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GOTHIC FEMALE WRITERS. ANN RADCLIFFE

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ABSTRACT

Gothic style has left an important print on all the manifestations of human culture, ever since its beginnings. The typical architecture came to be considered a character in itself in the Gothic fiction, together with the gloomy atmosphere, characters undergoing difficult interior turmoil and a plot which surprises the readers with its twists and turns. Yet, apart from all the terror, horror, mystery, awe and fear, sublime and sensibility, there stand the heroines, imbued with values of incipient feminism, fighting and unequal battle for their right to be free, even if they still have to obey the rules of the society they live in. The analyses of these themes and motifs represent the aim of the present dissertation: describe how the main features of Gothic fiction mirror into the works of female writers like Ann Radcliffe and Emily Brontë. This dissertation will pay special attention to the former, as she is the one who paved the way for the next female writers.

Keywords: Gothic literature; Gothic feminism; Ann Radcliffe; Emily Brontë; terror.

RESUMEN

El estilo gótico ha dejado una huella importante en todas las manifestaciones culturales de la humanidad. La típica arquitectura gótica llegó a ser considerada un personaje en sí mismo en la ficción gótica, junto con el ambiente sombrío, personajes que atraviesan una difícil agitación interior y una trama que sorprende a los lectores con sus idas y vueltas. Aún con todo, aparte del terror, el horror, el misterio, el asombro y el miedo, el sublime y la sensibilidad, allí están las heroínas, impregnadas con los valores del incipiente feminismo, luchando una desigual batalla por su derecho a ser libre. El análisis de estos temas y motivos representan el objetivo del presente trabajo: describir cómo las características principales de la ficción gótica se reflejan en la obra de escritoras góticas como Ann Radcliffe y Emily Brontë. Este trabajo prestará especial atención a la primera, puesto que es la que abrió camino a las siguientes escritoras.

Palabras clave: literatura gótica; feminismo gótico; Ann Radcliffe; Emily Brontë; terror.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Justification and relevance

During the last three centuries, Europe has undergone radical changes, both political and economical, as a direct consequence of the French Revolution. This period of extreme tensions and anxiety was mirrored in Gothic fiction while dealing with social, economical and political issues. Writers like Matthew Gregory Lewis, Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe or the Brontë sisters were influenced by the historical circumstances of the time, inspiring them to write Gothic novels where freedom mingles with terror and sarcastic observations on politics and society.

The main reason for carrying out this research was to design an outline of how Gothic style is reflected into the first feminine Gothic writers. They aimed not only at identifying themselves with certain aspects of the moment, but also at speaking out their ethical concern as to the deep changes in the society that they were witnessing. Special attention will be paid to Ann Radcliffe, in the first place, as well as to Emily Brontë, for they are united by their perspective on women's changing values in the Gothic fiction. Intellectual, Catholic, with a fine taste for arts, Radcliffe paved the way for the incipient feminist values to be implemented against the norms of the contemporary society. Her characters are imbued with the Gothic spirit within intricate plots that untangle surrounded by mystery, terror and horror. As a consequence, the reader is amazed, frightened, full of awe.

1.2. Objectives

As a literary genre, Gothic embraces criminal behaviour, violence, ambition, unbridled passion and licentious representations of carnal desire. Women were avid readers of Gothic literature in the 18th and the 19th century. They viewed it as a logical escape from the social conventions of the time. It was, for them, a source of pleasure, while stimulating a new form of twisted reasoning and new laws of morality or lack thereof. Gothic fiction presented worlds differently and more excitingly, in which heroines could find not only terrifying violence, but also freedom and adventure. It is ambivalent in its objectives and effects.

This dissertation tries to explain what Gothic and Gothic literature are, their origins, the impact that the French Revolution had on it and the main characteristics and narrative techniques identified especially in the writings of important figures like Horace Walpole (1717-1797), the predecessor of Gothic fiction, Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), the first woman to display Gothic characteristics in her literary work, as well as of the Brontë sisters (Charlotte (1816-1855), Emily (1818-1848) and Anne (1820-1849), whose literary work was partly influenced by the Gothic.

2. GOTHIC LITERATURE

2.1. Origin and characteristics

‘Gothic’ origins can be traced back to the building style exhibited by the Germanic Gothic barbarians which was “later extended to include most medieval architecture” (Summers 1964: 17). Used pejoratively, because it comes from the word ‘Goth’, which is how the Germanic tribes who attacked Rome and ravaged the rest of European continent all along the third to the fifth century were called, the term was later associated with that which was barbarian or barbaric as well as it came to take on other meanings as a result of the architecture that flourished in Europe during the Middle Ages, a period which was perceived as obscure, disordered and superstitious. Gothic architecture used tall spires, stained glass windows, pointed arches, vaults and

intricate traceries. Most Gothic buildings were religious, such as monasteries and cathedrals (Höglund 2016:42). Described as ostentatious and intensive, Gothic buildings were the best setting for developing certain physical and psychological circumstances that would be prone to the emerging of a new literary genre, characterized by mysterious stories, filled with uncertainty and irrational beliefs. Edmund Burke, Horace Walpole, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Ann Radcliffe and the Brontë sisters are the first literary names to be related to Gothic literature, to whom specific attention and study will be dedicated later in this dissertation. However, Gothic style has left its print on a long series of writings, up to today, such as in those signed by V.C. Andrews (1923-1986), Iain Banks (1954-2013) and Anne Rice (1941-2021).

Gothic literature first developed in England and was the result of some historical events which took place during the last fifty years of the 18th century, when a series of social, cultural and political conflicts changed the feelings and the mood of the population, instilling a deep nostalgia for the past. The Gothic novel emerged as a response to literature working as an expression of the feelings of the day, under the influence of the changing circumstances of that time. People's state of mind changed according to how the Industrial Revolution interfered with the living conditions of the society. On the surface, this event seemed utterly beneficial because it created economic growth and, implicitly, prosperity. In agriculture, the common rights were removed and replaced by landowners who held extensive farm properties. There was a noticeable increase in the range of food products, abundant and efficiently provided. The industry bloomed, as machines replaced people in methods of production, pushing aside the human and animal labour. Gas was being used to produce lighting. The emergence of the steam engine produced great progress as transport was improved, leading to better working conditions in factories and mines. As a result, industries like textile, especially in the North West of the country, proliferated, leading to more jobs and welfare. For the overall population, the standard of living grew higher along with a feeling of optimism and trust in the future (Höglund 2016: 31).

Nevertheless, soon enough, the downside of the Industrial Revolution started to reveal its colours. As the industrialization produced urban expansion, living conditions got poorer than during the pre-Industrial Revolution times. For instance, some factory owners decreased the wages of their workers in order to increase their profits. Thus, men, women, and children likewise had to work long hours in poor sanitary conditions for little pay. Another twisted side of the industrialization is the shelters, which were badly built and cramped. As a result of lack of space, cruelty, savagery and anger overtook people's hearts. Also, the lack of basic services such as sewage, in addition to contaminated water, caused a sudden and painful attack of cholera, leaving devastating consequences. Hence, the Industrial Revolution triggered a social and moral imbalance which generated a general state of dissatisfaction, anxiety and expectancy. Also, sensibility enhanced, rationality became unsatisfactorily and people started looking for explanation beyond material, concrete appearances, which was the reason why imagination took over reality. The social and psychological pressure of the time increased the susceptibility for neurosis, morbidity, hysteria and melancholy. Thereby, as a retreat, people, unconsciously, created a world which involved nothing real, changing the perception of the material and spiritual existence and annihilating rationality. Certainly, escaping reality is a common reaction to everyone's discontent with the historical, social and political events. Peace of mind, harmony and stability were replaced with agitation, confusion, disorder, and repressions were released from unconsciousness through dramatically psychological manifestations. Therefore, the Gothic novel emerged as a result of many political and social conflicts which changed the feelings of the population. It corresponds to a state of mind, symbolizing an attitude towards life, the need for a compensatory universe, and the detaching from the powerful and all-knowing rationality.

