Bluebeard's 'Closet:' Gothic Novels

Phallic Power: Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*

In 1764, Horace Walpole published *The Castle of Otranto*, "his sole experiment in the novel form" (Clery 2009: 101), which would inaugurate the genre of Gothic fiction. While, in the first edition, the novel claimed to be a translation of a medieval Italian manuscript, Walpole, encouraged by the story's success, acknowledged his authorship in later editions, describing the novelty of his writing as "an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (Walpole 2001: 9). Merging ideas of the fantastic and eighteenth century notions of 'realism,' Walpole, in "the ur-text in the Gothic canon" (Davison 2009: 38), lays the foundation for later works of fiction whose horror stems from this very combination. As Carol Davison emphasises, "Walpole's *Otranto*[…] marked a self-conscious aesthetic revolution against the realist novel" (Davison 2009: 39), making use of a supposed 'history' and its association with the supernatural in order to create a piece of art that addresses contemporary questions and cultural concerns in an innovative way. The novel, hence, is "fundamentally and ineradicably marked by its historic moment." (Davison 2009: 39) Walpole, most notably for our purpose, constructs a fictional world in which patriarchal (aristocratic) power based on lineage, and its architectural manifestation are already in a state of crisis. While his male characters are the ones in charge of domestic politics, and ultimately of women's bodies as well, the protagonist's 'phallic rage,' his paranoid and violent attempt to cling to his illegitimate position of power, is what finally leads to his decline. Bluebeard's phallus, Walpole seems to suggest, while uncontrolled and uncontained, will stab and crush at random – and finally crumble.

While the novel has not received much critical attention recently, and most of it, like Andrew Smith's reading in his introduction to Gothic literature, has focussed on "the theme of illegitimacy" (Smith 2013: 21), some work has been done concerning *Otranto*'s preoccupation with issues of gendered space and sexuality. Gretchen Cohenour remarks how "[t]he castle becomes a space for the absolute male exercise of vicious and illegitimate desires; remote, dark, and gloomy, its

malevolent setting mirrors that of the villain/owner" (Cohenour 2008: 75). Even more importantly for our purpose, Max Fincher situates the novel in the context of emerging discourses on same-sex 'sexualities' in the eighteenth century, and reclaims the Gothic for a creative engagement with masculinities: in the Gothic, "it is just as important to consider the place of masculinity as it is the place of femininity" (Fincher 2001: 229). Although I disagree with Fincher's emphasis on a biographical reading of Walpole's novel, he helpfully analyses the connection between *Otranto*'s paranoid males and their violence against women, "how homophobia is structured upon a misogynistic viewpoint" (Fincher 2001: 233), in that fear of feminisation gets aligned with fear of 'unmanliness,' and a paranoid masculine disposition.

Gothic Beginnings: The Weird Castle

At the very beginning of the narrative, Walpole introduces the reader to the idea that the masculinities presented here are far from stable or powerful. Manfred is the current master of Otranto, but it is more than questionable whether he will be able to pass on his patriarchal power: his son Conrad, "a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition" (Walpole 2001: 17), is his only male heir. Aware of his own illegitimate claim to his title, and threatened by "an ancient prophecy, which was said to have pronounced, *That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it*" (Walpole 2001: 17), Manfred is eager to marry his son off to the heiress Isabella. Most of the plot will hinge on Manfred's attempts to save his power against all odds. His actions are triggered by his paranoid fear that the prophecy might come true. The dangerous knowledge the narrative is preoccupied with is simultaneously suppressed and already out in the open, making Manfred's 'closet' resemble the nineteenth century 'open secret' of homosexuality from the start: "Manfred's identity as the grandson of a usurper is simultaneously an open secret. It operates in a similar way in which the open secret of the condition of the homoerotic body does, through the collusion of silence and unspeakability." (Fincher 2001: 234) Walpole links this paranoid secret, which is always already on the brink of being spoken, with an array of physical manifestations of the phallus, and the threat of the potentially penetrable/penetrated male body.

His narrative is obsessed with questions of scale. Most objects that are central to the plot stand out due to their sheer massiveness. Conrad, the sickly only son, is "dashed to pieces, and almost buried under an enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers" (Walpole 2001: 18). This is only the first

of several instances in which improbably large objects shape the course of events. Size, in fact, is tightly linked with masculinity in *The Castle of Otranto*. The giant helmet will remain central to the narrative, as a reminder of the weight of patriarchal expectation Conrad was too weak to live up to. It is no coincidence that he is killed just before his wedding, which would have required him to perform his duties as a husband, and provide the family with an heir. What remains instead is his dismembered body, and a bunch of oversized plumes, whose questionable phallic stability will feature as a physical sign of the family's precarious position. Manfred himself later explicates the connection between the physical setting and its function as a metaphor of power: "[Conrad] was a sickly puny child, and heaven has perhaps taken him away that I might not trust the honours of my house on so frail a foundation." (Walpole 2001: 23) This equation of space and metaphor will become one of the hallmarks of the Gothic, and turns cruelly literal here in Conrad's being crushed to death by the heavy secret from his father's past.

Besides physical manifestations of the power of the phallus, speech plays an important part in the politics of Walpole's novel. Power is not only controlled by those who can manage – or lost by those who get smashed by – the phallus, but also by those who can speak. Lack of voice gets associated with lack of power. In the face of the larger-than-life objects around them, Walpole's characters loose their ability to express themselves: "The horror of the spectacle, the ignorance of all around how this misfortune had happened, and above all, the tremendous phœnomenon before him, took away the prince's [i.e. Manfred's] speech." (Walpole 2001: 18) In fact, the ability to speak gets aligned with phallic masculinity, in that the giant helmet that crushes Conrad belongs to a statue of the castle's original master Alfonso the Good, who was poisoned by Manfred's ancestor. The dead man, then, effectively 'castrated' and silenced – he neither gets the chance to produce a legitimate male heir nor to speak the wrong he has been done – now silences Manfred, and fatally penetrates the body of the son Alfonso was denied. Notably, in an attempt to gain control over the situation, Manfred, uncannily reminded of his suppressed secret, and increasingly experiencing a corresponding "pathological terror" (Fincher 2001: 234), imprisons the young peasant Theodore, who later turns out to be Alfonso's grandchild, and the actual heir of Otranto, under the very helmet that killed his son (cf. Walpole 2001: 21). Without either of them knowing it, Manfred thus claims spatial authority over the man who will later replace him as master of the castle.

Manfred's position in his home is questioned once more shortly afterwards when he decides to marry Isabella, his dead son's fiancée, declaring his own wife Hippolita to be barren. Again, Walpole has him link phallic power and the power of speech in that, in the space of a few sentences, Manfred not only claims his 'right' to choose a woman who will provide him with an heir, but also performs

the speech acts of divorcing his wife ("Hippolita is no longer my wife; I divorce her from this hour." [Walpole 2001: 24]), and eliminating her discursive existence ("[F]orget her from this moment, as I do. […] I desired you once before, […] not to name that woman." [Walpole 2001: 23; 24]). As before, the castle's spatiality 'reacts' to Manfred's hubris: a walking portrait of his grandfather "uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast" (Walpole 2001: 24), contrasting Manfred's self-assertive speech with an utter lack of the same, and, at the very moment when Manfred is literally on the brink of violating a woman (Isabella), he sees the helmet's plumes again, "which rose to the height of the windows, waving backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner, and accompanied with a hollow and rustling sound" (Walpole 2001: 24). These phalli are bloated, unstable, and empty. Manfred cannot control the phallic manifestations of patriarchal power within his castle. Spatially, this is reflected in the walking portrait's leading Manfred to a chamber, and then denying him access: "As [Manfred] would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped-to with violence by an invisible hand." (Walpole 2001: 25) Bluebeard has been shut out from his own closet.

Knowledge of, and control over domestic space are not in the house's master's hands. Isabella, escaping from Manfred's advances, turns out to know the castle's secret architecture better than the latter: "[S]he recollected a subterraneous passage which led from the vaults of the castle to the church of saint Nicholas." (Walpole 2001: 25) Not only does she manage to find her way through these passages, but she is even able to help Theodore, who is "unacquainted with the castle" (Walpole 2001: 27), escape the dungeons, because she inexplicably both knows that there is a trapdoor with "a lock, which opens with a spring, of which I know the secret" (Walpole 2001: 27), and, "taking out a key, she touched the spring, which starting aside discovered an iron ring" (Walpole 2001: 28). Otranto's secrets, it seems, have long been found out by this resourceful woman (cf. Cohenour 2008: 81). Simultaneously, the giant helmet begins to undo the castle's physical foundations: "One of the cheeks of the enchanted casque had forced its way through the pavement of the court, […] and had broken through into the vault." (Walpole 2001: 29) Unsurprisingly, Manfred is disconcerted both by the two young people knowing more about his house's architecture than he does himself ("[T]hough hast not yet told me how though didst open the lock." [Walpole 2001: 30]), and by the fact that Theodore has escaped through its crumbling foundations.

Manfred increasingly loses control over the spatial management of his castle. While its secret passages are turned to use against him, its representative core is invaded by the same enormous apparition that has already blocked the court: two servants inform Manfred that "Satan himself I believe is in the great chamber next to the gallery. […I]t is a giant, I believe; he is all clad in armour, for I saw his foot and part of his leg, and they are all as large as the helmet below in the court."

(Walpole 2001: 32) The apparition – Alfonso from the prophecy – is too large to be grasped as a whole. It is both dismembered (only foot, only part of a leg) and powerful, the uncontainable secret from Manfred's past that threatens to burst open the castle's actual spaces, and destroy Manfred's claim to his position. Otranto becomes "a body steadily deteriorating from the secrets housed within" (Cohenour 2008: 76). Manfred himself more and more displays the kind of paranoia that will become typical of Gothic masculinities: "[H]e gave orders that every avenue to the castle should be strictly guarded, and charged his domestics on pain of their lives to suffer nobody to pass out." (Walpole 2001: 35) Locking Theodore "in a small chamber on the stairs" (Walpole 2001: 35), and making sure that he himself is not excluded from any information homosocially shared between Isabella and his wife and daughter (cf. Walpole 2001: 33-34), Manfred tries to contain spatially and epistemologically what goes on in his own house.

That secrecy is one of the novel's central concerns becomes even more obvious when Manfred's daughter Matilda is in her room with her maid Bianca. Matilda comments on her mother's keeping a secret from her: "[I]t is the mystery she observes, that inspires me with this – I know not what to call it. As she never acts from caprice, I am sure there is some fatal secret at bottom." (Walpole 2001: 38) Hippolita, who always takes her husband's side despite his lack of compassion, makes herself Bluebeard's female helper in keeping a secret from her daughter to the advantage of Manfred, thereby blindly confirming patriarchal authority. Matilda, although admitting to the possibility of homosocial trust between herself and her servant ("I [Bianca] am sure, madam, you may trust me. – With my own little secrets, when I have any, I may, said Matilda." [Walpole 2001: 38]), accepts the authority of her parents' patriarchal voice: "[B]ut never with my mother's [secrets may I trust you]: a child ought to have no ears or eyes but as a parent directs." (Walpole 2001: 38) Accordingly, she criticises Theodore for wanting to pry into Manfred's secrets, although the young man only wants to help her: "Dost thou come hither to pry into the secrets of Manfred? Adieu. I have been mistaken in thee." (Walpole 2001: 41) Matilda's faith in patriarchal authority, and her own disinclination to have secrets, while making her seem "born to be a saint" (Walpole 2001: 38), also make her vulnerable, and, in the end, she dies at the hands of the very (F)father she has trusted.

A similar discourse evolves when Manfred, still looking for Isabella, meets Friar Jerome, a priest from the nearby monastery. While Jerome speaks with the authority invested in him by the church, Manfred claims authority in his own house; and while Jerome is eager to triangulate the power struggle through Hippolita, Manfred denies her a voice, and tries to establish a merely homosocial argument: "Father, […] I pay due reverence to your holy profession; but I am sovereign here, and will allow no meddling priest to interfere in the affairs of my domestic.

If you have aught to say, attend me to my chamber – I do not use to let my Wife be acquainted with the secret affairs of my state; they are not within a woman's providence." (Walpole 2001: 43)

Having succeeded in establishing homosocial privacy between Jerome and himself, Manfred shares his plan with the priest to divorce Hippolita and marry Isabella, and tries to convince him to become his accomplice. Underestimating Jerome's heterosocial interest in Isabella, Manfred believes in the priest's promise to help him: "The well-meaning priest suffered him to deceive himself, fully determined to traverse his views, instead of seconding them." (Walpole 2001: 47) Seeing women exclusively as bodies traded in the interest of lineage, Manfred can only perceive epistemological processes in a homosocial dimension. He cannot imagine the friar acting in the mere heterosocial (non-sexual) interest of the former's object of desire. In this very misogynistic move, however, also lies the danger Manfred is so eager to avoid: dissociating himself from women, he displays an exaggerated fear of effeminacy that becomes problematic in his exclusive focus on homosocial bonds. As Fincher observes, Walpole, in combining misogyny and homosocial excess in his paranoid male subject, hints at "an internalized homophobia in the fear of femininity lurking within the male subject" (Fincher 2001: 237). It is also, of course, crucial to see that, within the patriarchal system Walpole depicts, one that vitally depends on lineage, the female can never actually be negated: "Manfred has to rely on women to perpetuate his rule, and works to control them in any way he can. […] Were there a way to perpetuate the patriarchy without women, [he] might be happy." (Heiland 2004: 13) Femininity, then, for Manfred, is a threat that, while it cannot be denied, has to be contained.

Walpole contrasts Manfred's paranoia with Theodore's striking lack thereof. Unlike Manfred, Theodore avoids being caught up in the political tangle around him by employing a rhetoric of honesty: "I answered to every question your highness put to me last night with the same veracity that I shall speak now. […T]he truth I have told thee." (Walpole 2001: 48; 49) This apparent lack of secrecy disconcerts Manfred, who assumes masculinities to be built on homosocially traded information, and sees secrecy where there is none: "[T]ake care to answer with less equivocation than thou didst last night, or tortures shall wring the truth from thee. […] Tell me, rash boy, who thou art, or the rack shall force thy secret from thee." (Walpole 2001: 48; 49) When Walpole finally confronts the reader with a hint towards the one big secret concerning Theodore – that he is the actual heir of Otranto – and Jerome discovers him to be his lost son, it is, once again, the strangely phallic giant plumes that foreshadow the effect the slowly emerging secret will have on Manfred's power: "[T]he sable plumes on the enchanted helmet, which still remained at the other end of the court, were tempestuously agitated, and nodded thrice, as if bowed by some invisible wearer." (Walpole 2001: 53) The

secret, which is on the brink of being discovered, threatens the shaking, bending plumes' 'erection.

Phallic Competition: The Traffic in Women

In what follows in the novel, the phallic symbolism that infuses the narrative takes on almost comic dimensions. Manfred clearly associates the shaking plumes with a threat to his own person: his "heart misgave him when he beheld the plumage […] shaken in concert with the sounding of the brazen trumpet" (Walpole 2001: 54). His actions and words get directly linked to the enormous black objects: "If I have offended – [the plumes were shaken with greater violence than before]." (Walpole 2001: 54) What ensues is a veritable phallic competition, because what the sound of the trumpet announces, and what coincides with the commotion in the plumes, is the arrival of Frederic, "the knight of the gigantic sabre" (*Walpole 2001:* 54). Walpole could have hardly filled the fictional space of Otranto with more oversized manifestations of his male characters' obsession with (and fear of loosing) their virility: Frederic's "penetration of Otranto with that sabre is a symbolic attempt to impregnate the castle body and breed out the usurper" (Cohenour 2008: 83). Manfred, challenged by the presence of the ominously potent knight, reacts according to by now established Gothic patterns of paranoid masculinity, and tries to keep control over his castle's spatiality. Shutting out Friar Jerome, and locking in Theodore, he takes recourse in performing a spectacle of spatial power for his opponent: "He then withdrew to the hall, and, seating himself in princely state, ordered the herald to be admitted to his presence." (Walpole 2001: 55) When a procession enters the hall, "[a]n hundred gentlemen bearing an enormous sword, and seeming to faint under the weight of it" (Walpole 2001: 58), and the giant enchanted plumes in the court get doubled in "a large plume of scarlet and black feathers" (Walpole 2001: 58) on the knight's helmet, Walpole constructs a dynamic that oscillates dangerously between homosocial rivalry and homoerotic desire: "Manfred's eyes were fixed on the gigantic sword. […] He turned and beheld the plumes of the enchanted helmet agitated in the same extraordinary manner as before." (Walpole 2001: 58) Simultaneously fixing his male gaze on the larger-than-life weapon that threatens to 'penetrate' his realm, and reminded of his fear of being unmanned, Manfred is suspended in a potentially compromising position of homosocial desire. When "the gigantic sword burst from the supporters, and, falling to the ground opposite to the helmet, remained immovable" (Walpole 2001: 59), the ambiguous physical proximity of the opposing phalli and their associated bearers is foregrounded even more prominently.

