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The Rediscovered Manuscript in the Gothic Novel.

A Comparison Between *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron*

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Ai miei nonni,

a quelli vicini e a quelli lontani.

Siete sempre con me, in ogni momento di ogni giorno.

"[…] I found it a bundle of little episodes, put together without art,
and of no importance on the whole, with something of nature, and little else in them.
I was a good deal affected with some very trifling passages in it;
and had the name of a Marmontel, or a Richardson, been on the title-page –
'tis odds that I should have wept: But
One is ashamed to be pleased with the works of one knows not whom."

Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*.[1]

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[1] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, Ed. by Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1987), 5.

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Introduction

This dissertation will focus on the comparison of the novel *The Castle of Otranto,* the first example of English Gothic narrative, written by Horace Walpole, and its earliest offspring, *The Old English Baron* by Clara Reeve. Firstly, I will analyze the narrative *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript, one of the most used literary devices, delineating how this narrative strategy legitimizes a fictional work by creating an allegedly credible connection between the text and reality. I will then explore the effect this *topos* has on a text on various levels, from narrative to linguistic, ethical, historical, and literary. I will also study the issue of the fragmentation of the manuscript, caused by the ravages of time or the negligence of its keepers, such as in the case of Henry Mackenzie's novel *The Man of Feeling*, whose original manuscript is incomplete, the first ten chapters missing, as the editor of the story reminds us in a footnote on the very first page: "The Reader will remember, that the Editor is accountable only for the scattered chapters, and fragments of chapters; the curate must answer for the rest."[2]

Modern authors tend to manipulate the text of a rediscovered manuscript to their advantage*,* under the pretence of updating the language of the old text. Indeed, an author may use the alleged fragmentation of an old text to his/her benefit in many ways, such as skipping or replacing the sections of the original manuscript which he/she considered boring or redundant, redirecting the story as his/her liking or to better suit the taste of his/her readers. Some authors used the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript as a way to legitimize their works, to give his/her work some kind of solid reputation to compete with their contemporary fellow- authors such as Samuel Richardson and Tobias Smollett. Furthermore, this *topos* was a strategy of self-defence used by novelists who tried to protect their reputation while experimenting with new genres, as well as when publishing new works they knew would not have been kindly accepted by the contemporary critic and public. In this way, writers were able to hide in plain sight, behind the pretence of not being the real author of that particular novel, but just the editor of the manuscript they had had the luck to discover. *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron* are two examples of the technique of the rediscovered manuscript in Gothic fiction. Before analyzing in detail these two novels, I

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[2]Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, 7.

will give a brief outline of some of the most famous examples of the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript from its origin throughout European literary history.

Secondly, I will outline the origin of the word "gothic" and the many meanings linked to this term, before examining one of the most important issues behind the origin of the Gothic novel, which is how facts and fancy are blended in this literary genre. Subsequently, I will focus on the novels *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron*, analyzing them both in direct comparison, starting with their emblematic prefaces, which precede both the first and second editions to both novels. If in the prefaces to the first edition of both texts we find a practical example of the usage of the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript, the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* is particularly important because it is considered the official manifesto of the Gothic genre, as in the text, Walpole outlined for the first time what would become the key elements of Gothic fiction, elements which would be further developed during the Gothic Revival period in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The final part of this dissertation will focus on the key themes and elements of the Gothic narrative which made their appearance first in Walpole's text and later in the revised version of Reeve's novel. I will then concentrate on how, despite having multiple features in common, the two novels share elements which were developed in completely different and sometimes opposite ways by the two authors, giving their reading public two completely different novels. In analyzing both novels I will highlight some excerpts that are emblematic examples of the most canonical Gothic elements and themes, such as the supernatural element, the role of divine providence, the fight of an honourable hero against an evil villain, the role of the woman as damsel in distress and the haunted castles.

I will conclude my work with a brief outline of the issues discussed, adding some examples of other Gothic elements which may be further analyzed in these two novels.

Chapter 1 – The Rediscovered Manuscript

As noted by Monica Farnetti, no matter how realistic and historically accurate a fictitious story may be, it will always be a pale imitation of the real world that lies just outside its pages. The only thing a text may link itself to will always be another text. This is what happens when one text quotes another: a link is established between the two. Why is this connection important? As mentioned above, a text never replaces reality and is always seen as a copy, a fake. The connection between two texts is, hence, born out of necessity. Trying to validate their own existence, to justify their presence in this world, the main aim of this link is to prove that texts are not just an imperfect imitation of reality, but part of it. Narratives try to persuade the reader they are real, yet when they fail to do so, they at least try to dissimulate their un-authenticity. According to Farnetti, a text written by the hands of men is a mere replica of nature, which is the divine book written by God. Yet, how does a text justify its own existence? How does a text prove to be part of the real world – of *reality*? One of the most used narrative devices employed is the rediscovered manuscript expedient.[3]

Through this technique the authors introduce a clearly fictional work and, usually in the preface, link it to another text, sometimes older and more authentic, and possibly handwritten as opposed to the more modern printed copies. He/she tries to pass their work off as a genuine and valid text written by someone else's hand. In other words, the author lies. He/ She lies about the true nature of their own work. Their role turns into an editor and by doing this their main aim is to simulate some sort of evidence which confirms the alleged authenticity of their work to the reader. However, this attempt to legitimize the fictional world, even if well-intentioned, is full of contradictions and problems that both the author-editor and the reader need to analyze in order to understand what they have in their hands.

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[3]Monica Farnetti, Il *manoscritto ritrovato, Storia letteraria di una finzione* (Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2005), 9-46.

The need to legitimize men's written works emerged in the 4th Century B.C. when Plato questioned the issue of literary and non-literary representation in his work *La Repubblica*, and it was based on the main assumption that every single text written by human hands would always be fictional, a fake copy in comparison with Nature, the holy book of the world.[4]

It is, indeed, on this binary opposition of true/ false, real/fictional, holy/human that the strong desire of men to prove that their works were not just mere copies of reality is based. In order to authenticate themselves, writers have been using many strategies over the centuries. The *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript has been one of the most effective. What does the term "rediscovered manuscript" mean? How does it work? The rediscovered manuscript is a narrative device where the author denies the authorship of his/her work, pretending to be simply an editor who happened to stumble upon a written text by fate or by accident. In this way, writers lie about their text's true origin and give it a more ancient and respectable foundation. A preface, where the book is introduced to the reader for the first time, is usually the moment when authors stage their intentions and their merit, as well as the limits of their responsibility for the subject the reader is about to read.

Much of the preface is, as a matter of fact, usually occupied by a detailed description of how the editor first came in touch with the original manuscript and how, after realizing its potential, he/she made the decision to bring this masterpiece to the public. By means of anonymity, real authors transfer to the fictitious name on the cover the responsibility of its content. Nevertheless, why would they go to such an extent as to conceal the real authorship of their works? There is more than one reason to this. First of all, by using this *topos* it is quite clear they intend to disguise the true origin of their work. They give the text a new but at the same time an old authority that is granted by the status of the manuscript they choose to rely on. All of this is part of the authentication process.

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[4]When I use Nature, with the capital letter, I refer to the manifestation of God's presence through natural phenomena.

By tracing the origin of the text up to an earlier manuscript the aim is to consolidate its credibility, to make the readers believe that the novel they are reading is not a fictional story, but a recollection of true facts and events, of stories that really happened in the past. Yet, despite the novelist's efforts, it is almost always clear to the readers that what they are reading is completely fictional in nature. Although the written word aims at being a true piece of reality, but is aware of the impossibility to achieve it, authors then decide to eclipse themselves and give full responsibility of authorship to a fictional figure, taking only the blame for any possible editorial mistakes that may or may not follow. With the creation of the editor's role we enter a new field full of possibilities and risks, such as the rewriting process. The main task of an editor is to focus on rewriting the original manuscript on which the main story is based.

The first issue to analyze is the narratological aspect: how is the rediscovered manuscript placed within the story and how does its incorporation affect the whole structure of the novel, as well as the interpretation of the entire work. The use of this *topos* connects two different narrative structures: the old rediscovered manuscript and the story based on it. The old manuscript functions as a framework, presented in the preface. Sometimes it is completely abandoned during the development of the story; sometimes it is called into account as the editor decides he/she has some use for it. The overlapping of two narrative levels, which invests the novel in its entirety, highlights the fictionality of the narration together with the phenomenology linked to it. Thus, a story within a story, the meta-discourse, the meta-fiction, the "point of view" issue, all lead to outcomes such as *mise en abyme*.

The *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript is a classic example of meta-fiction since it deals with a story whose main topic is another story, introduced by former in a sort of narrative frame that encompasses the whole novel. In this case, the preface acquires various meanings and values. The most recurring feature is the negation of the rights of authorship, as the author addresses him/herself directly to the reader in order to state the origin of the novel and to deny the authorship of the story. By giving up the authorship of the novel, the now newly appointed editor needs an expedient which may legitimize the story in question.

That is the exact moment in which the rediscovered manuscript is presented to the reader, who is asked to simply have faith in the editor's words and believe its authenticity. An important issue to focus on is the figure of the author who decides to hide behind a fictional mask, a constructed alter ego. He/ she takes on the role of an editor, almost becoming a fictional character him/herself. In the end, the desperate search for authenticity results only in accentuating the fictional dimension of the written work that so intensely the author has tried to mask.

Another issue at stake is the effect this *topos* produces at a communicative- logic level. The fictionality of the written work is strongly denied as the writer attempts to legitimize its status. However, this negation of fictionality is not believable since it actually takes place in a discourse that is by definition fictitious. The statement of non falsity results in reaffirming that a narrative work is indeed fictional. The denial of lying by lying is a well-known and complex linguistic act. The ambiguous linguistic structure, which is generated by the negation of the author's figure in the preface, becomes even more elaborated when the novelist reveals an ironic or parodistic intent, thanks to the reversal of meaning which is provided by a linguistic antiphrastic type of structure. The issue of *truth* is of central importance in both the philosophical and literary perspective.[5] To avoid any misunderstanding, the philosophical subject simply withdraws from this matter, by understanding the *truth* as "a value that answers the uncertainty that phenomenologically marks men's life experience."[6]

On the other hand, the subject of writing is determined to measure up against truth itself, and replace it. Aiming at making people believe that the subject of a fictional work is not fake but *true*, many complex logical- linguistic strategies are used, such as: pretending to be someone else; denying that the author is lying; pretending to deny; etc. Yet, no matter which pattern the author-editor chooses, the final result is not always successful: fiction is always recognized as fake. The only outcome achieved by the non- authors is to deprive their figure of its essential features, leaving a void and, in this way, confirming once again the fictional nature of their own texts.

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[5]When I use the term "truth" I refer to God's word, the *opus divinum*, carrier of the ultimate truth, which is expressed through Nature's manifestations. Everything that is, instead, transmitted by text and consequently written by men is considered fake and profane.
[6]Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), 63.

When analyzing the evident relationship of affinity between the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript and the customs, the clichés, the practices of discourse, of writing, the effects that this *topos* evokes, and to which culture they can be historically traced, we need to take a step back and pause on the concept of quotation and of the practice of rewriting. To make a quotation is when the writer explicitly refers to another written text. The *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript can be considered an integral quotation from a mysterious manuscript out of which, a fictional editor starts to rewrite, using notes and quotes.

The concept of quotation, which is inevitably connected to the concept of intertextuality, mainly aims to disprove the coefficient of "invention" that characterizes a work of fiction, tracing back its origin to the earlier manuscript from which it derives. The quotation itself is used as a physical evidence of such connection. When we quote, the writer is asked to separate the quoted text from its following commentary, to distinguish between primary discourse and meta-discourse, between the story and the framework. In the case of the pseudo-editor this distinction is lost, resulting in the creation of a single body in which the two narrative levels merge and overlap. On the other hand, when we analyze the relationship between this concept and the customs and practices to which it can be historically traced back, it is necessary to focus on the concept of *auctoritas*, tradition, source and memory.

All of them belong to the archaic phase of literature. An example of this is the pre-classical *topos* of the invocation to the muse. The muse was considered a symbol of authority, tradition and memory, a source of truth from which the ancient poets, like Homer and Virgil, directly drew when they wrote. The narrative strategy of the muse's invocation is one of the oldest examples of quotation. It is also the first instance in which we see the poets' attempts to legitimize their work by linking it to an external authority. The muse authority in the pre-classical era was considered indisputably true. Therefore, this need to affirm the authenticity of a work by its author was ritualized in ancient times and carried on, with slight variations, throughout history to the present day.

When we reflect on the literary works that use this particular *topos*, we need to bear in mind that they are also mirrors of the socio-cultural practices to which they historically correspond. By adopting this narrative *topos*, the novelists take into consideration the taste, the mentality, the customs and the ideas of the historical period into which they decide to transport the other manuscript. When an author-editor first starts to work on a rediscovered manuscript-based novel, the first issue he/she will need to deal with is style. The manuscript, not surprisingly, has a need to be updated as it may have some flaws in language and a style. The cause may have a historical reason, as the writing may be old and aged – a characteristic which is often used to highlight the authenticity of the narrative work. Or there may be aesthetic reasons, such as when the writing is marked by conspicuous parts of non- literariness, which is another strategy that helps reaffirm authenticity.

Therefore, a full update on the writing style is offered, which will need to be adapted to the current historical language standards and to the present public's taste, as well as to fit the instance of its publication. It is at this specific level that the author-turned-editor can finally show his/her skills. The editing culminates in the complete rewriting of the language and in the stylistic redefinition of the whole document. The narrative work is thus updated to the present standards and taste. The anonymity granted by the role of editor, in which the author takes refuge, also serves as a shield to protect and hide the writer from the consequences of possible political, moral and religious transgressions that are voiced through his/her words.

On an ethical level, the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript generates pseudo-fake texts, i.e. simulated presentations of authentically false texts which are presented as true. This category borders on, and is often confused with, actual false texts. It is precisely on this border that problems relating to ethics and the practice of falsehood arise. However, the identification of the line separating the two practices above mentioned is of little importance to literary theory critics, especially when two key elements are considered. Firstly, there is a sort of ethical code of fiction which establishes that every author has the right to protect himself/herself by delegating some responsibility to a fictional, sometimes anonymous, figure.

Secondly, the parameters that identify the distinction between the concepts of an author's disguise and an apocryphal text, change from culture to culture. Thus, it is made quite difficult to universally identify these parameters of demarcation. As a consequence, the ethical issue is often ignored and bypassed. As mentioned previously, there has always been a conflict between words and reality. It is, in fact, precisely the ambition of the written word to replace real things with itself that is at the base of this narrative *topos*. Nevertheless, the frantic search for authenticity results in "the weakening of the authenticity of experience."[7]

An analogical relationship is established between the divine book of Nature, as a source of truth, and the *opuscola*, written by human beings, who are by definition excluded from the reality of the world, since they are created by men and not by God. Thanks to this analogical bond between world and text, we understand that a text is a symbol of the world, which means that the world has its own readability. Every vision of the world is, hence, an interpretation, a reading, an identification of meaning, the world itself being a text. Thus, due to the affinity between the *topos* and the place, discourse and space, the readability of one can be metaphor-logically converted into the readability of the other, and vice versa. The identification between the world and the text was particularly strengthened in the early Middle Ages. Nature and the cosmos were the great divine Book offered by God to human beings, to be read and interpreted. The World is a text with hidden meanings, made up of codes that conceal truth.[8] Nature, hence, is a book in which the truth is encrypted and revealed only to a few. This is also the basic principle of the original definition of hermeneutics, a discipline which is in charge of "showing what is hidden in what is proclaimed."[9] It is precisely this theme of a world-within-a-book that the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript never fails to evoke.

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[7] Hans Blumenberg, *Legibility of World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), ii.

[8] When I use the term "Word" I refer to everything that surrounds human beings that was created by the hand of God.

[9] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 10.

So far we have dealt with the inner process of this particular *topos*. We may now ask: when did this narrative expedient historically begin to develop? In which specific literary contexts is it more easily found? The first evidence seems to date back to the 1st century A.D. with the text The *Incredible Wonders Beyond Thule* by Antonius Diogenes. Later, in the Middle Ages, at the time of the chivalrous novel, Chrétien de Troyes and Mary from France were two of the major supporters in the spreading and fortune of this narrative device. The Renaissance was considered the golden era of this literary *topos* as authors based many of their works on the previously mentioned chivalrous novels. Among the authors was Turpinio. The narrative, by definition "the art of lying pleasantly," was undoubtedly the preferred vehicle chosen by this *topos*.[10] Over the centuries, there were also contributions by other literary genres, such as drama and poetry, but the prose was always the preferred partner of this specific *topos*. Every literary genre is a representation neither of the truth, nor of reality, but of something else: of an "idea."[11]

An idea is already in itself an imitation of reality and, for this reason, Art cannot, in turn, imitate it. It is the prose that confirms itself as the guide-genre of this binary opposition of reality/fiction. Some of the main representatives of the rediscovered manuscript *topos* are Cervantes, Richardson, Goethe, Rousseau, Manzoni and Foscolo. Thanks to them, new literary genres arose such as the epistolary novel, memories, diaries and the autobiographical novel. The eighteenth century – the golden period of the novel– consecrated the ultimate fortune of the *topos* of the manuscript, in particular thanks to the flourishing culture of fake texts, among which one major example was the Ossian Case.[12]

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[10]Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Trattato sull'origine dei romanzi*, trans. R. Campagnoli and Y. Hersant (Torino: Einaudi, 1977), ii.

[11]Plato, *The Republic,* trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Classics, 2017).

[12] When I use the term culture of fake, I refer to a popular trend in which dubious works were attributed to famous authors thanks to some similarity between the copies and the original texts. During this trend con-artists and counterfeiters forged many texts trying to duplicate the style of famous authors.

Afterwards, it is thanks to Sterne that the specific parameters of arbitrariness, deception and falsehood of this fictional structure, and how to properly use them are defined. It is closely followed by the fashion of the historical novel typical of Sir Walter Scott and the Italian Alessandro Manzoni, a type of personal and private story that came to replace the objective historiography which had prevailed in literature until then. When an author writes about a story, the first thing that he/she does is to ask readers to suspend their disbelief about the improbability of such events and to accept that the story they are about to read is actually something that has happened in real life.

The reader makes a conscious choice to suspend disbelief. However, with the arrival of the Avant-garde and the Nouveau Roman culture, the meta- novel, the hyper-novel, rewriting as a genre and "fiction" as a literary hyper-genre, the reader's choice is not voluntary and conscious anymore. With this new kind of literature, the reader is led to a state of unconditional suspension of disbelief, something that nowadays is completely taken for granted. Now the reader can no longer ignore that literature is fiction and not real life. The problem of truth is no longer raised and there cannot be any relationship between the written word and the world, just as it had been from the beginning.

Chapter 1.1 – The Rediscovered Manuscript through History

Nell'atto però di chiudere lo scartafaccio, per riporlo, mi sapeva male che una storia così bella dovesse rimanersi tuttavia sconosciuta; perché, in quanto storia, può essere che al lettore ne paia altrimenti, ma a me era parsa bella, come dico; molto bella. 'Perché non si potrebbe, pensai, prender la serie de' fatti da questo manoscritto, e rifarne la dicitura?'
Non essendosi presentato alcuna obiezione ragionevole, il partito fu subito abbracciato. Ed ecco l'origine del presente libro, esposta con un'ingenuità pari all'importanza del libro medesimo.[13]

But just as I was closing the papers up to put them away, it began to grieve me that such a good story should remain unknown forever – for I really believe, whatever the reader may think about it, that it is a good story; an excellent one, in fact.
"Why not take the sequence of facts contained in this manuscript", I thought, "and merely alter the language?"
There were no logical objections to this idea, and I decided to follow it. And that is the origin of this present work, explained with a simplicity to match the importance of the book itself.[14]

With these words, the Italian writer Alessandro Manzoni reveals to his readers where the true origin of his masterpiece, *I Promessi Sposi* (1825), lies. The events described in this pile of papers that come into the author's possession almost by chance, are so peculiar and unique to leave even an experienced author as Manzoni astounded and spellbound. The decision to bring the text to the public was easy and made on the spot.

The text that we actually know as *I Promessi Sposi* is not the first version of the story written by Manzoni. In the span of almost twenty years between the first and last edition, the text underwent several revisions before reaching its final edition. The first draft which dates back to 1821-23, was published with the title of *Fermo e Lucia* (1823), but was almost immediately withdrawn from the market. After being intensely revised by the author between 1823-27, a second version of the novel was published in 1827 with the title of *I Sposi Promessi*.

