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REVIEW OF ANN RADCLIFFE *The Italian*

Anonymous review of Ann Radcliffe *The Italian* in *Critical Review* NS XXIII (1798) 166-9. The external evidence for C's authorship in this case is CL I 318.

DATE. Jun 1798.

It was not difficult to foresee that the *modern romance*, even supported by the skill of the most ingenious of its votaries, would soon experience the fate of every attempt to please by what is unnatural, and by a departure from that observance of real life, which has placed the works of Fielding, Smollett, and some other writers, among the permanent sources of amusement. It might for a time afford an acceptable variety to persons whose reading is confined to works of fiction, and who would, perhaps, be glad to exchange dullness for extravagance; but it was probable that, as its constitution (if we may so speak) was maintained only by the passion of terror, and that excited by trick, and as it was not conversant in incidents and characters of a natural complexion, it would degenerate into repetition, and would disappoint curiosity. So many cries "that the wolf is coming," must at last lose their effect.¹ In reviewing the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, we hazarded an opinion, that, if a better production could appear, it must come only from the pen of Mrs. Radcliffe,² but we were not totally blind to the difficulties which even she would have to encounter, in order to keep up the interest she had created in that work, and in the *Romance of the Forest*; and the present publication confirms our suspicions. The *Mysteries of Udolpho* fell short of the *Romance of the Forest*, by the tedious protraction of events, and by a redundancy of description: the *Italian* falls short of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, by reminding us of the same characters and the same scenes; and, although the descriptive part is less prolix, the author has had recourse to it in various instances, in which it has no natural connexion with the story. There are, however, some scenes that powerfully

¹ An allusion to Aesop's fable of the shepherd-boy who raised so many false alarms that he was not believed when the wolf did appear.

² *Critical Review* NS XI (1794) 361-72. C speaks impersonally for the Review.

seize the imagination, and interest the passions. Among these we prefer the interview between the marchesa and Schedoni in the church, and the discovery made by Schedoni that Ellena was his daughter. On the latter subject, we will gratify our readers with an extract. Schedoni approached Ellena with an intention of murdering her; but,

“as often as he prepared to plunge the poignard in her bosom, a shuddering horror restrained him. Astonished at his own feelings, and indignant at what he termed a dastardly weakness, he found it necessary to argue with himself, and his rapid thoughts said, ‘Do I not feel the necessity of this act! Does not what is dearer to me than existence—does not my consequence depend on the execution of it? Is she not also beloved by the young Vivaldi?—have I already forgotten the church of the Spirito Santo?’ This consideration reanimated him; vengeance nerved his arm, and drawing aside the lawn from her bosom, he once more raised it to strike; when, after gazing for an instant, some new cause of horror seemed to seize all his frame, and he stood for some moments aghast and motionless like a statue. His respiration was short and laborious, chilly drops stood on his forehead, and all his faculties of mind seemed suspended. When he recovered, he stooped to examine again the miniature, which had occasioned this revolution, and which had lain concealed beneath the lawn that he withdrew. The terrible certainty was almost confirmed, and forgetting, in his impatience to know the truth, the imprudence of suddenly discovering himself to Ellena at this hour of the night, and with a dagger at his feet, he called loudly ‘Awake! awake! Say, what is your name? Speak! speak quickly!’

“Ellena, aroused by a man’s voice, started from her mattress, when, perceiving Schedoni, and, by the pale glare of the lamp, his haggard countenance, she shrieked, and sunk back on the pillow. She had not fainted; and believing that he came to murder her, she now exerted herself to plead for mercy. The energy of her feelings enabled her to rise and throw herself at his feet, ‘Be merciful, O father! be merciful!’ said she, in a trembling voice.

‘Father!’ interrupted Schedoni, with earnestness; and then, seeming to restrain himself, he added, with unaffected surprise, ‘Why are you thus terrified?’ for he had lost, in new interests and emotions, all consciousness of evil intention, and of the singularity of his situation. ‘What do you fear?’ he repeated.

‘Have pity, holy father!’ exclaimed Ellena in agony.

‘Why do you not say whose portrait that is?’ demanded he, forgetting that he had not asked the question before.

‘Whose portrait?’ repeated the confessor in a loud voice.

‘Whose portrait!’ said Ellena, with extreme surprise.

‘Ay, how came you by it? Be quick—whose resemblance is it?’

‘Why should you wish to know?’ said Ellena.

‘Answer my question,’ repeated Schedoni, with encreasing sternness.

‘I cannot part with it, holy father,’ replied Ellena, pressing it to her bosom, ‘you do not wish me to part with it!’

