

T. J. Horsley Curties and Royalist Gothic: The Case of *The Monk of Udolpho* (1807)

Dale Townshend

“[T]here is no author more Gothic, more romantic than he.”

(Montague Summers on T. J. Horsley Curties(1)

One of the greatest sources of pleasure for any scholar of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gothic writing must surely be the extraordinary potential that the field bears for acts of literary-critical exhumation. Indeed, if the corpus of early Gothic fiction is metaphorically conceived as a grave-yard, then so much scholarly, editorial and critical activity in this, our critical Gothic hey-day, amounts to a plundering of its dusty tombs, a stealthy opening up of its crypts and a wilful conjuring of its most elusive ghosts. As if under the powers of a strange Frankensteinian compulsion, small, independent publishing houses—Valancourt Books; (2) Zittaw Press (3) —seek to reassemble, piecemeal, the early canon’s lost body-parts and set the lumbering Gothic monster back in motion; extensive data-bases of rare Gothic material— Eighteenth-Century Collections Online; (4) Adam Matthew microfilms of the Sadleir-Black collection (5) —lend to largely obscure and forgotten texts and writers a ghostly digital presence. And yet, the spoils of Gothic grave-robbing are often meagre, frequently bringing to light so many second-rate romances, dramas and chapbooks that seem more to confirm than seriously challenge critical assumptions regarding the aesthetic and generic ascendancy of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis in the period. To this state of affairs, however, the work of T. J. Horsley Curties is a welcome exception, especially when perceived through the contemporary perceptions of the writer disclosed in a review of his Gothic romance *St. Botolph’s Priory; or the Sable Mask* (1806) published in the influential journal *The Flowers of Literature for 1806*:

Mr. Curteis [*sic*] having gained much celebrity by his former romances, has now become one of the most indefatigable of our literati in that department of writing. He deserves no small credit from [*sic*] his ability to keep up an extraordinary degree of interest throughout five ponderous volumes, and at the same time to preserve a sufficient degree of consistency in his plot. These objects he has attained in the novel before us.(6)

Fitting of its time in 1806 this assessment of Horsley Curties certainly was. As Michael Gamer has argued, Matthew Gregory Lewis, in the wake of the controversies surrounding the publication of *The Monk* in 1796, had effected a marked retreat from the vexed subject-position of “Gothic author” in order to engage in the altogether less contentions literary endeavours of collaborative dramatic production and German/English translation.(7) Though never one to court literary publicity and fame, Ann Radcliffe, too, had disappeared from the literary scene into veritable obscurity after the publication of *The Italian* in 1798, to the extent that rumours of her madness and even death abounded. But by 1806, Horsley Curties had sufficiently occupied the gap in lower-end literary celebrity culture as to be perceived by this anonymous reviewer as one of the most popular and prolific writers of Gothic fiction of his day—an ambiguous, double-edged compliment, to be sure. An advertisement published in the *Preston Chronicle* on Saturday 29 September 1832 indicates that the author’s fame extended well beyond the publication of his last novel in 1807: “New editions of the following esteemed Romances, by T. J. Horsley Curties, Esq., which have long been out of print, are now ready for delivery.” With the distance between him and his precursors Radcliffe and Lewis safely assured, Horsley Curties could take up the poisoned chalice of the

nation's foremost Gothic romancer. The irony here, of course, is that *The Monk of Udolpho*, the work for which he would become most famous, was, as the title clearly suggests, a sustained tribute to his two literary forbearers.

Apart from the series of fashionable London addresses—No. 1 Bury Street, Bloomsbury; Vale Park, Hammersmith; Chelsea Park, Little Chelsea—disclosed in the Prefaces and Dedications of his various fictions, very little has been known hitherto about the life of T. J. Horsley Curties. In a letter published in *Notes and Queries* on 5 April 1924, Gothic bibliophile Montague Summers issued a plea for any insights into the writer and his works that the journal's bookish, erudite readership might have been able to offer:

T. J. Horseley Curteis [*sic*].—For any information concerning this writer I shall be exceedingly grateful. At present I have obtained only a few details. In October, 1805, he was living at Vale Place, Hammersmith Road. He is the author of the following novels: 'Ancient Records, or, The Abbey of St. Oswyth'; 'The Monk of Udolpho' (1805–6); 'St. Botolph's Priory, or The Sable Mask' (1806); 'Ethelwina, or, The House of Fitz-Auburne.' Most of these romances were published by J. F. Hughes, Wigmore Street. They seem to have been very popular; and several, probably all, were translated into French. There is a laughing allusion to "that eminent antiquary," Mr. Horseley Curteis, in 'The Spectre of Tappington' ('Ingoldsby Legends').(8)