There are many significant differences between the first and the second edition. In the first version the text presented strong fictional/novelistic features and the plot was

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[13]Alessandro Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*, ed. Francesco De Cristofaro (Milan: Bur Rizzoli, 2014), 83.
[14] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed,* trans. Bruce Penman (London: Penguin, 1983), 21.

composed of a structure made by single isolated episodes juxtaposed one to each other, almost as separate blocks without any links between them. In the first edition the language was strongly influenced by French and by pre-existing literary models, as the presence of many French words in the sentences prove. Manzoni initially chose the Lombard dialect as the official language of his novel, since he was originally from Milan. In 1824 Manzoni started a first revision of the text which ended three years later, in 1827. In the second edition, the narrative structure underwent some considerable improvement, becoming more fluid and cohesive. The author eliminated whole chapters which were so long to be considered almost like a separate story within the main frame of the novel, such as the story of the Nun of Monza which in the later version was told in just a few chapters. The linguistic register was also modified, switching from the Lombard to the Tuscan dialect. As for contents, a more realistic tone prevailed in the second edition than the fictional one used in the first edition. This change involved a closer attention to aspects of everyday life and a deepening of the psychological traits of the characters of the novel. The names of most of the main characters also changed, with the only exception of Don Rodrigo.

Manzoni, however, still did not seem satisfied with the final result of this first review. As a result, he spent the following thirteen years continually reviewing his work. The author had long been interested in the question of language in Italy, which had been discussed since the 13th century. Indeed, Italians were politically divided into many kingdoms and states, but still felt united by their culture. In the nineteenth century, the need for a national literary language that everyone could understand arose. It was in these circumstances that Manzoni concluded his third revision of the novel. He wanted his work to be nationally recognized and to become a national heritage. That is why he decided to change the linguistic structure of the novel again, writing it in the Tuscan dialect spoken by the Florentine educated classes. In 1840 it was published the third and final edition of the novel with the title of *I Promessi Sposi*.

However, Manzoni explained in the preface to the reader that, before trusting this unknown manuscript, he had decided to verify the authenticity of the events narrated. He started, in this way, to question other witnesses and to rummage in the memories of that period, to unfold the truth. Such investigation dispelled all his doubts: he found confirmation of most of the events in the echo of the last century journals and in the stories of the people who lived in those years. Moreover, some important personalities of the period were included in the long list of characters in this story. Despite that, even

if the reader felt momentarily reassured by the confirmation of the authenticity of the story due to the editor's research, the manuscript in itself, as well as the identity of its "true" author, remained a mystery, whose charm surrounded the manuscript as an impenetrable aura. It might seem an unconventional and unusual arrangement for the literature of such a historical period; on the contrary, Manzoni could not have used a more conventional narrative device. The rediscovered manuscript device remained firmly operative for over two hundred years, lying among the pages of the long narratives, that later will be identified as the novels. This *topos* survives the wear and tear of time and fashions, reappearing just when it seems to have disappeared forever, stronger than before.

In Manzoni's text, like in some of the novelists' we are going to analyze, there are aspects which tend to recur, such as: the role of fate; the manuscript discovery and rescue from a situation that would not have allowed it to survive, much less to be widespread to the public; the mysterious and often sinister nature of the stories; the foreign origin of the manuscript and the consequential necessity of translating it. These are the main characteristics that can be marked as the universal features of the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript. We will find them in almost all the novels that use this narrative device, as we are going to see in the following pages.

Chapter 1.2 – The archetype of the *topos*: *The Wonders Beyond Thule*

The first "rediscovered-manuscript-based narrative" in literature that records the most ancient example of this narrative *topos* is *The Wonders Beyond Thule* (Τὰὑπὲρ Θούληνἄπιστα – Apistahuper Thoulen) written by Antonius Diogenes, which dates back to the 1st Century. *The Wonders Beyond Thule* is a narrative prose composed by twenty-four books, of which we unfortunately have only very few volumes left. The only current knowledge we have of this lost work is thanks to Photios (9thC.), who left a brief but detailed summary of the contents of the whole opera in his lengthy volume *Myriobiblos*, a collection of summaries about what was worth reading at the time. Photios was convinced that Antonius Diogenes was the first novelist in history, and defined him as "the father of fictional stories of his time."[15]

Indeed, Diogenes helped to lay the foundations of prose fiction in which incredible and often supernatural events, mixed with real travel accounts, are narrated. The events in this narrative follow the adventures of Dinia, a man that during his travels witnesses numerous and bizarre events, of which he describes the most unusual peculiarities. These stories are told, sometimes by the protagonist and sometimes by other characters, whom the protagonist befriends during his travels. Diogenes accurately describes the oral lines of transmission through which the protagonist learns about some of these amazing stories, as well as the written ones. It is precisely here that the motif of the rediscovered manuscript appears for the first time in Western prose fiction.

The Wonders of Thule aims to hold together an entire universe, a world made up of countless facets and fragments, all reported as parts of an infinite exploration of the surrounding world. Thus, the story of the rediscovered manuscript is not something unimportant, but it is a tool used to show a piece of reality, evoking it and even trying to embody it in a physical object, as if the concreteness of the cypress tablets where Dinia's story was engraved, in some way, could confirm the authenticity of the magical element within them.

Indeed, the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript seems to have imposed itself as a narrative device capable of highlighting the materiality of the texts, of their being

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[15]Photios, *Biblioteca,* ed. N. Wilson (Milano: Adelphi, 1992), 271-80.

charismatic and authoritative objects, but at the same time, vulnerable and subjected to the physical reality.

Chapter 1.3 – From the Medieval Period to *Don Quixote*

As noted by Richard Maxwell, after Diogenes, the rediscovered manuscript device was largely used in the following years but the period in which its presence is stronger is the Middle Ages.[16] Indeed, the medieval chivalric prose often used the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript, developing and often reinventing aspects typically of a past era. Antonius Diogenes had always been uncertain whether to tell his story orally or write it down, opting in the end for the latter, decreeing the writing word a more reliable means of communication. However, many writers in the 12th century did not always reject orality as a vehicle of transmission of their works. For example, Mary of France often preferred to rely on Breton oral tales for a source of her writings, rather than on the better known written texts of her period. The use of oral sources was a choice that authors often made more as a matter of principle rather than of other specific literary reasons. In particular, they wanted to exploit the naturalness typical of the oral culture and give their writing a more authentic status.

The medieval versions of the rediscovered manuscript retained a certain degree of continuity with their models from the classical era. Indeed, the aim of Geoffrey of Monmouth, author of *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136), and Joanot Martorell, author of the *Tirant lo Blanch* (1490) was to claim the authenticity of their writings by delineating an impressive transmission line. However, in the following years, the symbolic scope seems to have drastically changed. The claim of the discovery of a manuscript started to become feebler, swaying between the mere declaration of fact, that is, the admission of having taken inspiration from an old text, and being a pure ritual practice.

The rediscovered manuscript underwent a surprising revival in the form of parody in the 16th century and at the beginning of the 17th century. Although excellent examples of the rebirth of this *topos* can be found in the works of Rabelais, Ariosto and Boiardo, it is with Miguel Cervantes in the first chapters of the narrative *Don Quixote* of La Mancia (1605/1615) that it reached the maximum expression of its parodic from. Cervantes was a great admirer of his ancient predecessors. In his works there are the same detailed descriptions that had characterized the work of Diogenes, as well as the exploitation of the motif on the uncertainty about the legitimate authorship of the text.

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[16]Richard Maxwell, "Manoscritti ritrovati, strane storie, meta romanzi," in Il romanzo, temi, luoghi, eroi, Vol. IV, ed. by Franco Moretti (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), 237-262.

At the beginning of the second volume, Cervantes attributes the original manuscript of the *Don Quixote* to a mysterious Moor, the catholic Cide Hamete Benengali, stating he is instead a mere editor. Thus, Cervantes suggested a new transformation of the way of conceiving the nature of communication.

The central element involving the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript introduced by Cervantes is understanding writing as something completely distinct from printed texts. Up to that moment, a manuscript referred to a handwritten text, often modified albeit marginally by each author-editor who wrote a copy. In *Don Quixote,* this idea of the manuscript was put in contrast with a new type of manuscript, the printed text. The manuscript, therefore, went from being a set of various unique copies based on the same narrative core, to a number of copies of the same text, almost identical to each other, produced by machines. Such distinction has ambiguous consequences: it can declassify the manuscript, making it the mere prelude to a printed product or it can transform this unique and mysterious text in a version whose uniqueness is yet diminished by its printed reproduction. *Don Quixote*'s text presents the reader with both possibilities: it is both a unique piece of work and a printed copy. As part of the older manuscript category, *Don Quixote* held an intrinsic authority that the more recent, practical and ordinary version did not have.

However, it does not mean that a printed text did not have any kind of integrity. A printed text needs to be preceded by a *Tasa* (a value to the manuscript papers, used to calculate the final price of the novel), by a *Testimonio de las erratas* (check that there have not been any changes between the printed version and the original manuscript, by comparing them) and by a *Privilegio Real* (the authorization from the Monarchy to print), to be published legitimately. Thanks to these formal authorizations granted by social institutions, texts such as *Don Quixote* are able to achieve a new type of authority which belongs to specifically modern texts. All these elements function as confirmation of the validity and originality of the printed copy of a narrative.

> "Try that bone on another dog, […] for by God I am no fool. It is a good joke for your worship to try and persuade me that everything these good books say is nonsense and lies, and they are printed by the license of the Lords of the Royal Council, as if they were people who would allow such a lot of lies to be printed all together, and so many battles and enchantments that they take away one's senses."[17]

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[17] Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. John Ormsby (1829-1895), Ch. XXXII vol.1, 355. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/996/996-h/996-h.htm , Accessed October 30, 2019.

In the prologue of the first part of the story (1605), Cervantes ponders about the advantages and disadvantages of recognizing the authorship of a literary work:

> Sometimes when a father has an ugly, loutish son, the love he bears him so blindfolds his eyes that he does not see his defects, or, rather, takes them for gifts and charms of mind and body, and talks of them to his friends as wit and grace. I, however – for though I pass for the father, I am but the stepfather to 'Don Quixote'— have no desire to go with the current of custom, or to implore thee, dearest reader, almost with tears in my eyes, as others do, to pardon or excuse the defects thou wilt perceive in this child of mine.[18]

A novel is the child of an author's mind, and like many fathers, they are so blinded by the affection they feel for their creatures that they don't see their weak points. Cervantes admits here that this is not his case, since he is more of a stepfather to *Don Quixote*. By being told the writer is not the legitimate author of the text, the reader begins to distrust the authenticity of the manuscript. Cervantes' further decision to present this work as simply as possible, i.e., without any explicit references to other authoritative sources, annotations, footnotes, verses and dedications, also increases the reader's distrust.[19] The reason for this choice is, by the author's own admission, the fear that his narrative may be misunderstood, and interpreted as a simple work of entertainment rather than as an educational text. Yet all these narrative choices undermine the work's legitimacy and authority in the reader's eyes.

At this point of the prologue, a friend of Cervantes arrives and starts to show him how to falsify the authority of a literary work by listing various narrative techniques usually used by authors to give some kind of legitimacy to their texts. In this list, however, the author carefully avoids mentioning the most famous of the conventional expedients used to give dignity and moral value to entertainment works, that is, the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript. The friend makes no mention of how authors in the past claimed they had discovered precious manuscripts and how they gave them only a good polish and refining before publishing them. No mention was made, at least not explicitly, of the fact that *Don Quixote* was based on a rediscovered manuscript as well. At least not until the readers reach the end of the first part of the story, when the

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[18]Cervantes, *Don Quixote,* 57.
[19]Cervantes, *Don Quixote,* 57.

narrative suddenly stops and, to be able to continue his story, Cervantes is forced to admit that his is only a translation of a text originally written by someone else.

Normally, in medieval or Renaissance chivalrous narratives, the sources were mentioned before the actual beginning of the story, in a prologue or in the first chapters. Cervantes, however, eludes the issue of the origin of his work throughout most of the first part of the story, deciding to analyze it in details in the second volume of the story. Picking up the narrative thread in this particular way, the author admits that his novel exists simultaneously both in the form of a pile of handwritten papers (the original version) and in the form of a printed book (the version the authors is proposing to the reader). Thus, one text depends on the other for its survival and vice versa. The recovery of the Benengali manuscript guarantees the continuation of the printed text, spicing up its reputation, just as Cervantes' printed narrative gives a new life to the original story of Cide Hamete. The continuous and sometimes redundant references to the original text in the second part of the work save Benengali's manuscript from the danger of being considered superfluous thanks to the appearance of a new printed version. The single-vulnerable handwritten text and the standardized printed version, thus, end up defining and complementing each other.

Don Quixote's narrative highlights both how the material dimension of the handwritten text is governed by chance (lost and then rediscovered) and provides a new form of modern immortality which is guaranteed by large-scale reproduction. The paths opened by Cervantes's masterpiece were so innovative and modern that very few eighteenth-century manuscripts that followed in his footsteps were able to replicate such a masterful skill set. One of the main reasons was that, in the following years, the political-philosophical framework that influenced the authors changed drastically. Descartes asserted that one should never passively believe everything that is found in books, since the knowledge that came from reading is based neither on sensory stimuli nor on reason, but only on the authors' authority, in other words, on the trust that the public is willing to accord them. The French philosopher recommended to get rid of any preconceived belief and to base our understanding of the world only on our own personal intuitions and observations.

Once again, the manuscripts become the embodiment of tradition, the corpus of the knowledge passed down from one generation to another, and its corruptibility. In a world that was started to be influenced by Cartesian philosophy and the search for order and rationality, claiming the discovery of a manuscript might now put the author at risk

of being accused of making pathetic literary choices. Yet, it was precisely in the century of Descartes that the theme of the rediscovered manuscript, instead of disappearing, would become a fundamental expedient in the fiction genre.

Chapter 1.4 –The century of the manuscript

According to Maxwell, the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript recurs in almost all the main genres of the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century novel. This motif was considered a supporting and universal structure of writing, imposing a sort of forced suspension of disbelief on those defiant readers who still belittled the value of fiction and the merits of imagination. Promoting the diffusion of the rediscovered manuscripts was not so much the novelty of the format, which was by then a fairly well-known narrative form, but made it clear that novels opened new narrative possibilities that other types of writing forms were unable to pursue.

Starting a text in prose with the story of its own discovery and publication may appear as a way to induce the reader to believe its validity; yet, this trust in the authenticity of a story, instead of remaining constant, swings up and down throughout the reading of the narrative. The result is a double structure, typical of texts in which the *topos* is used. On one hand we are asked to imagine a pile of dusty and battered papers, almost illegible, and sometimes even with large gaps. These papers are the preliminary form of an unfinished work of which the author tells us the story to motivate his/her decision to publish it.

On the other hand, we are asked to enjoy the complete transformation of those papers into a "modern" novel made by an editor, who is usually presented as someone modest and unpretentious. Indeed, it is this detached, almost mechanical intervention, where the editor shows how the manuscript story becomes the actual novel which turns out to be one of the most important features of eighteenth-century novels. This step is, indeed, the link between the original document and its new public version, which creates a space where it is possible to see a balanced overview of the whole story.

Therefore, the goal of narratives, such as *The Adventures of Signor Gaudentio di Lucca* (1737) by Simon Berington, *Sethos, Taken from Private Memoirs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1731) by Jean Terrasson, and *History of Mr. Cleveland, Natural Son of Cromwell* (1793) by Antoine Prévost was to develop a prosaic reality based on a new balanced knowledge whereby one approach (scientific, social, humanistic) would not take precedence over others, thus being different from the self-reflexive structures favoured by Cervantes, during the previous century.

Chapter 1.5 – The rediscovered manuscript in the England of the eighteenth-century

After a period of great popularity, the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript seemed to have run its course and been put aside. However, in the second half of the 18th century, the discovery of lost texts or stories relegated to dusty papers saw a new wave of popularity, albeit in a more limited range of genres than the previous century. The revival of the parody had the unexpected effect of allowing novelists to rediscover the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript, which was a narrative device still full of many narrative possibilities. In the second half of the 18th century, Henry Mackenzie was one of the English writers who masterfully used the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript. He followed the sentimental narrative genre inaugurated by *History of Mr. Cleveland*.

His main works *The Man of Feeling* (1771), *The Man of the World* (1773) and *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), all open with explicit tributes to chapter IX of *Don Quixote,* when the reader finally learns that Cervantes' story was based on a rediscovered text. This chapter shows that the charm of the manuscript lies in the easy way in which it can be lost or forgotten during the many events that happen in everyday life, without anyone paying attention to it until the arrival of a novelist who will finally take notice. For Mackenzie, reading a novel included an ethical component of "sympathy," and the narrative pathos in his stories results even higher thanks to the texts discovered by his narrators. This mysterious and abandoned manuscript, indeed, gives its best when the pages are in a fragmented and poorly organized state, as if the gaps of the text, the missing information, and the lost details were an indirect representation of the author's complex state of mind and the intensity of human feeling that ended up confined to those pages.

After 1750, however, the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript tended to ally itself with other literary genres, especially with Gothic and historical novels. With Horace Walpole, James Hogg and Walter Scott there was a return of three familiar themes: the irrational but compelling call of chivalric adventures, the problematic nature of literary originality and the peculiar interdependence between writing and the print. The discovery of a manuscript has always evoked the concept of time: when a manuscript comes to light, time is as if congealed, it becomes something almost tangible through which the writer and the reader can go back in time and space. Within this frozen time, personal and collective memory can be represented with great vividness and humour.

An example of this "time freezing" is Walpole's novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, believed to be the first Gothic novel of its kind, since the preface of its second edition is considered the official manifesto of the whole Gothic genre.[20] Walpole started the very first pages of his novel by informing the readers of the origin of his work:

> The following work was found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England. It was printed in Naples, in black letters, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. […] The style is the purest Italian. If the story was written near the time when it is supposed to have happened, it must have been between 1095, the era of the crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not so long afterwards.[21]

Following the huge success of the first edition, Walpole, admitted that he was the real author of this novel only in the preface of the second edition, declaring that he had succeeded in deceiving almost all of his early readers. The Gothic font which the author talks about refers to a written font typical of the 12th and 13th centuries which inspired the first examples of printing; in its original form then *The Castle of Otranto* looked like a printed book that, however, seemed to have been handwritten. Outdoing even Cervantes, Walpole suggested that his text was composed of four different layers: a manuscript (not directly quoted but implicit), a printed book that mimicked the handwritten form, a second printed book (the one in the hands of the reader) translated from the Italian, and printed in "the black letter" in the year 1529 and, finally, and a third printed book that did not derive from one of those sources, but from Walpole's own image of the manuscript.[22]

Conceiving a book that has so many references has already something Gothic and eerie in itself. If Cervantes focused on ambiguity, playing with his audience on whether or not he wrote *Don Quixote*, Walpole, instead, challenged his own readers in a complex quest to discover the true origin of his story, by forcing them into the superstitious and feudal culture of his novel. Walpole's mastery lied in knowing how to mix the categories of allegorical and literal genres, fancy and facts, so thoroughly that the reader ends up questioning the very nature of sensory experience and material objects in *Otranto*. No matter how ironic Walpole is and how mild its horrors

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[21] Walpole, "Preface to the First Edition" in *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. by Michael Gamer (London: Penguin, 2001), 5.

[22] As Gamer explained "black letter" refers to a Gothic typeface used by early printers in 1600, distinct from the Roman font, which prevailed afterwards.

(especially when compared to those that would have come later, for example in *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis), *The Castle of Otranto* preserves intact all its original strength which has its roots in the mystery and in the unknown. Walpole's writing strategy was reinvigorated by the birth of literary history and the rediscovery of the medieval and renaissance novel.

When Robert Southey wrote the Introduction to his translation of *Palmerin of England* (a novel originally written in 1533, and mentioned by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*), he took for granted that the late medieval stories of rediscovered manuscripts were mere expedients to claim the originality of the work. Presenting literary authorship as a game of mirrors, admitting the idea that translations may mysteriously precede originals, and imagining a feverish circulation of books in an ancient pan-European kingdom, Southey mixed a core of reality with the literary balancing acts of his time. It is difficult here to establish where the author's imagination ends and where true history begins. During the 19th century, a multitude of Gothic and historical fiction pushed the possibilities foreshadowed by Walpole to their extreme consequences.

Some of the best-known novels which followed in Walpole's footsteps are: *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* (1805-1813) by Jan Potocki, *Northanger Abbey* (1818) by Jane Austen, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) by Charles Maturin, and *The Three Musketeers* (1844) by Alexandre Dumas. One of the most striking examples of the overcoming of the above-mentioned limits was the novel written by the Scottish writer James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). The "Justified Sinner" mentioned in the title is Robert Wringhim, a psychopath of the 18th century convinced that he is a Chosen One and therefore not guilty of any sin. Under this conviction, and Satan's influence, he kills his own brother, before committing suicide. But before he ends his life, while working in a printer's shop, he tries to compose an autobiographical manuscript and to print it. When Satan himself appears in the shop, the distraught printer sets fire to all the copies of the confessions, except the one that its author manages to save. Fleeing from the angry crowd Wringhim manages to escape taking the only printed copy of the manuscript, which would then be buried with him. This unique copy of the Confessions will be rediscovered after a few years of intense search by the publisher of the novel, buried together with Wringhim's oddly well-preserved corpse.

