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From the Editors

Ever since its "official" inception in the 18th century, the Gothic convention has shown inexhaustible potential for multifarious implementations in all fields of artistic creation. A truly transgressive phenomenon, the Gothic has crossed boundaries of literary genres, media and modes of expression, involving a diversity of themes and forms. The scholarly response to this diversity has confirmed the unquestionable status of the Gothic in modern literary and visual discourses.

This special issue of *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature*, which is a sequel to *Expanding the Gothic Canon: Studies in Literature, Film and New Media* (ed. Anna Kędra-Kardela and Andrzej Sławomir Kowalczyk; Peter Lang, 2014), reflects the dynamic development and topicality of the academic research carried out within Gothic studies. The articles in this collection attest to the inexhaustible diversity of manifestations of the Gothic mode.

Individual essays dwell on romantic, Victorian, modernist and postmodernist variations of the Gothic in fiction, film, and television series. The authors refer to Gothic-related concepts such as the abject, the numinous, the neo-baroque, and the sublime. The plethora of themes and motifs discussed include, for instance, the concept of evolution and science (Katarzyna Pisarska), identity and monstrosity (Dorota Babilas, Jorge Bastos da Silva, Anna Kędra-Kardela, Andrzej Sławomir Kowalczyk), human waste (Jarlath Killeen), the theatricality of crime (Aleksandra Kędzierska), the supernatural and haunting (Jacek Mydla), terrorism (Anne

Keithline) as well as political commentary (Zofia Kolbuszewska). The articles also show the coexistence and interplay of the Gothic with genres such as the crime/detective novel (Joanna Kokot), utopia and dystopia (Marta Komsta, Justyna Laura Galant), and the novel of manners (Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga), to mention but a few.

The editors of this volume firmly believe that the essays included here will prove inspiring to scholars and students alike.

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Going Down the Drain: Sweeney Todd, Sewerage, and London Sanitation in the 1840s.

ABSTRACT
This article examines the penny blood *The String of Pearls* in terms of its treatment of human remains as the equivalent of human excrement. In the mid-nineteenth century, London underwent a transformation in terms of its waste and sanitation management, involving changes which were often controversial and generated considerable debate and discussion in all areas of society. Many of these changes had a disproportionate affect on the urban poor who were also the main readers of the penny bloods and dreadfuls, so it is no surprise to find that sanitation is a major topic in these fictions. The article argues that the Sweeney Todd serial acts as an intervention into these discussions.
Keywords: Penny Blood, Human Waste, Sewerage, Corpse Culture

You never quite knew what you were going to find waiting for you if you descended below ground in Victorian London. There are multiple reports of all manner of weird, wonderful and frankly repulsive discoveries made by the men employed to keep the drainage and sewerage systems going. In 1862, the *Builder* magazine, covering the construction of the new main drain for the city, complained that 'the filth which, under the veiled term of sewage' flowed below the surface of the earth included an assortment of distasteful substances:

> the percolations of crammed churchyards, the rain-washings of the streets, alleys, and yards…horse and cattle dungs, sweepings and scrapings lying on [street surfaces]; refuse from hospitals, infirmaries and dispensaries; fishmongers' and fishmarket washings and offal; slaughterhouse offal; fell-mongers', glue-makers', candle-makers', bone-dealers', tanners', knackers', scum boilers', and triple-dressers' liquid refuse; decayed leaves and vegetables; paper and rags; refuse from chemical works, gas works and dye works; … dead rats, dead dogs and cats, and sad to say, dead babes. People sicken and die too soon (Anonymous, 1862, p. 53).

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As this report makes clear, decomposing human remains circulated freely with excrement, dead animals and animal parts, and the detritus of urban life. Unsurprisingly, the greatest contemporary historian of London, Peter Ackroyd, describes its sewer system as a place 'of universal defilement' and 'the token of death' (Ackroyd, 2012, p. 65).

However, even for a veteran of London's underground networks, what was stumbled upon in the vaults of a Baptist chapel in 1839, was extraordinary. Charged by the Commissioners of Sewers with constructing a new drain under Enon Chapel, in Clement's Lane, a trip underground was required by the workers. Given the reputation the place had acquired by then, they must have been expecting the worst. Nevertheless, while the chapel was certainly notorious as the apparent source of an appalling stink that permeated the entire neighbourhood, and a breeding ground for swarms of what local children called 'body bugs', black, flying insects that hovered any days when the weather was slightly warm, no one was quite prepared for what was discovered in the subterranean darkness.

Enon Chapel was established in 1822 by the Reverend W. Howse, with the upper level devoted to the worship of God, and the lower chamber to burial of deceased congregants. Given the relatively cramped space beneath the building, the number of corpses that could be safely interred there was limited, but Howse was nothing if not an enterprising minister of the Almighty. The chapel had not long been in operation before congregants and local residents began complaining about the horrible smell that wafted from under the floorboards, and worshippers had to resort to pressing vinegar-soaked handkerchiefs to their noses to get through services. The poor Sunday school children, whose lessons took place within the chapel, were the ones who pointed out the insect infestation. The fact that the chapel was actually built over what was rumoured to be an open sewer could have rationally explained these phenomena. After all, it was not as if nineteenth century Londoners were unfamiliar with unpleasant odours. Indeed, according to one historian of the city, Victorian London was, from one perspective, simply a vast accumulation of pungent aromas: 'think of the worst smell you have ever met', Liza Picard advises. 'Now imagine what it was like to have that in your nostrils all day and all night, all over London' (Pickard, 2005, p. 1). This repellent potpourri was caused by the collision of a massive increase in population with a sanitation infrastructure completely incapable of dealing with the extraordinary growth in excrement, dead bodies, and the multitude of other waste products that comes with metropolitan life. Given that the city already reeked to high heaven, that the residents of Clement's Lane even noticed the abominable smell coming from Enon Chapel, indicates just how abhorrent it must have been.

The stink was not, however, generated just by an open drain, though there *was* one running into the burial chamber. The sewage men discovered that the vaults of Enon Chapel had, in effect, been turned into a mass grave, and there

were bodies everywhere, piled floor to ceiling, in various states of decomposition and disintegration. Burial in Enon Chapel was, relatively speaking, a bargain – certainly by comparison with its nearest competition, St. Clement Dane's. That these bodies were not lovingly interred but rather simply thrown into an ever-growing pile and left to rot, accounted for the lack of expense, and a space that was supposed to house a few hundred apparently contained upwards of 12,000 cadavers. One knowledgeable local interviewed later helped to dispel the 'mystification' about just how on earth so many carcases could be squeezed into so small a space, insisting that he had 'no doubt whatever that bodies were slipped down the sewer', to make a bit more room for new residents (Walker, 1846). In an admirable display of efficiency, the Reverend Howse had essentially combined two methods of waste disposal in the cellars of his chapel, effectively converting human remains into human waste.[1]

The coterminous presence of an open drain, leading to a sewer, and a mass grave makes the Enon scandal particularly resonant, given the intense debate about sanitation that took place in 1840's and 1850's London. In this debate the overcrowding of graveyards and church vaults was treated as part of the same problem as the management of human and animal excrement. There was another sanitation problem considered in need of immediate action by the commissars of Victorian health, though this problem threatened the mind rather than the body – the burgeoning penny press industry which churned out enormous quantities of literary drek. What we would now call 'pulp fiction' was treated as an urban pollutant by guardians of public morality deeply concerned about what it was doing to the minds of its readers. The growth in literacy and consumption of popular fiction generated a high level of anxiety about the potentially injurious affect it could have on public morality, especially the morality of the working class (Brantlinger, 1998, pp. 69-92). Unfortunately, this group of readers were not perusing 'improving' material, but chose instead to consume the supposedly morally degrading, publications such as the *Terrific Register* (1825) (a collection of gruesome stories of 'true crimes'), the *Newgate Calendar* (eighteenth century criminal biographies), the 'Newgate novels' (like *Rookwood* (1834), and *Jack Sheppard* (1839) by William Harrison Ainsworth which had criminal protagonists and which were accused of glamorising crime),

[1] The most important contemporary account of Enon is Walker (1839, pp. 154-158). See also Arnold (2006, pp. 104-107). It is important to note that not everyone accepted Walker's claims, or those of his witnesses. John Snow, gave a rather less Gothic account of the same place, insisting that, not only was it impossible for anyone to have fitted 12,000 corpses into the vaults of the chapel, but that it simply didn't happen. He subjected the Enon controversy, and particularly Walker's handling of it, to a coruscating and (to my mind rather persuasive) sceptical examination. He accuses Walker of being purposely gullible, and content to damage the reputation of the deceased Reverend Howse to make political capital for his sanitation causes (Snow, 1843, pp. 47-57).

and, most significantly, the ubiquitous Penny Bloods. Penny Bloods were cheap serials sold primarily to an audience locked out of the novel market because of price, were mostly historical and criminal in subject, and focused on gory and macabre episodes. Given that it was treated almost as a piece of Gothic theatre, it is unsurprising that the Enon Chapel outrage can be considered a major source of imagery for perhaps the most important penny blood of them all (For more on the penny bloods and penny dreadfuls, see James, 1963; Haining, 1975; Anglo, 1977; James & Smith 1998; Springhall, 1998; Killeen, 2012).

In *The String of Pearls* (1846-1847), now best known as the origin story of Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street, the church of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East, merely a ten-minute walk away from Enon Chapel, becomes the centre of an scandal. Congregants complain about an overpowering stench they have to endure when attending services, and the Bishop of London, there to perform a number of confirmations, runs out of the church vowing never to return until the stink is vanquished. So appalled is he by the unendurable smell that 'the people found themselves confirmed before they almost knew where they were' (*SP*, p.154), and if the bishop 'could decently have taken his departure without confirming anybody at all, there is no doubt but that he would have willingly done so, and left all the congregation to die and be – something or other' (*SP*, p. 153).[2] After this embarrassing incident, the St. Dunstan fetor cannot be left to grow ever more rancid. During the ensuing investigation, the prominent magistrate Sir Richard Blunt enters the vaults, but immediately retreats, having located the cause of the foul odour, the 'horrible secret … as will never be forgotten in connection with old St. Dunstan's church' (*SP*, p. 250). Sir Richard has discovered that, like Enon Chapel, St. Dunstan's contains a mass grave full of festering human bodies. As Sweeney Todd scholar Robert Mack points out, 'the representation of overcrowded graveyards and cemeteries that emit a repulsive smell' in *String* would undoubtedly have 'stood out' to original readers, as a powerful reminder of the Enon horror (Mack, 2007, p. 181), and the contribution of a widespread concern about post-mortem burial to the writing and reading of penny bloods has also been examined by other Victorian pulp fiction specialists (cf. Hackenberg, 2009; Powell, 2004). As I have pointed out, however, the Enon Chapel affair was notable partly because of the ways in which it acted as a microcosm of sanitation problems more generally, not just difficulties in the disposal of human remains, but also the treatment of excrement and the working of a proper waste system. Enon's corpse-stuffed sewer was as important as its cadaver-piled vaults, as it echoed the discursive connection sanitary campaigners of the 1830s and 1840s

[2] I will use the edition of *String of Pearls* edited by Robert Mack, and published in 2007. This edition 'follows precisely that of the original 1846-1847 text' (*SP*, p. xxx). Page references will be provided in parenthesis in the main text.

made between human remains and urban waste. This article suggests that as a (the?) prominent example of Victorian pulp fiction, *The String of Pearls* not only references notorious scandals of the period like Enon Chapel, but participates and intervenes in the discourse of sanitation that so captured the imaginations of the Victorian public, a discourse that took in not just the disposal of corpses, but also the management of excrement and slum life, all issues which were of enormous importance to the primary readers of this penny blood: the urban poor.

It is useful to begin this discussion with the Enon Chapel scandal, because it served as a prime example of bad sanitary practice for campaigners who wanted to restructure radically the city's hygiene systems. No sooner was the chapel exposed as a veritable Gothic castle in 1833, than it was snapped up as an establishment for entertainment, and soon after pleasure seekers were literally dancing on the bones of their former neighbours and friends when it was converted into a dancing hall for a society of teetotallers. In exasperation, the surgeon and sanitation champion George Walker, whose *Gatherings from Graveyards* (1839) made much of Enon as an edifying example of how urban burial should not be conducted, intervened, disgusted by the apparent indifference of the dancers to the continued presence of human remains in the vaults. He purchased the chapel, had the cellar excavated and all the remains removed for formal burial in Norwood cemetery in 1847, all with as much publicity as possible, reminding London's readers of its horrors just as huge numbers of them were reading about St. Dunstan's, another house of worship chock full of dismembered limbs and skeletons in *String* (for this 'sequel' to the original horror, cf. Jackson, 2014, pp. 124-126). Walker, a veteran campaigner against the venerable practice of burial in urban church graveyards and vaults, weaponised the Enon affair in pamphlets, private investigations and newspaper articles to convince the authorities that not only did allegedly 'miasmic' overcrowded graveyards threaten the health of local populations, but that they were a threat to human decency as well. Enon Chapel was his most prominent example of how disrespectfully treated human remains were in a city which simply had no more room to house the dead.

For the average reader of *String*, however, the refined disgust expressed about foetid decomposition and the 'respectful' treatment of the deceased advocated by campaigners like Walker, probably sounded rather hollow given the actual living conditions endured by inhabitants of the slums. The narrator of *String* sneers at those overly concerned with urban 'stinkifications', but only when they can be smelt by respectable attendees of religious institutions, remarking of the ignominious reputation of St. Dunstan's that 'a nuisance of any description' in London must become 'venerable by age before anyone thinks of removing it' (*SP*, p. 150):

> Probably, if this frightful stench, being suggestive, as it was, of all sorts of horrors, had been graciously pleased to confine itself to some poor locality, nothing would have been

> heard of it; but when it became actually offensive to a gentleman in a metropolitan pulpit, and when it began to make itself perceptible to the sleepy faculties of the churchwardens of St. Dunstan's church, in Fleet Street, so as to prevent them even from dozing through the afternoon sermon, it became a very serious matter indeed (*SP*, pp. 150-151).

Here the narrator places himself squarely with the inhabitants of the 'poor localities', and against the 'gentlemen' and 'churchwardens', and perhaps against attendees of churches altogether, who are unconcerned with the nauseous odours which assail the noses of the poor every day, until one of them finally begins to waft in their direction and disturbs their slumber time in the pews.

The narrator's emphasis on the social and cultural (though not the geographical) distance between those who live in these poor districts and the congregants of St. Dunstan's possibly reflects the fact that, in this period, the poor were known to be the least likely to attend any church service in the city. As the cultural historian Roy Porter notes, 'religion had no hold upon London's masses', citing one cleric's view that Eastenders considered religion the preserve of a 'different' class (Porter, 2000, p. 363), a comment echoed in *String*, when one character remarks that he doesn't have a soul because it is a luxury he can't afford (*SP*, p. 74). The narrator was not the only one to notice that, unless directly confronted with the horrific living conditions which their neighbours endured, influential inhabitants of London tended to simply dismiss this the issue as none of their concern. In one report, London's Medical Officer of Health, John Simon, warned about the depths of degradation in which many of the city's residents lived, asking the 'educated man' to 'devote an hour to visiting some very poor area in the metropolis'. For Simon, an act of sympathetic imagination was required for the cultured to understand life in the slums, and the accumulation of dirt, filth and putridity those who lived there experienced: 'Let him fancy what it would be to himself to live there, in that beastly degradation of stink, fed with such bread, drinking such water…Let him talk to the inmates, let him hear what is thought of the bone-boiler next door, or the slaughter-house behind; what of the sewer-grating before the door…what of the artisan's dead body, stretched on his widow's one bed, beside her living children' (cf. Porter, 2000, p. 318). Both *String*'s narrator and Simon confront the widespread belief that the filth of these areas was caused by the fact that they were populated by filthy people. Actual dirt, matter out of place, was considered indicative of naturally (perhaps even biologically) dirty human beings and the two organically belonged together. In 1840, when asked by James Peeke, the Surveyor of the Towns Hamlets Division of the Commissioners of Sewers, 'are not the sewers very beneficial in promoting the cleanliness of the neighbourhood?', one witness responded: 'the people are most intolerably filthy; they are the lowest description of Irish, many Germans, and many Jews, and they are, of all the people in the world, the most filthy' (*The Sessonal Papers,* 1840, p. 123).

It is, of course, true that London's slums were almost indescribably filthy. Many of them overflowed with excrement from private cesspools and blocked sewer pipes, as well as blood from neighbouring slaughter houses (White, 2007, p. 33). The area around St. Giles's Church was considered notoriously filthy, described by the architect Sidney Smirke in 1834 as composed of 'unutterable abominations', and as 'a retreat of wretchedness, the nest of disease, and at once the nursery and sanctuary of vice' (cf. Knight, 1841, pp. 254-255; for an analysis cf. White, 2007, pp. 29-35). However, rather than seeing this accumulation of dirt as a function of poverty, many of those deeply involved in reforming the city often resorted to pathological rather than social explanation. Mary Poovey describes the various reports of the tireless sanitation crusader Edwin Chadwick as, in part, attempts to establish the '"naturalness" of middle-class living habits', against which the habits of the poor could be judged not just deficient but indicative of their perverted preference for dirt itself (Poovey, 1995, p. 117; cf. also Danahay, 1991). Only when the stink of poverty literally made its presence felt in the more salubrious haunts of the city was something actually done about it.

The careful demarcation of the city into clean and dirty zones, and its inhabitants into the clean and unclean, is broken down in *String*, and not just by sharp critiques of the presumptuous attitudes of the well-to-do. Rather than being generated by the poor or immigrant communities, the ultimate origin of all the waste matter under St. Dunstan's Church is Sweeney Todd's apparently respectable barbershop in Fleet Street. Todd's may have had a respectable enough façade, but its basement engenders the putrescent waste that is stinking up St. Dunstan's. Todd, for those readers who live on another planet, is a barber who cuts more than just hair. The plot of *String* concerns his routine robbery and murder of his customers, after which he butchers their bodies and then passes the meat on to his 'friend' Mrs. Lovett, who uses human body parts as fillings for her very popular pies which she sells in a shop located in Bell Yard. Todd deposits any excess, unusable body parts and bones in the connecting vaults of St. Dunstan's Church. The cellars of Mrs. Lovett's shop in fact seem to be linked to the whole of underground London – it is the centre of a vast web of corridors and passage: 'there were as many doors in different directions, and singular low-arched entrances to different vaults…that one might almost suppose the inhabitants of all the surrounding neighbourhood had … given up their cellars to Lovett's pie factory' (*SP*, p. 93). Underneath these superficially reputable establishments, then, shops and churches frequented by the wealthy and the respectable, is a veritable labyrinth of filth, analogous to the underground sewer system which Ackroyd terms London's 'heart of darkness' (Ackroyd, 2012, p. 65).

It is possible that the anonymous author located these nefarious activities in Fleet Street, because of its long association with the sewer system. The Fleet River (which runs past the eastern end of Fleet Street) was synonymous with

sewerage transportation. The lower sections of the river had been bricked over and converted into sewers in the 1730s, and it was notorious since that period for being 'full of dung and dead things', a veritable 'river of death' (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 556). Indeed, in 1846, the same year as *String* was first published, one of the Fleet sewers literally exploded because of the build-up of trapped gas, spurting excrement onto the surrounding streets and flattening three posthouses (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 557).

The corpses of Todd's victims, then, are transported underground through filthy tunnels and caverns, just as the Enon corpses flowed through the sewer system, joined by all the other waste of the city. The London sewers were not, of course, originally designed to carry excrement at all. Their purpose was simply to collect rainwater deposited by street drains, and carry that water to the Thames for rerouting into the city's water system. However, by the 1820s, the sewers had become conduits of human excrement because of the ingenious invention of the water closet (WC). Until the introduction of the humble water closet, human waste in London was (badly) managed through a network of independent cesspools. The privies of a house were connected by drains to a cesspool, sometimes located in the back yard, but more often (for obvious reasons of gravity) in the cellar. While the houses of affluent Londoners accommodated many privies and indeed many cesspools, in less respectable areas of the city, several houses and tenements were often connected to just one cesspool. These over 200,000 cesspools were usually bricked in but permeable so that liquid waste could seep out into the surrounding earth. They were emptied in the hours of darkness by night soil men, who would enter the cellar after midnight, gamely climb into a usually full, and often overflowing pool, and shovel out the excrement, transporting the excavated waste matter on a cart driven to a relatively close-by manure heap, where it would sit – often for weeks and months at a time (for a superb analysis of the waste management of London, cf. Jackson, 2014, pp. 46-68; also Halliday, 1999).

To say that the cesspool cleaning was a rather sporadic and unreliable system would be an understatement, and many of them could go without being emptied for months at a time. Judith Flanders describes the cesspools of densely populated areas as simply 'beyond imagining' (Flanders, 2013, p. 206). London effectively sat on a barely contained gloopy 'lake' of excrement (Ackroyd, 2014, p. 68), always threatening to overflow (and quite often actually doing so), seeping into the cellars and foundations of houses, causing many of them to turn into what were to all intents and purposes faecal swamps. For all the sanitation rhetoric about the difference between the living conditions of the middle class and the poor, everyone, in fact, lived on top of piss and shit, and most cellars were sites of horror for much of the year. The foundations of many houses – including the houses of the very rich – were, as the first report of the Metropolitan Sanitary Commission put it in 1847, 'literally honeycombed' with cesspool chambers, and the constant leakage

threatened structural damage (cf. Jackson, 2014, p. 47). Entering a London cellar in the 1830s and 1840s was an extremely hazardous act, and you would most likely have quickly found yourself sinking into an excremental marsh.

The cellar into which Sweeney Todd drops his victims and then butchers them would also have contained his cesspool, and it is fitting, therefore, that these victims are then processed by him into meat and waste product. Indeed, his cellar becomes a kind of cesspool itself, into which he deposits the human beings he considers disposable. Like most cesspools, Sweeney Todd's cellar is located beneath a chair from which its contents (this time, murdered customers) drop, awaiting removal by the night soil man (in this case, Todd himself), making room for the next waste deposit. Todd is a brilliant recycler of waste, and there was a veritable obsession with the possibilities of such salvaging in Victorian culture, with numerous schemes devised as ways to transform shit into cash (for waste recycling see Schuelting, 2016, pp. 29-35). If London in Victorian Gothic became a kind of replacement for the castle and estates of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel, then the subterranean passages of those ancient estates were substituted by the extraordinary network of cellars, pipes, sewers, drains, and cesspools in operation under the streets and houses (Jackson, 2014, pp. 46-68). Sweeney Todd's waste management system is merely a much more efficient and effective version of the one slowly being constructed in the depths of Victorian London. From one perspective, the novel can be described as concerned with the relationship between downstairs and upstairs, the dependence of respectability on a hidden world of subterranean waste circulation, and the transformation of human beings into a mass of stinking, disgusting, miasmatic gloop once they descend into this secret world. The crucible of horror which is the cellar and tunnel network beneath Todd's, St. Dunstan's, and Mrs. Lovett's, is as filthy and disgusting as the actual underground tunnels of Victorian London. Within this fetid network, however, Todd manages to provide meat for the tastiest pies of London town.

Waste becomes food in *String*, as the customers of Mrs. Lovett's pie shop actually eat their neighbours, friends and relatives, as well as the strangers who had the misfortune to visit Todd's for a shave. The novel is not so much interested in the contamination of foodstuffs by excrement as Sally Powell argues (Powell, 2004, pp. 52-53), as the actual transformation of shit itself into food. The Londoners of *String* consume their own waste matter, fed back to them as meat pies. Thus, while some human waste causes an almighty stink in St. Dunstan's, more of it ends up on the shelves of Mrs. Lovett's shop. One place smells stomach churning, and the other makes a stomach growl, but crucially both smells are actually caused by the same process, the transformation of human bodies into a delicious snack. Analogously, the connecting tunnels between Todd's barbershop and Mrs. Lovett's pie shop are a kind of alimentary canal running the wrong direction in the body of London city. London is, of course, frequently anthropomorphised, and

famously, in his 'biography' of the city, Ackroyd starts with a chapter on London as 'body': 'the byways of the city resemble thin veins and its parks are like lungs. In the mist and rain of an urban autumn, the shining stones and cobbles of the older thoroughfares look as if they are bleeding…It is fleshy and voracious, grown fat upon its appetite for people and for food, for goods and drinks; it consumes and it excretes…' (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 1). Edwin Chadwick himself thought of London as a body and, in response to the unworkable excremental system of the sewers, recommended the introduction of a 'venous and arterial system' to clean up the place (Finer, 1970, p. 223). In *String*, the anthropomorphism is monstered, as the body is dysfunctional. Faecal matter, human waste, is fed back to London's body through the mouth.

Ironically, while St. Dunstan's stinks, the same human remains causing the 'abominable' smell are generate the enticing and mouth-watering smells emanating from Mrs. Lovett's pie shop. Their connection is emphasised by the narrator, who describes how congregants are so disgusted by the monstrous odour of the church that they are 'seen to slink into Bell Yard … and then and there to relieve themselves with a pork or veal pie, in order that their mouths and noses should be full of a delightful and agreeable flavour, instead of one most peculiarly and decidedly the reverse' (*SP*, p. 151). The use of the verb 'relieve' here is, I suggest, an obvious (though still amusing) joke alerting the reader to the link between eating fast food and the act of excretion. Mrs. Lovett's shop is horrifically both a toilet and a restaurant, or a restaurant in a toilet.

The novel acts as a darkly humorous reminder to its readers that, the mass consumption of excrement was not, in fact, Gothic fiction in the 1840s and 1850s, but sadly, everyday reality for Londoners. As Sally Powell points out, 'the supply of water to which … Londoners were subject was proven to contain a significant amount of corporeal matter' – especially of the excreted kind (Powell, 2004, p. 52). By the time *String* was published, the flush lavatory, or the water closet, had been installed in many homes, but rather than help waste management, it just made things worse, as with the addition of water cesspools filled up even quicker than usual. Wealthier inhabitants of London responded to this problem by illegally connecting their private cesspools to the public sewerage system, which helpfully took away the excrement-filled water and dumped it…into the river Thames. As Jerry White colourfully puts it, in the 1820s and 1830s the sewer system became 'efficient at shooting shit into the Thames' (White, 2007, p. 50), which quickly turned into a brown-coloured river Styx (as it was sometimes depicted in the popular press), or the real world equivalent of the chocolate river in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964). Soon millions of tonnes of waste were being dumped annually into the Thames (Ackroyd, 2014, pp. 74-75), and since the river was the main source of the city's drinking water, Londoners were forced to consume their own excrement, and discussed this consumption with

considerable fascination. Urbanites had been well aware that they were consuming their own shit and piss since at least 1827. In that year the journalist John Wright's *The Dolphin, or Grand Junction Nuisance; proving that Seven Thousand Families in Westminster and its Suburbs are supplied with Water in a state offensive to the sight, disgusting to the imagination*, *and destructive of health*, was a bestseller, and it pointed out that the Grand Junction Water Works Company's pipe in the Thames was located next to a major sewer, which meant that its customers were getting some very flavoured water pumped directly into their streets and houses.

String, then, is as 'realist' a Gothic text as anything by Charles Dickens, and it should be read as simultaneously responding to existing sanitary conditions in London, and also the official tendency to differentiate between the kinds of living conditions the working class was expected to put up with, and those enjoyed by the wealthy sections of the city. It is important that Todd dispatches customers who have either ready cash or valuable items that can be fenced later (such as the eponymous pearl necklace). In what could be read as a response to the prevailing sanitation discourse which read dirt and filth as functions of the filthiness of the immigrant and poor populations of slum areas, *String* dramatically levels the playing field by expanding the metaphor of humans as excrement vertically, an expansion that eventually takes in practically everyone in the city. After all, the social and geographical reach of Mrs. Lovett's customer base is extensive. Although a great many of her customers of the shop are legal clerks and solicitors, as 'one of the most celebrated shops for the sale of veal and pork that London ever produced' everyone actually crowds in: 'High and low, rich and poor' (*SP*, p. 29). Indeed, there is a sense in which everyone in the city ends up with a pie, as friends carry some of the pies 'to great distances', 'to the suburbs of the city as quite a treat' (*SP*, p. 29), and thousands of the things are made every night to be loaded onto the carts to be sent 'all over the suburbs of London' (*SP*, p. 93). If you are what you eat, then Mrs. Lovett's pies turns everyone into excrement.

It is true to say, though, that even though the human pies are consumed by everyone, distributed far and wide, and eaten by poor shop assistants as well as prosperous jewellery shop owners, the novel does focus on the customers who come from the near-by Lincoln's-inn, and takes particular pleasure at the end of the text, when the actual contents of the pies are revealed to startled well-heeled customers: 'How frightfully sick about forty lawyers' clerks became all at once, and how they spat out the gelatinous clinging portions of the rich pies they had been devouring' (*SP*, p. 280). All customers, though, are completely (though admittedly unwittingly) crazed with hunger for human flesh. Customers 'smacked their lips, and sucked in the golopshious gravy of the pies' (*SP*, p. 279), and the bodies of both known and unknown clients of the barber are broken down into a mass of dismembered limbs, pulped and then meatified for mass ingestion. Humans become gelatinous and disgusting (though incredibly enticing) globs of meat:

> delicious pies; there was about them a flavour never surpassed, and rarely equalled; the paste was of the most delicate construction, and impregnated with the aroma of a delicious gravy that defies description. Then the small portions of meat which they contained were so tender, and the fat and the lean so artistically mixed up, that to eat one of Lovett's pies was such a provocative to eat another, that many persons who came to lunch stayed to dine ….(*SP*, p. 29).

The emphasis here is on the conversion of human subjectivity into so much ooze, slime and simultaneously tantalising and nauseating gore. Like a kind of organic beef farming gone crazy, the distances between the farm, the slaughter house, the meat factory and the pie shop are radically reduced, and the meat sold is prime cuts (the baker is relieved to find that 'there is nothing wrong' with the pies [*SP,* p. 172], by which he means that the food is unadulterated), yet these have come from a sewer-like underground system and are made of human flesh. Customers end up feasting on their friends and relatives, and thoroughly enjoying the experience. I think the suggestion here is that there is, perhaps, not much difference between humans and the waste products they 'manufacture' and the meat they usually consume.

As these bodies are taken to pieces and placed on the shelves of the pie-making manufactory, 'ranged in shelves either in lumps or steaks' (*SP*, p. 97), bodily cohesion is undermined, and the integrity human self is placed under radical threat. Many theorists and analysts of horror have recently used the terminology of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to argue that, in the kinds of disembodiment found in contemporary body horror and torture pornography, a version of radical freedom can be found (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 8). For Deleuze & Guattari, the corporeal is precisely one of the elements of an oppressive world that needs to be overturned in order to achieve true freedom, and this argument has been useful for critics who see in the disintegration of the body in slasher and torture pornography a means to push the body beyond the confines of normative discourse. As the body is disintegrated it is transformed from a fixed entity into one in process, the 'becoming' body, the body in constant flux. The body destroyed and dismembered is also a body that can be read as ontologically disruptive, destabilizing notions of the body as an organic whole. Jay McRoy asks whether 'graphic displays of cinematic terror inevitably confound, if not outrightly escape, humanist notions of a consolidated corporeal and social body?', to which the answer (for many horror critics) appears to be: yes (McRoy, 2010, p. 197). In a related argument, Mikita Brottman argues that 'the pleasure of *cinéma vomitif* is a physical pleasure that splits the body into fragments, fetishes, and other sites of libidinal playfulness. In this kind of cinema, the body loses its individual definition and is collectivized at a transindividual level' (Brottman, 1997, p. 4). Despite the attractions of this line of argument, the attack on bodily integrity in *String* has rather less theoretically breath-taking effects. Rather than

setting the readers or its characters free to 'become', the radical desubjectification that Todd practices upon his clients reduces them to the status of food and faeces.

That the primary location of the almighty stench in the novel is a Christian church is not, I think, accidental. Drawing on the Enon Chapel scandal, the novel directs its sceptical focus on Christianity, with its traditional view of human beings as a special creation. The human bodies interred in the vaults of St. Dunstan are effectively sent to a kind of hell presided over by a Georgian Satan. The cellar in Mrs. Lovett's is 'of vast extent, and of dim and sepulchral aspect' tiled in red, furnished with a furnace from which 'gleaming lights seem to be peeping out' and 'a strange, hissing, simmering sound' emanates, while 'the whole air is impregnated with a rich and savoury vapour' (*SP*, pp. 92-93), a hell-hole of constant manufacture. Todd himself, with a laugh like a 'devil-noise' (*SP*, p. 7), is frequently treated as potentially demonic, and one character believes that if 'anyone had the assistance of the devil himself in conducting human affairs, I should say that by some means Mrs. Lovett had made it worth the while of that elderly individual to assist her' (*SP*, p. 174). The fervent prayers and pleas for mercy and compassion by the victims of Todd and Lovett meet with only more horror. 'God help me!', cries the poor baker Skinner, trapped in Lovett's cellars, and his cry is answered by Sweeney Todd, who smashes in his skull with a double headed hammer (*SP*, pp. 95-97). As Todd's assistant Tobias is being tortured in a madhouse, he begs for mercy, to which he is given the reply: 'Mercy! What the devil do you mean by mercy? Well, that's a good joke' (*SP*, p. 164). Unsurprisingly, Todd likes his apprentices to be boys of a 'religious turn' since 'the imagination in such cases has been cultivated at the expense of the understanding' (*SP*, p. 243). He understandably dismisses religious belief as useful 'superstition' which provides him with a train of easily manipulated sidekicks (*SP*, p. 264).

St. Dunstan's congregants perceive 'a strange and most abominable odour throughout that sacred edifice' (*SP*, p. 149), a smell that is both very physical, in that it emanates from the body parts crammed below the church, and existential, related to the crisis of faith that is about to erupt in the culture of the first readers. As Tom Crook explains, in Victorian culture, dirt was considered a metaphysical as well as a physical property, and 'endowed with the same mysterious, clandestine powers primitive cultures associated with the taboo'. He points to the engineer Henry Sanderson's 1847 *A Plan for a Effectual General System of Sewage for the Cities of London and Westminster and their Suburbs*, and its description of the 'evils of the cesspool', whose 'sulphuretted hydrogen and putrid effluvia' seep 'through the public gratings of gully holes, and the private sinkholes of all class of houses', escaping from the poorer districts and polluting the air of London itself with an ontological threat (Crook, 2008, p. 207). In *String*, those who open St. Dunstan's in the morning do so with handkerchiefs soaked in vinegar over their noses, 'just as the people used to do in the time of the great plague of London'

(*SP*, p. 150), and as the 'stinkifications' get out of control, the churchwardens become convinced that something 'pestilential' is on the loose and that they might be the first victims. Human beings are the source, as well as the primary victims, of this physical and moral pollution, the implication being, perhaps, that the planet would be much better off without them.

Cannibalism had long been a transgression thought peculiar to uncivilized inhabitants of far-flung lands, but it is here discovered being perpetrated by the inhabitants of the most civilised city on earth (for an excellent analysis of 'colonial cannibalism, see Brown, 2013, pp. 17-82). While, of course, the customers of Mrs. Lovett's shop don't know that they are eating their friends and relatives, their conversation is full of cannibalistic and bestial language anyway which suggests that only a thin veneer of pseudo-sophistication differentiates them from the supposed barbarians in foreign lands. One customer announces that he used to eat with his uncle so as to financially leach him dry, 'but since he disappeared one day, I live on Lovett's pies, instead of the old buffer' (*SP*, p. 252). Another customer, whose husband has been killed by Todd, and turned into a pie, is urged by Sweeney to 'lift up the top crust' of the pie she has just purchased, 'for you will soon see *something* of Mr. Wrankley' (*SP*, p. 266). Yet another announces: 'I would eat my mother, if she was a pork-chop, done brown and crisp, and the kidney in it…grilling hot' (*SP*, p. 263). Even Mark Ingestrie, trapped down in the cellar to make the pies, turns into a frighteningly obsessed human meat-eater for a while, ingesting (as his name dictates) an enormous quantity of human flesh: 'he tasted them half-cooked, he tasted them wholly cooked, and he tasted them overdone; hot and cold, pork and veal with seasoning, and without seasoning, until at last he had had them in every possible way and shape' (*SP*, p. 172).

Although Sally Powell powerfully argues that in *String*, 'representations of the pulverized and processed body speak implicitly of the exploitation of the worker, the inhuman demands of the employer, and the blind appetite of the consumer for the desirable and affordable product' (Powell, 2004, p. 54), in fact it is *not* just the working class body that is exploited, pulverized and made into meat (indeed, more often it is the rich who end up in the pies, as they possess something Todd can sell). Just as Todd does not have any class prejudices and will kill anyone he believes it useful to, the pies contain the flesh of an unknown and terrifyingly large multitude of all classes and no class. All are meat. All are ooze. And, perhaps worst of all, all are excrement. Although a case could be made that *String* is really interested in classifying certain elements of city life as cannibalistic consumers and exploiters who munch through the human detritus thrown up by the anonymous forces of city life, this analysis would hardly register the sheer exuberance and joy found in the scenes in *String* involving the consumption of the human pies. Just at the time when sanitation campaigners were trying to convince London officials to clean up their act, and clean up the city, *String* suggests that such a cleansing would

make little difference to the fact that human beings are, basically, cannibalistic, excremental creatures, and that (perhaps) a city as dirty as London is the natural habitat of such a species.

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The Dialogic Mode in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*: The Manorial Gothic Meets a Subversive Novel of Manners

ABSTRACT
The paper proposes to read the dialogue of two generic traditions: the novel of manners and gothic fiction in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. The generic dialogue in *Northanger Abbey* constitutes a particularly interesting case, as it appears at the very inception of the manorial tradition in fiction and thus bears a strong modelling function. The paper argues that *Northanger Abbey* represents a subversive version of the novel of manners, which contextualizes and substantiates the transgressive character of the gothic.
Keywords: manorial literature, novel of manners, gothic fiction, dialogue.

The greatness of artists, Barbara Hardy writes in *A Reading of Jane Austen*, lies in their ability to transform their chosen genre, to move the history of generic forms in a new direction (1979, p. 11). Hardy's early reappraisal of Austen focuses on her contribution to the development of the modern novel; it demonstrates the ways the writer harmonized two earlier traditions and created a „unified sense of character and society" by combining „the internal and the external approaches to character" (1979, p. 11) in a new form. While Austen's contribution to the creation of the modern novel has by now been well established, her importance for the manorial tradition in fiction needs to be studied in more depth. The writer had a fundamental role in the transition of the country house tradition in literature from poetry to prose, from the seventeenth-century country-house poem to the modern novel. The range of themes, plots and motifs found in her works created a corpus on which much of the manorial tradition in fiction has been founded. Yet, the impact of this diversity has yet to be fully understood, particularly in the context of the evolution of manorial genres.

The majority of Austen's novels belong to the genre of the novel of manners and it is in this form that the writer contributed the most to manorial literature.

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Her use of the gothic is much more restricted, practically limited to just one novel, *Northanger Abbey*. And yet, the novel's importance for the development of the tradition is crucial, as it testifies to the writer's experimenting with a different language than the one she developed in her novels of manners. If Austen is the founding mother of the country-house novel, mediating between the seventeenth-century country-house poem and later fiction, the two generic paths she explored, even if in unequal proportion, are equally important and need to be seen in relation to each other and to the whole tradition.[1]

The two book studies that discuss Austen's contribution to the development of the manorial literary tradition, Malcolm Kelsall's *The Great Good Place: The Country House and English Literature* (1993) and Alistair's Duckworth's *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (1994), belong to the traditional trend in the writer's research and offer a conservative reading of *Northanger Abbey*. Both critics find the gothic elements in the novel unconvincing and subsidiary to its realistic mode. Focusing on the country-house ideal, they question the relevance of Catherine's suspicions and claim the superiority of Henry Tilney's common-sense perspective.

When the new wave of research reclaimed Austen for the feminist critique and showed a more subversive tone of her writing, *Northanger Abbey* was also read in a new way. The gothic mode was no longer seen as a mere parody of earlier novels but as the locus of the ideological debate and an important educational tool in the development of the main protagonist. Critics no longer saw Catherine as a „deluded female Quixote who mistakes life for a romance until she is properly corrected and humbled by the hero" (Gerster, 2000, p. 123) but came to emphasize her correct judgement and the importance of gothic fiction in teaching her about contemporary forms of patriarchal violence. As Claudia Johnson (1988) rightly argues:

> Gothic novels teach the deferent and self-deprecating Catherine to do what no one and nothing else does: to distrust paternal figures and to feel that her power of refusal is continuously under siege. […] Further, gothic novels teach Catherine about distrust and concealment, about cruel secrets hidden beneath formidable and imposing structures (pp. 39-40).

Recent years have brought a new, fruitful phase in Austen's research that aims at going beyond the binary vision of the writer as either deeply conservative or

[1] The paper is the first part of a larger study into the importance of *Northanger Abbey* for the development of the gothic tradition in manorial literature. The focus here is on the dialogue between the novel of manners and gothic fiction. The subsequent papers will analyse the metafictional character of the gothic convention and its relation with the seventeenth-century country-house poem and the representation of the gothic country house in the novel and its film adaptations.

staunchly feminist. In such readings, the logic of "both/and" replaces that of "either/or" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 49) and the dialogue of contradicting voices rather than a unified interpretation is put centre stage.[2] In the dialogic readings of Austen, *Northanger Abbey* occupies a special place, as the novel has always been seen to incorporate two contrasting traditions, the realistic mode of the social novel in the first, Bath section and the parodic mode of the gothic in the second, Northanger part.

As James R. Keller convincingly demonstrates, the tension between the two parts of the novel and their different generic conventions has been at the centre of the criticism of the book.[3] The purported lack of aesthetic unity is the principal reason why *Northanger Abbey* is often described as a problem novel, one that demonstrates enough merit "to warrant the attention and delight of readers and critics for nearly two centuries, but nevertheless possessing flaws that cannot remain unnoticed by the discerning reader familiar with her later, more polished works" (Keller, 2000, p. 131). And yet, Keller rightly argues, it is not clear why Austen scholars are so "addicted to resolution and closure" and why a realistic novel needs to possess "an imaginary unity" (Keller, 2000, p. 141). The dialogic trend in Austen's research clearly rectifies the need to look for aesthetic unity and acknowledges that divergent voices are in fact, as Mikhail Bakhtin argued, a natural element of the novelistic form.

The paper proposes to read the novel's dialogic mode in the context of the manorial generic tradition.[4] As I demonstrated in more depth elsewhere, the realistic thrust of the novel of manners and the fantastic mode of gothic fiction are the two generic conventions that have been most formative in the development of the country house tradition in fiction (Terentowicz-Fotyga, 2015). Rooted in contrastingly different formal and ideological premises, the two genres construct very different visions of the manorial order. While the former is naturally aligned with country-house idealisations, the latter is more suited for manorial critique.

The novel of manners belongs to the realm of realistic fiction; its interest lies in the everyday life of a particular social group or class. Focusing on the relation between the individual and society, the genre examines the impact of "social customs, conventions, traditions, mores, and habits" (*Women's Studies,* 1990, pp. 205-206) on individual people and communities. The genre examines "the moral and ethical underpinnings of a small group of characters" in a restricted setting

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[2] A good analysis of the dialogic mode in *Northanger Abbey* in the context of the development of the main protagonist is offered by Carole Gerster (2000). The dialogic character of the novel's parody is discussed by Tara Ghoshal Wallace (1988). See also Barbara K. Seeber (2000).

