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Gothic Discourses
Cultural Theories and the Contemporary Conceptions of Gothic Fiction

Supervisor: Professor Leszek Drong

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Introduction

Gothic Discourses is crucially concerned with the effect that cultural theories have had so far on contemporary conceptions of Gothic fiction. As a consequence, its primary focus is on secondary (i.e. critical) texts. What it traces in those texts are the instances of theory influencing the conceptions of both particular Gothic writings and the Gothic mode *per se*. The perspective taken in the dissertation is thus close to that of New Historicism; it is structured largely around Michel Foucault's notion of discourse and the production of objects through discourse. From this perspective, Gothic criticism, institutionalised as it is, itself functions within a certain discourse, or a set of discourses, and as a result it engages in sorting out which statements are true and false, which are possible and which not, and who has the right to speak, in a direct reference to its own discursive framework.

The result of such a way of critical operation is construing the Gothic through a discursive paradigm that has a high propensity for appropriation and remodelling. In order to make those visible in the way Gothic fiction has been conceptualised over the last fifty years, we shall perceive the Gothic as a mode whose character is always contemporaneous in the sense that its shaped by the immediate historical context, shared by the writer and the reader.[1] Moreover, we shall understand that context not as simply particular historical events, but as a set of discourses, social, political, economic and cultural, that were valid at the times when given texts were being written and read.[2] As it appears, it is only through the consideration of such discourses that the Gothic may be appropriately contextualised and illuminated.

What is understood by cultural theories are a number of broader socio-cultural perspectives that have been applied to the analysis of the Gothic since more or less the 1970s. That was the time when a major methodological shift in the approaches to literary criticism took place. The most significant of those is psychoanalysis, which had been applied to the Gothic from the early twentieth century, but whose use in the 1970's changed to embrace a more modern way of conducting literary analysis, and was

[1] Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 3.
[2] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 4.

backed up with historicist-sociological research. Apart from it, other major theories applied to the Gothic are identified as Marxism, or neo-Marxism, feminism[3] and gender, and then we may also speak of postructuralism, new historicism and postcolonialism.[4] Our immediate object of analysis, however, shall be the first three, that is psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism, and that is due to the special status they have been ascribed in the Gothic studies, namely, that of the theories which brought the Gothic to its contemporary critical prominence.

The reason for choosing to scrutinise secondary texts, critical readings from the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century, controversial as such a decision might seem, is the paradoxical status that the Gothic has attained nowadays. The mode has been undergoing a continuous and vibrant conceptualisation for about fifty years now. We are conscious of the fact that it constitutes a field of an immensely significant inquiry into the epochs in which particular texts were written and, perhaps above all, into the origins of the Western middle-class culture as we know it. Gothic classics, such as Ann Radcliffe or Mary Shelly, are taught as English literature without any objections being made, nor even thought of. Still, it appears extremely difficult to find an answer to even such a seemingly simple question as: 'What is the Gothic?' While various facets of what we perceive as constitutive of Gothic fiction are being under ongoing discussion, apparently, there has not emerged a set of clearly stated answers regarding them, in spite of years and years of research. This fact directs our attention from the text – the literary piece – to the critic who undertakes to illuminate it. The question to be posed is the following: why does the contemporary Gothic criticism represent, as it seems to do, the Gothic mode as a disjunctive mode, ungraspable in its variety and hybridity, and still not entirely accountable for, despite a surge of innovative and revealing surveys?

We need to remember that what the critics do while reading and commenting upon a text of the past, is construct it in the first place. From a new historicist perspective, this is inevitable; yet, it can be especially visible in the case of a mode such as Gothic fiction. For the Gothic has always functioned, it seems, through representations. It is, thus, immensely difficult to excavate it, and the process itself demands special care and caution. On the other hand, the field of Gothic criticism has itself become recently

[3] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 3.
[4] Jerrold E. Hogle, "Theorizing the Gothic," in *Teaching the Gothic*, ed. Anna Powell and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 34.

aware of the fact the unconditioned application of theory to the Gothic may result in creating a yet further set of representations, instead of illuminating what the Gothic is. This is because theories are also historical entities, and reflect their own contemporary conditions. As a result, as we consider the contemporary representation of the Gothic as disjoined, hybrid, and subversive in its multiplicity, what we may be dealing with is a result of projecting the assumptions on which a theory is based on a text which belongs to a thoroughly different, and distant, context.[5]

As a result, if we wish to illuminate the Gothic well, we must rely not solely on a theory, but also on a historicist enquiry.[6] What is more, we need to begin with a reassessment of the work already done in the field which has been concerned with conceptualising the Gothic. There is a particularly sound reason for departing from such a vantage point. As it seems, Gothic criticism has largely re-construed the Gothic from its adopted perspectives, and especially that of psychoanalysis; consequently, what we presently often take to be an inherently Gothic quality may prove to be, in reality, a quality upon which a given theory is based, and to which it is thus sensitive.[7] The result is the emergence of a specific Gothic theory, a representation upon which further representations are based, like Baudrillard's simulacra.[8] That is why a reconsideration of the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic may prove as illuminating with regard to Gothic fiction as a strictly literary analysis of Gothic texts.

Following such critics as Robert Miles, Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, we shall assume that the above-mentioned major theories, used to account for the Gothic, aim at establishing an atemporal truth. Consequently, applied to the Gothic text, they lead to its rewriting with attention being paid only to what is of interest to their own framework, and to obscuring, or proclaiming irrelevant, the features of the Gothic for which their framework cannot account. The result is a peculiar re-construction of the Gothic as an object. At the same time, this dissertation itself is founded on a theoretical premise, and thus might be seen as prone to carry out a similar process. However, our standpoint is not that theory is entirely irrelevant to the study of Gothic fiction, but rather that a theoretical analysis must always be qualified with references to the text's immediate

[5] Miles notices this happens in the case of psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism. Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 10.
[6] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 3-4.
[7] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 10.
[8] See e.g. Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp.166-184.

discursive background. In this way, we may be able to avoid imposing the theory's own premises on the Gothic text. Hence, as we shall attempt at 'deconstructing' the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic, at dissecting the rhetoric applied by the critics, and tracing the assumptions about the Gothic they make beforehand, we shall also make an effort to provide an insight into the discourses which might have influenced both the Gothic and its immediate reception.

What will undergo a particularly close scrutiny in the chapters to follow is, primarily, the assumption of the Gothic's subversiveness. While the contemporary Gothic criticism works to represent the Gothic as ungraspable, it nonetheless seems to emphasise that subversion and transgression are its inherent features. Those, in turn, are reflected, on the one hand, by the indefinability of the Gothic (as a genre and as a mode), which is often explained on account of the Gothic's ostensibly 'natural' refusal to abide by formal rules and respect generic boundaries, and, on the other hand, by the mode's early marginalisation, which the critics take to be a sign of the Gothic's inherent marginality, or even liminality. All in all, this dissertation attempts to show that the Gothic is not that much indefinable (though defining it demands of us to abandon the conventional ways in which we understand definition, and taking another perspective, more suitable for such a mode as the Gothic). Rather, its indefinability is a discursive function which is meant to allow the critics to define the mode the way they prefer, risking neither the emergence of a 'grand narrative,' nor exclusion on the basis of such a narrative. Also, its aim is to illustrate that the critics confound the assumed marginalisation of Gothic fiction with marginality, or the oppositional, abjected, or 'waste' status, which they tend to see as the Gothic's feature. Neither indefinability nor anti-Enlightenment attitude is inherent in Gothic fiction. Both, however, serve the critics to construct the Gothic so that it confirms their own standpoints, and thus serves their own agendas.

Gothic Representations: Working with Parchments

It should appear that working with the Gothic is like dealing with the subject which has been approached from so many angles that only the constant extension of its field (a phenomenon observable in the contemporary Gothic criticism, without a doubt) can unveil to the critic something new. Yet the benefit of the approach taken in this dissertation is that it allows for avoiding the propagation of new Gothic areas as it,

simultaneously, makes it possible to uncover interesting white spots on the Gothic map known so far. For the fact is that, while it is a terrain that has been trod by many, Gothic fiction is not a terrain that has been trod in each and every possible direction. Far from that. And this is, above all, because it is not an easy one.

The situation is highly complex. Certainly, the Gothic is not easy to explore owing to its own character. Michel Foucault writes, in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," that genealogy "operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times."[9] Certainly, when we think of the Gothic, we may have an impression that the same could be said about the Gothic critic. It is not an accident that Jerrold E. Hogle describes Gothic fiction as the literature of counterfeit, "grounded in fakery."[10] Let us remind ourselves that *The Castle of Otranto*, allegedly the first Gothic novel, became, most probably, the most famous for its two prefaces and the hoax they play with. Perhaps Horace Walpole does not use the exact word 'parchment,' but he speaks of the manuscript, from the bygone era, which constitutes a written version of a vernacular account which was, after centuries, translated by an English gentleman. In this way, is not his story presented as a confused document, recopied many times? And, as the hoax is uncovered and the author admits fakery, is not the critic, working on his text, dealing with a yet more confused 'parchment,' scratched over at least twice? Then, as Clara Reeve modifies Walpole's story to adapt it to her own vision of the useful supernatural, we may see that the text is scratched over again. Robert Miles is right to observe that Gothic motives and features are not simply rehearsed and recopied, but instead "Gothic texts revise one another, here opening up ideologically charged issues, there enforcing a closure."[11] As a result, we may assume that the Gothic genre is a field which resembles the genealogist's parchment to a large extent. In fact, this extent is so large, that we can hardly perceive the Gothic as a genre. It appears much more adequate to view it as a mode.

This is, however, not the only way in which we may perceive the Gothic as an entangled parchment, rewritten many times. Although the term itself was not used until the early twentieth century,[12] Gothic fiction emerged at the times of Enlightenment, in the eighteenth-century Britain, which witnessed the extensive rewriting of history

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[9] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 76.
[10] Jerrold E. Hogle, "The Gothic Ghost of the Counterfeit and the Process of Abjection," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 293.
[11] Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 3.
[12] Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 12.

according to the Whiggish paradigm.[13] Next, this very same period, as observes Douglas Lane Patey, was 'rewritten' by Romanticism. As he states, in many histories of literary criticism, the "evolution [of criticism from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth] itself (and thus the eighteenth century from which it began) has been construed according to Romanticism's own account of its nature and origins."[14] To a scholar familiar with the field of Gothic studies, the notion that Romanticism 'dealt away' with the Gothic, pushing it out of the sphere of high art and the proper occupation of a learned person (a move later on reaffirmed by Leavisite literary criticism), is not at all an unfamiliar one. Dealing with the Gothic, then, may all the more seem to resemble uncovering layers of a recopied text on a parchment that is no longer entirely decipherable.

In this way, we have already identified two planes on which the Gothic mode could be proven to be marked by white spots. Yet as we move from Gothic fiction itself to the way it has been represented by the critics in the past centuries, there emerges yet another plane which should appear worthy of looking at. Surely, a particular representation of the Gothic (or rather, once we remind ourselves that the Gothic as a fixed notion did not exist before the twentieth century, of the popular romance/novel internalizing the superstitious, the unreasonable, and the supernatural) is offered for a scrutiny by the eighteenth-century critics themselves. We might, as well, search for some representations from the period of time between the middle nineteenth and the early twentieth century. This option proves especially tempting if we remember that once we are told that a certain period did not produce any significant representations,[15] we are also faced with a representation. Realising this fact, in turn, brings to our attention yet another fact, namely, that what we are offered by the contemporary criticism of Gothic fiction, that is the criticism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, is also a given representation of the Gothic, a given recopied 'parchment.'

The issue of the influence which the adopted methodology has on interpretation is not a new one in the field of literary studies. In a way, this dissertation engages with is as well. This is because it departs from the scrutiny of the Gothic text and, instead, turns

[13] Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 219-220.
[14] Douglas Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth century," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 4: *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 7.
[15] See, for instance, Jerrold E. Hoggles and Adam Smith's "Revisiting the Gothic and Theory: An Introduction," *Gothic Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2009), p. 3.

to the scrutiny of the critical text that construes the Gothic. As it has been stated above, the Gothic is a difficult, riven terrain, primarily because it is not available to us in its entirety. Dealing with it, we are not granted an immediate insight into the peculiarities of its historical context, for we already look at that context through the lens of how the following centuries construed it. And even if we were granted such an insight, what we would witness would be a highly complex structure, inherent in a period following a major cultural, social, and political change. All the more, we should remain cautious while dealing with the artefacts of that period – and the Gothic certainly represents such an artefact.

Theory: Tracing Discursive Inflections

Adopting the 'meta' perspective and turning to the investigation of Gothic criticism instead of Gothic literature has major benefits. It may tell us something about the deficiencies of the contemporary methodologies applied to the interpretation of Gothic fiction, and the inaccuracies that result from the interpretive process. However, above all, it may enable us to recover something of the missing part of the parchment (or to explore obscure areas), and thus it may help us to better understand the literary phenomenon we are dealing with. Therefore, rather than at a scrutiny of given interpretations of Gothic literary texts, this dissertation aims at a scrutiny of the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic. These, in turn, demand of us investigating into how the contemporary cultural theories have been appropriated as the tools of the Gothic critic.

There are particular reasons why cultural theories become our immediate focus. For one thing, it has already been pointed out, in the field of Gothic criticism, that the application of theory to the study of Gothic fiction may, and often does, result in miscomprehension. The examples of arguments that have been made over, approximately, the last two decades, coming mainly from such scholars as Robert Miles, Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, or Markman Ellis, make us sensitive to the fact that theory will often, and inescapably, enforce its own premises on the text. But, for another thing, we also need to remember that the rise of theory had a major impact on the development and flourishing of Gothic criticism, and contributed largely to, if not actually made possible, the emergence of Gothic studies. This is the way in which it is often represented by critics who endeavour to sketch what we could call a history of

Gothic criticism, most notably Maggie Kilgour and Fred Botting. And thus, unsurprisingly perhaps, theory plays a crucial part in the narrative of the rise of the contemporary Gothic criticism.

This dissertation draws from a number of critics identified nowadays as carrying out the new historicist type of inquiry into the Gothic. Of those, we have already enumerated Miles, whose application of Michel Foucault's genealogy in his *Gothic Writing* makes him particularly close to us from the perspective of the adopted methodology, and Ellis, who dismisses psychoanalysis as a tool for scrutinising the Gothic.[16] We shall also refer frequently to E.J. Clery and James Watt. However, the idea for this dissertation was inspired above all by Baldick and Mighall's article "Gothic Criticism," first published in 2000. Baldick and Mighall not only point to the fact that a strand of Gothic criticism (which they refer to as 'Gothic Criticism') has dehistoricised the Gothic and appropriated it to their own needs so that it could serve their own political agenda, and reconceptualised it so that political subversion and psychological depth have become its major qualities.[17] They also emphasise the fact that the Gothic is an inherently bourgeois genre,[18] not an anti-bourgeois or anti-Enlightenment one, and point to the ways in which the perception of Gothic fiction has been, since the early twentieth century, based on two crucial misconceptions: of the Gothic's Romanticist alliance and of its confluence with psychoanalysis.[19] As they point out,[20] and we shall see, those misconceptions are still at the root of the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic discussed in this dissertation. In fact, they seem to have become inherent in what we shall call the theory of the Gothic – a theory of Gothic fiction which becomes a methodological tool of scrutiny in itself. It is also worth mentioning that Baldick and Mighall recognise the assertion of the bourgeois anxiety reflected in the Gothic to be mistaken, in this way undermining another *a priori* critical assumption about Gothic fiction. They also point to the fact that while many of the contemporary studies of the Gothic claim to be historicist, they nonetheless turn from history to psychology and dehistoricise Gothic fiction as soon as they turn out to rely on the assumption that the

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[16] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 13.
[17] Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 209-210.
[18] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 226.
[19] See the discussion on this topic in Bladick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticsm," pp. 212-213.
[20] See, for example, their discussion of David Punter. Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 214-215.

Gothic reflects anxieties.[21] This we shall notice as well in the course of our own analyses of critical texts.

It is an interesting fact that Michel Foucault's remarks on the repressive hypothesis seem to parallel Baldick and Mighall's argument about the Gothic Criticism's approach to the Gothic as presented above. In fact, as the two critics elaborate on the ways in which Gothic Criticism reworks the Gothic so that the mode may became a sign of subversion in the bourgeois cultural system, we may feel tempted to observe that this calls for a comparison with Foucault's chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, "We 'Other Victorians.'" It is in this chapter that Foucault famously puts forth his analysis of the repressive hypothesis. And he makes the following observation on sex and its status as established by the prudish Victorians: "If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom. This explains the solemnity with which one speaks of sex nowadays."[22] It does not seem a correct approach to substitute the Gothic for sex in this quotation, but nonetheless we may observe some parallels between the way Foucault speaks of the present-day willingness to liberate sex, and the way Baldick and Mighall speak of the critics willingness to deal with the Gothic. They state: "the cultural politics of modern critical debate grant to vindicators of the marginalised or repressed a special licence to evade questions of artistic merit."[23] What is more, as they discuss the figure of the vampire, so appealing to the contemporary criticism, they notice: "The 'liberation' that the vampire brings is principally sexual liberation, the basis of our own modernity and enlightenment."[24] What they, thus, point to is that the Gothic becomes interesting to the critics for a particular 'political' reason, and speaking about it is seen as 'a cause,' an act of liberation. Similarly, speaking about sex becomes a matter of a political cause and liberation. In both cases, however, this cause is based on false presumptions.

It is telling that Gothic criticism, on the one hand, construes its own history, and on the other, contests the conceptions of the Gothic as informed by the critic's own socio-

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[21] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 221-222.
[22] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, *Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books), p. 6.
[23] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 210.
[24] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 224.

political stance. What this testifies to is the fact that Gothic criticism may be seen as characterised by a particular sense of critical self-consciousness: the ability to look back upon its own body. Suzanne Rintoul's review article "Gothic Anxieties: Struggling with a Definition" (2005) illustrates well this ability. The article is devoted to the question of how critics deal with defining Gothic fiction. It opens, rather tellingly, with a direct reference to Maggie Kilgour's proclamation of her own experience of horror, triggered by the growth of Gothic criticism, at the end of the twentieth century. Within the length of a paragraph, Rintoul is quick to situate the origin of Kilgour's horror in the common anxiety about the uncertain boundaries of the genre. As the latter sees the 'swelling' of Gothic criticism as a clearly positive phenomenon, stressing its recognition by the academic circle, she cannot be frightened by its poor quality, but rather by its "overwhelming quantity,"[25] and for a good reason. Rintoul writes: "But what does Kilgour find so especially frightening about this growth in Gothic criticism? Is it that the Gothic itself narrativizes anxieties? Perhaps a more likely reason is that the anxieties thematized in the Gothic are so spectral, so indecipherable and sublimely broad. By extension, then, the 'problem' of too much Gothic criticism lies in the difficulty of defining—of containing—the genre."[26] Thus identified, the problem of 'the excess' of Gothic criticism is further on summarised in the following way: "just as individual narratives compete with each other within the genre to represent fragmentation and disjunction, so criticism of the genre follows this same trend to represent the genre itself as fragmented and disjointed."[27] In other words, the less straightforward the characteristics of the Gothic genre, the greater the dispersion of the ways in which it can be approached; the result is the surge of Gothic criticism. Analogously, we should say that the greater the surge of criticism, the greater the dispersion of yet further possible ways of theorising the mode, and hence – the fewer the possibilities of reaching an agreement over a meta-definition.

The question of definition is one of the major topics discussed in this dissertation. The assumption of the Gothic's openness as a category appears to be particularly characteristic of the field of Gothic criticism. However, Rintoul is valuable to us since she also passes an immensely intriguing comment on the figure of the critic, presenting him or her as an active partaker in the shaping of his or her own object. And, as we shall

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[25] Suzanne Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties: Struggling with a Definition," *Eighteenth-century Fiction*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2005), p. 701.
[26] Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties," p. 701.
[27] Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties," p. 702.

claim, the self-consciousness of the contemporary Gothic critic is one which takes its fullest form while it proceeds towards the complete realisation of Botting's seemingly plain and unsurprising statement: that critical engagements with the Gothic are "clearly affected by changing critical positions."[28] To have it our way, we could say that the Gothic critics show the greatest consciousness of their own field and status as they realise that it is the critics themselves who *construct* their objects of study. This, as we shall pose, however, is not always realised by them, which results in misconceiving the Gothic and re-writing, re-construing, or re-constructing it in fact, in accordance with the assumptions underlying the applied methodology. On the other hand, once fully realised, it ought to allow for a detailed analysis of what the Gothic actually is, and how it can be best illuminated.

The considerations of the critical self-consciousness, its manifestations and implications for the analysis of how Gothic criticism construes, organises and actively re-works its own field are the major focus of Chapter I, "The History of Gothic Criticism," and Chapter I, "Gothic Counter-Histories." Chapter I is devoted to an interrogation of the available representations of the history of Gothic criticism. Such representations are offered, sometimes indirectly, in a number of self-reflexive texts – articles, chapters, subchapters, very often introductions and prefaces – in which critics undertake to account for the development of their field. As we scrutinise them, our basic assertion is that we may point to a particular functional paradigm according to which the perception of the history of Gothic criticism is often organised. This paradigm, in turn, may be linked with the widely assumed subversiveness of the Gothic mode. Significantly, change, rather than steady evolution, emerges as an important dynamics in the discussed 'Gothic' histories, the force propelling, if not enabling, the achievement of the contemporary status of both Gothic fiction and its critic. Hence, as the Gothic histories considered in Chapter I all seem to depend on a clearly stated moment of cutting off from the earlier scholarship, the paradigm which governs them will be termed the differentiation paradigm.

Chapter II, in turn, considers the critical self-consciousness as manifested in the course of the on-going debate on the applicability of cultural theories to the Gothic, or, in other words, on the available ways of theorising it. What becomes especially visible when we turn to this matter is the growing awareness that the choice of a critical

[28] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 17-18.

approach has its impact on the perception of a work, and that a critical reading of a text may prove informed by the adopted methodological perspective to the point of actually being re-written by the critic. What the critic sees in a text, in other words, are the traits (sometimes projected rather than present) that the adopted methodology is sensitive to, and that allow themselves to be summarised and accounted for according to the theory which was the basis for devising the methodology. Simultaneously, what falls outside the spectrum of theory's interest vanishes from sight. Elaborating on this type of critical self-consciousness shall further on prove vital to our understanding of the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic mode.

Chapter III, "Constructing the Gothic: Gothic Criticism and Discourse," elaborates on the methodological approach that we take while analysing critical texts. The basis for our methodology is Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and his remarks on the formation of objects. The usefulness of Foucault to our considerations stems not only from the fact that he pinpoints the value that is nowadays ascribed to the liberation from repression allegedly enforced by the bourgeoisie. It lies also in the fact that Foucault theorises the very period in which the Gothic emerges, and the fact that he stresses, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, that objects are always constructs. But above all, Foucault theorises discourse, and discourse proves to be a crucial tool for reassessing contemporary conceptions of the Gothic.

A considerable portion of Chapter III is devoted to the consideration of the notion of the so called 'overinterpretation.' In the course of the discussion, we look at this notion from the perspectives offered by such prominent figures as Umberto Eco, Jonathan Culler and Richard Rorty (whose exchange of views in the volume *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* of Tanner Lectures in Human Values prove immensely valuable to us at that point) in order to establish the perspective on meaning that is to be adopted in the dissertation. According to this perspective, we cannot fully account for Gothic fiction without acknowledging that part of the 'meaning' of the text is always conditioned by the specific historical background of the author and the reader. In other words, we are not be able to understand the Gothic and the peculiarities of its riven terrain without historicising it. However, the way we need to historicise it is not limited, as Robert Miles' *Gothic Writing* shows, to referring Gothic fictions to particular historical events. Instead, we need to refer to its own historical, discursive context.

It is at this point that Michel Foucault proves particularly useful to us. The way he conceptualises discourse, in, above all, his short lecture "The Order of Discourse", is

vital to our understanding of what conditioned the actual significance and signification that Gothic fictions might have had for their immediate reading audiences. It is also vital for our understanding of what meaning could not be 'uttered' by Gothic texts in their immediate discursive background, and should be, consequently, ascribed to the immediate discursive background of present-day critics. For present-day critics also operate within a general critical order of discourse, as Paul A. Bové makes it clear.[29] Interestingly, the two major cultural theories which have been frequently applied to Gothic fiction, psychoanalysis and Marxism, are seen by Foucault himself as examples of discourses as such.[30] As a result, if not properly qualified by the recognition of the original discursive background(s) of the Gothic, the conceptions of the mode construed by the critics who use cultural theories are inescapably prone to appropriations and re-constructions resulting from the demands of the adopted discursive framework.

Chapter IV, "Foucault: The Monster(s) and the Critics" (which playfully establishes a link with J.R.R. Tolkien's early meta-critical lecture of 1936, titled "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," treating on the critical reception of *Beowulf*[31]) considers examples of the ways in which Foucault's theory has been applied so far to the scrutiny of the Gothic. First, it is concerned with how Miles utilises Foucault's genealogy in *Gothic Writing* and, simultaneously, comments on the similarities and differences between Miles and the approach taken in this dissertation. Then, however, it turns to the scrutiny of the ways in which the discourse of Gothic criticism is capable to adjust theory so that is appears to confirm preconceived assumptions about the character of Gothic fiction. In a sense, then, Chapter IV shows how a theory of the Gothic, established by now, influences the critical reading grounded in a cultural theory, allowing for the appropriation of the critic's own tools. To be more precise, it looks at certain instances of using Foucault's texts by Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, and analyses them in order to show, in each of the cases, how the application of Foucault's thought is being subtly conditioned by the assumptions about the Gothic made beforehand. Those assumption are often traced, in turn, to the impact of psychoanalysis on the Gothic studies and the assumption about the Gothic's anti-Enlightenment drive.

[29] See Paul A. Bové, "Discourse" in "Introduction: Discourse," in *Mastering Discourse: The Politics of Intellectual Culture* (Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 1-4.
[30] Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Book, 1984), pp. 114-115.
[31] See J.R.R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins*Publishers*, 2006), pp. 5-48.

In the course of Chapter I, we are able to see that the assumption of the Gothic's subversion underlies the historical narrative within the differentiation paradigm. In the final two chapters of the dissertation, we attempt at undermining this assumption approaching it from two different angles: that of the Gothic's assumed indefinability (which we have already pointed to above) and that of its seeming anti-middle-class and anti-Enlightenment attitude, resulting in its alleged marginalisation.

Chapter V, "Gothic Definition(s): Shopping for the Gothic," is devoted to the question of the Gothic's definition. In it, we view the Gothic's alleged resistance to classification, denying of generic boundaries, and formal transgression as a discursive function. What links the consideration of the Gothic definition to the question of subversion is the matter of liberation. We assert that the assumed indefinability of the Gothic stems less from the actual impossibility of finding common axes for the Gothic material (these could be, for instance, established in the form of genealogies, as suggested by Miles[32]) than from a fear of a grand narrative[33] that might limit the number of available paths for the scrutiny of the mode (and, thus, constrain the mode itself as well). This fear, as we shall see, is entirely congruent with the history of Gothic criticism as construed by the differentiation paradigm. Moreover, what is in fact achieved through assuming the Gothic's indefinability is a creation of a paradoxically unified (under the heading 'Gothic fiction'), vast and potentially unlimited sphere for constructing individual definitions that might enjoy an equal status and coexist while proving to be mutually exclusive.

Chapter V analyses a number of such individual definitions. It begins with a critic from the period of early Gothic scholarship, J.M.S. Tompkins, and then it contrast her definition of the Gothic with that of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a critic of the borderline between the earlier and contemporary criticism, as established by the differentiation paradigm's history of the Gothic criticism. In this way, it attempts to undermine the paradigmatic assumption that there was a major liberating rift between the late twentieth-century criticism and that of the mid and early century. Next, we move on to discuss a number of subsequent critics, beginning with David Punter and ending with Anne Williams, in order to show that each time the critic attempts at defining the Gothic

[32] See Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 8-9.
[33] The term 'grand narrative' as used here corresponds to the concept of grand narratives as defined by Jean-Francois Lyotard. See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *A Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press). In applying it to the field of literary history, we follow Miles. See Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 199.

(and especially via the application of cultural theories), he or she actually readjusts it to the discursive framework adopted. Meanwhile, as the critics work to include more and more literary works into the field of the Gothic, the definitions they propose increasingly obscure the mode's possible limits. All in all, we attempt to show that while the critics uphold the general assumption that the Gothic cannot be limited for the sake of preserving its multifaceted, complex nature from appropriation, they in fact work actively to appropriate, limit and reshape it according to their own projected needs.

Finally, Chapter VI, "Gothic Fiction of the Eighteenth Century and the Narrative of Marginalisation," is aimed at reassessing the assumption of the Gothic's anti-Enlightenment and anti-bourgeois drive. Its major object of analysis is the commonly accepted historical account that the Gothic has been, on the grounds of its representing a social threat, a genre marginalised already by the eighteenth-century critics. To this end, the chapter draws on mainly two introductory texts by Fred Botting, his preface to the collective volume *The Gothic* and the general introduction to Critical Concepts Series' *Gothic*, written together with Dale Townshend. Again, similarly to the indefinability of the Gothic, its marginalisation is seen as a discursively functional notion. While the contemporary critics take liberation of the Gothic to be one of the major bedrocks of their own modern success in the academy, the fact is that they themselves often establish the value of Gothic fiction as grounded in its status of 'culture's waste,' or abject. What the Gothic, thus, is priced for by them is the fact that it reveals what culture throws off and represses at the time when the middle-class identity is still in formation, or what this culture hails as its opposite, against which it may define itself. In this way, the marginalisation of the Gothic becomes the proof for the mode's inherent marginality (characterised by subversion and transgression of what is acceptable), and this, in turn, becomes the basis for the mode's cultural value. Consequently, as we shall see, psychoanalysis does account for the contemporary conception of the Gothic to a large degree.

Following in the footsteps of Baldick and Mighall, we approach thus delimited conception of the Gothic with the assumption that the mode, quite on the contrary, participates in the operation of the positive mechanism of power. To this end, we refer to the new historicist accounts of the rise of Gothic fiction of Emma Clery and James Watt to show how the Gothic, in fact, actually actively worked to internalise the various empowered discourses of the eighteenth-century, including the critical one. Most

importantly, however, we attempt at contextualising the eighteenth-century critical responses to the Gothic with the aid of Gary Day's *Literary Criticism: A New History*.

In general Day is interested primarily in the criticism of poetry and drama, and not the novel/romance form. However, his approach is immensely useful to our considerations, primarily because such a focus on the prevailing critical trends outside of the new form of the novel directs our attention to the very gaps and fissures in the critical discourse which actually make the rise of the Gothic both possible and an entirely eighteenth-century affair. In the first place, Day conceptualises the eighteenth-century criticism as highly influenced by the new idiom of commerce. This, together with Clery's considerations of the ways in which the rise of supernatural fiction was triggered by commercialism, allows us to see that whereas the Gothic must have been, inescapably, rejected from the perspective of the utilitarian and moral function of the novel, of the exemplary historicism, and of neoclassicism, its emergence in the form of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* was fully justified from the perspective of the rising economic discourse. This, in turn, as various ways in which the Gothic copies and reaffirms the major middle-class trends, customs and beliefs, precludes seeing the mode as an anti-bourgeois one. Furthermore, both Day's considerations of neoclassicism, taste and imagination as eighteenth-century means to ground literary value in the face of the commercialisation of literature, and Clery's emphasis laid on the operation of civic humanism, may serve to undermine the assumption that the Gothic was an anti-Enlightenment mode. As we shall see, the Enlightenment period in Britain was a period of major discursive shifts and clashes, of which the Gothic is painfully aware, and which it reflects to a large degree. Hence, it is ostensibly rooted in the era which spawned it, bearing a mark of this era's inconsistencies, crucial problems, and dramatic changes. And it is in testifying to these, as we shall claim, that its actual value appears to lie.

In the course of the considerations and analyses carried out in *Gothic Discourse*, we wish to show that Gothic criticism indeed actively re-works the Gothic. This, in turn, takes place through the process of object formation as described by Foucault. Whenever the Gothic is approached through a cultural theory, and the approach is not qualified by the consideration of the mode's discursive background, its conception is constructed according to the discursive framework from within which the critic works. The result is a re-shaping of the Gothic which, indeed, tends to obscure our understanding of the mode instead of illuminating what the Gothic actually is.

A note about the usage of terms.

The following dissertation does not assume the Gothic to belong specifically to the category of either novel or romance. Hence, the form 'novel/romance' was used in the Introduction. In the chapters that follow, we use both forms 'the Gothic novel' and 'the Gothic romance' to refer to the Gothic mode. This is for the reason that, as critics often observe, 'novel' and 'romance' were not thoroughly clear-cut notions at the time of the rise of Gothic fiction, and even today one may encounter various positions on whether Gothic works should be referred to as novels or romances (consider the example of Botting and Townshend, who would perceive the Gothic as romance and of Kilgour, who titles her study *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. In a way, the choice of the particular term may also be seen as reflecting the critic's own agenda). Establishing which is more appropriate is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and, in fact runs counter to its logic. However, often, choosing to use one of the terms, we follow the particular critic under discussion.

Chapter I
A History of Gothic Criticism

In the introduction we have already recognised that the turn towards theory in literary studies in the late twentieth century is identified as the basis for the emergence of Gothic criticism as we know it today. The following chapter discusses the way in which a major strand of contemporary Gothic criticism organises its history and the relationship between contemporary Gothic criticism and criticism of the past. As a result, the chapter presents us with a general paradigm for the representation of Gothic criticism's history, which is called the differentiation paradigm further on. The basis for historical representation within this paradigm is the fact that the contemporary criticism cuts itself off from earlier scholarship on the basis of its assumed positive approach towards the Gothic, more appropriate methodology, and the drive towards liberation. Next, the chapter discusses David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* as a seminal study within the paradigm, and points to the fact that the study does not represent an emergence of an entirely new perspective on the Gothic, which could be straightforwardly contrasted with the former one. It also analyses a general representation of the critical history as all-embracing thanks to the assumption that the Gothic is a subversive mode, and, finally, brings about some individual cases of departures from this general representation. These considerations will allow us to see that the differentiation paradigm is a highly functional paradigm for representing Gothic criticism and its past in the field of Gothic studies, for it gives this field a sense of unity despite the field's inherent multifariousness. At the end, however, we shall see that the matter of how criticism represents its history, nonetheless, depends on the perspective it adopts and on its perceived aims.

1.1. The Differentiation Paradigm

It was already mentioned that a particularly interesting characteristic of Gothic criticism is its self-consciousness. This characteristic, the self-consciousness of Gothic criticism, may be observed on several different levels of critical activity. It is manifested, in the first place, in the way in which Gothic criticism has grown capable

and willing to look upon its own body. As we may observe, the Gothic critic has a well-defined sense of belonging to a certain group which occupies a certain place among other strands of literary criticism, and is able to determine the past of this group, and make speculations about its future. Such a critical self-consciousness can be detected in the plethora of available student companions to the Gothic, treating its history, critical approaches, and applicable ways of reading. It is their editors who are obliged in the first place to chew over and over again the questions of "What is Gothic?" and "What is the significance of Gothic fiction for the contemporary Western culture?" Next, the self-consciousness of the Gothic critic is also epitomized by the fact that there are available books on the methodology of teaching the Gothic, such as Diane Long Hoeveler and Tamar Heller's *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction* and Anna Powell and Andrew Smith's *Teaching the Gothic*. This very same self-consciousness becomes evident, too, if we consider the wide range of topics elaborated on in *Gothic Studies*, the academic journal devoted to the study of the Gothic. And finally, this very same self-consciousness proves undeniable as soon as we realize that there has been launched a debate over the suitability of the very critical approaches and prerogatives which once allowed the Gothic to become recognised as a fully privileged literary mode.

Critical self-consciousness manifests itself primarily in the ways in which Gothic criticism has structured its own history. As a consequence, such sources as Maggie Kilgour's final chapter of *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, "The Rise of Gothic Criticism," or Fred Botting's introduction to his widely known *Gothic*, both discussed below, cannot serve the purpose of our considerations too well. What both of them testify to and illustrate is that the Gothic critic, a discrete entity, is a self-conscious critic. Kilgour presents us with a brief yet telling account of the twentieth-century history of Gothic criticism, simultaneously giving some interesting evaluative comments. Botting, co-editing the *Critical Concepts* series on the Gothic (a four-volume collection of Gothic criticism, published in 2004) with Dale Townshend, as well as writing on his own, contributes greatly to the representation of a certain path of the development of the Gothic critic and his or her place in the general field of literary criticism. The overall picture he sketches may be seen as reinforced by other critical accounts – or undermined, if we consider undertones detectable in them. Andrew Smith, Jerrold E. Hogle, Donna Heiland and others also provide us with exemplary histories of Gothic criticism, and shall be mentioned in the course of this chapter.

Let us now turn to the representation of the history of Gothic criticism offered by the abovementioned critics. Both Kilgour's overview of Gothic criticism in *The Rise of Gothic Novel* and Botting's introduction to his popular *Gothic* (1996) locate the beginning of the criticism devoted to Gothic fiction in the early twentieth century. The key names of early critics that appear in both texts are those of Edith Birkhead, J.M.S. Tompkins, Michael Sadleir, Eino Railo, Mario Praz and, finally, Montague Summers. For Botting, Davendra P. Varma comes to represent the mid-century critical interest in Gothic fiction, and further contributions from the 1960s and 1970s come from G. R. Thompson, Robert Hume, David Platzner, Robert Kiely and Masao Miyoshi. To that list, Andrew Smith, in his brief introductory sub-chapter in *Gothic Literature* (2007), of the *Edinburgh Critical Guides to Literature* series, adds Dorothy Scarborough as an early critic. What he also adds is a strong emphasis on the significance of the names on the list after 1979, which are those of David Punter and Rosemary Jackson, who published their studies on Gothic fiction at the dawn of the 1980s. Punter's work, Smith asserts, inaugurates "the modern era of theoretically informed criticism," as well as "[provides] the first rigorous analysis of the Gothic tradition and suggested ways in which Gothic texts could be read through a combination of Marxist and psychoanalytical perspectives."[1] After Punter, as Smith states, there came "many groundbreaking contributions,"[2] which helped to shape the major contemporary approaches to the Gothic. Botting, having enumerated Punter as well, identifies the major of these as the works of Franco Moretti, Ronald Paulson, Ellen Moers, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Jerrold Hogle and Robert Miles, in the order given.[3]

Both Botting and Kilgour devote their attention to various stages of the development of Gothic criticism, though each of them has a different method. While Botting enumerates particular contributions to the study of the Gothic from the 1920s to 1990s, Kilgour moves from the early critics to a surrealist, André Breton, and discusses how the Gothic had been dominated by readings rooted in psychoanalysis until the introduction of Marxist and feminist approaches at the end of the twentieth century,[4] without identifying any further specific names. Smith, over ten years later, organises his survey of Gothic criticism in an alternative way. The fact that he jumps, at least at the

[1] Andrew Smith, Introduction to *Gothic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 5.
[2] Smith, Introduction to *Gothic Literature*, p. 5.
[3] Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 218; Botting, *Gothic* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 17-20.
[4] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, pp. 220-221.

beginning of his subchapter, from Varma (the 1950s) to Punter (the 1980s), without mentioning any other names in between, and pinpoints the precise moment at which the contemporary criticism was launched (the year 1980), is telling, as it uncovers a general assumption at work. This general assumption emerges in full shape in the following statement from Botting's preface to *The Gothic*:

> *[until] recently, with the rapid expansion of critical studies of the genre, the value of gothic texts has not been in doubt: judgements have concurred, less stridently maybe, with eighteenth-century criticism.* Though returning in popular forms for over two centuries, gothic fiction received little critical examination other than as literary curiosities, objects of antiquarian and even arcane scholarly interest. Any value discerned was no more than negative value: bad forms, styles and stories, like the villains, vices, crimes and monstrosities that populated them, at best served as cautionary examples allowing readers to distinguish what was aesthetically pleasing and uplifting from what was demonstrably unacceptable.[5]

We may observe how a demarcating line is being introduced here between the contemporary Gothic criticism and the prior criticism that engaged – infrequently and with reserve, we should perhaps add – in the considerations of Gothic fiction.

The premise that the situation described above, one of critical neglect and dismissal, has been reversed, and a new era of Gothic criticism has been launched, underlies the position of both Kilgour and Botting. If we depart from this premise, the history of Gothic criticism can be divided first of all into two basic phases: that of disparagement, neglect and distance, and that of acknowledgement, embrace and incorporation. This becomes clear at once as Kilgour describes the attitude of the early critics as, in most cases, characterised by "still a somewhat apologetic tone, reflecting a slight embarrassment in their own interests in the lurid subject."[6] She writes: "Edith Birkhead, for example, ends her study by trivialising her subject as a form that doesn't 'reflect real life, or reveal character, or display humour' (which she presumably thinks are things worth doing), but is 'full of sentimentality, and it stirred the emotions of pity and thrill' but only in order finally 'to produce a thrill.'"[7] Botting, similarly, states that the critical interest in the Gothic was initially limited to treating it as a peripheral incarnation of the

[5] Fred Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, ed. Fred Botting (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. 2. Emphasis mine.
[6] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 218.
[7] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 218.

developing novel form.[8] As he observes, in early critical works the Gothic is frequently discussed in the context of Romanticism and, hence, limited to a darker version of a major current: "[b]roader definitions of Romanticism, like those by Eino Railo and Mario Praz, include Gothic writings, but as examples of less ideal themes of violence, incest, passion and agony: Gothic becomes the dark or negative side to Romanticism."[9] A slightly different case could be that of Summers, who is referred to by Kilgour as propagating the Gothic as a serious art form, thus inverting the established hierarchy of literary tastes in a truly Walpolean style.[10] However, although his writings, similarly to those of Varma in the mid-century, are seen as aimed at recuperating the Gothic,[11] they are still found to construe Gothic fiction as "the means against which the detritus of the modern fictional tradition may be measured," or to prove "defensively apologetic," and as such join Botting and Townshend's extended list of critics whose works are underpinned by the discourse of disparagement (even if unintended) up till the 1980s.[12]

In the abovementioned critical account, the division between the period of disparagement and embrace is clearly paralleled by a division between methodological stances. Summers constitutes a good example here. Kilgour notes that he discusses the Gothic as an escapist form by insisting on its conservative and reactionary rather than revolutionary inclinations, the latter ascribed to it by surrealist critics such as Breton. As she points out, the chief function of Gothic fiction is, according to Summers, escapist: in the Gothic, the dullness of this world is exchanged for something more, and "a longing for the past" is satisfied.[13] Botting, on the other hand, sees Summers, just as he also sees Varma, as finding the Gothic appealing due to its anti-realistic and anti-rationalist character, "its quest […] for a realm of mysterious, mystical and holy."[14] The anti-rationalist and pro-Romantic representation of the Gothic construed in this way becomes the basis for Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall's placing of Summers, Varma and Punter in a line of succession.[15] As a result, we might view the contemporary criticism as indebted to both critics of the previous period. However, if we return to the

[8] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 18.
[9] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 18.
[10] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 218.
[11] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 18.
[12] Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, "General Introduction," in *Gothic*, ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, vol. 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 13-14; The other critics added to the list are Coral Ann Howells and Elisabeth MacAndrew.
[13] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 219.
[14] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 18.
[15] Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 214-15.

histories sketched by Kilgour and Botting, we will quickly notice that the early works are still presented as 'other,' even if their influence is acknowledged in passing. According to Kilgour, Summers not only irritates the contemporary critic with his pompous tone, but also represents the conservative and reactionary critical stance opposed to the one which in fact established the importance of the Gothic. According to her, it was surrealism, with its 'confusion' of reality and art, its seeing the Gothic as revolutionary and subversive, that first opened Gothic fiction to psychoanalytical scrutiny, one of the chief theories applied to the Gothic ever after.[16] In this way, Summers is distanced from contemporary criticism on the grounds of his assumptions.

A similar distancing takes place with regard to other critics associated with the period of disparagement. According to Botting and Townshend, their work is largely based on the assumption that

> [literary value] is […] measured in terms of enduring human qualities, instincts and emotions and thereby displays its foundations in the essentialist discourse of liberal humanism. Transcending class, history, culture and gender, the genre taps into emotions and instincts that have become crystallised as universal, timeless, fundamentally human in their depth and darkness. Davendra Varma […] goes so far as to assume that all readers of Gothic are male, Anglo-Saxon, and of sufficiently bourgeois a social origin as to be afforded the luxury of whiling away many precious hours before the comfort of a well-fuelled heart with nothing more than a Gothic romance in hand […] Human nature and instincts are repeatedly invoked to explain the appeal of Gothic tales.[17]

By contrast, the readings of the Gothic which mark the rise of the contemporary Gothic criticism – readings described as materialist, feminist and poststructuralist – represent a turn from essentialism to the socio-political context.[18]

The phase of Gothic criticism extending from the 1920s to approximately 1980 is thus described as characterised by its overall hesitant attitude towards the Gothic and a critical perspective negated by the contemporary literary criticism. The contemporary phase, by contrast, acknowledges the worth of the Gothic as much as it recognises its own indebtedness to the change in literary criticism as such. As Botting admits, the approach taken by *Gothic* was made possible by the developments and changes that

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[16] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, pp. 219-220.
[17] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 14.
[18] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 14.

took place in the very theory of literature, culture, and indeed criticism in the second half of the twentieth century.[19] Donna Heiland quotes Jonathan Culler to identify the changes more precisely. Allowing literary texts by previously marginalised groups, such as women or people of colour, to enter reading syllabuses; moving away from the discipline-based structure of departments; and adopting new tools for reading, borrowed from linguistics, psychoanalysis, feminism, Marxism, structuralism and deconstruction all constituted an impetus to transform the field of literary criticism into critical theory, interested in the first place in how texts generate meanings.[20] With these changes taking place, the Gothic soon underwent a re-evaluation. Putting the new emphasis not on "timeless human condition" but on "distinct and particular socio-political contexts"[21] made it possible to see the Gothic as valuable and worth studying due to "its revelation of social conditions."[22]

Apart from its attitude and critical assumptions, the contemporary Gothic criticism differentiates itself from the earlier scholarship on yet another ground. Apart from approaching the Gothic in a distanced manner and from now abandoned critical premises, the earlier phase of Gothic criticism is also assumed to operate within a repressive, limiting framework. The origins of that framework are traced back to the eighteenth-century early critical engagements with the newly emergent Gothic novel. According to Botting, "[b]etween 1970 and 1810 critics were almost univocal in their condemnation of what was seen as an unending torrent of popular trashy novels. Intensified by fears of radicalism and revolution, the challenge to aesthetic values was framed in terms of social transgression: virtue, propriety and domestic order were considered to be under threat."[23] Such an outrage at Gothic novels, in turn, had its source in the rules dictated by the Enlightenment aesthetics and rationalism.[24] Botting notes that, at the time of its rise, the Gothic was associated to some degree with a given representation of the barbaric, superstitious Gothic past, one 'produced' by the dominant paradigm to stand for the opposite of the rational, ordered and Enlightened

[19] As he stresses, "[by] challenging the hierarchies of literary value and widening the horizons of critical study to include other forms of writing and address different cultural and historical issues, recent critical practices have moved Gothic texts from previously marginalised sites designated as popular fiction or literary eccentricity." Botting, *Gothic*, p. 17.
[20] Donna Heiland, *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2004), p. 181.
[21] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 14-15.
[22] Kilgour, *The Rise of Gothic Novel*, p. 221.
[23] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 21-22.
[24] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 21-22.

present.[25] As a descendant of earlier romances, it was also seen as threatening the promoted value model of polite society. From the perspective of the social project undertaken by the eighteenth-century criticism – criticism concerned primarily with the effect of reading on individuals – which viewed literature as potentially ideological and able to reproduce a given set of values on the one hand, but capable of subversion and depravation on the other,[26] Gothic fiction was an aberration to be dismissed.

Simultaneously, however, its rebuttal served a productive function, for it allowed to promote a certain (useful) type of literature. Botting and Townshend assert that the romance and the Gothic "played, albeit through a process of recoil and negative reaction, a crucial and productive role in the development of aesthetic criticism and the invention and consolidation of the novel form."[27] Having identified Gothic fiction as belonging to the category of the romance, they sketch the history of criticism in which Gothic romance becomes excluded as it does not 'fit in,' or fulfil the conditions acclaimed by the critical mainstream. At the same time, they assert, its negative representation becomes clearly functional for the dominant critical framework as, through becoming the framework's opposite, the Gothic romance allows the novel to define its own distinctive features. As they see it, the eighteenth-century critics, favouring the realistic novel, represent the Gothic romance as a threat. If the novel is to serve the social function of moral education and prove useful on condition it remains didactic, the Gothic romance does exactly the opposite: it paints immorality in much too bright colours, or erases the difference between vice and virtue.[28] Consequently, it 'produces' the "reader-turned-monster, a subject of inflamed passion or the passive receptacle to a dangerous excess held forever in reserve."[29] In this way, the general critical frame turns out to be repressive. For example, if Radcliffe's romances avoid sharp criticism, it is because they abide by the rules set for the proper literary creation,

[25] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 22. It is worth noting, however, as Botting makes clear, that Gothic fiction also had its positive connotations, grounded in the notion of the continuity of English history and a counter-representation of the past. As he and Townshend stress, the Whig political histories were built on discovering a link between the contemporary Parliament and the democratic spirit of Gothic tribes, who contributed to the downfall of Rome, the empire being codified here as absolutist and connected with imported culture. The ambivalence resulting from the conflicting representations of the past, as we read in Botting's *Gothic*, remained unresolved, raising the question of the instability of modes of representation, which also emerges in the case of Gothic fictions, written in the century of a major cultural and political shift. Botting, *Gothic*, p. 22-3.; Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 8-9.
[26] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 30.
[27] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 4.
[28] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 4-7.
[29] Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 4.

rationalizing the supernatural and making heroines learn the lesson of discipline.[30] At the same time, however, castigating Gothic romances is productive: it helps to encode Enlightened, chaste and virtuous readers, capable of internalising the rules for proper conduct and morality, as the eighteenth-century critics would envision them.[31]

As it follows from Botting and Townshend's account, if the Enlightenment critics approach the Gothic in a repressive manner, constructing and using its representation to productively pursue their own ends, then a similar project is undertaken by the first generation Romantics. Here, the process of differentiation also takes place by means of negative representation and definition. Botting and Townshend state: "[the] diseased and corrupting mechanisms of Gothic novel writing and reading are placed at the furthest possible remove from Romantic vision, recalling the earlier sense in which the novel, through occupying a lower hierarchical position than poetry upon the eighteenth-century ordering of the aesthetic, defined and constituted itself in terms of its perceived differences from the romance form."[32] The paradox, however, is that in doing so Romanticism obliterates the common origins it shares with the Gothic, namely the interest in nature, imagination and the sublime.[33] What takes place through such a separation and the resulting denunciation of Gothic romances is the establishment of the familiar distinction between high art, represented by (chiefly poetic) forms accessible to the elites, and popular forms, which are meant to satisfy the basest demands of mass culture.[34] In a hierarchy organised in such a way, the Gothic becomes inscribed in the category of "a debased and debasing aesthetic mode" of the low, profane, marginal and excluded, as opposed to the elevating and ennobling, and these become the major foundations on which its perception is to rest.[35] Framed in such a way, we are to conclude, Gothic fiction is pushed on the literary margin and, after abundant – even though frequently negative – initial exchange between the critics and the practitioners, finally divorced from serious interest of literary criticism.

The situation is observed to continue well into the twentieth century. The early- and mid-century Gothic criticism, even though it gradually develops a serious interest in the Gothic, retains a derogatory tone. Thus, it is still said to operate within the marginalising frame, being conscious that what it engages with is nevertheless a

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[30] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 3-5.
[31] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, pp. 3-5, 7.
[32] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 11.
[33] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 12.
[34] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 12.
[35] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 11-13.

marginal form, a curiosity of literature.[36] As we read in Botting and Townshend, "[early] twentieth-century critics assume the inferiority of the Gothic romance as their point of critical and scholarly departure, and thus, even in those studies which self-consciously attempt a positive reconsideration of the form, unconsciously reiterate a discourse in which distinctions between high and low, good and bad, popular and literary works abound: almost without exception, Gothic appears to be the disenfranchised term in the construction of a system of canonical tastes, categories and literary-critical values."[37] What contributes to the persistence of such a frame of reference is certainly, we are told, the supremacy of New Criticism.[38] It lays stress on an organically organised text, in which conflicting symbols work towards building up a unity, and defines 'true' literature in terms of "dense high art within clear genres designed primarily for a coherent aesthetic response."[39] Hence, even its assumptions are occasionally used in the defence of Gothic fiction, it is bound to shun the Gothic and its transgressed generic boundaries, representations of discourses remaining in permanent conflict, irreconcilable tensions between opposite drives, and a verbal style too close to pastiche.[40] During the domination of New Criticism, and in the face of common attacks on popular culture, as Jerrold E. Hogle notes, the historicist studies on the Gothic undertaken by critics such as Birkhead, Railo, Tompkins or Summers, as well as later on those of Varma and Maurice Levy, "[remain] little more than indicators of a 'less essential' branch of literary history."[41] Yet even putting this aside, and putting aside the undertones of accepted inferiority, if those critics can be seen as nonetheless working towards raising the status of the Gothic, their efforts are still seen as determined by a constraining frame within the contemporary critical paradigm of differentiation.

As Botting and Townshend observe, while the eighteenth-century criticism encoded the Gothic reader as a reader exposed to moral corruption, early Gothic criticism of the

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[36] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 17.

[37] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 13.

[38] Jerrold E. Hogle and Andrew Smith, "Revisiting the Gothic and Theory: An Introduction," *Gothic Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2009), p. 4.

[39] Jerrold E. Hogle, "Theorising the Gothic," in *Teaching the Gothic*, ed. Anna Powell and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 29.

[40] Hogle, "Theorising the Gothic," pp. 29-30. Hogle admits that there have been cases of defending Gothic fiction in works based on some of the New Critical assumptions, giving examples of Coral Ann Howells' *Love, Mystery, and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction* (1978), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1980, rev. ed. 1986) and George E. Haggerty's *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* (1989). Still, the same assumptions allowed for presenting the Gothic as 'inartistically disunified', e.g. in Elizabeth Napier's *The Failure of Gothic: Politics of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-century Literary Form* (1987). Hogle, "Theorising the Gothic," pp. 30, 43 n. 3-4.

[41] Hogle, "Theorising the Gothic," pp. 30, 43 n .5.

twentieth century perceives him or her as a divided human self, who naturally and eternally craves for not only pleasure but also fright. They state:

> While the eighteenth-century reader of Gothic was always in danger of being consumed and carried away by the monstrous forms of desire which the romance was likely to awaken, the Gothic reader produced by the formal scholarship of the early twentieth century is strictly formulated within the binaric terms of the post-Carthesian philosophical tradition. Refusing the passionate, appetitive, corporeal excesses of its first readers, the critical heritage of the early twentieth century fixes its readerly subjects within certain Carthesian categories, pitting consciousness against body, mind against matter, and thereby effectively setting certain impermeable barriers in place against the abrupt loss of self and sociality which the Gothic romance was originally thought to threaten. Here, the reading of a Gothic romance is divested of its anchorage in the *jouissant* desires and passions of the body.[42]

The excitement gained from the Gothic is assumed to be purely mental and becomes psychologised; at the same time, if the critics refer to bodily instincts or drives, they divorce them from "mental, conscious or psychological reading processes so as to render their possible passionate, physical effects entirely innocuous and inconsequential."[43] As a result, Botting and Townshend point out, the appeal of the Gothic is found justified as being grounded in human nature and, simultaneously, proves less threatening when it comes to the possibility of the dissolution of the self, the major threat that reading Gothic romances used to pose according to the eighteenth-century critics.[44] From the perspective of the early- and mid-twentieth-century criticism, Gothic fiction "[offers] a reassuring recuperation of selfhood" by responding to what is eternally human.[45] Construing the Gothic in such a way works to elevate it from the status of debasement; at the same time, however, this still should prove a repressive, or at least significantly limiting, act.

Repression, or limitation takes place through ahistorical projection. Botting and Townshend write: "[in] attempting to the redemptive and holistic aspects of Gothic fiction, criticism discovers its own fully human image in texts where the idea of modern humanity was only and contradictorily in formation. The redemption, moreover, begins

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[42] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 8.
[43] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 9.
[44] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 8.
[45] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 9.

the process of critical recuperation which will bring a consistently denigrated popular genre within the walls of canon and culture."[46] Undeniably, the early critical attempts at recuperating the Gothic do contribute to its reaffirmation. Yet the reaffirmed image they propose is significantly re-worked – the quality of the Gothic (which, in general, remains in the low culture sphere) lies, according to earlier Gothic critics, in its timeless codification of human nature, a nature which is devoid of history and free of the concerns of class, gender and culture,[47] and, moreover, which is itself a product of a particular framework, historically conditioned and retrospectively imposed onto the Gothic text. What is more, this early- to mid-twentieth-century representation of the Gothic remains unavailable to a type of critical investigation that could establish the importance of the mode and its cultural function in terms of what is actually effaced by the redemptive-holistic approach. As Kilgour recounts, it had to take the fall of 'shackling' New Criticism, together with its 'imprisoning' concept of the autonomous verbal structure, for the Gothic critic to become "free to see the gothic, as it clearly must be seen, in its broader social as well as literary context."[48] And it is the broad socio-cultural contextualisation of the Gothic that may finally confirm the actual worth of the Gothic.

In the accounts such as those of Kilgour or Botting, the early phase of Gothic criticism becomes represented as functioning within a disparaging critical frame. This frame pushes the Gothic into the sphere of low culture and popular entertainment as opposed to high art, and reproduces critical assumptions which significantly limit the perception of its object. This latter characteristic is significantly elaborated on in Anne Williams' introduction to *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, where the mechanism of 'repression,' enforced by the general critical paradigm of the mid-twentieth century, receives a considerable dose of attention.

Discussing Williams adds significant points to our argument carried out so far. In her work, she attempts at reconsidering the prevailing perception of the Gothic as prosaic, subordinate to Romanticism and chiefly 'female' by discussing the 'stories' about Gothic fiction told by critics, and begins forcibly by stating that the "[twentieth-century] keepers of the House of Fiction [represented by F.R. Leavis in the first place] have

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[46] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 10.
[47] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 8.
[48] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 221.

always treated Gothic as a skeleton in the closet."[49] In her account, the Gothic has no legitimate place in the literary studies as envisioned by earlier scholarship. The realism-centred critics shun the Gothic as unworthy of deeper insight since it fails to follow the set of standards for the novel, and readily recognise Gothic fiction as long extinct as this proves the novel to be a superior – that is lasting – form.[50] If they acknowledges that the Gothic is still alive, on the other hand, they relegate it either into the realm of popular fiction, or into the area of 'romance,' governed by a different set of values.[51] Yet in this area, equated by Williams with Romanticism, there is even less room for the Gothic – the Romanticism-centred critic views the Gothic text as "the black sheep of the family, an illegitimate cousin who haunts the margins of 'literature,' pandering cheap and distressingly profitable thrills."[52] As Williams asserts, "[f]rom the high Romantic ground, disreputable Gothic appears shocking and subversive, delighting in the forbidden and trafficking in the unspeakable."[53] As a result, the resemblances between the two are "politely ignored," students of Romanticism being told that the Gothic is not a domain of the poetic but that of prose fiction.[54] This might appear a vicious circle, yet what it achieves is the comfortable exclusion of Gothic fiction from both fields, and its taking a liminal – or rather marginal position with regard to them.

The attempts at banning the Gothic from the Romanticist backyard take more forms in time. Soon, they begin to comprise not only the codification of Gothic fiction as prosaic and subordinate, but also the projection of the drawbacks later on ascribed to Romanticism by Modernist critics. To return to Williams argument, although the early twentieth-century critics link Romanticism with the Gothic (for example Railo in his *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism*), they do not find followers in the mid-century because, at that time, Romanticism-centred criticism tries to counter the Modernist attack on the perceived Romantic 'femininity,' and reworks its own image in terms of masculinity, characterised by 'Imagination,' dismissing Gothic fiction as a product of 'feminine fancy' with yet greater force.[55] Thus, the black sheep, as we could extend the metaphor, is made to be blamed for the ill-perception of the whole family. Williams concludes: "although 'Gothic' might reasonably claim kin with

[49] Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1995), p. 1.
[50] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 2.
[51] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 2-3.
[52] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 4.
[53] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 4.
[54] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 4.
[55] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 5.

both the novel and Romanticism, its claims have usually been denied almost before the fact. To preserve the realistic novel as the High Prose Fiction tradition, critics have regarded the Gothic as long dead, or else (if alive) as irrational 'feminine' popular romance. According to the Romanticist, this dim, shapeless fiction lacks the unifying clarity of the Romantic Imagination as articulated by several great poets in their greatest poetry."[56] Such a representation of the earlier scholarship is perhaps a most telling example of how the contemporary critical paradigm construes the limiting framework imposed on the Gothic before the paradigm's own rise.

The skeleton in the closet and the black sheep of the family both entail repression in its purest sense. We repress our skeletal 'dirty' family secrets as much as we do not speak a word of our infamous relatives since both could spoil our own self-image. At the same time, they enable us to delimit this very image so that it takes a favourable – and favoured – shape. Williams parallels Botting and Townshend in stating that, for the early to mid-twentieth century critics, the Gothic is the 'other' against which "'Realism,' 'Romantic poetry,' and 'Serious Literature'" define themselves, projecting that which disturbs their own integrity outward.[57] She also puts a strong emphasis on the 'falling down' of 'older' distinctions[58] which makes it possible to re-define the Gothic, dangerous though it may seem since each act of defining carries a potential risk of drawing a line again.[59] What is thus stressed is 'the fall of the old order,' which similarly emerges in Botting's and Kilgour's accounts. As the story goes, the present perspective on the Gothic has been made possible only owing to extensive changes in criticism itself, those changes allowing the critics to free themselves from the

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[56] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 2-6.

[57] Simultaneously, she adds what Botting and Townshend's theory of negative definition does not state, namely that for realist- and Romanticism-centred critics "*all* Gothic is culturally 'female.'" Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 11. While Botting, Townshend and Kilgour present the early phase of Gothic criticism by focusing on its own limitations, Williams provides us with a broader perspective. This perspective is extended in an interesting way to Gothic authors by Clive Bloom as he considers early twentieth-century horror writers' attitude towards this area of their own artistic oeuvre. As he notes, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Henry James "could offer only embarrassed disparagement when quizzed about *The Turn of the Screw*"; Edith Wharton "[offered] only the insight that most of her early life was dominated by a pathological avoidance […] of ghost tales [as a result of a nervous breakdown she had suffered as a child after having read a book of Gothic tales while she had been suffering from typhoid], and all that in a *discarded* fragment of autobiography!"; and M. R. James "[maintained] an ironic and amused distance." Clive Bloom, "Horror Fiction: In Search of a Definition," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 156-7.

[58] That is fixed definitions of the Gothic introduced by the establishment critics, and reflecting a social system characterised by a strong belief in the necessity of drawing boundaries: of "the literal and figurative processes by which society organizes itself, [...] declaring this 'legitimate', that not; this 'proper', that not; this 'sane', that not, rules and divisions that structure all dimensions of human life." Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 12.

[59] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 12.

constraints imposed by the received notions of realism or Romanticism as much as of high culture, the essentialist notions referred to by liberal humanism, or the New Critical autonomous verbal structure.

The freedom of the Gothic critic, be it to probe new ways of interrogation or to establish the importance of the Gothic in socio-political terms, or to question the prevalent norms, becomes one more, if not the major one, of the features inherent in the contemporary Gothic criticism. Botting passes a particularly telling comment in this regard: "If Gothic fictions and films were affected by the tide of sexual, political and social liberations of the late twentieth century, both curiously challenging normative and repressive mores, criticism, similarly, has not remained immune. Indeed, in a period of questioning, of crisis even, cultural and critical institutions have contested strict regimes of literary evaluation and canonisation and opened themselves to different ways of understanding and approaching texts and their contexts."[60] A similar stance manifests itself in Kilgour's account:

> From its beginning the gothic has suggested the limits of causality and modern systems for understanding relations, and offered itself as a form of 'cultural self-analysis.' Like other previously marginalised forms, it is therefore being used today to critique established norms: the canon, gender roles, and the traditional ideals of western individualism which took form during the seventeenth an eighteenth centuries. The gothic exposes the limits of modern rational ideals of both human and textual autonomy, coherence, self-control, and Lockean notions of personhood. A form whose monstrous corporate identity transgresses traditional generic categories seems appropriate for new attempts at boundary negotiations.[61]

What follows is that the Gothic clearly has a 'liberating' potential and may be particularly useful to the 'liberated' critic. Not only is it a form that, once marginalised, has been reassessed and valorised in positive terms owing to changes in criticism and overall culture. Since it exposes the impact of social context on literature, and in general, the impact of politics, or history, or sexuality on art,[62] bringing to the fore what is at stake 'here and now,' it may be *used* by the critic to trigger further changes. This is because it provides source texts that may be read as putting into question the notions of the establishment, fixed values, literary canons, marginalised and mainstream figures,

[60] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 4.
[61] Kilgour, *The Rise of Gothic Novel*, pp. 221-222.
[62] Kilgour, *The Rise of Gothic Novel*, p. 221.

the binary opposition between popular and high art, and even our inherited understanding of literature as recording eternal truths.

Contemporary Gothic criticism, then, as this history shows, has been made possible by the reorientation of literary values and the notion of literature itself. The path to its development was opened by questioning and contesting, or perhaps, as proposes Kilgour, by "our own increasing distrust of the enlightened myths that we have suspiciously inherited."[63] Or, somewhat paradoxically, by precisely our own new Enlightenment, which freed us from "the 'dark ages' of Leavisite 'New Criticism.'"[64] The liberation of the Gothic was paralleled by its acknowledgement by and inclusion into the institutionalised mainstream. As Catherine Spooner asserts in the May 2007 issue of *Gothic Studies*, a journal published continuously for over a decade now, nowadays, "Gothic in popular culture is a burgeoning area of research."[65] And in Anna Powell and Andrew Smith's introduction to *Teaching the Gothic*, we read that "[from] its former marginality to the literary canon as prescribed by English Studies, Gothic has become a fully-fledged and popular topic with its own undergraduate units and postgraduate degree courses, scholarly associations and journals."[66] Nowadays, the Gothic is relishing its right to be studied and included into the curriculum. The history of Gothic criticism as outlined here is thus one of success – of a route from disparagement to acknowledgement, the margin to the mainstream, repression to freedom. What is more, it asserts that the Gothic played its role in the re-evaluation and re-definition of our own understanding of literature. Understandably, such a history is not one of continuous progress, but rather of a rupture, or many ruptures, 'changing critical positions' that led to the final revelation of the value of Gothic fiction for Western culture.

We could conclude that the contemporary critics thus put considerable emphasis on their difference from their predecessors, and that the difference becomes the major characteristic around which the concept of the contemporary Gothic criticism is build. As a result, we may term the general paradigm that governs the representation of the history of Gothic criticism as delimited above 'the differentiation paradigm.' We might observe that the manner in which it operates resembles somewhat disturbingly the

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[63] Kilgour, *The Rise of Gothic Novel*, p. 218.
[64] Anna Powell and Andrew Smith, "Introduction: Gothic Pedagogies," in *Teaching the Gothic*, ed. Anna Powell and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 2.
[65] Catherine Spooner, "Introduction: Gothic in Contemporary Popular Culture," *Gothic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2007), p. 1.
[66] Powell and Smith, "Introduction," p. 1.

procedure of the negative definition applied by the realist- and Romanticist-centred criticism. Still, we cannot deny that it simultaneously appears to prove highly workable for the contemporary criticism.

1.2. The Borderline

In the context of the differentiation paradigm, governing the history of Gothic criticism as outlined above, it becomes clear why *The Literature of Terror* is given the seminal status by numerous critics who venture to account for the major developments in the field. Punter's study relishes the status of a ground-breaking work for a good reason. If Botting states that its approach is "Freudian, though heavily tempered by Marxist criticism,"[67] then he in fact acknowledges its cutting-edge quality – dealing away with the essentialist notions of the previous stage of criticism. By locating the source of Gothic dread in the bourgeois fear, inherent to and shaped by the particular moment of social instability, Punter's study counters the essentialist assumptions of the earlier Gothic scholarship. In Punter's own words, "Gothic emerged at a particular historical moment and has a particular historical development."[68] In this study, the transvaluation of literature becomes clearly visible, enabling an apparently unbiased and thorough investigation into the Gothic. In fact, Punter's investigation takes as its starting point the assumption that "an art-form or a genre derives its overall vitality, the ground on which specific excellence can be achieved, from its attempt to come to grips with and to probe matters of concern to the society in which that art-form or genre exists."[69] Also, his study establishes the value of the Gothic mode considering it in terms of "a process of cultural self-analysis."[70] In this, it manifests an attitude embraced by the contemporary Gothic criticism.

We could, however, observe – as do Baldick and Mighall – that a link could nevertheless be established between Punter's approach and that of early critics. Presenting the Gothic as anti-Enlightenment and anti-Augustan, that is as a clearly Romantic enterprise, is the case in point. But as Baldick and Mighall also state, aligning the Gothic with Romanticism belongs to "the traditionally defensive traditions of Gothic

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[67] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 19.
[68] David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London and New York: Longman, 1980), p. 412.
[69] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 402.
[70] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 425.

Criticism," which work to provide the Gothic with "some testimony of its high romantic credentials," and which we, thus, ought to link with the period of disparagement.[71] It is worth noting that both critics view the Gothic as characterised by the "vital elements of modern rationality, Protestant scepticism and enlightened Whiggery"[72] rather than as poetic and revolutionary. However, whether their own conception of the Gothic is more justified than the one which inscribes the Gothic within "a romantic or proto-romantic 'revolt' or reaction against […] the shallow materialism of the Augustan age,"[73] is, at least at this point, less significant to our considerations than the fact that Punter indeed works towards lifting the Gothic from the position of the margin, as if it were necessary before any serious study of Gothic fiction could be conducted. It is not, however, unambiguous whether this is a sign of continuity or of a rift.

What is worth consideration in this respect is Punter's chapter on the origins of the Gothic novel, and especially the way he re-draws Gothic literary alliances. Let us begin by taking Railo as a representative of early critics who linked the Gothic with Romanticism. Interestingly, as Railo introduces the reader to his aforementioned *The Haunted Castle*, the major reason he gives for studying Walpole's *Otranto* and its offspring, 'horror romanticism,' seems to be the fact that the "small and unassuming booklet" is mentioned in the majority of English literature handbooks.[74] Punter's work manifests a clearly different attitude, one in which providing reasons becomes a well-though-out and carefully planned activity, and is visibly given priority at the onset of the study. The allegiances Punter stresses work visibly to reconfigure the assumed relations between the Gothic and the popular. This is done, in the first place, not simply by aligning the Gothic with Romanticism, but rather by linking it with the learned and the middle-class, and construing it as a literature of the bourgeoisie. Having pointed to the financial and educational limitations of the potential eighteenth-century reading audience, Punter arrives at two major conclusions. Firstly, he calculates that, according to sales figures of the time, it was impossible for the Gothic to reach masses of any kind, and therefore "Gothic fiction should not be characterised as a popular literature in the sense in which we would now recognise."[75] Secondly, he continues, Gothic novels

[71] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 214.
[72] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 215.
[73] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 215.
[74] Eino Railo, *Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (Kessinger Publishing, 2003), p. 1.
[75] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 25.

were written in a too elaborate and learned style to pass as popular entertainment, proper for lower classes.[76] As he sums up,

> Walpole and Radcliffe write within a complex web of classical and Shakesperean allusions. Lewis writes an admittedly dramatic but very complicated prose. Mary Shelley's work is packed with elaborate and erudite social argument. Radcliffe, admittedly, received the then colossal sums of £500 for *Udolpho* and £600 for the *Italian*; but it could not have come, directly or indirectly, from the lower classes. Indeed, the evidence seems to point quite clearly to the hypothesis that, despite the differences between the realistic novel and the Gothic, and despite the attacks mounted on Gothic fiction by various arbiters of middle-class taste, the readership for the two genres must have been pretty much the same.[77]

All of this clearly works to draw a line between Gothic fiction and the popular as we understand it today. In this way, it also works to underscore vital elements of the negative representation of the Gothic, its commonly accepted perception as 'popular.'

It is not until this has been done that the relations between Gothic fiction and low entertainment are reconfigured in terms of establishing links to higher forms. In this area, the Gothic is seen as allied with phenomena ranging from Richardson's novels to sentimentalism to graveyard poetry in the first place. By establishing a complex net of forms, concepts and currents that gave birth to the Gothic, all sharing an averse attitude towards Enlightenment, rationalism and the Augustans, Punter shifts the mode from the position of a sub-category to the very mainstream of eighteenth-century literature. He states:

> [the] background against which the emergence of Gothic fiction needs to be seen [...] is a complex one, in which intellectual, technical and commercial developments all play a part. It is a background which includes the appearance and early growth of the novel form itself; the attendant emphasis on realism, and the complicated relationship which that bears to rationalist philosophy; Augustan cultural thinking and the view of human psychology it entails; the emergence of an emphasis on extreme emotionality which produces sentimental fiction; rival views of the relevance to contemporary writing of immediate and distant history; and the developments in poetic practice and theory in the mid-eighteenth century. Under such circumstances, it is not

[76] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 25.
[77] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 25.

> surprising that the elements of Gothic fiction first began to emerge, in a hesitant way, within the mainstream of the realist novel itself.[78]

In this way, Gothic fiction is, however, not only incorporated into the body of what has been already widely recognised as mainstream literature. Stressing the anti-Enlightenment or counter-Augustan features of recognised forms serves here to disclose "the contradictions in taste of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie," or the gap "between 'official culture' and actual taste."[79] This, in turn, justifies the bourgeois taste for the Gothic, and simultaneously brings to one's attention the fact that the Gothic might be seen as not necessarily that marginal. The same function can be ascribed to Punter's later considerations of Gothic influences on major poets (from Blake, through the first generation of Romantics represented by Coleridge, to the second generation including Shelley, Byron and Keats) and the influences they, in turn, had on the development of the Gothic. As Punter states, "[one] of the features of Gothic fiction which distinguishes it historically from many other forms of 'sensational' writing is the power which it exerted over this group of undeniably major writers; this is both part of its validation as a focus of critical interest, and also a major source of its continuing historical vitality."[80] The interest of 'serious' writers – canonical poets – in the Gothic becomes another argument in favour of its 'high art' credentials.

Paradoxically, such a transvaluation of the Gothic may be seen as emphasising both continuity and rupture. Romanticising the Gothic seems to be a gesture towards the discourse of high art – and so seems estranging the Gothic from the popular culture as we know it. While this indicates breaking up with the older critical discourse, it also indicates that this discourse still exercises power over what we think should be studied. The twenty-first-century criticism needs no such reconfigurations; on the contrary, as Spooner's aforementioned text states, dismissing the Gothic's affiliation with popular

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[78] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 45. What is worthy of pointing out is the fact that Punters sees the initial orientation of the Gothic as novelistic – hence, the Gothic is initially restored to its fully-fledged status of a prose form – and only then as poetic, though it is the latter orientation that becomes the centre of his attention later on. In a way, then, his reading of the Gothic's history reverses both the realist and Romanticist ways of explaining away the Gothic, discussed by Williams. Still, Bladick and Mighall criticise the shift of attention from the novel to poetry as following the established direction rather than investigating a different possible path, and as working to overemphasise the poeticness of Gothic fiction and its subversive drives, which in itself allows for 'explaining away' the possibility that the Gothic is primarily prosaic, Whiggish, and well-adjusted to its own times rather than rebelling against them. See Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism."

[79] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 30, 26.

[80] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 100.

discourses by academia has been a negative tendency and has already received some corrective.[81]

Punter's efforts, however, transfigure the Gothic by representing it as 'not' the popular but what had been unnecessarily removed from the respectable literary canon. This could be viewed as a sign of hesitation over legitimizing the Gothic as a serious subject, hesitation which results in the assumption that the Gothic needs to be reconstituted as high art to be treated with sufficient respect. If that were the case, we would be dealing with continuity with regard to the earlier phase of criticism. At the same time, however, such a transfiguration could be viewed also as a sign of certainty, an attempt at reclaiming the status of the Gothic, pushed to the literary margin after the categories of high and low art emerged, and unjustly kept there during their reign. In that case, we would be dealing with a rupture and establishing the parameters of Gothic criticism anew. Or, taking yet another perspective, it could indicate a difference between the contemporary, twenty-first century academia, which takes free interest in popular forms, and the scholarly context of Punter's work, which he embarks on in the late 1970s, when other works on the Gothic are still frequently informed by the assumptions of New Criticism, and a new critical discourse, that of theory, is in the process of taking shape. In this case, we are dealing both with continuity and with rupture, with a change of critical discourse in which different frames still persist and coexist, mesh, clash and interact, and which turns to new perspectives, introduces new priorities while still appropriating the old givens for its own purposes.

Punter's analysis of the origins of Gothic fiction makes us alert to the fact that both continuity and rejection are not clear-cut notions. His analysis seems to redeem the mode within the old critical framework. At the same time, his study shifts the interest from organic unity to psychological content, from innate human fears to historically conditioned social anxieties, from literary value to cultural theory, revealing a new and different discourse at work. It is at this point that 'changing critical positions' emerge to sight as determining the approach to the Gothic, not through a sudden and thorough breakthrough, but by shifts and rifts in the previous order which allow for a reconceptualization of both the object under scrutiny and the order itself. And this should, in turn, make us somewhat suspicious towards the history of Gothic criticism according to the differentiation paradigm.

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[81] Spooner, "Introduction," p. 1.

1.3. The General Representation of History

A peculiar characteristic of the contemporary Gothic criticism is that it is markedly conscious of discrepancies and rifts occurring in a seemingly unified field it represents, where one might be tempted to proclaim continuity. This statement, of course, demands an explanation. Let us assume that the 'natural' state of affairs in the 'old' critical discourse was to draw a line which would introduce order, unity and continuity through stabilising definitions. In that case, by comparison, the contemporary criticism should seem thoroughly conscious of the fact that it is inescapably marked with gaps, ruptures, and unstable limits. These manifest themselves not only in the assumed difference between the earlier and the contemporary scholarship, but above all in the way the today's criticism has been shaped. If we assume that the shift which enabled a new perspective on the Gothic entailed moving away from the organic text, the autonomous verbal structure or essentialism, and moving towards cultural theories, then the sheer variety of possible methodologies based on them should grant versatility, and often lead to irreconcilable, mutually exclusive conclusions. Having stated this, the question is whether there can be indeed one unified representation of Gothic criticism and its history, or perhaps various strands of Gothic criticism, informed by different theories, will define their field and its development in essentially divergent ways.

The versatility of the contemporary Gothic criticism is nowadays a widely recognised fact. However, while surveying contemporary critical accounts, one may still have the impression that the boundary between 'the past' and 'the present' of Gothic criticism (imprecise and highly generalising though these categories may be) marks the beginning of a new unified – in the sense that it shares certain underlying assumptions, common roots – critical discourse, with Punter as the founding father. Strikingly, this is the way in which we could read especially an outline such as Smith's, where we move immediately from Varma to Punter, as if there were no other theoretically informed works with a focus on socio-historical context worthy of a mention in between, and where the line demarcating the beginning of the contemporary criticism is drawn in a very explicit and straightforward way.

Despite the fact that the versatility of Gothic criticism is frequently acknowledged in the field, Smith's brief outline of the major contributors to the study of Gothic fiction presents the contemporary Gothic criticism as originating in Punter's psychoanalytical-

Marxist approach, and generally following the paths made available only after *The Literature of Terror*. Let us quote again the passage as a whole:

> However, the modern era of theoretically informed criticism was inaugurated by David Punter's *The Literature of Terror*, published in 1980, which provided the first rigorous analysis of the Gothic tradition and suggested ways in which Gothic texts could be read through a combination of Marxist and psychoanalytical perspectives. The following year Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (1981) was published, in which she examined the Gothic through Freud's concept of the uncanny [...]. Since then there have been many groundbreaking contributions from scholars working in Britain, mainland Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia, indeed often in those very countries where the Gothic took root. Such studies have helped to shape approaches to the Gothic, and in order to acknowledge this I will briefly outline a range of possible critical approaches [...]: the psychoanalytical, historicist, feminist, and colonial and postcolonial perspectives.[82]

What emerges here is clearly a diversity of approaches, but these are qualified in an interesting way. Adding that, one year after *Literature of Terror*, Jackson 'examined the Gothic through Freud's concept of the uncanny' reinforces the role of the psychoanalytical paradigm, and mentioning no other names but the two makes them stand out as a clear-cut borderline. This, in a sense, allows to treat later developments in somewhat general terms. True, they are immediately named and discussed, each separately, but a 'unifying' common source – the making available of a new critical attitude, the new understanding of a 'rigorous analysis' of a literary text – seems to prevail over the disparate directions taken by them. The contemporary Gothic criticism is rich, open to multiple perspectives, but still some sense of identity and unity is reinforced.