Ironically, Edmund Burke, whose theories provided the philosophical basis for the Gothic fiction, held little esteem for the ancient Goths. The origins of the modern Gothic are to be found in the Classical culture. The most influential works were those by Homer (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*), Virgil (*Aeneid*) and Ovid (*Metamorphoses*), as well as Greek tragedies. Mythological themes and motifs (temptation, human flaws, desire, reward, war, love, faith, beauty) have never lost their appeal, more so they provided the prototypes of storytelling techniques still used today.

Medieval authors also left their mark on Gothic culture. Usually their main sources of inspiration were legends, Christian faith and chivalry. Chrétien de Troyes (late 12th century) created the legend of the Grail (in *Perceval, the Story of the Grail*) that inspired countless interpretations and adaptations throughout centuries. In the early 14th century, Dante Alighieri wrote one of the most monumental works in history, *Divine Comedy* (1320), describing an imaginary voyage to Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. In Inferno, we already find some elements that will later characterize the Gothic fiction: dark and sublime atmosphere, beast from different mythologies, dramatic landscapes, stories of love, hate and sin.

In a classical Gothic plot we will find a trusting character (or characters), embodied by a female figure, innocent, easily fooled, even helpless up to a certain point, who, like the young Emily St. Aubert in Anne Radcliffe's classic 1794 novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, finishes up involved in a hard attempt to understand machination. Later on, this novel inspired Jane Austen to write the 1818 parody, *The Northanger Abbey*.

In 1764 came to the public eye a novel written by Horace Walpole, entitled *The Castle of Otranto*, considered to be the standard of excellence for 'pure' Gothic: not very extensive, but dark, suffocating, filled with elements of terror and a medieval atmosphere, setting the mood for a completely novel and exciting form of writing. The atmosphere in these writings is mysterious, imbued with suspense and, consequently, fear, upgraded by elements of the unknown or unexplained, a setting which more often than not can be considered a character in itself. Because Gothic architecture plays such an important part, large castles or manors, usually uninhabited or at the very least damaged and, certainly, not very close to a village or similar (so that cries for help would not be heard) are chosen as the main location in the plot, as well as caves, wild places, or moorland.

There can hardly be found Gothic fiction without supernatural or paranormal elements, such as ghosts or vampires. Sometimes, there is a reasonable explanation for the presence of these elements; although there are also cases in which no rational or

logical explanation is given. Furthermore, complex emotions are delivered by means of highly sentimental language and moments of exaggerated passion. Characters undergo feelings of panic, terror, enjoyment, sadness, fear, disgust, surprise which are often expressed in an exaggerated and overblown way in order to result in an incorrect image of them: completely out of control and at the hands of the evil that surrounds and possess them.

Most villains in the Gothic novel are powerful men who pursue a young, at times virginal woman (*Dracula* (1897)). In Radcliffe, Mazzini of *A Sicilian Romance* (1789), Montoni of *Mysteries* (1794) and Schedoni of *The Italian* (1797) make use of the imprisonment in their own homes or planning to make the heroines disappear. These manifestations of their male power create tension and the readers start to feel compassionate about the ‘victims’, which deeply engages the reader’s sense of pathos, especially since these heroines tend to belong to no family, have no protection, namely male protection. In any case, this does not mean that Gothic villains are altogether mischievous. Absolute opposites, made noticeable in Gothic transgressions, permitted appropriate points of confinement and qualities to be affirmed at the conclusion of accounts in which secrets were clarified or good resolutions advanced.

A story with an elaborated setting along with forces belonging to the supernatural or super-evil fighting against an innocent main character constitutes part of Gothic literature. Nowadays, the same criterion is still followed, yet paranormal and terror genres are also accepted. On the other hand, in Walpole’s time romances were seen by literary critics as an outdated form of fiction due to its “artificial diction, numerous coincidences, the promiscuous mixing of history and fiction, absurd idealism, and over-the-top heroics” (Hogel 2002: 22), and also lack of credibility and moral instruction. As romances lost popularity a newer and more modern form of fiction started to rise: the novel. The novel in its purest form started to emerge in the first half of the 18th century, bringing a new technique of writing fiction. Such authors as Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) and Henry Fielding (1707-1754) claimed to create a different form of fiction that was superior to the romances, because they sought inspiration from common life and rejected the use of hyperboles, a technique frequently present in romances. Despite the rejection of

romances Walpole knew that the novel needed romance, because there is an interdependent relation between the two, so he merged both elements, thus resulting in the rebirth of a new romance:

Walpole wanted to combine the unnatural occurrences associated with romance and the naturalistic characterization and dialogue of the novel. Just as the novel contained traces of romance, so Walpole's experiment drew on the innovations of realist and sentimental fiction. (Clery 2006: 24)

What makes the Gothic fiction revolutionary and unique is the authenticity the characters possess and the metaphor of bringing the Gothic architecture to life by using the supernatural, horror and terror inducing design.

The Castle of Otranto (1764) was enormously popular throughout Europe. All the contemporary readers found the novel extremely suspenseful, thrilling and fascinating, which is the reason why it soon became a distinguishable genre, imitated by many other novelists. Walpole's novel became famous on the strength of its novelty: the novelty of its narrative structure, of its settings, of its unease atmosphere, of the unpredictable and unexplainable. The plot is set in and around an old, gloomy and haunted castle with secret passages, trapdoors, crypts, labyrinths, and another mysterious architecture. Also, other elements such as deem moonlight in the darkness, a wavering candle and unexplainable supernatural manifestations were being used in order to create a feeling of gloom, mystery and suspense.

The setting, uncanny and mysterious, is intended to awake a feeling of uneasiness as well as forewarning leading to so much fear and dread that it can be sensed in the air. The terror is emphasized when characters discern only a shadow of something and wondering if it was a human who just passed by the window or it was just a blow of air moving the window covering. Sometimes people disappear and show up dead, mutilated in ways that defy explanation. Usually, the castle and its inhabitant are marked in the public memory by an ancient, confusing, obscure prophecy. In order to gain readers' sympathy, the writers focus on a lonely, thoughtful, oppressed female character who faces events that leave them terrified, screaming or unconscious. Therefore, her sufferings are more pronounced because the

women are either abandoned, or left alone accidentally or on purpose. They are often threatened by a strong, violent, despotic male. He has the power to command a woman to marry someone she does not love. Madness is considered a commonplace in the Gothic novels which does the job of bringing moments of suspense for book lovers, but also of unveiling facets of human nature which are still far from understanding.