It is striking that the "silent guests" (Walpole 2001: 59) refuse to employ the power of language, "answer[ing] only by signs" (Walpole 2001: 59), and not engaging in any discourse with Manfred. This refusal, counter-intuitively, denies Manfred recourse to the power of conviction, and he feels the need to justify himself and his title, receiving only occasional nods and signs of disagreement from the knights (cf. Walpole 2001: 60-61). Even though Manfred, as before with the friar, attempts to establish a space of homosocial interaction by taking his guests "into an inner chamber, shut[ting] the door" (Walpole 2001: 60), the silent strangers seem to have power over him who speaks incessantly for two and a half pages. The silent phallus/sabre lying in the hall is enough to rob Manfred of his authority.

Being thus shaken by the threat of penetration, Manfred increasingly loses control over the space of his castle. The friar bursts into the hall against his wish (cf. Walpole 2001: 63), and Matilda manages to free Theodore, transgressing the boundaries of gender and family she has adhered to so far: "Young man, […] though filial duty and womanly modesty condemn the step I am taking, yet holy charity, surmounting all other ties, justifies this act." (Walpole 2001: 64) Ironically, Theodore, confronted with the prospect of Matilda's leading him to the church in which Isabella has already sought sanctuary, feels wounded in his masculine pride, and weakly proposes to engage in a 'proper' phallic battle: "[S]anctuaries are for helpless damsels, or for criminals. […] Give me a sword, lady, and thy father shall learn that Theodore scorns an ignominious flight." (Walpole 2001: 65) Instead of confronting Manfred within the space of the castle, though, Theodore, equipped with a weapon, retreats to the liminal space of the forest, where "he sought the gloomiest shades, as best suited to the pleasing melancholy that reigned in his mind" (Walpole 2001: 67). This space, however, "haunted by evil spirits" (Walpole 2001: 67), does not afford him with an appropriate 'masculine' task, an opportunity to put his sword to homosocial use, and "to approve his valour" (Walpole 2001: 67). Instead, he is forced to "explore the secret recesses of this labyrinth" (Walpole 2001: 67), and, in extension, the secret recesses of his mind. Without proper homosocial rivalry and conflict, without an opportunity to cross swords (or phalli), Walpole suggests, his men become agitated and insecure. They define their masculinity purely against other men. Women, however, can serve as objects to be put to use in this 'chivalric' scenario. Luckily, Theodore meets Isabella in the woods, and immediately sees an opportunity to engage in sword-(phallus-)fighting in her name: "I will place thee out of the reach of his [Manfred's] daring. […] I meant to conduct you into the most private cavity of these rocks; and then, at the hazard of my life, to guard their entrance against every living thing." (Walpole 2001: 68) Isabella, understandably, is concerned about the heterosexual implications of this very privacy: "[I]s it fitting that I should accompany you alone into these perplexed retreats?" (Walpole 2001: 68) Theodore, however, far from thinking of putting his

penis to heterosexual use, is obsessed with putting his phallic sword to homosocial use – at the risk of death. The first person he badly wounds in his chivalric enthusiasm is Isabella's father Frederic, who, instead of being offended at the almost fatal penetration of his body, is reassured by Theodore's emphatic lack of heterosexual interest in his daughter: "This brave knight […] will protect thy innocence." (Walpole 2001: 70)

In *The Castle of Otranto*, then, masculinity is stuck in a pathological state: neglecting heterosexual reproduction, it focuses on homosocial rivalry instead, reducing women to objects to be traded in the interest of male-to-male bonds: "Any exchange of sexual commodities, whether houses or women, between men becomes a contest that flows over into larger social control – the home/castle becomes a means of containing female bodies." (Cohenour 2008: 78) The men are, nevertheless, paranoid about playing down the implicit homoeroticism involved: if you are going to stick the phallus anywhere, it must be to kill, or at least to hurt. Only then can you acknowledge your homosocial desire for your fellow men.

In what follows, Walpole further constructs the phallus as a cult of homosocial knowledge. Frederic tells the others that he found the giant sabre having been taken into the confidence of a dying hermit. The old man had once had a vision of Saint Nicholas, who "revealed a secret" (Walpole 2001: 72) to him. This almost comically exaggerated construction of a mysterious lineage of homosocial secret sharing makes Frederic unwilling to share what he found out with the castle's women: "On the blade[…] were written the following lines – No; excuse me, madam [Hippolita…]: I respect your sex and rank, and would not be guilty of offending your ear with sounds injurious to aught that is dear to you." (Walpole 2001: 72) It is only reluctantly, "in a faltering and low voice" (Walpole 2001: 73), that Frederic finally does repeat that part of the ancient prophecy he found written on the sabre.

Although Walpole affords his female characters a moment of homosocial intimacy as well, they do not manage to take advantage of this moment, since Hippolita, excluded from the heterosexual economy of her marriage, is anxious to make herself part of a triangular dynamic again in helping cement the homosocial bond between Manfred and Frederic: she suggests to Manfred "the union of our rival houses" (Walpole 2001: 79) in asking Frederic to marry her daughter Matilda. Hence, although ostensibly propagating the homosocial bond between herself and the two younger women ("Isabella, you have so much tenderness for Matilda, and interest yourself so kindly in whatever affects our wretched house, that I can have no secrets with my child, which are not proper for you to hear." [Walpole 2001: 79]), she actually encourages the men's traffic in women, making herself, once again, Bluebeard's female helper, unconditionally accepting the power of patriarchy: "It is not ours to make elections for ourselves; heaven, our fathers, and our husbands, must decide for us." (Walpole 2001: 80) Hippolita, in fact, has been, up

to this point, excluded from the story's female-homosocial secrets anyway: she is completely ignorant of the girls' shared love for Theodore. This rivalry, to an extent, mirrors and reverses the male-homosocial triangular structure described above, affording Isabella and Matilda a similar bonding moment over 'the traffic in a man:' "Each confessed to the other the impression that Theodore had made on her; and this confidence was followed by a struggle of generosity." (Walpole 2001: 78) Predictably, when Hippolita does find out the girls' secret, she is disinclined to take their side, merely reminding her daughter of her status as object to be traded in the interest of patriarchy: "Thy fate depends on thy father." (Walpole 2001: 82)

It is clear, then, that actual power – power over bodies, power over space, power over the phallus – lies with the men, and finds its most prominent embodiment in the giant statue of Alfonso, whose "size suggests the scale of masculine authority" (Smith 2013: 25). However, it is also remarkable that all the novel's (self-)destructive energies stem from its male characters' tendency to spill blood in their ambiguous attempts to negotiate homosocial bonds at the expense of women, and their paranoid need to distance themselves from any notion of weakness, 'unmanliness,' or homoeroticism. The novel's fourth chapter culminates in a scene of high camp when, in the church, a space of the highest patriarchal order, Manfred pronounces Matilda's engagement to Frederic. At his news, "three drops of blood fell from Alfonso's statue" (Walpole 2001: 85). This blood, on one level, denounces the violation of Matilda's virginal body. Since it is, however, Alfonso's nose that bleeds, it also reverberates with the thought of this man's violated body politic: his castle is still in the hands of the wrong man.

Spatial Castration: The Fall of Otranto

Although the power of violence clearly lies with Manfred, he compulsively needs to be in control of the knowledge that is circulated within the walls of Otranto. Suspecting (correctly) that there are secrets between Isabella and Matilda, which they keep from him, he tries to get the servant Bianca to tell him all she knows: "That damsel he knew was in the confidence of both the young ladies. […Y]ou are in her [Matilda's] secrets." (Walpole 2001: 88) Manfred reminds her that her duties to him as patriarch outweigh her possible homosocial sympathies for the women: "[I]t is thy duty to conceal nothing from me." (Walpole 2001: 89) It does not become clear whether Bianca is naïve, and does not suspect any secret on Matilda's part, or whether she is clever enough to ostensibly comply with Manfred's claims to authority without giving her mistress away: "Nay, there is nothing can escape your highness, said Bianca." (Walpole 2001: 89) Manfred, in his paranoia, cannot be sure which is the case; he has to assume a secret anyway.

This paranoia, at the centre of which lies the secret of Manfred's illegitimate claim to his title, is what Walpole represents spatially in the increasing reassembling of Alfonso's dismembered body, "a persistent presence that provokes anxiety for many of the characters, especially males" (Cohenour 2008: 79). When Manfred is just about to finally convince Frederic to marry Matilda, and give up any claim to Otranto, Matilda bursts into the room, reporting that she has seen "the hand! the giant! the hand!" (Walpole 2001: 90). The more Manfred tries to save his power, and keep his secret from bringing him down, the more manifest becomes Alfonso's giant presence in the castle. Frederic observes that "these are no trifles: the enormous sabre I was directed to in the wood; yon casque, its fellow" (Walpole 2001: 91). Bianca's being aware that the apparition must have something to do with the castle's dark secret ("Would I were out of this castle! My lady Matilda told me but yester-morning that her highness Hippolita knows something." [Walpole 2001: 91]) only makes Manfred even more eager to defend his good name and reputation: "Are my own domestics suborned to spread tales injurious to my honour?" (Walpole 2001: 91) Walpole associates the abstract threat to Manfred's name and power with the physical threat to his castle's architecture. Epistemological process and architectural disintegration go hand in hand, a phenomenon typical of later Gothic texts.

Into the last pages of the novel Walpole squeezes a firework of incidents that bring this dynamic to the boil. After a big feast in the great hall, at which Manfred stages his desired new connections in public, "plac[ing] the marquis next to Matilda, and seat[ing] himself between his wife and Isabella" (Walpole 2001: 92), Manfred wants to retire into homosocial privacy with Frederic, but is instead coerced into the heterosexual company of Isabella, a fact he is curiously unexcited about: "Manfred would have withdrawn with Frederic; but the latter, pleading weakness and want of repose, retired to his chamber, gallantly telling the prince, that his daughter should amuse his highness until himself could attend him." (Walpole 2001: 92-93) Homosocial desire, for Manfred, clearly outweighs heterosexual matchmaking. Similarly, when Frederic intrudes into Hippolita's apartment, looking for her in the 'closet' space of "her oratory" (Walpole 2001: 93) in order to convince her to agree to a divorce, what he finds is not the woman he is looking for, but the praying skeleton of the hermit who led him to the giant sabre: "[H]e saw a person kneeling before the altar. […I]t seemed not a woman, but one in a long woollen weed, whose back was towards him." (Walpole 2001: 93) What is striking here is that the apparition is first unsexed ('not a woman'), and then recognised as the dead (fleshless, impotent) man who triggered one of the story's central phallic conflicts. The hermit warns Frederic "[t]o forget Matilda" (Walpole 2001: 94), oddly reminding him to abstain from the heterosexual economy none of the novel's men seem very talented at inscribing themselves into. Having de-

nied Hippolita heterosocial confidence about what just happened to him ("I cannot speak." [Walpole 2001: 94]), Frederic rushes to his own apartment, only to run into a very ambiguously homoerotic encounter with Manfred: "At the door […] he was accosted by Manfred, who, flushed by wine and love, had come to seek him, and to propose to waste some hours of the night in music and revelling." (Walpole 2001: 94) Walpole, predictably, denies the two men any homosocial/-erotic harmony in privacy. As before, they can only employ the phallus to gesture at their homosocial desire. Frederic, accordingly, "pushed [Manfred] rudely aside" (Walpole 2001: 94), and the latter can only go and look for phallic employment elsewhere. Having also been "driven from [Isabella] on his urging his passion with too little reserve" (Walpole 2001: 95), he rushes to Alfonso's tomb in the church, where, intending to murder Isabella (the phallus has to be stuck somewhere), he, instead, unintentionally kills his own daughter: "Manfred will never permit our [Theodore and Matilda's] union. – No, this shall prevent it! cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke – Ah me, I am slain! cried Matilda sinking." (Walpole 2001: 95) Failing to establish both a stable homosocial bond between himself and Frederic, and a heterosexual union with Isabella, Manfred 'rapes' his own daughter to fatal consequences. Instead of managing to propagate his line, then, Manfred, paranoid about getting it all right despite the prophecy, can only make use of the phallus in a destructive way. Patriarchy, as displayed in *Otranto*, in its paranoid attempt to cling to power, can only become violent. As George E. Haggerty puts it: "The normativity of paternal power is itself the perversion, and Walpole reminds us that the son and daughter must be sacrificed to the increasingly impotent and destructive sexual demands of the aging father." (Haggerty 2006: 25)

Walpole's women, in this disastrous scenario, do not manage to have a powerful voice of their own. Their only options are to be Bluebeard's helper and propagator of male-homosocial bonds (Hippolita), or to be the sexual object to be traded (and killed) in the interest of these bonds (Matilda). Matilda, using the sacrifice of her life as the only powerful weapon she has, tries to re-establish the heterosexual bond between her parents: "Matilda, seizing [Manfred's] hand and her mother's, locked them in her own, and then clasped them to her heart." (Walpole 2001: 97) The only way to tame Bluebeard-Manfred in his phallic rage is to bind him to a heterosexual promise via the ultimate taboo of having stabbed/raped/killed his own daughter, a taboo that takes on sacrificial character in its association with the space in which it is committed: "a child murdered in a consecrated place!" (Walpole 2001: 99). The patriarchal space of the church becomes, however, as Haggerty observes, complicit in Manfred's violence in that it fails to protect Matilda from the power of the (F)father she cannot distance herself from: "By placing this violence in the chapel of Otranto and suffusing the scene with the air of a religious

sacrifice, Walpole makes a subtle connection between the heteronormativity of sexual violence and the patriarchal law of the father upon which Catholicism insists." (Haggerty 2006: 64) Matilda's parental fantasy of a heterosexual reunion must remain unfulfilled, and her sacrifice further foregrounds the unproductive rage of the men's phallic fight: "Matilda's pathetic victimization represents a kind of abjection that queers the fantasy by substituting a bloody corpse for the object of sexual desire. As Theodore and Manfred fight over the bloody dagger, Matilda lies there in defiance of their homosocial love-fest." (Haggerty 2006: 26)

Manfred being thus 'castrated,' having destroyed his family, the power vacuum he leaves is filled by Theodore, who now claims his right as "the sovereign of Otranto" (Walpole 2001: 97). It is remarkable that he immediately establishes his power on a basis of honesty, a trait he has been associated with from the start: "It was not my purpose the secret [of his right to the title] should have been divulged so soon; but fate presses onward to its work." (Walpole 2001: 97) Despite the obvious necessity to speak this secret in order for his claim to be acknowledged, Theodore's act of 'speaking out' nevertheless stands in stark and significant contrast to Manfred repeated acts of repression and silence. In Theodore, Walpole offers his readers the only male character who is not haunted by paranoid phallic confusions. "As an alternative to Manfred, Theodore represents a new kind of masculinity that unites the qualities of compassion, pliability and honour that are the antithesis to Manfred's aggressive double-dealing." (Fincher 2001: 238)

Although power has now shifted, the prophecy still gets fulfilled spatially: "A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. […T]he walls […] behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins." (Walpole 2001: 98)

Manfred, additionally 'castrated spatially' by the destruction of the architectural representation of his power, can now speak the secret that has dethroned him: "Alfonso died by poison. A fictitious will declared Ricardo his heir." (Walpole 2001: 99) Manfred, however, is not the only character haunted by a secret from the past. Jerome, telling the story of how he came to be Theodore's father, admits that "the secret remained locked in my breast" (Walpole 2001: 100). Two things are significant here: Jerome, in his own paranoid fear of challenging Manfred, did not speak out against the latter's tyranny, and, hence, helped uphold the very paranoid patriarchal structures that finally killed Matilda. Secondly, however, the power now invested in Theodore has been inherited by the female line – Jerome married Alfonso's daughter. The newly established power in the ruins of Otranto is, then, indirectly based on the reproductive power of a women – not on the stagnant phallic rage of men; and Walpole's story ends with Manfred and Hippolita

– Bluebeard and his female helper – "each [taking] on them the habit of religion in the neighbouring convents" (Walpole 2001: 100), hence permanently eliminating themselves from a heterosexual economy.

Walpole, in *The Castle of Otranto*, introduces the Gothic male as paranoid subject, preoccupied with dissociating his epistemological homosocial power from the threats of feminisation and homoeroticism. His "novel contains within it the seeds for later Gothic fiction by both men and women, especially in its focus on a paranoid, misogynistic male tyrant and concealed identities that are reversed and exposed" (Fincher 2001: 242). It is the first instance of a genre which, more than any other, begins to question norms as they are being established at the same historical moment, and delegitimises a reliance on Enlightenment ideals of the rational. The ensuing distrust of functional normative categories like modern patriarchal masculinities, and the ways that the Gothic is able to question and fragment them in its employment of fictional spatiality make *The Castle of Otranto*, in the words of Lee Morrissey, "a postmodern work" (Morrissey 1998: 87). It is, perhaps, the comic element in the Gothic, Walpole's employment of "humor, fakery, and melodrama," and early Gothic writers' "embracing surface rather than depth[, their] delight in excess" (Horner/Zlosnik 2012: 325), that make it easy to associate the genre with postmodern notions of camp, an attitude and aesthetics that devotes itself almost exclusively to the deconstruction of norms. While the humour of Walpole's writing gets lost in a lot of nineteenth century Gothic writing, Henry James will pick it up again, and become the master of a tongue-in-cheek 'queer Gothic rhetoric.'