The general tone of Smith's brief outline of critical history could be easily justified. All in all, his subchapter provides an insight into different approaches and, since it is targeted at students in the first place, it ought to aim at conciseness and clarity above all. Hence, logically, it could resort to naming only the key figures and facts. But these figures and facts create a clearly defined picture of Gothic criticism and its development, and what becomes alluringly striking about this account is how it could be read in the context of other accounts of Gothic criticism. Although it does not state it in

[82] Smith, *Gothic Literature*, p. 5.

any explicit way, this account eventually emphasises the line of succession mentioned above, namely that of Summers – Varma – Punter, as it proceeds from presenting two studies by Summers to *The Gothic Flame* by Varma and to *Literature of Terror*. As it was already stated, a line of succession is drawn by Baldick and Mighall when it comes to establishing the Gothic's anti-Augustanism, or anti-Enlightenment attitude, and thus its links to Romanticism in order to provide the 'high Romantic credentials.' The anti-Enlightenment twist is one of the key elements of the early Gothic as described in Smith's own book.[83] More significantly, however, marking the shift from the previous approaches to the contemporary ones with the names of Punter and Jackson may signal yet another way of appropriating this twist by the contemporary critical discourse. The choice of Jackson as the other leading 'Gothic' critic – though her major interest is fantasy in a broader sense – appears to be especially telling in this regard.

However, before we clarify in what way the anti-Enlightenment impulse becomes reinscribed in Smith's account as a result of coupling Punter and Jackson, there is another essential issue that must be referred to. A person familiar with the feminist readings of Gothic fiction could immediately ask: Why Jackson rather than Moers? In a way, Ellen Moers' 1976 *Literary Women*, in which the authoress coins the term 'Female Gothic,' could be seen as more significant for the development of the contemporary Gothic criticism than Jackson's study. As Botting writes, the feminist approach has "set the tone" of the contemporary Gothic criticism in a degree equal to Marxism or psychoanalysis.[84] But though Moers' chapter "Female Gothic" emerged four years before *The Literature of Terror*, it is mentioned in *Gothic* a-chronologically, after Punter, and after Paulson, who investigated into the connection between the Gothic and revolution, and published his *Representations of Revolution* in 1983. Punter himself, in his preface to the 1980 edition of *The Literature of Terror*, clarifies he has infrequently referred to particular works investigating the relation between the Gothic and the woman for the reason that "this material is as yet largely unavailable to the student or general reader," though he also adds that he provided references in his bibliography.[85]

There is something in this statement that rings a bell. Williams recounts at one point in her *Art of Darkness* that – just as the Gothic – feminist scholarship itself initially used

[83] To give just a brief example, the first point in the summary of essential points at the end of the chapter devoted to 'the Gothic heyday' states that "[the] Gothic represents an anti-Enlightenment impulse." Smith, *Gothic Literature*, p. 48.
[84] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 4.
[85] Punter, *Literature of Terror*, pp. x-xi.

to function on the margin of the academic establishment.[86] Kate Ferguson Ellis begins her account of feminist criticism of the Gothic in "Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics" by pointing to exactly this fact. As she writes, initially, the feminist theorisation of the Gothic as, above all, women's fiction, written by and for women while male authors were striving to "wrest the form from the female hands in which they saw it too firmly grasped," was losing to David Hume's 1969 view of the Gothic as oscillating around "'a complex villain-hero,'" and themes of unresolved moral ambiguity.[87] She comments: "Certainly a genre that privileges moral ambiguity would fare well among critics in ways that the heroine-centered Gothic, whose 'trappings' invariably include the happy ending required by its marriage plot, cannot so readily achieve."[88] Nowadays, we should assume that both feminism and feminist readings of the Gothic are granted their place in the academy and Gothic studies, and the gender- and queer-oriented perspectives are fruitfully applied to Gothic fiction and film. Yet then, all the more, it may appear somewhat suspicious that Moers' 'Female Gothic' should be substituted by Jackson's psychoanalytical reading in a history of the Gothic which seems to adopt a general – which also means the broadest – perspective.

Such a substitution points to a more complex psychoanalytical perspective as a basis for recognising the beginning of a new stage in the history of Gothic criticism. Yet this may appears surprising. If we agree with Hogle that psychoanalysis is the theory which "first rescued the Gothic from mere popularity and made it a means to understand Western thinking and culture more deeply,"[89] and assume it is for this reason that it is given attention before feminism in the histories of Gothic criticism, we should still expect early feminist critics to be mentioned before or simultaneously with Punter, at least for the sake of chronology and comparison. If we approach the issue from a totally different angle and observe that both psychoanalysis and feminism have been recently much contested,[90] we will also find little reason why one is being privileged over the other. However, if we bear in mind what is said by Williams and Ferguson on the initial

[86] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 8.
[87] Kate Ferguson Ellis, "Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), p. 257.
[88] Ferguson Ellis, "Can You Forgive Her?" p. 257.
[89] Hogle, "Theorising the Gothic," p. 31.
[90] Interestingly, to give just a very brief example, both Hogle's account of the application of psychoanalytical theory to the Gothic and the collection *The Female Gothic: New Directions* edited by Smith and Diana Wallace begin by acknowledging the fact that making use of theories they elaborate on has been recently questioned. Hogle, "Theorising the Gothic," p. 31; Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, "Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic," in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, eds. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 1.

position of the feminist approach among other approaches to the Gothic and relate it to what Punter states with respect to his approach, some questions may arise.

In his preface, Punter defines what was his incentive to write the book. This incentive stemmed partly from his interests, and partly from his dissatisfaction with the adequacy of the approaches that were at the time applied to the Gothic. As he states, while, in turn he would wish the Gothic to be approached through Marxism and sociology, these approaches were generally reserved for reading the realist fiction.[91] Without consulting the historical context, at least at this stage, we might infer from the above statement that, while the feminist readings of the 1970s remain closer to the margin than to the mainstream, Punter's seminal study claims to incorporate the approach which has already gained some esteem in the mainstream (for it has been used to scrutinise the realist material), and, hence, adopts an already empowered discourse. And this leaves us with a number of questions. Does this make his approach more 'acceptable'? If so, and if it is his study whose status is that of a 'borderline' from which the modern era of Gothic criticism takes its beginning, does this mean that the contemporary critical discourse on the Gothic is still the 'old' mainstream critical discourse? Or perhaps a new mainstream one?

These questions demand a careful investigation – and placing them in the context as well – as answers may be more complex than it might appear. However, in the first place, it seems what is at stake here is not simply an attempt at exclusion or diminishment of one particular strand of Gothic criticism. For example, we should take into account the fact that Smith, whose text we are focusing on, is vitally engaged in and with feminist criticism himself,[92] and so, in fact, deliberate exclusion does not appear to be the case. We should also observe that placing Moers anachronistically after Punter in fact inscribes her into the modern era of Gothic criticism in a history in which Punter's work constitutes a borderline. If, in such a historical representation, she were mentioned before him, she could become automatically pushed into the earlier period of criticism, or treated as a marker of a stage of passing from one standpoint to another. And that would be exclusion. In a concise outline of the history of Gothic criticism such as Smith's, this would not be acceptable. At the same time, however, the paradigm

[91] Punter, *Literature of Terror*, p. ix.

[92] Most notably, together with Wallace, he edited the aforementioned collection *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, to which he is a contributor, and 2004 issue 1 of volume 6 of *Gothic Studies*, dedicated to the question of feminism.

which informs Smith's account demands the Punter-Jackson dyad, not a Punter-Moers one, and its introduction has a significant result for the ramification of the whole field.

Jackson is introduced by Smith, as it seems, due to her application of the Freudian concept of the uncanny. Yet what should be said about her work, in the first place, is that she considers the literary fantastic primarily as a subversive mode which unveils "the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on to [...] that which is outside dominant value systems."[93] The assumption of the Gothic's anti-Enlightenment attitude inscribes itself well within this definition, this time not as a basis for establishing a Romantic affiliation, but as a feature confirming what has become irreversibly connected with many of the contemporary conceptions of Gothic fiction. Namely, the premise of the mode's inherent interest in *subversion*. When it comes to Jackson's considerations of the Gothic as a form which laid the foundation for the development of fantasy, Jackson does not see Gothic fiction as overtly transgressive. She states that it "conducts a dialogue *within itself*, as it acts out and defeats subversive drives,"[94] and thus poses a problem when it comes to speaking of political subversion. Still, she states:

> The tradition of Gothic fiction, traced here from *Frankenstein* to *Dracula*, in many ways reinforces a bourgeois ideology. Many of its best known texts reveal a strong degree of social and class prejudice and it goes without saying, perhaps, that they are heavily misogynistic. Yet the drive of their narratives is towards a 'fantastic' realm, an imaginary area, preceding the 'sexed' identity of the subject and so introducing repressed female energies and absent unities. Especially in the vampire myth, the attempt to *negate* cultural order by *reversing* the Oedipal stage constitutes a violent countercultural thrust which then provokes further establishment of repression to defeat, or castrate, such a thrust. The centre of the fantastic text tries to break with repression, yet is inevitably constrained by its surrounding frame. Such contradictions emerge in graphic form in the many Gothic and fantastic episodes which break into nineteenth-century novels, erupting into the calm surface and bland face of their realism with disturbing reminders of things excluded and expelled.[95]

Seen from such a perspective, the Gothic nonetheless does release the disruptive forces.

[93] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), p. 4.
[94] Jackson, *Fantasy: Literature of Subversion*, pp. 96-7.
[95] Jackson, *Fantasy: Literature of Subversion*, 122.

Mentioned next to Punter, Jackson becomes a mother-like figure to the contemporary criticism of the Gothic, one which displaces the perhaps more legitimate mother – the feminist critic, discussed by Smith only several pages later, after psychoanalytical and new historicist approaches to the Gothic have been considered. Hence, the contemporary Gothic criticism is constructed as both originating in a psychoanalytical/theoretical but *contextualised* studies, and as discussing the Gothic from the venture point of its hidden psychological content and *subversion*, be it anti-Enlightenment, anti-Augustan, or any other '*anti*' drive. And, as a matter of fact, in this way the critic's consciousness of belonging to a distinct group, one characterised by acknowledgement, a more relevant methodological approach and liberation can be maintained without pointing to differences between particular contemporary approaches, and remains valid with regard to the whole field. The feminist approach, obviously, inscribes itself within the paradigm given by Jackson, treating the Gothic as an example of, to quote Ferguson, "popular literature [that] can be a site of resistance to ideological positions as well as a means of propagating them."[96]

We could account for creating such a picture of Gothic criticism in terms of a generalising move. This move could then be aimed at obliterating the differences between particular strands of the today's criticism, and at creating a fixed frame to embrace the directions taken by nowadays' scholarship. But the coordinates of Gothic criticism defined in the way discussed above are in fact all-embracing enough to safely cover a whole vast field characterised by divergences, discrepancies, contrasting assumptions and mutually exclusive conclusions without (at least in theory) leaving any strand of criticism out.

The drive not to leave out may be seen as typical of the contemporary Gothic criticism, a trait to which we shall return on various occasions. Leaving out – excluding, omitting or dismissing – becomes a supreme crime in the world which, to put it in Kilgour's words, through its postmodern distrust of causality, becomes "a gothic world, made up of effects without agents, creations without creators, ideological constructs that have taken on lives of their own."[97] As Kilgour puts it, the contemporary criticism perceives literary texts as constructs that are often remade in the critic's own image; simultaneously, it remains fully aware of reality being inescapably made up of

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[96] Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. xii.
[97] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 221.

constructs, and of the fact that there is no absolute truth to uncover.[98] In such a reality, freedom from 'illusions' – or, we should perhaps say, meta-narratives – may be achieved through reading, embraced by criticism "which institutionalises the (originally anti-institutional) Protestant tradition of self-scrutiny, turning it into a larger psychoanalysis of cultural motives and impulses."[99] Reading Gothic fiction allows us to scrutinize our present as much as origins, and hence allows us to break away from the past, granting us at least some control over it. Of course, there exists a danger that the critic may become another Victor Frankenstein, devising his or her own Gothic monster from bits and pieces of a narrative previously ripped apart, in an act of gaining authority over the text.[100] We may infer that such a type of authority could redirect criticism back to its repressive past, provided it would denounce other possible approaches to, and interpretations of, the text for the sake of maintaining 'power.' Hence, all the more sensible may it appear to adopt the most general possible perspective, one to which different critics may subscribe while deciding on the methodology of their own choice. What is more, as Kilgour's text implies – in the times of the postmodern 'culture of recycling' no other perspective appears to be possible; all in all, it turns out that all the approaches are *inescapably* 'Frankensteinian.'[101]

Being 'all-inclusive' is, however, a double-edged (or even multi-edged) weapon. By being potentially all-embracing, the contemporary field of Gothic criticism prevents constraints, or authoritative attempts at imposing fixed distinctions such as those which limited the possibilities of critics interested in Gothic fiction during the dominance of New Criticism. Still, we could observe that if the realist-centred critic imposed a fixed boundary between the novel and the Gothic romance, or the Romanticist-centred critic between the Gothic and Romanticism, both with a result of diminishing – or discarding

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[98] Kilgour writes: "Like Godwinians, we tend to view everything as constructs we can take apart to remake in our own image. Unlike Godwin, however, we no longer believe that truth is under the veil, as like Radcliffe, we know that all we find is more art, constructs that we have made. But, like Lewis, that makes us think that not only is art a fraud, but life is, as reality is not real but a series of artificial Baconic idols." Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 222.
[99] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 222.
[100] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, pp. 221-222.
[101] "But the gothic seems an appropriate genre for our own dark enlightened age, another best and worst of times, so ahead of itself that it calls itself 'postmodern', in which we believe that by dismantling the past and remaking it in our own image we will really get ahead, and yet are simultaneously sceptical of all plots of progress. At a time in which change has become so rapid that it seems a truly gothic force over which we have no control, we flee from a sense of an ending to a culture of recycling which we hope will preserve us from the horrors of loss, closure and death." Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 223; If we adopt such a viewpoint, it seems that exclusion, even of approaches which do assault the text in an act of gaining control over it, is impossible and unacceptable. If the reality is made up of constructs and each critic struggles for their freedom by reworking it in their own semblance, on what basis are we to qualify approaches and asses them?

– the significance of the mode, defining the mode, for example, in terms of only women's fiction results in discarding a part of it as well. Such is Williams' criticism of early feminist critics: in construing their critical narrative of the Gothic, they create only another *mythos*, that of "the madwoman in the attic," according to which 'otherness' exposed in Gothic fiction is to be defined exclusively in terms of femininity.[102] This *mythos* imposes limits in that it excludes what it cannot contain – the 'Male Gothic.' A similar criticism is aimed at the Walpolean myth of origin, which presents *The Castle of Otranto* as the prototype of the Gothic tale and Walpole as the sole founder of the mode. In this way, the Gothic can be established as unique and worthy of studying for its own sake.[103] As Williams states, "[this] critical tradition proposes Gothic as a Surrealist or revolutionary nihilist, an eerily prescient prophet of psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and the miseries of the modern world," but simultaneously it becomes a patriarchal creation story, one which effaces the mother and confines Gothic fiction tradition within the frames of a prose genre which survived for only half a century.[104] These two critical Gothic stories share, together with the realist and the Romanticist ones, the drive to draw the line, reflected by the social establishment in which boundaries guarantee order, separating what is 'proper' from what constitutes subversion.'[105] It took the falling down of these boundaries to assume a new perspective on the Gothic, one that would not appropriate its object along the pre-established lines in a repressive manner.

Williams' classification of Gothic criticism suggests a taxonomy which complies with the differentiation paradigm, as we already indicated several pages ago. The skeleton in the closet, the black sheep – these are myths that correspond to the stage of disparagement. But the madwoman in the attic and the myth of creation in fact complicate such a correspondence as much as they subscribe to it. If we focus on remarks passed on feminist criticism, in Botting as in Smith, Moers is contemporary rather than belonging to the previous period. In Williams, whose study inscribes itself into the feminist strand of literary criticism, what we see is, however, distancing: the madwoman, even though embracing the Gothic 'feminine otherness,' nevertheless appropriates, limits and excludes, as much as the discourses which clearly belong to the (apparently) bygone era. This is an interesting discrepancy, one which could possibly point to different backgrounds – or discourses – from which the two versions of the

[102] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 8.
[103] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 11.
[104] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 8-11.
[105] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 8, 10-12.

critical history – general and female – emerge. Apart from that, this also shows that the line between the past of the Gothic criticism and its present is a provisional one, and that the contemporary modern rigorous analysis grows out of the past to a greater degree than, perhaps, it is being admitted.

The inclusive representation of the contemporary Gothic criticism constructed by accounts targeted at a broader audience is, however, able to accommodate such divergences as well. And these are numerous, emerging to sight as soon as we look at the histories drawn by those strands of Gothic criticism which are informed by different theories and dedicate themselves to highlight, in their variety, what a generalising move of the previous (repressive) discourse would sweep away – the issues related to the notions of gender, race, class, sexuality, diaspora, etc. Thus, an attempt to avoid exclusion, we could conclude, may be the reason for Botting's grouping together – subsequently to having mentioned Punter's combining of psychoanalysis with Marxism – critics such as Palmer and Moers, and, further, Sedgwick, Hogle and Miles, all three of whom he sees as exemplifying post-structuralist criticism engaging into an interrogation of issues emphasised by feminism and Marxism. And hence, quite possibly, Smith's lack of naming them, or rather his mentioning of them under one common denominator of numerous important contributions – which, we are to understand, follow the spirit of Punter and Jackson.

1.4. Divergent Representations of History

The general representation of Gothic criticism as embracing its subject, adopting new socio-cultural methods of scrutiny and liberating itself from its previously limited and marginalised place in the hierarchy of literary criticism can be found reflected by less general accounts of its history, even if these do not reproduce the set of names proposed above. For example, the account of feminist Gothic criticism offered by Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, a quite recent collection, reproduces the shift in criticism, situating the turn to socio-political contextualisation in the 1990s, which are also identified as the decade in which Female Gothic became a mainstream branch of literary inquiry.[106] In so doing, Wallace and Smith's account partakes in the general history as represented above, or at least parallels it in

[106] Wallace and Smith, "Introduction," p. 3.

incorporating the same changes which are emphasised by the general representation. But apart from that(and bearing in mind that the dates are different), unsurprisingly, it focuses strictly on the contributions to and within the area of Female Gothic criticism and its development, starting from the 1970s. Punter and Jackson are not mentioned here and the line of descent is traced from Moers without introducing sharper distinctions between the earlier and the contemporary critics, though the reader's attention is drawn to the late twentieth-century re-evaluation of the core concepts of Female Gothic in terms of the correlation between the text and the sex of the author, possible alternatives to universalising psychoanalytical readings, and the question of subversiveness of the mode.[107] Contemporary reconsiderations of earlier presumptions become emphasised more strongly in *Postfeminist Gothic: Critical Interventions in Contemporary Culture*, edited by Benjamin A. Brabon and Stéphanie Genz. Here, the 1990s are presented as the decade in which the introduction of post-structuralist theory into the feminist inquiry triggered a debate over the striking simplicity and overall usefulness of the category of Female Gothic, its essentialist assumption that the sex of the author can be equated with the gender manifested in the text, and its "acceptance of 'gender as the bedrock of explanation.'"[108]

A somewhat similar case is that of a history of Gothic criticism written from the perspective of gender studies. Heiland's "Coda: Criticism of the Gothic," the final chapter of *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction*, seemingly sketches a pardigmatic journey taken by the Gothic critic from the margin of literary establishment to the very mainstream, accompanied by essential general changes in the field of criticism and literature. The changes which enabled a new approach to the Gothic, as it was already mentioned in this chapter, are situated by her in the 1970s, the decade identified as one in which previously neglected minorities began to make their way into the academic curricula. Similarly to the histories discussed above, this one represents the early- and mid-twentieth-century criticism as either perpetuating the discourse which saw the Gothic as unacceptable in various ways, or forced to struggle with it.[109] Furthermore, moving away from essentialist readings is emphasised while commenting on the developments in Female Gothic in 1990s, especially Diane Long Hoeveller's

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[107] Wallace and Smith, "Introduction," pp. 3-4.
[108] Benjamin A. Brabon and Stéphanie Genz, "Introduction: Postfeminist Gothic," in *Postfeminist Gothic: Critical Interventions in Contemporary Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 6.
[109] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, p. 182.

considerations of Gothic fictions as aimed at teaching 'proper femininity.'[110] As in the accounts by Wallace and Smith or Brabon and Genz, the major parameters of the general historical representation are reflected by the account.

But a crucial difference emerges to sight immediately if we consider the way Heiland formulates her aims. She states: "[transforming criticism into theory] has been reflected in the single sub-field of gothic criticism, as critics have brought to bear on this literature, which itself consistently challenges established norms, everything that late twentieth-century literary theory had to offer. My purpose here is not to account for all of that criticism, but *to outline the major forms that it has taken and provide a guide through some of the work that has been done*."[111] This difference is the fact that Heiland adopts – or at least claims to adopt – a general perspective rather than one focused the strand of contemporary Gothic criticism devoted to gender studies. What a reader should expect from a text following such a formulation is a general survey. And indeed, the account offers a broad perspective on major currents and directions, both within Female Gothic and gender-oriented criticism and outside of them. However, the presumption governing the field of Gothic criticism in this history is somewhat different from that governing the general historical paradigm outlined above.

On the one hand, Heiland's account is in compliance with that paradigm, for it also rests on evoking a moment of differentiation. On the other, however, it is not, for it represents the borderline from another perspective, giving the field of Gothic criticism a different organising framework. Heiland states that "[while] gothic writing began to attract serious critical attention as early as the 1920s, it was not until the 1970s – when the very meaning of literary study was changing dramatically, *and when feminist criticism in particular was reshaping the literary canon* – that gothic took center stage."[112] As it follows from the accounts discussed above, such as those of Botting and Townshend, or Smith, feminism did play a vital role in reshaping the attitude towards the Gothic, but here this role becomes a decisive and major force behind the introduction of the Gothic into the canon. Furthermore, the distinction between the critics perpetuating the discourse of disparagement and those eschewing it is drawn on a different basis. For example, what becomes the reason for being fascinated and at the same time repelled by Gothic fiction in the works of Birkhead and Railo is not its

[110] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, p. 183
[111] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, p. 181. Emphasis mine.
[112] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, p. 180. Emphasis mine.

overall lack of 'value' as recognised by New Criticism, Romanticism or realism, but the complex attitude towards gender formation displayed by the Gothic text.[113] Heiland reads the two early critics as proposing a gendered history of the Gothic, one which tells a story "of male fertility and female nurture,"[114] and hence, to a certain extent, as striving to contain what could be seen as inappropriate or unacceptable in Gothic novels, a task which would continue to be undertaken by the critics up till the 1970s.[115] Once classified as disturbing the 'right' gender identity, the Gothic again finds itself pushed onto the margin of proper culture, and the attempts at recuperating it through containing it constitute attempts at appropriating, making acceptable at the cost of explaining away that which does not fulfil the overall critical, or even social, expectations.

As it was already stated, on the one hand, this proves much in tune with the contemporary general representation of the history of the Gothic and its criticism. However, on the other hand, the general paradigm is here rewritten in strictly defined and delimited terms, informed to a large extent by an underlying assumption about the constitutive structure of Gothic fiction. In such a history, Punter has a lesser part to play than Moers or Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar whose book's title, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), has come to function as a fixed phrase in Gothic studies. Having stated that "[the] emergence of feminist literary scholarship in the 1970s changed the criticism of gothic completely,"[116] Heiland continues, giving an account of Female, Gothic-centred criticism, which resists the conventional views of gender, and then moving to the studies of critics such as Kilgour, Williams, Miles and Markman Ellis, which adopt in reality various perspectives but are evoked as, nevertheless, engaging with 'male' and 'female' Gothics and thus elaborating on the relations between genre and gender. Next, she reviews related approaches to the Gothic which take as their starting point the assumption that the mode is occupied first and foremost with subjectivity shaping and identity construction, to finally arrive at the "range of research that has emerged in gender studies, gay and lesbian studies, the history of sexuality, and queer theory."[117] In so doing, she writes a history of critical progress and evolution, where links are more important than rifts for they serve to uncover the underlying

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[113] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, p. 182.
[114] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, p. 182.
[115] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, pp. 181-2.
[116] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, p. 182.
[117] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, pp. 182-4.

structure of the Gothic mode, defined in terms of gender: a specification which, in the more general accounts, is replaced by the more general assumption of literature disclosing socio-political context. Other perspectives on the Gothic are also given some space: Punter is mentioned as a leading figure of criticism focusing on the mode's engagement with the problems of class, nation and race, a question related to that of "subjectivity, gender and sexuality," and a yet another strand of criticism, related as well, is codified as exploring Gothic aesthetics and reception.[118]

In many ways this is an exhaustive account, one bringing together a whole array of names and contributions that have shaped the contemporary field of Gothic criticism. It also seems to aim at a general, inclusive perspective as it proposes three possible angles from which the Gothic might be approached, grouping, as Botting does, diverse authors under possibly general and broad headings. But between all of them some kind of relationship is established with reference to what remains represented as the core of the Gothic and, consequently, Gothic criticism: the female-feminist-gender paradigm. It would probably be a gross exaggeration to claim that this particular history might be consciously exclusive – but it may be interesting to note that while Heiland goes as far as to evoke Gayatri Spivak's essay on *Jane Eyre* and *Frankenstein*, she mentions neither Botting, nor Mighall, a recognisable new historicist figure in the field,[119] whose article written in collaboration with Baldick, already mentioned in this text, has nonetheless received serious critical response.[120] Nor does she mention Hogle.[121] The suggestion we could make here, to repeat, is not that these authors have been excluded on purpose. However, it might prove worthwhile to investigate the extent to which the critics who are mentioned by Heiland contribute, in one way or another, to the general paradigm of Gothic criticism she devises, and whether they reinforce it just as Jackson, once made a key Gothic critic from 1980s, reinforces the paradigm found in Smith's account.

[118] Heiland, *Gothic and Gender*, pp. 185-6.

[119] Mighall's book titled *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* defines the mode in terms of its interest in representing the past through given textual and rhetorical strategies which, according to him, "are central to the Gothic tradition, and offer a more consistent basis for locating a coherence within this mode than the perceived psychological and sexual motivations which have dominated twentieth-century readings," Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xiv.

[120] For instance in Botting's *The Gothic*. These shall be referred to further on in the dissertation.

[121] Hogle's *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, by the way, receives a noticeable dose of criticism in Rintoul's review for its 'canonical approach' which favours certain texts (both Gothic and critical) over certain (alternative) others, the latter, in this case, being those engaging with Queer and Female Gothic. Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties," p. 704.

On the basis of the above considerations, we may arrive at an interesting conclusion. It appears that the representations of the history of Gothic criticism not only vary when we move from the general plane to the level of (essential) details, but also that they may vary in accordance with the assumptions informing a given strand of criticism that undertakes to write a history. In a similar way, representations should vary according to various agendas, or aims that the critics set for themselves. To give a rather simple example of how a particular agenda may influence a representation of the crucial moments in the development of Gothic criticism, we may quote Clive Bloom's brief mention of the early twentieth-century critics whom he sees as carrying out "the serious study of horror and ghost fiction," and as scholars ready to "divine the essential nature of [the horror genre's] craft and symbolism."[122] In his account, early criticism becomes represented as a necessary stage which enabled "sustained critical analysis," even if its focus was rather on cataloguing than analysing.[123] Bloom's account is aimed at recovering the definition of Gothic horror from analytical texts by practitioners, beginning with Lovecraft, rather than commenting on the history of Gothic criticism, but the manner in which he ascribes early Gothic criticism a role in enabling this definition to take shape – approaching the genre seriously – in fact reworks the representation of criticism as presented above. What becomes displaced in this account is the very difference which seems to define the representation of the contemporary criticism – it is Birkhead, Railo and Summers who cross the boundary of disparagement inherent in early horror writers and mark the beginning of serious inquiry. Here, since there is little attention given to contemporary criticism and the focus is instead on writers, the early stage of the development of the Gothic critic may be easily construed according to a yet different reference frame, one which does not incorporate the changes in critical theory that took place in the second half of the twentieth century.

[122] Bloom, "Horror Fiction," p. 157.
[123] Bloom, "Horror Fiction," p. 157.

Chapter II
Gothic Counter-Histories

So far, we have based our considerations on the assertion that the contemporary Gothic criticism manifests a special sense of critical self-consciousness. On the one hand, this consciousness refers to being conscious of the place the Gothic critics occupy in the field of critical theory nowadays, and the changes that had to take place for them to become acknowledged by the critical mainstream. This consciousness is revealed especially when it comes to defining the recent history of criticism through the difference from the earlier stages of Gothic scholarship: through adopting a different approach that reflects, as much as it is enabled by, the turn to social context in general literary criticism; through moving the Gothic from the margin to the mainstream; and through remaining free from the constraints imposed by the previous prevalent critical discourse. On the other hand, this special consciousness emerges when we consider the general character of the paradigm established to characterise the contemporary criticism, one which seems to embrace various divergent representations of critical history, but at the same time proves to be reworked by particular critics according to their own presumptions about the mode. The contemporary Gothic critic avoids naming *the prevailing* approach, conscious that this would threaten with exclusion, liberation from which has been the basis for moving Gothic fiction from the margin straight into the mainstream. But at the same time, he or she nevertheless does choose – between generalising or specifying, both the general and specific paradigm being informed by some underlying assumptions.

As we have already noticed, the critics' choices seem to be, in fact, informed by their own adopted perspectives and by their own projected aims. In the following chapter we will consider a number of counter-histories of the Gothic, offered to us by William Hughes, Chris Baldick, Robert Mighall, and Robert Miles, as well as take into consideration the voices coming from the new historicist strand of Gothic criticism, in order to highlight this fact. Counter-histories such as those mentioned above represent the fullest form of critical consciousness as defined by us. This is because they recognise the fact that criticism itself actively reworks its own field, and attempt at contesting elements of the Gothic history as represented by the differentiation paradigm. As a result, what they emphasise is that, especially as it turns to theory for interpretive

tools, and away from historical discursive background of the mode, Gothic criticism turns out to structure conceptions of the Gothic which do not illuminate the mode as such, but rather serve to reinforce the very perspectives and aims of the critics.

2.1. Contesting the 'Myth' of the Margin

The fact that Gothic critics tend to take different approaches to the Gothic, choosing what best suits their needs, but at the same time avoid evaluation and exclusion is a curious and a problematic one. As Rintoul writes in her review, the critic's attention should be directed towards a significant gap in the field of Gothic criticism, namely the question of the impact of contemporary Gothic criticism on the definition of the Gothic.[1] By the same token, we could ask what is the extent to which Gothic critics shape their own past as a consequence of the approaches they take towards it. But taking different approaches is not all. As the brief example of Bloom above has shown, as soon as the aim of the critical survey into the past changes, an historical account may change as well, up to the point of being structured according to another paradigm. Just as Gothic criticism is well aware that our past defines who we are, so it is well aware that representations of the past are informed by different agendas. These agendas haunt the Gothic past*s* – but they also seem to haunt the critics. A trace of this haunting can be detected in Rintoul's article, which in fact highlights how Gothic critics seem to be frustrated with their inability to define their object but, in reality, themselves constitute the source of this frustration. The critical self-consciousness as exemplified so far entails seeing freedom from limitations as a basis for complete and fruitful scrutiny, and hence, we may conclude, the critics find themselves bound to acknowledge the diversity of possible approaches. This ought to be the case especially with the general paradigm for representing critical history. As a result, the only possible cure for the frustration caused by the fragmented and disjointed representation of the Gothic is to learn to accept it for the sake of the diversity (and hence freedom) it secures.

At the same time, however, just as the contemporary critics do favour representing their field in a particular way (subscribing to the general representation or modifying it from their own perspective), they still define the Gothic in their own manner, enjoying the freedom they have. Inescapably, in this way, they also contribute to further

[1] Rintoul, Suzanne. "Gothic Anxieties: Struggling with a Definition," *Eighteenth-century Fiction*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2005), p. 709.

fragmentation.[2] One result is what Rintoul mentions at a certain point, and what is generally noticeable if one surveys contemporary critical texts, namely the assumption that the difficulty with fixing rules upon the mode somehow parallels the mode's inherent emphasis on contesting limits.[3] As if the inherent subversion of the content was one aspect of the mode's subversiveness, the other manifesting itself in the mode's refusal to be fixed, which ought to make it a supreme subverter. We shall claim that such a representation of the Gothic is, in fact, often characteristic of the type of Gothic criticism which embraces the critical history as represented in accordance with the critical paradigm discussed above.[4] And, without a doubt, such a representation must be seen as highly functional.

More direct traces of agendas haunting Gothic criticism emerge to sight when we consider critical accounts which openly dismiss both the paradigm of liberation from the critical discourse of the past and the narratives of moving from the margin to the mainstream of critical establishment. For example, surveying the criticism of Gothic fiction from the year of the publication of *Otranto* to the dawn of the twenty-first century, William Hughes begins by thus summarising and commenting on the very representation of the history of Gothic criticism we have discussed so far:

> To chart the development of Gothic criticism, it might be argued, is to follow the progress of a genre from literary curiosity to distinctive and systematic cultural movement. A genre that forms the subject of a discrete and expanding body of criticism must surely, the argument runs, have gained acceptance within the Academy, and the right in consequence to police a canon or canons as well as affirm a body of generic conventions. To have attained such a worthy position, inevitably, implicates the genre in a mythical past-time when such a body of criticism could not have been contemplated, a less-

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[2] Rintoul concludes her review by asserting that "criticism of the genre has learned to accept its own inability to define the Gothic while using this inability to arrive at a number of workable modes of interpretation." She immediately adds: "None of the books reviewed here claims to define the Gothic as a genre, yet each is nevertheless implicated in creating a definition in two important ways. First, on the individual level, each book suggests bow the Gothic as a genre might be read. On a second level, these critical texts themselves collaborate to construct and define the genre." Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties," p. 709. One significant difficulty that we may find connected with the final assertion she makes is that even if we see critical texts as collaborating to construct the Gothic, the construct we get as a result still appears to be as fragmented as diverse are the approaches of the collaborators.

[3] Rintoul, "Gothic anxieties," p. 702.

[4] To illustrate this, let us quote a rather telling passage from the preface to *The Gothic*: "Perhaps [as a result of the constant mutation across genres and media] the search for *the* Gothic, like the various searches for the actual historical figures of Frankenstein or Dracula, is a vain critical endeavour to reach and authoritative standpoint in respect of a genre that has over the centuries consistently depicted the transgression of natural and moral laws, aesthetic rules and social taboos." Botting, Preface to *The Gothic* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), p. 1.

> enlightened age where Gothic was, if not precultural, then at least subcultural. *This is a wonderful myth*, and it is one which no doubt does much to reassure the critic at the dawn of the twenty-first century that he or she has escaped the strictures of a still-discernible Leavisite heritage. By accepting the Gothic, in teaching as well as in research, the modern Academy distances itself from an intolerant and elitist past, variously eighteenth-century, Victorian, or Leavisite. It proclaims a liberation of texts from obscurity and censorship, and in so doing sustains an edifice of the enlightened present. The Gothic, reassuringly, has been rescued from prejudice, has become something that the critics and authors commonly regarded as great, authoritative, or canonical, may now talk about openly with no embarrassment, save that of having to admit that their forebears were less enlightened.[5]

Williams sees the realist, Romanticist, feminist (at least until 1995) and creationist representations of Gothic fiction as critical myths; Hughes views in the same way the progress of Gothic criticism as described according to the paradigm which we have characterised earlier in this chapter.

This paradigm is interestingly contested in his account. Gothic criticism is extended to incorporate nineteenth- and eighteenth-century belletrist responses (the first example of a critical engagement with the Gothic being Walpole's first-edition preface to *Otranto*) and the beginning of the twentieth century is identified with the rise of Gothic criticism modified by the adjective "academic."[6] Such a change of strategic reference points allows for re(-)constructing the Gothic as never fully rejected, marginal or silenced by criticism, and debunks the "subcultural origins"[7] proclaimed by academic Gothic criticism. As Hughes points out, "Gothic as a genre has never been beneath the notice of the most elitist of critics—as, indeed, it has never been outside of the creative

[5] William Hughes, "Gothic criticism: A Survey, 1974 – 2004," in *Teaching the Gothic*, ed. Anna Powell and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 10. Emphasis mine. One may find it particularly interesting to read this description – and, subsequently, follow Hughes' line of argument up till his closing considerations of the Gothic canon – against the following description of the development of Gothic studies provided by Hogle in the article which follows Hughes' in the very same collective volume: "The teaching of the Gothic today is the product of a reactivated psychoanalysis, a post1950s feminism which has expanded into 'gender studies', a resurgent Marxism, a genuinely 'new historicism' combining cultural anthropology with Derridean 'deconstruction', and several forms of 'cultural studies' that have come to include 'postcolonial' theory and criticism, among other strands. All of these together, challenging the standards set by New Criticism and high/low culture distinctions, have brought the Gothic forward as a major cultural force by the very nature of their assumptions and thereby drawn some Gothic 'classics' (*The Mysteries of Udolpho* [1794], *Frankenstein* [1818], *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* [1886]) to the centre of what a liberal arts education must encompass if a college student is be truly 'literate' about what Western culture includes." Hogle, "Theorizing the Gothic," p. 34.

[6] Hughes, "Gothic criticism," pp. 11, 17.

[7] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 10.

achievement of the most canonical of authors."[8] Dismissed for its improbability but praised for craft by the eighteenth-century critics, elaborated on both through literary reviews and the formal essay, which condemned as much as explicated it, and produced by the learned members of the elites, the Gothic has always, one way or another, raised critical interest and this interest legitimised it historically.[9]

From this perspective, Gothic fiction proves inseparable from both authorial and critical mainstream at its dawn. And if it vanishes from the public eye in most of the nineteenth-century, this is, as Hughes maintains, because the public's (authors' and readers') interest shifts to the issues pivotal to the materialistic age, away from the Gothic trappings of history and supernaturalism. Though he points to a handful of writers like Walter Scott, Charles Lamb or May Shelley who remain engaged in the Gothic theory and aesthetics, Hughes writes: "no Gothic novel generated a level of social fascination equivalent to the products of [the] topical issues of the day, and so the genre remained a mode of fiction first and foremost rather than an arena in which to mobilize stridently the discords and fear of culture."[10] The situation changed only with the rise of decadence at the *fin de siécle*, bringing along a Gothic revival.[11] In that sense, the Gothic did become subcultural at a given time, receiving little critical interest, perhaps except for the burlesque satirising of its worn-out conventions. Those conventions were, nevertheless, still exploited by writers (consider e.g. the ghost story), and reviews appeared in journals.[12]

Of course, Hughes' is not the only critic that takes the final decades of the eighteenth-century as a starting point for the history of serious critical engagement with the Gothic. To give one example, in their introduction to the tenth anniversary issue of *Gothic Studies*, Hogle and Smith draw a parallel between the present day and the Gothic heyday with respect to the blooming exchange between Gothic novel and theory. Then, as now, the Gothic was undergoing vigorous theorising, as much as it fed on theory. However, this burgeoning exchange in the eighteenth century, as they relate, ended with the rise of high Romanticism and its disparagement of the Gothic, resulting in the disappearance of Gothic fiction from "the theory and criticism by 'men of letters.'"[13]

[8] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism, p. 11.
[9] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 10-11, 12.
[10] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism, p. 14.
[11] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 14.
[12] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 13-14.
[13] Jerrold E. Hogle and Andrew Smith, "Revisiting the Gothic and Theory: An Introduction," *Gothic Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2009), pp. 2-3.

Wordsworth and Coleridge are identified here as those whose attacks on the Gothic resulted in banning it from the sphere of criticism, and New Criticism phase as particularly strict in guarding the ban until it's supremacy had been overthrown, and the Gothic underwent "the process of restoring it and its many variations to cultural importance in the academy."[14] This account, unlike Hughes,' incorporates the extended history of Gothic criticism into the critical frame of 'liberating' the Gothic and its silenced cultural significance, and of re-acknowledging it after it had been debased.[15]

By contrast, Hughes asserts we cannot speak of a gradual acknowledgement of Gothic fiction.[16] In the paradigm which he draws, the Gothic has always been acknowledged, even if the critics raged at it, and even if at times the attention of the public was directed towards other literary phenomena and issues raised in writing. Similarly, it has always been exploited, to a greater or lesser degree, as a mode, even if at times there was little contribution to its theory, and the authors who took recourse to Gothic motives for profit did not treat it as a 'serious' genre. It was not forced underground due to its threatening subversions, or so that another form could use it to form a negative definition. Neither was it reclaimed from the margin with the change in critical theory that directed criticism towards discussing the text as a socio-political phenomenon. And it was not liberated by theory from constraints imposed by earlier critical discourse. This earlier discourse did not silence or underestimate the Gothic; rather, it focused primarily on other things, things to which it gave utmost importance. Within the framework proposed by Hughes, as we may conclude, the Gothic simply became relevant again with a new cultural turn – so much for changing critical positions. This time, the turn moved it not from the margin into the mainstream, but *from the non-academic sphere into academia*, with eighteenth-century belletrist literary reviews turning into articles in academic journals, post-conference volumes, and introductions by contemporary editors of Gothic writings, in all of which the belletrist spirit, in fact, survives.[17]

One interesting, though seemingly minor, difference between these two accounts is the critics' manifested understanding of the place of both Gothic fiction and criticism in the eighteenth century. For Hogle and Smith, the men of letters become equated, in a

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14 Hogle and Smith, "Revisiting the Gothic and Theory, p. 4.
[15] Another study, which could be seen as more relevant to quote here, is that of Botting and Thownsend. It will be, however, given much more attention in chapter four of this book, and hence it is not mentioned above.
[16] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 11.
[17] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 14-16.

sense, with the contemporary academy. Equating the two appears a logical move if we are to speak of bringing the Gothic back into the critical – i.e. nowadays' academic – mainstream. Falling outside the 'academy' equals falling outside the respectable, being rejected and becoming marginal. For Hughes, however, the belletrist tradition in which the Gothic first burgeoned is primarily non-academic. What this detail reveals is the centralising of academic discourse that is taking place in the paradigm embracing the postulates of acknowledgement, focus on social context, and liberation. In this paradigm, admission into the academy is the basis for recognition.

While stating this may be seen as stating the obvious, the implications it may bear are not that straightforward. Both accounts pay attention to the interaction between the Gothic and theory. Hughes' one, however, does not see the scarcity of theory on the Gothic as a sign of its exclusion – but rather as a consequence of the broader attention being temporarily directed elsewhere. We could thus draw the following conclusion: whenever the Gothic becomes closer to the prevailing cultural currents, more easily lending itself to be used for particular purposes (e.g. to become an embodiment of decadence or of rebellion against essentialist notions) we are dealing with a revival. This point of view is strikingly free from the dialectics of marginalisation and subversion. What is more, it allows us to suggest that, while the considerable part of the contemporary Gothic criticism dismisses the notion of literary value as dependent on 'high art' credentials, it nevertheless remains haunted by some sort of them. Academia – the house of research into High Art – needs to embrace the Gothic if the Gothic is to be validated, acknowledged and valued. Although it apparently revolts against the distinction between 'serious' and 'popular' literature, the contemporary Gothic criticism nevertheless acts under this distinction's influence.

The difference between the two paradigms can be perhaps best observed when it comes to the borderline between the past and the present, drawn by the differentiation paradigm. For Hughes, early twentieth-century Gothic critics were, "inevitably, influenced by the belletrist and antiquarian traditions in which their authors were well versed," and consequently focused on the generic survey.[18] Their embarrassment with the subject of their study is not brought to the foreground here: the Gothic becomes their subject in the first place due to its persistence.[19] This persistence, we could continue, becomes a reason *per se* for academic study – a reason, in fact, good enough to write

[18] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 17.
[19] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 17.

extensive volumes. As such, the Gothic becomes introduced into and validated by academia even without being seen from the perspective of the changes that took place in the 1970s and 1980s. What is more, it becomes mostly validated as a legitimate genre with fixed conventions and discernible features, even if at times it comes close to be incorporated into Romanticism.[20] The approach of the critics and their attempts at linking the Gothic with Romanticism could be seen, consequently, not as disclosing active marginalisation or neglect, or prejudice against the Gothic, but rather as resulting from the general character of the period which saw more interesting and pivotal topics elsewhere.

Similarly, the turn to the modern phase of study into the Gothic is not presented in Hughes' account as characterised by liberation from the trap of the margin. He writes: "Though the influence of other early twentieth-century critics such as Montague Summers cannot be discounted, nor indeed the synthesis of earlier works provided within Devendra Varma's *The Gothic Flame* (1957) be discounted, it is nevertheless important to establish a point at which the generic survey becomes a thoroughly modern and systematic critical medium."[21] Thus, Punter is introduced to fix a point at which the study of the Gothic becomes a fully modern and systematic enterprise – and not at as a *persona* who paved the way for a new path of analysis, one that had been kept made unavailable to the Gothic by earlier mainstream criticism:

> Discernibly a product of the liberal preoccupations and rising theories of the 1960s and 1970s, *The Literature of Terror* combines psychoanalytic thought with social consciousness in order to establish the genre as a serious attempt "to come to grips with and to probe matters of concern" to contemporary society. Its rejection of the assumption that Gothic is nothing more than escapism is subtle, and the book's theoretical context is less intrusive than, for example, Rosemary Jackson's psychoanalytical adaptation of Todorov's theories in her *Fantasy*, published twelve months later. *The Literature of Terror* is, also, the text which extended Gothic from its customary end-point in the nineteenth-century *fin de siècle* to more recent publications, many of which might not have otherwise been classified as generically Gothic. This extension includes possibly the first serious considerations of Walter de la Mare and Algernon Blackwood; a significant reading of the horror film; and the acknowledgement of a vibrant and *contemporary* Gothic tradition in the works of, among

[20] Hughes states this especially with regard to Mario Praz, whose *Romantic Agony* he sees as revitalizing "again the potential dismissal of Gothic as merely a crude phase of Romantic sensibility," by "proclaiming Romanticism 'an approximate term.'" Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 18.
[21] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 18.

> others, Oates, Pynchon, Ballard, Coover, and Carter through what Punter terms "Modern perceptions of the barbaric." This latter definition, together with his original coda in pursuit of a feasible theory of the Gothic, underlines the systematic approach which distinguishes this survey from those of twenty-three, if not forty to fifty years earlier.[22]

Punter's study fulfils the conditions set forth for the contemporary critical study thoroughly. At the same time, however, though his approach is distinct from the older approaches (as it clearly must be, provided it is the product of its own age), it does not allow these conditions to suddenly break through from a critical closet, but rather marks a point at which they have emerged in full shape, one critical discourse (or one set of discourses) being substituted by another.

What is interesting about Hughes' succinct history of Gothic criticism is the way he reworks the representation of the past, complicating, in fact, the possibilities of drawing the line between the past and the present. To be able to free oneself from the past one must assume some degree of continuity between now and then – otherwise, the rift will not be possible. However, as soon as we start thinking about different periods of Gothic criticism as conditioned by different discourses prevailing at different times, it becomes difficult to assess any of them on the same basis as we assess our own. Punter's study does constitute a transition point – and his considerations are, in general, guided by the modern critical frame, a frame which values liberation and inclusion. Prior discourses concentrate on other issues, as Hughes' appears to stress. And if it is so, should we perceive the neglect of Gothic fiction and its socio-cultural relevance as a conscious attempt at silencing, doing away with, or excluding for the sake of retaining power? Or perhaps such a perception of the previous stages of criticism is somewhat anachronistic?

What is also compelling in Hughes' account is the ease with which he speaks of achievements and definitions – and points to influences. It was Punter's work that introduced the Gothic critics of 1990s to the genre. Then, it was Botting's paperback *Gothic*, concise and accessible both due to the way it had been written and its price, that influenced undergraduate students in the 1990s, popularising the now widely accepted definition of the Gothic as a writing of excess, transgression and diffusion. Though Hughes admits there are "as many potential definitions of the Gothic as there are critics

[22] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 19.

to assert them,"[23] he nevertheless singles out Mighall's definition of the Gothic as a mode preoccupied with attitudes towards the past and its legacies, and not as a genre. Moreover, he also draws a link between the contemporary Gothic criticism and perhaps what could be least expected – the tradition of generic surveys, stating: "The scholarly monograph, and its fragmented counterpart, the critical article or book chapter, are in effect synecdoches of the broader drive of Gothic criticism, namely the construction of lineage and antecedent, temporal or otherwise, as an aid to generic identity, expansion, or definition."[24] Next, as he identifies the concepts which constitute the basis on which much of the contemporary criticism rests, Hughes enumerates Moers' the Female Gothic – both a style of writing and a mode of criticism – in the first place. As he states, "[t]his concept, which embraces both female authorship and the characteristic plots of a fictional tradition influenced by female psychological and political issues, is central to both generic definitions of the Gothic, to the wider problems of canon formation and resistance to the restraints of canon, as well as to broader women's issues beyond literary criticism."[25] He also devotes some attention to the critical works concentrating on anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic themes in Gothic Fiction,[26] aesthetic questions, typical Gothic elements such as the double or the ghost, national schools and, finally, published bibliographies and masterlists. And, concluding his account, he emphasizes a phenomenon which, in spite of the used disclaimer, hints at a somewhat perverse subversion of the premises of non-exclusion, on which the differentiation paradigm seems to rest:

> As academic teaching in the Gothic becomes more widespread, so the pressure to direct formal publishing to areas of mass appeal becomes more acute. The Gothic is too rapidly becoming, for example, Ann Radcliffe, Bram Stoker, and Anne Rice, rather than Clara Reeve, Algernon Blackwood, and Poppy Z. Brite. This is not to say that these other writers are excluded—scholarly revivals of the unreprinted works of Horace Walpole, Charlotte Dacre, and L. T. C. Rolt, for example, have been welcome—but it is becoming perceptibly more difficult to publish outside of the familiar (and already critically well supported) Gothic paths beloved of undergraduate students. [27]

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[23] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 20.
[24] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 21.
[25] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 21.
[26] Most notably, the critical works of Victor Sage, Margaret Davidson, Jules Sanger, Ernest Fontana and Daniel Pick. Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 22.
[27] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 20- 24.

The danger which Hughes traces, in the process of perhaps a quite involuntary limiting of the Gothic canon, seems to be real. What is more, the fact that he acknowledges the role of the prevalent ‘student tastes’ is striking, as one can, by association with the proliferation of Gothic novels at the dusk of the eighteenth century, sense the politics of marketplace behind what is being published of and on the Gothic nowadays.

2.2 Subversion and Theory’s Dehistoricising of the Gothic

Hughes’ account of the history of Gothic fiction clearly follows a different paradigm than the one outlined earlier in this chapter, and, clearly, stepping outside of the differentiation frame allows him to make several significant points. Still, his stance is not the only one that is distanced from the prevailing critical trends. A brief and provocative article, criticizing the history of Gothic liberation complacent with what we have identified as the differentiation paradigm, was published in 2000 and co-authored by the aforementioned Baldick and Mighall.[28] While Hughes’ history aspires to a more general status – though it must be said that its venture point is also a counter-perspective, its underlying assumption being that of the inherent centrality of the Gothic and the mode’s never ceasing presence in critical thought – Baldick and Mighall wish to focus on “some critical problems and strategies that are typical of the Gothic Criticism of the last seventy years.”[29] Thus, they present a counter-history which focuses more on the recent critical period.

Baldick and Mighall contest much of the assumptions on which the contemporary criticism operates. Their major objection is that the critics have abandoned historicist scrutiny in favour of methodologies and approaches which displace the Gothic from its historical context. Such a displacement, in turn, allows the critics to enjoy the liberty of re-making Gothic fiction – literally – so that it may be seen as characteristic of “psychological ‘depth’” and “political ‘subversion.’”[30] Consequently, the assumption that the Gothic is subversive – one which is visibly inherent in the contemporary Gothic criticism and conditioned by the character of our own times – seems to be at the root of what becomes condemned in the course of the article. For Baldick and Mighall, the

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[28] It is still reprinted in the successor to Blackwell’s *A Companion to the Gothic*, *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).
[29] Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, “Gothic Criticism,” in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), p. 209.
[30] Baldick and Mighall, “Gothic Criticism,” p. 209.

contemporary criticism perceives – and codifies – subversion in a clearly distinct manner, namely as positioned against Victorian repression and realist oligarchy, and then projects so codified subversion on the Gothic text, viewing it as consequently repressed and marginalised. There is a clear agenda behind such a projection. As Baldick and Mighall assume, "the cultural politics of modern critical debate grant to vindicators of the marginalized or repressed a special license to evade questions of artistic merit."[31] Thus, according to their representation of the recent critical history, the contemporary Gothic criticism, having liberated itself from the limitations imposed by earlier discourses, chooses to construe the Gothic as its anachronistic counterpart, a progressive character much ahead of its own times, trapped in the past of the strict bourgeois code and persecution; as a disturbing "undomesticable Other," "the favourite wicked uncle of counter-cultural rebellion."[32] As a result, the history they sketch becomes a history of miscomprehension and appropriation.

Baldick and Mighall's account begins with a statement which seems to correspond with the differentiation paradigm. The authors restate the common assumption that the early twentieth-century Gothic criticism worked "under a curse" of disparagement and on the "modest" assumption that the Gothic was a curiosity.[33] This phase of Gothic criticism is here termed "shamefaced antiquarianism,"[34] and comprises the phase which was, according to Hughes, that of generic survey. Hughes assumes Baldick and Mighall represent this critical phase as "the culturally naïve,"[35] though it appears that the strand of criticism until the 1930s is the one with which the two critics actually sympathize. Even if the claims to the right of recognition made by the early critics were modest and shameful, they still constituted a good enough ground on which the study of "sources, influences, biographical contexts and generic features"[36] could be conducted. Of course, we could debate whether conducting such studies is not, actually, culturally naïve, but still we need to remember about the position from which we depart. As Hughes stresses, early critical studies function within a different critical frame – and as Baldick and Mighall overtly state, it is historical survey that should constitute the basis for analysing Gothic fiction. Their one-paragraph-long description of the early critical works and authors emphasizes exactly the historical slant of the early works – the stress is visibly

[31] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 210.
[32] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 210.
[33] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 209.
[34] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 209.
[35] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 17.
[36] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 209.

put on considering context, drawing intertextual connections and doing ‘solid’ research (and not the apologetic tone), the qualities of early Gothic scholars which are, as the two authors figuratively put it, “brushed aside” by later critics.[37]

The appropriation begins with the displacement of the value of historical research and with removing the Gothic from the context of bourgeois fiction into that of high Romantic poetry. The result is a reorientation of the main field of the Gothic into that of “‘poetic’ revival of medieval sentiment or romance.”[38] One of the outcomes, apart from inscribing the Gothic into the sphere of high art, is positioning it not within the dimension of bourgeois tastes – the positioning which, as the two authors notice and we have observed, is carried out by Punter, but later on abandoned in favour of all sorts of poetic allegiances – but within the aforementioned sphere of counter-cultural rebellion. Hence, ultimately, the Gothic will become endowed with the quality of cultural transgression.

The displacement is carried out by Breton and Summers, though they depart from the opposite venture points. Breton, as was already mentioned during the discussion of Kilgour in the previous chapter, opens the Gothic to the psychoanalytic scrutiny, viewing it as resorting to dream and fantasy, the regions outside of the reign of reason. In his interpretation, the supernatural in the Gothic becomes the haunting presence of the feudal past, one against which the Gothic actively rebels.[39] This particular assumption about the uneasiness of the past could be found compliant with Baldick and Mighall’s own perception of the Gothic. However, it becomes distorted as the later Gothic criticism combines Gothic rebellion with what it takes after Summers, namely his assumption that Gothic fiction reflects “nostalgic resistance to bourgeois modernity and enlightenment.”[40] Interestingly, while the origin of this assumption is shown to lie in the mistaken premise that English Romanticism was reactionary rather than revolutionary[41] – and, according to Summers, the Gothic is overtly Romantic – the contemporary criticism seems to ‘tacitly’ turn a blind eye to the fact. The nostalgic

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[37] Baldick and Mighall, “Gothic Criticism,” p. 211.
[38] Baldick and Mighall, “Gothic Criticism,” pp. 211-12.
[39] Baldick and Mighall, “Gothic Criticism,” p. 212.
[40] Baldick and Mighall, “Gothic Criticism,” p. 213.
[41] This assumption was dictated, the authors presume, by the fact Summers was a Catholic. Baldick and Mighall treat the critic’s conversion to Catholicism as the ground on which the displacement of Gothic features as nostalgically recalling the feudal past rather that rebelling against it took place. A similar case is that of Varma, whose Hindu mysticism is evoked as the reason for him equating the experience of reading a Gothic novel with that of seeing a twelfth-century cathedral. Baldick and Mighall, “Gothic Criticism,” p. 213.

orientation of the Gothic towards the lost medieval past and against the uncertain present, first posed by Summers, is then upheld by Varma, and through a line of further successors traced up to the very work of Kilgour on which we have already drawn. On the contrary, Baldick and Mighall would see the Gothic as scarcely looking up to the past. According to them, Gothic fictions "represent the past not as paradisal but as 'nasty' in its 'possessive' curtailing of individual liberties; and they gratefully endorse Protestant bourgeois values as 'kinder' than those of feudal barons"[42] – an assumption in tune with much of the contemporary criticism of, for instance, Radcliffe's novels.

Displacing the Gothic's attitude towards the past, resulting from tying it with Romantic-poetic mode contributes to the representation of the Gothic as subversive by nature. Removed from the bourgeois background, the Gothic becomes the antagonist of the rationalist, Protestant, enlightened society. Its emphasis on conjuring decaying abbeys and castles, together with the use of the supernatural, so much condemned by the contemporary propagators of reason, somehow takes priority over its inherent bourgeois prerogatives. As these are obliterated, the Gothic is reorganized as transgressing boundaries. Hence, the Gothic becomes defined through negation – as non-realist, anti-Enlightenment fiction resorting to the realm of the fantastic and dreams. Such a perception of Gothic fiction, in Baldick and Mighall's view, contributes first and foremost to generic confusion and dehistoricising.[43]

Let us digress for a moment at this point. Though he is quite explicit about the psychological coordinates of the Gothic which he assumes in his study,[44] Robert Miles points to the dehistoricizing of the mode as well. His *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, which appeared in two editions, first in the 1993, and then almost ten years later, in 2002, was initially written in the 1980s (the decade when, as Miles states, there was still very little academic interest in the Gothic), and was meant to expand on Punter's argument. Similarly to Kilgour, Miles sees the upsurge of Gothic criticism in the following decade as overwhelming, refers to it as a "flood," poses the question whether this flood should be seen as a proof of a new fashion, or rather as a birth of a serious academic discipline, and immediately chooses the latter.[45] His stance, if

[42] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 212-14.
[43] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 215.
[44] Miles views the mode as addressing of a gap in the collective psyche, or subject, shaped at the time of the rise of Gothic fiction, as a result of which Gothic fiction is seen by him as a textual evidence in the history of the subject. Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 2.
[45] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. vii.

considered in reference to the differentiation paradigm, is thus an interesting one. And this is not only because in the preface to his second edition he overtly positions his work with regard to the developments in the study of the Gothic after the genre became central to critical interest.

In his study, Miles passes an intriguing comment on the aforementioned central position of the Gothic and Gothic criticism. He states: "My present sense of the field is that it is situated both at the margins and at the centre of 'English': at the margins, because the study of the Gothic is not primarily occupied with the best that has ever been thought and written, with those aesthetic concerns which constituted the canonisation on which traditional English studies were based; but at the centre, because it involves itself with those wider questions about the work of culture that have inspired much of what is innovatory in English."[46] One the one hand, what is interesting here is the retaining of the 'older' distinctions within the field of criticism as still operative – high art and aesthetic questions equal the centre, 'bad' literature equals the margin. In a way, such a perception of the academic field, stated in 2002, might be thought 'anachronistic' in itself with regard to the contemporary pronouncements of change in the critical discourse. Of course, on the other hand we have the statement that the cultural relevance of the Gothic places it at the centre of interest. But, in fact, Miles acknowledges that one might claim that the margin and the centre are two concepts irrelevant to the contemporary English as they depend on the perspectives adopted, and these are numerous, contributing to the field's constant state of flux.[47] This is a striking observation if we think of how much is said about the Gothic's journey from the margin to the mainstream. Still, as he postulates, whatever the case might be, it is "innovative" methodologies that enable the critic to cope with the Gothic's cultural significance, as contrasted with those traditional ones.[48]

As a result, what we have here is an interesting position, one which emphasises change, but at the same time does not announce the end of the older discourse, or its irrelevance, or the repression it used to exercise. Quite on the contrary – what seems to be stated is that the Gothic is not high art, and its relevance for the study of high art is marginal. It becomes central only when we turn to the study of cultural phenomena, and of its impact on the development of literature; and it is central only from a well-defined

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[46] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. vii.
[47] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. vii.
[48] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. vii-viii.

perspective. The two discourses, the 'old' and the 'new' as represented here, are neither mutually exclusive, nor incapable of coexistence. In fact, what becomes emphasised in this account is, as in Hughes' one, the coexistence of two different strands of criticism.

Miles' brief sketch of the contemporary criticism concentrates on the developments in the sub-field staked out by his own study. Significantly, his review in fact considers the authors whom he might view as his successors, at least in a sense.[49] The brief remarks he passes on the overall field of Gothic criticism are, however, valuable as they somehow imply the way he perceives the relationships between the 'new' methodologies applied to the Gothic. Feminist criticism, represented by Hoeveler, Williams and Clery, is here visibly acknowledged as contributing a significant influence on the contemporary study of Gothic fiction. Psychoanalytical readings, concentrating on "Freudian paradigm of the unconscious, and 'the uncanny,'" though presented as "previously […] so influential,"[50] are, by contrast, mentioned as eschewed by more historicist-oriented studies, which are the keen of *Gothic Writing*. Among these, Miles enumerates: E.J. Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, which adopts "a cultural materialist approach;" James Watt's *Contesting the Gothic*, which concentrates on the genre's internal generic and cultural heterogeneity; Mighall's *The Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, relating the Gothic with the parallel discourses of medicine and anthropology; Michael Garner's reconsidering of the relationship between Gothic fiction and Romanticism; Cannon Schmitt's discussion of the Gothic and nationalism; and Jacqueline Howard's elaboration on the Gothic and the carnivalesque. He summarizes the perspective taken by all of them in the following way: "What these studies have in common is a desire to catch the Gothic's contemporary inflections, thus placing Gothic works in their cultural and historical context."[51] In other words, what all of them share, is the historicist, or perhaps we should say new historicist, perspective.

The gap addressed by the Gothic, one referring to the subject in formation, or re-formation perhaps, and connected with the rise of modernity via rifts and ruptures, is,

[49] Miles does stress what the difference between his own approach and that of the authors to be mentioned is (in his own words, his study is both with and against historicist ones): his application of systematic methodology based on Foucault's insights into discourse and, consequently, his rejection of the consideration of author-function as demanding the sacrifice of other possible ways of considering a text and its cultural significance. At the same time, he does not claim that the other works are author-centred; still, they adapt a materialistic approach which values the biographical as vital to interpretation. Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. ix, xi.

[50] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. ix.

[51] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. viii-ix.

according to Miles, best "teased out" by a theory.[52] The choice of the theory is, however, not a straightforward one since the "dialectics" of the Gothic are multiple, and hence what often takes place – as in Punter's study – is a consensus between different approaches.[53] Still, Miles insists the consensus of theories is not enough:

> Gothic writing needs to be regarded as a series of contemporaneously understood forms, devices, codes, figurations, for the expression of the 'fragmented subject.' It should be understood as literary 'speech' in its own right, and not the symptom, the signification, of something else 'out there,' or 'in here.' The Gothic does represent a disjunctive subject, but these representations are in competition with each other and form a mode of debate. Gothic formulae are not simply recycled, as in the service of a neurotic, dimply understood drive; rather, Gothic texts revise one another, here opening up ideologically charged issues, there enforcing a closure.[54]

Theory itself is unable to give an ultimate answer to the question about the gap in the subject – provided, of course, any such answer is attainable.[55] On the contrary, it can find itself guilty of transplanting a text which bears witness to the past into the modern context, "dehistoricizing the Gothic through retrospective reading," and "encountering, not evidence of late eighteenth-century gap, only ghosts of twentieth-century ones." [56] Hence, historicizing the Gothic proves the condition *sine qua non* if theory is to take us anywhere.

Digressing towards Miles while discussing the account of Baldick and Mighall should enable us to contextualise their perspective. With *Gothic Writing*, it becomes visible that the strand of Gothic criticism oriented towards historical scrutiny persists, though, naturally, not without crucial changes both in assumptions and adopted tools. It also becomes visible that the criticism of the practice of using theory without a recourse to history can be encountered throughout critical writings. Most frequently, however, it can be encountered in those accounts which provide historical evidence that some of the achievements of theoretically-oriented studies need, in the best case, reconsideration, and in the worst case – serious revision. As it also follows from Miles, though less

[52] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 3.
[53] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 9.
[54] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 3.
[55] Miles does not promise reaching ultimate conclusions – on the contrary, he defines the question as "an enabling question, one to which we cannot expect ready answers, but which, in trying to answer it, pushes us forward." Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 3.
[56] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 2-4.

directly than from Baldick and Mighall, historicising the Gothic may, at least to a certain extent, clarify generic inconsistencies which have become the basis for the claims of 'non-definability.' Both accounts see a danger in theoretical readings. However, while Miles considers theory as compatible with the historicist approach and nonetheless vital to the study of Gothic fiction, Bladick and Mighall focus on what theory actually disfigures as soon as it divorces itself from the imperative to account for history. What is more, their account comments on the differentiation paradigm in a telling way, pointing to the possible manner in which the paradigm itself can be seen as a function of the contemporary critical discourse.

Baldick and Mighall, similarly to Williams, are quite explicit when it comes to identifying 'agendas.' A vivid example is the fact they connect Summer's Catholicism with the means he uses to explain away the anti-Catholicism of the Gothic mode, which used to be treated as an obvious element of the Gothic by the early historicists.[57] The assumption of the mode's psychological orientation, or even its "Freudian agenda," introduced by Breton, allows in turn for such an appropriation to pass unnoticed while it diminishes the importance of the historical context for the understanding of the mode. What is more, ultimately, it allows to analyse the relicts of the feudal past, present in Gothic texts, as explaining our own present rather that inherent in representations common in the eighteenth century.[58] What thus becomes obscured is not only the historical context, but also the impact this context might have had on the original meaning of the text. And this meaning, according to Baldick and Mighall, should be established with reference to the fact that Gothic fiction "delights in depicting the delusions and iniquities of a (mythical) social order and celebrating its defeat by modern [Protestant] progressive values."[59] For both authors, the Gothic is Whiggish, bourgeois, and internalising "the clash between 'modernity' and 'antiquity.'"[60] It is, thus, hardly anti-Enlightenment.

We might observe that such an understanding of the Gothic inescapably 'subverts' much of what the contemporary theory-oriented criticism has to say about it. If it were to be widely accepted, in the first place, it would force the critics to qualify their

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[57] See Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 213.

[58] This is exemplified by Williams, who links feudal monastic institutions with the Freudian concept of compromise formation and reads our culture as "'realized' as a medieval abbey," as a result of which monastic abuses become explained in terms of "a whole familial domestic situation shared by the late eighteenth- and late twentieth-century readers alike." Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 218.

[59] See Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 220.

[60] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 216-220.

assumptions about the Gothic's perceived subversion, its rebellion against the Enlightened, Augustan, or in fact bourgeois reality. Or, to put it in simple terms, it would undermine the critics' assumption that the Gothic offers some sort of progressive revisions of the past as, while it does offer revisions, these are not the ones the contemporary liberated critics could identify with. The Gothic as defined by Baldick and Mighall hails the emergence of the very 'repressive' cultural system of which the contemporary critics liberate themselves with so much pride. However, being deprived of proper historical context, it becomes the critic's peer, its monsters turned into heroes, its heroes into monsters.[61]

Baldick and Mighall ostensibly insist that a strand of contemporary Gothic criticism appropriates the Gothic for its own benefit, against the historical evidence. Seeing Dracula as a liberator as much as the Gothic mode as the wicked-uncle of rebels, and oneself as a rescuer of "the persecuted maiden Gothica from the ogre"[62] – the ogre of the Leavisite criticism, we should presume – appears, in the light of their perception of the Gothic, highly functional for the differentiation paradigm. According to such a narrative, not only have the critics liberated themselves; they have also liberated a forgotten – or perhaps silenced – genre of fiction which was suppressed in the previous period but is now free to be celebrated. Naturally, not all of the contemporary criticism, as the authors stress, can be viewed in this way, and if some authors can, then their inclinations are very often not entirely mistaken. This is for instance the case of Punter,[63] who, to give one example, actually qualifies the claims of Gothic's subversion. Still, the contemporary history of Gothic criticism as sketched by Baldick and Mighall is actually one founded on much miscomprehension, resulting from the attempts at accomplishing a well-defined agenda.

Hughes' subsequent and more general history recognises Bladick and Mighall's one as "a significant landmark in the genre's introspection."[64] Still, his overall reception remains sceptical. What is noteworthy, he perceives the distinction between the earlier and more modern phase of criticism as artificial – a perfectly just remark if we take into consideration his own vantage point, which is not to stake rifts that allow the Gothic to become central. But then, apart from criticising the co-authors' superficial treatment of

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[61] Such is e.g. the case of Count Dracula, who becomes established as a character bringing (sexual) liberation and thus subverting the oppressive bourgeois patriarchal norms. Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 221-225.

[62] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 210.

[63] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 227.

[64] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 17.

the early twentieth-century criticism – which, as we have already noticed, seems to result from his taking the implications of the phrase "shamefaced" somewhat at face value – he also states with regard to their approach that it:

> is as prejudiced as the "modern" phase of criticism which [it itself] disparage[s] as being implicated in a left-leaning and allegedly libertarian critique of Victorian repression. In a sense, [Baldick and Mighall] too have Gothicized the past, not with repression necessarily, but certainly with a dismissal based upon perceived primitivism and dilettante irrelevance. Gazing upon their division of two phases of Gothic criticism, the culturally naïve and the politically implicated, they find nothing to please them—at least until the act of criticism turns inward upon itself to critique the critical text and its theoretical basis over and above its alleged focus upon specific textual or generic issues.[65]

Whether the approach is prejudiced or not could constitute a moot point. Certainly, Bladick and Mighall are firm about their rejection of the particular perception of Gothic fiction and – too – of a particular type of methodology which, according to them, if not qualified by history, results in miscomprehension. Much of their article in fact recapitulates Mighall's earlier criticism of the application of psychoanalysis to the Gothic, which, in some cases, he sees as using Freud to explain what actually explains Freud.[66] The coordinates of the Gothic they promote are perhaps as limiting – with regard to the scope of both texts which could be seen as Gothic and paths of investigation which could be chosen as legitimate – as their argument is fierce in tone. Still, it does not appear justified to state that they find nothing to please them as they call out for a well-defined type of criticism and, above all, their act of turning inwards upon criticism cannot be perceived as of secondary importance with regard to what is at stake in studying Gothic fiction. Baldick and Mighall's account has generated significant critical response, and how central their argument is to studying Gothic fiction can be seen for instance on the example of David Punter and Elisabeth Bronfen's article published in the aforementioned collection, *The Gothic*, edited by Botting. We might conclude with their statement: "One premise which is assumed is that it is no longer adequate – if it ever was – to consider Gothic solely under the rubric of the

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[65] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 17.

[66] To be more precise, he makes this statement with regard to Kelly Hurley's analyses of the *fin de siècle* Gothic. Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 265.

counter-cultural or subversive; Gothic is now canonical in many different ways, but it could be argued that this renders the urgency of examining the ethical implications of our readings of the Gothic all the greater."[67]

2.3. Gothic Criticism and Psychoanalysis

The history of Gothic criticism as constructed by the differentiation paradigm is a history of success based on rifts. However, the accounts such as Hughes' and Baldick and Mighall's provide a valuable set of counter-perspectives, and point to possible points of rift and appropriation within the very contemporary critical discourse operating within that paradigm. Hughes approaches the notion of the Gothic journey from the margin into the mainstream critically and reinscribes the directions Gothic criticism took in the past without considering them with reference to a repression-liberation relationship. Baldick and Mighall highlight some underlying assumptions on which the contemporary Gohic criticism often operates, and point to significant displacements which bear upon the constitution of a vast field of study. Interestingly, just as Miles notices that the historicist surveys often turn their back on psychoanalysis – and psychoanalytical scrutiny seems in fact to underlie the success of the Gothic in the differentiation paradigm – so the voices contesting the underlying assumptions of the differentiation paradigm come most often from historicist critics. This is, however, not to state that there ought to be a rift between the historicist- and theory-oriented Gothic criticism. We have already seen in Miles that the corrective drive would rather be to unite, or perhaps re-unite, the two in such a way that we are able to pay more attention to our own projected goals and received prejudices as, inescapably, cultural theories are culturally conditioned tools.

The historicist (or rather 'new historicist') type of analysis interestingly identifies the potential (or actual) weak points of the theory-based interpretation where, we could say, the differentiation paradigm sees the moments of progress (or beneficial departure from the earlier assumptions and assessment of the Gothic), which enable the critic to reposition the Gothic as a phenomenon of central importance to culture. In the first place, what it contests is psychoanalysis, the basis for methodological scrutiny that first

[67] The in-text citation following the statement refers the reader to the article by Baldick and Mighall. David Punter and Elisabeth Bronfen, " Gothic: Violence, Trauma and the Ethical," in *The Gothic*, ed. Fred Botting (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. 7.

made Gothic fiction something more than just 'bad fiction,' that is fiction which failed to follow the canons of the best that has ever been written. It appears, then, that out of the array of theoretical approaches that Gothic criticism has adapted for the scrutiny of the Gothic, it is psychoanalysis that deserves our special attention.

A significant perspective on psychoanalysis is offered by Mighall. Valued by Hughes for its introduction of the concept of the Gothic as a mode,[68] his *A Geography of Victorian Fiction*, first published in 1999, elaborates in detail on the author's stance that psychoanalysis should be reassessed as an unproblematic mode of reading Gothic fiction. In fact, as Mighall states, psychoanalytical or psychological approaches preclude historical or 'geographical' considerations: "Discussions of just where and when a text is set are not prominent in this critical tradition."[69] Importantly, as considered by Mighall, Gothic fiction does not turn out to be inconsequential to the development of the modern subjectivity. He writes: "The Gothic dwells in the historical past, or identifies 'pastness' in the present, to reinforce a distance between the enlightened now and the repressive and misguided then."[70] Thus, its representations of the past ought to be seen as central to the formation of the bourgeois subject, a fact which is established without any aid of psychological scrutiny. What is more, Mighall claims, psychology-oriented critical readings are Gothic in their own right, as they "[enact] version of 'historical' attitudes and mechanisms which are central to Gothic representation, compelled to duplicate what [they fail] to understand."[71] They key idea here is that, according to Mighall, psychoanalysis stems from the same discourses that manifest themselves in Gothic fiction. As a result, while attempting at 'explaining' the Gothic, psychoanalysis traces in the text the clues pointing to what once determined its own rise.

An example might be necessary at this point to clarify Mighall's position. To give one, the Gothic's reliance on history makes it prone to invite psychoanalytical readings, simply because psychoanalysis itself relies on a history model in which the past equals infantile drives, the repressed which returns in the present to haunt us.[72] To give another, Lambroso's theory informs psychoanalysis as much as it also informs Stoker's *Dracula.* That is, among other reasons, why it appears that *Dracula* invites Freud so

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[68] Hughes, "Gothic Criticism," p. 20.
[69] Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, p. xi.
[70] Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, p. xviii.
[71] Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, p. xxv.
[72] Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, p. 248.

readily. Mighall writes: "Following Lambroso (the named source for his ideas) in stressing a biogenetic correspondence between ontogenistic stagnation (fixation in Freudian terms) and the count's archaism, Van Helsing twins the vampire's 'criminality' with his 'child brain.' Critics who pick up on this and transform atavistic 'child-brain' into 'infantile fixation' merely *rehearse the historical modifications that this idea was undergoing in the hands of Freud at about this time.* These critics' comments restore the lost historical thread which binds the two ideas."[73] It does not, however, properly account for the text's own conclusions, to which psychoanalytical 'infantile fixation' is still an idea of the future.

Similar conclusions, voiced perhaps in a less vehement manner, come also from other Gothic critics who dedicate themselves to a historicist scrutiny. To give just a brief example, in *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*, Miles engages into a dialog with psychoanalysis and Elisabeth Bronfen's analysis of 'the figure of the missing mother,' typical to Female Gothic plots. As he notices, the questions raised by Freud's essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and Lacan's account of the mirror stage "interweave with the Female Gothic on several levels," the typical female plot manifesting certain curious analogies with the two theories.[74] Yet, as he stresses: "[i]n digressing at length on psychoanalysis I do not mean to suggest that psychoanalysis explains Radcliffe, or even (as some argue) vice versa. It is rather that the Gothic and psychoanalysis invite a dialogue with each other, in which their voices, similar but different, ramify into something else, for good historical reasons."[75] What he begins with, namely pointing out that the Gothic and psychoanalysis as narratives are coeval,[76] may be seen as paralleling Mighall's account of how they are shaped by the same discourses. One of the moments when this becomes especially visible is when Miles uses Philippe Ariès' *The Hour of Our Death*[77] to briefly contextualise psychoanalysis.

[73] Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, p. 263.
[74] Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 106.
[75] Miles, *Ann Radcliffe*, p. 108.
[76] Miles, *Ann Radcliffe*, p. 108.
[77] The same book is used by Terry Castle to contextualise Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as representative of the repressed fear of death, newly emergent, according to Ariès, at the end of the eighteenth century. Miles recapitulates Ariès argument in the following way: "Whereas death had its place in the rhythms of traditional life, new taboos and customs surround it in the 'modern' world. No longer understood as a phase of a rational order, death now comes to figure the irrational itself, with the result that new strategies arise to hide, displace or disguise death." Miles, *Ann Radcliffe*, p. 108.

The conclusion he reaches on "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" is that "when Freud comes to analyse the 'death' instinct his language turns Gothic":

> Given that the essay was written in the shadow of Sophie Freud's death, the suggestion arises that Freud's 'speculations' are a displaced attempt to cope with death; that without either a paradigm that would explain it, or social customs to 'naturalise' it, Freud takes refuge in a narrative capable of 'containing' mortality. The narrative form that comes most readily to hand is the Gothic, with its dimly understood agencies, its images of division and entrapment, of deep, inner, self-betrayal. And the reason Gothic comes to hand is that, historically, it is the first literary form to come into being as a response to modern ways of dying.[78]

This vividly illustrates the ways in which psychoanalysis and the Gothic may interact, the latter assimilating the former.

To take a slightly different direction, the divergence between the outcomes of a psychoanalytical reading and the historically justified conclusions of the Gothic text, though not considered at great length, is pointed to by another scholar, Markman Ellis. As he proclaims at the onset of his considerations, he avoids referring to psychoanalytical register as it was not available to the authors he discusses. He writes: "As the term 'psychoanalysis' was first coined by Freud in 1896, first in French, then German, and only later in English – it could be concluded that the gothic inhabits a world of representation categorically pre-Freudian."[79] Furthermore, just as he sees solid reasons why psychoanalysis should find Gothic fiction attractive, so he enumerates reasons to remain cautious. As Mighall and Miles, he emphasises that psychoanalysis drew extensively from Gothic repertoire, some of its "key terms of value" being actually "predicated on, determined by, or theorised in the discourse of gothic fiction"; still, as the aforementioned critics do, he also points out that the Gothic and psychoanalysis each took their own, divergent route, and stresses that using the latter to explain the previous results in effacing the original conclusions that a Gothic text might offer.[80]

A vital conclusion arises out of these considerations with regard to the differentiation paradigm. This conclusion is that perhaps the elevation of the Gothic from the margin –

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[78] Miles, *Ann Radcliffe*, p. 109.
[79] Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 13.
[80] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, pp. 13-14.

of course, having assumed that the Gothic had previously functioned unambiguously at the margin – took place at the cost of displacing what the Gothic actually offers us. This is a striking conclusion, but not an impossible one. Similar displacements, lying at the foundation of the conception of the Gothic that the differentiation paradigm has constructed, may, quite possibly, be found if we look at a basic, it should seem, aspect of this very conception. This aspect is the mode's assumed subversion. Subversion, as we have seen, is the key concept in the differentiation paradigm, one which unites the variety of approaches under a common label of the liberated study of a liberated genre/mode. As we have noticed, there appear more or less confident voices that Gothic fiction could be properly seen as conservative rather than subversive in some particularly modern, or even postmodern, sense. However, we must remember that what is conservatism to one system, may appear subversion to another.