Hogg added some aspects of the works of Cervantes and Walpole to his atypical style, pushing them to their extreme consequences. The author's determination to leave

both the hero and the reader suspended between the allegorical and the literal emphasizes not only Wringhim's state of mind, but also the contradictory nature of the nearly destroyed alleged manuscript on which the narrator claims to have based his novel. This novel is, indeed, such a hybrid that it is impossible to attempt any bibliographic classification. *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* seems to be an unpublishable work by definition. There is no reader of this novel who has not wondered why its form is so exasperating.

On this particular subject it is worth noting that Hogg had been fully involved in both oral-collective and printed- centered culture. It is an ambiguous position, which Hogg often managed to exploit to his own advantage, but which also never made him forget the risks involved in the mediation between oral culture, where the form of words is an irrelevant detail, and the written one, where it is instead always a decisive element. Thus, Hogg became a kind of treasure hunter, who would steal treasures from one world and transfer them into another. Therefore, the discovery of a manuscript in a tomb was a sort of "literal allegory" of Hogg's vocation of wanting to set the oral sources on paper, effectively killing their oral status, but at the same time giving them a new life.

Another Scottish author of this period (and Hogg's mentor) was Sir Walter Scott, considered the true initiator of the historical novel, of a narrative work in which history and invention are combined together. Scott managed to skillfully match the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript with the historical novel. Indeed, at the time of *Waverly* (1814) the rediscovered manuscript was already a recurring feature of the historical novel. But, despite the explicit debt to *Don Quixote*, the beginning of *Waverly* escapes the manuscript convention, and it is only in an *Afterword* that Scott confesses that "indeed, so little was I satisfied with my production, that I laid it aside in an unfinished state, and only found it again by mere accident among other waste papers in an old cabinet."[23]

The story is then further enriched with an introduction written some time later, where the picturesque details of the rediscovering appeared. According to this preface, the author had found *Waverly* by chance while looking receiving a visit by a friend:

> I happened to want some fishing-tackle for the use of a guest, when it occurred to me to search the old writing-desk already mentioned, in which I used to keep articles of that nature. I got access to it with some difficulty;

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[23]Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley*, ed. Claire Lamont (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2015), 377.

and, in looking for lines and flies, the long-lost manuscript presented itself.[24]

Scott claimed he found a text, composed some years earlier, which was actually his own, not one of an author who had lived centuries before. Thus, by referring to a past that dated back to at least a generation, his text had a much wider scope, and a juxtaposition of two different pasts: the past within the novel and the past of the novel itself. Even if the author had lost his own manuscript, in this way, he gave it a status of authenticity: the rediscovered manuscript belonging to the past made the author "publish" it according to the usual strategy of the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript. In *Waverly'*s short epilogue-confession, the readers are allowed to go behind the scenes of the making of a novel and discover the events that had befallen the pages of *Waverly* before they could become the novel that everybody knew.

In *Ivanhoe* (1820), as well as in Scott's other novels, the rediscovered manuscript was introduced in a more conventional, almost mechanical way, but even in this case the author introduced a new important element in the text. The preface to *Ivanhoe* analyzes the inevitable counterfeiting of historical narrative, observing that, in order to pique the audience's interest, the representation of the past must always be updated. A similar process of modernization of the past is found in the novels based on rediscovered manuscripts, applied to the contents of the document and especially to the linguistic and stylistic aspect, which would otherwise result archaic and boring to the present-day public. Walter Scott opened with his novels a new frontier of the *topos* of rediscovered manuscript, which helped him to gain his immortal fame and guided many authors of the following centuries toward success.

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[24]Scott, *Waverley*, 390.

Chapter 1.6 –The Hybrid Manuscript

The Gothic-historical atmosphere of Hogg and Scott's works suggests that in the decades of preceding Enlightenment, the rediscovered manuscript preserved its charm intact precisely because it was now a stereotyped literary device: the more we believed that the proposed narrative content was fictional, the more it was able to express daring fantasies. This way of using the rediscovered manuscript has survived in the Gothic and historical novel all the way to the present day. However, towards the end of the 19th century the manuscript *topos* combined itself with a more "institutional" version that implied a world of experts, academic research, inquiries and studies, becoming a quite different narrative strategy from the bold antiquarian conclusions preferred by Hogg and Scott.

How effective this hybridization became is evident in Bram Stoker's Gothic novel *Dracula* (1897), which is also the representation of Walpole's Gothic impact on the modern novel more than a century after *Otranto*. As noted by Caryn Radick the vampire's story, which recounts the tale of count Dracula, is not a single narration told from one point of view but it is a composed manuscript made of many different sources, put together through pseudoscientific documentary research ranging from Jonathan Harker's diary to a wealth of documents, which included even newspaper articles and official eyewitness testimonies.[25]

> I took the papers from the safe where rather have been ever since our return so long ago. We were struck on the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of type-writing, except the later notebooks of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story.[26]

The manuscript is, therefore, not so much a "rediscovered" type anymore, but it is built piece by piece with extreme care. The material collected by these improvised investigators was organized and duplicated in an almost obsessive way, as if the vampire could be annihilated not only by sunlight but also by knowledge. This relentless search for documents, ultimately, only adds tension to the atmosphere of

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[25]Caryn Radick, "'Complete and in Order': Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' and the Archival Profession," *The American Archivist* 76, no. 2 (2013): 502–520.
[26] Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, (London: Collins, 2011), 454.

terror and suspense of the novel. Hence, even though it is a supernatural novel, Dracula's narrative describes the importance of record-keeping, research, access and organization of information, which also reflects the nineteenth-century trends.

Although he heavily relied on papers and recordings to narrate his story, Stoker also questioned reliability, by demonstrating the many ways in which documents can be altered. We have many examples where information is destroyed or falsified, such as when the Count has Harker write a letter to his fiancée telling her that he has arrived safely at his destination even if he is still imprisoned in Dracula's castle in Transylvania. As mentioned, Dracula's manuscript is made up of a mix of public and private documents, such as personal journals written in short handwriting, phonograph cylinders, letters, paper clippings, etc. This uneven structure makes it difficult for the characters to have open access to all the information and fully understand what they have managed to gather. When Mina realizes the importance of these documents in defeating Dracula, she uses her typewriting skills to transcribe them in a form that makes them readable to all. She and Harker will work in "knitting together in chronological order every scrap of evidence they have."[27]

Mina and Harker arrange all the papers following a logical and chronological sequence. Indeed, documents have immense value, but if they are not processed correctly and well organized, the ability to understand and find specific information within them can be seriously compromised, thus making them more of a hindrance than a help. By organizing and transcribing all the documents into an accessible and logical way, Mina in a sense helps create the manuscript that will be the main structure of Dracula's novel. Dracula in the end is nothing more than an artificial collection of documents that are assembled and intertwined with each other, whereby the author adapts their shape to his specific needs. When Mina transcribes Dr. Seward's diaries she modifies them, since she decides to omit all the parts in the recording expressing personal reflections, especially the sadness felt by Dr. Seward due to Lucy's rejection of his marriage proposal and her illness.

> All these papers have been placed in sequence will be made clear in the reading of them. Al needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of latter-day belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement to past events wherein memory may err, far all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given

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[27]Stoker, *Dracula*, 271.

from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them.[28]

Ensuing to the elimination of "unnecessary information", the transcribed copies are certainly more understandable and objective, but the resulting texts are not the same as the original piece. This underlines the important issue of the value of the original. A copy of a document transcribed in a more accessible format can provide a lot of information that was inaccessible before. However, a higher value will always be attributed to the original piece rather than to a copy. Originality is often used as synonymous for authenticity. We have an example of this association in the final lines of the novel's Epilogue where the issue of the authenticity of the text is explicitly addressed.

After seven years, Hacker realizes that all the documents they still have in their possession are nothing more than mere copies, as all the original versions were destroyed the night Dracula broke into the asylum to assault Mina. Here Harker equates the concept of authenticity with that of originality. Since the documents that make up the whole text are not the original ones the text is consequently not authentic enough. All the original versions of the documents that make up *Dracula*'s manuscript have been destroyed, and what remains is nothing more than an unacceptable mix of papers. This aspect is quite contradictory, as Stoker took great care in constructing his narrative and affirming its authenticity, even going so far as to explicitly state it at the beginning of the novel. But at the end of the story, through Harker's words, the author almost seems to deny the authenticity of his novel, by questioning the nature of the documents that compose it.

As the 19th century progressed, the supernatural tales thus took on a more scientific basis. The elements of horror and terror, rather than being represented by images of creatures from the darkness or by ghosts, turn instead into the result of a scientific experiment gone wrong. Science takes the place of superstition, just as the objective style ends up replacing the subjective one.

Another example from the early twentieth century, that presents this development taken to its *ad absurdum*, is the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The author, the German anti-Semitist Hermann Goedsche who had taken part in the trial of the supreme court judge and democratic leader, Waldeck, in order to ruin the man's moral and political

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[28] Maud Ellmann, "Introduction." In Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), xxxviii.

reputation, was caught falsifying some trial documents. Yet, the falsification was sloppy and easily detected. Later on, he wrote under the pseudonym of Sir John Retcliffe a long series of novels on the Crimean War, including *Biarritz* (1868), which became an influential work of fiction. In this novel there is a chapter entitled "On the Jewish cemetery in Prague", in which the author describes in detail a nocturnal rendezvous at the cemetery in Prague where representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel meet and discuss their secret plans for the conquest of the world.

Sometime later, Goedsche elaborated a much less fictionalized version of this chapter, which in turn became the core of the most infamous known rediscovered manuscript, namely the *Protocols of Zion*. Goedsche operated within a historical-Gothic matrix inaugurated by *The Castle of Otranto* and, with hindsight, it is quite logical that in the end he gave the shape of a rediscovered manuscript to a chapter in Biarritz. Of course, the Protocols are not the first case of a false historical document that impressed contemporaries. No one else's, however, seemed so realistic to the general public as Goedsche's text, while drawing so heavily on the world of fiction at the same time. This novel was classified almost as a research product, a bundle of evidence, and a reminder to "elect sinners," wherever they were, that together they can defeat the Jewish threat. In short, the Protocols are probably the most influential rediscovered manuscript in history, but more than a positive influence worthy of being passed down to generations, it is an influence of death, which unfortunately still circulates undisturbed in our libraries.

Chapter 2 – Different meanings of the term "Gothic"

What does "Gothic" mean? Although the meaning of the word seems rather evident, the term has had a wide range of definitions. Besides literary, it is linked to historical, architectural and artistic areas. In literature, Gothic is commonly used to define a specific narrative genre limited to a group of novels written between the 1760s and 1820s. Even though the authors in this category share several characteristics that clearly distinguish them from each other, both in style and content, they are often gathered under the generic term "Gothic." The Gothic was a very prolific genre considering the short period of time in which it developed and writers of the period challenged each other to write Gothic stories, such as *Vathek* (1786) by William Beckford, and *The Monk* (1796) by Matthew Lewis, as well as *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley and *The Vampyre* (1819) by John Polidori, which were both written in the summer of 1816, as a result of a challenge prompted by Lord Byron, who suggested that they "each write a (ghost) story" of their own.[29]

However, manyauthors are not well known to the international public, overshadowed by a few, such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, C.R. Maturin and Mary Shelley, who have become so famous that their names are permanently linked to this genre. David Punter writes in *The Literature of Terror* (1980) that a Gothic novel is commonly associated with a precise set of key features such as: an emphasis on terror; frequent usage of archaic settings – such as castles, abbeys, or ruins usually surrounded by wild nature; a prominent use of the supernatural; the presence of stereotyped characters who are often the personification of vices and virtues; the use of narrative techniques which push suspense to high levels reaching the central scene of the novel where the resolution of the plot takes place. In this sense, Gothic fiction is simply the fiction of haunted castles, heroines harassed by evil villains, terrifying events, prophecies and curses, ghosts, monsters, vampires and all the other creatures that are part of the supernatural world. All these elements contribute to creating a world that is at the same time real and familiar, unknown and insidious, full of manifestations and events that the human mind tries unsuccessfully to understand, leaving one overwhelmed with terror.

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[29] Mary Shelley, "Introduction" in *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*, (Oxford: Oxford Classics, 2013), 7.

Yet this is not the only literary definition associated with the Gothic since the term was used by some publishers of the past to sell certain types of novels, also known as historical Romances. The Gothic is a genre where Romance is mixed with a mild form of the supernatural in a broadly defined historical context. The key elements of this genre are: a prominent love-plot; the presence of aristocracy or noble characters; events that usually take place in castles or ancient estates; apparitions of ghosts or some other supernatural elements which are rationally "explained" by the end of the story. The events are usually set in the past but with poor accuracy and historical precision, except for the occasional insertion of some costume details and archaic words, used to conjure a general sense of "pastness."

This type of novels was written to attract a large audience, and was directed mainly towards the middle-class readers. Most of these historical Romances, such as *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury* (1762) by Thomas Leland and *The Spectral Bride* (1942) by Margaret Campbell, shared the same themes and features which were used in every other novel of this genre with just minimal variations, producing banal and predictable plots. Some critics have found a link between the birth of the Gothic novel and the French revolution. In *Idée sur les Romans* (1878), the Marquis de Sade attributed the appearance and sudden popularity of violent Gothic fiction to the effects of the aftermath of the revolution which changed forever the political structure of France. The traumatized European public had seen too much of reality and sought an escape in literature. Hence, after such a terrible tragedy, they were moved only by anything but the most horrific adventures, thus giving life to the fortune of this narrative genre.

Throughout the centuries, the term was mostly used to define a type of psychological novel with strongly grotesque accents, as it is evident in the writings of 20th century American writers such as James Purdy, Joyce Carol Oates, John Hawkes and Flannery O 'Connor. This "New American Gothic" was known as a genre that dealt with the unexplored parts of men and women's psyche, and mainly represented characters with severe mental disorders and obsessions of various kinds. The element of degeneracy abounds in these texts where violence, mental breakdown and rape are some of the central themes, and represent in detail the insanity of the human mind. Gothic is also used to refer to horror fiction, in particular to ghost stories. In this variant, the historical factor is used and is prevalent in the construction of the plot. Many authors of this supernatural genre, such as H.P. Lovecraft and M. R. James, developed their narrative techniques exploiting suspense and the archaic atmospheres typical of the

original Gothic fiction. The themesused in their stories also come from the supernatural elements used by their predecessors, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Brockden Brown and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Although not all the American Gothic authors have their roots in the study of the eighteenth-century Gothic texts, such as *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis, *The Mysteries of Udolpho (*1794) and *The Italian* (1797) by Ann Radcliffe (the so-called first generation Gothic novelists), many still relied heavily on the themes and narrative style typical of these authors.

An interesting interpretation of the word Gothic was offered by Angela Carter in the "Afterword" to her collection of short stories, *Fireworks* (1974), in which she stated her debt to the Gothic authors such as Edgar Allan Poe and E. T. A. Hoffmann. The Gothic tradition of these authors completely ignored the social conventions of their time, and engaged in their novels instead with a profound sense of the macabre and of the profane. Characters and events featured in these stories were brought by their authors to the limits of credibility, to the point of making them the main reference of modern Gothic tradition. This ornate and eerie writing is so powerful in the depictions of Gothic characters and events that it can deceive the reader's rationality, to the point of convincing him/her that what he/she is actually reading is real, causing great feelings of anxiety and fear, even though by the end of the novel it is clear that everything is blatantly fictional.

As noted by Robin Lydenberg in the *Introduction à la lettérature fantastique* (1970), Tzvetan Todorov designated generic uncertainty and transgression as one of the fundamental characteristics of the Gothic and the Fantastic.[30]The uncertainty in the Gothic tale is measured by Todorov not so much in the quality of the work itself but rather in the immediate and ever-changing responses it produces in the reader. The Gothic story Todorov refers to is built on the concept of unsolvable duality, which means to be able to evoke the feeling of terror within a familiar and often banal reality, resulting in the most disturbing and effective device of Gothic fiction. This type of novel reached its perfection in the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann (among them *The Sandman*), where the threat of the supernatural surfaces in the most familiar context. Todorov also insists that the genre can only be realized in prose texts and should never be attempted in poetry, since in order to create the necessary uncertainty in the reader the context must remain literal, and not figurative. The author must never allow the

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[30]Robin Lydenberg, "Gothic Architecture and Fiction: A Survey of Critical Responses," The Centennial Review 22, no. 1 (1978): 95–109.

reader the opportunity to explain the supernatural as a poetic fantasy, allegory or metaphor.

Over the centuries a wide variety of meanings have been attributed to the idea of Gothic, the main features being a strong attraction for the past, a conscious decision of portraying an unrealistic version of reality, the representation of taboos, the wilderness both of nature and of human nature, the barbarian element, and many others. To understand why this expression is so flexible and has so many nuances of meaning, we must explore the history of the word "Gothic" itself. The original meaning was linked to the Goths, a barbarian tribe from the north of the European continent, which played an important role in the fall of the Roman Empire, the symbol par excellence of classical culture. Gothic literally means "to do with the Goths." However, the writers of the eighteenth century had little or no real knowledge of the Goths and their culture. The term tended to refer to various characteristics of the different northern European tribes, becoming a synonym for "Germanic" and "Teutonic" and an equivalent to barbarity.

In the 18th century a series of cultural and linguistic changes heavily influenced the uses of this word. There was a shift from a meaning based on geographical characteristics to one based on more historical connotations. The truth was that very little was actually known about the Middle Ages. Because of this, the meaning of Gothic shifted from being a term that evoked mysterious and unknown traits and symbols of the Middle Ages, to defining everything that had happened in history until the mid-seventeenth century, when a new period of great prosperity for the English nation started. By setting the beginning of the Gothic period with the fall of the Roman Empire and the disappearance of the Greco-Roman culture, the term started to be associated with features in direct contrast with the classical world. Thus, if classical meant order, logic and precision, Gothic on the contrary was associated with chaos, wilderness, primitiveness, and extravagance. The Gothic style was simple and pure, free from the regulation of the Augustan culture, but at the same time it was ornate and convoluted. In essence, the rules and cultural models offered by classical culture, were put in contrast with the need for excess, exaggeration and the feeling of ambiguity evoked by the Gothic, reviving the freedom of a past era.

In mid-eighteenth century there was another shift in cultural values. Everything that was previously associated with the term Gothic, and which until that moment had always had a negative connotation, was now being re-evaluated and assumed a positive cultural meaning. The term embraced, in this way, the role of a valuable tradition and

past in contrast with modernity. Barbaric was then put in opposition to civilized manners, vulgarity to elegance, and the old English aristocracy was opposed to the new riches, the cosmopolitan middle class. In terms of nations and cultures, England was put in direct contrast with the Europeans of the continent, especially the French, who were considered the most dissolute and wild. According to Punter, the Gothic began to symbolize the archaic and pagan world which was strongly put in contrast against the rules and values of modern society and with the "art" of civilization. The writers used this as a starting point to praise the Gothic and regard it as the main source from which they could access the primitive energy of the past. The traditions of the ancestors, which until then had been considered unrefined and crude and not conforming to the standards to achieve cultural and aesthetic recognition in contemporary society, were now being re-evaluated as a new source of power and wild energy.

In this "Gothic revival," four main areas of "old" literature were brought back into vogue and acquired new popularity. Firstly, the ancient British heritage literature, such as old Welsh and Celtic poetry, became one of the main sources of inspiration for Thomas Gray and James Macpherson's imaginary "translation" of the Ossian poems. Secondly, another source was the old ballads which, thanks to the Gothic revival, finally re- established their long-lost legitimacy as a form of folk- poetry. This led to Coleridge's composition of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1797-8), and to the creation of Keats' poem *La belle dame sans merci* (1819). Thirdly, there was the revival of medieval English poetry, of authors such as Chaucer, which was followed by the rediscovering of Elizabethan major authors, such as Spencer, Shakespeare and Sidney. Thanks to the Gothic revival England began to rediscover the literature and poetry of the past with a great deal of new enthusiasm. However, this new taste for Gothic was not automatically shared by everyone and many critics sided against this return to the origins of English culture, which was moving away from the rules and the order of the classical world.