The response to Summers's request was rather disappointing. John Patching replied to the letter in a small entry in the journal two weeks later, claiming that "In addition to the novels named [in Summers's original query] this writer was the author, according to the 'Dictionary of Living Authors' (1814), of 'The Scottish Legend,' 1802, and 'The Watch Tower,' 1804" (294).(9) If, by the 'Dictionary of Living Authors' Patching meant *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland* [. . .] (1816), the entry on "Curteis [*sic*], T. J. Horsely" is brief and biographically uninformative, citing him merely as the author of the novels *Ethelwina*, *Ancient Records*, *The Scottish Legend*, *The Watch Tower*, *St Botolph's Tower* [*sic*] and *The Monk of Udolpho*.(10) Consequently, by the time of the publication of his monumental *The Gothic Quest* in 1938, Summers's account of the writer still has very little to offer by way of biographical certainty, claiming that "Of his life, practically nothing is known."(11) Matters are no more certain almost four decades later when Devendra P. Varma and Mary Muriel Tarr write their respective Foreword and Introduction to the Arno facsimile of *The Monk of Udolpho* in 1977. The opening lines of Varma's Foreword are suitably wistful: "If the cobbled stones of No. 1, Bury Street, Bloomsbury Square, London, were to unfold the scenes of the lodger who lived there in January 1801, and if those narrow, deserted, moon-blanch'd pavements could now whisper the tales of long ago, surely we would be able to reconstruct the life of T. J. Horsley Curties, the gothic novelist."(12) Apparently beyond the bounds of discovery by even the most indefatigable of Gothic ghost-hunters, Horsley Curties has long defied the work of authorial biography.

Senior Exon of Yeomen of the Guard

However, the key to the author's identity lies, perhaps, in Montague Summers's spelling of the author's name as "Horseley Curteis" in his earlier letter to *Notes and Queries*, in marked distinction from the "T. J. Horsley" of the title page of his first novel *Ethelwina* and the "T. J. Horsley Curties, ESQ. Author of The Sable Mask, The Watch Tower, Scottish Legends, Ancient Records, and Ethelwina" of his final fiction, *The Monk of Udolpho* (1807). Names and naming practices had occasioned particular attention in Horsley Curties's *oeuvre* from the outset. As he confesses in the Preface to his second romance *Ancient*

Records, Horsley Curties deliberately omitted his surname from the title page of his first publication *Ethelwina*, nervously casting the text “into the world as an orphan, whose father feared to acknowledge it, and under his *Christian* appellation of HORSLEY. The public have fostered it; and now, with some degree of pride, he can claim it as his own by his surname of Curties.”(13) Consistent with Summers’s later spelling of the writer’s last name, the following obituary for one Sir Thomas Isaac Horsley Curteis [sic] appeared in the Irish newspaper *Freeman’s Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* on Saturday 8th January 1859:

The death of Sir Thomas Isaac Horsley Curteis, K. B., is announced. Sir Thomas was 81 years of age, and was unmarried. He was the author of the “Watch Tower,” the “Scottish Legend,” the “Sable Mask,” “Monk of Udolpho,” “Ethelvia” [sic], “St. Botolph’s Priory,” and several other works. Sir Thomas died at his residence, Twyford Villa, Norfolk.

External records confirm the details of this report: the death of a Sir Thomas Wortley [sic] Curties in the registration district of Mitford, Norfolk, is listed in the *Death Index for England and Wales, 1837–1983* during the period October–December 1858, that is, shortly before the reportage of the death in newspapers in early January 1859. The announcement of the death of one Sir Thomas Curteis in the “Births, Deaths, Marriages and Obituaries” column of The London newspaper *The Examiner* on Saturday 8 January 1859 replicates much of the information included in the obituary in *Freeman’s*, though not without the inclusion of a few vital details: “He was thirty-four years a member of the Royal household, as Senior Exon of the Yeomen of the Guard, and was knighted by William IV in consideration of his lengthened period of service.” His literary publications are listed here as ‘Watch Tower,’ the Scottish Legend,’ the ‘Sable Mask, ‘Monk of Udolpho,’ ‘Ethelvina’ [sic], ‘St Botolph’s Priory,’ and several other works.” The two different orthographic renditions of the surname as “Curties” or “Curteis” seemingly point to two acceptable variations on the same family name; the only anomaly that remains is the provenance of the letter “J” in the commonly assumed authorial name of T. J. Horsley Curties. Given renditions of the author’s name elsewhere, it is not inconceivable that the “J” is a misprint or misrepresentation of the initial “I” for “Isaac,” a printing or orthographic error initially appearing on the title page of *Ethelwina*, the first novel of Thomas Isaac Horsley Curties, and possibly repeated for the sake of consistency across his next five fictions. Records in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle, however, continuously cite him as Sir Thomas J. H. Curteis.(14) Another obituary for Sir Thomas Isaac Horsley Curteis, K. B. published in the *Caledonian Mercury* on Saturday 8th January 1859 included the observation that “Sir Thomas retired in 1839” and, while attached to the Royal Household, “he attended no less than three coronations.” Similar, often verbatim repetitions of these reports in *The Derby Mercury* and *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* in early 1859 have nothing more to add to the emerging picture.