Much is said – and has already been quoted, especially from Botting – on the presumed (multiple) ways in which the Gothic subverted what was expected of literature, and then became marginalised as a result. But the critical outrage triggered by the growing popularity of Gothic fiction is only one level on which we can discuss Gothic transgression. If we decide to follow Baldick and Mighall's way of reasoning, we can see that subversion may be discussed on two further levels. One of them is the *subversion of the feudal past*, mentioned by Breton, and highly functional for the Whiggish political and social paradigm. The other one is the Romantic subversion of the Enlightened present propagated by Summers and upheld by later critics. Of these two, the previous is considered by the two critics as '*actual,'* the latter as a methodological mistake resulting from displacement. However, as they observe, the previous becomes obscured by psychologising ruminations which establish yet another level of subversion: of the reasonable by the unconscious, which immediately makes Gothic transgressions psychological and a-temporal. Hence, we may speak of one instance of *the displacement of the text 'original subversion.'*

Jackson, who introduces the notion of the subversive powers of fantasy in the 1980s, speaks of a yet different kind of subversion. Her considerations of what is given voice in the fantastic text, against the silence imposed by the dominant order, reorient the notion of subversion towards the domain of the play of power in the contemporary post-Foucauldian sense. But Jackson is quite explicit while stating that the Gothic is not

easily seen as subversive in this sense – and so is Punter.[81] The way in which a feminist critic would perceive Gothic fiction as subversive is a yet different story. And finally, while commenting on the conclusions of *Gothic Writing*, and the tension between the Gothic aesthetic – defined as "the discursive construction of an idealised Gothickness"[82] preceding Gothic fiction – and the way it is realised in Gothic writing, Miles states that his "point was not that Gothic writing was 'subversive,' in the usual meaning of that phrase, but that the accustomed vectors of power that obtained in discursive acts occurring on the same 'ontological plane' outside the text, frequently exhibited symptoms of reversal within it."[83]

A voice against assuming subversion (a multilayered concept, as it seems) to be the constitutive feature of the Gothic in all its incarnations comes, apart from Baldick and Mighall, also James Watt (1999). Watt contests Gothic subversions on two major planes. First of all, he points to the emergence of what he calls the Loyalist Gothic, a strand of Gothic fiction verging on historical romance, which originated in the writing of Clara Reeve and flourished at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. He states: "From around the time of the British defeat in America, […] the category of Gothic was widely redefined so as to denote a proud heritage of military victory. In the context of this increasingly powerful loyalist discourse, I argue that the majority of works after *Otranto* which called themselves 'Gothic,' along with numerous other 'historical' romances, served an unambiguous moral and patriotic agenda."[84] Second of all, according to Watt, a conservative perspective is in fact characteristic of the majority of Gothic novels of that time. As he states, what could be found disturbing at the time, was the context of production and reception rather than the content of the novels themselves: "Works that described themselves as translations or imitations of German fiction were seen to be increasingly suspect as the 1790s progressed, since anything 'German' was guilty by association with the deluded revolutionary idealism attributed to the Illuminati, or to writers such as Schiller and Kotzebue. The escapist fiction published by commercial presses, such as William Lane's Minerva, was widely censured, in addition, because of the way that it was seen

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[81] See David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London and New York: Longman, 1980), pp. 417.
[82] Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820*, p. xi.
[83] Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820*, p. xi.
[84] James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 7.

to feed the demand of an undisciplined yet ever-expanding reading public."[85] Hence, also, he considers Lewis' *The* Monk, the novel which relishes the status of an exemplar of Gothic transgressiveness as, first and foremost, atypical to Gothic fictions of the time, [86] and the novels which followed, like those of Dacre, Hogg, Maturin and the Shelleys, written in a similar vein, as constituting only one strand of the Gothic seen as a genre, and hence unable to provide a substantial evidence that Gothic fiction in general should be viewed as characterized by subversion.[87]

When it comes to Watt's stance on the context of production and reception as a source of Gothic subversion, a somewhat similar claim is made by Emma Clery. For example, read against the contemporary context of Revolution and revolutionary conspiracy, *The Monk*, as she views it, acquired the potential to subvert social order first of all in the eyes of the contemporary critics. Discussing Thomas Matthias virulent response to Lewis' novel, Clery writes: "The controversy gave the book a vertiginous slant; the subversion of morality and social institutions, which was its subject, was now publicly announced to be its end; [...] The confused overlappings of the content of *The Monk,* its reception and alleged effects, and rumours of actual political plots created an indeterminacy over allegiances and identities which in turn favoured an indiscriminate paranoia."[88] Though handing the theme of subversion in Gothic fiction in a different way, as she works on drawing multiple links between the rise of Gothic fiction – or the supernatural in fiction – and the context of its rise, which is the rise of consumerism, Clery also comes to announce a need to reconsider the subversive status ascribed to the Gothic: "Claims that the fantastic *per se* represented or continues to represent a literature of subversion need to be reconsidered in view of [the] definable post-1800 relations of production and consumption in Britain. Radical potential is not inherent in a uniform content, a set of themes, or a formal structure; it concerns above all the event of the work, the determinate entry of a work into circulation and the systematic boundaries of the dialogue between reader and text."[89]

All of the abovementioned voices, which we have grouped under the common heading of "Counter-Histories," undermine the basic elements of the contemporary representation of Gothic fiction as devised by the differentiation paradigm. It is said that

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[85] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 8.
[86] See e.g. Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 8.
[87] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 101.
[88] E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Subernatural Fiction, 1764-1800* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 164.
[89] .Clery, *The Rise of Subernatural Fiction*, p. 154.

the Gothic has travelled from the margin of culture into the mainstream – but at the same time, we must account for the fact that, in a very particular sense, the Gothic has always been a quite central phenomenon. It is said that theory, or, to be more precise, psychoanalytical theory 'recovered' Gothic fictions from the academic limbo – but some of the new historicist accounts of the Gothic view it as actually doing more harm than good. The contemporary critical discourse recognises the subversive character of Gothic fiction – but, again, in a manner which, some would suggest, is not qualified enough. And all in all, the very broadness of the notion of the Gothic and of the range of the approaches applicable to it assumed by the differentiation paradigm seems somewhat suspicious due to the way in which it impinges on both the conception of the Gothic and the history of criticism. What we need, perhaps, in such a case, is, indeed, a qualification. And this qualification, as it seems, ought to be carried out, following some of the suggestions already presented in this chapter, on the basis of the contextualisation of both Gothic fiction and its major coordinates as posed by the differentiation paradigm.

Chapter III
Constructing the Gothic:
Gothic Criticism and Discourse

Chapter I and Chapter II of this dissertation have discussed a current representation of the history of Gothic criticism and illuminate the ways in which this representation is contested by the critics themselves, respectively. This chapter elaborates on the basis for a possible contextualisation of the contemporary conceptions of Gothic fiction. Contextualising those conceptions, however, cannot be carried out without trying to account for the emergence of the differentiation paradigm first: without understanding why the field of Gothic studies represents itself by means of cutting off from the past. Consequently, what must be carried out before we proceed to devising a methodological approach towards the critical representation of the Gothic is a theorisation, and also in a sense contextualisation, of the differentiation paradigm itself.

Such a theorisation shall be carried out by means of comparing the situation in the field of Gothic studies to a situation in which a new interpretation becomes acceptable, discussed in Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class?* The relevance of Fish to our considerations stems from the fact that his work embodies the very changes Gothic criticism appears to embrace. As a result, we shall see that although Gothic criticism claims to originate in the shift of the general approach to literary studies, it nonetheless perpetuates the type of practice inherent in the earlier stages of criticism. This, in turn, seems to result from an attempt at self-validation within the domain of literary studies. And the consequence of such a validation is structuring the conception of Gothic fiction around what might turn out to represent a functional 'ruse.'

Having discussed the differentiation paradigm, the chapter turns towards considering the question of overinterpretation. In fact, one might wonder whether the subject of these considerations is actually the long-lasting debate on the matter of 'the meaning' that is the property of a text (mentioning the author's intention might appear too *passé*, which is of course meaningful in itself). This is not exactly so. A juxtaposition of Umberto Eco's, Richard Rorty's and Jonathan Culler's stances on overinterpretation will serve to clarify the position taken in the dissertation. The aim it pursues, like Culler's 'overstanding' interpretations, is to scrutinise how the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic fiction work, and why. At the same time, following Eco to a

certain degree, it stresses the need to contextualise a text in the process of interpretation. This is because both the production and the reading of any text, a Gothic one too, are conditioned by cultural factors, inherent in given times. As a result, the meaning we are interested in is the 'historical' meaning – the context of the production and immediate reception of the Gothic. Nonetheless, we do not wish to entirely reject theory as a methodological tool, but rather to emphasise the fact that theory must be qualified with historicist considerations if it is not meant to 'use' a text for its own purposes, instead of interpreting it.

A significant assertion which underlies our perception of criticism is that it represents an activity in which one inescapably constructs, one way or another, one's object. However, it is typical of the contemporary Gothic criticism to disregard this fact and seem to act on the presumption that it uncovers 'the truth' about the Gothic. This is a potentially dangerous practice, given that the Gothic is often ascribed a socio-political resonance. Yet, at the same time, the socio-political significance that Gothic fiction is valued for nowadays is exactly the reason for assuming such a position. If the Gothic is significant for it tells us something about our culture, then its conception cannot be widely recognised as a construct. At the same time, however, this conception may indeed turn out to be based on a ruse. The way in which we may be able to verify whether such a ruse has indeed become central to the representation of the Gothic nowadays is by checking the conception of the Gothic against the historical context of its production. By this historical context, however, we do not mean particular historical events that the Gothic may reflect, or allude to, but rather the discursive context, as available to us, which influences the production and original reception of Gothic fiction. It is by addressing such a context that we are able to identify some interpretations as informed by the contemporary theoretical perspectives.

And this takes us to Foucault, whose thoughts on discourse and the formation of objects constitute the basis for our own methodological approach. Foucault's theory of discourse is useful to us primarily because its allows us to see theory-oriented Gothic criticism as a discursive field, which constructs its objects and validates statements about them according to its own adopted framework. As a result, this field is prone to 'rewrite' the Gothic; to construct it anew and in agreement with its own discursive paradigm. As we shall see, Foucault himself perceives psychoanalysis and Marxism, two of the prominent theories mentioned by the contemporary Gothic critics, as discourses. What is more, although the differentiation paradigm assumes that Gothic

criticism cut itself off from earlier institutionalised and constraining scholarship, Foucault's thought allow us to notice that Gothic criticism, institutionalised as it is, itself exercises control over what is being said in the field. And, finally, Foucault's remarks also allow us to undermine the conceptualisation of the scrutiny of the Gothic as a process of discovering the 'true' origin of one's own cultural identity.

3.1. Theorising Gothic Criticism

In a certain way, what we deal with appears to be a paradox. How can we say, nowadays, that one reading of a text is the right one, and another is not? How can we say that one definition of the Gothic is the correct or complete definition and others are incomplete or mistaken? And above all, how are we supposed to forbid anyone to state that a genre – or a mode – escapes definition but is by nature subversive and marginal? In a certain way, it is '*true*' that we cannot.

We have analysed the differentiation paradigm and the way the contemporary Gothic criticism establishes its difference from the early scholarship, discarding earlier approaches. We may picture the situation in the field as parallel to Stanley Fish's assumptions concerning the question of what makes an interpretation acceptable. Fish generally claims to agree with the statement that "we are right to rule out at least some readings," simultaneously admitting what seems to be an impasse at the first glance – "on the one hand there would seem to be no basis for labeling an interpretation unacceptable, but on the other we do it all the time."[1] However, the foundation of his analysis of critical activity is the assumption that the text is a function of interpretation, a creation – a product or a construct – of interpretive communities. Its meaning is their property, and thus a reading can and will be ruled out on the basis of what is institutionally accepted at a given time as "a thing that is done" and what is rejected as "not done."[2] In other words, as soon as a given strategy of interpretation gains institutional recognition, it is established as acceptable.

Bearing this in mind, we may notice that Gothic literature (or the mode that encompasses much more than literature) has been ostensibly classified as 'done' and 'not done' since its very rise, as the differentiation paradigm holds. This classification

[1] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 342.
[2] Fish, *Is there a Text in This Class?* p. 343.

has only recently assumed the form of discussing whether a given interpretation is to be seen as 'right' or 'wrong.' Previously, it concerned the very question of the existence of a type of literature such as the Gothic. Gothic fiction was profusely 'done' at the end of the eighteenth century, both by the writers and the critics. By the latter, it was discussed as rather 'not (to be) done' than 'done.' Then, as it seems, it was definitely 'not done' by the critics for quite a while. And then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was again classified as 'done' (written and read) though in the light of a general agreement that it is 'not really to be done.' And, now, it is 'done' (literally and figuratively) again, profusely, but the contemporary ways in which it is done by the critics are more 'done' than those others of the past. But this is not the only parallel.

The situation of Gothic criticism parallels the one described by Fish with regard to the question of interpretation also with respect to his remarks on how a given 'new-born' interpretive strategy establishes itself as valid. By the way, these we might find surprising if we look at them from the perspective of the differentiation paradigm. Fish writes: "A new interpretive strategy always makes its way in some relationship of opposition to the old, which has often marked out a negative space (of things that aren't done) from which it can emerge into respectability."[3] Chiefly, the very same thing can be said of the Gothic criticism of the second half of the twentieth century. But Fish has more to say: "Rhetorically the new position announces itself as a break from the old, but in fact it is radically dependent on the old, because it is only in the context of some differential relationship that it can be perceived as new or, for that matter, perceived at all."[4] At this point, we may notice that the profundity of the contemporary Gothic criticism appears to have something to do with the fact that Gothic literature was so neglected and mistreated in the past, as maintains a large part of its criticism. In a way, the paradigmatic history of Gothic criticism as presented in chapter one may be seen as analogous with Fish's outline of the relationship between the new and the old position:

> This means that the space in which a critic works has been marked out for him by his predecessors, even though he is obliged by the conventions of the institution to dislodge them. It is only by their prevenience or repossession that there is something for him to say; that is, it is only because something has already been said that he can now say something different. This dependency, the reverse of the anxiety of influence, is reflected in the unwritten requirement that an

[3] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* p. 349.
[4] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* pp. 349-50.

> interpretation present itself as remedying a deficiency in the interpretations that have come before it. […] The lack an interpretation supplies must be related to the criteria by which the literary community recognizes and evaluates the objects of its professional attention.[5]

To sum up: Gothic fiction used to be considered as an inconsequential subgenre of the novel, a curiosity without much literary merit (by the previously institutionalised criticism – realism, Romanticism, New Criticism, etc.); now, it is considered as crucial to the understanding of the history of the middle class, modern literature and culture, and our own very contemporary psyche. What was not said about it, as much as what was said, becomes the basis for what is said about it now, and a justification for speaking at the same time. The area of deficiency is – understandably – vast, and interpretations find themselves supplying multiple lacks, all of which seem to be related to the appropriate criteria.

If we look at the case of the Gothic from the perspective of the differentiation paradigm, the space of the critic as delineated by his or her predecessors is that of *recovering one's space*. This is no accident for it is in this way that the paradigmatic history of Gothic criticism has been structured. And this is what makes the case of the Gothic particularly interesting as well. If Fish discusses the conflicting interpretations of Blake's tiger as either good or evil, or good and evil, or neither good nor evil, and shows how a given 'new' interpretation depends on previously delineated spaces, then in the case of the Gothic we can observe the same relationship, but in terms of the contradiction 'unworthy' and 'worthy,' and also 'forbidden' and 'liberated,' 'almost non-existent' and 'vibrantly lively.' On the level of scholarship centred on literary merit and universal human values, serious Gothic criticism is Fish's Eskimo interpretation (meaning an interpretation which is not to be) of "A Rose for Emily" given institutional credit. At the same time, on a different level, it does not transcend the limits established by what it wishes to discard. It is finally 'being done.'

Stanley Fish has not been chosen for this analysis merely for the reason of those above-discussed similarities. His *Is There a Text in This Class?* was published the same year as Punter's *The Literature of Terror* and is considered to be a testimony to the dusk of New Criticism, while given accounts of Gothic criticism celebrate this dusk as the dawn of their own freed field. Something of the attitude manifested, among others, by

[5] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* p. 350.

Fish, or its offshoot, in one or another form, can be perhaps felt ten years later in Kilgour's short chapter on Gothic criticism as she states that "[i]nterpretation gives us an *illusion* of control, especially as it has itself become increasingly idealised as a more authentically heroic and creative act than writing, a means of an ideal *communal construction* of the text that offers an alternative to the rampant possessive individualism of artistic creation."[6] Indeed, Fish's assumption that "there is no core of agreement *in* the text, there is a core of agreement (although one subject to change) concerning the ways of *producing* the text,"[7] ways which are disseminated by and a property of interpretive communities, corresponds well to what Alexandra Warwick writes on how, it should seem, studying the Gothic ought to be 'done' nowadays (but is not):

> It seems to me that the dominance of Gothic as a critical category is an effect of the aftershock of deconstruction, of the move to an apparently anti-scientific criticism that circulates around the problem of subject/object relations. Critical schools of the first half of the twentieth century such as Formalism, New Criticism and Structuralism constituted themselves as sciences. [...] The shift into Post-Structuralism comes when structural linguistics poses the question of whether structure belongs to the object or to the subject. This is the anti-scientific moment that disrupts the objectivity of scientific analysis, and this is followed by three decades of a similar anti-scientific orientation in criticism, in which the act of criticism tries, if anything, to highlight the ways in which it constructs and constitutes its object even as it apparently interprets it. The problem for Gothic studies, or the reason for the remorseless expansion of the field, is that the subject/object confusion still remains. Gothic criticism pretends that Gothic is inherent in its object and thus the relation between criticism and literature returns to being one of transparency and objectivity in which the texts themselves are coerced into becoming allegories of Gothic critical practice.[8]

Warwick's concern is that the Gothic as a critical category has expanded to the point of too diverse (and striking) texts ending up being labelled as Gothic fiction. We could even say the Gothic has become an interpretive strategy in its own right ('I recognise this text as Gothic and therefore this is what it says: [...]'). Simultaneously, the critics fail to notice that they are not discovering but *producing* meanings.

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[6] Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 222. Emphasis mine.
[7] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* p. 342.
[8] Alexandra Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" *Gothic Studies*, vol. 9. no. 1. (2007), p. 9.

Analysing the differentiation paradigm along Fish's considerations of the role of the criterion of acceptability is illuminating with regard to the above-presented situation in the field. It allows us to highlight what sort of space is given to the Gothic critic in this paradigm. The passage is not only from one acceptable interpretive strategy to another; it is also from unacceptability of interpretation as such to its full credit. All in all, though beginning to rise to its prominence at the times of the publication of Fish's book (and in the times following the spread of deconstruction) the contemporary Gothic criticism – to Warwick's disappointment, as it seems – not surprisingly falls into the same mechanisms of operation as the criticism(s) that preceded it. Although Kilgour asserts that the Gothic critic is aware there is no 'truth behind the veil,' no 'real point' to the text that should be discovered in it, to put it in Fish's terms, Gothic criticism (e.g. in its application of psychoanalysis in its various forms) still acts as if it was trying to devise this a-temporal, true point that has been overlooked by its predecessors, though, it seems, primarily on a different level (that of cultural significance). In such a case, resorting to the consciousness of the fact that there is no truth, only interpretation, may be considered as a means of *self-defence*, a justification for the diversity of interpretations, but proves rather superficial, especially with regard to the major arguments of the differentiation paradigm concerning the justification of Gothic criticism as such. 'Doing' Gothic has to be established as culturally significant (and thus striving to discover some sort of *truth*) if it is to be valued as 'done,' and not on the basis of the fact that this is what has 'somehow happened' to be presently allowed by academia. If it did not establish itself as revealing with regard to e.g. culture, it would remain a 'mere curiosity.' We shall return to this issue further on.

To allow ourselves a digression, the parallel between the differentiation paradigm and Fish's considerations may bring to one's mind another parallel, this time with Michel Foucault's treatment of the 'repressive hypothesis.' In his celebrated volume I of *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault sketches what seems to be a commonly observable fact – but turns out to be a pre-established functional assumption serving the politics of its own times – namely, that the society of the second half of the twentieth century is in the shackles of old bourgeois prudery and has to take efforts to liberate its sexuality. Foucault thus describes the common discourse:

> If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the

> appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom. This explains the solemnity with which one speaks of sex nowadays. [Speaking of sex] we are conscious of defying established power, our tone of voice shows that we know we are being subversive, and we ardently conjure away the present and appeal to the future, whose day will be hastened by the contribution we believe we are making.[9]

Again, we are dealing with what seems to be a definite cutting off from the old, though, as it is easy to imagine, the new discourse of "deliberate transgression" operates in the space marked by the previous discourse of repression. As Foucault shows, contrary to what is believed, the bourgeoisie invented sexuality and multiplied discourses on sex rather than silenced them. But as he states, at the time when his famous book is written, asserting the hypothesis is, we could say after Fish, commonly 'done':

> The affirmation of a sexuality that has never been more rigorously subjugated than during the age of the hypocritical, bustling, and responsible bourgeoisie is coupled with the grandiloquence of a discourse purporting to reveal the truth about sex, modify its economy within reality, subvert the law that governs it, and change its future. […] To say that sex is not repressed, or rather that the relationship between sex and power is not characterized by repression, is to risk falling into a sterile paradox. It not only runs counter to a well-accepted argument, it goes against the whole economy and all the discursive 'interests' that underlie this argument.[10]

Foucault refrains from claiming that sex has never been repressed – that its prohibition has been "a ruse."[11] But then he points to the fact that the repressive hypothesis has to be "[put back] within a general economy of discourses on sex in modern societies since the seventeenth century"[12]; that it constitutes a part of a larger system rather than a constitutive element for the modern history of sex.[13] We could say the way sex is seen nowadays depends on contemporary society, knowledge, power and the relations between them; this does not give us, however, the whole picture. What escapes us is

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[9] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books), pp. 6-7.
[10] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* vol. 1, p. 8.
[11] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* vol. 1, p. 12.
[12] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 11.
[13] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 12.

another set of relations between now and then – the questions: 'Why is it seen in such a way?' and 'How has it come to be seen in such a way?' Analogously, we could ask why Blake's tiger should be seen as no longer bad but good, and if it is announced that *The Tyger* has nothing to do with the categories of good and evil but with, say, time and space, what has prompted the change?

We could observe that the discourse of the repressive hypothesis has something in common with the interpretive strategy as defined by Fish. To put it in Foucauldian terms, we could say that the interpretive strategy itself belongs to and reflects a given discourse. Both cut themselves off from the previous discourse system but emerge into existence only in relation to it. However, the discourse of the repressive hypothesis is one which, after all, makes a ruse its central point – the prohibition of sex is not the historical basis for the writing of the modern history of sex; still, it has to become one if the discourse of the repressive hypothesis, itself a part of a larger power-knowledge system, is to be operative. Also, the ruse will not emerge to our sight if we do not consider a larger system of relations, one which extends beyond oppositions.

It is a matter of fact that the contemporary conceptions of Gothic fiction assume its marginality and subversity while being careful not to define it in a totalising way. We can agree or not, advocate the conceptions or prove them to be mistaken, but we *cannot disprove their functionality* – and necessity at this particular moment in time. The questions is, however, what makes them functional and necessary? How did subversion and marginality, visible in the very construction of the differentiation paradigm, come to be the central elements of the representation of Gothic fiction? And why?

The above considerations respond to one of the issues raised at the beginning of this chapter. In a way, we cannot disclaim the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic: they arise for certain reasons, and for certain reasons they could not be different from what they are. This, however, does not mean that we should accept them at face value and move on without giving them a serious thought. Let us now turn to another issue, the question of 'meaning' and 'overinterpretation' – in spite of the fact that mentioning Fish a moment ago could be seen as obliging us to exclude this path of consideration already at the outset.

3.2. The Gothic and the Question of Overinterpretation

Overinterpretation is not a matter that has been infrequently tackled by literary scholars. Umberto Eco's *Interpretation and overinterpretation*, a volume of the Tanner Lectures from 1990, discusses it explicitly, providing us with various, and significantly varying, perspectives on this subject. Eco's stance of a semiotician is clearly opposed to that of reader-oriented criticism, which can be best seen in his assumption that the aim of critical interpretation is to "discover […] something of [the text's] *nature*."[14] Accordingly, as he asserts, it is possible to point to criteria for assessing interpretation,[15] and, thus, it is also possible to reach an agreement about, at least, the meanings that are discouraged by a given text.[16] The criteria he gives oscillate around the concept of *intentio operis*, the intention of the text. Eco's understanding of *intentio operis* is as follows:

> The text's intention is not displayed by the textual surface. […] One has to decide to 'see' it. Thus it is possible to speak of the text's intention only as the result of a conjecture on the part of the reader. […] Since the intention of the text is basically to produce a model reader able to make conjectures about it, the initiative of the model reader consists in figuring out a model author that is not the empirical one and that, in the end, coincides with the intention of the text. Thus, more than a parameter to use in order to validate the interpretation, the text is an object that the interpretation builds up in the course of the circular effort of validating itself on the basis of what it makes up as its result. I am not ashamed to admit that I am so defining the old and still valid 'hermeneutic circle.'[17]

He further qualifies his stance by stating that "[t]o recognize the *intentio operis* is to recognize a semiotic strategy" (which may refer, for instance, to stylistic conventions), and that to prove the guess about the intention of the text one has to "check it upon the text as a coherent whole."[18] These are not all available criteria in fact as, in the course of his lectures, Eco also refers to the "criterion of textual economy,"[19] of resorting to the

[14] Umberto Eco, "*Intentio Lectoris*: The State of the Art," in *The Limits of Interpretation* (Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 57. Emphasis mine.
[15] Umberto Eco, "Interpretation and history," in *Interpretation and overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 40.
[16] Eco, "*Intentio Lectoris*: The State of the Art," p. 45.
[17] Umberto Eco, "Overinterpreting texts," in *Interpretation and overinterpretation*, p. 64.
[18] Eco, "Overinterpreting texts," pp. 64-65.
[19] Eco, "Overinterpreting texts," p. 52.

most economical ways of interpretation that find their confirmation in the cultural and linguistic context of the text in question as much as prove effective for the text as a whole. What he opposes, as stressed in his "*Intentio Lectoris*: The State of the Art," is the practice of 'using texts': of treating texts as one's venture point for "[getting] something else," under the risk of misinterpretation from the semantic viewpoint.[20]

Eco's arguments are confronted with criticism and polemics, gathered in the very same volume and coming from Richard Rorty and Jonathan Culler. Rorty, speaking from the position of pragmatism, wishes to dismiss Eco's distinction between interpretation and use[21] insisting that all interpretation be use, and finds mistaken the assumption that a text may somehow 'control' its reader. Culler, "a prominent expounder and to some extent defender of several of the new approaches which are collectively labelled (not always helpfully) 'theory,'" as Stefan Collini calls him,[22] disagrees with both Eco and Rorty on several different issues. However, above all, viewing the search for knowledge on the functioning of literature as the basic and vital occupation of literary studies, he disagrees with Eco when it comes to an instance of overinterpretation in whose case the critic is engaged more in the question of how the text works than in what it asks its model reader.

For Rorty, determining the meaning that the text in itself generates is pointless, just as the assumption that a given text has its own internal coherence against which an interpretation can be checked. He views interpretation in terms of responding to stimuli provided by an object by means of making assertions. These assertions, as he poses, "are always at the mercy of being changed by fresh stimuli, but they are never capable of being *checked against* those stimuli, much less against the internal coherence of something outside the encyclopedia. […] You cannot *check* a sentence against an object, although an object can *cause* you to stop asserting a sentence. You can only check a sentence against other sentences, sentences to which it is connected by various labyrinthine inferential relationships."[23] We could perhaps paraphrase this statement as follows: if a thing is constituted in language in such or such a way, what is said about it and shown as coherent cannot be checked against the thing's own coherence. If a

[20] Eco, "*Intentio Lectoris*: The State of the Art," p. 57.
[21] This argument is developed in Eco's earlier text, "*Intentio Lectoris*," published in 1988, in *Differentia*, to which responds Rorty. In the previous paragraph I have quoted from a later version of Eco's two lectures, the aforementioned "*Intentio Lectoris*" and "Theorien Interpretativer Kooperation." For further details, see Eco, "*Intentio Lectoris*: The State of the Art," p. 44.
[22] Stefan Collini, "Introduction: Interpretation terminable and interminable," in *Interpretation and overinterpretation*, p. 13.
[23] Richard Rorty, "The pragmatist's progress," in *Interpretation and overinterpretation*, p. 100.

representation happens to propose something else than the previously accepted representation, than it may be compared with the previous representation and found irrelevant, or it may be shown to be incoherent or insufficient in itself and thus disproved, but not with regard to the object itself. Thus, Rorty opposes "the idea that the text can tell you something about what *it* wants," and insists that it can only provide stimuli which confirm, to a greater or lesser degree, the way a reader is "inclined" to perceive it beforehand.[24] One's interpretation may prove convincing or not – but it always remains a use, always responds to a predetermined need.

For Culler, on the other hand, focusing on discovering the text's intention exclusively seems to be *dull*, or unproductive. As he states, an intellectual activity such as interpretation is to be valued primarily for being 'extreme.'[25] This is because the critic has a much greater chance to notice things that might be otherwise unnoticed by making strong claims.[26] Culler values overinterpretation, or overstanding – as he proposes to name it after Wayne Booth – when it investigates into "what the text does and how" instead of into what the text itself has to say.[27] This type of overinterpretation, which is hardly concerned with the text's meaning but pursues a different project (even though, as Culler suggests, it often calls itself, somewhat confusingly, interpretation[28]), is most productive for it uncovers the mechanisms by which literature functions. It investigates into "how [a text] relates to other texts and to other practices; what it conceals or represses; what it advances or is complicitous with. [Not what it] has in mind but what it forgets, not what it says but what it takes for granted."[29] Taking up such a perspective, we could say that to interpret the text merely in order to discover the meanings it 'wants' us to discover is not only dull but also *dangerous* – as is rejecting the importance of the mechanisms of how texts function. That is why Culler ascribes value to deconstruction, perceiving it as a significant critical tool due to its "continuing engagement with the hierarchical oppositions which structure Western thought, and the recognition that the belief one has overcome them once and for all is likely to be a facile delusion."[30] Overstanding, as he defines it, is exactly what enables the critic to expose such delusions.

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[24] Rorty, "The pragmatist's progress," p. 103.
[25] Jonathan Culler, "In defence of overinterpretation," in *Interpretation and overinterpretation*, p. 110.
[26] Culler, "In defence of overinterpretation," p. 110.
[27] Culler, "In defence of overinterpretation," pp. 114-15.
[28] Culler, "In defence of overinterpretation," p. 117.
[29] Culler, "In defence of overinterpretation," p. 115.
[30] Culler, "In defence of overinterpretation," p. 122.

These three stances, of Eco, Rorty and Culler, represent three extreme positions, three ways of approaching the text. It is not our aim here to decide which of these positions is 'right' – provided it is possible to approach them from such an angle at all. We have already stated that our goal is not to deny one's right to the present conceptions of the Gothic, but we are nevertheless going to look at them critically in order to see how they were structured and, possibly, with what outcome. Since we assume that the conception of the mode based on its subversiveness and marginality is functional, we already see it as representing a use – but this use is not to be debunked. Instead, it may be approached in terms of Culler's distinction between analysing the text for the questions it poses and asking questions about how the text works and what effects it produces. Literary criticism 'does' the latter, often, as Culler notices, without distinguishing between it and the former, in fact Gothic criticism being no exception. Our task is this as well, though on a different level: namely, to ask questions about how a given critical representation 'works,' where it originates and what its goals can possibly be.

Still, the concept of the text's 'meaning' must be addressed in the course of our considerations. As can be seen from the critical debates between particular scholars in the field of Gothic studies – especially in the case of Baldick and Mighall's article, it should seem – much of the contemporary scholarship in the field is accused of doing precisely what Eco stigmatises: overinterpreting texts in the sense of going too far; and using them for whatever purpose one may have at the cost of misreading. Such a stance clearly opposes the pragmatist one. On the other hand, there immediately appears a question about criteria. Are those proposed by Eco sufficient – or useful, indeed? Is it enough to check a conjecture against what we assume to be the work's coherence? Taking into consideration Baldick and Mighall's own conception of Gothic fiction, we could infer that at least some sort of qualification is necessary.

Let us consider one of the examples provided by Eco in "*Intentio Lectoris*," that of Derrida's and Marie Bonaparte's reading of E. A. Poe's "The Purloined Letter," which is also referred to by Rorty. As Eco notices, in Derrida's case what is meant to undergo an analysis is "the unconscious of the text," rather than that of the author, whereas Bonaparte, in her combining of the motives she finds present in Poe's texts and facts from his life, wants to get the author on the couch. [31] Thus, while Derrida's

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[31] Eco, "*Intentio Lectoris*: The State of the Art," p. 57.

interpretation does not violate the *intention operis* and "shows how a text can produce [a] second-level meaning,"[32] Bonaparte, to use Rorty's wording, "spoil[s] her own treatment of Poe."[33] We could say that whereas Derrida remains 'inside' the text, Bonaparte needs to use the text to attain something external to it. The problem is, however, more complicated.

We may remark, in tune with Markman Ellis' stance on the relationships between the Gothic and psychoanalysis, that Poe could not have been familiar with Freud's writings. To paraphrase, we may accept that a psychoanalytical reading remains 'faithful' to the *intentio operis* of any text, even if it is used to discern certain patterns that seem to have textual confirmation, only if we assume that psychoanalysis reveals some sort of eternal truth about how a human psyche works. However, the contemporary Gothic critics who approach the mode from the new historicist perspective would rather show, like Mighall, that psychoanalysis and the Gothic have common roots, and that makes them similar but does not make the former a tool to explain the latter, for both are *ways* of accounting for certain phenomena.[34] From such a perspective, having applied psychoanalysis to a reading of a text we end up doing precisely what Rorty writes about – namely, producing the text's coherence by linking textual clues, visible to us only by the power of a prior assumption of what clues we want to see, into a coherent and convincing whole[35] (or, better still, linking into a whole some clues by means of discarding some others which cannot be accounted for by the logic we have adopted). But the structure used to account for all the points is as external to the text as Bonaparte's interest in Poe's mental state. Otherwise, it seems, by introducing a dialectics which gained prominence for the first time several decades after Poe wrote "The Purloined Letter," we put into action something similar to the 'Hermetic' principle *post hoc, ergo ante hoc*, in which case "a consequence is assumed and interpreted as the cause of its own cause."[36] The situation could be different only if, by chance, psychoanalysis was somehow confirmed to constitute the underlying logic of the text.

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[32] Eco, "*Intentio Lectoris*: The State of the Art," pp. 57-8.
[33] Rorty, "The pragmatist's progress," p. 94.
[34] Robert Mighall*, A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's* Nightmares (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 248-265.
[35] Rorty states, quite tellingly: "So I should prefer to say that the coherence of the text is not something it has before it is described, any more than the dots had coherence before we connected them. Its coherence is no more than the fact that somebody has found something interesting to say about a group of marks or noises - some way of describing those marks and noises which relates them to some of the other things we are interested in talking about." Rorty, "The pragmatist's progress," p. 97.
[36] Eco, "Overinterpreting texts," p. 51. Eco thus illustrates the abovementioned principle: "The Renaissance Hermetists believed that the *Corpus Hermeticum* had been written by a mythical

But how are we to confirm such a thing? This may be an irresolvable question, but let us nevertheless delve into it. Rorty rightly notices that "the boundary between one text and another is not so clear."[37] On the other hand, Eco, also rightly, states that one "can certainly use Wordsworth's text for parody, for showing how a text can be read in relation to different cultural frameworks, or for strictly personal ends […] but if I want to *interpret* Wordsworth's text I must respect his cultural and linguistic background."[38] As he also rightly states, the process of interpretation includes, among others, "the cultural encyclopedia comprehending a given language and the series of the previous interpretations of the same text."[39] In this, as in his reference to the criterion of communal control,[40] we could assume he comes somewhat (perhaps incidentally and obviously from a completely different venture point) close to Culler's postulate that what is interesting in overinterpretation is the way in which it can unveil how a text functions (in a given culture). Surely, texts work in communities, and it is the communal consensus that points to the 'acceptable' ways of their working. In other words, Eco's model reader could be viewed as a communal reader, a reader who 'knows what to expect' of a text, or recognises which of the communal objects of interest have been realised in it. This, in turn, takes us in two directions. On the one hand, towards Fish's interpretive communities, and, on the other, towards Culler's assumption that it is less interesting to answer the text's questions than to delve into how a given text functions, what it omits to say, and what it takes for granted – for this will tell us something about its culture. It is this culture at a given moment, this set of principles governing the production of texts in a given community, in its temporal dimension, that elicits particular conjectures on the side of the reader through the text; which becomes inscribed onto the text. If we pay no attention to this fact, we shall fail to answer the question how a text works – instead, we will manifest how we want it to work.

The temporal dimension is a vital element here. 'Always historicize!' is the great motto of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*, first published 1981. It

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Trismegistos who lived in Egypt before Moses. Isaac Casaubon proved at the beginning of the seventeenth century not only that a text which bears traces of Christian thought had to be written after Christ but also that the text of the *Corpus* did not bear any trace of Egyptian idioms. The whole of the occult tradition after Casaubon disregarded the second remark and used the first one in terms of *post hoc, ergo ante hoc:* if the *Corpus* contains ideas that were afterwards supported by the Christian thought, this meant that it was written before Christ and influenced Christianity" (p.51).

[37] See Rorty's reading of Eco's evaluation of Bonaparte's readings of Poe in "The pragmatist's progress," pp. 94-95.

[38] Umberto Eco, "Between Author and Text," in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, pp. 68-69.

[39] Umberto Eco, "Reply," in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 143.

[40] See Eco, "Reply," pp. 144-45, 148-50.

represents a countermeasure against what Jameson sees as a trend prevalent in criticism, namely "the tendency of much contemporary theory to rewrite selected texts from the past in terms of its own aesthetic and, in particular, in terms of a modernist (or more properly post-modernist) conception of language."[41] Nearly twenty years later, we can see a similar type of claim being made with regard to Gothic criticism by Baldick and Mighall, and the concern about the de-historicising of, in this case, Gothic fiction remains valid. Hence Robert Miles' fear that a theory, rooted in the twentieth-century concerns, may project those concerns on the texts of the past, deciphering them according to the contemporary social code.[42] Hence, also, Robert Mighall's analysis of how the Dracula of Bram Stoker makes friends with the twentieth-century critic in his/her reading of the original text.[43] To conclude, it may be risky to assume that to use psychoanalysis as an explanatory tool with regard to Ann Rice makes more sense than with regard to Ann Radcliffe – but then there is a certain justified basis for doing the former, which seems to be at least the ubiquity of the psychoanalytical discourse in the twentieth-century culture.

The meaning we have established thus as interesting to us is in some sense an 'historical' meaning, one generated by the context of the text which influences the text's production as much as its reading. Of course, one could object that such a meaning is in fact as difficult to determine as any intrinsic nature that a text may possess. As Culler notices with regard to deconstruction, it "stresses that meaning is context bound – a function of relations within or between texts – but that context itself is boundless: there will always be new contextual possibilities that can be adduced, so that the one thing we *cannot* do is to set limits."[44] Specifically with regard to Gothic fiction, Andrew Smith remarks:

> Reading the Gothic historically enables us to see how writers respond to earlier Gothic texts; it also enables us to relate such texts to the historical contexts within which they were produced. […] However, the danger in this is that such texts can merely be seen as doing history by other means […] In addition, how we understand history is not an objective process as it is inevitably influenced by selectivity and because the past is always mediated for us through accounts […] of

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[41] Frederic Jameson, "On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act," in *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 17.

[42] Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 10.

[43] Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, pp. 227-228.

[44] Culler, "In defence of overinterpretation," pp. 119-20.

> historical events. History also means different things to different critics – how a Marxist, a cultural materialist, a new historicist, or a feminist interprets history is dependent upon the significance accorded to specific events.[45]

Again, Jameson could serve us as an illustration here. *The Political Unconscious* sees interpretation as far from the process of dealing with a text that is immediately available 'as it is.' On the contrary, the process of interpretation is one of apprehension "through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or—if the text is brand-new—through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive traditions,"[46] and the response is the imperative to historicise. Still, it cannot be overlooked that Jameson relies on a very well specified version of history – a Marxist one. And if Marxism perceives history in terms of class struggle, it is inescapably bound to emphasise certain facts and exclude others in accordance with its own paradigm.

Let us approach the issue from a Gothic angle. Reading a text against a given historical context, such as the French Revolution, will provide us with a particular interpretation. This interpretation, however, may prove as mistaken as reading it through the lens of a theory rooted in twentieth-century cultural concerns. For that reason, Smith, for instance, asserts that while reading the Gothic historically "due acknowledgement is made of the literary histories which [the texts that are being read] also drew upon and which played a role in shaping a Gothic aesthetic."[47] We could see this as a particular version of a recourse to the text's internal coherence, to taking into account 'all' the aspects of the text while making – and then checking – a conjecture, though, of course, it could also be said that we should remain cautious while 'choosing' the literary histories that 'shaped the Gothic aesthetic.'

Clearly, history does pose problems. Nevertheless, we need to remember that both Jameson and some of the Gothic critics point to *history* as an alternative to dehistoricising through *theory* while it is theory that dominates Gothic studies nowadays. Reading critical texts in the field of the Gothic feels almost like reading Culler's list of "series of competing 'approaches' […] such as structuralism, deconstruction, feminism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and new historicism."[48] Resistant

[45] Andrew Smith, *Gothic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 7.
[46] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 9.
[47] Smith, *Gothic Literature*, p. 7.
[48] Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), no pagination (see preface).

as it is to historicising itself, for whatever reasons there may be,[49] theory nevertheless risks rewriting the text in terms of interpreting it from the perspective of its own aims as well. But it does not seem the right way out of the predicament here to argue in favour of one of them; rather, as assumes Robert Miles, history can help us verify theory.[50] To put it in other words, perhaps it is not possible to identify one *right* context for the text, one that would explain it thoroughly and rightly. Nevertheless, referring a theoretical reading to certain contexts, both of the text and of the reader, may serve as a means of checking a conjecture, for it may show that certain 'meanings' are brought into the text from the historical outside.

It is that sort of enquiry that underlies our considerations, though the general framework of the object of investigation, namely, the contemporary critical conception – or representation – of Gothic fiction, is somewhat larger than the text itself. The question that remains is the one about the rationale for conducting such an analysis. What can be gained by 'verifying' the elements of the way Gothic fiction is structured nowadays by the critics against some sort of historical context – apart from what was already offered by such accounts as Markman Ellis' *The History of Gothic Fiction* or Emma Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*? Once again referring to Warwick's article, we shall argue that the answer lies precisely in Gothic critics' persistence in searching for the 'real' Gothic and refusing to accept the Gothic as their own construct.

3.3. The Gothic as a Construct

Warwick identifies the cause of the incontrollable spread of the Gothic, seen as a critical category, in "the subject/object relation problem."[51] Clearly, this problem can be rephrased in terms of the critical debate presented above: the question is whether there is any internal structure or element of the text that makes it Gothic, or any Gothic 'meaning,' or perhaps reading a text as a Gothic text is thoroughly arbitrary, dependent on a given fashion or preferred institutionalised critical practice.

According to Warwick, the consensus reached by Gothic critics when it comes to defining the Gothic is that the Gothic represents a mode or a loose tradition with a

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[49] See e.g. Peter C. Herman's "Introduction: The Resistance to Historicizing Theory," in *Historicizing Theory*, ed. Peter C. Herman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), pp. 1-16.
[50] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 3-4.
[51] Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" p. 7.

capacity for constant change and reinvention.[52] Yet, as she states, there are instances of criticism approaching the Gothic as if it were a genre, cataloguing its formal features, and 'mechanically' classifying texts as Gothic as soon as they appear to include those features – which, in her opinion, is a most harmful practice.[53] This is because, seen in this way, the Gothic as a critical category turns out to be practically unlimited, for Gothic 'clues' may be potentially found in most improbable places. Then, the problem becomes potentially more complicated when we reach a higher level: that of the 'Gothic meaning' which can be seen as politically or socially charged. We might be dealing here with a pattern of the following kind: if this text represents an example of the Gothic, and the Gothic is characterised not only by its formal features, stock characters and themes, but also by its social or political role or reverberation, then this text also has to have the same socio-political status or – conversely – the socio-political status of this text has to be Gothic. This, in turn, opens a promisingly vast field for the free practice of useful, a-historical misreading.

As we have noticed above, within the differentiation paradigm, Gothic criticism emerges as a *culturally* significant activity, one which has the privilege of acknowledgement. And that is the reason why it cannot define itself as projecting the structure on the object. If Gothic criticism accepted its status as owning the structure, it would have minimal space to claim that Gothic fiction has – and always had – a significant and influential socio-cultural role. In the previous chapter we have observed that whereas David Punter in 1980 still validates Gothic fiction by providing it with high-art poetic credentials, later critics move toward establishing its value in terms of socio-political impact and usefulness. One extremely useful example is Jerrold E. Hogle's article "The Gothic Ghost of the Counterfeit and the Progress of Abjection." Hogle relies on the conceptualisation of the cultural function of the Gothic, distilled, as he states, by the "most sophisticated recent critics," as that of providing a space for abjecting (in Kristeva's understanding) contradictions (otherness, anxieties, fears) of the Western middle-class psyche in the process of forming a unified identity.[54] Thus, the

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[52] Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" p. 6.
[53] Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" p. 6.
[54] Jerrold E. Hogle, "The Gothic Ghost of the Counterfeit and the Progress of Abjection," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 295-96. It may be observed, at this point, that this is the reason why the Gothic critic perceives the Gothic as reflecting the anxieties and fears of its contemporaries. Such an approach is openly refuted by Baldick and Mighall. They state: "The assumption the cultural 'anxiety' is reflected or articulated in Gothic fiction is not only rather simplistic: its tautological. Horror fiction is used to confirm the critic's own

Gothic is seen as providing a testimony to the ways the Western middle-class identity has been shaped, and reading a Gothic text is perceived in terms of the "Protestant tradition of self-scrutiny"[55] or, to put it differently, of digging in the garbage of culture to learn about it through what it disposes of.[56] Yet, simultaneously, it can be neither presented nor perceived as a mere construct but has to be given some 'substance.' Seen as a subjective structure projected on the object, the Gothic would seem to have little explanatory force with regard to the subject who conducts a 'self-scrutiny' of his or her origin. Hence the reason for the subject/object confusion mentioned by Warwick. And hence, also, the reason for our interest in what could be seen as the contemporary misconceptions of the Gothic.

Scrutinizing the contemporary conceptions of Gothic fiction instead of merely accepting them as predominant at present should serve to broaden our understanding of both the Gothic as such and the present condition of its criticism. As soon as we treat the reading of the Gothic as capable of explaining anything to us, our past or our psyche or our present society, it becomes a socio-politically marked reading. In a way, this is no surprise if the basis for the adopted methodology is theory. As defined by Culler, theory is "what changes people's views, makes them think differently about their objects of study and their activities of studying them," its most significant practical effect being "the disputing of 'common sense.'"[57] In this sense,

> [t]heory is often a pugnacious critique of common-sense notions, and further, an attempt to show that what we take for granted as 'common sense' is in fact a historical construction, a particular theory that has come to seem so natural to us that we don't even see it as a theory. As a critique of common sense and exploration of alternative conceptions, theory involves a questioning of the most basic premises or assumptions of literary study, the unsettling of anything that might have been taken for granted: What is meaning? What is an author? What is it to read? What is the 'I' or subject who writes, reads, or acts? How do texts relate to the circumstances in which they are produced?[58]

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unproven point of departure, that [...] 'oppressive' culture was terrified by its ideological 'Others.'" Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 221-222.

[55] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 222.

[56] Fred Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, ed. Fred Botting (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. 3.

[57] Culler, *Literary Theory*, p. 4.

[58] Culler, *Literary Theory*, pp. 4-5.

Theory is highly speculative, analytical and reflexive with regard to fixed notions – and subversive in its un-fixing of them. As a result, we cannot omit to notice that applying it to the reading of texts in order to 'explain' their function in e.g. the shaping of the subject – indirectly, or pretty much directly, also the subject who reads – we not only act in the socio-political domain but also act so as to produce a change, both in views and in thinking; we act with subversion on our minds. Thus, we end up encoding the particular vision – or version – of ourselves, our past, our society, our culture and a set of historical relations, as well as our possible future. As a result, however, the discourse on the Gothic reveals certain similarities to the Foucauldian repressive hypothesis: both reconstruct a certain history. The question is, however, whether the Gothic, just as the repressive version of the history of sex, is made functional at the cost of making 'a ruse' its central point. And this question may be answered precisely by means of verifying the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic against a historical background.

3.4. Contextualising the Gothic

We have initially sketched the method of our scrutiny as consisting in checking the contemporary critical representations of the Gothic against the context of the text's production. This, however, is still a rather vaguely described methodology and requires clarification. In the first place, we need to specify what is meant by the 'historical context.'

The obvious and simplest denotation of historical context would be the events of the past against which we can situate a text – one example good enough would be the aforementioned French Revolution as an illuminating background for Lewis' *The Monk*. In the light of the contemporary historicist approach, however, 'reading' a text exclusively 'through' an assumption that it is, one way or another, meant to reflect a certain historical event is not satisfactory when it comes to conceptualising *The Monk* or generally Gothic fiction (or any fiction, indeed). By the way, it is such an approach that seems to risk re-writing a text by means of doing history.

Treating Lewis' novel as an example, we can observe how the contemporary Gothic critics in the historicist circle move towards another, more satisfactory level of analysis. Before we discuss it, let us however turn to the oft quoted, ground-breaking 1981 article by Ronald Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution". Paulson's assumption, underlying his treatment of a number of key Gothic novels, is that Gothic fiction used to

serve as a metaphor of the Revolution,[59] and is supported with de Sade's famous opinion of 1800. Though Paulson distances himself from the position that the Gothic as such serves revolutionary propaganda, he states quite confidently: "I do not think that there is any doubt that the popularity of Gothic fiction in the 1790s and well into the nineteenth century was due in part to the widespread anxieties and fears in Europe aroused by the turmoil in France finding a kind of sublimation or catharsis in tales of darkness, confusion, blood and horror."[60] Relying on this assumption allows him to identify Lewis' monk Ambrosio as a revolutionary, an individual breaking free form repression (inflicted by an aristocratic family and the clergy); the scene of the destruction of St. Claire's convent by an angry mob as inspired by the actual course of Revolution; and Radcliffe's Emily as threatened by "the sexually threatening soldiers of Montoni […] (in this sense related to Burke's mob that threatens Marie Antoinette)."[61] In such a reading of the mode, its incarnation popular in the turbulent 1790s is established as either representing a "plot" that was already there and became adapted to reflect on the Revolution, or originated in the terrors of the Revolution itself and was "borrowed" to reflect on matters either related or unrelated to it.[62] According to Paulson, the Gothic not only has a potential for Revolutionary associations in itself: its castles-as-prisons are there by the time the turmoil in France brakes out, and have the potential to become the "frame of mind that made the Fall of the Bastille an automatic image of revolution for French as well as English writers" but this very frame itself also becomes "sophisticated" by the Revolution.[63] Resemblances, or perhaps interconnections between Gothic and 'revolutionary' fictions are further traced in the mode's elaboration of 'tyrant-victim' relationship; juxtaposition of tyrannical fathers obsessed with the preservation of property and banditti, the latter of whom Paulson deciphers as alluding to the rioting crowd; and the Gothic's taste for mysteries and plots.[64]

Organising – or structuring – the Gothic of 1790s in such a way produces a workable grid which can be extended over the Gothic material of that time and later. Identifying the use of terms parallel to those of Burke's reflections on the Revolution in Radcliffe's

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[59] Ronald Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," in *Gothic,* ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, vol. 2 (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 271.
[60] Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," p. 273.
[61] Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," p. 277.
[62] Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," p. 273.
[63] Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," p. 274.
[64] Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution ," pp. 272-278.

description of Emily St. Aubert further adds to the argument (probably as much as the readers' awareness that Lewis was an eye witness to the Revolution) on the basis of which Paulson is capable of stating that "Radcliffe produces a fiction about a spectator of revolutionary activity who can be confused by her experience […]" while "Lewis' *Monk* reproduces the exhilarating but ultimately depressing experience of the revolutionary himself."[65] Similarly, through evoking the possible ways in which the Revolution could have an impact on Mary Shelley, both through her own experiences and the experiences of her parents, he is capable of reading *Frankenstein* as "to some extent a retrospect on the whole process [of revolution] through Waterloo, with the Enlightenment-created monster leaving behind it wake of terror and destruction across France and Europe, partly because it has been disowned and misunderstood and partly because it was created unnaturally by reason rather than love in the instinctive relationships of the Burkean family."[66] Many of Paulson's observations are correct and intriguing. However, what becomes the basis for more contemporary considerations of the French Revolution theme, especially in the case of *The Monk*, seems to be the filling of gaps in the grid proposed by him.

With regard to historical reading, it appears impossible to read a Gothic text with a single reference point, as it is at the junction of multiple traceable influences that the fullest picture seems to emerge. Paulson's consideration on the influence of the French Revolution on a strand of Gothic fiction becomes compensated in, for example, such accounts as the aforementioned Markman Ellis' *The History of Gothic Fiction*, James Watt's *Contesting The Gothic* and Emma Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, each account in its own way drawing our attention away from the direct influence of omnipresent terror across the British Channel, stressed by de Sade, and towards issues pertinent at home. To return to *Monk* as our example, Paulson focuses on the theme of the rebel and the angry mob – both sympathetic and outrageous for rebelling against the *ancient regime* and a decayed version of Catholicism but, at the same time, heading towards their own destruction due to the excess of violence and the lack of moral restraint. The above-mentioned authors, by contrast, analyse the book in a way in which the influence of Revolution, though visible and meaningful, is placed in a larger context of Lewis' mockery of the Radcliffean novel and the discourse of sensibility, his instrumental use of Revolutionary and pornographic language, the overall

[65] Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," p. 279.
[66] Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," pp. 280-81.

understanding of conspiracy at that time and, as it seems, the personal striving to earn the label of *enfant terrible* of the day. Simultaneously, none of the authors seems to state so confidently as Paulson does that the Revolution is to be seen as constituting some sort of a common axis for the subject matter or manner of representation in the Gothic of the 1790s.

Placing the revolutionary theme in *Monk* in the context of the prevailing contemporary discourses has a notable effect on the understanding of its significance for the text. Addressing the critical stance on the issue of why *Monk* was condemned by its contemporaries appears essential at this point since it is through the study of what prompted the eighteenth-century critics to castigate Lewis that Paulson's grid becomes 'filled' with illuminating contents. Paulson remarks that Lewis' portrayal of the Revolution is distanced from its typical propaganda texts in France,[67] and does not mention the outburst of *Monk*'s criticism. In turn, the later critics stress that the novel was "loyalist" with regard to its portrayal of the Revolution but its reception turned out to be filtered through the fears predominating in the official critical discourse: in the critical readings at the time, exemplified by the vehement attack by Matthias, "the subversion of morality and social institutions, which was its object, was now publicly announced to be its end; the fate of Ambrosio […] seemed to foreshadow the discomfiture of M. G. Lewis."[68]

The fact that Lewis becomes castigated for spreading subversion which he, in fact, presents from the loyalist perspective in his novel is interesting. For Clery, the controversy around Lewis seems to be a side effect of the fear of revolution finding its reflection in the conspiracy panic, conspiracy being seen at that time as a possible trigger to the outbreak of the French Terror, and then also from the fear of books and

[67] "Lewis' treatment of the lynching scene, for example, is far removed from the morally clear-cut renderings of anti-clericalism exemplified by the *drames monacals* popular in the theatres of Revolutionary Paris. In one of these plays – de Menuel's *Les Victimes cloîtrées* of 1791, which Lewis saw, admired, and translated – the wretched prisoners held in the dungeons below a convent are finally rescued by a Republican mayor brandishing the *tricouleur*. Lewis exploits the dramatic resonances of the Revolution and its anti-clericalism, but simultaneously portrays the rioting mob as blood-thirsty, completely out of control, animal like in its ferocity. The convent of St. Claire represents corruption, superstition, and repression, but its overthrowers, no more admirable than the tyrants, are capable of the same atrocities or worse. In the same way, many observers (conservative and otherwise) by 1793 saw the brutally oppressed masses of France usurping the tyrannical roles of their erstwhile oppressors." Paulson, "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," p. 272.

[68] E.J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1899* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 164.

uncontrolled reading as propagating conspiracies[69] and illicit content. As she states, with their properly Gothic penchant for mystery, Gothic tales "[i]n their content […] allegorise their own effects,"[70] as a result of which they can be read as serving what they should demystify, which is exactly the case with *Monk*. According to Clery, "[t]he confused overlappings of the content of *The Monk*, its reception and alleged effects, and rumours of actual political plots created an indeterminacy over allegiances and identities which in turn favoured an indiscriminate paranoia."[71] What is interesting in the above is the fact that Clery links the 'confused' effect of mystery and conspiracy in Lewis with a similar perception of German *Sturm and Drang* movement and the form of *Schauerromane* in the late 1790s, especially Schiller's *The Ghost-Seer*.[72] Earlier, she notes that the German literature, imported with enthusiasm at the beginning of the decade, was soon seen by some as a threat capable of "[perverting] British minds and morals" as a result of associating it with the situation at the continent and spreading rumours of the "German-based" (Illuminati) world-wide plot, an example of which could be easily seen by the contemporaries in Lewis' *Monk*, a book whose author was not only versed in German novels but also openly admitted "borrowings"[73] from *Sturm and Drang* key works.[74]

Paulson also mentions conspiracy as inherent in the contemporary representations of revolution.[75] However, the obvious influence of German supernatural/conspiracy fiction on Lewis, brought about by both Clery[76] and Watt,[77] constitutes and important supplement to the revolution grid and allows to approach *Monk* from a different angle. Adopting this angle allows us to perceive the novel not simply in terms of reflecting upon revolution, or the Revolution, but in terms of its toying with the standard British romance form at that time – to which, at least initially, German novels were a refreshing alternative. Watt states: "[i]f Lewis dealt in German materials because of the regard for

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[69] Rooted in the conspiracy theories of Abbé Baruel and John Robinson, the previous of whom is especially eager to blame "the French *philosophes*." Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 163.
[70] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 163.
[71] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 164.
[72] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 163-64.
[73] The novel actually became famous for its notorious use of German works, and not only German, actual or ascribed to it by criticism, often amounting to plagiarism. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 142; James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 85.
[74] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 141-42. An extended account of the reception of German novels in Britain, including their stern rejection by the anti-Jacobin circles, can be found in Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, pp. 71-79.
[75] Paulson,
[76] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 142.
[77] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, pp. 71, 84-86.

boldness or daring which he shared with the translators and imitators […] he also had recourse to German sources, it seems, as a means of 'supplementing' the contemporary romance and making a name for himself by his defiance of the legitimizing conventions […] which were observed by writers such as Wordsworth and Scott," his "method" of composing *Monk* being "assimilative and wilfully heterogeneous."[78] This takes us to a quite different level of the text's functioning and, indeed, brings us closer to the homely affairs.

The fact that Lewis' works enter into a polemic with the form of romance and version of female sensibility popularised by Radcliffe is further emphasised by Watt and elaborated on in greater detail by Ellis. As Watt stresses, it was typical of Lewis to adopt an antagonistic position towards the discourse of sentimentality, often embraced by women writers.[79] Quoting Jacqueline Howard, he moves on to comment on Lewis' writing as aimed at achieving the status of a 'masculine,' brilliant author, whose characteristic would be unconventionality, eccentricity, risk-taking and the readiness to shock the readers. [80] What this further adds to the reading of *Monk*, seemingly aside the revolution theme, is the novel's constituting of itself as "a 'homosocial' work, written for a leisured male audience,"[81] and relishing *Shamela*-like, misogynist commentary on feminine virtue.[82] Importantly, *Monk* was initially credited by the critics for it literary merit, even though its libertine potential did not pass as unnoticed.[83]

When it comes to the outrage at the content of *Monk*, Watt notes it reached its peak only after Lewis, an MP at that time, publicly admitted his authorship in July 1796, and was stirred by the general anxiety connected with the emergence of the mass market and popular novel-writing.[84] This is not necessarily an argument contrary to that of Clery; in

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[78] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 86.

[79] As Watt observes, Lewis begun his carrier of a writer in 1791, with a piece titled "The E□usions of Sensibility: or Letters from Lady Honorina Harrow-heart to Miss Sophonisba Simper – a Pathetic Novel in the Modern Taste. Being the First Literary Attempt of a Young Lady of Tender Feelings." Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 87.

[80] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 87.

[81] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 89.

[82] See pp. 87-89 in Watt for a discussion of the representation of femininity in *Monk*.

[83] Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 106-7. See also Watt's discussion of positive critical responses to *Monk*, pp. 90-92. What is interesting, perhaps, about the positive responses to *Monk*, but remains left out in Watt's account, is the fact that some of its positive reviews came from the journals associated with the radical circles (*The Morning Chronicle*'s review of July 1796 and *The Analytical Review*'s one of October 1796) which, as Ellis states, soon "helped to identify the novel as being of the radical party, and ensured a hostile reception from more conservative organs." Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 109.

[84] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 84. The anxiety as discussed by the critics revolved around the theme of the consumptionist production and dissemination of literature the emblem of which became the Gothic novels of the Minerva Press, escaping critical control and pandering to popular taste, at the same time

a way, it inscribes well into her account of the critical reaction to popular fiction distributed by the circulating libraries. Watt perceives controversy as one of the goals the book was meant to achieve, reading it in the context of Lewis' later attitude towards the reception of his works, characterised by "[maintaining] the upstart reputation he had gained with *The Monk* [i.e. of an *enfant terrible*], baiting critics and reviewers by knowingly appealing to popular demand."[85] This also adds to the revolution-grid established by Paulson, again taking us closer to home. But then, on the other hand, it cannot be stated that *Monk* does not make use of the revolutionary theme, especially as Lewis was by experience capable of evoking the Revolution and the Terror itself in a vivid way.[86] As Ellis states, the novel gained a remarkably uncommon attention of criticism,[87] which seems well in tune with Watt's assumption that what prompted the critics was Lewis' high political status, and with Clery's analysis of the fear of revolutionary attitudes spread by supernatural fiction. What Ellis also states is that the novel was consciously inviting criticism through "deliberate obfuscation [of its stance]" and "confusion of […] ideological commentary, which [illuminated] British opinion on the revolution up to 1794 [but] was itself readable as a political intervention during its critical reception in 1797."[88] However, the aim of the confusion, as it follows from his considerations, again lies in something else than a reaction to the Revolution as such.

As it was stated above, Ellis focuses to a large extent on reading *Monk* in its relation to the Radcliffean novel. As he suggests, reading the novel as a satire on Radcliffe's internalising of the rule that literature ought to spread moral teachings could be of benefit to the critics.[89] While he mentions what was also stated by Watt, namely that *Monk* puts into question the construction of the feminine virtue and uses misogynist representations, he also makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the use *Monk* makes of the Revolution through its overt use of "a libertine descriptive language in moments of sexual encounter,"[90] at times disturbed with the application of revolutionary symbols. The discourse of libertinism "an historically enduring literary

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evading the restrictions and demands placed on the 'learned' authors by, e.g., the discourse of taste, which itself was a mark of a wider socio-cultural change. For a relevant discussion of the theme, see Watt, pp. 80-83, and especially Clery's chapter "The terrorist system," in *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 133-55.

[85] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, pp. 84-85.

[86] See Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, pp. 102-4.

[87] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 108.

[88] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, pp. 82-83.

[89] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 83.

[90] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 89.

and philosophic discourse on sexuality," was characterised by its masculine character and allegiances with misogyny; it treated sex as "good and natural," and postulated to analyse sexual behaviours in "rational and empirical" terms.[91] Ellis traces the use of the libertine language and representation of sexual behaviour in *Monk*, at the same time pointing to possible moments at which the language of libertinism becomes conflated with the language of liberty.[92] Such a use of the libertine language serves its own purpose: thanks to it, Ellis states, Lewis satirises *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, attempting "to expose the folly and hypocrisy of its ostensibly demure sexual agenda."[93] As a result, whereas Lewis' portrayal of the destruction of St. Claire's convent may differ substantially from French representations of revolutionaries combating the evil perpetrated by clergy, his language and manner of representation still manifest a link with those of French libertine anti-Catholic pornography, recognised in Britain in the 1970s as "closely allied with revolutionary radicalism, and as such, a dangerous species of sedition."[94] Similarly, his depiction of the devil's plot invites associations with the Revolution, even though, as Ellis observes, "*The Monk* is not simply a romance of the Terror [but] instead, multiple zones of overlap are located and explored."[95] It is because of such associations with the Revolution that Lewis' novel is found threatening (or at least highly contemptible) paired with the political position of Lewis, and if we follow this train of thought, we perhaps could even risk a hypothesis that it does so up to the point at which Paulson takes Ambrosio to be a revolutionary himself.[96]

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[91] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 89. Ellis also pays attention to the fact that libertinism was associated with the radical Whig circles around John Wilkes and Charles James Fox, the latter of which included Lewis. As he writes, "[a]lthough the alliance of libertinism and radical Whiggism was challenged during the Revolution controversy, the personal behaviour of Fox and his associates […] can be described by this discourse" (see pp. 89-90).

[92] For example, Lewis makes a woman's breast (itself allegorised by the Revolution) a powerful element in the novel. See Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, pp. 90-91and 93-94.

[93] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 89.

[94] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, pp. 92-93.

[95] Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, p. 104.

[96] As a side-note, it is perhaps worthy of a mention that Ellis takes the critical outrage at *Monk* to stem partly from the fear of the uncontrolled reading – which runs along the parallel arguments of Watt and Clery about the criticism of Gothic literature at that time – but sees the major factor contributing to it as what he takes to be the fact that the genre of Gothic novel at that time was aimed at the readership consisting of the young, and especially young women (see pp. 94-96 and p. 115). Clery's consideration of the composition of the Gothic readership at that time stresses that even though critics mostly seem to accept the assumption of female audience as valid *per se*, in fact repeating it after the eighteenth-century critics, which also seems to be the case with Ellis, there is little evidence that the novels were indeed read predominantly by women. She cites Paul Kaufman to support her claim that such a representation of Gothic readership in criticism of the day was an ideological construct: "Paul Kaufman gathered together all available evidence – library catalogues and a list of subscribers for a circulating library in Bath, a rare and recent find – to suggest that the stereotype was a male fabrication. Men outnumbered women as patrons at the Bath library by up to 70 per cent in the 1790s, and Kaufman insists that 'there is no reason

The insights of the contemporary criticism as presented above do 'fill' many of the gaps in Paulson's grid. In fact, we might notice that it is those gaps that actually make possible a straightforward reading of Lewis' novel as reflecting upon Revolution, and filling them actually complicates Paulson's basic assumptions. This suggests that perhaps a similar conclusion could be, upon consideration, reached also with regard to other novels he analyses. While he seems to be quite right when it comes to stating that the Gothic might have used the Revolution, its language and discourse of Terror to achieve its own objectives, it appears much less obvious when and to what extent the Gothic mode itself was actually used to reflect on the Revolution as such. This is for the reason that, when present, such a reflection would be possibly mixed with themes pertaining to homely affairs and would become fully meaningful only in reference to other discourses employed by the Gothic text.

What each of the aforementioned contemporary critics does, in fact, is relating, in a certain way, an existing assumption – a conjunction – to the available discourses of the times in question. In the case of *Monk*, what comes in handy is, among others, the discourse of sensibility as popularised by Radcliffean novels, the critical discourse and its representation of unlicensed reading, and the political discourses circulating around the Revolution itself. It is this kind of historical background that we will strive to evoke in our consideration of the present-day critical conceptions of the Gothic. In a similar vein, it is possible to check the basic conjectures of the contemporary Gothic criticism and the differentiation paradigm (like the one of the Gothic's inherent subversion, which evokes as evidence e.g. the eighteenth-century critical debasement of the mode), against the discourses prevalent in the criticism of the times when Gothic novels were actually written. Doing this, however, demands a double-sided analysis. On the one hand, what is necessary is the evoking of the past discourses in order to illuminate certain assumptions of the contemporary criticism. On the other hand, we also need to evoke the present discourses that may prompt the contemporary critics, dedicated to theoretical analysis, to reach particular conclusions.

to suppose it to be an exception', while the more numerous catalogues of library stock show a nationwide average percentage of fiction at only one-fifth of the total, though amounts differed widely, from 5 per cent to 90 per cent" (Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 98). This suggests that Ellis may be taking his argument too far in this particular respect.

3.5. The Theory of Discourse and the Formation of Objects

It is discourse, then, rather than the historical event, around which our analysis is to be organised. It goes without saying that historical facts are, indeed, represented through discourses, as can be seen in the case of the discussion of the French Revolution's impact on Gothic fiction. And, as the example of *Monk* shows, it is the discursive representation that has an impact both on the content of the work and on its reception. However, as we have already remarked, discursive representations constitute a context for production and immediate reception of a text in the past as well as for its re-production in the present. As a result, what is necessary is some sort of theory of discourse that would allow us to address and analyse both types of critical discourses on equal terms. Simultaneously, such a theory must let us pay a considerable attention to the ways in which both past and present discourses re-present their objects according to their own framework and for their own aims. Not surprisingly, approached in this way, the differentiation paradigm itself emerges as a kind of 'discursive formation.'

Such a theory of discourse is offered by Michel Foucault. Foucault has already been mentioned in this chapter – almost at the very beginning of it – mainly due to his notion of the repressive hypothesis. In fact, his thought has already been evoked to help us formulate the essential problem of this work, namely the suspicion towards the differentiation paradigm and its critical tenets. In a way, such a topic invites his theory, which curiously happens to be reflected in the field itself, even if only by means of a mere digression. Namely, in a footnote to his remarks on the way Baldick and Mighall approach the matter of critical misconception of the mode, William Hughes states "that Baldick and Mighall's argument owes much, it may be argued, to Foucault's "We 'Other Victorians,'" the opening chapter of the volume one of *The History of Sexuality*."[97] This is, of course, only a side-note; nonetheless, Foucault's thoughts on discourse indeed prove illuminating with regard to the subject matter of this work.

Of Foucault's works which deal with the question of discourse, in one way or another, *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and volume one of *The History of Sexuality* appear to be the most famous ones. Paul A. Bové enumerates two further sources which explicitly address the notion of discourse, namely Foucault's lecture "The Order of

[97] William Hughes, "Gothic Criticism: A Survey 1764-2004," in *Teaching the Gothic*, ed. Anna Powel and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 26, footnote no. 19.

Discourse" (1870) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969).[98] Other scholars could perhaps mention the essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971) as well, though in fact all Foucault's early work is concerned with this topic to a larger or lesser degree. All of the aforementioned works deliver a wealth of insight into the matter of discourse, even though it must be stressed that Foucault's views changed over years and while new paths were being pursued, others were dismissed or underwent considerable reformulation. The extended analysis of discourse belongs to Foucault's earlier phase of studies, with especially the method of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* bearing much semblance to structuralist theory. This method is ultimately abandoned in later writings in favour of genealogy, as Foucault turns to issues other than discourse as such.[99] Still, as Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow claim, "[a]s a technique, archaeology serves genealogy. As a method of isolating discourse objects, it serves to distance and defamiliarize the serious discourse of human sciences. This, in turn, enables Foucault to raise the genealogical questions: How are these discourses used? What role do they play in society?"[100] A set of similar questions pertaining to critical discourse emerges from the considerations following the remaining part of this work: How has the Gothic come to be codified as subversive or marginal, or indefinable? Why is it so vital to codify it in this way? What role does it have?

As it was already said, the advantage of Foucault's theory is that it enables one to identify literary criticism as discourse. What could perhaps be mentioned in this context is his treatment of the way discourse emerges as a unified entity, at least when it comes to taking his stance as a venture point. At this point, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* proves, however, a somewhat less immediately useful source, for it seeks to establish the rules which enable the unity of discourse as autonomous and ahistorical, in a

[98] Paul A. Bové, "Introduction: Discourse," in Mastering Discourse: The Politics of Intellectual Culture (Duke University Press, 1992), p. 4. "The order of Discourse" was initially translated as "The Discourse on Language." Bové uses the original French title.

[99] See the remarks on Foucault's early study of discourse, its relationship with the structuralist and post-structuralist mode of investigation, and its partial failure, especially as regards Foucault's assumption of the autonomous "rule-governed systems of discursive practice," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. xxiv-xxv. What perhaps should be stressed here is the fact that the authors assume Foucault's turning away from the structuralist-like analysis of discourse as rule-governed to have the following causes: "[f]irst, the causal power attributed to the rules governing discursive systems is unintelligible and makes the kind of influence the social institutions have […] incomprehensible. Second, insofar as Foucault takes archaeology to be an end in itself he forecloses the possibility of bringing his critical analyses to bear on his social concerns." For further information on the subject, see the chapters of the same book: "Towards a Theory of Discursive Practice" and "The Methodological Failure of Archaeology."

[100] Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, p. xxv.

structuralist-like fashion. Dreyfus and Rabinow contrast this attitude with the position taken by Thomas Kuhn in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), namely his introduction of the notion of "paradigm" – "a specific exemplar of successful work" – around which scientific communities are organised.[101] In his later works, Foucault also moves from the level of discourse theory and the search for rules to that of discursive practice, as well as pays more attention to the factors influencing this practice and its social significance. A number of useful observations can be drawn already from his "The Order of Discourse," the lecture introducing his concept of genealogy.

Foucault begins sketching out the concept of discourse by enumerating the ways in which it is restricted, and it is this perspective, rather than that of some sort of autonomous rules of discourse, which organises his discussion of the notion. What he addresses in the first place is the external means of exclusion, those which emerge whenever "power and desire" are put at stake,[102] namely prohibition, the opposition between reason and madness, and that between true and false.[103] Of these, he analyses in more detail the final one, focusing on "the will to truth" as a historical division which governs "the will to know," and states:

> starting from the great Platonic division, the will to truth had its own history, which is not that of constraining truths: the history of the range of objects to be studied, of the functions and positions of the knowing subject, of the material, technical, and instrumental investments of knowledge.
>
> This will to truth, like the other systems of exclusion, rests on an institutional support: it is both reinforced and renewed by whole strata of practices, such as pedagogy […]; and the system of books, publishing, libraries; learned societies in the past and laboratories now. But it is also renewed, no doubt more profoundly, by the way in which knowledge is put to work, valorised, distributed, and in a sense attributed, in a society. […] I believe that this will to truth […] tends to exert a sort of pressure and something like a power of constraint (I am still speaking of our own society) on other discourses. I am thinking of the way in which for centuries Western literature sought to ground itself on the natural, the 'vraisemblable,' on sincerity, on science as well – in short, on 'true' discourse. […][104]

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[101] Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, p. 60.

[102] Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 56

[103] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," pp. 52-54.

[104] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 55.

What is true is acceptable. What is not acceptable, becomes excluded on the basis of being false. Hence, the potential of discourse is significantly restricted, and its ability to generate statements curbed. At the same time, the will to truth remains unnoticed within the discourse itself.[105] Truth appears to be 'natural,' and hence transparent.

What Foucault opposes to the external procedures of control are internal ones, which become the "principles of classification, of ordering, of distribution," and serve to master "event and chance."[106] These are the commentary, the author-function and the organisation of disciplines. *The author*, according to Foucault, serves the "grouping of discourses, conceived as the unity and origin of their meanings, and the focus of their coherence."[107] In other words, it serves to bring together statements, or works, and delimit what a given unified discourse, or oeuvre, may be seen as saying. *Commentary*, to move on, is a function of "discourses which, over and above their formulation, are said indefinitely, remain said, and are to be said again," though, at the same time, they may prove unstable and subject to change.[108] They represent a kind of "major narratives," based on primary texts (among which he identifies also literary texts, such as *Odyssey*), and their existence precludes the utopia of a pristinely new discourse.[109] What characterises commentary is the relation between primary and secondary texts, one which entails "(endless) construction of new discourses" based on re-actualising the primary text, on discovering in it always fresh and promising meanings on the one hand and, on the other, constant repetition of identity, of what was already in that text, articulation of what was already "silently articulated 'beyond'" in it.[110] As Foucault states, "[b]y a paradox which it always displaces but never escapes, the commentary must say for the first time what had, nonetheless, already been said, and must tirelessly repeat what had, however, never been said."[111] In this way, the commentary dismisses the possibility of chance statements, "it allows us to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is this text itself which is said, and in a sense completed."[112] Finally, *organisation of disciplines*, the final means of exclusion, is

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[105] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 56.
[106] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 56.
[107] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 58. The function of the name of the author is discussed by Foucault in detail in his influential earlier lecture, given in 1969, "What Is an Author?" See Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Book, 1984).
[108] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 57.
[109] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," pp. 56-57.
[110] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," pp. 57-58.
[111] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 58.
[112] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 58.

based on delimited range of objects, methods and propositions that we recognise to be true, "a play of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments," as much as "the requisites for the construction of new statements."[113] Disciplines are also characterised by the coexistence of 'errors' and 'truths,' both of them having their "positive functions," and the fact that a proposition which is to be considered as true or false must first fulfil the criterion of referring to a given set of objects, as well as use well-defined "conceptual or technical instruments," and refer to a given "theoretical horizon;" in other words, it must be "in the true" if it is to be considered as belonging to a discipline at all.[114]

Both external and internal principles of control of discourse are seen as "principles of constraint" and are yet further contrasted with the principles of control that apply to individuals holding a given discourse, i.e. "the speaking subjects."[115] Similarly to a statement, which in a way needs to be pre-qualified to enter a discipline as a proposition, a subject also needs to be qualified to enter a discursive order, with certain orders being more open than others.[116] Exchange and communication between speaking subjects are governed by ritual, a system of restrictions which predefines "the particular properties and the stipulated roles of the speaking subjects"[117]; societies of discourse, which guarantee that discourses circulate only in predetermined, limited spaces, and ensure some degree of the secrecy of knowledge and non-interchangeable relations between the members[118]; and doctrines, which, on the one hand, require subjects to form a particular type of statements and, on the other hand, tie a given discourse with a certain group of individuals who stand out against other groups.[119] Foucault also pays attention to education as a means of appropriating discourse by societies through the regulation of its distribution.[120]

The usefulness of Foucault's insights on discourse when it comes to speaking about literary criticism in general is highlighted, for example, by Bové. Bové discusses the Foucauldian notion of discourse focusing, in the first place, on the New Critical understanding and use of the very notion (here, understood as a term providing one with

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[113] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 59.
[114] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 60.
[115] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 61.
[116] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," pp. 61-62.
[117] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 62.
[118] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," pp. 62-63.
[119] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 64.
[120] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 64.

"a way of identifying and separating genre"[121]). As he does so, he also delineates the manner in which a given (though in this case specifically New Critical) discourse (in more contemporary sense) of literary criticism may function. 'Discourse,' he states,

> used in this New Critical sense […] helped to constitute and organise an entire field of knowledge about language; it helped discipline the judgement, and thereby the response, of students and teachers; and in so doing, it revealed its links to forms of power—such as teaching—that have effects upon the actions of others. And in the case of New Criticism, we can, if we choose, easily choose this pattern, in which an intellectually specialized language of a professional discipline is constellated and made functional; we can see it extended both into a broader coherence with other discourses constituting other fields and into the processes which institutionalize discourses. When *their* discourse about language and criticism became institutionalized, it effectively produced the language of professional literary criticism and, accordingly, helped make up an academic discipline by giving it some of the characteristics of other intellectual fields already professionally organized. As a result, criticism joined in the general disciplinary project of producing and regulating the movement of knowledge, the forms of language, and the training of minds and bodies.[122]

What one may immediately associate with the above description is, indeed, the eighteenth-century critical discourse, itself informed by other discourses prevailing at that time, aimed at policing the adherence to the politics of chastity, didacticism and taste – or, as we could see in the case of *Monk* by Lewis, the propriety of political judgement or literature standards, up to the point of castigating what exceeded the acceptable norm. This very description, however, is applicable also to the differentiation paradigm discussed in previous chapters.

Elaborating on his example of New Criticism, Bové quite accurately outlines the discursive character of institutionalised literary criticism. He pays attention to features such as, first of all, "functional and regulative" character of utility of the critical discourse, which, as he states "hierarchizes not only poetry and prose but, implicitly, identity and difference, authority and subservience, taste and vulgarity, and continuity and discontinuity as well—that is, we might say, it shares in the operation of the generalized discourse of our society that constitutes its most basic categories of

[121] Bové, "Introduction: Discourse," p. 1.
[122] Bové, "Discourse," p. 3.

understanding and thought."[123] Furthermore, he points to the extension and propagation of the very discourse by the critic, who also becomes seen as a function, and to the discourse's apparent natural and self-evident status, achieved as a result of the fact that the critical discourse draws attention away from itself and towards "the need 'to get the job done,'" that is to carry out, in the obviously *right* way, a critical analysis of a text.[124] As he views it, "[b]y obliging all to answer the 'same' questions […] discourse homogenizes critical practice and declares 'invalid' whatever does not or *cannot* operate on its political and intellectual terrain," and thus, it maintains unnoticed power and control by means of not so much repression as positive production.[125] Although Gothic criticism ostensibly distances itself from the ways of New Criticism, we have already shown that it actually cannot successfully establish itself as a major rupture. As we have noted, a new strategy always functions within the space delimited by the earlier strategy from which it wishes to distance itself. As a result, as soon as it is institutionalised, Gothic criticism turns out to function in a discursive framework.

The fact that Gothic criticism represents a discursive field may be quickly observed if we turn to analysing Gothic criticism and bear in mind the way Foucault describes the notion of discourse. To follow the order outlined in our summary of the theory of discourse as presented in "The Order of Discourse," let us begin with the will to truth. What strikes one at this point is the fact that Gothic criticism in fact 'invented' the Gothic as we know it today. Or, to be more precise, the Gothic was invented by the early twentieth-century Gothic scholarship. This scholarship was perhaps not that much Gothic in the present-day sense, but, for one reason or another, searched for a way in which it could group together a number of literary phenomena, somehow related to that of the novel, and, in order to do so, came up with what today seems to be a systematising frame. Only gradually, with the shift of critical discourses, did the Gothic, seen as a genre, with a fixed range of objects (the canon of texts), become a recognisable and well-determined area of knowledge (even if its boundaries seem to be obscure), with a "range […] of the functions and positions of the knowing subject."[126] This knowing subject is the Gothic critic who, as we shall see, perceives himself/herself as, for instance, a postmodern broken subject carrying out the act of self-scrutiny with the aim of understanding one's own history, like one's own conscience, so significant in

[123] Bové, "Discourse," pp. 3-4.
[124] Bové, "Discourse," p. 4.
[125] Bové, "Discourse," pp. 5-6.
[126] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 55.

the contemporary Western culture. No doubt the will to truth governing the will to knowledge of the Gothic is nowadays institutionally supported, and we define the investment in the Gothic as an investment in a better understanding our culture, society and ourselves, in "material, technical, and instrumental" terms. We are also dealing with a "whole strata of practices" serving the dissemination of knowledge, with texts for scholars on how to study the Gothic, tutors on how to teach it, and students on how to understand it. It is also not insignificant that the 'old' approaches to the Gothic are dismissed as 'no longer relevant' in certain cases (like the "laundry list" approach consisting in listing the conventions of Gothic literature[127]), though, of course, not in all. All this, finally, appears simply commonsensical.