The Power of Absolute Spatial Access: Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

Ann Radcliffe's fourth novel is probably the most famous and most influential Gothic text, and has come to define the genre. Its archetypical plot of a female heroine who is carried off to a foreign country by a dark and villainous count, and locked away in his Gothic castle soon became a stock element of terror fiction. While feminist critics have extensively analysed the precarious spatial situation of *Udolpho*'s heroine Emily, "unearth[ing] the 'anti-patriarchal', subversive psychodramas of [Radcliffe's] narratives" (Keane 2000: 18), even "rel[ying] disproportionately on [them] to inform feminist readings of Gothic space" (Ledoux 2011: 333), no one has so far had a closer look at how architecture, in this novel, not only always conceals a man's secret and serves as a representation of masculine power, but also already subverts these structures by contrasting specifically masculine spaces with female equivalents in which the power over knowledge has shifted

to women. In the course of Radcliffe's story, men, stumbling over their paranoid handling of knowledge, are increasingly excluded from the domestic sphere.

Women, in Radcliffe's literary world, "move through landscape and […] exceed the commonplace representational reduction of women to property, and indeed become proprietors" (Keane 2000: 19), while men become either chained to their 'closeted' secrets, or excluded from an increasingly subverted domestic space. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, then, does not simply contrast "a safe, hierarchical, reasonable, loving world of the family with a chaotic, irrational, and perverse world of the isolated" (Durant 1982: 520), but, instead, subverts the structures of patriarchal masculinity while opening up possible spaces of female agency. In Radcliffe's fiction, Gothic architecture comes to stand for the structure of patriarchal society as a whole, an idea that later authors of the genre took up, for example William Godwin, who "found in Radcliffe's version of the gothic a model in which the psychology of a gothicized household could be used to represent abuses in society more generally" (Horrocks 2007: 33).

Three houses are central to the analysis of the novel's spatial semantics of secrecy: Udolpho itself, the Aubert's family home in La Vallée, and Chateau-le-Blanc. All three represent different nodes on a triangle of gendered power structures, and all three hide a secret. Udolpho, the novel's central Gothic site, serves as a spatial metaphor of patriarchal, male power. Its labyrinthine architecture both exposes Emily to the omnipresent threat of male violence, without granting her any privacy or protection, and symbolizes the paranoid structure of Count Montoni's dark secret from the past. Chateau-le-Blanc is its gendered mirror, the Gothic mansion that has come to defy male access, with the allegedly dead former mistress of the house having created a 'haunted' space that conceals a woman's secret, and expels any man that tries to penetrate its hidden spaces. La Valée stands between the two: it contains St. Aubert's secret, concealed in his closet; it also becomes, however, a symbol of a femininity that grows stronger, both in political and social terms, when Emily inherits it from her father, breaking both an exclusively patriarchal line of inheritance, and a psychological reading of the house as a representation of its owner's masculine power.

Bluebeard's Castle: Udolpho

The reader encounters Udolpho for the first time, through the eyes of Emily, as an edifice that evokes sublime terror and awe: it lies secluded in "a deep valley," surrounded by inaccessible mountains, "a gloomy and sublime object" that, from the start, seems to have a life and will of its own: "[I]t seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign."

(Radcliffe 2001: 215-16) The exterior architecture of this almost personified building, which Radcliffe abundantly equips with phallic towers, pointed arches, and pillars, displays Bluebeard's masculine power, an impression that is reinforced by Emily's foreboding that "she [is] going into her prison" (Radcliffe 2001: 217). This masculine power, however, is already crumbling and in a state of decay: the castle "wants a good deal of repairing. […S]ome of the battlements have tumbled down[…, and] a part of the roof of the great hall has fallen in." (Radcliffe 2001: 218-19)

Within the walls of Bluebeard's castle, as Ellen Malenas Ledoux observes, lawful protection from society is out of reach: "The narrative implies that women are protected by a society willing to shame men who abuse women. Removed from the protection of that society within the impenetrable Udolpho, Emily and Madame Montoni become subject to the will of the individual patriarch." (Ledoux 2011: 337)

Radcliffe also suggests, however, that Udolpho is not an unusual space at all, but that, on the contrary, Montoni and Udolpho enact a masculinity that is representative of patriarchal society at large. As we shall see, in fact, La Valée and St. Aubert stand for the same principles of secretive masculinity as Udolpho; and both are challenged by the alternative architecture of Chateau-le-Blanc.

The space that Emily enters turns out to be precarious for her in many respects. The room she is led to is "in a remote part of the castle" (Radcliffe 2001: 223), and is called "the double chamber" (Radcliffe 2001: 220), a name that alludes to the room's peculiar spatial quality: one of its doors opens to a passageway of which Emily cannot know where it leads to. This door "had no bolts on the chamber side, though it had two on the other" (Radcliffe 2001: 224). Emily finds herself in a space that does not allow her to have any real privacy or control over who can access it. It holds secrets that are not her own, and constantly exposes her to potential (male) violence from without. This threat is made especially uncanny when the door is repeatedly locked and unlocked during the night without Emily noticing or knowing who the potential intruder might be: "She became seriously uneasy at the thought of sleeping again in a chamber, thus liable to intrusion." (Radcliffe 2001: 230) Emily's lack of power over space is repeated on several levels: Udolpho in its entirety, with its maze-like corridors and locked doors, simultaneously locks Emily in, and shuts her out from finding out more about what goes on behind the doors she cannot open. Similarly, Emily's room is both the only place that she can, to an extent, call her own, and a space that denies her the power to bar access to it to others. Within her room, Emily and Annette, one of the female servants, find "a great old chest[…; Annette] tried to lift the lid; but this was held by a lock, for which she had no key, and which, indeed, appeared, from its peculiar construction, to open with a spring" (Radcliffe 2001: 415). Emily is both within and without,

kept in a space from which she can neither escape nor fully gain access to. She cannot penetrate the castle's secret, and remains powerless.

As in other Gothic novels, the terror Emily – and, by extension, the reader – experiences is not so much based on actual violence against the female protagonist than on imagining the possibility of such violence. The means Radcliffe employs to this end are almost all closely related to her construction of Gothic spatiality. Emily cannot find any space of safety within the walls of Udolpho. Access to her room is not in her power, and outside her room, the corridors and dark rooms of the castle only serve to further trouble her. It is, however, not only Emily's helpless position as a prisoner in the castle, but also her own investigative activity that increase her terror. Her curiosity makes her the archetypical wife of Bluebeard: in search of the castle's secrets, the reader expects her to open the chamber containing the bodies of Bluebeard's wives at every turn, even though Radcliffe never goes so far as to actually depict a scene as gruesome as this. She prefers terror over horror:

"Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. […W]here lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil?" (Radcliffe 1826: 149-150)

Radcliffe does, however, continually appeal to her reader's imagination for associations of violent potential. One of the best examples of this is the veiled 'picture.' Emily first hears of it from the castle's servants and is curious to see what is hidden behind the veil. The "faint degree of terror" (Radcliffe 2001: 236) she experiences when thinking of the picture only makes her even more willing to penetrate its secret. When Emily does unveil it, however, the narrative itself creates a new secret that will only be revealed at the very end of the story: "[W]ith a timid hand, [she] lifted the veil; but instantly let it fall – perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture, and, before she could leave the chamber, she dropped senseless on the floor." (Radcliffe 2001: 236) Towards the end of the novel, the reader learns what is actually hidden behind the black veil: "a human figure of ghastly paleness[…;] the face appeared partly decayed and disfigured by worms" (Radcliffe 2001: 622). The figure is only, however, "formed of wax" (Radcliffe 2001: 622), a memento mori created by the late Marquis of Udolpho. The point is that, even though, in the end, we learn that what Emily sees is actually harmless and does not have anything to do with Montoni's crimes, it does work as an uncanny image of the danger Emily might be in. She is genuinely horrified at the sight of what she finds, and the reader shares her reaction. Radcliffe, however, denies the reader knowledge of what Emi-

ly actually sees until the very end of the novel, thereby creating a further effect of terror on the reader that helps understand the female protagonist's terror, a terror that is created in the readers' own minds, because we do not know what Emily has seen; we can only guess. The narrative evokes terror because it denies us access to a secret which we conceive of as a threat.

The difference between terror and horror has a lot to do with knowledge and ignorance. Horror often implies immediate physical danger, but this danger can usually be grasped and faced. A novelist of terror, however, leaves it to the readers' imagination to guess what might be in store for the characters. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* achieves terror on two levels: most of Emily's fears are actually projections of her own mind, triggered by real fears for her physical safety that never, however, lead to scenes of actual horror. The reader shares this terror with Emily. Additionally, however, Radcliffe achieves terror on a narrative level: by withholding essential information about the scenes of alleged horror from the reader, she creates another layer of terror, because the reader's imagination will fill these gaps with images of horror that the cultural and narrative context (physical violence against women) suggests. The reader becomes both Bluebeard's wife and the 'paranoid reader,' and experiences the power of secrecy, and the feeling of helplessness that a lack access to knowledge can create.

Even though Emily does not die, this scene suggests that, in the world of *Udolpho*, a woman who tries to penetrate the secrets of the castle's master will meet as similarly violent an end as Bluebeard's wives; and, indeed, after this incident, Emily is even more aware "how wholly she was in the power of Montoni" (Radcliffe 2001: 238). Again, the mysterious locking and unlocking of doors adds to this power when Emily finds that, shortly after her own visit to the room containing the black veil, another servant tried to enter it, and found the door locked: "Emily now began to fear, that her visit to the chamber had been observed." (Radcliffe 2001: 242) It almost seems as if Montoni's power were exercised through the castle itself, without its master's ever having to visibly intervene. Keeping its own secrets concealed, Udolpho takes on a panoptical quality for Emily. She does not have any control over this space, can be locked in and out at will, and is not afforded any privacy. Even her mind, a modern individual's last refuge, is increasingly intruded by the terror evoked by her spatial situation. As in other Gothic fiction, the space of the house stands for and mirrors the space of the mind.

The sexual threat that is implicit in a lot of the narrative's terror never becomes explicit, but the danger Emily is in does not stop at the level of the imagination either: "The door of the stair-case was, perhaps, a subject of more reasonable alarm" (Radcliffe 2001: 246), and, indeed, one night Emily's fears come true: Count Morano enters her bedroom through the mysterious door, and "advance[s] towards the bed" (Radcliffe 2001: 247) with a sword in his hand. The narrative is ambiguous

in its description of this scene's terror. The situation certainly bears a lot of erotic potential, and – as at other points in the novel – Emily seems to have an almost masochistic longing for the sexual danger she is in, "trembling between joy and fear" (Radcliffe 2001: 248) (cf. Abdulatief 1994). All this, however, does not alter the fact that power here is unambiguously in the hands of masculinity, both on a spatial (the accessible room) and immediately physical (the man carries a sword) level. In Udolpho, all characters play the game exactly as normative modes of gender require. Masculinity is powerful and active, femininity powerless and passive: "Unable to reply, and almost to think, [Emily] threw herself into a chair, pale and breathless." (Radcliffe 2001: 249) Emily, both realising that she cannot escape the power of men even if she were to go with Morano, and knowing no other way to act, is willing to stay in the castle and in the realm of Montoni's power. Morano, equally acting according to cliché codes of phallic masculine behaviour, would risk an armed conflict with his rival Montoni for the sake of 'honour:' "Let him dare to face once more the man he has so courageously injured; […] let him come and receive my sword in his heart." (Radcliffe 2001: 250) The woman in this triangle is reduced to an object to be traded in the name of masculine 'honour' and homosocial rivalry: Morano would take Emily with him by force, he "will not leave [her] to be sold by Montoni" (Radcliffe 2001: 251). He even becomes pathetically jealous when Emily will not come with him: "[Y]ou – you – love Montoni! […H]e shall not live to triumph over me!" (Radcliffe 2001: 251) Similarly, Montoni, having wounded Morano, insists on blaming Emily for the incident, and thinks of her only in terms of a possession that a male rival might steal: "Count Morano […] you favour, it seems, since you find I have dismissed him." (Radcliffe 2001: 255) In Udolpho, Emily is completely powerless. In this world of male-homosocial power relations, her only value lies in the potential creation of a financial bond through an advantageous marriage that will further the interests of the men involved.

Emily's aunt, Madame Montoni, is in a similarly compromising position. Her husband's only aim is for her to sign off her estates to him, and Montoni, locking her up, and making use of the spatiality of his uncanny castle, tries to force her to do as he wishes: "'Am I blocked up here to die?' 'That may possibly happen, […] unless you yield to my demand: for, come what may, you shall not quit the castle till then. […] You shall be removed this night […] to the east turret: there, perhaps, you may understand the danger of offending a man, who has an unlimited power over you.'" (Radcliffe 2001: 287)

Here, the threat to the women's safety gains a rare physical actuality: both Emily and her aunt are aware that the older woman might not survive being locked up alone in a remote and cold part of the castle for long. Again, the scene is reminiscent of the Bluebeard tale, in which the disobedient wives are brutally killed, and the bodies locked away in a remote room of the castle. The women know that

they live with the constant threat of being fatally absorbed into the castle's secret architecture, without anyone ever wondering about their whereabouts. It also, however, becomes obvious in this scene that Emily and her aunt are not completely powerless: they legally possess the novel's important land and estates. If Madame Montoni does not give her estates up to Montoni, her niece will inherit them: "Do you understand, that these estates will descend to you at my death, if I persist in a refusal?" (Radcliffe 2001: 290) This is not immediate, physical power, but it is a form of abstract power that demonstrates how dependent on women the men in Radcillfe's world actually are. Madame Montoni, until the end, refuses to give up her estates to Montoni, even though her confinement does finally cause her death. Emily, however, repeatedly expresses "her willingness to resign all claim to those estates" (Radcliffe 2001: 351). She does not see that both her aunt's and her own only source of relative power (and temporary guarantee to be spared any real physical harm) is the fact that Montoni's legal access to the real space of Madame Montoni's estate lies beyond his reach. Only after her aunt's death does Emily realise that owning these estates provides her both with a protection from immediate physical danger, and with a potential future of independent female agency and a life of her own: "[T]he property, which she would willingly have resigned to secure the peace of her aunt, she resolved, that no common sufferings of her own should ever compel her to give to Montoni." (Radcliffe 2001: 358) Montoni, fully aware that he has no legal claim on the estates, can only resort to another threat of physical violence: "[Y]ou have dared to question my right, – now dare to question my power. I have a punishment which you think not of; it is terrible! This night – this very night" (Radcliffe 2001: 372). Masculinity, as represented in Montoni, articulates power through spatial violence, and the (finally impotent) threat of real, physical violence. In the end, Emily yields to this power, and gives up the estates – and her only source of potential power – to buy her own freedom, but Montoni has deceived her, and she stays a prisoner in Udolpho.

Emily's chamber remains a space of unease for both her and her female servant and confidant Annette. One night, Emily is alarmed both by the sound of someone outside the door leading to the corridor and of footsteps "ascending the private staircase" (Radcliffe 2001: 283). The effect of feminine terror is doubled: Emily is caught between potential (male) threats from two sides of her room; and Annette seeks refuge in the female company of this never-safe space from "a tall figure gliding along […in the corridor] into the room, that is always shut up, and nobody has the key of it but the Signor" (Radcliffe 2001: 284). Again, the spatial situation of locked and unlocked doors that bar or admit access emphasises the arbitrary potential of violence the women are exposed to in Udolpho. Emily's fear that the room in question might be the one in which she found the mysterious veil admits the reader to construct a mental map of a triangle of closely related rooms in im-

mediate proximity, both spatially and metaphorically: Emily's own room, which constantly seems to both protect and threaten her; the room with the black veil; and another room close by, which contains the portrait of the former mistress of Udolpho, Lady Laurentini. Taking into account the hindsight knowledge of Emily's fantasy that the veil hides the rotting corpse of this lady, we can read this triangle of rooms as the spatial nucleus of potentially subversive – albeit always precarious – feminine power.

Challenging mainstream feminist interpretations of Gothic space as symbolising only female imprisonment, Ellen Malenas Ledoux shows that women, in Radcliffe's novel, are not simply victims of male violence, but can also, "through responding actively to threatening situations, model a manly sense of agency[…, and that] authors use the allegorical potential of Gothic space to engage in a more complex exploration of domestic politics than a univocal critique of patriarchy" (Ledoux 2011: 331-32). Although Udolpho seems to be a predominantly masculine space, the reader soon learns that Montoni's possession of it actually goes back to his inheriting it from a woman. Her sudden disappearance, at the same time, constitutes the castle's (and Montoni's) mysterious secret from the past. This woman, however, is still an important, albeit marginalised, presence in Udolpho. Annette, showing Emily a portrait of the castle's former mistress, comments on this: "[T]he Signor would do well to hang [the picture] in a better place, than this old chamber. Now, in my mind, he ought to place the picture of a lady, who gave him all these riches, in the handsomest room in the castle." (Radcliffe 2001: 263) Montoni himself admits to his friends that he inherited the castle "by the female line," Lady Laurentini, the former owner of castle Udolpho, having allegedly "put a period to her own life" under "some singular and mysterious circumstances" (Radcliffe 2001: 273). Montoni deliberately employs a rhetoric of mystery and ignorance – both strategies closely related to denial – instead of not talking about the incident at all. Similar to Falkland in *Caleb Williams*, Montoni seems torn between protecting his secret, and sharing it with others. According to his account, Lady Laurentini retired to her room one night in a fit of "frantic madness," and "[f]rom that hour, she was seen no more" (Radcliffe 2001: 274). It is as though the castle itself had made her disappear, a fact suspicious to both Montoni's friends and the reader. In fact, as the reader learns in the end, Laurentini did give up her castle in a fit of guilty despair; Montoni, however, is not the legal heir, but Emily, who inherits the castle from Laurentini.