If these newspaper entries are accurate and reliable, we can infer that Thomas Isaac Horsley Curteis (or Curties) was born in or around 1777, making him approximately twenty-two years of age at the time of the publication of his first Gothic romance *Ethelwina* in 1799. Norfolk, as much as the London of Summers’s conjecturing, seems a possible place of birth, not only because Curties was sufficiently connected with Norfolk so as eventually to return there after a lengthy career in London, dying at Twyford Villa in late 1858, but also because he appears to have had connections with Norfolk much earlier on in his life: his fourth fiction, *The Watch Tower; Or, The Sons of Ulthona: An Historic Romance* (1804), is dedicated to a literary patron, one C. H. Elcock Brown, Esq., of North-Walsham, Norfolk. This form of financial backing would have made the writing career of Horsley Curties an exception from the start, the market for Gothic romance in this period being dominated, as it was, by women writers striving to keep the spectre of poverty at bay. The Last Will and Testament of a certain Thomas Curties, a Yeoman of

Thornage, dated 11 December 1846 indicates not only the Curties family's relation to the land-owning classes—"yeoman" in this context probably refers to an owner of property and land—but also T. J. Horsley Curties's personal familial connections with Norfolk: in this will, the paternal uncle bequeaths to "Sir Thomas ostler / Curties of Righburgh in the said county [of Norfolk] Knight my two / windsor chairs." (15) Righburgh is probably a variant spelling of Ryburgh, Great Ryburgh being a village in the county of Norfolk. By 1846, then, it appears that Sir Horsley Curties, the writer and one-time Yeoman of the Guard, had retired from Royal service in London in order to settle in Norfolk, where he worked as an ostler in his old age. Whatever his precise place and date of birth, we can safely assume that Horsley Curties was socially and financially well connected, since without a clear affiliation to the upper gentry, his accession to the post of Yeoman of the Guard, the prestigious office of Body Guards of the British Sovereign formed by Henry VII in 1485, would have been almost impossible: at this time, officers' appointments were purchased by wealthy civilians rather than awarded to military men of distinction. In fact, the last occasion on which Yeomen of the Guard had performed their primary military function as the King's Body Guard was in Dettingen, Germany, in 1743, when King George II led his army in battle against the French in the War of Austrian Succession. During the remainder of the eighteenth century, the need for trained soldiers in the Guard diminished, and gradually their positions came to be filled by civilian Yeomen, without any formal military credentials, who bought and sold their appointments accordingly. This state of affairs would continue until the conclusion of the Peninsular and Waterloo campaigns, by which time the Duke of Wellington and the future King William IV felt that only deserving veterans should fill the Guard's positions. The first soldier was appointed in 1823, and a mix of former soldiers and civilians continued to fill the ranks until the admission of the last civilian in 1834. Thereafter, only former soldiers and marines were appointed to the Guard; T. J. Horsley Curties's civilian post would have been bought out by the government upon his retirement in 1839. (16)

As Thomas Preston describes it in *The Yeomen of the Guard: Their History from 1485–1885* (1885), the Exons were a particular office of the Yeomen, fifth in the ranks beneath those of Captain; Lieutenant; Ensign and Clerk of the Cheque respectively. (17) According to information gleaned from Preston's study, a certain Isaac Housley Curteis [sic] was one of the four Exons in employment in 1805, alongside the better known Roger Monk Esq. His name appears twice in Colonel Sir Reginald Hennell's *The History of the King's Body Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard*, firstly as "Issac Housley Curties, Esq. Appointed Exon vice Remnant May 31st, 1805; re-appointed at the Coronation, 1831, and Knighted" and secondly "Issac Housley Curties, Esq. Re-appointed Corporal April 4th, 1831; knighted at the Coronation. 1831." (18) Reasons for what appears to be a break in Royal service followed by a reappointment in 1831 are unclear. He is also listed in *The Royal Kalendar; and Court and City register* [. . .] for 1817. Consistent with the deployment of the title "K.B" (Knight Bachelor) in the obituaries, William Arthur Shaw's exhaustive *The Knights of England* [. . .] (1906) notes that Thomas Horsley Curteis [sic], senior Exon of the Yeomen of the Guard, was Knighted at St. James's on 27 June 1833, (19) six years before his assumed retirement in 1839 at the approximate age of 62, and after what the entry in the *Caledonian Mercury* notes to have been a total of 34 years of Royal service. Thus, in accordance with the claim in the report in the *Caledonian Mercury* that "he attended no less than three coronations," Horsley Curties, in Royal service at least since 31 May 1805, would have been present at the coronations of three British Monarchs: George IV, William IV and even Queen Victoria in June 1838, a year before his retirement from the Yeomen of the Guard in 1839. The lengthy description of William IV's coronation published in *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* in September 1831 makes mention of the presence Horseley Curties, esq [sic] as an Exon of the Yeomen of the Guard, alongside one Henry Cipriani, esq. (20) A highly descriptive account of the Queen's State Ball at St. James's Palace published in *The Morning Chronicle* on Monday 12 May 1834 notes that "The Yeomen Guard were on