Another area in which the term Gothic was applied was architecture. It was used to refer to medieval structures, especially to ecclesiastical buildings, such as churches and abbeys, built between the 12th and 16th centuries. Although the general features of the Gothic style may vary according to the dominant culture, the geographical location, the period and the type of building, there are some key elements that characterize this architectural style: an increase of the height of the building, large stained-glass windows, flying buttresses, light and airy interiors, pointed arches, thinner walls –

especially in the French structures – ribbed vaults, and ornate style of decoration. With Gothic architecture, for the first time in history, buildings were not meant to be functional, but beauty and aesthetic values were also incorporated into their design. One clear example of a strong taste for Gothic architecture is Strawberry Hill, the home of Horace Walpole, a Gothic castle in miniature, built piece by piece according to the wishes of its owner, and whose construction went on for years before it was completed. Another example of the revival of Gothic architecture is Fonthill Castle, also known as Beckford's Folly, whose construction was ordered by the writer William Beckford. Unlike Strawberry Hill, the construction of the building was faster and the materials used were cheaper, and one of the towers collapsed more than once forcing Beckford to sell it due to the constant and expensive repairs the building cyclically required.

Among the many correlations linked to the term "gothic" one of the best known is that with fiction. Gothic fiction appears at first glance as a uniform writing style and themes typically used between the second half of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century. Although there was no close relationship between the current Gothic revival and this narrative genre, there were some elements they shared. Gothic novels were typically set in the past, where the author could exploit the aura of mystery and unfamiliarity that usually surrounds it. The stories took place in dark and mysterious locations, such as castles, ruins, convents and abbeys, often surrounded by wild and untamed nature. This special attention given to the descriptions of the environment was the answer to a specific demand of the taste of the contemporary public, who wanted to be able to savour the wilderness and barbarism when they read a Gothic novel. These elements, which came from early Gothic fiction, were generally accepted by contemporary audiences, seeking to reconnect with their forgotten past.

Nevertheless, some features were not received positively by critics, in particular the sensationalist element. These Gothic novels tended to exploit the terror generated by the representation of extreme situations, a strategy that was strongly frowned upon. This was the main reason that led literary critics and other writers to condemn Gothic fiction as just a crude and exploitative genre. William Wordsworth, for example, was quite outspoken in expressing his disapproval of Gothic fiction in the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1789):

> For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of
> gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its

beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability. […]The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.[31]

According to Wordsworth, literature should teach and help people raise their spirit and moral sense, the writer having the specific task of using his/ her words to elevate the minds of his/ her readers. Gothic, on the other hand, was often described as a genre of pure entertainment, as well as being accused of spreading the representation of violence and vices. Gothic writers did not aim to teach anything with their novels, their preferred pursuit being to explore and depict the unnaturalness and the eerie.

With the subgenre of sensationalism, therefore, Gothic fiction moved from the general Gothic Revival structures towards a more violent and grotesque path. The world that Gothic fiction wanted to represent was, however, at a considerable distance from the one of the eighteenth century. Many contemporary authors used parody to demonstrate how inappropriate and not very credible Gothic fiction was in the representation of social and everyday dynamics. A fine example of this is the first pages of Jane Austen's 1818 novel, *Northanger Abbey*:

No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man […] Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on—lived to have six children more—to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself.[32]

Through the continuous negation of the Gothic elements, Austen showed how the Gothic representations did not really correspond to any true description of the real world, but were merely fictional. The element of violence was not the only negative issue that prompted many novelists and contemporary critics to condemn Gothic fiction.

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[31] S. T. Coleridge and William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Routledge, 1968), 248-9.
[32] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (San Diego: Canterbury Classics, 2017), 3.

Another feature that produced strong unfavourable reactions to Gothic novels was the heavy and ornate writing style, full of hyperbole and strong exclamations. It was used mainly because the Gothic novelists wanted to avoid everyday language and adopted instead an archaic and outdated language. But, in most cases, according to Punter, Gothic authors were not able to achieve any satisfactory results, the only outcome being a pathetic imitation, unable to achieve any real reproduction of the archaic language.

Moreover, such Gothic stories have always been populated by such stock characters and stereotypes that made the story development monotonous and predictable. The shy but at the same time strong-willed virgin, the tyrannical father, the simple and comical servants, the handsome and noble hero, the wicked villain, are just some of the stereotypical characters that we usually find in a Gothic story. Yet, the most intriguing and complex character is not the good one, but the villain, who with his/her mysterious charms manages to capture the attention of the readers. The Gothic feature that elicited the most conflicted reactions, and that was often at the centre of many critical controversies of the period, was the supernatural. In literary history, especially during the Elizabethan period, it was quite common to find supernatural elements in poetry, as well as in prose texts and plays. But, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, they seemed to disappear, suppressed by the rational culture of the Augustan Age.

The reappearance of these Gothic elements was gradual, starting first in the old ballads and then in Gothic fiction, where it once again reached its full potential. The ways in which these supernatural elements were presented in the Gothic works of the eighteenth-century were numerous, but there is one main division we need to bear in mind: on the one hand, there were works in which some genuinely supernatural events were present, while on the other, in some novels there were only supernatural events that at the end would prove to have a reasonable and natural explanation. However, this distinction is mostly of a formal nature, as there is little difference in practice. Indeed, even if ghosts were eventually explained, that does not mean that their actual presence within the text can be forgotten, nor that there is a loss of intensity when they make their appearance in the story. Moreover, the fear of the supernatural is exploited by almost all Gothic authors for one purpose or another. Thus, the supernatural can be divided into two different types: the genuinely supernatural occurrences, as in Walpole's novel, and the supernatural elements that are eventually "explained" by the author, as it happens in the works of Ann Radcliffe. Words such as *horror, horrible, agony,*

shocked, striking, despair, and *terror* are just a few of the ones used by authors to increase the feeling of oppression and fear produced by the descriptions of supernatural episodes.

In the end, this distinction makes little difference. The supernatural presences within the text cannot be forgotten and haunt us till the last page, causing constant fear and anxiety in the readers. The concepts of Gothic and terror have become so intertwined that we cannot think of one without connecting it to the other, and we almost always find traces of terror in Gothic fiction. In dealing with terror, Gothic deals with the un-admitted, the forbidden and the taboo, issues that have always been treated with mistrust and moral rigour. Indeed, Gothic themes and motifs cannot help but produce feelings of social and psychological unease in the reader. Fear, in this case, is not simply a theme or a recurring attitude, but it has also consequences in terms of form, style and social relations to other texts. Thanks to the study of Gothic fiction we can, therefore, explore how fear and terror emerge in literature, in different ways and outcomes, but at the same time also establishing their own universal style, language and themes.

Chapter 2.1 – The Blending of Fancy and Fact in Gothic Novel

Although the term Gothic is related to a number of meanings of all kinds, the connection between "Gothic" and the literature of terror is what this word is best known for, even if it is a rather recent development. Despite the fact that *The Castle of Otranto* is universally recognized as the first Gothic novel, the novel was published in 1764 with the simple subtitle of *A Story*. In the preface to the first edition Horace Walpole presented himself as a conveyor and translator of ancient facts, and elaborated a complex and fictitious origin of the text which was presented as an Italian tale printed for the first time in 1529.

> The following work was found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism. The style is the purest Italian.[33]

The story was allegedly a copy of a handwritten manuscript dating back between 1095 and 1243, the period in which the story is set. In the first edition, the word "Gothic" was never mentioned. "Gothic" was added in the title only in 1765, when Walpole published the second edition of the novel, renaming it *The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story*. In this second edition Walpole finally presented himself as the author of the novel and revealed the origin of the text. The story, therefore, was not a transcription of an ancient lost manuscript, but a modern text born out of Walpole's imagination. According to E.J. Clery, by adding to the subtitle of the novel this particular word – evocative of chaotic times and uncontrolled passions – the author meant to provoke those rigid critics who had judged the text unsuitable as its experimental nature went beyond the parameters of verisimilitude set by contemporary culture.[34]

The paradox was evident as a Gothic story could not have a modern author. Walpole's contemporaries identified the Gothic as a historical period that was often linked with terms such as barbarism, superstition and chaos. The temporal boundaries of

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[33] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 5.
[34] E.J. Clery, "The Genesis of Gothic Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrod E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002), 21-39.

this period however were neither accurate nor equally defined in all cultures. For the Europeans of the continent it corresponded approximately to the Middle Ages, which started in the 5th century, when the barbarians caused the fall of the Roman Empire, ranging until the Renaissance, the period that marked the rebirth of classical culture. For English history, the period extended to the Reformation in the 16th century, when England definitively separated from Catholicism. Therefore, it was not possible for a text written by a contemporary author to be defined as "Gothic".

Furthermore, Gothic was used with a negative connotation to identify everything that was considered obsolete, outdated or extravagant. Even if the story in *Otranto* was set in the middle ages, the term was not what made this novel the revolutionary text that will have a pivotal influence for the genre of the novel in the following centuries. Apart from in the subtitle, Walpole did not use the term again, not even in the preface to the second edition. After *Otranto*, the only other significant mention of the word was in the subtitle of Clara Reeve's novel *The Old English Baron*, confirming the initial hypothesis that the attachment of the word Gothic to the literature of terror was almost certainly an invention of modern times. Nevertheless, we need to underline that *Otranto* was not the first text containing Gothic features. Before Walpole, there were other texts containing what will later be called "Gothic elements". And yet, why is *The Castle of Otranto* considered the progenitor of a whole narrative genre? The answer was given by Walpole himself in the preface to the second edition of the novel where he explicitly stated that he wanted to create a new kind of writing, one that "was an attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern."[35]

Walpole crafted a style that his contemporaries would never have dared. He decided to mix and combine the old Romance form with the contemporary writing style. He created a completely new genre, by blending stories of monsters and knights with everyday episodes typical of modern novels:

> In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life. […] The author of the following pages thought it possible to reconcile the two kinds.[36]

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[35]Walpole, *Otranto*, 9.
[36]Walpole, *Otranto*, 9.

Indeed, with the Preface to the second edition, Walpole presented *The Castle of Otranto* as a challenge to the contemporary ideology of his time which affirmed that the imagination that went beyond rational causes was crude and not pleasant at all. In response to the enlightening authors who had called Romances too improbable, Walpole criticized modern fiction for being too probable. Samuel Richardson, whose narrative strictly followed the moral prescriptions laid down by Samuel Johnson in his famous essay *The Rambler* (1750), was the principal enemy of fancy and free imagination. According to Richardson, the real function of the novel was to teach the minds of young people and, in order to achieve the aim, fictions should "exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world."[37]

The novel must be a true representation of reality and authors should never include in their texts what cannot be imitated directly from nature. Walpole completely ignored Richardson's instructions and derided the way he enforced the use of mimesis on narrative texts. He included supernatural elements and unrealistic details in his novel, such as a vengeful ghost and a terrifying giant armour not to teach amoral lesson, a practice so dear to enlighten society. Even if there was a moral message in Walpole's novel, namely *"the sins of the fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation,"* it was not the main focus of the plot as his aim was the pleasure of imagination.[38]

To prevent his novel from being dismissed as just an extravagant and obsolete text, Walpole employed more than one strategy. In the first edition, when he counterfeited the authorship of the novel, he employed the *topos* of the ancient rediscovered manuscript. Instead, in Preface to the second edition, when he came forward as the legitimate author of Otranto, in order to avoid the condemnation of his work he presented the rules for this *"new type of Romances."*[39] Walpole wanted to experiment with a new genre, combining the unnatural events associated with Romance and the naturalistic characterization and dialogues of the novel. Just as the novel contains features of Romance, the Walpolean text drew both on the form of the Romance from the past and on the innovations of modern and sentimental. In this way Walpole gave the chance to Gothic fiction to negotiate its own balance between fact and

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[37] As quoted in E. J. Clery and Robert Miles, *Gothic Documents 1700-1820: A Sourcebook* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 175.
[38] Walpole, "Preface to the First edition" in *Otranto*, 6-7.
[39] Walpole, "Preface to the Second Edition," in *Otranto*, 13.

fantasy, paving the way for all the writers who would come after him and try their hand at the merging the *"two kinds of romance."*

However, it was not easy to blend two completely opposite writing styles. Walpole, as well as other Gothic writers such as Beckford, Radcliffe, Polidori, Lewis, illustrated the difficulties they encountered while attempting to combine facts and fancy. Everything started with a dream, in fact a nightmare. In the Preface to the second edition of *Otranto*, Walpole tells the reader how one night he awoke after a terrible nightmare, the dream being so vivid that it impressed him greatly. The next day he began *The Castle of Otranto* and continued to write all day long, until the early hours of the morning, completing the first draft in only three days. The content of the novel, thus, came from a vision, from a private fantasy. Here we are presented with the main issue of Gothic novels, that is, how to merge an explicitly subjective material –such as a vision— with the realism typical of contemporary literature.

Focusing on this theme, Walpole brought to light the limits of the eighteenth-century novel form while, at the same time, outlined how those limits were to be overcome. The objective verisimilitude used in modern novels was in direct contrast with the subjective nature of the dream, as much as the unstructured nature of the private fantasy contradicted the durational and structural rules of a novel. By underlying this distinction what emerges is the literary dilemma that has troubled most Gothic writers: what is the most suitable writing style which represents fancy? By turning from an objective representation of the real world towards a less empirical vision of reality, Walpole took in the shift of sensibility that went through the literary world of the period. This change was further encouraged by John Locke's philosophical thinking, whereby the mind exists to receive impressions and, through a process of association, it creates new complex ideas. This concept was taken by literary critics and philosophers, such as Joseph Addison and Edmund Burke, and applied to literature. In his treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke seems to suggest that Gothic narrative can be the source of an intensely private and subjective experience: "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear."[40]

The sublime was not a new notion, the first mention of this concept being found in the treatise *On the Sublime*, a Greek-Roman text written by an unknown author,

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[40]Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 53.

conventionally referred to as Longinus (1st C. AD). The European diffusion of this text was mainly due to its French translation in 1674. The style of writing, which managed to evoke powerful emotions in the reader, became promptly very popular. Writers began to draw on the theory of the sublime and imitate this style, especially to counteract the mimesis, the imitation of nature, which was at the heart of the Enlightenment culture. The inclusion of supernatural and fantastic elements in the narrative text was legitimated as a means of stimulating the feeling of transport triggered by extraordinary episodes.

Following this tread, Burke wrote his *Enquiry on the Sublime* in which the imaginative feeling of transport was presented not only as a desirable occurrence, but also as a mental and physical necessity. Burke explains that human beings are currently in a state of perennial mental lethargy caused by boredom and a stable familiarity, which he calls the problem of indifference. He explains that there are two types of solutions which may shake people out of this numbness: pleasure and terror. The first type is a positive pleasure, usually derived from beauty and is the kind we associate with classical art. However, this type of pleasure is a mild and only temporary solution. Much more effective, and with a more lasting effect, is the pleasure-pain derived by fear, "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable."[41]

This feeling of pleasure-pain is the kind of intense pleasure associated with wilderness, bold art, and frightening events. The sublime is, in other words, the fear of danger but without running any immediate risk; it is a "state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror."[42] To reach this level of emotional turmoil, writers must make an extreme use of imagination. Burke's investigation influenced Walpole's experiment of mixing fact and fantasy in a strong and decisive way. In particular, the common feature in Burke's critical work and Walpole's novel is the emphasis placed on the concept of terror as the dominant principle of the sublime. Terror is the only feeling capable of shaking the human mind to its core. Walpole takes up this idea in the Preface to the first edition of *Otranto* and states that "terror, as the author's main engine, prevents the story from ever languishing" and "the mind is kept in a perennial affair of interesting passions."[43]

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[41]Burke, *Enquiry into the Origin of the Sublime*, 36.
[42]Burke, *Enquiry into the Origin of the Sublime*, 53.
[43]Walpole, "Preface to the First edition," in *Otranto*, 6.

Both Walpole and Burke's goals were to shake the human soul from the numbness caused by boredom and familiarity through artificial imagination. The paradox between private fantasy and public fact has been a central issue of Gothic fiction since the origin of the genre. The perfect balance is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve, making Gothic novels oscillate between two extreme poles. On one hand, there is the Gothic style of *The Monk* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, in which the disjunction between fantasy and facts is strongly highlighted by the heavy fictional elements within the novels; on the other, there is a more sedate Gothic fiction, such as in Ann Radcliffe's works, where the intensity of the Gothic was sacrificed in order to satisfy the rules of modern novels whose main characteristic was the mimesis of reality. Due to this contradictory nature of Gothic fiction, the writers of this genre have always been caught in a loop between trying to prove the reality of their fantasy and making that fantasy powerful and real. Another important aspect to consider when dealing with Gothic texts is the issue of language.

Writers can use referential language (a type of familiar language style that allows the reader to identify him/herself with the narrator or the main character of a text) so that readers may recognize themselves in the experiences described within the work of fiction, or they can use poetic language as an attempt to find an appropriate term that goes beyond the expression used in everyday-life language and is able to express the reality of the private self. Authors were caught between the metonymic use of language, typical of the realistic novel, and the metaphorical language, associated with lyric poetry. However, in a literary text both languages are necessary.

On the one hand, there is a need for a structure and a metonymic language to satisfy the criteria of verisimilitude issued by the modern novel, on the other there is the need for a metaphorical language able to evoke a depth of meaning, which was what Gothic writers tried to achieve. Indeed, for visions and fantasy scenes to be at their maximum expressive potential, the structure of the novel must be convincing and realistic. Visionary moments will not be convincing if the reader is not persuaded of the solidity of the rest of the novel. Moreover, Gothic fiction requires both the use of a rich metaphorical language that transcends physical and space-time boundaries, and at the same time a proper metonymic language, where the parameters of time, space and characters behaviours need to follow a specific pattern.

The problem of language, therefore, is similar in any Gothic novel: the intentions and aspirations of the Gothic style are constantly undermined and compromised by the

insistence on respecting those structural rules, such as character development, plot and setting, which are imposed on the novel, in need to be as faithful as possible to reality. At the beginning of the 18th century, the uses of language by novelists and poets were moving in opposite directions. During this period, Jane Austen perfected the metonymic use of language in her depictions of episodes of provincial everyday life, making it the best feature of her writing style.

On the other hand, the metaphorical expression was on its best when linked with poetry. Literary language, thus, has been applied both to the public field with metonymic use of the language in the novels, which had the main purpose of educating the readers, and to the private field, where the metaphorical use of language finds its best expression in poetry and in the representation of the author's inner feelings. Early Gothic novelists tried to find a balance and solve this linguistic issue. It took more than a century of experimentation to achieve mastery in the combining social form of the novel with the metaphorical language of poetry. However, Gothic novels showed how the subjective and the objective world can coexist, complementing each other.

A first solution to the dilemma between fantasy and fact was adopted by writers such as Clara Reeve and Ann Radcliffe by creating periods of suspension in the narrative. During these "suspensions" the reader came in contact with supernatural elements, immerging himself/herself in the fantastic and terrifying atmospheres of the Gothic, satisfying his/her need for terror, while the rest of the story respected the realistic rules. Suspensions ended when the author decided to reveal his/her strategy by demonstrating that behind every supernatural element there always was a logical explanation. The Gothic effect, thus, was nothing more than a mere deception of the reader's imagination. This type of Gothic fiction, such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), was what was previously referred to as the sedated Gothic. In the case of Reeve's novel, *The Old English Baron* (1778), the application of this technique is almost useless in the end, because her story lacks the fundamental purpose for which this technique is used, i.e. to find a balance between fantasy and facts. The author does not go against the social rules of contemporary society and the moralizing function typical of the novel, using fantasy elements only to emphasize the moral lesson within the plot.

What was achieved by the Gothic authors of the second generation, such as Lewis and Maturin, was an important milestone in literature. Indeed, Gothic fiction managed to overcome the dichotomy that Walpole firstly identified while writing *The Castle of*

Otranto. As G. E. Haggerty notes, objective and subjective states merge in the perception of consciousness, resulting in extending the limits of reality, and in this way, details that would otherwise have been judged inadmissible in an objective narrative, can be now included within the form of tale, which is a separate narrative context enclosed within the main story.[44] That separation from the main frame of the novel allows the tale to remain free from the empirical rules imposed by the structure of the modern novel.

Thanks to the filter of the consciousness of the narrator of the tale, the reader can freely accept the most unrealistic details, without compromising the external reality that surrounds the rest of the text. In these works, subjective reality began to obtain a new degree of objective power. Metaphorical language gained the representational and referential power of the metonymic language, while in turn the metonymic language was seen with an added layer of meaning, just as a metaphor.

The paradox of public and private experience is solved thanks to the use of the narrators' internal point of view and the temporal suspensions given in the form of a story within the novel. Although the fusion of probable and improbable is the most important aspect of Walpole's narrative style, there are some innovations that belong more to the trends and fashionable tastes of his time than to the tradition of the romantic genre from which the author declared to draw for his composition. When we think about Walpole's sources of inspiration for *Otranto* we must take into account not only the revival of the Romance and the aesthetics of the sublime, but also the revival of medieval and Celtic culture, and the rediscovery of Shakespeare's tragedies, which are the earliest examples of ghostly interventions in drama fiction.