In *The Castle of Otranto*, whose author is Horace Walpole (1717-1797), all the compulsory elements that define the Gothic genre can be easily identified. It constituted a source of inspiration in the novel form, and also in short stories like those written by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1949), and later on in films based on different Gothic writings.

The Gothic novels that followed were mostly written by women. Ann Radcliffe, born in London in 1764, is the first great exponential writer of the Gothic novel and the novelist acknowledged with most popularity in the 18th century England. To Walpole's Gothic she added the religious buildings represented by abbeys and monasteries, introducing suspense and explaining the supernatural. She also brought in painted-like evocative landscape and evil villains, focusing on the heroine and her struggle with them.

Radcliffe raised the Gothic novel to a new level, inspiring many authors; the kind of romance that she wrote established a new direction for posterior novelists. Terror and suspense were infused with a striking ability of surrounding everything with a halo of romantic sensibility¹. In her novels, the irrational and the supernatural are finally elucidated and the rational dimensions are re-established, meaning that she uses the supernatural but provides a rational explanation at the end (Höglund 2016: 51).

¹ "... the serious purpose of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels: far from being an advocate of sensibility, she, like Jane Austen two decades later, shows its weaknesses and flaws. Not the least of these weaknesses is the fact that it reduces the mind, leading the imagination astray, away from reason. And one departs from the rational, he naturally becomes more susceptible to the irrational, to superstition. Thus the Gothic novel was a perfect vehicle by which to show the extreme effects of sensibility" (Smith 1973: 577).

Radcliffe is known for creating the novel of suspense which combines the Gothic Romance of Walpole with the novel of sensibility, focusing on the delicate heroine and emphasizing the love interest. Although she is classified as a 'terror novelist', her novels are prevailed by descriptions of nature, focusing on the sensibilities of the characters and decreasing the terror.

2.2. Terror and horror

The word 'Gothic' has a wide range of meanings. It can mean a style of architecture, which strays from the classical architectural structure that has symmetry, regularity and simplicity. Another meaning of the word 'Gothic' is associated with the northern barbarian invaders of the Roman Empire who destroyed the civilised world. They left behind a peculiar architecture, whose characteristics are briefly exposed by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, on its online edition:

a style of masonry building characterized by cavernous spaces with the expanse of walls broken up by overlaid tracery.

In the 12th-13th century, feats of engineering permitted increasingly gigantic buildings. The rib vault, flying buttress, and pointed (Gothic) arch were used as solutions to the problem of building a very tall structure while preserving as much natural light as possible. Stained-glass window panels rendered startling sun-dappled interior effects.

The thematic purpose of Gothic fiction is to inflict a sense of horror and terror into the reader by the usage of the mysteriousness of the Gothic architecture. That is why usually

a Gothic tale takes place in an antiquated [...] space — be it a castle, a foreign palace, an abbey, a vast prison, a subterranean crypt, a graveyard, a primeval frontier or island, a large old house or theatre, an aging city or urban underworld, a decaying storehouse, factory, laboratory, public building, or some new recreation of an older venue, such as an office with old filing cabinets, an overworked spaceship, or a computer memory. (Hogel, 2002: 2)

These places usually conceal secrets within them that torment psychologically and physically the characters and help move the story forward. The hauntings can take an earthly form (i.e. skeletons, corpses, whispers, the environment itself etc.), but can also be supernatural or even extraterrestrial (ghosts, devils, aliens etc.). Gothic fiction uses two main ways to inflict torment into both the characters and readers: terror and horror.

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789) represent the first instance of aesthetic terror in Radcliffe's fiction whereas *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) is considered a symbolic representation of the "recess of horror" inside the Castle of Mazzini (*A Sicilian Romance* 216). In *The mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) Emily is the most haunted character in the castle of Udolpho, whereas Ellena of *The Italian* (1797) suffers from the presence of ghosts within the walls of her prison imposed by Schedoni.

Influenced by the leading Gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe, but also inspired by German thrilling horror stories, Matthew Gregory Lewis published *The Monk* in 1796, a novel well received by the reading public and, thus, very successful. Unlike Radcliffe, Lewis's novel emphasizes the horror, the violence, the eroticism, reasons for which the books were universally condemned by the critics. Also, it did not attempt to explain the supernatural events of the plot. The novel centers his narrative on a monk, Ambrosio, whose major sin was being too proud, greedy and carnal. He agreed to hand over his soul to the devil in exchange for not being tortured by the Spanish Inquisition but ended up dying (Höglund 2016:65). In "On the supernatural in Poetry" (1826), Radcliffe clearly explained the difference between the effect her novels achieved, terror, and the effect Lewis achieved, that is horror:

Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend, that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil? ("On the supernatural in Poetry", 149)

Therefore, the Gothic terror – represented by Ann Radcliffe – and Gothic horror represented by Matthew Lewis – whose controversial novel will never lose its popularity with readers, being one of the best era’s best-selling and most influential one – are the basis of the sublime in Gothic Literature.

This is what Gothicism actually is: an artistic technique that distorts the perception of reality to reveal the hidden truth that lies in the unconscious. Edmund Burke, in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), argued that “terror is in all cases whatsoever [...] the ruling principle of the sublime”. Furthermore, it was his idea of astonishment, noticed by almost all theorists, which had a more violent effect within his conception of a violently emotional sublime:

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature . . . is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other. (*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 77)

The difference between the two terms is that the characters and readers are held in suspense related to dangers to their lives at a psychological level. Furthermore, it implements such elements as whispers, approaching footsteps, howls etc. The terror suggests supernatural entities being involved, changing the character’s passive state to an active one and urging him to flee the situation. On the other hand horror Gothic manifests in a materialistic, solid form. These life threatening situations are experienced in the spaces in which the action takes place (chambers, crypts, vaults etc.), by touching a cold dead body or the sight of a decaying corpse. In this state the absolute horror is death, it is the biggest fear the characters get in this situation, the absolute limit where the infiniteness of imagination is rendered to finiteness.

While in some countries like France artistic creation was limited by the constraints of Classicism, in England theatrical drama was characterized by its boldness and grittiness. Crime, revenge, murders, madness, and suicides entertained

the English audience. The supernatural was also present, adding to this dark atmosphere for which Shakespeare's plays, in particular *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, are so famous. This taste for the macabre had almost nothing in common with Classicism; it was the heritage of the late medieval culture.

Castles, ghosts, witches, manipulative aristocrats, secrets, plots, revenge, dreams or stories of impossible love — all the ingredients of Gothic novels — were already present in the 16th and 17th century plays and poems. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1593) featured a demon Mephistopheles and in *Paradise Lost* (1667) John Milton went even further and gave voice to Satan himself.

2.3. Gothic female writers

It is no coincidence that a significant proportion of Gothic masterpieces came from female authors: Ann Radcliffe, the author of seven novels, starting with *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795), *The Italian* (1797) and last but not least, a work that was published posthumously, *Gaston de Blondville* (1826); Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1803, published in 1817), a parody of the Gothic where Austen explored a non-English characteristic: that of excessive emotionalism; Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), a living being appearing as the 'dark other' of scientific and technological progress yet more 'humane' than the humans. Emily Brontë in her novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847) used the Gothic to represent psychological realism and Charlotte Brontë (1847) in *Jane Eyre* exploited the Gothic to represent anxieties concerning the uncertainty of human identity.