[3] Keller's bibliographic study offers a succinct and informative summary of the debate (2000).

[4] I am here drawing upon and extending Claudia Johnson's thesis that in *Northanger Abbey* Austen domesticates the gothic "and in the process brings it into complete conjunction with the novel of manners" (1988, p. 35).

and tends to offer "traditional plot patterns [and] conventional, even stereotypical, characterisations" (Weld, 1992, p. 9). The story often centres on individuals' introduction into society, their education into social norms and habits; the themes concern courtship and husband-hunting (Bowers, 2010, p. 107). Focusing on the daily life of the community, the novel of manners tends to concentrate on the domestic sphere; it is not interested in the extreme but in the predictable and the familiar.

What is particularly important for the manorial tradition is the fact that in the novel of manners, the "world is made stable by the general acceptance of social standards and of class distinctions" (Reddy, 2010, p. 69). Shared codes of social manners, habits and traditions function as a way of maintaining the stability of the given community. Human behaviour is examined with an eye to establishing the norm and "the common body of belief" (Weld, 1992, p. 8), which are seen as guarantees of the social order. The self "is interpreted through the community's understanding what is right and proper" (Brothers and Bowers 2010: 4) and shared habits, manners and codes make up for "a system of behavior that restrains force and turns aggression into wit or some other gamelike form of combat" (Price, 1975, p. 267).[5]

In contrast to the realistic paradigm of the novel of manners, the natural element of the gothic convention is fantasy and the fantastic. Rather than exploring the centre of the social world, the gothic moves into the periphery, spatially, thematically and morally.

> While the novel of manners avoids exaggeration and extravagance, choosing the conventional and the stereotypically familiar, the gothic is defined by excess and transgression. It portrays characters that violate the moral, sexual or religious norms, forces that undermine human comprehension and the belief in human reason; events that exceed the limits of probability and test the boundaries of realistic representation. (Terentowicz-Fotyga, 2015, p. 93)

If the novel of manners is set at the centre of the community and searches for a stable set of norms, the gothic convention explores isolated, peripheral places, extreme situations and transgressive behaviour. Situating its characters "and readers at the limits of normal worlds and mores" (Botting, 1996, p. 13), both physically and metaphorically, it explores the areas into which the polite novel of manners would not venture, as probing them "too deeply would be to risk tearing the social fabric" (Punter, 1980, p. 198). While the former locates the country house at the fulcrum of the social world and at the centre of a given community, gothic houses are inhabited by social outcasts, villains and their victims.

[5] For the analysis of the ethical and moral underpinnings of the novel of manners and their implications for the country house ideal, see Terentowicz-Fotyga (2015, pp. 31-35).

In terms of the manorial tradition, the clash of the two contrasting generic conventions in *Northanger Abbey* constitutes a particularly interesting case, as it sets the two genres that normally structure different texts in a creative dialogue within one novel. The fact that this generic dialogue appears at the very inception of the manorial tradition in fiction means that the text bears a particularly strong modelling function, it constructs a generic variant that will shape in important ways the development of manorial literature.[6]

In *Northanger Abbey,* Austen clearly experimented with form and tried to find the right language to write critically about the English country house. The history of the novel's creation and publication is in this context particularly meaningful. Even though it was Austen's first novel, it remained unpublished until after the author's death. The writer kept revising the text and its posthumous publication suggests that she was never fully satisfied with the result, that she might not have found a satisfactory language to represent the dark side of the manorial order.[7] In terms of Austen's vision of the country-house, it is quite revealing that Northanger Abbey came before Pemberley, General Tilney before Fitzwilliam Darcy, in other words, the critique of the country house started to crystallize before its idealizations, which the writer is most remembered for.

Northanger Abbey tells the story of a young woman's entrance into the world and her education into social norms and customs. Though in contrast with Austen's most popular novels, the action is not set in a rural community centred around a country house, but takes place first in Bath, where Catherine Morland travels from her home village of Fullerton, and then in a gothic country house, Northanger Abbey, the novel, nevertheless, portrays a small community of several families. Characteristically for the novel of manners, the first part of the novel employs a realistic mode to portray the everyday life of a particular social group observed in a restricted setting. Structured by the theme of courtship and husband-hunting, it spotlights the language of social mores, manners and habits and their impact on the development of the main protagonist. The life of the community is put centre stage and the focus on the young girl's entry into the world allows Austen to examine with a fresh eye the functioning of social codes and habits.

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[6] What makes *Northanger Abbey* even more interesting is the fact that the dialogue of the two genres is inscribed in a metafictional form. *Northanger Abbey* is an early example of fiction about fiction, a narrative that probes into the nature of reality and fictionality, which has important consequences for the development of the country-house tradition. The analysis of the metafictional aspect of the gothic convention and its implication for the evolution of manorial literature goes beyond the scope of the paper and will be discussed in a separate work.

[7] As Keller (2000) explains, "The novel's original composition has been accurately dated to 1798–1799, and it is speculated that revisions continued periodically over the next two decades: 1803, 1809 and 1816. The publication of the novel in 1818 was five months after Austen's death in 1817" (p. 131).

New to the Bath society and to a larger world as such, Catherine is a convenient focalizer to examine critically the language of social mores and manners. The first pages of the novel portray the main heroine as naïve and inexperienced, her parents as incapable of preparing her for the complexity of the social world. Catherine, we are told, could not "learn or understand anything before she was taught, and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid" (Austen, 2000, p. 3), her mind was "as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is" (p. 6); Catherine's mother knows so little of the complex world that her advice fails to prepare her daughter for what is to come. And while the parodic tone and metafictional play in the opening pages of the novel sets the "moderation and composure" (p. 7) of common life against the over-active imagination characterising the romantic mode of fiction, the development of the novel puts them *both* to test and ultimately demonstrates that violence and transgression belong not only to gothic fictional worlds but define the daily life of the civilized community.

When discussing the parodic mode of *Northanger Abbey,* critics tend to concentrate on Austen's treatment of the gothic convention and emphasize the clash between the social realism in the first and the parodic gothic in the second parts of the novel. And yet, a closer look at the representation of social codes and rituals demonstrates that Austen's deployment of the mores and manners theme is far from unproblematic.[8] In fact, I want to argue that *Northanger Abbey* represents a subversive, or to use James Kincaid's (2010) term, a "slippery version" of the novel of manners (p. 95), which does not clash but resonates with the gothic convention. Rather than establishing a realistic portrayal of a small community with a stable set of norms, the novel offers a comic portrayal of a dysfunctional system, which has a lot in common with the transgressions imagined and happening in the second part of the novel. The mores and manners theme in *Northanger Abbey* does not serve as a contrast to Catherine's over-excitable imagination, the familiar and the everyday do not cancel but substantiate the transgressive mode of the gothic. Austen's representation of social codes and manners as an artificial and oppressive system undermines the main principles of the novel of manners and in effect prepares the ground for the reappraisal of the gothic convention.[9] In this sense, the two genres do not clash but work together to expose the power relations behind the patriarchal and manorial orders.

In "Anthony Trollope and the Unmannerly Novel," James Kincaid (2010) offers an inspiring insight into the nature of the novel of manners. He argues

[8] For a good analysis of Austen's social vision and the artistic form of her novels, see Monaghan, David. *Jane Austen: Structure and Social Vision*.

[9] The present paper is greatly indebted to reappraisals of the gothic. The most relevant for the present argument are Levine (1975), Glock (1978), Wilt (1980) and Johnson (1988).

that despite the surface politeness, the character of the genre is quite menacing. Beneath "its bland descriptive surface" there is "a fierce guard assigned to police the borders" (p. 88) because the social reality that the genre aims to portray has a great deal to protect (p. 87). By assumption, the novel of manners needs to take "a large system of moral and social codings" (p. 90) for granted. These codes tend to be seen as natural and instinctive, existing, as if, beyond time and underlined by the common understanding, "unstated but complete" (p. 93). The novel of manners rewards

> those with good manners – and often even […] those whose manners are not so good; but it will not tolerate those who raise questions about the very basis for a particular system of manners […] [those who] expose the rules for what they are – artificial, often ridiculous means for maintaining an ideology. (Kincaid, 2010, p. 87)

And yet, Kincaid argues, every novel of manners is at a risk of becoming unmannerly, of turning into a subversive, "slippery version" (p. 95) of the genre that attacks the premises on which it is based. Rather than representing the system of social codes as "the appearance of nature," such an "unmannerly" novel of manners will "blow the whistle on it" (p. 88). It will expose the artificial situatedness of the seemingly natural system of social codes and "of the interested power motives that uphold it. Manners can operate efficiently only when they are not seen as manners, not, in fact, seen at all" (p. 89). As soon as they are "revealed as a system […] tied to values, historical situation, the protection of position and power" (pp. 89-90), the genre, rather than portraying the stability of a given community and its common body of belief, begins to "raise questions about the values, the behavior, the manners not only of the individual but also of the culture as a whole" (p. 96).

Northanger Abbey represents such a subversive version of the novel of manners. The story purports to present Catherine's entrance into the world and her gradual education into social norms and customs. Yet, the series of events that befall the young heroine, first in Bath and then in Northanger Abbey, do not locate her in an enclosed and well-functioning community into which she gradually accommodates and in which she learns to function. To the contrary, step by step the novel exposes a vulnerable and unstable nature of social relations and an artificial and oppressive character of social codes and manners.

What is interesting, the artificial character of social codes is highlighted in one of the first scenes set in Bath, when Catherine meets Henry Tilney for the first time. To Catherine's surprise at his exalted reactions to her words, he responds with a tongue-in-cheek comment that this is precisely what social conventions expect of him and concludes that he "must give one smirk, and then we may be rational again" (Austen, 2000, p. 12). Henry's words about marriage function in a similar way. He describes marriage as a contract, in which "man has the

advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal; […] he is to purvey, and she is to smile" (pp. 47-48). Of course, the meta-critical position adopted by Henry does not mean that he is outside society's coercive structures. As many critics demonstrated, he is not in opposition but in harmony with other paternal bullies, his "disparaging banter, not the less corrosive for being entirely in the normal course of things" (Johnson, 1988, p. 37).[10] Yet, by speaking ironically about social codes and manners, he exposes them as an artificial and contingent system and in effect opens up a space for their criticism. Observed in an ironic way, mores and customs no longer appear natural and unquestionable but come to be seen as a menacing system aimed at keeping the relations of power intact.[11]

While Henry is happy to blow the whistle on the artificial and unnatural character of social codes and manners, Isabella Thorpe and her brother are the ones that never question the system, yet abuse it to their own benefit. Isabella is the epitome of artificiality and insincerity and Austen repeatedly contrasts her words and behaviour. In the Bath scenes, the reader is meant to observe critically her overblown reactions and false declarations that the naïve Catherine still tends to take at face value. But the development of the plot in the second part of the novel finally makes Catherine realize the scale of Isabella's hypocrisy. When she jilts James as soon as a better candidate appears and then tries to win him back once her attempt to secure Captain Tilney falls through, Catherine receives an important lesson in the shallowness and hypocrisy of people and the uselessness of social conventions.

The motif of failure of the social community to defend the powerless and properly educate young girls concentrates on the character of Mrs Allen. While Catherine's parents are portrayed as too simple and straightforward to prepare the girl for the complexities of the world, Mrs Allen is just as poorly equipped to introduce her into society. In a comic portrayal of Mrs Allen, Austen puts social codes and manners to test. Introducing the character, the narrator observes

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[10] Claudia Johnson (1988) suggests that the reunion of Catherine and Henry could only be possible if he learnt that the lessons of gothic fiction apply just as well to the "midland countries of England" and the seemingly polite, civilized English society (pp. 37-41). Gerster (2000) also writes about the significant evolution of Henry's thinking about gender roles under the influence of Catherine (pp. 118-119). For a different interpretation of Henry's role in Catherine's education, see, for example, Howard S. Babb, *Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue* (Chapter 4: *Northanger Abbey:* Parody, Pedagogy, and the Play of Feeling) (1962).

[11] In this sense, Henry's words resonate with the comments of the narrator, who often provides such a distancing position for the reader. For example, contrasting Catherine and Miss Tilney with other members of the Bath community, the narrator writes: "and though in all probability not an observation was made, nor an expression used by either which had not been made and used some thousands of times before, under that roof, in every Bath season, yet the merit of their being spoken with simplicity and truth, and without personal conceit, might be something uncommon" (Austen, 2000, p. 44).

humorously that her only qualification to "introduce a young lady into public" (Austen, 2000, p. 8) is her passion for clothes. She precedes these words with a comment that

> the reader may be able to judge, in what manner her actions will hereafter tend to promote the general distress of the work, and how she will, probably, contribute to reduce poor Catherine to all the desperate wretchedness of which a last volume is capable. (p. 7)

Although the readers do not yet fully understand the significance of the narrator's comment, they are encouraged to evaluate the character in a negative way.

As Catherine's socialization proceeds, Mrs Allen's failures accumulate. Upon arrival in Bath, it turns out that the social circle she wanted to introduce Catherine to takes long to materialize. They spend their time parading "up and down for an hour, looking at everybody and speaking to no one" (p. 11) and although, the narrator writes, "[t]he wish of a numerous acquaintance in Bath was still uppermost with Mrs Allen, and she repeated it after every fresh proof, which every morning brought, of her knowing nobody at all" (p. 11), they have "no party to join, no acquaintance to claim, no gentleman to assist them" (p. 9). The contrast between the promised socialization and the reality of the Bath season is emphasized by a comic repetition of the word wish, which punctuates Chapter Two:

> I wish you could get a partner […] I wish we had a large acquaintance here. […] I wish we had *any*. […] I wish they were here now. […] I wish I did. I wish I had a large acquaintance with all my heart, and then I should get you a partner. – I should be so glad to have you dance. […] I wish she had been able to dance, […] I wish we could get a partner for her. (pp. 9-10)

When the company finally appears, Mrs Allen's social circle proves hardly appropriate, as the acquaintance with Isabella and John Thorpe poses a number of risks, against which Mrs Allen fails to protect the young girl. This is well-observable in the series of scenes constructed around the trips the Thorpes organize. When Catherine seeks Mrs Allen's assistance to avoid joining the party, the latter either remains "placidly indifferen[t]" (p. 37) or fails to understand the subtle codes Catherine uses to elicit her help. Mrs Allen, the narrator comments, "not being at all in the habit of conveying any expression herself by a look, was not aware of its being ever intended by anybody else" (p. 37). It is only after the trip to Blaize Castle takes place, after Catherine is lied to, bullied and abducted, that Mrs Allen deems such expeditions inappropriate:

> '[…] These schemes are not at all the thing. Young men and women driving about the country in open carriages! Now and then it is very well, but going to inns and public places together! It is not right; and I wonder Mrs Thorpe should allow it. […]'
> 'Dear madam,' cried Catherine,' then why did you not tell me so before? I am sure if I had

> known it to be improper, I would not have gone with Mr Thorpe at all, but I always hoped you would tell me, if you thought I was doing something wrong.' (p. 66)

If Henry's hurtful banter teaches Catherine about the contingent character of social norms, Isabella's empty words and overblown manner about the falsity of language and the shallowness of human relations and Mrs Allen about the ineffectiveness of the community, the lessons learnt from John Thorpe's behaviour are more radical. Thorpe is an emotional and physical bully; in his company, Catherine is not only denied reason and judgement and the right to decide for herself; she is lied to and lied about; she is manipulated emotionally and socially and when she resists, she is abducted and forced to comply with his will. The figure of John Thorpe locates masculine violence and brutality firmly at the heart of the social world. Well before General Tilney appears on the scene as an embodiment of the gothic villain, the theme of transgression, excess and violence seeps into the polite form of the novel of manners.

> The moral and physical coercion of powerless females which figures so predominantly in gothic fiction is here transposed to the daytime world of drawing room manners, where it can be shown for the everyday occurrence it is, but no less 'strange' for all that. (Johnson, 1988, p. 37)

Austen creates a number of links between John Thorpe and General Tilney. Both stand for masculine cruelty and violence, both resort to physical violence and emotional bullying. Both have an ulterior matrimonial motive in courting Catherine, rooted in their conviction about the alleged prospects of the girl. What is more, Thorpe is the one that vouches for the General when talking to Catherine, describing him as "a fine old fellow, […] a gentleman-like, good sort of fellow as ever lived" (Austen, 2000, p. 60); from Thorpe General Tilney learns about Catherine's wealth. In both subplots, the acts of transgression and violence are linked to gothic buildings. Thorpe's abduction of Catherine takes place during the trip to Blaize Castle; from Tilney's gothic country house she is expelled as soon as her prospects prove false. Her suspicions about the fate of General Tilney's wife centre on the gothic architecture of the Abbey and although his wrongdoing is partly imaginary, her opinion of him ultimately proves well-justified.

If General Tilney and not John Thorpe tends to be described as a gothic villain, it is because he is portrayed in the gothic surroundings, as a paternal figure ruling over his gothic country house and thus reminiscent of the rogue aristocrats in earlier gothic fiction. But his villainy is not greater than that of John Thorpe and the number of parallels and similarities between the two characters suggests thematic continuity between the two parts of the book. Examples of masculine power and violence towards women are not limited to the second part of the novel but subsume the representation of social reality in the whole narrative.

The experience of the oppressive social system which the gothic convention brings to light and accentuates does not clash with but develops from the portrayal of society in the mores and manners section. Gothic fiction uses a different language to understand and represent the relations of power than the one deployed in the polite novel of manners, but in *Northanger Abbey* the transgressions imagined and happening in the Abbey are contextualized and substantiated by the failures of the social codes and rituals portrayed in the first part of the novel. In fact, one might argue that the gothic mode is initiated only after the safety promised by the novel of manners is compromised. The fantastic mode of gothic excess takes over the text once the true character of the social world is exposed, once the stability of social codes is put into question and undermined.

Claudia Johnson (1988) is right to argue that in *Northanger Abbey* Austen domesticates the gothic "and in the process brings it into complete conjunction with the novel of manners" (p. 35). But the novel of manners that the gothic convention resonates with is *unmannerly*, as it subverts the most cherished premises of the genre. In the first part of the novel, Austen demonstrates that social codes, manners and rituals are not an innocent, instinctive realm which an individual seamlessly and naturally grows into. To the contrary, she uses the theme of a young girl's entry into the world to expose social mores and manners "for what they are – artificial, often ridiculous means for maintaining an ideology" (Kincaid, 2010, p. 87). Catherine's process of socialization amounts largely to discovering the abuses and the power play behind social codes and habits. Under the cloak of sociability, the young girl is manipulated and bullied, she is lied to and lied about, she is cajoled, threatened and denied the right to decide for herself. In *Northanger Abbey,* words prove either misleading or blatantly untrue, behaviour is either insincere or openly violent. Rather than portraying a community united by "the common body of belief" (Weld, 1992, p. 8), a world "made stable by the general acceptance of social standards and of class distinctions" (Reddy, 2010, p. 69), Austen exposes the artificial and dysfunctional character of social codes and manners and reveals the relations of power hidden behind daily norms and customs.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen brings together the two generic traditions that will define the development of manorial tradition in fiction, the novel of manners and gothic fiction and constructs a complex dialogue of their different languages and iconographies. But the truly innovative character of the novel consists in its subversive tone. The novel "contains within itself a critique of all the forms it takes" (Wallace, 1988, p. 271). She begins to develop the new generic form of the novel of manners that will be perfected in her most popular books and at the same time installs at the heart of the genre a subversive tone that undermines its most cherished assumptions. She parodies gothic fiction but at the same time reappraises its implications by bringing it into a fruitful dialogue with the unmannerly mode of the novel of manners.

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The Utopian and the Gothic in Ellis James Davis's *Pyrna*: *A Commune; or, Under The Ice*

ABSTRACT
The paper discusses spatial modelling in Ellis James Davis's Victorian utopia, *Pyrna*: *A Commune; or, Under The Ice* (1875) regarding its appropriation of the Gothic mode into the utopian convention. By examining selected aspects of the novella's world, this article argues that the Gothic tropes of numinosity and sublime constitute significant elements as major defamiliarizing components of the semiotically monolithic utopian spatial model.
Keywords: utopia, Gothic, sublime, numinous, space

On the surface, Ellis James Davis's *Pyrna: A Commune; or, Under the Ice* (1875), an obscure late Victorian utopia, blends the conventional utopian model with references to some of the dominant socio-political trends of the era, Darwinism and social Darwinism in particular (Claeys, 2009, p. x).[1] At the same time, Davis's narrative is structured upon the fusion of two distinct generic conventions – utopia and the Gothic – which accounts for *Pyrna*'s distinct spatiotemporal modelling.

In his typology of literary models, Andrzej Zgorzelski classifies utopian and Gothic narratives both as secondary genres of fantastic literature, which "presupposes the *confrontation* of [phenomenal reality's] order with a different one, signalling the presupposition by the presentation of both or more orders *within the text*" (Zgorzelski, 2004, p. 32). In effect, fantastic literature *sensu* Zgorzelski foregrounds "the *strangeness* of those it confronts with the known order

[1] As Gregory Claeys contends, "the discussion of Social Darwinist and eugenic themes, and the debate over the promise or threat presented by the socialist movement" were "the two most important innovations" in the utopian genre (Claeys, 2009, p. x). For further information on the subject, see, for instance, Gregory Claeys "General Introduction: *The Reshaping of the Utopian Genre in Britain, c. 1870-1900*."

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of phenomenal reality" (p. 32) (emphasis added). While both utopia and Gothic are based on the juxtaposition – or, as Zgorzelski would have it, confrontation – of various models of reality, the idea of "strangeness" is approached differently in the two genres. Gothic narratives foreground an inherently dichotomous approach to spatial modelling, based on the genre's paradigmatic liminality established in-between "the human domain of rationality and intelligible events" and "the world of the sublime, terrifying, chaotic Numinous which transcends human reason (but which need not be the supernatural)" (Aguirre, 2008, p. 3). Almost invariably associated with fear, terror, and entrapment in Gothic narratives, numinous space functions thus as the nucleus of transgression in the given text, whose key role is "to destabilize assumptions as to the physical, ontological, or moral order of the cosmos" (p. 6). Structured upon signs that elude comprehension, the essential unknowability of the Numinous alienates both the readers and the characters of the Gothic narrative, and since "[a]mbivalence and uncertainty obscure single meaning" (Botting, 1996, p. 2), the intensely defamiliarizing effect of the Numinous constitutes the core element of Gothic sensibility.[2]

Bearing in mind the dualistic quality of Gothic spatiality, it is important to notice that utopian space is also an essentially binary construct, signified by the boundary between the largely static utopian centre and the disordered peripheries of the outside world.[3] The Gothic emphasis on disarray and conflict, made evident in the genre's disorderly aesthetics, is in direct contradistinction to utopian beauty and harmony that, by default, resist ambivalence and heterogeneity. Drawing on Foucault's definition of a heterotopia as a "counter-site," Fred Botting points out that

> the main features of Gothic fiction, in neoclassical terms, are heterotopias: the wild landscapes, the ruined castles and abbeys, the dark, dank labyrinths, the marvelous, supernatural events, distant times and customs are not only excluded from the Augustan social world but introduce the passions, desires, and excitements it suppressed. (Botting, 2012, p. 19)

Conversely, utopias model space in correlation with the their socio-political organisation: utopian architecture, language, landscape design, and the overall aesthetics function as reflections of the state's underlying principles, which

[2] For the purpose of this paper, the Numinous or numinosity (used interchangeably) are used as an umbrella term following Manuel Aguirre's definition based on Rudolf Otto's original description of the numinous as that "which transcends the rational, that which by human definition lies beyond our conception of morality and reason (...)" (Aguirre, 1990, p. 3). As such, the adjective "numinous" will be applied to various elements of the presented world in order to highlight their defamiliarizing influence upon the text's protagonist.

[3] I use the term "utopia" in the context of the genre, whereas the literary model of the utopian state in the discussed text is approached as a "non-existent society described in considerable detail and located normally in time and space" (Sargent, 1994, p. 9).

accounts for the defamiliarizing effect the utopian reality has upon its visitors. Yet, in contrast to the unsettling effect evoked by Gothic narratives, the expressions of surprise and wonder at utopia's omnipresent excellence are the major factors of utopia's didactic function.[4]

Despite the semiotic incongruity between the two genres, utopia and Gothic are not mutually exclusive. Anna Kędra-Kardela posits that "the Gothic quality of the spatial arrangement is not a constant feature of a text written in this genre, but is subject to change" (Kędra-Kardela, 2015, p. 169); Kędra-Kardela describes processes of gothicisation and degothicisation during which the given spatial model absorbs or, conversely, is cleansed of Gothic elements.[5] While Kędra--Kardela's analysis focuses on texts typically classified as Gothic, it is my contention that utopian spatiality is also susceptible to the above-mentioned mechanisms, allowing utopia to incorporate the Gothic mode into its spatial structure.[6] In what follows, I argue that space in Ellis James Davis's *Pyrna* allows for a subversive re-reading of the narrative in which utopian space is gothicised not by means of the typically Gothic elements of excess and transgression, but by utopia's staple traits of control, order, and homogeneity that evoke fear in the narrative's protagonist. Perfection can be terrifying, after all. [7]

The narrator's ambiguous reaction to Pyrna's excellence becomes then a signifier of repressed numinosity that accounts for the gothicisation of utopian space. The text's brief introduction establishes the tension between the two generic conventions: the sublime setting of "mighty mountains" is inhabited by people of seemingly supernatural – and implicitly superior – qualities:[8]

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[4] For an extensive analysis of the spatial modelling and its function in utopian narratives, see Artur Blaim (2013) *Gazing In Useless Wonder*.

[5] Kędra-Kardela explains that "either the familiar space becomes unfamiliar and thus acquires a Gothic quality, or a reverse process can take place, when Gothic space loses its quality as a result of being 'appropriated' by the characters (…) and thus becomes 'domesticated'" (Kędra-Kardela, 2015, p. 169).

[6] As Anna Kędra-Kardela and Andrzej Kowalczyk (2014) elucidate, with the gradual departure from the staple 18th-century format, "the [Gothic] convention has been present in literary works as a Gothic mode rather than a genre" (p. 35).

[7] Other utopias of the period also used the defamiliarizing effect in order to induce fear towards the perfected social model. In Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871), the protagonist, who becomes trapped in the subterranean utopian world of the Vril-ya (the novel's utopian race), compares at one point his hosts to "a *sabbat* of fiends and witches" (Bulwer-Lytton, 1871, p. 34).

[8] Defining the multi-layered concept of the sublime, Philip Shaw asserts that "whenever experience slips out of conventional understanding, whenever the power of an object or event is such that words fail and points of comparison disappear, *then* we resort to the feeling of the sublime. As such, the sublime marks the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what might lie beyond these limits" (Shaw, 2007, p. 2). In what follows, the sublime is often associated with "[t] e sensation of cognitive failure" (p. 2). As Kędra-Kardela and Kowalczyk (2014) contend,

> It is not generally known that the summits of these mountains and their ice-filled valleys are inhabited by *a race of beings entirely different to any others*. In our *imperfect language* they would be called *inhabitants of another world* though really of flesh and blood like ourselves, and may sometimes be seen in the *moonlight* walking over the clear blue ice of the Glacier [emphasis added]. (Davis, 2009, p. 5)

The plot begins with the narrator recalling the circumstances of his accidental nocturnal visit to the glacier city of Pyrna, situated inside the mountain of Galenstock in the Swiss Alps.[9] From the outset, the protagonist's solitary excursion across the Rhone Glacier abounds in ominous cues that enhance the sinister Walpolian atmosphere: at the very beginning of his trek, the narrator admits to "a chill of apprehension" upon hearing "the ghostly echoes of [his] voice among the mountains" (Davis, 2009, p. 8); later, as he marches next to Toden See (Lake of the Dead), he arrives at a fork in the road where he decides to take the ominous "left-hand path" (p. 8) upon which he encounters a mysterious stranger. The meeting becomes the first example of defamiliarization in Davis's narrative: "The figure turned round and confronted me. I stood stock-still, *a chill of horror* ran through my veins, for the first view of my midnight acquaintance gave me the idea that I was in the presence of *a disembodied spirit*" (p. 9) (emphasis added). The cognitive estrangement evoked by the narrator's first contact with the representative of the utopian community initiates thus the process of fusing the utopian paradigm with Gothic qualities of fear and apprehension.[10]

In what follows, the tension is built via a continuous juxtaposition of the narratorial expressions of admiration and awe towards Pyrna's perfection and the protagonist's increasing sense of numinosity evoked by the utopian environment. Plotwise, Davis's utopia adheres to a fairly typical pattern centred on the outsider's visit to the secluded society, whose customs and details are meant to demonstrate its overall excellence over the external world. Accordingly, Pyrna adheres to Yuri M. Lotman's definition of a concentric city-state correlated with "the image of the city on the hill (or hills)" in which the city functions as "the mediator between earth and heaven (…) – it is the eternal city" (Lotman, 1990, p. 192). Situated under "a firmament of ice" (Davis, 2009, p. 11) and suspended between heaven and earth

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"[t] e beautiful derives from the perception of harmony, smoothness, proportion," whereas the sublime "is evoked by the experience of pain, fear, and threat" (p. 42).

[9] Similarly to other utopian narratives of the period, the narrative offers some indications pointing to the supposed unreliability of the first-person narrator, whose excursion to Pyrna begins and ends with the loss of consciousness, allowing the readers to interpret Davis's novella as an utopian rendition of a dream vision.

[10] The moment of stepping over the threshold between the two realities (i.e. entering the glacier through a hidden door) is therefore synonymous with crossing the boundary between both the utopian centre and the outside peripheries as well as between the human world and the realm of the Numinous.

inside a mountain, Pyrna is symbolically stylized as an advanced civilization, its sublime magnificence reflecting what the narrator calls "real beauty" of the utopian metropolis, "beauty that the mind could hardly appreciate, that the eye could scarcely hold, and the tongue or the pen but inadequately describe – a grandeur to be felt, not spoken of" (p. 17).[11]

In terms of spatial organisation, Pyrna combines the aesthetic values of beauty and harmony with the rational use of space. As one of the chief components of the utopian presented world, Pyrnian architecture reflects both the elegance and pragmatism of the utopian order by means of juxtaposing imposing exterior and interior designs (modestly furnished houses are reminiscent of palaces, "for they were all too large to be called mere houses" [Davis, 2009, p. 11]) with conspicuous yet subtle opulence; "I was astonished," the narrator observes at one point, "how much gold and silver might be used without producing a vulgar effect" (p. 18).[12]

The citizens of Pyrna appear to be equally aesthetically pleasing and their physiological wellness (the protagonist admits that he "neither saw a lame nor a blind man, nor any one with a physical deformity of any sort" [Davis, 2009, p. 19]) comes to symbolize utopian tenets of harmony and uniformity. As a homogenous egalitarian society (where "all the men [and women – note added] seemed made upon the same type" [p. 19] and "[a]ll loved their neighbours more than themselves" [p. 54]), Pyrna is based on the intrinsic relationship between the body politic and the body natural; accordingly, all citizens constitute elements of a larger whole, and as such, they are components of the largely anonymous collective rather than distinctive individuals (further highlighted by the fact that, in addition to names, all citizens have numbers assigned to them). Emphasized here are unity and cooperation in the utopian community where "[a]ll were one family; each one was prepared to make any sacrifice for his or her neighbour's benefit. Self-consideration was merged in the well-being of all. Selfishness was unknown. Each thought, moved, lived for the whole of the Universal Community (...)" (p. 30).[13]

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[11] The protagonist's astonishment is further highlighted by his repeated assertions of the aesthetic singularity of the utopian state; e.g., upon seeing a street in Pyrna, the narrator explains that "never in [his] life" did he see "such a crowd anywhere but in London at a public entry (…)" (Davis, 2009, p. 12), the surrounding buildings "were the grandest of the kind [he] had ever seen" (p. 18), and eventually the entire capital becomes the emblem of perfection unattainable in the outside world: "Never had I conceived anything so magnificent as the city before me" (p. 16).

[12] Blaim contends that "[t]he aesthetic qualities are most strongly associated with the image of the utopian state: they manifest themselves in its harmonious construction, alleged perfection, and timelessness" (Blaim, 2013, p. 8).

[13] The physiological perfection of the Pyrnians has a clearly defamiliarizing function, evidenced by their sense of sombre superiority over the human narrator, who admits that he "could not have approached one of them without reverence" (Davis, 2009, p. 20). "There was something

At the same time, Pyrna's grandiose architecture and superior social model stand in opposition with the natural world, whose conspicuous absence operates as the key gothicising element of the narrative's spatiality. According to Artur Blaim (2013, p. 146), the natural world, extensively appropriated by the state, constitutes a "local [manifestation] of the general principles underlying the utopian system", and thus, it is subjected to its laws and regulations. In the Gothic convention, the space of Nature often functions as the signifier of the Numinous as the site of transgression that needs to be controlled and, ultimately, familiarized.[14] Conversely, Pyrna's frozen natural world represents the all-encompassing spatial dominance of the utopian society and its mechanisms of restraint and order employed against the numinous aspect of Nature, which is recognized as potentially subversive and detrimental to the state's welfare.

It is, though, something of a paradox that the glacier realm of Pyrna, able to sustain only vestiges of what might be considered vegetation, symbolically professes its admiration of Nature, and even emulates Nature as a viable instrument of regulation. Significantly, the most impressive building in the city is the Temple erected for the glory of the Universal Creator, with the facade "formed of numberless massive marble pillars, perfectly plain, except at their tops, *which were carved and hollowed out like the branches of pine trees*" (Davis, 2009, p. 40) (emphasis added). Nature is, hence, cast in stone and effectively deprived of its restorative powers; Pyrna's main emblem is an ice pyramid called pryn, the signifier of the static perfection of the utopian realm as well as the symbol of "the passage to immortal life" after death, denoting the essential timelessness of the utopian order (p. 37).[15]

A corresponding mechanism of containment is present at the level of socio-political organisation established against the disruptive influence of the Numinous inside and outside utopia's boundary. Following the insular trope of traditional utopias, Pyrna is isolated from the peripheries, which, nevertheless, are essential to its maintenance. The centre's economic exploitation of the subjugated peripheral territories (viewed as "an inferior creation" comprising "an industrious but unintellectual people" [Davis, 2009, p. 33]) is juxtaposed with Pyrna's defence of its boundaries against any possibility of external intrusion; thus, while the servant

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awful and sublime in the faces of their old men", he confesses, "and I felt *too much abashed* in their presence to raise my eyes to theirs" (p. 52-53) (emphasis added).

[14] On a related note, in his discussion of dystopian narratives, Aguirre makes a valid point that "[d]ystopia offers – or enforces – protection against Nature, the Numen outside, the Numen in ourselves, by curtailing or cancelling not only the individual's freedom and his desire for freedom but also his will, his very individuality, his humanity" (Aguirre, 1990, p. 159).

[15] Nevertheless, the Pyrnians do not entirely reject the possibility of improving their already perfected state: "The end in view was to make Pyrna more and more beautiful and commodious, and where is it possible to build a city incapable of improvement and embellishment?" (Davis, 2009, p. 39)

peoples are expected to contribute the necessary commodities to the utopian state, their actual entry into the realm is strictly forbidden. In a similar fashion, domestic regulations foreground discipline and unity, for "[i]f one person transgressed, the whole machinery was put out of gear; the mechanism was stopped; and the mischief done was incalculable. The strictest order must be maintained and the law rigidly enforced" (p. 34).

Internally, Pyrna's socio-biological precepts clearly derive from the social Darwinist appropriation of the theory of natural selection, not uncommon in many utopias of the period, which accounts for the officially sanctioned programmes of eugenics and euthanasia (the former denounced by the horrified narrator as the "Massacre of the Innocents" [Davis, 2009, p. 51]). Susceptible to various physiological vicissitudes, the body in *Pyrna* is regarded as a potential space of numinosity that should be, if required, extirpated from the healthy society. Consequently, the Pyrnians regard severe illness as a criminal offense, and they "exterminate every form of life but that which is natural, healthy, and like to grow up capable of taking its place in our community on an equal footing with its brethren, and capable of exerting its faculties for its own and the general well-being" (p. 50).[16] The degothicised utopian body becomes then one of the key aspects of numinosity in Davis's narrative.

It is by virtue of the narrator's inherent human inadequacy that ambiguity and confusion, associated with the experience of numinosity, resurface in Pyrna; the utopian model becomes precisely the site of fear and unknowability it has been striving to suppress, as its underlying precepts are revealed to be beyond the comprehension of the human visitor. "Your people in the now state of your world could not understand our simplicity," his utopian guide tells him. "Their minds would be unable to grasp our idea of unity (…)" (Davis, 2009, p. 43). It is small wonder then that the narrator's initial astonishment gradually gives way to an increasing sense of alienation, enhanced by his growing awareness of the unbridgeability of the gap between his hosts and himself: "I felt I was in the presence of Gods, and not men," he admits, "and a strange, yet not disagreeable dread took possession of me" (p. 24). Subsequently, the astounding environment of the utopian *polis* is progressively gothicised into "the cold look of the stony city" (p. 53), the epitome of "a strange cold, world", inhabited by "beings with whom [the narrator] had no sympathy, and who appeared scarcely mortal" (p. 31):

> Beside me was one of them: I was at his mercy. His cold, clear features looked colder and clearer in repose, and his glittering eyes lost none of their lustre. *He was white as a corpse*. *The idea and dread of death stole over me*. I felt as if I were in the power

[16] One needs only to mention Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), one of the principal utopian satires of the late Victorian era, in which punishing citizens for their failing health is considered a just and necessary countermeasure against the corruption of the society.

> of some *malignant spirit* who was chilling and freezing me *into the grave* with an icy breath and a glassy stare, and *I shivered from head to foot with fear*. (p. 31) (emphasis added)

The process of gothicisation reaches its culminating point during the protagonist's visit to the city's graveyard, the core heterotopic component of the presented world, described appropriately as "a world of death" where bodies, entombed in the translucent ice pyramids, remain visible "fresh and ghastly as the day on which [they were] placed there" (Davis, 2009, p. 60). Michel Foucault observes that "[t]he cemetery is certainly a place unlike ordinary cultural spaces," for it is "a highly heterotopic place since, for the individual, the cemetery begins with this strange heterochrony, the loss of life, and with this quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance" (Foucault, 1984). In keeping with the Gothic paradigm, the heterotopic spatiotemporality of the graveyard is appropriated in Davis's text by means of the conspicuous visibility of the entombed bodies that remain suspended in the liminal state of the above-mentioned "quasi-eternity" beneath the dome of the ice pyramid as an unsettling reminder of Pyrna's living citizens encased under the glacier's roof.

Understandably, the utopian necropolis evokes a highly ambivalent response in the narrator, who at first muses upon his own inexplicable terror of dying ("Why is that the mortal frame shrinks so much from the sight of its brother mortality? Why does the body fear to contemplate its end? Who shall answer! [Davis, 2009, pp. 60-61]), only to reflect later had he "had no great desire to be out in a pryn of ice and frozen up among those frightful corpses (…)" (p. 62). Most importantly, however, the protagonist's ambiguous reaction towards the utopian reality (highlighted by his parting desire to return to Pyrna) points to the fundamentally indeterminate nature of space in Davis's utopia, evocative of the seemingly contradictory reactions of delight and dread. Immediately after leaving Pyrna, the protagonist finds himself upon the mountain's summit in front of "a scene of unparalleled beauty" of the Alpine landscape (p. 62), filled with "that *sublime majestic grandeur* that those who have not seen can never hope to imagine," capable of inducing both awe and terror in the enraptured spectator (p. 63) (emphasis added). This Burkean epiphany provides thus a fitting finale to the narrator's transformative journey through the realm of the utopian Numinous.

As an amalgam of the Gothic and utopia, *Pyrna* highlights some of the key aspects of the genres in question, inviting, as a result, further exploration on the reciprocal influence between both genres. At the same time, the numinous underside of Davis's utopia might be seen as an inadvertent, perhaps, foreshadowing of the 20th-century dystopian narratives, in which the state-approved standards of excellence become a hotbed of authoritarian practices. Since "[t]he most horrible always forms the strongest impression on the mind" (Davis, 2009,

p. 63), the sublime terror of god-like perfection in *Pyrna* is a reflection of both its turbulent present and the anxieties of the future.

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The political gothic of dystopian romance. Joseph Shield Nicholson's *Thoth* (1888)

ABSTRACT
The text of *Thoth. A Romance*, a late nineteenth-century dystopia by Joseph Shield Nicholson, is here analysed as a generic amalgam characterised by conspicuous repetitiousness and the motif of multiplication of a circular pattern on the levels of plot, setting, imagery and characterisation. A meeting of the Gothic and the dystopian in the text results in an expansion of the former convention, politicisation of the Gothic and blending of the psychoanalytic with the dystopian.
Keywords: nineteenth century, dystopia, psychoanalysis, politics, Joseph Shield Nicholson

Thoth's thematic complexity

Thoth (1888), written by an economist, mathematician and journalist Joseph Shield Nicholson, was the first of the author's three romances published alongside the substantial body of his non-fiction. Although the partially composed text was re-written twelve years later to replace the central plot line of male friendship with a heterosexual love story,[1] the main intention behind it remained unaltered: it was to warn the readers of the dangers of the unbridled might of human reason. As Nicholson informs us in the preface to the second edition:

> The original idea was philosophical. I wished to illustrate the power of will and intellect working through generations with a definite design, and to show that this power might be used for the most repulsive object. The object I chose for my purpose was the destruction of the whole human race by means of pestilences, with the intention of replacing it with a race of men who had for generations been trained in the exercise of the highest intelligence. The new rule was to be a tyranny of intellect. (Nicholson, 1889, p. vi)

[1] The second edition of *Thoth* (1889) contains the final chapter from the original version of the work.

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Although the author's description of the text suggests a typical dystopia cautioning against inordinate trust in humanity's powers of reasoning, given the characteristics of the genre in the nineteenth-century, *Thoth* is an unusual work of its kind. Set in the past rather than future, in ancient Greece, not the London of the twentieth or so century, it blends pre-Christian cultures with highly advanced technological and scientific innovation; a fairy-story setting of benevolent giants and paradisal gardens with the motifs of world-conquest and institutional misogyny. Written a few years before Freudian psychoanalysis started taking shape as a theoretical and methodological approach, it lends itself particularly well to a psychoanalytic interpretation and combines interest in individual passions with considerations of eugenics and the misused potential of human reason.

A brief synopsis offers a glimpse of the thematic complexity of the story. At the time of the reign of Pericles, a Greek-Egyptian Thoth, vice-regent in a highly-advanced, beautiful city in a desert whose rulers remain in suspended animation, attempts to prevent further anthropological devolution of his people by breeding future generations from the genetically superior Greek girls. The once unsurpassed civilisation which had employed eugenics with much success is currently threatened with decay as the personal hatred of women developed by its heartbroken founder, Thoth the First, becomes law, and female breeders of the upper classes are imprisoned and engaged in various demeaning or purposeless tasks. Attempting the reform of women's reinstitution in society against the forefathers' decrees, Thoth arrives in Athens where he initiates a plague to induce girls to leave their home land for a new life abroad more willingly. Due to a naval catastrophe, a strong-willed young woman, Daphne, is the only female brought to the desert city where she reciprocally falls in love with the mysterious, menacing and melancholy Thoth. On discovering the plans of world-conquest devised by Thoth's ancestors and embraced also by him, Daphne succeeds in convincing her lover to destroy the forefathers and allow her departure for Athens. When he re-joins her, after the city is inexplicably swallowed by the surrounding desert, she rejects the man's love, unable to accept his role in the decimation of Athens – the decision which prompts his immediate suicide by drowning.