In the *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors* (1758), in which Walpole lists the most important authors and their works of the past century, he had come in contact with some genuine early Romance texts before writing his novel. But *Otranto* has very little in common with them. Thus, even if *Otranto* was first published as the rewritten version of a translation of an old manuscript, the text has more to do with the contemporary tastes and new theories about the novel than with real imitation of the traditional Romance form. Fact and fantasy could never be more clearly distinguished as is represented in Gothic fiction. This is unquestionably a decisive contribution that Gothic fiction gave to the development of the novel.

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[44] George E. Haggerty, "Fact and Fancy in the Gothic Novel." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 39, no. 4 (1985): 379–391.

Chapter 2.3 – The Romance and the Novel

By claiming his wish to "blend together two different kinds of romances" Walpole focused his attention on an issue that many authors had already addressed before him: the opposition between the "improbability" of the older Romances and the realism of the modern novel. The earliest examples of prose novels in the 17th century were identified with the term Romance. Their plots were centred mainly on the developing of a love story and incredible events, whose protagonists were usually courageous heroes and beautiful heroines, noble princes and princesses, kings and queens. The language used to narrate such extraordinary events was rich and elaborate and aimed to leave the reader delighted and charmed.

The modern novel started its development process in the first half of the 18th century in reaction to the dominant literary tradition of the 17th century. Some of the main authors who represented the opposition against the form of Romance were Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. They argued the superiority and originality of their narrative style based on the mimesis of nature and the description of everyday episodes and opposed it to "Romance" which they deemed a vulgar and outdated narrative. In his novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747), Richardson's worst accusation against his characters, especially women, is that they are readers of Romances, who he also calls fantasists and time-wasters. Richardson affirmed, in fact, that only texts that are based on the mimesis of reality, reflected the laws of probability and have a good moral lesson to teach, were considered good and useful works.

According to E.J. Clery's idea of the genesis of Gothic fiction, "novel" literally means "the new", and is the most suitable narrative genre to convey the progressive and modern thinking of the Enlightenment, which replaced English Renaissance as main cultural current. The key features of this realistic style came from classical sources such as Aristotle's *Poetics*, from which the concept of probability was taken, and Horace's *Ars Poetica*, where the saying "incredulous odi" ("What I cannot believe disgusts me") comes from. According to these classical writing keys, only if fiction is faithful to life can it become a vehicle for useful education and moral improvement.

In other words, the novel had a more realistic and familiar nature. The topics narrated were closer to episodes of everyday life. Accidents and strange events were also represented, but never in an exaggerated and unrealistic way. The fundamental principle that the novel needed to observe was verisimilitude. The definitions of these

two narrative forms and their resulting opposition remained fairly constant throughout the 18th century.

This issue was approached by Clara Reeve in her *The Progress of Romance* written in 1785. She defined Romance as a heroic fairy tale that narrated fantastic characters and objects, while Novel as a realistic representation of the reality and customs of the time in which it was written. This "definitions by contrast" of both the Novel and the Romance were used by many authors during the eighteenth century. "The novel needed Romances as the measure of its own achievement," notes E.J. Clery who underlined there was a dialectal interdependency between the two narrative forms.[45]The alleged reliability, for which the modern novel was always praised, was simply a strict adherence to rational standards, achieved by remaining within the natural boundaries of reality. Anything that was not an exact copy of reality was not considered credible enough. These "natural" features of the novel were more accentuated by the constant confrontation that contemporary authors and critics inevitably made with the early form of fiction, the Romance, and the imaginative credulity that it required. Moreover, the use of supernatural elements and incredible events earned to the Romance the bad reputation of a chaotic and deceptive genre, resistant to regulations. Any attempts of the modern novel to define itself through a comparison with Romance became nothing more than a constant reconfirmation of the public values established by the Enlightenment culture which were entirely based on the concepts of reason and rationality.

The boundaries between novel and Romance were, however, not precisely defined and often became blurred. As a proof of this, the word Romance and Novel often overlapped. Indeed, during the eighteenth century, these two terms were frequently interchanged when referring to fiction. Behind this confusion was the fact that "Romance" was an extremely imprecise term that was applied indiscriminately to many types of texts, ranging from medieval verse and the French heroic to the sentimental prose of the 17th century, such as *Cassandre* (1644-50) by La Calprenède and *Le Grand Cyrus* (1659-63) by Madeleine de Scudéry.

As E. J. Clery notes, most of these texts did not contain any supernatural and fantastic element, but were characterized by a very artificial diction, numerous coincidences, a mixture of history and fiction, absurd idealism and exaggerated heroism.

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[45] E.J. Clery, "The Genesis of 'Gothic' Fiction," In *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, 23.

Novelists tried to evade the strict regulations imposed on the boundaries of probability and improbability by balancing the demand for education and the entertainment in their works. One thing was very clear to all authors: in order to attract readers, they could not rely only on people's common sense, as moral messages needed fascinating narratives, otherwise they would have been completely ignored. Prose contents needed to be embellished by a compelling style. Some of the most successful works of moralistic intent, indeed, contained episodes that would not be completely out of place in Gothic fiction. In *The Progress of Romance*, Clara Reeve emphasized this lack of precise boundaries in the definition of the term Romance, harshly criticizing those fellow authors who used the appellation Romance to define a text, even if they did not have a clear idea of what the true definition of the word Romance entailed.

> I have consulted all the dictionary writers upon the subject, and I do not find that in any of them are clear and certain in their definition of it.[46]

In her text, Reeve proposed various interpretations of the word Romance in relation to literature: "a wild, extravagant, fabulous story," "stories that are built upon fiction," "Heroic Fable ... an Epic in prose."[47]*The Progress of Romance* is considered an experimental novel. The word *Romance*, a synonym for old and obsolete, and the word *progress* had never been used together in the same sentence, therefore, the very idea that Romance could progress and evolve was absurd for Reeve's contemporaries. It is evident from the title what kind of perspective the author decided to adopt regarding the main topic of the text, that is, the Romance was a structure subjected to change and development, and not a static form firmly lodged in the past, but it can evolve and progress. Indeed, the author firmly stated that "Romances are of universal growth, and not confined to any particular period or countries."[48]

Reeve formulates a clear distinction between the genre of Romance "which treats of fabulous persons and things" and the novel as "a picture of real-life and manners."[49]She ignores the definition of fiction produced by the contemporary revival of Romance and decides to create a new category from scratch: "Novels and Stories, Original and Uncommon." In this new classification Reeve places under the same label

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[46] Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance, through Times, Countries, and Manners*, Vol. I (Colchester: W. Keymer, 1785), 12.
[47] Reeve, *Progress of Romance*, 6 - 13.
[48]Reeve, *Progress of Romance*, 167.
[49]Reeve, *Progress of Romance*, 210.

both *The Castle of Otranto* and novels such as *Tristan Shandy, Gulliver's Travels* and even *Robinson Crusoe*, declaring them all respectful of the current moral standards

Unfortunately, even in Reeve's work, a completely clear definition of the term Romance is not provided, leaving the issue unsettled. Although Reeve's contemporaries considered the modern novel superior in every aspect to the Romance, the two narrative forms were always linked by the fact that the Romance was considered the progenitor of the novel, its gestational form. In researching and defining the processes of evolution of the novel, Sue Chaplin, rationalized the existence of Romance by giving it the role of the novel's historical predecessor.

According to Deborah Russell, some contemporary authors such as Richardson and Smollett continuously denigrated the Romance by defining it as an outdated and frivolous form of entertainment tied to a superstitious and unrefined past.[50] Any attempt of definition of a narrative genre, based on its relationship with "nature" and reality will always be a failure because fiction is itself an artificial form. Fiction will always go beyond the boundaries of reality. Defining Romance as the predecessor of the novel means that contemporary narrative could never be separated from its fictional and imaginary past. This connection also highlighted how the Enlightenment, based strictly on modernity and rationalization, did not control the cultural production of the entire century. The values of the past existed and would continue in the dialectical relationship with their modern opposites.

The Romance will exist as a narrative form thanks to the Novel and to its constant need of defining itself through a process of confrontation against the Romance narrative form. This concept has been recognized by many critics, such as David Punter and Deborah Russell, as part of the movement behind the Gothic Revival. It was thanks to its numerous points of contact and its constant entanglement with the Romance form that the novel was designated as the perfect vehicle for the development of Gothic fiction. By addressing themes such as terror and the taboo, which were completely excluded from the subjects treated in the modern novel, the Gothic consciously chose to set itself against the rational Enlightenment culture. As a matter of fact, with a few exceptions, the Romance had been largely excluded from the dominant culture of the seventeenth century.

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[50]Deborah Russell, "Gothic Romance." In *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 55–72.

During the following years, indeed, what prevailed was the absolute influence of the neoclassical style of the Augustan era, in which the harmony of the forms and a strong adherence were preferred to the improbable. This strict control heavily undermined the role of feelings and passions in literature. Furthermore, in this period the importance given to classical texts increased, thus causing the decline of the previous Romance in favour of a more simple and rational narrative form. However, towards the mid- 18th C., there was a rediscovery of values which neoclassical culture had discarded, considering them unsuitable. Many writers felt the need to rediscover their medieval origins and to look into their past, a past that later would be identified precisely as "Gothic past". It was in this atmosphere of nostalgia that a general re-evaluation of the narrative form of the Romance began.

As noted by Laura Mandell, one of the authors who sought to restore the lost dignity of the traditions of the past was Richard Hurd, who wrote *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) in which he explained how he had identified a link between the medieval feudal society and the Romance.[51] Hurd stated that chivalry should be considered the foundation of romanticism. Furthermore, he suggested that the fantastic and supernatural elements in the novels should be interpreted as allegories that refer specifically to social realities and political issues. Following this historicist approach, Clery maintains that in *Otranto* Walpole managed to represent the connection between the medieval setting and the manifestations of the supernatural through the Gothic episodes of the novel. In Walpole's *Otranto*, the exaggerated supernatural elements were an allegorical transposition for the violent manifestations of power.

In the first Preface to the novel, Walpole explained that the inclusion of ghosts and miracles in the text was necessary to make the representation as faithful as possible to the medieval setting, as the author needed to be rigorously "faithful to the manners of the time."[52] Thus, a first explanatory context was provided by the chivalry customs and culture of feudalism, while a second context was provided by the strong dominance that the Catholic Church had in Europe during the Middle Ages. Indeed, in the first edition, Walpole clearly stated that the original story had been written precisely to strengthen the Church's "empire of superstition"[53] as it was trying to counteract the newborn enlightened culture and the spread of knowledge which threatened its dominion over

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[51]Laura Mandell, "Introduction," in Two Gothic Novels: *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Old English Baron*, PhD dissertations, (Miami, University of Miami, 2011)

[52] Walpole, "Preface to the First Edition*"* in *Otranto*, 6.

[53] Walpole, *Otranto*, 5.

vulgar minds: "such a work as the following would enslave a hundred vulgar minds beyond half the books of controversy that have been written from the days of Luther to the present hour."[54]

One of the factors that led British writers to give up the traditional form of Romance was the association with Catholic superstition. The modern and disenchanted novel, which ousted Romance, was considered instead the most appropriate form of fiction for the new enlightened Protestant culture. This was one of the causes of the indignation when the true author of *Otranto* was revealed. If a work wanted to be accepted by the contemporary world it had to cut any link with its superstitious past. Walpole's "authentic" portrayal of medieval ghost beliefs has a very ambivalent value, the past being revived only to be discredited by the author in order to entertain his modern audience. It was not a representation aiming at a valorization of the past but it was used instead to arouse the reader's attention and enjoyment.

It should be noted that Hurd did not particularly praise the Romance form, but emphasized the importance of the imagination of which the old literary traditions were imbued, as was attested by the popularity of the works of many authors such as Shakespeare, Sidney and Spenser, considered national heroes. However, Hurd had a pessimistic view of the future of literature. He thought that literature had lost the power of using imagination due to the restrictions imposed by the classical culture. He argued that modernity had brought a great deal of improvements and modern innovations, but also had deprived the human beings of the ability to imagine and create freely: "What modern era has gained in civility it had lost in poetic inspiration."[55]

Hurd saw the transition from a native to a neoclassical culture as a decisive breaking point with the traditions of the past. Modern culture did not understand the past and consequently rejected it, relegating it to a corner where it would soon be forgotten. This point of view shed a new light on the concept of modernity within the novel. The forced adaptation to modern standards was an attempt to survive by carving out its own place in a new contemporary culture, whereby cutting ties with the past was the condition imposed to fiction to be accepted and not to be left behind. In the end, the old Romance –symbol of the past— was left behind while the modern novel took its place.

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[54]Walpole, *Otranto*, 5.
[55]As quoted in E.J. Clery, "The Genesis of 'Gothic' Fiction," 27.

This shift was not only a consequence related to the cultural world, but was mainly the transposition of the social change due to 18[th]century crucial political and economic events, such as the Act of Union (1707), the revolutions and independence of the colonies, the French Revolution, and the rise of commercial capitalism. These events contributed enormously to the birth of the new English society based on the idea of progress and rational thinking. This focus on the idea of progress and rationality occurred, however, at the expense of the link between society and its national past, which consequently became less accessible to the new generations because it was considered less important than the future. It was this cultural shift from tradition to modernity that Hurd considered as a great cultural loss. Walpole, on the other hand, did not share Hurd's pessimistic view, and saw this shift as an opportunity.

The eighteenth century, the confusion surrounding the definition of the form of Romance was, therefore, the transposition of the uncertainty felt by contemporaries towards the relationship between past and present. The Romance was becoming more and more tempting as the years went by, an appealing way to escape. However, the Romance evoked the idea of a generalized set of specific concepts and themes, such as traditions of the past, imagination and superstitions, it was also a narrative form free from the rigid rules that forced authors into modeling their works on pre-determined cultural patterns set by society. The Romance symbolized a past that was mostly unknown and only partially understood. This was a very important feature because it offered writers an excuse to reinvent it and allowed them to imagine history anew. By subtitling the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, "A Gothic Story," Walpole wanted to evoke an ambiguous and chaotic past that was the representation of everything considered anti-classical.

Indeed, both the words Gothic and Romance suggested a concrete reference to the past that was quite difficult to identify in terms of space and time. The boundaries of this "past" were so inaccurate and blurred that they existed mainly in the literary imagination. This allowed literature to have some kind of historical power, as a historical record of those ambiguous years. Here we have another case of definition by opposition. As the novel was defined in relation to Romance, History was defined in relation to Fiction by means of the same process of comparison. Novel and Romance, each considered part of fiction, were both regarded as a mere and pale imitation of History. Indeed, fiction was recognized as being capable of imitating historical reality, but, moreover, it was also considered as a form of deceptive writing because it was able

to alter the perceptions of memories, especially compared with the dull but accurate historical accounts. The affective effect that fiction had on the minds of the public worried literary critics and authors of the time such as Samuel Richardson, who accused novels and Romances of being the main cause of the ruin of young readers' minds, who cared more about frivolous stories instead of studying dignified and serious topics. It was a danger especially insidious for the minds of the women who were much more sensitive and easily influenced.

> The habit of reading [novels and romances] breeds a dislike to history, and all the substantial parts of knowledge.[56]

Other authors, such as Walter Scott, have recognized the connection between history and fiction in a more positive light, seeing fiction as a means to better understand history thanks to the exploration of the human motivations and feelings hidden behind their actions. The portrait of the human mind was also a representation of history, albeit unofficial. Indeed, Walpole argued that the only difference between history and fiction was that "History is a romance that is believed: romance, a history that is not believed."[57]

The cultural support given to this aspect of fiction as another side of History contributed enormously to politicize the Romance's representation of the past. When Walpole said he wanted to create a new fictional genre by mixing "two kinds of romance", he positioned himself in the debate between novel and Romance, verisimilitude against fancy. His intentions were to use and renew the excitement and imagination of the Romance by adapting it to modern sensibilities and standards. He also exploited the connection between fiction and history, particularly how fiction was seen as a way to explore and show human characters and motivations. Walpole explicitly stated his intention to represent the human being in his entirety in the Preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*. He "wished to conduct the mortal agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak,

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[56] James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical: On Memory and Imagination. On Dreaming. The Theory of Language. On Fable and Romance. On the Attachments of Kindred. Illustrations on Sublimity.* (Edinburgh: W. Strahan, and T. Cadell, and W. Creech, 1783), 574.

[57] Horace Walpole, *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Oxford,* Vol. IV, (London: printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, and J. Edwards, 1798), 368.

and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions."[58]

The contents of his novel were fictional, but all the characters reacted as real people would in such extraordinary conditions. The depth of characterization of *Otranto* was much deeper and complex than the usual stock characters that were typically used in the Romances. Walpole took the original model of the old Romance characters, such as their role in the story and their basic features, and amplified their features. This desire to explain the human character was evident since the first edition of the novel, when Walpole's true identity as the author of *Otranto* was still hidden and disguised under the one of the fictional translator William Marshal."Allow the possibility of the facts, and all the actors comport themselves as person would do in their situation. [...] The characters are well-drawn, and still better maintained." [59]

The decision to initially present *The Castle of Otranto* as a translation of an ancient Italian text was made for various reasons, one of the more pressing being the presence of the supernatural. The author thought that it would have been accepted more easily in a context where superstitions and miracles were a common feature of the people's culture. Walpole here presented the supernatural as a way to access the belief system of the past. Indeed, it would have been an unfaithful representation if the author had described characters and events without including their belief in the superstition and miraculous episodes that were common in the Middle Ages.

> That was not the case when our author wrote; much less when the story itself is supposed to have happened. Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the manners of the times who should omit all mention of them. He is not bound to believe them himself, but he must represent his actors as believing them.[60]

The last sentence anticipates Walpole's later revelation as the true author of the novel, defending at the same time his position on the supernatural in history. The author stressed that he did not believe in what he described, but since his task was to represent all the facets of personalities and behaviors of the period in which the story was set, he needed to include all the values of medieval culture. However, when the true identity of

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[58]Walpole, "Preface to the Second Edition" in *Otranto*, 9-10.
[59]Walpole, "Preface to the First Edition" in *Otranto*, 6.
[60]Walpole, "Preface to the First Edition" in *Otranto*, 6.

the novel's authorship was discovered, what emerged was that the novel was actually a modern text and not a translation of an ancient document from a distant past. The judgment of the critics, who during the first edition had been surprisingly favourable, was now completely overturned. They harshly accused *Otranto* of being an absurd and monstrous fiction that favoured the restoration of the barbaric values typical of the Gothic era.

Furthermore, according to Deborah Russell, it was thought that behind the unforgiving remarks of *Otranto*'s second edition was the wounded pride of the critics who had initially praised the first edition, and who were not too happy to have been so blatantly deceived by the author's deception. The supernatural element, therefore, despite being accepted when it referred to a medieval context, was instead rejected when the modern origin of the text was discovered. According to Walpole, historical truths were entirely accessible only through the link between Romance and the psychological insights of the novel which helped to get a complete picture of events, i.e. the need to include superstitions to reach an affective understanding of people of the past. Walpole's work was not overtly political, but the supernatural and the story of the awakening of the Romance were well balanced by the discussion of themes such as inheritance, usurpation and oppression. Yet despite the text's political potential, Walpole never pushed over the boundaries of entertainment.

There was one aspect of the issue Romance and novel that Walpole deliberately did not address: the concern about the morality of fictional writing. The idea that literature should have both instructive and entertaining purposes was already an established aspect of eighteenth-century culture. What worried the critics was the growing popularity of Romances, and especially the attraction they exerted over the female audience. Samuel Johnson argued that if written properly the novel was the ideal tool for inculcating moral values into young readers' minds. However, the vast majority of critics viewed Romance as a danger because of its association with taboo and the ambiguity of boundaries that made it difficult for readers to distinguish between vices and virtues: "Romances are a dangerous recreation[...] and tend to corrupt the heart, and stimulate the passions."[61]

To counter this negative judgment on Romances, the nostalgia for a simple past was often opposed to the corrupted modernity governed by consumerism. In her work

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[61]Ioan Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700-1800: A Documentary Record.* (London: Routledge, 1970), 327.

The Progress of Romance, Clara Reeve claimed that "the enthusiasm" which both medieval and seventeenth-century novels inspire "was that of virtue and honor."[62] Reeve went beyond what her predecessors did in their effort to defend and revive the romantic form from harsh criticism. She not only promoted the aesthetic and moral potential of Romance, but often juxtaposed the Epic and Romance genres, putting them on the same level. For Reeve, as both genres dealt with love stories with moral messages within their plot, why should one be considered immoral but not the other?

