that while one appreciated the idealized simple life style, one never forgot the reality of their linguistic inferiority. Given the association of language with progress, this effectively kept audiences from entirely romanticizing the “unenlightened” rural populations. But in completely divorcing the linguistic reality from his portrayal of these populations, Wordsworth is able to flip the implications of language and progress. The literate cities become threatening influences on cultural and moral progress, while the idealized rural reflects England’s most civilizing qualities. Despite their common affinities for aesthetic language, Radcliffe would have strongly disapproved of such an idealized (and unrealistic) portrayal, insofar as it completely occludes the superstitious epistemologies of rural populations.

Radcliffe use of linguistic codes has been notably absent from scholarship devoted to her language. As my argument has demonstrated Radcliffe’s servants are much more than undeveloped flat characters whose buffoonish loquacity and speech provide an interlude of comedy among episodes of kidnap, imprisonment, and murder. Their speech patterns distinctively reflect eighteenth-century theories on language, and linguistically represent an irrationality that Radcliffe found profoundly threatening to individuals and to the British nation. Her simultaneous portrayal of these characters as benevolent and integral to the plot’s development shows her own contradictory desire to romanticize a style of life, while remaining acutely aware of its reality. Interestingly Wordsworth is able to divorce the idealization from the reality in a way that Radcliffe neither does, nor would do, given her investment in Enlightenment values. Reading her texts in this way strongly suggests that Radcliffe was very much divided by
Romanticism. Although she would have certainly been attracted to the Romantic poet’s aesthetic appreciation of nature, she most likely was also strongly opposed to the reductionist nature of their idealization.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Samantha Plasencia received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in women's and gender studies, and English from Rutgers University in 2008. She received her Master of Arts in English literature at the University of Florida in May 2011 and is currently working towards her doctorate at the University of Florida. Her research interests include gender, genre, and the British novel 1660-1900. She has taught courses for the University Writing Program, including ENC1101 ‘Writing Academic Arguments’ and ENC3254 ‘Professional Communication for Engineers.’ She also currently teaches for the English Department, including course ENL2022 ‘Survey of English Literature: 1750 to the Present.’