Generic cross-currents, politics and psychoanalysis in *Thoth*

Themotives locate the work on the generic crossroads between the Gothic and the dystopian fiction , while also rooting it in the culture of the nineteenth century with its interest in eugenics, the macro-politics of conquest, and the potential dangers of progress.Contextualisation is expected in works of utopian variety and, as many critics point out, is relevant to the understanding of the Gothic as a genre by no means concerned only with the "timeless reality outside history" (Day, 1985, p. 33). Indeed, looking at some of the Gothic writing of the nineteenth century, especially of the somatic, anthropological type prominent during

the *fin de siècle*, it is hard to disagree that it relies on "fictional representation […] shaped by historical circumstances" (Mighall, 2000, p. 165). This characteristic is partially explainable by the specificity of the era's concerns: as Kelly Hurley rightly observes, "the topics pursued by nineteenth-century science were often as 'gothic' as those found within any novel" (2004, p. 20).

Though, undoubtedly, elements of the Gothic are employed in many nineteenth-century dystopias[2] with the purpose of depicting the horrors of an impoverished, corrupt society, as they do in other types of fiction at the time – for instance, Dickens's *Oliver Twist* or *Bleak House* – they are not likely to use the Gothic structure as a consistently prominent, continuous narrative frame, as is the case with *Thoth*.[3] By the same token, though Gothic (especially the writings from the last decades of the eighteenth century) can be seen as a genre related to the historical revolutionary impulses – de Sade's, then Hazlitt's related views[4] later reiterated with a change by Williams's recognition of the revolutionary quality as characteristic of female Gothic (1995, p. 138), its explicit engagement with the political is not part of the tradition.

The great variety in the genre notwithstanding, its involvement with the contemporary reality tends to be of a rather general type: inferentially conveying the society's predominant fears and fascinations, making use of topical motifs from the culture at the time. Where Nicholson's novel stands out is in its direct employment of the political – not discoverable as an undercurrent – but existing as an integral part of the plot. Notably, this feature, which is clearly linked to the dystopian nature of the text, does not erase its Gothicity, but rather amplifies it, extending the central concerns of the narrative. In the rather eventful story, the psychoanalytic aspects – the struggle of the son with the sins of the father, his attempt to re-instate a mother figure, and the heroine's survival against the background of a misogynistic city – are paired with the dystopian traits – the opposition of a reformer against the erroneous system of the forefathers and the woman's manipulation of a tyrant away from his scheme of world annihilation.

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[2] I adopt the understanding of a dystopia as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" (Sargent, 1994, p. 9)

[3] A dystopia which approaches this usage is the American, racist *A Sojourn in the City of Amalgamation in the Year of our Lord 19--.* (1835) by Jerome Bonaparte Holgate (pseudonym Oliver Bolokitten), which employs elements of the Gothic throughout, then gives prominence to the Gothic plotline in the last section of the novel.

[4] Robert Miles points to the interesting difference between the two approaches by pointing out that "His [Hazlitt's] formulation suggests that the Gothic derived its interest for readers, not because it was a necessary art of a revolutionary age (de Sade's argument), or because it was itself revolutionary (the view of the anti-Jacobins), but because there was a widespread perception that all old structures were in a tottering condition, such as, for instance, castles, or the constitution, with its feudal, Gothic foundations" (2002, p. 44).

At the same time, the reliance of both narrative strands on the Gothic is dictated by the centrality of woman, which proves pivotal for the personal as well as the political.

Genre-blending and the motif of circularity

As the Gothic tends to look to the past and inward, explicitly exploring the horrors affecting an individual psyche (and only implicitly the anxieties of the era), and the dystopian looks outward to a future world, attempting to trace in the present the shape of the threats to come[5], their pairing may result in a work which displays simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal tendencies[6]. Assuming that a rudimentary Gothic plot can be understood as an enactment of the struggle of an entrapped individual against powerful outside forces at least partially incomprehensible and beyond their control, a feature which Gothic seems to share both with tragedy and many literary dystopias, *Thoth* appears as a quintessentially cross-generic work whose involvement with the pattern present within both the aesthetic paradigms causes its reiteration in all basic components of the text. The outcome is a generic amalgam characterised by conspicuous repetitiousness and the motif of multiplication of a circular pattern on the levels of plot, setting, imagery and characterisation.

Circularity of plot and the circumpunct

The essential inward-outward hermeneutic axis of the novel is easily observable on the level of plot: as the psychological concerns are allied with the dystopian paradigm, the motif of the personal threatening the political, applicable to both, lies at the heart of all the interlinked circular plot-lines. The first Thoth's personal revenge on woman, repeated in the relationships of all the citizens, endangers the city's well-being, causes a gradual devolution of his race of would-be world-conquerors, and therefore jeopardises his plan of global domination. His descendant's love towards Daphne, while reflecting the father's experience, causes the annihilation of the rightful king and the ancestors. Daphne's desire towards Thoth, mirroring the unhappy love of his mother, has the capacity to threaten her resolution to prevent the destruction of humankind. While the multiplication and circularity which pervade the text may well be read in psychoanalytic terms as a re-enactment of the trauma originated in the suppression of woman, in the

[5] It is worth remembering that the intimate concern with the psyche of an individual submerged in an inimical regime does not become a staple of dystopias until the twentieth century.

[6] In a different analytical context, while discussing in detail the links between the sublime and the Gothic, Andrew Smith notes an "outward" direction in the nineteenth-century Gothic which he describes as a move from the natural to the urban, as well as from private to public, where "isolated experience is reconstructed for public transmission" (2000, p. 98) expressed through fascination with linguistic practices and cultural experiences.

broader, biological context, they may refer to the abuse of the laws of nature. By allowing politics dictated by personal passion for revenge to interfere with the eugenic programme of the city, Thoth initiates multiplication without progress. The gradual decay of the genetic stock due to the consistent abuse of the female breeders dissociates multiplication from evolution and threatens the regression of Thoth's race to its pre-superior stage. The omnipresent imagery of circularity is thus married to the double-coded notion of entrapment – the repetition compulsion of the individual character's psyche, as well as the fateful, dystopian circularity of history; while the personal trauma and municipal politics remain fully complementary.

These plot patterns are reflected on the level of imagery in the salient geometrical motif of a circumpunct primarily connected with female imprisonment and closely linked with both the Gothic and the dystopian paradigms. Daphne is stranded in a misogynistic city surrounded by a vast desert, whose ideology is graphically represented by the figure of a woman encircled by deriding statues of men and paintings depicting the degradation of women: "On the beautiful statue in the middle of the apartment a number of stony figures looked down with sneering hatred. This grouping she might possibly have thought accidental, but the pictures left no doubt as to the design of the whole chamber" (Nicholson, 1889, p. 85). Her own situation is not only reflected historically in the parallel stories of the previous royal consorts humiliated or killed by the king, but also in the many high-class breeders imprisoned in their separate rooms where mental and physical torturous training is to condition them to bear intelligent and able children. Finally, her final escape from danger is presaged in the story told by a pygmy servant in which the girl, stranded in the centre of a fountain with her boat out of reach, is saved by, as she believes, Thoth himself. The much-echoed motif of an entrapped damsel in distress emblematic of the Gothic doubles as an indicator of the centrality of woman for the city's development – the biological factor with political implications.

Simultaneously, the pattern of the circumpunct is meaningfully reversed on one occasion: the spatial arrangement of the spheres of disempowerment – the focalised female figure enclosed by deriding men – is inverted in the ancestors' sepulchre where the founder is surrounded by concentric circles of his progeny – the would-be world-conquerors. By direct repetition, the design brings home the notion of centrality of power as bound with the notion of vulnerability and powerlessness, the paradox evoking the centripetal-centrifugal motif of the text which will eventually be illustrated by the final elaborate plot twists and the key figures' careful positioning in space: the female outsider from Athens virtually imprisoned in the city will destroy its centre of power, which will be swallowed by the surrounding desert almost as soon as she leaves its circumference.

Thoth's politicised unconscious

A consideration of the concept of the centre in the novel suggests that for Thoth's city, as well as for the protagonist, woman's function corresponds exactly to that of the Lacanian unconscious, constituting the kernel of being. Needless to say, it is also the pivot point on which the narrative's plot line turns away from world-domination to the annihilation of the ambitious city and its champions; and for the male protagonist, from the purely political existence to love-life. Typically for the text's persistent pattern of multiple reference, Thoth's repressed unconscious – his emotionality later awakened by Daphne – is matched in the literal suppression of the female by the consciously-scientific, rational society. Unsurprisingly, the hubris of the technophobic dystopia is associated with the concept of nature culturally strongly bonded with the notion of woman. Much like in Mary Shelley's seminal text, where male intellect employs science in the name of the blasphemous God-like creativity, Nicholson's work seems to posit woman – understood as nature, instinct, and man's other – as the inevitable balancing principle which checks male aspirations, and whose persistent reduction or elimination must result in catastrophe. Logically, the return of the repressed in the form of Daphne means a dramatic character-change for Thoth – and the destruction of his civilisation.

The marriage of the dystopian with the Gothic results in a radical expansion of the Gothic textual pattern, consistent with the outward-bound orientation of dystopias. While, admittedly, Gothic can be understood as "overdetermined by the rule of the family" (Williams, 1995, p. 22)[7], the father-son conflict in *Thoth* becomes subordinate to the question of political reform; and the power of a patriarchal family structure – the staple of the Gothic romances – here embraces the entire city where it is present in the form of lawful misogyny. The original early Gothic setting of a haunted castle or house here takes the form of a city haunted by ancestral dreams and ancestors' sins; and the metaphysical and supernatural become the multiform achievements of science – the "ghosts" of the city are the forefathers in suspended animation, the "monsters" – the eugenically-bred giant and dwarf classes and abused females. Similarly, the multiplied "madwomen in the attic", that is the high-class breeders locked in their separate cells of a municipal building, carry the Gothic over into the political as a dark family secret becomes official policy and madness is a result of city-provided "nurture". Needless to say, the rationalisation and logical explanation of the evil forces (identified with the female Gothic tradition) agrees better with dystopias' proclivity to verisimilitude. The key threat to the Gothic heroine is also altered, conforming to the dystopian convention: rather than serving to quench the lust of a reprobate, she is to produce superior offspring – carnal passion is replaced by eugenic ambition, and nefarious

[7] As Williams believes, "Literally and metaphorically, Gothic plots are family plots, Gothic romances are family romances" (1995, pp. 22-23)

impulses carry global threats. Finally, since the Athenian Daphne stands for the entire civilised world (an association succinctly suggested by one of the chapter titles which refers to the heroine and Thoth – "Greek and Barbarian"), the Gothic dystopia's other damsel in distress is civilisation as the author knows it threatened by the reign of corrupt reason.

In a particularly semiotically-dense scene, the influence of the dystopian is discernible when the likeness sent from lover to lover – a picture from Thoth delivered to Daphne when she is recovering from the shock of discovering the city's misogyny – contains not only the image of the sender but a visualisation of his planned political reform: "It represented in the most accurate manner the room of the statue, with the walls bare and the image garlanded […] But the chief interest in the picture lay in the fact that Thoth himself was represented as gazing on the statue with the most profound reverence, as if supplicating for pardon" (Nicholson, 1889, p. 89). The missive can be read simultaneously as an unusual love-letter, a lover's promise, a re-affirmation of the woman's safety, and, given the fact that it is sent before Thoth becomes aware of his love for Daphne, an externalisation of his latent unconscious desires. Moreover, while in one capacity it foreshadows the consequences of Thoth's love of woman – his prioritisation of Daphne will lead to the eradication of his city (represented by the bare walls), in another, it is a political manifesto illustrating his intentions of reinstating woman as a respected member of society. Noticeably, here also, the repetition of a circumpunct and the tension between the centrifugal and centripetal directions come to the fore. Daphne is looking at an image of Thoth gazing at a female statue – representing femininity as well as herself – which results in her paradoxical positioning as both the outside observer and the insider observed; and brings the attitude of admiration – expressed by Thoth's likeness – and the attitude of derision only very recently found in the original circle of shame – uncannily close.

The politics of characterisation

Unavoidably, in the novel, the change in characterisation resulting from the influence of a political genre is also notable. Although Daphne in her capacity as a Gothic-romantic heroine struggle with her own contradictory desires and kindle love in the dispassionate Thoth, in time she graduates to a damsel in distress who saves both herself and the world from personal and political danger.

In the course of the story Daphne progressively adopts the political functions which, unknown to her, had commanded her existence since the decision to leave Athens. Before his plan for reform is dominated by love, Thoth views the heroine as a diplomatic tool – one who will help convince the elders that the end of misogyny must result in producing a superior race and enabling a political advantage over the rest of humanity, as well as one who will produce such offspring herself to prove the hypothesis. As the city's governing principles are revealed to

her, Daphne becomes a Machiavellian figure manipulating the lover into trust, successfully resisting personal desires, vanquishing his plans of conquest, and, rather importantly in view of the Victorian cult of domesticity, rejecting both the potential husband and the offer of motherhood of future generations to embrace the political responsibilities towards humanity in general.

In agreement with the text's centripetal-centrifugal orientation, the multiplication of the heroine's functions coincides with the equally dramatic reduction of those of the hero. Thoth, whose ambition was to extend his power over the globe, regresses from the dystopian polymath – brilliant scientist, world-conqueror, unconditionally-obeyed ruler, social revolutionary – to a scorned, suicidal lover, in a manner of speaking abstracting himself from dystopia and embracing a role in a romance. In view of the above, the apparent characterisation of Daphne as a stand-in for the emotional and the natural needs to be reevaluated: the heroine is associated simultaneously with creation and destruction; power and powerlessness. Importantly, she is not exclusively an antithesis of the scientific, active, determined intellect represented by Thoth. From the beginning of the text she is depicted as ambitious, willing to take risks, take care of her own survival, interested in choosing a life suitable for herself though not widely accepted socially. As we learn:

> she was strong of will, and rather ruled than obeyed her parents; and she not only obstinately refused an honourable marriage, but spoke bitterly of the small esteem and respect in which the Athenians held their lawful wives; and she upheld as a model Aspasia, her compatriot, the friend of Pericles, and in all but name his honoured wife. For, while the lawful wives of the noblest Athenians were cooped up like children in their own apartments, Aspasia enjoyed perfect freedom. (Nicholson, 1889, p. 28)

Daphne is also associated with clear judgement, acumen and self-control which she displays when her lover is incapable of doing so. Towards the end of the novel, the heroine, proves the only fully *rational* character who is able to recognize danger, see the necessity of resisting emotional impulses in the face of the larger political necessity, who invents and successfully implements the plan to destroy the menacing city, and remains loyal to humanity by rejecting personal desires.

Conclusion

Nicholson's authorial intention quoted at the beginning of this text appears to describe a fraction of the complex and confusing end product, making it quite tempting to speculate, as psychoanalytic and post-structuralist critics would encourage, on the work's covert content. Likewise, the author's re-writing of the central plot, which he saw simply as promising a more compelling narrative, may well be read in the light of the social changes of late nineteenth-century culture. The novel was, after all, written not only at the time when technophobia had fertile

ground for development, but also when in view of the feminists' contesting claims on the "natural" characteristics and functions of women, the notion femininity was becoming more difficult to define. In *Thoth*, the politicised Gothic heroine gains the status of an unconscious – the desert city's ultimate other ultimately contained, the novel's pivotal element, affects everything in the city and in the text. It is by observing how the work and the world within it are affected by the feminine presence that the readers may brook its latent power. Therefore, one possible reading of the text "against itself" would suggest its concern with the power of femininity defined more broadly than the dominant nineteenth-century cultural ambience would allow. Intending to write a text about the dangers of misused intellect, Nicholson also wrote one which is about the unpredictability, indispensability, powerfulness, and rationality of a female.

Importantly, while the merging with a political genre causes an expansion of the textual patterns of the Gothic, it is the latter which is responsible for the structural centrality of the female character – by no means a traditional feature of most nineteenth-century dystopias. The aforementioned rudimentary pattern of a struggle of an entrapped individual against outside forces which the Gothic and the dystopian share – be it the literal setting of a castle or dungeon or the metaphorical confinement by the apparently inevitable historical patterns – finds in *Thoth* an apposite medium in the form of the female. Eventually, the genre-blending which manifests through the centrifugal-centripetal tensions in the novel results in an enriching complementarity which allows for a psychoanalytic reading of the dystopian/political, a critical "interiorisation" of a kind, and a considerable "externalization" of the Gothic through its politicisation.

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The Fertility of the Supernatural: Stuart Neville's *The Ghosts of Belfast*

ABSTRACT
In *The Ghosts of Belfast* (2009), spectres of the victims of civil war in Northern Ireland haunt Gerry Fegan, a former "soldier" and assassin. Picking up the metaphorical cue from the epigraph to Neville's novel – "the place that lacks its ghosts is a barren place" – the article addresses the thriller's supernatural content. The meaning and role of the titular ghosts have been in part determined by Neville's debt to the Western traditions of making sense of the supernatural. However, they assume new roles within the narrative and possibly also in the author's vision of the peace process: i.e. in keeping Northern Ireland "fertile".
Keywords: fictional ghosts, supernatural, terrorism, Northern Ireland

1. Introduction

My goal in this article is to examine the uses of the supernatural in Stuart Neville's debut novel *The Ghosts of Belfast*.[1]

Ghosts have been a defining feature of the Gothic, even though many classic Gothic authors, representatives of the "Radcliffe school," have preferred to "explain ghosts away." Fictional ghosts are commonly regarded as metaphors for the manner in which suppressed past events linger in the present, disturbing its peaceful progression onwards. If a piece of fiction is to raise vital and relevant concerns with the aid of the supernatural – such as a need for reparations for crimes committed in the past – then critics of the Radcliffe school are right: an imaginary ghost would not do this kind of job properly.

[1] The novel was published in Britain in 2009 as *The Twelve*, an obviously much less marketable title. The Polish translation appeared under the "American" title: *Duchy Belfastu*, trans. Tomasz Konatkowski (2012,Warszawa: Wydawnictwo WAB).

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In Neville's novel the ghosts are real, and it is my goal here to make sense of this insistence on their reality and of how this feature combines with their presence and their use as vital metaphors. Through the example of *The Ghosts of Belfast* my propose to examine how a contemporary author of popular fiction engages the supernatural. This will allow us to see how the ghostly may be used to infuse a breath of freshness into fear literature. In particular we shall examine Neville's attempt, towards the end of his novel, to move beyond the logic of retributive justice which is an essential part of the literary inheritance characteristic of Gothic ghosts from *Hamlet* and *The Castle of Otranto* onwards.

2. The noir of Belfast

The title of Neville's novel cannot fail to attract attention. It suggests that Belfast is a spooky and a haunted place, answering to the city's representation in a collection of stories set in this city. *Belfast Noir*, published by Akashik Books in 2014, has been edited by Stuart Neville and Adrian McKinty, who write in their introduction: "Few European cities have had as disturbed and violent a history as Belfast over the last half-century" (McKinty & Neville, 2014, p. 13). The subtitle of their introduction calls Belfast "the noirest city on Earth," a close paraphrase of a statement by thriller author Lee Child.

In *The Ghosts of Belfast*, Neville consistently sustains this image of the city, which is especially vivid in passages which emphasise the contrast between the calm present and the bloody past. These images help readers readers to understand how the city's growing prosperity is making it oblivious to the terrors of the conflict:

> Designer boutiques, restaurants and wine bars passed on either side. Students and young professionals crossed at the lights.
> They think the city belongs to them now, Fegan thought. If the peace process meant they could buy overpriced coffee without fear, then perhaps they were right. A young woman in a business suit crossed in front of the Jaguar's bonnet, a mobile phone pressed to her ear. Fegan wondered if she was even born when they scraped the body parts off the streets with shovels. (Neville, 2009, p. 30)[2]

The reader will not overlook the fact that the mediating perspective in these passages is that of a former participant, an assassin, in whom – as we shall see presently – the memory is still excruciatingly alive.

Summing up in a few paragraphs the violent chapter in Northern Ireland's recent history known as the Troubles (1960s-1990s), the editors of *Belfast Noir* emphasise its most painful aspect – the toll measured in the lives of those who were not directly involved: "Of course the majority of those killed were innocent

[2] Hereafter the quotations from *The Ghosts of Belfast* are marked by *GB* followed by page number.

civilians on both sides" (McKinty & Neville, 2014, p. 15). It is precisely this painful fact that Neville's novel brings to our attention with the assistance of the so-called supernatural machinery. Throughout the book, this heavy toll is kept obtrusively and eerily present in the shapes of the twelve ghosts who follow Gerry Fegan. Among these "followers" there is a woman with a baby in her arms, both victims of typical atrocity: a bomb attack on a shop. As we find out only towards the end of the novel, they died because a terrorist turned politician – Paul McGinty – needed the headlines for his career: "to make the [Republican] leadership notice me," "to make a name for [my]self" (*GB*, p. 353). These truths are more shocking and terrifying than the ghosts themselves. It is significant and comforting that the ghost woman and her child have been survived by two real-life counterparts, Marie and her daughter Ellen, the latter being the child of the mother's relationship with a police officer.[3]

3. The ghosts

The titular ghosts are introduced to the reader at the very beginning of the novel. Neville in other words chooses not to use the supernatural machinery in the typical way, i.e. step by step to produce in his reader the growing uneasiness characteristic of the classic ghost stories (see Mydla, 2017). Neville signals his interest in the supernatural as predominantly moral and political.

In the first scene we see Gerry Fegan, the hero-villain, sitting in a Belfast pub getting drunk, a habit he has developed since his release from the Maze prison. Soon we learn that Fegan is not alone, that in fact he is trying once more to drink himself into a state which would make him oblivious to the obtrusive presence of the ghosts of his twelve victims:

> Fegan looked at each of his companions in turn. Of the five soldiers three were Brits and two were Ulster Defence Regiment. Another of the followers was a cop, his Royal Ulster Constabulary uniform neat and stiff, and two more were Loyalists, both Ulster Freedom Fighters. The remaining four were civilians who had been in the wrong place at the wrong time. He remembered doing all of them, but it was the civilians whose memories screamed the loudest. (*GB*, p. 4)

This passage introduces a number of key points. First of all, we learn the essential fact about Gerry Fegan, namely that during the Troubles he was an assassin on the Republican side, "a soldier" and "a hero" in the eyes of his community and "a terrorist" for Loyalists. We are made to realise the toll of the conflict measured in violent deaths and the extent of Fegan's responsibility and guilt.

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[3] "Marie McKenna had scandalized her family by taking up with an officer of the hated Royal Ulster Constabulary. Even worse, he was a Catholic cop at a time when joining the police was still an act of treachery. […] A romance with a peeler cut her off from all but her mother" (*GB*, p. 57). The reader cannot help regarding as symbolic the fact that the Republican "soldier" Fegan now dedicates his life to the protection of Marie and her daughter.

Even if – in the opinion of Fegan and those who "commissioned" the killings – members of Royalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups and regular cops (or "peelers") "deserved" to die, there were also innocent victims. This toll from a certain angle defines the nature of the conflict, where the line separating military and civilian became indistinct. Two of Neville's major preoccupations are the mechanism of the conflict spilling from the military, and the moral fallout it has left in the spectral shape of disturbing memories.

The identification of memories with ghosts is one of the significant tropes in the novel. In fact, it is the ghost-perturbed and unbalanced memory of someone like Gerry Fegan which now is the site or ground for the living memory.[4] Neville emphasises the significance of memory for and in Fegan in passages such as these:

> Memory cursed him. (*GB*, p. 18)
> *I remember my sins*, thought Fegan. *They follow me everywhere*. (*GB*, p.117).

The ghosts are reminders of the past, frozen in the moment of their deaths and repeating gestures which are meant to suggest to Fegan what he is supposed to do if he wants to lay them to rest and be rid of them. The militaristic pollution – as we might call the involvement of the innocent – is obvious from the moment we meet the ghosts. Here is the earliest passage of this kind:

> There was the butcher with his round face and bloody apron. Fagan dropped the package in his shop and held the door for the woman and her baby as she wheeled the pram in. They'd smiled at each other. He'd felt the heat of the blast as he jumped into the already moving car, the blast that should have come five minutes after they'd cleared the place. The other was the boy. Fegan still remembered the look in his eyes when he saw the pistol. Now the boy sat across the table, those same eyes boring into him. (*GB*, p. 4)

Already these two passages give us a hint at Neville's method in the novel as far as his use of the supernatural is concerned. On the one hand, essential are flashbacks in which Fegan and those who commissioned the killings – McGinty and others – relive the atrocities. On the other hand, the ghosts keep on urging Fegan to avenge them, miming the actions he ought to perform if he wants to be rid of them. The following passage shows clearly this combination of retrospection and anticipation. Still in the pub, Fegan is talking to the owner, Michael McKenna, another former terrorist starting a political career at Stormont (*GB*, p. 7). The ghost of a boy the two men tortured and killed together is hovering around:

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[4] Some of the victims have no graves. Neville links the image of the notorious burial in a bog (*GB*, p. 322) with the still living mother of a boy Fegan and an associate tortured and killed. Now, hardly alive to the present, this woman is still looking for her son's grave (*GB*, p. 6).

> Fegan nodded and took another mouthful of stout. He held it on his tongue when he noticed the boy had risen from his place on the other side of the table. It took a moment to find him, shirtless and skinny as the day he died, creeping up behind McKenna.
> The boy pointed at the politician's head. He mimed firing, his hand thrown upwards by the recoil. His mouth made a plosive movement, but no sound came.
> Fegan swallowed the Guinness and stared at the boy. Something stirred in his mind, one memory trying to find another. The chill at his center pulsed with his heartbeat.
> "Do you remember that kid?" he asked. (*GB*, p. 5)

Memory thus plays a key role in the narrative, and we can say that the ghosts as it were jog the otherwise weakening collective memory. In some – as in the case of the young business woman, too young to remember the violent past – the memory is simply absent. In the case of the new-made politicians, the memory is a stain they need to cover up in order to be able to start a new and prosperous life.

Neville's preoccupation with the painful past ought not to be confused with a wholesale and undiscriminating rejection of the peaceful and opulent present. As Neville and McKinty explain in their "Introduction":

> It might seem a cynical observation, but the truth is, those comforts – the restaurants, the theatres, the cinemas, the shopping malls – are the things that probably guarantee that the peace will hold. Only the most hardened individuals would feel a return to the grey desolation of the '70s and '80s is a sacrifice worth making for whatever political ideals they're too embittered to let go of. (McKinty & Neville, 2014, p. 17)

And yet a novel such as *The Ghosts of Belfast* does offer its readers a return to the past and the possibility of experiencing some of the most distressing moments in the city's recent history. Indeed, this possibility is represented as a necessity – Neville's protagonist has no choice but to wade again through the blood he has spilled and make the guilty pay for their sins. The rationale seems to be clear: the present is a sham as long as a thorough reckoning with the past has not been made. The ghosts are there to make sure that this reckoning is what is going to happen. They are the guardians of the notion that truth is a fertiliser which will ensure a genuinely prosperous future, a future which is not built on lies and silences. In the course of the story, the reader realises that Fegan's mind is a vehicle for the moral message of the book, as summed up, metaphorically, in the epigraph from John Hewitt:[5] "The place that lacks its ghosts is a barren place."

As we have mentioned at the outset, Neville makes Fegan insist that the ghosts are real; and indeed they need to be more substantial than mere products

[5] The epigraph comes from John Hewitt's dramatic poem "The Bloody Brae." In the poem the line is spoken by a female character whose name is Mary, like the name of Neville's main female protagonist.

of a diseased and troubled mind. Otherwise people like McGinty will easily brush them aside as mere "figments" of a drunk's "imagination" (*GB*, p. 353). Typical of ghostly narratives, the author introduces an element of scepticism and thus indirectly emphasises the reality of the "followers" who pester Fegan. The diagnosis of the shrink in the Maze is a case in point:

> He [Fegan] told one of the prison psychologists about it. Dr. Brady said it was guilt. A manifestation, he called it. Fegan wondered why people seldom called things by their real names. (*GB*, p. 8)

Unlike the shrink, those who share the responsibility for Fegan's actions have a moral stake in disproving the reality of the ghosts. Father Coulter's reaction is telling. When Fegan confesses to having recently killed two of his former companions, the priest asks him for a reason. Fegan explains that he simply had to "give" these men "to the ghosts" as retribution for the loss of innocent lives. On hearing this, the priest calls it "madness" (*GB*, p. 153), and tells him to go with the words "your burden […] is your penance" (*GB*, p. 154). But the readers understand that just as it is not possible for the priest to accept the reality of the ghosts, it is not possible for him to absolve Fegan properly. What's more, the ghosts of three young British soldiers urge Fegan to kill the priest in order to avenge their deaths. A flashback takes us back in time to a situation in which the priest was given a chance to save the lives of the men, but did not find enough courage in himself to risk his own life by opposing Republican leaders.

Fegan's friend at the Maze prison, Ronnie Lennox, seems to have had more understanding of ghost seeing than anyone else. In a flashback recounted in Chapter 22, we see Fegan speaking openly to Ronnie about his bizarre gift:

> "When I was small, before my father died, I used to see things. People. I used to talk to them." He listened for some response, some dismissal. When none came, he said, "I never told anyone that. Not even Dr. Brady." (*GB*, p. 159)

Somewhat paradoxically, Ronnie, a dying man, seems to have more belief in the reality of ghosts than the Catholic priest. He says:

> "You're talking about the dead," he said. […] "Don't talk to me about the dead. The stuff's eating away at me, the asbestos, eating me from inside. You'll be out of here in a few weeks, but I might not make it that far. […] Don't talk to me about the dead, Gerry. […] I'll meet them soon enough." (*GB*, p. 159)

Typical of the Protestant disinclination to discuss the afterlife, Ronnie refuses "to talk about the dead," but we also sense a genuine moral concern in his fearful anticipation of the hereafter. Like Fegan, he is painfully aware of the reality of his guilt, of the fact that he has taken another person's life. Explains Fegan: "'He slit

a man's throat,' […]. 'A Catholic who walked into the wrong bar. Ronnie cried when he told me'" (*GB*, p. 139).

While the novel's real ghosts represent mute commentaries on the moral obligations that the past holds for the present, the memory that Fegan has of his prison friend Ronnie is positive, as this friendship enabled Fegan to find a kindred spirit with whom to share the sense of guilt. As we have seen, it was possible for Fegan to find in Ronnie a person who understood his supernatural gift. Another powerful presence in Fegan's life – similarly spectral – has been his mother, who, however, unlike Rennie, was unwavering in her condemnation of her son's terrorist activity and who regarded manifestations of his gift as "devilment" (*GB*, p. 44).

4. From retribution to mercy

The task of finding a working reconciliation has been the greatest challenge Northern Ireland has faced in its history and the 1998 Agreement is proof that the country has passed a difficult test. Or is it? Clearly some people have doubts and believe that in the new order and era symbolized by Stormont there linger moral debts which still need to be paid. As long as there are mothers looking for the graves of their sons, ghosts of the past will "follow" and trouble the living. As the novel says: "The old ways were dead and gone, but still their ghosts come to haunt the political process" (*GB*, pp. 244-245).

A propulsion towards closure is present in the gene pool of the thriller genre which *The Ghosts of Belfast* represents. Moreover, closure is to be expected in any novel which, like *The Ghosts of Belfast*, reawakens the conflict. Through this reawakening, with the strong emphasis on the past rendered vivid through retrospections, closure becomes an aesthetic and a moral necessity.

The need for closure is inscribed in the novel's structure as expressed in the chapter headings, which count down from twelve to zero. In moral terms, this countdown is to a restoration of equilibrium, when the ghosts' thirst for the blood of their murderers has been quenched and the avenger – Fegan – has attained peace of mind.

However, the painful lesson taught by the history of this and similar conflicts is that the shedding of blood leads to more shedding of blood. In other words, for viable moral closure there has be a logic higher – more effective – than that of retribution.

"Sooner or later, everybody pays" – Fegan keeps repeating (e.g. *GB*, p. 337). And Neville seems to be aware that he cannot let his protagonist off. Also, because institutional religion cannot guarantee peace of mind – as the case of the corrupt and compromised priest has shown – Fegan himself has no right to be pardoned. No wonder, then, that in the final section of the novel, entitled "One," the one remaining ghost, that of the mother, makes it clear to Fegan that he now has to take his own life:

> "Please." He looked up to the woman. "I can have a life."
> She stepped forward and returned her fingers to his forehead. Fegan reached up and took her hand in his. A thought flashed in his mind: he had never reached out and touched her before. She had touched him, but he had never touched her. He wrapped his fingers around hers. He looked up into her hard eyes.
> "I can have a life. I can be a real person, a whole person. I know I can't be with Marie and Ellen, but I can be clean. Please let me have a life."
> Her eyes wavered, something soft moving behind them.
> "Mercy," Fegan said, the word catching in his throat. He squeezed her hand in his, feeling her slender bones. "Have mercy."
> Something flickered across her face, just for a moment, and then it went slack. She pulled her hand away, formed the shape of a gun once more, and placed her fingers at the center of his forehead. There was no anger or hate in the lines of her face now, only sadness. (*GB*, p. 366)

The ghost's sadness is saying to Fegan that his plea for mercy cannot be heeded, that it is groundless. The ghost expects Fegan to complete his scheme of righting past wrongs. The logical next and final step is suicide; Fegan may not have been the only person responsible for the deaths of the twelve victims of the conflict, but the bare fact is that he personally killed those people.

As we have suggested, the logic that neatly corresponds to the retributive idea of justice may not in this case satisfy the reader's expectation of a morally compelling closure. Aware of this, Neville "makes use" of Ellen in the scene in which – as we have seen – Fegan is making a desperate plea for his life with the ghost woman. The entry of Ellen breaks the deadlock, as suggested by the way in which Fegan conceals the gun with which he was going to blow his brains out: "He let the gun hang inside the bath, away from her pretty eyes" (*GB*, p. 367).

We immediately realise that Ellen is mercy personified: "She slipped between his knees and propped herself on his quivering thigh. Her fingers were soft and warm as she touched his tears and felt the stubble on his chin" (*GB*, p. 367). Moreover, to Fegan's astonishment, Ellen is also a ghost seer; she is concerned with the fact that the ghost woman is now alone, her "baby" having "gone to Heaven." In a moment of symbolic reconciliation which goes beyond the patterns of militaristic and Gothic retribution, the ghost first turns to Ellen, upon whom she bestows a silent blessing: "She lowered herself to her knees as her lip trembled. Her fingertips brushed the loose strands of Ellen's hair, smoothing them." Then she turns to Fegan, gives him "the softest, faintest, saddest of smiles," and departs "into the morning light beyond" with the word "Mercy" on her lips.

The fact that it falls to the female characters, both "real" and "supernatural," to bring closure to a mayhem unleashed and sustained by men is telling, and requires no elucidation. It is equally obvious why it is Ellen who features prominently in Fegan's vision of the country's future fertility:

> Students gathered in huddles on the grass on one side, and on the concrete steps on the other. Young, pretty people Fegan would never know. It occurred to him that most of these children had never been torn from sleep by a bomb blast in the night hammering their windows like a thousand fists, freezing their hearts in their chests. For a moment he might have resented them for it, but then he felt Ellen's fingers adjust their grip on his, and he was glad for them. He thought of Ellen as a young woman, and how she would never comprehend the awful, constant fear that had smothered this place for more than thirty years. (*GB*, p. 139)

This image takes us back to the young woman in a business suit crossing the street in one of Belfast's prosperous areas, mobile phone pressed to her ear. In Neville's vision of the future, this woman could be carrying a copy of *The Ghosts of Belfast* in her bag.

But then one thinks that perhaps Ellen would not need to read Neville's book. She herself, like Fegan, is a ghost-seer.

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John Dickson Carr's Early Detective Novels and the Gothic Convention

ABSTRACT
Even if the Gothic romance may be considered as one of the predecessors of detective fiction, the world model proposed by the latter seems to exclude what was the essence of the former: the irrational underlying the proposed world model. However, some of detective novel writers deploy Gothic conventions in their texts, thus questioning the rational order of the reality presented there. Such a genological syncretism is typical – among others – of the novels by John Dickson Carr. The paper is an analysis of Gothic conventions and their functions in four earliest novels by Carr, featuring a French detective-protagonist, Henri Bencolin. It concentrates on elements of Gothic horror, on the atmosphere of terror as well as the motif of the past intruding the present.
Keywords: Carr, John Dickson; detective fiction; Gothic fiction; Grand Guignol

1. Introduction

It is customary to think of broadside ballads, 18th century pamphlets describing actual crimes, "Newgate" novels drawing themes from crime chronicles or sensational novels of the 50s and the 60s of the nineteenth century as the predecessors of English detective fiction, but the Gothic roots of this genre seem to be equally obvious (Ostrowski, 1980, pp. 90-91; Ascari, 2007; Cook, 2014). Already in the pre-Romantic Gothic romances the intrusion of ghosts and spectres into the world of the living was most often provoked by some crimes committed in the past – one may say that the objective was exactly the same as in detective fiction: to unmask the culprit and bring them to justice. Also the nineteenth century penny dreadfuls commonly combined criminal plots with horror resulting both from the intervention of the supernatural and from the macabre aspect of the crimes themselves. The slums of London were modelled there after the conventions of Gothic fiction, where the dark and labyrinthine streets in forbidden districts performed the function of a Gothic castle, and their degenerated inhabitants – that

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of ghosts and Gothic villains (Mighall, 1999, pp. 27-77). The sensational novels from the second half of the nineteenth century did not shun the atmosphere of terror and the sense of mystery either, even if the final explanation rarely involved the supernatural (though, for example, in Wilkie Collins's *The Haunted Hotel* [1878] it is the intervention of supernatural forces that makes the murderess admit her crimes).

It might seem that the new genre (detective fiction) practically eliminated the irrational from the presented reality, resigning of the conventions of Gothic fiction, especially of any intimations of the supernatural. In the detective stories and novels, especially those written in the inter-war period, the mimetic order of the world dominates: a crime is a puzzle that demands to be solved. An investigation based on rational premises is foregrounded; the supernatural element is relegated both from the sphere of the detective's activities ("The problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means" [Van Dine, 1946, p. 190]) and from the sphere of the crime ("All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course" [Knox, 1946, p. 194]).

Moreover, as Dorothy Sayers notices in her introduction to the second series of *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror* (1931), detective fiction underwent significant changes in the first decades of the twentieth century. The genre, which initially developed mainly as short story focusing on the puzzle abstracted from any broader (social or psychological) context, now turned to novel "with »plenty of reading in it«" (Sayers, 1931, p. 16). One of the consequences of these changes was turning crime into a commonplace. Already Agatha Christie in some of her novels presents crime almost as part of daily routine (Kokot, 2015, pp. 88-89): anybody may be a murderer, the motive is usually most simple and trivial while the social and spatial setting is rooted in the tradition of the novel of manners. Such a commonplace and plain aspect of crime stresses what is the dominant feature of the world model presented in detective fiction in general: its rationality and predictability. There is no place for mysteries in this type of fiction but only for puzzles that can be solved – contrary to Gothic romances which question rationality, assuming the existence of the Unknown and the possibility of its intervention.

However, some of detective tales introduce an element of uncertainty as to the dominant genological convention[1]. This is the case of some Margery Allingham's novels (Rowland, 2004, pp. 28-39) – for example in *Look to the Lady* (1931)

[1] Maurizio Ascari stresses the fact that the rational element present in detective fiction did not eliminate completely the possibility of combining it with supertnatural motifs (Ascari, 2007, p. 10), while Srdjan Smajić notices "a persistent metatextual concern in detective fiction: the anxiety that generic purity is unattainable; that the supposedly rational genre in which the supposedly rational [detective] feels at home is everywhere contaminated by the supernatural, occult or irrational" (Smajić, 2010, p. 3).

the criminal and sensational intrigue includes a village witch and a mysterious guardian of a Celtic chalice. One can also find echoes of occult fiction in many short stories by Gilbert Keith Chesterton (especially those in *The Incredulity of Father Brown* [1926]), even though the final explanations bring back rationality into the presented world.

Close to Chesterton's stories mentioned above are the detective novels by John Dickson Carr. On the one hand he carries out the recommendations of John Knox and S.S. Van Dine almost to the letter and constructs intricate intrigues constituting a challenge to the assumed reader and an invitation to compete with the fictitious detective. As Douglas G. Greene remarks:

> Despite the fact that Carr wrote in the mood of neo-gothic horror or high comedy, almost all his novels are formal detective stories. No detective novelist was more scrupulous in giving every clue to the reader and in presenting rational explanations of all the seeming impossibilities. (Greene, 1991, pp. 9-10)

On the other hand, however, an impression is created that the puzzles cannot be explained otherwise but by an intervention of the supernatural. The uncanny circumstances of the crime are enhanced by references to black magic and occult arts in the presented reality. In *The Hollow Man* (1935) the reader meets Professor Grimaud, a specialist in "low magic", when he is lecturing on Hungarian vampire legends, according to which "the dead men could leave their coffins, and float in the air in the form of straw or fluff until they took human shape for an attack" (Carr, 1964, p. 7), which is exactly how the narrator characterises the murderer. *It Walks by Night* (1930) opens with a passage from a fifteenth century book devoted to werewolves whose attributes the psychopath, Laurent, claims to possess. It seems at first that behind the incomprehensible crimes in *Below Suspicion* (1945) or *The Crooked Hinge* (1938) lie Satanic practices performed by some characters, while in *Hag's Nook* (1933) and *The Plague Court Murders* (1934) the victim's death is related to a sinister legend concerning the past of the family or of the place. Finally, the eponymous lamp in *The Curse of the Bronze Lamp* (1945), found in an Egyptian pharaoh-priest's tomb, is said to be cursed; indeed its owner disappears without a trace on the way to her room; moreover, the incident takes place in a neo-Gothic castle imitating the style of Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill.

> Carr […] had the crime shake one's faith in a rational universe. By quoting from seemingly ancient manuscripts and legends about witches and vampires, Carr implies that only someone in league with Satan could have committed the crime. (Greene, 2008, p. 254)

The subject of the following analysis will be four earliest novels by John Dickson Carr, featuring Henri Bencolin, a Parisian *judge d'instruction*, the first of the serial

detectives created by the writer[2]. The narrator of all the novels is a young man of letters and Bencolin's friend, Jeff Marle. The fact that Jeff is a writer is significant – he, as the teller, would be responsible for the literary patterns imposed on the tale.

Although – apart from rather hazy suggestions in *It Walks by Night* – there are no attempts to persuade the reader that any supernatural factor might be involved in the crime, the narrative techniques refer straightforwardly to the tradition of Gothic fiction. On the one hand the crime scenes are – as we shall see – saturated with macabre and horror, on the other, the Gothic mode in descriptions often results from Jeff's sensitivity to the surroundings perceived by him as uncanny, *unheimlich*. Thus the terror invades reality both on the level of facts and on the level of the observer's impressions and intuitions.