The literal power to imprison women is not restricted to the novel's villainous characters. Instead, Radcliffe also gives an example of how being confined to a room by a man can be a source of protection for a woman. Annette tells Emily that her friend and fellow servant Ludovico, in a moment of imminent danger to her safety, "locked [her] up, as he has often done before, in a room in the middle of

the castle" (Radcliffe 2001: 408). Annette deliberately puts herself in the spatial power of a man she deems trustworthy. Emily realises that she has hardly any other option herself: running away from the castle would make her subject to immediate physical dangers, and in the castle, she has to give herself up to the 'protective' power of either of two men; and since Montoni's rhetoric of chivalric protection is an obvious trap ("'You know the terms of my protection […]' […H]e would only conditionally protect her, while she remained a prisoner in the castle." [Radcliffe 2001: 410]), she has no other choice than to opt for another potential imprisonment, and "entreat[s] [Ludovico's] protection" (Radcliffe 2001: 409), fearing that she will again be traded to be married to Signor Verezzi.

Radcliffe repeatedly employs a language of secrecy and curiosity in her depiction of Udolpho and Count Montoni. These discourses, in fact, are present in over-abundance, based both on an actual, and on an imagined concealment of knowledge. The effect of this is a foregrounding of what a rhetoric of secrecy can do, independent of what the concealed knowledge actually is, or whether the secret is, in fact, empty. What makes the character of Montoni so threateningly powerful to Emily and to the reader is, most of all, his capacity to mystify. Until the end of the novel, neither Emily nor the reader can be absolutely sure what his motives are, or what actually lies buried in his secret past. His behaviour within the space of the castle both fascinates and scares Emily: "[H]er astonishment only began, which was now roused by the mysterious secrecy of Montoni's manner, and by the discovery of a person, whom he thus visited at midnight, in an apartment, which had long been shut up, and of which such extraordinary reports were circulated." (Radcliffe 2001: 291)

Both the castle itself and its master are full of secrets and seeming arbitrariness for Emily. This kind of secretive masculinity, paired with Montoni's violent demeanour, have an ambiguous effect on the novel's female protagonist. Emily constantly fears for her own and her aunt's safety, but also seems excited and fascinated by Montoni-Bluebeard. When her aunt advises Emily to try and escape from the castle, she "accord[s] with her in the wish, but differ[s] from her, as to the probability of its completion" (Radcliffe 2001: 292). It seems that Emily – at least subconsciously – feels a certain desire to stay at Udolpho, and in its master's power. We can also observe this almost masochistic tendency in a later scene in which Emily, walking through the castle at night, comes across a chamber containing what she concludes to be "instruments of torture" (Radcliffe 2001: 329). Being about to faint, she "seat[s] herself, unconsciously, in the iron chair itself" (Radcliffe 2001: 329). In her morbid curiosity to further penetrate the castle's spaces, Emily actively puts herself in the position of victim. In the same room, she finds a curtain concealing a remote part of it. This curtain works for the narrative in very much the same way as the black veil hiding the 'picture.' Emily's own curiosity has

her actively reveal the secret that lies beyond: "[S]he wished, yet dreaded, to lift [the curtain], and to discover what it veiled." (Radcliffe 2001: 329) Again, what she unveils is a sight of abject horror:

"Beyond, appeared a corpse, stretched on a kind of low couch, which was crimsoned with human blood, as was the floor beneath. The features, deformed by death, were ghastly and horrible, and more than one livid wound appeared in the face. Emily, bending over the body, gazed, for a moment, with an eager, frenzied eye; but, in the next, the lamp dropped from her hand, and she fell senseless at the foot of the couch." (Radcliffe 2001: 329/30)

Of course, as the reader later learns, what Emily has seen is not a corpse, but a wounded soldier. For the moment, however, the effect is one of real horror. Two things are important to note here: it is Emily's own action that reveals to her what lies in the secret space beyond the curtain; and she is as fascinated as she is horrified by the sight of blood, wounds, and violent deformity. Once again, it is helpful for our purpose to read this scene through the lens of the Bluebeard tale. Emily's mind is full of real and imagined fear for her own physical integrity. It is her own curiosity that drives her to further penetrate Udolpho's secrets; but at every instant, she expects to find Bluebeard's secret chamber, in which he keeps the physical evidence of his punishment of any woman who tries to penetrate his secret: the mangled corpses of his former wives. Bluebeard's secret chamber works for Radcliffe like a cultural blueprint of female abject horror: for women in these texts to want to know too much means to risk physical violence, or even elimination. Even though this psychological threat never becomes real in its physicality for Emily, it is there, for her and for the reader. Montoni's (and Udolpho's) masculinity defines itself through the threat of physical violence against women. On the other hand, of course, Montoni is in a problematic position himself: his actually killing Emily would not get him what he wants (money and her aunt's estates), and, in the end, his power, which is built on a lie (he is not the legitimate heir of Udolpho), collapses.

A Female Bluebeard's Castle: Chateau-le-Blanc

Although Udolpho's Gothic architecture dominates the greater part of Radcliffe's novel, its representation of emphatically masculine spatial power is mirrored by another, smaller chateau that provides an important setting for Emily's adventure: Chateau-le-Blanc. The reader becomes immediately aware that here it is not clear at all who has power and who does not. The chateau's master, the Marquis de Villeroi, has recently died, and has left the house to his friend, the Count de Villefort,

who never sets foot in it. Even before his death, the Marquis had taken "a dislike to the place, and has not been there for many years," even though it had earlier been his "favourite residence" (Radcliffe 2001: 68). There must have been something about the house that drove its master from it. Currently, "the old housekeeper, and her husband the steward, have the care of it" (Radcliffe 2001: 68); and it soon becomes clear that the female housekeeper is, literally, the keeper of the keys to the chateau's secret rooms.

Chateau-le-Blanc, as a Gothic space, is just as mysterious as Udolpho, but the gendered connotations are reversed. It is the former residence of the deceased Marchioness de Villeroi, who, as we find out in the course of the story, forms part of the secret past of both Emily's father and Lady Laurentini, the late mistress of Udolpho. It is not surprising, therefore, that her own house has a reputation for being haunted too: "[N]obody likes to go near that chateau after dusk." (Radcliffe 2001: 84) The house, though it has not been inhabited for years, has the power to keep people away and in fear of its secrets. La Voisin, a resident of a nearby village, denies Emily any information about the house: "[I]t is not for me to lay open the domestic secrets of my lord." (Radcliffe 2001: 84) In hindsight, this sentence seems almost ironic, because we soon find out that the secrets that are concealed in the chateau are not the 'lord's' secrets at all: he does not know about its secret rooms and what they hide. Power over space and knowledge from the past is firmly in the hands of the house's dead mistress and her female servant.

The story of Blanche, the Count de Villefort's daughter, doubles Emily's role as Gothic heroine on a micro level: she is "not yet eighteen, had been hitherto confined to the convent, where she had been placed immediately on her father's second marriage" (Radcliffe 2001: 438). She is an inexperienced, young female, placed into a confinement that keeps her ignorant and sexually innocent. Strikingly, in the world of Chateau-le-Blanc, it is not primarily male agency that puts Blanche in the hands of the Catholic Church, one of the pillars of patriarchal control of knowledge. Instead, her stepmother's "dread of superior beauty […] urged her to employ every art, that might prevail on the Count to prolong the period of Blanche's seclusion" (Radcliffe 2001: 438). The current Countess de Villeroi, however, only exerts power through the male institutions she has indirect access to. Only with the almost simultaneous arrival of Blanche (on "the day, which was to emancipate her from the severities of a cloister" [Radcliffe 2001: 439]) and Emily at Chateau-le-Blanc, are the secrets hidden in the house uncovered, and take on a particularly gendered dimension.

When the Count's family, for the first time since he has inherited the chateau, approach the building, the place impresses them as unfriendly and unwelcoming: the road to the house is "overgrown with luxuriant vegetation;" the chateau is "a dismal place," a "barbarous spot" (Radcliffe 2001: 441). Architecturally, the build-

ing is a pastiche of different styles, "not entirely built in the gothic style, but […with] additions of a more modern date" (Radcliffe 2001: 441). Chateau-le-Blanc is presented to the reader as a Gothic 'haunted mansion,' very much reminiscent of the fairy-tale architecture of Sleeping Beauty's castle, overgrown and forgotten, which nevertheless defies the uniform terror of Udolpho's architecture. It is a place that has been transformed by its mistress into something that goes beyond the threatening power structure of a dark Gothic castle into a domestic space that Radcliffe deliberately constructs such that it connotes feminine agency.

At first, however, the chateau presents itself to its visitors as a place not that different from Montoni's Udolpho. The hall, the nucleus of masculine domestic power and grandeur, is "large and gloomy," and "entirely gothic" (Radcliffe 2001: 441), and the whole place "would require considerable repairs and some alterations, before it would be perfectly comfortable, as a place of residence" (Radcliffe 2001: 442/43). The house, however, soon reveals its more peculiar aspects: Blanche, exploring its unknown spatiality like a true Gothic heroine, discovers rooms that deny the chateau's architecture any homogeneity as a site of Gothic terror. Blanche finds a saloon that "had been either suffered to fall into decay, or had never been properly finished," with windows that afford "a very lovely prospect" (Radcliffe 2001: 443). Behind another dark passage, she comes to "a hall, but one totally different from that she had formerly seen, […an] apartment […] of very light and airy architecture […with] arches built in the Moorish style" (Radcliffe 2001: 444). Chateau-le-Blanc is a place both in flux and frozen, a conglomerate of styles and tastes, incorporating the new and the foreign, bearing the potential to be something it does not seem to be at first glance. All recent changes and developments in the chateau's architecture were initiated before the late Marchioness de Villeroi's death, and now lie dormant under layers of dust, waiting to be disturbed. It is at this moment, when she is alone in the strange but stimulating atmosphere of the 'other' hall, that Blanche fully realises her newly-gained freedom. Standing at one of the hall's windows, in a liminal space suspended between the old and the new, nature and architecture, foreign and familiar, she experiences a truly Romantic epiphany:

"And have I lived in this glorious world so long, […] and never till now beheld such a prospect – never experienced these delights! Every peasant girl, on my father's domain, has viewed from her infancy the face of nature; has ranged, at liberty, her romantic wilds, while I have been shut in a cloister from the view of these beautiful appearances, which were designed to enchant all eyes, and awaken all hearts." (Radcliffe 2001: 444)

In bringing Blanche to Chateau-le-Blanc (it seems fitting that the 'white' girl should finally enter the 'white castle'), Radcliffe juxtaposes two chains of associa-

tions: Blanche, the feminine, Chateau-le-Blanc, the Marchioness, the new, nature, freedom on the one hand; and the cloister, the masculine, the Marquis, the old, estrangement from nature, imprisonment on the other. As a narrative strategy, this is an extremely clever move: within a few pages of a subplot, Radcliffe manages to associate the revolutionary potential of Romanticism with feminine agency. Chateau-le-Blanc, as a masculine space, changed, and now seemingly haunted by its former mistress, helps Blanche – and the (female) reader – see how women can define for themselves a space of their own.

Blanche becomes the prying female, but instead of uncovering a dangerous masculine secret, she helps reveal the chateau's powerful feminine secret, which, it seems, wants to be found out by the young women. Blanche continues to explore the chateau's rooms, and begins to penetrate its more remote and secret spaces and maze-like architecture. Passing thorough several corridors, up "a back staircase," and through "a door in the wall," she arrives "in a small square room," and gets lost "in a dusky passage" (Radcliffe 2001: 451). She is found by the housekeeper Dorothée, the only character who finds her way easily through all the rooms and corridors in the chateau. Dorothée informs Blanche that a door the latter has found locked "open[s] to a suit of rooms, which had not been entered during many years" (Radcliffe 2001: 452). This is where the chateau's secret lies: the countess died in one of the rooms behind the door, and, since then, no one has entered them. They are the house's 'closet', albeit not a masculine one. What lies behind these doors, protected by the female keeper of the keys, is the most private part of the house's late mistress' domestic sphere. Naturally, just as Emily's curiosity makes her explore what lies behind curtains and veils in Udolpho, and just as Bluebeard's wife opens the door to the forbidden room, Blanche, intrigued by the knowledge that might lie behind the door Dorothée asks her to leave shut, now wants "to see the suite of rooms beyond" (Radcliffe 2001: 462).

The reader soon learns that the secret of Chateau-le-Blanc is closely connected to Emily's own history and her father's past. It turns out that Emily bears a striking resemblance to the late Marchioness, and Dorothée recognises her former mistress' face in a medallion that Emily has found in her father's own closet. Becoming aware that there seems to exist some connection between herself and the Marchioness, Emily feels "a thrilling curiosity to see the chamber, in which the Marchioness had died" (Radcliffe 2001: 498), and convinces Dorothée to enter the forbidden rooms with her. Radcliffe here constructs a female triangle that turns out to have the potential to uncover all the secrets the men in the novel (Montoni, St. Aubert) have tried to conceal: Emily (and, in extension, Blanche) is the agent of female curiosity who instigates the opening of the Marchioness' 'closet;' the dead Marchioness herself – and her ongoing, uncanny presence in the chateau – is the key to solving all the story's mysteries; and Dorothée literally holds "the keys of

that suite of rooms, which had been particularly appropriated to the late Marchioness" (Radcliffe 2001: 499).

In what follows, Radcliffe constructs a scene of female-homosocial intimacy that problematises the position of femininity within the novel's structures of knowledge and power. Although Dorothée is the female guardian of the Marchioness' apartment, she is unable to unlock the door. Instead, Emily succeeds in turning the key. This becomes crucial in hindsight, because Emily, in fact, now enters her own aunt's apartment. Together with Dorothée, who goes on to "unlock […] the door that lead[s] into the late Marchioness' apartment" (Radcliffe 2001: 501), Emily penetrates these rooms increasingly further, rooms that still bear witness to what their dead inhabitant had made of them, "rich in the remains of faded magnificence" (Radcliffe 2001: 500). The Marchioness still seems present, with the curtains around her bed "remaining, apparently, as they had been left twenty years before;" Dorothée even imagines to "see my lady stretched upon" it (Radcliffe 2001: 501/2).

The secret that lies hidden in these rooms is kept in the most private part of the Marchioness' apartment, literally in her closet. Here, Emily finds a picture that resembles the one she has found with her father's belongings, and that makes Dorothée again remark on Emily's likeness to her former mistress. The Marchioness' ghostly presence is highlighted by "many memorials" that the two women find in her closet, amongst them "a long black veil, which, as Emily took it up to examine, she perceived was dropping to pieces with age" (Radcliffe 2001: 502). This veil, on a symbolic level, is clearly connected with the novel's other veils and curtains. In all other instances, they posit a line that, if crossed, will expose the female heroine to moments of (imagined) horror, and the reader to experiences of (real) terror. In this scene, however, the uncanny movement of unveiling is broken: This veil, once covering a woman's head, is reduced to a piece of cloth that does not conceal anything, but only serves as a medium of communication from aunt to niece. It has been deliberately left where Emily finds it: "[M]y lady's hand laid it there; it has never been moved since!" (Radcliffe 2001: 502) The veil also enables Dorothée to take Emily close to an act of identification with the dead Marchioness: throwing the veil over Emily, she observes "how like you would look to my dear mistress in that veil" (Radcliffe 2001: 503). On the level of plot, Radcliffe further foreshadows the kinship between Emily and the Marchioness. The veil, however, has a semantic function that goes beyond this: Emily's ultimate rejection of an immediate identification (she "disengaged herself from the veil" [Radcliffe 2001: 503]) emphasises that Emily, at this point, will not accept inheriting a female role that connotes gendered spatial constraints. The veil, here, can be read as a symbol of any form of female subservience – a nun's headgear, a woman in mourning, a

woman hiding or being hidden from the public gaze – a theme Henry James will reverse in Juliana's powerful gaze from underneath her veil in *The Aspern Papers*.

Emily's arrival triggers a change in this secret female space, which seems to come alive in her presence. Neither the Marquis nor the chateau's current male owner have ever entered it after the Marchioness' death. The dead woman's presence, however, becomes uncannily palpable to Emily, both when she "survey[s] the closet, where every object, on which her eye fixe[s], seem[s] to speak of the Marchioness" (Radcliffe 2001: 503), and when she believes she sees the dead woman's face on the bed she died in. Of course, as in similar instances, Radcliffe reveals later that this ghostly appearance is nothing but a real face, albeit not that of the Marchioness; for the moment, however, the illusion has the effect of bringing Emily into almost physical contact with the dead Marchioness in her own and the readers' imagination. This 'closet' is constructed such that it helps Emily realise her secret past; and her penetration of this secret female space will help disclose the male characters' secrets.