‘Is it impossible to make you answer my question?’ said he, in extreme perturbation, and turning away from her, ‘has fear utterly confounded you!’ Then, again stepping towards her, and seizing her wrist, he repeated the demand in a tone of desperation.

‘Alas! he is dead! or I should not now want a protector,’ replied Ellena, shrinking from his grasp, and weeping.

‘You trifle,’ said Schedoni, with a terrible look, ‘I once more demand an answer—whose picture?’—

“Ellena lifted it, gazed upon it for a moment, and then pressing it to her lips said, ‘This was my father.’

‘Your father!’ he repeated in an inward voice, ‘your father!’ and shuddering, turned away.

“Ellena looked at him with surprise. ‘I never knew a father’s care,’ she said, ‘nor till lately did I perceive the want of it.—But now.’—

‘His name?’ interrupted the confessor.

‘But now’ continued Ellena—‘if you are not as a father to me—to whom can I look for protection?’

‘His name?’ repeated Schedoni, with sterner emphasis.

‘It is sacred,’ replied Ellena, ‘for he was unfortunate!’

‘His name?’ demanded the confessor, furiously.

‘I have promised to conceal it, father.’

‘On your life, I charge you tell it; remember, on your life!’

“Ellena trembled, was silent, and with supplicating looks implored him to desist from enquiry, but he urged the question more irresistibly. ‘His name then,’ said she, ‘was Marinella.’

“Schedoni groaned and turned away; but in a few seconds, struggling to command the agitation that shattered his whole frame, he returned to Ellena, and raised her from her knees, on which she had thrown herself to implore mercy.

‘The place of his residence?’ said the monk.

‘It was far from hence,’ she replied; but he demanded an unequivocal answer, and she reluctantly gave one.

“Schedoni turned away as before, groaned heavily, and paced the chamber without speaking; while Ellena, in her turn, enquired the mo-

tive of his questions, and the occasion of his agitation. But he seemed not to notice any thing she said, and, wholly given up to his feelings, was inflexibly silent, while he stalked, with measured steps, along the room, and his face, half hid by his cowl, was bent towards the ground.

“Ellena’s terror began to yield to astonishment, and this emotion increased, when, Schedoni approaching her, she perceived tears swell in his eyes, which were fixt on her’s, and his countenance soften from the wild disorder that had marked it. Still he could not speak. At length he yielded to the fulness of his heart, and Schedoni, the stern Schedoni, wept and sighed! He seated himself on the mattress beside Ellena, took her hand, which she affrighted attempted to withdraw, and when he could command his voice, said, ‘Unhappy child!—behold your more unhappy father!’ As he concluded, his voice was overcome by groans, and he drew the cowl entirely over his face.” Vol. ii. p. 294.

Among those parts of the romance which we disapprove, we may reckon the examination before the court of inquisition: it is so improbable, that we should rather have attributed it to one of Mrs. Radcliffe’s numerous imitators.

But, notwithstanding occasional objections, the Italian may justly be considered as an ingenious performance; and many persons will read it with great pleasure and satisfaction.

REVIEW OF MARY ROBINSON *Hubert de Sevrac*

Anonymous review of Mary Robinson *Hubert de Sevrac* in *Critical Review* NS XXIII (1798) 472. C himself refers to this review in *CL* 1 318.

DATE. Aug 1798.

The character of Mrs. Robinson’s novels being generally known, it is perhaps sufficient to say, that *Hubert de Sevrac* is inferior to her former productions. It is an imitation of Mrs. Radcliffe’s romances, but without any resemblance that may not be attained by a common pen. There are detached parts, however, of which we may speak with approbation; and, during the prevalence of the present taste for romances, the whole may afford amusement to the supporters of circulating libraries. But it may be necessary to apprise novel-writers, in general, that this taste is declining, and that real life and manners will soon assert their claims.

FRANCE AND GERMANY COMPARED

MS Pierpont Morgan Library; wm 1796. This note is written on the back of a system of phonetics in German script (not in C’s hand), and is therefore tentatively dated as belonging to the period of C’s studies in Germany.

DATE. Late 1798?

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16 16/500/31—¹

German Empire—not an Island, & too large to feel its common interests—why not the same of France?—Much to historical events; yet still something is wanting—it was never *conquered*—that is perhaps the reason—

Ubi ad optima emergere non possumus, inter meliora subsistere fas est.—²

¹ The significance of the figures is not known. it is right to remain among the better.” No source traced.

² “When we cannot arrive at the best,