We may notice the reflection of internal procedures of rarefaction in the discourse of the contemporary Gothic criticism as well. What appears to fulfil the author-function emerges as quite evident if we consider the way Gothic criticism has established the Radcliffe's school of terror and Lewis' school of horror, to give one example. To give another, we may consider the way in which Walpole is still commonly singled out as the founding figure of Gothic literature, his second preface to the castle of Otranto persistently identified as 'the gothic manifesto' – not only by those singled out by Williams as holding the legend of the Gothic Father. The very issue of the formation of the Gothic canon, of choosing the texts on the basis of which the concept of the Gothic is to be formed, and later on disseminated and applied in the consideration of texts to be included into the domain of Gothic studies could, in fact, be discussed in terms of author-function with a considerable dose of success. Roughly the same can be said with regard to the question of commentary – the question of constant rereading of the same canonical texts in order to make them speak up. Furthermore, as we could see in the previous chapter, we could perceive Gothic criticism and the differentiation paradigm as reflecting what could be compared to the organisation of disciplines. To give just one example at this point, we have already seen how the Gothic is structured around a 'positive' error, its alleged poetic character, which makes it the predecessor of the romantic formulae. And again, we could look at the differentiation paradigm's effort to differentiate itself from the previous scholarship and see who is "in the true." Interestingly, it is also true that Gothic criticism rarely speaks of who is 'in the wrong'

[127] Eugenia C. DeLamotte in Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 14.

when it comes to assessing its own contemporaries. This, however, as we tried to show in the previous chapters, is also a functional, 'positive' feature in the Foucauldian sense.

Interestingly, it is also a 'positive' feature that the domain of Gothic criticism seems to be just as open as it perceives one of its aims to consist in the 'opening' of the individual's psyche by the opening of a text of the past to scrutiny. Strangely enough, the 'secret' of the Gothic, like a repressed thought or memory, has to be brought to light – even, or especially, if we follow the logic of psychoanalysis, where we do not expect it to reside – and, what is more, made public for it constitutes the repressed content of *everybody*'s very own psyche. If we assume the psychological reception of the Gothic to be 'the closest to truth,' and we remember that psychology makes quite 'material, technical and instrumental' claims with regard to extra-literary reality, we need to bear in mind that it is as if everybody were invited to speak, and thus to attain and disseminate knowledge; to become members of the discursive community and, inevitably, its agents. This, however, also positively regulates the critical discourse.

It is possible, then, to situate the present-day Gothic criticism as a discourse. Moreover, we are able to do it in a way which allows us to account for certain regularities (as much as discontinuities) and practices (of reorganisation, redefinition, re-construction, re-representation), and which enables us to take up a more systematic analysis. In the course of this analysis, are able to pay attention to certain facts which usually pass as unnoticed, or are indeed noticed but not always discussed to a satisfactory degree. We have already pointed out that what influenced the rise of Gothic fiction was multiple discourses of the day, sometimes intertwined, sometimes openly hostile, reflected both in writings under scrutiny and critiques. All of these discourses shaped the field of eighteenth-century reaction to the surge of ostensibly un-reasonable texts, as much as they shaped the general criticism of the day and the text production. As could be noticed at this point, we have just (and again) suggested that although criticism can be seen as a discourse in itself, it is also formed and influenced by higher levels of discourse, not necessarily concerned with literature as such, but still capable of accounting for literature as a part of their domain and ascribing to it a function. This could be said of sentimentalism as much as civic humanism *or* the general social and political discourse pervading British society after the Restoration, with its reorientation from the modes of representation centred on feudal values to those of the newly prominent middle class of the city. The same can be said of the contemporary criticism, too – with its recourse to theory as the key to unlocking the text's message.

It is interesting that two of the theories underlying the contemporary discussions on the Gothic as traced back to the seminal study by Punter, psychoanalysis and Marxism, are spoken of by Foucault as discourses in their own right. According to Foucault, both Marx and Freud represent what he calls "founders of discursivity," types of authors who make possible "not only a certain number of analogies, but also (and equally important) a certain number of differences."[128] As Foucault speaks of Freud and Marx, he states: "[t]hey have created a possibility for something other than their discourse, yet something belonging to what they founded. To say that Freud founded psychoanalysis […] means that Freud made possible a certain number of divergences—with respect to his own texts, concepts, and hypotheses—that all arise from the psychoanalytic discourse itself."[129] Both psychoanalysis and Marxism delimit a certain space of inquiry which in practice "defines a proposition's theoretical validity in relation to the work of the founders"[130]; furthermore, re-reading the primary texts – the texts of Freud and Marx – may modify the discourse, but in itself takes place only within its limits.[131] Applied to the reading of literary texts these discourses expand, open up to a new possible application.[132] However, we should add that they also inescapably re-construct the texts they are applied to in accordance with the pre-established theoretically valid statements. What they are be able to tell us, in other words, cannot transgress their own limits. Interestingly, the founders of discursivity are contrasted with literary authors (and paradoxically, the example of a literary author given by Foucault is Radcliffe), an opposition to which we are going to return in the next chapter.

Illuminating with regard to the subject matter of our analysis is also a number of other elements of Foucault's thoughts on discourse and its practices, some of them already evoked in this chapter. In the first place, as has already been signalled, what corresponds to the situation in the field of Gothic criticism is the theme of discontinuity as a venture point for analysis. It is indeed in *Madness and Civilization* that Foucault raises the questions of discourse as paired with power, discontinuity of representation (or cultural change) as (continuously) linked with power demands of the day and opposed to uninterrupted progress in science, and the importance of the institution and

[128] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" p. 114.
[129] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" pp. 114-15.
[130] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" p. 116.
[131] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" p. 116.
[132] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" pp. 114-15.

its representative.[133] Bearing in mind Fish's postulates of critical practice being always adjusted to the demands of the present-day institution (which seems to successfully dismiss any claims to 'truth' inherent in the text under scrutiny as much as it does away with the notion of continuous progress), we could already see that similar questions emerge in the scrutiny of the differentiation paradigm, with its emphasis on 'freeing itself from the shackles' of earlier scholarship, from the predecessors' institutionalised resistance to certain modes of scrutiny.

Drawing from Foucault's works, we may now expand our insight. In one of his interviews, Foucault comments on his early analyses and especially the theme of discontinuity:

> My problem was […] to pose the question, "How is it that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge, there are these sudden take-offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the calm, continuist image that is normally accredited?" But the important thing here is not that such changes can be rapid and extensive, or rather it is that this extent and rapidity are only the sign of something else: a modification in the rules of formation of statements which are accepted as scientifically true. Thus it is not a change of content (refutation of old errors, recovery of old truths), nor is it a change of theoretical form (renewal of paradigm, modification of systematic ensembles): It is a question of what governs statements, and the way in which they govern each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures. In short, there is a problem of the regime, the politics of the scientific statement.[134]

The differentiation paradigm, to a certain extent in a conscious manner, posits itself as a discontinuity, an abrupt "take-off," but as we have seen, the differentiation process is not that sudden and free from being grounded in the previous critical discourses as it may seem. The new critical discourse on the Gothic begins pretty much in the midst of the old discourse of the primacy of the poetic mode and, even today, rests on the assumptions formed in the mould of the previous representation of literature, despite the fact that it represents itself as a rupture. It is a fact that the aim of the paradigm is to

[133] For a short summary containing comparisons with Foucault's other works and explanatory remarks see Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, pp. 3-12.

[134] Michel Foucault, Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, "Truth and Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Book, 1984), p. 54.

differentiate itself – to cut itself from the previous approaches. However, the dependency of the contemporary scholarship on its predecessors, both in terms of the rhetoric of establishing one's own status and the actual direction taken by the contemporary criticism, stressed by Fish, is obvious, both on the level of some of the critical tenets and the more general one of establishing the 'worth' of the Gothic. Hence, we could conclude that, in tune with Foucault's proposition, the change in critical discourse, in spite of the rhetoric used by the very discourse, is not the question of a "theoretical form."

Furthermore, if we refer to Foucault's statement quoted above, it becomes more visible that, in a curious way, the differentiation paradigm establishes itself as progress in spite of (or perhaps in tune of) the rhetoric of stressing discrepancies. It represents its way of 'reading' as liberated from institutionalized limitations which hamper *progress* (even if progress remains unnamed) in proving the Gothic to be a worthy and illuminating socio-cultural product. Moving away from the imposed and restrictive model is, in this sense, a critical progress towards a better form of analysis; at the level of the representation produced by the differentiation paradigm, it is a move towards "a change of content." What may escape one's notice, however, is the fact that the 'oppositional' reading modes soon gain the status of the institution and the critics attain the demeanour similar to that of a clinical expert, entitled to exercise correction and prescribing the unblemished way of conduct. In this way, we are dealing both with concealed discontinuity – the progress is no progress but an adjustment to the new authoritative position, external to the critical discourse – and the continuity of power being exercised. "Extent and rapidity" turn out to be "the sign of something else," a "modification" in the acceptable way of speaking and reading, triggered by external factors. Importantly, Foucault's (genealogical) perspective, though in a way similar to that of Fish, allows us to push the analysis much further in the sense propagated by Culler, beyond the critical discourse itself, so that the question why the differentiation paradigm emerged and has operated successfully by representing the Gothic as it does in the socio-cultural context could be addressed effectively.

There is another way in which Foucault's complex remarks on levels of discontinuity (visible and unseen, represented and concealed) may beneficially bear on our considerations of Gothic criticism. His remarks allow us to approach from a given angle the strand of criticism devoted to researching the Gothic as a material enabling a reconstruction (a regaining) of the way in which the contemporary subject has been

shaped; as a way of discovering one's own origin. We have already stressed that taking such a stance makes the Gothic meaningful with regard to contemporary culture and justifies the volume of critical attention. At the same time, however, if we look at such an approach to the Gothic, we can notice that its result is the obfuscation of a certain area of self-scrutiny.

Let us return to Kilgour as our example yet again. It has already been mentioned that what may be sensed in her account of the contemporary Gothic criticism is the loss of the power of interpretation to unveil the 'truth.' What such a loss entails, is also, unavoidably, the loss of sense of 'meaning' inherent in the text and the loss of 'progress' in the reading practices of the institution. What is, however, interesting in Kilgour is the fact that, although she seems to recognise "that not only is art a fraud, but life is, as reality is not real but a series of artificial Baconic idols,"[135] she simultaneously sees interpretation as nevertheless a cure. Asserting the position of power and re-making the text in one's own image (using it in Rorty's understanding) is a possibility which she does not seem to welcome with much enthusiasm, as the value of Gothic for our own times seems to lie for her precisely in its "demonization of creation and authority."[136] She states that "[f]rom the beginning the gothic has suggested the limits of causality and modern systems for understanding relations, and offered itself as a form of 'cultural self-analysis,'" but immediately inverts its power by pinpointing it as "an ancestor for our current obsessive self-criticism and self-scrutiny of past and present motives," an object of institutionalised "Protestant tradition of self-scrutiny [turned] into a larger psychoanalysis of cultural motives and impulses. [Of] reading […] as a way of gaining power and so breaking away from the past."[137] We could paraphrase this by saying that Kilgour sees Gothic criticism as a way of discovering the history of the postmodern subject, of carrying out a psychotherapeutic analysis of 'what has brought me to the place I am right now and how can I cope with it.'

At this point, Foucault's thought proves illuminating as, according to him (and Nietzsche, whom he recapituales), history should be by no means seen as the discovery of the origin. Genealogy, as he states, "opposes itself to the search for 'origins'"[138]; hence, the genealogist "refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to

[135] Kilgour, *The Rise of Gothic Novel*, p. 222.
[136] Kilgour, *The Rise of Gothic Novel*, pp. 222-23.
[137] Kilgour, *The Rise of Gothic Novel*, p. 222.
[138] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, History, Genealogy," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Book, 1984), p. 77.

history, he finds that there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms."[139] The postmodern Gothic critic is highly suspicious of metaphysics, but still nourishes a hope that a text of the past might wield the key to understanding the present, and thus seems to seek an underlying continuity in spite of his or her contempt for the notion of progress (by seeing how my culture has abjected what it feared onto the Gothic in the process of structuring identity, I can see how *I* came into being). This, however, is a ruse, at least from the Foucauldian perspective.

To state this is not to dismiss the possibility that the study of Gothic fiction could show how discourses have changed, shifted and substituted one another until the present day. In fact, this could possibly bring some interesting results. Rather, our aim is to point to the vast region of data that actually could grant one understanding but becomes obscured by turning to the past for answers. "[T]he origin," states Foucault, "makes possible a field of knowledge whose function is to recover it, but always in a false recognition due to the excesses of its own speech. The origin lies at a place of inevitable loss, the point where the truth of things corresponded to a truthful discourse, the site of a fleeting articulation that discourse has obscured and finally lost."[140] As he views it, and this is a vital point, "[g]enealogy […] operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times"[141] – and, practically, the Gothic critic interested in the texts from the past centuries does roughly the same. Searching for the key unlocking the present in the past, one turns a blind eye to the keys offered by the present itself. Or, to put it in different words, the origin that could be perhaps recovered in the Gothic text is the text's own origin in the tangled discourses which gave it birth (as we have seen on the example of *Monk*), pretty much different from those which assign to the critic the task of searching for origins at the present moment. Seen from this perspective, the critic's own discourse will inevitably impose itself on the field of knowledge that is to be recovered with "the excesses of its own speech," turning the Gothic text it works on into a parchment that has been "scratched over and recopied many times." This is, however, not just a matter of the *status quo*, things as they simply are, as reader-response or pragmatist criticism

[139] Foucault, "Nietzsche, History, Genealogy," p. 78.
[140] Foucault, "Nietzsche, History, Genealogy," p. 79.
[141] Foucault, "Nietzsche, History, Genealogy," p. 76.

might be seen to imply, but a matter of turning one's attention away from the discourse in which one operates in such a way as to establish a functional origin.

In "Nietzsche, History, Genealogy," Foucault states after Nietzsche that "the pursuit of the origin […] is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities; [it] assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. This search is directed to 'that which was already there.'"[142] Our immediate task is to focus on the critical conceptions of the Gothic as constructed by theory, and it must be stressed that by viewing criticism in terms of discourse we also automatically view it as constructing its object in a given way, and not recovering something "which was already there." Establishing the Gothic, or its conception, in terms of the object of discourse should prove of use to us, not because this could show that there is no such thing as the Gothic, but because it could make us alert to the ways in which discourses actually create (or recreate) their own objects for their own purposes. In fact, to state that the Gothic was 'born' in discourse, does not appear to be a mistake. As it seems, what is nowadays taken to be Gothic literature has always been a *mode* of writing particularly sensitive to the variety of discourses prevalent in the politico-social context of the day. And the very fact that we are presently dealing with the very notion of Gothic fiction, non-existent before the twentieth century, is in itself meaningful.

The notion of the object of discourse, as much as its attempted theory, is elaborated on in detail in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, a book which might be seen as, to a certain extent, representing a failed project. Nonetheless, as was already stated above, it still allowed Foucault to grasp valuable notions, and, approached from a certain perspective, proves of immense use to our considerations. In the first place, as Warwick notices, what is problematic about Gothic criticism is the fact that critics sometimes do strive to establish some sort of truth inherent in the object of their study, as if there was something ingeniously 'Gothic' in Gothic literature that could be teased out. Foucault, in turn, draws our attention to the fact that the object under scrutiny in itself is not a coherent whole against which statements on its nature can be checked, but rather emerges through these statements:

> the unity of the object 'madness' does not enable one to individualize a group of statements, and to establish between them a relation that is

[142] Foucault, "Nietzsche, History, Genealogy," p. 78.

> both constant and describable. There are two reasons for this. It would certainly be a mistake to try to discover what could have been said of madness at a particular time by interrogating the being of madness itself, its secret content, its silent, self-enclosed truth; mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating, in its name, discourses that were to be taken as its own. Moreover, this group of statements is far from referring to a single object, formed once and for all, and to preserving it indefinitely as its horizon of inexhaustible ideality; the object presented as their correlative by medical statements of the seventeenth or eighteenth century is not identical with the object that emerges in legal sentences or police action; similarly, all the objects of psychopathological discourses were modified from Pinel or Esquirol to Bleuler: it is not the same illnesses that are at issue in each of these cases; we are not dealing with the same madmen.[143]

Foucault's major concern here is the matter of classification of statements as belonging to one group, or discourse. Without engaging in a detailed consideration of his assumptions, however, we can still see that, according to him, it is discourse that produces its object – the abstract concept of madness, in this case. What enables the unity of a discourse, according to Foucault, "would be the interplay of the rules that make possible the appearance of objects during a given period of time: objects that are shaped by measures of discrimination and repression, objects that are differentiated in daily practice, in law, in religious casuistry, in medical diagnosis [etc]."[144] Again without delving into the character of these rules at great length, what proves useful to us is the fact that the perceived 'nature' of objects lies outside of them, and in fact, as

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[143] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 36.

[144] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 37. As Dreyfus and Rabinow point out (see footnote no. 100), Foucault's assumption is mistaken when it comes to perceiving these rules as inherent in the 'nature' of discourse as an autonomous system and a practice. The relations which he later views as enabling the emergence of objects, and which he calls "discursive relations," are seen by him as neither internal (i.e. "[establishing] a deductive or rhetorical structure between propositions or sentences") nor external (i.e. limiting it or forcing it to take certain forms or state certain things) to discourse, but as occupying a place "at the limit of discourse," "[determining] the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object," and "[characterizing] not the language (langue) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice": "a group of rules that are immanent in a practice, and define it in its specificity" (pp. 51-52). Dreyfus and Rabinow, though asserting this strand of Foucault's thought to be "one of the most important but least discussed claims in the *Archaeology*," notice the difficulties posed by it as well as Foucault's diminishment of the role of "nondiscursive" factors, presented in fact as in a way 'subordinate' to discursive relations. According to them, "only when Foucault gives up his semi-structuralist claim that discourse has some sort of priority which enables it to 'use' nondiscursive relations can he discover the legitimate domain of the functioning of discursive practices, and give an account of the unique way discourse is both dependent upon and yet feeds back and influences the nondiscursive practices it 'serves.'" Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, pp. 63-64, 67.

Foucault's later studies will manifest, outside of a given discourse on them as such. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he states:

> The conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse, the historical conditions required if one is to 'say anything' about it, and if several people are to say different things about it, the conditions necessary if it is to exist in relation to other objects, if it is to establish with them relations of resemblance, proximity, distance, difference, transformation [...] are many and imposing. Which means that one cannot speak of anything at any time; [...] the object does not await in limbo the order that will free it and enable it to become embodied in a visible and prolix objectivity; it does not pre-exist itself, held back by some obstacle at the first edges of light. It exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations.[145]

These relations, according to him, "are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization" and, above, all, thus prove to be external to the object itself: "They do not define its internal constitution, but what enables it to appear, to juxtapose itself with other objects, to situate itself in relation to them, to define its difference, its irreducibility, and even perhaps its heterogeneity, in short, to be placed in a field of exteriority."[146] The object of study, then, emerges as a construct. Furthermore, as Foucault makes clear, neither it, nor its domain is constant.[147] This is very useful to us since, if we are to trace the ways in which criticism re-shapes and re-presents what it calls the Gothic via theory, simultaneously constructing it, we need, in a Foucauldian-like fashion, to put aside the notion that there is some sort of 'Gothic meaning,' which manifests itself in a given body of texts, to be discovered, and "dispense with 'things.'"[148] Otherwise, we might get caught in yet another version of Gothic definition and only reorganize the field in accordance to it.

From these considerations there emerges a general method applied in this work to the scrutiny of the contemporary theory-based conceptions of Gothic literature. The aim of the following analysis is to show how these conceptions are structured in ways functional from the point of view of the applied methodological tools, themselves reminiscent of certain discourses, and how, as a result, they re-structure the original

[145] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 50.
[146] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 50-51.
[147] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 53.
[148] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 53.

discursive object which is the Gothic. What such an analysis demands is a rediscovery of a set of (broken) connections between the contemporary and the past (historical) conceptions of Gothic texts, and the vantage point is the contemporary assumptions of the aforementioned the Gothic's indefinability, marginality and subversion, which seem central to the conception structured collectively by different areas of the differentiation paradigm. As a result, we shall be dealing with two sets of discourses: those which shape the critical conceptions of Gothic literature nowadays, and those which could have shaped the production and reception of certain texts, later singled out from the body of eighteenth and nineteenth-century fictions as belonging to one genre, or mode.

With such a methodology adopted, what appears necessary is a recourse to works covering the original discursive influences in Gothic fiction. As a result, all sorts of new-historical critical studies of the Gothic should prove most useful. However, we also need to address on equal terms the available historical studies on literary criticism, and especially its shape in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. That is because many of the contemporary major critical texts refer to the critics of those times – as they do to authors – in order to support their stances. Such a 'reading' of the present-day conceptions of the Gothic, against the standpoint from which they are uttered and the discourses of the past, may prove a useful method of pinpointing 'the moments of rupture,' or of distortions and shifts, at which the theory-based methodology re-creates the original text while passing over the connections which might not account for the interpretation it produces, but rather point to a different one. Occasionally, especially during the analysis of the contemporary status of Gothic definition, we may also find it necessary to evoke the discarded early Gothic criticism of the previous century, especially in its historical form. In a way, thus, our analysis is meant to constitute a kind of genealogical scrutiny.

Chapter IV
Foucault: The Monster(s) and the Critics

The major thesis set out for this dissertation is that theory applied to the reading of the Gothic text has often exerted a considerable impact on the results of the reading, thereby projecting certain pre-established assumptions on conclusions. This situation is to bear upon the contemporary conceptions of Gothic fiction, which appear to be based on the shared assumptions of certain typically Gothic features (though no longer 'the Gothic repertoire'). The major of those assumptions is the mode's inherent predilection for subversion of norms. We are going to have a look at two ways in which this perceived subversion is often seen to manifest itself: the critical confusion regarding the definition of the Gothic, and the mode's marginalisation. In the previous chapters we undertook, first, a brief sketch of the paradigm which, to some extent, seems to govern the positions taken by the contemporary Gothic criticism (a sketch of *a* history), and a delineation of some counter-responses (*counter*-histories) which entice us to delve into the subject of the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic. Then, we presented our methodology. This chapter, in turn, has a slightly different function. In a way, it might appear to be digressive with regard to what preceded it, but it also appears to be indispensable if the analysis we are approaching is to be seen as feasible, and its tool as indeed useful.

Michel Foucault's thought represents by no means a prime point of reference when it comes to Gothic studies. Still, it has not been an infrequent practice of Gothic criticism so far to use Foucault for the purpose of analysing the Gothic text, or various levels of its functioning in culture. This is a fact even if we agree that, for several years, French post-structuralism has been avoided by the critics as if it were a Gothic monster itself.[1] Monstrous or not (and of course monstrosity could probably be accounted for as a reason by itself), Foucault has been found relevant to Gothic studies – and, as the critical material proves, in several ways. We shall account for some of those in this chapter.

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[1] Jerrold E. Hogle, Review of *The Orders of Gothic: Foucault, Lacan and the Subject of Gothic Writing, 1764-1820* by Dale Townshend, *Gothic Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2010), accessed 25 April 2012, at Literature Online, http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/searchFulltext.do?id=R04389465&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1335341153_12639&trailId=1364E0A33B7&area=abell&forward=critref_ft.

What is more, we also need to consider that Foucault's name is in itself a staple of cultural theory in the sense we use it here. As a result, it seems impossible to accept it without hesitation, just as it is impossible to accept without hesitation the assumption that history is a simple alternative to theory. Since Foucault has not been avoided at any cost by Gothic criticism, it appears worthwhile to distinguish between the way his remarks on discourse, repressive hypothesis, genealogy and the like are employed in this dissertation, and the ways in which his thought has been used by the very criticism we are scrutinising.

4.1. At the Gothic-Theory Confluence: Reversing Relations

What Gothic critics find compelling in Foucault is not only his analysis of sexuality, though of course the introductory volume to *The History of Sexuality* finds its place in the range of applicable theoretical resources. Foucault's thought appears to prove itself especially useful to the critics for the reason that he theorises the very moment in the history of Western society at which Gothic fiction is born, and this seems to allow for contextualising as much as conceptualising the mode. In both cases, the mode emerges as partaking in and reflecting the significant changes that took place at the dusk of aristocratic world and the dawn of the bourgeoisie, industrialisation and modernity itself. In this chapter, we shall examine chosen cases of critical applications of Foucault, not in the least to show that Foucault can 'unlock' the Gothic, but to confirm what has already been said at the beginning of this chapter and in the previous ones, namely, that the discourse in which the critic operates exerts a significant influence on what it makes its object.

This is one thing. Another thing refers to what seems to be an issue in Gothic studies. The considerations which follow were not initially meant to constitute a lengthy and significant portion of the argument – rather, they were envisioned as a brief and somewhat symbolic overview of some ways in which Foucault and his various writings have been applied to the critical readings of Gothic fiction. But, all in all, they testified to something striking (though perhaps trivial if one thinks about it), namely the fact that it is not only theory that bears upon a conception, but it also can be a conception (well-established and raised to the prominence of theory itself) that bears upon a theory, in which case the tool and the product strangely shift their positions.

Something alike has already been noticed by criticism. For example, in *A Companion to the Gothic*, David Punter remarks that "in the 1990s in particular, we have found ourselves at a peculiar confluence between the major motifs of the Gothic and a set of ways of thinking increasingly current in contemporary criticism and theory,"[2] and moves on to enumerate where parallels can be found: in the use of phantoms and crypts, spectres and the uncanny, above all, by Derrida and psychoanalysis. Both Derrida's poststructuralism and psychoanalysis might seem to us the staple-marks of two vast areas, theory and psychology, which played (as the differentiation paradigm holds) their great role in the process of uplifting the mode form the state of debasement. As Punter notices, at present, the very same theoretical tools "give us a potentially powerful grasp of new ways of understanding the Gothic," while they simultaneously prove to be "increasingly haunted"[3] – just like the Gothic, we might be expected to add – by their understanding of knowledge, theory and practice, and history as not safe and obvious notions but constructs of complicated and unstable nature.[4] He limits his conclusions, however, to advising caution when it comes to judging the phenomenon's implications, so that the critics do not fall into the trap of losing critical distance.[5]

Indeed, there clearly seems to be a confluence between the Gothic and theory today. However, we could ask ourselves the question about the extent to which it actually takes place. A direct exchange of themes, or 'ghosts,' between the Gothic and theory appears debatable. Similarly, it does not appear correct to state that theory gives voice to something that was already present in the Gothic, but could not be stated explicitly by it. Both theory and the Gothic are historical 'entities,' both acquire their specific meanings in context. Perhaps, as it is the case of psychoanalysis, particular theories and the Gothic may share common roots. However, from the perspective which has already been adopted here, we could hardly look at them as haunted by the same ghost. Psychoanalysis has been already tackled in the course of the chapter I and we could see that historicist-oriented critics would rather take a stance that the relationship between psychoanalysis and the Gothic is a complex and, indeed, historical one, which makes it impossible to 'translate' one strictly into the terms and notions of the other.

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[2] David Punter, "Introduction: The Ghost of a History," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), p. ix.
[3] Punter, "The Ghost of a History," p. ix.
[4] Punter, "The Ghost of a History," p. x.
[5] Punter, "The Ghost of a History," p. ix.

Similarly, the relationship between the Gothic and Derrida is not a straightforward one. In her article "Feeling Gothicky?" Alexandra Warwick hints at the merging of the Gothic with the method applied to its study, but she does so in a way which may be seen as illuminating with regard to Punter for she goes one step further. Namely, she points out that, nowadays, "Gothic *becomes* deconstruction" through critical misconception and misuse of Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*.[6] What she has in mind is a situation in which the Gothic itself is used as a tool for deconstructing. To illustrate her point, Warwick evokes the example of Julian Wolfrey, who would view Victorian fiction as haunted by the Gothic. Here, Victorian texts are read by the Gothic critic, in the quasi-Derridean fashion, as containing 'Gothic' traces that undermine their governing logic. At the same time, the overall analysis heads towards showing that these texts are therefore Gothic in themselves, which is against deconstruction's logic, and, in general, turn out to be a paradox. If the Gothic is the dominant logic, then it represents what should be in doubt. According to Warwick, somewhat strikingly, the critic wishing to follow Derrida in this way simply takes the presence of traces as such, spectres of meaning, to be suggestive of the Gothic, which makes the Gothic worthless both as a tool for deconstruction and as a field of study. Approached from such a perspective, all traces are Gothic and all texts are Gothic, and hence the Gothic is dominant, ubiquitous and can be anything.[7] As she puts it, found and announced potentially everywhere, "Gothic is being used to explain itself."[8]

Curiously enough, a similar conclusion might be seen as potentially applicable to Punter's statement that the Gothic and contemporary theory seem to come at a confluence. First, perhaps we ought to remark that Punter may be seen as verging on inviting the same sort of misconception of *Spectres of Marx* as the critical movement discussed by Warwick at the point when he states that Derrida uses the same rhetoric of evoking spectres as the Gothic.[9] Both the Gothic and Derrida may be using the same rhetoric – but then, if we are not to lose our critical distance, we cannot take the implications of this confluence too far. If we choose to see theory as paralleling, or even 'the same as,' the Gothic, on many planes, thereby levelling confluence with conflation, we cannot use it as a tool anymore. Then, the Gothic would clearly be used to explain

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[6] Alexandra Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" *Gothic Studies*, vol. 9. no. 1. (2007), p. 8.
[7] Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky? P. 8.
[8] Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" p. 8. The author also discusses how "Gothic becomes psychoanalysis," see the article from page 10.
[9] Punter, "The Ghost of a History," p. ix.

itself: there would seem to be little sense in pointing to "peculiar" similarities between the two except as a warning, unless we want to cross the line and see the Gothic as simply 'inexplicable' by means of theory, or, turning tables, itself having an explanatory force with regard to it. Or to our culture, which came up with it. And while Punter issues his warning, he seems to substantiate it with yet more uncertainties, and poses yet more questions, which complies with the unstable picture of the mode, instead of clarifying.

Punter, to an extent, codifies the Gothic as a mode which demonstrates to us the instability of history.[10] Such a codification rings a bell, for it is much in tune with Kilgour's assumption that the Gothic shows us the artifice of reality – and much before the rise of postructuralist and postmodernist thought. However, if that is the case, what is actually meant to be illuminating with regard to what? If we do not state explicitly that both the Gothic and theory signal, though in different ways, a change, but this change is in each case historical and peculiar to its own times, logically – or *chrono*logically – it should seem that the Gothic is illuminating with regard to theory. This, however, is a very strange conclusion, and a highly suspicious one, for it does actually make the Gothic the basis on which the contemporary Western culture rests, and in a totalising way. As a result, we end up in a Gothic world without an alternative. And this is a dead end, even if some would be perfectly happy with such a resolution.

However, if we introduce Foucault's notion of discourse into these considerations, we are capable of showing that such a codification of the Gothic indeed organises our reality around a simple ruse. This ruse is an achronological, ahistorical perception of the phenomena we are tackling. It seems perfectly justified to state that the Gothic "consists of a series of texts which are always dependent on other texts, texts which they are not, texts which are ceaselessly invoked while no less ceaselessly misread, models of *méconnaissance* in the form of lost manuscripts, of misheard messages in cyberspace, in the attempt to validate that which cannot be validated, the self-sufficiency, the autonomy of a textuality that is already ruined beyond repair."[11] But this does not mean that the Gothic is a kind of supressed pre-theory which speaks of mutability in a pre-postructuralist or pre-postmodern way. It is a phenomenon which demonstrates certain facts about how texts are created. Still, it operates under discourses which trigger it and give it its often distorted, irregular and illogical shape. Contemporary theory may try to

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[10] See Punter, "The Ghost of a History," p. x.
[11] Punter, "The Ghost of a History," p. x.

account for such phenomena, but the phenomena themselves are silent about the theory – they speak only of the discourses which used to own them. The Gothic is often a gratifying object for postrstucturalist and postmodern thinking (and as we know both Derrida and Foucault discuss Gothic texts) but it is not on a par with them. Just as Derridean spectres are not on a par with those of Gothic literature, for the simple reason that Gothic literature does not have a monopoly on ghosts.

One assumption of this work which perhaps has not been voiced forcefully enough in the previous chapter is that Gothic criticism is in itself a discourse. We have elaborated on Foucault's perception of the notion and pointed to the ways in which the differentiation paradigm acts out the procedures of the rarefaction of discourse. However, what may still appear somewhat confusing is the fact that we simultaneously speak of different discourses which manifest themselves in the critical practices within the differentiation paradigm, psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, gender, etc, even pointing to how they account for differences within the paradigmantic history of differentiation. The presence and operation of these discourses do not seem to raise doubts; but if this is the case, how can we still perceive the differentiation paradigm as a discourse in itself?

In fact, it does not appear quite impossible. We may, for example, consider Foucault's stance that "[d]iscourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other."[12] There is, as he puts it, no "great unsaid" or "unthought" that would underlie all of them,[13] but still they can come together and depart, and form different orders. Taking into consideration the fact that theory's general focus is to question, which was mentioned in the previous chapter, it does not seem to run counter to Foucault's assumptions that different theories, once applied, may delimit a space which will constitute a discursive formation in itself. What we have already mentioned above, namely the fact that it may be observed how the object formed in discourse renegotiates theory which was once used to structure this object, is indicative of precisely this: the discursive status of the contemporary Gothic criticism as such.

[12] Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 67.
[13] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," p. 67.

For the purpose of demonstrating the above-said we may now turn to the consideration of particular texts. We shall begin with addressing an example of the ways in which Foucault is addressed by the critics. Next, we shall move on to showing how the discourse of Gothic criticism itself seems to attempt at objectifying the theory it adopts. Foucault is referred to openly by various critics at various stages of their research and for various purposes, from Rosemary Jackson to Diane Long Hoeveler and beyond, but one particularly interesting case from the perspective of this work is the aforementioned book by Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy*. We shall review its assumptions in order to position our own study with regard to other studies of the Gothic relying on Foucault. When it comes to scrutinising the ways in which the discourse of criticism 'invades' the boundaries of theory, we will make use of the essay by Fred Botting published in Punter's *A Companion to the Gothic*, "In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture." The point of passage from one strand of the argument to the other will be a discussion of a somewhat 'unfulfilled' contextualisation of Gothic fiction with the use of Foucault in Fred Botting and Dave Townshend's introduction to the second volume of Critical Concepts series' *Gothic*, which results in establishing a particular conception of both the mode and the modern.

4.2. "Crossed by Discourse": Robert Miles, Gothic Writing and Genealogy

Robert Miles' *Gothic Writing* was already briefly introduced in Chapter II for the sake of its overall argument, with some attention being paid to the fact that the book aimed at taking up some paths opened up by Punter's seminal study. Embarked on in 1980s, first published in 1994 and then republished in 2002, the work, if we situate it in its proper place within the chronology of approaches to the Gothic, proves to be a significant one, especially due to the perspective it adopts on the earlier theory-based studies, and the manner in which it attempts to 'push' their reasoning further, beyond the limits imposed by theory. In a sense, it is illuminating with regard to its own moment in the history of Gothic criticism, as much as Punter's seminal study is illuminating with regard to the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. The fact that Miles responds to Punter's suggestions, but already in the 1990s stresses the danger of what we could perhaps see as overestimating theory, is obviously crucial. There are other studies that use Foucault's ideas in a systematic way, like Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism* (1998), which to some extent utilises Foucault in a similar way to Miles, but *Gothic*

Writing seems to be the first one that would employ them on such a scale, engaging in a genealogy of both discourses and texts. What needs to be stressed is the fact that Foucault's thought becomes the foundation for the analysis here, and not only for contextualising the Gothic. This focus on Foucauldian analysis is what primarily makes the work similar to our own study. However, what also must be emphasised is the fact that while *Gothic Writing* proves in many ways immensely useful to us, it also seems to incorporate a dialectic, or perhaps a rhetoric, inviting assumptions from which we wish to distance ourselves.

What triggers Miles' work is his observation that both Punter's *The Literature of Terror* and his 1987 review of Elisabeth Napier's *The Failure of Gothic* advance an indirect, tentative claim that the Gothic speaks of a gap in the subject.[14] Miles attempts at "teasing it out,"[15] but although he clearly stresses that the findings of the critics who preceded him are valuable and allow for an advance in Gothic studies, he is not fully content with the theoretical approaches they rely on. As he notices, though the contemporary studies cut themselves off from the simplicity of early psychoanalytical and Marxist readings, testifying, either purposefully or by virtue of their own versatility, to the versatility and complexity of Gothic dialectics (to the fact that Gothic writing is not a uniform genre which has some sort of deep structure to be discovered) theory, when applied to the Gothic, may still reach a dead end by dehistoricising its object of study.[16] According to Miles, theories are sensitive to gaps in the subject for they are founded on such gaps – but what they consequently recognise in the material they are applied to is their own reflection. What he finds to be a remedy is taking a "literary-historical" route that would be "theoretically sensitive,"[17] and that is why he turns to Foucault.

Foucauldian genealogy has a number of advantages, which are of a twofold nature. To quote Miles, "it provides theoretical accommodation for the diverse discourses […] to be found within a literary complex such as the Gothic; and […] it [divests] itself of both the evolutionary and the causal assumptions of conventional histories."[18] But apart from that, Foucault proves relevant also because he speaks of what is very close to Gothic criticism. Miles notices that Punter reads the late eighteenth century as

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[14] Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 1-3.
[15] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 2.
[16] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 2-3.
[17] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 3-4.
[18] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 199.

historically important due to the fact that it witnesses the modern subject in the process of its formation, thus echoing "the traditional view of Romanticism as an epiphenomenon of the modern"[19] (which should not surprise us). He also notices that Foucault offers a similar periodization of the times as those in which "a series of archival ruptures constitutes the modern,"[20] and is to be seen as all the more relevant since the tide of criticism after Punter feeds off the potential opened by such a historical paradigm.[21] Thus, Foucault is found to be relevant to the contextualising – or rather historicising – of the Gothic.

This is carried out on two planes. In the first place, Miles approaches the Gothic material with the help of *Madness and Civilization*, backing it up with Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic*. Especially, he pays attention to the themes of madness and Gothic forms as gradually emptied of their original meaning, of the birth of history as a straight, meaningless line, and of nostalgia for the past. Seen in this light, the rise of the Gothic in the late eighteenth century is enabled by the growing detachment of the word from the thing which it is meant to signify.[22] The Gothic discourse, connected with Gothic revival and indeed reviving Gothic iconography as already deprived of the original, feudal signification, is here presented as re-creating the past for the sake of the present, and in ways which disclose its contemporaneous interests. Miles moves on to pinpointing these interests with the use of volume one of *The History of Sexuality* and Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, and does so through the application of Foucault's notions of the deployment of alliance and sexuality in order to historicize the Gothic's obsession with feudal fathers and disobedient offspring.

Obviously enough, Miles introduces Foucault's theory as a way of avoiding the pitfalls of dehistoricizing. According to him, the Gothic is a mode which "constitutes significant textual evidence for the writing of the history of the subject,"[23] and finds itself involved in the process, but at the same time does not represent a unified stance or smooth line of development but rather "a mode of debate," in which "Gothic texts revise one another, here opening up ideologically charged issues, there enforcing a closure."[24] As a result, he views Foucault's genealogy as an immensely useful, non-

[19] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 2.
[20] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 2.
[21] The exact way Miles puts it is: "Relevant, because the upsurge in critical interest in the Gothic since Punter's book has to an extent been driven by these historical paradigms." Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 2.
[22] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 15.
[23] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 2.
[24] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 3.

teleological, "theoretically sensitive model of literary history,"[25] and for a number of reasons. Firstly, it emphasises the intertextual quality of the Gothic, contrary to theories which tend to pass over it.[26] Next, though not less importantly, it also directs our attention to the complex status of the Gothic as a writing, crossing genres, *and* an aesthetic, pre-existing and co-existing with the writing, not always without a tension.[27] And finally, above all, genealogy also enables one to see the dialogue between Gothic texts as "energized by the power implicit in discourse."[28] As Miles states, his task is to look at how Gothic writing discloses inflections towards contemporary discourses, these being "axiomatically historical" in the sense that they mirror "the vicissitudes, not of events, but of discourse, discourse moreover occurring in the highly mediated form of literary expression."[29] Such a formulation of objectives is almost identical with the one we have assumed in the previous chapter.

Last but not least, Foucault is also found immensely useful for the reason that his theory is centred on the subject. What proves especially valuable to Miles in this regard is the conception of the subject as "a radical cultural entity,"[30] immersed in history and always represented from the perspective of discourse. What is more, while Foucault's theory is not organised around a particular gap in the subject, it adopts a non-evolutionary model of history in which looking at shifts and changes is inevitable. Therefore, it remains sensitive to 'gaps' (and Miles recognises that 'gap' is no longer a useful word in its usual meaning for, within Foucault's theory, there is no self as a unity that could experience a gap, or a fracture, but only shifts and changes of the self as a "site of conflict") without imposing on them a particular, well-specified understanding, which allows one to situate the Gothic in a historical context instead of automatically projecting on it the conclusions to be reached.[31] Perhaps it is also worth mentioning at this point that *The History of Sexuality* proves especially useful when it comes to theorising the gap in the self, since, as Miles assumes, the now problematic areas constituted as a result of the emergence and proliferation of the discourses on sex –

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[25] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 4.
[26] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 4.
[27] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 4, 6.
[28] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 4.
[29] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 4.
[30] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 11.
[31] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 11.

modesty, mania, reverie, hysteria – "form discursive presences within the Gothic; they at once implicate 'sexuality' and instabilities within the self."[32]

Gothic Writing traces a number of competing discourses encountered in the Gothic, the basic two being that of the Gothic aesthetic and the hygienic self, both utilised variously in Gothic writing. Not surprisingly, these turn out to "have as their foci issues of national origin, the sublime, genius, vision, reverie, a congeries tied together by a pedagogic concern for the self and its integrity,"[33] all of which Miles recognises as the sites where power and knowledge intersect. He does, however, also point to a difficulty connected with identifying the discursive when it comes to literature, one which in a way also touches the sphere of our own analysis.

This difficulty lies in the character of literature as such. As Miles himself states in the preface to the second edition of the book, his work is "discourse-centred," which makes it at the same time unique and odd.[34] Both its uniqueness and oddness in fact refer to what is a problem stemming from the question of whether imaginative literature can be seen as discursive. On the one hand, it seems it can, at least in a way, for it may employ discursive models employed widely elsewhere in culture, and these can be received by the reader in an act of reading which, for instance if it were that of a nineteenth-century woman reading a treatise on hysteria, would be clearly discursive.[35] Still, in the case of literature, it is difficult to determine "the flow of power" inherent in a discursive act.[36] Miles acknowledges that his work struggles with this problem, pointing to possible discursive inflections but at the same time being careful about the way they are realised in the literary text, and concludes that, all in all, "[t]he final version of Gothic writing that emerged from the book was that it was a multigeneric occasion whereby the discursive construction of the human subject was imaginatively disassembled, re-assembled, and generally re-figured."[37]

There is a perceptible difference between *Gothic Writing* and our study as far as this issue is concerned. Miles is, obviously, interested in the flow of power connected with the discourses utilised by the Gothic text. So are we – but to a different extent. We can see from the above quotation that Miles focuses on charting how Gothic writing utilises

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[32] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 7.
[33] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 6.
[34] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. ix.
[35] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. x. Miles quotes the arguments after John Bender and Dorothy Cohn, referring to a debate that occurred between them in 1995, on the pages of *New Literary History*. See pp. ix-x.
[36] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. x-xi.
[37] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. xi.

contemporaneous discourses, either incorporating power relations they serve or reversing them. Our task is also to point to various discourses in which Gothic fiction finds itself involved, but our aim is not that much a given genealogy of the Gothic as the recovering of what theory has swept out of sight, doing precisely what Miles wished to avoid – dehistoricizing the mode. Works such as *Gothic Writing* will be of great use to us, but our task is not primarily to undertake a similar sorting out of power/knowledge relations – though this should prove useful as well, especially that we are going to talk about the perceived subversion of the Gothic. What we wish to tackle in the first place is how the theoretical re-construction of the Gothic may be seen as a dehistoricizing act of rewriting, functional within the differentiation paradigm and serving the interests of the modern critic. But then, since we also assume that the Gothic text is "crossed with discourse" – a phrase that Miles' uses as referring to a situation in which "a textual segment partakes both of the purely discursive, and the discursive within the frame of fiction"[38] – our study will also partake in the problem of viewing literature as discursive. Nonetheless, for our own aims, what is of major importance is that, undeniably, literature hosts discursive presences, no matter how it charts them, and these cannot be obliterated if we are to understand it.

The same is repeated by Miles, alongside a number of other useful observations. But it may also be noticed that the way he speaks of his own method and the way he wishes to utilise it sometimes verges on inviting the differentiation paradigm – or, to put it differently, sometimes seemingly finds itself at a confluence with it. We could begin with what may puzzle us as we are reading the introduction to *Gothic Writing*, being already familiar with Foucault's theory of discourse, and especially his understanding of traditional history and his method of analysis, genealogy. Miles' own understanding of the notion is, as can be deduced from a number of citations, based on "Nietzsche, History, Genealogy," and then also *The History of Sexuality*. However, while Foucault, similarly to Nietzsche, insists there is no progress and evolution, no history in the word's traditional sense, Miles perceives Gothic writing as illustrating Foucauldian geneaology, but Gothic aesthetic as incorporating the 'conventional' one, in which evolution – tracing back the origin of national values – becomes emphasised.[39] At the first sight, the idea that Gothic writing 'illustrates' Foucault's method of detecting cultural rifts and erased fragments of 'texts,' or aesthetic 'incorporates' traditional

[38] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. x-xi.
[39] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 8.

history must inescapably come as striking, and it takes reading on, into the following chapters, to sort this seemingly bizarre assumption out. As Miles explains, he views the analysis of Gothic aesthetic as one in which "the critic's concern becomes, not the chasing down of a cultural provenance of a form, but an account of what made an excellence possible."[40] This he views, perhaps unnecessarily, as a methodological contradiction, but instead of resolving it, he "[intends] to use it as a constructive tension, one that highlights, in another form, […] to what extent […] the complex and riven self of Gothic writing [bears] witness to historical forces outside of the form, and to what extent [it is] self-created."[41] And then, he moves on to elaborating on the ways in which the Gothic as such represents discourse.

Miles' resolution to retain the contrast between two genealogies, in its own way, makes perfect sense, especially if we consider the fact that he indeed views the Gothic aesthetic as a discourse in its own right. Discourses do give the histories they produce the shape of evolutionary, teleological stories of progress, and the 'traditional' genealogy of discourse should enable one to highlight how Gothic writing utilises it in its own, versatile way. But we need to be careful before we embrace the assumption that the Gothic in general can be viewed as a discursive formation.

This, especially from the perspective taken by this study, would be, in the best case, troublesome. What indeed re-emerges here is the question of literature as a discursive phenomenon, but not that much with regard to how it charts the flow of power (e.g. in accordance with the external discourse or not), but rather whether we can actually perceive a literary mode such as the Gothic as a discourse in its own right. We could consult Foucault with regard to this crux. In the course of "What Is an Author?" Foucault gives a partial answer to this question, even though it is not Gothic writing that he wishes to examine above all. According to him, Ann Radcliffe is a founder of a certain type of novel, but is not a 'mother' to a discourse. He states:

> Ann Radcliffe's texts opened the way for a certain number of resemblances and analogies which have their model or principle in her work. The latter contains characteristic signs, figures, relationships, and structures which could be reused by others. In other words, to say that Ann Radcliffe founded the Gothic horror novel means that in the nineteenth-century Gothic novel one will find, as in Ann Radcliffe's works, the theme of the heroine caught in the trap of her own

[40] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 13.
[41] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 13.

> innocence, the hidden castle, the character of the black, cursed hero devoted to making the world expiate the evil done to him, and all the rest of it.[42]

What distinguishes the founders of discursivity, such as Freud or Marx, from literary authors is, in turn, the fact that they give birth to a formation which provides an opportunity for, and limitations to, differences as much as similarities. By the same token, neither is Walpole a 'father'; he may have spawned a certain type, or mode, of representation, or commentary on reality, but as soon as Clara Reeve reworks it for her own purposes, we can see the two oeuvres do not 'utter' a common discourse, nor do they represent it – they rather seem to be 'responsive' to different external (discursive) stimuli. Or rather, they may respond to similar stimuli, but utilise them in their own, discrete ways.

What is at stake here is Miles' own conception of the Gothic as comprising two distinctive but related notions, the Gothic aesthetic and Gothic writing. For Miles, the previous influences and exists simultaneously with the latter. As such, it predates Gothic writing, emerging at the time of the Age of Sensibility, and is to large extent brought about by antiquarianism and the emphasis it put on the idealisation of Gothic times as the origin of Englishness.[43] If we look at it in this way, we may imagine the reason for Miles' speaking of a 'conventional' genealogy that it incorporates. Foucault clearly dismisses evolution, but the Gothic aesthetic is a discourse which rests on nostalgia for the irretrievable past and the original national spirit; which "reveals its discursivity through its claims to know the past, thus urging the normative values of its ideals while insisting on the imperative of disowning the accompanying umbrageousness."[44] From Miles' perspective, the Gothic aesthetic is not that much an aesthetic *sensu stricto* as it is an ideological concept, and, as such, a discursive site: "As a reinvention of Englishness, the Gothic aesthetic assumes the status of a discourse, a site of power/knowledge revealing, not an evolution of maturing aesthetic views, but the 'hazardous play of dominations.'"[45] Unsurprisingly, this very same discourse may be used to serve power as much as to oppose it, and this fundamentally Foucauldian assumption becomes the basis for drawing a link between the Gothic aesthetic and

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[42] Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Book, 1984), p. 114.
[43] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 28.
[44] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 42.
[45] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 30.

Gothic writing, which feeds off the aesthetic. According to Miles, "in its pedagogic and prescriptive aspects the Gothic aesthetic offers the representation of an idealized, culturally compromised, self, exaggerated and repudiated, explored and denied, by Gothic writing."[46] As a result, it is not only the Gothic aesthetic that turns out to be discursive; "Gothic writing is a discourse in the sense of a language ranging over,"[47] which departs from the basis provided by the Gothic aesthetic. Hence, it can be seen as an "occasion" for re-figuring of the discursive construction of the self. Hence, also, the reason for stressing the tension between the aesthetic and the writing in terms of genealogy they 'embody.' If the Gothic aesthetic ideologically prescribes a given version of the self, Gothic writing re-works it, and thus may self-create what does not necessarily find reflection in the discourse external to the text. In a given metaphorical sense, aesthetic could be thus seen as utilising traditional history, whereas writing – as representing genealogy for it tears a representation apart to create it anew.

Thus Miles ascribes to the Gothic an additional dimension of discursivity. There is, however, as we have already mentioned, a problem which stems from such a conceptualisation. The argument that the Gothic aesthetic bears a mark of discourse appears to be sound enough, and particularly useful for our own purposes. But the same assumption made with regard to Gothic writing poses a problem, even if we bear in mind Miles' understanding of its discursivity. This problem manifests itself particularly well if we consider such statements as: "[w]here the novel opposes social registers with ideological inflections, Gothic writing *opposes* discursive practices,"[48] or Gothic writing is "a *code* for the representation, and the working out, of anxieties regarding the self's nature."[49] Whereas Miles insists the Gothic needs to be viewed as diverse, carnivalesque and dialogic, and complies with the contemporary theory that it cannot be considered in terms of some sort of deep structure, the above passages nevertheless might be read as disclosing a drive towards finding a unifying axis for Gothic writing. And this results in an interesting tension within his own dialectic.

Similarly to the theory-oriented approaches of the late twentieth century, Miles strives to avoid grand narratives of literary history.[50] On the one hand, he admits this was his pre-conception about the Gothic, but on the other, his analysis also shows that

[46] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 30.
[47] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 30.
[48] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 11. Emphasis mine.
[49] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 12. Emphasis mine.
[50] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 199.

Gothic writing is "axiomatically historical," and, therefore, changes over time. This is a direct result of the adopted methodology. But the temptation to read his considerations as showing how the Gothic itself turns out to be a discursive formation concentrated on the transgressive representation of the self, a site of unified practices, if not by means of an underlying assumption than at least through the achieved effects, is nonetheless invited. In the case of the aforementioned passages, what plays a crucial role is the very register used. Hence, perhaps, the reason why the second edition's preface explains that it was not the author's intention to assert that the Gothic was subversive, but rather that "the accustomed vectors of power that obtained in discursive acts occurring on the same 'ontological plane' outside the text, frequently exhibited symptoms of reversal within it."[51] Then, Miles also qualifies the assumption of Gothic writing's disclosure of opposing discursive practices as he states that he analyses texts which range from those that only display the presence of a discourse to those that use it to actively rework it; texts in which discourse (in power, we should perhaps add) can be both reinforced and questioned.[52] This clarifies his standpoint, showing it to be in accordance with Foucault's rule of the polyvalence of discourse. Still, the line which should separate this account of the Gothic from a grand narrative may sometimes vanish out of sight if we lose the angle dictated by a strict adherence to the tenets of the methodology adopted.

We may contend that even if the Gothic constantly revises the socially and politically preferred representation of the self, this is exactly because it is discourse-sensitive, and not a discourse in itself. Viewing it as a site where empowered discourses are utilised for the sake of reversal need not be wrong; it may simply be not enough. Walpole would revise the empowered aesthetic discourse for a different reason than Mary Wollstonecraft. Thus, it appears true that the Gothic would provide a particularly useful space for such revisions; however, it also appears that the reasons could be pinpointed

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[51] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. xi.
[52] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 12. Miles supports his argument with Foucault's assumption, from volume one of *The History of Sexuality*, that discourses need not to be subservient to power, but can oppose and hinder it. As a result, it appears that we should assume that he understands "opposing discursive practices" as opposing particular sets of discursive practices, either through reworking the discourse utilised by the power, or adopting a counter-discourse – or simply adopting the same or different discursive "segment" with a given "tactical function," depending on the adopted strategy (Foucault would reject the notions of dominant and dominated discourses). Foucault, in the very same work, points also to the ways in which 'minorities' adopt the same discourses as power to claim their rights, giving the example of homosexuality claiming its normalcy by the categories previously used to elaborate on it as a perversion. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books), pp. 100-2.

on the level of discourse play itself, rather than devised on the basis of some sort of common paradigm.

What might prove of interest at this point is the fact that Miles insists on viewing the Gothic as a code, even though 'code' might not, again, seem the best possible lexical choice, for it signals a common framework of reference. Yet interestingly enough, Miles defines the system this code uses as that of "literary devices that make certain articulations possible."[53] What he wishes to undertake with regard to Gothic writing is, explicitly, its genealogy, entailing, on the one hand, the genealogy of discourses which shaped "the expression of subjectivity"[54] available to the Gothic, and which contextualise it, but, on the other, the genealogy of *intertextual relations* between particular texts. It is the latter which he views as occupied with the Gothic code. One of the comments he passes about the character of this code is, for example: "It is a tenet of modern psychoanalytic theory that anxiety may be discharged through utterance. Irrespective of therapeutic effect, the Gothic provided a codified expression for fashionable anxieties regarding the self, anxieties to an extent shaped, if not produced, by mental paradigm itself."[55] What could prove of interest at this point is perhaps a simple connotation that the Gothic code as a set of literary devices might have: the aforementioned 'laundry list' of the Gothic themes and characters, devices and figures. In a sense, these are pretty often as much 'literary devices' as empty symbols, inherited, through antiquarianism, from the properly Gothic repertoire of chivalric romance. And, as such – as Miles does make us aware – they are discursively fillable.

Assuming Gothic fiction to represent discourse would be a fatal step, one which would ultimately result in producing a grand narrative particularly fit for our own times. This is what we need to bear in mind. Interestingly, what *Gothic Writing* appears to partake in, at least on the level of register – strange generalisations, uncannily reminding us of the paradigm which favoured grand narratives – is, however, a sort of tension between two successive paradigms with the old one somehow intruding into the domain of the new one. Still, the work's argument is illuminating with regard to how the Gothic should be conceptualised, and how it should not if we wish to avoid losing its crucial historical inflections out of sight. Let us now address two more cases of

[53] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 14.
[54] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 14.
[55] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 52.

critical texts, in which, as we shall see, the undertones of the differentiation paradigm are traceable, if not immediately recognized.

4.3. Gothic Modernity: Filtering Theory Through the Gothic

To give another example illustrating how Foucault may be applied both to contextualising and conceptualising Gothic fiction we can turn now to Botting and Townshend. It is with the use of Foucault's deliberations that the critics, in their *three* initial paragraphs of the introduction to the second volume of *Gothic*, establish the Gothic as "a peculiarly modern genre," one registering "a shift from classicism to modernity, embodying a new sense of literature."[56] What becomes the basis for such an encoding of the Gothic as a genre is Foucault's three works: *The Order of Things*, "Language to Infinity" (1977) and "The Eye of Power" (1980). A closer look at these and the context they provide for the Gothic ought to turn out to be worth the effort. Let us start with "Language to Infinity," which seems to constitute the axis of the critics' brief conceptualisation of the Gothic as a modern genre.

It is in "Language to Infinity" that Foucault refers to Sade and what he calls "the tales of terror"[57] of the late eighteenth century to stake out the moment of change almost coinciding with literature taking the shape that we know today.[58] This modern literature, in the words of Botting and Townshend, "emerges […] in a self-reflexive and abyssal

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[56] Fred Betting and Dale Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 1. Such a conceptualisation could be viewed as paralleling Punter's attempt at establishing the Gothic as worthy of critical attention due to its connections with high art and predominantly Romanticism, described in the previous chapter. It must be stressed, however, that in the presently discussed case the basis for conceptualizing the Gothic is quite different, which has an altogether different impact on the resulting conception of Gothic fiction. Here, critical discourse operates outside of the binary opposition low/high, bringing into light those features of the Gothic that contribute to the overall critical value of the Gothic text irrespective of the previous discourse's demands. This is an important gesture, for it potentially frees us from the necessity of viewing Gothic fiction in terms of the Romantic revolt, providing us with a critical distance towards the previously mounted assumptions.

[57] Michel Foucault, "Language to Infinity," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 60. It is perhaps worth pointing out that Foucault names the French *Coelina and the Child of Mystery* (*Cœlina, ou l'Enfant du mystère*, 1798), by François Guillaume Ducray-Duminil as his prime (and in fact only) example. Elsewhere, e.g. in "They Eye of Power" and "What Is an Author," we shall find references to Ann Radcliffe's novels. Undeniably, parallels can be draw between the French and the British Gothic novel of the times. See Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth, New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 114. Full references for "The Eye of Power" are given below.

[58] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p. 59.

relation to language and death."[59] The relation of which they speak, if we now turn to Foucault, might have existed since the times epitomised by Homer, when speech was first used to talk about and against death, opening a space for writing to emerge: "a virtual space where speech discover[ed] the endless resourcefulness of its own image and where, it [could] represent itself as already existing behind itself, already active beyond itself, to infinity."[60] Speaking about death, the moment at which language 'dies' as well, language, as Foucault puts it, "turns back upon itself"[61] and engages in an unlimited play of mirrors to create its own 'immortal' image. A work speaking about death is a stilled and complete one, to be spoken about infinitely, both to warn against death and to promise immortality – it becomes a mirror of the Infinite, the Infinite being external to language.[62] In its talking about death – about misfortunes sent by gods – language speaks so that death remains unfulfilled and averted, distanced through words that make it 'still.'[63] And in so doing, it creates its own self-representation, becomes doubled: "language […] tells of itself, discovers the story of the story and the possibility that this interpenetration might never end."[64] Quite like Scheherazade, who, one night, tells the story of her own striving to postpone her death by telling stories.

As Botting and Townshend recount, it is, however, the self-conscious staging of 'the murmur of death' in the language's play of mirrors that allows *modern literature* to emerge.[65] To turn to Foucault's exact deliberations, what indicates the change in relations between language and death in the eighteenth century is the fact that in the case of both Sade's works and the tales of terror (and in the face of secularisation and the disappearance of the Infinite outside the text) "languages […] are constantly drawn out of themselves, by the overwhelming, the unspeakable, by thrills, stupefaction, ecstasy, dumbness [etc.] and […] are calculated with the greatest economy and precision to produce effects [to the point of achieving the greatest possible transparency] [and thus] very strangely represent themselves in a slow, meticulous, and infinitely extended ceremony."[66] Consequently, the case of the tales of terror is as follows: their language's prime function, as it might seem, becomes communication – transmitting the event of terror but simultaneously erasing its own presence. As a result,

[59] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 1.
[60] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p. 55.
[61] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p. 54.
[62] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p. 59.
[63] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p. 54.
[64] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p. 54.
[65] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 1.
[66] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," pp. 60-61.

there seems to be no space open in the language for its possible endless self-representation: in a tale of terror, language does not represent itself, seemingly not engaging in a play of mirrors that would grant it infinity.[67] It is only in the tales' own parody that their language becomes manifested. Foucault states:

> It is as if two twin and complementary languages were born at once from the same source: one existing entirely in its naivety, the other within parody; one existing solely for the reader's eyes, the other moving from the reader's simple-minded fascination to the easy tricks of the writer. But in actuality, these two languages are more than simply contemporaneous; they lie within each other, share the same dwelling, constantly intertwine, forming a single verbal web and, as it were, a forked language that turns against itself from within, destroying itself in its own body, poisonous in its very density.[68]

This doubling, however, grants no immortality. We could say that satire annihilates the language of the tales of terror; but in so doing, it also inescapably annihilates its very own language. In this sense, paradoxically, its birth is simultaneously its death.

Yet the language of the tale of terror is doomed to die anyway. Instead of pursuing infinity, or immortality, it is "push[ed] to its own limits,"[69] to use Botting and Townshend's words, which is a mark of its very modernity. To return to Foucault, on the one hand, language is triggered by its "ornamental superabundance," the necessity of describing all details overtly and at once.[70] On the other hand, it is triggered by its obligation to produce the moment of terror, which is the moment when it gains full power over the reader, but also when it becomes immediately impotent, as terror cannot be stilled. It can only be produced *ad infinitum*, in a series of successive episodes (chapters, volumes, etc.).[71] Both ornamental superabundance and the evoking of terror make language going, infinitely drawing from itself only to prolong its existence, but at the same time display the murmur of death in it: its reaching of its own limits, its impossibility of becoming complete in an immortalising way. In the case of terror, completion is death.

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[67] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," pp. 63-64.
[68] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p. 64.
[69] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 1.
[70] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p. 64.
[71] Foucault, "Language to Infinity," p.65.

These remarks may be found useful for conceptualising a phenomenon such as the Gothic. Let us now, somewhat anachronistically, turn to *The Order of Things*. In *The Order Of Things*, published 1970, and especially in the final subchapter of "Labour, Life, Language," Foucault treats modern literature as a means of substitution, or compensation, for "the demotion of language,"[72] for making language an object of knowledge instead of a form of knowing.[73] As he states, in the nineteenth century, it is through, or rather in, literature that language becomes liberated from grammar; it regains independence by constantly drawing upon itself:

> Literature is the contestation of philology (of which it is nevertheless the twin figure): it leads language back from grammar to the naked power of speech, and there it encounters the untamed, imperious being of words. From the Romantic revolt against a discourse frozen in its own ritual pomp, to the Mallarméan discovery of the word in its impotent power, it becomes clear what the function of literature was, in the nineteenth century, in relation to the modern mode of being of language. Against the background of this essential interaction, the rest is merely effect: literature becomes progressively more differentiated from the discourse of ideas, and encloses itself within a radical intransitivity; it becomes detached from all the values that were able to keep it in general circulation during the Classical age (taste, pleasure, naturalness, truth), and creates within its own space everything that will ensure a ludic denial of them (the scandalous, the ugly, the impossible); it breaks with the whole definition of *genres* as forms adapted to an order of representations, and becomes merely a manifestation of a language which has no other law than that of affirming […] its own precipitous existence; and so there is nothing for it to do but to curve back in a perpetual return upon itself, as if its discourse could have no other content than the expression of its own form […].[74]

This constant drawing upon itself, in denial of established rules, may be seen as corresponding with the situation of the tales of terror as described in "Language to Infinity," in which language forms a closed circuit, reaching its own limit and turning back inwards to continue *ad infinitum* in a series of yet further thrills and terrors. As a result, it seems that contrasting the essay and the subchapter could definitely prove thought-provoking. Not to mention the fact that the statements concerning literature's

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[72] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 326.
[73] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 322.
[74] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 327.

'radical intransitivity,' detachment from Classical values, 'ludic denial' and breaking with the definition of the genre might prove more than compelling, to some on the level of immediate association, and to some others as opening a path for a deeper analysis.[75] However, they are not found compelling by Botting and Townshend. On the contrary, the two critics seem to use Foucault in an interesting way, which signals not only their interest in the French philosopher as enabling us to contextualise the Gothic, but also the fact that their analysis is based on some preformed assumptions about Gothic fiction which impinge on Foucault's remarks themselves.

Botting and Townshend see the usefulness of *The Order of Things* for the conceptualisation of the Gothic in something else, and it may seems they are quite right. In their third paragraph they view the Gothic's exploitation of feudal settings as disclosing a newly shaped sense of history, one which becomes another marker of the beginning of modernity in Foucault's study.[76] As they notice, while they were fictions persistently reviving the Gothic past, Gothic novels were strikingly modern, always immersed in their eighteenth-century present. In this way, the Gothic is conceptualised as distinctively modern from yet another angle – what is *modern* about it is not only the way its language discloses the murmur of death, but also its sense of history. And it seems to be conceptualised properly.

However, if we return to the initial paragraph of Botting and Townshend's text, we shall see that their approach to the Gothic still betrays assumptions about the Gothic made in advance. In the first paragraph, for instance, the critics seem to evoke *The Order of Things* in order to depart in a quite different direction, using it to emphasise certain elements of the Gothic as construed by the contemporary theory. This is done in an interesting way, and with possibly curious results worthy of our attention.

Referring to the modern sense of history is a means to conceptualise the Gothic as modern literature. It is a gesture towards establishing it as definitely deserving the attention it is given – without any need to locate it within high art plane. But drawing from *The Order of Things* in order to link the rise of modern literature with the rise of the unconscious, which the critics do, takes us at a different discursive level. As Botting and Townshend state, "[i]n *The Order of Things* the division separating the transparency of the scientific language from literature's doubling begins a process in which the

[75] Some would also assume there is an equation mark between the tales of terror and 'the Romantic revolt.'
[76] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 2.

unconscious appears."[77] In Foucault's own words, also quoted by them: in the nineteenth century "[language] had to be either made transparent to the forms of knowledge, or thrust down into the contents of the unconscious."[78] It is difficult not to notice that 'the unconscious' in the context of Gothic fiction unmistakably points to Freud, but the implications here seem to be more intricate.

Referring to Foucault's exact train of thought should again prove useful. The transparency of scientific language, according to Foucault, is connected with the first of the three compensations for language demotion, namely the fact that language remained the necessary medium for the expression of scientific knowledge. As a result, the ideal state of affairs was to make it neutral and passive to the point of becoming "nature's faithful portrait" – "the exact reflection, the perfect double, the unmisted mirror of a non-verbal knowledge."[79] As to the emergence of the unconscious, it can be explained in the following way. The second compensation for language demotion, as Foucault writes, is the value given to the study of language.[80] He states:

> Having become a dense and consistent historical reality, language forms the locus of tradition, of the unspoken habits of thought, of what lies hidden in a people's mind; it accumulates an ineluctable memory which does not even know itself as memory. Expressing their thoughts in words of which they are not the masters […] men believe that their speech is their servant and do not realize that they are submitting themselves to its demands. The grammatical arrangements of a language are the *a priori* of what can be expressed in it.[81]

Hence, the importance of the formalisation of language – and hence the rise of the notion of the unconscious. We read:

> The critical elevation of language, which was a compensation for its subsidence within the object, implied that it had been brought nearer both to an act of knowing, pure of all words, and to the unconscious element in our discourse. It had to be either made transparent to the forms of knowledge, or thrust down into the contents of the unconscious. This certainly explains the nineteenth century's double advance, on the one hand towards formalism in thought and on the

[77] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 1.
[78] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 326.
[79] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 323.
[80] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 324.
[81] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 324.

> other towards the discovery of the unconscious – towards Russell and Freud.[82]

In other words, the language is either neutralised when it comes to the forms and rules imposed in advance upon what can be said, or traced back to those forms or rules, buried, as we may assume, in the unconscious past of human kind. However, it must be stressed that such an unconscious is not yet the Freudian one.

As a result, the usefulness of emphasising the unconscious element in language while elaborating on the Gothic appears to lie in analogy, though not immediately a psychoanalytical one. The unconscious is considered as one of the prominent themes of Gothic fiction, being the term's immediate connotation. Indeed, if modern literature is to be seen as representing a sort of reaction to the changing perception and treatment of language – as the philology's twin, to use Foucault's metaphor – then it must somehow reflect upon the changes taking place in what it operates in relation to. And one of these changes is the development of the notion of the unconscious as underlying the production of language. Hence, we could assume, the unconscious transpiring through the Gothic fabric.

However, Botting and Townshend, as they speak of the unconscious, have a different understanding of it in mind. Although they seem to employ Foucault's periodization as an explanatory tool, rhetorically, in a curious way, they also remain at the level of analogy, but a 'Gothic' one. In their introductory paragraph, the unconscious, emerging through the change of the perception of language, is the Gothic's *inherent business*. True, it can be linked with the rise of modern literature, but in the first place, it is inherently Gothic. It is not even the case that the unconscious is related to psychoanalysis, which first identified it in the mode. The unconscious becomes an integral feature of Gothic fiction.

And what is more, this special language which is modern literature plays with *mirrors*, *doubles* itself, or engenders *monstrous* forms.[83] Mirrors, doubles, monsters – all of these are in themselves considered to be Gothic properties. And all of them, rooted, as it were, in Foucault's application of metaphors to describe certain processes, are emphasised in the opening paragraph of Botting and Townshend's introduction for the purpose of linking the Gothic with the dawn of modernity, but in a paradoxically

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[82] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 326.
[83] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 1. Emphasis mine.

'Gothic' way. As we read at the end of the critics' initial paragraph, "Foucault's references to death, doubling, mirrors and monstrosity, all abiding figures from tales of terror, make the emergence of modern literature a thoroughly Gothic affair."[84] There is a rhetorical device at work here, one which is meant to be an apt and catchy metaphor – which it certainly is – but, at the same time, one which reveals to what extent certain assumptions about the Gothic are taken as givens. It is not Foucault's considerations of the emergence of modern literature here that explain the Gothic – it is the Gothic that seems to explain modern literature. Once, psychoanalysis contributed to establishing the Gothic as characterised by the unconscious and the double. Now, the Gothic critic take both to be inherently Gothic in the first place, and link modernity to Gothic fiction because of metaphors used by a philosopher. It is as if Foucault's though was filtered through a particular conception of the Gothic: its elements not used in order to illuminate the mode, but chosen on the basis of their likeness to what has already been established as characterising Gothic fiction.

We could assume that catchy metaphors are the privilege of introductory paragraphs. The second paragraph apparently turns to more exact references to Foucault. Firstly, the critics assert, in tune with Foucault, that the Gothic engenders the moment of shift out of which arises the modern sense of literature, evoking Foucault's statement that the tales of terror are drawn out of themselves, aimed at effect, the language reaching its own limits.[85] Then, they refer to "The Eye of Power" to further establish the modernity of Gothic fiction. They write: "A distinctive topography appears: mirrors and surfaces, with their range of effects and affects, are counterposed with mysterious doubles and terrifying death. The new topography, recognisable in the play of surfaces and depths that are literary and, subsequently, psychological, have architectural correlates: the fortress or castle, defiantly exposed to external elements, finds its power and darkness internalised in the panoptical complexities of the labyrinthine spaces beneath its sovereign ramparts."[86] Let us now pick up this trait.

Dark fortresses and castles, mysterious vaults and terrifying secrets are the requisites which, in Gothic novels, designate the feudal era. In this era, as we read in Foucault, the prison was a space of darkness and restriction, the source of disease of the body and

[84] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 1.
[85] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 1.
[86] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 1.

moral corruption.[87] The eighteenth century, with its interest in science and medicine, turns toward visibility and access – the panopticon, in which vice and crime are eradicated through immediate exposure to whoever watches. The rebellion against the monarchy also finds itself internalising the rule of visibility. Foucault thus elaborates on the topic:

> A fear haunted the latter half of the eighteenth century: the fear of darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men and truths. It sought to break up the patches of darkness that blocked the light, eliminate the shadowy areas of society, demolish the unlit chambers where arbitrary political acts, monarchical caprice, religious superstitions, tyrannical and priestly plots, epidemics and the illusions of ignorance were fomented. The chateaux, lazarets, bastilles and convents inspired even in the pre-Revolutionary period a suspicion and hatred exacerbated by a certain political overdetermination. The new political and moral order could not be established until these places were eradicated.[88]

According to him, the literary illustration of the process takes place in the Gothic novel, and especially in the works of Ann Radcliffe, in which dark feudal spaces are infested with all sorts of aristocratic and aristocratically-related parasites. The feudal topography, anachronistically depicted, becomes the foil for visibility.[89] Juxtaposed with lightness, it serves to enhance the new order: "In the Panopticon, there is used a form close to that of the castle—a keep surrounded by walls—to paradoxically create a space of exact legibility."[90] As Jean-Pierre Barrou, one of Foucault's interviewers, notices, "[it's] also the areas of darkness in man that the century of Enlightenment wants to make disappear."[91] It seems it is in these terms that the new order of visibility can be translated onto the psychological dimension – it is meant to be instilled in those subjected to gaze, starting from a child and finishing with a criminal. By analogy, spatial rearrangements of the times are one manifestation of a multi-layered process, taking place as much within the subject's psyche; in the period of transition, this should prove unavoidable.

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[87] Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power," in *Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et all (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 153.
[88] Foucault, "The Eye of Power," p. 153.
[89] Foucault, "The Eye of Power," p. 154.
[90] Foucault, "The Eye of Power," p. 154.
[91] Foucault, "The Eye of Power," p. 154.

Yet Botting and Townshend again seem to read Foucault in a different way. In fact, their way of handling the issue appears to be predetermined by an assumption about the Gothic. Mirrors, surfaces, depths – these are concepts marginally related to the main train of thought in "The Eye of Power." The fortress and the castle are described therein as manifestations of distrust and repugnance felt towards the previously dominant system, based on hierarchy and ultimate power wielded by the God-appointed King, rather than as representations of psyche's regions. Still, surfaces and depths – effects and affects – sound more psychological, not to say psychoanalytical, and hence more 'Gothic' if we take the contemporary conception of the mode into consideration. It is a fact that Foucault is here referred to as illuminating the conception, but there remains an impression that another explanation of 'the new topography' could be proposed, for it is at hand.

This moment of linking Foucault's rumination on panopticon with psychological dimension of the Gothic as accepted nowadays is a point at which an underlying assumption reveals itself at work. And this assumption works to adjust theory as much as to utilise it for the benefit of the existing conception of the mode. The same could be said about the introductory paragraph. Catchy or not, the metaphor posing the Gothic as some sort of an underlying logic of modernity is striking. Granted, Gothic fiction manifests an abundance of motifs and figures that prove to be marks of modernity – but does this make the rise of modernity a Gothic affair? Or should it remain the other way round? Above all, it seems a pity that a body of Foucault's potentially illuminating work is filtered, and evoked to some extent only for the sake of a metaphor – one that remains in tune with the prevailing assumptions.

4.4. The Gothic Heterotopia: Gothic Criticism as Discourse

Foucault's periodization of the eighteenth century and his ruminations on the birth of modernity testify to his attractiveness at least to some of Gothic critics. His works allow for contextualising the Gothic as much as for theorising it. We have briefly looked at the instance of the former; let us now turn to the latter. To give another example of how Foucault has been applied to the study of Gothic fiction, one which represents less an attempt at conceptualising it in context than at theorising its certain features, Fred Botting, in his essay "In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture" applies

Foucault's conceptions of utopia and heterotopia as sites to account for the meaning and effects of the Gothic's interest in the Gothic past.

Let us again begin with Foucault and his own argument. In "Of Other Spaces," first published in 1984, though constituting the basis for a lecture delivered in 1967,[92] the philosopher introduces a distinction between two types of 'sites,' sites understood as the modern incarnations of the concept of space, utopias and heterotopias. Utopias are defined here as "fundamentally unreal places," which represent real societies either in their perfected or inverted form.[93] Heterotopias, by contrast, are "effectively enacted utopia[s]," real spaces within existing societies in which "all the other real sites that can be found in culture, are simultaneously *represented, contested, and inverted*."[94] In other words, they reflect other sites, but are unlike them, and remain outside of them. The mirror, an early example provided by Foucault, is both a utopia and a heterotopia; the previous in the sense that the space it opens does not exist, is "a placeless place"[95]; the latter in the sense that the mirror itself is real and creates a *counter-site* in that it relates to (reflects) reality as much as contests and inverts it. Foucault thus describes the experience of the mirror:

> In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, *virtual space that opens up behind the surface*; I am over there, there where I am not, *a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself*, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where *it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy*. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it *makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there*.[96]

[92] As a footnote in the *Diacritics* 1986 reprinting of the text informs us.
[93] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1986), p. 24.
[94] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 24. Emphasis mine.
[95] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 24.
[96] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 24. Emphases mine.

Some passages in the quotations above have been emphasised because they emerge in Botting's article as a basis for his reading of the concepts of utopia and heterotopia, and are then applied to account for what we should call, after the article, 'the Gothic mirror' – 'Gothic' standing for both a type of fiction and a general, abstract notion designating the medieval (or rather 'feudal') past as 'constructed' – almost literally – in the Enlightenment. The constructing, rewriting, inventing or fabricating of Gothic, again in the sense of both the past and fiction (but apart from that also e.g. architecture), by the Enlightenment becomes the basis on which Botting builds up his argument.

Let us return to Foucault, though. Other examples of sites which remain in relation to real spaces but invert them and remain outside of them are, to name but a few: a mental hospital, a prison, a boarding house, an army's post, a cemetery, a New World's colony or a (n Oriental) garden, and finally, a boat, "a place without a place."[97] As Foucault presents them, they come to exemplify six principles by means of which the concept of heterotopia can be described: 1) heterotopias are present in all cultures of the world and take various forms, which we can classify into two categories, a) crisis heterotopias and b) heterotopias of deviation[98]; 2) the function of a heterotopia depends on a given culture and its needs; 3) heterotopias are spaces within which otherwise incompatible spaces can be brought together and juxtaposed (consider the cinema or the aforementioned Orient garden); 4) *heterotopias are linked with heterochronies*, "slices in time," moments of "absolute break with […] traditional times"[99]; 5) heterotopias are both isolated and penetrable; and 6) they function in relation to the remaining space. This final principle means we may be dealing either with illusion heterotopias, ones which "[expose] every real space […] as still more illusory"[100] (here Foucault gives an example of the brothel) or with compensation heterotopias, which strive to be perfect places, as opposed to our messy social reality.

Of the aforementioned principles, I have emphasised the fourth one for a reason. "Of Other Spaces" begins with the following statement: "The great obsession of the

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[97] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 27.

[98] For the sake of clarification: crisis heterotopias are meant to be characteristic mainly of primitive societies and refer to "privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc." Deviation heterotopias, by contrast, are inherent in our own times and represent "those [sites] in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed." A prison as an example should do. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," pp. 24-25.

[99] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 26.

[100] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 27.

nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics."[101] In this way, the nineteenth century is established as the age preoccupied with time. Our own times (or at least the mid-/second half of the twentieth century), are on the contrary established in the text as the times of space.[102] Still, as it has been emphasised above, the counter-sites of heterotopias are related to moments of rupture in time. Hence, as Foucault notices, the highly heterotopic character of the cemetery – a place outside of the remaining space which constitutes itself in the light of the end of life. Foucault distinguishes between two types of relations between heterotopia and heterochrony: heterotopias infinitely accumulating time (museums, libraries) and those which are in themselves only temporal (seasonal fairgrounds or Polynesian vacation villages). This relation between time and space is emphasised here as, while speaking about the Gothic past in Gothic fiction, we are inevitably driven back towards the concern about time and history, though this time in the eighteenth century.