The apartment presents itself in a very different light when the novel's men enter it. Radcliffe draws the picture of an almost comic male conspiracy against the alleged ghost hiding in the Marchioness' rooms. Ludovico meets the Count in the latter's own closet, where he receives a sword which "has seen service in mortal quarrels" (Radcliffe 2001: 534), and is now to serve Ludovico in his fight against the 'ghost.' The Count's deliberately mocking tone in this farce of phallic masculine courage does nor diminish its effect on the reader, because, although the characters do not take the threat seriously, they will actually experience uncanny moments in the 'haunted' rooms.

Radcliffe presents masculinity as not being in control of spatial access. In order to get into the Marchioness' apartment, it is again Dorothée who unlocks the door, because "Ludiovico, unaccustomed to the lock, could not turn it" (Radcliffe 2001: 514). The Count, who has not set foot in the apartment since the Marchinoess' death, acknowledges how much this space's former grandeur relied on its mistress: "[H]ow the room is changed since I last saw it! I was a young man, then, and the Marchioness was alive and in her bloom." (Radcliffe 2001: 516) The apartment seems to have faded and died with its female inhabitant, and has taken on a "funeral appearance" (Radcliffe 2001: 516). Ludovico, who is asked to stay in the apartment over night, can only summon enough strength when his (masculine) courage is questioned: "[P]ride, and something like fear, seemed struggling in his breast; pride, however, was victorious." (Radcliffe 2001: 516) Ludovico penetrates the apartment's most private recesses, and also enters the Marchioness' closet, finding her portrait. Unlike Emily, however, he cannot make sense of what he sees there, not gaining any additional, albeit fragmentary, knowledge the way Emily and Dorothée do.

The "Provençal Tale" that Radcliffe includes at this point in her narrative mirrors the loss of control over space and knowledge that her male characters experience in Chateau-le-Blanc. The Baron, in this tale, is master of a castle that represents his powerful position: He gives a feast "in the great hall […], where the costly tapestry, that adorned the walls with pictured exploits of his ancestors, […] the gorgeous banners, […] the sumptuous canopies, […] united to form a scene of magnificence" (Radcliffe 2001: 520/21). Patriarchal power manifests itself in this space. This power, however, is subverted by the appearance of a stranger who, without the Baron's knowledge, has "been secreted in the [latter's] apartment" (Radcliffe 2001: 521), disregarding the privacy of this very intimate space. What is more, the stranger places the Baron in a position of epistemological disadvantage, telling him that he has come "to communicate to him a terrible secret, which it was necessary for him to know" (Radcliffe 2001: 521). Two things happen here: the Baron, as a man, is faced with the fact that he lacks knowledge that supposedly concerns him, a position that, from the point of view of a masculinity that defines itself through an economy of knowledge, is unacceptable. At the same time, in the context of the novel's genre, the Baron takes on the feminised role of 'Gothic heroine,' the stranger's hints "awaken[ing] a degree of solemn curiosity in the Baron, which, at length, induced him to consent to follow the stranger" (Radcliffe 2001: 521). The Baron's loss of power over knowledge is mirrored spatially in that the stranger "open[s] a secret door, which the Baron had believed was known only to himself[;…] the Baron follow[s] in silence and amazement, on perceiving that these secret passages [are] so well known to a stranger" (Radcliffe 2001: 523). Not only does the Baron not gain access to the knowledge he is apparently lacking (the stranger "was a moment silent," "frowned, and turned away in silence," and "did not speak" [Radcliffe 2001: 522/23]), but he also loses control over the space – and, hence, knowledge – of his own castle. Only when the Baron has completely exposed himself to weakness and vulnerability, following the stranger to the liminal space of the forest alone, is the spell broken, and the narrative returns to a rhetoric of masculine valour and honour. Until this moment, however, Radcliffe, in this short story-within-a-story, manages to further destabilise notions of absolute masculine control over space and knowledge.

Returning to the main narrative, the loss of spatial power depicted in the tale finds its way into the 'real' world of the novel: when the Count returns to the Marchioness' apartment, he finds it still locked, and Ludovico not answering. Even more than before, the door to the apartment itself seems to deny the master of the house access: The Count "was himself going to strike upon the door […], when he observed its singular beauty, and with-held the blow" (Radcliffe 2001: 528). The door, in this rhetoric, becomes a personification of the female 'ghost' it is protecting, defying the master's brutal physicality with "the beauty of its polished

hue and of its delicate carvings" (Radcliffe 2001: 528). When the Count finally does force his way into the apartment through a back door, he finds that Ludivico has vanished, though the doors leading out of the apartment are locked from the inside. This female space not only denies access to the chateau's male master, but it also seems to swallow up male invaders, making them part of its uncannily secret spatiality.

Radcliffe's male characters now increasingly feel the need to fend off a perceived feminine threat. The Count tries to stabilise his position both spatially and epistemologically by literally regaining possession of the keys after leaving the apartment in which Ludovico has disappeared: "The keys of the north apartment I have not suffered to be out of my possession, since he disappeared, and I mean to watch in those chambers, myself, this very night." (Radcliffe 2001: 537) This determination expresses the Count's desire to both be in control of who gets in and out of that part of his house over which, so far, he seems to have lost control, and find out what has happened to his fellow man, adopting Ludovico's role of watchman in a homosocial act of solidarity in the face of an uncanny, feminine "evil spirit" (Radcliffe 2001: 538). The Count, in fact, enters the apartment together with his son Henri. The whole male part of this family seems prepared to defend themselves with all their phallic power, laying "their swords upon the table" (Radcliffe 2001: 538) on entering the Marchioness' rooms. Strikingly, Radcliffe does not show the reader what happens during the night; instead, the next time we encounter the Count and his son, they are even weaker than before. The two men are unwilling – or unable – to speak about what happened: "[P]ress the subject no further, I entreat you; […] upon every occurrence of the night you must excuse my reserve." (Radcliffe 2001: 539) While secrecy can empower masculinity (although always precariously), the impression here is crucially different: these men's secrecy neither empowers nor threatens them, but instead fundamentally defeats them, making them both unable to know what exactly it is they have experienced (they think they have seen a ghost), and to express what they think they have seen. Their failure to penetrate the secret of the Marchioness' 'closet' disables them to take part in the management of knowledge, both mentally and linguistically. Robbed of knowledge and speech, the Count is finally expelled from his own house: "I mean to change my residence, for a little while, an experiment, which, I hope, will restore my mind to its usual tranquillity." (Radcliffe 2001: 545) Naturally, as in all of Radcliffe's novels, all the narrative's uncanny incidents are ultimately explained as being of a perfectly ordinary nature. For the moment, however, the female 'ghost' of Chateau-le-Blanc has successfully managed to share knowledge with its female visitors (Emily, Dorothée), while holding it back from the men, who lose control over knowledge and space, and, in the end, are even driven from this feminine counterpart of Udolpho.

A 'Queer House:' La Valée

Emily's family home in Gascony defies any clearly gendered reading. From the start, this house is 'queered,' as it were, being both deficient in its representation of patriarchal power, and closely associated with the pastoral and nature. The scene surrounding the chateau is one of "pastoral landscapes, […] gay with luxuriant vines, and plantations of olives, […] flocks, and herds, and simple cottages" (Radcliffe 2001: 5). St. Aubert himself is not primarily depicted as the patriarchal master of his house, but, instead, as a man whose ambition in life has been tamed by experience, retiring "to scenes of simple nature, to the pure delights of literature, and to the exercise of domestic virtues" (Radcliffe 2001: 5). More strikingly, St. Aubert refuses to fulfil his function as male protector and propagator of his family's wealth: he "had too nice a sense of honour to fulfil the latter hope [of an advantageous marriage], and too small a portion of ambition to sacrifice what he called happiness, to the attainment of wealth" (Radcliffe 2001: 5). In the world of the Gothic, St. Aubert is a deficient male, almost emasculated by his lack of ambition and close association with pastoral settings.

The edifice itself reflects this lack of powerful masculinity: it is "merely a summer cottage […of] neat simplicity, […] only a simple and elegant residence" (Radcliffe 2001: 6). As opposed to other Gothic mansions like Udolpho, with its intimidating grandeur and representation of wealth and power, La Valée's interior is characterised by "chaste simplicity" (Radcliffe 2001: 6). The library, traditionally a place of masculine occupation and importance, is pushed towards the liminal through its being immediately adjoined by "a green-house, stored with scarce and beautiful plants" (Radcliffe 2001: 6). St. Aubert, instead of occupying himself with matters of political or social importance in the virtual, homosocial society of letters, often prefers to "seek one of those green recesses" (Radcliffe 2001: 7) in the house's heterotopian vicinity in the female company of his wife and daughter.

Despite La-Valée's deficiencies as a typically 'masculine' architecture, the structure of the Bluebeard plot surfaces once again in its secret spatiality. One night, Emily finds her father in his closet, "weep[ing], and sob[ing] aloud" (Radcliffe 2001: 28). St. Aubert's demeanour in this private space is a mystery to Emily, and she is "detained there by a mixture of curiosity and tenderness" (Radcliffe 2001: 28). Finding that there is something about her father that she cannot understand awakens Emily's curiosity, just as Bluebeard's telling his wife that she must not enter his secret chamber makes her determined to find out what is in it. Emily, however, at first refuses to penetrate her father's secrets, "recollecting that she was intruding upon his private sorrows" (Radcliffe 2001: 28). She tries to control herself despite finding St. Aubert weeping over the picture "of a lady, but not of her mother" (Radcliffe 2001: 28), a fact that must make her suspicious. Emily's will-

ingness to accept the patriarchal boundaries of knowledge keeps her from finding out more about her father's secret until what she has seen more or less unwillingly (the picture she finds) is contextualised at Chateau-le-Blanc through the more powerful female agency of the dead Marchioness and her female servant.

Of all the male characters in Radcliffe's novel, St. Aubert, the least traditionally masculine of them all, plays the part of Bluebeard most convincingly. Not only does he keep knowledge spatially concealed from his daughter, but he also gives her the key to unveil the secret, while explicitly demanding of her not to do just that: on his dying bed, St. Aubert discloses to Emily the intricate structure of his closet, which "has a sliding board in the floor" (Radcliffe 2001: 76), under which he has hidden "a pack of written papers" (Radcliffe 2001: 76). Having laid open this secret spatiality thus far, however, he denies Emily knowledge of what the secret actually contains. He elaborately reveals how the secret of his past is hidden, but does not fill it with semantic content: "These papers you must burn – and, solemnly I command you, *without examining them*." (Radcliffe 2001: 76) This masculinity feels the need to repeatedly emphasise that it has something to hide in a hypertrophied rhetoric of secrecy, without, however, making the content of the secret itself visible. St. Aubert's move is contradictory: firstly, he – just like Bluebeard – employs Emily with the means of revealing his secret while, at the same time, asking her not to do it; and secondly, while trying to protect his secret from being known to a woman, he accepts that patriarchal lineage has failed, and that a woman can just as well be mistress of his house. He makes Emily promise never to sell the chateau; he "even enjoined her, whenever she might marry, to make it an article in the contract, that the chateau should always be hers" (Radcliffe 2001: 76).

St. Aubert and his house, when it comes to the question of masculinity, seem foreign, contradictory, and strangely 'queer' in Radcliffe's fictional world. Both house and owner hold on to traditional mechanisms of how masculinity defines itself through secrecy and the exclusion of women, but also accept that maybe a future might look different, that masculinity needs to evade misogynistic paranoia, and allow for women to have a space and agency of their own. There is, however, no room (yet?) for such a radical re-thinking of gender roles in the world of this novel; and, accordingly, St. Aubert dies.

When Emily returns to what is "now her own territory" (Radcliffe 2001: 90), she symbolically takes her father's place as mistress of the house by making the library, the centre of masculine, intellectual power, her own: "There was an armchair, in which he used to sit; […s]he walked slowly to the chair, and seated herself in it." (Radcliffe 2001: 92) Radcliffe further highlights that Emily is now mistress of her own house by having the dog accept her in her father's stead: "[I]t was Manchon who sat by her, and who now licked her hands affectionately." (Radcliffe 2001: 93) Emily's adopting a position of power in the house, however, is

an ambiguous affair. She can still sense her father's presence, and feels bound to act according to his wishes, even though she has literally taken possession of his house's spatiality. Being about to open the secret hiding place in St. Aubert's closet, Emily looks at another chair, and "the countenance of her dead father appeared there" (Radcliffe 2001: 99). Again, the chair can be read as a symbol of patriarchal power over the household, and Emily's newly-gained position as mistress of La Valée continues to be contested by her own father. Through his last wish to her, he has made sure that she will execute power over this domestic space according to his wishes, even beyond his own death: once Emily has taken the secret papers out from underneath the floorboards, "there appeared to her alarmed fancy the same countenance in the chair" (Radcliffe 2001: 99). When she has a closer look at the papers, she is caught between her curiosity (and actual power of penetrating her father's secret), and the impulse to act according to her father's last wish:

"[H]er eyes involuntarily settled on the writing of some loose sheets, which lay open; and she was unconscious, that she was transgressing her father's strict injunction, till a sentence of dreadful import awakened her attention and her memory together. She hastily put the papers from her; but the words, which had roused equally her curiosity and terror, she could not dismiss from her thoughts. So powerfully had they affected her, that she even could not resolve to destroy the papers immediately." (Radcliffe 2001: 99)

As at other points in the novel, Radcliffe doubles the effect of secrecy on several narrative levels: neither does the reader know what it is that Emily has read, nor what the papers actually say in their entirety; and Emily, only glimpsing a fragment of the whole, jumps to a wrong conclusion, suspecting her father of infidelity, while, as she and the reader learn at the end of the novel, the papers would reveal to Emily that the late Marchioness de Villeroi was her aunt. As it is, her father's denying her access to this knowledge, and her own curiosity lead to the creation of half-knowledge and an increased interest in Emily, and of more suspense for the reader. Emily now openly "lament[s] her promise to destroy the papers" (Radcliffe 2001: 100). However, her sense of filial duty is, for the moment, stronger than her curiosity, and she "consign[s] the papers to the flames" (Radcliffe 2001: 100). It is crucial here that St. Aubert forces Emily into this act of self-censorship, reversing, to a certain degree, the act of handing down to her the power over to the domestic space of La Valée. Emily does, however, find a way to subvert the paternal power she so unquestioningly obeys. Finding the miniature picture of her aunt – she does not know yet that it is her aunt – Emily concludes that it does not fall under her father's dictum: "St. Aubert had given no directions concerning this picture,

nor had even named it; she, therefore, thought herself justified in preserving it." (Radcliffe 2001: 100)

St. Aubert remains an ambiguous patriarch in the gendered world of *Udolpho*. On the on hand, he exerts spatial power over women just like Montoni; on the other hand, he seems to have accepted the cultural inadequacy of a strictly male lineage, embodied in the possession of the patriarch's mansion. St. Aubert performs a contradictory masculinity that defines itself through the denial of women's access to knowledge that is already inherent in the Bluebeard myth. While verbally forbidding his wife to enter his secret chamber, Bluebeard, by giving her the key to the room, provides her with the physical means of doing just what he has explicitly asked her not to do. Similarly, St. Aubert, instead of leaving his secret to be forgotten where it is hidden, both orders Emily not to try and find out what it is, and provides her with enough information to do just that – and the 'closet,' once opened, does not threaten Emily, but makes her independent. In St. Aubert, Radcliffe portrays a masculinity that has come to question its own foundations of power, and the very structures on which its self-understanding rests. In this, she is not "a conservative writer[, for whom] the true gothic terrors […were] the winds of change, dissolution, and chaos, […] resolutely turning [her] back on modern life" (Durant 1982: 519-520, 530), but a truly revolutionary novelist.

A 'Male Heroine:' William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*

Caleb Williams, first published in 1794, has mostly been discussed as an example of social criticism of the state of England at the end of the eighteenth century, often being compared and contrasted with William Godwin's political essay *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Rudolf Storch criticised decades ago that this was a reductionist approach to the novel; he reads it as a comment on a more general cultural state of mind: "[W]e feel and recognize in the narrative the guilt and the anxieties which seem to have dominated much of Western culture since the end of the eighteenth century." (Storch 1967: 189) I will propose a reading that locates these anxieties at the very heart of modern patriarchal-masculine identities, drawing attention to the emphatically homosocial nature of Godwin's narrative. Avoiding a minoritising reading of the male protagonists as 'homosexual,' it will show these men to be struggling with defining a stable gender identity for themselves, a task that becomes impossible in the light of the paranoia that is an inherent characteristic of end- and post-eighteenth century English masculinities. The relationship between Caleb and Falkland will, in fact, turn out not to be representative of a minority 'sexual' identity at all, but will prove 'queerness' to be at the very centre of modern masculine self-definition.

A Question of 'Honour:' Chivalric Masculinities

What characterises the men of Godwin's "narrative of obsession" (Storch 1967: 189) most is a feverish preoccupation with what they call their 'honour' (cf. Monro 1953: 86-108). Falkland, the story's 'Gothic villain,' represents a concept of masculinity that not only fails because of its hyperbolic and manic pursuit of an unblemished 'reputation,' but also feels constantly threatened by Caleb's invading curiosity. Caleb acts as opponent to Falkland, but also turns out to be trapped in the same system of chivalric codes of masculinity, codes which Godwin exposes as both inherent and fatal to his fiction's homosocial world. In *Caleb Williams*, Godwin creates an elaborate discourse of 'honourable behaviour,' and a 'good reputation,' seemingly reaching back to a long tradition of semantically specific codes of conduct. As it turns out, however, none of his male characters ever manage to explicate what 'honour' actually means. Chivalric masculinity, in this novel, remains as much an under-determined category as the homosocial dynamics that rule its interactions; it cannot be defined, but only spoken about, and becomes the focal point of Godwin's protagonists' paranoid attempt to read themselves as 'men' in an economy of knowledge and power that locates paranoia at the very centre of a male-homosocial ideology.