2. The shadows of the past

In the pre-Romantic Gothic romance an important role is played by the past which the protagonists have to face. The space setting – a medieval castle or abbey – is a fragment of reality immersed in another time where the echoes of the past are still alive. Let us remember that the supernatural phenomena typical of Gothic fiction consist in blurring not only the barrier between the world of the living and the world of the dead, but also that between the present and the past. Ancient walls hide secrets of old crimes, the latter "returning" when the victims' ghosts cry revenge. The same happens in the nineteenth century ghost stories, where the supernatural manifestations make the past appear before the protagonist's eyes. The "Gothic" space is not only a numinal one but also one where time is suspended.

Some locations in Carr's novels are viewed in a similar way – as enclaves in the contemporary world, belonging to another time and "haunted" by the spectres from the past. The Gallery of Horrors in the wax museum is the world of the dead with its wax figures representing people long gone. It is there M. Augustin, the owner, believes he sees a ghost of a woman once sent to the guillotine by Bencolin. As he says: "one night, months ago, when I was closing up, I could have sworn I saw Madame Louchard, in her fur neckpiece and her little brown hat, walking along the green-lit Gallery …" (Carr, 1984, p. 16). He sees the same spectre again

[2] In *It Walks by Night* (1930), Bencolin and Marle investigate the murders of Duke de Savigny and Edouard Vautrelle; both victims were beheaded and the prime suspect is Laurent, the first husband of Madame de Savigny, who dealt with his psychiatrist in a similar way. *The Lost Gallows* (1931) is set in London, while the puzzle concerns mysterious threats addressed to a rich Egyptian, Nazim El Moulk, by someone who calls himself "Jack Ketch" (an English nickname for a hangman). The crime site in *Castle Skull* (1931) is a medieval castle, where an actor, Myron Alison, is burnt alive, and where – as it eventually expires – a magician, Maleger, has been kept prisoner for several years. The eponymous place in *The Corpse in the Waxworks* (1932) is linked by a passage with a house of ill fame, while the victims are two young girls, Odette Duchene and Claudette Martel, and a blackmailer, Etienne Galant.

a day before the action proper starts, when he follows Miss Claudine Martel, a girl that will be found murdered in a passage at the back of the museum: the phantom as if announces her death. Of course the reader can deduce the identity of the alleged ghost on the basis of the further course of events, but the place itself seems an obvious setting of such manifestations – it is a place of the dead in a double sense of the word. The figures in the Gallery of Horrors not only represent people already gone, but they also present them at the moment of their death.

The house of de Savigny, too, is presented as a place where echoes of the past are still alive. The house seems to return to life when the detectives enter it, but it is life from before many decades:

> We tramped down the great staircase, as though we descended into a dim gulf from which rose voices of the past, all those portraits on the walls stretching out their mimic arms, stirring and rustling in brocade through the whitish dusk; as though the candles in those silver scones drew back their ghastly light, and into the carpets crept the bloom they have lost a hundred years. . . . I could not put down the impulse to wander through the place, to feel the pull of the memories that must have haunted it for so many. (Carr, 1986, pp. 121-122)

Jeff's further mention of "mirrors reflecting the past" (Carr, 1986, p. 122) suggests that the house is filled with the echoes of old days which indeed "have haunted it for so many". It is not surprising then that when he sees Bencolin going out of the wine cellar, the detective looks "like a ghost", while the protagonist-narrator states that "it was none of my business" (Carr, 1986, p. 123), as if he found himself in another reality, from the perspective of which it is the present that appears to be a spectral world.

Jeff experiences a similar submerging in the world of the past in Nazim El Moulk's apartment full of artefacts from Egyptian tombs. Here, too, his companions turn into shadows, "dark figures" (Carr, 1985, p. 114), while he himself for a moment passes into the bygone reality: "I was listening to ghostly bugles in old wars – bugles that woke the coloured halls of Karnak, and then went crying through the streets of Thebes" (Carr, 1985, p. 114). A similar illusion is experienced by the tenant of the apartment. The murderer, going by the name of John Ketch, is inspired by a tale, dating back to the times of the Pharaohs, about a wicked prosecutor, El Moulk's namesake, who met death from the hand of his victim's ghost in a place called Ruination Street. Nazim El Moulk considers himself to be the descendant of the ancient Egyptian, fearing a similar spectral revenge of a man whose death he caused ten years ago falsely accusing him of murder:

> Imagine him sitting there night after night by his green lamp. Imagine the horrible blackness that came on him the first time he ever saw that papyrus – when he saw his own story acted out with grisly exactitude, and his doom written for him four thousand years before his birth! (Carr, 1985, p. 174)

Faubourg St.-Germain, where the parents of Miss Martel live, seems to be an anachronism in the modern Paris, an enclave where time has stopped – the whole district is perceived as a phantom from the past, where "you might meet an unlighted coach, with footmen and four white horses, and you would realise, in the wind and thunder of its passing, that the passengers had been dead two hundred years" (Carr, 1984, p. 92). The associations are not groundless when confronted with the criminal intrigue. Colonel Martel, the father of the murdered girl, is an old-fashioned man living in and by the past, a stranger in the modern world. "For many years he has sat there alone with his ghosts" (Carr, 1984, p. 181) delighting in the fact "that Disraeli took tea on that lawn with Napoleon the Third when [Martel] was a boy" (Carr, 1984, p. 180). Moreover, the past does not mean merely people and events but also ideals: the family honour guarded by whole generations of the Martels and now stained by Claudine. When the colonel broods over his daughter's deeds, "[t]he ghosts come round again. They prod him with the reminiscence of each Martel" (Carr, 1984, p. 181), while the Gallery of Horrors in the wax museum does not induce terror in the man but brings to mind equally absolute ideals in the name of which lives were taken or given away:

> Now he saw the past […] He saw people who killed and were killed for an abstract ideal. He saw cruelty or madness acquire a sort of terrible grandeur. He saw the Terrorists, unsmiling, watch the heads drop into the guillotine basket. He saw the Spanish Inquisition, unpitying, burn the heretics for the glory of God. He saw Charlotte Corday stab Marat, and Joan of Arc go to the stake, for the sake of an ideal, a terrible code which must never yield! (Carr, 1984, p. 184)

And in the name of such "a terrible code which must never yield" Colonel Martel kills his own daughter. Thus the way in which Jeff perceives Faubourg St.-Germain – as a space out of this time and out of this world – finds its embodiment in a character and attitude of one of its dwellers who is not able to free himself from the ghosts of times past.

The medieval Schloss Schadel is modelled in a similar way – this place, too, is perceived by Jeff as belonging to a different world. The guests from the modern times are strangers there, trespassing a reality they are not part of: "When we stood with our lights in the stone passage, we were anachronisms, and the halls did not like us. […] We were intruders" (Carr, 1960, p. 68). As in the case of the Paris district, the *locus* described by Jeff functions as a metaphorical equivalent of its dweller who does not belong to the present time[3]. The owner of Castle Skull is a magician, Maleger, whose *nomme de guerre* is a name of a spectral

[3] Already Yuri Lotman signalled links between a given locus and a character ascribed to it, poiting to "the possibility [...] of the moral description of literary characters through the type of artistic space corresponding to them" (Lotman, 1977, p. 22).

warrior from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and whose real name and surname as well as nationality and age are unknown. All this – as well as the terror provoked by his shows surpassing conventional illusionist tricks, as if real magic were at their heart – places this character rather in the context of a medieval Gothic castle than that of a twentieth century drawing room.

Moreover, several years before the action proper Maleger due to the machinations of his ex-friend was pronounced dead and now returns, like a ghost from Gothic romances, to avenge his wrongs. Even in the report of one of the characters Maleger is described as "a shadow on the white sky" (Carr,1960, p. 27) and not as a living person. The man is indeed like a phantom from the past: he allegedly died seventeen years before; he "dies" after completing his revenge, losing his mind; finally, he actually appears to be dying, as he suffers from an incurable disease. In this way the character of Maleger confirms Jeff's initial intuitions – the *locus* ascribed to the magician does set him in the past, in the realm of ghosts and death.

Carr creates spaces which belong to the world of the dead and not of the living. It is not only the atmosphere of terror that dominates there, but also that of desolation and unreality, when the protagonist suddenly experiences a world that exists no more. Moreover, all these places are connected with deaths that occurred in the contemporary times as well. Schloss Schadel and de Savigny's house are crime sites, the house at Faubourg St.-Germain and the apartment at the Brimstone Club are the dwelling places of murderers; in the latter El Moulk will eventually die hanged by the neck.

3. The Grand Guignol tradition

The Gothic aspect of Carr's novels does not result merely from some vague premonitions of the past invading the present or of the existence of enclaves where the past still survives in a spectral form and the present is an intruder disturbing the preserved order. It is also horror in its purest form.

A car with a dead man behind the wheel passes the streets of London; moreover, even if the vehicle moves at a great speed, it takes all turns properly and finally parks in front of the Brimstone Club as if the corpse were able to drive it. Jeff's imagination brings the driver back to life: "The corpse on its grisly ride was breaking all speed laws. I could fancy it shaking its arms and threshing about with the joy of the ride" (Carr, 1985, p. 22). The driver's throat is cut, the car soaks with blood and so does the body itself which – when lain on a billiard table – provokes grotesque and macabre associations.

The discovery of Vautrelle's corpse – shocking in itself, as the man's head is almost entirely severed from the body – is preceded by a rather macabre scene: when Jeff and Vautrelle's ex-lover, Sharon, are sitting on a garden bench, the girl feels a touch of a cold hand on her shoulder. As it appears it is not the hand of

her companion but that of Vautrelle, whose body was hidden in the bush behind the bench. The horror of the discovery is still enhanced by the seemingly oblique speech used in the narration, reconstructing Jeff's reaction to the nightmarish find:

> Nausea! Steady now, steady! Get yourself together! It won't hurt you; it's dead, God knows! I gripped the rough bark of the bench, and bent in sick coolness. The fountain shrilled steadily, as though it laughed. Come, now, turn him over! Your head's is in the way of the moonlight. Get to one side, so you can see his face! *His* head's been nearly severed from his body. Never mind *that* stuff; you can wash it off. Damn that fountain! (Carr, 1985, p. 165; highlighting by J.D.C.)

Myron Alison dies a terrible death, being burnt alive by his persecutor. Jeff is not a witness of this event, he only quotes the others' reports, but he is present at the discovery of another body – that of Bauer, the Castle Skull watchman. The detectives searching the castle find a cell in a secret passage where the man, several days dead, is found:

> At first you saw the top of a man's head, lowered as though he were about to run like a bull, and you saw the dirty greyish hair hanging towards the floor. Then you realized that the man was suspended against the wall. Rusty chains had been wound about him, hooked under his armpits, and then fastened to iron staples in the wall on either side. His bony arms, with large-knuckled hands, hung far out of his coat-sleeves. To give details is not necessary, because they were not pretty. He must have been hanging there for nearly a week. There was an odour, too … (Carr, 1960, p. 60)

The macabre and grotesque aspects of the crime scene refer rather to the tradition of Grand Guignol than to the poetics of detective fiction. This tradition is overtly pointed to in *It Walks by Night*, the first of Carr's Bencolin novels. A psychopath, Laurent, a fugitive from a lunatic asylum, leaves behind a macabre memento – the severed head of his psychiatrist "looking out from one of his own jars of alcohol on a shelf" (Carr, 1986, p. 24), which is commented by Bencolin: "For a man of imagination, what a Grand Guignol picture" (Carr, 1986, p. 23)[4].

Often the decor of the crime site makes it a perfect background of the macabre find. In *The Corpse in the Waxworks* such a place is the Gallery of Horrors and the staircase leading to it. The gallery itself is full of wax figures presenting historical characters dying a terrible death; Jeff describes the figures as "a masterpiece of devilrish artistry" (Carr, 1984, p. 25). Not only do the descriptions render the wax figures almost as real people, but also the border between what is real and what is only part of the exhibition is blurred. The dagger in Marat's chest is stained with actual blood, as it was used as murder weapon by Miss Martel's killer,

[4] Actually, the first – shorter – version of *It Walks by Night*, published in 1929 in *The Haverfordian*, was entitled *Grand Guignol*.

while the body of the girl is at first mistaken for a wax figure. In the naturalistic performances of Grand Guignol fictitious cruelties looked like real ones, here real traces of crime are taken for part of the decor.

Later the Gallery of Horrors will be the scene of the death of Galant, who becomes almost an element of the presented *tableau*:

> There was a creak, and one of the window-panes swung open. *A face pushed through, looking at us*.
> Framed in the windows, it showed huge white eyeballs and irises pushed up under the upper lids. Its mouth hung open in a sort of hideous grin. Then the mouth was obscured by a gush of blood. It gurgled, its head twitched sideways, and I saw that there was a knife projecting from the neck. It was the face of Etienne Galant. (Carr, 1984, p. 169; highlighting by J.D.C.)

The horror of the scene is enhanced by the technique of the description – the dying man is reduced only to a face framed by the window, like a macabre portrait or a puppet on a stage (again associations with Grand Guignol are triggered – Guignol is the name of a hand puppet in the traditional French puppet show).

A theatrical dimension is imposed on the first murder in the wax museum, too – this time it is not a coincidence, but the murderer's wilful action. Miss Martel's body is posed as a victim of the Satyr, "one of the popular Parisian bogies, a sort of man-monster who lives in the river and draws down women to their death" (Carr, 1984, p. 23), whose figure stands on the landing of the staircase leading to the Gallery of Horrors. Evidently, the killer lay the dead girl in the arms of the legendary creature purposely: "Is it strange then […] that he should continue this symbolism of his? That after he had stabbed his daughter he should put her body into the arms of – *the satyr*? He was offering her there as a kind of sacrifice" (Carr, 1984, p. 185; highlighting by J.D.C.). Claudette Martel was a regular customer of the house of ill fame where she treacherously lured her friend, eventually bringing death upon her. No wonder that she was laid as an offering in the arms of a satyr: the creature is not only a bogeyman from an urban legend, but also the embodiment of lust and debauchery.

The crime scene in *It Walks by Night* is significant, too. The very decor of the card-room where de Savigny's body is found fits the way the man met his death. The colour red is prevailing here (red walls, red tapestries, red carpet and dim red light), which not only matches the colour of blood but also brings to mind an executioner's attire. The associations with an execution are the more obvious that the victim was beheaded and died on his knees like a convict, while his head was exhibited afterwards. Like in the case of *The Corpse in the Waxworks* the position of the body is significant – as it will appear later beheading the victim was not merely a way to direct suspicions at the psychopathic Laurent but an execution indeed, even if it was not performed by the law.

Neither is Alison's death in flames merely a testimony to the killer's sick cruelty. It appears that the actor was planning to direct a play about early Christians, himself "starring as the Christian leader who was burnt by the Emperor Nero. But Maleger knew of it, and Maleger lived to give him his wish." (Carr, 1960, p. 126). Thus the last minutes of Alison's life function as a kind of a theatrical performance, where the gallery is the stage, the victim's villa on the other side of the river – the seats, and the victim himself – an actor playing the part of a live torch. Bauer's body, too, was posed deliberately: he was shot and then put into chains in the same cell in which Maleger himself had been chained for several years, while Bauer had kept watch both of the castle and of the prisoner.

The macabre dimension of the world presented in *Castle Skull* not only results from the *tableaux* created by the killer but also from the presence of music, otherwise perceived as the quintessence of order. Already the beginning of the novel introduces a grotesque contrast between the light melody played by the orchestra, extolling "the grace of Lizette, the smile of Mignonette, and the cuteness of Suzette" (Carr, 1960, p. 5), and the grim tale about Alison's murder told to Bencolin at a restaurant table. The actor himself dies as if to the melody of "Amaryllis" played by one of his guests ignorant of the tragedy that is taking place in the castle. As a witness puts it: "I'll never forget that it almost seemed to be dancing to that »Amaryllis«, that tune" (Carr, 1960, p. 20). Beauty and harmony that are usually associated with music, when confronted with a nightmarish crime, deprive the surrounding reality of its substantiality, exactly like the theatrical aspect of the crime does. The order imposed on reality paradoxically lets in chaos and terror.

4. The atmosphere of terror

The patterns on the level of fictional reality changing that reality into a kind of a performance in a theatre of horrors have their equivalent on the level of the narrator's utterance. Jeff-narrator in the descriptions of particular scenes – not only those with elements of the macabre – utilises the conventions of Gothic fiction creating an atmosphere typical of a tale of terror[5].

In the descriptions of Castle Skull the stress falls on darkness pervading it, dispersed only by the dim light of torches; on the play of shadows on the castle walls, when the detectives pass the interiors in search of clues; finally on the labyrinth of passages and staircases, reminding one of similar space organisation of the early Gothic fiction castles. Moreover, though the terror in the narratorial descriptions is limited only to the castle and has no access to the villa on the other side of the river (here the convention of the novel of manners, typical of

[5] Jeff's fondness for Gothic atmosphere can be noticed also in *Poison in Jest* (1932) where Bencolin is substituted by another, more commonplace detective.

contemporary detective fiction, dominates), it seems to beset Alison's place, even if it is eventually dispelled by the prosaic nature of the surroundings.

A space analogous to a medieval castle is the wax museum, especially the Gallery of Horrors. However, here the Gothic atmosphere is not the narrator-protagonist's "response" to a crime already committed – on the contrary, it functions as a means of foreshadowing the horror as it permeates the place before the victim's body is discovered. Jeff's imagination gives life to the wax figures, provoking irrational fear. When he walks about the Gallery of Horrors he even suffers from hallucinations: it not only seems to him that the wax figures are following him with their glass eyes, but also that he hears their footsteps. A dripping sound (not very disquieting in itself) scares him out of his wits: "Panic seized me […] I hurried up the stairs in a tumult of echoes. I wanted light, and the knowledge of human presence in this choking stuffiness of wax and wigs" (Carr, 1984, p. 26). All this foreshadows the moment when Jeff's fantasies find their equivalent in reality: the discovery of Miss Martel's corpse posed as a wax figure, as one of museum exhibits.

The Brimstone Club assumes Gothic characteristics as well: Jeff's impressions and premonitions foreshadow the Egyptian's macabre death. The club itself is a place permeated by the atmosphere of evil: it was here where Regency rakes lured young and naive aristocratic maidens. At the time of action the club functions as a hotel, but all the same it arises bad associations in Jeff: "But, though now the club has fallen into peace, it is a peace more evil and morbid than of any hauntings of the past" (Carr, 1985, p. 12). It even assumes some aspects of a haunted place: when Jeff walks through the empty building at night it seems to him that he sees human shapes and smiling faces in the unlit rooms. It is not clear whether these are real people or optic illusions, but in the narrator's relation they resemble ghosts, once visible, once invisible, showing in the interiors lit only by street lamps outside. Later Jeff perceives the murderer in a similar way – the man disappears in an inexplicable way, like a ghost passing through walls, and when the protagonist finally finds the secret room where the execution is to take place, "Jack Ketch" is first seen as a monstrous, distorted shadow on the wall.

The rendez-vous of Jeff and Sharon (*It Walks by Night*) takes place, as the narrator puts it, at "[h]aunted Versailles, filled with the sound of wind and willows, with gilt and glass and the white finery of kings" (Carr, 1986, p. 161). Initially the word "haunted" does not carry ominous associations; Sharon's beauty takes the enamoured man into an older and more sublime world of "the white finery of kings". The surrounding reality does not induce terror, but it becomes half-substantial, like Faubourg St.-Germaine or the galleries of Castle Skull. However, Versailles soon becomes "haunted" in a more sinister sense: Sharon, standing in the garden, looks like a lifeless spectre – in a short fragment the word "dead" is repeated three times: "I could see the dead white of her face staring up at the moon.

It was like a dead face, except for the eyes, and she was like one dead except for the faint movement of the silver gown" (Carr, 1986, p. 164). The tryst site changes into a *locus horridus*, provoking irrational fear – the "haunted Versailles" is no more a world of beauty and refinement but a world of death. Indeed, the scene in the garden precedes immediately the discovery of Vautrelle's body with the head nearly severed from it[6].

Thus before the macabre discovery is made, the narrator creates an atmosphere foreshadowing the approaching horror, anticipating the climax. The result is not only foregrounding Jeff's modelling activities as a narrator and a writer. Contrary to most contemporary detective tales, Carr's novels do not present a crime as a mere (no matter how complicated) puzzle, an intellectual problem to be solved both by the fictitious detective and by the reader. The references to the conventions of Gothic fiction are at the same time references to a model of reality where the mimetic order has been violated by an alien element which is terrifying because it undermines the very essence of the universal harmony.

5. Final remarks

The character of Bencolin fits the reality created by Carr perfectly, adding to the sense of uncanny. His outlook, the way he dresses as well as his facial hair endow him with diabolical looks[7]. The associations with Mephistopheles may seem paradoxical since it is Bencolin who executes the law and restores the order of reality, entering the realm of chaos, crime and human hell – a hell that is doublefolded, as not only the external world seems to fall apart, but the same happens to the murderer's personality. The motive of the crime is an irrational revenge which results from hatred often fed for many years (as in the case of Maleger or "Jack Ketch"). Contrary to most detective puzzles of the period, the crime scene is not arranged so carefully merely to hide the identity of the culprit – it is significant in itself, and so is the cruelty which underlies the murder.

In all the cases we have to do with a double (or double-folded) murder – a crime bears a crime, both being equally irrational. El Moulk kills one man and falsely accuses another because he is insanely jealous of a woman. Odette Duchene dies because the old-fashioned principles she confesses belong to the world that Miss Martel obsessively hates. Alison imprisons Maleger because the magician

[6] Although the phrase "haunted Versailles" is motivated by the fact that Sharon's villa is indeed at Versailles, the name together with the kind of death that Vautrelle met carries further associations – those with Louis XVI and his fate when "the white finery of kings" was overtaken by the bloody reign of the Terror.

[7] This is how Jeff describes his friend in *Castle Skull*: "The black hair, parted in the middle and twisted up like horns. The long inscrutable eyes, with hooked brows drawn down. The high cheek-bones, the aquiline nose. The slow smile, stirring between small moustache and black pointed beard" (Carr, 1960, p. 6).

does not appreciate his Thespian talents. Laurent who claims: "It comes over me […] sometimes as an impulse, often as a slow process of thought, that there would be pleasure in seeing blood – the blood of man, woman or beast" (Carr, 1986, p. 21) murders de Savigny and takes over his identity to re-marry a woman who once escaped his madness. The second wave of crime – the death of El Moulk, Alison, Laurent and Vautrelle, as well as Miss Martel and Galant – constitutes acts of revenge executed in a scenery straight from a horror tale, being the equivalent of the murderer's madness[8].

Carr, using the pen of his narrator creates a world which loses its rational aspect or even its substantiality, as Jeff-narrator states more than once. For example, in *It Walks by Night* he speaks about the unreal nature of the case; the reaction to the atmosphere in the houses of de Savigny, Sharon and Terlin is respectively: "an aspect of unreality" (Carr, 1986, p. 79) "the unreality" (Carr, 1986, p. 124) "an unreal aspect" (Carr, 1986, p. 157) "a feeling of ghostliness" (Carr, 1986, p. 142). The world surrounding the protagonist becomes like a castle in a Gothic romance, where secret passages open unexpectedly, strange voices are heard, or spectres from another world seem to appear.

The final solution of the puzzle restores order, exorcising terror and presenting reality as rational after all (even if this rationality is guaranteed by Bencolin-Mephistopheles). It is so in other novels by Carr, too, where the genological uncertainty is introduced, but in the novels with Jeff Marle as the narrator the fact is stressed that the terror does not lurk outside man but within, that – like in the American variant of the Gothic – it has above all psychological dimension. And this on a double level: on the one hand the crime is committed out of irrational motives and it leads to further disaster, on the other – the irrational aspect is echoed by both the emotional reactions of Jeff-protagonist and by modelling reality by Jeff-narrator.

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[8] The only one who remains sane is the real killer of Alison who shoots the actor and wounds him severely before Maleger exacts his revenge. This fact seems to suggest a justification of the act; Bencolin, too, knowing the identity of the murderer decides not to prosecute them.

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"You have a lovely and unusual name." Mrs de Winter from Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* – a Gothic Heroine in Search of Identity

ABSTRACT
The paper is devoted to the analysis of Mrs de Winter, one of the main characters from Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, as an example of a Gothic figure. The analysis traces the stages in the development of the heroine by demonstrating how she first becomes, through the process of *gothicisation*, "the Gothic damsel in distress." Vulnerable and easily threatened, she is defined solely in relation to her aristocratic husband, whose status she is unable to match. Then, however, as a result of her growth as an individual, Mrs de Winter is *degothicised.* We witness a change in her attitude toward her tormentors: she no longer feels intimidated; she starts developing, in what we view as an identity-building process, her public and personal sense of a mature and independent individual.
Keywords: Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca*, Gothic novel, damsel in distress, degothicisation

1. Introduction

The concept of identity has been used, as Steph Lawler (2014) observes, "in a wide-ranging and inclusive way to mean both its public manifestations – which might be called 'roles' or identity categories – *and* the more personal, ambivalent, reflective and reflexive sense that people have of who they are" (p.7). By adopting such a broad perspective we are able to analyse "the more conflictual, complex and cross-category processes by which a person or a self gets to be produced" – the procedure which focuses on one's sense of oneself as well as on the perception of an individual by others, and the individual's reaction to these perceptions (pp. 7-8). Seen in this light, identity is taken to be a construct, a result of the dynamic process of (self)-definition or identification carried out in a broader context (p. 10).

Defined in this way, the notion of identity can be applied to the analysis of a literary character. It will play a pivotal role in our analysis of Mrs de Winter, Daphne du Maurier's Gothic protagonist of the novel *Rebecca*, whose identity

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is constructed and defined in the course of her own retrospective narrative. The process of Mrs de Winter's self-definition is carried out primarily in relation to, and by her confrontation with, three characters in the novel: her husband, Mr de Winter; Mrs Danvers, the loyal servant to his dead wife Rebecca; and Rebecca herself, whose haunting presence in Mr de Winter's estate at Manderley exerts a powerful influence on his new wife.

This paper intends to show how the naïve, inexperienced nameless young woman, of whom we know very little – a perfect candidate for the Gothic "damsel in distress" – and who is initially "defined" in relation to her husband and the class he represents, develops and builds her own (female, class and personal) identity. It also demonstrates how, as the plot develops, this process of definition gains momentum, resulting in the reconfiguration of social relations on the one hand and in identity construction on the other. It is argued that this process of the search for identity goes through stages. In the first stage, the protagonist is "gothicised" and acquires traits of a Gothic heroine when she becomes Mrs de Winter and arrives at Manderley, a place which, as critics agree, has features of a Gothic abode.[1] In the course of the story, this process is reversed, resulting in the "degothicisation" of the heroine, who develops and builds her own identity no longer marked by the "damsel-in-distress" label.

Most of the studies devoted to du Maurier's *Rebecca* focus on the eponymous character, who, although never present in person, haunts the pages of the novel.[2] She has been intriguing enough to be compared by critics to Desdemona (Nigro, 2000); her status as a literary figure has also been likened to that of Dracula[3] or Frankenstein (Horner & Zlosnik, 1998, p. 99). Mrs de Winter, in turn, has been considered to bear a similarity to Jane Eyre. Furthermore, the impact of fairy tales, "Cinderella" and "Bluebeard," on du Maurier's novel, has been acknowledged by critics (cf. e.g., Beauman, 2006, p. x). With Catherine Morland from *Northanger Abbey*, the nameless heroine shares "social, intellectual and sexual naivety" (Horner & Zlosnik, 1998, p. 103). Thus, firmly rooted in the literary tradition, the creation of both Rebecca and her successor, Mrs de Winter, has attracted critical

[1] It can also be claimed that by adopting her husband's name the protagonist receives a kind of pseudo-identity as she does not recognize herself as Mrs de Winter. It is only later, at the end of the story that she begins to think of herself as Mrs de Winter.

[2] In her study, Marta Kőrösi (2002) enumerates different "layers of interpretation to construe Rebecca as a system of reference: Rebecca as a referential construction to interpret gender; Rebecca as a semiotic construction created by means of objects; Rebecca as the narrator's double; Rebecca as body; and Rebecca as writing and narrative. These layers do not appear separately in the text, as they all depend on one another in their methods and purpose of constructing Rebecca."

[3] Rebecca has been seen to have the features of a vampire: "Facial pallor, plentiful hair and voracious sexual appetite" (Horner & Zlosnik, 1998, p. 111). In a sense, it seems, she may be treated as "undead" – like a vampire, Horner and Zlosnik posit, "she has to be 'killed' more than once". In fact, she represents "the Fatal Woman" (pp. 111-112).

attention. In particular, the impact of the Gothic convention has been widely recognised.

The novel has been read as a modern rewrite of the Bluebeard tale, as "a Gothic love story, in which a virtuous woman triumphs over an evil one by winning the love of a gentleman" (Llompart Pons, 2013, p. 70), as an example of "Female Gothic" and as a "psychological thriller" (Wisker, 2003, p. 86). Richard Kelly describes the novel as "a profound and fascinating study of an obsessive personality, of sexual dominance, of human identity, and of the liberation of the hidden self" (p. 54, quoted in Frank, 2005, p. 239). Horner and Zlosnik (1998, p. 99) have interpreted du Maurier's novel as one in which "the narrator's identity is haunted by an Other, and in which Manderley is seen, like all classic Gothic buildings, to be a house haunted by its secrets." They also argue that "Rebecca, treated as a Gothic rendering of the Other Woman, becomes one of those 'perfect figure(s) for negative identity' which, according to Judith Halberstam, endow certain Gothic texts with the potential for multiple meaning" (p. 100). In particular, Horner and Zlosnik claim, du Maurier's novel shows "female identity as complex and multifaceted" (p. 100).

There are also studies which challenge the more traditional approaches to *Rebecca*. For example, Gina Wisker (2003) sees du Maurier's *Rebecca*, as well as some of her stories, as ones which, she argues, "destabilise romantic fiction foundations, disturb the trajectory of conventional narratives, and expose the oppressions and destructively held myths of romantic fiction" (p. 84).

As Horner and Zlosnik (1998, p. 103) assert, the novel charts Mrs de Winter's quest from ignorance to knowledge and the reader is made to follow the quest, guided by the narrator who recounts this quest retrospectively. I would like to claim that this quest can be looked at in terms of identity-building process which is parallel to the heroine first acquiring the Gothic features of a damsel-in-distress and then freeing herself from them in the process of degothicisation, thereby shaping her independent personality. The narrative Mrs de Winter offers as the protagonist contributes to building her own identity. Significantly, Mrs de Winter's first name remains unknown. As Armitt (2000, p. 104) aptly puts it, *Rebecca* is a story of "the woman with no name and the woman who has nothing and is nothing *but* her name." All we know about the name is that it is, according to Mr de Winter, "a lovely and unusual" one (*R.*, p. 25). The protagonist of du Maurier's novel develops from the nonentity she is at the beginning ("prim, silent, and subdued" [*R.*, p. 25]) to becoming a full-fledged individual, no longer susceptible, it seems, to Gothic experiences and ready to challenge others instead of being challenged herself.

The story is narrated, as mentioned above, by the protagonist and the episodes which mould the personality of the heroine are shown from her perspective. These episodes relate primarily to the three important characters with whom Mrs de Winter interacts: her husband Maxim, Mrs Danvers, and Rebecca, whose ghostly presence

dogs the heroine. In the picture of Maxim she constructs, she sees him as a wonder-man, a man she does not deserve. He is a remote figure, rarely present and rarely shown in interaction with his wife, which also impairs her sense of self-esteem. Rebecca is seen by Mrs de Winter as a model to follow, which she fails to match. Mrs Danvers, as the guardian of Rebecca's memory in Manderley, is her tormentor. It is through the interaction with these figures that Mrs de Winter develops her sense of self. They become important factors in creating her identity.

2. Mrs de Winter – her younger self

In the opening chapters of the novel, in her retrospective narration, Mrs de Winter presents her younger self as a lonely woman of twenty-one, shy, socially inexperienced, not very likely to change her life as a paid companion to Mrs Van Hopper. Her features can be looked at by the reader as conducive to becoming a Gothic heroine – one who is traditionally of "unexceptional appearance, […] sexually innocent and highly romantic […] [and] marked by [a] self-deprecatory tendency" (Radway, quoted in Haddad, 2012).

The protagonist of du Maurier's novel is strongly critical of herself, full of disbelief in her attractiveness as a young woman. Recollecting her stay at Monte Carlo as Mrs Van Hopper's companion, the narrator describes her own position as conspicuously "inferior and subservient" to her employer's (*R*., p. 11),[4] a feature easily noticed by the waiters and servants who, accordingly, treat her in a patronising way. She realises that, as befits a paid companion to an aristocratic lady, she is perceived as "a youthful *thing* and unimportant" (*R.,* p. 14; emphasis added) who is not included in a conversation, and who "could safely be ignored" (*R.*, p. 14). For this reason she is often distressed and blushes ("I felt the colour flood into my face" [*R.,* p. 16]) when she finds the circumstances embarrassing. She lacks experience of social codes and conventions, and speaks of herself at that time as "too young" (*R.*, p. 16), or "feeling like a child that had been smacked" (*R*., p. 16). She is too shy – as "the raw ex-school girl, red-elbowed and lanky-haired" – to feel comfortable when involved by Mr de Winter in a conversation about Monte Carlo (*R*., p. 17).

When invited to lunch with Mr de Winter, she is encouraged by him to talk about her family, her father, and the death of her parents – an experience which makes her feel she "had […] risen in importance" (*R*., p. 27). She recollects this episode as one which brought about "a total change from his usual attitude of indifference" (*R*., p. 27). And even if for a moment she "found the change depressing" (*R*., p. 27), she soon discovers that "she was a person of importance, [she] was grown up at last. That girl who, tortured by shyness, would stand outside

[4] All quotations from *Rebecca* are taken from Du Maurier (2006/1938) and will henceforth be documented with *R* and page numbers in parentheses.

the sitting-room door twisting a handkerchief in her hands […] – she had gone with the wind that afternoon" (*R.*, p. 30). While this change seemed to be welcome and was followed by a marriage proposal (although her immediate reaction was "I'm not the sort of person men marry. […] I don't belong to your sort of world for one thing" [*R.*, p. 57]), its long-term consequences are much more serious and can be looked at in terms of an experience typical of Gothic fiction.

By accepting the marriage proposal from Maxim, a widower twice her age, who is recovering from the tragic death of his wife Rebecca, assumed to have died as a result of a sailing accident, the young woman embarks on the path to a life for which she has been completely unprepared. The remark that Mrs Van Hopper made when saying good bye to her sounds like a warning: "Naturally one wants you to be happy, and I grant you he's a very attractive creature but – well, I'm sorry; and personally I think you're making a big mistake – one you'll bitterly regret" (*R.*, p. 66). The warning is enhanced by her farewell words: "[Y]ou know why he's marrying you, don't you? You haven't flattered yourself he's in love with you? The fact is that empty house got on his nerves to such an extent he nearly went off his head. He admitted as much before you came into the room. He just can't go on living there alone…'" (*R.*, p. 67). These words foreshadow the events that are going to take place later on.

Interestingly, Mr de Winter does not introduce changes to Manderley after Rebecca's death. By keeping the traces of his former wife, Maxim forces himself to experience her more immediately than he would if she were merely a memory (Kőrösi, 2002). This also results in forcing his current wife into confronting Rebecca as the "Other Woman," whose constant ghostly presence is perpetuated by the sinister housekeeper – Mrs Danvers.

3. Mrs de Winter – Maxim's wife in Manderley

The novel is described in the blurb on the back cover of its 2003 edition as "the haunting story of a young girl consumed by love and the struggle to find her identity." It is precisely this "struggle to find *identity*" that is most closely related to the Gothic character of the novel. The search for identity is also inseparable from the protagonist's experience of Manderley, the central setting in the novel. The second Mrs de Winter is introduced to Manderley (incidentally, the place she knows from a postcard she bought as a teenage girl and which she idealised in her imagination) seven weeks after her wedding to Maxim. Interestingly, Maxim wants to marry the young woman hurriedly, in an office, where "the whole thing can be so easily arranged in a few days" (*R.*, p. 61), without church bells or the choir boys the young bride would expect. In response to his bride's surprise, he answers: "You forget,' he said, 'I had that sort of wedding before'" (*R.*, p. 61). This kind of "wedding context" may arouse suspicion and, as befits a Gothic tale, is likely to be followed by emotionally-laden events.

Mrs de Winter's marriage is indeed the starting point for her Gothic plight. There is a silver lining to her experience though, which, however bitter, will ultimately result in her growth to (self)-identity. To begin with, unlike in stereotypical Gothic novels, the young woman's marriage to the wealthy aristocrat does not conclude a Gothic plot with "they lived happily ever after." Rather, it initiates it. Although getting married to Mr de Winter provides an impulse for his wife to undergo the transformation which results in her identity building and achieving integrity as a character, this comes at a price. Without Mr de Winter, the nameless heroine would have probably remained a paid companion to Mrs Van Hopper. Coming to Maxim's aristocratic estate is a stage on her "road to building her identity" (Tóth, 2010, p. 30). Although at first glance her status as a wife to an aristocratic husband may seem to indicate social advancement and offer a guarantee of a stable social position, it becomes a threat to her, resulting in her victimisation, which is a typically Gothic course of events.

Mrs de Winter's journey to Manderley foreshadows the Gothic experiences she is going to encounter there. First of all, she has a feeling of getting entrapped (a characteristic feature of the Gothic convention and a typically Gothic experience) as soon as she passes the gate to her husband's estate. Every detail of the description below contributes to the creation of the strange, of the numinous:

> The gates had shut to with a crash behind us, the dusty road was out of sight, and I became aware that this was not the drive I had imagined would be the Manderley's, this was not a broad and spacious thing of gravel, flanked with neat turf at either side, kept smooth with rake and brush.
> This drive twisted and turned as a serpent, scarce wider in places than a path, and above our heads was a great colonnade of trees, whose branches nodded and intermingled with one another, making an archway for us, like the roof of a church. Even the midday sun would not penetrate the interlacing of those green leaves, they were too thickly entwined, one with another, and only little flickering patches of warm light would come in intermittent waves to dapple the drive with gold. It was very silent, very still. On the high road there had been a gay west wind blowing in my face, making the grass on the hedges dance in unison, but here there was no wind. (*R.*, p. 71)

The border is drawn between the ordinary, everyday world and the numinous world: "the world of the sublime, terrifying, chaotic" (cf. Aguirre, 2002, p. 3). The narrator gets the feeling of being entrapped not only in the physical sense but also, and more importantly, in the psychological. Her liberation from this custody (cf. *R.*, p. 102) will be a pivotal part of the identity building process. Indeed, Mrs de Winter finds her new environment of Manderley hostile and she cannot adjust to her new position as a wife to Maxim, whose former aristocratic wife, Rebecca, was considered to be an exceptional person in many ways.[5] The narrator

[5] Incidentally, the reader's image of Rebecca is constructed, to a great extent, on the basis of

describes her daily experience in Gothic terms: the estate, although modernised, is mysterious to her; the west wing including Rebecca's bedroom is locked and Mrs de Winter is not encouraged to enter it.[6] The estate is old indeed and "has been in his family's possession since the Conquest" (*R*., p. 16). Rebecca's ghost hovers over the estate, rendering Manderley Gothic. This is one of the reasons why the threatened and scared Mrs de Winter feels uncomfortable in the luxurious surroundings of Manderley: "You would not think she [Rebecca] had just gone out for a little while and would back in the evening.' […] 'It's not only this room,' she [Mrs Danvers] said. 'It's in many rooms in the house. […] I feel her everywhere. You do too, don't you?'" (*R.*, p. 194) (cf. Kędra-Kardela, 2015, p. 175). The quotation is also an illustration of the role Mrs Danvers fulfils as a "living extension" of Rebecca, whose presence as a ghost she perpetuates.

The presence of Mrs Danvers, whose appearance has the features of a Gothic villain, almost like a vampire, enhances the sense of horror experienced by Mrs de Winter. Her first encounter with her makes her notice the housekeeper's "lifeless" voice and hands (*R.*, p. 74), "a little smile of scorn upon her lips." As she says, "[s]omething in the expression of her face, gave me a feeling of unrest" (*R*., p. 75). This feeling of unrest is going to define the heroine and her relationship with Mrs Danvers, who, although socially inferior to Mrs de Winter, refuses to recognise this and thus constantly weakens the protagonist's self-esteem.

Mr de Winter's ancient Manderley estate does not become a real home to his wife: she feels like a stranger there. For her it is a haunted place, with a room she is not supposed to enter, and a labyrinth of corridors and staircases. Mrs de Winter feels constantly dogged by the feeling of inability to match Rebecca in her aristocratic manners, in her social skills. She does not think of herself as Mrs de Winter. For instance, in a telephone conversation, when addressed as "Mrs de Winter," she automatically responds that "Mrs de Winter has been dead for over a year" (*R.*, p. 95).

At the earlier stages of plot development Mrs de Winter cannot get rid of the persistent feeling of Rebecca's presence: "Rebecca, always Rebecca. Wherever I walked in Manderley, wherever I sat, even in my thoughts and in my dreams, I met Rebecca. I knew her figure now […]. I knew the scent she wore, I could guess her laughter and her smile. […] Rebecca, always Rebecca. I should never be rid of Rebecca. […] And I could not fight. She was too strong for me" (*R.,* pp. 261-262). The repetition of Rebecca's name in this passage confirms the narrator's

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what Mr de Winter says and what we learn from Mrs Danvers' description of Rebecca as a paragon of virtue and beauty (cf. Kőrösi, 2002).

[6] This Gothic convention of a closed wing was established as early as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and by Clara Reeve who, in her *Old English Baron*, introduces "a vacant wing" (Spector, 1990, p. 1047). Later on, this motif featured in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and in "The Old Nurse's Story" by Elizabeth Gaskell, to name but a few instances.

obsession with her husband's previous wife. Mrs de Winter constructs an image of Rebecca in her mind as a picture of perfection. Even her handwriting was perfect: when comparing her own handwriting with Rebecca's she notices her own inadequacy. Rebecca's handwriting is perceived by her successor as showing a strong personality. As Horner and Zlosnik (1998) aptly assert, "[t]he household documents written by her signify both acceptance of a certain social role and the ability to carry it out with verve and sophistication" (p. 114), features which Mrs de Winter lacks. By trying to emulate Rebecca, Mrs de Winter creates, as Beauman (2006) puts it, "a chimera," a monster that she has to fight with psychologically up to the moment when the monster is "destroyed" by her: "Patching together a portrait of Rebecca in her mind, she creates a chimera – and an icon of womanhood. Rebecca, she comes to believe, was everything she herself is not: she was a perfect hostess, a perfect sexual partner, a perfect chatelaine and a perfect wife" (pp. x-xi).