To turn to Botting now, as we have already indicated, history in the incarnation of the Gothic past, or to be more precise the theme of its rewriting (re-constructing) in the eighteenth-century, constitutes the foundation of his article. As he amply states, "[t]he Enlightenment, which produced the maxims and models of modern culture, also invented the Gothic." Botting stresses that it is thanks to the extensive rewriting of history that the Enlightenment, itself a re-invention of the classical period, can establish itself as 'modern,' different both from the classical period, which it, nevertheless, wishes to be a continuation of, and from the feudal past, from which it cuts itself off.[103] 'Gothic' as a word emerges from this process of rewriting equipped with a wealth of meanings and significations, primarily negative, opposed to what is valued by the Enlightenment, both in a political and aesthetic sense.[104] It is also strongly marked with fabrication – so when it comes to Walpole's first 'Gothic story,' as when we speak of

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[101] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 22.
[102] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 22. On the other hand, the concern with space and space-arrangement begins in the eighteenth-century. For a brief discussion on the topic see e.g. Foucault, "The Eye of Power."
[103] Fred Botting, "In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), p. 3.
[104] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 3.

his Strawberry Hill, or Macpherson's *Ossian*.[105] All this reconstruction – rewriting, fabrication, inventing – of history has its clearly defined function: "it articulates the long passage from the feudal orders of chivalry and religiously sanctioned sovereignty to the increasingly secularised and commercial political economy of liberalism."[106]

As Botting asserts, 'Gothic' – an abstract concept in itself, it should seem to us, a set of associations, a mould of perception and simultaneously something like a discursive formation – is thus proved to represent a type of 'conceptual site.' This site reflects the eighteenth century in that it represents the perceived vices of the past against which the present can elevate its virtues. What this site allows is, basically, the mechanism of negative definition – but here dressed in the metaphor of the mirror, and, above all, a utopic one for it provides an inverted analogy of the real society.[107] Botting reads Foucault's analysis of the utopic mirror as allowing self-definition (since it provides "a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself") and distancing ("in 'the virtual space that opens up behind the surface'"),[108] and this translates well onto the mechanism of negative definition: shadow of myself in the feudal mirror gives me my own Enlightened visibility, and is at the same time safely distanced for it appears in a space which is not – the past is gone.

However, whereas utopia is originally understood as a "direct or inverted analogy," in this Gothic utopic mirror, Foucault's 'or' disappears. The conceptual site of the past is not only inverted. By peculiar and paradoxical means, it also becomes perfected, retaining a direct relation with the conception of the present by "an idealization of the elements of the past and the establishment of a continuity with the present" through creating 'the myth of the Goths.'[109] As follows from Botting's article, whereas, in general neoclassical and bourgeois terms 'Gothic' has predominantly negative connotations (barbaric, disorderly, feudal, superstitious), when it comes to the establishment of what we could call national identity, it acquires positive resounding by the same means of re-construction of the historic Goths as liberal, rational and democratic; in this way, the continuity between the past and the present is restored against the corruption of the continent. Botting, quoting Miles, gives us an example of

[105] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly, pp. 4-5.
[106] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 5.
[107] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 5.
[108] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 5.
[109] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 5.

Radcliffe in whose Gothic novels the 'bad' aristocracy is coded as 'Oriental,' whereas 'good' aristocracy undergoes embourgeoisement.[110]

But then, not much space is needed for Botting to show how the Burkean chivalric ideal is reversed by Mary Wollstonecraft's "rationalist critique" and "thoroughly enlightened morality," and how literary criticism (or its early version) of the times finds, in the light of the French Revolution, Gothic romances as potentially disturbing the social order – and hence, again, how Gothic acquires negative denotation.[111] His discussion of the contemporary critical discourse (demanding fiction to teach virtue, but also by means of showing vice as a deterrent), as applied, inversely, on the one hand by Clara Reeve to justify romances, and on the other hand, by critics to condemn them, allows to introduce *ambivalence* as *the* inherent feature of the Gothic mirror. "Not only is it a utopic mirror that preserves an imagined and ideal continuity with the past, but it also serves as an inverted reflection marking a distinct break in the progress of history."[112] This 'break,' although Botting never uses Foucault's term, emerges in his article as a powerful heterochrony.

The presence of a heterochrony, visible actually since the very beginning of Botting's argument about the Enlightenment constituting itself, is significant. It confirms what should have been expected since the moment of the application of the metaphor of the mirror to account for the concept of Gothic. Namely, the Gothic mirror is also a heterotopic one. Botting establishes this 'version' of the mirror on the basis of his consideration of how Gothic fiction distorts the mimetic and corrective mirror of the novel: "With romances and Gothic fiction, however, the social function of the mirror is distorted, its reflections exceeding the proper balance of identification and correction. The utopic mirror of perfected or inverted reflection is intermingled with a heterotopic form."[113] Distortion of proper literary function, lamented upon by the eighteenth-century critics, thus turns the conceptual locus of 'Gothic' (non-existent and placeless since established as the past on the immediate level, and then also as a pure fabrication on a higher one) into an almost material place in the form of a book which, like a mirror, represents the real space but contests and inverts it at the same time. Gothic

[110] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," pp. 5-7.
[111] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 7.
[112] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 8.
[113] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 9.

fiction, no longer an abstract concept but a palpable literary creation, which 'enacts' the concept, becomes "an 'effectively enacted utopia.'"[114]

This is, however, not all. It has already been mentioned that Foucault distinguishes between two general types of heterotopia.[115] Crisis heterotopias, as he asserts, are by our times practically extinct; thus hardly a heterotopia should escape being a deviation heterotopia, one which presupposes a deviant relation with the established norms. This feature of heterotopias should prove extremely attractive to the Gothic critic and indeed, Botting writes:

> The main features of Gothic fiction, in neo-classical terms, are heterotopias: the wild landscapes, the ruined castles and abbeys, the dark, dark labyrinths, the marvellous, supernatural events, distant times and customs are not only *excluded* from the Augustan social world but introduce the passions, desires and excitements it suppressed. The heterotopic mirror, moreover, exists in reality with palpable effects: 'it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy.' The mirror of fiction, too, has a *counter-Augustan* effect. Not only does it transport readers into remote and unreal places, but it is read in a specific place in the present, thereby *disturbing* a sense of reality along with the aesthetic values supposed to sustain it. The heterotopic mirror 'makes the place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.'[116]

Exclusion, counter-effect, disturbance – together with distortion – what could suit the Gothic better? But let us pay close attention to the way Botting establishes here the deviation of the Gothic with regard to the Augustan norm. Just like the mirror, the Gothic takes the reader into a space which is virtual, and thereby contests and inverts the experience of the real place of reading. What is more, the medieval, and often South-continental, we should add, setting and its elements are deviations with regard to the norm both in Enlightenment politics and aesthetics.

Such a conceptualisation of the Gothic should hold, as it makes perfect sense. But then, there seem to be a few questions worth asking. In the first place, let us return to the question of ambivalence, introduced by Botting as an inherent feature of the Gothic

[114] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 9.
[115] See footnote no. 98 on page 161 of this chapter.
[116] See Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 9. Emphases mine.

mirror. As he states, "[t]he Gothic mirror offers a heterogeneous and conflicting reflection of the present."[117] On the one hand, it inverts the past to despise feudalism while, on the other, it perfects elements of the past to establish continuity; on the one hand, it shows vice to promote virtue but on the other it does not discourage vice clearly enough. All this takes place in the utopic mirror – but should it not also take place in the heterotopic one? It does not seems so since Botting states: "Fiction itself, as much as the landscapes and cultures it represents, operates in the manner of a heterotopia: consumed in the eighteenth century, it nonetheless *counteracted the dominance of neoclassical taste* with an alternative and seductive vision of society, nature and art."[118] Thus, only what is counter-neoclassical, counter-Augustan, or counter-Enlightenment – counter-*dominant* – is recognised as distinctive of heterotopia. However, paradoxically, what is pro-dominant, as follows from Foucault, could also be heterotopic. Let us consider his juxtaposition of illusion and compensation heterotopias – brothels and colonies. Of the latter, he gives the following definition:

> their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. In certain cases, they have played, on the level of the general organization of terrestrial space, the role of heterotopias. I am thinking, for example, of the first wave of colonization in the seventeenth century, of the Puritan societies that the English had founded in America and that were absolutely perfect other places. I am also thinking of those extraordinary Jesuit colonies that were founded in South America: marvelous, absolutely regulated colonies in which human perfection was effectively achieved.[119]

As much as the Enlightened Britain strives to establish its own values and mores, as opposed to the superstitious times of aristocratic primogeniture, it also strives to establish, in a sense, a perfect society, a perfect space as opposed to what is jumbled and ill-constructed, and messy. The perfected reflection of the past which is to reinforce a perfected version of the present is also deviant with regard to the established rule – were it not, the present would not need perfection – and is also a marker of the heterotopic.

[117] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 8.
[118] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 10. Emphasis mine.
[119] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 27.

What is more, the mimetic mirror of the novel, referred to by Botting as the opposition of Gothic fiction's heterotopic mirror, is, by definition, heterotopic as well. Let us consider Richardson's *Pamela* – a most perfect(ed) staging of feminine virtue to be mimicked and internalised. And let us consider Fielding's *Shamela* – a heterotopic mirror of the present which yearns for Pamelas. All fiction, as the above-quoted excerpt from Botting unintentionally suggests through its wording – "fiction itself" – if we treat it as having parallel effects to the mirror, is heterotopic. All fiction is read somewhere and sometime, relates to the space and time in which it is read (even if unconsciously), and takes the reader somewhere else where the rules will be – since the place *only represents* the real space – deviant. At some level, this rule should prove to apply even to the realist novel as defined by Stendhal – *un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route*.

What we touch upon here is what was signalled at the end of the Chapter II, namely the way we understand subversion. Distortion, exclusion, inversion, contestation, counteraction, disruption, disturbance, confounding, blurring – all these concepts, used by Botting, can be linked with subversion, even if the noun itself never appears in the text. So does the adjective 'deviant.' But Foucault's deviance, through the types of heterotopias he establishes – and the functions he ascribes to them – is a double-edged weapon, or tool. If it works in one direction, it works also in the other.

Botting's application of the concepts of utopia and heterotopia as defined by Foucault is indeed precious and illuminating for the Gothic. In a way, it enables us to bring together various historically conditioned discourses which shape the conceptual locus of 'Gothic' – the perception of the past and its use for the present purposes. In a longer run, such a vantage point, like Foucault's heterotopia, which brings together otherwise juxtaposed spaces, resolves the problem of whether the Gothic was initially seen as detrimental or positive (even if the mirror shows a conflicting and heterogeneous reflection, we are confused only until we examine the particular details that are reflected, and their origin) for it was seen as both, within the same order of discourse, without any shade of paradox. This constitutes a well-prepared ground for further considerations of the issues of Gothic subversiveness and marginality. Apart from that, Botting's considerations also bring our attention to the fact that the initial perception of the Gothic was to an enormous degree dependent on its political, social as

well as aesthetic context, one of extensive changes and reformulation in all the spheres of culture – of a powerful heterochrony, as we have already said at a point.[120]

On the other hand, however, the above-discussed account is incomplete, for it does not seem to make a full usage of the tool provided by Foucault's theory. And it seems that if we take into consideration the major vectors of the differentiation paradigm discussed in the previous chapter, it could hardly do so. Perhaps this is too bold a claim – but it seems that the traces of the rhetoric of subversiveness and counter-Augutanism, both established as the distinctive features of Gothic fiction, run along the lines of the text. Botting appears more than right in his consideration of the counter-Augustan effect of Gothic fiction when it comes to particular significations ascribed to the term 'Gothic' and given aspects of its functioning, but he evades noticing that 'counter' in Foucauldian sense is not quite an unambiguous word. The direction in which his considerations develop in the latter part of the article up to the conclusion also seems to be informed by a biased way of reasoning.

This may be seen in the course of further analysis. What may appear to follow from Botting's reading of Foucault – and to find confirmation in his analysis of Gothic – is the statement that "[t]he heterotopic mirror not only distorts the proper perception of the relation between present and past, but introduces a divergent reflection in which 'Gothic' marks a discontinuity between political and aesthetic version of history."[121] Let us begin with the first part of this statement. What is interesting about it is the assumed distorted perception of how the past relates to the present, which is clearly presented as a heterotopic feature. To turn to Foucault, when it comes to the complex relation between heterotopia and heterochrony and its two incarnations, he states, with regard to spaces accumulating time, that they incarnate "the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place."[122] Then, turning to temporal spaces, he comments that they are "linked, on the contrary, to time

[120] Still, one issue worth considering that I would like to only signal at this point is the eighteenth-century critical opinion, on which Botting relies so strongly; we will return to it in the course of the following part of this dissertation.
[121] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 10.
[122] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 26.

in its most fleeting, transitory, precarious aspect,"[123] and while he considers the Polynesian villages, offering holiday that take a city dweller straight into the primitive past preserved in a simple hut, he sums up: "The rediscovery of Polynesian life abolishes time; yet the experience is just as much the rediscovery of time, it is as if the entire history of humanity reaching back to its origin were accessible in a sort of immediate knowledge."[124] And this is important.

We could assume that it is difficult to imagine, after the lesson of postmodernism, or new historicism, that humanity is truly capable of "reaching back to its origin" to acquire an immediate knowledge of what it was like to live in a hut. Neither is it capable of accumulating, or preserving, time outside of time. On the other hand, even if Foucault states that "museums and libraries were the expression of an individual choice" in the seventeenth century, as opposed to modernity,[125] knowing that this is said by Foucault, we can hardly say that nowadays the accumulation of time is objective. *Discursively*, it pretends to be. But then, any representation of the past which lays claim to objectivity is tinted by (political) discourse, its seemingly neutral and obvious givens. A museum aspires to abolish time – but under this cover it is simultaneously marked by the choices dictated by its own times. The experience of a Polynesian hut can also provide only a distorted (by the present) experience of the past. The same should refer to the relationship between the past and the present, and the same is manifested by fiction – in this case Gothic fiction – politically interested in presenting this relationship in a given way.

The fact is, however, that although such conclusions can be drawn from Foucault's oeuvre, he himself does not seem to put too much emphasis on them in this particular text. His interest is primarily in characterising a type of sites – heterotopias – which is, at a point, connected with pondering over the relationship between those sites and time; nonetheless, the question of the way in which heterotopias blur the perception of the past and its influences is not raised. On the other hand, raising such a question suits well the heterotopic mirror of the Gothic: blurring the relations by utilising given versions of history is exactly what it does, and for clearly specified reasons.

The above part of the discussion of the quotation from Botting eventually shows no more than how a certain feature of heterotopia becomes added to, or emphasises aside,

[123] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 26.
[124] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 26.
[125] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," p. 26.

Foucault's major description. And we could say, quite justifiably. Nonetheless, we can observe how 'heterotopic' becomes somewhat strangely and instantly, without any foregoing warning or signs that this is to happen, substituted for the word 'Gothic.' The trigger may come so from reflections on Foucault's notes and oeuvre, perhaps during the consideration of Gothic, as from considerations of the Gothic as heterotopic in the course of which the concept of heterotopia becomes re-characterised alongside what it was supposed to help to conceptualise.

In such a case, a tool turns into an object, an object into a tool. What comes to one's mind is Alexandra Warwick's brief analysis of Julian Wolfreys' passage from *Victorian Gothic*, which runs as follows: "we only read where the gothic has been, we only comprehend its effects in the places from which it has already retreated. We understand the gothic therefore as always already spectral through and through. All that is left in the Victorian text is the promise of the gothic, the disturbing trace, the haunting absence.[126] Warwick considers this passage as an example of the aforementioned ill-application of Derrida, 'hauntology,' a practice of searching for Gothic traces which 'haunt' texts. According to her, Wolfreys substitutes the word 'gothic' for the word 'meaning': "The problem here is that there is a rhetorical trick at work, a sleight of hand in which the word Gothic is first substituted for the word meaning, 'we only read where meaning has been' and then in the next sentence meaning becomes genre, if meaning is spectral then places from which it has departed become Gothic, and then back to meaning again, 'all that is left is the promise of meaning.' Gothic is then simultaneously that which haunts and that which is haunted, it is both meaning and text."[127] We could say that 'meaning' here is an incomparably broader term, and indeed, as Warwick notices, substituting Gothic for meaning makes it so ubiquitous that, according to her, it becomes meaningless.[128] In the case of Botting, we have a reversed situation, namely a general term is substituted for a narrower one, but, peculiarly, the result is the same, and typical of the critical practice of elevating the Gothic: since heterotopia shares the major (in the text) characteristic of the Gothic, the Gothic itself seems somewhat grander (and its boundaries start overlapping with these of fiction in general).

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[126] Julian Wolfreys, '"I could a tale unfold" or, the Promise of Gothic', in *Victorian Gothic*, ed. Robbins and Wolfreys, p. xv., quoted in Alexandra Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" *Gothic Studies*, vol. 9. no. 1. (2007), p. 8.
[127] Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" p. 8.
[128] Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky?" p. 8.

Let us turn now to the remaining part of the quotation, according to which the heterotopic mirror "introduces a divergent reflection in which 'Gothic' marks a discontinuity between political and aesthetic version of history." Again, even if we somehow relate this statement to Foucault's theory, an analogous assumption is absent from "Of Other Spaces." This means that, as above, we are dealing either with an extension of Foucault's basic theory triggered by a reading of the concept of Gothic, or with an absorption and adaptation of his theory by the contemporary theory of the Gothic. What is of special interest to us here is the way in which this statement is developed further on in Botting's article. What he means is basically that, in terms of aesthetic, the fascination with 'Gothic culture' results in a contestation of the neo-classical taste which leads straight to Romanticism – and its rejection of Gothic fiction. Thus, from the political standpoint, Gothic is 'inappropriate,' a nuisance, a threat, while, from the aestheticpoint of view, it is related to Romanticism, but considered as an illegitimate relative. A skeleton in the closet, a black sheep of the family.

Let us take a closer look at how this rhetoric is realised here. One more time we need to move from the level of Gothic fiction onto the level of Gothic as a broader concept related to the Gothic history – the Gothic revival. It is this revival, Botting notes after Lovejoy, that contributed to displacing beauty as the criterion for art and nature, and turning to the sublime instead. We read: "Romance is thoroughly entwined in the development of a non-classical aesthetic, involving a new sense of nature and, along with it, a positive notion of imagination and creative originality."[129] The Gothic romance (by which we mean that of the past, not the eighteenth-century one), on the one hand belongs to the debased social and political order, but on the other, in the works of Percy or Hurd, turns out to reveal Nature itself – free from neo-classical rules of composition and therefore unfit to be judged by them. This Nature is soon to become the domain of the Romantic poet, romance putting on new garments, acquiring new associations (imagination, creativity). In this process of change, Botting writes, "[i]n the heterotopic mirror of the past [...] a new, Gothic nature is discovered, a nature of sublimity and imagination that will be appropriated by romantic poets, while Gothic finds itself relegated to the popular and trashy realm of cheap, formulaic fiction."[130] And this is telling.

[129] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 11.
[130] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," pp. 11-12.

What is pinpointed here by Botting is the moment of passage from the Enlightenment to Romanticism. In the new aesthetic order, the old (feudal) romance starts to change its signification as constructed by the eighteenth century, and the concept of 'Gothic' becomes re-constructed, partly under the name of 'Nature,' and partly as 'Gothic' trashy fiction of sensationalism, so popular at the end of the eighteenth-century. Again, we are dealing with a heterochrony, and 'Gothic' as a conceptual locus changes its function accordingly: to put it in Botting's words, "it continues to have heterotopic effects" although now in relation to high culture.[131] This makes sense. But then, we cannot fail to notice how certain elements of the rhetoric of Gothic criticism are brought about in this analysis. To be precise, 'Gothic' – the conceptual locus – is shown to be related to Romanticism, preparing the ground for its advent, and its literary incarnation, Gothic fiction, is then denied its role in those preparations and marginalised as trash. The verbs 'appropriate,' 'relegate,' and in the next line also 'expel,' all signify a negative process in which one of the parties involved is deprived of it property, position or rights, partly or entirely.

What perhaps seems worth noticing in this context is the shifting of the term 'Gothic' in the article. First, 'Gothic' is a concept, the Gothic past, either rejected by the bourgeoisie or mythologized for the sake of the national spirit; next, Gothic fiction is a debased mode unfit for the reader; and then the interest in Gothic culture and the Gothic revival prepare the ground for the change of the neo-classical taste. 'Gothic' as a conceptual site is a larger concept that Gothic fiction – or the Gothic mode in poetry, prose and drama, and nowadays also cinema and video games, designated as 'the Gothic' – but finally, after its importance for aesthetic taste is stressed, it is reduced to fiction, popular literature. But if this is the case there nevertheless remains the question to what extent we may link Gothic fiction with 'Gothic' as a conceptual locus when it comes to preparing ground for Romanticism. Certainly – unquestionably – to some, but is it enough to state that Romantic poetry first appropriated what was 'Gothic's' invention and then got rid of its literary predecessor? Or perhaps the two had drawn from the same source and then went separate ways? The matter seems to be slightly more complicated than it might appear. In fact, these questions are related to the status of the Gothic as a discriminated, marginalised entity elevated by revealing its effaced allegiances; questions to which we will return in the following chapters.

[131] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 12.

Furthermore, if the heterotopic mirror provides a divergent reflection in which 'Gothic' is something different from a political point of view, and something different from the aesthetic one, then we should be able to show the way its political/social version develops. Yet, surprisingly, in the article, we limit ourselves to aesthetic considerations which confirm the already established conception of the Gothic. It is as if the political/social concept of 'Gothic' was not only separated from the aesthetic one but ceased to exist at a point, lost its political relevance; and the aesthetic quality 'Gothic' involved changed its name while leaving the body of texts out. Conversely, we could say that perhaps the political concept remained the same – but then, this does not seem correct.

Let us for a moment treat Foucault's notes as if they were a historical resource. As it was already mentioned, according to Foucault, the nineteenth century is preoccupied with the second principle of thermodynamics: themes of development and entropy, progress and degeneration, cycles and crises; with time as much in its past incarnation as with the fear of the future, all culminating at the *fin de siècle*.[132] Botting's description somehow loses this political/social historical slant, turning to the aesthetic dimension in order to return to the theme of the past in a distinct way. Perhaps this is because the 'thermodynamic' conception of time, marked politically and socially, is not adequate with regard to the eighteenth-century concept of the Gothic past and its function. But then should we exclude a body of nineteenth-century fiction considered as Gothic today from the Gothic domain as it seems to circulate around different issues? This is an interesting problem.

Time in Botting's article is predominantly history, and history as a Gothic theme becomes codified here as an everlasting play of past and present, in which the present tries to rewrite the past and the past keeps 'haunting' the present. Botting states: "Gothic remains ambivalent and heterotopic, reflecting the doubleness of the relationship between present and past. Indeed, Gothic continues to stand as a trope of the history of the present itself, a screen for the consumption and projection of the present onto a past at once distant and close by. The play of distance and proximity, rejection and return, telescopes history, both condensing the past into an object of idealised or negative speculation and unravelling and disarming the gaze of the present with its ambivalent

[132] To observe how Gothic fiction of the late nineteenth-century realises these themes, see e.g. Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, materialism and degeneration at the fin de siècle* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

return."[133] In this description, the feudal past is constructed by the eighteenth century as much as "disarms the gaze" of it; early nineteenth-century England becomes the repressive Gothic past for the early twentieth century fiction; and the *fin de siècle* is the Gothic setting for the late twentieth-century film.[134] This past is of course not 'Gothic' – but the same process seems to work in all of the cases, which ought to secure the continuity of the mode, whose proper place is pop: "Without the grandeur of a wild and natural past [...] Gothic finds itself as the mirror of a baser nature, a symptom of a voraciously consumeristic commercial culture in which pleasure, sensation and excitement come from the thrills of a darkly imagined counter-world, embracing the less avowable regions of psyche, family and society as well as the gloomy remoteness of past cultures and rugged landscapes."[135] And again, *counter*-world, *less avowable* regions of human sphere, a structure which *unravels* and *disarms* the present and its attempts to codify the past so that it does not '*haunt'* – all these signal the unstated Gothic subversion lurking in between the lines.

Finally, there is the issue of the application of the analytical tool, namely the Foucauldian concepts of heterotopia and the mirror. Let us have a look at the discussed quotation again. The first part, "[t]he heterotopic mirror not only distorts the proper perception of the relation between present and past," seems a characterising statement about heterotopia, but it may be an extension of Foucualt's theory as much as 'heterotopic' in it may simply represent a "sleight of hand," a substitution for 'Gothic.' The second part, "but introduces a divergent reflection in which 'Gothic' marks a discontinuity between political and aesthetic version of history," is much more problematic. The question is *what* heterotopia stands for here. Are we still dealing with a heterotopic mirror in the form of the Gothic (book), or in the form of 'Gothic' the conceptual locus? Or rather with a different heterotopic mirror which reflects the conceptual locus of the 'Gothic' which is not a heterotopia itself? Or is the heterotopic mirror of Gothic fiction reflecting 'Gothic' which is itself a mirror? If not, there should be something yet else which would take up the mirror function. But this seems unclear. Later on in the article, in one of the passages quoted above, there appears "a heterotopic mirror of the past" in which we discover "a new, Gothic nature" – but since the mirror, which is a heterotopia, must be some sort of site, what sort of site should we imagine

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[133] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 12.
[134] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 12.
[135] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly," p. 12.

the past to represent? Perhaps there is another conceptual locus at play. Or perhaps the logic of this statement does not flow from Foucault's remarks but becomes filtrated through the givens of the contemporary Gothic criticism.

The analysis carried out above by no means exploits the subject entirely. But then, the aim was not so much to provide a comprehensive account of the ways in which Foucault is used by the critics as it was to bring two things to our attention. Firstly, there is the fact that the voluminous oeuvre of Foucault proves at many various points at least potentially illuminating with regard to the Gothic. This is because Foucault's theorising of the eighteenth-century cultural, social and political shift in the Western societies, such as those of France or Britain, not only constitutes an interesting context for the emergence of Gothic fiction, but also invites closer theoretical analysis of the phenomenon. If we feel that 'the essence' of the Gothic is difficult to capture, this is because the mode emerges out of these considerations as, indeed, a conflicting site: it witnesses and reflects a major cultural shift – and participates in it – and thus becomes a repository of conflicting discourses that are at play at a given moment. This is the reason why Gothic fiction departs in so many divergent, often contradictory directions, follows discrete agendas – and this is what a Foucauldian reading, grounded as it is in constant engagement with historical considerations of the very needed point in time, makes evident.

But then, there is also the other thing, which in fact designates a problem area within Gothic criticism as much as it proves the differentiation paradigm to constitute a discursive formation as such. As we could see, in spite of its potential relevance, theory may still be read 'through the Gothic' – through the Gothic's own discursively established theory. Accidentally perhaps, while it proves to some extent attractive for the Gothic critic but, at the same time, by no means central to the field of Gothic studies, Foucault's poststructuralist thought illustrates this problem area well. While, in the above-discussed accounts, it becomes partially transplanted into the Gothic domain as illuminating, it is only utilised selectively and in accordance with pre-established criteria of relevance. As a result of, some of its implications and findings are in danger of getting lost somewhere between the lines, their visibility obscured by criticism's own discourse.

Chapter V
Gothic Definition(s): Shopping for the Gothic

As we have pointed out, the differentiation paradigm is a highly functional paradigm for representing the Gothic and its criticism. The following chapter, dealing with the question of the definition of Gothic fiction, poses that the assumed indefinability of the Gothic is similarly functional in the critical discourse of contemporary Gothic studies. This is because it allows for the coexistence of the most varied definitions of the Gothic, simultaneously securing the field from the rise of a dominating and exclusive 'grand narrative.' It appears that the indefinable, ungraspable nature of the Gothic should find little confirmation in reality; this is because, one way or another, the Gothic is constantly being defined. Consequently, the chapter discusses some of the available definitions, offered to us by both the contemporary criticism and the criticism from the period recognised within the differentiation paradigm as that of disparagement. In the course of our analysis, we will attempt to trace the influences on the adopted methodological standpoint observable in them, and show that all of them, in fact, organise the Gothic according to their own discursive framework. This will allows us to undo the distinction between the late twentieth century and later criticism, on which the differentiation paradigm's representation of the history of Gothic criticism is based. It will also allow us to show that the more Gothic critics strive to expand the domain of the Gothic, and prove further texts to belong to it, the more they 'spectralise' the possible boundaries of Gothic fiction. Finally, we will again see how presumptions about the Gothic as already conceptualised by criticism inform the reading of the Gothic by influencing the handling of the methodological tools.

5.1. Against Grand Narratives

It was stated in the previous chapter that situating Robert Miles' *Gothic Writing* with regard to the chronology of what might be called the history of Gothic criticism produces valuable results. To give one significant example, Miles' own 'discourse' (in its more immediate, non-Foucauldian sense) allows us to trace changes in the critical discourse on the Gothic. Miles asserts that the surge of criticism after Punter's *The Literature of Terror* engages itself in remedying the deficiencies of the earlier,

simplistic, psychoanalytical and Marxist readings.[1] Simultaneously, he himself takes yet one step further to avoid dehistoricizing his object of study. His premise is noticeably different from that of Suzanne Rintoul, mentioned in earlier chapters. Rintoul elaborates on the *apparent* lack of Gothic definition in works on the Gothic published more or less a decade after *Gothic Writing* was issued for the first time. When Miles speaks of defining the Gothic, he seems to be at a point of departure for (or at a peak of, depending how we view it) the process which resulted in consolidating the position Rintoul elaborates on. And this, indeed, provides us with a valuable perspective on the forming of the Gothic's paradigmatic indefinability.

Apart from that, *Gothic Writing* is valuable for yet another reason. It was published two years before Fred Botting's influential *Gothic*, early enough to be mentioned in it.[2] We could thus expect the two works to convey a similar perspective on the state of research. The changes in the field of literary criticism, those enabling the rise of serious interest in the marginalised forms such as Gothic fiction, which Botting speaks of, take place in the very same decade which is mentioned in Miles' own introduction. But the two critics apply two different rhetorics to reflect on the period. One of the advantages of Miles' account is that it tends to name moderately what the differentiation paradigm inscribes within a grander rhetoric of prejudice, resistance and successful overthrowing of limits. While Botting focuses on 'the enabling' of serious study by unsettling old boundaries, Miles, in the closing chapter of his book, openly names the paradigm which has been the driving force for his own as much as other more or less recent studies: the rejection of grand narratives.[3] By the way, this rejection is what we might see as explaining his insistence on the multiplicity of Gothic dialectics, in the introduction to *Gothic Writing*. Miles' "making room for difference"[4] corresponds directly to Botting's "challenging the hierarchies of literary value."[5] While Botting's hierarchies immediately call for power(/knowledge) relations, Miles' moving away from simple histories, simplistic readings and quests for deep structures in favour of more adequate (considering the complexity of the Gothic) theoretically informed readings seems strangely almost un-Foucauldian.

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[1] Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 2.
[2] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 19-20.
[3] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 199.
[4] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 199.
[5] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 17.

We could say that both critics are influenced by the contemporary discourse, and, arguably, we would be right. But what is significant here is the fact that Miles' assertion of, and conformity with, the establishment consensus that grand narratives are to be avoided is to be seen as admitting the foundation of the differentiation paradigm's unwillingness to define. Grand narratives limit and exclude, which is an observation that could be well read along Botting's lines. For Miles himself, avoiding such narratives seems to be, in the first place, a matter of doing justice to the multiplicity of the Gothic: a multiplicity which must, as it should seem to us, stem from the fact that the Gothic writing is crossed by discourse. And while we could observe that he nevertheless finds no difficulty in devising a workable definition for the carnivalesque mode he envisions the Gothic to represent, we cannot easily assert that his definition has a fully totalising or exclusive effect, at least considering the methodological premises he adopts. This becomes immediately visible in his justification for, as he views it, important omissions of canonical Gothic texts in his study: "No single dialectic includes all Gothic writing, and no single genealogy: there are only supplementary readings."[6] Such an assumption immediately undoes totality. With this statement, what is opened is an immediate possibility of other genealogies and other axiomatically historical discursive inflections to be traced, intertwined in the fabric of what we take to represent the Gothic.

Rintoul, as it was stated above, departs from a different point. She no longer writes about avoiding grand narratives, or liberating oneself. Instead, she would rather seem to advocate guarding the Gothic against fixing its boundaries and limiting its liberty, which, in spite of her final call for a critical self-scrutiny that would fill in a significant gap in the field, is properly paradigmatic. This can be seen in her own approach, which is to favour no approach: "Clearly, studying the Gothic has no *best* approach. While this review has attempted to discuss some of the benefits and pitfalls of particular approaches, I am not prepared to suggest that either the survey method or focused study method of reading the genre ought to be considered superior to the other."[7] Although each of the texts she analyses does, as she states, define the Gothic, in one way or another, what seems to be the greatest achievement of the field is the equality of approaches.

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[6] Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 9.
[7] Suzanne Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties: Struggling with a Definition," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 17, no. 4 (July 2005), p. 709.

Not surprisingly, indefinability, though risky at times and generally frustrating, is established in the review article as clearly valuable. Rintoul focuses on the assumption, based upon her observations, that Gothic critics *compete* to represent the genre (for she still views the Gothic as a genre, even if this might be considered somewhat striking), as "fragmented and disjoined,"[8] enacting the very same process of dialogue which actually made Gothic fiction so versatile and difficult to pinpoint. This is a perfectly just observation, but for Rintoul the situation proves problematic only where there is an attempt, on the part of the critic, to use the indefinability of the Gothic as a cover for imposing some sort of undesirable limits. According to her, such is, to a significant extent, the case with *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold Hogle. Analysing that work, Rintoul comes to the conclusion that, in spite of its insistence on the instability of Gothic fiction's boundaries, the collection paradoxically relies on the canon and chosen patterns of selection when it comes to Gothic texts and themes. This results e.g. in the exclusion of feminist and related readings from the scope of the book. As she states, "Hogle favours a canonical approach, and from this approach one can glean that certain ages and nations are afforded more legitimacy than others in terms of Gothic writing."[9] On the other hand, the more diffused the understanding of the Gothic on the side of the authors and editors, and the broader the spectrum of possible contexts and contents as presented to the students, the better. We could sum up that Rintoul's perspective is a direct 'product' of the process consciously engaged in by Miles, and rhetorically elevated by Botting.

There is little room devoted to the consideration of how the drive for indefinability could be situated historically in Rintoul's article. The reader is, instead, reminded of the explanatory mantra, characteristic to the late twentieth-century criticism, that the Gothic itself emphasises the unsettling of boundaries, which Rintoul seems to take for granted. There is also a brief discussion of Miles himself, whom she quotes as "lamenting"[10] the lack of attempts at grasping the multifarious dialectics shaping the Gothic. What is,

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[8] Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties," p. 702.
[9] Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties," p. 704.
[10] Rintoul, "Gothic Anxieties," p. 702. It is perhaps worth stressing at this point that when Rintoul assumes that Miles seems to conflate dialectics which shaped the Gothic with psychoanalysis, Marxist and feminism, she herself appears to 'overintepret' his statement from *Gothic Writing*. Miles' insistence on the dehistoricising effect these theories may have on a Gothic text clearly excludes the position that they could shape the Gothic in any way, except in the process of re-reading. What is, however, disclosed through Rintoul's picking up the trait of possible conflation of Gothic dialectics and cultural theories, must be the kind of practice (of the hermeneutic circle) met in the field of Gothic studies, namely reading Gothic fiction as if it embodied the dialectics used to scrutinise it.

however, discussed at some length are the ways in which the critics benefit, and therefore themselves contribute to, the lack of Gothic definition. Rintoul finds less fault with the remaining books she analyses. They either succeed in rendering the sense of the multifariousness of the Gothic in their attempt at a general but simultaneously disjunctive representation of the field, or focus strictly on chosen works and themes, providing rich contexts as well as bringing to one's attention texts and forms which fall outside the Gothic canon. Subversion is visibly favoured here (for the lack of the works' pointing to it is lamented on a few occasions); inability to define the Gothic is seen as productive. Although each work defines the Gothic to some extent, none advocates itself as containing it thoroughly, which allows the advent of various modes of interpretation, and the diminishment of the chances for exclusion.

Rintoul does finally raise the question about the critic's role in defining the genre. But while this indeed signals an understanding of the critic as actively involved in shaping his/her object of study, the effect of carrying out such a role seems to be noticed only in the case when the emergence of a new grand narrative becomes possible. In other cases, it is only minor infringements of the secured multifariousness and instability of the Gothic, omissions of marginal or subversive themes and texts, that rise the author's doubts. However, one must admit that such an egalitarian approach to the issue of definition does pose a serious problem, one that goes beyond the framework of the differentiation paradigm, and one which must manifest itself in the long run. Namely, if all the approaches are equal, at what point does one lose the hold of the widest possible perspective on the subject, for it changes into an incomprehensible assembly of discordant readings and themes?

This might seem a rhetorical question, but what is actually at stake here is the perspective we adopt. Considering a doubt such as the one stated in the previous paragraph while bearing in mind Fish's criterion of what is acceptable in academia with regard to interpretation, we may assume that a situation in which one ultimately loses the hold is impossible, at least for those versed in the contemporary Gothic studies. There is always some key to the accepted way of reading, some underlying assumption as to what is supposed to be 'done.' For this very reason, there must also be an order of equal readings, mutually exclusive though they may be, even if it is not what we might expect it to be – even if, as Foucault tells us, this order is not immediately visible in the field as such. It is here that the real problem resides. What is the order – the key to

‘understanding’ the Gothic – that we are looking for? And does it truly serve to illuminate Gothic fiction?

Miles makes us alert to what underlies the supposed indefinability of the Gothic, shedding light on the moment from which the differentiation paradigm gains an impetus. Rintoul’s article may serve well to illuminate the contemporary understanding of what is to be ‘done’ in the field of Gothic criticism. Bearing this in mind, we shall nonetheless undertake to answer the call she voices for the scrutiny of the ways in which Gothic criticism defines its own field. In this way, we hope to trace some discursive inflections of critical accounts, and to be able to analyse the manner in which the contemporary approach to the definition of the Gothic turns out to be functional in the critical discourse.

As Rintoul’s remarks make us aware, there is a wealth of available definitions of the Gothic. This should not come as a surprise – as she notices, if critical accounts do contribute to the definition either by indicating how the Gothic can be read, or simply by emphasising one chosen aspect of it, each and every critical text should tell us something (which is, in fact, a truism). Rintoul distinguishes between two structural camps which undertake to define the Gothic, one focusing on providing a general understanding of the genre, the other on chosen works and themes.[11] All the four studies she discusses represent one of the camps. We, however, shall approach the issue from another angle by scrutinising studies which overtly undertake to define Gothic fiction. This will entail delving more deeply into the period of Gothic studies to which *Gothic Writing* belongs, the 1980s and 1990s, the period which seems to have established the indefinability of the Gothic in the course of trying to structure a definition that might describe it most accurately. As we shall attempt to show, this ‘defining of the indefinability’ already discloses the functional dimension of the ‘spectralising’ of the Gothic definition, the dimension which is then clearly visible in Rintoul as much as in other ‘late’ criticism. Failing to be captured by the allure of the Gothic metaphor, however, we shall theorise this functionality using Eugenia C. DeLamotte’s concept of the shopping-list definition. This results from the fact that surveying late twentieth-century Gothic criticism – and much of its twenty-first century continuations as well – one has a hardly resistible impression that what it does with texts is ‘shopping for the Gothic’ in a manner truly similar to that of a certain mock-Gothic heroine, Cherubina.

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[11] See Rintoul, “Gothic Anxieties,” p. 702.

5.2. The Borderline Undone: J. M. S. Tompkins and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

As Miles' states, the drive towards avoiding the grand narratives is noticeable in the general practice of critics in the 1980s. We shall begin with an early case, mentioned by Miles as well, and labelled by him as working against the shallowness of mid-century psychological readings, namely Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. At the same time, we will attempt to show that reading Sedgwick against an example of an early Gothic scholar undoes one aspect of the basic distinction at the foundation of the differentiation paradigm, that is its sharp separation from the earlier scholarship. J. M. S. Tompkins is chosen here deliberately instead of a representative of the mid-century generation of critics, such as Masao Miyoshi, whose premises Sedgwick wishes to undercut, as her study is a conveniently distanced one, both in time and as far as the perspective it adopts is concerned. If the differentiation paradigm maintains that the earlier criticism worked to limit the understanding of the Gothic and contain its cultural powers within a safely constrained confine, the following analysis is aimed at showing how both earlier and late twentieth-century critics construe the Gothic, working each from within their own adopted discourse. As a result, in each case, the Gothic can emerge as functional in relation to a wider critical paradigm. Seen in this light, the borderline studies enumerated by the differentiation paradigm as enabling the shape taken by the contemporary criticism in terms of an intellectual breakthrough – and progress – can be discussed as fulfilling their function in a discursive shift.

Since Gothic fiction is so strongly associated with 'the past,' let us for a brief moment succumb to the temptation of the Gothic metaphor and begin with the *past* of the Gothic criticism. In *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800*, first published 1932, J. M. S. Tompkins does not seem to have any significant problems with defining 'the Gothic romance,' which she does by means of listing and then elaborating on what she considers to be the exemplary members of the genre. Her prime examples are Radcliffe and Lewis, conveniently juxtaposed to illustrate the differences between the English and the German vein in the romances of the late eighteenth century. Of these two, quite predictably, Radcliffe is favoured, which can be felt at least if we consider the room

offered for the consideration of her novels.[12] Both authors are, however, seen as descendants of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* – which, nonetheless, is discussed in a separate chapter under the heading of the historical novel. There are other names mentioned, either as representing the genre or in some way related to it – and among these, there appear e.g. Reeve, Smollet, Lee, Roche, Smith, Godwin and Drake, as one might expect. Also, there are listed and discussed the most pervasive themes, places and characters, and the list goes, more or less, as follows: castle, decay, convent, imprisonment, forbidden love, the Inquisition, conspiracies and secret societies, the fantastic and mystery, hermits and monks, the rebel, the supernatural (also explained), vengeful ghosts, witchcraft, as well as the palpable influence of the sentimental novel, scattered and reassembled families, parental tyranny, and the persecuted heroine. There are also listed some themes which, though making an appearance, do not fit as closely as the remaining ones the paradigm according to which Tompkins perceives the genre: these are gypsies and slavery, "on which no romantic light has yet fallen."[13]

As this final quotation makes clear, Tompkins reads the Gothic romance as the eighteenth-century embodiment of the "notion of the romantic."[14] While she relates the information on the contemporary status of Radcliffe in the field of literary studies, she point out that "[m]ore and more one sees in her the focus of all the romantic tendencies"[15]: Radcliffe is to be seen as "unashamedly romantic,"[16] rather than didactic, "the first poetess of romantic fiction."[17] Accordingly, the themes discussed by her, putting the aforementioned exceptions aside, are all marked with the romantic spirit and its perception of the world. Decay is "part of every romantic spell,"[18] the prison becomes symbolic, the style is emotional, tyranny and guilt, ghastly and intolerable in

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[12] It can also be felt much more perceptibly if we consider, for example, the following passage, which openly aims at elevating the English romance above the German imports: "Beside *The Old English Baron* or *The Romance of the Forest* the German *Ritter-, Räuber- und Schauerromane* are very crude products. The ideal elements of the English romances are wholly lacking; terror is coarsely material and love a theme for jocularity, while the delicacy, dignity and moral scrupulousness of Mrs. Radcliffe's methods are replaced by a heavy-handed grotesqueness, a strained emotionalism and violent assaults on the nerves. […] German terror is frequently hideous […] and this violence is met by a stolidity on the part of the characters, quite different from the English heroine's trembling fortitude." J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800* (London: Methuen & Co LTD, 1969), p. 245.
[13] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 295.
[14] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 247.
[15] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 248.
[16] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 248.
[17] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 264.
[18] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 267.

themselves, become elevated by "the romantic mood" which reshapes them for its own purpose.[19]

Apart from that, Tompkins also views the Gothic in terms of its obvious contemporaneousness as opposed to the archaisms of the feudal past. This emerges for instance when she considers the theme of the decaying castle as combining not only the image of tyranny and melancholy but also "a gentle thrill of complacency."[20] While she recognises this complacency not to be explicit in Gothic works as such, and "for obvious reasons," she nonetheless views the Gothic representation of the feudal abode as partaking in the perception of the ruin of a castle as indicative of progress and stability when it comes to the government, civilisation, individual safety and property.[21] Similarly, she classifies the Gothic protagonists as "projections of eighteenth-century ideals," and while she points to Gothic anachronisms, she nonetheless perceives them as resulting from the demands of *taste* preferring "modern elegance" to historical accuracy.[22]

If we adopted a limited perspective on her representation of the Gothic, we could conclude that Tompkins represents an early twentieth-century version of Eugenia DeLamotte's shopping-list approach towards the definition of the Gothic. That would, in fact, comply nicely with DeLamotte's periodization of Gothic criticism as characterised by the shopping-list approach until the 1960s.[23] DeLamotte describes the approach, based on listing conventions, as originating in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gothic parodies, which, as she sees it, for the first time grouped together a number of novels recognised as Gothic today. What is characteristic of the approach is its reliance on stock characters and themes, or "similarities," which become embodied by a shopping list that the protagonist of Eaton Stannard Barret's *The Heroine*, Cherubina, draws in order to properly equip a newly acquired Gothic ruin.[24] The list goes as follows: "'painted glass enriched with armorial bearings,' 'pennons and flags stained with the best old blood;— Feudal if possible,' 'antique tapestry sufficient to furnish one entire wing,' 'an old lute, or lyre, or harp,' 'a bell for the portal,' black

[19] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 290.
[20] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 267.
[21] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 267-68.
[22] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 295.
[23] Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5.
[24] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 3.

hangings and curtains, and a velvet pall."[25] As DeLamotte observes, while it enables critics to identify the Gothic in a text, the shopping-list approach passes over the implications hidden behind the use of Gothic traces.[26] We could paraphrase this statement by saying that while the approach is useful when it comes to placing a Gothic label on a text or an author (the practice criticised severely by Warwick[27]), it does not provide one with the satisfactory explanation of a possible impact of this label on meaning.

DeLamotte enumerates Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's study as one of the works which launched a new approach to the Gothic. She describes this approach as based on trying to determine "what fear, what longing, what faith, or what despair" was to be conveyed by the application of "the tired vocabulary of Gothicism."[28] In Sedgwick's own chapter on the definition of the Gothic in *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (first published 1980), we read:

> You know the important features of its *mise en scene*: an oppressive ruin, a wild landscape, a Catholic or feudal society […] the trembling sensitivity of the heroine and the impetuosity of her lover […] the tyrannical older man with the piercing glance who is going to imprison and try to rape or murder them […] the novel's form: it is likely to be discontinuous and involuted, perhaps incorporating tales within tales, changes of narrators, […] found manuscripts or interpolated histories […] priesthood and monastic institutions; sleeplike and deathlike states; subterranean spaces and *live burial*; *doubles*; the discovery of obscured family ties; affinities between narrative and pictorial art; possibilities of incest; unnatural echoes or silences, unintelligible writings, and *the unspeakable*; garrulous retainers; the poisonous effect of guilt and shame; [etc].[29]

The description of what Sedgwick *ironically* labels as the pervasive conventions and predictable contents[30] of the Gothic seems nowadays so clichéd that one might wonder what is the purpose of quoting it yet again, especially that a similar list has already appeared in this chapter. However, as we shall see, the use of the list by Sedgwick is

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[25] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 3.
[26] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 5.
[27] Aleksandra Warwick, "Feeling Gothicky? *Gothic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2007), p. 6.
[28] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 5.
[29] Eve Kosofsky Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York and London: Methuen, 1986), p. 9. Emphasis mine. As Sedgwick informs us in Acknowledgements, the first publication of the book was in the form of , a volume of Arno Press collection "Gothic Studies and Dissertations," whose advisory editor was Davendra P. Varma.
[30] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 9.

both rhetorical and vital for her own representation of the Gothic. She does not resign from enumerating conventions, but rather does so providing them with the meaning DeLamotte found lacking in the accounts written up to the 1960s. However, quite paradoxically, if we put DeLamotte aside and return to Tompkins, refusing to treat her representation of the Gothic as a shopping list, we shall see that the two lists, one by Tompkins, the other one by Sedgwick, are both dis- and similar, if closely inspected. Above all, their dissimilarity need not be accounted for in terms of DeLamotte's periodization, and this periodization is vividly undercut by their similarity. What is the most important thing is the fact that Tompkins' list lacks some of the elements mentioned by Sedgwick. This seems trivial to mention, but not because, as Sedgwick seems to state in a somewhat ironic manner, the list of Gothic conventions she gives is a summary of the lists found in "every work on the Gothic novel."[31]

Alongside others, this marginal remark, added in a footnote, discloses the 'novelty' of the standpoint that Sedgwick takes. She clearly refutes the simplistic thinking of the Gothic as a predictable set of conventions, which soon becomes codified as represented best by Railo and Summers. And then, she also attempts to distance her own study from the perspective taken by the mid-century predecessors. This is done most effectively, so with regard to the dismissive attitude taken by the early criticism, as the mid-century depth psychology approach, both when it comes to the arguments she presents and the rhetoric she uses. An example of this rhetoric can be found in her introduction, where her thesis 'sandwiches' the considerations of the topic: she begins by evoking a commonplace statement that Gothic is not a useful critical category, and ends with reversing it completely as a conclusion to the observations she makes in between. But above all, this rhetoric may also be traced in the very quotation above. Seemingly, it does not differ that much from DeLamotte's typical shopping list, but in fact it anticipates Sedgwick's own definition of the Gothic, based on the two emphasised central themes – live burial and the unspeakable. It also can be seen as disclosing, to an extent, her vantage point and the basis for the analyses to come – the Freudian twist. The double, as the contemporary theory of Gothic fiction teaches us, is always a suspiciously biased notion. Moreover, if we consider the 'conventions' enumerated in the proximity of the emphasised ones, it turns out that what is placed between "priesthood and monastic institutions," representing the Gothic's anti-Catholicism, the

[31] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 35, footnote no. 1.

aesthetic considerations in the form of "pictorial art" and its influences on writing, and the simply humorous "garrulous retainers," reminiscent of Shakespeare, are themes immensely attractive to the psychoanalysts. What is the case here is clearly an attempt at describing Gothic conventions from a 'meaningful' perspective.

Sedgwick example of a shopping list is thus not a simple evocation of an old cliché to be done away with. It serves its own purpose within the rhetoric adopted early in the study. Gothic conventions may seem to be narrow, but their narrowness is mitigated by "the range of tone and focus,"[32] as much as "intent"[33] displayed by works which follow the formula. Above all, they allow Sedgwick to ask her working questions: "why are these conventions found *together* in the gothic novel? Why did it take so long for one and another of the conventions to become disentangled from the formula and available to other novelistic traditions?"[34] But then, despite the fact that it is visibly different from Sedgwick's, Tompkins list is also not a 'simple' list of conventions, similar to Cherubina's list of Gothic items.

If Sedgwick's list includes what is of immediate interest to her, the same can be said of Tompkins.' Tompkins' list is not a mere list of 'empty conventions,' a formula limited to requisites and themes: in her definition of the Gothic romance, these become filled with *romantic* signification. Hers is also the definition of the Gothic as 'modern' in the sense that it is rooted 'here and now' in the late eighteenth-century immediate English context, not 'back then,' in the Middle Ages, superstition and folklore, as the German Gothic. She writes: "The German *Ritterroman*, however, is often susceptible of political meaning; not only is its anti-clericalism more virulent than the picturesque iniquities evolved by English authors, but it is strongly marked by idealism of the feudal past and the Holy Roman Empire."[35] The 'politics' of *Schauerroman* is here clearly seen as divergent from the politics of eighteenth-century more moderate romance, the 'German' context is not the 'English' one.

These two perspectives, of tracing the romantic mood and simultaneously pinpointing the modern inflections of the Gothic, do clash at a point. We may, for example, find it surprising that Tompkins praises Radcliffe's novels simultaneously for not being didactic and for complying with the demands of probability and the

[32] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 10.
[33] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 11.
[34] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 11.
[35] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 244.

expectations of the critics, anxious about the misconduct of youthful readership.[36] The failure to see the connection here must, at least partly, result from the overall romantic paradigm adopted as a means of elevating Radcliffe to literary prominence. The romantic mood, organised around passion has little room for the novel's tedious teachings and equating the Gothic with the romantic automatically annuls novelistic inflections. Such a critical step, all in all, proves not that different from Punter's attempts at validating the Gothic through the Romantic credentials.

There is most probably more than meets the eye in Tompkins' emphasis on two strands of the Gothic romance, insistence on the Gothic's romantic nature and the ease with which she views the Gothic as introducing eighteenth-century ideal characters. Yet even going only as far as we have until now, we may say that she construes the Gothic according to her own critical framework, the extra-textual context she operates in. This, inescapably, results in emphasising certain aspects of the object of her study at the cost of others. Her Gothic is the romantic Gothic. We could say she owns it, and if we assume she represents the critical discourse of her own period, it may become clear to us how it structures its own objects of study.

Considering one of the bedrocks of the differentiation paradigm, namely the oppressiveness of the former approaches, this should not come as striking. However, the fact that Tompkins construes her object of study according to a critical paradigm is paradoxically what makes her both different from and similar to Sedgwick. Sedgwick is enumerated by Botting, after Punter, as one of the key contributors to the todays' Gothic studies. Botting introduces her in the following way: "Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's book on Gothic conventions discloses the textuality of the genre, the play of narrative surfaces and metaphors that undermine assumptions of depth and hidden meaning."[37] Her approach, presented thus, is to be seen as markedly different from what proceeded it; as contesting the traditional notions and patterns. The opposition is, however, based on the recourse to one particular strand of criticism which directly triggers Sedgwick's response. She is not that markedly different from the earlier criticism when it comes to the certainty with which she delimits the premises from which she approaches the Gothic. And, as long this can be seen as representative of anything, we can also notice that while she is dissatisfied with the assumption that 'the original Gothic' and Victorian novels can be linked *only* on the basis of "their shared impetus towards the

[36] Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, p. 290.
[37] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 19.

pole of passion and away from that of reason,"[38] which is, be as it may, an awfully romantic impetus, she does not say it is a wrong basis, but only an insufficient one.

Quite similarly to Tompkins, Sedgwick relies on thematic regularities filled with signification dictated by an external paradigm. This paradigm is a psychoanalytical one, for references to Feud abound in critical moments of her analysis and play a decisive role when it comes to forming conclusions. But then, it is also a clearly structuralist one, for she strives to draw a governing structure according to which the Gothic conventions work. The conventions she is interested in are related to themes, or metaphors, such as the unspeakable or live burial, which are both explicitly used in the novels and "acted out" by them on different levels.[39] To give an example, the unspeakable is such a theme for it both belongs to the Gothic register and emerges at particular points of the plot (when a character cannot speak), or can be detected in the very structure of the narrative (which can prove fragmentary).[40] These themes, or conventions, are seen as representing subjects particularly interesting to the writers, and as congruent with one another; congruent in the sense that they can "mean" or be "about the same thing" or "encompass the same content."[41] Sedgwick assumes it is necessary to be careful not to reduce the Gothic to 'one centred' type of content, which she tries to escape by shifting her focus from one possible centre to another, and pointing to the variety of connections between themes instead of substituting them with one all-encompassing theme. In doing so, she may be seen as trying to avoid the 'grand narrative' such as that of Tompkins' romantic Gothic, which is a discursive and obviously biased product for it relies on the romantic as the key to understanding the Gothic. And, obviously, she is trying to undermine the prevailing dialectic of seeing the Gothic as arranged in accordance to a vertical axis of surface and depth psychological meaning; to open the possibility of meaning distributed over the Gothic material in a different manner. But simultaneously, the structures she adopts to change the limiting perception of the Gothic are in themselves limiting and appropriating. It is more than telling that she names the types of content she recognises as Gothic as the *phenomenological*, the *psychoanalytic* and the *structural*,[42] which, even if we treat it as merely metaphorical, still comes disturbingly

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[38] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 4.
[39] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 4.
[40] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic* Conventions, pp. 4-5.
[41] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 7.
[42] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 7.

close to what Tompkins does while she designates the Gothic content as *almost* always 'romantic.'

Sedgwick is well aware that the types of content she enumerates reflect three critical schools. She does not see it as a problem, though. She limits herself to modestly assert she hopes to achieve "a fairly careful eclecticism," so that centeredness does not take over the possibility of "mere contiguity."[43] Yet we might oppose that there should not be that much difference between 'structuring' the object by three different discourses and merely one discourse: in each case, the object emerges from within the paradigm used to account for it. Each time, some properties are given to the object at the cost of some others. Logically, the more discourses we 'apply' to the object – or the more discourses offer their own version of the object – the more distorted picture we ought to be bound to get.

If in the case of Tompkins one may be surprised by the way she passes over the possibility of didacticism in Radcliffe, in the case of Sedgwick one may be similarly struck, for example, by the way she handles the interpretation of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Sedgwick proposes, though "not definitely," to envision the novel as "a therapy, in the course of which Brontë extricates herself from the demand for a relationship of identity with her main character and becomes educated to the necessity for signs and representations."[44] Such a model, for her, explains the structure of the novel, granting it coherence on all levels. Here, psychoanalysis serves well the structuralist drive. But taking into consideration the way Sedgwick was introduced by Botting, and her own assumed orientation away from naïve psychologising,[45] it seems somewhat striking that in order to 'explain' the book – and to explain it as 'Gothic' – all in all, in spite of the intricacy of her overall insight, she finally makes Brontë lay down on the couch, as if she could not resist saying something about the author's psyche. This bizarrely remind us of Marie Bonaparte doing the same with Poe.

They key issue in question here is identity as a theme of *Wuthering Heights.* This theme becomes connected with the consideration of the unspeakable and doubleness of language as typically Gothic themes. For example, Sedgwick notices that Catherine fails to recognise herself by her face (the sign), which is interpreted as one of the arguments

[43] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 7.
[44] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 113.
[45] See: Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 141.

in favour of Cathrine's "denial of doubleness"[46] between language and herself, and her urge for directness and immediacy, the power of which language cannot grant her in spite of her wish. The way in which Catherine 'wants' her language to effect *real* power, over herself and others, or to express herself immediately and directly, is discussed at length. The consideration of Catherine's assertion that she is Heathcliff, or that Heathcliff is more her then she herself is, is also given much attention, either as an example of the manner in which Catherine wills language to almost magically transform reality, or in terms of unresolved "psychoanalytic siblingship."[47] Sedgwick does notice that Catherine never has an occasion to say 'I am Catherine,' but this comes as a marginal remark, for she is much more interested in how Heathcliff and Catherine shift, and whether the former can be discussed as a fantasy of the previous (in terms of Catherine's rejected doubleness, for Heathcliffe is both one with her and a dreadful other). What Sedgwick aims at is, first, to assert that Heathcliff, with all his indeterminacy, is "the novel's fantasy about its own character,"[48] and, finally, to arrive at her suggestion about the novel as a therapy for Brontë. Interestingly, she begins the chapter by quoting a passage from the book in which Catherine, the name, is juxtaposed with – respectively – Earnshaw, Heathcliff and Linton as possible surnames, but she is more interested in the consideration of the similarity between Lockwood's ghost adventure at Wuthering Heights and the function of dreams in what we could perhaps feel free to call the Gothic structure, rather than in the identity theme suggested by the exchange of surnames as Catherine's modifiers.[49]

It is interesting how Sedgwick's account oscillates around the possibility of Catherine being a spectral presence without noticing it. Catherine is, indeed, introduced for the first time as a ghost. In each and every case Sedgwick does not make the connection which almost forces itself on her reader: that Catherine's problem with language stems from the fact that she cannot express herself for she *is not*, or is only *spectral*. Reading Sedgwick, going through the quotation she provides, one realises that Catherine's identity is always 'borrowed.' Heathcliff, Earnshaw, Linton – all denote a different Catherine, and in each case, Catherine is defined by the surname. At the moment when the protagonist is left with *herself*, she perceives *herself* as a ghost, a haunting presence, the presence which has never been uttered or, at least, was not

[46] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 107.
[47] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 111.
[48] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 112.
[49] For the whole discussion of *Wuthering Heights*, see Sedgwick, pp. 97-118.

listened to (as when Nelly Dean refuses to treat Catherine's threats of starving herself seriously). What is more, her identity will remain unuttered, for Lockwood will not let *her* in, even at the cost of mutilating the ghost which *bleeds*, literally and brutally 'cutting if off' from existence.

Similarly as in the case of Tompkins, the question is why the critic does not make the connection. What is especially striking is the fact that this connection would combine well, at least potentially, with the remaining analysis, and might serve to establishes a somewhat sounder relationship between the author and her characters, one not necessarily based on investigating into Brontë's own internal life. We might risk to answer that drawing the connection would demand introducing another centre of attention, or structure, into the analysis, and this structure has not been defined by Sedgwick as inherently Gothic. For Sedgwick, the novel is ultimately classified as Gothic precisely for what she recognises to be the Gothic conventions it internalises. One of them is the theme of the unspeakable realised at various levels: Catherine's and Heatcliffe's use of language, Heathcliffe's indeterminacy, the novel's puzzling structure of events and narrators. The other, related, is doubleness: the lack of unity between the substance and the sign, the protagonists's state of being "massively blocked off from something to which it [i.e. the self] ought normally to have access,"[50] and the terribleness of the moment of potential unification[51] – of the ghost's entering of the world of language – which is banned from the novel, never realised, contained yet always lurking 'behind the window.'[52] Interestingly, in the light of those assumptions, Sedgwick admits that the latter part of the novel, dedicated to Cathy, Linton and Hareton, is not that Gothic[53] – and performs what might be seen as an act of explaining it away by building the Gothic interpretation of *Wuthering Heights* on the returning threat of the doubles (Catherine/Heathcliffe, Catherine/Emily). As a result, the Freudian twist (inviting the author to the coach) proves to be necessary to make a large portion of the text meaningful within the assigned structure, and stimulated by precisely the search for such a structure that would reflect the assumptions about the Gothic and fulfil itself on every level. Consequently, the analysis is bound to leave certain possible traits – or statements – out, finding them not that much valued as false, as simply inexistent. The

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[50] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 12.
[51] See: Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, e.g. p. 13.
[52] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 118.
[53] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 118.

definition of the Gothic illustrated by Sedgwick's reading of *Wuthering Heights*, in spite of the recourse to eclecticism, turns out to be discursive.

We could sum up by stating that the paradigm adopted by Sedgwick forces itself on her reading of a Victorian novel, just as the romantic paradigm forces itself upon Tompkins' Gothic romance. The attempts at applying depth psychology to the Gothic, and viewing the Gothic as a genre concentrated primarily on masculine protagonists and their internal struggles – the occupation of the mid-century critics – seen in the contexts of the analysis of both female critics, emerge as embodying only one more possible, more or less justifiable, but still limiting perspective on the Gothic. In all the cases, both on the side of what proceeded the contemporary Gothic criticism, and on the side of the border-case studies that the contemporary Gothic criticism wishes to embrace, the Gothic – the object – is structured by the dominant paradigm of the discourse – or set of discourses – which claims it. Thus, as the comparison of Tompkins and Sedgwick shows, the borderline which the differentiation paradigm draws to distinguish itself from earlier criticism can be undone, at least in one way.

As it was mentioned earlier in this part of the chapter, Sedgwick's account can serve as an example of turning away from 'grand narratives' which would 'fix' the Gothic. It aims at eclecticism, at showing how possible centres of attention within the Gothic interact and prove to be interconnected and coherent without naming the one which prevails and proves the core. At the same time, however, it ought to be noted that Sedgwick, as much as she works to liberate herself from the limits of the depth psychology approach, does not entirely preclude it; rather, she reinscribes it within her own spatial model – that of the self being cut off from what it should have a free access to – assimilating surface-depth axis but only as one possible way of reading the Gothic. As she puts it although her "model is not inconsistent with psychological interpretation, it is distinct and recognisable without it."[54] There is a particular reason for stressing this fact while discussing the 'spectralisation' of the Gothic definition.

Traditionally, we would expect the Gothic to have this one defining, graspable quality which makes it what it is. But Sedgwick performs a movement which at the same time expands the field she is interested in – her definition, or structure, is more capacious for it contains both what was already recognised as Gothic and yet opens itself to more – and makes its defining qualities less tangible (or fleshy). This is for the

[54] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 12.

reason that although there are three types of content, or meaning, inherent in the Gothic, the attention each of them is given is to constantly shift, without any of them being singled out. This is the very kind of approach that we recognise, though in an advanced form, in Rintoul.

And there is yet more to it. Just as Sedgwick speaks openly of the Gothic 'content' in terms of critical schools, each of which has a discursive potential to structure their objects, so she speaks openly of the aim of her re-spatialisation of the earlier understanding of the Gothic. As she states, by the way she redefines the Gothic conventions, she wishes to "make it easier for the reader of 'respectable' nineteenth-century novels to write 'Gothic' in the margin next to certain especially interesting passages, and to make that notation with a sense of linking specific elements in the passage with specific elements in the constellation of Gothic conventions."[55] What we ought to recognise here is the drive, characteristic of the differentiation paradigm, to change the literary status of the Gothic. This time, however, the critic does not provide the Gothic with the Romantic credentials (although *romantic* passion is not denied its place in the Gothic constellation, it is not sufficient to make the Gothic a respectable context for nineteenth-century 'serious' prose), but as if turns to "respectable" Victorian novel for support. The conclusions drawn from the union are as follows: The Gothic is not simply the late-eighteenth century Radcliffean romance. It lasts well into the next century. This is, obviously, an attempt at once again validating the Gothic. And – the final thing to be stressed – it too serves to further 'spectralise' the Gothic definition by envisioning a structure which 'works' for a much broader body of fiction, but is simultaneously less 'substantial.'

5.3. Going Shopping: The Decade after the Breakthrough

While Sedgwick is interested in extending the scope of Gothic fiction so that it can include the Victorian novel, David Punter wishes to extend it so that it comprises the eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century works. This obviously makes the domain he ventures into larger, and much more indiscriminate. The problem with Sedgwick's structure is that it passes over what it cannot assimilate while emphasising the conventions that can be applied outside the so called First Wave Gothic. Punter's theory

[55] Sedwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, p. 4.

of the Gothic faces this problem in a macro scale. What is more, while Sedgwick's discursive frame is strictly structural – her Gothic is a pattern of recurring formal features, carrying the particular meaning, estimated by recourse to e.g. Freud – Punter emphasises the Gothic as a reflection of the psychological state of the middle-class, immersed in Marxist history, which creates a much greater – and graver – potential for re-construction of the mode along the lines of two powerful twentieth-century discourses. Hence, discussing Punter after Sedgwick proves beneficial when it comes to illuminating how the Gothic definition is made less and less possible (and more and more a construct) while more and more new areas are included into the field of Gothic fiction, and theoretically-based tools applied.

This is, however, not the only reason for choosing to tackle Sedgwick first. There are two interesting points about Punter's 1980s definition of the Gothic. One of them is, of course, the fact that Punter himself is not that eager to repeat it twenty years later, in his companion, but rather turns to pointing out the difficulties that the Gothic poses as a category. Perhaps this is self-explanatory. The 2000 edition of the Blackwell companion already represents a diversified collection of vantage points and perspectives presented in 24 chapters, and its succeeding edition of 2012, whose introduction is an almost identical copy of the 2000 one, adds further twelve. The other thing is that none of the two later and strictly feminist studies, by DeLamotte and Williams, which will be discussed in this chapter, lists Punter's contribution as vital. At the same time, both undertake to define the Gothic by explicitly addressing the legacy left by earlier critics.

DeLamotte's example could be given immediately. According to her periodization of the Gothic criticism up to and after the 1960s, the approaches which initiate the beneficial changes are listed as follows:

> Works that ask such questions [i.e. questions about the meaning hidden behind Gothic conventions] have attempted, for example, to define a Gothic 'monomyth' and relate it to 'dark Romanticism' (Thompson); to explain 'the coherence of Gothic conventions' (Sedgwick) or the 'deep structures' of the genre (Levy); to trace, in later works, the development of its symbolic resources (Nelson); to place the Gothic in the context of women's psychology and social status (Doody, Fleenor, Gilbert and Gubar, Holland and Sherman, Kahane, Moers, Nichols, Ronald, Wolff); to trace a persistent Gothic tradition in England (Wilt), America (Fiedler, Ringe), or the twentieth-century South (Malin).[56]

[56] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 5.

Punter, as can be seen, is missing from the list; moreover, he is not named even once in the entire book, published 1990, although he appears in the bibliography. Both studies, however, utilise Sedgwick more or less directly, which reminds us that Gothic criticism is a divided field even if the differentiation paradigm strives to establish its unity – notably, by turning to indeterminacy as a golden mean.

Yet Punter does attempt at defining – theorising – the Gothic, and his attempt discloses the same inflection towards discursivity as the thematic conventions discussed by Sedgwick. What is more, it is vital that his theory-based definition self-consciously aspires to the status of a theory too, and this theory has indeed become highly influential in the field. We shall begin our scrutiny of the decade of the 1980s with a consideration of this theory. Then, however, since, as we can see, Punter is not always represented as the Father-figure presiding over the field, we shall shift our focus to have a look at an attempt at the Gothic definition organised along a different axis, namely George Haggerty's perspective on the Gothic form as a tale. The shift from the application of cultural theories to the consideration of form may appear somewhat out of place here. However, Haggerty's considerations do not abstain from quoting e.g. Kristeva, and referring to his colleagues' theory-based works. What is more, he asserts that his discussion of the Gothic form is meant to explain the immediacy with which psychological or political perspective is adopted for reading Gothic fiction. And finally, his proposed definition of the Gothic practically grants it indefinability, at least as far as thematic approaches are concerned. In the final section of this subchapter, we shall arrive at DeLamotte's own vision of the Gothic at the dawn of the next decade. With DeLamotte, we shall return to the thematic approach to defining the Gothic, but this time, as a result, we shall see how the Gothic may be constructed from a feminist perspective.

David Punter's "Towards a theory of the Gothic"

"Towards a theory of the Gothic," Punter's closing chapter, devoted to defining Gothic fiction, begins with a brief overview of the definitions made available by the 1980s, but concentrates on what Punter calls the "heart" of Gothic fiction.[57] Generally, he divides the defining criteria into two groups: the external and the internal ones.

[57] David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London and New York: Longman, 1980), p. 404.

Included into the first group are: the cultural/historical definition, which treats the Gothic as a response to eighteenth-century social and cultural context; the focus on narrative complexity; and the Gothic's propensity to draw freely from various literary traditions and genres.[58] All of these are found to be "subsidiary elements in the Gothic's general opposition to realist aesthetics," the criterion treated by Punter as the basis for "[defining] a unitary 'Gothic tradition.'"[59] As far as the second group is concerned, the heart of the Gothic is defined by three vital concepts, that is: paranoia, the barbaric and taboo. Paranoia is here linked to the reader's experience of disturbed reality while reading a Gothic novel; the barbaric is connected with the fear of reaching the limits of civilization; and taboo with working on the borderline of the acceptable.[60]

There are many points in this theory on the Gothic at which discursive inflections can be observed. However, from our perspective, it is the most beneficial to illuminate those at which Punter refers to the theme of history. We have chosen to treat the Gothic as always crossed by the contemporary discourses, to use Miles' phrase; to be always rooted in and to reflect on the prevailing discourses of given times, and hence to be always contemporaneous in the most literal sense. Consequently, what proves immediately important to us is, first of all, Punter's handling of the historical definition, and, second of all, the later part of his considerations, devoted to the internal group of criteria, whenever it deals with the historical aspect of the Gothic. This is for a simple reason. It seems that if we juxtapose Punter's understanding of the historical dimension of the Gothic with our own, what should be consequently illuminated is the way in which this dimension is actively reworked by Punter's discourse so that it suits the discourse's overall governing assumptions.

Initially, we could find it quite promising that Punter begins with a criterion that stresses the grounding of the Gothic in its immediate historical context. However, as soon as he discloses his understanding of this criterion, we notice that it is thoroughly distinct from the way we would understand the historical context. Like other external criteria, Punter acknowledges, the one of the historical-cultural relevance has been elaborated in reference to the First Wave Gothic and the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, he finds it relevant also with regard to later Gothic works.[61] The consistency he traces lies, however, not in the way these works reflect on their own

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[58] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 402-4.
[59] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 404.
[60] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 404-5.
[61] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 402-3.

historical-cultural contexts, even though that would be much in tune with his own premise that the vitality of a genre is a result of its engagement in the matters of social concern at a given time.[62] Instead, Punter focuses on the ways in which later works evoke the eighteenth-century Gothic as such, through utilising its stylistic or satirical conventions, archaism, or emphases on certain types of architecture and setting, which he sees as the proof of "the continuity of Gothic's central concerns."[63] These concerns, like Gothic conventions, are thus immediately identified as the common axis for more than a two-hundred-years-old body of fiction, and they are exemplified by Lytton's nineteenth-century fiction, or more precisely its "insistence on portraying codes of behaviour and honour which are not grounded in the value-system of the bourgeoisie."[64] Thus, the common axis for Gothic fiction is structured as that of the anti-bourgeois attitude.

We observe that although Punter provides himself with the basis for establishing contemporaneousness as the major characteristic of the Gothic, he thoroughly fails to notice it. Quite on the contrary, it seems that the definition which limits the Gothic to its eighteenth-century incarnation is somewhat strangely extended by him so that is can work for the later Gothic as well (original formal features and stock devices reappear). It should not, of course, come as a surprise that later writers draw from the broad spectrum of the 'original' Gothic styles, settings, or generally conventions. Yet we could account for such a continuous recourse to the stock conventions throughout the extensive body of the Gothic in a number of different ways, probably depending on the author or the particular text in consideration, instead of by emphasising 'the unity of concerns.' That is one thing.

Another thing is that, in Punter's case, the eighteenth century itself is understood in a particular and distinct way, as a moment of change whose consequences are still felt, and it is this understanding that allows it to become the core thread for continuity.[65] However, Punter strangely contradicts himself at this point – on the one hand, he assumes that the Gothic persists since it always tries to tackle the concerns of the day;

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[62] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 402.
[63] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 403.
[64] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 403.
[65] It is true that Punter asserts that "[t]he terrors of the original Gothic novel are *not* in any immediate sense our own fears" (Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 424.). This is, however, his prelude to the negation of 'contemporaneousness' as we would see it, namely the Gothic's responsiveness to shifting socio-cultural context. Punter wishes to establish a continuity that would run across the vast body of Gothic fiction up till the 1980s, and this continuity, as we shall see, is to lie in the troubled bourgeois psyche (p. 425).

on the other, he assumes these concerns have not changed for over two hundred years. All the more, these central concerns need not boil down to the anti-bourgeois attitude. In fact, there is much evidence to support the stance that they cannot. As we noticed earlier in this chapter while discussing Tompkins, whose account is also quoted by Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall as a decently historical one,[66] the early Gothic can be easily discussed in terms of its inherent 'modernity,' instead of in terms of turning against the bourgeois reality. As a result, we could hypothesise that what Punter chooses to perform while discussing the historical definition of the Gothic in order to make it account for an extensive body of texts are two moves. One goes up a timescale – conventions reappear from the beginning of the mode to the present day. The other one goes down that scale – it departs from a present day assumption to account for a body of texts which may have little to do with that assumption's immediate context.

Our hypothesis immediately gains some justification if we remember our considerations of the assumption of the Gothic's opposition towards realism, Enlightenment and Augustanism, carried out in the first chapter. It is useful to evoke these considerations now, for they illuminate how the axiom of the anti-Enlightenment attitude of the Gothic effectively serves to rework the mode's representation. Above all, it is also this very axiom, the perceived alliance of Gothic fiction and Romanticism, to be held responsible for Punter's conviction that the central concerns of the Gothic are continuous. As a matter of fact, all Gothic fiction is claimed to be anti-realist, according to his theory. We have already discussed how workable such an assumption is. Based on what Foucault would call a ruse, the assumption that the Gothic is Romantic becomes anachronistically projected on the texts of the past, as a result of which continuity can indeed be seen as traced back to the 'original' Gothic. It is another thing that this continuity is fake.

Before we move on to confirm our hypothesis, we may notice that it proves to be somewhat striking, in the light of the above considerations, that only two pages later Punter speaks of "the 'historical Gothic'"[67] as illustrating the fear of the past. From our own perspective, this again should sound promising. His mentioning of this category of Gothic fiction is connected with the introduction of the concept of the barbaric as the 'internal' feature of the mode. The example of the fear of the past is the fear of the

[66] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 216. Tompkins is here praised for the way in which she highlights the anti-Catholic satirical inflections of the Gothic.
[67] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 405.

aristocratic world, epitomised in the figure of the vampire. Simultaneously, the barbaric emerges in nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, engaged in the question of the degeneracy of human species, and twentieth-century one, which turns out to be anxious about the shape of humanity in the future.[68] As a result, the conclusion is drawn that the Gothic "brings us up against the boundaries of the civilised," emphasising the relativeness of conventions, ethics and codes of behaviour.[69] This could, again, position the Gothic as, nonetheless, contemporaneous.[70] In that case, when it comes to early historical Gothic, the immediate context could be deciphered as a 'modern' one, reinforcing the eighteenth-century codes through depicting a potential feudal threat, rather than anti-bourgeois. But then, Punter soon proves to view the question from a thoroughly different angle.

The fear of the past, mentioned early in the chapter, is later on illuminated through Marxist-based considerations of the historical moment at which the Gothic emerges. Punter views this moment as connected with the Industrial Revolution, which he discusses in terms of the falling down of the old social structure and order, and the emergence of a new system. This system is immediately classified as unstable, and, furthermore, it is meant to influence the shape of Gothic literature by making it display an *ambivalent* attitude towards the bygone era of feudalism.[71] The present middle-class fears, those connected with the instability of the new system, are here displaced and projected onto the ancient structures, which nonetheless retain some allure based on nostalgia for the lost order:

> The 'borderland' attitude of Gothic to the past is a compound of repulsion and attraction, fear of both the violence of the past and its power over the present, and at the same time longing for many of the qualities which that past possessed. In Gothic the middle class displaces the hidden violence of present social structures, conjures them up again as past, and falls promptly under their spell. […] The code of Gothic is thus not a simple one in which past is encoded in present and vice versa, but dialectical, past and present intertwined, each distorting each other with the sheer effort of coming to grips.[72]

[68] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 405.
[69] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 405.
[70] It seems enough to think about the rich context provided for the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic and the degeneracy theme by Kelly Hurley in her *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, materialism, and degeneration at the* fin de siècle (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[71] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 412-18.
[72] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 418.

As a result, the fear of the past is not simply the fear of feudalism as threatening the modern way of living, as it could be viewed, for example, if we consider Tompkin's position on the 'modernity' of the Gothic. It becomes the projection of the fear of the present. In a peculiar way, the bourgeoisie fears itself.

In this way, although the vantage point for Punter's considerations is again 'historically' promising, we remain on the level of the anti-bourgeois attitude, where the attitude is seen as inherent in the late eighteenth-century middle-class itself.[73] It is as if Gothic fiction was a type of literature aimed at disclosing the very (Freudian) discontents of the order that the bourgeoisie themselves raised: the relative status of their own civilisation and its borders. And this is exactly what Punter says: "Gothic enacts psychological and social dilemmas: in doing so, it both confronts the bourgeoisie with its limitations and offers it modes of imaginary transcendence, which is after all the dialectical role of most art."[74] Yet as soon as one refuses to perceive the Gothic in terms of the messed-up bourgeois psyche, one may start to wonder whether Punter is indeed accurate in his application of Marx to the explanation of the emergence of Gothic fiction. Marxist-based reading of the Gothic is a recurring theme in Gothic studies. It is especially its construction of the middle class that proves attractive to the critics: from the Marxist-Freudian perspective, the Gothic is a bourgeois literature which continues because it constitutes a space in which the 'other' in the bourgeois can be projected on the outside and denied. Such an interpretation initially seems to hold, but then there are points at which Punter appears to overestimate the explanatory power of Marx – or, to use Eco's terms, starts overinterpreting.

The first of such points seems to be connected with the explicit gap that Marx sees between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. If Gothic fiction is a bourgeois literature, read, for afforded, mainly by the middle-class – and this is Punter's argument meant to vindicate the Gothic as the literature of the educated – and if the middle-class thrives on capitalism, is it truly adequate to discuss the Gothic as "literature of alienation"[75] using Marx's notions of the alienation from the products of one's labour, the natural world, one's own humanity and, finally, oneself? Punter enumerates a number of texts which seem to confirm his train of thought; these are respectively: *Frankenstein*, *The Island of*

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[73] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 417.
[74] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 417. He also states that the fact "that Gothic can at one and the same time be categorised as a middle-class and an anti-middle-class-literature" is "the central dialectic of Gothic fiction" (p. 423).
[75] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 417.

Doctor Moreau and Kafka's "Metamorphosis"; *Titus Groan*; *The Monk*, *Turn of the Screw* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; *Peeping Tom*, *Repulsion* and *Cat People*.[76] At the first sight, all of these could be seen as tackling the issue of alienation. But if one begins to think about it (and about the rule of economy, also as discussed by Eco) is, for example, the alienation from the product of one's labour really meant to be the governing idea for Victor Frankenstein's monster-making and monster-rejection? It is a fact that both Wollstonecraft and Godwin, the perhaps most immediate influences on Shelley, were radicals, but it does not seem historically correct to reduce them to prophesying Marx. Of course, Punter does not make such a connection – but neither does he make any other, except for the assumption that the Gothic reflects the troubled bourgeois psyche in need of a mode of transcendence. As it seems, this conflicted psyche must be bourgeois, or else the possible motives for its being conflicted could possibly be innumerable (and in the case of Mary Shelley, would have to include at least a multi-layered birth trauma[77]).

It should seem that Marx is not that much occupied with the bourgeois psyche, torn between what it perpetuates and fears at the same time. Instead, he is focused strictly on the proletariat, the victims of the bourgeoisie's cold reasoning and calculations. As to the bourgeoisie, in the *Communist Manifesto* we read:

> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.[78]

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[76] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 417-18.