The master-servant relationship depicted in *Caleb Williams*, and the emerging pursuit of Caleb by Falkland are the result of the characters' efforts to live up to a vision of masculinity that the novel shows to be not only unliveable, but also (self-)destructive. Falkland and Caleb depend on each other for their existence in a homosocial world that draws its ambiguous power from the sharing of secrets, and lives in permanent fear of its own deficiency, and its secrets' disclosure. Joel Faflak makes a similar, yet less gendered, point by showing how Falkland and Caleb define themselves through their conversation with each other in "a kind of interminable dialogue through which each wrestles for a self-mastery that comes only through the control of each other's selfhood" (Faflak 2005: 102).

Godwin's novel is acutely concerned with the paranoid dynamics of male secrecy. Reading the language of the 'closet' he employs as that of the unambiguously 'homosexual closet,' as, for example, do readings offered by Robert J. Corber and John Rodden, would, however, be reductive. Corber sees *Caleb Williams* as a critique of the aristocracy that was constructed as effeminate and 'sodomitical' by contemporary radical discourse (cf. Corber 1990: 85-89). Rodden reads the novel in purely psychoanalytical terms, claiming that

"Caleb's narration of causally disconnected events and his deep-seated ambivalence toward his master-surrogate father Lord Falkland become understandable when viewed as a fundamentally narcissistic personality unconsciously

engaged in a homosexual struggle with his omnipotent father. The world of *Caleb Williams* represents the narrator's search for the ideal family of romance, a projection of Caleb's self, with the various characters serving as different aspects of Caleb's fragmented ego." (Rodden 2009: 120)

Although these readings, and others that come to similar conclusions (cf. e.g. Gold 1977; Daffron 1995), touch on important points, for example the erotic attachment of Falkland and Caleb, and Caleb's failure to escape his exclusively homosocial world and create a Freudian 'surrogate family,' they do not take into account that the homosocial nature of the conflict between the two men is more deeply embedded in Godwin's depiction of masculinity than a purely psychopathological reading of the novel (with Caleb as 'homosexual narcissist') would be able to show. As William D. Brewer rightly observes, "*Caleb Williams* is […] just one of the novels in which Godwin explores the dynamics of masculine relationships, and not all of his male protagonists' attitudes toward same-sex friendship are homophobic" (Brewer 2000: 50). A less minoritising ('homosexual') and more globalising ('queer') approach, hence, will help us see how, in this late example of the Gothic novel, homosocial dynamics of secrecy politics do threaten the characters' masculinities, reverberating with connotations of deviant identity categories that begin to emerge at the time, without, however, being clearly about the men's 'sexuality,' but rather about their gender identity, and how it defines itself around questions of knowledge, power, and eroticism. I will argue that erotic rivalry, for Godwin, is not, as Brewer claims, an unfortunate by-product of male-to-male relationships (cf. Brewer 2000: 50), but the crucial – albeit conflicted – core of modern masculine self-definition. As Brewer himself acknowledges, "[f]or a man to find his true antitype, Godwin's fiction suggests, he must turn to another man" (Brewer 2000: 52).

The reader encounters Falkland early in the story as a man who already bears all signs of having lost the traits of what we later learn to be the novel's concept of 'chivalric' masculinity. Falkland is "a man of small stature, with an extreme delicacy of form and appearance;" his face is "pregnant with meaning," and Caleb can sense "the unquietness of his mind" (Godwin 2005: 7). In these first few sentences we get enough information to recognise Falkland as a Gothic Bluebeard – very much like Walpole's Manfred – who has a secret that threatens his existence from within, both physically and psychologically. Shortly after this first impression, however, Godwin introduces us to a very different, earlier version of this character. As Caleb learns from Mr Collins, Falkland, in his earlier days, used to be very much what we might call 'a perfect, honourable gentleman.' In his dealings with Mr Tyrrel, who is later killed by Falkland, Williams elegantly contrasts two very different, but equally (self-)destructive masculinities. Tyrrel is the untamed, wild 'athlete:' "muscular and sturdy," he is "an expert in the arts of shooting, fish-

ing, and hunting," activities that provide him with "tenfold robustness and vigour" (Godwin 2005: 19). Tyrrel's rawness makes him more of an animal than a human being when it comes to his relationships with other people. He is despotic and mean, but, nevertheless, the object of admiration and desire for his female acquaintances, who imagine themselves playing with "the fangs of this wild beast" (Godwin 2005: 21). Tyrrel is Falkland's mirror, the epitome of virile masculinity. To Falkland, Tyrrel seems crude and uncultured, and he regards him with a hatred and rivalry that oscillates between envy, self-doubt, and self-affirmation. Falkland is the sophisticated 'aesthete,' whose "cultivated manners were peculiarly in harmony with feminine delicacy" (Godwin 2005: 22). Falkland prides himself on his refinement and dignity. However, Godwin's choice of words to describe him (wit, cultivation, grace, elegance, benevolence, feminine delicacy) position him – on a culturally still reverberating continuum of male and female – dangerously close to being effeminate, a possibility that the narrator explicitly acknowledges, but, at the same time, denies with ironic emphasis ("elegant without effeminacy!" [Godwin 2005: 23]).

Falkland and Tyrrel both represent contrasting, yet equally flawed versions of masculinity, and "the contrast between these two leaders in the field of chivalry" (Godwin 2005: 23) will end in catastrophe. It is no coincidence that the first point of conflict between the two men is the rivalry over a woman at a ball. The main – or, indeed, the only – function of women in *Caleb Williams* – who, as we will see in more detail later, are never "desirable victims or lovers" (Chatterjee/Horan 2003: 128) – is to be part of a triangle that serves as a catalyst in homosocial power struggles. Falkland, succeeding in being the dance partner of choice for Miss Hardingham – while never showing any kind of 'sexual' interest in her – literally threatens Tyrrel's virility, making "the ferociousness of his antagonist subside into impotence" (Godwin 2005: 25).

Although Falkland's demeanour, in this early part of the novel, makes him a more likable and respected man than Tyrrel, his obsession with chivalric – i.e. medieval and outdated – codes of masculine 'honour' leads to his later, paranoid existence. Falkland takes his model of masculinity from an imaginary past, even composing "An Ode to the Genius of Chivalry" (Godwin 2005: 27). His is a masculinity that values 'honour' – i.e. a good reputation and the protection of his 'good name' – above everything else; and, despite their differences, both Falkland and Tyrrel realise that their world is predominantly homosocial; women play a marginal role, and men need each other as rivals in the contest of becoming the 'better man:' Falkland pleads his "manly and honest purpose" in "the society of men" (Godwin 2005: 32), and Tyrrel admits that "Falkland haunts me like a demon. I cannot wake but think of him. I cannot sleep but see him. […] I should be glad […] to grind his heart-strings with my teeth." (Godwin 2005: 33) These examples

confirm Sedgwick's claim that, in triangles such as this, the bond between the two men is the relevant one, and their rivalry, more often than not, reverberates with intimate and erotic undertones (note the vampiric penetration of Falkland's heart, the symbol of love) (cf. Sedgwick 1985: 21-27; Corber 1990: 92-93).

The Traffic in (Wo)Men: Erotic Triangles and Issues of Class

The most prominent example of the 'traffic in women' (cf. Rubin 1975) in *Caleb Williams* is the character of Emily. As Tyrrel's ward, Godwin immediately eliminates her from any kind of 'sexual' economy: "Nearness of kindred, and Emily's want of personal beauty, prevented him from ever looking at her with the eyes of desire." (Godwin 2005: 42) Falling in love with Falkland, Emily becomes the victim of the rivalry between the two men, the object of the destructive energies between them: "Her partiality for the man who was the object of [Tyrrel's] unbounded abhorrence, appeared to him as the last persecution of a malicious destiny[…, and] he determined to wreak upon her a signal revenge." (Godwin 2005: 49) Intending to marry Emily off against her will to keep her from marrying his opponent, Tyrrel reduces her to an object that is traded in the interests and politics of men. He becomes another Gothic Bluebeard, making Emily a prisoner in his house: "This house is mine, and you are in my power." (Godwin 2005: 60) Though Falkland saves Emily at first, this only makes Tyrrel more determined to take out his revenge on Falkland through her: "Let her die! […] I will not always be insulted." (Godwin 2005: 86) Emily dies as the sacrifice of a masculine rivalry that articulates itself in acts of violence against those who are less powerful. Her death – and the extinction of the female, mediating element between the men – triggers Tyrrel's public condemnation as "the tyrannical and unmanly murderer of Emily" (Godwin 2005: 96), and then, in consequence, the bloody conflict between Falkland and Tyrrel that results in Tyrrel's death, and the creation of Falkland's dark secret. Homosocial traffic in women, Godwin demonstrates, leads to Bluebeard's fatal penetration of both the female and the male body, and, ultimately, to a paranoid existence.

The fate of the Hawkins family, tenants of Mr Tyrrel, demonstrates how much both Falkland's and Tyrrel's masculinities define themselves through notions of class and dependence. The younger Hawkins becomes part of a wholly male triangle when Tyrrel decides, against the older Hawkins' will, to take the son into his household. This plan becomes something of an obsession with Tyrrel, and "every time he saw the boy his desire of retaining him in his service was increased" (Godwin 2005: 73). When the older Hawkins, mostly for reasons of lower class self-esteem ("I will not make a gentleman's servant of him." [Godwin 2005: 74]), finally

refuses to give his son up to Tyrrel, a power struggle over questions of masculine 'honour' ensues, with Tyrrel being enraged at Hawkins ("I made you what you are." [Godwin 2005: 73]) for not getting what he wants, namely the boy who he is "desirous of taking into favour" (Godwin 2005: 73). Two things are of interest here: that Hawkins is so frightened of his boy being corrupted by Tyrrel ("I cannot risk my boy's welfare, when I can so easily, if you please, keep him out of harm's way." [Godwin 2005: 73]); and that, in his decision to stand against Tyrrel, he argues from a point of view of masculine 'honour' different in grade, but not in nature, from that of the aristocratic squire ("I am a man still." [Godwin 2005: 75]). The dynamics are similar to those in a male-male-female triangle: the older Hawkins and Tyrrel are rivals for the better concept of masculine 'honour,' and, in their rivalry, fight over who gets to form the younger generation's 'masculinity.'

Codes of masculine 'honour' in *Caleb Williams* are not exclusive to a certain class. Rather, conflicts emerge when two different kinds of 'honour' clash. Masculine 'honour' is depicted as selfish and narcissistic. Mr Collins comments on this, referring to the chivalric or 'gentlemanly' tradition of duelling: "Duelling is the vilest of all egotisms." (Godwin 2005: 102) The men in this world feel the need to live up to (imagined or real?) expectations from others, a task in which all of them fail, both being destroyed by others, and destroying themselves.

A 'Male Heroine:' Dynamics of Homosocial Secrecy between Caleb and Falkland

The second and central male-male pairing in *Caleb Williams* is the one between Falkland and Caleb himself. Unlike Falkland and Tyrrel, "Caleb and Falkland are determined not to triangulate their desire for each other" (Corber 1990: 93). This relationship works on four different axes of gender and class: master-servant, secrecy-curiosity, homosocial secret sharing, and paranoid homosocial desire, all four elements suggesting potentially homoerotic undertones. From the novel's first pages, Caleb is presented to the reader as a man for whom curiosity is the "spring of action which, perhaps more than any other, characterised the whole train of [his] life" (Godwin 2005: 6). This curiosity, which, in the course of the novel, will be the cause of most of Caleb's sufferings, makes him a dangerous and subversive element in the homosocial world of Godwin's narrative. He is a deviant being; his disrespect for the secrets of other men is reminiscent of female Gothic heroines like Radcliffe's Emily, or the young woman opening Bluebeard's secret chamber. Godwin himself acknowledges the similarities between *Caleb Williams* and the Bluebeard tale, even alluding to the cross-gendered parallel between Caleb and Bluebeard's wife: "Falkland was my Bluebeard, who had perpetrated atrocious crimes, which if discovered, he might expect to have all the world roused to re-

venge against him. Caleb Williams was the wife, who in spite of warning persisted in his attempts to discover the forbidden secret." (Godwin 2005: 353) This association is confirmed by Caleb's self-characterisation: "My simplicity, arising from my being a total stranger to the intercourse of the world, was accompanied with a mind in some degree cultivated with reading." (Godwin 2005: 113) He is the inexperienced 'male heroine' who is suddenly faced with the grimness of the 'real world' after having been brought up in a well-protected environment. Curious Caleb is bound to collide with a homosocial world – embodied by Falkland – whose greatest fear is a fear of disclosure. Caleb's position is particularly precarious, because not only does he behave like a female Gothic heroine, but he does this from a position of close homosocial intimacy, being Falkland's secretary, the keeper of books and secrets in the master's 'closet' (cf. Stewart 1995). The ambiguity of both being part of the homosocial order, and subverting it – by transgressing (genre-) normative forms of 'masculine' behaviour like the respect for other men's reputation – explains Falkland's strange attitude towards Caleb: he both shares more and more intimate knowledge with Caleb – "[H]e virtually seduces Caleb into violating his 'privacies.'" (Corber 1990: 92) – and, at the same time, is irritated by Caleb's prying: "You set yourself as a spy upon my actions. […] Do you think you shall watch my privacies with impunity?" (Godwin 2005: 10) Falkland is both desirous of sharing his secret with a fellow male, and unsure of Caleb's position in the world of masculine 'honour.'

Caleb himself is fascinated by his master's secrets, but has difficulties respecting the boundaries that his position asks of him: "I understood that secrecy was one of the things that was expected from me." (Godwin 2005: 10) Mr Collins' account of Falkland's earlier life, however, "tend[s] to inflame [his] curiosity" (Godwin 2005: 11). Caleb starts to spy on his master, and finds "a strange sort of pleasure in it" (Godwin 2005: 112), a pleasure that appears to be close to something like sexual pleasure, "a kind of tingling sensation not altogether unallied to enjoyment" (Godwin 2005: 113).

It becomes obvious in the course of the novel that, just like Falkland's obsession with his reputation and the ensuing hunt of Caleb seem to become a necessity for him, Caleb himself more and more defines himself through Falkland and his secret. Falkland and Caleb become mutually dependent counterparts that both need and destroy each other. Caleb realises that they are drawn to each other, but cannot name the reason: "I found a thousand fresh reasons to admire and love Mr Falkland. […] There was a magnetical sympathy between me and my patron." (Godwin 2005: 112, 117) Caleb keeps repeating his admiration and love for his master, "borrow[ing] from the language of courtship to describe his relations with his patron" (Corber 1990: 92), a love that does not fade despite the fact that Falkland eventually drives him out of society and into near-madness; and Falkland, though he realises

early on that Caleb might be dangerously curious, keeps him in his service: "Mr Falkland would not hastily incline to dismiss me." (Godwin 2005: 119)

Falkland's paranoid 'closet,' it soon becomes clear, is a result of his obsession with 'honour.' Mr Collins, having told Caleb the story of his master's past, names the curse of Falkland's life: "He was too deeply pervaded with the idle and groundless romances of chivalry, ever to forget the situation [of being publicly insulted], humiliating and dishonourable according to his ideas." (Godwin 2005: 101) Falkland – as we find out in the end – indeed commits a murder for honour's sake, creating a secret that, from then on, defines and tortures him, driving him into the 'closet' of his own codes of masculinity, which he is unable and unwilling to alter or compromise. The preservation of his 'honour' increasingly becomes the sole purpose of Falkland's life, and the question arises whether it could be any different, or whether this – albeit self-destructive – obsession is a necessity he could not live without. It is crucial to note that it is not only the 'private,' suppressed secret of the murder that slowly destroys Falkland, but also the 'public' show of a *potential* guilt in form of the trial. While the secret preserves his 'public' honour, but gnaws at him from within, the public blemish of the trial works in a similar way: "It is not in the power of your decision to restore to me my unblemished reputation, to obliterate the disgrace I have suffered." (Godwin 2005: 105) Public opinion is soon convinced of Falkland's innocence and 'honourable' character, but Falkland is driven into eternal paranoia by the possibility of public shame: "Reputation has been the idol, the jewel of my life." (Godwin 2005: 106)

Caleb is willing to go increasingly further in his search of Falkland's secret, penetrating deeper and deeper on two levels: Falkland's mental world (in their conversation) and Falkland's house (Caleb feels tempted to go look for the locked trunk in the secret chamber). The spatiality of the house parallels Falkland's psyche, and Caleb looks for the secret on both the metaphorical and the actual, spatial level.