duty in the Guard Room and the corridors, through which the company passed. The party were commanded by Sir Thomas Horsley Curties, the Exon in Waiting; the other Exons were Mr. Charles Hancock and Mr. Pearson.” On Friday 29th May 1835, the same newspaper describes the presence of the Yeoman Guard at the Queen’s Levee (a formal reception of guests by a distinguished person) to mark the birthday of the King, with “Sir Thomas Horsley Curties and Messrs. Charles and Samuel Hancock” listed as Exons. At another formal reception held by the Queen (certainly by this time the only recently crowned Queen Victoria) described in *The Morning Chronicle* on Thursday 19 July 1838 lists “Sir Thomas Horsley Curties” as an Exon of the Yeomen Guard, while, in the same newspaper on Wednesday 30 January 1839, “Sir Thomas Horsley Curties, exon (of the Yeomen Guard)” is reported as one of the many persons in attendance of Queen Victoria’s visit to Drury Lane Theatre to see a performance of Balfe’s opera, *The Maid of Artois*.

Joining the Yeomen of the Guard in or around May 1805, Horsley Curties would continue to write until his apparent abandonment of the large-scale literary endeavours of his twenties in 1807. Perhaps the unprecedented appearance of the appended title “ESQ” on the title of *St. Botolph’s Priory* in 1806 is attributable to the social preferment that his accession to the role of Exon would have constituted; prior to this, the title pages of his second, third and fourth romances sought to distinguish their author not socially but only through reference to the other titles he had penned. More crucially, though, the dates point to a curious over-lapping, over a period of at least two years, of what we might be inclined to think of as two entirely incompatible if not mutually exclusive activities: a professional commitment to the Hanoverian Monarchy, on the one hand, and a semi-professional dabbling in the subversive ways of Gothic romance, on the other. Perhaps the conflict was too much to bear, for after 1807, Curties, at least at first glance, appears to have abandoned novel writing in order to devote himself to full-time professional service of the monarch. His name only appears again in 1815 through his association with the book entitled *Select and Entertaining Stories [. . .] for the Juvenile; or, Child’s Library, Vol. I*, published by J. Marshall, London. However, this might be only one of many yet-to-be-rediscovered novels by Horsley Curties vaguely gestured towards in at least two of his obituaries. If he continued to write Gothic fiction after the publication of *The Monk of Udolpho*, it is likely that he perceived no conflict between the roles of Gothic romancer and servant in the Royal household at all. Indeed, in keeping with the political affiliations necessarily attendant upon such a career, his fiction seems more intent upon conserving the patriarchal institutions of fatherhood and sovereign power than subverting them in the tradition of countless, more radical Gothic romances of the 1790s.

Romancer in the Spirit of Radcliffe

As Montague Summers’s comprehensive *A Gothic Bibliography* indicates, Horsley Curties’s literary activities spanned the years 1799–1807.⁽²¹⁾ *Ethelwina; or, The House of Fitz-Auburne* (3 vols; 1799) was followed by the four-volume *Ancient Records; or, The Abbey of St. Oswythe* in 1801; both fictions were published by William Lane’s Minerva Press, and both (perhaps unsurprisingly, given the publisher) drew heavily upon a decidedly Radcliffean aesthetic. Horsley Curties deferentially acknowledges his debt to Radcliffe in his Preface to *Ancient Records*, attributing the origins of this his second fiction to “a love of Romance, caught from an enthusiastic admiration of *Udolpho*’s unrivalled Foundress.— He follows her through all the venerable gloom of horrors, not as a kindred spirit, but contented, as a shadow, in attending her footsteps” (vol. I: vi). Though couched in the modest language of a Radcliffean tribute, Horsley Curties, in a significant act of cross-gendered identification, styles himself at once as Radcliffe’s literary successor and her ghostly handmaiden. In this act of self-stylization, the review of *St. Botolph’s Priory* in 1806 cited above was altogether complicit. For his next two fictions, Horsley Curties turned his

hand to the contemporary vogue for fictional romances set in the sublime landscapes of ancient Scotland, penning two extraordinary yet hitherto critically neglected examples of what we might today term ‘Scottish Gothic’ in *The Scottish Legend; or, The Isle of St. Clothair* (William Lane; 4 vols; 1802) and *The Watch Tower; or, The Sons of Ulthona* (P. Norbury; 5 vols; 1804). Set in early fourteenth-century Scotland, *The Watch Tower* self-consciously situates itself in an Ossianic tradition, and makes considerable use of the sub-Walpolean convention of the serendipitously discovered but only partially legible ancient manuscript. With the publication of the five-volume *St. Botolph’s Priory; or, The Sable Mask* in 1806, Horsley Curties exploited the contemporary taste for tales of Catholic hypocrisy and deception for which J. F. Hughes, the text’s publisher, was rapidly becoming renowned. As Peter Garside has pointed out, Hughes’s publishing catalogue between the years 1803 and 1810 had flagrantly traded in sensationalism through such attention-grabbing titles as the *LEGENDS of the NUNNERY* (1807) by the pseudonymous Edward Montague, Esq.; *MONTONI; or, the CONFESSIONS of a MONK* by the pseudonymous Edward Mortimer, Esq.; Sarah Wilkinson’s *Fugitive Countess; or, Convent of St. Ursula* (1807) and *Convent of Grey Penitents; or, the Apostate Nun* (1810) and Rosa Matilda/Charlotte Dacre’s *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805).⁽²²⁾ Similar titles from Hughes’s catalogue in the period include *The Monk and His Daughter; or, The Intrigues of Amanda* (1802); Mary Anne Radcliffe’s *Manfroné; or, The One-Handed Monk* (1809); and *The Monk of Hennesares* (1817). Still, the issue of a literary text’s title only really comes to the fore with the publication *The Monk of Udolpho; A Romance*, Horsley Curties’s final Gothic romance published by J. F. Hughes in London in 1807.