There are two delimitations when it comes to reading Gothic literature: male (Male Gothic) and female (Female Gothic). There is a clear difference between the styles of Gothic male writers — Horace Walpole (1717-1797), Matthew Lewis (1775-1818), William Beckford (1760-1844) and their Gothic female counterparts — Eliza Parsons (1739-1811), Mary Shelley (1797-1851) or the Brontë sisters: Charlotte (1816-1855), Emily (1818-1848) and Anne (1820-1849). It has been argued that, as

opposed to traditional Male Gothic fiction in which the heroine is a minor character in the story, in Female Gothic the central character is a young woman who is a persecuted victim and a brave heroine at the same time (Nabi 2017: 75), while Kilgour explains why men' and women's objectives are opposed:

While the male moves through the standard Bildungsroman towards personhood and individuation, the female is never independent, and achieves her goal by entering a new relation through marriage. Male identity, thus, is based on autonomy, while female identity [...] is conceived of as essentially relational. (Kilgour 1995:37)

Written and read mainly by women, the Gothic novel was never an exclusively female vehicle of expression, but allowed women to symbolically express the social and family pressures to which they were subjected. During the eighteenth century, for example, there was a true Gothic fever in England. In the tradition of Gothic male literature, the focus is on an independent individual, visualized as Satanic and revolutionary, alienated in such an extreme way that it is impossible to integrate into society. The structure of the narrative is linear and causal, often driven by family constraints, for example, in *The Castle of Otranto*. Gothic women writers tend to embrace conflict and actually choose discontinuity in structure.

In the story of Dr. Frankenstein and his creature, the doctor concluded his trip with a neat and purifying self-immolation. While women in Gothic literature were experimenting with innovative ways of settling their differences between their individual interest and the expectations of the society they were part of, their gender counterparts tried their best to highlight the impossibility of such an undertaking. The greatest contribution of women to Gothic literature is, thus, their emancipatory intent. Radcliffe's idea of freedom tallies with "a new liberated female identity" (Davids 2008: 11), as embodied in Emily's character.

They wrote from the heart, from the feeling that seeks to expand and manifest itself. The man, however, was limited by rational parameters that raised insurmountable barriers for their imagination. Female Gothic functioned as a clear

voice for all women who had no voice. Its authors, far from feeling detached, cry with their heroines, appreciate each chapter, and become one with the Gothic genre.

Known as the Victorian era, the time span from 1837 to 1901 was a period of complex changes, characterized by industrial reforms, the cultural, scientific progress, extreme privation and military conflicts. Gothic genre appeared as a direct consequence of the Romanticism period, when women were considered temples of love and purity, so could not be used for sexual purposes by men. The one and only purpose of women in those years was to marry and be in charge with the housework, including raising their children. Since adolescence, they were carefully prepared for marriage: they had to be innocent maidens, docile and obedient, educated in English, painting, dancing and singing.

Women belonging to the upper classes had a completely different life from those of most of the female population: they could take delight in more freedom to move around without restrictions, to live the life they wished for going to parties surrounded by friends and acquaintances. All they had to care for was to marry and have children, quite the opposite of the lower class women whose energy and time was put into working long hours in factories, laundries as well as servants in other houses. Their only goal was to find a husband and raise their children. As the century was coming to its end and the signs of the Industrial Revolution were becoming more and more visible, they began working as nurses and went into the world of medicine, journalism or into the legal world. Women needed to control their nature apart from an economic and emotional stability provided by the man through marriage.

It stands to reason that one of the main objectives of literature is to reach the reader's heart. Gothic fiction goes deep into the main characters' mind, namely their most intimate thoughts and feelings, with the main goal of making the readers' emotions flourish. Thus the latter experience pleasure caused by terrible events, which is known as the sublime, a well-known resource of both Gothic and romantic works in literature. Radcliffe's Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is prompted by St Aubert to experience the sublime by cultivating the mind: "Store it [the mind] with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking...Thought and pleasure... are necessary to afford a sublime

pleasure in the taste they create for the beautiful, and the grand” (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 16).

In the case of *Wuthering Heights*, readers see women, especially Cathy Earnshaw as rapacious, strong-willed, and bent on having an all-out battle with their male counterparts. The allure of Gothic fiction is enhanced by its approach to feminism. Women in Gothic works of fiction are either innocent victims or dangerous and conniving in order to meet their goals. The victims are usually attracted to men who are evil and seek only to fulfil their own agendas. When it comes to utilizing women characters, the writers used terror in the shape of aggression or fear through subversion. Cultural and societal norms in the mid-1800s did not allow women to express their opinions if that alienated the men in their lives. They were expected to be pleasant, always supportive, and to always refrain from taking decisions independently (Priestman 2003: 24).

The early 18th century Gothic literature, which had recently gained the status of literary genre, could bring together the dark, the grotesque, and the supernatural as a means to elicit terror, especially for the feminine audience. Women were attracted by the inclusion of desirable men that could not fit the societal norms of the age. In Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* all the typical devices necessary to a novel to be classified as Gothic can be easily identified. The ghostly appearances conform to the supernatural, the gloomy appearance of the Heights and the thirst for revenge of their characters, just to name a few of the characteristics of the Gothic novel. These men were often improper suitors or husbands who defied their position and were regarded as villains. Usually, female characters are portrayed as innocent, self-centred and empathetic, which further enlarges the differences between them as the stories progress. Yet Cathy’s love is obsessive, wanting to have the best of both worlds: a relationship based on love and one that can benefit her social status.

One of the first if not the very first original Gothic work of fiction was Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto*, who paved the way for women characters such as Isabella, characterized as virtuous and selfless, to be portrayed as submissive and obedient in exchange for suffering. The 19th century enriched the Gothic genre with

works of art such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), in which we find a role reversal – Elizabeth is in control of Victor, who strangely takes on a woman's lack of physical prowess and resistance to illness. However, except for Mrs. Saville, Mary Shelley decided that every other female character should die by the conclusion of the novel, in one way or another: Caroline gives her life to save her adopted daughter, Justine gets the capital punishment for committing murder, while Elizabeth's hope of getting Victor back becomes her undoing as she ends up savagely killed by the monster.

However, the Gothic genre also allowed female characters to escape their own flaws by rebelling and changing their behaviour to survive. They no longer solely serve for bearing children, but they increase their awareness when it comes to oppression. The masterpiece of Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847), considered one of the greatest classics of literature in the English language, chronicles the life of Jane Eyre, an orphan, abused by her aunt and cousins, from early childhood until she marries the man of her dreams. She achieved a permanent place in the list of feminist female character. She is an independent and caring woman, good and selfless, without any deviations in conduct. Charlotte imbues the character with a feminist notion of equality of which the girl is fully aware, although almost in a metaphysical way. Every time a woman comes up against social conventions and norms, she must have the courage to overcome them.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848) by Anne Brontë is her second and last novel, narrated in a non-linear fashion, initially by a naive Gilbert Markham, the landowner. The second narrator is Helen Huntingdon, who was an orphan and a religious girl. She falls in love with Arthur Huntingdon, who corresponds to their feelings. For the first time in a novel, we have a story that begins with a wedding, not the other way around, and that will gradually be revealing the true face of many marriages of that time. Increasingly distant for constantly time-consuming visits to London clubs, Arthur becomes unrecognizable in the eyes of the loving wife who discovers an alcoholic and an adulterer. This fall from grace makes Helen slam the door in her husband's face, showing her determination to escape the abusive relationship. She takes her faith into her own hands and flees to a small town where

she meets Gilbert. Thus, Helen discovered that society lives behind masks in a constant attempt to omit the tension and the existing immorality by keeping them under the hood. Feminism means equality and freedom, and Helen does not care whether she is feminist or not — what she wants is the freedom of bearing the consequences of her choices.