However, Mrs de Winter's self-perception changes and Manderley loses its quality of a haunted Gothic space once Maxim reveals to his present wife the terrifying truth that he had murdered Rebecca.[7] Once he confides in her, he treats her, for the first time, as a wife, partner and as a person capable of supporting him. This moment marks the turning point in Mrs de Winter's identity-building process. Manderley, where this process takes place, becomes an "identity building space," whose perception by Mrs de Winter corresponds to her perception of her own self. It becomes therefore "an objective correlative" of Mrs de Winter's experience including her emotions.[8]

The previous hierarchy in the family which underprivileged Mrs de Winter and prevented her from building her mature sense of self is now subverted. In Chapter 19, when the boat with Rebecca's dead body is discovered at the bottom of the bay, Mrs de Winter's reaction shows her as a woman capable of facing a truly critical situation and sharing her husband's concern. Her earlier tendency to react with anxiety disappears:

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[7] Llompart Pons (2013, p. 74) convincingly argues Mr de Winter is actually a manipulator, who "demonizes Rebecca and blames *her* for *his* crime" (emphasis original). He presents himself as a victim of Rebecca's machinations.

[8] Tóth (2010) comments on this aspect of the Gothic in fiction in the following way: in Radcliffe's novels, for example, "transformation and development find their objective correlative in physical spaces; in the polarisation of the safe, harmonious pastoral world as opposed to a frightening, urban gothic world. The tender, delicate pastoral world is not only associated with the past, but also with the female sphere, whereas the modern gothic world with its castles and ruins exists in the present and demonstrates restricting male power. The complexity of this pattern is made even more complicated by the introduction of the aesthetic principles of the sublime and the beautiful: as in Burke, these two principles have clear-cut gender associations; the sublime with the male, the beautiful with the female" (p. 23).

> 'I'm so sorry,' I whispered,' so terribly, terribly sorry.' He did not answer. His hand was icy cold. I kissed the back of it, and then the fingers, one by one. 'I don't want you to bear this alone,' I said. 'I want to share it with you. *I've grown up, Maxim, in twenty four hours. I'll never be a child again.*' [emphasis added] (*R.*, p. 296)

The conversation which follows the above exchange between Maxim and his wife reveals his sense of Rebecca being a hindrance in the marital relations with his current wife: "'Rebecca has won' he said. […] 'her shadow between us all the time,' he said. 'Her damned shadow keeping us from one another'" (*R.,* p. 297).

The discovery of the truth about Rebecca, the circumstances of her death on the one hand and of her corruption, disloyalty and marital infidelity as a wife, on the other,[9] has a profound impact on Mrs de Winter as a psychologically liberating experience. It turns out that a change in her sense of who she is and what she is capable of is possible. Mrs de Winter will no longer be defined "through Rebecca" or "against Rebecca" as her inferior counterpart:

> [S]omething new had come upon me that had not been before. My heart, for all its anxiety and doubt, was light and free. I knew then that I *was no longer afraid* of Rebecca. I *did not hate her* any more. Now that I knew her to have been evil and vicious and rotten I did not hate her any more. […] I could go to the morning-room and sit down at her desk and touch her pen […]. I could go to her room in the west wing […] and I should not be afraid. […] She would never haunt me again. […] Maxim had never loved her. I did not hate her any more. Her body had come back, her boat had been found […], but I was *free of her* forever.
>
> I was free now to be with Maxim, to touch him, hold him, and love him. *I would never be a child again*. *It would not be I, I, I any longer; it would be we, it would be us* [emphasis added]. (*R.*, p. 319-320)

Apparently, at this critical moment, Mrs de Winter sees herself as a mature person, no longer a *child*. Her personality, previously defined in relation to Rebecca, whom she believed she could never equal, now acquires new features. Maxim's second wife is no longer a vulnerable woman, a "Gothic damsel in distress" with the mentality of a child. She develops a "complex and multifaceted" identity as a woman (Horner & Zlosnik 1998:100). Horner and Zlosnik (1998, p. 122) rightly claim that in reaching her full-fledged personality, the change in Mrs de Winter's attitude to Rebecca, "unlocking the door to Rebecca," is more important than the change in her relationship with Maxim. However, it is vital to note here that once the relationship of intimacy with her husband is mentioned, an element previously missing in the narrator's account of her experience as a wife, Mrs de

[9] It has to be borne in mind that Mrs de Winter received the information concerning Rebecca's death and its circumstances from Mr de Winter. She takes the information at face value, though there have been reasons to regard Mr de Winter as a manipulator, who aimed at presenting himself in a favourable light, as Llompart Pons indicates (cf. footnote 9).

Winter's femininity is confirmed. As a result of obtaining knowledge about her aristocratic predecessor, Mrs de Winter is liberated and thus is degothicised. Her perception of her environment, of people and places changes and is degothicised too (cf. Kędra-Kardela, 2015). Consequently, she no longer feels threatened by Rebecca, she no longer fears Mrs Danvers as the guardian of Rebecca's memory in Manderley, nor will the ghost of Rebecca haunt her anymore.[10] She is ready to dismiss Mrs Danvers and take over running the house (*R.*, p. 422). Her attitude to her husband changes, too – she can start taking care of Maxim.[11] Very much in the manner of the female Gothic, she begins to speak on her own behalf – both as a character and as a narrator. As she narrates her own story, Mrs de Winter is wholly responsible for the picture of herself she conveys. She gains the courage to make her voice audible. The portrait of Mrs de Winter as a literary figure gains considerable psychological complexity.

As mentioned above, the artistic space of Manderley and its perception by Mrs de Winter in Gothic terms and what happens to this perception is an objective correlative (cf. Tóth, 2010, p. 23) of the heroine's development which goes through stages – from being a victim of Rebecca's haunting presence and a passive object of Mrs Danvers' vicious actions to being an active person capable of acting on her own and facing the challenges. Only by acknowledging her difference from Rebecca, which was possible after the discovery of the secret and (not uncontroversial) circumstances of her death, does Mrs de Winter achieve a sense of identity and certain independence. As aptly put by Benwell & Stokoe (2006), "[t]he 'recognition' process which is crucial to identity […] arises through participation in social life," and they add, by quoting Donald E. Hall (2004, p. 51): "[A]n individual's self-consciousness never exists in isolation […] it always exists in relationship to an 'other' or 'others' who serve to validate its existence" (p. 24). In the case of du Maurier's novel, Rebecca, no doubt, is "the Other" who "validates" Mrs de Winter's existence. As a "chimera," as a monster, Rebecca proved to be "both threatening and liberating" (Horner and Zlosnik, 1998, p. 125) to her successor at Manderley.

The Gothic heroine, whose first "lovely and unusual" name we never get to know and who initially does not identify with her husband's name, at the end

[10] It is worth mentioning that the connection between Rebecca and Mrs Danvers is stronger than one might think: when visiting Doctor Baker, the physician who diagnosed Rebecca with cancer, she "called herself Mrs Danvers" (*R.*, p. 412), apparently to conceal her identity. It is only later, during the investigation into the circumstances of Rebecca's death, that Doctor Baker realised that "Mrs de Winter and Mrs Danvers [was] the same person" (*R.,* p. 413). This seemingly minor detail may account for Mrs Danvers's close attachment to Rebecca, even after her death.

[11] Llompart Pons (2013, p. 74) goes as far as to argue that, at this point, "Maxim becomes childish, Mrs de Winter becomes more like a mother figure – a protector" (see also Horner & Zlosnik, 1998, p. 106).

of her narrative, as a result of the "identity building process" combined with the process of degothicisation, becomes a confident individual as Mrs de Winter, capable of performing her role. However, a part of her life remains a (Gothic) mystery: her first and maiden name are never revealed to the reader, consistently concealing a part of her identity.

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Mistaken for Ghosts: The Gothic Trope of Catholic Superstition in Conrad and Ford's *Romance*

ABSTRACT
A perennially fruitful activity in Gothic studies is to track the development of Gothic tropes as popular literature evolves. Joseph Conrad's career, which spanned Victorianism and early Modernism, provides examples of the evolution of certain Gothic conventions between early- and late-career work. Conrad's collaboration with Ford Madox Ford on *Romance* (1903) is an early example of Conrad's exposure to, and use of, Gothic tropes, especially relating to Catholic ghost-seeing. This paper demonstrates similarities between *Romance*'s uses of the trope of Catholic superstition and those of three classic Gothic novels, and also outlines the trope's lasting effect on Conrad's later work.
Keywords: ghost, Catholicism, Conrad, superstition, Gothic

1. Literary Context for the Catholic Element

A widespread trend in early British Gothic Romantic literature is to set stories in Catholic lands and among Catholic peoples. Catholicism is made to appear exotic and its followers full of superstition, facilitating in the original (Protestant) readership the pleasures of escapism and the suspension of disbelief necessary to the effectiveness of the genre. Three of the earliest works of Gothic literature – Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764; Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794; and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, 1796 – are essentially stories about Catholics and feature ostensibly Catholic beliefs.

Much discussion may be conducted around the motives for the choice to represent ghostly happenings in foreign Catholic contexts rather than British Protestant ones. One possibility is religious and intellectual resistance in Britain towards ghosts from the Reformation onwards. Throughout the 1600s, the culture of Enlightened Protestantism developed British perceptions of Catholicism as not only exotic and foreign, but also superstitious, paganistic, and populated by ghosts. Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) describes the whole Catholic hierarchy as essentially

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a ghost itself: the "ghost of the deceased Roman empire" that started up "on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power" (Hobbes, 2013). Although Hobbes himself does not refer to the thus described "kingdome of darkness" (Hobbes, 2013) as Gothic, authors such as Walpole may have had something of this sort in mind when they set their romances in the "darkest ages" of Christianity (Walpole, 1998, p. 5). Thankfully for early Gothic authors, the philosophical resistance to ghosts did not extend to the popular taste – the English public has avidly consumed Gothic literature and its by-products since its conception. Yet philosophical trends before, during and after the Enlightenment were perhaps not the most amenable to the conception of natively British ghosts, and so the authors may have found a middle ground by supplying foreign, Catholic ones. The tradition of non-Catholic authors setting Gothic stories in Catholic contexts continued throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, with major contributions coming from Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, M.R. James, and countless others.

The norms of Gothic romance were established long before Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford published their second collaboration, which bore the straightforward title of *Romance* (1903). Nominally an adventure romance in the style of Stevenson, it also contains tropes and themes of a distinctly Gothic character.[1] Today *Romance* is read less frequently than other works by either author and is largely off the radar for both Conradians and followers of Ford. However, some scholars have recognized *Romance* as a crucial moment of development for both authors. Raymond Brebach traces the development of the novel, and of Ford and Conrad as artists, in his 1985 *Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, and the Making of* Romance. According to Brebach, Conrad's "technical proficiency developed in the course of the collaboration" as his knowledge of mid-register, popular written English improved due to "the writing skills Ford brought to the partnership" (Brebach, 1985, p. 1).

Brebach also includes a detailed assessment of the partnership's impact on Ford's writing and is able to construct a nearly blow-by-blow account of the

[1] These tropes include, but are not limited to: Imprisonment of an innocent female victim of high birth by a villain who desires her wealth, lands, and titles; Deep mourning by the heroine over the death of a parent; Marriage as an escape from the domination of the villain; Bands of robbers (banditti or pirates) whose presence is significant for plot and theme; The villain's ability to advance his wrongdoing and keep it hidden by way of his public stature, social connections, and skillful manipulation of public opinion; Stylistic and thematic contributions by music and verse; Prose interspersed with verse; The villain's wrongdoing is born in part out of genuine attraction to the heroine; Protagonists are brought near death by prolonged physical stress and mental anguish, with a focus on the degenerative effects of these stresses over time; Lover-protagonists are both from noble families; Lover-protagonists represent "pure good" as opposed to the villain's "pure evil"; The villain employs omnipresent spies who hamper the progress of the heroic couple; Religious processions and sites serve as venues for major plot actions; The hero has a doppelganger/uncanny double; The protagonists are sheltered by subterranean caves and tunnels.

input given to Ford by Conrad, who at the time was the senior author, having had critical, if not popular success with *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and other titles. Unlike with their earlier collaboration, *The Inheritors*, where Conrad seems to have been "more of a critical reader than coauthor" (Brebach, 1985, p. 1), Conrad was deeply involved with the production of *Romance.* Brebach's analysis, based on manuscripts, letters, third-person accounts and proofs, indicates that any material in the published version of *Romance* that did not originate from Conrad himself is unlikely to have been included without his knowledge and approval.

Romance is at first glance an adventure romance in the style of Stevenson. Says Brebach, "Conrad and Ford conceived of their novel as a popular adventure story, a potboiler which would appeal to the tastes of the masses" (Brebach, 1985, p. 3). Brebach also notes that despite adherence to certain aspects of the Stevensonian format, "*Romance* does not aim at imitating Stevenson's style" (Brebach, 1985, p. 3). He cites "the heightened presence of politics" (Brebach, 1985, p. 5) and the ironic attitude of the narrator in regards to his own past experiences (Brebach, 1985, p. 6) as ways in which "Conrad and Ford tried to make their adventure story interesting to a more sophisticated audience" than, for example, Stevenson's original intended readership for *Treasure Island* (1883)*, Kidnapped* (1886) or *David Balfour* (1893), three works to which *Romance* has been compared in the past (Brebach, 1985, p. 5).

To Brebach's analysis I would like to add that one of the strongest ways *Romance* differentiates itself from Stevensonian adventure fiction is in its adherence to Gothic themes and tropes – in particular its use of Catholic lands, characters, and ghosts to create the feelings of temporal, political, geographical, and ideological distance characteristic of Gothic literature. Catholic characters' superstitious belief in ghosts is also used to heighten dramatic tension and to further the plot in ways that closely recall earlier works by Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis and others. While the three Stevenson novels previously mentioned do create romantic distance by other means, and *Treasure Island* even uses superstitious characters who believe in ghosts to advance its plot, neither the distance nor the ghosts have anything to do with Catholicism, or indeed, any religion. The religious element in *Romance*, then, may be seen as another, very deliberate layer of complexity onto the Stevensonian adventure romance formula.

2. Uses of Catholic Superstition in *Otranto, Udolpho* and *The Monk*

The three best-known early works of Gothic literature all feature plot developments that would not be possible were they to be set outside contexts where belief in ghosts is not only plausible, but commonplace. Characters in these works who uncritically accept Catholicism are almost guaranteed to accept any apparent manifestation of a ghost equally uncritically, even when the ghost is proven to be

unreal by a more sober-headed character later on. Since the acceptance of ghosts by Catholic characters as a plot device is so prevalent in the three early Gothic works mentioned, and affects their plots in so many ways, a complete analysis is impossible here, and so this paper will focus on just one aspect of how belief in ghosts moves plots in Gothic literature and in *Romance*: What happens when characters are mistaken for ghosts at critical moments.

The Castle of Otranto is first to use this trope. Princess Isabella is fleeing the evil Manfred through catacombs deep beneath the castle when she encounters a figure she takes to be "the ghost of her betrothed Conrad" (Walpole, 1996, p. 29). The figure turns out to be the man who will rescue her, but the misapprehension is a moment of terror that heightens the tension of the scene and reinforces the characterization of Isabella as prone to high emotions and to superstition. The episode also highlights the general fear of all in the household of ghosts, devils, and other apparitions, which is seen to detract from characters' abilities to work constructively to solve their problems – an oblique commentary on Catholic countries and cultures by the British author. At another point in the novel, the villain Manfred, who is especially prone to the "brain's delirium" caused by stress and fear, eventually mistakes Theodore, a peasant, for the ghost of Alfonso, the former Lord of Otranto who was killed by Manfred's grandfather (Walpole, 1998, p. 83). This mistake provides foreshadowing, because Theodore is eventually revealed to be Alfonso's true heir, and by the end of the novel takes his place as Lord of Otranto. In both episodes, the fact that characters mistake living people for ghosts heightens the drama of the moment and also acts as a plot point upon which later developments rest.

The "mistaken for ghosts" trope is also an active mechanism of the plot in *Udolpho*. In this novel, the "ghosts" are actually pirates who had hidden their plunder in the vaults of the eponymous castle during the years when its only inhabitants were a pair of elderly caretakers. During those years the pirates would routinely enter the castle by secret passageways and make ghostlike noises in order to terrify the caretakers and perpetuate the legend that the castle was haunted. Thanks to this intrigue, the pirates are able to access their loot even when the castle is again occupied, coming and going from the vaults and upper chambers from which the Catholic inhabitants have been frightened away (Radcliffe, 2013). The trope has an appreciable impact on the plot when Ludovico, who does not believe in ghosts, decides to spend the night in the haunted chambers, and disappears, resurfacing later on when a group of the heroes are captured by those same pirates, and discover that Ludovico, too, is their prisoner. Ludovico's presence with the pirates is a key in the escape of the heroes. If the pirates had not been mistaken for ghosts, Ludovico would not have investigated the mystery or been kidnapped, and so would not have been in position to rescue the group when the time came.

The Monk also uses the trope of mistaken ghostly identity to advance the plot, this time with an ironic twist. One of the heroines, Agnes, is imprisoned in a castle in order to keep her from her lover, Raymond. Agnes has heard, however, that each year the ghost of a nun who was tortured and killed in the castle is said to walk down from the tower that she haunts in order to exit the castle from its main gate, which is always left open for her on that night by the superstitious castle-dwellers (Lewis, 1998, pp. 139-141). Agnes decides to impersonate the ghostly nun in order to escape (Lewis, 1998, p. 148). Dressed in a bloody habit, she succeeds in leaving the castle, but the coach which Raymond promised to have waiting is not there. Ironically, Raymond has already left in the coach – along with the real ghost, whom he has mistaken for Agnes (Lewis, 1998, pp. 155-157). The ensuing possession of Raymond by the ghostly nun, as well as the ramifications of Agnes's continuing confinement, become major plot points.

3. Uses of Catholicism in Conrad and Ford's *Romance*

Like *Otranto, Udolpho* and *The Monk*, *Romance* uses Catholic contexts to full advantage in creating romantic distance and moving the plot. Especially notable in *Romance* is the handling of the concept of distance, which seems to draw from, as well as update, the Gothic propensity to use Catholic superstitiousness as a distancing tool. *Romance*, a work by two early-Modernist authors, also includes a dimension of self-consciousness that cannot be expected from the three earlier Gothic novels mentioned. Kemp gives voice to the importance of geographical and temporal distance in the creation of romance:

> Journeying in search of romance… is much like trying to catch the horizon. It lies a little distance before us, and a little distance behind – about as far as the eye can carry. One discovers that one has passed through it just as one passed what is to-day our horizon – One looks back and says, "Why, there it is." One looks forward and says the same. It lies either in the old days when we used to, or in the new days when we shall (Conrad & Heuffer, 1925, p. 62).

Conrad, in a letter to William Blackwood, also emphasizes cultural distance as an important component of romance, saying that "the feeling of the romantic in life lies principally in the glamour memory throws over the past and arises from contact with a different race and a different temperament" (Brebach, 1985, p. 38)[2]. Setting *Romance* in a Catholic context supplies all three types of distance: temporal, geographical, and cultural.

Catholic superstition in *Romance*, in particular, remains an important mover of plot, especially the propensity for Catholic characters to mistake real people for

[2] Brebach quotes this letter from *Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1958, p. 130).

ghosts. There are two main scenes in *Romance* where being mistaken for ghosts helps the heroes escape from danger. The first of these scenes occurs when Kemp, Seraphina Riego, and their protector, Castro, are escaping from Casa Riego and the *Lugarenos* (smuggler-pirates in thrall to the villain O'Brien) who control it. They row through a foggy, windless bay in a leaking dinghy, trying to find some kind of ship to rescue them. While they are rowing past a spit of sand in the south of the bay, the fog parts, revealing them to a group of *Lugarenos* on shore. However, the *Lugarenos* mistake them for the ghosts of English seamen supposed to haunt the spot, "after the manner of spectres that linger in remorse, regret or revenge" (Conrad & Heuffer, 1925, p. 255). The *Lugarenos'* panicked exclamations include the invocation of Mary – "'*Santissima Madre!* What is this?'" – as well as a "trembling mutter of an invocation to all the saints" (Conrad & Heuffer, 1925, pp. 254-255). Level-headed Kemp, however, dismisses the superstitiousness of the *Lugarenos* and sees the episode from a patriotic perspective:

> my obscure and vanquished countrymen held possession of the outlet by the memory of their courage. In this critical moment it was they, I may say, who stood by us (Conrad & Heuffer, 1925, p. 255).

The runaways are able to pass by and eventually find temporary safety in a British ship.

Religious superstition is also responsible for a second escape. Kemp, Seraphina and Castro are eventually forced to leave the British ship when they realize that it is bound for Havana, where O'Brien will be waiting for them. The plan is for the runaways to take another, smaller boat to Havana, where they will rejoin the British ship only after it has been thoroughly searched by O'Brien and his men. The plan goes wrong, however, and the three find themselves trapped in a cave onshore with a band of *Lugarenos* waiting for them at the entrance. Days pass of starvation and thirst inside the cave. A sequence of events leads to the death of Castro. Just when things start to seem impossibly dire for Kemp and Seraphina, the leader of the *Lugarenos*, Manuel, catches sight of the "gaunt and disheveled" Kemp at the mouth of the cave and mistakes him for "an apparition from another world" (Conrad & Heuffer, 1925, p. 415). In his shock Manuel screams, "'In the name of God, retire!'" and falls off the ledge and into the ravine, having "recoiled violently in a superstitious fear from my [Kemp's] apparition" (Conrad & Heuffer, 1925, pp. 424-425). Both this episode and the previous one adopt wholesale the Gothic trope of characters escaping due to being mistaken for ghosts due to Catholic superstition, and is responsible for two major developments of the plot. It's important also to note that the second instance, at least, was likely the invention of Conrad alone; it occurs in Part Four of *Romance*, an entire section for which, according to Brebach, Conrad was "totally responsible" (Brebach, 1985, p. 86).

4. Impact on Conrad's Later Work

There is a marked difference in Conrad's treatment of Catholicism before and after *Romance.* Catholicism became a tool for creating distance and introducing Gothic content, a tool which Conrad was to use again and again. Works preceding *Romance* do not include Catholicism in a meaningful way, let alone Gothic material relating specifically to Catholicism. In contrast, the novel Conrad wrote immediately following *Romance – Nostromo* – persistently uses Catholicism to create romantic distance, and at least one episode in its plot that deals with Catholic superstition even echoes a scene found in *Romance.* Brebach recognizes *Nostromo's* overall debt to *Romance*, though not the Catholic element, and devotes several paragraphs to the influence of *Romance* on Conrad's next novel, saying that

> It is hardly surprising that while writing his own Latin American novel Conrad should have turned to *Romance* to find incidents and situations which he could further exploit, especially since the *Romance* proofs began arriving from the printer shortly after Conrad began to work on *Nostromo* (Brebach, 1985, p. 99).

Brebach goes on to discuss various aesthetic and political matters, and though his analysis does not touch Catholicism, the fact remains that *Nostromo* was the first of Conrad's independent works to use Catholicism to such a large extent in establishing establishing cultural distance. The Catholic religion itself is presented as primeval, the fuel for deep superstition and explosive emotions. One Protestant character is even "shocked and disgusted at the tawdriness of the dressed-up saints in the cathedral – the worship, as he called it, of wood and tinsel" (Conrad, 1990, p. 90).

Nostromo also recycles thematic material and plot developments from *Romance* relating to ghosts. As Brebach notes, the harbor escape in *Romance* is reenacted in *Nostromo*:

> Both sets of scenes involve perilous flights into dark or fog-shrouded seas; both involve the protection of treasures of immense value (in *Romance* the treasure is Seraphina herself; in *Nostromo* it is the silver); in both the protagonists are almost literally run into by their enemies (Conrad & Heuffer, 1925, p. 99).

To this I would add that both adventures are also associated with ghosts. In *Romance*, the runaways are literally mistaken for the ghosts of the non-Catholic English sailors said to be lingering at the scene of their greatest regret (naval defeat at the hands of the *Lugarenos*). Similarly, in *Nostromo*, Decoud and Nostromo are strongly associated with the ghosts of "two gringos, spectral and alive… believed to be dwelling to this day amongst the rocks" of an island where they guard a treasure they discovered there (Conrad, 1990, p. 40). *Nostromo* is not a romance, and doesn't need to follow genre rules exactly, so Nostromo and Decoud are never

literally mistaken for ghosts. However, Nostromo's greed after hiding the treasure, as well as Decoud's eventual death protecting it, draw the parallel between their situation and that of the "gringo ghosts suffering in their starved and parched flesh of defiant heretics, where a Christian[3] would have renounced and been released" (Conrad, 1990, pp. 40).

The use of Catholicism for the creation of romantic distance and the working in of Gothic material doesn't end with *Nostromo*. This classically Gothic trope continues throughout Conrad's career, with "Gaspar Ruiz" (1904-1905), "The Duel" (1908), "Prince Roman" (1911), "A Warrior's Soul" (1917), *The Rover* (1923) and *Suspense* (1925). The latter two novels – the last ever written by Conrad – still contain echoes of patterns originally found in *Romance*. For instance, Catholicism figures heavily in the temporal and geographical setting of *The Rover*: the French Mediterranean coast soon after Napoleon's Concordat of 1801 relegitimized Catholicism in France. Special pains are taken to portray this Catholic coast as exotic, tribal and superstitious, a foreign land populated with tribes of savages. The identification of a character with a ghost is also an important metaphor and plot device. Arlette, a young woman who as a child endured all the horrors of *la Terreur,* has spent years almost completely silent. A British sailor observes her:

> There glided without a sound before his eyes from somewhere a white vision of a woman. He could see her black hair flowing down her back. A woman whom anybody would have been excused for taking for a ghost (Conrad, 1924, p. 62).

Arlette is never literally mistaken for a ghost; like *Nostromo*, *The Rover* is not a genre romance, and so the black-and-white "mistaken for a ghost" scenario of *Romance* would be out of place. Still, the trope remains as a metaphor and has an appreciable effect on the plot. Arlette's unearthliness is so disconcerting that it leads her aunt to attempt to discourage the niece's would-be lover from starting a life with her, an event which contributes to the climactic action of the novel.

Conrad's final novel, *Suspense*, continues and in a sense culminates Conrad's use of Catholicism to create romantic distance and introduce Gothic material. Like *Romance, Nostromo* and *The Rover, Suspense* takes place in a Catholic setting, the Italian city of Genoa. The hero is a young Englishman named Cosmo. *Suspense* also mirrors the same spectral scene shared by *Romance* and *Nostromo*: an escape into a bay at night, with the need to travel silently so as to avoid enemies. The treasure is political information that will be used "for Italy" (Conrad, 1925, p. 274). There's no fog this time but an atmosphere of lightlessness and silence prevails;

[3] In both *Romance* and *Nostromo,* Catholics refer to themselves as "Christians" and do not think of non-Catholics as Christians.

ten-minutes' poling with oars is enough for the enemy galley to become "invisible" (Conrad, 1925, p. 271) and travel is conducted "with infinite precaution to avoid knocks and bangs, as though the boat, the oars, and everything in her were made of glass" (Conrad, 1925, p. 270). When Cosmo's smaller boat meets its larger partner there is "no hail or even murmur" and the men aboard her are described as ghostlike, "silent and shadowy" (Conrad, 1925, p. 272). In *Suspense*, unlike in *Romance* or *Nostromo*, there is no local ghost legend with which to compare the runaways. However, Cosmo's comparison to a ghost is made much more directly by the spectral language with which he is described:

> "I am not sleepy," said Cosmo. If no longer invisible, he could still feel disembodied, as it were. He was neither sleepy nor tired, nor hungry, nor even curious, as if altogether freed from the weaknesses of the body, and not indifferent, but without apprehensions or speculations of any sort to disturb his composure, as if of a fully-informed wisdom. He did not seem to himself to weigh more than a feather (Conrad, 1925, p. 272).

Immediately following this ghostly description, we learn that Cosmo will be unable to leave the conspirators, as he had thought earlier, and will have to accompany them further on their voyage. In fact, a place in the crew has opened up for Cosmo due to the quiet drifting into death, presumably from fatigue, of its elderly steersman. This scene from *Suspense* is the last known scene in the novel Conrad was in the midst of writing at the time of his death.

Looking back at the arc of Conrad's career, we see that the Gothic trope of "being mistaken for a ghost" that Conrad picked up in *Romance* evolves from the formulaic (an enactment of the Gothic genre trope of Catholic superstition, in *Romance*,) to the literary (an analogy between a legend and the actions of two characters, in *Nostromo*) to the spiritual (in *Suspense*, where the scene's supernatural side and the action of the plot finally merge into the same narrative level.) In the repetition and revision of this scene, we may be getting a look into Conrad's process of making an influence his own.

5. Conclusions

In *Romance*, Conrad and Ford take full advantage of the Gothic trope of Catholicism for the creation of romantic distance and also use instances of Catholic superstition to propel the plot. Aside from its interest to the Gothic Studies community generally, Conradians in particular may wish to study *Romance* as a potential early source of Gothic material for Conrad. The fact that Conrad recycled and redeveloped certain elements out of *Romance* suggests that the collaboration with Ford had a lasting effect on Conrad's writing. As demonstrated, certain Gothic elements from *Romance* don't just show up once and go away; they are there even at the very end of his writing life. The "mistaken for a ghost" trope is used again

by Conrad throughout his career, becoming refined and repurposed as Conrad's artistry increases. Conrad also recreates the "escaping into a dark bay" scene in *Romance,* which utilizes the Gothic trope of "being mistaken for a ghost," in two later novels, eventually resulting in the integration of the supernatural and earthly elements of the original scene.

Romance includes many more classically Gothic tropes than this paper could cover, and Conrad reuses many of them, and variations on them, throughout his career. Yet despite the wealth of Gothic material found in Conrad, few in-depth studies on Gothic matter in Conrad exist. Moreover, Conrad Studies is also almost totally lacking in research investigating how and when Conrad might have been exposed to elements of Gothic literature. Such research must be the cornerstone of any attempt to portray a "Gothic Conrad". One piece of the puzzle could be Conrad's participation in writing *Romance*. As demonstrated, Conrad was intimately involved with every stage of the production of the novel. Notwithstanding other possible exposure to the Gothic, Conrad's collaboration with Ford should be viewed as one clear example of a time when he actively worked with multiple tropes of Gothic romance.

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Violence as Spectacle: Happy Gothic in Ben Aaronovitch's *Rivers of London*

ABSTRACT
Discussing the specificity of the Gothic plot in Ben Aaronovitch's *Rivers of London*, this study focuses on the theatricality of crime which, by blending violence and laughter, by transforming policemen into performers and criminals into artists, also highlights the fact that various methods of detecting and law enforcement have thespian roots.
Keywords: Ben Aaronovitch, *Punch and Judy*, happy Gothic, postmillennial Gothic, theatricality of crime

1. Introduction: Theatricality of Crime

Writing about the pervading presence of crime in modern culture, M. L. Rio, author, thespian, and bardolator contends:

> [w]e, as a culture, are obsessed with crime. In the age of cop dramas, legal thrillers, and murder documentaries, it can be difficult to tell where violence ends and entertainment begins. … Theatre seems to satisfy our strange human appetite for physical and emotional violence. Theatre invites us inside a criminal mind. Theatre lets us get away with murder. … So we turn to the theatre where we can live vicariously through the prince of Denmark, the king of Scotland, or the citizens of Rome. We witness their murders and regicides and assassinations, we feel their ambition and envy and outrage, and when all the 'carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts' are done, we get up and go home, satisfied (Rio, 2017).

Horace Walpole, the father of the Gothic, who worshipped Shakespeare as "the great master of nature," emphasised hybridity in the Bard's works, where the combination of theatricality and crime was further enhanced by a mixing of the comical and tragical. In his second preface to *The Castle of Otranto*, he wondered whether the "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

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fooleries of Polonius, and the clumsy jests of the Roman citizens, were omitted, or vested in heroics."[1]

Although by no means aspiring to follow in the footsteps of Shakespeare, in his *Rivers of London* (2011) Ben Aaronovitch offers an equally rewarding fusion of theatre and crime. Blending magic with elements of the detective story and the police procedural, his urban fantasy demonstrates that the presence of the supernatural, violence and spectacle has become an indelible part of the visage of the modern city and its peculiar Gothic character. The novel owes much of its impact to a plethora of ghosts whose actions not only provide an insightful, and frequently humorous, comment on the condition of humanity and justice in the metropolis of the twenty first-century but, by defining in the process the concept of crime itself, they also emphasise theatricality and 'comic turn' (Horner & Zlosnik, 2005, p. 1) as its crucial characteristics. Like other contemporary Gothic texts which often hybridise with comedy or romance, *Rivers of London* can be described as "comic, romantic, [or] celebratory," thus reflecting Catherine Spooner's requirements for "happy[2] Gothic" (*Post–Millennial Gothic*).[3] The comic streak, built throughout the novel whenever the human world is confronted with the supernatural reality, serves not only to 'debase' traditional Gothic, reducing its terror-inducing power, but also to create hero who, in accordance with Freud's findings, "refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality," and compelled to suffer. Rather than being "affected by the traumas of the external world," they will view such traumas as "no more than occasions […] to gain pleasure" (Freud, 2010, p. 4545). Laughter not only reminds people of their humanity, but also strengthens the morale of the oppressed. As noted by Wylie Sypher (1980), their being "able to laugh at evil and error means [that they have] surmounted them". (p. 54)

In this essay we argue that apart from the obvious presence of humour – verbal and situational – the category which best enhances the Gothic "lightness of being" in *Rivers of London* is the theatricality of crime which, by blending violence and laughter, by transforming policemen into performers and criminals into artists, also highlights the fact that various methods of detecting and law enforcement have thespian roots. Due to the devices of theatricality and humour, the murders "most foul" that the novel depicts are made less terrifying and, disquietingly,

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[1] Retrieved May 1, 2014 from https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Castle_of_Otranto/Preface.

[2] Coined by Spooner (2017), "happy Gothic" (known also as "debased Gothic", "sellout Gothic", or "Gothic lite") is an "umbrella term" embracing such OED definitions as, 'deep pleasure in, or contentment with, one's circumstances' as well as "happy" as a mobile, oppositional term that groups together a range of positively inclined emotions or moods that are unexpected in conventional Gothic critical discourse (p. 10).

[3] A similar conviction was articulated by Botting (2008) in his *Limits of Horror*, stating that "Gothic texts do not want to shock or scare but are playful or even celebratory in tone." (p. 10)

more fun. By distancing the reader from crime as a fact of life, and especially an act of cruelty, theatricality turns violence into a show, an entertaining spectacle, wrapping ugly truths in the fancy costume of a magical illusion which, together with deception and pretence, constitutes the very core of thespian delight.

2. The Gothic World of *Rivers of London*: Magic and Murder

In *Rivers of London*, the comic dimension of Gothic comes to the fore through Peter Grant, a detective narrator gifted "with a touch of the sight" (Aaronovitch, 2011, p. 9)[4] whose rational, pragmatic personality is heavily tested by various weird incidents and creatures he comes across in his work. His encounter with magic begins when, guarding the scene of a bizarre murder, "Grant sees a ghost, who introduces himself as Nicholas Wallpenny, and claims to have witnessed the crime" (Nunez, 2016). While following the lead from this "corporeally challenged" (*RL*, p. 26) witness, Peter becomes recruited as an apprentice wizard in the Folly, a secret branch of the London Metropolitan Police handling supernatural incidents. In such a capacity he is to assist inspector Thomas Nightingale, his wizard superior, in finding what turns ordinary people into vicious killers. Here, the main thrust of the novel "concerns a revenant of a failed actor, [Henry Pyke], who taking the role of Mr Punch, [the protagonist in *The Tragical Comedy, or Comical Tragedy, of Punch and Judy* by Giovanni Piccini], forces random individuals to act out what are ultimately murderous scenes in a warped version of a classic play occurring mostly in his head" (Brazil, 2012).

Peter shares his investigative success with Lesley May, his attractive co-worker and friend whom Punch chooses to be his "Pretty Pol", and eventually transforms her into a deadly enemy. However, before Grant realizes the danger she is in and, more importantly, the one she poses to others, the constables happen to watch *Punch and Judy,* eventually comprehending that each of the supernatural killings under their examination follows the play's plotline.[5] Thus everything begins with Toby the dog. Bitten on the nose, and thus magically "infected," Brandon Coopertown kills William Skirmish and then his own wife and infant child. Punch stands behind the cycle courier Derek Shampwell's kicking Dr Framline in the face and his lethal revenge on the biker. Punch, too, uses Michael Smith, a former crack addict and now a Hare Krishna, to beat Gurcan Tamiz to death with a large

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[4] Aaronovitch, B. (2011). *Rivers of London*. London: Gollancz, henceforth abbreviated as *RL.* All quotations, parenthetically followed by page numbers, come from this edition.

[5] Chapter 8 of the novel opens with a summary of the original *Punch and Judy* plot: "Toby the dog bites Punch. Mr Punch beats the dog's owner to death. Mr Punch then goes home, throws his baby out the window and then beats Judy (his wife) to death. Mr Punch falls off a horse and kicks a doctor in the eye. The doctor tries to beat Mr Punch with a stick, but Mr Punch grabs the stick and beats the doctor to death. Mr Punch rings a loud bell outside a rich person's house. When a servant tells him off, Mr Punch beats the servant to death." (*RL,* p. 204)

cow bell. Finally, he gets Lesley May to try to hang Peter on stage at the Royal Opera House. Comedia dell'arte becomes real horror.

Apart from pointing to the puppet figure of Mr Punch as the master mind behind all of the villanies, the play suggests an anti-Punch strategy to be implemented when the Piccini script, this time in its musical version, is performed at the Royal Opera. Unfortunately, Peter's plan to insert himself into the play and arrest the villain backfires, and the Opera night ends with the killer who, free and ready for mayhem, provokes a full-scale riot in central London. It takes a lot of magic skills and the help of the river spirits to finally destroy Mr Punch and send the vengeful Pyke back where he belongs.

Apart from the mystical killings they have to solve, Grant and Nightingale are called out on other supernatural incidents, one of which involves destroying a nest of vampires peacefully inhabiting a villa in Grassmere street, and the other brokering a peace "in the turf war between the two warring gods of the River Thames and their respective families" (Saxon, 2011). "It turns out that," as Brazil (2012) contends, "each river has its own god or spirit, with the Thames currently divided into two sections; one ruled by Mother and the other by Father Thames," and this thread, strictly connected with the novel's title, offers a collection of *Genii Locorum*, colourful deities who, along with enriching the supernatural aspect of the story, defy the traditional stereotypes of what ghosts should look and behave like, and thus highlight the comic turn of the novel.

During his chase after the revenant, Peter goes back in time to the very start of the city of London, where Father Thames (aka Baba), known then as Tiberius Claudius Verica, not only facilitates the spear which kills Punch, but also ceremonially sacrifices him to the river. Baba's son Oxley and his wife provide the information about Pyke and his feud with Charles Macklin, his rival performer, celebrity and playwright. Mother Thames, with not even a drop of Anglo-Saxon blood, is a glamorous Nigerian woman whose court embraces her many daughters (Tyburn, Fleet, Lea etc.), each as temperamental as the river after which she has been named. Amongst them is Beverly Brook whose beauty and charm soon entice Grant into thinking amorous thoughts and whose friendly nature makes her a perfect ambassador to negotiate an end to the turf war.

3. Aaronovitch's Gothic Villains

The world created by Aaronovitch is peopled by many supernatural characters. *Genii Locorum* and life-sucking vampires notwithstanding, there are many other spectral heroes amongst which the most vivid is Mr Punch, the miscreant of many names including Pulcinella, or "demon drink". Feeding on people's anger and frustration and using his magic, he specialises in the method called 'sequestration' through which he compels his victims to commit preposterous crimes. He thus not only turns them into murderers by proxy, but also into his clones, easily

recognisable by hooked noses and jutting chins. Sometimes they are found wearing a distinctly Punch-style red jacket and hat or heard shouting his famous (punch)line "That's the way to do it," before carrying out the murder.

Another equally Gothic perpetrator is restless Henry Pyke who frequently changes his identitiy (Wallpenny, Pyke, Punch). Both Punch and Pyke are characterised by excessive emotionality and, as will be seen, their connection with acting highlights both the performative and theatrical status of their crimes which, in fact, cannot be eradicated: their wickedness is revealed but their punishment is mainly symbolic. Even though killed in the end, Punch still triumphs and, resurrected from show to show, he still embodies the anarchic spirit of the London mob (the icon of which he has been for over three hundred and fifty years; Masters, 2012). Moreover, as befits the tradition of the carnivalesque and street performance (Punch is the real celebrity of his show), his gruesome actions are invariably co-orchestrated by the audience, voluntarily participating in the story, and thus exonerating him from exclusive guilt.

Aaronovitch bends the concept of the criminal and his crime even more by investing his villains with specific theatrical pasts and acting capabilities**.** Mr Punch, one learns, leads his double-life – on the page as a literary creation of Piccini, yet he also has his stage self – as a puppet character in the *Punch and Judy* show. Not as successful, Pyke's late eighteenth century stage life was, however, more varied, Mr Punch being merely one of many parts he played. It was also marked by a feud with his great enemy, Macklin, by whom he was eventually murdered. And yet, although Henry's return as a revenant is driven by his hope to avenge himself on his rival, he is also propelled by his vanity as well as love for the stage/theatre and limelight. In his modern self, he fulfills himself by acting out scenarios of Mr Punch for whom Pyke's insatiated anger is a convenient channel to spread violence. Incidentally, it was Macklin's play *The Married Libertine* – promoting, like *Punch and Judy*, betrayal, brutality and toxic relationships as themes that modern society also finds entertaining. When performed at the Royal Opera House, it triggered the displeasure of the present-day libertines, those two "killing gents" Wallpenny described, and thus started an avalanche of grotesque murders in modern London.

4. Theatrical Space: The Crime Scene

With the Covent Garden area being the novel's heart of criminal activities, the readers discover the significance of such thespian landmarks as The Old Royal Theatre and the modern Royal Opera House in Bow Street. The centre of tourist London is "gothicized," but not because its mysterious mansions are drowning in mist and darkness, with midnight reserved for horror specials. It becomes Gothic due to the magic crimes that take place there. Once unleashed, the evil force reaches out towards other places and streets near the Piazza frequented by crowds

of theatre-goers, including The Urban Outfitters Pub, Sheekey's Oyster Bar, and Seven Dials. And it is against another famous site, the portico of the Actor's (St Paul's) Church, that a pale figure Grant takes for a street performer (sic!) turns out to be the ghost who initiates Peter into magic. When Grant informs Nicholas about the witness' duty to give a statement, the latter remarks that "that might be a bit of a problem … seeing that [he is] dead" (*RL*, p. 6). He even "steps forward into the light," demonstrating that "he was transparent" (*RL,* p. 7).

Enhancing the Gothic hybridity of the scene by intermixing modern-day, realistic and supernatural elements (Ascari, 2008, p. 58; Lurz, 2014), this humorous confrontation of the two worlds illustrates the parodic potential of Aaronovitch being deployed as a key aspect of comic Gothic.[6] The "cockney geezer," as Peter describes Wallpenny, so relates – in the dramatic present−how one of the two acquaintances he saw killed the other: the "killing gent," he recalls, puts on a cap and a red jacket, quietly and swiftly, "comes up behind the first gent and … knocks his head clean off." (*RL,* p. 8). "Even for a ghost," he claims, "it was a terrible sight. I swear on my own death… Off came his head and up went the blood." (*RL* 8) Yet, he continues, "That wasn't the worst of it…There was something uncanny about the killing gent". And as a spirit, Wallpenny "knows the uncanny when he sees it" (*RL*, pp. 8–9). The man, Nicholas reports, "didn't just change his hat and coat, he changed his face. Now tell me that ain't uncanny." (*RL*, p. 9)

If during their first encounter Peter had paid more attention to the badge of a dancing skeleton in Wallpenny's lapel ("caught mid-caper" hence suggestive of more performance, mischief and theft), he would have been more cautious before this "goth" (*RL*, p. 6), the very term[7] linking Nicholas to spectacle and supernatural horror. When, finally, Grant realises Henry's striking similarity to Nicholas, it dawns on him that "[i]t was always Henry Pyke, right from the start, from the portico of the Actor's Church", and that his confession at the church "had been just that – a scene, a performance" (*RL,* p. 366), a mere dramatic act put on for Peter's benefit. And yet, taking advantage of the oldest of theatrical strategies known to the actor−of masquerading as another, of creating illusion and deception (Świąder 2012)−Nicholas was disarmingly truthful, describing his activities as "performances [which] have hitherto been confined to the street" (*RL*, p. 366).