For all its shameless plagiarism of two of the most iconic titles of 1790s Gothic romance, the Preface to *The Monk of Udolpho* takes great care not only to apologise to Ann Radcliffe, “that Mighty Magician,” for its indiscreet infringement of literary property, but also defensively to explain the provenance of the fiction’s title.⁽²³⁾ J. F. Hughes, Horsley Curties informs his readers, had long advertised a romance entitled *Monk Udolpho* [*sic*]. As Garside has observed, the forthcoming publication of “THE MONK OF UDOLPHO” was first announced in *Rosa; or, the Child of the Abbey* in 1805, and then later in *Feudal Tyrants* of 1806, Matthew Lewis’s novel published by Hughes a year after his publication of Lewis’s translation, *The Bravo of Venice*.⁽²⁴⁾ By 15 October 1806, *The Monk of Udolpho* by J. Horsley Curtis [*sic*] was already being billed in *The Morning Chronicle* as being “Published this day,” despite the publication date of 1807 on the title page of the first edition; the misspelling of the author’s name in this advertisement, though, might indicate that the writer was acting more on the anticipation of the book’s imminent appearance than first-hand experience of its physical presence. Irrespective of these details, the Preface to Curties’s romance continues to note how the intended author of this advertised title died prior to the delivery of the manuscript or even so much as an outline of its plot. Consequently, Hughes invited Horsley Curties to submit a romance under the pre-existent title, while making allowance for him to disclaim all responsibility for his fiction’s egregious plagiarisms in a prefatory address to its readers. Thus “prevailed upon to soar once more into the regions of fancy and the dark mysteries of romance” (I: vii), Horsley Curties proffers to his readers *The Monk of Udolpho*, though not without an insistence that it be read and appreciated according to ‘its more legitimate appellation of “Filial Piety”’ (I: vii).

Filial Piety/Royalist Gothic

A lengthy treatise upon the uneasy paths of filial piety *The Monk of Udolpho* certainly is. If, as Caroline Gonda has argued, early Gothic writing involves a sustained schooling of the heroine in the appropriate modes of heterosexual desiring in and through her complex relationship with her father, Horsley Curties’s romance is no exception.⁽²⁵⁾ The narrative opens with the supposed suicide by poisoning of the heroine Hersilia’s father Angelo, Duke of Placenza, the gaming habits of whom have led him to financial disaster

and personal ruin. Sworn into the defence and preservation of her late father's memory, Hersilia, apparently in accordance with his expressed will, is handed over to the dubious guardianship of her father's long-standing rival Cosmo, Prince of Parma, and the eponymous Monk of Udolpho himself. While rationally she might question the paternal injunctions that run contrary to her knowledge of her late father's character, she nonetheless submits herself to the surrogate paternal powers invested in the Monk, albeit ultimately only in the name of obedience to her dead father. From the moment of his first appearance in the text, the description of Udolpho owes much to Lewis's characterisation of Father Ambrosio in *The Monk*. Renowned by most inhabitants of the Castle Placenza for his "pious self-denial," his "exterior of great humility" and his "extreme abstinence from all mundane enjoyments" (vol. I: 21), Udolpho shrouds himself with a dark cowl; when his hood gapes, it reveals only a ghastly countenance and a tightly bound forehead cloth upon which is displayed "the ghastly grinning ensign of a Death's head" (vol. I: 23), the insignia of the monkish order which Udolpho claims to have founded.