The writings of the Brontë sisters were used to fight the prevailing machismo in their time and to manifest their need for freedom. The most dramatic and romantic of the Brontë sisters, Emily, is less obviously a feminist. Her only work, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), has a Gothic aura surrounding it, but it is located at the threshold of insanity. Unlike other novels, this one, although rooted in Gothic, is closer to Romance.

The unhealthy love between Catherine Earnshaw and her adopted brother Heathcliff cannot be specifically liberating, but is at least a relationship of equality between their egos and personalities; there is a superior man and a submissive woman, not the stereotypical opposite members of a couple. We have in Heathcliff and Catherine two very expressive characters and violent in their passions. They are treated as equals throughout the narrative, always facing each other. Social conventions are represented by Cathy's husband, Edgar Linton, 'the good guy' by nature. Catherine presents herself as an equally interesting character from the feminist point of view: the impetuous and stubborn, but still sweet and intelligent girl goes through terrible trials and tribulations. She is doing what she thought was necessary according to Victorian social practices, but in the isolated microcosm of those moors, she is actually rebelling against her husband and against morality itself.

This also makes it a Bildungsroman with a narrative worthy of a strong female character at the beginning that is progressively eaten away by doubt and despair. Catherine's coming of age is continued by her daughter, Cathy, who manages to understand the toxicity of Heathcliff's influence on her family. Catherine evolves from an innocent, wild girl to a woman that experiences the love of two men, Heathcliff and Linton. Once she allowed herself to be courted by Linton, she manages to assert her independence from Heathcliff. The dark, gloomy hallways that define the

Gothic genre can be compared to the relationships Catherine makes with both men. Heathcliff is the destabilizing element that manages to get a foothold in the other characters' lives through Catherine. She becomes the binding agent that leads him to marry Isabella.

Although in *Wuthering Heights* we sometimes find violent storms as well as scenes of fierce dogs, ghosts and cemeteries, the novel is rather a tragedy imbued with Gothic elements; a family drama covering two generations of characters. Cathy spent her childhood at *Wuthering Heights*, the family farm, when one day her father returns from a long trip with a strange boy whom he seeks to raise as one more of their children. Catherine and Heathcliff soon become great friends. They are rebellious, mischievous and above all very united. But when the family patriarch dies, Cathy's older brother, Hindley, inherits the property and he despises Heathcliff. Although Cathy chooses to marry Edgar Linton, at this point, she and Heathcliff are well aware of their love, but their relationship does not progress at all, they are always arguing as they did in childhood (Priestman 2003: 41). Cathy is very selfish and almost as evil as Heathcliff. She goes as far as to humiliate her husband in front of Heathcliff, to make him see that he is a weak man.

Cathy represents the dominant spirit of women in the novel. Greatly obsessed with Heathcliff, she centres her entire life on him. She professes to love him romantically or just based on mere physical attraction. She says in the novel "Without Heathcliff [...] the universe would turn to a mighty stranger" (*Wuthering Heights*, 75). Catherine Earnshaw is such a complex character, that her internal conflicts uncover an impressive intricate psychology and expands the boundaries of freedom of femininity.

However, despite facing internal conflicts, the heroines are still able to struggle against the external world. This is against the education of all the ladies of society, which was designed to suppress the desire to be original. Fatalism comes into scene as Catherine's personality is broken into pieces, in the form of a double personality, the moment she had to learn that harsh lesson.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the two primary female characters are depicted marginally in an unexpected way; however, both of them rely on upon a paternal figure and are helpless before Heathcliff. Despite the fact that the ‘old’ Catherine and her girl do battle to be free, they do not generally succeed, as they are masochistic and defenceless. They cannot stand their grounds (and when they attempt to, as Isabella did, they wind up in a more regrettable place) and are casualties of male figures surrounding them. They should obey the standards and take after what is socially adequate. Nelly Dean then again, is free and serves as a nurturing figure to both Catherines.

Catherine is depicted as a free soul; however, she begins to be ‘tamed’. Her first change in turning out to be ‘socially worthy’ happens during her five-week period spent at Thrushcross Grange. She is no longer the young lady who enjoyed a wild and free life. Now, she is taking after the feeling of respectability, sequestered by the social norms of her times. The most essential duties of a lady of that period were that of spouse and mother. Catherine is not adept at both: she does not love her better half and she dies when giving birth. One important issue these women brought on was that they experienced passionate feelings for somebody they should not have. Catherine loved Heathcliff but decided not to wed him since he did not have the means to offer her a respectable life.

At the start of the novel, Catherine’s anguish is anticipated by using foreshadowing. This literary technique can be used to add suspense or highlight an omen. Omens are intrinsically linked to Gothic since they elicit a state of anguish and gloom. During his stay at Wuthering Heights, he had to live in a prohibited room. There was a spot next to the window from where he managed to see the names on the wall: “Catherine Earnshaw [...] Catherine Heathcliff [...] Catherine Linton”. “The glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres — the air swarmed with Catherines” (*Wuthering Heights*, 40). There was something strange about the space: it had a nearness of Catherine. Catherine was confronting a terrible interior battle. All those different names were the proof. It foreshadowed the issues she would later face with the two male characters.

The lack of pain and suffering would have left us a completely different novel. Agony is present throughout the novel: the starting point introduces female characters that do not know how to manage their issues well, a fact that does not disappear with the demise of a character. Gothic heroines were generally set in a conflicting position to choose between a dull enticer and a reasonable mate; however, they often tried to secure both. Catherine is a rebel, she does not follow the rule, because she is tormented by an internal dilemma for she makes the conflict internal. She does not feel torn between two sweethearts, but she actually finds herself isolated between the two of them.

However, it can be argued that Catherine's appearances as a ghost may just be Lockwood's dream and his vivid imagination when recounting the events. This proves not to be true since Brontë decided to make Catherine's ghostly appearances as real as they can be just to give the novel the Gothic element it needed for readers to accept the troubling nature of the story.

Catherine, then again, has Heathcliff — who is just about the representation of underhandedness and pessimism — adjacent to her, despite the fact that she picks Edgar as a husband, although she is fully aware that she did not choose right (Priestman 2003: 67). One component of such equivocalness is apparent in Catherine's readiness to utilize the sort of downright judgment of good and fiendishness that we take up with cliché Gothic courageous women. In spite of the fact that it will not be suitable to characterize Heathcliff as an unequivocally fiendish person, such a method of distinguishing greatness from fiendishness is grinding away in Catherine's mind: she says Heathcliff is an "un reclaimed creature" to Isabella (*Wuthering Heights*, 91).

The contradictions experiences, the forcefulness of her demeanour and the hesitation of her activities, cause a wary and confounding perspective, which represents the most noteworthy distinction amongst Catherine and other Gothic courageous women. Her demise shows that she could not adapt to the situation (married to Linton, carrying his child, but still in love with Heathcliff), which in turn makes her the heroine and the primary 'conduit' of Gothic melancholy through

misery, degradation and revenge followed by death (of other characters). Her sudden and unexpected death was what made the novel possible in the first place.