[77] For a discussion of the link between Shelley's motherhood and *Frankenstein*, see Ellen Moers, "Female Gothic," in *Gothic*, vol. 1, ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp.125- 131.

[78] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, trans. Samuel Moore with Frederick Engels (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), no pagination, accessed 15 May 2013, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/ communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007,

Taking into consideration different periodizations of the Industrial Revolution, one might pose the question whether early eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, for instance that of Walpole or Reeve, may indeed be seen as possible to be contextualised by the Industrial Revolution in the form discussed by Marx. Similarly, one could ask whether it makes much sense to discuss Ambrosio as alienated from his "'species-being.'"[79] Perhaps it makes, but judging by the quotation above, were it not for the psychological assumption that the Gothic enacts conflicting drives of the bourgeois – the assumption that the Gothic is anti-middle-class at heart – such a contextualisation might just as well reveal early Gothic fiction to be far removed from representing a sphere offering symbolical transcendence.

There seem to be two ways in which contemporary (new)historicists discuss class depiction in early Gothic novels. One of them is to assume that works of Walpole and Reeve depict a restoration of old aristocratic ties and rightful inheritance. According to James Watt, *The Old English Baron*, to give an example, redeems aristocracy for strictly patriotic reasons. Watt states: "Reeve accentuated the role of legitimacy and property in her plot, so as to purge *Otranto* of its frivolity and provide a reassuring moral and patriotic fable during a period of national crisis."[80] The other one is to, quite conversely, see the eighteenth-century 'ideals' as nonetheless promoted over the strictly feudal code of ownership and primogeniture. An illustration of this approach could be E.J. Clery's reading of the very same work. Recounting the plot of *The Old English Baron*, Clery notices that soon after the duel between sir Phillip and Lord Lovel, "the knights and barons remove their armour and […] roll up their shirt sleeves" to settle the conditions – the 'business' – of Edmund taking over the estate, which he is a rightful heir to, from Baron Fitz-Owen, who has made an investment in both the estate and Edmunds upbringing for over twenty years.[81] As she concludes, "[t]he assorted fifteenth century noblemen have the appetites and (idealised) instincts of eighteenth-century men of commerce."[82] Both of these readings, no matter which we find closer to the fact, undercut Punter's psychoanalytical-Marxist perspective.

What proves the weak point this time is the Freudian inflection of Punter's theory. If Watt is right, then we have a confirmation of nostalgia for the past order as displayed by

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[79] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 418.
[80] James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 49.
[81] E.J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 85.
[82] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 86.

the eighteenth-century text, but this nostalgia has less to do with resolving a conflict in the bourgeois psyche as it is evoked to be actively involved in shaping the perception of the nation. It is to be seen as strictly political, idealising the chosen elements of the past for the sake of constructing the present, and not escaping from it. On the other hand, if we choose to follow Clery, we will also find it difficult to perceive the Gothic as serving to resolve an internal psychological conflict. Instead, Gothic fiction will have to be seen as ostensibly pro-middle-class, and not in any way anti-bourgeois. Quite probably, Marxist criticism might have a lot to say about the Gothic text in question in both cases, as much as it might have plenty to say about later texts such as, to resort to the obvious, *Dracula*. However, without the psychoanalytical grounding, even if it would not reveal Gothic texts of various periods to be strikingly different, it would still produce quite different readings from those preferred by the contemporary Gothic criticism, which clearly takes the anti-bourgeois stance.[83]

At this point, one may seriously wonder whether it is not obvious that the common axis adopted by Punter precludes certain readings of particular Gothic texts, anachronistically imposing on them readings which confirm the continuity of concerns. The combined Freudian-Marxist perspective serves well Punter's theory of the Gothic, for it does provide a unified framework in accordance to which the Gothic might be discussed, supposedly as a whole. But in this theory Freud and Marx are used to reinforce each other. Without one, the other soon diverges from the preferred course, taking the act of defining the Gothic to the extremes.

Let us return to the initial pages of "Towards a theory" and the way they introduce the historical dimension of the Gothic, for this may allow us to better comprehend why Punter does not find it questionable that the bourgeoisie is meant to relish anti-bourgeois fiction. The historical aspect of the Gothic emerges in yet another way there, namely through the discussion of the distorted perception of the past, characteristic of Gothic fiction. As Punter states, "the Gothic revivalists of the eighteenth century could not properly 'see' the areas of history which they were trying to revive," yet not due to the fact that they failed in their attempts at 'seeing,' but because "the whole weight of the eighteenth-century synthesis lay against the possibility of perceiving the medieval world aright."[84] This is a third time when Punter seems to make a valuable observation,

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[83] See Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 221-226.
[84] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 406.

one which could be very much in tune with Baldick and Mighall's insistence on perceiving Gothic fiction as embodying "partisan and self-consciously Protestant approach to historical representation," based on deliberate reconfiguration of the past as a foil for the present.[85] However, quite predictably, he draws dissimilar conclusions. For him, the fact that Gothic fiction misrepresents history is a result of the mode's complex relation to realism. The Gothic's 'unreal' (which means improper, anachronistic) depiction of the past becomes connected with the fact that the mode enters into a debate with realists, utilising their insights but simultaneously focusing on symbolism and myth-making as the primary occupation of the writer.[86]

Again, while Punter makes a thoroughly justified observation, he fails to notice the opportunities it gives. It does not seem to be the case that misrepresentation of history, resulting from the impossibility of seeing history properly, was a recurring "problem"[87] faced by the Gothic – definitely not the early one. Nonetheless, the drive towards assuming the anti-realist perspective as the governing principle of the mode has an immediate impact on the way the statement on the impossibility of 'seeing properly' is taken account of. Recognising the "*Whiggish*" agenda is not a proposition to be considered in the discourse assumed by Punter.[88] In this discourse, the Gothic is striving to portray the world as not simply governed by cause-and-effect laws but rather, on many occasions, inexplicable, comprising "moments of terror and vision,"[89] and hence, as *more complete* and 'as it *really* is.'

Obviously, Gothic fiction is full of moments when reason is suspended and reverie takes the hold of both the protagonist and the reader. But again, there are different ways in which we could account for resorting to such a mechanism, and not all of them come down to the assumption that the Gothic writer wishes to show that realism is not the whole story. Yet in "Towards a theory," such an assumption seems to be 'the whole story.' Punter's account of the anti-realistic impulse of the Gothic finally ends up in

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[85] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 220.
[86] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 406.
[87] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 406. It seems to follow from Punter's account that it is realism to be blamed for the impossibility of seeing "the medieval world aright." It is as if, thanks to its 'superstitiousness' or 'supernaturalism', anti-realist 'mythical' or 'symbolic' properties, this medieval world had an access to something that is missing in realist novel: the wholeness of human experience of the world as not just rational but also, very often, irrational. Such as stance appears to be interestingly underpinned by the discourse of Romanticism. At the same time, if we view realism as serving to "simplify and distort," to "smooth out the moments of terror and vision" (p. 407) and the (Gothic's) reverie as that which is 'normally' swept under the carpet, we are just one step from the Freudian superego and id.
[88] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 219.
[89] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 407.

turning the Gothic into an entirely psychological domain: Gothic fiction becomes the embodiment of the state of "delirium […] the experience of being at the mercy of conflicting and unassimilable impressions,"[90] inherent in one's life. Realism, on the other hand, becomes a *post facto* reconstruction of "a single model," one obliterating "the intensity and immediacy of life."[91] This psychological domain is then translated into a strictly psychoanalytical one as Punter evokes Freud to support the view that life consists of the acts of mythologizing, both of ourselves and the world we live in.[92] Through such a use of a psychological model of the Gothic, Punters is free to claim it as 'realistic' as any realist novel.[93] This, perhaps, ought to be seen as an attempt at dismissing realism as the empowered discourse. Yet, simultaneously, it could be considered as a case of using the empowered discourse to pursue the causes of a 'minority': with its insistence on portraying human imagination as it is, the psycho-Gothic may be well established – even though it is not overtly proclaimed so, for Punter does not do that – as having more right to the status of 'being realist' than realism itself. Be as it may, Punter again uplifts the Gothic from debasement, this time not by aligning it with Romanticism, but by psychologising it so that it proves truly 'realistic.'

While Sedgwick proposes a structural framework of conventions to extend Gothic fiction into the Victorian period, and, consequently, passes over whatever falls beyond that framework, Punter abandons conventions for the sake of psychology and fixes the Gothic meaning as psychoanalytical. Even if he applies Marxism to historically contextualise the Gothic, such a contextualisation seems to hold for the whole body of Gothic texts only if we assume that the Gothic is an expression of the troubled bourgeois self. At the same time, such a contextualisation explains away a wealth of other available contexts. In Punter's account, Gothic fiction, designating a vast body of diverse texts, indeed "becomes a process of cultural self-analysis, and the images which it throws up become the dream-figures of a troubled social group.[94]" But it can be little more than that. The continuity of concerns breaks down as soon as we refuse to perceive Gothic fiction as a psychological projection of the ego torn between its thirst for progress and reason, and its experience of the actual reality as irrational. If we remove from this theory the anti-bourgeois attitude – the heart of the Gothic proper and the

[90] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 408.
[91] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 408
[92] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 408.
[93] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 408.
[94] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 425.

reason for its paranoia, barbarity and taboos – the intricate net of links between different texts up till the present day falls apart. If we refute the anti-realist attitude, we not only lose the common axis for the Gothic aesthetics, but also cannot strive to do the Gothic justice using the very discourse of realism against the (establishment criticism's) power which relies on this discourse. Stepping outside of this basic framework is possible only if we do not strive to undermine any of its cornerstones. If we do so, the structure crumbles down, and all that is left for certain are Gothic conventions, the in-famous Cherubina's shopping list.

George Haggerty's *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*

Punter's early approach to the definition/theory of the Gothic is, as can be clearly seen, more thematic than strictly formal. It is, however, not exactly the case that he devotes little space to the consideration of form. Punter begins his considerations with this area[95] and through his analysis of the Gothic's distorted perception of history, represented un-realistically, and its predilection for symbolism and myth-making, he arrives at the conclusion that Gothic fiction represents romance fiction, "no less 'real' than the realistic novel."[96] The mode's[97] formal eclecticism and, as Elisabeth Napier would have it, formal failure are later on explained in terms of psychoanalysis: human psyche is not unified, and hence, all the more unity is not a property of a Gothic text.[98] George Haggerty, who approaches the Gothic from a strictly formal angle in his *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, 1989, takes a different stance.

For Haggerty, the vantage point is the assumption that the Gothicist strives for formal innovation. Here, a crucial role is ascribed to Walpole as the founder of the genre, and the basic function of Gothic fiction becomes that of "[playing] out a formal drama."[99] This drama is explained in terms of the Gothic writer struggling to resolve the tension between the affective content of a work and formal limitations imposed on the novel, which ends in "a generic revolution."[100] According to Haggerty, Gothic fiction represents in the first place an affective form, which proposes a new perception and

[95] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 405.
[96] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 408.
[97] Actually, already Punter uses this notion with reference to the Gothic. Consider e.g. p. 406.
[98] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 410.
[99] George E. Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), p. 3.
[100] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 4.

representation of reality, different from that imposed by realism, and its initiator's aim is to be seen as "to change the concept of reality itself."[101] In a certain way, this can be read as similar to Punter's assumption that the Gothic strives to achieve a more complete representation of reality, one encompassing its irrational dimension. However, instead of ascribing the Gothic a 'psychoanalytical' dimension, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* emphasises Gothic fiction as aimed at "giving private experience external manifestation," simultaneously contextualising it through references to the eighteenth-century trends in aesthetics and the growing interest in imagination.[102]

Haggerty asserts that the fullest formal realisation of the Gothic's concerns is the tale form. This is the form which, as he sees it, suits best the need of raising emotional response, or, as he puts it, "[heightens] the emotional intelligibility" of the Gothic. This 'emotional intelligibility,' achieved in a form-specific way, is here seen to be the inherent and distinctive feature of the Gothic.[103] The main "subject" of the Gothic is assumed to be "the paradox between private experience and public fact."[104] Gothic conventions, which Haggerty identifies with those listed by Sedgwick, are referred to as "[having] the power to objectify subjective states of feeling […] they were developed as metaphorical vehicles, but their tenors remain inexpressible," as a result of which each reader may express them only 'privately.'[105] Hence, they are not accidental, and serve well the Gothic project.

In this account, Gothic fiction is clearly defined as a form which is above all meant to trigger a particular type of emotion. There arises, however, a problem connected with such a definition. Quite predictably, the affective nature of the Gothic is described by Haggerty as serving indeterminacy. As he states, "Gothic fiction […] cannot have specific meaning […] it is central to the nature of Gothic fiction that differing interpretations of the material will seem equally valid."[106] Haggerty himself does not perceive this as a problem, though. Instead, he points out that some critics tend to confuse interpretation with generic analysis, while other – including Punter and Paulson – tend to present their interpretations as final, and concludes that versatility of

[101] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 5.
[102] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, pp. 5-8.
[103] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, pp. 11-14.
[104] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 8.
[105] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 8.
[106] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 8.

interpretations is inherent in the Gothic form itself.[107] From the perspective we adopt, such an approach to the Gothic does, nonetheless, pose certain difficulties.

What may not immediately emerge as problematic is the fact that, in *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, the thematic approach to the Gothic is immediately established as secondary to the definition. Even though Haggerty assures he does not wish to dismiss the psychological and political readings of Gothic fiction, his approach still challenges the assumptions about the Gothic genre's "nature" which stem from such readings.[108] This indeed gives the impression that his analysis goes 'deeper,' explaining why more 'superficial' – devoted to interpretation – accounts are meant to make perfect sense even as they clearly contradict one another, but adding a necessary correction to their premises. Since the thematic approaches, those which assign the Gothic a particular meaning, have been so far shown as discourse-driven and passing over what they cannot assimilate within the discourse, Haggerty's approach should be seen as beneficial. Still, there is something in it which makes it 'final' as well.

Firstly, this can be seen on the rhetorical level of the critical text as such. Haggerty says, for instance, on Emily Brontë:

> the problems so widely noted in the Gothic novel are the result of a basic contradiction between novelistic structure and affective intention. Brontë was not only aware of such formal inconsistency in the Gothic novel, she seems to have structured her novel both to mirror these tensions and to demonstrate the formal means of their resolution. Even more effectively than *Frankenstein*, *Wuthering Heights* directly confronts the formal dilemma facing every Gothic novelist and works out with literary exactitude the means of resolving the conflict between Gothic intention and novel form.[109]

Of course, one might agree that Brontë was aware of the tension between the realistic mode of representation and the internal, to some extent even 'supernatural,' life of her main protagonist, and that she even structured her novel in the above-mentioned manner – just as one may assume there is enough historical evidence that Mary Shelley, another of the authors Haggery discusses, was well-read in Gothic novels.[110] Nevertheless, while reading Haggerty, we may have the impression that his own language – or

[107] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, pp. 9-10.
[108] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, pp. 8, 10.
[109] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 66.
[110] Haggerty provides the list of these novels on page 38.

discourse – now and then shifts from analysis to interpretation. Was Brontë aware, or do we only choose to read her, or actually her authorial intention so, judging from the textual evidence that we are left with? Clearly, what transpires from such passages as the one quoted above is the assumption that the Gothic novel is a transitory form between realistic novel and the Gothic tale, better suited for the expression of the private experience; a transitory form which faced the inadequacy of the available modes of representation to the affective load of the text. Such a premise makes perfect sense, as far as we may agree that the appearance of Walpole's first Gothic novel indeed shattered the newly established canons and opened possibilities which were soon to be utilised by later writers, and have been exploited by this day. What is, however, difficult to accept is the arising possibility of a critic making a non-qualified presumption that the Gothic text is first and foremost concerned with formal matters, and this alone validates all sorts of varying interpretations.

Establishing the affective agenda as primary for the Gothic is a tricky move. For one thing, Haggerty's consideration of, for example, the ways in which Mary Shelley's 'monster' is meant to be unnameable but at the same time invites all sorts of interpretations[111] is convincing, and perhaps one could even accept the premise that Shelley's primary aim was to scare her reader. Yet for another thing, there are novels deemed Gothic which are affective and, simultaneously, are visibly biased, philosophically or politically – take fiction by such radicals as Godwin and Wollstonecraft, for example – and their philosophical or political charge is impossible to be set aside, lest we wish to deliberately obscure it. At this point, it should be perhaps mentioned that Haggerty, similarly to Sedgwick, wants to extend the label 'Gothic' so that it may comprise later works,[112] including the American ones, but his choice of material seems to be limited, in each case, to *specific* examples of texts and authors, labelled as Gothic already by 1989. Of the First Wave Gothic writers, he discusses at some length only Walpole. Hence, while his definition of the Gothic seems to be inclusive, it nonetheless remains exclusive.

While the general methodological assumptions manifest themselves in the very language used in *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, and then also in the choice of texts, an inclination towards finality may also be noticed on a much more general level. The fact that Ludwig Wittgenstein and Wolfgang Iser meet in the very first sentence of the book,

[111] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 55.
[112] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 11.

to be joined by Hans Robert Jauss somewhere around the middle of the introduction, is obviously telling. Yet Haggerty's assumption that different interpretations will seem equally convincing for that is the nature of the Gothic form may be seen as encouraging misinterpretation at apparently no cost. The qualifying criterion that is missing here is again historical contextualisation, the recognition of the grounding of a Gothic work in its own contemporary discursive background. Haggerty sounds convincing as he states that "Gothic works only become fully intelligible when we understand the extent of their affective rationale,"[113] but it must be remembered that the affective rationale is, at least in many cases, an important but *not* the only criterion of intelligibility. Ann Radcliffe is a mistress of the Gothic affective form, but not all existing interpretations of her novels seem equally valid, nor even invited, if we refer them to the range of discourses available to the authoress. Some may be even considered simply out of place.

All in all, it seems unavoidable that a Gothic text should be structured so as to scare, thrill, perplex and enchant. Haggerty's claim that Gothic fiction takes a direction towards the tale form rather than a purely novelistic one seems perfectly sound for this very reason. However, just as the Gothic does not have a monopoly on spectres, it also does not have a monopoly on the affective character. While we may fully agree that for example both Shelley and Brontë artfully work to trigger specific emotional responses in their readers, this seems an unsatisfactory reason to immediately classify their works as Gothic. Of course, to some extent, novels by both authoresses employ typically Gothic conventions, but then many texts do, and for different reasons. As a result, we may agree with Sedgwick that we are able to add the comment "Gothic" on their margins, next to specific passages, but this does not change the fact that it is simultaneously possible to consider both novels from other angles. To add a side-remark, the issues – social, moral, etc. – raised in *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights*, as Haggerty aptly shows, are various, and in each case may be accounted for by the writer's immediate background rather than by a general thematic paradigm of Gothic fiction.

We are left, then, with a field which again seems to be broad and welcoming, for it extends the scope of the Gothic. The rhetoric of this field may, however, explain away what might undercut its openness, quite discursively. Needless to say, this field is also too welcoming when it comes to interpretation, for it has a potential to excuse theory-

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[113] Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, p. 13.

driven dehistoricising and re-shaping, the premises of Haggerty's approach having potentially the very same effect as the paradigmatic premise of the indefinability of the Gothic.

From the perspective of a discourse which works towards functional indeterminacy, the stance that the Gothic formally encourages conflicting responses should be more than desired. However, what comes together with it, at least potentially, is a permission for a perverted version of Cherubina's (already perverse) shopping for Gothic items. As we know, the mock-heroine does not find too much of 'true' Gothic stuff available for purchase. As a result, she has to do with substitutes, sometimes capable of giving way to only loose associations with 'Gothickness.'[114] Critics permitted to interpret in whatever way they wish, feeling excused by a too hastily assumed premise that the form itself grants them freedom, may be seen as performing a similar act: shopping for whatever meaning they could do with while pretending to be dealing with the 'true' Gothic, whatever it could be.

Eugenia C. DeLamotte's *Perils of the Night*

While Punter provides the Gothic with a theory that allows to include into its field a wide array of texts, Haggerty's Gothic fiction is a category seemingly unlimited, but in fact it imposes upon the texts labelled as Gothic quite specific limits. In *Perils of the Night*, 1990, Eugenia C. DeLamotte confronts the problem of limits as she tries to establish a non-final yet solidly texts-based thematic approach to the Gothic definition. Interestingly enough, she takes the feminist perspective, which allows her both to point out how the conception of the Gothic was re-constructed (almost discursively) by mid-century criticism (the same criticism from which Sedgwick distances herself) and, simultaneously, to re-construct that conception anew.

Having dismissed the early critical approach to definition, dealing with cataloguing conventions, DeLamotte delimits her own premises. She evokes Claudio Guillén's distinction between myth and genre, where myth may be seen as a recurring theme ("an essential situation or significant structure derived from the [works] themselves"[115]), and genre as a kind of matrix of possibilities to be realized ("an invitation to the actual

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[114] See DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 3.
[115] Guillén quoted in: DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 5.

writing of a work, on the basis of certain principles of composition"[116]), and brings about the notions of a first and a second circle, which utilize the original pattern, respectively, more thoroughly or only partially. To her, the recent (at that time) criticism of the Gothic is engaged in scrutinizing the myth, which results in an expansion of the field and may bring a potentially beneficial rethinking of the original generic pattern. At the same time, however, she notices that definitions devised on the basis of works which utilize the myth in a manner far distant from the original pattern may, in fact, have little reference to it.[117] The political implications of such a departure loom just behind the corner.

According to DeLamotte the "best described"[118] original pattern of the Gothic genre may be established on the basis of Maurice Lévy's *Le Roman "gothique" anglais, 1764—1824*. As she states, Lévy's discussion of Gothic works, written over the period of fifty years and sharing a given way of handling plot, setting, character and conventions, allows for 'pinpointing,' in a precise manner, the genre of the Gothic romance. Yet while neatly limiting "the innermost circle,"[119] this particular original pattern turns out to be immediately exclusive as far as its insistence on architecture as the central Gothic feature is concerned. DeLamotte does find it problematic and immediately moves on to extend the scope of the Gothic myth beyond Lévy's framework.

This is an interesting move. What DeLamotte immediately does seems to be noticing how different authors take the invitation to write but adjust the original pattern to their own needs and possibilities.[120] The example she gives is that of the American Gothic writers, Hawthorne and Brockden Brown, who exchange Gothic architecture for wilderness but retain other typically Gothic traits, utilizing them for their own ends. What is interesting here is the fact that the dialogic quality of the Gothic is automatically implied. One may think of James Watt's assertion that different Gothic writers pursue different aims (including the political ones) and hence Gothic fiction is so versatile. Yet DeLamotte bases her approach on Guillén, and later Alastair Fowler,

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[116] Guillén quoted in: DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 5-6.
[117] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 5-6. DeLamotte is also not entirely satisfied with the application of the notion of mode to what she perceives as the Gothic myth, as opposed to the notion of the genre, claiming that "more and clearer distinctions would often be useful in discussions of particular works," and illustrates how failing to distinguish between the genre and its myth only dilutes the former. See p. 294, footnote no. 3.
[118] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 6.
[119] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 6.
[120] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 6-8.

precisely to put this versatility in order. In the first place, she manages to isolate the 'basis pattern' for the Gothic not, as it was the case with Haggerty, by taking Walpole as a starting point, but by applying Fowler's distinction between three phases of the development of a genre.[121] From this perspective, the initial stage of the genre development 'naturally' entails versatility – as a result of "assembling the 'genre complex'"[122] – but ends in the emergence of the genre's formal epitome, that is Ann Radcliffe.

The fact that DeLamotte chooses Radcliffe as the "formal type"[123] has a multiplied effect. In the first place, thanks to the methodological stance taken, the patter she proposes for the Gothic myth is established as almost an 'objective' fact. DeLamotte does observe that, when it comes to the 'innermost circle' of the Gothic romance proper, the links between particular authors and texts tend to be vague. Consequently, "generalizations about the genre are often tacitly rooted in the works of one particular author and not necessarily transferable to those of another."[124] Assuming that Radcliffe represents the formal type is thus her way out of the predicament: 'the Great Enchantress' presents the reader with the finely developed pattern to be utilized by subsequent writers in their own way, while the preceding – or simultaneous – works are located in the position of a point of departure. Sound as it may seem, however, such an explanation does have the other side to it. In a way, whatever wider discourse the works pre-dating the formal type are emerged in, their own 'meaning' behind Gothic conventions is automatically relegated into the domain of 'the *less relevant*,' not to say '*less significant*.'

This becomes particularly visible as one realizes the discursive premise from which DeLamotte herself departs. One of the difficulties connected with defining the Gothic, as she notices, is the fact that there is a wealth of neglected and/or unavailable texts which also belong to the genre or myth yet are not taken into consideration by the critics, deciding on the canon.[125] This is a perfectly justified observation, which DeLamotte links with the consideration of the distinction between 'high' and 'low' Gothic. One may immediately think of Punter arguing that the Gothic cannot be seen as popular literature due to, among other things, the fact that its representatives fulfil the

[121] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 10.
[122] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 10.
[123] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 10.
[124] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 8.
[125] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 8.

criteria of literariness, which he illustrates with Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis and Shelley.[126] One could imagine that a whole array of aspects of the genre may be neglected in this way, at least potentially. However, DeLamotte limits her considerations to one particular aspect, the women's influence, taking a feminist viewpoint.

Such a step, of course, may be seen as justified. Above all, it results from a reaction against what we could view as discursive re-construction of the Gothic from the male-centred perspective. As DeLamotte notices, 'high Gothic,' for the mid-century male dominated criticism (apparently, the very same strand of criticism that Kate Ferguson Ellis writes about[127]), is based on a male canon, and 'low Gothic' becomes a notion which allows to relegate women's prolific fiction to the margin.[128] She also quotes Leslie Fiedler and Patrick Day to show how such a 'transfiguration' of the Gothic impacts on its reading by eradicating the need to consider women and their situation as central to Gothic fiction.[129] As a result, the stance she takes on the shape of the concept of the Gothic is that "[i]t is necessary to insist on the centrality to the genre of Radcliffe in general and of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in particular," for otherwise "Radcliffe and her most famous work are easily relegated to the periphery of the genre she herself did most to define."[130] Obviously, we could agree with such a stance, but what poses certain problems is the question of 'centrality.' It is hardly debatable that Radcliffe exerted vast influence on various authors, both more and less known. Similarly, it is barely possible to deny that the Gothic was to a large extent written by women and that it encodes a particular version of women's situation, whether explicitly or implicitly,[131] and that this must not be overlooked. However, while DeLamotte delimits the pattern for the Gothic myth in such a way that it is still possible to utilise it in various ways, viewing the women's question as central for the Gothic results in a 'transfiguration' similar, to some extent, to the one which takes place when the Gothic is considered from a predominantly male-centred perspective.

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[126] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 25.
[127] Kate Ferguson Ellis, "Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), p. 257.
[128] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 9.
[129] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 12.
[130] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 12.
[131] See for example Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

This is perhaps not that evident if we consider DeLamotte's conception of the main axis for the Gothic myth. If Lévi insists on architecture, she manages to reconsider his stance so as to make the Gothic a much more open category. Gothic conventions are here viewed as constituting "a symbolic language congenial to the expression of […] a concern about the boundaries of the self." [132] From this perspective, the Gothic castle (or abbey, or convent), the embodiment of mystery and the past (both individual, of characters, and shared, of characters and readers) stands for loss, including self-loss within a confined space.[133] The atmosphere of the setting, in turn, takes on the quality of a depersonalised and diffused "nameless dread," as if it the place itself stood for "the forces of violence," which DeLamotte identifies as exercised by social institutions, represented by the place: "[t]he church, the courts, the Inquisition, and the family."[134] Such a conception of the nature of fear, the major subject of the Gothic,[135] as *the fear of social institutions* allows DeLamotte to extend Lévi's architectural pattern so that it may encompass also the natural setting. Also, it does not preclude as non-Gothic a situation in which the setting recedes into the background, but the fear of violent, omnipresent power remains. The essential feature of the Gothic text becomes the anxiety about boundaries: a concern that the self will be, against its will, cut off from the world and the ordinary; locked in an alien *milieu*, physical or metaphorical; and invaded by the Other.[136] Thus, both the American writers and, for instance, Maturin and Shelley can be seen as Gothic. What is more, translating the anxiety about boundaries into the Romantic anxiety about the distinction between "the me" and "the not-me" opens, as DeLamote postulates, a new way of approaching the relationship between the Gothic and Romanticism.[137]

The (discursive, we should add) transfiguration of the Gothic carried out by DeLamotte becomes more visible if we consider how putting the women's question in the centre of the Gothic results in limiting this welcoming openness. The limitations to the Gothic which result from the adopted premises here can be traced down if we consider two major assumptions that DeLamotte makes about the Gothic. On the one hand, the author does stress that the anxiety about boundaries as a theme is not limited

[132] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 14.
[133] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 15.
[134] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 16-17.
[135] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 14-15.
[136] As she states, "[b]oundaries and barriers, after all, are the very stage properties of Gothic romance." DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 18-19.
[137] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 23.

to women writers and that even women writers utilise it in different ways.[138] This is a common-sense conclusion, which results from her theoretical premise about the distinction between genre and myth, myth's circles and the stages of genre development: if the anxiety about boundaries is to be the pattern for the Gothic myth, it must be utilised by the male Gothic and it must be utilised variously. On the other hand, she argues that

> what becomes evident in the analyses of male and female Gothicists writing about both women and men and the boundaries of the self is that the problem of the boundaries of the self was a crucial issue for women in some special ways—ways that sometimes manifest themselves even in a woman's portrayal of a male protagonist and that sometimes do not manifest themselves fully even in the most sensitive Gothic portrayals, by male writers, of that issue as it applies to women.[139]

This is fully in accordance with her assumption that because Gothic fiction is occupied, on a more general level, with the boundary between the individual and the world, it lends itself to the expression of women's psychological and social situation and proves especially attractive to both women writers and readers.[140] Departing from such a premise, DeLamotte is able to extend – or actually reverse – Sedgwick's spatial model of the Gothic in which a typically Gothic situation is that of one being cut off from what should normally be available to one, evoked earlier in this chapter. As she states, Segdwick's natural connection between the self and what the self is blocked from is "a connection that women are not ordinarily able to make, because of the social forces and the psychological consequences of women's experiences of those forces that define women's relation to the world beyond them."[141] For DeLamotte, the typically Gothic situation is that in which a female protagonist is cut off from what is normally unavailable to her in a patriarchal society.[142]

When it comes to the first assertion, the limits imposed are those on the dialogic possibilities of the Gothic text. This takes us back to our earlier observation that, by making Radcliffe the formal type, DeLamotte removes from the genre's foreground writers such as Walpole and Reeve, with their specific concerns and the potential, both

[138] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 25.
[139] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 25.
[140] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 23.
[141] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 28.
[142] See DeLamotte's discussion of the matter, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 25-28.

literary and cultural, with which they endow the newly emergent literary form, whatever it is. Automatically, also the subsequent writers, of the secondary and tertiary phases,[143] are to be discussed primarily from the perspective of the 'governing' pattern. The specific concerns of the non-female texts, or female texts which do not contain the fully developed pattern, are here immediately codified as side-concerns, by-products, or realisations of the myth, not central to the definition of either myth or the genre. Thus, the possible recurring links between both female and male fictions other than those based on, originally, gender relations, which are the social factors impinging on the shape of DeLamotte's pattern, are thus removed from the central discussion and located at the myth's periphery.

It is interesting to note that Reeve's *Old English Baron*, to give one immediate example, could be seen as displaying similar, or even the same, traits of culturally imposed restrictions as later female Gothic novels. As E. J. Clery notes, Reeve's correction of Walpole and the much restrained handling of supernatural are both signs of negotiation: in the era when women are expected to be subject to didacticism and paragons of virtue, and the discourse of the sublime, otherwise justifying the use of supernaturalism, is gendered and reserved for men in its pure form, female Gothicists are forced to apply specific techniques to avoid immediate castigation.[144] Needless to say, the founder of the most successful technique, the supernatural explained is Radcliffe.[145] However, when it comes to the question of the boundaries of the self, in the case of Reeve the issue must be more complicated. This should be expected even judging by the mere fact that DeLamotte does not consider her writings, content with the assertion that they, too, serve to assemble the genre's proper complex.[146] We may, of course, feel that reading Reeve from DeLamotte's theoretical perspective is possible. Yet how to approach, in that case, the political implications of her patriotic novels (with a middle-class bias) from the perspective of theory which assumes that the Gothic allows women to voice their discontent with their contemporary social/family system is a more complicated matter. DeLamotte does recognise, time after time, that the female Gothic is caught up in the vicious circle of subscribing to the same social restrictions

[143] For the explanation of how these are realised in the Gothic, see DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 10-11.
[144] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 106. For Clery's discussion of Burke and the sublime, see pp. 104-105.
[145] Following Delamotte's logic and Clery's list of Radcliffe's followers, we should find it even less surprising that the techniques, in the first place that of the supernatural explained, *had to* be mimed and elaborated on both by men and women. For the list, see Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 108.
[146] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p.10.

that it finds dissatisfying,[147] but in the case of Reeve there seems to be more at stake. This could be, among others, the 'loyalist' quality of her writing, of which we shall say more in the next chapter; the ability of the Gothic to support the emerging *status quo* as much as to attempt at shaping it, and not necessarily only when it comes to women's situation.

In *Perils of the Night*, the Gothic is constructed discursively from a number of angles, and this takes us to DeLamotte's other assertion mentioned above. A precise excerpt from her text should prove useful at this point. She writes: "And because the dividing line between the world and the individual soul has had, from the inception of the Gothic craze, a special relevance to the psychology and social condition of women, this interpretation of the 'deep structures' of Gothicism provides a new explanation of the appeal the genre has always had for women readers and writers."[148] A fixed set of theoretical premises can be immediately identified here. First and foremost, what takes place at this very moment is, once again, making a connection between the Gothic and Romantic philosophy, or, in this particular case, their occupation with the boundary between the self and the world. Interestingly, this time, as a result, one could possibly see Romanticism as having a predecessor in women's Gothic, which actually signals *two loci* traditionally encoded as 'inferior.' Willingly or not, this reminds one of the Romantic credentials; however, rather than to provide a pedigree for the Gothic and women writers, drawing such a new link between the Gothic and Romanticism may be seen as a call for a reconsideration of the very tenets of Romanticism.

Another premise is, implicitly, that women constituted the major readership of Gothic fiction.[149] This, as Clery makes it clear, is not that obvious; what is more, as she notices, feminist criticism up to her times had had little interest in disproving such a position.[150] It is hardly possible to deny the cultural importance of the phenomenon of female Gothic readership and the critical response it generated.[151] Nonetheless, the fact that the dominantly female readership of the Gothic is, to some extent, a discursive construct, with a well-defined socio-regulatory function assigned, as Clery

[147] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 151.
[148] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 23.
[149] DeLamotte restates it openly elsewhere in the text, using it as a justification for the significance (and the assumption of special signification) of the typical behavioural patterns of Gothic heroines. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 150.
[150] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 98.
[151] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 99.

demonstrates,[152] should complicate its use as a justification for the 'central' position of the women's Gothic. That said, we return to the already raised question of the centrality of the inherently gender-based pattern to the Gothic as a genre/myth/mode. As Diane Long Hoeveler stresses, feminism itself is a diverse and diversified field,[153] which may be perhaps illustrated by the fact that, in *Gothic Feminism* (1998), she denies the need to read female Gothic along its male counterpart, viewing the former as a distinct genre "designed to dramatize the horrors of English patriarchal life safely displaced onto a remote setting."[154] Although Hoevelers stance on the character of female Gothic is thus basically close to DeLamotte's, and she too cites the common-place assumption of the female authorship and readership, this neatly undercuts the need to come up with a pattern that would be discernible in 'all the (true) Gothic,' whether genre or myth (or mode). Taking such a perspective does not diminish the force of Hoeveler's argument; it also does not implicitly impose the domination of one theme.

Tracing further discursive tenets which shape DeLamotte's conception of the Gothic, one may, for instance, point out to a Freudian influence. Her reading of the female Gothic appears to be based on Freud's assumption that only unhappy people fantasise. One might imagine that eighteenth-century women need not be (psycho)analysed to be read as potentially dissatisfied with their status. Still, they are read via this particular Freudian given for example by Hoeveler, who also admits to rely on Punter's theory that the Gothic displays the bourgeoisie's ambivalent attitude towards the lost order and the anxiety about the newly emerging one – their own.[155] The same set of assertions lies at the foundation of DeLamotte's own considerations. Both she and Hoeveler treat women's Gothic as a version of wish fulfilment fantasy in which women envision a perfect happy ending.[156] Next, the very same assumption which underlies Punter's premise that the Gothic is a version of anxiety of the present projected on the past manifests itself in DeLamotte's statement that "[t]he contemporaneity of the suffering

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[152] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 98-105. She states, e.g.: "the conflation of reading and female sexuality may be interpreted as a secondary construction, not fully meaningful in itself. It provided a codified and therefore distanced and acceptable means of handling the intractable subject of economic change and its social consequences. The issue of novel-reading (a representative by-product of consumerism at large) reduced the scope of the problem, and offered a language with which to 'narrate' it. Concern about the spread of leisure and luxury to the lower orders would be conveyed by a story about the corruption of a milliner or a lady's maid by reading fiction, as if the problem could only become discursively visible when charged with the sexual theme" (p. 101).
[153] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. xvii.
[154] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. xiv.
[155] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. xvi.
[156] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 167; Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. xvi-xvii.

described in women's Gothic, for example, is most often disguised by the portrayal of the institutions that oppress the Gothic heroine as outdated, foreign, or illegal […]."[157] The application of Freud, and the departure from the premise that the Gothic somehow turns against its own socio-political context, both connected irreversibly in much of Gothic theory, point to a discursive crux.

What is at stake here is the unresolved, as it seems, question of whether the Gothic originally turned against the bourgeois order or participated in its formation. DeLamotte herself favours the psychoanalytically biased view, namely that it did both, creating a psychological tension, at times impossible to be resolved.[158] What comes to the foreground is, however, dissatisfaction in every case, a type of negative submission resulting from the lack of possibilities of change: what women do by means of writing is "speaking the Gothic nightmare."[159] Consequently, we may say that female Gothic participates in the dominant bourgeois ideology, but due to the lack of alternative, and this only confirms the oppressiveness of the system.[160]

With women's fiction, especially in the vein of Radcliffe, the question of participation/rebellion attains a particular complexity. Assuming the perspective that the Gothic propagates the bourgeois culture against the feudal corruption uncritically when speaking about women's fiction might direct our attention away from its important complexities, and ultimately dehistoricise it in another way. We must retain caution, though. There is every historical evidence to document the acuteness of women's situation in the discussed period. However, much of what we make of it today appears to depend on the adopted critical perspective. One may notice, for example, that while DeLamotte's position is ultimately a strongly anti-bourgeois one, the final representation of the Gothic heroine she proposes is that of a powerless woman, too constrained to rebel, even on a symbolic plane on which she unveils her discontent. Yet it seems that, in the case of other critical readings similarly interested in the women's question, the less strictly anti-bourgeois the adopted perspective proves to be, the more power is admitted to the female protagonist. Of course, what we mean by power here is not the ultimate equality of the woman and the patriarch, or an actual, open rebellion.

[157] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 151-152.
[158] The impossibility to sort the tension out emerges e.g. as DeLamotte discusses the relevance of masochism to female Gothic and its handling of female sexuality. When it comes to sexuality in general, she notes that the female Gothic evokes it only to deny it. See DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 157-158, 163.
[159] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 150.
[160] The lack of alternative emerges powerfully as DeLamotte discusses the way in which the Gothic can be read as highly conservative. See DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 186-189.

Rather, it is a space in which the woman may act subversively from within the bourgeois culture, implementing mechanisms of negotiation in a narrative which may be read instructively.

In this regard, the shortcoming of DeLamotte's reading, or its discursive inflection, seems to be, unsurprisingly perhaps, its lack of a more concrete historical grounding. DeLamotte does notice that the Gothic heyday occurs during the period in which the place of women in society was under discussion, but immediately after mentioning Wollstonecraft as an example of a notable exception, she moves on to rely on the bourgeois feminine code as operating upon the emerging Gothic fictions.[161] As a result, for a moment the woman's status is shown as a status in formation, but the moment is brief and fleeting, and the bourgeois code is presented as having already influenced women Gothic writers and holding its stand. Thus, the writers are not represented as capable of negotiation, but become ultimately victimised themselves: their texts may, on a symbolic plane, display anger and suffering, but as a result of processes which have already taken shape and resulted in fixed social formulas the texts themselves abide by. In a particular way, such a representation of the historical momentum to Gothic fiction is an instance of discursive re-shaping, which we may demonstrate by means of a comparison.

It does not take much for Hoeveler to speak from an already changed position, and for Clery it takes even less. The study of the latter is based on a research into the discursive context of the supernatural fiction, a research similar to the one we see as necessary to proper understanding of the phenomenon of the Gothic. The former relies on a peculiar blend of Freud and Foucault as a foundation for methodology, which enables her to approach the female Gothic in an irresistibly empowering way. The result is that whereas DeLamotte seems to see no point in distinguishing between the feudal and the bourgeois patriarchy, Hoeveler does notice the rift between them, and Clery is able to describe it in detail. In both cases, the consequence is the change in the perception of women's situation as propagated in fiction.

If DeLamotte's Gothic expresses discontent on a symbolic level, Hoeveler's is a functional critique of the woman as subject as constructed by public institutions and juridical systems of the bourgeoisie.[162] This situates the Gothic craze in a similar

[161] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 150-151.
[162] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. xiii. Hoeveler does stress, however, that while the female Gothic gives the heroine covert power, its insistence on her maintaining, or at least pretending to maintain, the

historical setting as in DeLamotte, but simultaneously must result in a change of perspective: though “coded and veiled,”[163] this critique does not ultimately shun its own insights due to the limits imposed externally. What is more, it is not only a critique. Hoeveler views the female Gothic as a discourse, characteristic of what she calls Gothic feminism, an ideology, which constituted the source of the ideology today termed ‘victim feminism.’ As she would have it, Gothic feminism aimed at constructing and promoting “professional femininity,” a pose or a masquerade which grants, similarly to victim feminism, “female power through pretended and staged weakness.”[164] Thus, it aimed not that much to change social order as to “allow […] female characters and by extension […] female readers a fictitious mastery over […] an oppressive social and political system;” to help women feminize and tame the masculine spaces that confined them, and thus adapt to the status newly assigned to them by the bourgeois culture.[165]

The consideration of the discursive context has a direct impact on such a representation of the female Gothic. What is noteworthy, Hoeveler assumes Gothic fiction to become popular among women writers and readers for the very reason that it posits itself *both* within the bourgeois culture *and* at the same challenges it. This is, as she believes, the result of the ambivalence which women felt towards the shift of their social status as a result of the political and economic changes.[166] Consequently, we may speak of participation and rebellion at the same time, but not in a straightforwardly negative terms, as was the case with DeLamotte. In *Gothic Feminism*, the female Gothic as a discourse is seen as participating, alongside sentimentality and Romanticism, “in the broad cultural project of Enlightenment ideology—that is, making the world a safe place for feminized men and masculinized women.”[167] It is at this point that Hoeveler pays special attention to the distinction between the feudal, aristocratic codes and those of the new ruling class, the bourgeoisie. It is also at this point that she evokes Foucault in a crucial manner. In Foucault’s charting of the cultural shift taking place in the eighteenth century, the bourgeoisie move away from the symbolics of blood, which they

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social identity (virtue) ascribed to her externally often results in a paradox: the heroine heads towards self-destruction instead of resistance. As a result, the female Gothic cannot be seen as a category critical in an uncomplicated way (p. xvi).

[163] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. xiii.

[164] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 7.

[165] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. xii-xiii.

[166] As she states, “[s]uch an ideology [professional femininity] […] accounts for the works’ popularity among women readers who covertly wanted to believe that they could challenge or in some way passively subvert their newly inscribed and institutionalized ‘spaces’, while maintaining their identities and roles as wives and mothers of the bourgeoisie.” Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 7.

[167] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 20.

associate with the aristocracy, to their distinctly middle-class analysis of sexuality, which is to find its first expression in de Sade and early eugenics. For Hoeveler, significantly, the shift is also reflected in the female Gothic, which does away with the feudal patriarch simultaneously promulgating the professionalization of female sexuality.[168]

Perhaps the best illustration of how taking such a stance allows Hoeveler for a re-construction of the possibility for female agency is her interpretation of the Gothic hero and marriage endings of many Gothic novels. For DeLamotte, the hero – the final husband – is in a sense to be identified with the villain. As Radcliffe's Emily is to be married to Valancourt, the supposedly good husband, she becomes entrapped in the displaced marriage with Montoni, the bad one. In DeLamotte's reading, the second, displaced marriage can be seen as a manifestation of the threat inherent in the first one, an instance of a female "dream of fear" before marriage, or a sign of the Gothic author's suspicion that the "domestic bliss is a lie."[169] Yet for Hoeveler, the very same hero is a feminised man, a ritually punished and wounded "sibling figure" purged from folly, who will not stroll too far from home and his wife.[170] He bears the signs of a sentimental man, crying profusely and girlish, and his code of masculinity stands in the direct opposition to that of the patriarchal (feudal) tyrant.[171] As Hoeveler aptly puts it, "juridical violence, paranoia, and injustice, figured as the 'masculine,' can be brought to heel, punished, and contained safely within the confines of the ultimate fantasy home—the female-dominated companionate marriage."[172] Having outsmarted the patriarch (and getting rid of him by passively waiting for his own fatal step), the Gothic heroine, rewarded for her virtue and the persecution she underwent, settles in the bourgeois household without a need to fear a man.[173]

Ironically, if we move one step further, we can say that, quite conversely, it is the man who could feel insecure. Hoeveler does notice, in here analysis of Radcliffe, that her novels pass a telling comment on the property and inheritance law.[174] Also, she does mention the eighteenth-century understanding of the woman's legal status with regard to her husband, quoting William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*,

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[168] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 20-21.
[169] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, pp. 158-160.
[170] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. 94.
[171] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 98-99.
[172] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. xiv.
[173] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 7, 18.
[174] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 88-89.

and notices that Gothic heroines usually manage to avoid it.[175] Finally, while she posits, in tune with Punter, that the female Gothic displaces the contemporary anxieties on the past, she nonetheless takes the final stance that it is feudal patriarchy and family ties based on blood that get busted.[176] Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, published five years earlier, allows us to place those remarks in the proper context. What is more, following Clery we observe how a more historically oriented study may conclude with a suggestion that the female Gothic could have been actually envisioned as subversive.[177]

Clery too quotes Blackstone, and her considerations highlight some significant facts about the eighteenth-century common law. Blackstone's *Commentaries* illustrate how the property law – with arbitrary changes – is transplanted from the feudal setting into the bourgeois context, retaining coverture and justifying it with social (economic) benefit. As a result, the husband technically wields a total power over the wife, who, upon marriage, 'dies' in civil terms.[178] Yet what Clery also notices is that, in the case of Radcliffe, it is persistently the heroines who inherit property, with the culmination of female legal heirs in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Contrary to the legal provisions, Emily inherits after two other women, and, upon marriage, she retains the control over her property through the charitable character of the union and the benevolence of Valancourt, which Clery sees as "the dispensation of economic power in the relationship."[179] As she signals, while the inheritance plot in the novel can be seen as nonetheless justified by the common law logic, the resolution may actually postulate a different matrimonial order.[180] Also, in the novel, we may observe a clash between coverture and the law of equity – applied to property since the seventeenth-century to allow families in direct blood kinship to retain family property by passing it to the daughter, and then her descendants, and not to her husband, and, incidentally, creating a possibility for a woman's financial independence.[181] This leads Clery to the conclusion that "Radcliffe, by regularly endowing her female characters with inherited fortunes, foregrounds the ideological inconsistencies of the property laws relating to women of her time."[182] Such an observation is in tune with that of Hoeveler, but is substantiated

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[175] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 6-7.
[176] See e.g. Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 88, 97.
[177] See Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 114, 128-130.
[178] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 124-125.
[179] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 123.
[180] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 123-124.
[181] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 125-126.
[182] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 125-126.

with the legal technicalities traceable in the historical context of the period and in the novels themselves.[183]

Whereas coverture can be seen as an arbitrary turn to custom, equity may be perceived as an instance of 'natural' law. Yet, as Clery stresses, rather than as an overt social critique, Radcliffe's handling of property laws may be seen as a powerful means of terrifying the female reader out of her wits. But this is not a simple means, nor a fancy terror. As she writes:

> this was the shape that terror took for the projected reader, middle class and female: the point at which fantasy and reality met and mingled. [Radcliffe's] writings, at least at the height of suspense, encourage reflection on the illusory nature of the law's 'phantom-objectivity,' its interested, man-made nature, through a literal-minded representation of the law as haunted house. The metaphysical paraphernalia of an 'objectivist' system of justice is portrayed with objectivity in the terrifying phantasmagoria of Gothic fiction. 'Justice' is estranged from itself, retranslated into an unequal, repressive relation between people. Before the narrative reverts to a tidy denouement there is a moment of illumination in which the unthinkable is felt to be real.[184]

The critical potential of Radcliffe's novels is then explored more realistically and consciously in Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman*, which tries to pass a social comment through the Gothic medium (even though the medium is perhaps not entirely suited for turning critique into action).[185] And with Wollstonecraft, the Gothic critique becomes radical.

As Clery states, the potential critique, intertwined in the Gothic fabric, is symptomatic of the fact that women Gothicists in Radcliffe's day do realise that romance may reveal the facts about their own situation, not at all that rosy.[186] Such a statement is not surprising in the feminist strand of Gothic criticism. In this respect, all the three critics discussed in this section, DeLamotte, Hoeveler and Clery, share the common ground. Furthermore, Clery can be seen as close to Hoeveler, for example, since she assumes the Gothic heroine to be the inheritor of Richardsonian Pamela's legacy, i.e. the inevitability of trading a woman's own virtue and turning propriety into

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[183] See also Hoeveler on Radcliffe's critique of the property law in *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 87-89.
[184] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 126-127.
[185] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 127-128.
[186] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 129.

profit.[187] In a way, their overall perspectives can be seen as complementary: it is possible – or even desirable – to view the female Gothic as both reflecting on the contemporary legal discourses in "the libertarian language,"[188] and propagating covert power through mastering adaptation. Though perhaps Clery's female Gothic seems to be, at this particular point, less complacent about the bourgeois codes,[189] it does not preclude Hoeveler's stance, but adds to it, illuminating some of its intricacies. What is more, Clery's analysis too heads towards envisioning the female Gothic as implementing particular codes of behaviour that modify the bourgeois discourse by participating in it (trading virtue) and, at least potentially, may open a space for a more radical discussion (playing with the women's *awareness* of their financial and legal insecurity, Wollstonecraft's attempt at social critique through the Gothic mode). Nonetheless, both these perspectives would not be possible within the discursive frame adopted by DeLamotte.

The governing assumption for much of DeLamotte's reading of the Gothic is the perceived victimisation of the Gothic heroine. As a victim, the heroine is doomed to self-destruction through submission – but she remains pure. Much is said in *Perils of the Night* of the way in which self-protection in the women's Gothic is based on retaining a coherent version of the self, abiding by the decorum, which will sooner suffer self-destruction than violate the imperative of purity. This mechanism is ultimately transferred on the women writers, too – just consider DeLamotte's statement that Radcliffe and Roche are too indoctrinated to represent their angel-like heroines as spoiled by internal evil (which they, by the way, are also said to perceive as inherently 'male').[190] The woman cannot afford subversion even if her own writings glimpse at it – she has already been too victimised. Protecting the decorum is the very same mechanism which Hoeveler sees as an inherent flaw in the Gothic, its insistence on the professionally gendered heroine to at least successfully pretend she is the exemplar. But while Hoeveler admits the possibility that the heroine may pretend – the ability to turn tables becoming simultaneously the chance and the minimum requisite for negotiation – DeLamotte views the heroine as having internalised the exemplar to the point of not

[187] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 122-123.
[188] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 126.
[189] Though simultaneously, it remains critical of the feudal ones. The patriarchal tyrants are all feudal tyrants – Montoni uses coverture against Emily's sense of equity (Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 126.) – just as the law is feudal in itself. True, the same can be said of equity as used with regard to inheritance law (p. 125-126), but then Radcliffe's *Udolpho* reverses Blackstone's justification of the use of feudal laws in the bourgeois context from a woman's perspective.
[190] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 163.

being able to safe her-self. From here, there is just one step to the Freudian logic of the heroine-patient: she suffers from repression, and her repression results in hysteria, or schizophrenia, or paranoia, the consequences of the unresolved tension between the fear of anger and a need to voice it. But such a heroine, or a victim, is nonetheless pure, and hence, cannot be accused.

One of the possible 'accusations' is that of the heroine pursuing her trouble. This is an argument connected, for example, with the perceived masochism of the damsel in distress: her desire to be victimised (sexually). DeLamotte refutes the critical readings based on such a foundation as containing "glaring inadequacies": viewed from this perspective, the heroine cannot be seen as a victim of external forces and her struggle to free herself from confinement in the socially assigned homely space is swept out of sight.[191] On the one hand, the critic seems to be right to do so, especially if we see her response as a response to a particular discourse which would find such a reading politically functional. On the other hand, as she insists that the heroine be a victim, she herself falls prey to the imposed decorum the heroine, in her reading, fears so much to infringe.[192] Occupying the position of an innocent victim, too pure to cope with any sort of internal flaw, the Gothic heroine (or writer) will never be allowed any substantial active agency aimed at an actual critique or change. Similarly, she will never be allowed any positive participation in the discourse which incarcerates her. It is in this way that DeLamotte's own discursive framework does not validate readings such as those by Hoeveler or Clery.

If we consider the definition of the Gothic proposed by DeLamotte, we shall find out that it participates in a discursive re-shaping of the Gothic on many planes. The victimisation of the Gothic heroine is here perhaps only one illustration of what is signalled by Hoeveler as she states that by failing to see contradictions in the female Gothic, one may end up "[recasting] our novelistic foremothers in our own image."[193] As in the case of the previous critics, the result is going shopping – constructing the Gothic in the image of what we believe it should be.

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[191] DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, p. 157.

[192] At this point we might think of Fish's assertion that every new interpretation is limited by the boundaries set by its predecessors. If the new interpretation here wishes to cut itself off from another one, that is the (patriarchal) one which explains away the question of women's situation, the limits it immediately imposes upon itself are the very ones against which it is aimed – those imposed by the patriarchy on women.

[193] Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, p. xvi.

5.4. Decorating the Castle: The Spectralisation of the Gothic

If the impetus behind the differentiation paradigm's insistence on the Gothic indefinability is the fear of grand narratives, than we might find it somewhat surprising that the decade which the paradigm considers as its own beginning continues to produce narrations of the Gothic. Broad as they are, and sometimes vague too, all the three considered definitions are discursive narratives. And since, in their attempt to overthrow the domination of narratives which constructed the Gothic as limited in capacity and diminished in cultural/literary significance, they aim at the expansion of the field and the status of the general, they too end up being grand. We could call it Fish's irony – while it seems that the Gothic criticism takes a new (opposite) direction (consider e.g. the mid-century male-oriented psychological readings which constitute the 'negative' basis for much of the feminist criticism), it actually recapitulates the same sort of processes. And these processes remind one of Rorty's procedure of linking traits and clues in a way which is entirely subjective and external to the work, or Foucault's assertion that there is nothing essential in an object as such, for the object is the sum of statements about it, possible in a given discourse. Even if we agree that all the three definitions create a vast space for interpretation, and leave certain areas to be white spots on the map, the general frameworks they devise confirm just that: discourses they utilise validate only a specific set of statements as true or false, and pass over a vast array of other statements as illogical or simply inexistent. In this particular regard, is there much difference between, say, a Freudian and a Romantic paradigm?

The multiplicity of theoretical tools combined with an array of perspectives creates a whole range of possibilities for devising one's own Gothic. With this in mind, we understand why Miles decides to speak of discrete Gothic genealogies. We also grasp why Hoeveler insists on seeing the female Gothic as a separate genre, not bothering too much to define the governing principle for the Gothic as such.[194] Both are ways to limit

[194] There are two points at which Hoeveler tackles the matter of definition. First, she refers to it to stress that she wishes to refrain from the "temptation" of generalising about the genre through succumbing to the "generic laundry list" approach, which usually diverts the critic away from systematic analysis. In this, she comes close to DeLamotte. But contrary to DeLamotte, Hoeveler wishes to limit herself to the female Gothic only. And while she states that this category has been dealt with in valuable ways by DeLamotte, Poovey and Williams, she also states that "earlier analysts tended to privilege the notion of the 'female' 'self' in ways that ignored the highly ideological nature of both the gothic 'myth' *and their own critical approaches* [emphasis mine]." For Hoeveler, the woman's self is not ahistorical, but always immersed in the social conditions that shape it – a visibly Foucauldian legacy, we could say.

Second, Hoeveler speaks of the Gothic definition as she states that to delimit the genre in terms of time period or conventions are "futile attempts to give shape to the shapeless." Instead she perceives the

one's field at the same time not limiting another one's. If the considerations carried out in the previous section show anything, they show that focusing on one strand of consistencies, or one dialogic line, might actually illuminate the domain of Gothic fiction better than attempting to grasp it in its vague entirety. This is because the Gothic has always been a label, applied to various, though similar, sets of texts for various purposes. Similarly, the texts traditionally labelled as Gothic utilise 'Gothickness' variously. Thus, trying to view the Gothic 'globally' inescapably entails omissions, re-workings and obliterations, no matter what the intention was.

Bearing this in mind, we might think of a potential solution. Viewing the Gothic as a dialogic mode, within which we deal with a series of interconnected genealogies that use a similar code of conventions to elaborate on different (social, economic, gender, etc.) questions in a way determined by a given discourse, or an order of discourse, of a given period, seems to solve the problem of accounting for why a certain work 'has a Gothic feel to it,' without the immediate need to decide about its generic affiliation. Of course, this would not enable one to avoid constructing or reconstructing grand narratives. Still, it seems it would prove more illuminating with regard to a number of works traditionally grouped together as 'Gothic' if we focused on excavating their own grand narratives, rather than on rewriting those narratives anew. However, as Gothic criticism brings together multiple perspectives, interpretations and representations, insisting that there be no specific limits to the category it nonetheless wishes to treat as established (or institutionalised), such an approach is made impossible. And the assumed equality of approaches, especially if they tend to be mutually exclusive, results in the spectralisation of the Gothic.

The problem with the dialogic approach, from the perspective of the differentiation paradigm, seems to be the fact that it would again undo the importance of the Gothic as a literary/critical category. We may imagine, for instance, a situation in which we would be dealing with a series of works – or texts – speaking of the women's struggle, or the anxiety of boundaries, or the fragmentation of the self, through a particular coded

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female Gothic as characterised by "codified spaces" and "voices" telling about a struggle with the outside forces in which a set of strategies is used. In a way, she too discusses a genealogy of the Gothic in this way. Also, it is perhaps telling that Hoeveler speaks of the female Gothic as "the works that traditionally have been identified as female Gothic." What this indicates is working within a space which is pre-defined and already established, to re-define it with a partly new, consistent pattern. The benefit of her approach, is, however, that while it does quite a lot of psychoanalysing, its simultaneous analysis of the discourses available to the discussed female Gothic writers does not allow for shunning insights such as those of Baldick and Mighall. The Gothic heroine may negotiate with the bourgeois patriarchy, at the same time, remaining thoroughly Protestant and Enlightened. Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism*, pp. 2-3, 8-9.

representation, but the mode (and, importantly, not genre) of that representation would be less important than what is behind it. Or it would be important only to the extent to which it would signal a distinct perspective. In a similar vein, we could speak of the development of emotive narrative strategies without necessarily limiting them to one literary genre, or the development of an aesthetic without tying it with some allegorical or symbolic meanings veiled by its gloomy landscapes. Conversely, we could be speaking of how these three dimensions interact and impact on one another as they meet, and that could be seen as 'a Gothic moment' – but that kind of interaction could not be ultimately fixed. The Gothic would always have a potential for an already changed meaning, an already new perspective, and an already new aspect of a theme.

If that were the case, however, the differentiation paradigm would lose another of its founding tenets – the vindication of a marginalised category, a topic which will be expanded upon in the next chapter. A subtle signal that the existence of such a category is somehow necessary for the contemporary Gothic critic can be felt, for example, as one reads the following passage from Anne Williams' *Art of Darkness*, of 1995:

> [T]hough there may be disagreement as to the absolute position of the line between the "obscene" and the "decent," there is a general category of "obscenity." Similarly, though one may have trouble drawing a precise line between "Gothic" and "not Gothic," there undoubtedly *is* such a thing as Gothic. Just as Western culture has tended to assume that obscenity more or less equals the explicitly sexual, so Gothic more or less corresponds with eighteenth-century fantasies of the "dark ages." This approach to either category has its limitations, however. It inadequately serves the feminist lawyer who wants to argue that violence against women is more damaging to the social fabric than representations of sexuality, or the literary critic who wants to talk about Faulkner as part of the Gothic tradition.[195]

Certainly, the category of obscenity constructed in such a way might serve inadequately the feminist (or any) lawyer. But why would the lack of grounds to read Faulkner as Gothic serve inadequately a literary critic? Williams is right that there is more to the Gothic than "fantasies of 'dark ages.'" Yet what is interesting in this passage is the statement of choice and intention. The literary critic *wants* to speak about *Absalom, Absalom!* as a member of the Gothic genre, be it a secondary or a tertiary

[195] Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 15.

representative.[196] But why? Is this meant to be an arbitrary decision, based on one's intuitive perception that there is something Gothic about the work, and hence it might be somehow illuminating to tease it out? Or is this the matter of some rejected and muted truth that Faulkner was a Gothic writer?

The comparison with the lawyer would suggest that reading Faulkner as Gothic is a matter of no minor importance. Faulkner is a recognised writer and one of the aims of Gothic criticism, as illustrated throughout this chapter, is to show that the Gothic is present within the canon, but remains unrecognised, for the institutionalised criticism has tended to repress it. It is assumed that Gothic fiction is popular trash, hence low in artistic qualities, hence even if we trace its influence on a major literary work, it cannot be of any substantial importance, not to mention the fact that the resemblance may be purely accidental, and so on. In a certain way, the Gothic thus becomes seen as *constructed* by earlier institutionalised critics as a negative label, a category of dismissal serving as a means of evading the consideration of meanings that would otherwise come to the surface. What is repressed in reality is, then, the meaning itself. As a result, reading Faulkner as Gothic could be a yet another attempt at the vindication of a genre and a reconsideration of the literary/cultural categories, on the one hand, while, on the other, it might be seen as a way to uncover an additional but significant layer of signification, not fully illuminated otherwise. In both cases, however, it is crucial that *there is* an established category such as the Gothic.

But the question here is not even whether there is a Gothic moment in Faulkner or not. It may be there – just consider "The Rose for Emily," a story of a decaying aristocratic monument engulfed by darkness and jealously guarding its secret. The question is, to what extent it actually impacts on the content. To establish such an impact, it may seem we would need to consider not only the textual layer, the traits we recognise as Gothic (and thus hurry to ascribe to them meaning by association) and their relationship with other significant traits (in Eco's fashion), but also, and perhaps primarily, the context and the possibilities it might have both given and precluded. By failing to carry out such considerations, we risk discursive re-writing. Furthermore, if we ascribe the Gothic a fixed set of associations and, thus, meanings (themselves discursively generated), and we use it as a grid to generate the meaning of a text, then the discursive rewriting may only double.

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[196] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 16.

The more, it should seem, Gothic criticism ought to avoid grand narratives. Yet the paradigmatic assertion of the indefinability of Gothic fiction, of its 'spectrability,' is a grand narrative in itself, in which the instability of the limits becomes a practical measure to grant the unlimited possibility of setting boundaries. All of the discussed definitions do. However, while their shortcomings are pointed to in the criticism which comes immediately after them, and then the criticism which follows the period of breakthrough, 'individual' ways of approaching the Gothic are rarely dismissed. On the contrary, they seem to be accumulated to protect the freedom of staking out one's own area, especially an underprivileged one, and they are definitely available and used for further considerations of the Gothic. There is, certainly, a grander dimension to it, and it need not come down to the impossibility (or refusal) to choose the new dominating grand narrative. We may, for instance, recall Culler's line of defence of overinterpretation: the most radical interpretations are often those capable of triggering the critical re-thinking of social/cultural constructs, of making issues surface. Very often, the contemporary Gothic criticism seems to embark on precisely such a project. Nonetheless, in doing so, it frequently illuminates its own times and milieu, while not necessarily telling us something illuminating with regard to the Gothic (or non-Gothic) text and its context.

The final example of a Gothic definition to be discussed in this section may serve as an illustration of what we might metaphorically call 'decorating' the Gothic castle with the purchased items. The metaphor describes a situation in which the Gothic undergoes double rewriting. Its theory rests on the paradigmatic axioms and it expands from this basis, further reworking the Gothic as a category. However, at the same time, the critic adjusts the analytical tool to the already established 'knowledge' on the Gothic. As a result, the category undergoes as if double discursive re-shaping.

Published the same years as Kilgour's *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, in a way, Williams' *Art of Darkness* is already partly symptomatic of what Rintoul writes about the contemporary critical stance on the issue of the Gothic definition. Williams is careful about asserting the difficulty Gothic poses as a category, and highlighting the dangers that stem from attempts at defining it. At the same time, however, she begins to construct her own definition as quickly as she dismisses other critics for writing 'Gothic stories,' and her own perspective influences her analysis quite visibly. At times, she does voice the realisation that the Gothic is constructed by criticism rather than explained, but then she immediately changes the direction and engages in a yet another

re-construction. Above all, however, her study illustrates how the Gothic shifts from a literary category into a literary theory, from an object to be defined to a workable grid used to account for texts (and not necessarily only literary ones). If maintaining the limits blurred is one way in which the contemporary Gothic criticism acts to 'spectralise' Gothic fiction, such a transformation of the Gothic into a category larger than that of the strictly literary/textual is another one deserving our immediate attention.

Williams titles the part of her introduction devoted to outlining her own premises "On the Dangers of Defining the Gothic." The stance presented here is, however, not yet that the Gothic is indefinable. This is what distinguishes Williams from critics such as Kilgour or Botting. If they proclaim that the Gothic is indefinable – openly, for the Gothic is so broad, or by implying that every attempt at knowing is a re-construction – Williams treats its complexity as a vantage point for her own definition. Her evoking of the difficulty the Gothic poses as a category is a rhetorical manoeuvre, to same extent. It is meant to stress that the Gothic is difficult to define not simply because it is so vast and so spectral, or because 'there is no truth behind the veil,' but because the critics fail to see deep enough in it, and, consequently, to approach it in the proper manner. This becomes immediately visible if we consider one of the opening statements of the section: "even referring to 'the' Gothic and choosing—or not—to capitalize the word opens some doors and assures that others will remain not only closed but invisible. A thoughtful analysis of 'Gothic' should challenge the kind of literary history that *organizes, delineates, and defines*: a literary history that also confines us within some inherited literary concepts, particularly ideas about genre, that can be as confusing as Udolpho's amazing structures."[197] The first sentence of the quote could strike us as very close to our own observations: no matter how we delimit the Gothic, we shall always leave something out. But in a footnote which follows after the sentence, Williams immediately clarifies: "I have chosen to capitalize the word because I intend to demonstrate that Gothic denotes literary conventions organized around a specific structure."[198] Then, with the second sentence, her stance is further clarified. Certainly, it is difficult (if at all possible) to imagine a literary history which does not organize, delineate and define, and still remains a literary history, but 'to organise,' 'to define' and 'to delineate' are all verbs which have a special significance – and signification – here. What Williams seems to speak of are "inherited" notions and modes of analysis,

[197] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 13. Emphasis mine.
[198] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, footnote no. 31, p. 260.

those which she appears to blame for the failure of previous critics in their attempts to reach an 'appropriate' definition of the Gothic. The fact that her version of literary history will also organise, define and delineate, by the way, is not necessarily realised by the reader at the same time.

In her attempt to clarify the "Gothic's apparent chaos,"[199] Williams uses George Lakoff's conception of a category as a cognitive structure. This allows her to explain the central motif of the castle (and the reason why certain Gothic texts lack it but are still Gothic) in a more thorough manner than DeLamotte's conception of the Gothic myth.[200] The basic move is to perceive Gothic fiction not as characterised by a particular shared essence, or family resemblances, but as a cognitive structure build up according to discernible principles, which has its central, basic members to which further members are linked through "chaining" and which may be affected by culture-specific "basic domains of experience."[201] While Williams asserts that Gothic fiction poses problems for critics who wish to approach it through classifying, for the reason that classification invariably entails lacks and inconsistencies,[202] her own approach is meant to both allow one to grasp the Gothic in its entirety and prevent one from failing to consider its historical development. This development seems to be reflected both by the chains in the Gothic "complex,"[203] and the fact that certain works produced before Horace Walpole (Williams uses the abbreviation "B.W.") have been retrospectively viewed as Gothic, and many works up to this date, be they written or cinematographic, still have a discernible Gothic feel to them.[204]

But for the insistence on the 'centrality' as a key concept to the Gothic definition, this approach would be quite similar to ours. Certainly, by moving beyond the theme, Williams wishes to distance herself from the search of 'the essential Gothic feature.' But the fact that the Gothic complex she proposes is meant to be structured around a 'central' element nonetheless immobilises the structure, carving the possible paths of development in advance.

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[199] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 17.
[200] For Williams' discussion of DeLamotte see *Art of Darkness*, pp. 16-17.
[201] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 18.
[202] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 17.
[203] For Williams' explanation of the term 'complex' as a more appropriate category to describe the Gothic than those of genre, mode, tradition or set of conventions see *Art of Darkness*, pp. 23-24. It is perhaps immediately worth mentioning that 'complex' here refers not only to a given structure, but also to the Freudian notion of complexes, an illustration of how the adopted methodology in fact imposes itself on the perception of the object under scrutiny.
[204] See Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 13-14.

If "basic domains of experience" influence, or, indeed, organise the category, the Gothic is to be organised around the deeply rooted Western-cultural experience of the patriarchal family. For Williams, Gothic fictions notoriously represent otherness,[205] set in motion already by Walpole as he labelled his *Otranto* "a Gothic story," a story taking place in the 'dark ages' as opposed to the present, civilised times.[206] She affiliates the otherness found in the Gothic with the categories of otherness she finds to be consistent in the Western culture and exemplified by the Aristotle's 'the line of evil,' as opposed to 'the line of good,'[207] which she perceives as founded upon the binary opposition of 'male' versus 'female.' As she links the Gothic with the line of evil and the female – "the most powerful and persistent "other" of Western culture[208] – Williams discovers the secret principle for the Gothic, comparable, as she writes, to Freudian 'latent content' or linguistic 'deep structure.' The castle, a persistent Gothic element, is a setting most representative of a patriarchal family, patriarchy itself being the embodiment of the line of good, which becomes threatened, with its clear distinction between what is male and what female, by the Gothic's ostensible others. This, as she views it, is the distinctive characteristic of Gothic fiction: "Gothic plots are family plots," the family structure determines the plot.[209]

If assertions about the Gothic theme, recurring throughout 'all the Gothic' texts, immobilise the category, so does the assertion that the Gothic is 'latently' structured around the rule of family. The basis for the structure may not be in the Gothic texts themselves – it may be outside of them – but it is still fixed, this time in Western culture's perception of itself. There are many interesting points in this 'poetics' of the Gothic, as Williams terms it. There are, also, many questions to be simultaneously raised.

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[205] It should be noted that Williams evokes postructuralism as being able to show that "language, psychoanalytic conceptions of the self, and post-Enlightenment culture at large all depend upon some idea of the other." (Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 19.) This is an interesting point. On the one hand, we should, then, surmise that the Gothic is a post-Enlightenment category too, or, if not, it at least anticipates this category. On the other, looking from a certain perspective, we can also hardly deny that our own culture is post-Enlightenment. Thus, a link is established between the Gothic and ourselves, one which is fertile to explore. Certainly, such a reasoning can be seen as an example of the paradigmatic reasoning: the anti-Enlightenment nexus combined with the quest to excavate one's own origin.

[206] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 20.

[207] The line of good consists of the notions: male, limited, odd, one, right, square, at rest, straight, light, good. The line of evil comprises: female, unlimited, even, many, left, oblong, moving, curved, darkness, evil. Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 18-19.

[208] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 19.

[209] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 22-23.

One of them is definitely that of the status of the Gothic. Is it to be seen as a threatening "other" as such? The question is thought-provoking due to the way in which Williams accounts for the two ancient lines of opposites. Under the label of the line of evil, she groups together the Gothic and Romantic aesthetics, and, unsurprisingly, the theory of the sublime, all three containing some of elements associated with the line. On the opposite side, she puts classicism and realism.[210] This opposite side is then ascribed to patriarchy, and the statement that "Gothic narratives enabled their audiences to confront and explore, and simultaneously to deny, a theme that marks the birth of the Romantic (and modern) sensibility: that 'the Law of the Father' is a tyrannical *paterfamilias* and that we dwell in his ruins"[211] presents Gothic fiction as capable of inviting and entertaining, though not necessarily wishing to implement, subversion. On the one hand, this is nothing new. But on the other, the simultaneous reconfiguration of Romanticism and the sublime as opposed to the patriarchal is curious.

A similar question is that of whether we should, consequently, put an equation mark between the Gothic and the female. Could we add the Gothic as such to 'the line of evil'? Like the previous one, this question, though it sounds like a cliché, imposes itself on us immediately as we think of the ways in which the first wave Gothic was dismissed by its contemporary critics. Once again, Clery could be particularly useful here. Her consideration of civic humanism as an Augustan, conservative discourse aimed against finance capitalism and consumerism[212] sheds light on how Gothic fiction actually came to be debased for the drastic effect it allegedly had on women, and how it was itself codified as a representative of a new 'feminine' order of business. Among many things, Clery brings our attention to the fact that, as eighteenth-century critics rage about the Gothic peril to female readers and writers, they see more at stake than the woman's virtue. The woman becomes less an object of concern than a rhetorical figure here, embodying an ages' old link between the female and luxury.[213] For civic humanism, the female is indeed a disturbing other: maintaining the feudal manner of thinking about wealth, what the discourse represents as feminine is commerce, an epitome of which becomes Gothic fiction. Hence, for the 'aristocratic' patriarchy, the Gothic could, in a way, belong to 'the line of evil.'

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[210] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 19.
[211] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 24.
[212] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 7.
[213] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 101.

But what Clery's considerations make clear is yet another thing. For civic humanism, the female stands for "the excesses of economic self-interest;" but for bourgeois liberalism, it represents "virtues excluded from the sphere of commercial competition."[214]While the female is the other for the conservative, landed paterfamilias, and serves as a veiled representation for his another 'other,' which is the middle-class capitalist, it is simultaneously the capitalist's other as well. In the case of Williams' account, however, the bourgeois seems to be replaced by the Romantic. Indeed, the study internalises the paradigmatic assumption of the link between the Gothic and Romanticism to the point of seeing them as almost one. Rebellion is, consequently, emphasised where one could see the influence of (middle-class) 'conservatism.' Furthermore, as the author relies heavily on psychoanalysis, patriarchy seems to be brought down to a single denominator: The Law of the Father. Hence, the shift from the aristocratic order to the middle-class one is removed from sight.

This is related, in a way, to the question of history in the study. Early in her considerations, Williams complains that approaching the Gothic through classifying it into subcategories is unsatisfactory for, among other reasons, in this way the issue of the historical development of the genre is not addressed.[215] However, she dismisses history as insufficient to explain the Gothic thoroughly later on in her study.[216] From our perspective, this is felt perhaps most acutely as she contends that the surge of texts concentrating on the family plot in the late eighteenth century must have had something to do with historical changes in the family structure at that time, but immediately shuns socio-economic considerations in favour of analysing psychological effects of the changes.[217] As a result, she limits herself to the well-known assertion that since the Gothic proliferates at a certain period in history, it must reflect contemporary anxieties projected on a remote setting. In this case, the difference is that she grounds this assertion in Mark Turner's consideration of 'family' as a basic conceptual metaphor and takes the stance that our experience is regulated by family notions.[218]

The turn towards psychology and away from history results, at a crucial point, in Williams' peculiar way of reading Foucault. Speaking of family structure changes in the eighteenth as well as in the nineteenth century, one may easily think of Foucault's

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[214] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 103.
[215] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 17.
[216] She states, for instance, that "while history, as cause, undoubtedly accounts for some of the features of Gothic, it cannot account for them all." Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 91.
[217] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 87.
[218] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 88-89.

volume one of *The History of Sexuality*, and she indeed evokes the source as useful. What is to be of particular interest with regard to the Gothic seen as organised around the family plot are Foucault's notions of two kinds of deployment: of alliance and of sexuality. The birth of the deployment of sexuality coincides, in Foucault's periodization, with the birth of modernity. It is also strictly connected with the bourgeoisie and marks a distinction between the middle class and the old aristocracy. Foucault's states: "sexuality is originally, historically bourgeois;"[219] the bourgeoisie "converted the blue blood of the nobles into a sound organism and a healthy sexuality."[220] Thus, the deployment of alliance is occupied with preserving fixed statuses and family relations to ensure a particular way of the circulation of wealth, and is based upon stable rules of what is to be permitted and forbidden. By contrast, the deployment of sexuality is not concerned with preserving statuses, but constantly expands its area of power and control through shaping bodies. It is "concerned with the sensations of the body, the quality of pleasures, and the nature of impressions," and the producing and consuming body is one of the relays through which it connects with the economy.[221] The two, are however, not simply juxtaposed, but seem to be inescapably interconnected.

The connection is an intricate one, and refers to the way in which the deployment of sexuality utilises and incorporates the older system. It is constructed "around and on the basis of the deployment of alliance,"[222] and incorporates alliance's basic family axes of husband and wife, and parents and children relations. Thus, the family as a basic social cell becomes the place where sexuality is first and foremost incited, instead of thwarted, but at the same time, it remains a unit governed by law inherent in alliance. Hence, for instance, the insistence on the prohibition of incest, which – due to the highly sexualized character of the family – is seen as inherent in the family (being its "dreadful secret"[223]) and, simultaneously, becomes the object of the strictest ban. As Foucault notices, in this way, the law characteristic of alliance is retained within the dimension of sexuality, whose proliferating techniques of power are thus brought under jurisdiction, and pleasure enters alliance.[224]

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[219] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books), p. 127.
[220] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 126.
[221] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, pp. 106-107.
[222] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 107.
[223] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 109.
[224] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 108.

It is this interconnection of sexuality and alliance in the family cell that attracts Williams' attention. The obvious reason is of course Foucault's placing of the family at the centre of the new system of power, which manifests itself most visibly from the eighteenth century on. However, Williams indeed concentrates exclusively on the psychological effects of the emergence of a new deployment. Interestingly, as she evades the need to take account of the affiliation of sexuality with the bourgeoisie, she identifies alliance with neoclassicism, patriarchy, The Law of the Father and the line of good. Simultaneously, she views sexuality as underlying the Romantic revolt against the other system, and hence belonging to the line of evil. In her view, sexuality "[favours] the private perspective of the individual, sentient being."[225] Since both operate within the family, one imposing the strict rule of the Father, the other underscoring the *status quo* and transgressing the rules inherent in alliance, the result is a psychological tension: "a situation in which the demands of family, property, social order, and tradition conflict with the new idea that the desires of the private self should constitute the fundamental basis of private behavior, and even of institutional order."[226] As she moves on, she describes the family which combines the two deployments as "a structure ordered according to the hierarchical principles designed, among other things, to name and control the female [which] must also nurture sexual beings, who know and act according to their own desires."[227] As can be seen in the quotations, she views sexuality as capable of ensuring, in a sense, a greater freedom and, thus, constituting a threat to patriarchy, but, simultaneously, as still controlled by the patriarchal family structure. This is a paradoxical situation, in a sense recognized by Foucault as well (though we could argue that Foucault takes a slightly different perspective on the dimension of sexuality's threat).[228] As a result, the Gothic is defined "as a narrative built over a

[225] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 93.
[226] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 93.
[227] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 93.
[228] Sexuality is meant to be 'healthy', and 'rebellious' with regard to the power of blood, thus it positively generates both what is desirable and undesirable. However, it is not meant to be rebellious with regard to the bourgeoisie. Not every personal desire and desired behaviour is desirable for society which wishes to substitute the noble blood with healthy sex. Sexuality does produce the techniques which do oppose the notion of law as such, but from the perspective of the bourgeoisie these are to be seen rather as 'by-products', which indeed are threatening. Alliance allows to contain sexuality in the forms of law, but this is to serve the new ruling class, which is patriarchal, but 'healthy' sexuality also helps to reinforce patriarchy.

It seems Williams brings these by-products to the foreground, in a way, relying, in a typically paradigmatic manner, on the link between the Gothic and the Romantics. Consequently, the bourgeoisie are seen as one with the aristocracy, and the neoclassicism (Enlightenment) and hence, in Gothic fiction, they oppose themselves, their sexuality being their way (repressed, of course) of subversion. The clash between the Romanticism and the Enlightenment, the internal conflict of the bourgeoisie – these are all

cultural fault line—the point of conjunction between the discourses of alliance and sexuality, in Foucault's sense of those terms."[229] Through this narrative, the self – which is frequently the 'female other' – finds a means to express the conflict inherent in the clash of inner desires with the external rules.