Caleb, however, not only tries to find out Falkland's secret; he wants Falkland to know that he tries. Having read a letter from Hawkins to Falkland that suggests to Caleb that Hawkins, in all probability, did not commit the murder he was convicted for, Caleb reflects: "I was willing that the way in which it offered itself to his attention should suggest to him the idea that it had possibly passed through my hands." (Godwin 2005: 121) Shortly afterwards, Caleb alludes, in front of Falkland, to people who were falsely convicted of a crime they did not commit. His master's reaction is strangely ambiguous: "He came up to me with a ferocious countenance, as if determined to force me into a confession. A sudden pang however seemed to change his design." (Godwin 2005: 122) The two men have started to play a game of power that has the structure of an 'open secret:' Caleb cannot know for sure that he knows something, but wants Falkland to know that he might.

Falkland, on the other hand, cannot know whether Caleb actually knows what he thinks he might know, and cannot openly react to the allusions.

Falkland is caught between wanting someone to share his secret with, and Caleb's inadequacy for such a task: Both Caleb's social rank and his (from Falkland's point of view) ambiguous masculinity make him an impossible confidant, an "insolent domestic. Do you think I will be an instrument to be played on at your pleasure, till you have extorted all the treasures of my soul?" (Godwin 2005: 124) The double meaning of 'extorted' – 'extract' and 'blackmail' – foregrounds Falkland's paranoid awareness of his own blackmailability.

Falkland fears and depends on Caleb; and, similarly, Caleb, instead of checking himself in the face of danger, seems all the more intrigued and admiring: "Sir, I could die to serve you! I love you more than I can express. I worship you as a being of superior nature." (Godwin 2005: 126) Here, Caleb goes a step too far: he disrespects both the class boundaries that make it impossible for him to become Falkland's intimate confidant, and the unspoken rules of the homosocial 'open secret,' namely that its dynamics of desire remain unnamed and deniable. Caleb can be Falkland's secretary, his servant, and Falkland might live in the unconscious hope of being able to use Caleb as a deposit for his secret; but the secret is too powerful, and class considerations make Caleb not trustworthy enough in Falkland's eyes.

Falkland's ambiguous relationship with his secretary makes it impossible for him to let Caleb go: He wants Caleb to know, cannot let him fully know, and does not know what Caleb knows exactly. Falkland has lost the full power over his secret knowledge, and Caleb is aware of this: "[W]e were each a plague to the other; […] he did not determine to thrust from him for ever so incessant an observer." (Godwin 2005: 128) Caleb is very much aware of the potential power he could achieve by getting closer to his master and his secret.

The novel first reaches a climax when Caleb realises that Falkland must be the murderer. His intimacy with his master has increased to a degree that bodily signs suffice for both to 'know:' "[W]e exchanged a silent look, by which we told volumes. Mr Falkland's complexion turned from red to pale, and from pale to red. I perfectly understood his feelings." (Godwin 2005: 132) Falkland, however, can only be sure that Caleb is sure because Caleb speaks the unspoken, in a garden, a space of heterotopian possibility: "I exclaimed, in a fit of uncontrollable enthusiasm, 'This is the murderer.'" (Godwin 2005: 135) Sure of his knowledge, Caleb is also as certain as never before of his love for Falkland: "I was never so perfectly alive as at that moment. […I]t was possible to love a murderer." (Godwin 2005: 135/136) In this moment of perfect mutual awareness of a shared secret, the bond between the two men is as strong, and as unacknowledgeable, as never before. Falkland overhears him, the secret is out, and the game must change in character.

Falkland's secret is no longer safely concealed, and, accordingly, the metaphorical edifice of his life, and the actual edifice of his home begin to crumble.

The 'Closet' of Honour – The 'Closet' of Society

Falkland's secret is concealed both psychologically, and in an actual space. Godwin introduces Falkland's closet on the first pages as the central locus of the novel's energy, a space that is hidden deeply in the most private parts of his mansion, "separated from the library by a narrow gallery that was lighted by a small window near the roof" (Godwin 2005: 9). One day, Caleb finds his master in the closet where he is facing his dark secret in agony:

"As I [Caleb] opened the door, I heard at the same instant a deep groan, expressive of intolerable anguish. The sound of the door opening seemed to alarm the person within; I heard the lid of a trunk hastily shut, and the noise as of fastening a lock. I conceived that Mr Falkland was there, and was going instantly to retire; but at the same moment a voice, that seemed supernaturally tremendous, exclaimed, 'Who is there?'" (Godwin 2005: 9)

The secret is multiply hidden: in a locked trunk, in the master's closet, in a corridor behind the library. It is kept in the most private and secret space imaginable, serving as a spatial metaphor for the way Falkland tries to lock away the awful secret of his past in the deepest recesses of his own mind, so that no one can ever find it. At the same time, the secret is always on the brink of being exposed, both psychologically and spatially. Caleb finds the secret chamber, and knows of the existence of the trunk. He does not know the secret yet, but he knows *of* it. While he gets more and more intrigued by Falkland's secret psychology, he is simultaneously drawn to finding out about the trunk's secret content. Falkland's own desire to face and acknowledge his past – he seems inclined to confide in Caleb – is mirrored by his actually going into the closet to open the trunk and ponder over what is concealed within. Spatial metaphor and mental mechanism work hand in hand: the secret of the mind and the secret in the closet are inseparable.

Accordingly, when Caleb is finally convinced of Falkland's guilt, and Falkland overhears him in the garden, the ensuing damage to the structures of the 'closet' is inflicted both mentally and spatially: directly after the (half-)encounter between Caleb and Falkland, a fire breaks out in Falkland's house, with "one of the chimneys" (Godwin 2005: 137) being on fire as a fitting phallic symbol of Falkland's threatened masculinity. Falkland fears for the whole of his life, which is built on a

good 'reputation,' just as "[s]ome danger was apprehended for the whole edifice" (Godwin 2005: 137).

Although Caleb insists that his "object had been neither wealth nor the means of indulgence, nor the usurpation of power" (Godwin 2005: 139), acquiring knowledge of Falkland's secret does put Caleb in a position of relative power over his master, if not in a political – no one will believe Caleb because of his low and Falkland's high social standing, and Falkland's "social status empowers him to use the available political and juridical structures to his advantage" (Chatterjee/Horan 2003: 128) – then in an intimately homosocial way, making Falkland even more dependent on him. Falkland can now no longer uphold the precarious 'open-secret' relationship that he has so far had with his secretary. Instead, he chooses to openly share his secret with his servant, creating an even closer bond between them: "You must swear, […y]ou must attest every sacrament, divine and human, never to disclose what I am now to tell you." (Godwin 2005: 141) Once the 'open secret' has been spoken, the only way to fix the breaking homosocial bond is for the two men to become secret sharers in order to preserve masculine 'honour:' "Insulted, disgraced, polluted in the face of hundreds, I [Falkland] was capable of any act of desperation." (Godwin 2005: 141) By making Caleb the confidant of his paranoid 'closet,' he creates a bond between them that makes them more inseparable than two lovers: "To gratify a foolishly inquisitive humour, you have sold yourself. […] I shall always hate you." (Godwin 2005: 142) Yes, but he will also never let Caleb out of his sight or out of his life again.

Sharing Falkland's secret makes Caleb a prisoner in several ways. He voluntarily decides never to disclose Falkland's secret, sharing his mental 'closet:' "I was tormented with a secret of which I must never disburden myself." (Godwin 2005: 144) At the same time, Caleb becomes a prisoner in a more concrete, spatial sense: From being imprisoned in Falkland's house, he goes on to being locked away in an actual prison, the public 'closet' of all of society's unwanted individuals.

In the prison, a dark and filthy place full of "gloomy passages[…,] the doors, the locks, the bolts, the chains, the massy walls and grated windows" (Godwin 2005: 184; 188) make it clear that what is contained in here is not supposed to get out again. Here, society's rules do not apply, the prisoners have no more rights; they are at the mercy of their jailors: "Their tyranny had no other limit than their own caprice." (Godwin 2005: 187) The prisoners are shut away, from the outside and from each other, from any human contact: "Our dungeons were cells, 7½ feet by 6½, below the surface of the ground, damp, without window, light, or air, except from a few holes worked for that purpose in the door." (Godwin 2005: 187) The prison cells share some properties with the closets of mansions like Falkland's, only the purpose is perverted: the prison dehumanises society's criminals and deviant outcasts, and makes them part of a shared knowledge that is suppressed in the

'mind' of their own culture. They are "those whom society has marked out for her abhorrence" (Godwin 2005: 189), and become the unspeakable secret that must be contained and put away, the excrement of a society that cannot tolerate rule-breakers, be it by a breach of the written law of the courts or – more accurately in Caleb's case – by endangering the law of the patriarchal order, knowing too much about the secrets of the powerful.

Whoever tries to break out of the prison is brought back to be shut away further down, further back in this space that so aptly symbolises the workings of the human mind, suppressing unwanted and tabooed knowledge to the most obscure recesses of the mind, never to be discovered. Caleb, after an unsuccessful attempt to escape, is "conducted to a room called the strong room, the door of which opened into the middle cell of the range of dungeons. It was underground, […] the air was putrid; and the walls hung round with damps and mildew." (Godwin 2005: 208) Just as Christopher Marlowe's Edward II, Caleb is locked in a collective cultural 'closet,' only the reasons are different: Edward does not realise that his royal body is only inviolable so long as he respects that this body cannot have a 'private' life in the modern sense of the word. Caleb enters into a homosocial bond of power politics, and realises too late that, being of a lower social rank than Falkland, he can only be his equal on a psychological, but not on a social level. David Collings rightly reads *Caleb Williams*, and especially Godwin's depiction of the legal system, as "a systematic critique of every kind of institution, arguing that people should live under the immediate authority of reason itself" (Collings 2003: 847). What Godwin ultimately criticises – and is fascinated by – is the male-homosocial order with its paranoid mechanisms of policing and suppression, embodied by the police and the law.

The Structure of the Chase

The whole third volume of *Caleb Williams* is dedicated to Caleb's flight from the hands of Falkland after his escape from the prison. From the fairy-tale architecture of the thieves' lair to the modern anonymity of London, the reader follows Caleb to the point of physical and psychological exhaustion. This chase has two astonishing characteristics: firstly, Falkland, while being determined to ruin Caleb's reputation and make him a social outcast wherever he can to destroy his credibility, nevertheless goes out of his way to keep Caleb both from dying, and from leaving England; and, secondly, Caleb, though driven to near-extinction by Falkland, both is determined, almost to the last, never to disclose his former master's secret, and never loses his feelings of admiration – and even love – for Falkland. Both men destroy and are obsessed with each other.

This ambiguously erotic chase is worth analysing in more detail with regards to its homosocial dynamics. The episode of Caleb's short association with the group of thieves is set in a Gothic landscape and architecture that is strongly reminiscent of fairy-tales, featuring a reputedly haunted forest, and "a pile of ruins" that contains, beyond "a winding passage that was perfectly dark" (Godwin 2005: 222), the thieves' secret hideout. Here, we encounter another of Godwin's female characters who will never be a sexual object, but rather, being described as uncannily gender-unspecific, both supports and potentially subverts the male-homosocial community: the witch, or Bluebeard's female helper. The woman, who lives with the thieves, seems to Caleb "extraordinary and loathsome[…,] uncommonly vigorous and muscular," and she has "a voice […] which for body and force might have been the voice of a man, but with a sort of female sharpness and acidity" (Godwin 2005: 222). Mr Raymond, the head of the all-male group of thieves, seems to have a certain amount of authority over the woman. She, however, at least at times, keeps the keys to the house, and it is her presence that keeps unwanted company away from the place that has "the reputation of being haunted" (Godwin 2005: 229). The woman is believed to be a witch, causing supernatural lights, and taking part in "a carnival of devils" (Godwin 2005: 229). Contrary to first appearances, this is not a space of absolute male power. Instead, it is strongly influenced and subverted by the ambiguously female power associated with witchcraft.

The witch-woman is the dominating presence in the house, and the men are left to play their games of power under her observation. Although Caleb claims that "[t]he persons who composed this society had each of them cast off all control from established principle" (Godwin 2005: 226), the thieves actually do copy established structures of homosocial power relations in the military, calling their leader 'captain,' and following certain rules of obedience. Although outcasts themselves, these men still adhere to the same codes of masculine 'honour' that are constitutive of the society that has outlawed them. One of the thieves, Gines, who has earlier attacked the helpless Caleb, is expelled from the group because his behaviour is considered 'dishonourable:' "I [Raymond] vote that Gines be expelled from among us as a disgrace to our society." (Godwin 2005: 225)

Gines is the most fascinating minor character in *Caleb Williams*, because he seems, at first, to be the only man who does not live according to principles of 'honour' and 'reputation' (although, in the end, he will turn out to be just as driven by these codes as the other characters). His attitude is pragmatic, albeit often cruel: he does what is best for himself, his own survival, and that of his peers. He has principles, but they are not 'honourable' at first glance. When asked why he abused Caleb, he simply answers: "He had no money." (Godwin 2005: 224) His actions, however, are not all random: "I was always true to my principles." (Godwin 2005: 225) What distinguishes Gines from the other male characters is that his ideas of

'honour' will never make him turn against himself. His sense of self-esteem lacks the masochistic quality that we see in Falkland and Caleb. These characteristics make Gines the most ruthless of the novel's characters – and the one who is most apt to survive. They also make him an efficient helper of Falkland's in the latter's pursuit of Caleb, since he will act out Falkland's destructive will more ruthlessly than Falkland's own sense of 'honour' would allow him. I will pick up this issue again at a later point.

Caleb, as opposed to Gines, fully engages in the masochistic game of homosocial, secretive bonding. At this point in the story, he is still prepared to keep Falkland's secret, but calls him both his "protector" and "persecutor" (Godwin 2005: 228), aptly summarising his ambivalently close relationship with his former master. He does not want to disclose his knowledge due to "the possibility of its being made use of to the disadvantage" (Godwin 2005: 228) of Falkland. Raymond, aware of the workings of homosocial intimacy, does not find this kind of behaviour suspicious, and respects Caleb's secrecy. He appears to instinctively understand the nature of Caleb's situation, and how vital his secret is for him. Raymond, in fact, correctly guesses Caleb's transgression: He tells the other thieves that Caleb, "because he wished to leave the service of his master, because he had been perhaps a little too inquisitive in his master's concerns, and because, as I suspect, he had been trusted with some important secrets, his master conceived an antipathy against him" (Godwin 2005: 232). What makes Caleb worthy of protection in the eyes of Raymond, in the end, are questions of status: "Shall we, against whom the whole species is in arms, refuse our protection to an individual more exposed to, but still less deserving of their persecution than ourselves?" (Godwin 2005: 233) Their common situation as outcasts creates a bond of loyalty between the thieves and Caleb, and their own codes of 'honour' protect Caleb – for the moment at least – from Falkland: "If fidelity and honour be banished from thieves, where shall we find refuge upon the face of the earth?" (Godwin 2005: 233)

Caleb is eventually driven out of his residence with the thieves by the power of the witch-like woman, "the infernal portress of this solitary mansion" (Godwin 2005: 237), who, in a scene that turns Gothic stock plots upside-down, again puts Caleb in the position of helpless female heroine when he is lying in bed, and suddenly perceives "the execrable hag […] standing over me with a butcher's cleaver" (Godwin 2005: 239). Shortly before, Caleb falsely assumes a male enemy approaching, listening to "*his* constrained yet audible breath" as "*[h]e* came up" (Godwin 2005: 239, emphasis mine), reinforcing the impression of reversed gender roles on the reader. This woman is associated with a feminine power and violence that threatens to subvert the patriarchal order: "Her vigour was truly Amazonian." (Godwin 2005: 240) She almost succeeds in both destroying Caleb physically, and robbing him of his spatial freedom: "'I will sit upon you, and press you to hell! I

will roast you with brimstone, and dash your entrails into your eyes! […] I will be the death of you yet: you shall not be your own man twenty-four hours longer!' With these words she shut the door, and locked it upon me." (Godwin 2005: 240/41) A masculine order, in this house, only ever exists on the brink of its undoing, due both to the precarious stability built on the thieves' 'honour,' and to the presence of a subversive femininity that initially seems to be a 'female helper,' but, in the end, turns out to question traditional modes of gender, and threatens to either shut men in or turn them out.

Caleb eventually manages to escape, only to face animosity wherever he goes. Falkland has managed to make Caleb the object of common fear and disgust. Strikingly, what appals people most about Caleb's alleged depravity is his disrespect for the spatial boundaries of class and law: he is known as "the notorious housebreaker, Kit Williams" (Godwin 2005: 244). A man in the street is astonished "that he should have been so hardened as to break the house of his own master at last, that is too bad" (Godwin 2005: 244). A woman admires Caleb because "he outwitted all the keepers they could set over him, and made his way through stone walls as if they were many cobwebs" (Godwin 2005: 246). Caleb's willingness and ability to transgress society's spatial borders of lawful and 'honourable' conduct makes him uncannily dangerous.

Caleb can only escape from the omnipresent danger of being recognised in public by starting to perform roles, a task at which he considers himself very talented: "From my youth I had possessed a considerable facility in the art of imitation." (Godwin 2005: 246) He starts to change his movements, and adopts an Irish accent. At the same time, however, Caleb regards this sort of performance as inherently unmanly: "Such are the miserable expedients and so great the studied artifice which man, who never deserves the name of manhood but in proportion as he is erect and independent, may find it necessary to employ." (Godwin 2005: 247) To hide behind artifice and performance, in the eyes of Caleb, unmans a man, makes him 'unworthy,' and, clearly, is not 'honourable.' Ironically, masculinity, in *Caleb Williams*, through the characters' obsessive pursuit of 'honour,' is itself exposed as a performance, albeit one that claims to be original and 'real.' Caleb's 'unmanly' performance alludes to the meta-level of the pursuit of an 'honourable' masculinity that most of the male characters in the novel follow, and in which they fail. Trying too hard to be 'men' of a 'good name' and a 'good reputation,' Falkland and Caleb equally drive themselves and each other into madness and extinction.