Her love for Heathcliff, which lies outside her marriage, is one part of the novel that makes *Wuthering Heights* Gothic fiction. The novel depicts a predominance of ladies: Catherine is solid and free, which could be illustrative of Brontë. Might this be able to likewise speak to the ascent of the low class? Catherine is held interestingly with Isabella who could be simply summarised as a hyperbolised, unimaginably guileless Victorian lady, who is also candidly frail and immature. She is frequently seen as subordinate to Catherine, despite the fact that she is vital to make such convincing differentiation. Catherine is the absolute opposite of the conventional 'Gothic courageous woman' that is ordinarily characterized by accommodation, lack of involvement, reliance, and a little physical nearness. We can assume that Catherine's rundown of defects is so long one ponders if she is a leading female character by any means. Courageous women in Gothic books are frequently mentally substandard and inclined to passionate breakdowns. In any case, since a courageous woman should in any case be depicted as a capable figure, the Gothic novel blesses the champion with good prevalence over each other character.

As opposed to the ethically faultless champion, Gothic books regularly incorporate an inverse female depiction, the *femme fatale*. The *femme fatale* has the freedom of soul, the enthusiastic dynamic quality, the creativity, and the ethical unsteadiness. In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë declines to satisfy both of the differentiating Gothic generalizations used to describe ladies. Or maybe, her female hero is a blend of qualities. Catherine, the 'courageous woman' of *Wuthering Heights*, epitomizes the free soul and imperfect ethical quality of the *femme fatale*, yet likewise speaks to the physical excellence and enthusiastic unpredictability of the Gothic courageous woman. Catherine is shrewd and is equipped for self-reflection, qualities which are customarily truant from Gothic courageous women. She does not only relate her story. Moreover she uncovers her deepest emotions, considerations and dreams.

Catherine's demise is accordingly rich with importance. It appears to be clear that the aggravated impacts of pregnancy, approaching parenthood, physical and social imprisonment, enthusiastic enduring, tuberculosis and starvation end her life. In light of this juncture of circumstances, her passing is at last an exhibit of the harm brought on by patriarchy.

It appears that Isabella Linton's downfall begins with her lack of suspicion when it comes to Heathcliff. She is brought up in a privileged family, having had very few contacts with men apart from her respectable father and sibling. The depiction of her landing in the Heights "smothered in cloaks and furs" (*Wuthering Heights*, 52) paints a clear image of her frailty, even obliviousness. She experiences passionate feelings for Heathcliff, completely unaware of his personal history, refusing to pay attention to Catherine's description of him as "an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation" and "a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man" (*Wuthering Heights*, 90).

A more courageous woman than Catherine, Isabella has a place with the local climate of the Grange. She is such a refined woman and so sensible that Isabella looks like an innocent young lady, which leads her to believe completely in an imaginary universe inaccessible from reality. She clearly cannot perceive how hazardous her marriage to Heathcliff would be, as he behaves like a courteous fellow. She has not yet developed the ability to understand male goals, and all things considered, satisfies the sort of the Gothic virgin condition, while additionally accentuating Catherine's more prominent comprehension and understanding. When she flees with Heathcliff, Isabella's life turns out to be precisely similar to other demises and falls from grace delineated in Gothic works. Heathcliff's evil treatment and viciousness, the haphazard life of Hindley, and Joseph who does not aid her in any way, all help us to remember damsels sequestered in Gothic castles. Given how she depicts the Heights, Emily was plainly aware of Gothic loathsomeness and inspires Gothic affiliations when she makes Isabella ask Nelly:

How did you contrive to preserve the common sympathies of human nature when you resided here? I cannot recognise any sentiment which those around

share with me. Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil? I shan't tell my reasons for making this inquiry: but I beseech you to explain, if you can, what I have married — that is, when you call to see me; and you must call, Ellen, very soon. (*Wuthering Heights*, 121)

Nonetheless, we cannot just set Isabella within Gothic traditions as a result of her rebellion towards Heathcliff. She becomes the 'wild card' and frees herself from his grasp, parting ways with Gothic tradition when she decides to leave the Heights. Her discourse hints at the lack of perplexity or trepidation she experienced when she moved at the Heights. She admits her desire and arrangements for vengeance. It is a momentous change; Isabella was an ordinary Gothic courageous woman until she wedded Heathcliff. However, her involvement with the Heights draws out her survival impulses. She becomes aware of her predicament and takes the logical course of action: she leaves Heathcliff. Isabella sees how demonic he is, nothing but a shadow of how she pictured him. She degrades herself, both physically and mentally, though she demonstrates the concealed viciousness of her identity which empowers her to escape from her jail.

Emily St. Aubert in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Isabella Linton have a lot in common, which leads us to believe that Emily Brontë found inspiration in Ann Radcliffe's work to make her female protagonist. Both of them are brought up in a local situation which develops an unreasonable purity and lack of experience that disconnects her from the external world. The moment she chooses to wed Heathcliff signifies the sentence to seclusion (Punter and Byron 2004: 34).

Wuthering Heights and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* reveal the shared imprisonment of their individual courageous women since both of the characters' locations symbolise the last phase of their sheltered residential lives. They are left bare handed facing forceful oppressors, apart from dealing with being honest and sensible, two qualities which hinder them from living on their own choices. Be that as it may, both courageous women figure out how to overcome the boundary of sensibility when they exhibit their quality to conquer the miscreant's dictatorship.

Wallace and Smith (2009) argue that the Female Gothic itself has been interpreted as deciphered as a secret system of women's fear of capture, both inside their residential space and inside their body. The restrictive space of *Wuthering Heights* and the overly-possessive nature of Heathcliff confine Isabella both physically and psychologically. Detainment and confinement are elements of Gothic used by Emily Brontë to imbue the novel and give it the opposite of freedom; a way to prepare Isabella to escape the archetypal female character that she respected in the beginning.

Cathy Linton, as well, can be perceived as a courageous young woman: she is brought up by a man of honour, Edgar, who "took her education entirely on himself and made it an amusement" (*Wuthering Heights*, 166). Also, she is precisely shielded from seeing any perversity coming from Heathcliff. She was not let to wander off the Grange until she was thirteen. Mr. Linton would rarely take outside. This depiction helps us to remember Emily St Aubert's protected life, which may imply that Emily Brontë, although unwittingly, was affected by the Gothic courageous women's domestic surroundings. Isabella Linton and Cathy are instructed at the Grange with consideration, but the latter she stays oblivious of the society, as she find herself unprepared to face individuals who do not see her with the same eyes her father and her friends at the Grange do, that is "she who was always 'love,' and 'darling,' and 'queen,' and 'angel,' with everybody at the Grange" (*Wuthering Heights*, 174).

It is important to see, nonetheless, that Cathy has the courage and boldness that is not present in conventional Gothic heroines. Whereas Isabella as a young lady is closer to the honest Gothic virgin, recognized by her feebleness, Cathy is portrayed as a free and intense young lady, whose character is a blend of expectedness and benevolence, tradition and development. Cathy's strength turns out to be more expressive when she is persuasively moved to the Heights. She has to endure Heathcliff's orders and she does not accept his abusive remarks. However, Linton is also an abusive figure at the Heights as well. Cathy is then feeling compelled to nurture a man in distress all the time, which is a torment for her and depletes her both physically and mentally. Her aggrieved life is not put an end after Linton's demise.