On the one hand, such a reading of Foucault is plausible. The patriarchy, formerly inherent in feudal relations, is maintained and adapted to the needs of the bourgeoisie. Hence, to remind ourselves, the new jurisdiction maintains the law of coverture. Sexuality is seen here as capable of functioning on its own terms, indeed, as Foucault notes, traversing the laws which the conjunction with alliance imposes on it. Unchecked, the technologies of power generated alongside the rise of sexuality begin to counteract the very notion of law – but, consequently, they also need to be "recoded" in its forms.[230] We could see this, in a sense, also as a situation arising as a result of the discursive shift: the givens of the newly empowered discourse are not necessarily different from the givens of its predecessor. But, on the other hand, Williams devotes no space to the consideration of sexuality's class implications and function. Instead, she focuses on the deployment of sexuality as a trigger to the Romantic revolt. The consequence is atemporality assumed where it should seem we are discussing historically conditioned shifts: patriarchy and sexuality are distilled from the context of their functionality. Williams seems to perceive patriarchy as univocal and 'unchangeable,' released sexuality being its overt 'other' and opposite, which erases a number of subtleties, and she further simplifies the notion by organizing it around the eternal Name of the Father.

The un-changeability of patriarchy emerges as Williams rewrites Aristotelian lines of good and evil and places the deployment of alliance at the end of the former, putting the deployment of sexuality at the end of the latter.[231] This would not be possible but for the turn away from socio-economic considerations and towards psychology. While alliance is characteristic of aristocracy, and sexuality of the bourgeoisie, both aristocracy and the bourgeoisie are inherently structured around patriarchy. And even if Foucault supposes

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paradigmatic tenets which may operate here. Next, we have Freudian psychoanalysis which demands to trace internal conflicts. What is more, Freudian psychoanalysis is hardly Freudian without sexual repression. All in all, we may be tempted to suggest that Williams is incapable of escaping the repressive hypothesis – despite her recourse to Foucault.

[229] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 93.

[230] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 109.

[231] The new lines are as follows: (male) Father, house, univocal speech, signifier, Symbolic, conscious, horror, culture, deployment of Alliance; (female) Mother, secret room, written text, signified, Semiotic, unconscious, terror, nature, deployment of sexuality. Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 99.

that the deployment of sexuality might replace that of alliance in the future,[232] he nonetheless views it as incorporating the older system and tied to the system so that it may appear to be naturally grounded in law. By the way, the crucial role in the process of consolidating sexuality with alliance is ascribed by him to psychoanalysis.[233] The conflict between the demands of the two, manifesting itself in the family, is, inescapably, reconciled first by medicine, than by law and naturalised.

The emphasis on sexuality (the female, the other, the Romantic) as subverting and capable of functioning outside of alliance (the patriarchal, the neoclassical) and the elision of its socio-economic implications have their price. True, they give the Gothic a reason *to be*, and not a minor one, but central to the cultural development of the Western world from the eighteenth century to the present. Simultaneously, however, they preclude certain paths of reading a Gothic text favouring particular others. On a higher level, such an approach sexualises the Gothic permanently, following the assertion of psychoanalysis that family relations are permeated with desire. Thus, it again reorganises the boundaries instead of releasing one from the need to draw the line, for it immediately sweeps aside various themes and inscribed discourses that are characteristic of the Gothic, but not necessarily explicable through the psychological results of the internal clash between alliance and sexuality. On a lower level, every Gothic stock device – the typically Gothic spectre, to give an example – becomes a signal of a threat to patriarchy by definition. To reverse Williams' assertion, it is not that certain themes and characters become 'Gothic' as they start to be used as threatening the patriarchal family.[234] As we assume that the patriarchal family and the fissure in The Law of the Father lie at the heart of the Gothic, whatever scares in the book, has to somehow scare the patriarch.

The concern about both bringing the Gothic down to sexuality and representing the Gothic 'other' as always subverting the *status quo* is voiced in Baldick and Mighall. As they state, in much of the twentieth-century criticism, especially devoted to late nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, one may find declarations of a historicist-like attitude. This attitude, however, becomes unmasked as superficial as soon as we realise that the analysis focuses on the psychological dimension and relies on the *a priori*

[232] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 107.
[233] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 113.
[234] See Williams' discussion of the vampire theme, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 21-22.

assumption of the anxious bourgeoisie.[235] We may state that the same refers to the case of Williams. In fact, her assertion that a stock Gothic 'other' becomes a stock Gothic 'other' the very moment it is established in fiction as threatening the patriarchal family, which we have just reversed above, is an apt illustration of Baldick and Mighall's position that contemporary critics often depart from an "unproven" vantage point that "this 'oppressive' culture [i.e. the bourgeois culture] was terrified by its ideological 'Others'; and thus if the Gothic features the Other in demonic form, these demonic forms must reflect society's fears about the Other."[236] Williams' one-page-long discussion of the vampire as exemplifying the process of becoming 'Gothic' also could serve as an example in their discussion of the critical re-writing of Count Dracula.

For Baldick and Mighall, Gothic fiction concentrates on two types of anachronisms. One of them refers to a situation in which 'modernity' is misplaced in 'antiquity'; the other, to a situation in which 'antiquity' invades 'modernity.'[237] Dracula exemplifies the latter case. However, as Williams does not distinguish between 'antiquity' and 'modernity' embodied in patriarchy, but rather views patriarchy as constant, for her Dracula automatically exemplifies the line of evil and the other, "a specifically sexual threat that could undermine Western culture itself."[238] Thus, he is also automatically linked with the female, and confirmation is found in the immediate associations he rises: "blood, darkness, death, and monstrous, unspeakable, unsanctified reproduction."[239] Notably, we should not assume that his sexuality or these traits make him a part of the Aristotelian 'evil line.' Since patriarchy is atemporal and, in such a form, occupies the line of good – and in the novel it is represented by the bourgeois Crew of Light – Dracula, being an adversary, must be on the other side. The remaining conclusions are inescapable if we wish to hold to the idea of two lines as embodying the, again, atemporal categories of otherness in the Western culture, and we insist on the binary pair of 'male/female' as the basis on which other categories rest.

This is an only superficial sorting out of the Count's affiliation. What is explained away is the fact that Dracula is *alliance*, just as he is *Father*, or a paterfamilias, and his blood is the blue blood of the nobles. His sexuality is thus not a healthy bourgeois

[235] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 222.
[236] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 222.
[237] Baldick and Robert Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 220.
[238] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 21. One could object that it is not true that Williams fails to recognise Dracula as an anachronism. She views the vampire as the Freudian Father who predates the cultural order as known to the civilised Westerners. However, this theme is quickly abandoned.
[239] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 22.

sexuality; from the perspective of Foucault's periodization, it is not sexuality at all. It could rather represents what Foucault calls "the combined figures of an alliance gone bad and an abnormal sexuality."[240] What else is Lucy the vampire, sucking infants' blood, than an extreme incarnation of "the mother beset by murderous obsessions"[241]? Or to put it better still, Dracula's sexuality could embody the typically middle-class representation of the aristocrat as lustful, immoral, and dedicated to gratifying carnal desires, thus spoiling the body. In both cases, however, the trick is that he is not in line with the female. As an aristocrat, he is not the 'other' of patriarchy as such, but an exemplary of the long beaten *ancient regime* as seen through the bourgeois eyes. Drawing an analogy with Clery, we might assume that the clash over women, taking place in the novel, is an element conditioned by the bourgeois discourse in which the woman is an exemplar. If that is the case, the fight is actually about much more than family relations (this issue is actually quite interesting and we shall return to it shortly).

Thus, we may realise that there is a fault in Williams' line of reasoning at this point. IF it were not for the psychological perspective, her reading of Dracula would be self-contradictory. Moving on, we may also observe, by the way, how the point from which she departs actually allows her to choose between available interpretations suggested by the psychoanalytical line of reasoning. If, as she states, Stoker accidentally foretold in *Dracula* Freud's story of patricide from *Totem and Taboo* (1912), then her own reading of the great vampire as "the terrible father figure" who nonetheless "*represents* the female"[242] could be re-read were it not for the immediate assertion that patriarchy has one single denominator (men in the novel) and all that is against it must be aligned with the female. Strangely enough, if we insist on Stoker's unconscious ability to foresee Freud, we may also see Dracula as the specter of the father arising from the grave to regain the power over women and punish the murderous sons. Again, in such a reading, there are two *statuses quo* in conflict, and the whole order built around The Law of the Father is in danger. But from both perspectives, of the guilty sons and the Father-specter, women *belong* to men; they pass from hands to hands, or are all in the hands of one man.

Another thing is that, indeed, what is regarded, in a discourse centred on men's hegemony, as undesirable will quite probably be represented in 'feminine' terms. This

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[240] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 110.
[241] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 110.
[242] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 22.

is exactly the case of civic humanism discussed by Clery. It may be, thus, the case, that 'evil' in *Dracula* is shown as linked with the governing discursive representation of femininity.[243] However, this does not mean that the vampire will immediately have the same status as the female, even if both are 'others.' There is, in Williams's analyses, something which makes one think of a problem with metaphor; something which at times makes us notice she resembles Clery in her considerations, but only on the surface. Following Clery, we see that much in culture around the Gothic boom was discussed in terms of women, their chastity and their proper place. Consequently, much should also be represented through familial metaphors. But metaphors are metaphors because they point to something beyond their immediate signification (which, of course, is not to say that their immediate signification is without significance). In her use of the family metaphor, Williams seems to look in the opposite direction – as if, since our experience can be told in the familial metaphors, this meant that the family is indeed what our experience is about. This is a Freudian point of view, of course, and, for instance, Baldick and Mighall show how it imposes itself on her interpretation when she is dealing with the typically Gothic representation of Catholicism.[244]

The patriarchal family is established in *Art of Darkness* as one fixed, atemporal coordinate. The other one, as should have perhaps become clear by now, is the organisation of 'others' in the Western culture, to which Williams constantly returns. The way in which those become established as constant and unchangeable is exemplified by the sorting out of the Burkean sublime. As Clery notices, the sublime's opposite is the beautiful, and the contemporary critics point out that both are gendered, as male and female respectively.[245] The same is referred to by Williams, who states that "[Burke's] association of the sublime with the masculine and the beautiful with the feminine is virtually explicit."[246] Simultaneously, she nonetheless emphasises that the sublime can be seen as incorporating several of the qualities that belong to the line of evil. Thus, it is as if it were evoked by the culturally female. Consequently, Williams asserts that "'the sublime' is […] a 'sublimation' of the culturally female."[247] What is to confirm this assertion is the observation that the subject perceiving the sublime is placed

[243] Williams writes that "Stoker's narrative implies that 'evil' is intimately connected with 'the female.'" Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 22.
[244] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 218.
[245] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 104. Clery draws from Frances Ferguson, 'The Sublime of Edmund Burke, or the Bathos of Experience', Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* and Vivien Jones (ed.), *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*. See footnote 27, p. 192.
[246] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 77.
[247] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 78.

in the culturally female position. As a result, the sublime is established as "smuggling into the Symbolic […] the repressed maternal."[248] Sound as it may seem, this reasoning rests, however, on the assumption of the unchangeability of the binary pairs with regard to the governing male/female opposites. Additionally, as we may notice, Williams mentions in passing that such an understanding of the sublime undoes the need for establishing the difference between the Gothic and the Romantic varieties.[249]

Williams' theory of the Gothic visibly rests on many of the typically paradigmatic tenets. The affinity of the Gothic and Romanticism, the anxious 'bourgeois' (though here not named by class), Gothic fiction's atavistic attitude towards its own present – or at least its expression of the tension resulting from the inculcation of conflicting modes of desire – these are all the givens of a theory of the Gothic as developed by the differentiation paradigm. All of these givens are notably underlain by a conjunction of the need to vindicate the Gothic and psychoanalytical methodology. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, we may observe that these givens are here no longer to be seen as determining the rising action, climax and resolution of the act of interpretation, in a way. The notions of patriarchy and the Aristotelian lines, here seen as fixed, may be perceived by us as not necessarily illuminating the Gothic, and hence referred to, but rather as chosen for they seem to confirm and reinforce the already established truths of the Gothic theory. They also allow for its further elaboration in the formerly assumed direction. Williams' insistence on remaining in the realm of psychology as more appropriate than a recourse to history may be seen in the same light. Shunning history in favour of psychology shuts down the possibilities to divert from the pre-established direction of analysis; it secures both interpretation, and the theory itself. As a result, we may observe that while the contemporary criticism re-works the Gothic using various discourses, its own discourse expands incorporating an additional grid: the concept of the theory of the Gothic. This theory emerges at the point of convergence between various discourses, but in time gains an impetus to function independently.

This independence may be sensed in Williams' application of psychoanalysis. On the one hand, she draws heavily on Freud, Kristeva and Lacan when their assertions come in hand. On the other hand, she makes it clear that psychoanalysis is itself a child of its own times. At times, as in the chapter "Male Gothic: Si(g)ns of the Father," she

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[248] The Symbolic invaded by the repressed is, again, a psychoanalytical concept. The analysis of the sublime is preceded with a consideration of Freud's the uncanny and its relation to terror and the sublime, and Julia Kristeva's abject and its relation to horror. Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 79.
[249] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 79.

observes that psychoanalysis is occupied primarily with the masculine, and hence patriarchal, point of view (especially when it comes to gaze as a means of establishing one's identity).[250] Elsewhere, she views it from a poststructuralist perspective to highlight its own organisation around the concept of the other, interestingly, inherent in "the post-Enlightenment culture."[251] Yet elsewhere, we may find statements such as the one that "Freud […] may serve to represent the most advanced views of the late nineteenth century."[252]Thus, psychoanalysis functions in the study as a tool for analysis and, at the same time, as an illustration of the ongoing processes, so to speak. What is most interesting, however, is the fact that Williams sees it as itself a narrative which has something in common with the Gothic.

Williams is not the first to notice the similarity. In the first chapter, we already evoked Miles as pointing to it. However, in Williams' understanding of the affinity between the Gothic and psychoanalysis, the latter is embedded in the former entirely. This exemplifies, to some extent, the stance typically taken by psychoanalytic criticism with regard to the matter. The stance could be illustrated with Michelle A. Massé's position. For Massé, both the Gothic and psychoanalysis follow a historical development, and are socio-culturally conditioned but, most importantly, they have a common source in "cultural unease."[253] We could say that this statement both reflects the hermeneutic circle of psychoanalytical reading, and betrays the emergence of the Gothic as theory and a mode of interpretation as such. First, you need to identify the cultural unease, anxiety, irrationality, etc. as the Gothic fabric with the help of psychoanalysis. Then, you are able to see the Gothic and psychoanalysis as cognate, not as one, or related to each other as are a case study and the method of analysis, but as related (the object is constructed, together with its materiality). Thus, Massé assumes that psychoanalysis is not an objective mode of interpretation which unlocks the Gothic, but still illuminates it, and the more so if we assume that the Gothic influenced psychoanalysis[254] (the object is interwoven in the net of 'natural' evolution). Williams' reading is one caught up in the vicious circle of hermeneutics comprising both turns of the circle – constructing the Gothic as grounded in the same internal conflict as

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[250] See Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 108-114.
[251] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 19.
[252] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 22.
[253] Michelle A. Massé, "Psychoanalysis and the Gothic," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 230.
[254] Massé, "Psychoanalysis and the Gothic," pp. 230-231.

psychoanalysis, and then using it to explain psychoanalysis *and* simultaneously confirm it.

It is suggestive that, throughout the study, Williams both utilises the teachings of psychoanalysis and simultaneously shows it to be defective. This illustrates just well enough how a discourse works. However, Williams is particularly interesting in this respect. In her final chapter, she asserts that psychoanalysis is a limited model for an illuminating analysis, a grid which produces unsatisfactory results, especially from the feminist perspective.[255] Yet this is meant only to strengthen the relationship between it and Gothic fiction. The limited capability of psychoanalysis for illuminating the Gothic is to result from the fact that psychoanalysis is Freud's own version of a Gothic narrative. She states: "perhaps we have it backward. Instead of using Freud to read Gothic, we should use Gothic to read Freud."[256] This is not, however, the same claim as the one made by neohistoricist critics, such as Miles or Mighall, who would then venture to examine the historical (and discursive) context of both. Williams treats her statement literally, dedicating a number of pages to showing how the Gothic undoes the boundary between literary and nonliterary, how Freud utilises its conventions and how his narrative (a *grand* narrative, we should add) may be seen as incorporating both Male and Female Gothic plots as defined by her. In the end, she reaches the conclusion that "the similarities between the Freudian model of the psyche and the conventions of Gothic fiction are best understood as parallel expressions of an Enlightenment frame of mind, which is both the last phase of patriarchy and the first of something else not yet articulated."[257] From the historicist perspective, such a statement could be perfectly sound. Yet in this case, it is spectralising in effect.

The spectralisation results from the fact that the Gothic is, nonetheless, constructed as an object according to psychoanalytical tenets. In spite of the effort to address historical shifts and rifts, and the adopted feminist perspective – which could be particularly promising for the historical illumination of the category[258] – psychology still imposes itself on the definition. Thus, the Gothic is not only a sum of a particular set of true and false statements, a set which is exclusive as much as it expands beyond the previously established area of a literary category in both directions of the past and the future, incorporating a new range of texts institutionally established as 'high art.' It

[255] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 242.
[256] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, pp. 242-243.
[257] Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 248.
[258] See Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic criticism," p. 227.

becomes its own spectre. Williams' reading of Freud 'via' her construction of the Gothic proves this spectre to be perfectly able of what spectres typically do – haunting. Her Gothic is indeed a theory: aspiring to the institution, equipped with its own poetics, and enforcing its own way of reading. Thereby, the discourse explains away yet more efficiently what it cannot assimilate or account for.

Focusing on socio-economic context, the very one Williams dismisses as less relevant, could clarify many points in her argument. It could, also, bring to the light many discursive rifts and gaps. Yet the assumed equality of approaches, discussed at the beginning of this part of the dissertation, assumes a different criterion for verification: the indefinability, the multiplicity of contexts and subtexts, the blurring of boundaries, emphasised in Rintoul's review. And this is striking. It is as if indefinability, which results from approaching the Gothic from positions which in fact predetermine its shape – indeed, from shopping for the Gothic and decorating the castle with whatever suits the critics – was taken to be the sign of whether one defines the Gothic 'correctly' or not. If we consider the possible definitions that have been discussed here, we will not find it surprising that it is so difficult to grasp the Gothic, for it has been rewritten so many times, that it is compelled to constitute an astounding palimpsest of voices and perspectives, a true discursive mixture. Consequently, it ought to be as far as possible from a 'grand narrative.' However, the equality of approaches results in inclusiveness which allows for the most varied coexistence, and further mixing, of the defining structures. Accidentally, or unnoticeably, it also allows us to pass over the fact that the in-definition of the Gothic has its own, internal order.

Chapter VI
Gothic Fiction of the Eighteenth Century and the Narrative of Marginalisation

In Chapter V we have analysed one feature of Gothic fiction which is often emphasised in the contemporary conceptions of the mode, namely, the mode's indefinability. The following chapter deals with the assumption of the Gothic's marginalisation, which is often shown to originate in the eighteenth-century virulent criticism of the popular novels/romances. As the differentiation paradigm poses, contemporary Gothic criticism liberates the Gothic from the literary margin. At the same time, however, the value of Gothic fiction is established, according to a psychoanalytical logic, on the basis of its 'waste' status – its representing what culture abjects in the process of identity formation. Establishing the cultural significance of Gothic fiction in such a way, paradoxically, results in fixing it on the margin in the sense that the critics conceptualise the mode as inherently marginal by 'nature.' On the contrary, we attempt at showing that the Gothic is not a mode that used to be marginal in the eighteenth century due to its assumed abjected status or oppositional stance towards the *status quo* and social order. This is because the Gothic utilises as much as participates in a number of contemporary discourses, socio-cultural, political *and* (what is often overlooked) economic. In this way, it takes part (perhaps marginal indeed, but still representative of the general changes taking place in the eighteenth century) in the constitution of the bourgeois order through positive production in the period following a major socio-political and, indeed, cultural shift. This makes the mode a particularly eighteenth-century and middle-class literary phenomenon.[1]

6.1. Historical Refashioning: Liberation of the Margin

If we were to adopt the perspective of the differentiation paradigm, we ought to assume the long-lasting marginalisation of the Gothic to be significant first and foremost for its 'injustice.' On a certain level, we may concur with this. If we recognise the Gothic to emerge at a time of socio-cultural shift, and we assume it somehow

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[1] This chapter takes as its point of departure the ideas contained in my article "The Marginality of the Gothic: A Reconsideration." See Agnieszka Kliś, "The Marginality of the Gothic: A Reconsideration," *Text Matters*, no. 2 (2012), pp. 97-114.

embodies this shift, then dismissing it as a literary curiosity, unworthy of 'serious' studies and scholars, should seem to be harmful. Logically, we should take it for granted that, owing to its immersion in the shifting discourses of its contemporary times, Gothic fiction may tell us a lot about at least the history of literary categories and their connection with economy or politics.

Nietzsche would probably agree with the maxim "History is written by the victors." So would Foucault, and so shall we. It is hardly questionable that the Gothic as a concept had not enjoyed a widely recognised position in the literary histories until late twentieth-century gave it some recognition. It had to take a change in the critical approach to literature for Gothic studies to flourish. However, as the discipline enjoys its institutionalised status, an inquiry into how it sorts out the past in which it was itself 'marginal' may take us in two directions.

One of them is the question of the extent to which the negligence of the Gothic impoverished our understanding of the processes which shaped the modern concepts of literature. And, of course, we may consider the 'impoverishment' as functional in the 'grand old' critical discourse. If it ascribed the Gothic a minor position, we should expect this was a position in a wider hierarchy, organised so that a specific equilibrium could be maintained, and a particular representation of literary history upheld. The other direction, in which we are now about to turn, is related to the question of how the contemporary criticism, stressing its own difference, rewrites history for its own aims.

As we have seen in the first chapter, in the history written by the contemporary criticism, often, even if not always, the notion of marginalisation plays a crucial role. Interestingly, if it does not, the account is often less interested in drawing a clear and divisive line between the past and present scholarship. On the other hand, if it does, differentiation is usually emphasised. What this indicates is that marginality and marginalisation represent notions which play a significant discursive part; they are concepts with an assigned, well-defined function within the discourse of the contemporary Gothic criticism. If we remember the first chapter, we may observe that in the paradigmatic histories the contemporary Gothic criticism has not *solely* moved the Gothic closer to the centre of the institutionalised critical inquiry after a time of negligence. Once we recall Williams' Gothic myths of the black sheep or the skeleton in the closet, or Kilgour's metaphor of the New Criticism's shackles, we shall remember that Gothic criticism is represented as having *liberated* the mode. Of course, this means that the Gothic had to be previously 'constrained,' 'limited' so that it conformed to its

ascribed place in the literary hierarchy. By representing its own history in such a manner, the contemporary Gothic criticism in a way inscribes its practice into a wider cultural project of contesting the 'grand' discourses of 'truth' as oppressing discourses.[2]

Participation in the wave of liberation, both of the Gothic and the critic, is visible, or at least traceable, not only in more general accounts which tend to comment on the necessary changes in the critical discourse (think of e.g. Botting's introduction to the New Critical Idiom's *Gothic*). There is, for instance, a detectable sense of personal as much as social liberation from constraints in Nina Auerbach's introduction to *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995). Here, we begin with the critic's recounting of her own teenage interest in the 1930s horror movies as a way of fending off the identity of a popular girl in the 1950s, "a destiny of girdles, spike heels, and approval," and finish with her recollecting how her paper was dismissed at a Women's Studies symposium for it was about horror and undeath, both allegedly incompatible with the 'real' threats for women.[3] Thus, we may see her personal account as an illustration of the Gothic (in this case, vampire) critic's journey for recognition. And we may assume the journey has been successful. Auerbach states she is "writing in part to reclaim [vampires] for a female tradition, one that has not always known its allies,"[4] and this is clearly seen as a beneficial advancement.

Much of the contemporary criticism seems to set itself a similar goal. The question remains, however, whether the reclaiming is a 'true,' or historically justified one, or whether the critics (in general, not necessarily Auerbach herself), all in all, consciously or not, tend to slip into carrying out the practice of congratulating themselves on their personal, (post)modern liberation by rewriting the Gothic. The practice, described in precisely those harsh terms, is discussed by Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall as characterising much of the contemporary critical studies. Congratulating oneself upon one's personal liberation from "the dungeons of Victorian sexual repression or social hierarchy,"[5] as the passage goes, designates a biased reading of the Gothic which is

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[2] We have already discussed the role of contesting grand narratives in the overall Gothic criticism of the late twentieth century. According to Baldick and Mighall, due to what we may call its primary occupation with contesting the grand narratives of the past, 'Gothic Criticism' becomes an "instance of mainstream modernist, postmodernist, and left-formalist campaign against nineteenth-century literary realism and its alleged backwardness." Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 210.
[3] Nina Auerbach, Introduction to *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 3-4.
[4] Auerbach, Introduction to *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, p. 4.
[5] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 210.

informed by the critic's own contemporary discourses, and not on a consideration of the text's historical context. What results is a rewriting of the Gothic, its recodification according to a code alien to the mode's own background. As the authors suggest, the practice takes place due to the fact that "the cultural politics of modern critical debate grant to vindicators of the marginalised or repressed a special licence to evade questions of artistic merit."[6] Yet, we could notice that the case is not restricted to the question of artistic merit as such. The postmodern critical debate in general places much emphasis on the scrutiny of the margin and its vindication.

If the marginalisation of the Gothic had a starting point, this point was the mode's very birth, followed by an outcry of the eighteenth-century critics. Of course, Gothic novels did not vanish from bookshelves in consequence, and neither did criticism immediately fall silent about them. Quite on the contrary, the process of marginalising the mode should appear to be a gradual one. In the following chapter, we shall have a look at a brief history of Gothic criticism, represented by two texts, one written by Fred Botting as a preface for a collective volume, the other co-authored by Botting and Dale Townshed, which oscillate around the concept of the Gothic margin and its formation, and put a particular emphasis on differentiation.

Our starting point will be doubts raised by Baldick and Mighall's counter-history with regard to the common representation of Gothic fiction. A major difference between their perception of the Gothic and the one proposed by the above-mentioned authors is the mode's attitude towards its own historical socio-cultural background. We may see that Baldick and Mighal strive to base their accounts on historicist scrutiny, just as Botting and Townshend. However, while the former pair of critics stresses the overall 'compliance,' or 'conservatism' of the Gothic with regard to its own discursive background (and it is worth stressing that, in a certain way, both words in inverted commas seem to be inappropriate if we apply those critics' perspective), the latter one is obliged, by the adopted viewpoint, to focus rather on what makes the Gothic stand in the opposition to that background. To remind ourselves, for Baldick and Mighall the Gothic is primarily a type of bourgeois fiction, characterised by its specific use of topography and history, Protestant rejection and satirising of Catholic superstition and abuse, and frequent anachronisms which serve to confirm its modernity and illustrate its embracing of the prevalent middle-class Protestant/Whig values.[7] By contrast, Botting

[6] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 210.
[7] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," pp. 211, 216, 217-218.

and Townshend, especially in the general introduction to *Gothic*, propose a reversed understanding of the mode's engagement with the contemporary discourses, focusing primarily on the rejection of Gothic fiction by the contemporary and subsequent critics, and the possible reasons for it. In consequence, we are presented with two apparently incompatible versions of the very same literary phenomenon: one stressing the Gothic's belonging to the discursive order of the times, the other emphasising the outrage it provoked by its alleged breaches of that order as a reason for resulting marginalisation. The incompatibility arises from the fact that each of those versions approaches the Gothic from a different premise: one attempts to look at content, and the other at reception. In the course of analysis, we shall see how the latter version has been structured around the assumptions characteristic of the contemporary critical discourse on the Gothic, making use of its theory-established tenets and, consequently, passing over the possible historical discursive inflections of the mode.

6.2. The Functionality of the Margin

As it has been mentioned above, marginality appears to be a functional notion in the paradigmatic history of Gothic criticism. Clearly, it enables us to draw a line between the contemporary and older scholarship on the one hand, and adds extra value to the scrutiny of Gothic fiction on the other. At the same time, however, it also creates a space for a re-working of the conception of the Gothic which goes beyond assigning Gothic fiction the status of a worthy object of study.

One way of illustrating how ascribing the marginal status to the Gothic entails its reconceptualization is, as one might suspect, by turning to psychoanalytical Gothic theory. We might say that Gothic fiction was first successfully vindicated as culturally significant by psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century. Michelle A. Massé (trying to vindicate psychoanalysis as an appropriate tool for the scrutiny of the Gothic at the dawn of the twenty-first century) points to the special significance that 'popular' modes have for psychoanalytical scrutiny and thus the understanding of our own psyche in general. She writes:

> Freud […] identified writers of what we would now call 'popular culture' texts as providing particularly fruitful objects for psychoanalytic investigation, because it is 'the less pretentious authors of novels, romances, and short stories, who nevertheless have the

> widest and most eager circle of readers of both sexes.' In such texts, the 'secondary elaboration' through which we reshape primal material seemed less densely wrought, the wishful, forbidden desires more clearly evident. The enthusiasm of readers for such genres further underscores their power, a power often nervously depreciated by relegating them to the realm of 'low' culture.[8]

We may notice that such a representation of the Gothic runs counter to the attempts at vindicating the mode on account of its poetic and Romantic affiliations. Nonetheless, it is seen here as enough to grant Gothic fiction a recognisable socio-cultural status. Unelaborated, popular texts offer a more fruitful investigation into both the writer's and the reading audience's psychological states, or, in more general terms, the culturally hidden – repressed – content. Thus, on the one hand, we have Gothic fiction as 'popular,' which means here less elaborated in a *positive* sense. On the other hand, we have the Gothic as something *powerful*, and thus *feared* – as a consequence of which it becomes *marginalised* as low culture. We may see in these assertions the basis for some of the strongest paradigmatic axioms: the Gothic as a carrier of unspeakable desires, as powerful for culturally subversive by nature, as feared by the institutionalised mainstream. What makes the Gothic attractive and valuable here is precisely the fact that it allows the repressed to surface – acting like the "rubbish bins" of culture, which hoard what the culture throws off[9] – and since it does, it is necessarily marginalised, cast out, or abjected. Marginalisation is here as much a result as a symptom and confirmation of the (dangerous) psychological load carried by the Gothic text.

At the same time, however, as Baldick and Mighall would point out, the value of the Gothic is established at the expense of reconceptualising the mode in purely psychological terms. There seems to be little space left for the consideration of what other reasons might contribute to the marginalisation of the mode. Similarly, there is hardly any place left for the consideration of how the Gothic participated in the culture which spawned it. Or, to put it differently, both the question of other, say socio-political reasons, and that of participation in the *status quo*, if tackled from this perspective, must be subordinated to the conception of the Gothic as carrying the power of the repressed, and hence, at least to some extent, feared due to the danger it poses to the coherently formed social subject. There is virtually no possible option for establishing the Gothic

[8] Michelle A. Massé, "Psychoanalysis and the Gothic," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), 2008, p. 229.
[9] Fred Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, ed. Fred Botting (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. 3.

as above all ‘positively’ middle-class and embracing the middle-class values, and hence reinforcing identity, personal, social or national, rather than pointing to rifts within it.

We could paraphrase what has just been said in Foucauldian terms. If we adopt the psychoanalytical perspective, repression automatically becomes the focus. This is demanded by the overall discursive framework. Yet power operates upon the subject not simply through repression, but also by positive mechanisms. For instance, as Foucault states, "‘Sexuality’ is far more of a *positive product* of power than power was ever repression of sexuality."[10] In volume one of *The History of Sexuality*, we read:

> In any case, the hypothesis of a power of repression exerted by our society on sex for economic reasons appears to me quite inadequate […] We are dealing not nearly so much with a negative mechanism of exclusion as with the operation of a subtle network of discourses, special knowledges, pleasures, and powers. At issue is not a movement bent on pushing rude sex back into some obscure and inaccessible region, but on the contrary, a process that spreads it over the surface of things and bodies, arouses it, draws it out and bids it speak, implants it in reality and enjoins it to tell the truth […].[11]

Hence, Foucault's method of focusing on the positive mechanisms of power: "rather than assuming a generally acknowledged repression, and an ignorance measured against what we are supposed to know, we must begin with these *positive mechanisms*, insofar as they produce knowledge, multiply discourse, induce pleasure, and generate power; we must investigate the conditions of their emergence and operation, and try to discover how the related facts of interdiction or concealment are distributed with respect to them."[12] If, instead, we concentrate exclusively on repression, such positive mechanisms remain unnoticed.

This is not to say that we may unproblematically use ‘Gothic fiction’ as a substitute for ‘sexuality,’ and then apply Foucault to our discussion. Not all of the above will be immediately applicable to the Gothic; a mere rewriting of the passage, using ‘the Gothic’ instead of ‘sexuality,’ would probably not take us far, at least not much further than the similar practice of rewriting Derrida, mentioned earlier in this dissertation. What we may, however, find immediately useful is the emphasis Foucault puts on the

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[10] Alessandro Fontana, Pasquale Pasquino, an interview with Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *The Foucaultian Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 62. Emphasis mine.
[11] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books), p. 72.
[12] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 73. Emphasis mine.

positive operation of power. Surely, concentrating on repression will automatically set aside any possible 'positive mechanism' that we might otherwise trace while dealing with the Gothic.

The positive mechanisms, if there were any, would have to link with the assumption that the Gothic is a middle-class form. If it indeed represents such a form, then it must fall within the field of practices used to "produce knowledge, multiply discourses, induce pleasure, and generate power." In the least, it ought to situate itself within the already established area of knowledge and order of discourses, and promote them somehow. Interestingly, this should not preclude critical outrage, as we shall attempt at demonstrating. It may, however, undermine the value of the Gothic as established by the repression-centred criticism, and, from a more general perspective, allow us to reconceptualise the notion of the Gothic's marginality, at least to a certain degree.

To turn now to our own case studies, let us consider the first of the two above-mentioned sources, Botting's preface to the English Association's *Essays and Studies 2001* volume *The Gothic*. The preface is interesting primarily for its general tone of self-scrutiny. Botting evokes the paradigmatic history, pretty much similar to the one he himself presented in his New Critical Idiom's *Gothic*, to ultimately cast it into doubt by the end of the text. The history of Gothic criticism he offers us illustrates well the functionality of the notion of marginality in the differentiation paradigm discourse. What needs to be stressed, however, is the fact that the account as such appears to distance itself from the typical theoretical analysis, as if in direct response to Baldick and Mighall's criticism of the state of affairs in the field of Gothic studies.[13] The tension revealed in the meantime points to the discursive framework of Gothic criticism and its lasting influence on the critics and their standpoint. We could propose that, as a consequence, the history evoked by the text invites and might embrace the notion of positive power mechanisms, but, while still working under the discursive givens of Gothic criticism, it can do so only partially.

The influence of the paradigmatic discursive assertions can be observed while Botting discusses the cultural status – and value – of Gothic fiction. Having mentioned the long lasting critical neglect and denial, Botting pinpoints precisely the qualities which make the mode worthy of serious attention, and these are its 'bad' qualities:

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[13] There are explicit references to "Gothic criticism" in e.g. Elisabeth Bronfen and David Punter's and Robert Mile's contributions to *The Gothic*. See Punter and Bronfen, "Gothic: Violence, Trauma and the Ethical," p. 7, and Miles, "Abjection, Nationalism and the Gothic," p. 47.

> No one has ever claimed that gothic texts offer examples of the best that has been thought and said in the world. More often the contrary. Indeed, it is as explorations of mysterious supernatural energies, immense natural forces, and deep, dark human fears and desires that gothic texts apparently found their appeal. Emerging at a time when enlightenment reason, science and empiricism were in the ascendancy, the attraction of Gothic darkness, passion, superstition or violence came from prohibitions and taboos, and was not the positive expression of hidden natural instincts and wishes: the newly dominant order produced, policed and maintained its antitheses, opposites enabling the distinction and discrimination of its own values and anxieties.[14]

Consequently, marginality becomes the key to the usefulness of Gothic fiction. The today's critics engaged in the study of the Gothic become cultural rubbish-diggers, their role almost as subversive as the Gothic negative material. They are not "[guardians] of taste and morality," but rather "[analysts] of the currents and consistencies of specific cultural self-representations," of "the negative represented by and in Gothic texts," and examine culture by bringing to our attention the fact that what it excludes is as telling as what it wishes to embrace[15] Clearly, being the opposite, the antithesis of order, and representing tabooed passions, is what makes the Gothic a precious artefact today. Its cultural status, in turn, may be seen as confirmed by the anxiety about its negative effect upon the readers with which it was initially welcomed, and the mode's overall marginalisation.[16]

Quite predictably, the description which grounds the value of the Gothic in its marginality, not to say liminality, is immediately followed by the recollection of the cutting-off moment in criticism. Botting speaks of the transvaluation of Gothic fiction in both writing and criticism in the second half of the twentieth century, "a curious dynamic" which made the Gothic a central affair.[17] Yet he also highlights that it is the modern Gothic fiction and criticism that chime with the imperative to love one's own monster, and that, at the end of the twentieth century, both the Gothic and criticism are affected with the drive towards liberation, be it social, political, or cultural.[18] With these remarks, the preface turns towards self-critique and the final call for self-scrutiny and reconsideration.

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[14] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, pp. 2-3.
[15] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, pp. 2-3.
[16] Cp. Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 2.
[17] See Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, pp. 3-4.
[18] See Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, pp. 3-4.

Consequently, what becomes particularly interesting in this account is the visible 'instability' of the ground on which the critic seems to be standing. There is a clear realisation that a reconsideration of the field's givens is required, but at the same time the critic's background, from which he continues to write, is put into doubt. To give an example, we can see that, on the one hand, the account dismisses 'depth psychology' and stresses the tendency of psychoanalysis to misperceive its own applicability with regard to the Gothic. We might notice that this could represent simply a discarding of the older, more naïve application of Freud, characteristic of criticism until the 1970s. At the same time, however, the preface names psychoanalysis explicitly only as it discusses the dangers of theory to critical reading. In tune with Mighall and as if referring to Miles, Botting states, for example, that "[p]refiguring Freud as much as Gothic writing does […] there is a case to be made for reversing the direction of influence so that psychoanalysis becomes an effect of 150 years of monster making."[19] Still, on the other hand, it is difficult not to associate the idiom through which the validity of the Gothic is established with psychoanalysis, and not to notice a parallel between the cultural status of the Gothic thus construed and its status as presented by Massé. As in Massé's article, here, the Gothic is not uplifted thanks to its Romantic affiliation, but on the grounds of its being the rejected, or repressed, of a socio-cultural order; "waste,"[20] which nonetheless has the power of giving a full picture of the very order, the order's own preferred and propagated image, and the repression through which this image could be achieved.[21]

This illustrates the tension which arises as the critics strive to reassess their own field, the clash between the consciousness of misreading[22] and the depth to which the givens of Gothic theory have become rooted in the field. Simultaneously, what we may notice is the influence of the once established theoretical framework as preventing a reformulation of the theory from another angle: a reformulation based not on repression, but on the positive mechanism of power. If we return to the passage in which the Gothic is presented as primarily valuable for its endorsement of the negative material rejected by the dominant order, we may observe how this takes place.

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[19] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 5.

[20] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 3.

[21] As Botting writes, "texts of the past, critically reassessed or rewritten, also begin to disclose strange new truths about the development of modern identity." Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 4.

[22] Botting says, for example: "While Gothic texts seem to offer themselves freely as endorsements of the veracity of any type of critical reading, their ready compliance occludes resistances to an entanglements of easy attributions of meaning." Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 4.

For all its psychoanalytical idiom, the passage curiously invites a more history-oriented study of socio-political circumstances. Especially while considering the statement that the Gothic did not use to be a positive expression of natural desires for 'the newly dominant order produced, policed and maintained its antitheses, opposites enabling the distinction and discrimination of its own values and anxieties,' we may have an impression that Freud somehow meets Foucault. What this statement refers to is, clearly, the assertion that the Gothic was a necessary cornerstone for the 'dominant order's,' or culture's, negative definition. In the history of Gothic criticism as described here, this negative definition is construed primarily through a psychoanalytically-related model of identity formation through some sort of repression or abjection.[23] Hence, the critic becomes a rubbish digger. However, the negative definition may also be seen as a positive mechanism (and, up to a point, it is seen so here as well, a fact to which we shall return shortly). In a sense, it generates both the given cultural order and – quite discursively – its opposites, not so much by repressing them, but by delineating them carefully, giving them concrete shape and substance. Interestingly, the very terms used in the passage to describe the 'handling' of opposites by the dominant order – producing, policing and maintaining – point towards such an understanding of the negative definition process. They are, however, interpreted in accordance with the already established discursive framework: the dominant order is repressive, prohibits certain desires, and guards taboos.

To define, then, the Gothic as "the worst that has been thought and said"[24] is to depart from a pre-formed assumption, which may be at least partly traced back to psychoanalytical criticism. What is more, clearly, the negative qualities of the mode are seen as the warrant that the mode is worth studying. Yet, in this way, the marginality of the Gothic, the basis for its today's 'glamorous' status, proves to be a paradoxical construct if we consider the drive towards differentiation from the earlier, negligent or repressive, criticism. That is because to treat Gothic fiction as 'waste,' is actually to adopt, and adapt, the perspective of criticism which once shared the discourse with the dominant order that construed the Gothic as "demonstrably unacceptable."[25] If we recall Massé's statement above, rejection is a symptom of repression. Consequently,

[23] As Botting notices, nowadays, "texts of the past, critically reassessed or rewritten, also begin to disclose strange new truths about the development of modern identity." Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 4.
[24] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 3.
[25] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 2.

differentiation proves to be superficial; it is actually sameness which allows to valorise the status of Gothic fiction. Moreover, if we remember how the Gothic used to be vindicated through its Romantic affinities in the 1980s, especially by Punter, we may notice that vindicating it on the basis of its 'antithetical' function in the process of negative definition similarly entails working from within the same discourse that would codify it as debasing and debased. It is debasement which becomes, curiously, the basis for uplifting.

We may illustrate the above statement more fully if we now turn to the other case study, the general introduction to four-volume collection *Gothic* (2004) of *Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* series, co-authored by Botting and Townshend. Again, we are dealing here with a history of Gothic criticism, and one which strongly emphasises critical differentiation. Near the end of it, at the crucial point of turning to today's critical attitude, we read: "Eschewing the literary assumptions, hierarchies and values which position Gothic as inferior, criticism examines the cultural role it plays in terms of different contemporary perspectives, perspectives that examine how the idea of human is constituted historically and ideologically, how it shapes notions of individuality within changing cultural and class contexts, and how it participates in the exclusion of a variety of figures from dominant cultural discourses."[26] But for the emphasis put on exclusion in the latter part of the quotation, we might find what the authors say quite promising. Yet this history is a history of the Gothic margin from the eighteenth century to the present in the paradigmatic terms. It concentrates mainly on how, for most of the time, criticism worked to establish the Gothic as a basis for negative definition, and then operated on the so established ground, strengthening the common negative perception of the category. The very fact that the authors write the history of Gothic criticism from such a perspective as a way to introduce the reader to an extensive selection of critical texts – the mainstream of critical inquiry in the Gothic, one should presume – cannot be seen otherwise than as telling. The stress on exclusion rather than positive production of figures – women, sexuality, aristocrats, criminals, etc. – in conjunction with Foucault evoked in the very same paragraph,[27] points directly to

[26] Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, "General Introduction," in *Gothic*, vol. 1, ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 15.

[27] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 15. Foucault's volume two of *The History of Sexuality* is mentioned in the text as the authors juxtapose the essentialist perspective they find to characterise the mid twentieth-century criticism with the stress on contextualising the mode they perceive as characteristic of the contemporary approach: "The turn to history, to a contextualising critical

the operation of the conventional tenets of the Gothic theory. From this perspective, in spite of its call for historicising the Gothic,[28] the introduction largely restates the assumptions of the critical history presented by Botting in the preface to *The Gothic*, but does so not in a similar self-critical manner.

The negative value of the mode, be it purely a matter of discursive representation, is here represented as the basis for the mode's early marginalisation. The Gothic emerges as a part of a wider (and older) current of popular romances. Thus, the lexicon of reasons for assuming the 'waste' status of Gothic fiction in the eighteenth-century critical responses, provided by Botting and Townshend, is long. And we may easily predict it is going to be so by glancing at the first paragraph of the text. Immediately, 'Gothic' is presented as a word of "critical abuse", denoting fiction under attack for "[refusing] neoclassical realistic and didactic aesthetic rules […] endangering not only aesthetic values, but moral and social values as well."[29] The critical attacks entail accusations of offending decency, disregarding social and familial rules, teaching readers irrationality, inciting passion, propagating mischief and painting a false, over-sentimental image of love, all of which, as the authors emphasise, are seen as having grave (and much feared) social consequences.[30] Among those, the authors distinguish the destabilisation of parental, and especially the father's authority, which is seen as a symptom of the fear about the stability of entire social order, law and morality included. Furthermore, linking them with the fear of social change effected by the French Revolution, the authors also emphasise the anxiety about the women's reading and writing, and the merging of the question of female sexuality with other contemporary anxieties. Finally, when it comes to aesthetics, the Gothic is reported to have been attacked on the basis of its disrespect for neoclassical rules of composition, uncivilised deformity (also moral), amounting to monstrosity, and its unnaturalness. It also used to

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interrogation of the significance of Gothic forms of writing, examines, in Foucaultian terms, both the proximities and distances, the continuities and differences of the genre" (p. 15).

[28] As the authors state, "the Gothic expresses fears that do not attest to some timeless human condition but derive from distinct and particular socio-political contexts." To support the statement, they quote Punter's "The Theory of the Gothic" and Baldick's introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales.* (Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 14-15.) The significant thing in this case is, however, the stress on human fears, which may, as we consider the two critics mentioned, refer both to the fear of the feudal past, as in the case of Baldick, and the fear arising from the conflicted bourgeois psyche, as in the case of Punter. Thus, on the one hand we have a recourse to 'historical' discourses and their propagation, and, on the other hand, to psychoanalytical repression.

[29] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 1.

[30] Botting and Townshend discuss a two-dimensional function of nascent literary criticism in the eighteenth-century criticism. On the one hand, it embarks on "a literary-historical enterprise"; on the other hand, it engages itself in "a sociology of literature," a study of literature's aesthetic and moral effects on culture and society. Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 5.

be scoffed at for its generic impurity, being neither purely a romance form, nor a novelistic one.[31] Perceptibly, if we recall Botting's preface discussed above, the early rejection of the mode for precisely these reasons – whether the negative reviews disclose authentic fears or only use Gothic fiction as an excuse to complain about wider phenomena – is what makes the Gothic a fertile ground for a socio-cultural research. The contemporary critics neither subscribe to the views of early reviewers nor strive to debunk them, but treat them in themselves as evidence of the process of cultural formation.

In this way, the original institutionalised critical discourse does not undergo so much a scrutiny as it is embraced and theorised for the benefit of the present-day critical discourse. This results in the sameness of the discourses, at least partial. While the criticism of the turn of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century represents the Gothic – discursively – to pursue its own goals (let socio-cultural identity formation at the time of a major cultural breakthrough be one of them), the contemporary critics take over this early discourse on the Gothic and treat it as an object of and, simultaneously, justification for study. Thus, what is, however, in danger of being passed over, is the way in which the Gothic itself actively and productively engages in the contemporary discourses and the positive processes of, among other things, identity formation. The present-day discourse is focused primarily on the negative, the rejected, the repressed.

This becomes even more visible if we consider the question of negative definition. As we have already stated, the negative definition – or, in Botting and Townshend's words, "a process of recoil and negative reaction,"[32] – may, or even should be, seen as a kind of positive operation of power. To a certain extent, this also follows from both the preface and the general introduction. As Botting states on the eighteenth-century criticism, it used to treat the Gothic as an example of an undesirable form of writing to teach the readers how to choose what to read.[33] Similarly, together with Townshend, he observes that, in precisely such a way, the Gothic played its role in the shaping of both modern criticism and the novel.[34] This, in turn, may be seen as a positive process, a mechanism which both construes the object – the Gothic – establishes the set of true and

[31] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 1-4.
[32] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 4.
[33] Botting, Preface to *The Gothic*, p. 2.
[34] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 4.

false statements about it, and shapes and fixes its perception. Thus, discourse is multiplied, knowledge produced, power generated.

Interestingly, however, this particular representation – or rather a set of functional representations – becomes fixed in the perception of the present-day criticism. It is desirable to scrutinise the early, deterring discourse to discover what might be hidden behind it. However, as the present-day critics assume that the popularity of the Gothic, irrespective of the critics' bashing, came from the allure of the prohibited and the tabooed, they oblige themselves to take their predecessors' word – or representation of Gothic fiction – for granted.

It should seem that if criticism wishes to distance itself from the previously held positions, it should distance itself from the assumption of the marginality of the Gothic. Or, at least, it should reconsider that marginality, treating as suspect the formulations based on the representation of the Gothic as a repressed antithesis of order. If we were to do that, we would need to take a clue from the possibilities offered by the assumption that the dominant order produces, polices and maintains its opposites. Also, we would need to take into consideration the possibility that the Gothic is a field in which positive mechanisms of power do operate through participation in discourses and the pedagogy of knowledge. As we have already mentioned, this does not necessarily preclude negative reviews, but, in fact, may illuminate them to a degree.

6.3. The Gothic's Discursive Background: A Reconstruction

One clue as to the ways in which the Gothic may actually be popular thanks to its participation in the recognised discourses of its time may be taken directly from Botting's preface. As was already quoted above, the Gothic found its particular relish in the supernatural and "the immense natural forces." Of course, such a formulation immediately calls for an association with Romanticism, and may be easily juxtaposed with the Enlightenment ideal of fiction. However, we may notice that Gothic fictions were first produced in the discursive context more complex than *simply* favouring the Enlightenment ideals of utility, reasonability and naturalness. We should perhaps immediately think of the discourse of the sublime, but turning to Emma Clery's careful delineation of the gradual process of the supernatural becoming acceptable should put us in a broader picture.

In *Spectres of Shakespeare*, in which he analyses Shakespeare's influence on the early Gothic, Jacek Mydla emphasises the fact that the supernatural was far from being entirely rejected in the Age of Reason. As he observes, "[i]n the second half of the eighteenth century, scenes of supernatural terror received ample coverage in paintings, prints, and personal accounts by spectators — all reflecting the fascination with ghost-seeing and the power of the supernatural to transfix popular imagination."[35] And, as Clery states, with regard to the eighteenth-century attitude towards 'ghost-seeing,' "different ways of seeing the supernatural were as much the product of specific discursive fields as of personal opinion."[36] Her considerations of the links between the supernatural fiction and the developing consumer society illuminate the Gothic as acceptable primarily in the nascent *economic discourse*. This discourse of the marketplace and consumerism is to be seen as counteracted by the Augustan discourse of civic humanism, a 'landed' discourse opposing the new economy based on luxury and consumption, irrational and unpredictable as they are by nature. As Clery states, civic humanism sets the terms for the negative reception of the fictional representations of the supernatural in the early eighteenth-century: "[t]he resistance to representations of the marvellous, with their illusory, irrational appeal, coincides with anxiety over the escalation of 'unreal needs."[37] It is unreal needs – irrational appeal, and the useless pleasure one finds in the marvellous, seen as parallel to and representative of consumerism – that raise doubts here.

In a similar way, though with stress placed on the rejection of credulity, the supernatural is approached in what we could perhaps call the discourse of "the real supernatural." This type of the supernatural, according to Clery, is characteristic of the way of ghost-seeing based on the question of truth. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, as Clery recounts, the apparition narrative, a projected antidote to the spread of atheism and scepticism, is meant to serve a didactic function of convincing disbelievers through transparent scientific description and testing: a faithful (even boring) record of circumstances and a (frequently painstakingly) careful scrutiny of facts. Yet publishing apparition narratives inescapably entails the risk of inciting appeal. Narratives are in

[35] Jacek Mydla, *Spectres of Shakespeare: Appropriations of Shakespeare in the Early English Gothic* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2009), p. 96.
[36] E.J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 33.
[37] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 7. Later on, however, consumerism and the market are represented in more favourable light due to the supernaturalisation of "commerce as and order validated by God." See p. 8.

danger of being read merely for the pleasure of emotionally indulging oneself in a thrilling story, which testifies to one's credulity, and hence, a regressive drive, deserving to be scorned. This risk, as Clery remarks, turns out to be in itself more threatening to the authors than the accusations of spreading credulity by the narratives themselves, yet as such is not necessarily at odds with the publishers' policy.[38]

As we can see, the (political) discourse of landed wealth and stable social order on the one hand, and the scientific/religious discourse on the other are both sensitive to the popular demand which validates and revalorizes what they wish to discard. And this is not surprising, for already the mid-century market willingly embraces "the spectacular supernatural," that is the supernatural construed originally from the sceptical perspective as an object of mockery and yet, simultaneously, entertainment. Such is the case of e.g. the Cock Lane ghost, which upon its alleged appearance in 1762, quickly becomes not only a subject of farce, but also a stock-device in a number of strategies used for attracting readers and theatre audiences.[39] Seen from this angle, the supernatural becomes a spectacle and a commodity, to which both the 'credulous' mob and the 'learned' elite may respond with enthusiasm equal to that raised by a theatrical performance, the pleasure not being tainted by the accusation of superstitiousness. Yet, notably, while the spectacular supernatural becomes divorced from the question of truth, it ultimately takes its potential from the continuing fascination, the thrilling moment of "a mental state of suspension in doubt."[40]

A parallel process takes place in the aesthetic discourse. As early as with Dryden, and later on with Addison, the supernatural becomes suggestive of taking on an aesthetic function. Clery states: "[t]he effect [the tragic ghost] produces is pleasurable in so far as the object is known to be fictitious and enjoyed as part of the dramatic artifice, but terrible in that, simultaneously, disbelief is suspended far enough for the passions to operate *as if* the object were a reality. […] Valorisation of the supernatural as a source of aesthetic pleasure, the awakening of a sensibility detached, not only from truth, but also from probability is the sign of an autonomous sphere of art in the process of formation."[41] The process is visible in the way in which Garrick validates and valorises the supernatural for the aesthetic effect through naturalistic acting in Drury Lane's

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[38] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 19-24.
[39] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 14-17.
[40] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 24-32.
[41] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 35.

staging of Shakespeare's plays.[42] On stage, the matter of supernatural is not that much a matter of representation, as a matter of how the actor represents the reaction to the supernatural occurrence.[43] What is more, the prohibition to evoke emotional states in the receivers, operating in written accounts, is undone. The viewer experiences the effects of ghost-seeing through private identification with the actor; however, simultaneously, the technique of triggering emotional responses remains fully explicable in terms of the body knowledge, "a taxonomy of passions."[44] Objectified and divorced from the question of belief in the ghost, the emotional response is perceived not as a sign of credulity, but as a mark of sensitivity to a technique of stimulating particular states in the viewer; the supernatural becomes a sublime object, triggering "delightful terror."[45]

Both the spectacular supernatural and the aesthetic supernatural function as plausible representations of the marvellous, and point to the areas of acceptability within (and generated by) the generally 'prohibitive' discourse. As Clery observes on Garrick, the taste for supernatural he raised in his audience did pave, even if only to a certain extent, the way for the supernatural fiction to emerge.[46] Thus, we might see the Gothic as predated by 'permitted' representations and, consequently, we might suspect its emergence actually depended to some degree on the general prevailing discursive order. This should prove especially valid if we pay attention to Clery's emphasis on the overall compliance of both types of the supernatural with the realist/Enlightenment limits.[47] As Clery comments on William Collins's ode to fear, the poet, attracted by the Enlightenment dispensation for representing the marvellous, "is divided between the desire to exploit the supernatural for aesthetic effect, and a guilty consciousness of the enlightenment prohibition against any such usage."[48] This might sound as repression or nostalgic longing; however, the fact is that the 'allowed' representations of the ghost are themselves products, not antitheses, of the dominant discursive order. This is because,

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[42] See Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 38-46.
[43] Mydla, *Spectres of Shakespeare*, p. 101.
[44] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 42-46.
[45] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 46.
[46] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 49. We may also observe that this very audience was in general 'thirsty' for Shakespeare's supernatural, which fact also, quite clearly, had to have an impact on the emergence of Gothic fiction. See Mydla's chapter "Shakespeare and the fascination of the supernatural," in *Spectres of Shakespeare*, pp. 87-101.
[47] Except for mock-supernatural, no appealing supernatural is allowed in writing, unless one wishes to risk accusations of credulity; Dryden engages in the real supernatural discourse as soon as he seems to validate the free use of supernatural on stage on the ground of the artist's liberty; Addison does not tackle the question of introducing the supernatural into contemporary productions at all and supports his stance on the aesthetic function of ghosts with classical authorities; and Garrick, quite similarly, relies only on well-established plays of the past. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 34-36, 46.
[48] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 49.

on the one hand, they do not infringe the overall discursive framework, and, on the other hand, they emerge as a response to this framework (both the sarcastic laughter triggered by a supposed ghost and Garrick's move away from pantomime[49] are conditioned by it). The Gothic, then, as one mode of representing the supernatural, does not emerge as a sudden rupture in the system. The grounds for it are prepared within the predominant discursive framework.

A further clue how the predominant discursive paradigm might itself generate possibilities, in a yet broader sense, for the emergence of Gothic fiction comes from the history of literary criticism. Gary Day's *Literary Criticism* shall prove a particularly useful source at this point. We may see a parallel between Clery and Day in the fact that both emphasise commerce as a decisive factor in the development of literature and the shaping of critical response. Yet while Clery focuses, necessarily, on the popular novel, supernaturalism, and the ways in criticism responded negatively to the supernatural fiction due to its being an epitome of the consumerist revolution, Day puts us in the picture with regard to the positive (in the sense of a positive production mechanism) impact of the market discourse on criticism as such. It is this impact that, as we shall attempt to show, opens perhaps not yet a way, but a fracture in the structure of literary production and reception that will enable the Gothic to emerge.

Simultaneously, of course, it must be said that the impact of commerce on criticism has been known for long. And while the importance of the market factor is easily found to be stressed in the histories of the eighteenth-century criticism, what we may find emphasised in those histories is not only the critical reaction against the expansion of publishing, but also the growing influence of commerce on critical concepts themselves. It seems enough to browse Douglas Lane Patey's introductory chapter to the volume four of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Patey stresses that the second half of the eighteenth century is when the critical scrutiny undergoes sharpening, which is connected with the expansion of publishing and the growing need for distinction between high and low literature.[50] At the same time, however, he describes the first half as influenced by the new conception of civil society as built upon commerce, represented, among others, in the writings of Addison and Steel.[51] What Day makes

[49] On pantomime, see Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 37-38.
[50] Douglas Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume IV: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H.B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 11.
[51] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," p. 21.

particularly clear is the fact that criticism in the eighteenth century was preconditioned by market discourse to a large extent. And, since it is the market which, as we shall see, validates the Gothic – just as much as it quickly absorbs the supernatural turned into a spectacle – this appears to be a significant coincidence.

One of the important facts about the eighteenth-century criticism is the fact that, as Day puts it, the modern literary era begins with a shift towards imagination.[52] This shift is later on discussed as one way of grounding literary value in the face of the spread and growing commodification of reading and writing, which began in the late seventeenth century. The other ways, as Day lists them, are neoclassicism, taste and scholarship.[53] The sole question of the need for grounding literary value is significant here, yet before we move on, it is crucial that we establish on what grounds the relationship between the Gothic, criticism and commerce becomes explained away through the contemporary critical practice.

Evoking imagination, within the field of the present-day Gothic criticism, inescapably calls for some sort of association with the Gothic. At this point, we may immediately think of the rise of imagination as the path which led to the rise of Romanticism. If we were to validate the Gothic by its Romantic allegiances (the artistic dimension), then we might view it as following, or even sticking out, this very same path. With all the attention they pay to the participation of Gothic fiction in cultural formation through the process of the negative definition, this is a manner of validation that Botting and Townshend finally hint at in their general introduction:

> Elements of romantic and Gothic aesthetic find themselves absorbed by the movement belatedly distinguished as Romanticism: darkness and mystery provide the conditions for solitary and introspective reflection, allowing inspiration to attain spiritual and visionary heights; wild nature offers suitably sublime scenes for emotional and imaginative creation. Although there may be, in the scenes, mood and effect of works that can be grouped together as a counter-Augustan aesthetic attitude, a common ancestry linking Romanticism and Gothicism, all traces of filiation are denied by the time the former is defining itself […]. Perhaps the proximity is too great. Certainly, it is too disturbing, and must be held at bay with strong critical denunciations.[54]

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[52] Gary Day, *Literary Criticism: A New History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 156.
[53] Day, Literary Criticism, p. 169.
[54] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 11.

Perhaps the Gothic is not absorbed entirely. Yet we could say that, just as 'appropriate' representations of ghosts pave the way for the supernatural to break free, Gothic aesthetics prepares the ground for the Romantic vision.

Still, there is more at stake in the passage. We ought to pay attention to the final two sentences, and then bear in mind that the authors are quick to evoke how Gothic fiction is discarded by the First Generation Romantic poets. Wordsworth rejects the writer's pandering to "a craving for extraordinary incident" shown by the masses accumulated in the cities,[55] and Coleridge denies the frequenters of circulating libraries the status of true readers on account of the debilitating outcome of the activity they perform.[56] Consequently, as Botting and Townshend state, "[t]he diseased and corrupting mechanisms of Gothic novel writing and reading are placed at the furthest possible remove from Romantic vision."[57] Thus, as described here, the Romantic distancing of the Gothic might be called a discursive activity: sorting out one's own distinct representation/identity by adjusting the general reference framework to one's needs, and explaining away "disturbing" similarities.

And this is, of course, much in tune with the validation of the Gothic on the ground of its being the 'abjected,' 'othered' cultural material. Simultaneously, it is interesting that Botting and Townshend remain practically silent about the market factor which could be seen to transpire from Wordsworth and Coleridge's grand literary project of uplifting literature from the debasing status of pandering to popular cravings.[58] No matter how we look at it, as long as we do not limit it to the 'canonical' names listed by Punter, the Gothic is a mass-market form, entailing a mechanistic reproduction of schematic texts, sometimes amounting to what we might call recycling today, and calling for a comparison with the mechanistic division of labour.[59] Yet, while Botting

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[55] William Wordsworth, "Preface" [1800, 1802] in *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 239-240.

[56] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 48.

[57] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 11.

[58] The former, for example, states, with palpable bitterness, on the popular taste for the extraordinary incitement: "[t]o this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves." Wordsworth, "Preface," 240. The latter, as it was already stated, speaks openly of the circulating library.

[59] An exemplary account of the publishing practices in 1790s is given by James Watt. Watt is congruent with, as we shall see, Patey in stating that the growing number of both novels and romances published in response to public demand was a trigger to anxieties connected with the reader's lack of proper learning and, thus, discerning powers. The tactics for increasing sales used by the Minerva Press he lists posited Minerva's publications as "[displaying] a particularly acute form of commercial awareness," which was unacceptable to the critics. Notably, Watt perceives the attack on the Minerva novels at the turn of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century as a symptom of a larger anxiety over social destabilisation and

and Townshend speak of the Romantic division between high art and popular/low forms, they again speak in terms of discursive 'explaining away' in the name of negative definition, rather than bring up such factors. They state: "With neoclassical and Romantic critics *allied against it*, Gothic fiction is firmly *located* in the lower realms and *situated* on the margins of a properly literary history and production."[60] While we may find it unquestionable that the eighteenth century witnesses a new demarcation of literary production, what is conveyed by means of rhetoric here is the assumed artificiality (and we should add discursiveness) of the process; its grounding not in the quality of texts, but in the functionality of the demarcation lines for the overall Romanticist project. Similarly, as Botting and Townshend discuss Gothic fiction being rejected for its departure from the rules of composition, they are more willing to explain it with discursiveness, the neoclassical supremacy, expected moral function of literature or widely assumed inferiority of feudal themes, rather than to delve into the question of the conditions of actual production of the majority of popular novels at the time.[61] It is as if we had a direct confirmation of Baldick and Mighall's assertion that vindicating the margin suspends the obligation to consider artistic merit.

Of course, one could respond that in the face of the Gothic serving as a negative 'other' in the process of identity formation, the question of artistic merit recedes into the background. What counts is the load of the repressed or rejected of a culture that unravels as we scrutinise the Gothic text. All in all, it is not the literariness of Gothic fiction that is at stake here, but cultural representation – both within and of the Gothic. The 'waste' status justifies critical interest. Yet, in a certain way, these two areas cannot be considered separately, especially if we structure the negative image of the mode on the basis of historic material. While the representations construed in the reviews are undeniably conditioned by various discourses of the times in which they were produced – let us treat civic humanism as an example – the question of the impact of popular publishing on the value of a work, and, on a larger scale, on social stability, be literary value grounded in one way or another, nonetheless remains their inherent element. Still,

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upheaval, impossible to be prevented by critical correction due to the sheer amount of published items. James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 80-82. A more complete overview of the development of the circulating library is provided by Clery, who stresses that the libraries which opened in the first half of the eighteenth-century emphasised the moral credentials of the work aspiring for inclusion. It was due to its success among the readers that the library begun to rise suspicion among the critics, which, by 1780s, made it the epitome of cheap, debasing fiction. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 88.

[60] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 12. Emphasis mine.

[61] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 3-5.

the question of *the commodification of literature*, the reign of 'popular tastes' on the shelves of the circulating library, somehow escapes one's attention while going through Botting and Townshend's text. And even if it did not, it might be seen to be declared as unimportant by the overall discourse construing the Gothic as, indeed, culture's much revealing 'waste.'

In this way, we begin to see that we may be dealing with a double discursive formation: both on the side of the 'old' and on the side of the 'new' critics. It is one thing that Botting and Townshend do not delve into the relationship between the Gothic, criticism and commerce, the poor quality of masses of popular novels and the conditions of their production. And it is another that the criticism of Gothic fiction – its actual marginalisation – is consequently positioned exclusively between the neo-classicist/realist/Enlightenment aesthetic/moral critical stance and the Romanticism's falsification of its own roots. Early criticism of the Gothic construed in this way becomes a matter of aesthetics in an assumed connection with the moral question. Consequently, the emphasis is put on "base motives and desires" the Gothic connotes,[62] but these raise 'psychoanalytical' connotations[63] rather than evoke any associations with the production of low quality writing. The Gothic is the worst of what has been ever written but somehow only because it comprises culture's rejected regions of the self, and incarnates culture's opposite.

The social dimension, which is intricately connected with the moral one, is thus explained solely in terms of 'negative' identity formation. Little opportunity is left for the 'positive' one. Whiggism appears as if on the margin, its negative codification of romance form serving only to confirm the rejection of the contemporary romances. And national spirit, as reflected by the Gothic revival, is mentioned as, in fact, the only 'legitimate' eighteenth-century discourse in which Gothicism, thought as it seems somewhat indirectly, might find some support.[64] The class in question ought to be the middle class and hence the Gothic must be the 'waste' of that class. As a result, although much is said about the social threat the Gothic poses, the literary considerations become in fact separated from the *economic* background which might illuminate them. What is more, the present-day critical discourse, again, follows

[62] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 12.
[63] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 12-13.
[64] See Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 7-10.

trustingly the eighteenth-century condemning critics, whose accounts originally represent ‘the hobgoblin romance’ as a source of social threat.

Why would the Gothic pose a social threat exactly? As Clery shows, with regard to the critics who bash female reading and writing, the representation of the Gothic as endangering the rightful social status of women readers and, by extension, the society, may be explained by the operation of civic humanism. What should be stressed is the fact that civic humanism, in turn, is a discourse harkening back to the past, fearing the consumer future. Hence the social threat, posed by popular fiction and too readily available luxury. In Botting and Townshend’s history of the marginalisation of the Gothic, with regard to the women’s question, the only given context is French Revolution and the resulting fear of social change.[65] Of course, such a context may be rightly chosen – but it is not an exclusive one. Thus, as the authors point to the fusion of the romance form, revolutionary politics and female sexuality in critical responses,[66] they may be seen as delimiting a field for further inquiry, and not necessarily providing a self-evident example of representing the Gothic as socially devastating.

It appears necessary to ask the question to what extent the early critical responses to the Gothic are directly representative of a culture. In the words of Clery, “the hurry to use the condemnations of novel-reading as evidence of one thesis or the other has prevented them from being read in anything but a roughly descriptive or referential way. Their high rhetoric makes them extremely quotable, yet at the same time their repetitiveness has encouraged the illusion that they are ‘already read,’ self-explanatory.”[67] Such a reading, however, may easily result in falsification, as any theoretical re-working.

To return to Day, his considerations of the different ways in which the Enlightenment criticism strives to ground the literary value allow us to reconsider that kind of ‘self-explanatory’ reading of criticism. Yet even before we proceed to his exact account, we might begin by briefly locating the critical moment at which the Gothic receives harsh welcoming. Botting and Townshend treat the Gothic as receiving criticism on a pair with a surge of popular romances, whose negative reception prepares the ground for the same sort of reaction towards Gothic fiction. Thus, they launch their review of the critical reaction with, among others, Oliver Goldsmith’s negative account

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[65] Botting and Townshend, “General Introduction,” p. 3.
[66] Botting and Townshend, “General Introduction,” p. 3.
[67] Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, p. 99.

of romances from 1760.[68] For Patey, in turn, Goldsmith, as well as Johnson, mark a moment of transition in the overall eighteenth-century critical practice, from a more 'democratic' and dialogic perception of the critic's role to the sharpening of critical categories, which we have already mentioned above. To quote his exact words this time, "under such pressures as an explosion of new publication and a consequent sharpening of distinctions between 'high' and 'low' literature, the qualifications of the critic again become stringently exclusive in something like the old manner: the critic must once again be either scholar or member of a new quasi-aristocracy of 'fine taste.'"[69] In the context of our considerations, this is a significant observation, above all for the stress put on the market factor and the resulting need to emphasize the artistic value.

While Goldsmith is perhaps not that fond of the scholar-function, believing it to be characterized by pedantry detrimental to good taste, he views the critic as a qualified teacher whom "the vulgar" are to follow.[70] The excerpt from a letter from *Public Ledger* quoted by Botting and Townshend directs our attention towards the exemplary role of writing and its influence on "the youth of either sex,"[71] yet the quality of writing is also Goldsmith's concern. He perceives the decline of taste to stem from the expansion of authorship as a profession, available to many, and governed by the laws of the market.[72] He says:

> The author, when unpatronized by the Great, has naturally recourse to the bookseller. There cannot be, perhaps, imagined a combination more prejudicial to taste than this. It is the interest of the one to allow as little time for writing, and of the other to write as much as possible; […]. In these circumstances, the author bids adieu to fame, writes for bread […]. A long habitude of writing for bread, […] turns the ambition of every author, at last, into avarice […] he despairs of applause, and turns to profit […]. He finds that money procures all those advantages […] which he vainly expected from fame. Thus the man who under the protection of the Great, might have done honour to human nature, when only patronized by the bookseller, becomes a thing little superior to the fellow who works at the press.[73]

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[68] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 1.
[69] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," p. 11.
[70] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," pp. 26-29.
[71] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," p. 1.
[72] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," p. 27.
[73] Oliver Goldsmith, "An Enquiry into the present State of Polite Learning," in *The Miscellaneous Works of Oliver Goldsmith, M. B.*, volume IV (Baltimore: Coale and Thomas, 1809), p. 56.

Yet, as observed by Patey, the expansion of writing is the result of the previous opening of the domain of taste to a wider public.[74] What is particularly interesting from our perspective here is the fact that, as he stresses, this very opening is partly enabled by criticism itself.

Patey provides us with a general explanation by illuminating the transition from John Dennis's conception of the critic to that of Addison, Steele and Pope at the beginning of the century. Notably, we could see this transition as one between two distinct socio-political discourses. Both Dennis and Addison define the critic's role and status in reference to the status of a gentleman, possessed both of inborn qualities and thorough education, who leads the state. Yet their perception of the gentleman's status and role, as much as that of the state, is substantially different. For Dennis, whose social ideas Patey recognises as somewhat old-fashioned and more of the 1690s,[75] the critic, a "gentleman of taste," is a "polite man of taste [who] must 'have his mind free from all avocations of Business, and from all real vexatious Passions'"; a member of aristocracy who received proper learning and enjoys enough leisure to cultivate art.[76] He is also a person of cultural authority, qualified to guide others, himself being one of the few who possess the fine taste.[77] Thus, "the realm of taste is […] no republic but an aristocracy, a hierarchy ruled ideally by the taste of its monarch."[78] Addison and Steel, on the other hand, envision the critic as "a polite companion": *not* a censor, but a friend who engages into a conversation with those of his breeding and hence 'teaches' by bringing to attention what his fellow companions, by their breeding, should already know.[79] Thus, their vision of critics, as Patey notes, exemplifies the turn against the absolutist state.[80]

Of course, such a more 'democratic' approach in criticism does not amount to the opening of the realm of polite taste. As Patey makes it clear, neither women, nor lower classes are seen as possessed of any considerable taste.[81] Nonetheless, while commerce is the source of the decay of taste for Goldsmith, in a certain sense as it is to Dennis, for

[74] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," p. 28.
[75] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," pp. 16, 18.
[76] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," p. 15. Not surprisingly, Dennis observes a decline in taste resulting from the overall turn to commerce and the availability of leisure to lower social orders (p.15).
[77] As Patey writes, "Dennis's critic speaks not from within but from above those whose taste he means to guide." Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," p. 19.
[78] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," p. 20.
[79] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," pp. 18-19.
[80] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," p. 17.
[81] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," pp. 21-22.

Addison, the critic is a member of civil society based on it.[82] And this opens a way for the extension of the reading public. By the time of Goldsmith, Patey observes, "Addisons great educational scheme has succeeded only too well: there has emerged a large and diverse reading public […], which has in turn helped to generate too many writers […] that is, of the wrong social alignments (lacking polite taste)."[83] And, as the scheme succeeded, its success may be seen as signifying the shift in perception, rooted precisely in the middle-class order of discourse, which prepared the ground for the emergence of the Gothic.

Day proves particularly useful at this point. Above all, he illuminates the interrelationship between commerce and the criticism of the first half of the eighteenth-century. In the first place, he draws our attention to the ways in which imagination and figurative language are juxtaposed with 'commercial' plainness and clarity of style after the Civil War, the trend which continues into the beginning of the eighteenth century.[84] Similarly to Patey, Day emphasises the reconceptualization of commerce. Its revalorisation, as one might say, results from the post-war distrust of the figurative language, the language of the court and religious sects,[85] and a drive towards social stability. To a nation troubled by the internal and external conflicts of the seventeenth century, "[a] language based on calculation and measurement seemed to yield knowledge of the world and its workings. Tropes stood in the way of truth. Literary imitation endorses the values of business and enlightenment because, in principle at least, it portrays natural phenomena that the merchant wants to exploit and the scientist to understand. More importantly, it reveals the harmony at the heart of nature. […] The imagination could offer no such comforts."[86] It is then the comfort of plainness and clarity that makes commerce attractive to the critics.

Furthermore, and more importantly, by having power over language, commerce is also able to condition thought.[87] Thus, the parallels observable between art and

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[82] Patey remarks: "as William Robertson writes in his *View of the Progress of Society in Europe* (1769), 'Commerce . . . softens and polishes the manners of men.' Providence has made us in such a way that commerce can be reconciled with, indeed be the engine of virtue, apart from (and even by restraining) the powers of the state. It is within this reconception of commerce, as the site no longer of Dennis's vexatious Passions' but of […] benign 'calm passion', that early eighteenth-century accounts of the formative power of 'polite conversation' and of the critic as 'friend' should be understood." Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," pp. 22-21.

[83] Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth-century," pp. 27-28.

[84] Day, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 159-161.

[85] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 160.

[86] Day, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 160-161.

[87] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 164,

commerce[88] testify to a market mentality of the eighteenth-century English. What emerges together with such a mentality is a new conception of the human as "a costed commodity" and "an economic unit." It is thank to it that commerce is believed, at the beginning of the eighteenth-century (as it is evident in the writing of e.g. Addison) to be capable of unifying a divided society: "in general, there was a move from a conflict model of society, based on religious passions, to a cooperative view of society, based on commercial interest."[89] When it comes to criticism, this may be perhaps particularly visible in it becoming itself associated, as seen in Addison, with an act of consumption of goods.[90] Yet, as follows from Day, the very same move towards commerce which emphasizes commerce's many benefits results in the market attitude which will make criticism's traditional function of correction seem redundant. Also, it will contribute to the emergence of a class of writers whose work will be dedicated exclusively to earning money. Since commerce defines the human as a machine, and machines are repetitive, and since imitation in art may be seen as corresponding to this mechanistic conception of the human, the justification for the ethical, or corrective, dimension of criticism may seem to be lost.[91]

What is to be observed, and stressed, at this point, is a sort of clash, a conflict of interests which sparks between the market mentality and the critical discourse. While the critics are clearly far from resigning from their function of improvement of men and manners, commerce, to whose language and social benefits they turn in the times of crisis, and which manifests itself to a degree in their own attitudes to literature, simultaneously undoes their 'moral' authority. What appears is a rift which, as we shall see soon, makes the emergence of the Gothic possible and perfectly justifiable as a thoroughly eighteenth-century, and central, affair.

As we may see, the discourse of criticism is underpinned by the social/political discourse and this makes it resort to commerce. What we must, simultaneously, bear in mind is that imagination, like the supernatural, is politically suspicious for the Augustans. Both are notions connected with the Gothic 'romance,' and the romance flights of fancy are all too readily juxtaposed, in the mid-century and later, with the

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[88] Day notes the interconnections between imitation, imagination and the division of labour and mechanistic conception of the human on the one hand, and the parallels between the concepts of imitation, imagination and the issue of representation of money on the other. See Day, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 162-164.

[89] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 165.

[90] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 167.

[91] Day, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 162, 167-168.

novel's aim to imitate nature. Hence, what Day provides us with may be seen as shedding light on the discursive exclusion of the future Gothic as a 'low form' on the one hand, but, on the other, it also attests to the rooting of the economic discourse, which will embrace low forms just as it will embrace the supernatural, in wider culture.

From the perspective of a historian of criticism such as Day, the low forms of art are low basically for they are connected with the mechanistic operation of the market and market demand. With the decline of patronage, opening of culture, and increase of publishing outside of the learned elites, earlier notions of literature are undone, and criticism turns to the discrimination of 'bad' writing from high-quality works.[92] This, by extension, is connected with the fear of the lack of sheer possibility to control what is being read and how it is read.[93] And this fear, in turn, is underpinned with much more general anxieties, inherent in the period of multi-layered change already taking place. At that point, criticism and commerce part; however, the market mentality is still rooted in society.

What is passed over in critical histories which leave out the connections between the Gothic and the increasing commercialisation of literature is precisely this fact. It may seem that evoking 'poor' quality of the surge of Gothic novels at the dusk of the eighteenth-century, as much as evoking 'poor' quality of popular fiction, to whose stream the Gothic belongs, does not primarily concern a theoretically-oriented account of the socio-cultural status of the mode. Firstly, poor literary quality is not relevant to a cultural analysis which rests on the assumption of the 'waste' status, not more than to a point to which it confirms that status. And secondly, the considerations of the quality of the Gothic material seem to belong to a different critical discourse, the one of the past from which the present-day critics wish to distance themselves. Yet if Gothic fiction poses any kind of threat to social order, for the eighteenth-century critics this threat manifests itself primarily in the fiction's commercial character, associated primarily with the poor quality of writing, be it actual or projected. It is the Gothic's commercial character, its sensitivity to market demand, and hence the modes being an epitome of wider social processes taking place that primarily make it threatening.

Yet this, contrary to what might be thought, actually casts doubt on the assumption that the Gothic – the genre or the mode – is an abject, or other, or any kind of an actual underground or unconscious 'waste.' It definitely represents the abject of the culture as

[92] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 167.
[93] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, pp. 80-82.

projected, or represented, by the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century critics in their commentaries, immersed in various discourses. And it may just as well carry out the process of abjection in its own representations of the threats faced by the projected eighteenth-century protagonists. Yet a wider socio-cultural acceptance for the Gothic as a critically condemned form, as for Grub Street writers – as well as its emergence – is granted by the society's well rooted market mentality. The eighteenth-century middle-class English demand their basest needs to be pandered to, while the market is necessarily sensitive to those demands. And it is this that makes the Gothic a central and inherently eighteenth-century, not marginal or antithetical, phenomenon. Gothic fiction may be 'firmly located in the lower realms and situated on the margins of properly literary history and production' by the predominant critical discourses, but not exactly because it, as such, carries a social threat reminding one of what has to be repressed to form a coherent social self. On the contrary, it represents a part of the 'fearful' consumer self which is already there.

What perfectly confirms such an observation is Clery's analysis of both Walpole's prefaces to *The Castle of Otranto* and the novel itself. Clery states: "The founding work of the Gothic genre did not appear out of the blue, the harbinger of a Romantic revolt against the repressive rationalism of the Enlightenment. […] the event of *The Castle of Otranto*, its critical reception, its address to the public in the prefaces, its very newness, was determined by a complex of values and assumptions already in place."[94] And this, in turn, puts Walpole in an interesting position with regard to the question of the Gothic's lineage. We may remember that the conception of *Otranto* as the first Gothic novel is deemed to be a myth by some. Watt scrutinises the novel and its prefaces in detail to show that *Otranto* cannot be seen as an obvious founder, just as its second preface cannot be seen as a Gothic manifesto, without a significant dose of qualification, for its status is clearly singular.[95] Clery, in her turn, observes that Walpole had to wait long for a successor that the market would respond to. In fact, such a successor appeared only more than a decade later, in the form of Reeve's *The Old English Baron*. The observation she makes about the lack of the publishing market's substantial interest in texts utilising the supernatural after *Otranto* and its many versions' success is interesting. According to her, *Otranto* did not spark the demand for

[94] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 66.
[95] See Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, pp. 24-41.

followers, apparently due to its "reputation […] as a one-off novelty or caprice."[96] This is important, for it signals the singular status of Walpole's text. What is more, though this will become obvious only as we discuss Reeve in the further part of the chapter, it also signals that there had to take place a change in the discursive codification of Gothic fiction for the Gothic to surge and flood the circulating libraries, one which would actually confirm even more visibly the Gothic's grounding in the Enlightenment culture.