From the outset of the narrative, however, the Monk is not without his rivals, not least of all in the figure of the hero, Lorenzo Val-Ambrosio of Guestella. Like any romantic coupling in early Gothic fiction, Hersilia and Lorenzo are initially yoked to one another in an attitude of "mutual affection" (vol. I: 54). It thus comes as a particular blow to the young lovers when they learn that, despite their long-standing commitment to one another, Lorenzo's father, the Comte of Guestella, has suddenly and quite inexplicably prohibited their imminent marriage, believing that "'honour's sacred attributes submit not to an union with the daughter of a suicide, nor must a son of mine ally himself to that ignominy which he also will have to endure the shame of'" (vol. I: 194–95). Guestella manipulates the old Walpolean formula to particularly powerful effect: "'Unhappy indeed are the children of such parents; for on them is visited the sins of their fathers; on their guiltless heads must fall the ignominy which the gamester and the suicide is only screened from by that dishonoured grave'" (vol. II: 12–13). Although Hersilia and Lorenzo plan a clandestine marriage and elopement, their plans are thwarted when the Comte hastily sends his son off to war against the Venetians. Forcefully denied the romantic union she so fondly anticipates, Hersilia enters into the first stage of what figures as the gruelling textual dramatisation of her subjective eclipse, erasure and annihilation. While, by her own admission, her life may be rendered variously a "blank" (vol. I: 143) and a "dark void" (vol. I: 231) during this process's most excruciating moments, the possibility of Hersilia's resistance to stern and unyielding patriarchal authority is precluded by her commitment to her late father's legacy. Uncomfortably caught between honour and passion, compliance with surrogate paternal authority and the threatened exposure of her father's shameful gaming and death-by-suicide, she repeatedly opts for the former in this uncompromising distribution of terms. As the powers that threaten her grow in intensity, so self-sacrifice and submission to filial piety increasingly become the governing principles of her action. Her sole source of resistance is a quiet, unspoken refusal to relinquish the mental image of her lover, a form of defiance which ostensibly creates for the heroine a private internal theatre of "mental freedom" (vol. II: 63). However, this provides scant defence against the numerous acts of material and physical violation that await her. Threatened by Cosmo, Duke of Parma's attack of her paternal home at Placenza, she agrees to a relocation to what she believes to be the inalienable maternal space of the Castello di Albori, the castle that runs in her late mother's female line of inheritance. But in place of the security that her mother's family residence promises, Hersilia, in a symbolic form of live burial, is imprisoned within Udolpho's Castello di Ubaldi, and subjected here to the unwelcome sexual advances of Sanguedoni, the supposed nephew of the Duke of Parma who has long nurtured an attraction to her. If the Monk of Udolpho is a version of Lewis's Ambrosio, Sanguedoni is an avatar of Radcliffe's Father Schedoni from *The Italian*; like Udolpho, though, Sanguedoni "set no limits to his wishes, no bounds to their enjoyment: every right that opposed him was broken down; religion, justice, truth, were violated, or rendered subservient to his purposes" (vol. II: 148). Sexual desire

becomes in *The Monk of Udolpho* a thoroughly complex and unruly entity: while both Sanguedoni and Cosmo crave the realisation of their fantasies regarding the sexual possession of the heroine, the figure of Hortensia, a version of Lewis's passionate demon Matilda, expresses her life-long desire for the absent hero Lorenzo. Narrowly avoiding rape and violent attack by Sanguedoni, Hersilia "was become every way the victim of filial piety, but yet she repined not" (vol. II: 231). A commitment to her father manifests itself as a troubling paralysis in the face of adversity. The timely intervention of a female ghost during another tense moment of near-rape only adds to the narrative an atmosphere of Radcliffean terror. Firm in the belief that her commitment to filial piety far outweighs the pain of her suffering, Hersilia's pose is one of stolid endurance throughout.

The systematic assault upon Hersilia is brought to a climax when Sanguedoni and Father Udolpho are revealed to be not two, but one: while Lewis's Ambrosio may surprise his readers with his duality and his double-dealing hypocrisy, Curties's Udolpho is remarkably unitary, superficial and one-dimensional in nature. With this disclosure, though, comes a slight remission of the heroine's agony, as the narrative, in accordance with the conventionalised endings of fictional romance, gradually makes its way towards a felicitous conclusion. It is thus not long before it is revealed that Sanguedoni/Udolpho was deliberately responsible for the ruin of Angelo at the gaming table, and that while Angelo did indeed make a potentially fatal attempt on his own life, it was Sanguedoni's refusal to provide an antidote to the poison more than the poison itself that was the real cause of his death. The shame of the father's suicide is thus rapidly converted into murder, shifting the responsibility from Angelo to Father Sanguedoni in the process. The will of the father, too, is eventually revealed to be a forgery, an act of counterfeiting deliberately resorted to by the Monk with a knowledge of the vast extent of Hersilia's filial piety in mind. In a turn patently influenced by the Radcliffean technique of the explained supernatural, the female spectre that has haunted Hersilia from the narrative's earliest moments is revealed to be none other than her half-sister Eloisa, the offspring of Angelo's affair with another passionate woman who, like her daughter, has been forced to endure another form of live burial in a convent, and who, like Lewis's cross-dressing Rosario, has served her beloved sister throughout the fiction in the masculine disguise of Astolpho the minstrel. Hortensia meets an untimely death, and Sanguedoni, during an unexpected turn in the proceedings of an Inquisition-like tribunal, re-enacts the opening scene of immolation, albeit this time upon himself. With all spectres banished and the iniquitous duly punished, Hersilia and Lorenzo, newly restored to one another, are free to marry.