It is interesting to observe how the Heights protects its Gothic climate: the entryway is constantly bolted, the wild mutts are kept generally as Lockwood knows them, and you can still find a secretive, vile room which is kept out of service. Cathy, here, turns into a detainee: thus her story helps us to remember Gothic courageous women who are locked in towers and castles. Notwithstanding, she still figures out how to make herself comfortable in the Heights, by keeping Hareton close to her, and in the long run, accomplishes an upbeat marriage. Despite the fact that her battle cannot be compared with the one between Isabella and Heathcliff, the writer utilizes her to demonstrate that more than one way is possible for courageous women to challenge the Gothic plots that include them. Cathy figures out how to trade off and be tolerant keeping in mind the end goal to comprehend Hareton and the relationship that has emerged amongst him and Heathcliff.

There is one woman who cannot escape her fate of bearing the pain of families that she cannot free herself from and is unable to rescue: Nelly Dean, the maid at Wuthering Heights. She is a true Gothic character because of her inability to set things right. She is also the ‘villain’ because she did not try to stop Isabella from entering Wuthering Heights, which makes the reader feel anxiety caused by her lust for power. She has control over two households and decides to use that information in order to elicit Lockwood’s attention.

3. ANN RADCLIFFE

3.1. Sensibility

Considered one of the most successful novelists of her time, Ann Radcliffe also had the benefit of being praised by her critics: she was called “the mighty enchantress” and “the first poetess of romantic fiction” by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) and Nathan Drake (1798) considered her “the Shakespeare of romance writers” (Norton 2009: 37). She continued to grow in popularity during the 19th century and the admiration John Keats (1795-1821) felt for her made him consider her “Mother Radcliffe” (Miles 2009: 42).

She had enough talent and inspiration to choose the proper, tender heroine, who embodied the concept of love, and she built a novel of suspense in which elements from Walpole's Gothic romance can be identified, with a novel of suspense. There is always

a beautiful and solitary girl is persecuted in picturesque surroundings and, after many fluctuations of fortune, during which she seems again and again on the point of reaching safety, only to be thrust back into the midst of perils, is restored to her friends and marries the man of her choice (Tompkins, as cited in Hall and Whannel 2018, para. 2).

Interrupted courtship covered in terror make her to be identified as a "terror novelist", although there is more of how she indulges herself in describing nature and in observing the sensibility of her protagonists (Wallace 2013: 43). She is just pointing out the risks of excessive sensibility. Her heroines see themselves involved in conflicts due to indulging themselves into imagination. And this is where reason comes to rescue them. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Emily is advised not let herself be dominated by too much sensibility:

Above all, my dear Emily [...] do not indulge in the pride of fine feeling, the romantic error of amiable minds. Those who really possess sensibility ought early to be taught that it is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery or delight from every surrounding circumstance. And since, in our passage through this world, painful circumstances occur more frequently than pleasing ones, and since our sense of evil is, I fear, more acute than our sense of good, we become the victims of our feelings, unless we can in some degree command them. (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 127)

Consequently, reason plays a more important role in the heroine's life, whereas emotion and sensibility should be given not much attention: "mystery [...] by exciting awe and curiosity, reduced the mind to a state of sensibility, which rendered it more liable to the influence of superstition in general" (*Wuthering Heights*, 862).

3.2. Characters

Temperamental, pensive, rebellious, sometimes bearing the burden of past secrets, Radcliffean male protagonists like Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Schedoni in *The Italian* (1797) can be included in the series of Byronic characters. However, they do not raise readers' curiosity for being strong personalities but because they see themselves in exciting situations, pushing them into the limits.

As for the female characters, Ellen Moers introduces a new concept related to Radcliffe: heroinism, depicted as "the intellectual or thinking heroine, the passionate or woman-in-love heroine, and the travelling heroine". Radcliffe's belong to the category of the travelling heroine, "who moves, who acts, who copes with vicissitude and adventure" (Moers 1976, as cited in Adair and Filipova 2020). More often than not, travelling does not have a happy starting point: it is danger that forces her to abandon her house and elope; however, there are always amazing moments awaiting for her (Wallace 2013: 55). She moves from one place to another within the walls of her house, exploring it in and out. Moers notes: "It was only indoors, in Mrs. Radcliffe's day, that the heroine of a novel could travel brave and free, and stay respectable" (Moers 1976: 129). In this sense, Radcliffe's novels get closer to the male picaresque fiction.

In her novels, anybody can travel: those who hunt the heroine, those who let themselves carried away by their thoughts, as long as there a change of space involved, that is travelling. A disconnection from the reality is required that helps the readers to breathe. Descriptions of the scenery come along with the travelling, either real or imaginary, allowing both the characters and the readers to experience romantic feelings and sublimity.

3.3. Scenery, the sublime and the obscurity

Radcliffe was an intellectual woman: she found pleasure in reading, travelling (although she did not travel much), enjoying art, especially the paintings of Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) and Poussin (1594-1665), who were her favourite. Her novels are full of descriptions of landscapes, and many of them contain elements of these two

painters: “She undoubtedly sought by such scenes to achieve in prose the same visionary effects she admired in the works of the seventeenth-century landscape painters Salvator Rosa, Claude, and Poussin” (Castle 2008: xv). From them she took the feeling of loneliness and the profoundness of her descriptions which are so vivid that they are brought to life, as they were at least painted. Just like the paintings she drew her inspiration from, her landscapes are obscure and silhouettes can hardly be perceived through a dim light. “To the warm imagination, the forms which float half-veiled in darkness afford a higher delight than the most distinct scenery the sun can show” (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 917). For Burke, obscurity is a key element to help display the complex emotions of pleasure and fear felt by the readers of Gothic fiction. Obscurity leads to terror which, in turn, results in sublime: “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror” (*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Idea of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 50). Sublime cannot exist without obscurity:

To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings. (*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Idea of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 80)

The mundane is imbued with signs of numinosity², where the sublime identifies with a religious non-rational experience (Otto 2018: 33). Characters feel awe, they perceive the presence of the supernatural, something beyond a logical explanation, as in *A Sicilian Romance*: “The scene inspired madame with reverential awe, and her thoughts involuntarily rose, ‘from Nature up to Nature’s God’” (*A Sicilian Romance*, 130).

²“The numinous, then, can be summed up as an affective state in which the percipient—through feelings of awe, mystery, and fascination—becomes aware of an objective spiritual presence” (Varnado 2015: 26).

3.4. Mystery

Action-centered novels, unlike the picaresque ones, Radcliffe's keep the reader in suspense, from the beginning to the end, although sometimes the ending is foreshadowed. Curious events enchain one after the other in an amazing atmosphere created by the unfamiliar Gothic buildings that turned into the heroes' home for a novel. The Castle Mazzini, for example, has not been entirely discovered by Julia and Emilia, although they spent their whole life in it.

As previously mentioned, two important elements play a crucial part in Radcliffe's fiction: the obscurity of the sublime. Unintelligible noises, indefinite sounds, events whose explanation perhaps goes beyond reason, and hardly, vaguely distinguished silhouettes in the darkness of the night or the dimmest light ever, magnified by anxiety, either the character's or the reader's.

