

Michelle Germinario (Fordham University)

'Imagination, thus elevated by wonder and painful curiosity' in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*

In Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, dark spaces serve to entice and develop the imaginations of characters. Radcliffe privileges moments of uncertainty in the novel, because they invite the imagination to complete the idea of reality. The character Vincentio di Vivaldi explores the unknown and in turn has frequent aesthetic experiences. However, a shift occurs towards the end of the novel where the imagination is not favored over reason. In the Inquisition, Vivaldi does not employ his imagination in this undefined space, but rather interacts with the unfamiliar through logic. His logical experience does not provide a moment of sublimity. This change of mind demonstrates how Radcliffe graces Vivaldi with the power of thought and complexity.

In her 1826 essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry," Radcliffe marks the difference between terror and horror in regards to the sublime. In the vein of Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Radcliffe rejects the Enlightenment and privileges the unknowable. Her emphasis on positions of doubt illuminates and heightens the importance of Vivaldi's experiences. His agency in the dark spaces aligns with Immanuel Kant's idea of the subjective perception and affirms Vivaldi's dominance in the novel. The loss of linguistic certainty paves the way for questions of origin and knowledge brought on by Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*.