Men, Godwin demonstrates in *Caleb Williams*, are the fools of 'honour.' This is also true – in more or less vital ways – for minor characters, for example the two men who arrest Caleb on the ship to Ireland. When they realise their mistake (he is not the Irishman they had been looking for), they cannot admit their mistake to themselves: "[T]hey had gone too far for it to be possible they should retract in

consistence with their honour." (Godwin 2005: 251) In this short episode, Godwin summarises his image of men as portrayed in this novel:

"Every man is, in his different mode, susceptible to a sense of honour; and they [the two men] did not choose to encounter the disgrace that would accrue to them if justice had been done. Every man is in some degree influenced by the love of power; and they were willing I should owe any benefit I received, to their sovereign grace and benignity, and not to the mere reason of the case." (Godwin 2005: 254)

Masculinity, this passage suggests, is about having power over others, and being in control of one's own 'honour' and 'reputation.' This is easily applicable to Caleb and Falkland: Falkland needs to be intellectually and spatially in control of his secret knowledge and, in extension, of Caleb. This is what constitutes his masculinity. The same is true for Caleb: his sense of 'honour' depends on his retaining control over Falkland's secret. Without it, he would be powerless, and a 'lesser man.' That is why – almost until the very end – he is unwilling to disclose what he knows.

Having realised that Falkland will not let him flee the country and out of his reach, Caleb decides to try and hide in the liminal anonymity of the city, and goes to London to vanish "amongst the crowds of the metropolis[…,] a place in which, on account of the magnitude of its dimensions, it might well be supposed that an individual could remain hidden and unknown" (Godwin 2005: 259; 271). The modern city, with its dissolution of traditional social bonds, and a tendency of people to withdraw into a new sphere of domestic privacy, provides Caleb with a certain amount of anonymity. London is "an inexhaustible reservoir of concealment to the majority of mankind" (Godwin 2005: 263). Caleb also further perfects his disguise, adopting the appearance of a Jew, escaping the dangerously suspicious existence of an outlaw by pretending to be part of a minority that lives on the borders of spatial and social acceptance, and is therefore not the focus of particular attention. Spatially, Caleb makes his concealment complete by withdrawing to a private apartment in which he "constantly secluded [him]self from the rising to the setting of the sun" (Godwin 2005: 264). Thus multiply hidden, Caleb leads a shadow life in constant fear of discovery: "In every human countenance I feared to find the countenance of an enemy. I shrunk from the vigilance of every human eye." (Godwin 2005: 264) This is the rhetoric of the 'closet.' Caleb's alleged crime makes him a stained being, cast out by society, and forced into a paranoid existence, spatially and mentally imprisoned: "I was shut up, a deserted, solitary wretch in the midst of my species. […] My life was all a lie. I had a counterfeit character to support. I

had counterfeit manners to assume. […L]ike a frightened bird, [I] beat myself in vain against the enclosure of my cage." (Godwin 2005: 265)

It is no coincidence that Godwin has Caleb find a last refuge in writing, at a time when English society was increasingly occupied with questions of individuality and the inner life, with novels being the new literary expression of a private domesticity that was more and more appreciated, especially by the emerging middle classes. Ironically, however, it is Caleb's published writing that finally leads to his being discovered by Gines.

This second personal enemy of Caleb's now turns out to be just as driven by a sense of masculine 'honour' as the novel's other male characters. In contrast to most of the other men, however, who pursue more or less widespread, 'common' notions of 'honour,' Gines reveals these definitions to be arbitrary, following self-fashioned rules of his own that contradict those of the other characters, but are logical enough in themselves. Gines decides to take out his revenge solely on Caleb, because it is his rule never to betray people who have been his accomplices before. However, "though Gines was in this sense of the term a man of strict honour, [Caleb's] case unfortunately did not fall within the laws of honour he acknowledged" (Godwin 2005: 270). Every man, it seems, defines his own notion of 'honour;' the only common ground of these definitions is a rather nebulous sense of chivalric 'manliness' that, once threatened, triggers mechanisms of violence and paranoia. In Gines' case, Caleb's crime is to have 'unmanned' him by turning him into an 'honest man:' he now works as a thief-hunter, an occupation that is nothing like "the liberal and manly profession of a robber" (Godwin 2005: 270).

In Gines, Godwin ridicules the fantastic nature of the 'manliness' his characters try to live up to, an attempt at which they fail precisely because of the arbitrariness and lack of actual semantic content of words like 'honour,' 'reputation,' and 'manly.' Gines, just as Falkland, derives meaning from hunting down the man who has allegedly damaged his 'honour:' "He spared neither pains nor time in the gratification of the passion, which choice had made his ruling one." (Godwin 2005: 271) Gines projects his frustration at his instable 'masculine' identity on Caleb, who becomes his obsession.

Disclosing the Secret

Although Godwin goes to extremes to keep up the unresolved tension between Falkland and Caleb (and Gines), without having Caleb disclose his pursuer's secret, the novel reaches its climax with the final public revelation and ensuing catastrophe; or rather, Caleb has to attempt twice to make justice believe him. Both scenes are telling concerning the dynamics of the bond between the two men.

Having escaped Gines in London by the skin of his teeth, Caleb finally decides to reveal Falkland's secret. He emphasises that this resolution is only the result of his now undeniably unbearable situation: "I had long cherished a reverence for him which not even animosity and subordination could destroy[;…but now] I lost all regard to his intellectual greatness, and all the pity for the agony of his soul. Was it wise in him to drive me into extremity and madness? Had he no fears for his own secret and atrocious offences?" (Godwin 2005: 284)

The answer to the last question is twofold: judging from what we have seen so far of the relationship of the two men, it is safe to say that Falkland can, to a certain extent, be sure that Caleb will keep his secret safe. He knows that Caleb wants to preserve their bond just as much as he does himself. On the other hand, Falkland behaves the way he does because he cannot help it. In his paranoia, he can neither let Caleb out of his sight, nor let him live undisturbed.

When Falkland does confront Caleb privately, his body is the physical display of the destructive dynamics of his paranoia: "His visage was haggard, emaciated, fleshless[…,] being burnt and parched by the eternal fire that burned within him." (Godwin 2005: 290/91) He explicitly reminds Caleb of the necessity of the bond between them. He needs to keep Caleb alive, but, at the same time, keep him from disclosing their shared secret, which would, as Falkland is aware, result in the death of one or both of them:

"'[T]he preservation of your life was the uniform object of my exertions. […] I knew you could not hurt me. […] You have sought to disclose the select and eternal secret of my soul. Because you have done that, I will never forgive you.' […] There was something in the temper of [Falkland's] mind that impressed him with aversion to the idea of violently putting an end to my [Caleb's] existence; at the same time that unfortunately he could never deem himself sufficiently secured against my recrimination so long as I remained alive." (Godwin 2005: 291/92, 315)

What this 'something' is that keeps Falkland from killing Caleb remains unspoken; but this seemingly contradictory attitude towards Caleb again reveals that he is both the basis of Falkland's existence, and its eternal threat. Falkland's only attempt at making their situation more stable – namely forcing Caleb to sign a declaration of Falkland's innocence, a declaration that would safely restrict knowledge of the secret to the pair – fails because of Caleb's own sense of class and 'honour:' he refuses to "sign away [his] own reputation for the better maintaining of [Falkland's]" (Godwin 2005: 293). Caleb's problem, here, is that, on the one hand, keeping his master's secret is the 'honourable' thing to do; at the same time, however, he cannot publicly declare himself a thief and a liar without acting contrary

to his own self-esteem. Leaving aside questions of justice, Caleb's signing this contract would, in fact, potentially stabilise the precarious bond between himself and his former master; and although Falkland threatens to exercise "a power that shall grind [Caleb] into atoms" (Godwin 2005: 294), he actually continues to avoid inflicting any physical harm on Caleb.

The last – and naturally futile – attempt at escape from his destructive homosocial bond with Falkland leads Caleb to the novel's last important female figure: Laura, a young woman he meets and lives with for a while, hiding from Falkland. As all the other female characters preceding her, she exists outside the realm of sexual possibility for Caleb. She is the story's mother figure, the only potential refuge for a man like Caleb, who is so fatally caught up in the workings of the homosocial order. The possibility of a heterosexual bond never suggests itself in *Caleb Williams*. Women are either objects of male-to-male power struggles in triangular structures (Lady Lucretia, Emily), asexual or gender-ambivalent female helpers (the witch-woman), or mothers (Laura). Kenneth W. Graham reads the absence of heterosexual love interest in Godwin's novel solely as the result of the author's dislike of the institution of marriage, and an "antipathy to the sentimental delusions encouraged in the conventional novel" (Graham 1990: 17), ignoring the homosocial dynamics highlighted by this exclusion of women. None of Godwin's women can help Caleb and Falkland in their struggle to find an adequate masculine identity: "This coldness from Laura, my comforter, my friend, my mother! To dismiss, to cast me off for ever, without one thought of compunction!" (Godwin 2005: 308) Some of the women, indeed, seem to deny themselves to the men precisely because they are themselves excluded from male-homosocial power and knowledge. The witch-woman hates Caleb because he is a potentially subversive element in the sphere of domestic female power she has established for herself in an all-male, misogynistic environment; and Laura, in the end, does not cast Caleb off primarily because of his alleged crimes, but because he has not shared his secret knowledge with her: "Is it possible, if you had been honest, that you would not have acquainted me with your story?" (Godwin 2005: 310)

Being thus denied peace once again, Caleb rejects the 'closeted' existence into which Falkland is trying to force him, and determines not to employ any kind of disguise any more, since "life was not worth purchasing at so high a price" (Godwin 2005: 315). This determination, in fact, is of a double nature: by refusing to sign the above-mentioned contract, Caleb rejects making explicit the 'closet' shared with Falkland (based on the 'honourable' assumption that a legally binding promise will keep Caleb from speaking); and by finally refusing disguise and flight, Caleb also opts against living in the 'closet' of social self-denial (a possibility that is equally foreclosed by Falkland's inability to leave Caleb alone).

Caleb realises that he will always remain a prisoner of Falkland's at the hands of Gines, 'closeted' both by his being under constant pressure from without, and his own unwillingness to disclose what he knows. Gines reminds him of this: "You are a prisoner at present, and I believe all your life will remain so. Thanks to the milk-and-water softness of your former master! […] The Squire is determined you shall never pass the reach of his disposal." (Godwin 2005: 323) Realising that the distribution of power in his relationship with Falkland will always remain unequal to his disadvantage, Caleb, once again, decides to risk breaking the bond, and let the secret out of the 'closet,' using it as the only instrument of power he still seems to possess: "Tremble! Tyrants have trembled, surrounded with whole armies of their Janissaries! […] I will unfold a tale! – I will show to the world what thou art; and all the men that live shall confess my truth!" (Godwin 2005: 324/25) At this point, the narrative, having explored every detail of mental and physical concealment and containment, returns to the spatial image that triggered all the events of the story: the trunk containing Falkland's secret, the spatial 'closet' of his life that Caleb, by opening it, has had to share. It is telling that Caleb never actually sees nor learns what the trunk actually contains: "The contents of the fatal trunk, from which all my misfortunes originated, I have never been able to ascertain." (Godwin 2005: 326) The trunk's spatial 'reality' is elusive, invested with guesses, and never revealing all its 'truth.' It is space and metaphor at the same time.

The two endings Godwin wrote for the novel – the original and the published one – both, in their own way, show that Caleb's situation cannot be positively resolved. Determined again to reveal Falkland's secret in front of a magistrate, Caleb is confronted by Falkland, whose "appearance of a corpse" (Godwin 2005: 329) is the physical sign of his paranoid existence. The secret and its protection slowly kill him. From this moment, the two endings diverge.

In the published ending, the moment Caleb sees his former master in this state, he is reminded of the vital importance of their bond to himself, and of the danger he is putting it in:

"Shall I trample on a man thus dreadfully reduced? […] I have reverenced him; he was worthy of reverence: I have loved him; he was endowed with qualities that partook of divine. From the first moment I saw him, I conceived the most ardent admiration. […His] secret was a most painful burthen to me; […] but I would have died a thousand deaths rather than betray it." (Godwin 2005: 330-32)

Caleb realises that, despite his own sufferings, all he has wanted, from the start, is to be close to Falkland, and to keep his secret. This alternative, however, as the reader is aware, was always already foreclosed by Falkland's inevitable paranoia, and Caleb's sense of 'honour' (he would not sign the contract). Caleb realises that

he has broken the bond, and what follows is a last – and almost comical – mutual display of 'manly affection' between Falkland and Caleb: the latter praises Falkland's "affection and kindness" (Godwin 2005: 334), and Falkland is moved to declare "the greatness and elevation of [Caleb's] mind," and is impressed by his "artless and manly story" (Godwin 2005: 335). This 'manly' contest of mutual praise and self-accusation, however, cannot change the fact that the spell is broken: not only is the secret out (Caleb has spoken it once before), but Falkland has given up his position of social power over Caleb, and admits his guilt. The equilibrium of their ambiguous relationship could only exist in the unspoken and eroticised agreement of shared secrecy *and* their social inequality. As David Halperin aptly observes, "[w]ithin the horizons of the male world, […] hierarchy […] is *hot*" (Halperin 2002: 118).

The result of the loss of this equilibrium is disastrous for both characters: Falkland, one can assume, will die due to "the destruction of that for the sake of which alone I consented to exist" (Godwin 2005: 335) (i.e. his 'honour'); and Caleb realises that "it is now that [he is] truly miserable" (Godwin 2005: 336). Neither of the two men can go on living without the other. Falkland loses both his secret sharer and his good reputation; and Caleb loses his source of homosocial identification and power that has given meaning to his life: "I have now no character that I wish to vindicate." (Godwin 2005: 337)

The situation in the alternative, unpublished ending of the novel is similar for Caleb, but crucially different for Falkland. Here, Falkland does not forget his advantages as a social superior, and counters Caleb's accusations, foregrounding his own "uniformly benevolent and honourable life," and drawing attention to Caleb's alleged crimes as "first a thief; then a breaker of prisons; and last a consummate adept in every species of disguise" (Godwin 2005: 341), a subversive element in this homosocial society. Falkland succeeds: by upholding the social distance between himself and Caleb, and, again, using it to his advantage, he manages to finally decide the power struggle between himself and Caleb for himself. Caleb ends up defeated, "incarcerated in an 'apartment' with Jones (Gines) as his 'keeper'" (Godwin 2005: 342n). By finally confining Caleb to a 'closet' in the realm of his power, Falkland has removed the most immediate source of his paranoia. Though not destroying Caleb physically, he – with the help of Gines and another 'female helper' – drives him into a madness that erases all knowledge of the secret from Caleb's memory: "I should like to recollect something – […] but it is all a BLANK!" (Godwin 2005: 345) Caleb now fully realises the terrible power of knowing and speaking, and how, due to the inherently political nature of speaking, choosing not to speak might sometimes seem the more peaceful alternative: "If I could once again be thoroughly myself, I would tell such tales! – Some folks are afraid of that, […] and some folks said I disturbed them – and so, I believe they

have given me something to quiet me. […] It is wisest to be quiet, it seems – […] True happiness lies in being like a stone." (Godwin 2005: 346)

Caleb, in this version, is the female heroine again, albeit one that has failed: the master has his knowledge safely under control, the paranoid structure of his secret has not led to his undoing, and Caleb is reduced to a 'closeted' existence as 'the mad(wo)man in the attic,' the living reminder of the unstable character of masculinity depicted in *Caleb Williams*.

Eve Sedgwick lists *Caleb Williams* as a Gothic novel of the 'Schreber type,' arguing that these novels' paranoid homosocial structure shows that "paranoia is the psychosis that makes graphic the mechanisms of homophobia" (Sedgwick 1985: 91). I have demonstrated, however, that a mere sexualised reading of the novel cannot sufficiently account for its unique structure of masculine crisis that evolves both from the obsessive preoccupation with unliveable concepts of 'honourable' masculinity, and the creation of a paranoid structure that is the result of this obsession. 'Sodomitical' connotations and allusions – especially in the character of Falkland – are part of the novel's depiction of failing masculinities. These 'sexual' undertones, however, have not yet completely fused with the paranoid structure of the secret. I agree with Sedgwick's verdict that "through these novels a tradition of homophobic thematic was a force in the development of the Gothic" (Sedgwick 1985: 92). Homophobia is a theme in *Caleb Williams*, but it has not yet definitely and undeniably entered the 'closet.' Godwin's novel does, however, foreshadow a development that will finally merge the increasingly paranoid self-fashioning of 'masculinity' with the one discourse that becomes the greatest challenge for traditional notions of masculine gender: sexuality. *Caleb Williams* is a novel on the threshold, its male characters being caught in a homosocial world that is driven by paranoia, and that will increasingly have to position itself in a more and more rigorous dichotomy of 'sexual identities.'