3.5. Morality

Radcliffe's finds morality in the pastoral with dreary forests, as the rural is the ideal place to live in, as Raymond Williams puts it: "On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence and simple virtue". On the contrary, cities are "a place of noise, worldliness and ambition". The author's flawless Catholic morality emerges through her fiction, imbued with her own aesthetics. In the case of Montoni, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, there is a direct connection between morality and taste — defined as "the sense of what is appropriate, harmonious, or beautiful; *esp.* discernment and appreciation of the beautiful in nature or art; *spec.* the faculty of perceiving and enjoying what is excellent in art, literature, and the like" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*): he is a wicked man as a consequence of his lack of taste. Furthermore, virtue equals taste and sensibility: "Virtue and taste are nearly the same, for virtue is little more than active taste" (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 82).

3.6. The unconscious

Would it be possible for Radcliffe to owe her success, at least partially, to the unconscious? The unconscious has no constraints whatsoever, and in her novels it can also manifest anywhere. Hideous images reflecting the characters' dark side bring out to light the deepest experiences that left a print on their unconscious which should be paid attention so that they do not become destructive.

Common nightmares also appear in her novels: getting lost in some strange place, wandering about looking for a way out, or trying to escape from the pursuit of some evil people, or animals, or undefined entities, crossing small narrow claustrophobic places with no air to breathe. Her talent is at its best in these scenes and she achieves to awake the fear and the anguish in the reader's minds.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The present dissertation had as its starting point the idea that Gothic is present everywhere in our lives. The most relevant aspect of this style is the fact that it links us to the past, giving us the opportunity of travelling back in time to the 15th century. In terms of architecture, fortunately we can still admire Gothic monasteries, abbeys, cathedrals and bridges built in Gothic style, like the Abbey of Saint Denis in Paris, Sens Cathedral in Burgundy, France, Canterbury Cathedral in England and so many more examples of live history. Apart from architecture, Gothic has influenced all the areas of our cultural life: literature, cinema, music and fashion, just to name a few, modern Gothic writers like Diane Setterfield (1967-) or Kate Morton (1976-), films such as *Suspiria* (1977) or *The Orphanage* (2007) or the well-known music bands Depeche Mode and The Cure must also be mentioned. Gothic-styled fashion is characterized by the use of dark outfit, especially leather, exaggerated dark make-up, blue-black hair color, silver-made jewelry and women usually wear corsets. All this style had its starting point in the mediaeval times, when the concept of 'Gothic' began to be used.

I think it is important to understand what lies behind this style, as every detail has an explanation, perhaps not as logical as most of us would expect, and surely there are still many more aspects to be revealed. In this dissertation we have delved into the sublime, the terror and horror, the incipient feminist values, the male and female Gothic, the awe, the fear, the mysterious and wanted to join them in a compendium, in an attempt at providing a synthetic overview of the most important concepts related to Gothic literature, mainly focused on the female one, so brilliantly represented by Emily Brontë and Ann Radcliffe. We took into account the critics' theories on these issues and we were amazed by the massive interpretative potential that Gothic has, although I have to admit that I was expecting more research to have been done on Ann Radcliffe. That is the reason why our analysis has mainly focused on highlighting the importance of her contribution.

Why the insistence on female Gothic writers? Genre studies have recently acquired a considerable importance in literary criticism. As seen in the present study, even from the 18th century, Male Gothic literature (for instance *The Monk* (1796) by Matthew Gregory Lewis) and Female Gothic literature (for example *The Italian* (1797) by Ann Radcliffe) were differentiated in terms of specific characteristics such as themes, characters and narrative techniques; the former explicitly describes scenes like matricide, rape and incest, whereas the latter undermines the heroine.

A future corpus-based research comparing Male Gothic Literature and Female Gothic Literature could be carried out, with a focus on certain issues in order to establish scientifically proven evidence to illustrate the differences between the two perspectives of Gothic literature. The subject "The use of corpora in English studies" studied in this Online Master in English Studies offered us a solid basis for such a research, ICTs included (the Antc.Conc software is the key element to be used in this type of research).

However, there is still room for more topics to be investigated, apart from the genre studies. One prospective line of research could be that of revealing how the language used by the characters in Radcliffe's novels controls their future actions.

Likewise, we could concentrate on analyzing how the characters construct their inner world. This is one of the fields of study of neuro-linguistics, namely the neuro-linguistics programming (NLP), which

studies how we structure our subjective experience – how we think about our values and beliefs and how we create our emotional states – and how we construct our internal world from our experience and give it meaning. No event has meaning in itself, we give it meaning, and different people may give the same event different meanings. So NLP studies experience from the inside. (O'Connor 2001: ix).

On a personal note, I have to admit that I would love to carry out this type of research, as, after a personal experience that led to discovering and accepting another self, I am convinced that neuro-linguistics programming (NLP) has the capacity to make us better human beings. Gothic characters have a lot of potential, as they undergo a lot of drama and trauma, and their healing process is long and tormented, if there is any healing.

A more extensive research could be done on how Radcliffe conveys the vivid images of her favorite painters (Salvator Rosa, Claude or Poussin), all of them great landscape artists, into her scenery descriptions as she is a word-painter. There is almost no difference between the emotions caused by looking at painted scenery and those bloomed at reading Radcliffe's descriptions. In her novels, landscapes are a character in themselves. They have a story to tell, feelings to touch the readers' hearts, they connect to the human characters, they come hand in hand with female experiences, as well as they share a piece of the author's identity with the quiet witnesses to their fictional lives, namely her readers.

It would also be very interesting to do a more extensive research on Radcliffe's ideas about marriage and about where women stand with respect to properties. For the young female characters in her novels, the legal union between two people does not represent the loss of rights or freedom, but, on the contrary: married women are still free, not letting themselves to be controlled by the obsolete rules of their society. Radcliffe is a feminist: she imbued her characters with the spirit of a high self-esteem

which leads to a rational love for a man (see Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest*).

Having a close look at the range of vocabulary used to express the characters' emotions could also be of interest. Both male and female protagonists undergo a wide variety of feelings, sometimes in a very passionate way, and the study of how they served the sensibility in Gothic female novels would reveal their 'psychological complexity'. Being a Catholic left a noticeable print on Radcliffe's perspectives on the emotional and moral conflicts developed in her novels. Sometimes, her heroines had to take a stand between what was accepted by the society they were living in and how they wanted to live, which means being free of any constraints and free to bear the consequences of their choices.

I would like to conclude by saying that female Gothic writers fulfilled their role of breaking down the barriers established by the society of the 18th century. Their novels, particularly those of Ann Radcliffe, reflect the romantic tendency to escape from the reality of severe tensions: a world in which suffering, instead of tragically limiting existence, turns into a stimulus of the imagination.

Finally, the following quote leaves no doubt about the very essence of female Gothic fiction:

In this sense, Gothic fictions enact a dialogue between the continued unquestioning use of negative images of women and an awareness that such images merely work to sustain a misogynistic patriarchal inheritance. The Gothic, then, can be used to negotiate inherited, changing, and often contradictory female identities rooted deep in the cultural imagination. (Horner and Zlosnik 2016: 11)

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