As Gary Kelly states, Reeve's work had a strong gender approach and "Romance," or particularly feminized versions of it, can contribute greatly to the "progress" of modernized and civil society.[63] Through the dialogues between her characters, the author tried to expose the issue of gender inequalities in the critical reception of both entire genres and individual works, especially those written by women. Hence, the Romance was clearly linked and exploited by contemporary female writers, especially after the publishing of Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1783-5) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), which Wollstonecraft identified as a tool for the "female cause" and which in turn Reeve labelled as "the cause of virtue."[64] Reeve argued that the Romance, especially the feminized versions of its form, could give a great contribution to modern culture's advancement towards a more gender-balanced society.

According to Reeve, female writers had a higher level of authority in dealing with the genre. She claimed such an authority both as a theorist and as a writer, as she not only theorized on the subject, but also published her own novel *The Champions of Virtue* in 1777, then renamed as *The Old English Baron* (1778) in the second edition. In the Preface to the second edition Reeve makes a clear reference to Walpole:

> This Story is the literary offspring of the Castle of Otranto, written upon the same plan, with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and modern Novel, at the same time it assumes a character and manner of its own, that differs from both.[65]

But in *The Old English Baron* Reeve drastically reduced the supernatural elements, choosing instead to expand the depictions of everyday life, and focus more on

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[62] Reeve, *The Progress of Romance,* 67.
[63] Gary Kelly, *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785.* (London: Pickering &Chatto, 1999), ix.
[64] Kelly, *Bluestocking Feminism,* 136.
[65] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, ed. by James Trainer, (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2003), 2.

the emotional bonds between each character. There is still a hint of the supernatural in the plot, but it is overshadowed by the other elements of the novel. The reader has no time to experience any fear or terror for he/she is immediately reassured. What is achieved with this style of writing is certainly the intertwining between a moral lesson and a certain number of supernatural features, yet the two key components of Gothic literature, terror and sublimity, are lost. However, Reeve clearly stated that her novel was not a mere imitation, but a corrected and improved version of Walpole's Gothic story:

> In the course of my observations upon this singular book, it seemed to me that it was possible to compose a work upon the same plan, wherein these defects might be avoided; and the keeping, as in painting, might be preserved.[66]

She reiterates her belief that a novel should not only entertain the reader but also communicate a precise moral message: "The business of Romance is, first, to excite the attention; and, secondly, to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent, end."[67]Walpole failed in this task due to an excessive use of supernatural elements and ghostly manifestations. For Reeve overly supernatural events "destroy the work of imagination, and, instead of attention, excite laughter."[68] To solve these problems, the author proposed to mix fancy and facts, blending the Romance and the novel "within the utmost verge of probability," [...] "without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention."[69]

As noted by Patricia Meyer Spacks, Reeve's narrative emphasized domesticity and everyday sense of the familiarity at the expense of the mysterious and terrifying atmospheres typical of Walpole's Gothic style. [70] Her sacrificing the supernatural elements in favour of a domestic sense of reassurance, results in making her view of the Gothic past not frightening and terrifying at all. We can see it in the scene in the *Baron* when the main character, Edmund, is sent to spend the night in the haunted wing of the castle. After a dream when his real parents officially recognize him as their true heir, he

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[66] Reeve, "Preface to the Second edition," in *The Old English Baron*, 4.
[67] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 3.
[68] Reeve, *The Old English Baron,* 3.
[69] Reeve, *The Old English Baron,* 3.
[70]Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Gothic Fiction," in *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English fiction*, (New Heaven; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 191-221.

and his companions find, following the origin of some sinister noises, the bloodied armour of the former Lord Lovel in a hidden closet:

> The first thing that presented itself to their view, was a complete suit of armour, that seemed to have fallen down on a heap. [...] They took it up, and examined it piece by piece; the inside of the breast plate was stained with blood. [...] While he was speaking, he shifted his ground, and perceived that the boards rose up on the other side of the closet; upon farther examination they found that the whole floor was loose, and a table that stood over them concealed the circumstance from a casual observer.
> "I perceive," said Oswald, "that some great discovery is at hand."
> "God defend us!" said Edmund, "but I verily believe that the person that owned this armour lies buried under us."
> Upon this, a dismal hollow groan was heard, as if from underneath. A solemn silence ensued, and marks of fear were visible upon all three; the groan was thrice heard.[71]

The first response of Reeve's characters to this shocking discovery is not to be overwhelmed by terror, but to pray for the soul of the ghosts.Furthermore, by asserting a gendered authority over the Romance, Reeve created a reassuring version of Gothic fiction that emphasized the feminine values of domesticity, virtue and benevolent heroism. On the other hand, the excessive property of the writing style and strict adherence to the novel's moral function only served to mask the political potential of this novel. Through the relationship between Romance and novel, Reeve uses the connection between fiction and history to show contemporary readers a specific view of the past, almost as if she had taken her audience on a journey back in time. The author, indeed, suggested a clear nostalgia and the desire to return to a simpler and more virtuous past:

> Sweet is the remembrance of the virtuous, and happy are the descendants of such a father! They will think on him and emulate his virtues—they will remember him, and be ashamed to degenerate from their ancestor.[72]

The nostalgic patriotism typical of this passage offers a clear indication of the fact that Reeve and other authors viewed the form of Romance as a device with which they could put the modern public in touch with a past era. This glance on the glorious English past, then, could be used as model for a cultural intervention on both a political and moral level. Many female writers followed Reeve's lead in asserting a gender

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[71]Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 46.
[72]Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 134-5.

authority in relation to the Romance. Nevertheless, in the following years the Gothic developed into a more accomplished genre with a focus on the female version of the sublime, thus making Reeve's moralistic Gothic an obsolete version due to its overtly didactic style. Yet, thanks to the example of *The Old English Baron*, female writers started to gain access to a new function of writing which they wanted to use to help contemporary society improve itself through the vision of a detailed representation of the values of previous national history.

As noted by Michael Schmidt, Reeve's footsteps were followed by Sophia Lee and Ann Radcliffe, who appropriated and exploited the link between Romance and history for their own purposes. Fiction was no longer needed to simply explain and portray the personalities of the past and the motives behind historical events.[73]Romance became a tool used to highlight specific imaginative and affective approaches thanks to which women authors were able to question the patriarchal beliefs and power structures of the past.

In her novel *The Recess* (1783-5), Sophia Lee focused on the insertion of the forgotten female narrative in historical contexts of England's national past. By narrating the fictitious story of the twin daughters of Mary Queen of Scots, who were abandoned to themselves and forgotten by the rest of the world, Lee wanted to underline the damage that the patriarchal society inflicted on women who were un able to express their own political and historical voice. In Lee's novel, there is a special focus on the collective repression of the memories of the female gender in fiction. Although Ann Radcliffe had a heavy debt towards Sophia Lee, she decided not to focus on narratives which were excluded from history. In her stories there are heroines with typically modern and middle-class attitudes who are projected within an outdated context that usually belonged to feudal culture. This encounter between modernity and the past created a strong clash of cultural and historical points of view.

On the one hand, there are rational and modern heroines who encounter evil villains, who instead are the embodiment of all the values of an oppressive old culture. This clash was represented and developed within a plot based on a love story, a typical feature of the old Romance genre. What was innovative in Radcliffe's novels was a

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[73]Michael Schmidt, "The Eerie: Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, William Beckford, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Charles Brockden Brown, Charles Robert Maturin," In *The Novel.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 162–176.

strong cultural and historical contrast represented within the fictional boundaries. She reformulated in a more modern version the contrast between past and present that Walpole had introduced for the first time with *The Castle of Otranto*. Radcliffe used the great potential of Gothic Romance to represent and explore the cultural and social transition in history. Radcliffe's work emphasized, like Clara Reeve's before her, the importance of female influence to the concept of historical progress.

As previously mentioned, Walpole's reintroduction of the supernatural into literature was not completely accepted by contemporary critics and authors and this led to the reformulation of the Gothic novel style from Clara Reeve. Reeve's variant was, indeed, more in line with the cultural guide lines of the period. But by sacrificing the mysterious and fantastic atmospheres in favour of a more reassuring Gothic, she also gave up the feeling of excitement spurred by the genre. Ann Radcliffe, pioneer of the "explained supernatural", reached a sort of resolution that lay between the Walpolean Gothic and Reeve's Gothic style. As a typical feature of her novels, this type of the supernatural managed to bring together the pleasures of imagination and terror with the rationalistic needs of contemporary culture. The logical explanations of supernatural episodes and the moral lessons included in the plot dampened the improperness of the Gothic supernatural episodes typical of Romance, thus creating a balance between the supernatural and the need of reason.

Some decades later, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft also used this mix of fantasy and facts to address important social issues, such as women's rights, class and gender tyrannies, political and social injustices. These radical writers made extensive use of the Romance form for their own purposes. Yet all of this was possible thanks to Walpole's innovations which opened a new path allowing other writers to exploit the relationship between the plausible and the fantastic. It was also possible thanks to Hurd, who brought to light the link between Romance and the feudal society. And to Reeve, who underlined the importance of the sense of social action in fiction, whereas Lee emphasized how the dominant narrative culture marginalized women and the powerless. And to Radcliffe and her Gothic images that gave future authors both models to take inspiration from and subjects to define themselves against. To sum up, the main concept that aroused from all these innovations was that fiction was important, because it was thanks to this narrative genre that one could look at history with different eyes.

Chapter 3 – The Double Preface

> The *Castle of Otranto* is remarkable not only for the wild interest of the story, but as the first modern attempt to found a tale of amusing fiction upon the basis of ancient romances of chivalry.[74]

It is with these words that Sir Walter Scott, great admirer of Walpole's work, described *The Castle of Otranto* in his "Introduction" to the edition published in 1811. Indeed, when we refer to the Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron* are often linked to each other for being the first two texts to have the term "Gothic" included in their titles. Being the latter the self-proclaimed descendant of the former, unquestionably they have many characteristics in common, both in form and content. One of the features shared by the two texts is that both their first editions, as well as their second editions, are accompanied by prefaces. These pages are extremely important since they contain details relating to the origin of the stories and, in the case of the Preface to the second edition of *Otranto*, they set the first example of the Gothic genre key features, making it the official manifesto of Gothic literature.

In the preface to the first edition of Walpole's novel, published on 24 December 1764, the information that immediately captures the attention of readers and critics is the exotic and mysterious provenance of the novel. The name of the author on the cover, William Marshall, is a fictional name as Walpole was reluctant to reveal the true authorship of his work, fearing that he would be ridiculed due to the "wildness of the story". In a letter (17 April 1765) to his friend William Mason, the author confessed that he feared the public's reaction to the "folly of the tale," the supernatural events within the story being interpreted as too extravagant and transgressive by the contemporary enlightened culture.[75]

> The following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism. The style is of the purest Italian. If the story was written near the time when it is

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[74] Walter Scott, "Introduction," in *The Castle of Otranto*, (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne, 1811), iii.
[75] Horace Walpole, "Short Notes of the life of Horatio Walpole," in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence Volume 1*, ed. W.S. Lewis (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1937), All quotations from Walpole's correspondence are taken from this edition.

supposed to have happened, it must have been between 1095, the era of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards.

As noted by Crystal B. Lake, at the beginning of the Preface to the first edition, the first thing that is revealed to the readers is that the story he/she is about to read was not written personally by Marshall, but comes from a manuscript the editor discovered in the library of a Catholic family in Northern England.[76] The original manuscript, dated 1529, was written by an Italian Catholic priest Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas in Otranto, and kept for a long time in an ancient library in Naples, Italy. Upon a closer inspection the editor noted immediately that it was written in pure Italian style, a Gothic font in both appearance and style, which further confirmed the of the text.

Moreover, the events told in the story appeared to even predate the alleged original publication date, tracing them to the time of the Crusades between 1095 and 1243. Marshall, therefore, was not the author but an editor who, after discovering the manuscript, rewrote it, improving and modernizing the linguistic register, so that the story could be adapted to the taste of the public of his century. The editor also clarified that only the formal aspect had been altered, while the contents were untouched. After apologizing to the reader in case the story was not to his/her liking, Marshall then starts to explain that he found the story exceptionally interesting, even though it had been tainted with supernatural elements, which were a clear representation of the "belief in every kind of prodigy [that] was so established in those dark ages."[77]

He did not approve of the descriptions of the fantastic and of the miraculous events he had to depict, but he claimed that "an author would not be faithful to the manners of the times who should omit all mention of them. He is not bound to believe them himself, but he must represent his actors as believing them."[78]With the revelation of the origin of the novel coming from an ancient manuscript, Marshall underlined a plausible link between the text and history. This connection served to confer a degree of credibility and legitimacy to the text that otherwise would have been judged as frivolous and meaningless by contemporary criticism, one which, however, Walpole was unable to completely avoid. Hence, Walpole decides to use the narrative device of the

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[76] Crystal B. Lake, "Bloody Records: Manuscripts and Politics in The Castle of Otranto," *Modern Philology* 110, no. 4 (May 2013): 489-512.

[77] Walpole, "Preface to the First Edition," in *The Castle of Otranto*, 6.

[78] Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 6.

rediscovered manuscript to confirm the legitimacy of his work. He carried out a manipulation both on a physical level, focusing on the material composition of the manuscript as a tangible object found in Italy and viewed in person by the alleged publisher– a detail that strengthened the idea of authenticity— and on the historical level, obtained through the use of historical elements within the narrative context, referring to the Catholic feudal culture of the Middle Ages.

Readers were thus driven by Marshall / Walpole's manipulations to believe that the text they were about to read was authentic. However, readers had no concrete proof of the literary work's authenticity other than the word of its editor. As the preface progressed, the credibility and reliability of Marshall's words were drastically reduced due to the contradictions that started to merge in the text, thus giving away its fictitious nature. In particular, Marshall undermined his credibility as an antiquarian and the authenticity of the text, when he tried to explain the relationship between fiction and facts in the novel. At first he stated that, since the story represented supernatural events that were impossible in objective reality, it might have been created by the Catholic Church as an expedient to cultivate the superstitious beliefs of readers, to "enslave a hundred vulgar minds" and to keep them anchored to religious rituals in a historical period where things were changing and the reading and knowledge of the arts had started to spread even among the lower classes.[79]

This meant that the text was originally intended to function primarily as religious propaganda. This reasoning displayed by Marshall appeared quite consistent, but was completely invalidated when he went on to say that any story that had been written between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries required contemporary authors to make some concessions to remain "faithful to the customs of the times." Such a statement destabilizes the previous interpretation which sees the novel as a mere medieval religious propaganda. The author cannot be an impartial writer of events of a historical period that requires absolute fidelity to their customs, and at the same time an impartial propagandist who manipulates events for his/her own gain. This contradiction clearly calls into question the historical value of the whole text. Then, Marshall informs the reader of the moral purpose of the text, such as "the sins of fathers are visited on their children to their third and fourth generation" specifying that, in addition to amusing the

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[79]Walpole, *Otranto*, 5.

readers, the story also wants to be the bearer of a moral lesson on themes such as inheritance and aristocratic legitimacy.[80]

However, this moralizing purpose appeared to the contemporary journals, such as the *Monthly Review*, to be weak and undeveloped, as if it had been added at the last moment by the author to appease the criticisms that would almost certainly have been triggered by the presence of the supernatural element. Nevertheless, the main element of the first preface is how Walpole manipulated the text to hide behind a state of anonymity, which is further guaranteed by the fictitious origin of the story. This self-defence strategy adopted by the author, together with the use of a pseudonym on the cover, was a choice mainly due to Walpole's concerns about the reactions of the readers and critics regarding the strongly supernatural content of his novel, especially when associated with a modern author such as himself. Walpole knew that the novel's supernatural elements would have been accepted more docilely if placed in a medieval historical context, where superstitions and miraculous events were commonplace. When the novel was first published, contemporary critics were reluctant to make a definite judgment on the text. They appreciated its singularity but did not approve of its contents, which were considered rather absurd.

The Critical Review (January 1765) did not express a clear position in its initial judgment of the novel, calling it "a very curious performance", but was already persuaded of the more modern origin of the novel. Instead, John Langhorne on the *Monthly Review* (February 1765) praised *Otranto* far more openly than his fellow reviewers. Langhorne wrote in his review that: "those who can digest the absurdities of Gothic fiction, and bear with the machinery of ghosts and goblins, may hope, at least, for considerable entertainment from the performance before us: for it is written with no common pen [...].As a work of genius, evincing great dramatic powers, and exhibiting fine views of nature, *The Castle of Otranto* may still be read with pleasure."[81]

Despite the author's first concerns, *Otranto* had an immediate and remarkable success, so much so that a new reprint was issued a few months after the first publication. It was in the preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* that the issue of the true identity of the author was addressed and the fundamental rules of the Gothic genre established. The second edition was published in April 1765, with the

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[80]Walpole, *Otranto*, 6.
[81] Walpole, "Appendix 2, Review of *The Castle of Otranto*, Monthly Review 32 (February 1765), John Langhorne, pp.97-9. Extract," in *Otranto*, 118.

name of Horace Walpole on the cover of the novel, and with a sonnet addressed to Lady Mary Coke signed by H.W., which further certified his authorship. With the revelation of the true identity of the author, and thus the modern nature of the novel a new set of issues arose. One of these was the negative reviews that followed the publication of the second edition of *Otranto*, which were even more bitter because of the sense of betrayal felt by the critics, who had initially praised the novel for having been so easily deceived by the author's machinations. Upon revelation of the origin of the novel, the *Monthly Review*, which had previously expressed a more than positive opinion on the novel, withdrew their statements, defining *Otranto* in rather harsh tones as an "absurd and monstrous fictions" demonstrating "false taste" and advocating for "re-establishing the barbarous superstitions of Gothic devilism!"[82](May 1765).

While the first preface tried to present the novel as a genuine medieval Romance, the preface to the second edition, outlined the fundamental keys of a new literary genre, creating a new way of conceiving the novel. As Walpole wrote, "it was an attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life."[83]

The author's intention was, therefore, to mix the two opposite genres of the old Romance whose main features were free imagination and the concept of improbability, and the modern novel, capable of faithfully imitating human reality and nature. The author's aim was to exploit the imaginative qualities of the Romance and its freedom from the restrictions imposed by the Enlightenment on contemporary prose, and combines them with the principle of probability typical of the modern novel.

If the first preface emphasized the concept of improbability and miraculous events fuelled by the superstitious religious, the second instead focused more on how it was possible to combine ancient and modern together. This union could be achieved as long as "moral agents [characters]" acted "according to the rules of probability," especially when presented with those incredible situations.

> Desirous of leaving the powers of fancy at liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention, and thence of creating more interesting

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[82] Walpole, "Appendix 4, Review of *The Castle of Otranto* (2nd edition), Monthly Review 32 (May1765), p.394," in *Otranto*, 119-20.
[83] Walpole, "Preface to the Second Edition," in *Otranto*, 9.

situations, he wished to conduct the mortal agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions.[84]

As noted by John Riely, Walpole made the supernatural element acceptable because he used it in a realistic perspective.[85] Indeed, to understand the culture and the people of the Middle Ages it was necessary to resort to the depiction of antiquated superstitions and prodigious events. But, while supernatural events were obviously unrealistic, Walpole assured his readers that his "mere men and women" would react in the most natural way to the extraordinary things they experienced. For example, the servants and any other "lower class" characters in the story always behaved in a rather ridiculous fashion and often had comical reaction, devoid of any psychological depth, especially when confronted with the supernatural appearances of the ghosts roaming Otranto's rooms, as emerges in the following dialogue.

> "Jaquez and I, my Lord—"
> "Yes, I and Diego," interrupted the second, who came up in still greater consternation. "Speak one of you at a time," said Manfred; "I ask you, where is the Princess?"
> "We do not know," said they both together; "but we are frightened out of our wits." "So I think, blockheads," said Manfred; "what is it has scared you thus?"
> "Oh! My Lord," said Jaquez, "Diego has seen such a sight! Your Highness would not believe our eyes." [...]
> "For all that, she may be there still for aught I know," said Jaquez; "but the devil shall have me before I seek her there again—poor Diego! I do not believe he will ever recover it."
> "Recover what?" said Manfred; "am I never to learn what it is has terrified these rascals?—but I lose my time; follow me, slave; I will see if she is in the gallery."
> "For Heaven's sake, my dear, good Lord," cried Jaquez, "do not go to the gallery. Satan himself I believe is in the chamber next to the gallery."[86]

On the contrary, Walpole stated that the representation of these hilarious behaviours was not a careless choice, but it was made to highlight the elegance, virtue and nobility of the higher-ranking characters. Princes and heroes spoke in courteous and often archaic language – one of the most noticeable concessions the author made to the

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[84]Walpole, *Otranto*, 9.
[85]John Riely, "The Castle of Otranto Revisited," *The Yale University Library Gazette*, vol. 53, no. 1 (July 1978), 1–17.
[86]Walpole, *Otranto*, 31.

depiction of the medieval historical context in the tale, as well as placing the story in a haunted medieval castle. Apart from these two precautions, Walpole did not deepen the historical context nominated in the first Preface.