If this synopsis reads as a synthesis of what critics have subsequently come to identify as the "male" and "female" strands in late eighteenth-century Gothic writing, it is an inevitability suggested by the title of the fiction itself. Neither strictly male nor strictly female Gothic, Horsley Curties's *The Monk of Udolpho* is as androgynous as the cross-dressing Eloisa/Astolpho. However, in the writer's own terms, his text ought to be read more as a masculine disciplining and vanquishing of the feminine than any fictional hybrid transgressively formed by the suturing of the two gendered modes. Having identified himself as Ann Radcliffe's heir and shadow in his Preface to *Ancient Records* (1801), Horsley Curties, as if suddenly self-conscious of the feminising of his own authorial persona that this identification effects, turns to address the long-debated critical differences between the novel and romance forms:

As this species of writing has of late been feebly attacked, I will venture a few observations on the subject. —Authors of Novels are nearly allied to those of Romance—are twin-sisters, and should be equally allied in affection; but as sisters will sometimes envy and disagree when the one has been more admired than the other, so the Writers of Novels, jealous of us humble

architects, will not suffer us to build our airy castles, nor mine our subterranean caverns unmolested. (vol I: vi)

The romance and the novel are so indistinguishable from one another as to render them “twin-sisters.” Challenging the long-standing critical tendency to gender the novel as masculine and the romance as its weaker feminine counterpart, Horsley Curties somewhat radically characterises both literary forms as a pair of bickering, mutually jealous sisters. Again, however, the implications that this rhetorical move bears for the gendering of his own authorial subject-position seems too much to countenance, and lest he persist in styling himself as the feminised ghost of Ann Radcliffe working on the equally feminine old maid of romance, Horsley Curties ends his Preface with a conservative retreat into conventional gendered positions. Despite the imperative to display in their works a comprehensive knowledge of human nature, female writers of both novels and romances, he claims, ought never to compromise their innocence and modesty with fictional representations of vice: “Ought she to describe scenes which bashful modesty would blush to conceive an idea, much less avow a knowledge of?—Oh no! let the chaste pen of female delicacy disdain such unworthy subjects” (vol. I: vii). Literary renditions of baseness, Horsley Curties insists, ought to be the exclusive preserve of male writers such as himself, for “when female invention will employ itself in images of the grosser sort, it is a fatal prediction of relaxed morals, and a species of—at least—LITERARY PROSTITUTION” (vol. I: viii). Having initially feminised himself as the ghostly writer of feminine romance in the tradition of Ann Radcliffe, Horsley Curties, through aspersions of fictional whoring, seeks to render the writing of Gothic an exclusively masculine prerogative.

This formal marginalisation of the feminine is not too dissimilar to the moral structures set in place at the end of *The Monk of Udolpho*. For all the rewards of life-long contentment and bliss bestowed upon Hersilia at the narrative’s close, the lessons taught by the text are decidedly conservative, for in line with the major tenets of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century patriarchal discourse—Filmer; Fleetwood; Delany; Fielding; Hardwicke; Blackstone—this fiction preaches nothing if not the virtues of an unquestioning obedience to the will of the father, however dire the consequences and however averse to one’s well-being his inscrutable injunctions may initially seem. Hersilia is rewarded at the fiction’s close, we recall, for her unswaying obedience to a paternal will that, in the end, turns out to have been the product of a counterfeiting. But this, the text suggests, provides no justification for the shirking of a daughter’s filial responsibilities. Clearly, this moral dimension to the fiction was something that Horsley Curties directed at his ideal readership, the problematic and often anxiously policed category of the young female romance reader tirelessly invoked in contemporary reviews of the Gothic. In characteristic fashion, *The Monk of Udolpho* was reviewed twice by Francis William Blagdon in *The Flowers of Literature for 1806*, despite his expressed documentation of the fiction’s publication in 1807. The first of these reviews indicates that early nineteenth-century readers would not have missed Horsley Curties’s direction of the novel at a young, largely female readership: “This romance is well calculated to please those who delight in horrors. The Monk as usual is a most diabolical character, and meets with his deserts. The terrors of the banditti and the inquisition are each of them introduced, and will not fail to harrow up the feelings of susceptible females.”(26) But as Blagdon’s other review of the novel in the same publication makes clear, the ideals instilled in the female readers of this particular fiction are more useful than they are dangerous: “Mr Curtis’s Monk of Udolpho [*sic*] is deserving of association with most of that gentleman’s other performances. The interesting Hersilia exhibits one of the finest patterns of filial piety we have ever seen portrayed [*sic*] in a novel” (lxxviii). In the gentlemanly hands of Horsley Curties, the “susceptibility” of the female reader is more a boon than a hindrance.