Still, if we depart from the perspective assumed above, namely that it was the market discourse which also contributed to the emergence of the Gothic, legitimising it in its own field, we shall see that Walpole did pave the way for the later re-codified 'Gothic story.' If we assume that the Gothic is a dialogic form, a mode in whose case particular texts remain in constant dialogue but not necessarily form a unified axis of progress, or stake out a stable field, we may find *Otranto* palpably distinct on the one hand, but paradoxically Gothic on the other. Especially from the perspective of the mode's market conditioning, as well as its rooting in the discursive context of its own times, *Otranto* is an exemplary Gothic text.

There are two areas of discursive rooting, as we might call it, that emerge from Clery's discussion of the novel. One of them refers to the question of compliance with the contemporary critical tenets, the other one to the more general question of social change in the eighteenth-century. Criticism becomes the target of Walpole's two prefaces, the first of which, as Clery carefully observes, meets on many levels the requirements of the critics. This preface, provided by an alleged translator, William Marshall, in Clery's view, is written so that it complies with 'the horizon of expectations' defined by exemplary historicism.[97] Said to be written down by an Italian monk of the period of reformation, Onuphrio Muralto, the story, taking place in the feudal times, relies on unrealistic depictions, superstition and unbalanced sensationalism, but as such it proves in accordance with the eighteenth-century representation of the medieval culture, and is entirely acceptable as an exemplary historic relict. Its incredibility, in other words, may serve to reinforce the contrastive representation of the sober, enlightened and Protestant eighteenth-century English.[98] As

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[96] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 83-84. Watt points to the same fact, namely the novels reception as "a frivolous diversion." Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 25.
[97] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 54, 59.
[98] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 54-55. See also her discussion of Johnson's response to 'Ossian', pp. 58-59. As Watt observes, evoking the antiquarian discourse in the first preface also had the

Clery observes, it was at the cost of such a codification of the past that the eighteenth-century readers were allowed to enjoy the supernatural, and, as a result, it was such a codification that made some writers resort to forgery as a means to make the marvellous enjoyable, Macpherson's 'Ossian's poems' being an example.[99]

Similarly to 'Ossian,' *Otranto* is a forgery, and its initial preface reveals an acute consciousness of the requirements for the eighteenth-century fiction. Its second preface, in turn, proves the first one to be a satire on these requirements.[100] In Clery's words, "[t]he second preface […] alters the meaning of the first by suggesting that the spurious antiquarian account of the work's origins in the late gothic era is a disguised account of its true origins in the present."[101] What follows from such an interpretation is that, producing his story in the times of the Enlightenment and progress, the metaphorical spread of letters and rejection of superstition, the modern author, like the monk (whose surname is Walpole translated into Italian), subverts the progressive present by using its greatest invention, the press, to spread superstition and backwardness – or rather, to breed a much feared demand for "unregulated, hedonistic, irrational consumption of print," unguided by moderation, utility and reason.[102] In a sense, by anticipating the critical reaction to his 'modern romance' as unacceptable in the era of reason, Walpole pinpoints the underlying fear of an uncontrolled production and consumption cycle. While poetic forgeries such as 'Ossian' tend to serve as a means for indirect critique of the Enlightenment and the growth of commerce,[103] Walpole's prefaces subvert the common eighteenth-century representation of the market and commerce as necessarily controlled and guided by virtue and reason.[104]

The subversion, however, is hardly anti-bourgeois. On the contrary, it points to a crucially bourgeois grounding of the text in its immediate historical context, in the apparent contradiction inherent in commerce. Clery points to this as she compares the

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advantage of going round the problem of *Otranto*'s moral status and impact on the readers. (Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 25.) This is clearly connected with the functioning of exemplary historicism and the representation of the eighteenth-century perfectly enlightened and chaste English middle-class representative, of which speaks Clery. Briefly speaking, for Watt, the first preface carries out the same function as that observed by Clery (see p. 26.), though his stance on the matter follows the one presented by Harriet Guest's in the article from 1992. See Harriet Guest, "The Wanton Muse: Politics and gender in Gothic theory after 1760," in *Gothic*, vol. 2., ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (London and New York, Routledge: 2004), pp. 14-21.

[99] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 55.

[100] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 61.

[101] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 61.

[102] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 61-62.

[103] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 56.

[104] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 62.

tone of Walpole's prefaces with the scandal aroused by Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*.[105] Also, she states that the prefaces "raise the spectre of a thoroughgoing transformation in the relation between literary fiction and society, not in order to analyse or resolve the questions or difficulties involved in such a change [but] to wave it like a red rag in the face of the opposition."[106] The concerns they address are clearly concerns inherent in the eighteenth century and characteristic of the widespread changes taking place at that time. They appear to be linked with a negotiation of identity, but the contradiction is not simply repressed in the process; in fact, it is not repressed at all, to which fact testify the continuing critical outrage and alarm. Commerce, breaking free from the supervision of eligible authorities, may be lamented upon, but cannot be repressed, for commercialism is already inscribed in the identity. It is this fact that may just as well transpire from Watt's assertion, stated as if on the margin, that Walpole's first, authenticating preface was officially received as true by some critics in spite of the fact that they may have just as well suspected it was a hoax.[107] And, as Clery observes, even as the forgery was disclosed, "the public continued to buy and read and, in private, literary friends and acquaintances felt free to express their approval."[108] Thus, the reaction of criticism, with its bashing and rejecting, was one thing, and the general reception was another.

If we now remember Day, we may see a direct operation of the economic discourse, or the market mentality, here. In the case of Walpole, fiction dedicated exclusively to demand satisfaction is validated without a notice paid to the moral, or corrective, function of criticism, or the so projected function of literature. As Clery notices, both prefaces manifest the position of "economic amoralism"[109] taken by the author. As a result, what supplants the instructive function of literature are: the freedom of novelty and imagination in creating a new literary form that would be primarily attractive to the public on the one hand, and the freedom of appealing to 'kitchen taste,' disrespectfully of the critical dictates, if only this will grant a novel its success on the other hand.[110] And these will clearly decide upon the success of the surge of Gothic fiction by the end of the eighteenth-century.

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[105] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 62.
[106] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 66.
[107] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 26.
[108] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 60-61.
[109] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 63.
[110] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 65-66.

The prefaces to *Otranto* manifest the market mentality in operation. First of all, this takes place through their elaborating on the fearful – or, in other words, highly problematic, from the perspective of criticism's traditional function of correction – relationship between commerce and literature. Second of all, it can be observed in Walpole's open evocation of the legitimising power of market demand. Turning to *Otranto* as such, the novel, in turn, manifests its inherent grounding in eighteenth-century socio-cultural background due to its tackling of the paradoxes and inconsistencies inherent in the period of social change. As Clery observes, *Otranto* may be read as an "[allegory] of an imperfect, irrational social structure."[111] This is not an immediate reading, and certainly it does not appear in the eighteenth-century commentaries. Yet, according to Clery, due to the complexity of the contemporary discourses of progress and rationality, it was impossible for the eighteenth-century criticism to read the novel in this way, for such a reading would undercut the very premises (dictated by exemplary historicism) which defined the critic's own point of departure.[112]

Just as in the case of the prefaces, what lies at the heart of *Otranto* is a contradiction inherent in the period. The prefaces articulate, we might say, either the conditioning of the critical discourse by civic humanism, of which Clery speaks, or the departure of criticism from the discourse of commerce of which we have spoken earlier, effected by the market's disregard of the traditional moral and corrective function of the novel (in which it undercuts the need for moralising criticism). The novel (or the modern romance), in turn, points to the anachronistic persistence of the laws sanctioning patrimonial inheritance of land privileging aristocracy in the era of bourgeoisie's increasing power. In Clery's words, "[by] the second half of the eighteenth century, debate over the divinely appointed succession of kings was effectively dead, whereas patrilineal inheritance of land and title continued to be a live issue. Indeed, it could be said that the moment when the providential doctrine of kingship was revoked, in 1688, was the point at which aristocratic ownership of land became sacralised in its place."[113] Along this historical legal background, Clery analyses Walpole's own situation with regard to the source of his income and the constant criticism he underwent

[111] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 69.
[112] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 69.
[113] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 73.

consequently, and finds his reaction supporting her line of interpretation.[114] She notices that the supernatural in *Otranto* operates in the manner of blind justice, a patrimonial law from whose strictures there is no escape, even though they may seem illogical and unjust. The pieces of Alfonso's magnified statue crush both familial ties and the will of those upon whom the prophecy operates, regardless of whether these are the descendants of a usurper, or the rightful heir.[115] They are, as if, anachronistic reminiscences of the previous order, forcing themselves upon the lives of future generations.

This is an incredibly useful observation from our perspective. As may be seen from the quotation above, patrilineal inheritance of land in the eighteenth century is an anachronistic but still operating remnant of the feudal order and absolutist state. Civic humanism's representation of landed estate as a stable warranty of one's support, in contrast to luxurious and unstable commerce, is obviously meant to serve the opponents of the market economy.[116] Patrilineal inheritance, is, hence, anti-bourgeois. If we, then, read Walpole as criticising, or simply satirising the situation, we may see his perspective as evoking the competing discourse, that of bourgeois capitalism. As Clery notices, the latter discourse opposes primogeniture, viewing it as threatening its own basic values, "human self-determination and the bonds of familial affection," family seen as based on contract, not kinship of blood.[117] Thus, she concludes: "The supernatural in *The Castle of Otranto* figures an equivalent contradiction between the traditional claims of landed property and the new claims of the private family; a conflict between two versions of economic 'personality.'"[118]

Regardless of Walpole's own comments on the origin of *Otranto*, his 'modern romance' seems hardly an apolitical distraction. Certainly, it can be said to be grounded in the eighteenth-century bourgeois discourses, and to function in a way which is closer to the positive operation of power (the rising middle-class power). In any case, what it appears to oppose is the previous order, whose overall rejection is also inscribed in the Enlightenment project. One may think of what Watt reminds us, namely the fact that Walpole did comment heavily upon the contemporary political affairs, even though he was "a private critic," and he did "frequently [adopt] a principled, old Whig,

[114] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 75-76.
[115] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 74-75.
[116] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 73-74.
[117] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 76-77.
[118] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 77.

oppositional stance."[119] What springs to one's mind here is the recollection that discourses are themselves not exactly coherent, not autonomous structures, framed by clear-cut boundaries, but have their inflections and gaps, fractures and illogicalities dictated by external factors, often related to the question of who wields the power in support of which discourse is used. While perceiving *Otranto* as an anti-Enlightenment work, one in a sense treats them as if they were autonomous. Yet, as the novel seems to reject the neoclassical dictates, the rules of exemplary historicism, and the requirements of rationality, it is, simultaneously, still deeply rooted in the socio-political discourses of the times, and not at all strange to its immediate readers. As Clery states, "[i]t was addressed to a specific crisis in the experience of its eighteenth-century audience, a fantasy of the dissociation and homicidal confrontation of self and social forms […]."[120] We may, of course, simultaneously concur with Watt that much of Walpole's political commentary may exemplify his quite pretentious self-fashioning rather than true interest. [121] Still, we cannot reject his work's rooting in its discursive background. This is because *Otranto* is indeed rooted in it, and not oppositional with regard to the bourgeois-oriented discourses of the times.

It is possible to list other ways in which Gothic fiction turns out to be rooted in the eighteenth-century discourses and thus representative of the age and its crises, rather than marginal or oppositional with regard to it. We could turn to the examples of how eighteenth-century writers consciously worked to inscribe their works into the dominant discursive paradigm. Such examples readily spring to one's mind, and have been often evoked by the contemporary critics. Yet another way would be turning to discrepancies rather than conformities, to the 'loopholes' in the very critical paradigm, so unstable in the eighteenth-century, in order to show that these loopholes and discrepancies also contributed to the emergence of the Gothic. One of such 'loopholes' is, as we have seen, the early critics' engagement with the discourse of commerce, which helped us to pinpoint this very discourse's impact on the widespread acceptance of popular fictions. However, further ones can be traced even in what should seem to preclude the rise of Gothic fiction, namely neoclassicism and the discourse of taste.

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[119] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 23.
[120] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 79.
[121] Watt's general assertion is that *Otranto*, similarly to Strawberry Hill and Walpole's other literary works, exemplifies Walpole's attempt to become a distinguishable figure on the English highlife scene despite his lack of political success. Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 22.

Day, again, will prove useful at this point. His historical account, in the first place, allows us to trace the gaps in the overall neoclassical framework as adapted to the English needs, and, consequently, to contextualise Walpole's own justification for the 'invention' of his 'hybrid' genre from yet another perspective. In his second preface, Walpole presents Shakespeare as his model and refers to Voltaire's contemporary criticism on the playwright, all in all trying to turn Voltaire's general thoughts on comedy complimented by the elements of tragedy to his own benefit.[122] In this, Clery traces a continuity with the changing critical attitude towards the national bard, triggered by Voltaire's attacks: with the shift from the consideration of his breaches of classical rules to the emphasis on him embodying the genuinely English national spirit, as opposed to French-ness.[123] Next, she points to Elizabeth Montagu's attempt to validate the supernatural in Shakespeare's plays on the very same basis.[124] Similar conclusions are offered by Mydla. As he states, Montagu's position "[testifies] to the rise of bardolatry."[125] Walpole, in turn, utilises the traits "identified with Britishness and worshipped in the figure of Shakespeare."[126] In the eighteenth century, Shakespeare, indeed, is not simply cherished as an artist; he becomes an embodiment of national identity, "a spokesman of an enlightened social and political order and a champion of civil liberties."[127] And this opens a potent fissure in the neoclassical order for the early Gothicist to make use of.

Mydla describes this fissure more precisely. As he observes, the vindication of Shakespeare was based on an appeal to "the affective conception of drama"[128] as opposed to the rule-based one. Both conceptions can be traced back to Aristotle, but the former postulates that pity and terror, and hence the reception of the play, outweigh in importance the rules of decorum.[129] And, as Mydla notices "the early Gothic was greatly indebted to the affective notion of tragedy, mainly as a consequence of Walpole's attempt to base his *Otranto* on this tragic pattern."[130] This makes two things immediately visible. First, as Mydla shows, both Walpole and Radcliffe participated in

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[122] Horace Walpole, "Preface to the Second Edition," *The Castle of Otranto*, par. 5., http://www.snow.edu/jeffc/otranto/preface2.html , accessed 27.01.2014.
[123] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 64.
[124] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 64.
[125] Mydla, *Spectres of Shakespeare*, p. 71.
[126] Mydla, *Spectres of Shakespeare*, p. 72.
[127] Mydla, *Spectres of Shakespeare*, p. 69.
[128] Mydla, *Spectres of Shakespeare*, p. 61.
[129] Mydla, *Spectres of Shakespeare*, pp. 60-61.
[130] Mydla, *Spectres of Shakespeare*, p. 62.

the national 'worship' of Shakespeare and utilised him for the needs of their own fictions to a considerable degree,[131] which could not pass as unnoticed by the contemporary audience. Second, when the Gothic emerged, the 'affective' conception of fiction as a tool for aesthetic 'vindication' was already in place, even before the Aikins wrote about the pleasures of terror. In a sense, then, the vindication of Shakespeare also paved the way for the Gothic.

In both cases, of Montagu and of Walpole, the attempt to use Shakespeare to justify the supernatural is met with rejection and condemnation on account of the resistance to reducing the appreciation of drama to mere uncritical pleasure.[132] The rule of the utility of fiction (behind which, we might say, there lurks the fear of commercialisation), it seems, operates here more strongly than the nationalist discourse. However, be as it may, Walpole's reference to Shakespeare as his model displays another level on which *Otranto* as a whole can be seen as grounded in its immediate discursive background. If we now follow Day, we may see again that whereas Walpole and Montagu move perhaps several steps too far in their attempts to justify the supernatural through the notion of nationhood, they are not at all exceptional when it comes to the general critical paradigm of the time.

As Day makes it clear, transplanted on the English soil from France and the rest of the Continent, neoclassicism was not embraced entirely. In his own words, "[t]he native tradition made it difficult to adopt the principles of neoclassicism completely. Consequently, the English relation to neoclassicism was one of dialogue."[133] The immediate example he gives is that of Dryden, who would respond to the accusations aimed at Shakespeare's plays by justifying: the lack of unities, meant to imitate nature, by the actual unnaturalness in which they may result; the typically English introduction of underplots with the pleasure one gains from their making the main plot less obvious; the mixing of tragedy and comedy with the fact they are complimentary; and the violence on stage with the national temperament. The last of the typically English breaches of the classical rules of drama, by the way, Day associates with an implicit attempt at representing the English as warlike and manly in contrast to the French, the relations with whom were tense at that time.[134] Interestingly, one of the arguments

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[131] See e.g. Mydla's chapter "The Gothic Manifestos: Walpole and Radcliffe," in *Spectres of Shakespeare*, pp. 117-134.
[132] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 64.
[133] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 170.
[134] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 171.

Dryden uses is that the French themselves no longer follow Aristotle as closely as they used to.[135] We may observe that Walpole himself utilises a parallel argument with regard to Voltaire.

Further examples reveal further paradoxes, and, we could perhaps say, prove English neoclassicism to be a qualified measure for asserting literary value. Dennis points to the fact that Aristotelian rules of tragedy may be adopted partially, depending on their relevancy to the play's immediate context. And while neoclassicism may be seen as having some affinity with science thanks to its underlying assumption that particular means trigger particular emotional responses, Addison and later Johnson dismiss the possibility of discerning all the exact and constant triggers, in a scientific manner, that might account for the whole pleasure derived from a work. Thus, Day demonstrates, one of the central tenets of neoclassicism is undermined.[136] And, while the possibility of a partial implementation of neoclassicism is one thing, Day moves on to indicate inconsistencies and paradoxes in the ways neoclassicism actually becomes implemented.[137]

One of the interesting things Day mentions is that before the implementation of neoclassicism, the English had hardly any drama tradition of following strictly the classical models.[138] In a way, then the very introduction of neoclassicism might be seen as a discursive breach of continuity, for, as it follows from Day's account, it was clearly functional. For one thing, neoclassicism laid stress on clarity and this quality, like in the case of the clarity of the language of commerce, made it an alternative to figurative language. For another, it promised to renew literature after its assumed fall, resulting from the fact that its domain was taken over by the market.[139] Yet, perhaps most importantly, it could have been seen as reinforcing political stability and social order, through the emphasis it put on imitating nature as a constant, ideal order of things, in a country which had suffered along with the change of political and social system. As Day notices, neoclassicism emphasised the universal – and unifying – qualities of mankind.[140] At the same time, the traditional instructive function of literature could be embedded within its fundamental element, the imitation of nature.[141]

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[135] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 171.
[136] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 172.
[137] See e.g. his discussion of Rymer and the paradoxes in his criticism; Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 176.
[138] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 174.
[139] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 174.
[140] Gary Day, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 173, 175.
[141] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 174.

However, if we see the drive towards social stability as a reason for adapting neoclassicism to the needs of the English, we should also view this very drive as a cause of neoclassicism's failure. Just as criticism cannot embrace the commercial discourse for commerce underscores the need for critical supervision, so, at a certain point, there proves to be a rift between neoclassical emphasis on the proper hierarchies being respected and the post-Civil War suspiciousness towards the previous socio-political order.[142] While the critics seem to conflate nature and culture in their accounts of what should be imitated, Day observes, the universal and unifying power of neoclassical nature is brought down to "the local."[143] It is the novel, rather than classical epic, poetry and drama that will take over of the function of representing a society "where the distinctions between ranks are no longer clearly demarcated."[144]

It is frequently assumed that the Gothic in the eighteenth-century was a reaction against neo-classical limitations which came well before Romanticism. However, a careful analysis of the conditions on which neoclassicism was introduced in Britain casts doubts on the *overall* oppositional status of the Gothic. The above is not meant to serve as a confirmation that the gaps and rifts in the English adaptation of neoclassicism make it too weak to become a perspective from which early Gothic, such as Walpole's, could be attacked; far from that. But if we look closely at *Otranto*, and especially at its two prefaces, we shall see that Walpole is utilising various aspects of the contemporary debates – and inconsistencies – to promote his own text. Firstly, he makes use of the ongoing question of Shakespeare, inscribing his own discourse into the general critical one. Next, he adopts similar means to justify his own cause to those adopted by major critics, such as Dryden. We may also pay attention to that fact that, as Day observes, neoclassicism's power is weakened by the fact that the development of science divorces literature from its traditional function of conveying the truth – just as much as its rhetorical function is taken away by turning it into a commodity.[145] If the reaction is a further search for the basis to ground literary value in the mid-century, and the possible basis is found in imagination, then we are also not surprised by Walpole's appealing to the notion of imagination being cramped by the modern novel.[146] And we are even less

[142] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 177.
[143] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 177.
[144] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 177.
[145] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 178.
[146] At this point, we could perhaps pay attention to the fact that Day distinguishes between neoclassicism and the novel, the former being inherent in the realm of "epic and drama," as he says, and the latter being

surprised, taking into consideration Clery's stance that Walpole embraces economic amoralism, if we consider the fact that imagination emphasises the poet's vision instead of rules, but, in this way, it also draws one's attention away from moral questions.[147] On account of all these ways of inscribing his justification for a new blend of romance into the available critical discursive frame, Walpole proves less to be 'in opposition' to neoclassicism, than he attests to the complex structure of the eighteenth-century critical discourse. This structure, in turn, is too heterogeneous to allow for drawing a clear line between what is 'conformist' and what is 'oppositional' or 'antagonistic.' It is this heterogeneity, in fact, that *Otranto* represents and draws attention to.

If we now turn to the discourse of taste, we may say that, in a way, it appeared to be better suited to the needs of the rising middle-class in Britain than neoclassicism. For one thing, as Day observes, taste "combines the value the aristocracy place on birth with the value the middle class place on achievement."[148] It allows for establishing an elite social group, and thus serves to reassure social distinctions, yet on a different level that between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Simultaneously, it remains in tune with the middle-class discourse, for it does not fix taste as a constant quality, but represents it as open (at least to some extent) to polishing and improving.[149] At the same time, however, taste also works towards diminishing the importance of the corrective function of poetry. As it shifts attention from the traditional concerns of criticism to the question of individual experience of a piece of art, it puts a greater stress of pleasure as a matter of "self-cultivation" rather than ethical improvement, and hence emphasises the consideration of the text's 'beauties' rather than moral qualities.[150] All in all, as Day states, "[t]he focus on the sublime and the beautiful suggests that the conception of literature is now more aesthetic than ethical."[151]

As a result, taste becomes potentially relative.[152] There are, of course, attempts at balancing the relativity of taste with reason and the reintroduction of ethical standards, but these are, as Day points out, not entirely successful.[153] Also, as he points out,

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better cut out for the needs of the times and the general socio-political paradigm. Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 177.

[147] See Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 168.
[148] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 180.
[149] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 180.
[150] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 180.
[151] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 190.
[152] See Day, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 186-187.
[153] Day, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 187-188.

> [m]ost discussion of taste in this period is dedicated to minimizing its socially disruptive effects. The idea that taste differs from person to person threatens the unity of the polity because it signifies what separates them, not what they have in common. This, in fact, is the tension between civic and commercial humanism. The former focuses on the citizen's duty in promoting virtue and valour to maintain the integrity of the State while the latter focuses on the cultivation of manners and pleasures. The struggle to establish taste either on an idea of human nature – 'a child born with an aversion to its mother's milk is a wonder' – or on the premise that 'there are certain qualities in objects which are fitted by nature to produce [feelings of beauty]' is the struggle to find a balance between the individualism of commercial humanism and the community of civic humanism.[154]

This is interesting, primarily for it once again directs our attention to the clash of two discourses, one affirming the past, the other affirming the future, both having an impact on critical categories. Yet more importantly, as the above shows, what we may spot in the case of the discourse of taste is another fracture, or a gap, in the general discursive order, that might have facilitated, in a longer run, the Gothic's emergence. In a peculiar sense, in his final statement from the second preface to *Otranto* on the novel, saying that "[s]uch as it is, the public have honoured it sufficiently, whatever rank their suffrages allot to it,"[155] what Walpole appeals to is precisely the 'liberty' of individualised taste.

Having considered all the above, we may assert that the Gothic is embedded within the eighteenth-century – and Enlightenment – discourses and overall historical situation to a large extent. *Otranto* with its prefaces constitutes an apt example here. Even if we treat Walpole's satirical text as oppositional in a sense, its oppositional stance will nevertheless remain deeply rooted in, and reflecting, the general unstable, and often paradoxical, situation in a period following a major socio-political shift, in which the interaction between discourse and power is highly complex. What is more, the fact that Walpole alludes, or at least seems to allude, to the major contemporary debates in the field of criticism, and the prevailing discourses on the literary value, makes us alert to the fact that the Gothic did not emerge from a vacuum. On the contrary, it was the contemporary critical discourse itself which 'offered' the Gothic rifts and fractures to claim validation, successfully or not, but above all, to emerge and root itself in a fertile soil.

[154] Day, *Literary Criticism*, p. 188.
[155] Walpole, "Preface to the Second Edition," par. 8.

Still, Gothic fiction cannot be seen as a mere by-product of the dominant trends. This is because it also participated in those discourses in more self-conscious and conforming ways, often internalising their paradigmatic schemes. Let us now to turn to the examples of the ways in which early Gothicists attempted at inscribing their new domain into the dominant discursive order. As we noticed some time ago, both the spectacular supernatural and consumerism taking over the publishing realm prepare the ground for Gothic fiction, though, we might say, on different planes. These planes do converge, for both are dependent on consumption and demand. Actually, let us remind ourselves, the spectacular supernatural, the supernatural which becomes entertainment, is but one incarnation of market mentality, which reconfigures a ghost as a commodity, a novelty which boosts sales. Yet while the publishing market, based on demand, has a potential to dissociate itself from critical discourse and the conditions it lays for validation, Garrick's supernatural is found to abide by the dictates of critical demands, and thus, to be discursively validated.

Following the assumption that the Gothic has to undergo a similar discursive validation to emerge in its full-blown form, Clery lists a number of ways in which such a validation is attempted by the end of the eighteenth-century. Of these, the most immediate one is embedding a theory of the supernatural as causing the feeling of pleasurable terror within Edmund Burke's conception of the sublime. Here, Clery cites the Aikins as, initially, offering an explanation of the pleasure derived from the contemporary discourse of historicism as a regressive drive in humans, explainable through primitivism.[156] However, as she observes, the authors of the essay "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror," are quick to follow Burke in their departure from primitivism towards a psychological explanation of the thirst for a sublime experience: "The taste for horrors arises from the resistance of the mind to the torpor induced by humdrum reality."[157] As Clery observes, Burke, on his side, similarly begins by validating imagination and figurative language through primitivism, and then offers them as antidotes to the diminishment of the powers of mind caused by living in a commercial society, the powers of mind being stimulated best by means of terror, as he assumes.[158] In a parallel manner, the Aikins propose a tale of terror as a remedy to the contemporary sentimental novel, having a debilitating effect upon the faculties of the

[156] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 81.
[157] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 81.
[158] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 81-82.

reader by not being able to trigger the faculties.[159] In this way, we might sum up, imagination is being juxtaposed with imitation. Yet interestingly, the latter is not only a matter of improvement through fictional example; it is also inherent, if we look at it from another angle, in the debilitating production process and the cycle of production and consumption. Day, in turn, points to the juxtaposition of imagination with imitation associated with the division of labour as a way of validating imagination in the mid-eighteenth century, and of grounding literary value in it. He also emphasizes how this inescapably links imagination with commerce, and thus, discloses a form of market mentality at work, too.[160]

Approaching the question of terror from the perspective which parallels Burke allows the Aikins to justify the use of supernatural without a recourse to didacticism. As Clery notices, in this field, granted to the novel, a tale of terror seemed not to be able to hold a stand.[161] Yet as the critic also sums up, such a route to acknowledgement fails to grant success as well, for the tale of terror, evoking powerful emotions, cannot dissociate itself thoroughly from the production and consumption cycle which, as we might observe following Day, and Burke, imagination is meant to be a cure for. A tale of artificial terror is in itself an embodiment of surplus luxury, supplanted according to the demand, and creating an artificial need in the readers.[162] It is this propensity of the Gothic that will become the basis for its rejection by Romanticism.

According to Clery, it is Clara Reeve who manages to put the tale of terror, quite literally, into use, more than a decade after the singular success of *Otranto*. Usefulness, in turn, is her key to *The Old English Baron*'s relative success. Contrary to the Aikins, Reeve turns to the discourse of fictional example, the usefulness of the novel in the vein of Richardson and Johnson, and defines the relationship between her text and Walpole's one as that of correction.[163] Thereby, she subordinates her own writing to the dominant discourse, as did Garrick with his acting. The Reevian ghost, as Clery observes, is turned back from an absurd spectacle into a 'truthful' entity, in the sense that it has to be represented realistically enough not to damage the general realism of the whole text. To

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[159] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 82.
[160] He states on imagination: "Its habit of showing, in the poet Charlotte Smith's words, 'the beauteous rather than the true' is at once a symptom of the division of labour and a compensation for the damage it inflicts." He also notices, with regard to the representations of imagination in the writings of Defoe and Addison, that "[l]ong before the imagination enjoys its exalted status in romanticism, it is compromised by money." Day, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 163, 166.
[161] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 80.
[162] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 83.
[163] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 84.

achieve this end, its appearance is reduced to minimum, but apart from that it is also made to seem "commonplace."[164] It is this turning of the ghost, scarce as it is, into an almost commonplace phenomenon that Clery views as Reeve's crucial reworking of the fictional example principle. Instilling morality becomes the justification for a reasonably reduced form of the supernatural.[165] The novel, though dressed in a "fancy-dress with the spice of the paranormal," remains a version of *Pamela*: it oscillates around the details of conduct, creating an optimistic bourgeois vision; it is "an illustrative conduct-book for the proper correlation of wealth and virtue."[166] The supernatural is thus once again made acceptable according to the dictates of the dominant critical discourse. At the same time, the remaining content of the novel conforms with the mainstream.

The above-mentioned characteristics of *The Old English Baron* are seen by Clery as enabling the further publishing expansion of Gothic fiction. Firstly, the 'useful' content of the "modern romance" allows to change its status, previously limited to that of a novelty, or curiosity.[167] Secondly, the authoress' effort to meet critical expectations discloses her "business sense," an ability to compromise for the sake of critical recognition and respectability, and sensitivity to the problem of the publishing market seen as representing the cycle of production and consumption.[168] Yet, as Clery notices, while Reeve's novel succeeds, what it stirs is the worry that a too-commonplace ghost – a ghost not turned into a clear spectacle – may be also too-truthful, and serving the spread of superstition.[169] Simultaneously, the novel fails to meet the criterion of sublimity[170] – and in this, that is the lack of the ability to trigger high emotional states able to expand the mind, we might see another cause for the rejection of the Gothic by the First Wave Romantics.[171] All in all, as Clery remarks, it is only with Radcliffe that the problems triggered by the representation of the supernatural in writing are

[164] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 84.
[165] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 84.
[166] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 86.
[167] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 86.
[168] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, pp. 86-89.
[169] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 89.
[170] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 89.
[171] What is worth adding here is that the lack of the ability to trigger high emotional states able to expand the mind, as we have said, is perceived by the Romantics as inherent in the 'frantic' novels, permeated by sensationalism which dulls the mind, while simultaneously triggering high emotional states, rather than expands it. This is the case of Gothic fiction at the end of the eighteenth- and the beginning of the nineteenth-century. Reeve's novel is a different case, but still, the cause of rejection is, in a sense, the same.

overcome.[172] And, significantly, they are overcome through a further compromise and subordination to the dominant discursive frame.

To stay with Reeve yet for a while before we move on, as we speak of her and the validation of Gothic fiction by means of addressing the contemporary discourses, we may also evoke Watt's notion of 'the Loyalist Gothic.' Clery points out to the subtle manner in which Reeve both internalises the fictional example and modifies it for the benefit of the supernatural in the didactic realm. Watt, also acknowledging Reeve's insistence on the usefulness of romance, provides us with an account of other ways in which *The Old English Baron* proves to be rooted in the eighteenth-century prevailing discourses, and, just as *Otranto*, can be seen as mirroring the crises inherent in the age of change.

What he is primarily interested in is Reeve's interest in the question of nationalism. While Clery views *The Old English Baron* as a stage in the representation of the supernatural in modern fiction, Watt points to the text's indebtedness to newly emerged historical romance.[173] As such, *The Old English Baron* may be seen as embodying a stage in the shifting status of the Gothic past as a resource for the formulation of national identity. We have observed in the first chapter that it is a seeming paradox that the Middle Ages are rejected as barbaric, superstitious and uncultured, yet simultaneously praised as embodying the true national heritage and spirit. This seeming paradox turns out to be hardly a paradox if we consider it from the perspective of the eighteenth-century socio-political prerogatives. On the one hand, we have the Enlightenment and rationalism, which preclude superstition, sensationalism and the supernatural, and exemplary historicism which defines its own age as that of progress through a negative comparison with the past. However, on the other hand, we also have the anti-aristocratic and anti-absolutist drive, which paradoxically, but not surprisingly, results in reaching for the Gothic example to substantiate its own claims. And, we also have persisting conservative (anachronistic, in a sense, we might say if we look at it from the perspective of the progressive bourgeoisie) sympathies which result in exactly the same thing.

What we are dealing with here is what Mark Madoff, in 1979, termed 'the useful myth of Gothic ancestry.' In Madoff's words, this ancestry "was a product of fantasy invented to serve specific political and emotional purposes. [It] offered a way of

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[172] Clery, *The Rise of the Supernatural Fiction*, p. 91.
[173] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 47.

revising the features of the past in order to satisfy the imaginative needs of the present."[174] We could exchange the word 'myth' for representation, and following Madoff, see how it shifted according to the current needs of who was using it. He gives, for instance, an account of how Whig politicians would simultaneously resort to the representation of Goths as "noble, vigorous, physically hardy, intellectually and morally superior to the Romans [and] particularly famous for prizing their liberty" to advocate the freedom of the Parliament set against the monarch's power already in the seventeenth century, and shift to the representation of Gothicism as an anachronism to criticise the Tories.[175] In a sense, we maysee here how a certain discourse is being adopted to the given needs of power.

A similar usage of the representation of the Gothic past emerges from Watt's account. First, in the early eighteenth century, when a patriotic stance was associates with the opposition, referring to ancient ancestry was a way of emphasising the possibility of an alternative political authority.[176] Then, by the end of it, Gothic constitution was assimilated by the conservative circles to emphasise the continuity between the past and the present, the latter finding its justification in the previous.[177] We may remember Clery's discussion of the eighteenth-century law, evoked in the context of Radcliffe's subtle subversive revisions of patrilineal inheritance evoked in the previous chapter, or even the discussion of Walpole above. In both cases, the eighteenth-century law harbours feudal provisions, anachronistic from the perspective of the growing needs of the middle-class. As Watt makes it clear, it is a positive representation of the past that conservatives, such as Blackstone, would embrace in order to justify such anachronisms.[178] He is cautious when it comes to assuming clear-cut divisions with regard to particular texts and their ideological conditioning. However, he generally distinguishes between two ways of representing the Gothic past in the period starting with the late 1770s, on which befell American and then French Revolution: radical and democratic, evoking the heritage of "a Saxon democratic tradition," or militarist, focusing on "military victory" and continuity of the state.[179] Of these two, the latter manifests itself more visibly in the conservative circles of the

[174] Mark Madoff, "The Useful Myth of Gothic Ancestry," in *Gothic*, vol.1., ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 27.
[175] Madoff, "The Useful Myth of Gothic Ancestry," pp. 29-30.
[176] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 45.
[177] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 46.
[178] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 46. The other example of a conservative using this strategy is, of course, Burke.
[179] Watt , *Contesting the Gothic*, pp.50-51.

1790s, and can be seen in conjunction with the fear of revolution and anti-Jacobin sentiments.[180]

Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, according to Watt, represents a stage in the development of what he terms the Loyalist Gothic. The romance, as he views it, is situated in the period of "[reimagining] national identity."[181] Hence, on the one hand, Watt acknowledges what is more vividly stressed in both Clery and Madoff, namely the fact that *The Old English Baron* presents characters and sentiments with which the eighteenth-century readers may easily identify.[182] Yet, on the other, he also emphasises Reeve's overall positive representation of medieval class relations and inheritance law as testifying to her attempt at representing aristocracy "possessed of merit" and, hence, "redeemable."[183] Tracing what we may call a genealogy of texts that begins with Walpole's *Otranto* and the possibilities his 'Gothic story' offers, and then continues, in the form proposed by Reeve, into the 1790s and the beginning of the nineteenth-century, he speaks of a group of novels which rarely feature in the canon of Gothic fiction, but disclose a strong affinity when it comes to their political stance on nationalism and the recourse to the loyalist discourse.[184] According to him, the Loyalist Gothic is characterised by its setting the action "in a predominantly English medieval setting, and [depicting] the conflict between patriotism and a variant of misguided ambition in a period of chivalric manners, all the time underlining the lessons that such a conflict presented for readers in the 1790s."[185] The final example he gives is Radcliffe's *Gaston de Blondeville*.

What we have just discussed are two distinct ways of validating the Gothic by an appeal to discourse in power, one by aesthetic means, the other by socio-political ones. While Clery points to the ways in which such a validation takes place through a revalorisation of the supernatural element, Watt's analyses suggest a more general process of the Gothic becoming acceptable by means of its adopting a loyalist agenda. If we consider the above, we may say that these two ways depart in two opposite directions. Yet what they have in common, and what will ultimately grant the

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[180] Watt , *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 51.
[181] Watt , *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 47.
[182] Madoff, for instance, states that Reeve's "total effect is more Grandisonian than wild, romantic, or medieval." For his remark see Madoff, "The Useful Myth of Gothic Ancestry," p. 32.
[183] Watt , *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 48.
[184] See Watt , *Contesting the Gothic*, pp. 59-67.
[185] Watt , *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 58.

Radcliffean romances' success, is their conscious use of the critical, aesthetic, or political discourse to support their own cause.

This calls for an analysis from the strict perspective of discourse. We may remember Foucault speak of discourses as capable of "[circulation] without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy:"[186] of discourse not being homonymous with power that it happens to produce, transmit and reinforce.[187] Hence, we could say that, in the above cases of the Aikins and Reeve – and Walpole as well – what operates is Foucault's rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourse. In both cases of the theory of delightful terror and the attempt to endorse the Gothic tale with a useful and patriotic aim, the discourse which supports power (itself changeable as it may be) is used to validate the Gothic object as 'true' within that discourse, and, in this way, to turn it into an acceptable one – not without trying to adapt the supernatural, or generally the Gothic, in the long run, to the discursive framework in use.

Of course, in both cases, because of the 'nature' of the order of discourse the Gothicist faces and attempts to operate within, validation produces a discordance, or a clash, with the dominant paradigm at a certain point. This discordance is, however, not that much a matter of the final impossibility to accommodate the supernatural, the terror tale, the Gothic within the discourse in power. As we have already observed in the previous chapter, Radcliffe succeeds in meeting the Enlightenment paradigm with her device of the explained supernatural and, at the same time, manages to achieve a certain dose of subversion without a substantial condemnation. And that is because her Gothic is bourgeois – not antagonistic, but representative of a shared, wider socio-cultural context.

6.4. The Marginalised, the Marginal

There is a number of points that need to be made to conclude the considerations carried out in this chapter. We have begun our discussion of the ways in which Gothic fiction is grounded in its contemporary discursive background with an assumption that such a discussion should enable us to confirm that the Gothic serves the positive production of power. The above analysis of Reeve is a clear confirmation that it does. By stating this, we repeat what was earlier stated by Watt – there exists a traceable

[186] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1., p. 102.
[187] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1., p. 101.

genealogical line of the Loyalist Gothic. But Reeve is not an exception to the general rule. Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism*, evoked on various occasions in the previous chapter, shows that we may speak of the positive operation of power with regard to a whole range of Gothic fictions written by women. And a major example is Radcliffe, the romantic poetess contrasted by Tompkins, as indigenously English, with the German imports and the school of horror influenced by them. Speaking of the school of horror, Watt traces another genealogical line, including Lewis and the above-mentioned German literature, which accounts for the Gothic texts disclosing openly subversive drives as standing out from the overall attitude of the majority of English Gothicists contemporary with, say, Reeve and then Radcliffe.[188] He also points out that we need to observe how the utilisation of the socio-political discourse changed in texts written consciously from the liberal and radical standpoints.[189]

To return to Radcliffe, an outstanding illustration of the manner in which her Gothic romances embodied the bourgeois ideal is delivered by Botting and Townshend themselves, in the introduction to the second volume of *Gothic*. As they state, she "embourgeoisifies the genre, moderating the passions and vices of its commercial context with the virtues of prudence, patience, duty and chastity. Her heroines learn the lessons of excess, eventually, and reap the rewards."[190] Consequently, Radcliffe manages to conform to the critic's demands: her heroines embody readers who initially give in to passion but then avoid doom by turning to reason and virtue, and, what is made clear to the reader, thus exemplify clearly what is to be followed and what avoided.[191] In that, her romances prove to be corrective – productive, we should say – and participate in the overall critical project of "the encoding […] of an ideal reader."[192] As a result, it seems by all means justified to see her as internalising the dominant system that produces knowledge, multiplies discourses, induces pleasure, and solidifies power.

Yet, interestingly enough, Botting and Townshend would rather see Radcliffe as an exception, a particularly sensitive middle-class representative who would know how to

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[188] See Watt's chapter "Gothic 'subversion': German literature, the Minerva Press, Matthew Louis," in *Contesting the Gothic*, pp. 70- 101.
[189] Watt, *Contesting the Gothic*, p. 67.
[190] Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2 (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 3
[191] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 5.
[192] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 4.

satisfy such critics as T. J. Matthias.[193] Overall, as they view it, the Gothic would invite indignation owing to the fear that it might turn readers into passionate monsters.[194] Yet, again, what we must notice while following their account is that, firstly, they rely on the eighteenth-century critics, and secondly, in spite of all the references they make to Foucault, that the assumption of the Gothic representing (in a double way) the repressed, the 'waste,' seems to continue to underpin the stance they take. As they state, for instance, rephrasing Edward Barry's response to 'depraving' fiction, "[o]nce awakened by a work of fiction, the reader's monstrous desires would know no limits on the path towards destruction."[195] It is hard to resist the impression that desires in the above sentence, triggered by passions portrayed by a romance, must be the repressed ones. While the present-day critics paraphrase an eighteenth-century critic, psychoanalysis lurks from behind the idiom they use.

However, as we have seen, it is difficult to ascribe to the Gothic the status of the repressed if we consider the general discursive context of its appearance. For one thing, all the bashing and castigating that takes place in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century critical responses and reviews resembles the multiplied discourses that would codify sex on a whole range of levels, producing a positive body of knowledge about it rather than falling silent over it. For another, the Gothic, in a sense, may hardly be seen as repressed. By the end of the century it proliferates on the shelves of the circulating library. In fact, what illustrates well the degree to which the attempts at silencing it fail is an insignificant, though humorous, interjection made in the middle of his otherwise critical and satirical text, "The Terrorist System of Novel-Writing," by the oft quoted 'Jacobin Novelist.' As the anonymous contributor to the *Monthly Magazine* states, it has "fallen to [his] lot to peruse many of these wonderful publications, previously to [his] daughters reading them (*who, by the bye, would read them whether [he] pleased or not*) […]."[196] Interestingly, Botting and Townshend mention the very same author and passage in their general introduction while they discuss the threat posed by the Gothic to the traditional paternalistic family. As they state, he "insisted that fathers rigorously scrutinise and police the reading matter of their daughters. At the same time [he] tacitly acknowledges that these fictions would continue to be read irrespective of a father's

[193] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 3.
[194] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 4.
[195] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 2, p. 3.
[196] A Jacobin Novelist, "The Terrorist System of Novel-Writing," in *Gothic Readings: the First Wave, 1764-1840*, ed. Roctor Norton (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), p. 301. Emphasis mine.

approval."[197] The critics do not comment on the final statement, leaving it as if for the readers to judge what its implications may be. But it seems that this brief interdiction, no matter whether it was meant to be comical, as we might see it today, or an expression of lament, collapses the critical integrity of the text, otherwise tackling serious issues such as the impact of the French Revolution on the English spectators. He author indeed scrutinises his daughters' reading – but his supervision is utterly ineffective. Perhaps the Gothic should be 'repressed,' together with the revolutionary terror it is permeated with. But, all in all, what can the critic do but complain?

If there seems to be something repressed about the Gothic, it is its commercial affiliation. And, paradoxically, it is repressed both in the eighteenth-century reviews and in the twentieth-century accounts of the marginalisation of the Gothic such as Botting and Townshend's. The eighteenth-century critics fear luxury and market demand as much as they use the woman as an exemplar. And this is not surprising if we take into consideration Clery's discussion of how the contemporary criticism is influenced by civic humanism. It is also not surprising if we recall how the discourse of commerce, production, consumption and profit undoes the need for rhetorical criticism, which is the traditional form of criticism. Thus, when Botting and Townshend state that Gothic fiction "[comes] out in favour of the romantic desires of the younger generation,"[198] they mean that the contemporary critics respond with a fear of the loosening of parental authority, but they could just as well state that Gothic fiction comes out in favour of market demand. And how can one control such a demand if it is being satisfied before one even has a chance to object? In a sense, what the eighteenth-century critics do by fighting off the Gothic and popular fiction in general is defending the province of letters in the face of the changing conditions of artistic creation. In a sense, they are trying to fend off the inevitable.

In this sense, it is then difficult to see the Gothic as an incarnation of the repressed. Gothic fiction emerges together with the commercialisation of the republic of letters and the recognition of the power of market demand. And these lie at the foot of the economic identity of the eighteenth-century English middle class. There is, of course, an ongoing clash between the old and the new, civic humanism and bourgeois liberalism, the surviving remnants of the feudal law and the growing need of the bourgeoisie, the market and the traditional role of criticism, transplanted into a new background. And

[197] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction,", p. 2.
[198] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction,", p. 3.

there are shifts of power, as well as shifts of discourses, depending on the historical situation. The eighteenth-century middle-class identity is thus formed in a process of negotiation, in a riven, unstable manner; shaped by external factors which contribute to incongruent elements being assimilated at the same time. Hence, the critical outcry at the Gothic.

And hence, also, the difficulty with asserting that the Gothic is not entangled in the mechanisms of the positive production of power. Gothic fiction seems to be a part of the process of negotiation. If we look at it from the perspective of the growing commercialisation of the English society, it is entangled in the positive production of power, because it becomes a means of boosting sales, and Walpole's prefaces can be seen as promoting the liberty of the market. If we look at the rifts and gaps in the very critical discourses of the times, the Gothic also reflects and responds, to a degree, to the ongoing debates. And if we look at the ways in which the mode is consciously and deliberately made to assimilate the empowered discourses, we may see it again serves the positive production of power, for a large part of it embraces and incorporates the elements of the eighteenth-century middle-class identity. Of course, to some extent, the Gothic may also convey subversive content, as in the case of Radcliffe's treatment of inheritance law, or radicals' use of the mode for highlighting political issues, but this does not mean it is an abject, or 'waste.' The very complicated status of the eighteenth-century social identity casts doubt on viewing it so.

All in all, criticism does much more than only complain. It fixes the categories of high and low art and redirects our attention towards the former category, and away from the scrutiny of Gothic fiction as representing, directly or implicitly, the eighteenth-century socio-political shifts. And this is a discursive manoeuvre, for it serves a new agenda, first suiting the Romantic, and then the modernist critics. With shifting interest, the Gothic and the question of the reader depraved by Gothic fiction is left behind. At this point we might agree with Botting and Townshend that the discursive shift of attention is first enacted by the Romantics. Yet then, we should also think of what Patey stresses, namely that Romanticism itself produces a certain, discursively functional representation of the Enlightenment, and that this representation has to be qualified and re-examined if we are to understand the peculiarities of the eighteenth-century context.[199]

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[199] To quote Patey's exact words: "it was the romantic figuration of literary change as revolutionary discontinuity, in manifestoes such as Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), whose norms have

Simultaneously, what should be re-examined is the marginalisation of the Gothic in the eighteenth-century. While it appears that the Enlightenment subjects are "rational, ordered, moral and prudent,"[200] superimpose morality and aesthetics, and follow the rules of neoclassicism,[201] if we delve into their discursive background, we may see that they also turn from neoclassicism to imagination and the sublime, from the unity of the polity to personal experience of a work of art, and complicate the matter of the moralising and utilitarian function of criticism in the discourse of taste; that they represent history according to the needs of the day, and occupy both conservative and liberal, or even radical, positions. And above all, that they are dealing with the strengthening of the economic power. The Gothic does not seems to abide by the general rules for the favoured manner of literary production, for it may be easily associated both with the unreasonability of the ancient social order on the one hand, and the feared commercialisation of life inherent in the newly developing one, on the other. Still, it is representative of the period and its upheavals, and cannot be easily seen as oppositional with regard to a stable socio-cultural identity, and thus threatening, without a proper qualification.

The Gothic represented as a social threat is, undoubtedly, appealing to the late twentieth-century critics. The eighteenth-century critical attack on the popular novel, the Grub-street writers devoid of taste and learning, then its 'silencing' by the Romantics, and the disdain with which it is treated well into the twentieth-century, seem to attest undisputedly to its marginalisation. Yet, as it seems, in the nowadays' critical accounts, apparent marginalisation quickly turns into inherent marginality, a 'natural' penchant for occupying the liminal spaces. While it does open some paths for subversion, the Gothic is, nonetheless, not that liminal as it might seem. And perhaps it truly deserves to be studied for exactly this reason: for its own rooting in and reflecting a major period of cultural change.

We have pointed out, in the previous chapters, that both the differentiation paradigm and the indefinability of the Gothic are discursively functional concepts. While the differentiation paradigm allows the critics to represent their own field in a way which

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in one form or another governed most criticism ever since. To a remarkable extent, how the history of criticism in any period is written has depended on the historian's understanding of how criticism evolved from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, while this evolution itself (and thus the eighteenth century from which it began) has been construed according to Romanticism's own account of its nature and origins." Lane Patey, "The institution of criticism in the eighteenth century," pp. 6-7.

[200] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction,", p. 1.

[201] Botting and Townshend, "General Introduction," pp. 3-4.

unifies it in spite of the fact that it is highly versified, the Gothic's indefinability secures the lack of a grand narrative of the Gothic, but at the same time ensures that multiple narratives of the Gothic may be uttered. And, while the differentiation from the earlier Gothic criticism obliterates the fact the history of Gothic criticism is also construed by institutionalised criticism in accordance with its own agenda, the indefinability of the Gothic contributes to the spectralising of the mode, and allows to shift the mode's boundaries in the way favoured by the critic. As we have seen in this chapter, the marginalisation of the Gothic is a function of the critical discourse, too. It allows to ground the value of the Gothic in its marginal status, its alleged opposition to culture. At the same time, it results in obliterating the Gothic's grounding in its own contemporary context. In a certain way, then, it serves to confirm the already established conception of the Gothic as subversive, anti-bourgeois, and repressed. As a result, we can see that theory is not only projected on the Gothic. Once projected, it becomes inscribed into a conception of the mode and returns to haunt the future attempts at illuminating it.

Conclusion:
Subversion, Compliance,
and the Critical Conception of the *fin de siècle* Gothic

Robert Miles' assumption that the Gothic represents no single dialectic, but can be accounted for by tracing various dialectics and genealogies should seem incredibly promising from our perspective. If we accept that the Gothic is a mode, not a genre, and that it is, as Miles observes, a mode of texts which remain in constant dialogue, and are always conditioned by their own discursive background, then no other way of accounting for its body should appear equally productive. In a given sense, the differentiation paradigm also traces such a genealogy of Gothic texts. Yet, what it assumes to be the mode's common dialectics is, to a considerable extent, subversion and psychological depth. And this, paradoxically, allows for unifying a tremendously diverse literary phenomenon at the expense of its historical discursive inflections.

We have attempted to show that Gothic criticism is prone to re-construct the Gothic according it its own adopted discursive framework. Such a reconstruction, more or less extensive, is bound to take place whenever the critic relies on cultural theories to the point of internalising their prerogatives as givens for the Gothic, and fails to back them up with a considerable dose of historical research. In fact, once restructured according to the tenets of, above all, psychoanalysis and the assumption of the Gothic's anti-Enlightenment attitude, the conception of the Gothic becomes a workable theory. Its influences, as we have seen, may be traced in a number of critical accounts. In those accounts, what turns out to be appropriated is both the material to be interpreted and the methodological tools used for interpretation.

Yet, as we also attempted to show, the Gothic is neither entirely about psychological states, nor about subversion. At least, not in the sense that it represents the fearful 'other,' the object of abjection and the cultural 'waste' itself. The marginalisation of the Gothic, indeed, is conditioned by the political and social factors; however, this does not mean that the Gothic itself is marginal, in the sense of being oppositional, with regard to the political and cultural mainstream. It may tell us about subversions and then expel them, in accordance with its own discursive frame, and then it may highlight psychological states, but to account for those we would need to delve into contemporary philosophical discourses instead of immediately applying psychoanalysis. Similarly, if

we wish to trace what the Gothic, as a culture's artefact, can tell us about, for example, changing class relations, we need to consult its immediate political and social discursive background before we evoke Marx. As a result, while it appears that devising a meta-definition for the Gothic is indeed impossible, for each such definition, as we have shown, leads to the reworking of the Gothic at the expense of its diversity, the change of dialectics underlying the way we try to account for it seems to be inevitable if the Gothic is to be properly illuminated.

Based on our considerations, it turns out that a promising dialectic for considering the Gothic is its 'contemporaneousness,' the feature emphasised by the new historicist studies. For, indeed, the Gothic is always contemporary. It is for this reason that it disturbs civic humanism so much, with its internalised luxurious status of a commodity and its sensitivity to market demand. Or, that it appears to be so anachronistic. It is also for this reason that it turns out to be loyalist and cherishing the military past, or radical and advocating a social change. All of this is conditioned by its being immersed in its own historical moment, in the complexity and interrelationships between various discourses that are applied both by power and by opposition. Once we admit that, we are able to account for its apparent paradoxicality and the penchant for shape-shifting it appears to disclose. At the same time, we also complicate its study considerably, for we draw attention to the fact that the Gothic terrain is far from smooth. On the contrary, it can be quite unpredictable and tricky, and in the least degree in the manner that we could identify with.

The problem here springs from the fact that what the critics do is always construct their object. We could observe how the eighteenth-century critics construed the distinction between proper and improper occupation of literature – and we could trace in their accounts the indication that these tended to collapse as soon as literature proceeded from the site of a critical essay, or review, to the hands of readers. The basis for the success of the Gothic was the fact that it was read, in the first place. We could also observe how the contemporary critics reconstruct what has already been constructed, by, for instance, adapting the representation of the Gothic as devised by the critics from the past in order to reinforce the cultural status of their own activity. What must be remembered is that we do not have an immediate access to Gothic fiction as it was perceived at the times of, for example, its rise. What is more, we perceive those times as such through subsequent representations. This is, as we have noted following the historians of criticism, the case with the Enlightenment. Only as we are able to

understand the age which gave birth to the Gothic, are we able to begin to understand the Gothic itself.

One might have the impression that much of what has been stated above could find confirmation in regard to eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, but could prove somewhat less applicable to the nineteenth-century one. We have discussed, of course, the instances of re-shaping the conception of the Gothic so that it may encompass the respectable, canonical Victorian novel – the instances of critics constructing the Gothic yet again. Still, not that much has been said about the *fin de siècle* revival of the Gothic. And, speaking of the psychological depth and subversion in the Gothic, it seems that the *fin de siècle* Gothic fiction can hardly testify to any other dialectic that that of the trembling bourgeois psyche.[1]

For instance, we could notice that whoever has read Christopher Craft's essay "'Kiss me with those red lips': Gender and inversion in Bram Stocker's *Dracula*," could think, at least for a moment, that the Gothic is indeed a transgressive genre. Craft observes that whatever subversive sexual desires are initially invited in the novel, and then entertained for a while, they are forcibly expelled at its end. And we could assume that since the *fin de siècle* monster is universally expelled at the end of the Gothic text, we are dealing with compliance with the *status quo*. On this basis, we could reject the Gothic's anti-bourgeois drive again. However, compliance with the *status quo* does not always amount to affirmation and positive power production; in fact, one may comply but, at the same time, remain sceptical, or dissatisfied, and tacitly aim at subversion. And, as Craft states, "[w]ithin its extended middle, the Gothic novel entertains its resident demon—is, indeed, entertained by it—and the monster, now ascendant in its strength, seems for a time potent to invert the 'natural' order and overwhelm the comforting closure of the text."[2] Hence, compliance does not preclude the fact that what the text has entertained in between is a purely subversive drive. In fact, as Craft finishes his essay, he stresses that even as Dracula is annihilated, little Quincey Harker, the legitimate result of a heterosexual union between Jonathan and Mina, remains a child curiously suggesting an offspring of the homoerotic union of the crew of light.[3]

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[1] Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 221.
[2] Christopher Craft, "'Kiss me with those red lips': Gender and inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," in *Gothic*, vol. 3, ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 259.
[3] Craft, "'Kiss me with those red lips,'" p. 283.

Still, if we consider the question of the way in which the conception of the *fin de siècle* Gothic is formed by the critics nowadays, we may see that what triggers the process of forming this conception is exactly what we have been discussing so far. Namely, what triggers the process is discursive assertions about the text made beforehand and later on confirmed by the projection of the adopted theoretical framework. For instance, Craft's statement that the Gothic demon seems capable of inverting the natural order, natural in inverted commas, discloses his postmodern perspective. The order which is disturbed by the vampire is 'natural' according to a certain grand narrative, but this may be noticed only by the present-day critic. As Baldick and Mighall observe, Craft's reading of *Dracula* "is wholly dependent upon the a priori assumptions that vampirism is sexually subversive and that the 'conventional' Victorian patriarchs are the villains of the piece."[4] Such a reading is enabled only if we project the contemporary discursive framework on the text of the past.

What could serve us as another example is, again, an introduction by Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, this time to the third volume of the *Gothic* series they edit. The text tellingly begins by presenting Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis as dominating the critical discussion of the nineteenth-century Gothic fiction. As the authors state, "[a]t once constructing and being constructed by their cultural and historical conditions, both confirm critical expectations regarding Victorian repression and the return of the repressed sexuality."[5] This is a very promising statement, as it seems to almost immediately point our attention to the critical projection of pre-formed assumptions and expectations on the Gothic text. Accidentally (or maybe not), Botting and Townshend acknowledge what Foucault tells us about our own perception of the Victorian prudes, namely, that we expect them to repress sexuality as this forms the basis for our own perception of ourselves as liberated. However, the above having been stated, the authors immediately return to confusing Freud and the Gothic, postulating the internalisation of the former by the latter.

This becomes immediately visible as Botting and Townshend discuss the characteristic features of the nineteenth-century Gothic. The very first one they mention is the uncanny as theorised by Freud. Immediately, what becomes associated with the Gothic is the repressed. As the authors state, "[t]he relation between psychoanalysis and

[4] Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 223.
[5] Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.

Gothic fiction lies in the manner in which both disclose what ought to have remained concealed. Indeed, a Freudian topography inscribes itself neatly over Gothic writing […]: beneath the surface of the conscious mind is a cesspool of seething appetites; in the closets of well-kept homes, scandals and secrets lurk."[6] The eighteenth-century ghost, expelled by Enlightenment reason in Radcliffe's romances, as Botting and Townshend point out, becomes internalised in the psyche and turns into a "psychological aberration and pathology."[7] Thus, the vampire, having risen to its prominence and strength by the end of the century, "signifies an otherness beyond, beneath and disturbingly central to the cultural, familial and sexual limits it both defines and transgresses. […] coming from distant and almost oriental lands to cross the thresholds of English homes by invitation only, Dracula […] evokes the strangeness at the heart of bourgeois family life, setting loose the barely supressed impulses within them and thereby corrupting fragile mores and norms."[8] Showing a peculiar interest in women entertaining the breach of social decorum, he endangers bourgeois patriarchal society, but he also turns out to be the double of those who dare to exterminate him. And the extermination itself resembles the establishment of society through the act of patricide similar to that described by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*; the uncanny, as Botting and Townshend write, "returns only to be expelled."[9]

Evoking *Totem and Taboo* has a strange effect on the account. What immediately follows the act of patricide in Freud's text, the act itself being fundamental to the establishment of society as we have known it ever since, is the (re)establishment of the totem by the sons, giving in to remorse.[10] Botting and Townshend do observe that in the figure of the vampire, "culture and the law paradoxically discover both their limits and their ends."[11] But we could also notice that a reference to *Totem and Taboo* subtly subverts the overall representation of the vampire that the two critics give, as it also points out to a peculiar glorification of the returning uncanny instead of only its re-enacted expulsion. Yet the critics do not follow this thread, limiting themselves to stating that the killing of Dracula is "coeval with Freud's account of patricide and

[6] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, pp. 2-3.
[7] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, p. 4.
[8] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, p. 7.
[9] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, p. 8.
[10] See Sigmunt Freud, "The Infantile Recurrence of Totemism," subchapter "The Origin of Exogamy and its Relation to Totemism," sec. 5, in *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, at Project Gutenberg, accessed 12 December 2013, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/41214/41214-h/41214-h.htm#CHAPTER_IV.
[11] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, p. 8.

primal violence."[12] In this way, they seem as if to turn from discussing the Gothic in psychoanalytical idiom to stressing the simultaneous emergence of psychoanalysis and the Gothic vampire. And, very soon, they turn away from the subversive potential of Dracula to the way his figure plays a productive function: "In disturbing the boundaries and securities of bourgeois modernity, […] the vampire does not serve as a harbinger of liberation […]. In serving metaphorically as the point of condensation for many Victorian fears, [it] plays a crucial role in the discursive production of sexuality during the nineteenth century."[13] What follows is a brief account of Foucault's dealing with the repressive hypothesis, and the conclusion that, by elaborating on the vampire's subversive perversity, the present-day criticism itself reaffirms the repressive hypothesis, proliferating the discourse it tries to liberate itself from.[14]

This makes Botting and Townshend's account an incredibly interesting one. As we may see, the critics do make use of Foucault's remarks, pointing to the way in which criticism, trying to pursue its own, postmodern agenda of liberation, falls prey to the repressive hypothesis. But, on the other hand, as they reaffirm the positive character of the Victorian Gothic, Dracula's taking part in the positive production of power, they do not preclude its affinity with psychoanalysis. On the one hand, this is because they report on the prevailing trends. And these trends, we must observe, do confirm what we have stated above, namely, that in the case of the *fin de siècle* Gothic, the critical conception of Gothic fiction remains informed by the discursive framework of the adopted methodology, psychoanalysis, to a large extent. However, on the other hand, they also give no alternative. The nineteenth-century Gothic of their account remains a 'psychoanalytical' one, characterised by its doubles, uncanniness and the return of the repressed. As a result, we could ask ourselves the question: Why should the vampire stand primarily, as it seems to stand in the account, for sexuality? Perhaps it does. But if the critics limit the positive power of the vampire to that of encoding proper sexuality in a psychoanalytical vein, it is quite probable that they consider the text from the limited position of one discourse, simultaneously passing over other possible positive roles that the vampire might play.

What Botting and Townshend's account seems to lack in, perhaps for the sound reason of reporting on the prevalent trends, or perhaps due to an overreliance on the

[12] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, p. 8.
[13] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, p. 9.
[14] Botting and Townshend, Introduction to *Gothic*, vol. 3, p. 9.

Gothic theory as already established, is proper historical contextualisation. Such a contextualisation, carried out for instance in Miles' *The Great Enchantress*, or Mighall's *The Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, both already mentioned in the course of this dissertation, could show the Gothic and psychoanalysis to stem, perhaps, from the same source, or even the same discursive order. However, at the same time, it would allow us to keep them separate, as they should be kept. What is more, a discursive contextualisation would allow us to pay attention to numerous other discourses that might be, perhaps, found manifesting themselves in the Gothic of the *fin de siècle*.

Such an attention, a very close one, is paid to the discursive background of the *fin de siècle*, for instance, in Kelly Hurley's *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, materialism and degeneration at the* fin de siècle. In the case of Hurley, as in the case of much of the contemporary Gothic criticism, what we may notice is the departure from premises that we have already discussed as deserving reconsideration. Hurley not only draws from Kristeva to theorise the concept of the abhuman.[15] She also draws from Jackson to indicate that the discourse of the fantastic is an oppositional discourse.[16] Yet, what she aims at in her study is "to specify the Gothic's relationship (*both contestatory and highly imbricated*) to dominant ideologies of human identity found within the nineteenth century."[17] This is an interesting perspective, for while it assumes that Gothic might have played a role in the contestation and fragmentation of the above-mentioned discourses, it also aims at contextualising it with regard to the positive processes in which it took part. It does emphasise the former above the latter, though, for, as Hurley states, "[t]he Gothic seemed at times to reinforce normative sexuality by representing such behaviors as aggressive femininity and homosexuality as monstrous and abhorrent [but] even within this register (a fundamentally anxious one), the Gothic

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[15] Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, materialism and degeneration at the fin de siècle* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 4. However, it must be noted that Hurley simultaneously points to the ways in which Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* could be historicised "itself by placing it on a continuum with other anguished responses to the particular brand of materialism that arose in the nineteenth century." As she observes, "Kristeva's revisionist psychoanalytical model of the subject (liminally human, fragmented, Thing-like, convulsed with symptoms) could not have been conceived without benefit of *fin-de-siecle* models of the abhuman subject drawn from both pre- or proto-Freudian psychology and a constellation of evolutionist discourse (p. 11).

[16] Hurley, *The Gothic Body*, p. 7. Also, as Baldick and Mighall observe, her analysis rests on the assumption that the Gothic negotiates cultural anxieties, which they find to be "tautological." Baldick and Mighall, "Gothic Criticism," p. 221.

[17] Hurley, *The Gothic Body*, p. 7. Emphasis mine.

served to multiply, and thus destabilize, the meanings of sexuality."[18] As a result, it both draws our attention towards the necessary contextualisation of the Gothic, and could itself constitute an interesting object of study with regard to the influences of the contemporary cultural theories on the conception of the Gothic.

The aim which we set for this dissertation in the very beginning was to show that theory-oriented Gothic criticism actively re-works the Gothic. As we have seen, this indeed takes place through the process of object formation as described by Foucault. Whenever the Gothic is approached through a cultural theory, and the approach is not qualified by the consideration of the mode's discursive background, its conception is constructed according to the discursive framework from within which the critic works. We could see this to take place on numerous occasions. Cultural theories, be they psychoanalysis, (which indeed can be identified to influence the structuring of the basic axioms of many contemporary representations of the Gothic mode), Marxism or feminism, do tend to re-conceptualise the texts of the past according to their own internal logic, as a result of which subversion is seen as the mode's inherent feature. As a result, they pass over what they often cannot account for – the Gothic's own discursive background. Or, they account for it, but appropriating it to their own reference framework, posing the statements that can be perceived as true, and discarding those which need to be perceived as false for the framework to make sense. In addition, the assumption of the mode's anti-Enlightenment and anti-bourgeois attitude (which originates in the affiliation of the Gothic and Romanticism) is often incorporated within the conceptions of the Gothic structured through the lens of theory, for it indeed appears to be very useful from its perspective. As a result, those conceptions often turn out to be indeed structured around a ruse, a methodological blunder. And then, those conceptions often form the basis for yet further readings, and yet further conceptions, in the process of what appears to be a double discursive appropriation. The result is a re-shaping of the Gothic which, indeed, obscures our understanding of the mode instead of illuminating it.

We cannot deny that the contemporary conceptions of the Gothic have been, and to a large extent, shaped by theory. And, above all, we cannot deny the fact that theory has often not only projected its tenets on the Gothic, but also contributed to the mode's discursive re-construction. Acknowledging this appears to be our critical obligation.

[18] Hurley, *The Gothic Body*, pp. 10-11.

Like and old parchment, the Gothic is then still partly a lost text, an obscured manuscript – and partly a text to be still uncovered. And perhaps that is why we may expect it to remain highly intriguing, and inviting exploration, for a yet long time.

Summary

Niniejsza rozprawa poświęcona jest zagadnieniu wpływu teorii kulturowych na współczesne koncepcje literatury grozy. W rezultacie, bezpośrednim przedmiotem analizy są w niej teksty krytyczne. W tekstach tych badaniom podlegają możliwe wpływy teorii kulturowych na konceptualizacje zarówno poszczególnych tekstów grozy jak i literatury gotyckiej jako takiej. Perspektywa badawcza, przyjęta w niniejszej rozprawie, jest zatem bliska perspektywie nowego historyzmu. Opiera się ona w znacznej mierze na teorii dyskursu Michela Foucaulta oraz na jego koncepcji przedmiotu jako dyskursywnego konstruktu. Z tej perspektywy, krytyka literatury grozy funkcjonuje w obrębie dyskursu, czy też sama reprezentuje dyskurs, w wyniku czego aktywnie konstruuje własny przedmiot badań.

Z przyjętego w rozprawie punktu widzenia, koncepcja literatury grozy postrzegana jest jako konstrukt powstały w procesie przekształcania i dopasowywania do określonych ram dyskursywnych. Aby uwidocznić ten proces, niniejsza praca przyjmuje, iż groza charakteryzuje się nade wszystko swą 'współczesnością': tym, że jest niezmiennie zanurzona w swym własnych kontekście historycznych, właściwym dla danej epoki i znanym zarówno autorowi, jak i bezpośredniemu odbiorcy. Co więcej, na kontekst ten składają się nie tyle dane wydarzenia historyczne, co współczesne tekstom grozy dyskursy – społeczne, polityczne, ekonomiczne i kulturowe. Wydaje się, że tylko poprzez uwzględnienie wpływu owych dyskursów na tekst grozy i jego odbiór, tekst taki może zostać odpowiednio skontekstualizowany i opisany.

Przez teorie kulturowe rozumie się tu szereg szerszych perspektyw społeczno-kulturowych do których od lat siedemdziesiątych dwudziestego wieku odwoływali się w swych analizach krytycy grozy. Najważniejszymi z nich wydają się psychoanaliza, Marksizm i feminizm i to im rozprawa poświęca najwięcej uwagi. Są to bowiem teorie, które wedle współczesnych przedstawień historii krytyki literatury grozy, pomogły ustanowić współczesny społeczno-kulturowy status literatury gotyckiej.

Decyzja o skupieniu się na analizie tekstów krytycznych, nie literackich, jest wynikiem refleksji nad paradoksalnym, jak mogłoby się wydawać, statusem, jakim w dzisiejszych czasach cieszy się literatura grozy. Stanowi ona przedmiot rozległych badań od około półwiecza, umożliwiając badaczom wgląd zarówno w tło historyczno-literackie poszczególnych tekstów, jak i w ogólną historię współczesnej kultury

zachodu. Jednakże, bardzo trudno jest odpowiedzieć choćby na tak proste pytanie, jak „Czym jest literatura gotycka?" Wydaje się, że mimo lat badań, jesteśmy coraz dalsi od udzielenia takich odpowiedzi. Fakt ten kieruje naszą uwagę na rolę krytyki literackiej w kształtowaniu postrzegania tekstu literackiego. Wydaje się, że koniecznym jest postawienie następującego pytania: dlaczego współcześni badacze grozy ukazują tą literaturę jako niedefiniowalną, wysoce zróżnicowaną i hybrydyczną, w stopniu uniemożliwiającym jej pełne uchwycenie i opisanie, pomimo całych lat owocnych badań?

Niniejsza rozprawa przyjmuje jako swój punkt wyjścia założenie, że wyżej wspomniane teorie kulturowe, używane niejednokrotnie jako narzędzia analizy tekstu, dążą do odkrycia ponadczasowej prawdy, jednocześnie same będąc 'bytami' historycznymi. W wyniku tego, oparcie się na nich bez jednoczesnego uwzględnienia dyskursywnego tła danego tekstu prowadzi do przetworzenia i niejako 'napisania' owego tekstu na nowo, zgodnie z przyjętą perspektywą. Dzieje się tak, ponieważ krytyk literacki, w trakcie analizy, skupia się na tych elementach tekstu, na które wrażliwa jest dana teoria, pomijając te, których ramy dyskursywne, właściwe dla tej teorii, nie są w stanie objaśnić. Rezultatem jest przetworzenie tekstu grozy według ramy dyskursywnej współczesnej badaczowi, ale obcej dla samego tekstu.

Niniejsze rozprawa, jednocześnie, sama oparta jest na teorii. Jej celem nie jest jednak odrzucenie teorii jako narzędzia badawczego. Zamiast tego, rozprawa przyjmuje stanowisko, że analiza teoretyczna musi być koniecznie poparta analizą historyczną. W ten sposób, możliwe jest uniknięcie projekcji założeń właściwych danej teorii na dany tekst. Dlatego też analizy prowadzone w trakcie rozprawy, siłą rzeczy, podparte są rozważaniami na temat dyskursów, które mogły mieć wpływ zarówno na powstanie jak i odbiór danych tekstów literackich w przeszłości.

W rozprawie szczególny nacisk kładziony jest na rozważenie kwestii subwersywności literatury gotyckiej. Podczas gdy współczesna krytyka grozy ukazuje ową literaturę jako niemożliwą do pełnego zdefiniowania, mimo wszystko podkreśla subwersywność i transgresywność jako jej nieodłączne cechy charakterystyczne, czy wręcz 'gatunkowe.' Te, z kolei, znajdują odzwierciedlenie, z jednej strony, w założeniu niedefiniowalności literatury grozy (groza z natury podważa obowiązujące normy i przekracza granice gatunkowe), a z drugiej strony, w założeniu marginalizacji grozy (przy czym, fakt, że literatura grozy podlegała marginalizacji uznawany jest za dowód na jej 'gatunkowe' zaangażowanie w kontestację porządku społeczno-kulturowego, a

sama marginalizacja, za przejaw ‘wyparcia’). Jak się jednak okazuje, literatura gotycka jest nie tyle niemożliwa do zdefiniowania, co założenie niedefiniowalności okazuje się funkcjonalne w obrębie współczesnego dyskursu krytycznego. Pozwala ono bowiem na dowolne definiowanie badanego zjawiska, bez ryzyka powstania ogólnie przyjętej definicji, będącej swego rodzaju ograniczającą i zinstytucjonalizowaną ‘wielką narracją,’ z punktu widzenia której możliwe byłoby automatyczne wykluczenie konkretnych koncepcji jako ‘niewłaściwych.’ Co więcej, wydaje się, że niesłuszne jest uznanie charakteru grozy za opozycyjny, czy kontestacyjny na podstawie faktu, że była ona marginalizowana w dyskursach krytycznych przeszłości. Jak pokazuje niniejsza rozprawa, ani niedefiniowalność, ani postawa anty-oświeceniowa nie są cechami charakterystycznymi literatury grozy. Pozwalają, jednakże, współczesnym badaczom na konstruowanie zjawiska literackiej grozy w taki sposób, by potwierdzało ono ich własny punkt widzenia, czy mogło posłużyć realizacji ich własnych celów.

Rozdział pierwszy rozprawy poświęcony jest analizie współczesnych przedstawień historii badań nad literaturą grozy. Takie przedstawienia bardzo często powielają pewien schemat, w którym podstawą dla określenia współczesnego statusu badacza jest stanowcze odcięcie się od perspektyw wcześniejszych pokoleń badaczy, dominujących przed rokiem 1980, a przyjęcie perspektywy charakteryzującej się ugruntowaniem analizy w dostępnych teoriach kulturowych. Jak ukazują współczesne historie badań nad grozą, to zmiana, raczej niż ewolucja, leży u podstaw współczesnego statusu zarówno literatury grozy jak i jej krytyki. Nakreślenie spójnego obrazu współczesnej dziedziny badań nad literaturą grozy – dziedziny ogromnie zróżnicowanej – jest z kolei możliwe poprzez przyjęcie założenia, że badania te wskazują na subwersywny charakter zjawiska, któremu są poświęcone.

Rozdział drugi poświęcony jest, z kolei, ukazaniu kontr-historii, które świadczą o dużej samoświadomości współczesnej krytyki grozy. Szereg tekstów krytycznych, przytaczanych w tym rozdziale, wskazuje na fakt, że sami badacze, zwłaszcza ci analizujący literaturę grozy z punktu widzenia nowego historyzmu, stają się coraz to bardziej świadomi procesu przetwarzania, jakiemu podlega literatura gotycka w trakcie analizy z punktu widzenia teorii w przypadku, gdy nie ma miejsca odwołanie się do kontekstu historycznego danego tekstu. Szczególnie problematyczna okazuje się być pod tym względem psychoanaliza. Dostrzegany jest również fakt, że współczesne koncepcje grozy niejednokrotnie służą poparciu kontestacyjnych postaw samych badaczy.

Rozdział trzeci poświęcony jest metodologii badawczej niniejszej rozprawy. Metodologia ta opiera przede wszystkim na rozważaniach Michela Foucaulta nad dyskursem, które umożliwiają postrzegania krytyki literackiej jako swoistego dyskursu, w obrębie którego ma miejsce konstruowanie przedmiotu padań. Rozdział rozważa też przyjęte w rozprawie rozumienie 'znaczenia' tekstu jako ugruntowanego w tle dyskursywnym danej epoki, oraz rozważa współczesne ukazania historii badań nad grozą, oparte na odgrodzeniu się od wcześniejszych perspektyw, w świetle rozważań Stanleya Fisha nad zasadami jakie rządzą naszym postrzeganiem danej interpretacji jako właściwej. Rozdział proponuje też wytłumaczenie dla faktu, że krytyka literatury grozy wciąż zdaje się często dążyć do 'odkrycia' jednoznacznych prawd o swym przedmiocie badań.

Rozdział czwarty omawia sposoby, w jakie sama myśl Foucaulta jest współcześnie wykorzystywana przez krytykę literacką w rozważaniach nad grozą. Z jednej strony, przytoczony zostaje przykład Roberta Milesa, który w swym studium „Gothic Writing, 1750-1820. A Genealogy" odwołuje się do genealogii Foucaulta jako wyjątkowo skutecznej metody badawczej w przypadku literatury grozy i ukazuje w jaki sposób przyjęte w niniejszej rozprawie stanowisko metodologiczne zbliża się do i różni od tego przyjętego przez Milesa. Z drugiej strony, analizie podlegają przykłady tekstów krytycznych, w których myśl Foucaulta sama ulega przetworzeniu przez pryzmat przyjętej koncepcji literatury grozy. W wyniku tego, zamiast prowadzić do ukazania nowych faktów i związków, służy potwierdzeniu wcześniej obranego stanowiska.

W końcu, rozdziały piaty i szósty poświęcone są, kolejno, analizie koncepcji niedefiniowalności i marginalizacji literatury grozy. Rozdział piąty analizuje szereg tekstów krytycznych, począwszy od studium J.M.S. Tompkins z pierwszej połowy dwudziestego wieku, a kończąc na studium Anne Williams z ostatniej dekady tego samego stulecia. W wyniku analiz, okazuje się, iż nie ma zasadniczej różnicy pomiędzy wczesną a współczesną krytyką grozy, ponieważ, bez względu na przyjęta perspektywę metodologiczną, obie konstruują literaturę grozy w odniesieniu do własnych ram dyskursywnych, tym samym ograniczając swój punkt widzenia do założeń właściwych tejże ramie. Co więcej, podczas gdy współcześni badacze starają się nie dopuścić do powstania 'wielkiej narracji,' która zdominowałaby ich dziedzinę badań, podjęte przez nich starania mające na celu ukazanie, że groza nie ogranicza się do zjawiska marginalnego i przelotnego, przyczyniają się do rozproszenia granic tego zjawiska i umożliwiają weryfikację istniejących koncepcji literatury gotyckiej.

Rozdział szósty, z kolei, ukazuje w jaki sposób marginalizacja grozy, mająca swój początek w osiemnastym wieku i negatywnej recepcji krytycznej wczesnych powieści gotyckich, uznawana jest przez współczesnych badaczy za oznakę i potwierdzenie subwersywności gatunku. Z tego punktu widzenia, literatura grozy zagraża porządkowi oświeceniowemu pod względem społecznym, moralnym i estetycznym, co czyni ja niezwykle bliską współczesnym badaczom i cenną dla badań nad formowaniem się tożsamości społeczno-kulturowej klasy średniej. Jednakże, rozdział ma na celu ukazać, że literatura grozy nie jest z założenia anty-oświeceniowa, ani nie kontestuje porządku społecznego narzuconego przez klasę średnią. Wręcz przeciwnie, wczesna powieść gotycka wpisuje się w tło dyskursywne swej epoki, odzwierciedlając zachodzące w niej przemiany społeczne, kulturowe, polityczne, a zwłaszcza ekonomiczne. Jako taka, okazuje się ona być zjawiskiem reprezentatywnym dla osiemnastowiecznej kultury brytyjskiej i często ucieleśniającym wartości klasy średniej, a nie otwarcie antagonistycznym.

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