Grant's suspicions concerning Wallpenny become confirmed by Mr Punch himself, who admits: "I let Pyke do all the deception, lives to act, poor thing." (*RL,* p. 367) Henry, too, states that in his invasion of Lesley May's mind, as a male, he

[6] "Parody of the convention functions as a key aspect of comic Gothic because through repetition with critical difference it foregrounds the production of the modern subject through discourse, an exploitation of stylized theatricality of the Gothic device is what characterized the comic turn of the Gothic" (Horner & Zlosnik, 2005, p. 9).

[7] See Urban dictionary, retrieved December 11, 2015 from https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Goth.

was attracted by "the challenge a female role always was … and a modern woman doubly so" (*RL*, p. 376). Interestingly, Pyke's thespian mentality triumphs over his vengefulness when he lets himself be persuaded to leave her.

> "Listen, Henry," I said, "This is your moment, your *big exit*". … "I don't want to go," said Henry Pyke. "You must," I said, "That's the mark of true greatness in an actor, knowing, down to the precise moment when to make his exit." "How wise of you, Peter," said Henry Pyke. "That is the true mark of genius, to give oneself to one's public, but to retain that private side, that space, the unknowable …"
> "To leave them wanting more", I said, trying to keep desperation out of my voice. "Yes," said Pyke, "*to leave them wanting more* [emphasis added] … And then the mouthy git was gone. Right on cue" (*RL*, p. 380).

Living for his "big exit," perversely, Pyke, the revenant actor, nourishes his desire for fame, even if now he can only give himself to his public through violence, enacting his private drama about his need to belong, to be talked about, to leave others "wanting more".

5. Policeman on Duty: A Ghostly Comedy Of Manners

With the detectives' plan to actually insert themselves into *Punch and Judy* as members of the cast, the theatricality of the rendering of a crime and its detection acquires a new dimension in the novel. However, even when so exposed, shown in the limelight, the actions of the people on the stage are by no means easier to understand; quite the contrary, they become even more ambivalent. Influenced by magic, both police and perpetrators are moved by the same driving force−an attempt to deceive the opponent and maneouver him into an ambush.

Acting as Jack Ketch (a homonym of the policeman's successful "catch"), and true to the notorious hangman's name, Grant hopes to apprehend the villain. However, the performance at the Opera is disrupted by a powerful compulsion spell, strong enough to "hold over two thousand in thrall" (*RL,* p. 307). Transfixed, zombie-like, the people watch the performance with glazed eyes, applauding or stamping their feet, manipulated into whatever Punch demands from them. The increasing aggressiveness of the audience is further enhanced by the situation on the stage, where Grant discovers the true meaning of stage fright when, forced to literally run for his life, he must defend himself not only against Pyke and Inspector Sewall, but the "whole principal cast howling for my blood" (*RL*, p. 319).

Possessed by Pyke, Lesley no longer personifies Law and Order. Peter's trusted friend may still be wearing her police uniform, yet she is determined to eliminate Grant: he survives his execution only because he can liberate himself from "the theatrical noose" in which he has been hanged. On the stage, Lesley, whose impersonation of Mr Punch really colours the Gothic concept of the damsel in distress, tells the story of Punch Pyke's way, interspersing it with Henry's

personal history of his own grievance against the hated Macklin–said to be the ghost of the Opera–whom the revenant wants to provoke into appearing. Thus the original play changes into Pyke's private recital, a show for the benefit of Macklin who, unfortunately, ignores Henry's efforts.

Eventually, Pyke/Lesley sets the roaring crowd loose on London ("Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls. I think it's time to go out and play," *RL*, p. 315) and the "better class of riot" (*RL*, p. 321) creates its own theatre of violence and laughter when people fight with one another in the streets, looting or setting shops and cars on fire.

Convinced of the ineffectiveness of the police to restore order, Pyke prophesies their failure. Addressing Grant as the embodiment of the Law, he declares: "Over the last few months, I've come to think of you as less of an arch-enemy and more as the *comic relief* [emphasis added], the slightly dim character that comes on with the dog and does a funny turn while the real thespians are getting changed." (*RL*, p. 316). Moreover, perceiving the relationship between the perpetrators and the police as a kind of game, Pyke argues

> "We are playing our role, … we are Mr Punch, the irrepressible spirit of riot and rebellion. It is our nature to cause trouble, just as it is your nature to try and stop us."
> "You're killing people," I said.
> "Alas," said Lesley. "All art requires sacrifice. And take it from one who knows – death is more of a bore than a tragedy." (*RL,* pp. 316–317)

As if he had known de Quincy's *Murder as Fine Art*, Pyke the criminal thinks of himself as an artist, defining himself through the freedom of "riot and rebellion" and seeing the police merely as the repressive force, trying to stop what is natural.

6. Patchwork Personality and Open 'Theatre'

Lesley/Pyke's performance at the Opera House-her handling of such parts as the Professor, "Pretty Pol", Pyke and Punch – best illustrates the composite nature of a criminal whom Grant defines as "a patchwork personality" (*RL,* p. 317). A different meaning of 'patchwork' is described when magic attacks the Northern Line of the London underground and the presence of the "demon drink" (*RL*, p. 341) translates into rude and nasty behaviour by the passengers. In a crowded train, where commuters dance the dance of trying to keep their armpits out of each other's faces, averting their eyes from dandruff or gagging on the offensive smells of sweat, urine and excrement, the worst side of people does not take long to reveal itself. For instance, taking her chance to experience some erotic satisfaction a woman begins to rub herself against Grant, attempting "to ground her hips into his crotch" while a white boy with dreads, leaning towards him, "with a great deliberation poked me in the face with his index finger. 'Poke,' he said, and giggled. Then he did it again" (*RL,* p. 341).

Violence and laughter are a heady concoction on the Northern Line where, magically, Peter hears the answers to the vital questions about the identity of the criminal and specificity of his murders. He believes that "there must be something behind Pyke", the conclusion confirmed by the ranting drunk with Mr Punch's face who declares "Of course there is (…) That would be me" (*RL*, p. 340). Thus, paradoxically, the villain himself happens to provide essential clues for solving Peter's "whodunit." More significantly, since his catching a revenant would hardly be possible without magic, Peter must know how to detect the presence of the so called vestigium, an "afterimage" of "violence and laughter" that the uncanny leaves (*RL,* p. 38). Trained in basic spell casting, learning to use magic as weapon and in self-defense, Grant gradually turns into a performer who, practising his skills, goes from one demonstration to another: this adds to the novel's atmosphere as a show which, depending on their luck, may be terrifying or enjoyable for the audience. When, for example, working on the *lux,* Peter finally produces a werelight, "a perfect globe of light," it makes his day. Amazed and shocked, yet also delighted, he thinks, "Fuck me … I can do magic" (*RL,* p. 138).

7. Performances of the Magic Detective

Apart from the *lux*, Peter also gets to know and apply, the power of *seducere*, the compulsion spell used by magical creatures to make others do what they are told. As a "magic detective" he has what Lurz (2014) calls "a comic combination of skills": a passion for the scientific method and a millennial's facility with technology (Waterhouse, 2012) and this scientific component of magic is even highlighted by the fact that Isaac Newton is presented as the patron saint of wizards. (p. 79).

One fascinating case of Grant's performance is the necromantic ritual (*RL,* pp. 211–219) he performs to summon Nicholas whose interrogation at the cemetery of the Actor's Church reveals important information about the revenant's name. "How's … death treating you?" Peter begins his examination, to which Wallpenny responds: "'Fair enough', […]. Can't complain […]. This being the Actor's Church and all, we're never short of an evening entertainment" (*RL,* p. 219). Nicholas mentions a visit of a guest artist, one Henry Pyke, making Grant wonder whether Pyke is planning "a long run" and speculate on the words which become clear only during the performance at the Opera, the words about Pyke having "bought the theatre," his being "strangely hard on his co-stars" and his having "got a role in mind for [Peter]" (*RL,* p. 219).

8. Violence As Spectacle

With time Grant also learns the *impello* which involves making an object float and the spell actually saves Nightingale's life, depriving the shooter's gun of its deadly accuracy. In addition, watching the deaths or autopsies of the Punch-possessed

killers, Peter becomes an expert at recognizing the *dissimulo*, which, responsible for the greatest devastation of the body, moulds flesh and bone into a specific shape and appearance. For all of the witnesses involved, the death of the cycle courier becomes a spectacle of horror, its intensity all the greater for the slow motion in which it is registered:

> The [man's] chin seemed to bulge, I heard the distinct cracking of bone and teeth as it just jutted forward into a sharp point. The lips twisted into a snarl as the nose stretched until it was almost as long. It wasn't a real face, it was a caricature. The mouth opened and I could see inside to the red ruin of his jaw. 'That's the way to do it!', he shrieked and lifted his stick…his face slumped like a wet papier mâché. (*RL*, pp. 158–159)

Transformed into human caricatures, this and the other accidental killers are rewarded by their "big exit," their facelessness suggestive of the consequences of the vice, yet also of the status of the villain as everyman.

9. Human and Ghostly Institutions: Magical Interactions

His growing awareness of the very real presence of magic forces Grant to learn all he can about the various institutions helpful in fighting revenants who, naturally, do not fall under human legislation. Among others he visits a ghostly magistrate still occupied by Colonel Sir Thomas De Veil who trades in justice and is as corrupt as he used to be at the height of his power in the seventeenth century; he subsists off the magic given him in return for various services and transactions, such as signing an arrest warrant, for instance. Dealing with de Veil reveals a magic side to the ghostly business. In the parlour, which seems empty to the uninitiated, the figure of the judge with glittering, keen eyes materialises when addressed, "more transparent [Peter observes] than my friend Wallpenny, thinner and more ghostly." (*RL,* p. 259)

> "I'm looking for a warrant," said Nightingale.
> …
> "And which miscreant are we looking to apprehend?" asked De Veil.
> "Henry Pyke, Your Honour, who goes by the name of Punch and also by the name of Pulcinella."
> De Veil's eyes glittered and his lips twitched, "Are we arresting puppets now, Captain?"
> "Let us say we are arresting the puppet master, Your Worship."
> A quill appeared in De Veil's ghostly hand, and with a flourish he scratched out a warrant. (*RL,* pp. 259–260)

Peter's werelight, which the judge greedily devours, is His Worship's magical payment (*RL*, p. 259) and the warrant, still blank when unrolled, is the constable's passport into the play in which Mr Punch's next victim is to be a policeman trying to arrest him, the role Grant chooses for himself.

10. Conclusion

It seems that Peter Grant's exposure to the Gothic London is, from the very beginning, categorised as part of a spectacle in which, in trying to come to terms with the discovery that "ghosts are real", he feels "like a man watching a magic show." He clarifies this feeling: "I'd expected a magician to step out from behind the curtain and ask me to pick a card, any card. I wasn't ready to believe in ghosts, but that's the thing about empirical experience – it's the real thing" (*RL*, pp. 33–34). The magicians Grant confronts in *Rivers of London* are Punch and Pyke and the card they deal, their "real thing", is murder most foul which, imbued with humour and theatricality, loses some of its nasty sting.

As befits the post-millennial Gothic, the readers laugh, yet their merriment does not allow them to forget about the many serious issues they need to confront. There is, for instance, the troubling awareness of the closeness to the uncanny or other invisible horrors, and along with this the conviction that the "incorporation of the monstrous into the normal results in (…) the dissolution of difference, so that (…) norm and monster become indistinguishable in a proliferation of differentiations and hybrids." (Botting, 2008, p. 10). This prediction of man's monstrosity is enhanced by the focus on the ghostly, which, exposing the inhuman nature of crime, allows one to explore it as a metaphor of unfulfillment and a key to the understanding of the criminal psyche: the psyche of a man who has turned into a ghost, who has replaced dialogue with murder and who, watching the spectacle of his own creation, no longer recognises violence as the distinctive trait of his performance.

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"I know not […] what I myself am": Conceptual Integration in Susan Heyboer O'Keefe's *Frankenstein's Monster* (2010)

ABSTRACT
The article proposes a cognitive-poetic reading of Susan Heyboer O'Keefe's novel *Frankenstein's Monster* (2010) – a modern rendition of the myth of Victor Frankenstein and his Creature – with regard to the theory of conceptual integration proposed by G. Fauconnier and M. Turner (2002). It is argued that the reader's conceptualization of the eponymous Monster emerges in the process of conceptual blending, where several input mental spaces, constructed around elements of the philosophical concept of the Great Chain of Being, are merged to produce a novel entity. Thus, the reader's active participation in meaning construction allows her/him to redefine her/his perception of monstrosity.
Keywords: conceptual blending, cognitive poetics, the Gothic monster, monstrosity, Frankenstein

1. Introduction

It is almost a truism to observe that monsters have constituted a pivotal component of the Gothic convention, from its early realizations in literary texts to contemporary film and new-media incarnations. Equally obviously, it does not take an expert in the field of Gothic studies to realize that the concept of monstrosity is as old as human culture, providing food for thought for scholarly representatives of such disciplines as history and theory of visual arts and literature, philosophy, cultural studies, psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, religious studies, politics, etc. A researcher investigating the area may feel overwhelmed by the number of monographs and academic essay collections published within the last few decades, let alone dozens of journal articles and book chapters. In this context, the authors of the most recent research guide to Gothic literature in English (Brown, Senf & Stockstill, 2018), who under the entry "Monsters and Ghosts" assert that "the

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discipline of monster studies is still in its relative nascency" (78), appear to be totally wrong. On second thoughts, however, their claim is less questionable than it seems, for investigating the multitude of (theoretical) perspectives from which the issue of monstrosity has been approached may indeed resemble the process of creating the body of Frankenstein's monster: "assembling" a patchwork of various more or less related parts, whose interconnections may or may not be conspicuous but which undoubtedly condition the creature's fascinating existence.

This article is intended as a modest contribution to (Gothic) monster studies, proposing a cognitive-poetic (*sensu* Stockwell, 2002) perspective from which to examine the *manner* in which monsters and monstrosity can be conceptualized in a literary text. More precisely, I will utilize the theory of conceptual integration, or conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), appropriately characterized by Todd V. Oakley (1998) as a "unified frame for understanding the dynamic constructions of meaning that concern cognitive linguists, rhetoricians, and literary critics" (p. 322). The proposed analysis will also refer to the so-called Great Chain of Being – a hierarchical conception of the nature of the universe (Lewis, 1964; Lovejoy, 2001) which greatly affected people's worldviews from antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages (Bunnin & Yu, 2004, p. 289; Lewis, 1964, pp. 11-12, 22-23, 26-27, 40-44, 56-57, 66, 74, 152-153, 203; Lovejoy, 2001, pp. 24, 38-39, 43, 58, 67, 101, 115), and continued into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, dying out as late as in the nineteenth (Lovejoy, 2001, pp. 43, 45, 59-61, 80, 111, 143, 183-184, 317; see also Lewis, 1964, pp. 216-219).

Since, as Mark Turner (1996) contends, "[m]ost of our experience, our knowledge, and our thinking is organized as stories" (v), and conceptual blending far exceeds the boundaries of literary imagination per se (p. 67), the findings of this study are hoped to be of value not only to literary scholars but also to cognitive linguists, psychologists, students of culture, etc. As my analytical material, I will use a twenty-first century literary rendering of the myth of Doctor Frankenstein's Creature – the 2010 novel *Frankenstein's Monster* by Susan Heyboer O'Keefe (b. 1953), who thus far has made herself known as a children's author.

According to Judith Halberstam (1995), the Gothic monsters of the nineteenth century "metaphorized modern subjectivity as a balancing act between inside/outside, female/male, body/mind, native/foreign, [and] proletarian/aristocrat" (p. 1). Heyboer O'Keefe's novel continues this tradition, creating its version of the Monster via intertextual references to Mary Shelley's original as well as developing this literary character in line with what Halberstam (1995) describes as the essence of Gothic fiction:

> Within Gothic novels […] multiple interpretations are embedded in the text and part of the experience of horror comes from the realization that *meaning itself runs riot*. Gothic novels produce a symbol for this interpretive mayhem in the body of the monster.

> The monster always becomes a *primary focus of interpretation* and its monstrosity seems available for any number of meanings. (p. 2)[1]

In Heyboer O'Keefe's *Frankenstein's Monster*, this primary focus is marked by the novel's title and the first-person narration dominating the text. It is owing to this narrative perspective that the Monster's quest for identity – parallel to his physical peregrinations – is communicated to the reader in a manner which diminishes the distance between her/him and the fictional world. I will argue that the mechanism of conceptual integration involved in creating the mental image of the Monster – based on both textual suggestions and contextual knowledge – allows the reader to redefine her/his perception of monstrosity.

2. Conceptual Integration: An Overview

Since the publication of the first edition of Peter Stockwell's *Cognitive Poetics* (2002), studies of literary texts within the framework of conceptual blending have been proliferating (e.g. Freeman, 2005; Semino, 2006; Libura, 2007; Dancygier, 2011; Harbus, 2012; Kędra-Kardela, 2012, 2015; Kowalczyk, 2017; see also Mark Turner's webpage: http://markturner.org/blending.html). Nonetheless, it is worth recalling here the basic assumption of the theory. Conceptual integration can be viewed as a next step in Fauconnier's idea of mental spaces, or "conceptual packets constructed […] for purposes of local understanding and action" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 40). Such spaces, "connected to long-term schematic knowledge" (p. 40), are also interconnected and "can be modified as thought and discourse unfold" (p. 40). Conceptual integration assumes that two (or more) conceptual spaces, or inputs, are cross-mapped and that, as a result, some features/structures selected for matching are projected – via the so called generic space, or an abstract structure containing elements shared by the inputs – into a new mental space, or a blend. In the blend, there are some elements/structures from the inputs but also – and more importantly – some *novel* elements (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 41).

A well-known example of conceptual integration is "the regatta," discussed by Fauconnier & Turner (2002, pp. 63-65). In 1993, a modern catamaran sailed from San Francisco to Boston, trying to go faster than a clipper sailing the same course in 1853. A few days before the end of the catamaran's voyage, a commentator observed: "At this point, *Great American II* [the catamaran] is 4.5 days ahead of *Northern Light* [the clipper]." Obviously enough, the situation involves two distinct events: the 1853 race and 1993 race (which correspond to two input spaces). At the conceptual level underlying the above commentary, these two events are cross-mapped mentally (common elements being the ship voyage, the same starting and ending point, the same course, etc.) and merged

[1] Emphasis added.

into one (the blend), where both vessels take part in the regatta, leaving Boston on the same day.

As Maria-Ángeles Martinez (2018) convincingly argues, conceptual blending proves "an appropriate framework for the study of narrative engagement" (p. 10), one of the major reasons being that a blend is "simultaneously predictable" (due to its links with background knowledge; in the case of literature, with cultural knowledge) and "open to idiosyncratic variation" (p. 10), that is to individual reading. With this assumption in mind, in the subsequent section I will discuss Heyboer O'Keefe's novel.

3. Reading[2]

An inherently intertextual work, Heyboer O'Keefe's *Frankenstein's Monster* resumes Mary Shelley's model story at the point of Captain Robert Walton's meeting Victor Frankenstein in the Arctic. In O'Keefe's version, Walton takes over Frankenstein's quest for the Monster, who does not die as in the original[3] but leaves the North Pole region and keeps escaping for ten years. The story proper, narrated by the Monster himself, takes place in the south of Europe, in Italy and France, to be moved to England and (Northern) Scotland. In the course of events, the Monster becomes a professional beggar in Venice, falls in love with a persecuted woman whom he has rescued, loses her due to Walton's malicious plotting, and decides to seek revenge on Walton's family in England. There, under the assumed name of Victor Hartmann, he falls for Lily Winterbourne – the daughter of Margaret Winterbourne (née Saville), Walton's beloved sister and the addressee of his writing, familiar from Mary Shelley's original. After several dramatic events, including the burning down of the Winterbourns' mansion, Lily, allegedly believed to have been dishonoured and abducted by Hartmann the Monster, accompanies him to the Orkneys. It is there that Hartmann's monstrous female partner was once created (cf. Shelley, 2003, pp. 168-172), so by taking Lily to the spot with the intention of marrying her, he hopes to find inner fulfilment and emotional rest.

Meanwhile, however, Captain Walton reappears, scorched and disfigured in the conflagration, and slashes Lily across the face with a knife, for he finds both her pregnancy and attachment to Hartmann disgraceful. The latter spares Walton's life

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[2] As further explained in Kowalczyk (2017), my understanding of the concept of "reading" unifies within cognitive poetics the activities of analysis and interpretation, characteristic of "traditional" literary studies (pp. 16-17).

[3] At the closing of Mary Shelley's novel, the Monster declares that he will construct a funeral pyre and burn himself up, his "ashes […] be[ing] swept into the sea by the winds" (Shelley, 2003, p. 225). However, since the utterance is reported by Walton in a letter to his sister (i.e. by the first-person narrator who is a character and whose credibility may be an issue), it is not impossible to regard the novel as open-ended.

and tries to save Lily and take her back home to her father, Mr Winterbourne, but she refuses, continuing the flight. At one point, the protagonists find themselves in a running carriage, followed by half-mad Walton, shooting at them. Aided by Hartmann, himself severely wounded in the arm, Lily delivers a puny baby boy; however, she soon bleeds to death.

Both the new-born and Hartmann are saved by a party of coalminers. When Hartmann regains consciousness, he learns about a series of gas explosions in the colliery and decides to join the rescue action. Meanwhile, continuing his furious quest for the Monster, Walton pursues him underground, into a coalmine tunnel. The two enemies fight to the death, inflicting pain on each other. In a bout of frenzy, Walton admits to being Lily's *father* (i.e. to having an incestuous relationship with Margaret), fires a pistol shot at Hartmann and – due to a very high concentration of coal dust in the tunnel – vanishes in the ensuing fireball. As the reader learns from the Epilogue, Hartmann, who has saved the lives of several miners, wins the gratitude and respect of the locals. He also develops affection for Lily's son, "[l]ike he was the first father in all the world and this was the first baby" (April 10, 1839).[4]

This brief summary of the plot fails to shed enough light on the novel's fundamental theme: the Monster's search for identity. Suspended between the past and the present, the animal and the human, the scientific and the metaphysical, the bodily and the spiritual, etc., Hartmann keeps writing his journal, giving the reader an insight into his inmost doubts, hopes, and disillusionment. The statement quoted in the title of this study, "I know not […] what I myself am," perfectly grasps the essence of this quest.

I would like to argue that the reader, prompted by the text, constructs several mental spaces (inputs) which contain elements associated with particular aspects of the Monster's identity. Next, as a result of a series of cross-mappings, another space emerges (the blend), containing selected components of the inputs fused together into a novel entity: a conceptualization of the monster.

The temporal dimension of Heyboer O'Keefe's book's universe is marked by two dates: (i) 1829, associated with the death of Victor Frankenstein and the beginning of Captain's Walton's obsessive chase for the Monster[5] (Prologue), and (ii) 1838/1839, when the story proper takes place,[6] culminating in the events referred to in a letter by one Anne Todd. This letter offers a glimpse into

[4] Since this and further references to Heyboer O'Keefe's novel are made to an electronic edition, dates from the Monster's diary will be given where relevant, instead of page numbers.

[5] It is worth noting that in Mary Shelly's novel these events, reported by Captain Walton, are dated as "March 28th,17--" (2003, p. 19), i.e. earlier than in Heyboer O'Keefe's version.

[6] The period between these two dates is summarized by the Monster in the following manner: "It has taken me these ten years to be able to recognize that Victor Frankenstein was my father" (April 15).

Hartmann's life after the catastrophe in the mines (Epilogue). Although the events take place in the nineteenth century, when the idea of the Great Chain of Being lost its significance as a reading tool of the empirical world (see above), the Monster's considerations and descriptions of actions in his journal do bring this concept into mind. Schematically, the novel's version of the Chain can be presented as follows:

[God (the Creator)]
Satan (the devil)[7]
man
animal (beast)
object (thing)

This can be viewed as the philosophical/religious hierarchy underlying Heyboer O'Keefe's fictional universe. On its top, there is God, "maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen," as The Nicene Creed, or a statement of belief in Christian liturgy, puts it. God, angels (hardly mentioned in the novel), and his rebellious creation, Satan, are spiritual beings;[8] man, the "middle link" in the Chain (Lovejoy, 2001, p. 190), is both bodily and spiritual, possessing an immortal soul. An image of God, the human being has higher feelings; in contrast, the animal, a soulless creature subject to man's power,[9] is driven primarily by (primitive) instinct. Finally, objects/things are material but, obviously, lifeless.

The Christian underpinning of the Chain is suggested in the novel, whose first chapter proper is set in the holy city of Rome and contains the Monster's report of a theological/philosophical discussion of Vatican priests over the relationship between body and soul (April 20). Furthermore, among the characters who exert major influence on the Monster's life are a Catholic nun, sister María Tomás, and a Protestant priest, Reverend Graham, both saving him from death. The literary texts read and contemplated by the Monster are also associated with the Christian worldview: they include not only John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as is the case in Mary Shelley's original, but also, for instance, "a stolen volume of [saint] Augustine" (April 20).

God's highest position in the Chain is alluded to in the Monster's considerations. "Where was I when God made man? (May 29)," he writes in his journal; elsewhere, he observes that "[t]o create life […] was the power of God" (October 29). The idea of the Divine superiority can also be noticed in other

[7] In the standard version of the Great Chain of Being, angels are second to God in the hierarchy (Lewis, 1964, pp. 70-74; Lovejoy, 2001, pp. 60, 90, 190, 240).

[8] However, note the discussion of popular/folklore imagery below.

[9] Cf. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them: […] and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28, *KJV*).

characters' utterances. For instance, one of the Vatican priests argues that "[t]he universe – the whole universe, along with our bodies – was created out of pure goodness" (April 20). Walton mentions "Eternal Justice [that] has prepared [the North Pole] for the rebellious" (Prologue), as well as interprets himself as "the Hand of God, carrying out His will" (November 26). Reverend Graham states that "God made everything once and perfectly at Creation" (November 21), while Sister María Tomás consoles the Monster with the following sentence from the Bible: "*And God saw all the things that He had made and they were very good*" [italics orig.] (December 12).

The overall effect of such passages is precisely that of establishing a philosophical/religious hierarchy in the novel's fictional universe. Simultaneously, they more or less directly underscore the blasphemous character of Victor Frankenstein's rebellion against the Divine order. As the Monster himself bitterly observes:

> My father [Victor Frankenstein] was not a believer. Nevertheless, if he had accepted me as his son, would he have made me learn, even if by rote, the Christian creed? Left alone, abandoned, I made my own creed. In mine, the son does not die as atonement; the father dies. This is *as blasphemous as my father's seizing the power of creation* [emphasis added] – and as unsatisfying. (October 10)

Not surprisingly, in Heyboer O'Keefe's novel the unnatural/unholy character of Victor's creative act and its "product" is conceptualized via references to Satan – the evil spirit in the Great Chain of Being. Consider the following instances:

> - "*Devil*. Was that not his [Frankenstein's] very first word upon seeing me rise up?"[italics orig.] (April 15);[10]
> - "Would those men […] have feared me as the incarnation of Satan?" (April 20);
> - "I am the real Devil" (June 6);
> - "I can imagine myself Satan in Hell, *plotting against all mankind*" [emphasis added] (October 24);[11]
> - "He [Frankenstein] unwittingly created *pure evil* [emphasis added] (November 7);
> - "Earlier today I met the priest. He believes he has met the Devil" (June 5);
> - [letter of Ann Todd:] "I was so shocked, with him being *so tall* and having such a *dreadful face*, that I blurted out, 'It's such a start you gave me, your being *so ugly*, sir. It's you, isn't it? The *Black Angel*" [emphasis added] (April 10, 1839).

The statements above combine theological aspects with folklore imagery: not only is the Monster an embodiment of metaphysical evil but also a physical

[10] In Mary Shelley's novel, Victor Frankenstein frequently uses the word "devil" both to address the Creature directly (e.g. "Devil!" "Wretched devil!") and to describe him ("the devil").

[11] Cf. "Many times I [the Monster] considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition" (Shelley, 2003, p. 132).

creature of considerable size (and might),[12] which is repulsively ugly. In the case of conceptual blending under discussion, the statements reveal an underlying mental input space (Input 1, or the "Satan" space) involving such elements as: being God's creature; having a spiritual nature; epitomizing pure evil; being the (arch-)enemy of God and man; featuring repulsive ugliness; and having a symbolic connection with darkness/blackness (see Fig. 1).

Perhaps the most developed of all the input spaces – in the sense of being evoked by the greatest number of textual elements and, arguably, involving the Monster's strongest emotions – is the one created around the category of man/human (Input 2, or the "man" space). The frequency of such elements in the novel's text reflects the supreme wish of Hartmann the Monster, namely being recognized as a human – a creature included in God's plan, or the Great Chain. He may allude to the category both in a positive and negative manner, but it stays in the centre of his conceptualizations. First, consider the examples below:

- "[Lily's] beauty forced me to seek out *what little humanity I possessed* [emphasis added], and I took my father's name: Victor" (October 26);
- "Am I a new type of man?" (November 21);
- "Winterbourne made me believe I *was his equal* in many ways" [emphasis added] (November 25);
- "I cried, 'I am a man!'" (February 17);
- "I have decided to be a man" (March 3).

And now juxtapose them with these "negative" statements:

- "I am […] a mockery of all that is human" (May 11);
- "I […] still had no part in humanity" (March 3);
- "Where was I when God made man?" (May 29);
- [about having sex with Lily:] "Humanity and inhumanity met and joined in us" (January 1);
- [Walton's letter:] "[Victor Frankenstein] took the natural and made it unnatural" (November 24).

Even though Hartmann the Monster questions his links with humanity (cf. "mockery"; "no part in humanity"; "inhumanity"; "unnatural"), his emotions prove to the contrary.

Hartmann's innermost desire manifests itself also through the concept of Victor Frankenstein being his "father," which, in turn, entails sonhood, and hence – being a human (cf. "might [Victor] have learned to call me his son?" [April 15]; "if he

[12] In a letter to Margaret, Heyboer O'Keefe's Walton describes the Monster as follows: "For the first time I knew its *full enormity*, *as if a mountain had fallen on my back* [emphasis added], breaking every bone, crushing the meat of every muscle to pulp" (Prologue).

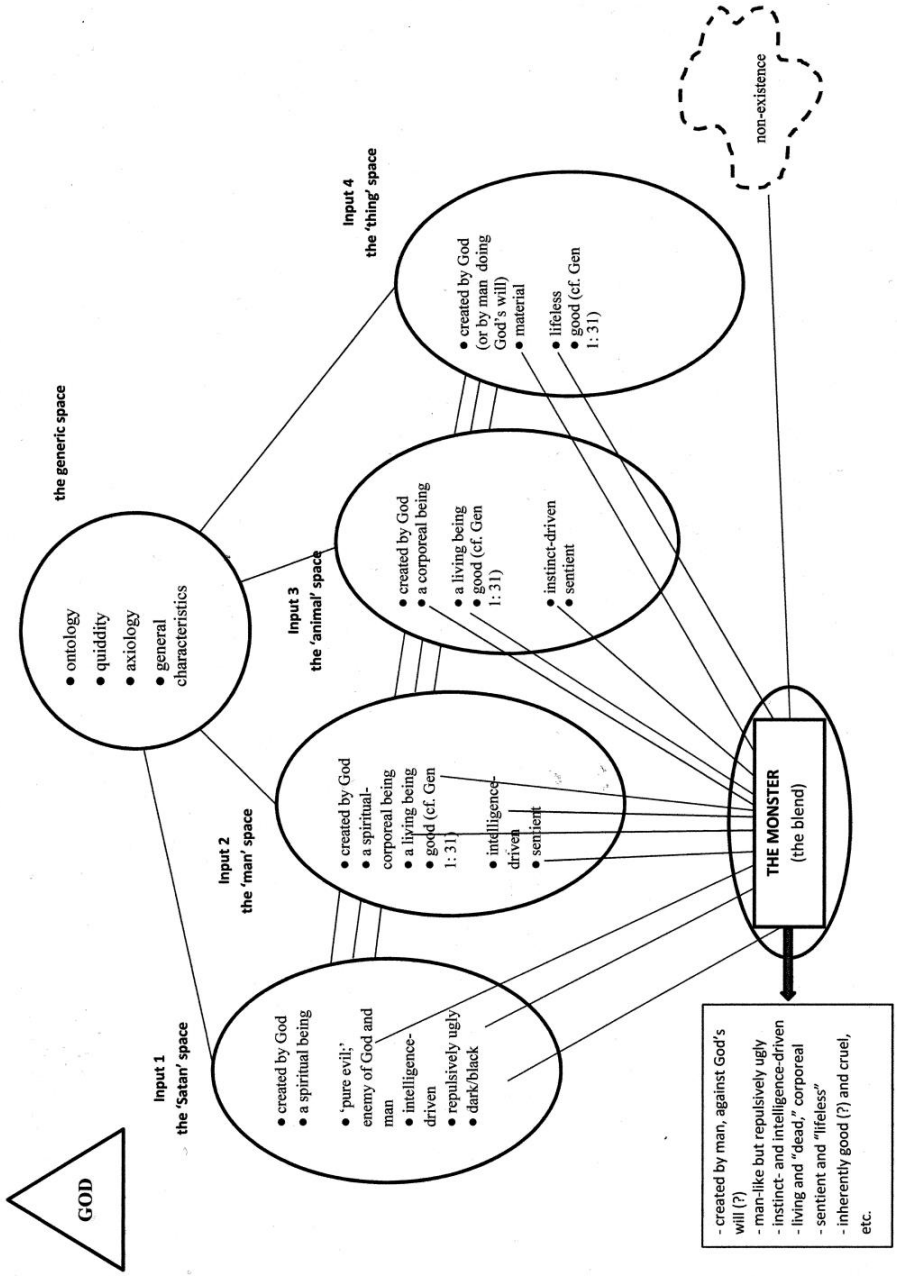

Figure 1. The Monster as a blend

had accepted me as his son" [October 10]). The pivotal character of this particular conceptualization can be seen in Hartmann's recurring nightmare:

> I killed *my father* again last night.
> It was the same dream as always, *my father and myself* pursuing and pursued till I no longer knew who he was, who I was; indeed, *if there were any difference* between us. […] In the dream, as in life, he chases me endlessly. […] *My father* is nearby. […] I reach out. My fingers curl around his throat, as his reach out to mine. He laughs. […] I know that I have killed him. I do not know if he has killed me. [emphasis added] (April 15)

Here, the Creature and his creator merge into one, Victor Frankenstein virtually becoming Hartmann's *doppelgänger* (cf. "His face appears, framed by white mist; *it mirrors* my own horror and hatred" [emphasis added] [April 15]).

Furthermore, the Monster's conceptualizing himself as a *dead* member of the category of man is still less painful than not belonging to it at all. Several statements Hartmann makes may, indeed, sound shocking: "having taken shelter in one of the catacombs, […] I sit watch among my dead brothers" (April 20); "I am a dead man resting in a graveyard" (June 5); "I, who had been made of death" (March 3). In this context, it is worth considering the Monster's deplorable act of taking Lily to a graveyard, digging up a coffin, and lifting a female corpse out of it:

> Slowly I unwrapped the winding sheet. […] [B]efore me lay a stout matron of fifty, her fleshiness slack as a deflated balloon, her ashen face spotted with black. […] If she had had a soul once, if any human had one, it was gone now. […] I grasped the woman under her arms and began to haul her up […]. […] Ignoring [Lily], I once more put my arms around the body and lifted. This time I easily pulled it up over the edge and onto the ground. The same perversity that had brought me here tonight […] now made me sit at the hole, feet dangling, and gather the corpse up close. I balanced it on my lap as one might hold a child. […] I smoothed the woman's gray hair, cupped her chin to tilt her face up, pressed my lips upon hers, and with feigned fondness said, "Mother!" (December 10).

On the one hand, Hartmann is evidently breaking a death taboo in an attempt to retaliate against Lily, who has spitefully underscored his affinity with the dead, alluding to the manner in which he was created[13]. Furthermore, the act of caressing the dead woman smacks of necrophilia, and, in a sense, of incest (cf. "Mother!").[14] There is, however, the other side of the coin: what appears to be inhumane and inherently profane can be construed as Hartmann's desperate endeavour to stir Lily's feelings and make her emotionally "alive" towards him, if at the cost of

[13] Cf. "You have been created from the dead" (November 5); "You have already been dead. You come from death. What does it feel like?" (November 13).

[14] Nevertheless, Sally Cline (1997) points out that "in certain parts of Ireland today the practice of children kissing a corpse continues," while in the Victorian times "*most children* would have been encouraged to touch a corpse with either reverence or attention" [emphasis added] (p. 121).

transgressing moral principles.[15] After all, the act is performed with "[his] nerves throbbing, tears pricking [his] eyes," and the Monster is perfectly aware that "it was […] appalling to hold the human dead, knowing [the human corpse] had been violated to make [him]" (December 10).

To recapitulate, the "man" input space (Input 2) would contain the following elements: being created/having a father; having a spiritual-corporeal nature; being alive (and destined to die); being intelligence-driven; being sentient; and, finally, being designed as "very good" (cf. Gen 1:31, quoted by Sister María Tomás [December 12]) (see Fig. 1).

The third major input (Input 3, or the "animal" space) can be constructed around the category of animal/beast – the one which is regarded by Hartmann – whose assumed name unites the animal ("Hart") with the human ("man") – as a threatening possibility which opposes his quest for being a human. In a sense, he is obsessed with the idea of *not* being categorized as a member of the animal world, bitterly recalling the evidence to the contrary:

- "She [Mirabella, the woman with whom he falls in love in Venice] has seen the *beast in my nature*" [emphasis added] (May 14);
- "One wall [of the house] was lined with the mounted heads of dozen animals […]. You are *just one more beast*, their eyes said" [emphasis added] (October 29);
- "Victor Hartmann. Hart-mann. *Animal* man" [emphasis added] (October 29);
- [Lily to Hartmann:] "At best you are *some freakish animal*" [emphasis added] (November 30);
- "I […] felt dark enjoyment last night at the feel of bones being crushed" (October 28).

Perhaps the most disconcerting scene associated with the discussed mental space is Hartmann's reaction to Lily's disdainful calling him "a dog eager to lap cunt" (December 4). Emotionally hurt and blindingly furious, the Monster runs away to a forest, getting rid of his clothes – the last token of his belonging to the human race – and gradually *becoming* a wild animal. As he admits later on, even his senses of sight, smell, hearing, and taste "flood[ed] with a beast's thousand perceptions" (December 4). This desperate act of Hartmann's immersion in primal instincts culminates in a forced sexual intercourse with a doe, which would be classified in terms of zoophilia, were the perpetrator human. Needless to say, such a desperate attempt to turn into "an animal in truth" brings no emotional relief whatsoever; as the Monster confesses, "At the last moment I cried out from the pain of knowing there had been no one human to accept me" (December 4).

The "animal" input (Input 3), therefore, constructed by the reader in the process of interpreting textual signals, would feature such elements as being created by God

[15] Cf. "I threw the body to the side, grabbed Lily by the back of the neck, forced her to her knees over the corpse, and pressed her head down till her face rubbed the dead woman's" (December 10).

(cf. Gen. 1:31, quoted by Sister María Tomás: "And God saw all the things that He had made and they were very good" [December 12]); having a corporeal nature; being alive; as well as being instinct-driven and sentient (see Fig. 1).

Yet another mental space which takes part in the blending process in question would be related to the Monster's conceptualizing himself and being conceptualized as an object/thing (Input 4, or the "thing" space) – a subordinate category in the Great Chain of Being. Hartmann refers to himself as "the thing" (November 4), "a created thing, an *artificial* man" [emphasis added] (April 18) and "a vile thing, a mockery of all that is human" (May 11), also asking about *what* (rather than *who*) he is (November 3, November 21). Likewise, other characters call the Creature "the thing" (Walton, October 13, 1828; July 17, 1829; Lily, November 7) and regard him as soulless (Rev. Graham, November 24) – possibly "no more than a machine" (November 21). A particularly conspicuous group of expressions reveal the conceptual metaphor[16] THE MONSTER IS A (CRUDELY-WROUGHT) PATCHWORK which has been shaping Hartmann's perception of himself. Consider:

- "–and suddenly I had my name. […] [T]he Patchwork Man" (October 29);
- "I've been created from […] pieces" (April 20);
- "I […] exposed the *ugly network* of scars" [emphasis added] (April 20);
- "There was no symmetry in me anywhere" (June 5);
- "I was made of such obviously mismatched pieces" (November 4);
- [Lily was] "like a seamstress examining a bolt of cloth. […] She tasted my every scar and counted each stitch that held me together" (January 1).

Apparently, this mental structure is saturated with strong negative emotions connected with the Monster's awareness of being poorly "assembled," or created (cf. "ugly"; "no symmetry"; "mismatched pieces," etc.), but these emotions seem to be associated with the monster blend rather than the "thing" input (Input 4) as such. The features distinguished in the fourth input include being created (by God or man); being material; being lifeless; and having no sentient nature; as well as being good (cf. Gen 1:31, quoted by Sister María Tomás [December 12]) (see Fig. 1).

It will be remembered that mental spaces are on-line structures created for the purposes of (complex) meaning construction. In the process of blending, cross-space mappings take place between the inputs, the generic space providing general information common to the inputs. In our case, the generic space would contain such abstract components as ontology, quiddity, axiology, and general characteristics of the Great Chain entities (see Fig. 1). As a result of the cross-

[16] According to George Lakoff & Mark Johnson (1980), metaphor is not a mere poetic or rhetorical device; on the contrary, "our ordinary conceptual system […] is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p. 3). Conceptual metaphors enable us to understand one idea (or the so-called conceptual domain) in terms of another. For instance, Lakoff and Johnson contend, the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR ACTUALLY "*structures* the actions we perform in arguing" (p. 4).

mappings among the four inputs (i.e. the "Satan" space, the "man" space, "the animal" space, and the "thing" space), certain elements are *creatively* mapped out to the new mental space, or the blend – a novel, emergent structure through which monstrosity is conceptualized. Thus, the "monster" blend features a man-created being[17] which unites the corporeal and the material;[18] the dead with the living; being intelligence-driven with being instinct driven; the sentient with the insensible, and so on. In Heyboer O'Keefe's novel, the Monster proves good, even though he may have committed evil deeds. Such a blend is further developed by the reader (the so-called running the blend), who can refer to her/his frames of knowledge, including, for instance the knowledge of Mary Shelley's hypotext (*sensu* Genette, 1997), references to other literary texts and criticism, philosophical/theological awareness, etc. The modern reader's cultural knowledge of monstrosity may also take part in the process, complementing the blend based on certain notions of sociology, literary history, gender issues, etc.