It is difficult not to read in this fictional defence of unswaying filial obedience a disguised but by no means less effective treatise on sovereignty. As Lynn Hunt has argued, political discourse of late eighteenth-century Europe was marked by a curious superimpositioning of fatherhood and kingship.(27) Michel Foucault has argued a similar point by way of his account of the conceptual proximity between parricide and regicide in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: to kill the king was also to effect an assault upon the nation's father.(28) In terms more peculiar to Britain of the period, Edmund Burke had read the public world of politics through the metaphorical model of the family in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). And as Linda Colley has pointed out, King George III, the sovereign in power at the time of the publication of *The Monk of Udolpho* in 1807, was often subject to cultural representation in terms more applicable to a sentimental construction of the father.(29) To preach fidelity to the father was thus inevitably to make certain political pronouncements on the importance of loyalty and obedience to the sovereign—an ideological position utterly in keeping with a writer who, by all accounts, spent no less than three-and-a-half decades of his life in dutiful service to the Hanoverian monarchy. In his study *Contesting the Gothic* of 1999, James Watt coined the phrase “loyalist Gothic” to describe the fidelity to certain cherished British institutions, values and class structures displayed in Gothic fictions written in the tradition of Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777/8).(30) While the use of the term in other contexts might misleadingly conjure up expectations of sovereign allegiance in a form of writing that is for the most part infused with a revolutionary Republican spirit, it is, where Horsely Curties is concerned, certainly no misnomer. In fact, pushing beyond a mere lip-service to the values modern British life, Horsley Curties's *The Monk of Udolpho*, in its splendid display of the binding power of the father/king, might best be described as an instance of “Royalist Gothic.” By 1807, such pressing realities as the Napoleonic Wars had rendered the political ambivalences and undecided allegiances of Gothic writing of the previous decade a veritable impossibility. Forced either into a position of Shelleyan radicalism or a royalist support for the king, the Gothic had to take political sides. It is in the work of T. J. Horsley Curties, perhaps, that the products of this process, at least in their conservative manifestations, are most tangible: he who would later be described as the “old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king”(31) metaphorically figures in *The Monk of Udolpho* as the sovereign object of ultimate reverence and obedience, even at the cost of the Royalist subject's unbearable suffering and near death.

1. Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune Press, 1938), 333.
2. See the website for Valancourt books at <http://www.valancourtbooks.com/>
3. See the website for Zittaw press at <http://www.zittaw.com/>
4. See <http://www.gale.cengage.com/DigitalCollections/products/ecco/index.htm>
5. See http://www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk/digital_guides/gothic_fiction/Contents.aspx
6. Rev. of *St. Botolph's Priory; or the Sable Mask, The Flowers of Literature for 1806*, 513–14.
7. See Michael Gamer, 'Authors in Effect: Lewis, Scott, and the Gothic Drama', *ELH* 66.4 (Winter 1999): 831–61.
8. Montague Summers, 'T. J. HORSELEY CURTEIS', *Notes and Queries* April 5 (1924): 250.
9. John Patching, 'T. J. HORSLEY CURTEIS (cxlvi. 193, 259)', *Notes and Queries* April 19 (1924): 294.
10. *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland* [. . .] (London: Henry Colburn, 1816).
11. *The Gothic Quest*, 333.
12. Devendra P. Varma, 'Foreword', *The Monk of Udolpho; A Romance*, 4 vols, by Horsley Curties, ESQ, 1807 (New York: Arno Press, 1977), v.
13. T. J. Horsley Curties, *Ancient Records, or, The Abbey of Saint Oswythe. A Romance*, 4 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1801), I: v. All further references will be cited by volume and page number in the body of the text.
14. I am grateful to Paul Denny, retired army officer and currently Yeoman Bed Hanger in the Body Guard, for generously sharing with me the fruits of his research on the Yeomen of the Guard in the Royal Archives, Windsor.
15. National Archives, Catalogue Reference PROB 11/2046
16. Once again, I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Paul Denny for his insights into these matters.
17. Thomas Preston, *The Yeomen of the Guard: Their History from 1485 to 1885. And A Concise Account of the Tower Warders* (London, 1885).
18. Colonel Sir Reginald Hennell, *The History of the King's Body Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard* (Westminster, 1904), 245, 246.
19. William Arthur Shaw, *The Knights of England* [. . .], 2 vols (London, 1906), vol. II: 334.
20. Anon, 'The Coronation of Their Majesties William IV. and Queen Adelaide', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* September 1831, 226.
21. Montague Summers, *A Gothic Bibliography* (London: Fortune Press, 1938).
22. Peter Garside, 'J. F. Hughes and the Publication of Popular Fiction, 1803–1810', *The Library: Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 9.3 (1987): 240–58.
23. T. J. Horsley Curties, *The Monk of Udolpho; A Romance. In Four Volumes*. London: J. F. Hughes, 1807, I: v. All further references will be cited by volume and page number in the body of the text.
24. Peter Garside, 'J. F. Hughes and the Publication of Popular Fiction, 1803–1810', 247.
25. Caroline Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions, 1709–1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).
26. Francis William Blagdon, Rev. of *The Monk of Udolpho, The Flowers of Literature for 1806*, 507. All further references will be cited by page number in the body of the text.
27. See Lynn Hunt's reading of Louis XVI and the metaphors of fatherhood in *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1992).
28. See Michel Foucault's discussion of the metaphorical superimpositioning of fatherhood and kingship in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conceptualisations of parricide in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991) and *I, Pierre Rivière, having*

slaughtered my mother; my sister and my brother...: A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

29. Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty, and the British Nation', *Past and Present* 102 (Feb. 1984): 94–129.

30. James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764–1832*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

31. The reference is taken from P. B. Shelley's description of King George III in his sonnet "England in 1819" (composed in 1819; published in 1839).