Nevertheless, thanks to the psychological introspection typical of the modern novel, it is possible to access a new type of historical truth previously ignored by the critical Enlightenment culture, which is conveyed by the intimate and subjective representation of the thoughts of characters of the past. The second preface is essentially considered the manifesto of the Gothic genre because it is here that Walpole first outlines the roots and defines the framework and ambitions of this new literary genre. Furthermore, the author hoped that "the new route he [...] struck out shall have paved a road for men of brighter talents."[87]

An additional strategy of self-protection, adopted by the author of *Otranto*, was to rely on the figure and fame of William Shakespeare, going so far as to explicitly mention him as his primary source of inspiration for the novel: "The great master of nature, Shakespeare, was the model I copied. [...] The result of all I have said, is to shelter my own daring under the canon of the brightest genius this country, at least, has produced."[88]The debt that Gothic writers owe to Shakespeare is enormous, especially to the techniques used for the representation of supernatural events, such as the depiction of ghostly episodes (i.e. the ghost in *Hamlet*), and the alternation of comic and dramatic scenes. Even in the first preface, when the editor mentioned the "inspired writings" he took as a model for his work, he referred to the Bard as his main source of inspiration. Indeed, Shakespeare is another great example of the blending of ancient and modern characteristics. His works are the perfect combination of typical elements of Protestant and Renaissance culture, through which he accessed popular folklore and religious superstitions, both bearers of great imaginative values.

In a way, Walpole set out to do what Shakespeare did in his day: combine the old and the new. The cult of the Bard intensified enormously in the years preceding the publication of *The Castle of Otranto*. Against the backdrop of the Seven Years War, his figure and his works were back in huge vogue, with a particular emphasis on his role as a national hero and as a symbol of English nationalist glory, evoking a legendary past. Moreover, Walpole decided to dedicate the rest of the preface to a passionate and ringing defence of Shakespeare, in the form of ironic speech, against Voltaire who had

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[87] Walpole, *Otranto*, 10.
[88] Walpole, *Otranto*, 10-13.

previously launched a ferocious critique of the English dramaturgical tradition which consisted in the insertion of comic scenes within the tragedies, stating that the "mixture of buffoonery and solemnity is intolerable."[89]

To which Walpole replied:

> Let me ask, if his tragedies of *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* would not lose a considerable share of their spirit and wonderful beauties, if the humour of the gravediggers, the fooleries of Polonius, and the clumsy jests of the Roman citizens, were omitted, or vested in heroics? Is not the eloquence of Antony, the nobler and affectedly-unaffected oration of Brutus, artificially exalted by the rude bursts of nature from the mouths of their auditors? [...] Surely if comedy may be toutesérieuse, tragedy may now and then, soberly, be indulged in a smile. Who shall proscribe it? Shall the critic, who, in self-defence, declares, that no kind ought to be excluded from comedy, give laws to Shakespeare?[90]

The characterization of supernatural elements such as ghosts and miraculous events, and the technique of using comics to emphasize the solemnity of dramatic moments, are just some of the narrative elements that through Walpole will be part of the key canons of the Gothic novel which we will find later in many novels of the genre such as those by Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Charles Maturin and many others. Walpole wrote:

> I might have pleaded that, having created a new species of romance, I was at liberty to lay down what rules I thought fit for the conduct of it: but I should be more proud of having imitated, however faintly, weakly, and at a distance, so masterly a pattern, than to enjoy the entire merit of invention, unless I could have marked my work with genius, as well as with originality. Such as it is, the public have honoured it sufficiently, whatever rank their suffrages allot to it.[91]

Unlike Walpole's editions, only the second edition of Clara Reeve's novel is preceded by a proper preface. Previously published as *The Champion of Virtue* in 1777, the author chose in this case to include an "Address to the Reader" at the end of the novel, that is not actually a preface but it has the same purpose, in which the most important information conveyed to the readers is the revelation of its alleged origin. Here Reeve used the narrative *topos* of the found manuscript, taking inspiration from

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[89]Walpole, *Otranto*, 11.
[90]Walpole, *Otranto*, 10-11.
[91]Walpole, *Otranto*, 13.

Walpole's first preface. Like Walpole, Reeve also decided not to initially reveal to the public that she was the author of *The Champion of Virtue*, publishing it under the name of an Anonymous editor. In doing so she fabricated the origins of her novel tracing them back to a mysterious and ancient Breton manuscript found and reported by a mere editor:

> It occurred to my remembrance, that a certain friend of mine was in possession of a manuscript in the old English language, containing a story [...] [that] if it were modernised, might afford entertainment to those who delight in stories of this kind. Accordingly (to my friend's permission) I transcribed, or rather translated a few sheets of it.[92]

Following Walpole's example, Reeve claimed the authorship of her work in the preface of the second edition that was published the next year. In the "Address to the Reader," albeit indirectly, Reeve linked from the start her story with *The Castle of Otranto*, asking her readers:

> Pray did you ever read a book called, *The Castle of Otranto*? If you have, you will willingly enter with me into a review of it. – But perhaps you have not read it? However have you heard that it is an attempt to blend together, the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and modern Novel.[93]

Indeed, Reeve approved of Walpole's goal to create a new literary genre that contrasted the dominance of the overly realistic eighteenth-century novel, which was limited to a faithful imitation of reality and history, often stifling the writers' imagination.

> History represents human nature as it is, – alas! Too often a melancholy retrospect – romance displays only the amiable side of the picture; it shows the pleasing features, and throws a veil overt the blemishes: mankind are naturally pleased with what gratifies their vanity, and vanity like all other passions of the human heart, may be rendered subservient to good and useful purposes.[94]

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[92]Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 139.
[93] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 137.
[94] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 138.

Reeve was well aware of the attraction and influence that old Romances, the realm of imagination and fantastic tales exerted on the minds of the public, and especially on those of young readers. Hence, the author argued that the use of the romantic form could be considered acceptable on the condition that it was used to attract the attention of readers and teach them good moral and social purposes:

> The business of Romance is first to excite the attention, and secondly to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent end. [...] to attain this end, there is required a sufficient degree of the marvellous to excite the attention. – enough of the manners of real life, to give an air of probability to the work; – and enough of the pathetic to engage the heart in its behalf.[95]

Yet Reeve's "Address" also included a strong criticism addressing Walpole's choice of relying excessively on supernatural elements making "the machinery so violent, that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite", thus losing sight of the real purpose of the novel, which was not only to entertain but also to teach.[96] This was what Clara Reeve intended to do by writing *The Champion of Virtue*. She wanted to create a story based on the same plan of *Otranto* but correcting its "defects". Indeed, Reeve's goal was to find a balance between old and modern, between supernatural effects and moralizing intents. The novel as a whole, as well as the supernatural events within it, must be "kept within the utmost verge of probability", and it was on this point that Reeve set out to correct and improve Walpole's work: "In the course of my observations upon this singular book, it seemed to me that it was possible to compose a work upon the same plan, wherein these defects might be avoided; and the keeping, as in painting, might be preserved."[97]

Determined to avoid the mistake of letting supernatural events take over the element of probability, Reeve corrected this "flaw" by explaining the supernatural episodes through elements of logic and religion. This same technique, used for the first time in Reeve's Gothic story, will be later brought to success by Ann Radcliffe in her novels which will be defined as the master of explained Gothic. In the second edition (1778), when the novel took the title of *The Old English Baron*, in addition to revealing the true authorship of the novel, Reeve inserted a preface that replaced the "Address to the Reader," and was followed by a dedication to Mrs Martha Bridgen, Richardson's

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[95] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 138.
[96] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 138.
[97] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 139.

daughter, thanking her for her invaluable help in correcting the defects of her previous edition.

> I have also been prevailed upon, though with extreme reluctance, to suffer my name to appear in the title- page; and I do now, with the utmost respect and diffidence, submit the whole to the candour of the public.[98]

In this second Preface the author removed all the allusions on the connection between *The Old English Baron* and *The Castle of Otranto* and replaced them with a clear declaration of "kinship" between the two novels:

> This Story is the literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto*, written upon the same plan, with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and modern Novel, at the same time it assumes a character and manner of its own, that differs from both.[99]

As noted by James Watt, while it is certain that there are strong similarities between their stories, Reeve's novel is by no means a mere imitation of Walpole's work, as it was hinted at by some critics such as John Dunlop and Sir Walter Scott, who complained that Reeve's version lacked invention and had an excessive presence of "prolix, [...] and unnecessary details" dedicated to the "incidents [...] of real life."[100]Although Reeve's Gothic story has been accused of suffering from a lack of intensity produced by the abundance of unnecessary mundane details – such as the long and pedantic description of the details of the organization of the duel between Sir Philip Harclay and Lord Walter Lovel—, her version of the Gothic is characterized differently from Walpole's, which is usually related to terms such as barbaric, wild, strange and mysterious.

Reeve's Gothic is one that inspires feelings of familiarity and nostalgia, and it refers to a Gothic culture of the past characterized by champions of virtue and chivalrous models, where divine justice settles difficult situations in favour of good people and where religion is the means to achieve salvation. Reeve's writings refer to a positive Gothic past that the author looks upon with nostalgia, and not to a barbaric and dark past, bearer of ghosts and obsolete religious superstitions. As a result, the historical context that clashes with modern characters in this case is not a barbaric past seen with

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[98]Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 4.
[99] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 2.
[100] James Watt, "Introduction," in *The Old English Baron*, xiv.

distrust but the glorious English history that has been set aside and abandoned due to the advent of 18th C. Enlightenment culture, which was mainly focused on progress and on the modernization of the "old."

Reeve helped to make English Gothic tradition available again to its fellow authors, especially those who initially refused to compromise the laws of credibility in favour of events that were objectively impossible to attract the public, incorporating it into a potentially revitalizing account of England's past and national identity. Instead of offering a representation of a past that is characterized by the strict observance of the rules of the Enlightenment, based mainly on the pedantic attention to realistic details and the depiction of episodes of everyday life, *The Old English Baron* presented an idealized version of the medieval era to demonstrate the novel's usefulness as an alternative teaching tool to the reading public. Although, the two literary works start from the idea of composing *"a work upon the same plan",* and both refer to a similar content, they can be unquestionably distinguished as two very different Gothic stories.[101]

Reeve's 1778 Preface outlined a bolder and stronger statement of her intentions than the one presented in the 1777 "Address to the Reader" offering the manifesto of her personal version of Gothic novel. Where as the "Address" appears almost like a pre-defensive strategy employed by the author to protect herself from the public's initial reaction about her subject and her desire to "imitate" a contemporary work as famous as *Otranto*, the Preface to the second edition clearly announces the author's intentions to produce something better that could avoid the harsh judgments received by Walpole, creating the perfect Gothic novel that would combine *"the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance"* and the Modern Novel manners and taste.[102]

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[101] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 4.
[102] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 2.

Chapter 3.1 – *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron*

At the eve of the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, in a letter to his friend William Cole (9 March 1765) in which he described where the inspiration for his masterpiece came from, Walpole wrote:

> Shall I even confess to you what was the origin of this romance? [...] I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream, of which all I could recover was. That I had thought myself in ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that in uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down and began to write without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it—add that I was so engrossed in my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking, in the middle of a paragraph.[103]

The Castle of Otranto, like the vision from which it was born, is a novel made up of intense images and vivid descriptions with the ability to evoke strong emotions in the reader and, while *The Old English Baron* aims to follow Walpole's footsteps, the outcome in the end is quite different and unique. Despite the many elements shared by the two texts, both novels are different, dispelling the accusations that Reeve simply copied Walpole's work, spoiling it by dulling the intensity of the supernatural elements. As by Gary Kelly notes these similarities serve both to underline what the two works have in common, and their differences.[104]

First of all, the primary edition of both texts was published under a pseudonym, coupled with the usage of *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript, used to support and promote the authenticity of the text. In Reeve's novel, in comparison to Walpole's, she makes an extra effort to disguise her work as an old manuscript which has suffered the ravages of time. Indeed, the narration is often interrupted by gaps which are usually followed by a few lines written by the editor warning the reader of the interruption of the narration due to the lack of readable pages of the original manuscript. For example, at one point the text reads:

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[103] Horace Walpole, "Short Notes of the life of Horatio Walpole," in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence Volume 1*, ed. W.S. Lewis, (New Heaven: Yale University Press: 1937)
[104] Kelly, "Provincial Bluestocking,"105–125.

Here the manuscript is not legible for several pages. There is mention, about this time, of the death of the Lady Fitz-Owen, but not the cause. [...] The manuscript is again defaced for many leaves; at length the letters become more legible, and the remainder of it is quite perfect.[105]

These interruptions are placed by the author within the novel to further reinforce the disguise of the text's nature. A similar instance can be found in Henry Mackenzie's novel *The Man of Feeling* published in 1771, where the text gaps are skilfully manipulated by the author, to avoid long descriptions and context introduction. Indeed, Mackenzie narrative jumps from an episode of the protagonist's life to another little to no warning, and it is only thanks to the editor inclusion of some explanatory brackets and some subtitles, placed at the beginning of each chapter, that the reader is informed of the abrupt change of context or of the lack of pages.

[Here a considerable part is wanting.][106]

By contrast, Walpole's narrative is fluid and unbroken, with no fabricated interruptions within the text. Both novels claim to be translations: *The Castle of Otranto* of a sixteenth-century Italian text, and *The Champion of Virtue* of an ancient manuscript set in mid-fifteenth century "In minority of Henry the Sixth," written "in the old English language." [107]On the one hand, Walpole decided to set his story in Italy, in the south of Catholic Europe, a world geographically distant and culturally different from his contemporary Protestant England. On the other hand, Reeve created a fictional world which, while referring to an ancient and distant period, was nevertheless more familiar to English readers.

The choice of placing *The Old English Baron* in a less alien, less "non-English" setting as Kelly writes, was made to underline Reeve's intention to not represent an alien, barbaric and unpolished Gothic world to exalt the superiority of the Protestant England – as Walpole did in *Otranto*— but to represent a Gothic period and culture seen through a purely Old Whigs perspective, where Gothic was not considered synonymous with barbarism and wildness, but was associated with "Germanic independence, liberty and virtue."This fundamental difference in the structure of the novels is reflected on a formal level in the description of the minor characters,

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[105] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 5-26.
[106]Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling*, 32.
[107] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 139.

particularly those belonging to the lower classes. In *Otranto* the vulgar characters are talkative, ignorant, superstitious and completely unhelpful towards the protagonists, and also have exaggerated and comical reactions to the events of the story. As we can see in the scene where the frightened servant Bianca and Lady Matilda discuss the ghost's apparitions around the castle, the girl engages her lady in a rather comical dialogue that depicts her exaggerated behaviour, which is put in opposition against the princess's calm and reserved responses:

> "Blessed Mary!" said Bianca, starting, "there it is again! Dear Madam, do you hear nothing? This castle is certainly haunted!"
> "Peace!" said Matilda, "and listen! I did think I heard a voice—but it must be fancy: your terrors, I suppose, have infected me."
> "Indeed! Indeed! Madam," said Bianca, half-weeping with agony, "I am sure I heard a voice." [...] Oh! Dear Lady, I would not speak to a ghost for the world!" cried Bianca."[108]

The characters of the lower classes in Reeve's work, however, are loyal, morally honest, and their help is decisive in discovering the truth that solves the narrative plot of the story. On a stylistic level, in *The Castle of Otranto* there are long monologues, stagy dialogues and an antiquated linguistic register mainly used by high-class characters. On the other hand, in *The Old English Baron*, these elements are replaced by an informal and colloquial discourse, which manages to express the intensity of the crucial scenes without the usage of static and dull monologues.

According to Andrew Smith, there are a few features that can be easily identified in both novels, such as the theme of inheritance, the problem of aristocracy legitimacy, the role of religion, the issue of family relationships and the role of gender.[109] The issues of inheritance and aristocratic legitimacy are intertwined in both novels, whose legitimate heirs to a title and lands, however, ignore their true identity and live as commoners. Consequently, after the premature death of their parents by the hands of a villain, they live their lives as commoners and only at the end of the novel, thanks to a providential intervention of supernatural forces, the truth is revealed and the order in the castle restored. In Walpole's novel, Theodore is an ordinary boy who is incidentally involved in the tragic events of the castle of Otranto when he is unjustly accused of witchcraft by Prince Manfred. He later turns out to be the son of Friar Jerome, the

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[108] Walpole, *Otranto*, 38-39.
[109] Andrew Smith, "The Gothic Heyday, 1760–1820." In *Gothic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 18-51.

former Count of Falconara, who had married the daughter of Alfonso the Good and Victoria — a foreign woman whom the prince had secretly married in Sicily during one of his war expeditions. By poisoning Alfonso and falsifying his will, Manfred's grandfather had violated the legitimate order of succession of the aristocratic line of the principality of Otranto. It is only thanks to the intervention of the ghost of Alfonso, the former prince of Otranto, and Riccardo, Manfred's grandfather and Alfonso's murder, that the true identity of the rightful heir is revealed and Manfred's nefarious plans are prevented.

Likewise, in *The Old English Baron*, young Edmund grows up as the son of a tenant couple in the lands surrounding Castle of Lovel, following the literary convention that, although the protagonist is unaware of his/her true origins, it is always possible to perceive his/her diversity due to the obvious superiority of his/her character and nobility of soul, as if being part of the aristocracy were a hereditary gene that emerges regardless of the circumstance of the character's upbringing, rather than a social title. Indeed, Edmund is described as a kind, handsome, good-natured young man, always loyal to the Baron despite the harassment suffered by the Baron's envious eldest son. As in *Otranto*, it is thanks to the ghosts of the deceased Lady and Lord Lovel that the truth about the young man's origins is discovered and the legitimate line of succession of the county is restored.

The theme of religion is present in both novels but is used differently by the authors. In the Preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, the publisher stated that religion was a crucial aspect of medieval culture and had to be considered in all its facets, even if he had to include the descriptions of events which depicted "the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions."[110] What Walpole implied here, and more explicitly in the preface to *Otranto's* second edition, is that religion was employed in the novel as a tool to better articulate and justify the use of supernatural elements within the story. The editor of the first edition affirmed that "such a work [...] would enslave a hundred vulgar minds," emphasizing how the original function of the text he translated was to strengthen popular superstitions so that vulgar minds would resist the intellectual and religious enlightenment spread by Protestantism. For many centuries Italy was considered by English Protestants a barbaric and ignorant kingdom, governed by ridiculous rites and foolish beliefs that the Church used in order to control its subjects.

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[110] Walpole, *Otranto*, 5.

When Walpole decided to set *The Castle of Otranto* in Italy, he did it so as to enhance and take advantage of these characteristics, to represent a Gothic era in which the keywords associated to that culture were superstitions, extreme passions and wild nature.

Within the plot religion has an ambivalent value: on the one hand Manfred does not value the religious authority of Friar Jerome, nor the sacred vow of marriage to Hyppolita, considering himself above any religious will. On the other hand, the servants, such as Bianca, Jaquez and Diego, demonstrate by each encounter with the ghost that their behaviour is mainly governed by religious fear and credulity. In the end, religion in this novel seems to have a more structural role, as in the depiction of the characters, rather than a theological value. On the contrary, Reeve asserted that her supposed original medieval source was written with the primary purpose of conveying a moral and religious message to posterity, about how a champion of virtue must behave and how Providence always comes to the aid of deserving people.

In *The Old English Baron*, indeed, religious faith is not a source of prejudice and superstition that confuses the minds of the characters, but rather it is the spiritual strength that gives courage to the protagonist during the nights he spends in the haunted rooms of the castle – especially when he encounters the ghosts, before recognizing them as non-malevolent spirits. Edmund faces supernatural events with the same serenity which in *Otranto* Matilda offers to listen and pray for the souls of the ghosts that seem to have invaded her castle, his behaviour being in stark contrast with the hysterical and comic reactions of Richard Wenlock and Jack Markam, who escape from the haunted rooms of Castel Lovel frightened to their wits.

> As they stood with their fists clenched, on a sudden they were alarmed with a dismal groan from the room underneath. They stood like statues petrified by fear, yet listening with trembling expectation. A second groan increased their consternation; and, soon after, a third completed it. They staggered to a seat, and sunk down upon it, ready to faint. Presently, all the doors flew open, a pale glimmering light appeared at the door, from the staircase, and a man in complete armour entered the room. He stood, with one hand extended, pointing to the outward door; they took the hint, and crawled away as fast as fear would let them; they staggered along the gallery, and from thence to the Baron's apartment, where Wenlock sunk down in a swoon, and Markham had just strength enough to knock at the door.[111]

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[111] Walpole, *Otranto*, 68.