Significantly, the cognitive phenomenon in question, i.e. conceptual integration, involves the reader's emotions. Looking at the act of reading from a cognitive perspective, Magdalena Rembowska-Płuciennik (2014) underscores a close link between emotions and perception, emotions and memory, as well as emotions and attention [*napięcie uwagi*] (p. 564). She further contends that emotions are intrinsically associated with textual information processing (pp. 565-566). In a similar vein, Agnieszka Libura (2006) demonstrates how emotions work in conceptual blending. Analysing, among others, the "regatta" scheme invoked above, she comes to the conclusion that emotions are "guides of intellect" [*przewodnicy intelektu*] as well as co-factors in the process of global meaning creation (pp. 66-67). With regard to Heyboer O'Keefe's Monster, the key role of emotions is doubly evident: not only are they omnipresent in his narrative but also interwoven with the reader's construction of the blend. It is enough to mention the feelings which accompany the Monster's being rejected or accepted, singled out or ignored, respected or despised, self-assured or internally shattered, as well as his complex relationships with other human characters. As he finally puts it himself, and not without some ironic distance:

> And what of Lily? Must I discount our days together as meaningless because she was mad? I never knew happiness with her, but I glimpsed its possibility. And, in the end as

[17] On the one hand, Victor Frankenstein's creative act is conspicuously rebellious, for it violates God's will, traditionally construed via reference to the Chain of Being. On the other hand, Heyboer O'Keefe – especially through the character of sister María Tomás – seems to propose a more hopeful interpretation, namely that ultimately *nothing* happens out of God's will.

[18] The question whether the Monster possesses a soul may remain "technically" unanswered (Cf. "But of my senses, my soul, […] I am no less ignorant than any man" [November 3]), but if his ability to love is interpreted in Christian terms, he does seem to have one.

> she lay dying and later as I worked in the mine, I felt pity. I felt forgiveness. I felt … even love? For a monster, such emotion is itself a prize to be treasured. (March 15)

If accepted, this recapitulation prompts a Christian interpretation of the novel: what makes one a human being is her/his ability to love.

Conclusion

Cognitive-poetic analysis, which, in the words of Peter Stockwell (2002), does not deal with "the artifice of the literary text alone, or [with] the reader alone, but [with] the more natural process of reading when one is engaged with the other" (p. 2), sheds some new light on the construction of monstrosity in Heyboer O'Keefe's *Frankenstein's Monster*. Owing to the mechanism of conceptual integration, the reader, who actively participates in meaning creation, builds her/his conceptualization of the eponymous Monster and of monstrosity in general. Monstrosity, in turn, proves to be intrinsically associated with humanity, whose shapes, in the words of Richard Bleiler (2006), are also "mutable, variable, and at some level fragile and unstable" (p. 342).

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Living in the Sunken Place: Notes on Jordan Peele's *Get Out* as Gothic Fiction

ABSTRACT
The gothic imagination often expresses a sense of the instability and/or vulnerability of human identity, bearing either on specific individuals or on the species as a whole. The present article examines the 2017 film *Get Out*, written and directed by Jordan Peele, in order to highlight the ways in which its exploration of the abovementioned topic relates to the tradition of the gothic as it is recognisable in literary texts dating from as far back as the eighteenth century. Relevant titles include Walter Scott's *Count Robert of Paris* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, as well as examples from film. The argument of the article therefore focuses on a gamut of thematic concerns that link different works across different ages and media.
Keywords: gothic, identity, human nature, animal, possession

It is possible to argue that a recurring, if not altogether defining, characteristic of the gothic imagination is that it explores the porous borderline between the natural and the supernatural, just as it explores the porous borderline between the human and the non-human. Such porousness involves a sense of instability and indeterminacy, productive of either what H. P. Lovecraft (2008) termed "cosmic fear" (p. 18 *et passim*) or of a more localized atmosphere of horror, and it is often expressed in narrative through devices associated with metamorphosis. The two strands mentioned above come together, for instance, in the thematics of ghosts or apparitions, which more often than not are predicated to be human individuals who are no longer there (because they have died) but who are somehow still around – who more or less mysteriously remain undead. One example among myriads is the White Lady in Walter Scott's *The Monastery*. Allegorical apparitions such as the ghosts of Christmas in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* are fairly rare exceptions. Those two strands also come together in the intersection between man, animal and the preternatural, as in the many tales involving werewolves, the villain Dracula

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(who is notoriously capable of transforming himself into a bat), and the vigilante hero of a city aptly named Gotham, Batman.

Needless to say, hybrid and mutating beings as well as mysterious individuals are not exclusive hallmarks of gothic fiction (they hark back to the tradition of medieval romance and further back still to works like the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid), but they are nonetheless staple features in the long line that stretches from the late eighteenth century to the present day, and which has in fact become a thread that connects literature to film, comics and graphic novels. The wide array of manifestations of the gothic – a variety which is discernible chronologically, thematically and technically – has entailed intersections with other cultural formations, amongst which science fiction stands foremost. Science fiction has arguably become central to modernity and postmodernity, obsessed as our (Western, and indeed global) civilization has become with the promises and the threats of technology. It is worth noticing, however, that the intersection between the gothic imagination and SF is not a recent development, as it has been in place since Mary Shelley's groundbreaking *Frankenstein* of 1818. This reminder is important for the present article, which proposes to focus on the 2017 film *Get Out*, written and directed by Jordan Peele, in order to highlight some of the ways in which the film partakes of the tradition of the gothic as it is recognisable in a range of texts dating from as far back as the late eighteenth century. In his study *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*, Noël Carroll (1990) submits that "[w]hat presumably happens in certain historical circumstances is that the horror genre is capable of incorporating or assimilating general social anxieties into its iconography of fear and distress" (p. 207). It may be objected that horror can hardly be reduced to the status of a "genre", as it translates across the borders not only of genres but of media as well. But the point is, as shall be seen, that if texts in the gothic mode are symptomatic of their own times (and why should they be assumed to be otherwise, if all works of culture are potentially so?), a portion of what is revealed in *Get Out* bears testimony to the persistence of themes and motifs with a very long history within the tradition of the gothic.

It is useful briefly to rehearse the plot of the film by means of a qualified synopsis. *Get Out* tells the story of a young African American photographer called Chris Washington who is visiting his white girlfriend's parents for the weekend at their house in the woods. Rose's parents are called Dean (a neurosurgeon) and Missy (a psychiatrist). Rose's brother Jeremy, who is studying Medicine, also shows up for the weekend. Intimations that the film is about racism pile up from the start, and they include the fact that the Armitages have a black groundsweeper, Walter, and a black cook, Georgina, in their employment. "We hired Georgina and Walter to help care for my parents. When they died, I couldn't bear to let them go", Dean explains, as he gives Chris a tour of the house. Other bits of information given at this stage in the most ostensibly benevolent tone include a reference to

the basement ("We had to seal it up. Got some black mould down there") and a comment about the kitchen that is made as Georgina is shown standing there: "My mother loved her kitchen, so we keep a piece of her in here" (minutes 17-18).

A friendly atmosphere prevails until Jeremy becomes intoxicated over dinner that evening and expresses an ambivalent preoccupation with Chris's health and "genetic makeup" (minute 24). The events of the night, however, are the real (first) turning point. Having left Rose alone in bed and come outside for a cigarette, Chris is faced with Walter, who almost knocks him down in a seemingly demented run across the grounds. Chris also spots Georgina acting in a weird manner, as if sleepwalking. He is then lured into Missy's study, where he is hypnotized into utter subjection. "I can't move", he says. Missy's words are stark and imperative: "You're paralyzed." "Now, sink into the floor." "Now you're in the Sunken Place" (minutes 34-35). Chris feels himself falling into a dark abyss, struggling in vain to grab at something, suspended in a sort of inner cosmic vacuum that looks like outer space – only to wake up in bed, after sunrise already, unsure of what happened.

Later that day there is a garden party attended by a large group of friends who prove to be obsessed with the issue of race, making a series of awkward remarks about black people, some admiring, some condescending. Chris eventually takes a picture of the only other black man at the get-together, Logan, who all of a sudden changes his behaviour completely. The flash wrings him from his dormancy and causes him to yell in evident panic: "Get out! Get outta here!" (minute 53). We will learn afterwards he had been kidnapped, and Logan is not his real name.

The atmosphere of horror intensifies when, in stark contrast to Logan's cry of warning, we witness a silent auction conducted through the use of bingo cards. The rich, white people are bidding for the protagonist. Sensing something is wrong, Chris tries to leave but is made to fall into hypnotic stupor and caught. He wakes up in the basement, bound hands and feet onto an armchair, facing an old TV set – with the stuffed head of a deer hanging from the wall above. More than the exclamation from which the film derives its title, this may be considered the key episode of the story. It betokens the culmination of the suspense mounting since the beginning, and at the same time it dispels the mystery by providing an explanation. Chris is first shown an old video in which Roman Armitage, Dean's father, explains the "Coagula procedure", which has been developed by "our order" for many years; and, once more striking the very ambiguous note of inverted racism that pervades the film, he further spells out: "You have been chosen because of the physical advantages you've enjoyed your entire lifetime" (minutes 71-72). Chris is then shown another video, in which the procedure is described in more detail. This time, the speaker is Jim Hudson, a failed photographer turned art dealer who is blind. Hudson, who longs for Chris's eyes, made the highest bid at the auction, and he is speaking from a room nearby, during the pre-op. It is here that the most thorough description of the partial "transplantation" is given (minutes 80-81):

JIM: The piece of your brain connected to your nervous system needs to stay put, keeping those intricate connections intact. So you won't be gone, not completely. A sliver of you will still be in there, somewhere, limited consciousness. You'll be able to see and hear what your body is doing, but your existence will be as a passenger. An audience. You'll live in –
CHRIS: The Sunken Place.

At the prospect of being doomed to the depths of his own private inferno, Chris realizes it is not only deprivation of the will that is at stake, it is also deprivation of one's identity, expropriation of the self:

JIM: Now, I'll control the motor functions, so I'll be –
CHRIS: Me. You'll be me.

In effect, neither Chris nor Jim will be fully himself anymore. The partial transplantation turns them both into partial waste. If the black man's identity is treated as expendable, the white man's body is similarly disposed of without ceremony. The viewer is shown pieces of the scalp and the cranium conspicuously being thrown into a waste bin during the early stages of the procedure.

Through cunning and violence, Chris manages to extricate himself from his captors, and in the process starts a fire which presumably burns the house to the ground. One way or another, the whole Armitage family is killed. It also emerges that Walter and Georgina are none other than Rose's "transplanted" grandparents. It is therefore appropriate that the cook-cum-matriarch makes an attempt to kill or perhaps recapture Chris while shouting: "You ruined my house" (minute 91). As with the unnatural goings-on between the living and the not-quite-dead in Poe's House of Usher, it may be supposed that, sooner or later, her house was fated to fall.

It does not take much to see that *Get Out* recycles and revitalizes motifs from the gothic tradition, as it was established primarily by Romantic and Victorian literary fiction in Britain along with its counterparts in the literatures of countries like Germany and the United States. The film resonates with topoi familiar from works by authors like Matthew Gregory Lewis, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Mervyn Peake, to name but a few. One such topos is the crypt or subterranean chamber as a place of imprisonment, torture and murder. Catacombs abound in Lewis's *The Monk*, Walter Scott's *Count Robert of Paris*, Thomas Moore's *The Epicurean*, and Bram Stoker's *The Lair of the White Worm*. Interestingly, interpreting Peele's motion picture against the background of the gothic allows us to see the catacombs as a metonymy for the predicament of possession. Chris's entrapment in the basement of the Armitage house foreshadows his entrapment in his own body after the "transplantation". His body will have been taken by an other, and Chris will be constrained to the passive role of "passenger" or "audience", as mentioned above. The secret society dedicated

to helping wealthy people with physical disabilities or declining health practices a form of body snatching which may remind the viewer both of *Frankenstein* (although it is to assorted parts of cadavers that a new lease of life is given in this case) and of *The Body Snatchers*, Jack Finney's thriller novel (made doubly famous by its film adaptation, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) which transfers the motif of possession into the typically SF domain of interplanetary warfare. Incidentally, the fact that the "transplantation" in *Get Out* depends on a medical procedure, not a supernatural event or intervention of any sort, also connects the film to science fiction.

The Armitage family in *Get Out* may however be overconfident in their technical achievements, for the film develops the idea of the spectral existence in yet another way. As shown in the case of Logan, if the black man is to be possessed, the white man will be haunted. As surgery fails to completely hollow out the manipulated body, under special circumstances the previous and rightful, natural owner of that body manages to resurface. The identity of the black man is never fully exorcised; on the contrary, it proves to be ultimately indelible. Both possessor and possessed are truncated selves, coexisting in insoluble conflict. The "Coagula procedure" generates a *Doppelgänger*, a perpetual Jekyll and Hyde condition. As a matter of fact, the name of the procedure is unwittingly revealing. The idea of the coagulum, of the clot, is suggestive of the unhealthy, dangerous nature of the surgery; it also hints at the formation or intrusion of an unnatural body within the self, a lump. The white brain in the black body can never be anything but an invader and a disease.

Furthermore, *Get Out* may be seen as a variation of the story of Bluebeard, the folktale memorably crystallized by Charles Perrault. Virtually, the entire Armitage household stands for Bluebeard, beginning with the bearded patriarch, Dean. But the central, operative character is in this respect Rose, the *femme fatale*. She is the serial seducer and sexual partner of healthy, young, innocent black men, whose pictures Chris discovers hidden in a small box in a closet in her room. Later those photos are displayed, in frames, on the wall, as Rose is shown browsing the internet for new targets. The pictures are her trophies, recollections of the victims of the Armitages and their "order", a gruesome gallery of the many who have been preyed upon. Actually, the plot of *Get Out* is imbued with the concept of the chase, most palpably emblematized in the deer's head hanging from the wall in the basement, a potential mirror-image of Chris as he is being prepped for surgery. As it happens, the deer's head becomes a weapon of liberation and revenge. The doctor is pierced through with its antlers and dies. With fine irony – or poetic justice, perhaps – the prey turns upon the predator, even if the prey is no longer an agent but a simple tool.

Additionally, it may be suggested that the film's engagement with the problematics of racism is a critical variation (at times verging on the facetious) on

the topic of the sub-human, the quasi-animal, which was historically connected with the institution of slavery and its attendant justificatory discourses (that the idea of "transplantation" may be intended to evoke the "plantation" is not irrelevant). That the thematics of the sub-human play a significant role in the gothic imagination can be shown by looking at one of the grimmest of Walter Scott's novels, *Count Robert of Paris*. While depicting the most extremely sophisticated, and indeed pompous, social situation – that of the imperial court of Alexius Comnenus in Constantinople at the time of the First Crusade – the novel is shot through with references to animals, from their employment in the symbolic idiom of heraldry to the Emperor's menagerie. Offensive discourse often resorts to animal imagery in order to express prejudice, contempt or dislike. Most importantly, the language of the emotions in the novel consistently suggests the presence of subconscious, sub-rational undercurrents in human experience, which is in consequence equated with the bestial.

Two characters are particularly invested with this ambivalence. They are, as it were, its embodiments. The philosopher Michael Agelastes is nicknamed "the Elephant" not only owing to his heavy build but also "from his strict observation of the rule which forbids any one to sit down or rest in the Imperial presence" (p. 77). Agelastes is thus a pedantic figure. He is also scheming and darkly ambitious, scoffed by the courtiers and yet feared, among other reasons because one can scarcely account for

> an influence gained without apparent effort, and extending almost into the very thoughts of men, who appear to act as he would desire, without his soliciting them to that purpose[.] Men say strange things concerning the extent of his communications with other beings, whom our fathers worshipped with prayer and sacrifice. (p. 78)

The philosopher is credited with cultivating pagan beliefs in an age of Christianity. He is thus alleged to bridge past and present, although he is in truth a sceptic of all religions, just as he bridges the realms of the human, the daemonic and the animal. As far as the latter is concerned, a pivotal moment is located during a visit of the empress and the princess to his house. Receiving them at the door, the Elephant prostrates himself before the elephant carrying the imperial personages. The man bowed down before the pachyderm gives rise to equivocal jibes at "the singularly curious animal" (pp. 133, 135-136).

Like Agelastes, the second relevant character, Sylvan, has diabolic connotations. When Sylvan is first seen by Count Robert in the dungeons of the Blacquernal Palace, it/he is perceived as a strange creature of undefined nature: "Something [...] of very great size, in the form a human being" (p. 169), yet "it would have been rash to have termed it a man" (p. 170), although it/he is wearing clothes. The Count is left to speculate upon the identity of "that furry gentleman". He infers it "could be no other than the Devil himself, or some of

his imps" (p .170). The narrator himself contributes to the uncertainty regarding "the tremendous creature, so like, yet so very unlike to the human form" before explaining that Sylvan "was a specimen of that gigantic species of ape – if it is not indeed some animal more nearly allied to ourselves – to which, I believe, naturalists have given the name of the Ourang Outang" (p. 171). Unusually among his fellow primates, this particular orang-utan is an individual endowed with human propensities. It/he is "an animal of an appearance so ambiguous" (p. 350) with a disturbingly quasi-human behaviour and capabilities which make it/him virtually unclassifiable. Numerous epithets denote this hybrid condition. The Emperor calls him "a sylvan man, or native of the woods" (p. 288). Agelastes calls him "that singular mockery of humanity" (p. 271). The soldier, Hereward, refers to "the Man of the Forest, the animal called Sylvan" (pp. 203-204), the twin epithets provocatively implying the interchangeability of human and animal. Some believe Sylvan possesses the ability of speech (cf. 174). As if reiterating the existence of a "half-reasoning capacity" (p. 350), verbs and nouns recur which point to an affinity with human experience, such as "chatter" (pp. 170, 171, 172, 350), "weep" (p. 173), "mutter" (p. 173), "whine" (p. 174), and "bemoan" (p. 170, 204). When the Count wounds Sylvan with a dagger, it/he lets out "a deep wailing and melancholy cry, having in it something human, which excited compassion" (p. 173). Sylvan is not alone in this uncanny likeness to human expressions. Along with many other magnificent beasts, the imperial zoological collections comprise a "huge lizard, which, resembling in shape the harmless inhabitant of the moors of other countries, is in Egypt a monster thirty feet in length, clothed in impenetrable scales, and moaning over his prey when he catches it, with the hope and purpose of drawing others within his danger, by mimicking the lamentations of humanity" (pp. 136-137).

Bringing *Get Out* into line with *Count Robert of Paris* makes it possible to construe an entanglement of themes linking both works to countless other narratives of the gothic. In their different ways, but in both cases assimilating contemporary anxieties into their respective iconographies of fear and distress (to paraphrase Noël Carroll, quoted above), Peele's film and Scott's novel encapsulate the problem of the vulnerability of the borders of the human. While *Get Out* explores the theme of the violation of the individual in the persons of the abducted black men who are turned into hardware for the ailing members of the "order", *Count Robert* explores the theme of the violation of the province of humanity caused by the irruption of an underground menace redolent of the jungle – Sylvan, wreaking havoc in the imperial palace of Constantinople and killing the Elephant. Both stories express concerns relative to possible regression into a less-than-human state. *Get Out* couches them in terms that reflect a context in which engineered bodies have ceased to be a dream and it no longer takes visionaries or enthusiasts, but simply believers in the likelihood of certain technological developments in the not-so-

distant future, to voice trans-humanistic prophecies involving the prolongation of life by means of prosthetics for the benefit of a migrating and/or expanding consciousness (see Kurzweil, 2009; Kaku, 2012, pp. 87-117; Harari, 2017, pp. 49-56, 319). Presenting in its turn a plethora of images of animals, *Count Robert* focuses on primates, and in particular on the figure of the orang-utan, in keeping with age-old discourses interrogating species boundaries. The larger primates were deemed relevant analogues to humans throughout the successive epochs of Western culture from the Middle Ages onwards if not before,[1] and in the Romantic period, as has been remarked by Christine Kenyon-Jones (2001), "a new emphasis on nature" resulted in debates "articulated both about animals' difference from human beings and also about their similarity. [T]hey were [...] perceived as similar, in so far as they have the ability to behave, to feel and perhaps to think like human beings" (p. 2). A list of works of fiction bearing on the former topic would include the TV series *Battlestar Galactica* (in its "reimagined" version authored by Ronald D. Moore), as well as the films *Lucy*, written and directed by Luc Besson, and Wally Pfister's *Transcendence*. A list bearing on the latter topic would include Pierre Boulle's novel *La Planète des Singes* (*Planet of the Apes*) and its several filmic avatars.

Moreover, either through transmutations between human and animal or half-human, or through the transposition of the self or mind into a new organic body or into data storage devices, the gothic imagination questions the assumption of the integrity of the individual – "individual" being a word which contains the notion of the indivisibility of the subject – which is deeply ingrained in Western culture. Humanist assurances regarding the uniqueness and stability of the self are challenged in a war fought on several fronts: shapeshifters (werewolves, vampires and sundry aberrations), souls without bodies (ghosts), bodies without souls (zombies), all undermine the notion of an integrated subject. Besides, division easily occasions multiplication. The split self indicated by the *Doppelgänger* motif expands into the duplication of the self – Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde do not at bottom differ much from Robert and Gil-Martin in Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* – and the duplication does not necessarily acknowledge any limits. Why should the "Coagula procedure" not allow an old brain to be transferred to a healthy body over and over again, one becoming in effect many? Cloning threatens to disprove that central tenet of Western values, the uniqueness of the individual: that he or she is (a) *one* and *only*. The ultimate step along this path are surely the intelligent, self-perfecting, self-reproducing

[1] For the Middle Ages, see, among other possible references, Curtius (1961, pp. 522-523); for the Early Modern Period, Wiseman, 2002; for the long eighteenth century, Brown (2001, pp. 221-265) and Nash (2003, pp. *maxime* 22-30; 110-116); for the age of Walter Scott, Brown (2010, pp. 27-63; 90-111).

machines which/who lay claim to a higher level of humanity than that of their human creators, as do the Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica* with their genocidal drive and their resurrection ship. An almost seamless link runs through all of this, from humans tackling the sub-human and/or daemonic components of their being to the self-perpetuating technology that constitutes a negation of conventional anthropology. These notions bring us closer to the core anxieties of the gothic, and *Count Robert of Paris* and *Get Out* evidently share in, and illustrate, this universe.

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Family Resemblance: Frankenstein's Monster and the Phantom of the Opera in *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016)

ABSTRACT
The Creature of *Frankenstein* never managed to fulfil his desire of finding a loving partner in Mary Shelley's novel, but his symbolic progeny continues to haunt modern popular culture. The article discusses the case of "family resemblance" between Frankenstein's Creature and the title antihero of Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera*. In their respective literary sources, they share an inborn deformity, an appreciation for music, a romantic yearning for love and acceptance matched with sociopathic violence. Recently, the TV series *Penny Dreadful* elaborates on these allusions, conflating the narratives by Shelley and Leroux, as well as their later adaptations.
Keywords: *Penny Dreadful*, *Frankenstein*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, mash-up, adaptation

Recombining iconic Victorian characters has become something of a staple of millennial popular culture – e.g. Kim Newman's novel *Anno Dracula* (1992), Alan Moore's graphic novel *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999), or the TV series *Dickensian* (2015-2016), to mention but a few examples in different media. The phenomenon of the continued popularity of the Victorian era and the cultural need to reinvent it has been theorised by scholars of the Victorian (Sweet, 2002), Neo-Victorian (Mitchell 2010), and Gothic Studies (Halberstam, 1995) alike. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that John Logan, the creator of horror drama television series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016), would choose to draw upon a wide array of Gothic fiction. The series presents a complex and erudite mash-up of (mostly) Victorian Gothic stories including the characters from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), and tales of witches, werewolves, demonic possessions etc. It would not be unanticipated that in a tale that reworks so many characters and plotlines from

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late-19th and early-20th century Gothic tradition, Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera* (1910) would also make his appearance. Especially regarding the fact that the novel – known for its many adaptations, most of them in the English language – has generally been accepted as part of the anglicised Gothic canon, so much so that *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* lists it alongside the works of Stoker, Stevenson, and Wilde (Hogle, 2002b, p. 9) rather than position it in the tradition of the French *fantastique*.

In a way the Phantom (called Erik in the novel) does appear – and yet he doesn't. In the spirit of Derrida's "hauntology" (1994, p. 10), subtle but clear allusions to Leroux's story and its numerous subsequent "progeny" (Hogle, 2002a, p. 1) are visible in one of the central characters of *Penny Dreadful* – Doctor Frankenstein's (first) Monster (played by Rory Kinnear), known also as Caliban and later as John Clare. The Creature follows many of the narrative paths used by Leroux's antihero, making the Phantom the ghostly presence haunting the show. The ghostly presence of the Phantom is evident by the narrative traces he leaves behind, yet hard to grasp, continually recycled and altered – and in turn engendering constant alterations in the Creature.

1. The Monster and the Opera Ghost

The origins of this "ghostly presence" run deep in the past. Already in the original novel, Gaston Leroux's antihero, Erik the Phantom, bears more than a passing likeness to Shelley's monster. In their respective literary sources, they share an inborn deformity able to scare and repulse onlookers, an appreciation for music and poetry, a romantic yearning for love and acceptance, matched with sociopathic violence – and some physical characteristics including long, black hair, thin, black lips, a deathly pallor and otherworldly, inhuman yellow eyes. In Chapter 5 of Shelley's novel, Victor Frankenstein recalls his first view of his creation with horror: "I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open," continuing with a fuller description:

> His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (Shelley, 2005/1818, Chapter 5)

The characters of Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera* offer equally terrifying accounts of the appearance of the presumed "Opera Ghost":

> His jacket hangs on a skeletal frame. His eyes are so deep that you can hardly see the pupils. There are only two big black holes, like a dead man's skull. His skin is stretched

> out across his face tight as a drumhead and is not white, but a pasty yellow. His nose is so insignificant that you almost can't see it and its very absence is too awful to behold. The only hair I saw were three or four long dark locks on his forehead and behind his ears. (Leroux, 2004/1910, Chapter 1)

Later on, they repeatedly stress that the most terrifying element are the villain's "blazing, yellow eyes" (Leroux, 2004/1910, Chapter 13, 21, 26).

Popular culture has acknowledged the visual resemblance between the two classic Gothic monsters ever since they were played by Lon Chaney and his son Lon Chaney Jr. in the early decades of the development of horror cinema. The Creature – first played by Boris Karloff in 1931 in what began a whole series of *Frankenstein* movies – had an elongated skull with a distinctive high forehead and strands of black hair, thin lips and deep-set eyes, whose colour was impossible to tell in black and white. Many of these features were reprised from the famous make-up devised by Lon Chaney – known in Hollywood as "the man of a thousand faces" – and used in 1925 in Universal's earliest horror, *The Phantom of the Opera*. The face of the Phantom, originally kept secret before the movie's premiere, in time became something of a fetish in re-releases of the film, further emphasizing the visual connection between Leroux's character and *Frankenstein*. When Lon Chaney Jr played the Monster in *The Ghost of Frankenstein* in 1942 – shortly before a Universal remake of the *Phantom* with Claude Rains in the title role reached the cinemas – the "family resemblance" (Wittgenstein 1969: 32), that is a set of well-established unifying characteristics, was made even more obvious to horror fans. Not all of the distinguishing features of the character must be present at the same time, but there seem to be too many of them to be dismissed as purely coincidental.

Actually, the parallels go beyond the rather superficial references in horror movies. In a more direct take, the 2004 (re-)translation of Leroux's novel into English by the French-American husband and wife team Jean-Marc and Randy Lofficier (the 4th official translation of *The Phantom*) includes an added prequel titled "His Father's Eyes," in which the Phantom is revealed to be a biological son of Frankenstein's Creature. The short story opens with a terrified young woman named Rosemary held captive in a dishevelled shack in the Scottish highlands by an unnamed monster, whose description sounds strangely familiar: "corpse-like face," "lipless mouth," "dirty strands of long, black, matted hair," and especially "burning yellow eyes" (Lofficier). The reader of Leroux's novel may immediately assume that this is Erik the Phantom, possibly before he settled in the Paris Opera (we know from the novel that he had travelled all over the world and moved in only as an adult). However, the creature – referred to by Rosemary only with an italicized *he* – seems rougher and more animalistic than the Phantom, he also remains almost completely silent. As Anne Myers observes:

> Rosemary is, like her parallel [Leroux's] Christine, a self-sacrificing figure; just as Christine does Erik's will in order to save [her fiancé] Raoul and the opera house from eradication, so Rosemary does not escape when given the possible opportunity to do so, for fear of bringing the creature's wrath down on others (specifically her father and her village). Her belief in the creature's near-omnipotent ability to track and find her is very similar to Christine's spellbound belief in Erik's abilities, while, as in Leroux's story, her father is the only family member mentioned in connection to her. (Myers)

Lofficier's story contradicts much of Leroux's internal chronology and the information given in his novel, but it offers some interesting intertextual connections. The monster assaults Rosemary sexually and then unexpectedly leaves, and she soon discovers that she is pregnant. Her father ships her off to Rouen to live with some relatives. She gives birth to a baby boy, but is terrified to see "his evil yellow eyes" (Lofficier) which resemble his father's. Only then it is revealed that it is the baby who is supposed to be Leroux's Erik, although in the novel he is raised by an unloving mother, and here Rosemary soon dies and leaves him in the care of her aunt and uncle. As a final touch, at the end of Lofficier's short story a motto is given in the form of a quotation from Shelley's *Frankenstein* – attributed directly to the Monster: "Shall each man find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone? I had feelings of affection, and they were requited by detestation and scorn" (Shelley quoted in Lofficier).

The short story addresses the question of the Phantom's inborn deformity, placing him in the line of monsters rather than, as Leroux did, making him unique and singular in his hideousness, and thus even more solitary both in his genius and in his madness. Moreover, the name Rosemary and the whole concept of monstrous birth may be a further reference to Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (based on Ira Levin's novel), in which the protagonist also was terrified to see her new-born son's monstrous flaming eyes, in this case linking him to the devil himself. Perhaps, then, Lofficier's aim was to remove the whole story of the Phantom and Frankenstein one more generation back and suggest a demonic lineage of the resurrected Creature.

Like Frankenstein's Creature, Erik is what Franco Moretti (1983, p. 84) calls "a totalising monster", extremely adaptable to embody any symbolic threat. Literary criticism has made ample use of this flexibility. In consequence, *Frankenstein* has been discussed in terms of anxieties of the modern society, tensions between nature and nurture (Levine, 1973; O'Rourke, 1989), the sublime (Clubbe, 1991), or identity issues concerning gender, class, and race (Veeder, 1986; Dickerson, 1993; Mellor, 2001). Much in the same vein, Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera* has been, as demonstrated i.a. by Jerrold E. Hogle, perceived to be a tale about various kinds of otherness. He can represent the menace of an underclass climbing up the social ladder, with additional allusions to a dangerous Middle-Easterner or a Semite (especially resonant in a post-Dreyfus French society);

he could be a lurking criminal, or even a sexually undefined hermaphrodite or a deviant (Hogle, 2002c, pp. 214-222). Leroux's novel deals with the fears of "degeneration" and "decadence," which pose threats to the stability of bourgeois society of the turn of the twentieth century, but it could also be analysed in terms of the social fear of feminine talent (Hawkins, 1990) and the disruptive power of art (especially music) in general.

In his 1981 non-fiction book *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King acknowledges Frankenstein's Monster (together with Dracula and the Werewolf) as a powerful archetype of the horror genre – a type he calls the "Thing Without a Name" (1981, p. 37). The same soubriquet could be applied also to the Phantom, especially in his most famous pop-cultural incarnation in Andrew Lloyd Webber's blockbuster musical of 1986, where he remains nameless.

2. Frankenstein created the Phantom

These constantly developing parallel literary histories seem to inform the rewriting of the character of the Monster in *Penny Dreadful*. In the three seasons of the series, the Creature's plotline follows almost exactly the trials and tribulations faced by Erik in the century after the publication of Leroux's novel in its multiple adaptations and remakes (Hogle, 2002a; Picard, 2016). This adds another layer of complexity to the cultural history shared by the two characters. As Linda Hutcheon (2013) observes in the revised edition of her seminal *Theory of Adaptation*, playing with recognisable motives and tropes – especially pertaining to stories with an established fan following – often implies a degree of prior knowledge on the part of the audience who joins in the game of riddles and associations. Of course, for any adaptation to succeed, artistically and commercially, it is necessary to be attractive "for both knowing and unknowing audiences" (p. 121), but erudite and playful mash-ups usually rely on knowing audiences more than other types of adaptations. In the case of the Phantom this includes at least basic familiarity not only with Leroux's novel, but also with its later reworkings.

Even from his first appearance in the series (Season 1, Episode 2), the Monster – revealed to be the first, discarded original creation of the youthful Victor Frankenstein (Harry Treadaway) – displays the characteristics shared by Shelley's antihero and Leroux's Phantom: the long black hair, deathly white skin, thin black lips and the yellow eyes. Still, some of the secondary characteristics of the Phantom seem to be diffused also among different characters in the series – such as the (post-Lloyd-Webber) half-mask hiding the mauled face of the revenge-driven detective Warren Roper (Stephen Lord) or the fact that spoiled and megalomaniacal Dorian Gray (Reeve Carney) lists opera among his many artistic passions.

The Creature, despite being articulate, literate, and even quite talented, is rejected and feared both by his creator and the general populace, mostly on

account of his supposedly "abhorrent" looks. The right-hand half of his face is badly scarred following Frankenstein's experiments – recalling the half-deformed face of Lloyd Webber's (nameless) Phantom. Searching for acceptance, a purpose in life and personal identity – and after surviving an unprovoked attack in the street, recalling David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* (1980) – the Monster finds shelter in a rather low-brow theatre, where a friendly elderly actor takes him in, offers him a job of a stage technician, and calls him Caliban. He soon befriends a beautiful actress Maud Gunneson (Hannah Tointon), and attempts to woo her by reading poetry together (including – what else? – his favourite *Paradise Lost*). Tragically, Caliban mistakes Maud's compassion (he reminds her of her brother, disfigured in a factory accident) and small acts of kindness for romantic interest and barely resists attacking her in grief and anger when finally she rejects his advances.

The relocation of the place of action from an opera house, to a theatre – given a meaningful name of "Grand Guignol Britannia" – points not only to the original Grand-Guignol theatre, an important Parisian landmark of the *belle époque* macabre (Hand and Wilson 2002), but also to the transposition of Leroux's *Phantom* from the realm of high art to popular culture. Moreover, the whole subplot, including the Swedish-sounding name of the actress, bears direct resemblance to the central plot of *The Phantom of the Opera*, namely Erik's obsessive love for the young soprano Christine Daaé whom he teaches through the dressing-room mirror, promotes her career at the theatre, and finally kidnaps to his lair (Persephone-like) – only to be confronted by her handsome aristocratic suitor. In *Penny Dreadful*, the heartbreak pushes Caliban to demand of Victor Frankenstein the creation of an undead, resurrected mate especially for him – a task that Victor reluctantly undertakes, only to himself fall in love with the revived consumptive prostitute he names Lily (Billie Piper).

3. The Creature on Erik's narrative path

The second season has Caliban – who has now taken the name of John Clare, after another of his favourite poets – working at a waxworks museum, further conglomerating the narratives by Shelley and Leroux, or more specifically Leroux's inspirations and reworkings. Following the classic horror movies path, the inclusion of the wax museum as Gothic space recalls the 1933 *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (dir. Michael Curtiz) with its mutilated sculptor bent on revenge. As noticed by film critic Richard Koszarski (1979, p. 16): "the description of the monster's face recalls the make-up of Lon Chaney" in the 1925 *Phantom*, and "the unmasking scene in particular is direct plagiarism". Additionally, another recurring Phantom trope – filmic and literary – is present, that of a blind woman as the implicitly perfect partner for the disfigured protagonist. The classic example of such a heroine is Dea from Victor Hugo's *The Man Who Laughs* – an important

literary influence on Leroux's novel, also adapted later for the big screen in early Hollywood. Being blind, Dea cannot be repulsed by the ugliness of her lover, the circus freak Gwynplaine, but can fully appreciate his sensitivity and talent. A similar motif of a blind girl who can symbolically see beyond the repulsive face of the Phantom appeared relatively early on, in the series of Chinese film adaptations entitled *Song at Midnight* (1937, multiple later remakes). In Western culture, a character of a blind pianist, Miss Lowell, who comforts the heartbroken Erik was introduced by Sam Siciliano in his rendition of "Sherlock Holmes meets the Phantom" story, *The Angel of the Opera*, in 1994. *Penny Dreadful* uses this melodramatic motif very creatively and openly plays with the audience's expectations – as Lavinia (Tamsin Topolski), the blind daughter of the owners of the waxwork exhibition, proves deceitful and heartless despite the idealistic assumptions that her lack of eyesight could imply. She tries to ensnare Clare, so that her parents can imprison and exploit him for their profit. She is eventually spared when the monster takes his revenge, but it is because of his pity rather than her own merit.

The third and last season of *Penny Dreadful* offers yet another possible Phantom-related storyline for Frankenstein's Creature. In the series, Clare starts having flashbacks of his life before the unholy resurrection. Gradually he remembers having a wife and a small son, whom he decides to find and reunite with. His plan succeeds, and in a surprising turn of events, both Marjorie (Pandora Colin) and 10-year-old Jack (Casper Allpress) welcome their undead family member with open arms and tears of joy. They refuse to see anything monstrous in his creation and are happy to see him brought back to life. The family idyll is unfortunately short-lived, as Jack who suffers from terminal tuberculosis dies in his father's arms soon after his return. Despite Marjorie's pleas, Clare refuses to take his son's body to Victor Frankenstein so that he can be "cured" and resurrected the way he himself had been. Knowing that this would tear up his relationship with his wife, Clare buries Jack in the waves of the Thames and once again is left alone in the world.

The idea that the Phantom of the Opera might wish to have a wife and offspring is present already in Leroux's novel, when Erik declares to the kidnapped Christine (and earlier to his friend, the Persian) that he wants to "have a wife like everyone else," to take out for walks on Sundays and entertain (Leroux, 2004/1910, Chapter 23). A Sunday walk in Kensington Park is precisely what Clare promises to his ill son – a dream of happiness that is never meant to be. A sad observation that "a home, even wife and children were not out of the question" for Erik is made in Donald Barthelme's short story "The Phantom of the Opera's Friend" published already in 1970. The friend in the title might be the Persian from Leroux novel, or possibly anyone sympathetic towards Erik's plight, including many of the readers. In fact, a baby (usually male) fathered by the Phantom with Christine, or with

another partner deemed more appropriate, can be found not only in countless works of fan-fiction, but also in professionally published sequels and renovelisations of Leroux's story, such as Susan Kay's *Phantom* (1990) or Frederick Forsyth's *The Phantom of Manhattan* (1999). The latter novel provided the inspiration for a much-criticised sequel to Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical, entitled *Love Never Dies* (which premiered in 2010 in London). Here the child survives, but the Phantom's newly found family bliss is also tragically cut short.

The Creature of Doctor Frankenstein and the Phantom of the Opera have shared much of their characteristics from the onset, and the paths of mutual inspiration of the subsequent adaptations of both stories have been complex and winding, but never far apart. In a way, the Phantom is the Creature's "monstrous progeny," developing some aspects of his character and its cultural significance. But in the century that followed, the engendering went both ways – with Frankenstein's Monster acquiring some traits borrowed from the Opera Ghost and his quest for identity, recognition, and acceptance. The protagonist of *Penny Dreadful* may serve as proof that this "family connection" is beneficial for both sides.

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From a Gothic Text to a Neobaroque Cinema: Wojciech Jerzy Has's Adaptation of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

ABSTRACT
The article discusses the journey of the gothic novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) by James Hogg (1770-1835) from the repertoire of Scottish Romanticism to the neobaroque film adaptation *Osobisty pamiętnik grzesznika przez niego samego spisany* (1985) by the Polish filmmaker Wojciech Jerzy Has (1925-2000). The film demonstrates Has's anamorphic position and emphasizes the crucial role of the gothic text's neobaroque aesthetics in illuminating Polish cultural and political conflicts in 1986 when the film was released. Has rearticulates contradictions structuring the puritan-provincial mind depicted by Hogg and launches a critique of factional fanaticism.
Keywords: Wojciech Jerzy Has, James Hogg, provincial gothic, puritan-provincial mind, Neobaroque, anamorphic position

This article explores an intriguing journey of a Gothic text – James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (first published in 1824) – from the repertoire of Scottish Romanticism to the neobaroque oeuvre of the outstanding Polish filmmaker Wojciech Jerzy Has (1925-2000), who adapted Hogg's text to the screen in 1985 (released in 1986) as *Osobisty pamiętnik grzesznika przez niego samego spisany* (Memoirs of a Sinner).

Trained originally as a painter, Has made self-reflexive poetic films luxuriating in baroque visual overabundance from the late 1950s to the late 1980s. However, only recently the director's films have witnessed a surge of popularity, and at present are gaining wider acclaim at home and abroad.[1] Yet to the cinema cognoscenti all over the world Wojciech Jerzy Has has been familiar since the 1960s

[1] The three twenty-first-century monographs on Has and his cinema published in Poland and abroad testify to this surge of interest; see Grodź, 2008; Maron, 2010 and Insdorf, 2017.

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as the director of the esoteric black and white *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* (Saragossa Manuscript, 1964) and the melancholy color film *Sanatorium pod klepsydrą* (The Hour-Glass Sanatorium, 1973).

Less exalted by cinema lovers than *Saragossa Manuscript* or *The Hour-Glass Sanatorium*, the adaptation of Hogg's novel was a color movie and Has's last but one film. The film's release in 1986 coincided with Poland's descent into an ever deepening provinciality due to the ravages brought about by the utter legitimation crisis of the communist regime. Although as a filmmaker the director would shun a direct political engagement, his decision to release the film precisely at that moment may be interpreted as his oblique proposition that the adaptation can help illuminate Polish cultural and political conflicts. It can also be argued that like the rest of Has's oeuvre, the film *Memoirs of a Sinner* serves as a vehicle of the director's oblique response – conveyed by the neobaroque cinematic form and launched from a position later on discussed as anamorphic – to the expression given by the mainstream Polish cinema (whose most recognized representative was the director Andrzej Wajda) to the Romantic martyrological myth of Polish history (Toeplitz, 1964, p. 2).

This martyrological vision emerged in the wake of the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its disappearance from the map of Europe for 123 years, until 1918. The country's former territories were relegated to the status of peripheries of three empires: Russia, Austria and Prussia. After a brief period of independence from 1918 to 1939, the peripheral status of Poland as a Soviet satellite determined at Yalta Conference continued to 1989. A compelling affinity between the peripherality and relative provincialism of Poland in relationship to western Europe in 1986, and the provincialism of Romantic Scotland so ingeniously reflected in Hogg's gothic novel, as well as the writer's insight into the consequences of a factional conflict, make justifiable a conjecture that these circumstances might have prompted the director's choice of a text for adaptation.

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner by Hogg consists of three parts. The first and the last part are narrated by an unnamed Editor, who in the first part retells the events that led to the tragic demise of the main protagonist, the religious fanatic Robert Wringhim. The second part presents the story of his life and fall, told by Robert himself in his partially printed and partially handwritten confessions, while the third part, which describes the discovery of Robert's confessions in his grave, is again narrated by the Editor. Robert Wringhim's tale is a story of his gradual decline into madness and despair caused by his Calvinist fanaticism and a seeming friendship with one Gil-Martin, a shape-shifting demon who turns out to be the fanatic's double. At Gil-Martin's instigation, Robert, at this point an insane wretch, commits numerous vile crimes and eventually murders his own brother. Later he also kills his mother. Finally he hangs himself on a straw rope.

Unlike Hogg's novel, Has's film begins with the apocalyptic narrative frame of the Revelation where against the backdrop of the scene presenting the dead rising from their graves, a gang of grave robbers dig out a rotting corpse of Robert Wringhim, still clutching an unfinished manuscript of what later turns out to be his memoires. Awaken from the grave, the corpse tells the story of his life and death as a religious fanatic – a strict Calvinist – who, encouraged by Gil Martin, his evil double, seems to commit numerous foul crimes, including killings and rapes, the insidious stabbing of his own half-brother, and the murder of his mother. Initially a stranger encountered by Robert when the fanatic comes to believe that he belongs to the elect who deserve eternal salvation, Gil Martin, dominates Robert's life and persuades the religious wretch that murder can be a correct course of action undertaken to punish sinners – all those, according to Robert, who find pleasure and fulfilment in the profane material world. The evil acquaintance turns out to be capable of appearance metamorphoses and often assumes Robert's mien while committing the evil deeds which are therefore attributed to the fanatic. Driven by guilt, Robert eventually descends into madness and despair and, on returning to the ruin of the mill owned once by his stepfather, stabs Gil Martin to death. Yet, wanderers passing the ruined mill find Robert's corpse with a knife in his chest. Pursuing his evil dopplegänger, the devil, Robert has been on the search for himself.

By employing neobaroque aesthetic strategies in the film, Has rearticulates contradictions structuring this Scottish Gothic text, and cogently focuses on a representation of fierce factionalism which derives from what in the analysis of Hogg's novel Susan Manning (2009, p. 70) refers to as "the paradox of the puritan-provincial mind". Lawrence Buell (1987) also observes that the notion of provinciality is crucial for interpreting the novel, which he classifies as belonging to "provincial gothic." The term refers to "the use of gothic conventions to anatomize the pathology of regional culture" (p. 351). The genre originated among Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-Irish writers "whose sensitivity to provincial difference from English norms led them to invest the former with an atmosphere of romantic otherness and grotesquerie" (p. 351). Thus, the otherness of the local is both desired and pathologized. Buell considers provincial gothic at its most powerful when operating between the poles of romance and realism, and emphasizes the doppelgänger quality of its distorted world (p. 367). Indeed, Susan Manning demonstrates that in Hogg's novel both the Editor and Robert Wringhim are facets of the same puritan-provincial mind even as they represent diametrically opposed viewpoints. "Both search for unassailable truth beyond inscrutable appearances; both 'interpret' these appearances through a series of polarities, doublings and oppositions" (Manning, 2009, p. 70).

The puritan-provincial mind is predicated on contradictions. It desires the hidden truth of the center even as it knows it cannot have it, and yet it is compelled

to strive for knowledge. In the case of the puritan mind it is the certainty of one's election which is the knowledge accessible only to God, while the provincial mind desires the confidence of wielded political or cultural power. Consequently, desiring to possess knowledge without losing innocence, the puritan-provincial personality undergoes a split as a result of aggressive confrontational proclivity. Part of the self capitulates to the experience of the center "with its connotations of degeneracy and decadence" (Manning, 2009, p. 70), while the other half maintains its radical innocence. Division within the self is reflected in the external doubling: The "confrontation becomes self-confrontation, pursuit becomes soul-searching" (Manning, 2009, p.71).

It must be noted that the conflict between the center and peripheries, between the hegemonic power and the subalterns is also inherent in the structure of political aesthetics of the neobaroque paradigm. Rather than designating a return to the historical baroque, the paradigm, which embraces the concepts of the Neobaroque, New World Baroque, and New Baroque, is global and transhistorical. Yet, indeed, this paradigm comprises political sensibility, aesthetics, and artistic strategies, as well as practices first introduced by the historical baroque (Egginton, 2007, p. 108). [2] Discussing relationships between the terms Baroque, New World Baroque and Neobaroque, Monika Kaup and Lois Parkinson Zamora invoke the image of an irregular pearl whose Portuguese name, *barroco*, is considered one possible source of the designation of the historical period called baroque: "In fact, we might think of the Baroque, New World Baroque, and Neobaroque as a single, rather large, eccentric pearl with excrescences and involutions corresponding to their overlapping histories and forms in Europe and the Americas" (Parkinson Zamora & Kaup, 2010, p. 3).

In this article I employ the term neobaroque. It facilitates a discussion of the return of baroque aesthetics globally and transhistorically, in reference to the tensions between politically and culturally defined centers and peripheries. Both Hogg's novel and its adaptation by Has dramatize this tension as well as interrogating factional conflicts between moderate and extreme religious attitudes; truth and appearances; simplicity and hypocrisy; as well as autonomy and seduction. Uncertainty about what actually resides at the center is presented in the novel and in the film as the source of simultaneous attraction and abhorrence. This contradiction leads to the emergence of a series of doubles.

Yet, the doppelgänger quality of Hogg's novel is conveyed in Has's film by means of the strategy of distributing epistemological contradictions into different possible worlds. Whereas in Hogg's novel the tension between the center and peripheries that leads to the rise of the doubles plays out, as it were, internally, in

[2] For the genealogy of the neobaroque paradigm see Egginton, 2007, p. 108 and Kaup, 2005, p. 107).

the mind of the protagonist, in Has's film this tension is dramatized, so to speak, externally, in the form of multiple worlds. In this way Has offers what Monika Kaup (2005, p. 105) refers to elegantly as "an ontological solution to an epistemological impasse". The director's strategic formal choice places his film precisely in the very heart of the neobaroque paradigm. By representing conflicting standpoints as belonging to different possible worlds Has offers a solution to factional struggles. He shows a multiverse in which conflicting worldviews can appear side by side, while the costs of internecine struggles are viewed from a global, apocalyptic perspective.

The hybrydity of neobaroque forms and a tension between politically invested neobaroque artistic strategies arise from the multiple complex social, ethnic, cross-cultural, and religious confrontations as well as from colonial resentments arising at the peripheries of empires; in other words, circumstances constitutive of modernity. Consequently, the neobaroque strategy for facing the multiplicity of perspectives and impossibility to adhere to one single and universal truth is to sort out inconsistencies into parallel universes (Kaup, 2005, p. 135). The epistemological question turns into an ontological quandary. The creation of new worlds to manage epistemological crises is also a way to respond to the tension between the neobaroque major and minor strategies.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's discussions of minor literature in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986), Egginton and Kaup identify two strategies operating in the neobaroque aesthetics: major and minor[3]. The neobaroque minor strategy takes "the major strategy at face value," pushing the material medium of its figurative assumptions" to their "absurd extremes" (Egginton, 2007, p. 115). Egginton (2007) emphasizes the political potential of the minor strategy by pointing out that "the minor strategy is a way of residing in the major strategy without accepting its fundamental assumptions" (p. 113). While the major strategy considers the coherence of representation to be vouchsafed by its relationship to an unknown thing, an absolute, present at the center, beyond the veil of an arbitrary system of signs, the minor strategy links the image's function to the dissolution of these binds – whether this dissolution is due to the absence of an absolute or to an uncertainty whether there is any absolute at all beyond the veil. Inasmuch as the search for the limits of representation is treated as an end in itself, the relation constitutive of representation is cut off thus liberating a copy from the original (p. 113). Means of representation become an end in itself (p. 117).

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the concept of theatricality underlies the neobaroque experience, where the subject is analogous to a spectator in a theatre who synthesizes "raw data" and organizes available knowledge through

[3] Egginton (2007, p. 113) prefers the expression "minor strategy", while Kaup (2005, p. 112) employs the term "the strategy of becoming-minor".

the medium of the stage and its characters (Egginton, 2007, p. 110). Buci-Gluksmann connects the theatricality inherent in the neobaroque experience with its fundamental exaltation of otherness: "baroque reason, with its theatricization of existence and its logic of ambivalence, is not merely another reason within modernity. Above all it is the *Reason of the Other*, of its overbrimming excess" (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 39) – the excess of the feminine (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, pp. 125-173). This reveals the neobaroque's conciliatory capacity by bringing out the flow of cultural influences from the marginalized Other and their assimilation by the discourse of the center (Salgado, 1999, p. 323, 325).

Has was never interested in providing immediate, direct or realistic response to contemporary social and political issues, nor did he feel compelled to give in to reigning artistic fashions, styles, or passing fads. Rather, he would choose "the anamorphic position" (Sarduy, 1975, p. 50), a concept introduced by Severo Sarduy when discussing baroque gaze. Anamorphosis, the term invented by Gaspar Schott in 1657, refers to the projection of a monstrously distorted and deformed image onto a surface that renders a picture which only from a certain point of view appears to have proportions consistent with regularly constructed perspective (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 101). As a geometrically based rhetorical figure that plays with concealment and reveals dark sides of representation, anamorphosis proves an excellent strategy for capturing otherness (Castillo, 2001, pp. 2-4). Indeed, "[a]namorphic images teach us that it is possible to look at the margins of our own visual field, insofar as we are willing to marginalize our point of view" (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 100). Appositely, by assuming the anamorphic perspective, Has employs a neobaroque minor strategy in his cinema of folding and unfolding labyrinth-junkyard.

Some disgruntled viewers have complained on internet fora that Has's films actually constitute one and the same movie. Indeed, this negative and shallow remark paradoxically captures the neobaroque morphogenesis of Has's cinema. Not unlike "Baroque temporality [that] overarches discontinuities, and Baroque space [that] is labyrinthine, an ambit in which forking paths diverge, cross and conjoin" (Parkinson Zamora & Kaup, 2010, p. 10), Has's films form a continuum of a folding and unfolding neobaroque labyrinthine junkyard of looping paths, an arch-fold which runs from linguistic expression through visual complexity of the cinematic montage to the rich materiality of reality. This arch-fold begins with the title of Has's first feature film: *Pętla* (Loop & Noose,1957), runs through a mural presenting a woman that haunts *Pętla*'s protagonist to reach another figuration of the feminine – the images of gigantic sea-shells at the end of *Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera* (The Tribulations of Balthasar Kober, 1988), the director's last film.[4]

[4] Reality is represented in Has's films as either consisting of multiple parallelWorlds introduced often as dreams or visions or as a spatio-temporal continuity folding in on itself. The

The will to persist on the border of the unknown, and a desire for the explorartion of a terra incognita is a central theme in neobaroque thought (Egginton, 2007, pp. 111-112), a thought that is realized aesthetically in such primary images as: "the ruin, the labyrinth, and the library," phenomena that "are based on deception, complexity, and artificiality" (Turner, 1994, p. 23), while sensuality, a taste for folds, and skulls evinced by neobaroque aesthetics clearly valorize feeling (Egginton, 2007, p. 113). It thus comes as no surprise that Has's characters set out on looping external journeys which mirror their internal quests. The image of ruin is realized in Has's films as junkyards as well as buildings and apartments in the state of decay. Indeed, in Polish film criticism the filmmaker's oeuvre is referred to as "rupieciarnia" (junkyard) (Eberhardt, 1967, p. 5) or "rupieciarnia marzeń" (the junkyard of dreams) (Słodowski & Wijata, 1994). Mismatched objects in a junkyard, often in disrepair, testify to a decline or violent demise of a homogenous cultural formation. They have been divested of their symbolic meaning and acquire the status of signs whose interpretation facilitates a new, transformative – and as yet uncertain – reading of reality (Salgado, 1999, p.317).

In adapting Hogg's novel Has divests the Gothic text from the features pointing to its Scottishness and retains only very general characteristics of loosely treated Puritan/Protestant mundane life—diction, reading of the Scripture at home, costumes (especially in the case of the minister, Robert Wringhim's father), and provides a new narrative frame—that of the Book of Revelation. Moreover, along with providing an apocalyptic frame Has does away with the typical gothic fragmentation of Hogg's text. The director not only removes the process of editing a book about the sinner's life from the hands of a local, provincial editor, but places the judgment in the hands of the author of the "Book of Life" (Revelation 20: 14). Thus, instead of telling the life of Wringhim as a text poised between subjective introspection (because the confessions are in part still in handwriting) and the public judgment (because the book is in part already printed), Has provides an apocalyptic frame that establishes the center of meaning and the source of knowledge of good and evil.

In this way, Has erases the provincial doubt or hesitation by substituting a centrifugal rebellion against the Father with a theatrical enactment of the centripetal convergence of all meaning and knowledge. Of course, performing central knowledge is not necessarily different from the knowledge that is located at the center – although neither the puritan-provincial mind nor the neobaroque

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dispersal of reality into parallel worlds among which contradictory characteristics of identity are distributed is exquisitely demonstrated by the formal solutions employed by Has in *Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera*. The spatio-temporal continuum can appear in the form of a single Möbius strip, as in *Pętla*, or multiplied into numerous loops which constitute baroque pleats and folds. The most memorable examples of looping spatio-temporal continuum come from *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* and *Sanatorium pod klepsydrą.*

sensibility can ascertain this – but such staging can certainly be considered a neobaroque minor strategy, which is focused solely on the folly of representation. The apocalyptic frame with its play of light, darkness, chiaroscuro and flames invokes spectacles of baroque fireworks, or opera performances. Interestingly, images of fire as emblematic of the infinite are those on which both Puritan theological imagination and baroque sensibility converge: "the flame, this black and glowing red flame, would be the continual metaphor of boundless baroque forms, infinitely multiplying forms, deformed and anamorphic as if consumed by the infinite" (Buci-Glucksmann, 2013, p. 121). The apocalyptic scene is therefore simultaneously an operatic stage where the complaint of the wretched is enacted. Here the violence generated by jealousy, cruelty, separation, abandonment, loss and death is transformed into a "sweet supplication Monteverdi and other composers deem the essence of opera: *le lamento*" (Buci-Glucksmann, 2013, p. 20). However, the lamentation song is rendered in Has's film as confessions made in a grating, raspy voice complaining not of the torment caused by the loss of a lover, but by the despair of the sinner on account of potential damnation.

The internal reality of a distraught mind degenerating into madness, and producing doubles, is represented in the film by means of a vortex of metamorphosing images, where nature and artifice are shown as theatrically mirroring each other. The interior of Wringhim's house emulates the landscape outside, yet, simultaneously being a projection of the protagonist's state of mind, distorts the view. The transformed image of the exterior depicted inside the house is an artifice presenting a melancholy late autumn landscape of dead nature, which functions as a backdrop for demented frolics and dances of guests invited by Wringhim – or, perhaps, by his double. Among the guests are decaying corpses and half-rotten mummies which seem to metaleptically cross over from the apocalyptic frame, where the rising of the dead from their graves at the end of the world is staged in an excessive, theatrical way. These interior scenes seem to have an affinity with horror fantasies of the late seventeenth-century painter Salvator Rosa (Davenport-Hines, 1998, pp. 17-23). Conversely, nearly pastoral quality of the landscape outside the house is presented as a pastiche in the manner of the seventeenth-century Dutch masters.

The image of a windmill, an important element of the external landscape mirrored in the paintings decorating the interior of the house, plays a crucial symbolic role within the narrative of Wringhim's life in the film. The windmill may figure a heavenly millstone. The metaphor can be traced to the ancient Roman belief that: "The heavens turn endlessly like a mill wheel, and the result is always some misfortune" (Satyricon, quoted in Gibson & Majewski, 2010, p. 34). Christianity changed the narrative of inexorable dependence on the fate by proclaiming that Christ's death put an end to the effects of the original sin and thus moved emphasis from "the inflexible laws of cause" to "suffering and death" (Gibson & Majewski, 2010, p. 37), in this way announcing "the definitive decline of the mindless power

embodied in the mill" (Gibson & Majewski, 2010, p. 37). Calvin qualified this independence from natural causality by introducing the division between the elect and the reprobate. The arbitrariness of the God's decree as to who is elected abrogated man's right to know the causes, to provide "reasons" or explanations for what can never be understood (Manning, 2009, p. 2).

The image of the mill in Has's film is thus emblematic of God's judgment's inexorability and the inscrutability of the knowing center. The mill constitutes a counterpart to the Book of Life that plays the role of the center of knowledge in the apocalyptic narrative frame. Yet, as a shattered, split image multiplied in proliferating representations because it appears both inside and outside the house, the picture of the mill cannot provide genuine access to the center of truth and the source of knowledge.

The neobaroque proliferation of images, evinced in the film by repetition with difference of crucial motifs and scenes, reflects uncertainty and confusion on the part of the protagonist when facing a doctrine which amounts to an arbitrary system with no clear referent. Indeed, the multiplication of depictions of the symbol of confusion and anxiety (the mill) drives the confusion and anxiety to their extremes. However, this confusing multiplicity of images also signals that the division of a community into those worthy and those unworthy of salvation is a function of cultural representation, rather than the absolute truth proclaimed by the inscrutable center, because "the ostensibly unrepresented is revealed as still being a function of representation" (Egginton, 2007, p. 122).

The baroque motif of the library is in turn realized by invoking poems and The Book of Revelation in the narrative frame of the film. The characters recite passages from such poetical works as: *The Book of Thel* and "Mad Song" by William Blake, "Why So Pale And Wan, Fond Lover?" by John Suckling, and "To Anthea, Who May Command Him Anything" by Robert Herrick. From the point of view of peripheral Scotland these poets belong to the culture of the center—England. By supplementing Hogg's Gothic text with these poems Has restores balance to the puritan-provincial mind's swings of confidence and alleviates its anxiety. Appositely, the poems themselves bespeak moderation in life and encourage interaction with the world. Herrick and Suckling were associated with the royal court and their religious and political views were remote from puritan radicalism; in the poems recited in the film they extoll joys of life. William Blake's poems chosen by Has express the potential of growth and becoming inherent in an encounter between the world and the self, and imply the necessity of immersing in experience as well as accepting the loss of innocence.

In adapting James Hogg's Gothic text, which he strips of its Scottish characteristics and of a Calvinist, puritan inflection, Has assumes a position which can be construed as anamorphic towards the puritan-provincial perspective. He employs this position in order to play with the terms of the puritan-provincial

mind and to decline to endorse its ideological stance, thus proposing his own aesthetics of neobaroque minor strategy. The director has made an aesthetical choice that is obliquely political in order to carry out a critique of the provincial anxiety caused by: simultaneous desire and contempt for the center; emulation of its ways and struggle for independence from its influence. The film is also a critique of factional fanaticism and a praise of a middle way. Has demonstrates how the uncertainty, confusion, jealousy, cruelty, separation, abandonment and loss resulting from the oscillations of provincial and factional desires lead to violence and death.

As has already been noted, the characteristics of the puritan-provincial mind can be generalized so that we can talk about factional-provincial mind. The aesthetics of the neobaroque minor strategy employed by Has restores balance between the extremes that determine oscillations of the factional-provincial mind by establishing a moderate perspective. Focusing on the transformations, growth, disruptions, decay and rebirth of the material reality as the sensible vehicle of representation, the minor strategy neither desires ultimate knowledge and certainty about whether or not there is an absolute beyond appearances, which the sectarian and provincial minds so obsess about, nor fears the lack, vacuum, nothingness beneath representation. Therefore, the neobaroque aesthetics assumes the role of the ethical and puts an end to the relentless pursuit of the Other which turns into a frantic pursuit of oneself. In its ethical function the neobaroque aesthetics encourages acceptance of one's experience as a fall from radical innocence, which may lead to compassion rather than internecine struggle between those proclaiming themselves pure and justified and those labeled corrupt and reprobate.

Consequently, it can be observed that Has's film is as much a non-factional treatment of factionalism as a non-provincial treatment of provinciality. The director made the film in 1986 when the uniting fervor of the Solidarity movement had abated and Poland was facing a potentially destructive conflict – which, after all, it then wisely avoided – of radically polarized political factions. Yet, the director was never an overtly politically engaged artist. His obliquely manifested stance was always a function of his aesthetic choices. Has's neobaroque minor strategy in *Memoirs of a Sinner* both critiques and evokes Hogg's gothic interrogation of binary patterns of oppression and rebellion, dominance and submission in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. After all, as Monika Kaup (2012) emphasizes, "the [neo-]baroque refuses to regard culture as a fixed, 'self-contained system,' the property of discrete, segregated social groups. Rather, the [neo-]baroque is 'anti-proprietary' expression'"(p. 3). Therefore, it may be concluded that a twentieth-century neobaroque director from one peripheral culture adapts a nineteenth-century gothic novel written by a writer from another peripheral region in order to make, in a "doubly localized" manner, an "anti-proprietary" aesthetical comment on the global dangers of provincial factionalism.

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Darwin's Monsters: Evolution, Science, and the Gothic in Christian Alvart's *Pandorum*

ABSTRACT
This article analyses Gothic tropes in the science fiction film *Pandorum* (2009, dir. Christian Alvart), through the lens of such concepts as evolution and science, which are presented in the film as inherently monstrous. Key to the analysis is the notion of the return of the repressed (or abjected) past which invades the future, disrupting biological, social, and moral borders of the human. This Gothic return, facilitated by advanced science and technology, turns the future into a site of humanity's confrontation with their animal instincts, highlighting the fragility of our civilisation and proving our subjection to evolutionary processes.
Keywords: Gothic, Darwinism, evolution, science, monstrosity

In his essay for *A Companion to Science Fiction* (2005), Fred Botting comments on the frequent interplay of the Gothic and science fiction in the following way:

> The conjunction of two hybrid genres composed from diverse literary and mythical precursors breeds monstrosities: strange beings and disturbing other – and underworlds lurk at the limits of modern knowledge. Despite so many Gothic science fiction mutations, it is strange the genres should cross at all. Gothic writing conventionally deals in supernatural occurrences and figures, looking back, in its architectural and cultural settings, to superstitious and barbaric "dark" ages without the enlightened reason and empirical technique so important in science fiction's imaginings of human progress. Gothic fiction, for all its wanderings in desolate landscapes and invocations of diabolical forces, never strays far from home, playing upon the anxieties of its uncertain present. In looking forward to change, science fiction also projects figures of fear. In the crossings of two generic monsters, monstrosity returns from the past and arrives from the future. As long as it is not "predictable," "calculable," or "programmable," "the future is necessarily monstrous" (Botting, 2005, p. 111).

The above passage well communicates the preoccupations of this article, which analyses Christian Alvart's science fiction horror film *Pandorum* (2009) as

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a Gothic text in which the concepts of evolution and science are informed with the idea of monstrosity. First, the article puts the monstrous in the context of the Gothic's relationship with the past, which revisits the present like a ghost haunting our sense of civilised humanity and modern rationality. Second, it examines the manner in which the film locates the monstrous in the future, when technological progress and science unexpectedly breed horrors of the social and biological kind.

In *Pandorum* the past and future monstrosities are brought together in a Darwinian twist. In the year 2174, the spaceship *Elysium*, carrying 60,000 colonists from the overpopulated Earth, is sent to the newly discovered planet Tanis. We witness the awakening of Corporal Bower and Lieutenant Payton from hyper-sleep to take over their watch. The *Elysium*, however, is dark and silent, its systems unstable and malfunctioning due to the discharge of the main reactor. As Bower sets out on a reconnaissance, he learns that the ship is inhabited by an unknown form of life – predatory humanoids who prey on human flesh. Bower and his two allies, the geneticist Nadia and the hunter Manh, struggle through the bowels of the ship raided by the savage gangs, in the attempt to reach and restart the reactor. As the film progresses, the three characters discover that the beasts have evolved from the passengers who were woken up too early from hyper-sleep. As the molecular structure of the colonists had been enhanced with an enzyme fostering adaptation to new conditions on Tanis, those woken up before their time have instead adapted to the environment of the ship, turning into monsters devouring its human cargo.

In her book *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, materialism, and degeneration at the* fin de siècle (2004), Kelly Hurley writes that the Gothic "has been theorized as an instrumental genre, reemerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises" (Hurley, 2004, p. 5). Similarly, Fred Botting notes:

> Gothic representations are a product of cultural anxieties about the nature of human identity, the stability of cultural formations, and processes of change. As a result the representations are influenced by the cultures that produce them: evil is located in the past or the future, whether it be aristocratic excess for an eighteenth-century bourgeoisie *or* genetic experimentation for a late twentieth-century consumer culture. (Botting, 2002, p. 280)

In the same manner, the Gothic in *Pandorum* is employed to interrogate several pressing issues of our age – overpopulation, the draining of the planet's natural resources, and the pollution and destruction of the natural environment. It also reflects current social anxieties concerning medical experiments aimed at enhancing human beings, which have been frequently voiced by "dystopic" posthumanists (see Sharon, 2014, pp. 21-24). However, while capitalising on contemporary cultural fears, *Pandorum* in many ways looks back to the nineteenth century and its philosophical, scientific, and literary legacy. The film toys with the ideas of

Thomas Malthus, Charles Darwin, and Friedrich Nietzsche, presenting the notion of the posthuman as being invariably suffused with old nineteenth-century fears of devolution and the moral decline of man. It also echoes the Gothic themes of monstrous transformation, barbarism, and retrogression, inspired by the social and biological sciences of the age, which were explored in R. L. Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), or H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). In this way, *Pandorum* shows both the present and the future of humanity as haunted by old Darwinian demons – "the bestial within the human," which is the source of "primal patterns of instinct and motivation threaten[ing] the humanity of the human species" (Botting, 1995, p. 8).

Commenting on the *fin-de-siècle* anxieties connected with the rise of Darwinian sciences, Hurley writes:

> The Gothic also mapped out alternate trajectories of evolution than the one set forth by Darwin, imagining monstrous modifications of known species, or the emergence of horrific new ones, in accordance with the logics of specific ecosystems.
> Whereas the Darwinian narrative was a non-telic one, governed by natural processes that worked in no particular direction and towards no particular end, the nineteenth-century imagination was preoccupied with the prospect of the reversal of evolution, insofar as this was understood as a synonym for "progress". (Hurley, 2004, p. 10)

Accordingly, within the realm of the filmic imagination, the beastly hominids of *Pandorum*, who supplant humans at the top of the food chain, are both our heirs in the evolutionary scheme and our returned ancestors from time out of mind. Shown as people's successor in the future, the new man has slipped back to the prehistoric savagery of his own species: tribal organisation, cannibalism, lack of verbal communication, which are complemented with predator's skills and lack of morality. As the barbarous past materialises on *Elysium*, the spaceship becomes a Gothic space where humankind lapses into monstrosity, bringing to the fore the perennial questions about the nature of humanity and activating our latent post-Darwinian fears of returning to a state of inhumanity.

In its detectable references to the theory of evolution, *Pandorum* extrapolates into science fiction setting the concerns about overpopulation and food shortage which date back to Thomas Robert Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), a work which avowedly had a tremendous influence on Darwin's ideas expounded later in *The Origin of Species* (Barlow, 1958, p. 120; Browne, 2006, pp. 43-44). In his essay, Malthus famously states that population, when not limited by such checks as "moral restraint, vice, and misery" (Malthus, 1958, p. 14), grows "in a geometrical ratio" (p. 8), whereas the means of subsistence only "in an arithmetical ratio" (p. 10). While bringing intense suffering to humankind, the constant imbalance of population and subsistence also works as a stimulus for human activity and competition to ensure the means of survival. When translated

into Darwinian terms, the shortage of food results in "a war in nature, a struggle for existence," as a result of which the weakest forms perish, while the strongest, healthiest, and best adapted remain alive and reproduce (Browne, 2006, p. 44).

In Alvart's film, the Malthusian checks on population are shown as inoperative. The beginning sequences alternate the information about the achievements of humanity in the field of space exploration (landing on the Moon, the launch of the Kepler Telescope, the discovery of the Earth-like planet Tanis) with the reports of the dramatic overcrowding of Earth and the destruction of man's habitat. In 2153 the world population is 24.34 billion, suffering from "food and water shortages." Twenty years later, as we learn from the last title card, the year in which *Elysium* is launched, "the battle for Earth's limited resources reaches its boiling point," which implies ferocious struggle for survival and presages the planet's apocalypse.

According to MacArthur, "the need to procreate and maintain the ancestral lineage of a patriarchal society," which remains a major theme in early Gothic fiction, has assumed an apocalyptic dimension in Gothic science fiction, translating into the need to ensure the continuity of the human species which is faced with its own inability to reproduce (MacArthur, 2015, p. 61).[1] The 60,000 people heading for Tanis are humanity's only hope of survival. We learn that they underwent obligatory fertility tests to guarantee that the new colony would grow. "We were meant to go on," Nadia comforts Bower, "and we were meant to survive." At the same time, the ship is a repository of earthly life in more than a merely anthropological sense. It contains a modern version of Noah's Ark – a laboratory filled with embryos of terrestrial fauna and flora.[2] This tabernacle of the terrestrial biosphere, however, whose samples were collected for five years by Nadia's team, relies on advanced technology and the energy provided by the now discharged ship's reactor.

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[1] According to Botting, Gothic narratives teem with "parentless children […], roaming wild and gloomy landscapes without protection or property, often without a secure sense of themselves that comes with a proper name and position" (2002, p. 284). In *Pandorum*, the disinheritance of the characters takes place on a larger, cosmic and evolutionary, scale. The travelling humanity is separated from their planet and culture in double respect – the Earth, from which they departed years ago, has perished in a cosmic cataclysm, which underscores the detachment of the surviving humans from their anthropological, planetary, cultural, and moral points of reference. Their ties with the parent world are severed, they are the progeny of an extinct species, themselves on the verge of extinction under the attack of the newly evolved creatures.

[2] The meaning of the biblical metaphor of Noah's Ark used by Nadia is not lost on the audience. The plant and animal species preserved in the laboratory (not live pairs, as in the Book of Genesis, but more technologically viable embryos) together with "a handful" of the chosen people on board are saved from the violence and corruption (also in an environmental sense) which finally consume the earth and its inhabitants. However, when humankind on the *Elysium* degenerates into monsters, the evil is wiped clean by the sea of Tanis, which breaks into the sunken ship in the approximation of the biblical Flood.

Pointing out the dubious role of science in the Gothic since the nineteenth century, Botting notes:

> From *Frankenstein* onwards scientific discovery is as much a threat as it is a promise. In H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) the biologist's attempt to accelerate evolution according to Darwinian principles only causes rapid regression to bestial states and unleashes a reversion to savagery and a host of horrible hybrid creatures. The hi-tech worlds of computer games – linking instinctual energies and powerful machines (rather than natural or supernatural forces) – participate in this narrative of ruin. The future is anxiously perceived as another place of destruction and decay, as ruined as the Gothic past. Social and corporeal disintegration awaits in postindustrial devastation, in genetic experimentation, in alien and mutant forms of life and death (Botting, 2002, p. 279).

In *Pandorum*, similarly, science, in its two facets as astronautics and biochemistry, is shown as a source of Gothic horrors which, against the intentions of the creators, may precipitate the death of humanity instead of ensuring its rebirth. Owing to astronautics, humans are sent through deep space, which causes them to develop pandorum (an orbital dysfunctional syndrome [ODS]), and leads to cosmic catastrophes, like that of the *Eden*, whose five thousand sleeping passengers were launched into space by one insane officer. Owing to biochemistry, part of the crew undergoes mutation into man-devouring monsters as a result of a synthetic enzyme called accelerator, supplied through the feeding tubes of the hyper-bunks in order to speed up the passengers' adaptation to Tanis and thus aid their evolution.

Acknowledging the monstrous potential implicit in science, Bower suggests at one point that the hunters may have originated in Nadia's laboratory, created by scientists. It turns out, however, that they were created by Corporal Gallo, who throughout the film impersonates Lieutenant Payton on Bower's watch. Gallo – a perfect example of the perennial Gothic themes of doubleness, insanity, and split personality – corroborates MacArthur's observation that Gothic science fiction "has its roots buried firmly within the concept of man as ultimate monster" (MacArthur, 2015, p. 79). Gallo appears to be a reversed incarnation of Dr Moreau, fashioning men into beasts, and sciences of our age like biochemistry and genetics facilitate his goal, just as vivisection serves Moreau's perverse plans. Instead of inflicting physical pain, Gallo, who subscribes to the idea of evolution as natural selection and the survival of the fittest, inflicts Malthusian suffering on his victims – lack of food, in combination with pandorum, works as a stimulus to a new alimentary practice, cannibalism, devoid of fear or remorse. He tells Bower:

> [I]magine yourself without the chains of morality. […] It's ultimate freedom. […] Let go and on the other side of it is divine clarity. Purity. Enlightenment. […] You have to let go of your petty concept of reality. That's just baggage from the old world. And we both know that didn't work out very well now, did it? They fucked up our planet. Life eats life. […] This ship is a seed from which we can create a new world. A new world. A natural

> state. Raw, beautiful, perfect. I am offering you the kingdom. And all that is holding you back is your own fear. (*Pandorum*)

According to Russell West, beside incest, cannibalism is a central taboo in European culture. It is "an alimentary taboo" as understood by Lévi-Strauss, "figur[ing] as a trigger of disgust," and thus it can be considered a central site of abjection in Kristeva's understanding (West, 2007, p. 235). As "a revolting practice," notes further West (2017), "cannibalism is contiguous with several of the principle domains of abjection-disgust, namely, food, waste products, and above all, the human corpse as 'abject' par excellence" (pp. 236-237). The horror connected with the displacement of man and the disruption of evolutionary hierarchies is duly evoked in *Pandorum* through the film's preoccupation with food and feeding habits, with the *homo sapiens* changing their position from the consumer to the consumed, and becoming a corpse – "the most sickening of wastes", "the utmost of abjection," marked by the complete dissolution of the self (Kristeva, 1982, pp. 3-4). In *Pandorum* beasts eat humans (mutants feeding on the crew just as Wells's subterranean troglofaunal Morlocks feed on the Eloi), beasts eat beasts (mutants eating their own kind), and humans eat other humans (Leland, a cook, eating other passengers).

As Botting notes, "Gothic and science fiction share a fascination with the ruination of the species and the monstrous dissolution of the imaginary integrity of the human body" (Botting, 2005, p. 119). Furthermore,

> [h]orror and science precipitate the extremes of life beyond the securities of modern knowledge and culture. Bodies are repeatedly invaded, penetrated, dissected, slashed, possessed, snatched, manipulated, and controlled in the horrors that link Gothic and science fictions (Botting, 2005, p. 120).

By the same token, in *Pandorum*, in the new evolutionary order, the human body can be eaten, chewed into, slashed, torn, and, as inedible remains, discarded into a skeleton dump. Just as animals on Earth, the humans on Elysium are at the mercy of their habitat; they need to run for their lives, take cover, or conceal their human scent so as not to be devoured.

The above observations evoke the concept of the border which, as Barbara Creed claims while elaborating on Kristeva's theory of abjection, is fundamental to the development of the monstrous in horror films:

> [T]hat which crosses or threatens to cross the 'border' is abject. Although the specific nature of the border changes from film to film, the function of the monstrous remains the same – to bring about an encounter between the symbolic order and that which threatens its stability (Creed, 1993, pp 10-11)[3].

[3] Creed (1993, pp. 12-13) argues that in horror films the semiotic (which Kristeva links with the pre-verbal phase of toilet training and "a primal mapping of the body" effected under "maternal

Therefore the monstrous in the horror movie arises from the confrontation between human and inhuman, man and beast, the normal and the supernatural, good and evil, etc. (p. 11). "Most horror films," continues Creed,

> also construct a border between what Kristeva refers to as 'the clean and proper body' and the abject body, or the body which has lost its form and integrity. The fully symbolic body must bear no indication of its debt to nature (p. 11)

Following this reasoning, the hunters in their *abhuman*[4] shape represent an abject body. Though originating in the human, they epitomise that which has been jettisoned by human society over centuries of biological and linguistic development and acculturation. Interestingly, they are initially treated as aliens, not us. When Payton asks Bower over the radio about "these other guys," Bower answers trembling with fear: "Guys? Those weren't 'guys,' they were hunting. […] They didn't seem human," thus denying the creature he has just seen any affinity with his own kind. Hunched on all fours, sniffing for prey, pale, with black mouth and a plume of bone-like blades around his neck, the savage may at first seem a completely different form of life. However, over the course of the film, we become increasingly aware of the disturbing similarity between the remnants of the crew and those who feast on their flesh. The new man inspires our horror because he bears so much resemblance to us – his anthropomorphic shape has not yet disappeared, his piercing eyes and grimace-twisted lips are uncannily similar to our own. So much so that Bower's companion Manh refrains from killing a savage child. His misguided scruples cost the hunter his life: the deceptively human creature turns out to be a ruthless predator like the rest of his kind, and slashes Manh's throat the moment he lowers his guard.[5]

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authority") finds its expression in the revolting images of bodily waste – blood, vomit, excrement, etc. The semiotic in horror films is typically connected with the monstrous feminine. Thus it endangers the wholeness and purity of the subject constituted in relation to the symbolic ("the law of the father"), which represents the acquisition of language and social norms, and represses the authority of the maternal figure (pp. 13-14).

[4] The term *abhuman*, invented by William Hope Hodgson, refers to "the horrifying, liminal, disintegrating or metamorphosing body which expresses *fin-de-siècle* anxieties over evolution and degeneration" (Wasson & Alder, 2011, p. 13). See also Hurley (2004, pp. 3-4).

[5] In *Pandorum* the horrors of the abject are also forwarded by the images connected with birth and foetal life, paying (un)intended homage to Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1978) and its sequels. Apart from the theme of confrontation between the human crew of a spaceship and the biologically superior predatory species, *Pandorum* seems to imitate *Alien* in its aesthetics, which is reminiscent of the biomechanical designs of H. R. Giger in the *Alien* films. As in *Alien*, the visualisation of the ship in *Pandorum* suggests its connection with the figure of the parthenogenetic archaic mother, who is "sole origin of all life" (Creed, 1994, p. 18). The cryopods in both films make birth possible without the agency of the opposite sex, offering "a primal fantasy in which the human subject is born fully developed," and the ship, appearing in the capacity of the mother, is "sole parent and sole

The amoral mutants are a product of a world in which, as Gallo says, God is dead and with him all laws and conventional morality. The line rings with Nietzsche's nihilistic philosophy, which was a product of the last decades of the nineteenth century, when it became increasingly obvious that the social Darwinist concept of the survival of the fittest governed contemporary social and international politics (Wilson, 1999, p. 282). In the twentieth century, a combination of eugenic theories (which arose from Darwinism) and the Nietzschean concepts of the superman and the morality of masters and slaves, grafted on the doctrine of national socialism, led to the savagery of World War II, evoked in *Pandorum* through sparse but meaningful glimpses. When Bower watches an advertisement of the trip to Tanis on a large outdoor screen on Earth, we can see the Brandenburg Gate rising behind him against the cityscape. Moreover, the passengers of *Elysium* have tattoos on their forearms denoting their function on the ship as well as their future function on Tanis (e.g. officers, engineers, farmers), which brings uncomfortable associations with the Nazi concentration camps, and underscores not only the crew's hierarchies but also their impending victimisation (needless to mention the accelerator enzyme given experimentally to the passengers, which leads to the emergence of the *Übermenschen*). The past is therefore a site and reminder of monstrosity in man – monstrous ideologies invented by monstrous leaders playing gods and dicing with human lives, just as Gallo ruthlessly toys with the lives of the awakened passengers.

In conclusion, in *Pandorum* our (pre)historic past returns to haunt us in the era of space travel, showing that even technological future is not free from the

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life-support" (p. 18). However, in *Pandorum*, as opposed to *Alien*, this technological birth is far from clean and painless (cf. Creed, 1994, p. 18). Each hibernated member of the crew on the *Elysium* is fixed to the back wall of the pod like a foetus connected to the placenta in the uterus and fed externally by a system of tubes. Waking up from hyper-sleep is a terrifying experience, brutal and dramatic like birth itself: the sleepers, covered with sticky mucous substance, cry while leaving the pods as if they were newborns delivered by the ship, without memory and self-awareness. Also, the ventilation tunnels through which Bower crawls out of the bridge at the beginning of the film are tight and full of cables which resemble ducts and muscles of some gigantic creature, and the corporal's progress through their moving mass is like being squeezed down the uterine channel. This image of the ship as a living being is again reminiscent of the *Alien* cycle, in which the organic substance produced by the aliens and covering the corridors of ships and stations gives the impression of life and often *comes* to life with the crawling predators (cf. Creed, 1994, p. 18). The imagery of the dark and cavernous *Elysium*, which houses man-eating monsters, is connected with fluids evoking the "abject" secretions of the female body: dripping water, fog, moisture, and green sticky mould on the walls close to the reactor compartment, which has become the ship's monstrous womb. The hominids crowd around the nuclear core, multiplying, sleeping together in a mass of limbs, crawling and writhing like a nest of maggots. Last but not least, the final scene in which the ship ejects the remaining cryopods to the surface of the sea resembles birth, as the sleeping "infants" leave the mother's hostile and impure body while it is being consumed by the untainted sea of Tanis (cf. Creed, 1994, p. 19 on *Alien*).

demons of our latent bestiality. The combined themes of evolution, eugenics, inhuman experiments on people, and the misguided appropriation of Darwinism which results in the creation of a master race through the horrors of retrogression and suffering – all of the above highlight man's monstrous potential. According to Joseph D. Andriano (1999, p. xi)., "[w]hether repressed id, shadow, animus, anima, instinct, or impulse from the reptile brain; whether oppressed race or extirpated species, the uncanny monster is the familiar Self disguised as the alien Other". The monster, Adriano further argues, functions as a trope along the lines of metaphor and metonymy. In the former case, it represents some human trait, transforming animal into human (and vice versa). In the latter case, "the monster is represented in contiguity with the human, in juxtaposition," putting "animal and human side by side" (p. xiv). Considered from this perspective, the mutants in *Pandorum* metaphorically represent the barbarous in the homo sapiens, bringing to the fore the latent violence and thirst for blood brewing beneath the veneer of our civilised selves. Metonymically, being at once a more evolved and a more retrogressive form of the *homo sapiens*, they stand for the animal placed alongside the human, reminding us of our beastly heritage and making us aware that evolution as a process is far from completion.

Ultimately, *Pandorum*, in the vein of the traditional Gothic, brings the "restoration of order" and the "return to all things normal and acceptable" (MacArthur, 2015, p. 15), as the surviving passengers emerge from the sea to consciousness and the light of day, leaving their monstrous progeny on the sunken spaceship. However, as MacArthur points out, in the Gothic the repressed always returns, with a force impossible to control (p. 16). The last we see of the new colony is the end card "Tanis year one, population 1213…". The suspension points suggest that this is not the end: the colony will grow and one day Tanis may be visited by the same Darwinian horrors as Earth and the *Elysium*. The reactor of the spaceship, losing its power and in need of rebooting, is an apt metaphor of the dying world of man, our world. Through its Gothic tropes and imagery of horror, *Pandorum*, like Corporal Bower, delivers shock to the system: wake up, humankind, it seems to say, rise above your biological limitations, stop fighting, treat your planet with respect. Escape from the demons which are produced when reason is asleep.

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