Therefore, in *Old Baron* religion is used as a tool for the structural articulation of supernatural scenes but, while in *Otranto* it focuses on the superstitious reactions of the characters. In Reeve's novel religion is used to describe typical attitudes of the chivalric culture of upper-class characters, a common feature of the code of conduct of feudal England. Thus, in both novels, we are faced with a ritualization of the sacred and of beliefs which, as we have seen, develops in two opposite directions: in *Otranto*, religion is used to channel feelings of anxiety and fear, which in the story result in superstitious behaviours and foolish attitudes. In *The Old English Baron*, the sacred is conceived in a more positive light, focusing on the features of the power of the Providence in helping the good people and on the fair retribution, which is depicted in the unconditional faith towards God shown through the act of prayer and other religious rites.

Both novels are about families; it is the central element in Manfred's plot, whose main goal is to ensure his family reign over the principality, and in *The Old English Baron*, where it is thanks to Sir Philip's brotherly love for Lord Lovel that drove him to Castle of Lovel, starting in this way the chain of events that will unearth the truth about the murder of his close friend. Conventional family relationships do not exist in *Otranto*, which are at best fragile bonds between characters subjected to sudden changes to accommodate the power-seeking whims of the Prince. Indeed, Manfred's actions are the main cause of the destruction of his family, as he can think of nothing else but consolidate his political power and give an heir to the principality, which leads him first to completely disregard the tragic death of his son, then to discard his devoted wife in favour of a marriage of convenience, and eventually promise his daughter's hand in exchange for a political alliance. Ultimately, his senseless jealousy will be the cause of the death of his daughter Matilda, who will still forgive him on her deathbed.

The other example of a family unit represented in *Otranto* is that of Friar Jerome and Theodore. The heartbreaking reunion between father and son, which would normally have been an event of joy, is however characterized by a bitter aftertaste and anguish for the fate of Theodore, just sentenced to death by Manfred, as well as stained by Friar Jerome's guilty feelings. Due to his desire to help Lady Isabella escape the prince's nefarious plan, before learning the truth about Theodore's identity, Jerome fuels Manfred's jealousies towards the boy by suggesting the possibility of a relationship between the young man and Isabella, and causing in this way Theodore to be sentenced to death by the prince. However, as it is evident in the following scene, where Jerome begs the prince to spare his son's life, that between Jerome and Theodore, we finally

have the realization of a relationship of unconditional filial love, which instead is totally absent in the relationship between Conrad and Manfred.

> "Gracious heaven!" cried the holy man, starting; "what do I see? It is my child! my Theodore!" The passions that ensued must be conceived; they cannot be painted. The tears of the assistants were suspended by wonder, rather than stopped by joy. They seemed to inquire in the eyes of their Lord what they ought to feel. Surprise, doubt, tenderness, respect, succeeded each other in the countenance of the youth. [...] "Oh, God!" said the holy man, "dost thou question his being mine? Could I feel the anguish I do if I were not his father? Spare him! good Prince! spare him! and revile me as thou pleasest."[112]

Apart from this, Walpole did not give the reader many details about what happened between Jerome and his late wife, nor about their relationship before he took his vows. We only know that Theodore lived with his mother until her death, which occurred before the beginning of the story. In *The Old English Baron*, it is Sir Walter Lovel, Lord Lovel's cousin, who caused the death of both his relative and his wife and the destruction of their family, only because he was envious and angry at Lord Lovel who had married the woman he was infatuated with. He does not hesitate to ambush his own kin to get revenge, and ultimately shows no apparent remorse for being the cause of his beloved's death after she rejects him again. Nevertheless, it is not quite clear whether the fact that he left the manor almost immediately after the deaths of his relatives was due to a partial guilty conscience over his actions or for the fear of being haunted by the ghosts of his victims, indeed, "it was whispered about, that the new Lord Lovel was so disturbed every night, that he could not sleep in quiet."[113]

The society represented in both novels is of a patriarchal-feudal type. Indeed, both in *The Castle of Otranto* and in *The Old English Baron* aristocratic women are represented as the symbol of temperance, morally virtuous and beautiful, but without any freedom to make decisions about their lives in total mercy of the men of their family or their guardians. The depiction of this gender-based feudal society is most evident from the representation of the relationship between Manfred and Hippolita and her "unshakable submission" to her husband's will, even when he asks for a divorce in a time when divorcing would have ruined forever the reputation of a respectable lady. Although she is emotionally abused by Manfred throughout the story, it is not a surprise

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[112] Walpole, *Otranto*, 51.
[113] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 29.

that she never defends herself, as the education imposed on her, and on all-female nobility, was centred around the belief of putting the husband's need in the first place and leave all the important decisions to him as "it is not ours to make the election for ourselves: heaven, our fathers and our husbands must decide for us."[114]

In *The Old English Baron* the role of the women is much more marginal in the course of the story. Reeve seems to make a deliberate choice to exclude the female characters from the action in her novel, as if, by deciding to represent an era in which the main model of virtue was the chivalrous man, she had to renounce a deeper and more complete characterization of the women of her story. Although the female presence is quantitatively reduced, it is nevertheless, qualitatively decisive in the unfolding of the plot. As we can see, it is because of Sir Walter's infatuation with Lady Lovel and his envy that Lord Lovel is murdered in the first place. And it is thanks to Mrs. Twyford's maternal love that Edmund grows up protected and loved, becoming an exceptional young man; and it is because of cousin Richard's unrequited love for Emma that the path is set in motion that will allow Edmund to discover his father's bloody armour and the truth about his true origins. We are, therefore, faced with a paradox whereby despite the marginality of the presence of the women, their role is equally central and important for the development of the novel.

In the *Baron*, the most prominent female character, except the ghost of Lady Lovel, is Emma Fitz-Owen who is secretly in love with Edmund but is well aware that their different social classes prevent their love story from happening. Indeed, for the purposes of the plot, the character has the only value of solving the legal-economic dispute linked to the transfer of ownership between her father and Edmund after discovering that he is the true owner of Castle of Lovel. The economic issue is swiftly solved by the author with the marriage between Emma and Edmund and the union of the two families. The medieval aristocratic society in which both novels were set is clearly a world of men, where the role of women was a means, often used during the negotiations of new political alliances, rather than a human being with a mind and dreams for the future. Women, indeed, did not have any autonomy on their lives and freedom in their choices, and were used mainly to depict the perfect model of morality and martyrdom, to show young girls how to behave and be good wives and mothers, the only two roles granted to women in the past.

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[114] Walpole, *Otranto,* 80.

There are other elements shared between the two novels: the resolution of a dispute through a duel; a sub-plot of a love story in the younger generation that ends with a marriage that re-establishes peace in the castle; the usurpation of a title and its consequent restoration to the legitimate heir; supernatural events and the intervention of providential forces that help the main characters to obtain justice and punish the villain. However, the theme on which the two novels differ most is that of the supernatural. As anticipated by Reeve in the preface to the second edition of *The Champion of Virtue*, her use of the supernatural elements wants to be different from Walpole's, which she judged excessive, "the machine is so violent which destroys the effect it intends to excite."[115]

In any case, in both plots there are ghostly apparitions including the one of the mysterious armour - or pieces of it in *The Castle of Otranto* - which symbolizes the spiritual presence of its deceased owner, the victim of the murder. In *Otranto* it is the sudden appearance of a giant helmet that sets off the chain of supernatural events that only end when the truth about Alfonso's murder comes out and Theodore's birth-rights restored. One of the greatest Gothic scenes in Walpole's novel describes the moment when the ghost of Riccardo appears in front of Manfred and Isabella, allowing the girl to escape from his unwanted advances:

> Manfred rose to pursue her, [...] At that instant the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh, and heaved its breast... he saw it quit its panel, and descend on the floor with a grave and melancholy air. [...]The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved. As he would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped to with violence by an invisible hand.[116]

In *The Old English Baron*, the armour in question is not ghostly in nature but is hidden in a secret closet which is discovered only with the help of its owner's spirit and is also one of the main elements that will lead Edmund and his helpers to uncover the truth about Lord Lovel's killer. In both stories there are other ghostly figures: in *Otranto* the ghost of Riccardo (the hermit of the desert who Lord Frederick meets) and the ghost of Alfonso the Good, and in *The Old English Baron* the ghosts of Lord and Lady Lovel.

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[115]Clara Reeve, "Appendix I, From *The Champion of Virtue* (1777) Address to the Reader," in *The Old English Baron*, 138.

[116] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 24-25.

In addition, in both novels the ghosts are used as a vehicle through which divine Providence works, aiding the good and noble protagonists in their search for truth, while hindering and frightening anyone who tries to interfere in the rectification of the correct social order of the castles.

While the supernatural elements in *The Castle of Otranto* are depicted as truly inexplicable and impossible events, most of the supernatural manifestations in *The Old English Baron* occur through prophetic dreams, sinister noises and mysterious moans. Indeed, Reeve's supernatural elements can be explained and accepted through the filter of the Christian faith, as the spirits are not treated as dangerous and evil entities but as a manifestation of the soul of the dead. Yet, in *The Old English Baron* there is an episode in the novel that in a way embodies and replicates Walpole's supernatural, the only scene that has remained unexplained by the author and which for this reason can be considered the only true Gothic scene in the entire novel. It is the moment when Edmund and Sir Philip arrive at Castle of Lovel after the duel with Lord Walter: when the truth about the murder of the former Lord Lovel is finally revealed, at the very moment Edmund sets foot in the courtyard of the manor, all the doors and windows of the castle are thrown wide open by a mysterious force, as if the castle itself was ready to welcome home its rightful owner.

> The sound of the horn announced the arrival of the commissioners; at the same instant a sudden gust of wind arose, and the outward gates flew open. They entered the court-yard, and the great folding-doors into the hall were opened without any assistance. The moment Edmund entered the hall, every door in the house flew open; the servants all rushed into the hall, and fear was written on their countenances; Joseph only was undaunted. "These doors," said he, "open of their own accord to receive their master! This is he indeed!" [117]

In *The Castle of Otranto,* however, the supernatural has no logical explanation and its nature is not traceable to the Christian faith as in the ghosts of Reeve. Nevertheless, in the *Baron* as in *Otranto,* the supernatural interventions are decisive on more than one occasion and serve the purpose of obtaining justice and hindering the misdeeds of evil characters, as in the episode in which the shocking appearance of Ricardo's ghost allows Isabella to run away from Manfred before he can take advantage of her. It is not possible to logically explain how a figure can detach itself from a

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[117] Reeve, *The Old English Baron*, 115.

painting and then cross a stone wall, but it is precisely this inexplicable essence that characterizes the supernatural in Walpole and distinguishes it from the one of other authors.

Moreover, in *The Old English Baron* the supernatural presences are strongly decisive for guiding the main character towards the discovery of the truth, directing the main characters on the right path through prophetic dreams, correcting injustices and guaranteeing the resolution of the narrative plot but, unlike in *Otranto* where the final resolution is closely tied to the apparitions of the ghosts, in Reeve's novel are the "real" characters and their actions, such as the victory of Sir Philip against Sir Walter who makes him finally confess the truth, and Edmund's marriage to Emma Fitz-Owen which restores harmony in the castle, which are the main proponents of the happy ending of the story.

To sum up, both *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron* have within their texts many elements that will become the standard features of the Gothic genre, such as: a haunted castle, ghosts and moving objects, a girl threatened by a power-hungry villain, a brave and morally pure hero, minor characters who run to the aid of the good hero, and justice will always be obtained. What makes these novels with so many elements in common two so profoundly different stories is how the shared elements are characterized and developed differently by the authors, following or going against the narrative conventions of their time and, thus, giving life to two models which will become the starting point of two distinct strands of Gothic fiction that developed in the following years.

Walpole's example and Gothic style will be followed and carried forward by Gothic novelists of the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century, such as M.G. Maturin, William Godwin, and James Hogg, while Reeve's model will be observed and followed mainly, but not exclusively, by Gothic Romance female writers and reformist novelists, such as Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, Daphne du Maurier, and even by Jane Austen. Nevertheless, the dichotomy between *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron* is not a simple opposition between two gothic narratives, but proves how two novels belonging to the same genre can be different while at the same time share most of the themes and formal elements, transforming themselves according to the intentions and the motivations of their authors.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have analyzed the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript in English literature, and in particular how it was used in *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *The Old English Baron* by Clara Reeve. The *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript is one of the most used narrative devices in literature, whose first example dates back the work *The Wonders of Thule* by Diogenes in 1 A.D. The *topos* was generally employed by authors as a means to legitimize their works by giving them an origin that could have been traced back over time to an event or a person who existed in history.

One of the reasons behind the importance of the legitimization of novels was that, writing started to be a source of economic income and not just a pastime cultivated only by aristocrats and wealthy people who wrote more for pleasure, or for political and social reasons, rather than for their economic survival. Throughout history, many well-known authors have made use of this literary *topos*, such as Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, Alessandro Manzoni in *I Promessi Sposi,* Sir Walter Scott in *Waverly* and *Ivanhoe*, Bram Stoker in *Dracula*, and many others. What these authors have in common is their intention to create a link between their fictional work and reality, and what emerge are the multiple effects that this device has on a text, at a narrative, linguistic, ethical, historical, and literary level. In particular, one issue is the incorporation of the rediscovered manuscript within the new story. This union affects the whole structure of the novel in its entirety, as it links two different and separate narrative structures, the old rediscovered manuscript and the story based on it, whereby the old manuscript functions as a framework. The overlap of these two narrative levels creates a paradox: on one hand, this construction highlights the fictionality of the narration, while on the other hand, it creates an allegedly link with reality, trying to confirm the authenticity of the text.

Another significant issue derived from the use of the rediscovered manuscript is fragmentation, usually caused by negligence or the passage of time. The status of a damaged text allows novelists to intervene on the story of the original manuscript, manipulating the contents of the rediscovered document to their advantage. Indeed, when an author first starts to work on a manuscript – typically presented as an old text long forgotten in a private library or on a dusty shelf – with the intention of turning it into a new novel, the first issue he/she will need to deal with is the revision of

the language and the style. Even though the outdated language is a characteristic often used by authors to stress the authenticity of a narrative work, such obsolete style may be difficult to read and even boring for modern readers. Thus, the author offers a full update on the writing style, adapting it to the current historical language standards as well as to the contemporary public's taste. However, under the pretence of updating the language of the text, this expedient was used to manipulate the original text to his/her liking, omitting or replacing sections in the original manuscript which he/she considered boring or superfluous and redirecting the narration to better suit his/her taste.

Furthermore, the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript was used by many authors as a self-defence strategy towards contemporary critics and readers. Especially when the novels introduced innovative elements or exploring new genres, which were usually in stark contrast with the current cultural movement of the time. In this case, the *topos* of the rediscovered manuscript was used to mask the true identity of the author, giving the text an old origin where those elements could be more readily accepted. In this way, the writers were able to hide in plain sight, behind the pretence of not being the real author of that particular novel, but just a mere editor. In addition to giving legitimacy to their novels by giving them an ancient origin, the authors used the historical context to justify the usage of particular behaviour or elements, such as the supernatural, which would not have been otherwise accepted by contemporary readers.

This was the case with the first editions of Walpole's and Reeve's novels, where both novels were presented as the adaptations of rediscovered old manuscripts which dated back to the dark and mysterious middle ages, where superstition and religion were regarded in a completely different way compared to contemporary England. *The Castle of Otranto* and *the Old English Baron* are two of the best examples of the technique of *rediscovered manuscript* in the Gothic novel, a new and innovative genre which had not been dismissed from the start as silly and unbelievable if Walpole would not have used the strategy of masking the true modern origin of his novel. Indeed, in a period where the prevailing culture was the Enlightenment, represented by the works written by authors such as Richardson and Johnson, which demanded full adherence to reality and the complete exclusion of fantastical elements, gothic novels such as *Otranto* and the *Baron* ran the risk of being just ridiculed, criticized and soon forgotten. Although the term Gothic is linked to a great number of different meanings, its correlation of the term with literature is unquestionably well known.

As a matter of fact, the Preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* is considered the official manifesto of the whole Gothic genre. In these few pages, Walpole explains to the reader why his story is different from the other contemporary texts. Novelists who, in the following years, will follow in his footsteps, such as M.G. Maturin, Matthew Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, will look at *The Castle of Otranto* as the main source for what would become the key elements of the Gothic genre. *Otranto* was not the first text in which these specific elements appear, but it is the first text to frame those features and to give them rules and boundaries.

With *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole brought to light the limits of the eighteenth-century novel form and, at the same time, outlined how those limits were to be overcome, by means of the union of fancy and facts. Putting himself in direct contrast to the rules dictated by the culture of his period, Walpole decided to bring back the novel, a form of prose that the Enlightenment society decided to put aside because it was deemed unsuitable and lacking in didactic purposes. Nevertheless, Walpole did not attempt to replace the modern novel with the old Romance, since his intention was to "blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern" into a new genre in which the style of the modern novel would be combined with the imagination and improbability of Romances, trying in this way to evade the strict rules imposed on writing by the Enlightenment. It thanks to the blending of facts and fancy that the first Gothic novel comes to life, and that the objective descriptions typical of the contemporary novel are combined with elements of fantastic nature such as the supernatural, ghosts, haunted castles, etc.

Within a few years, Gothic novels acquired considerable popularity both among readers and other authors, despite the not too favourable reactions of the press, which initially looked with curiosity and distrust at the introduction of such unrealistic elements in contemporary writing. There is a direct link between *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron*, a novel published only a couple of years later. Indeed, in the preface to her novel the author declares that she was inspired by Walpole's work and that she based her novel "on the same plan" used for *Otranto*. However, Reeve did not passively accept all the new canons conceived by Walpole, as she considered the excessive use of the supernatural by the fellow author a serious flaw in his work since it made the novel lose sight of what should have been the main purpose of any text, that is, to be the vehicle of a teaching or a moral message.

Unlike Walpole's novel, Reeve's Gothic story aimed to teach to her readers a moral and, in order to do so, she decided to correct the elements of *Otranto* that she considered "defects," adapting them to contemporary tastes. Hence, what emerges from Reeve's "correction" is a text that starts from the same idea as Walpole's, but whose final result is a completely different novel. After the publication of *The Old English Baron*, contemporaries such as Sir Walter Scott started to criticize Reeve's novel, finding her attempt to tame the supernatural element a complete failure, and calling her work a "bad copy" of *Otranto*, lacking intensity and showing instead an excessive abundance of unnecessary details. Nevertheless, the readership should not limit itself by such criticism, since what Reeve and Walpole's contemporary critics did not take into account was that the "Gothic" to which the two authors refer are two completely different ideas of Gothic: Walpole's Gothic is mysterious, wild and terrifying, while Reeve's is more familiar, nostalgic and reassuring, reminiscent not of an ancient and dark world dominated by superstitions, but of a glorious past that conveys comfort and that contemporary society should look at as a model.

In the end, the dichotomy between *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron* is not a simple opposition between two contemporary Gothic narratives but the juxtaposition of two texts which, despite having many elements in common, are ultimately profoundly different. Indeed, the two narratives are characterized by many shared elements which, however, have been developed in a very different way by their authors, thus giving life to two distinct models of Gothic fiction, which will fully develop in the following years of the eighteenth century. In this dissertation, I have analyzed how the elements that the two novels share and create both a connection between the two works, yet at the same time highlight their differences even more, especially on themes such as the supernatural, inheritance, the problem of aristocracy's legitimacy, the role of religion, family relationships and the role of gender.

Yet, there are many more themes that the two novels share that may have been included in my dissertation. For example, how the representation of the authors' different political visions translates in their novels into the depiction of two opposed conceptions of the past. Moreover, studying more in detail the role of women, which is apparently considered of secondary importance and marginal for the purposes of the story, but is actually the fundamental matrix that gives life and moves all the events of the plots. Another issue to analyze is how in Gothic novels there is a rediscovering of faith in its purest form in the shape of non-ritualized superstitions, and how these are

placed in stark contrast to religion, which is the ritualization of beliefs and the sacred in the form of rites and strict rules. As well as, how Gothic can reach and display the deepest fears of the human being, in particular the fear of death and the extinction of family lineage. And, how the Gothic offers the possibility of giving voice to the inner turmoil and forbidden desires of human beings, usually repressed by social institutions that stifle and destabilize the freedom of the individual in favour of a morally acceptable mask.

Although many years have passed since the Gothic revival and many studies have dealt with its origin, *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Old English Baron* remain the undisputed ancestors of a literary genre that expanded immeasurably in the years to come, branching out in several sub-categories and contaminating new and pre-existing genres. In recent years, the interest in the Gothic has undergone a new increase, especially since the literary genre has come in contact with the film industry, which gave life to many terrifying representations that have the power to reach and arouse the most unconscious fears of its spectators, offering to its audience that mixture of fear and pleasure that awakens the human soul from that perpetual state of "neither pain nor pleasure," which Burke identified as a state of indifference. Indeed, the modern Gothic helps readers reconnect with their inner selves again, just as Walpole first did with the power of *The Castle of Otranto* and its ghosts.

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